

Promoting Peace Education via Language Teaching

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Abstract

Today, many children around the world increasingly face violence and bullying in their schools. There are different approaches globally to prevent and resolve this issue. One of them is peace education. Peace education aims to cultivate and bring up in children different skills, attitudes and values such as listening, tolerance, empathy, non-violent behavior, responsibility, proactivity, understanding and respect for different cultures. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between peace education and language teaching in the classroom. The researcher collected the data by conducting a pedagogical experiment, pre-test, post-test and statistical analysis. An important finding of this study is that it is hard to determine the effectiveness of peace education in the English language classroom. Meanwhile, it was found that peace education is conducive to a friendly atmosphere in the English language classroom. Children study with an interest and their cooperation is on a high level. Furthermore, it is implied that more education materials should be devised for young English learners by the educators and experts specializing in peace education. The results discussed in this paper can be of practical value to teachers and parents of young children; to higher education institutions focusing on violence and bullying prevention; to educators specializing in peace building and education in general.

Keywords: peace education, English as a foreign language, childhood education.

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Published by Kazan federal university and peer-reviewed under responsibility of IFTE-2020 (VI International Forum on Teacher Education)

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Introduction

Today, it is very common when there is a degree of violence and bullying in schools. Children often misbehave and do not listen to their teachers. It happens in different schools from private to public ones. Thus, children need to be taught values such as empathy, understanding toward others, responsibility, listening and other conflict resolution skills. Having these values and learning them at early ages is very important and realized by many. Not always teachers know how to deal with violence and approach such incidents in an effective manner. Thus, it becomes necessary for teachers to learn how to address it within different educational settings and subject fields.

In Russia English programs have been implemented for children of different ages. New bilingual and multilingual schools have been opened. In some of these schools all education is in English. Such schools are not many but still they happen to exist. Learning new methods of teaching English has gained a practical significance in these schools. Teachers have been trained in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and other programs for teaching English as a second or foreign language.

Teaching English to children can include different methods. Among these methods are songs, flashcards, storytelling, educational games and others. All these methods are also relevant to peace education programs. They can be used to teach children different values and attitudes conducive to peace. Peace education aims to model and practice a peaceful audience and healthy dynamics in the group. It also encourages students to be reflective and open-minded. Peace education enhances children imagination, creativity and problem-solving capabilities.

Peace education programs nowadays are implemented in the United States, Europe, Africa and other world's continents. It was originated in the United States but these days is prevalent in different other forms also in other countries.

This study is relevant as it focuses on the ways of teaching a language can promote a culture of peace in the classroom. It examines children's learning experiences in the English language classroom focusing on peace education related activities.

Purpose and objectives of the study

Research (Andriamiseza 2010; Kruger 2012; Hashmi 2014; Tulgar 2017) conducted on teaching the peace education program in the English language classroom exist in the literature; however, there is still

not sufficient data which focuses on the ways of teaching a language can promote a culture of peace in the classroom.

One of the purposes of this study was to fill the gap in the literature by investigating the effects of the peace education program on children in the English language classroom. Furthermore, the aim was to investigate children's experiences as they participated in this program.

Literature review

The literature review of this study introduces the theoretical background and the importance of peace education programs. The research conducted about the effect of peace education is reviewed.

According to UNICEF (2018) about 150 students globally face violence in their schools. Researchers state that violence has been shaped in the minds of men for decades (Suvorova, 2008). Conflicts have also been between different groups and cultures (Gross, 2017). Thus, it is argued for the necessity to eradicate this culture of violence (Diaz & Karpava, 2015).

Galtung (1969) determines peace education as an absence of violence. Mishra (2015) stresses that peace education promotes the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that are capable to change behaviour and end violence. It is also argued that peace education can specifically teach to be tolerant toward different opinions and listen to a different point of view (Litvynovich, 2017). Peace education rejects the need to respond to difference by force (Kannan, 2017). It can also teach critical thinking skills, responsibility and proactivity (Smirnova, 2017). Peace education promotes new attitudes and skills in non-violent behaviour and conflict resolution (Adetoro, 2015). Studies reveal that it becomes a priority to build people's humanness by cultural values and traditions of the people (Rychshanova, 2018).

Litvynovich (2017) argues that peace education concepts and values become especially important during globalization processes when the youth needs to be educated how to communicate and collaborate with people of different nationalities. It is also suggested that globalization broadens cultural diversity (Mukhamadeeva, 2014). Becoming globally dependent puts at risk humanity to violence (Bombardelli, 2017). Therefore, people need a new paradigm: a culture of peace. The latter offers a dialogue for different cultures and their productive cooperation (Litvynovich, 2014). According to Setiadi et al. (2017), this need to live together in peace is critical.

Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative method. An empirical study was conducted on the basis of primary school in Kazan (Republic of Tatarstan, Russia). The sample was 12 preschool children who were five and six years

old. For these children Russian or Tatar was their mother tongue. In the study a pre-test and post-test were adopted by the researcher. During the eight-week period, peace education activities were implemented in the group. After an eight-week period, children were administered a post-test by the researcher.

Experiment description and procedure

All children took part in the formative assessment, a pre-test by the researcher. The pedagogical experiment was carried out in three stages:

- 1) at the first stage of the experiment, there were identified the present values in the whole group;
- 2) at the second stage of the experiment, there were implemented the peace education activities for the whole group;
- 3) at the final stage of the experiment, there were identified the dynamics of changes in the values, and there was tested the effectiveness of the peace education program on children.

As a pre-test and post-test, the researcher used 8 tasks in English. Children were asked to look and tick the pictures in accordance with the planned lessons' content. 8 values were presented: greeting people, play respectfully, be kind to others, at other people's homes, take care in the park, be kind to animals, take care at schools, share with others.

During the eight-week period, English texts and educational games were taught to the group. All material was related to peace education. These lessons were done twice a week.

After the eight-week period, children were given the same test, 8 tasks in English, as a post-test by the researcher. The results of the two tests were compared to see whether the peace education program contributed to the learning of children.

Results

During the experiment, the peace education program was implemented in teaching children English as a foreign language. An important component of the peace education program is the teaching children the values that are conducive to peace. The values such as empathy, listening, understanding toward others, responsibility and other conflict resolution skills. Various tasks introduced during the experiment. This experiment conducted on the basis of primary school in Kazan could not prove whether peace education program can be effective in the English language classroom. The researcher found no significant difference

between a pre-test and post-test in terms of the children performance. Pre-test resulted in a high-performance score for most of the tasks. It was only difficult for children to do the task number 5 (“how to take care in the park”). In the first task - 12 right answers. In the second task - 11 right answers. In the third task - 10 right answers. In the fourth task - 10 right answers. In the fifth task - 9 right answers. In the sixth task - 11 right answers. In the seventh task - 10 right answers. In the eighth task - 10 right answers. Post-test resulted in a non-significant difference between the group’s initial score and the final score. In the first task - 12 right answers. In the second task - 12 right answers. In the third task - 11 right answers. In the fourth task - 10 right answers. In the fifth task - 10 right answers. In the sixth task - 11 right answers. In the seventh task - 11 right answers. In the eighth task - 11 right answers. In the tasks number 2 (“play respectfully”), 3 (“be kind to others”), 5 (“take care in the park”), 7 (“take care at school”) and 8 (“share with others”) the results were with a slight improvement.

At the same time, it can be argued that a general atmosphere in the class during and after the experiment was friendly, the children were eager to participate in the activities and cooperate with each other. They were happy during the process and with interest completed all the tasks.

The results of the study are given in the Table 1.

Table 1. The total number of correct children answers before and after the experiment

| Experiment | 1 task (Greeting people) | 2 task (Play respect- fully) | 3 task (Be kind to others) | 4 task (At other people’s homes) | 5 task (Take care in the park) | 6 task (Be kind to animals) | 7 task (Take care at school) | 8 task (Share with others) |
|------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Pre-test | 12 right answers (100 %) | 11 right answers (91.6 %) | 10 right answers (83.3 %) | 10 right answers (83.3 %) | 9 right answers (75 %) | 11 right answers (91.6 %) | 10 right answers (83.3 %) | 10 right answers (83.3 %) |
| Post-test | 12 right answers (100 %) | 12 right answers (100 %) | 11 right answers (91.6 %) | 10 right answers (83.3 %) | 10 right answers (83.3 %) | 11 right answers (91.6 %) | 11 right answers (91.6 %) | 11 right answers (91.6 %) |

Discussions

As a result of introducing the peace education program into the educational process, there were identified no significant different changes in the tasks performance for the group in the English language classroom. Only a few tasks were performed with slight improvements. In the meantime, there was revealed in a

majority of the children in this study a desire to participate in the given activities by the researcher. The children were eager to cooperate with others in a friendly and peaceful environment. They helped each other during the lessons. They actively played the games and performed the reading, writing, listening and speaking tasks. Thus, during these lessons children might have a positive experience with their peers that has a lasting impact on their attitude and behavior. They learn how to interact with each other in a positive manner. They are also eager to share with one another. The whole process might motivate children to learn and engage better in the given activities.

The study presented is a quantitative. For further research a qualitative study including interviews with teachers may be done to investigate their readiness to implement peace education programs in the English language classrooms. Furthermore, it might be done to see teachers' approaches on the implementation of such programs. These approaches might differ from one teacher to another.

Different groups may be included in the future study as a control and experimental group to compare the results. Moreover, this research may be done in more than one school to increase the sample size. In addition, longitudinal study for at least two years may be done to see the real effect of such programs on children.

Conclusion

In this study, the researcher examined the effectiveness of peace education in the English language classroom. The attempt was to identify the different approaches conducive to a culture of peace. The experiment did not prove whether the peace education program can be effective in the English language classroom. During the experiment, it was not found that in children the results were much higher at the end of the experiment compared to the initial stage of the experiment. At the same time, children began to actively engage in the activities, were eager to cooperate with their peers. The general atmosphere in the classroom was peaceful. Creation of such conditions conducive to a peaceful environment in the classroom is important. Therefore, for education it is necessary to support peace education programs. There is the need to create the opportunities for all children to live and study in a peaceful environment. A peaceful and safe environment is step one in supporting learning for children. Children should be able to learn in the environment that engages them in a meaningful learning opposed to the environment of violence and aggression. This will also make it possible to eradicate or diminish the violence incidents for these children in the future where they will themselves choose peace opposed to aggression. They will be able to model this culture of peace for others.

In this respect, children should also be provided with appropriate knowledge and skills that will allow them to be good citizens of this world. It is important in order to eradicate violence and aggressive behavior. Children need to distinguish between violence and peace and realize that it is possible to leave in peace with others.

There is also the need for schools to get on board with educating children the peace education values by investing time and resources in their teachers. Teachers are very important in the whole educational process as they interact with children more than others. Thus, teachers are at the frontline of their schools and can act as the agents of change for the children they teach and for the school as a whole. As teachers and educators, there is the need for them to devise more peace education materials for children. Teachers and educators ought to develop a pedagogy in all subjects including the English language classroom that will teach in children compassion, non-violence, empathy, responsibility, listening, understanding toward others and other conflict resolution skills. This process means that children should be empowered with all necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes. Teachers should model it for students and acknowledge their responsibility to the future humanity. In this best possible case there can be enduring peace which is an important prerequisite for children to learn and grow as capable individuals from one generation to the next.

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