USING PEACEFUL LANGUAGE: FROM PRINCIPLES TO PRACTICES

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Contents

Summary

This article aims at showing how the vital concepts of Language and Peace can be integrated and applied in varied contexts of human communicative interaction. A Checklist for self-check/monitoring is also provided and references are given on the author's work in a Brazilian context.

1. Introduction

This text aims at providing an overview of a slowly but steadily emerging dimension of research within the broadly-based Tradition of Peace Studies --- Applied Peace Linguistics --- as conceived and developed by a Brazilian educator with a background in languages, law, and linguistics. After a brief statement of four underlying principles, examples will be given of how to implement such guiding beliefs in four contexts: at home, at school, at work and in diplomacy. Technical terminology will be kept to a minimum and previous background knowledge in Linguistics will not be assumed. In other words, the text will be as lay reader-friendly as possible.

2. Two concepts and their integration

The theoretical foundations for this text can be found in the Traditions of Linguistics and Peace Education, through their respective key concepts: Language and Peace. Accordingly, it is well to start by clarifying the author's views of those two processes and then to show how a conceptual integration can be made for applicational purposes. However, before stating what is meant by language, the question could be raised of what kind of human creatures we are .A mnemonically-based reply (centered on adjectives beginning the with letter C) would be : we are cognitive, communicative,

community-located, (cross) cultural creatures. Such multidimensionality of human beings helps explain both what language is and how such process pervades our communicative existence. By language is meant the complex cognitive or mental system of symbols shared by all human beings everywhere and used for communicating intra and interpersonally through spoken, written or sign languages. That universally shared faculty of language is one of the prerequisites for us to function as language acquirers, language users, and language makers. Thus, each individual's linguistic history starts with childhood language acquisition, followed by life-long communicative development in one or more languages. As humans, we are bio-neuro-psychologically equipped to learn languages and through social interaction to build up our communicative competence. To sum things up : Language is a human cognitive system which enables us to communicate via culture-specific systems called languages.

What about Peace? What kind of process is it? A profound process of humanization, a system of humanizing oneself and others, or in less abstract terms, a system of becoming humanizers , that is, persons imbued with such values as compassion, dignity, human rights, justice, peace, solidarity,(cross)cultural understanding and who apply such ideals in everyday (inter)actions.

2.1. Integrating Language and Peace

Language and Peace have long co-existed as two juxtaposed concepts, and little has been done universally, on a systematic basis, to integrate them, not just theoretically but applicationally. The existence of such conspicuous gap has led this author to devote most of his work to Applications of Linguistics to Peace, since 1993 , the year in which I created the concept-term **communicative peace .** In such spirit, a book in Portuguese was published on a Pedagogy **of Positiveness (Communicating constructively in Portuguese)** in 1996, followed in 2002 by another book, also in Portuguese, on **Communicating for the good, Toward communicative peace .** See References. In both proposals, a case has been made for Peaceful Language/Communication with a focus on the vital agents of language systems: **language users.** In fact, having characterized language as a cognitive activity , it is well to add that human beings are engaged in creative, language-using activities ,or, as I have recently coined, **creaCtivities** .To deeply humanize the language and peace connection ,the phrase Peaceful Language will be used in this text , with the noun **use** left implicit. Thus: **Peaceful Language (Use).**

As human beings, we are language users/makers but to what extent are we also peaceful language users/makers? The former type of linguistic competence is universally shared but the latter, alas, is conspicuously absent from most educational systems, if considered as a systematic program for life-long education of peaceful language users. Most of the author's recent experience in helping educate Brazilians in strategies for using language peacefully took place on the campus of the Federal University of Pernambuco, as an instructor in Peaceful Communication for local military police enrolled in the Community Policing Program at the Center for Applied Social Sciences.

For a recent example of how to relate Peaceful Language Use to the dimension of Conflict Resolution, see Gomes de Matos (2006).

3. Four principles for Peaceful Language Users

In a still-to-be-written   introduction to Applied Peace Linguistics, several principles will be stated so as to characterize the theoretical foundations of such work. Four of such general beliefs will be shared here and corollaries thereof which might prove useful as educational implications for peace educators.

Principle 1

- Be a peaceful language bridgeperson between/among persons, groups, communities. How?
    Several courses of action:
    By viewing and treating conflicts and controversies constructively.
    By convincing others cooperatively, rather than competitively or coercively.
    By contributing to a culture of compassion.

Principle 2

- Dignify your daily dialogue. How?

    By addressing other persons with respectful language and optimistic vocabulary.
    By disagreeing through empathic language, that is, by placing oneself in the other´s shoes.
    By using positivizers (adjectives and verbs which can enhance positive qualities/traits In people)

Principle 3

- Honor humanism and foster humanization. How?
    By avoiding/preventing verbal harm and humiliation
    By applying justice and peace to your communicative acts
    By rephrasing potentially dehumanizing messages, texts

Principle 4

 - Act as a peace patriot at all times. How?
    By perceiving persons as peace partners
    By promoting a passion for peace, especially in aggressive, hostile contexts
    By monitoring your communication for their ethical, moral, social values.
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[The volume aims at filling a gap in Traditions of Pedagogy, by proposing a Positive Pedagogy as applied to listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing. Theoretical principles underlying such Pedagogy of Positiveness are translated into practical applications through several Checklists for self-monitoring. The book follows an interdisciplinary approach and is strongly influenced by Linguistics, Psychology, Education, Human Rights, Peace Education and Communication Theory. There are 3 parts: A Pedagogy of Positiveness and Portuguese Language Usage, A Humanizing Communication, and Positive |Perceptions of Culture, Politics, Television, Science, Tourism, and Advertising.]

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Biographical Sketch

Francisco Gomes de Matos was a Professor of Applied Linguistics, English, and Portuguese at the Department of Letters, Center for Arts and Communication, Federal University of Pernambuco, Recife, Brazil, from which he is now retired. He is also co-founder, past President and Consultant, Associação Brasil América (www.abaweb.org). Was a Visiting Professor at the University of Ottawa, University of Georgia (Athens, Ga), University of Texas, Anthropology Museum (Mexico City) and the Catholic University of São Paulo. Author of several books and many articles in English and Portuguese. A pioneer in the emerging areas of Applied Peace Linguistics and language learners and teachers linguistic and crosscultural rights. Co-founder of Brazilian Linguistics Association and of Brazilian Association for Applied Linguistics. Listed in international biographical volumes. Member of the Dom Hélder Camara Commission for Human Rights, UFPE, Recife. Most recent books: *Comunicar para o bem. Rumo à paz comunicativa* (Communicating for the good. Toward communicative peace), published by Ave Maria, São Paulo,2002 and *Criatividade no Ensino de Inglês.A REsourcebook*, published by DISAL, São Paulo,2004.