

Hayhoe, R. (2015). Review of the books *The language of peace: Communicating to create harmony*, by Rebecca L. Oxford, and *Understanding peace cultures*, edited by Rebecca L. Oxford. *Comparative Education Review*, 59(2), pp. 357-358.

Comparative education and peace studies have long been linked by virtue of their concern with social issues of global importance. When efforts of progressive educators to form an educational body within the League of Nations failed after World War 1, they went on to found the International Bureau of Education (IBE): an independent professional organization whose goals included the enhancement of education for international understanding and peace. Spanish comparative educator Pedro Rossello, who served as vice-director, once made the poignant comment that the yearly budget of the IBE of Geneva amounted only to the price of a few dozen machine guns and that if each state contributed to the bureau the cost of one of its tanks, the efficiency of that institution could be increased a hundredfold. With the founding of UNESCO in 1947 came the classic statement “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences [*sic*] of peace must be constructed.” The efforts of comparative education scholars in the Peace Education SIG of CIES since its founding in 2005 carry forward this vision, and the two volumes discussed in this review make a substantive contribution.

In *The Language of Peace*, Rebecca Oxford draws upon the fields of linguistics and critical discourse analysis to examine a wide range of literature related to issues of peace, war and conflict resolution with a special emphasis on the selection of words, their connotations and the transformative possibilities of speech and naming. Each chapter has a lengthy set of references as well as suggested activities for experimenting with the language of peace and experiencing its transformative potential.

One of the highlights of this book is an extensive discussion of the work of Johann Galtung, from his early definition of structural violence in the “structural theory of imperialism” through subsequent refinements of his theories. As the founder of peace studies in the 1970s and as an active member of the World Order Models Project, Galtung provided a critical yet flexible framework for international engagement long before the end of the Cold War, bridging the deep divide between Marxist historical materialism and the dominant tradition of realism in the capitalist West. In Chapter Four of this volume, Oxford shows how instrumental this has been in dealing with and transforming different types of violence, while she also expresses some critical reserve on Galtung’s work from a gender perspective.

A second highlight is the application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to Martin Luther King’s “I have a Dream” speech, which opens up rich insights into many dimensions of this iconic historical speech event. Most of us are familiar with CDA as a tool for decoding the hidden prejudices that are part of the structural violence embedded in many texts. But it comes as a revelation to see how the same set of tools can illuminate the means by which language becomes an irresistible force for social transformation.

The remaining chapters of Part B, titled “Learning the Language of Peace through Words and Images,” deal with poetry, visual art and journalism and show various modalities whereby language can contribute to peacebuilding efforts. Part C, “Using Peace Language with Other Cultures,” moves to the cultural dimension and distinctions between individualist and collectivist cultures in peacemaking. This segues well into the second volume listed above with its focus on culture, religion and the arts in peacemaking.

Understanding Peace Cultures, a companion volume edited by Rebecca Oxford, is both similar to and distinct from *The Language of Peace*. Highly eclectic in content, it has five sections, beginning with a look at: (1) peace cultures; and going on to (2) a section containing diverse examples of peace education; (3) a group of chapters on spiritual and literary insights into the creation of peace cultures; (4) examples of performing arts for peace and (5) a look at social and political perspectives. Once again, each chapter has substantive references and detailed exercises to guide readers into activities relating to the practice of peace. The focus in this volume is on culture as opposed to language with the key point being that peace building must begin with the achievement of inner peace.

The heart of this volume is thus the middle section, with chapters introducing Buddhism, Islam and Confucianism as religions that build peace from an inner spiritual discipline that extends outward to family, community, nation and region. A striking feature of a number of other chapters is the way in which the reality of violence and discord is faced directly, with the final two chapters offering deeply personal accounts of activities for peace in Jerusalem and Palestine, South and North Korea, perhaps two of the most intractable sites of ongoing discord. Violence is also dealt with candidly in the chapter on Gangsta Rap, which shows how society’s structural violence begets a violent response in many of the lyrics associated with this genre, while at the same time providing details on Hip Hop’s 2002 Declaration of Peace.

For any scholar wishing to bring both the theory and practice of peacemaking into the teaching of Comparative Education, these two volumes are indispensable.

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