

Teaching Peace Linguistics in ESL Classrooms: A Catalyst for Global Peace

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Abstract

Peace Linguistics is a branch of Linguistics aimed at helping users of languages to create conditions for communicating peacefully in varied contexts by humanizing the use of language and raising awareness of individuals' communicative roles to interact in a dignified manner. This field of linguistics is borne out of the need for the use of language to achieve peace in the global context since conflicts are inevitable in linguistic interactions. This paper examines how Peace Linguistics could be harnessed in teaching peace through humanizing the English Language in a second language situation. The study presents different teaching strategies and contents that could encourage students to use the target language creatively and learn to humanize the language to harmonize disagreements, alleviate communicative aggression, and build communicative dignity to achieve peaceful co-existence. The need to be intentional in creating long lasting state of peace using language is through peace oriented linguistic education. To this end, this study explores the use of certain de-confrontation linguistic devices/ features such as-hedges, negativized positive antonymous adjectives, positivized expressions, polite requests through the use of courtesy subjuncts and the use of declaratives instead of Wh- challenging questions that students can learn to be able to interact in a dignified manner in order to alleviate communicative tensions, as a means of promoting human rights globally for the world to be a better place to live.

Keywords: Teaching, Peace Linguistics, Catalyst, Global Peace

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Introduction

Language has been defined in various ways by different scholars based on their perceptions of the concept. It is described as the medium or vehicle for conveying ideas, a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for social operation, the totality of meaningful utterances in any given society (Lamidi, 2000; Akindele and Adegbite, 2005). Language is a body of words and the systems for their use, common to a people who are of the same community or nation, the same geographical area, or the same cultural background (Mabekoje, 2009). Language study is a field of interest to many scholars; the study of language as a science is their major concern. Linguistics as the scientific study of language is the subject whose focus practitioners devote their attention and energy to understanding why human language is the way it is (Crystal 1999). Linguistics as a field has its focus on man's means of interaction and social involvement (Ahumaraeze, 2021).

Linguists' interest in language study covers three main areas namely: language structure, language meaning and language in context. Language structure deals with word structure (Morphology), sentence structure (Syntax), speech sounds and their rules and patterns between them (Phonetics and Phonology); meaning of language (Semantics and Pragmatics), and language in context, that is the way language is used which covers a wide range of fields or branches since language is used almost in all areas of human endeavours. These branches are Psycholinguistics which deals with language acquisition and use; Sociolinguistics (language use and its connection with society); Applied Linguistics (application of the knowledge of language studies to solving real life language related problems); Conversational and Discourse Analysis (language use in social contexts) and Stylistics (the use of different styles in language).

The subject of language has been given priority attention because of the communication (interactional and interpersonal) roles it plays in the society. The significance of language in the process of communication cannot be over emphasized. Language functions in communication as a tool for information dissemination and for building interpersonal relationships. In the educational process, language is key determinant of learning outcomes. Based on this, language pedagogy has shifted emphasis from the formal or structural approach of language study to include language functions and the context of use, that is what learners do with their language, what communicative strategies they employ and how these are developed (Alo, 2003). In other words, attention is now on Communicative Competence. Communicative competence is concerned with the knowledge and ability which speakers need to possess in order to use language appropriately in communicative situations. It involves the ability to use the resources of language (words, phrases, sentences, rhetorical devices) correctly and appropriately in given contexts and situations. This encompasses knowledge of social and conversational rules, as well as, speakers' own and outer world which they are presumed to have to enable them to use and interpret sentences meaningfully.

Communicative Competence is the kind of knowledge required to engender peace in the society. A speaker that knows what to say, with whom, where and how to say it will definitely foster humanization and contribute immensely to societal and global peace. Thus, Peace Linguistics is concerned with the quality of interaction, which is dependent upon the communicative competence of the interlocutors. This implies that "the language quality of interaction required certain level of linguistic abilities, awareness of language and culture of self and others, personal and communal backgrounds, circumstances and social status in each community" (Bello, 2020:210). Going by this, Gomes de Matos affirms that teachers must

first believe in the importance of positive interaction with their students and practice peaceful communication with them. Based on this understanding, this study aims at examining contents and methodology of teaching Peace Linguistics in ESL classrooms.

Peace Linguistics

Peace Linguistic is an interdisciplinary approach to language study that advocates for peaceful use of language (Ahumaraeze, 2021). It encompasses other disciplines such as Peace Studies, Conflict Resolution, Sociology and other branches of Linguistics. It is a discipline in which” linguistic theorizations, findings and methods are applied to non –linguistic issues with the specific goal of creating a peacefulco-existence of human beings among whom intermittent discords, crises and misunderstanding are always inevitable” (Omole and Bello cited by Bello, 2020:210). Gomes de Matos, the proponent of Peace Linguistics was of the view that Language and Peace have long existed as two interrelated concepts, and there have not been so much effort, globally on the systematic method at integrating the two, not just theoretically but in the practical sense (Gomes, 1990). An attempt to bridge the existing conspicuous gap between Language and Peace led Gomes to devote most his works to application of Linguistics to Peace because Language is one of the vital instruments that human beings use to position themselves and interact with or disassociate from others either verbally or non-verbally (Luzkarime, 2019). This has cumulated into a good number of publications on the concept, such as ‘Pedagogyof Positiveness (Communicating Constructively in Portuguese) in 1996,’ Communication for the good, Toward Communicative Peace’ in 2002. The focus of these publicationsis language users, the vital agents of language systems.

It has been established that language users always choose consciously, subconsciously or unconsciously from the available linguistic alternativesin any given context. In formal contexts, the choice is almost always done based on the fact language users are aware of their expressions. However, in informal contexts, such as casual conversations with friends, relations and associates, language users seem to be less conscious of their language use and communicative implications of their expressions which in most cases result in confrontations (Bello,2020). Peace Linguisticsis borne of the need to curb linguistic violence and aimed at exposing how language could be used not only as an ordinary tool for exchange but also a tool for communicating peacefully (Ahumaraeze, 2021). According to Friedrich (2007), Peace Linguistics is therefore developed in order” to emphasize the use of humanizing language, the design of strategies to deal with differences constructively, language that fosters peace rather than language used with the opposite agenda in mind, a focus on agreement rather than disagreement and controversy, and avoiding of pompous language which typically brings up reservations, walls, and resistance” (Bello, 2020:211). More recently, Peace Linguistics is defined in terms of what peace linguists are expected to do , by prioritizing the humanizing nature of language use and also being aware of the other side of communicative reality which is dehumanizing use of language (Gomes, 2012). All the linguistic principles, methods, findings and applications are seen as attempts by linguists and language teachers at promoting peace at a global level.

Thus, Gomes de Matos is of the opinion that Peace Linguistics as a study of Language-Peace Interaction is realized by communicative acts of language users in peace- building, peace – dignifying, peace enhancing and peace-sustaining purposes. He challenges language users, particularly teachers and learners to engage in building, dignifying, enhancing or sustaining what he calls LIFE PLUS; that is life-improving force of peaceful language use (Gomes de

Matos, 2012). Since we communicate in ways that tend to humanize or dehumanize, connect or disconnect at various degrees, we do so both verbally and non-verbally (Jocelyn Wright 2019). In performing relevant peaceful actions, language users are encouraged to fulfill their responsibilities as humanizers and dignifiers (Gomes de Matos, 2013). According to him, the theoretical foundations of Peace Linguistics are predicated on the need:

- To be a peaceful communicator in all languages you use and will use. How? By communicating constructively, peacefully for the good of persons, groups, communities and countries;
- To dignify your daily dialogue. How? By interacting as a communicative dignifier, prioritizing the use of positivizers, nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs used positively (Gomes de Matos, 2015b); and
- To plan your (spoken/written/signed) language use by anticipating and avoiding possible harmful effects on your listeners/ readers/ viewers. If possible, learn how to enhance your pragmatic competence in the language you will be using (Gomes de Matos, 2014b).

From the foregoing, Peace Linguistics is an interdisciplinary approach aimed at helping educational sector and other sectors of human endeavours to create conditions for the preparation of human beings as peace language users, co-existing in a peaceful world.

Teaching Peace Linguistics in ESL Classrooms: Content and Methodology

In Gomes de Matos' theoretical foundations of the introduction to Applied Peace Linguistics, four principles that could be useful as educational implications for peaceful language users and peace educators are highlighted. These are:

- Be a peaceful bridge person between/ among persons, groups, communities.
- Dignify your dialogue.
- Honour humanism and foster humanization.
- Act as a peace patriot at all times.

Based on the scope of this paper, Principle 2 is the most relevant to peace linguistic pedagogies and contents in ESL classrooms. In addressing the question- Dignify your dialogue. How? The principle clearly states the approaches/strategies that could be employed by teachers in teaching, entrenching and dignifying peace in daily classroom dialogue by:

- Addressing other persons with respectful language and optimistic vocabulary.
- Disagreeing through empathic language, that is, by placing oneself in other's shoes.
- Using positivizers (adjectives and verbs) which can enhance positive qualities/traits in people.

Teachers as life molders/enhancers play important roles in their day to day interactions with students to humanize language use in language learning especially in a second language situation where the resources in the mother tongue or native language interplay with the features of the second language which makes SL Learning a bit challenging. The strategies proposed for the teaching of Peace Linguistics in this paper are in tandem with Bello's 2020 de-confrontation strategies, which are modalization, hedging, negativisation and positivisation. However, this paper examines the use of certain peace oriented linguistic devices such as negativized positive expressions, positivized expressions, polite requests through the use of courtesy subjuncts and the use of declaratives instead of Wh-challenging questions for effective teaching of Peace Linguistics in ESL classrooms.

Contents and Methodology

As there are crises of various kinds all over the world, there have been different measures put in place by law /peace enforcement agencies in different countries to address the crises, yet no solutions have been proffered to reduce crises in our societies. Having employed these measures, language is therefore seen as a veritable alternative tool for bringing peace into the world and one of the ways of achieving this is to teach Peace Linguistics in the classroom. Each linguistic environment has its own cultural values and norms that are characteristic of the language use in such a community. An expression could be acceptable and engender peace in a language situation, which may not be welcome in another, hence there will be conflicts. There is a number of strategies that could prove useful in preparing ground for peaceful environment; one of such is by teaching the language of peace in the classroom.

As students learn peace language, they will acquire the linguistic features and devices that be used in their day-to-day interactions with their peers. Ultimately, they will be reflexive, open-minded and develop the capacity for problem solving. Some of the language devices that be taught are the following:

A.) Hedging

This is the process of presenting a cautionary expression in a more acceptable and soothing way. Hedges are expressions that warn the addressee on how to take or interpret the contents of a clause (Bello,2020). Hedges could be used to minimize conflicts between or among the discussants. The following are some of the examples:

- I think we may need to reconsider our position/ instead of/ We need to reconsider our position.
- I'm not entirely convinced by your argument / Instead of / Your argument is wrong.
- I'm not totally happy with this decision / Instead / I'm unhappy with this decision.

A discussant could be accused without being offensive as the following expressions illustrate:

- You're kind of being rude. / Instead of / You're rude.
- That's sort of a strange idea. / Instead of That's a strange idea.
- It's kind of a waste of time. / Instead of/ It's a waste of time.
- That's somehow boring. / Instead of / That's boring.

These types of expressions can down tone or minimize the potential threats that could possibly lead to conflicts.

B.) Negativised Positive Antonymous Adjectives

Negativized positive antonymous adjectives which appear to present some positive values in terms of meaning, despite the use of the negative adverb 'not' could also be taught in the classroom as we have in the following examples:

Non- Negativized Form

You're sluggish.
You're arrogant.
You're wrong.
Your face is dull.
You're lazy.

Negativized Antonymous Form

You're not fast at doing things.
You're not humble enough.
You have not got it right.
Your face is not bright.
You're not up and doing.

You're wicked.
You're hostile.
You're stingy.

You're not kind enough.
You're not friendly enough.
You're not generous enough.

C.) The Use of Positivized Expressions

Positivizers have the tendency of lessening the potential threats in the expressions which may likely make the addressee feel humiliated as we have in the following expressions:

Non- Positivized Expressions Positivized Expressions

- I don't want to go out for dinner tonight. / I appreciate the invitation but I have other plans tonight.
- I can't lend you any money right now. / I understand your plight but I'm not bounyant to lend you money at the moment.
- I don't have the time to talk right now. / I appreciate your desire to chat, but I'm currently very busy.
- I don't really like your idea. / I appreciate the thought you put into that idea but I'm not convinced it's the best option.
- He failed the test despite all our efforts. / He tried hard to pass the test but couldn't make it.
- You're not talented in that area. / You have different area of expertise distinct from that.
- You're always unhappy. / You're only excited once in a while.
- The outfit looks horrific on you. / The outfit looks quite beautiful on you but needs to be slim fitted.
- I don't have any free time to engage in discussion with you. / I will be free in a moment to discuss with you.

Positivised expressions as the above can avert conflicts in discourse.

D.) The Use of Polite Requests Through the Use of Courtesy Subjuncts

Polite requests could be employed in conversations to show consideration for the feelings and desires of the interlocutor in order to create and uphold peaceful interpersonal relationships through the use of courtesy subjuncts. Courtesy subjuncts are used to convey a formulaic tone of politeness in order to tone down the abruptness of commands. As exemplified in the following expressions:

- | Imperatives (Commands) | Polite Requests |
|--|---|
| • Pass me the salt. | / Could you <i>kindly</i> pass me the salt? |
| • Carry this box with me. | / Could you <i>please</i> lend me a hand with this heavy box? |
| • Place it on the table I will attend to it later. | / You could place it on the table I will attend to it soon, <i>please</i> . |
| • Close the door | / Could you <i>please</i> close the door? |

E.) The Use of Declaratives instead of Wh-Challenging Questions

Wh-challenging questions could be confrontational. In the alternative, declaratives may be used to forestall any likely conflicts as illustrated in the following expressions:

- The time is far spent, why haven't you started the engine? / The time is far spent, you ought to have started the engine.
- Why couldn't you wait for other participants before introducing the guests? / You ought to wait for other participants before introducing the guests.

F.) Students could also be exposed to peace related vocabulary that could be acquired through indirect exposure to the words at home or school, by listening, talking and reading widely on their own, by engaging in activities that could promote deep processing of word meanings. Students should be encouraged to understand and use peaceful words in their day-to-day language use. Their exposure to peaceful expressions through real life experiences will help them imbibe peaceful use of language. By giving the synonyms and antonyms of the word 'peace', their meanings, when and how they could be used, students will be acquainted with peace related vocabulary.

Examples of such are: synonyms of peace such as, *reconciliation, concord, tranquility, serenity, quietness, ease, stillness, rest, harmony, accord, etc.*

Antonyms of peace, their meanings and use could also be learned, e.g., *aversion, bloodshed, confrontation, discord, enmity, fighting, rivalry, tension, abomination, antagonism, conflict, hostility, animosity, disagreement, etc.*

G.) Students could also be exposed to special quotes or expressions on peace such as:

- “If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.”
- Mother Teresa
- “When power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace.”
- Jimi Hendrix
- “Peace begins with a smile.”
- Mother Teresa
- “Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding.”
- Albert Einstein
- “Better than a thousand hollow words, is one word that brings peace”
- Buddha
- “Peace is our gift to each other.”
- Elie Wiesel

These are some of the contents to be taught in ESL classrooms in order to build in students the attitudes and attributes of peace.

Methodology

Since the goal of teaching peace linguistics is to foster peace in any context of language use, the best method of teaching would be communicative/ interactive method. This method presents learning materials in a natural discourse with authentic language examples that promote active engagement in the language learning process through the use of dialogue, discussion, role play, etc. Through these methods, students, particularly in primary and secondary schools, will develop team spirit, tolerance, forbearance, patience, and self-control which could in turn foster peaceful co-existence.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the teaching of Peace Linguistics in ESL classrooms: what can be taught (contents) and how (methodology) in order to foster peace among learners and by extension in the larger society. The language teacher as a peace linguistic applier, according to Gomes de Matos (2014), needs to be concerned with how his language students express their communicative dignity in speaking, writing, or signing; convey communicative harmony during classroom interactions and in online communication, improve their communicative humility by apologizing when being unfair to someone, prevent acts of communicative aggression, use the language peacefully as a communicative- life improving force among others. It is strongly believed that if these peace driving communicative acts could be imbibed by teachers and learners, there would be peace globally.

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