UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI TRIESTE

Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche e Sociali

Per la pace

Percorsi nelle scienze politiche

a cura di
Giulia Caccamo
Giovanni Grandi
Franca Menichetti
Georg Meyr
Moreno Zago

EUT

La promozione di una "cultura di pace" si sostanzia di pratiche sociali, politiche e diplomatiche e coinvolge sul piano della ricerca e della formazione le diverse discipline che si occupano delle scienze politiche. I conflitti, infatti – quali che siano le loro configurazioni e caratteristiche – evidenziano sempre questioni che, per essere affrontate con ampiezza e dovuta profondità, richiedono il coinvolgimento di molteplici campi del sapere.

Per celebrare i cinquant'anni dalla sua fondazione, il Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche e Sociali dell'Università degli Studi di Trieste, attraverso le voci del corpo di docenza e di ricerca afferente, propone una raccolta di scritti pensati per restituire, come in un caleidoscopio, la varietà dei percorsi "per la pace". Dai diversi campi disciplinari emergono prospettive teoriche ed esperienze che, componendosi, creano un racconto corale dell'impegno scientifico e culturale del Dipartimento.

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Indice

Language and literacy for peace: proposals for Italian secondary education

Elizabeth Swain[1]

Language developed out of the need for humans to cooperate for their survival. Indeed, the caveman who understood that to resolve conflicts over resources, dialogue was preferable to clubs, may have been the first diplomat. Ancient diplomatic treaties are amongst the earliest known forms of writing, and attest to the time-honoured role of language in fostering and preserving peaceful relations between individuals, communities, and nations. The growth of citizen diplomacy initiatives today, facilitated by digital communication technologies, means there are increasing spaces in society for ordinary people to advocate for peace and justice. These opportunities, and the threats to peace posed by the hate speech and extremism which feature regularly in our interconnected but increasingly polarized world, are a powerful argument for developing the linguistic and cultural competences for peace as an integral part of the school education of young people. In this short article, a brief overview of relevant trends in the academic literature is followed by some suggestions as to how curricular and extracurricular activities in Italian secondary education could incorporate training in critical awareness and skilful use of language for peace. The paper conceives of language as inseparable from culture and societal values and norms, and values task-based language teaching.

[1] Researcher in Language and Translation - English Language.

A substantial body of literature exists on the role of language in peace and in conflict, variously concerned with diplomatic practice in international affairs, with broader issues of social, political, and economic injustice, and with conflict in everyday conversation. Publicly accessible diplomatic discourse – unclassified or declassified correspondence; speeches; treaties; press conferences and media interviews - has been analysed by researchers in the human sciences and by diplomatic practitioners for salient features such as persuasive rhetoric, the management of emotion, and pragmatic aspects such as ambiguity, politeness and the unsaid (Kurbalija & Slavik 2003). Manuals and textbooks on diplomacy generally devote some space to written diplomatic communication, particularly ritual forms of courtesy, designed to dignify interlocutors, understate any hostility, and soften criticism. A much vaster literature within critical discourse analysis (CDA), going back to the 1970s, is concerned with revealing how language in society encodes inequalities (of class, gender, age and ethnicity) which undermine peace, and with empowering students through critical awareness and language skills to overcome forms of oppression (Fairclough 2014). Interest in the use of language in everyday life to resolve disputes and to challenge and overcome injustice is more recent and comes in two broad forms. One is peace linguistics (PL), an interdisciplinary field which developed from the work of Brazilian linguist Gomes de Matos (2008), and its offshoots "the new peace linguistics"; "communicative peace linguistics" and "applied peace linguistics". The other is positive discourse analysis (PDA) a term coined by Martin (2002) in response to «an apparently pathological disjunction in 20th century social science and humanities research which systematically elides the study of social processes which make the world a better place in favour of a critique of processes which disempower and oppress» (2004: 183-4). PL draws on intercultural communication, language education for peace, conflict resolution studies, and sociolinguistics. PDA by contrast is grounded in systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and proposes the analysis of genre and evaluation in models of positive change and reconciliation.

Both PL and PDA emphasise the significant contribution that language in education can make to peace. As the above literature review shows, this contribution can take various forms. One is learning to respect linguistic diversity as an expression of cultural richness, and to support language policies which promote linguistic equality and respect for minority languages. The Italian state school system supports bilingual schooling in border territories;

the promotion of (twelve) minority languages such as Friulian, Sardinian, and Ladino, and above all, the pioneering content and language integrated learning (CLIL) programmes which have been compulsory in upper secondary school since 2014. Though CLIL conceptualises languages as flexible tools which "convey" meaning and can be adapted to all sociocultural contexts, in practice CLIL entails navigating the different worldviews that shape and are shaped by individual languages. In the process, CLIL develops the intercultural understanding and respect which are key to harmonious relations between diverse communities of speakers. This intercultural understanding can be actively nurtured through task-based learning activities such as the creation of multilingual and multimodal texts highlighting linguistic and cultural differences between languages: Italian and English differ in expressing temporal orientation, aesthetic sensibility, feelings, and other interpersonal features such as hierarchy, formality, and family and community ties, for example. The different worldviews constrained and enabled by language can also be explored in CLIL through scrutiny and practice of parallel translation: as communication across language barriers, translation requires and develops skill in negotiating and resolving differences.

Language in education can contribute to peace in at least two further, complementary ways. One, favoured by PL, is learning how language is used in professional and citizen diplomacy to advocate for peace, negotiate conflict resolution, and build and maintain peaceful relations based on trust and mutual respect. Another, the domain of CDA, is raising awareness of how discourses, particularly of power and authority, reinforce the prejudices, stereotypes, and mistrust on which conflicts feed. In the Italian *licei,* language programmes, particularly English, tend to support the teaching of literature, and in the *scuole professionali* or technical schools, languages are seen as vocational skills (e.g. language for tourism / business / accounting). However, language and other school subject curricula, particularly in the social sciences, can accommodate some of the ideas and analytical tools of PL, PDA and CDA. The compulsory (since 2020) civic education programmes, often collectively taught by instructors from different disciplines, including languages, also offer a space for this, as do optional religious education and extracurricular initiatives such as the increasingly popular Model United Nations and Model European Parliament.

With some basic prior training of language teachers, schools could host the study and practice of genres and genre-specific language deployed in the

service of peace. Language for peace education could be achieved compatibly with the relevant school subject curricula and / or learning objectives (such as developing skills of critical thinking, problem-solving and good communication), building in the process a school culture of peaceful cooperation. Verbal and multimedia texts for potential study include contemporary and historical speeches delivered by inspiring speakers advocating for human rights, social and economic justice, and peace; personal narratives of asylum seekers or members of oppressed communities sharing their stories; letters to local authorities, governments or foreign ministries, or diplomatic press communiqués calling for action to address unjust situations, and verbal and multimodal texts (posters, films, documentaries) used in NGO campaigns supporting human rights causes. Analyses of such texts would focus on rhetorical structure and on the visual and verbal language of empathy and exhortation. Students could apply what they learn from these models in authoring their own texts – simulated or for real use – striving for peaceful resolutions of conflictual issues of the day.

Complementary to the positive emphasis above, is developing awareness of how language, while a vital resource for peace, can also foment or escalate conflict by perpetuating prejudices. An obvious choice for attention in the school context is hate speech, which targets members of minority or vulnerable groups in society and is widespread in online contexts frequented by young people. Another is coverage of armed conflicts in media discourse, and its responsibility in shaping perceptions of conflict. Historical and contemporary examples of hate speech, ranging from forms of wartime propaganda to expressions of racism in election campaigns and football stadiums can be the focus of respectful debates on freedom of speech. Identifying common patterns across different modes of hate speech expression (gestures, sounds, cartoons, memes, jokes etc.), and unpacking and critiquing its presuppositions and often implicit arguments, can inform projects aimed at countering hate speech Verbal and multimodal media texts covering historical and contemporary armed conflicts could be the focus of analysis and editing for bias and for the language of "doublespeak" used to dehumanise the victims and sanitise the brutality of war.

Peace is a value enshrined in the Italian Constitution, and generally embraced by Italian society. Implementing some of the above ideas on language education in the country's secondary schools will not only reinforce this value, but prepare communicators skilled in the ways of peace.

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