Peace Education in Foreign Language Classroom

Ayşegül Takkaç Tulgar
English Language Teaching Department, Atatürk University
E-mail: aysegultakkac@hotmail.com

Abstract

Due to the ever improving relations between the nations of the world in many respects for the last decades, foreign language teaching has been an area which occupies a large place in the agenda of every modern individual. Numerous studies have been carried out to realize effective foreign language teaching. Materials designed for this purpose are intended not only to teach the structural language, vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading and writing but also to present texts including knowledge in many different areas presumed to attract attention by learners. Because foreign language teaching materials are also essential course materials that can contribute to the cultural accumulation of learners, topics focusing on 'peace' as a concept indispensable for the present and future of mankind should also be included in the course material as much as possible. In this way, with a focus on peace as a common universal notion, the importance of peace in one's country, peace with neighboring countries and peace in the whole world, students in every single county on earth may be conscious of the concept from a very early age. Growing with an understanding that peace is not an undeniable conclusion but an undeniable reason in every mutual relation, generations receiving peace education at school, especially in foreign language classes which allow flexibility in course content, may be more conscious of and insistent on peaceful approaches.

Keywords: peace; peace education; foreign language education; global citizenship; global friendship and understanding

1.Introduction

Every single course at every level of teaching requires a unique framework as regards the material intended to present information to learners. Physical sciences have their own characteristics, social sciences have their own aspects and art sciences possess their own unique, idiosyncratic conventions. Evolving as an area of learning, in line with the developments and emerging demands in the relations of nations and individuals belonging to different nations in the world, foreign language education also has its distinctive qualities. The distinctive qualities of foreign language learning are apparent in the course material offered to learners. Foreign language teaching materials are different from the teaching materials of every other course in that the flexibility of the content information is not comparable to any other course. The reason for this is that the aim is to teach not a single subject but the target language as a living thing. Every other course has its own boundaries but foreign language teaching can include information in all subjects and 'peace education' is no exception.

1.1.Peace as a human concept

Peace has always been a concept that has kept its prominence from the time peoples of the world started to live in communities however small or large the population and tried to resolve conflicts occurring between individuals and nations. The history of the world is, in a sense, the history of conflicts and formulas invented and put into effect to end those conflicts. As soon as a problem has emerged, some ways have been sought for its solution. That is why, peace has always been the never changing purpose in the lives of individuals and communities throughout the world. Even when parties involved in a problematic issue could not resolve conflicts immediately, they have never given up trying to search for new ways to reach solutions. As Dörnyei and Murphey (2009) state: "the main strategy in trouble-shooting in international crises is to initiate talks between the parties at all costs and then try to keep the communication channel open" (p. 138).

Since it is obviously witnessed from the history of mankind that problems and reaching settlements between individuals and nations have always been part of life and since the ultimate aim is peace, peace education must be an essential part of general education in the global sense. Peace as an umbrella term includes so many concepts directly related to human life and numerous subjects amalgamate under the headline of 'peace education'. Some of them are women's rights, economic equality, anger management and acceptance of 'others' (Ben-Porath, 2003, p. 527).

Peace has been a field occupying the minds of people and every nation is expected to strive to achieve peace (Köylü, 2004, p. 59). It has become "a liberal concept based on reason and something that can be precipitated" (Kühn, 2012, p. 399). The need to enable generations to be able to live in peace was heavily felt after World War I and II and educators sought ways to prevent future wars by teaching for peace (Bajaj, 2015, p 154). For this purpose, an international consensus was reached as stated in Article 1 in the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations (1945):

Reviewed and edited by ICANAS organizing committee

> To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace.

1.2. Peace education

The United Nations and other international bodies have made noteworthy efforts to establish peace in all parts of the world and in the minds of people to make our world a peaceful and more inhabitable planet. Yet, it is beyond the scope of this study to engage in the historical and theoretical orientations of peace education. That is why, only a short definition and the purpose of peace education and the nature of its curriculum will be provided here and then the focus will be on application of peace education in foreign language classroom. Brantmeier and Bajaj (2013) outline peace education is worthy of consideration and offers genuine prospects:

> "Peace education is not just about the elimination of violence, although that is a central tenet, but also about creating preventive structures and conditions that better align educational policies, pedagogies and content toward peace, social justice, and human rights principles. As such peace education can be understood as a harmonizing integrative force used to establish both common ground and affirm diversity in plural contexts. It can and should be used to promote positive change, beyond the absence of direct and indirect violence." (p. 141)

Zemblays and Bekerman (2013) outline some remarkable points in peace education as regards its critical cultural analysis and those involved in the process. They stress the importance of programs for developing community relations around an exploration of the role of identity and culture in real life, the notion of identity/culture as categories for describing the world, developing the skills of cultural analysis rather than knowledge of the characteristics of 'the other', and efforts needed to be redirected from a focus on the 'other' towards collaborative efforts for change for a better world (p. 209). Ashton (2007) also brings to the forefront these basic theoretical values and defines peace education curricula to refer to teaching concepts of peace, ways of bringing about peace, or ways to change violent attitudes and behaviors to the use of nonviolent methods of solving personal and social problems (p. 40).

One of the postulates of modern peace education, Harris (2004) notes, is that it "teaches alternatives to violence" (p. 6). Fulfilling this unavoidable duty is intended to bear fruitful results on the way to establish ideal human values for the generations receiving education in all branches of learning. If the aim is to develop generations of people sensitive to others, foreign language classes may shoulder its share of the responsibility to accomplish this prominent mission. This mission will convince students that "all human lives are of equal value and that all human beings deserve to be seen and treated in the full richness, beauty, and complexity of each life" (Shapiro, 2010, p. 121). As a matter of fact, the effectiveness of peace education is not only an ambitious but a necessary goal in order to have peace education and peace studies legitimized and taken seriously within and beyond educational institutions (Morrison et al. 2011, p. 180). In fact the historical approach utilized by nation-states to cultivate an unquestioning acceptance of war and the war system must be replaced by an understanding of peace education for the cooperative internationalism of a culture of peace (Reardon & Cabezudo, 2002, p. 28).

The above information about the interpersonal and international prominence of 'peace' requires that every individual and every institution should do what they can to promote peace and reconciliation for the welfare of the whole world. Those responsible to offer education to individuals who are expected to shape the future of the world must attach additional importance to this matter. In fact, as a concept denoting the significance of the serenity and tranquility of human life, 'peace' should take the place it deserves among the items in all the course contents including foreign language education as much as possible.

As the importance attached to foreign language teaching is in line with the level of the development in international relations, tourism, trade, education, joint research and collaboration in many areas, the basic underlying aim in foreign language teaching must be to initiate peace, friendship and understanding between individuals and nations. In theory and practice, the course content in foreign language teaching is flexible and most suitable to "to educate people for a better understanding of others, in other words, to lay foundation stones in the building of a peaceful world, preparing people for a global world" (Mirici, 2008, p. 345).

1.3. Peace Education in Foreign Language Classroom

In foreign language classes, the course content will naturally be in the target language, which means that learners will acquire information in a language other than their own. This, alone, may be said to create an international consciousness because foreign language courses are essentially expected to have a global spirit denoting that violence "is disintegrative, while nonviolence is integrative power" (Nagler, 2004, p. 43). It is possible to teach in these courses that peace education is a global issue. It is also possible to enable students to recognize the relationship between the self, community and world, and foster reflection upon and development of peace within

Reviewed and edited by ICANAS organizing committee

the self, in relationships, in the community, and in the world. Through this education, students may be trained as global citizens and see the relationship between who they are and what they do in the global environment (Hettler & Johnston, 2009, p. 106).

The contents of course materials in foreign language teaching are almost the same for target languages all over the world. Course books indispensably include sentences to teach grammar, vocabulary and four skills. Of course, expressions to be learned by learners to meet their needs in their daily lives and to have knowledge in many fields of learning are included as examples in this section to teach "grammar in an informative and meaningful way" (Arikan, 2009, p. 95). To stress the importance of peace, expressions taken from first the target languages and then other languages should be a part of grammar and vocabulary section so that the participants of the course may be acquainted with 'peace' as a crucial term. Learners should be able to see, while learning the structure and vocabulary of the target language that native speakers of the language and speakers of other world languages have deeply rooted cultures and their experiences have produced proverbs and phrases stressing the need for peace. It is an undeniable assumption to note that in all languages there are meaningful and mind provoking expressions denoting that peace among members of a nation is indispensable. Inevitability of peace and friendship is reflected in expressions for family members, relatives, neighbors, needy people, travelers, the sick and elderly, and so on. Just to give two examples: Turkish proverbs 'Only fools believe that brothers fight with each other' denotes the intrinsic relation and the prerequisite to occur in the ties between siblings, and 'Man needs even the ash of his neighbor' marks the critical requisiteness of goodwill between neighbors as well as the nature of the attitude toward neighbors and other people around.

The proverbs above indisputably imply the concept that peace and conditions to establish peace are to be observed starting from the family as the nucleus of the society and spreading to all sides of the community. When the issue is handled in the world context, the founder of Republic of Turkey, Ataturk's saying 'Peace at home, peace in the world' reflects the necessity of the global philosophy that 'peace should be the only constant' the world over. These examples are only three phrases from Turkish culture. As there are many more such sayings in Turkish language, so there are, self evidently, numerous similar expressions in the languages of the nations sharing life on earth. It is not possible to include all those related phrases from the languages of all world nations in this paper but foreign language course books may contain a whole lot of these expressions.

Including proverbs and other meaningful expressions in course books in classroom contexts is not all that can be offered as regards the inculcation of the idea that peace, mutual understanding and friendship should be placed in the minds of students as constructive human values. Reading passages may also clearly emphasize the notion that peace is as urgent a need as food for the peoples of the world, which is an understanding inaugurating mutual pleasure of living and sharing the world with others. Being exposed to reading passages with such contents as international collaboration following an earthquake, food aid for the starving people in some parts of the world, building, where needed, facilities with international support and many other activities conveying the message that the world is better when all people live together in peace and solidarity, students in all schools of the world may be able to develop the same global understanding dedicated to peace from very early ages.

While reading texts offer students written documents containing information in selected subjects in the target language, listening courses allow them to hear registered material. Listening courses may include a number of items related to topics of global friendship and peace. Stories including the idea of goodwill and friendship among world nations, dialogues reflecting how happy individuals become when their needs are met, the welcoming of a stranger by the members of the host nation and the constructive communication between them, topics pointing out that people need each other if they want to live in communities and texts from the world literature emphasizing that the earth would be an uninhabitable place if it were not for the friendship, understanding and peace will be excellent materials for speaking courses. Listening to these materials in the foreign language classroom, students will naturally feel that peace is a concept occupying the minds of the people all around the world and they will need to develop ideas accordingly. Such listening materials will leave a psychological footprint in the minds of learners from the time they have started to learn about the affairs of the world and when meeting and sharing life with foreigners, their behaviors will exert positive impacts stemming from what they learned in listening classes.

Speaking courses offer chances for discussion and idea sharing activities on issues students are expected to build their own capabilities and to produce their own propositions. Items related to friendship, understanding, tolerance, in short, peace as an umbrella term may be included in topics focused on in speaking classes. Thanks to the talking points characterizing how the ideal behavior should be among people in both local and global context, learners may gain an insight that they are individuals like everyone else in any part of the world and everyone else in any part of the world is like them. They may understand "what peace represents without opposing it to violence" (Davies-Vengoechea, 2005, p. 11) and get the perception that people are, in essence, the same and that the points suggested as differences are, as a matter of fact, just peculiarities.

Speaking courses are discussion settings where students are to shape their prospective ideas and behaviors of peace and to learn how to be more tolerant to others and to seek peaceful solutions to problems. In this unique

Reviewed and edited by ICANAS organizing committee

setting teachers need to engage in "genuine conversations with their students, offer them real learning experiences, and should be willing to discuss open-minded and open-ended ideas and concepts without predetermined answers" (Van Oord, 2014, p. 11) so that students may feel that they also have their own share in the issue. The effort spent for this purpose may arouse the feeling of a national and global friendship and understanding between individuals who have no other choice but to share life in the same world.

Speaking topics and performances of students in speaking courses are, in a way, activities of social interaction. The seeds of friendship planted in foreign language courses with the aim to realize national and global friendship will help students grasp the notion that students the world over are also talking on such questions, producing ideas to make way for global peace, looking for the possibilities of living together and thus paving the way for global friendship evoking the feeling that they are searching for the prospects of collective action. Today's technology enables schools to share their courses and classroom environments with those friends in other cities of the same country or in schools in different countries, which will enable peace education to change learners' perspective on "the other" in a constructive direction. With activities tailored to create a better future for all, students in all countries can be involved in this important process defined "as a transformative educational approach which encourages movement from violence towards a culture of peace" (Kwon, 2015, p. 64). Collective behavior and action should be understood as an unnegligible process in today's world because, as the world has become more interconnected, students need to gain familiarity with the world around them for a peaceful collaboration (Carano, 2009, p. 191).

Reading passages may also include the stories of individuals living abroad and establishing friendly relations with the native settlers, anecdotes of international tourists setting up relationships with local people and the experiences of scientists collaboratively working with colleagues in other parts of the world sound and safe within an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding. Experiences of students studying abroad will also be ideal reading texts in the language classroom. These texts will show the lives of individual students who are alone in a foreign country at first sight but who are, in fact, among friends who care for him/her and for whom s/he cares. The nature of the relations between students may be even more mind gripping stories for target language learners in that the experience is shared by learners just like them, with the feeling in their minds that the target of peace education is "to help transform the attitudes of children and youth to reject a culture of war and pursue a culture of peace" (Ashton, 2007, p. 40). In this way, a holistic approach will be developed and the youth will realize that if "peace is to be regarded as a right, then people therefore should have the right to be educated and informed about that right" (Page, 2008, p. 6).

World literature is like a huge ocean when viewed from the perspectives of writers to international issues. It is an invaluable global heritage reflecting the point that the concept of universal human rights is "rooted in an essentialist concept of the human subject as an entity whose characteristics are universally valid" (Gur-Ze'ev, 2001, p. 316). Countless writers from many nations have produced literary works infused with the necessity of global friendship, global understanding and global peace. One can even say that the world nations have almost the same literary tradition on friendship demonstrating the standpoint that "a shared world is a necessary condition for intersubjective friendship" (Hayden, 2015, p. 746). Passages taken from literary works like novels, stories, poems and plays stressing how invaluable peace is for the peoples of the world will play an initiative role in the process learners are to develop a global framework in which people are to live together in peace. Students are to learn through the works of creative minds that peacemaking is "nothing more nor less than the application of soul force to human violence at its greatest scale. Therefore, it must begin, somehow, with deep changes that take place within the person— where the soul is" (Nagler, 2004, p. 203). And they are to discover through the framework they form that any kind if political, cultural, national or religious discrimination should be unacceptable will find no supporters in any place in the world. With their impressive words, persuasive language use and presentation of discrete connotations, literary texts are undeniably to occupy permanent places and to exert permanent effects in the minds of learners, which will be a process to shape the thoughts and behaviors of learners.

Writing is, in a sense, documenting ideas. In foreign language classes writing means putting on paper creatively, in the target language, what students have in their minds about topics focused on. The concept of peace is also a proper subject in writing courses because it opens the gates for students to express their thoughts in organized written expressions. In writing activities students should be expected to try to construct their own meaningful expressions about their expectations of living in peace in the whole world "with an emphasis on cross-cutting principles such as nondiscrimination and equality (Zembylas, 2011, p. 572). They may create mottos to live in peace and solidarity in the whole world. They may even criticize the whole lot of nonsense that impedes the establishment of international friendship and understanding and may emphatically express their decisive stance for global peace. Technology, here too, may help students share their classroom experiences with friends creating and documenting ideas in foreign language classes in the same country and abroad.

Reviewed and edited by ICANAS organizing committee

IISTE

2. Conclusion

The above revelation indicates that foreign language classes may offer ideal chances for carrying out peace education Asking young children, in foreign language classes in a global context, about what they can do to make peace may be the first important step in encouraging them in their peacemaking efforts (Walker et al, 2008, p. 381). This will lead way to the "social transformation of the school and its community in which people accept and adapt to each other's needs" (Carter, 2002, p. 52). This will also create empathy atmosphere, since progressively expanding the participants of a moral universe is an important objective of peace education and arguably the opposite of empathy is essential to violence (Duckworth et al., 2012, p. 91).

The world being a global village, students are supposed to know, through their education in general and foreign language education in particular, that they are sharing their classroom experiences with those with whom they will possibly meet in their future lives. The enthusiasm for meeting people like them, exploring the world together, sharing local culture in the global context, learning from each other and believing that a friend's heart is beating somewhere in the world and that friendship is reciprocal in character may lead people to a peaceful world only. As McLeod and Reynold's (2010) note, this will provide opportunities for students "to enact their knowledge, values and skills of human rights and their classroom experience of modelled peace-building to effect more equitable conditions and opportunities in their own environment with the aim of long-term development of attitudes, beliefs and values of social justice and equity" (p. 20).

The first thing a foreign language teacher does when s/he enters into the classroom is to greet students in the target language saying 'good morning' or 'good afternoon', which makes students feel that peace is to dominate in the process and a social interaction is to occur. After the greeting process, that day's content is studied which is either grammar or one of the four skills: listening, speaking, reading or writing. In all this process, information related with peace may be included in the course content. Teachers must be aware of the fact that it is important to introduce the concept of peace in the lives of learners (Lewsader and Myers-Walls, 2016. P. 12). As individuals dedicated to establishing peace, teachers may, thus, "hope their students will think of themselves as compassionate global citizens who identify with people throughout the world struggling for peace" (Harris, 2004, p. 10). This being realized in the whole world, people will aspire for universal friendship and universal peace.

3. Disclosure statement

One who desires peace, should should teach for it.

References

Arikan, A. (2009). Environmental peace education in foreign language learners' English grammar lessons. *Journal of Peace Education, 6*(1), 87-99.

Ashton, C. V. (2007). Using theory of change to enhance peace education evaluation. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly,* 25(1), 39-53.

Bajaj, M. (2015). Pedagogies of resistance' and critical peace education praxis. *Journal of Peace Education*, 12(2), 154-166.

Ben-Porath, S. (2003). War and peace education. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, *37*(3), 525-533.

Brantmeier, E. J., & Bajaj, M. (2013). Peace education praxis: Select resources for educators and researchers. In *Educating about Social Issues in the 20th and 21st Centuries: A Critical Annotated Bibliography*. Vol. 2, edited by S. Totten and J. Pedersen. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

Carano, K. T. (2009). Passport to cultural enrichment: The peace corps world wise schools experience. *The Social Studies*, 100(4), 187-192.

Carter, C. (2002). Conflict resolution at school: building compassionate communities. *Social Alternatives*, *21*(1), 49-55.

Davies-Vengoechea, X. (2005). *A Positive Concept of Peace*, *Keeping the Peace: Conflict Resolution and Peaceful Societies Around the World*. Edited by Graham Kemp and Douglas P.Fry. New York: Routledge

Dörnyei, Z., & Murphey. P. (2009). *Group Dynamics in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge: CUP.

Duckworth, C. L., Allen, B., & Williams, T. T. (2012). What do students learn when we teach peace? A qualitative assessment of a theater peace program. *Journal of Peace Education*, *9*(1), 81-99.

Gur-Ze'ev, I. (2001). Philosophy of peace education in a postmodern era. *Educational Theory*, *51*(3), 315-336.

Harris, I. (2004). Peace education theory. *Journal of Peace Education*, *1*(1), 5-20.

Hayden, P. (2015). From political friendship to befriending the world. *The European Legacy*, *20*(7), 745-764.

Hettler, S., and L.M. Johnston. (2009). Living peace: An exploration of experiential peace education, conflict resolution and violence prevention programs for youth. *Journal of Peace Education, 6*(3), 101-19.

Köylü, M. (2004). Peace education: An Islamic approach. *Journal of Peace Education*, *1*(1), 59-76.

Kwon, S. (2015). *Violence in South Korean Schools and the Relevance of Peace Education*. Unpublished Thesis Submitted to the University of Birmingham for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Kühn, F. P. (2012). The peace prefix: Ambiguities of the word 'peace'. *International Peacekeeping*, *19*(4), doi:

Reviewed and edited by ICANAS organizing committee

10.1080/13533312.2012.709785, 396-409.

Lewsader J., & Myers-Walls, J. A. (2016). Developmentally appropriate peace education curricula. *Journal of Peace Education*. doi: 10.1080/17400201.2016.1228527, 1-14

McLeod, J., & Reynolds, R. (2010). Teaching human rights across the curriculum. *Ethos, 18*(3), 17-21.

Mirici, İ. H. (2008). Training EFL/ESL teachers for a peaceful Asia-Pacific region. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 9*(3), 344-354.

Morrison, M. L., Austad, C. S., & Cota, K. (2011). Help increase the peace, a youth-focused program in peace education. *Journal of Peace Education*, 8(2), 177-191.

Nagler, M. N. (2004). *The Search for a Nonviolent Future: A Promise of Peace for Ourselves,Our Families, and Our World*. Makawao, HI: Inner Ocean.

Page, J. (2008). *Peace Education: Exploring Ethical and Philosophical Foundations*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

Reardon, B. A., & Cabezudo, A. (2002). L*earning to Abolish War Teaching Toward a Culture of Peace: Rationale for and Approaches to Peace Education*, Book 1. New York: Hague Appeal for Peace.

Shapiro, H. S. (2010). *Educating Youth for a World beyond Violence*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

UN. 1945. *Preamble to the Charter of the Unied Nations* (Online) Available from: http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-i/index.html (Accessed 19 December 2016)

Van Oord, L. (2014). Peace education beyond the mission statement. *International Schools Journal, 34*(1) 8-13.

Walker, K., K. S. Myers-Bowman, & J. A. Myers-Walls. (2008). Supporting young children's efforts toward peacemaking: Recommendations for early childhood educators. *Early Childhood Education Journal,* 35, 377-382.

Zembylas, M. (2011). Peace and human rights education: Dilemmas of compatibility and prospects for moving forward. *Prospects*, *4*, 567-579.

Zemblays, M., & Bekerman, Z. (2013). Peace education in the present: dismantling and reconstructing some fundamental theoretical premises. *Journal of Peace Education*, 10(2), 197-214.

Notes

Note 1. This paper was presented at the 2nd International Symposium on Language Education and Teaching in Rome, Italy on 20-23 April, 2017.

Reviewed and edited by ICANAS organizing committee