Whatever Happened to Peace (Linguistics)?

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Question 1: Whatever Happened to Peace?
On January 3, 2004, in Austin, Texas, the American singer/songwriter Willie Nelson publicly performed for the first time a song titled "Whatever Happened to Peace on Earth?" *(Austin Chronicle)*. The song title refers to the Biblical passage "And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" (Luke 2:14), and the lyrics include the following lines:

"We believe everything that they tell us / They're gonna kill us / So we gotta kill them first / But I remember a commandment / Thou shall not kill / How much is that soldier's life worth? / And whatever happened to peace on Earth?"

The event at which Nelson sang was a benefit concert for the U.S. politician Dennis Kucinich, who was then a Democratic presidential candidate. Although Kucinich was not nominated by the Democratic Party to run for president in 2004, or in 2008, he did propose a Department of Peace (DoP) as a cabinet-level, executive branch of the U.S. Government, and in 2013, he received the Gandhi Peace Award (first given to Eleanor Roosevelt in 1960). As it turns out, in proposing a DoP, Kucinich was following a centuries-old idea, starting with Dr. Benjamin Rush, one of the signatories of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, who in the early 1800s wrote an essay titled "A Plan of a Peace-Office for the United States" (Rush, 1806).

The 1950s and 1960s were an especially appropriate time for proposing a Department of Peace, with no fewer than 85 bills from the Senate and the House of Representatives put forward in just 14 years between 1955 and 1968 calling for the creation of such a department. That raises the question: Whatever happened to the U.S. Department of Peace? The answer is – sadly, but obviously – war.

On July 25, 2017, amidst the chaos and confusion from the White House, the U.S. President proudly boasted: "We've achieved a historic increase in defense spending to get our troops the support they so richly deserve." That statement, like countless others, is not true (Greenberg and Tobias, July 27, 2017). However, more than *600 billion US dollars* has just been approved for *one year* (2017-18) to spend on what is referred to as "defense." And according to the National Priorities Project (which was nominated for the Nobel Peace

Prize in 2014), "The U.S. outpaces all other nations in military expenditures. World military spending totaled more than $1.6 trillion in 2015. The U.S. accounted for 37 percent of the total." The NPP report goes on to note that "U.S. military expenditures are roughly the size of the next seven largest military budgets around the world, *combined"* [emphasis added]. That pretty much kills the idea of a Department of Peace in the U.S. Government. RIP DoP.

Question 2: Whatever Happened to Peace Linguistics? In a recent article "Back from the Battlefield: Resurrecting Peace Linguistics," (Curtis, 2017), I report on a search of some 400 papers published in two of the key journals in Peace Education and Peace Studies, published between 2004 and 2017, and between 1996 and 2016, respectively, with approximately 200 papers published in each of the journals over their 13 years and 20 years, respectively. Given more than three decades' worth of publishing, and so many hundreds of articles, I was very surprised to find a conspicuous

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absence of papers focused on language and/or linguistics – fewer than 20 in 400. In Curtis (2017), I also report on the creation and presentation of what appears to be the first Peace Linguistics (PL) course of its kind taught anywhere in the world. That seems unlikely, but so far, we have not found a comparable course, i.e., a credit-bearing, degree-level PL course taught at a university.

In Curtis (2017), I also note that David Crystal, in 1999, described Peace Linguistics as "an approach which emerged in the 1990s among many linguists and language teachers in which linguistic principles, methods, findings, and applications were seen as a means of promoting peace and human rights at a global level. It emphasized the value of linguistic diversity and multilingualism" (in de Matos, 2014. p. 415). However, apart from the work of Gomes de Matos (2005), Friedrich (2007), and a few others, Crystal's reference to "many linguists and language teachers" working on PL appears not to have been the case, as my review of around 400 articles showed.

In thinking about what may have happened to PL, and why hundreds of articles on Peace Education and Peace Studies, published over decades, made little or no reference to language or linguistics, I thought that "one possible reason may be the compartmentalization of knowledge on which academic institutions are built. In such arrangements, sometimes referred to as 'silos,' peace educators research, write, publish, and present on PE, while applied linguists research, write, publish, and present on applied linguistics, thereby 'siloizing' the work in these disciplinary areas of academic endeavor" (Curtis, 2017, p. 23). However, if the reason for the conspicuous absence of papers focused on language or linguistics was some sort of an academic "silo" effect, perhaps as a result of a publish-or-perish mentality, then work on PL would still have been published in the key journals in ELT, even if the key journals in Peace Education and Peace Studies were not publishing such articles.

To test this theory, I carried out an online search of the 1,500-plus articles published in the *ELTJ*, one of the most prestigious and longest established journals in our field, published continuously for more than 70 years, with the first issue of the first volume coming out in October 1946. The search-word "peace" produced 15 hits, and although one in 1,000 is a very small proportion, just one of those 15 hits was an article with "peace" in the title – and that turned out to be a book review of *Language, Negotiation and Peace: The Use of English in Conflict Resolution* (2007) by Patricia Friedrich (Solly, 2011). It may be worth noting that a number of the other 15 hits included the *ELTJ* editors wishing their readers "a very happy, healthy, and peaceful 2008" (*ELTJ,* 2008, p. 2), which was somewhat "downgraded" five years later, when the *ELTJ* editors wished their readers just "a happy and peaceful 2013" (*ELTJ*, 2013, p. 2). This kind of search is, of course, fairly crude, but as the good wishes from the editors show, the search, carried out using the publisher's search engine (Oxford University Press), did not only look at the titles of the articles, but at the text of each article as well.

This search of *ELTJ* articles, combined with the reviews

of the 400 or so articles in the *Journal of Peace Education* and *The International Journal of Peace Studies,* confirms that, in spite of Crystal's statement in 1999, Peace Linguistics does not in fact appear to have been "an approach which emerged in the 1990s," and it has not been used by "many linguists and language teachers." If that is indeed the case, then let us hope that, this time around, Peace Linguistics will catch on, because if there is one thing that our bruised and battered world needs right now, it is less war and more peace, to which PL has the potential to make some major contributions.

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