Evaluating an English Language Teaching Program in terms of Peace Education

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Abstract

The present study aimed to evaluate the new English Language Teaching Program (ELTP) of the 12th grade in Turkey in terms of peace education. It was designed as qualitative research. The new ELTP of the 12th grade was used to collect data. The data were analyzed through document analysis. The findings indicated that the new ELTP was integrated with peace education in its nine units through the themes, target language functions, and learning objectives of the units. The findings also showed that the new ELTP could teach students personal peace, peace with the human family, and peace with nature. The findings were discussed in light of the literature.

Keywords: Peace education, ELTP, Curriculum evaluation, Secondary education and Turkey

Introduction

People around the world experience and encounter different types of violence and conflicts stemming from several reasons. Gender (Borg & Grech 2014; Manojlovic 2018 and Snauwaert, 2019), religion (Billings Chilcoat 2017; Borg & Grech, 2014 and Manojlovic 2018), ethnicity or racism (Billings Chilcoat, 2017; Borg & Grech, 2014; Buck, 2016; Costa & Ivenicki, 2016; Harris, 2004; Manojlovic, 2018; Ooko, Muthomi, & Odhiambo, 2015; Ubogu, 2016 and Verma, 2017), color (Manojlovic, 2018), language (Manojlovic, 2018), oppression (Verma, 2017), militarism (Snauwaert, 2019), terrorism (Agnihotri, 2017), extremism (Manojlovic, 2018), stereotypes (Agnihotri, 2017; Costa & Ivenicki, 2016), prejudices (Agnihotri, 2017 and Costa & Ivenicki, 2016) and sexuality (Borg & Grech, 2014 and Harris, 2004) may lead to violence and conflicts among people. Such violence and conflicts may create asymmetrical power relations in society (Bajaj, 2015 and Borg & Grech, 2014), social and economical disparities and inequalities (Agnihotri, 2017 and Bajaj, 2015), genocide (Harris, 2004), marginalized or disadvantaged groups (Bajaj, 2015 and Verma, 2017) and ecocide (Harris, 2004). As seen, violence and conflicts may influence people physically, politically, psychologically, economically, and ecologically in a negative way (Agnihotri, 2017; Bajaj, 2015; Borg & Grech, 2014; Ghaith & Shaaban, 1994 and Verma, 2017) at interpersonal, national, and international levels (Ghaith & Shaaban, 1994) in addition to personal, social and environmental levels (Agnihotri, 2017). One way to respond to the forms of violence and their negative effects is peace education (Bajaj, 2015; Harris, 2004; Snauwaert, 2019 and Ubogu, 2016). Therefore, it is significant to understand what peace education means.

Different researchers have defined peace education similarly. For example, according to Fountain (1999) peace education is

… the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behavior changes that will enable children, youth, and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural, to resolve conflict peacefully, and to create conditions conducive to peace weather at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national and international level. (p. 1)

Besides Fountain (1999), Manojlovic (2018) defined it as educating students to manage conflicts and violence through learning skills and concepts such as human rights and protection of the environment. Ubogu (2016) stated that it is teaching people to acquire the knowledge, values, and skills required to live in harmony and synchrony with other people and nature. Also, Polat, Arslan, and Günçavdı (2016) explained it as an instructional process where students are taught peaceful problem-solving skills.

Peace education can be given in three ways considering the reasons and effects of violence and conflicts: personal peace, peace with the human family, and peace with nature (Agnihotri, 2017; Gebregeorgis, 2017 and Renner, 1991). Personal peace is related to a person's peace with his/her body, heart, and mind and peace with the human family includes respecting and promoting human rights, considering economic and political well-being of everybody, resolving conflicts peacefully, and promoting justice (Agnihotri, 2017; Gebregeorgis, 2017 and Renner, 1991). Peace with nature promotes environmental consciousness, sustainability, and security (Agnihotri, 2017; Gebregeorgis, 2017; Norris, 2016 and Renner, 1991).

Considering the reasons and effects of violence and conflicts, the definitions of peace education, and the types of peace education, peace education is defined in this research as teaching students at different ages how to live in peace and harmony with themselves, other people (around them or in their societies, their countries, and other countries) and other living and non-living beings in nature by helping them to learn the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for them to reach and resolve conflicts and violence peacefully.

As seen, peace education is very important for each society on the world (Fountain, 1999) as it can contribute to the struggle for social justice

(Borg & Grech, 2014 and Snauwaert, 2019), human rights (Snauwaert, 2019), genuine peace (Borg & Grech, 2014) and honoring human dignity equally through the inclusion of people socially, morally and politically (Snauwaert, 2019). Therefore, it should not be considered as a different subject in the curriculum (Fountain, 1999). It can be integrated with other subjects such as language teaching. Language teaching, including English language teaching (ELT), can contribute to peace education since languages can cause conflicts (Manojlovic, 2018). Still, language teaching can help students to understand the speakers of other languages better, so they can deal with conflicts resulting from languages peacefully (Fountain, 1999).

Different researchers (e.g., Abid, 2016; Finch, 2004; Kruger, 2012; Natarajan, 2018; Renner, 1991; Sun, 2017; Şahin, 2011; Takkaç Tulgar, 2017; Vandrick, 1996; Yphantides, 2010 and Yusuf, 2011) in their conceptual papers stated that ELT could be used as a means for peace education. They explained how peace education can be integrated with reading classes (Yusuf, 2011), how an English language teacher can promote peace education in his/her classes (Abid, 2016; Şahin, 2011 and Yusuf, 2011), how different authentic materials can be used to promote critical thinking and reading (Sun, 2017 and Vandrick, 1996), and how an English language course for peace education can be designed (Yphantides, 2010). As seen, the conceptual papers only include the suggestions of the researchers about how peace education and ELT can be integrated. Also, some studies researched different aspects of ELT and peace education including contextualizing and teaching English grammar through peace education (Arikan, 2009), using English as a peace-making process with student English language teachers (Carmel & Yochanna, 2018 and Chowdbury, 2013), evaluating a local English language course book in terms of peace education (Gebregeorgis, 2017), using memory artifacts as a tool for peace education (Gutiérrez et al., 2020), and training teacher candidates for peace education (Mirici, 2008) in the literature. These studies have two limitations: (a) having been made generally with university students (Arikan, 2009; Carmel & Yochanna, 2018; Chowdbury, 2013 and Mirici, 2008) and (b) having focused on

the integration of peace education with the specific aspects of ELT such as teaching grammar (Arikan, 2009), ELT course books (Gebregeorgis, 2017), and using English memory artifacts (Gutiérrez et al., 2020). Consequently, the conceptual papers and the research studies have not dealt with how ELT and peace education can be integrated in an English language teaching program or curriculum. Besides, the ELT curriculum evaluation studies made in the national and international sphere have evaluated ELT curricula or programs not in terms of peace education, but in terms of English language teachers' and students' opinions (Çelik & Büyükalan Filiz, 2018 and Merter, Kartal & Çağlar, 2012), English language teachers' places in the program/curriculum (Alnefaie, 2016; Banegas, 2011 and El-Okda, 2005), need analysis for ELT program/curriculum development (Kaewpet, 2009 and Watanabe, 2006), and English language teachers' and students' perceptions (Nam, 2005) about the ELT curriculum/program. Therefore, the present study aimed to evaluate the new English Language Teaching Program (ELTP) of Turkey for secondary education in terms of peace education. Due to space limitation, a part of the new ELTP (i.e., the new ELTP of the 12th grade) was evaluated for this purpose. The present study tried to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a unit related to peace education in the new ELTP of the 12th grade?
2. What is/are language function(s) related to peace education in the new ELTP for the 12th grade?
3. What is/are the objective(s) related to peace education in the new ELTP of the 12th grade?

Methodology
Research Design
The present study was designed as a qualitative study because qualitative research could help the researcher to explore the issue (i.e., whether peace education is integrated with the new ELTP of the 12th grade and if so, how it is integrated) by having a detailed and complex understanding of it as Creswell (2007) emphasized.

Research Context
English is the most commonly taught foreign language in basic, secondary, and higher education in Turkey. In basic and secondary education, English language teaching is organized according to the English language teaching programs designed and developed by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). English language course books are designed and developed according to the English language teaching programs of the MoNE.

Data Collection Tool
The data was collected from Ortaöğretim İngilizce Dersi (9, 10, 11 ve 12. Sınıflar) Öğretim Programı [Secondary Education (9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Grades) English Language Teaching Program] prepared by the MoNE in 2018.

Data Analysis
The data were analyzed through document analysis. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2013) suggested a four-step framework for document analysis. The researcher followed this framework in which he (a) first downloaded document was original from the official website of the MoNE, (b) second ensured that it was original because of this, (c) could understand the document because of his 10-year teaching experience and familiarity with the document as he has been conducting different studies on the document, and (d) analyzed the new ELTP of the 12th grade according to the codes derived from the document and related to peace education.

For the trustworthiness of the document analysis, one of the colleagues of the researcher who has a Ph.D. degree in ELT and has carried out several qualitative studies related to ELT also document analyzed the new ELTP of the 12th grade. Then, the researcher and his colleague compared their document analyses, talked about the similarities and differences between their document analyses, and reached a consensus on the differences between their analyses.

Results
The results of the study were presented according to the codes derived from the new ELTP of the 12th grade by the definition of peace education: peace

with the human family, personal peace, and peace with nature.

Peace with the Human Family

Eight units in the new ELTP of the 12th grade are related to peace with the human family. Five units out of these eight units are directly related to peace with the human family owing to their themes and target language functions. In comparison, three units are related to peace with the human family because of their target language functions. Therefore, eight units are categorized as group 1 (which is directly related to peace with the human family due to themes and target language functions) and group 2 (which is related to peace with the human family owing to target language functions).

One of these units in group 1 is unit 2, whose theme is based on friendship. Its target language functions are describing personal features, making conclusions about people depending on their features, and stating reasons for the conclusions made. The listening, speaking, reading, and writing objectives are closely related to the theme and target language functions. In this unit, students can infer the qualities of a good friend in a recorded text. They can ask and answer questions about the features of people and give reasons while describing people's appearances. They can identify irrelevant content about descriptions of different people in a text. They can write a paragraph about the features of a good friend and express their reasons for the features they choose.

Another unit in group 1 is unit 3, which is about human rights. Expressing ideas on, making suggestions about, and discussing problems related to human rights are the target language functions of this unit. Students are expected to meet several learning objectives related to the theme and target language functions of the unit in terms of reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Students can learn the meanings of words about human rights from oral texts and identify positive and negative expressions about human rights. They can talk about human rights, make suggestions to improve them and discuss the problems disabled people have. They can choose supporting ideas in a reading text about good practices on human rights and match the paragraphs with the words and pictures related to gender equality, children's rights, and animal rights. They can write slogans about human rights and an essay about disabled people's problems by offering solutions.

Unit 5 is one of the units directly related to peace with the human family. Its theme is based on psychology, and its target language functions are describing mood and making suggestions to change a negative mood. The learning objectives of the unit are related to the theme and target language functions tightly. Students can listen, write down suggestions made by a psychologist/friend to change the mood, and recognize the tone and mood of a speaker. They can role-play a dialogue between a client and psychologist, comment on moods, and use their voice in different levels in giving and following instructions in various moods. They can write about their mood and the mood reflected in a song or photograph.

One of the units in group 1 is unit 6, which is contextualized based on favors. Making, accepting, and declining requests are practiced in addition to asking for and responding to favors as target language functions. Unit 6 has several learning objectives related to its theme and target language functions. Students can listen and complete dialogue about favors. They can recognize formal and informal language while they accept and refute requests. They can read and find specific information in a reading text about a charity organization. They can invite people to a charity organization by writing an announcement. They can apply to an organization for the scholarship by writing an application letter.

The last unit in group 1 is unit 10, which is about manners and aims to teach talking about wishes and regrets, apologizing, and giving explanations as target language functions. Its learning objectives are closely connected to its theme and target language functions. Students can listen, recognize the vocabulary related to wishes, regrets, and apologies, and categorize the manners in a program. They can explain their wishes, regrets, and apologies and talk about manners in different cultures in a discussion. They can write about wishes, regrets, and apologies in a letter or note. They write, describe, and detail experiences, feelings, and events related to a topic.

As mentioned, there are three units in group 2. Unit 1, which is about music, is the first of these three units. What relates it to peace with the human family is its target language functions, which are expressing opinions and preferences. There is a close connection between target language functions and learning objectives in this unit. Students can share their ideas about their music preferences and agree or disagree with other people by giving their opinions. They can read about people's ideas about music and infer their music preferences from their ideas. They can survey their friends' music preferences and write their results.

Unit 4 is the second unit in group 2 and is about coming soon. In this unit, making predictions and talking about certainty and uncertainty in the future are studied as language functions. As learning objectives, students are expected to talk about their predictions and plans in the future and join an informal debate in addition to identifying the vocabulary related to cyber rights.

The last unit in group 2 is unit 9, which is based on technology. It aims to teach talking about things needed to be done and taking part in interviews as target language functions. As learning objectives, students can share their ideas and feelings about technological devices with each other and interview each other about how technology affects social life.

Personal Peace

Among the ten units of the new ELTP of the 12th grade, two units are related to both personal peace and peace with the human family because of their themes, target language functions, and learning objectives. One of these units is unit 5. As mentioned above, psychology is its theme, and describing mood and making suggestions to change negative moods are studied as target language functions about this theme. Students are expected to note down suggestions by a psychologist/friend to change the mood and identify the tone and mood of a speaker in oral texts. They are supposed to participate in a role-play activity between a client and psychologist, make comments on moods, and use their voice at different levels when they give and follow instructions in various moods. They are also expected to write about their mood and the mood reflected in a song or photograph. These learning objectives can contribute to students' peace with themselves because they can help students to recognize their moods and change their negative moods by using the suggestions in the oral and reading texts or the ones they make.

The other unit is unit 10. Its theme is based on manners and talking about wishes and regrets, apologizing, and giving explanations are connected to this theme and included as target language functions. At the end of the unit, students are supposed to identify the vocabulary about wishes, regrets, and apologies, and categorize the manners in a program in oral texts. They are expected to explain their wishes, regrets, and apologies and talk about manners in different cultures in a discussion. They are also supposed to write about wishes, regrets, and apologies in a letter or note besides writing a detailed description of experiences, feelings, and events related to a topic. These learning objectives can help students to build their peace as students can know themselves better by realizing and expressing their manners.

Peace with Nature

Among ten units in the new ELTP of the 12th grade, unit 8 is related to peace with nature as it is contextualized based on alternative energy. In this unit, how to describe environmental problems, offer solutions to them, and make complaints about them are studied as the target language functions. The reading, speaking, writing, and listening learning objectives that students are expected to meet in unit 8 are related to the theme and target language functions tightly. Students can listen and note different solutions to the issues caused by excessive energy consumption. They can complain about different environmental/energy problems and offer solutions to them. They can join an informal debate about the future use of alternative energy. They can write a summary of a text about alternative energy and find out solutions to environmental problems in another text. They can offer solutions to an environmental problem by writing an email to local authorities and express their ideas about the use of alternative energy by writing a paragraph.

Results

Different researchers (e.g., Abid, 2016; Finch, 2004; Kruger, 2012; Natarajan, 2018; Renner, 1991; Sun, 2017; Şahin, 2011; Takkaç Tulgar, 2017; Vandrick, 1996; Yphantides, 2010 and Yusuf, 2011) have mentioned that peace education can be integrated with ELT, so ELT can help students to become and grow up as peaceful people who are in peace with themselves, the human family and nature. The findings of the present study show that this purpose of peace education has been achieved in the new ELTP of the 12th grade by integrating peace education with ELT in an ELTP in terms of themes, target language functions, and learning objectives, which has not been researched in the studies related to peace education and ELT (Arikan, 2009; Carmel & Yochanna, 2018; Chowdbury, 2013; Gebregeorgis, 2017; Gutiérrez et al., 2020 and Mirici, 2008) and ELT curriculum/program evaluation (Alnefaie, 2016; Banegas, 2011; Çelik & Büyükalan Filiz, 2018; El-Okda, 2005; Kaewpet, 2009; Merter et al., 2012; Nam, 2005 and Watanabe, 2006) in the literature.

According to the findings of the study, themes play a certain role in integrating peace education with ELT in the new ELTP of the 12th grades. The chosen themes in the new ELTP are based on the concepts such as human rights which is related to peace with the human family (Agnihotri, 2017; Gebregeorgis, 2017; Renner, 1991 and Snauwaert, 2019) and alternative energy that is related to peace with nature (Agnihotri, 2017; Gebregeorgis, 2017; Norris, 2016 and Renner, 1991). Such themes can provide students with the background information about different issues that may risk the peace and create conflicts, so such themes can serve as a tool to raise students' awareness of any issues such as the violation of human rights and environmental problems. Thus, this awareness-raising can help students to understand the negative physical, political, psychological, economic, and ecological influences of such issues on people (Agnihotri, 2017; Bajaj, 2015; Borg & Grech, 2014; Ghaith & Shaaban, 1994 and Verma, 2017) at interpersonal, national, and international levels (Ghaith & Shaaban, 1994) in addition to personal, social and environmental levels (Agnihotri, 2017).

As the findings of the study indicate, peace education and ELT are integrated through target language functions in the new ELTP of the 12th grade. The target language functions in the new ELTP focus on and require communication and interaction between people in all of the units related to peace education in addition to the ones between people and nature because of the theoretical framework of the new ELTP of the 12th grade is based on the communicative approach. The target language functions such as expressing opinions and preferences in unit 1 and expressing ideas on, making suggestions about, and discussing problems related to human rights in unit 3 can be used as tools to demonstrate students how people can express their opinions or ideas about something, make suggestions, and discuss problems with other people peacefully by avoiding conflicts and violence as supported by the literature (Agnihotri, 2017; Bajaj, 2015; Borg & Grech, 2014; Fountain 1999; Ghaith & Shaaban, 1994; Manojlovic, 2018; Polat et al., 2016; Snauwaert, 2019; Ubogu, 2016 and Verma, 2017). Therefore, the target language functions in the new ELTP can help students to learn the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for managing conflicts and violence and resolving conflicts in a peaceful way as mentioned in the literature (Fountain 1999; Manojlovic, 2018; Polat et al., 2016 and Ubogu, 2016).

The findings of the study also point out that the learning objectives of the units in the new ELTP of the 12th grade are closely and tightly related to the themes and target language functions, so they also contribute to the integration of peace education and ELT in the new ELTP. This close relationship of learning objectives with themes and target language functions can help students to learn the knowledge, skills, and values of peace education by studying and practicing the themes and target language functions through different listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities that are prepared according to learning objectives. In this way, students can learn more about concepts such as human rights, friendship, and alternative energy about peace and about how to express their opinions, ideas, suggestions, and reasons for their explanations in a conversation or dialogue in a peaceful way. Thus, the learning

objectives of the new ELTP can enable students to build peace with themselves, the human family, and nature, which is the purpose of peace education (Agnihotri, 2017; Fountain 1999; Gebregeorgis, 2017; Manojlovic, 2018; Norris, 2016; Polat et al., 2016; Renner, 1991 and Ubogu, 2016).

Conclusion

The present study has indicated that peace education and ELT are integrated through themes, target language functions, and learning objectives in the new ELTP of the 12th grades. It has also shown that this integration is supported by the close relationship between themes, target language functions, and learning objectives in the new ELTP. Therefore, the new ELTP of the 12th grade can teach students personal peace, peace with the human family, and peace with nature so that students can contribute to the peaceful prevention and resolution of the conflicts and violence in their society.

The present study is limited to a country and a specific ELTP of a specific level. Further studies can be made with ELTPs prepared for different grades and different purposes in other countries so that a better understanding of how peace education and ELT can be integrated can be obtained. Besides, the strengths and weaknesses of different ELTPs can be identified in terms of peace education, and ELTPs can be improved in terms of peace education by overcoming their weaknesses.

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