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To cite this article: Gene Vasilopoulos, Gloria Romero, Reza Farzi, Mariana Shekarian & Douglas Fleming (2019) The practicality and relevance of peace in an EFL teacher training program: Applications and implications, *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 16:1, 10-29, DOI: [10.1080/15427587.2018.1520599](https://doi.org/10.1080/15427587.2018.1520599)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15427587.2018.1520599>



Published online: 25 Sep 2018.



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The practicality and relevance of peace in an EFL teacher training program: Applications and implications

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the practicality and relevance of positive peace (Galtung, 1964) in English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher training. It focuses on a collaborative three-month study abroad program, funded by the Chinese Scholarship Council, for EFL teachers from rural communities in western China to participate in an intensive professional development program hosted at a large Canadian university. Beginning with the premise that the teaching and learning of Global English is not apolitical, and that the power imbalance between Center based institutions and remote Periphery communities should not be ignored, we consider how the concept, and practice, of positive peace can counter English linguistic and cultural hegemony. In Summer 2016, thirty-five teachers from western China attended the program; thirteen agreed to participate in interviews and focus groups for research purposes. Thematic analysis was used to first code the data for prominent themes with subsequent rounds of interpretive coding to uncover the presence of latent concepts expressed through counter-discourse, such as peace. Through this analytical approach, the data revealed that the visiting teachers (1) disagreed with host instructors on the utility of specific pedagogic approaches; (2) prioritized their own local curriculum; and (3) hoped to teach their hosts about China, as well as learn about EFL pedagogy and Canadian culture. By reading the data through the framework of positive peace, the counter-discourse between visiting teachers and host instructors/researcher can be viewed as sites of peace-building where expertise can be contested, professional identities reasserted, and once silenced voices heard.

Introduction

The relevance of peace in language education, let alone within English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher training, may seem unlikely and immaterial to some. However, we argue that the opportunity to build peace is present in EFL teacher training and that these sites of peace negotiation play an important role in delivering equitable and just EFL teacher training. Drawing on Galtung's (1964, 1969) notion of positive peace, we examine the potential for positive peace in a Teaching English as a Second Language

(TESL) training course offered at a Canadian university. More specifically, we focus on the TESL China Professional Development Project (CPDP), a professional development program funded by the Chinese Scholarship Council (CSC) that since 2015 has sponsored EFL teachers from rural China to participate in a three-month study abroad program hosted.

The program objectives as directed by the CSC in collaboration with the Canadian host university include developing among the participants a deeper understanding of English language teaching/learning pedagogy, both in terms of theoretical knowledge and practical application; developing a methodological foundation to apply new teaching practices within their teaching contexts; improving English language communicative proficiency; and engaging in Canadian culture and community life through sociocultural exchanges. During the summer of 2016, data were collected by a research team composed of the Canadian training course instructors and administrators as part of a broader qualitative research study on EFL teacher professional development study abroad programs and the specific learning experiences of these visiting Chinese teachers. We revisit these data to explore how positive peace was experienced and expressed by the participants.

Conceptual framework: Peace

With the exception of notable contributions from Morgan and Vandrick (2009), Kruger (2012, 2016), and Waterhouse (2011, 2017), few scholars have explored the presence and significance of peace in English language teaching. Collectively, their work highlights how peace and violence, as thematic concepts, manifest in English language teaching via the complex socio-cultural-political-linguistic-religious-economic backgrounds that adult language learners bring to the classroom. Indeed, adult English language learners may hold histories that are loaded with conflict, hostilities, and tensions from previous life experiences. When these histories come into contact with counternarratives either from other learners, or program curricula, the language classroom is transformed into a site where histories of peace/violence can be negotiated. Here, again, is the potential for classrooms to become safe spaces for narratives that challenge mainstream views and validate individual subjectivities (Waterhouse, 2017).¹ With this starting point in mind, we look at EFL teacher professional development through the lens of negative and positive peace (Galtung, 1964), and how this conceptualization of peace may relate to the experiences of these visiting Chinese English language teachers in this Canadian study abroad teacher training program.

Negative peace and positive peace

Johan Galtung (1964), a seminal author in peace education, pioneered the very notion of peace as a subject of academic study. For Galtung, conflict is

inevitable. It is impossible to eradicate conflict in its entirety. Instead of working to eliminate conflict, Galtung focused on how peace could be developed, maintained, and promoted in ways that prevent future conflict. In this way, he distinguished between positive peace and negative peace. Negative peace “is the absence of violence, absence of war” and positive peace “is the integration of human society” (Galtung, 1964, p. 2). Violence was defined by Galtung (1969) as being “present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realisations are below their potential realisation” (p. 168). Violence could be physical and direct or structural and integrated in everyday life, such as systemic discrimination against a particular group where no singular actor perpetuates harm but where violence is built into a system that manifests an unequal balance of power. As will be revealed in the subsequent section, structural violence is relevant to this study through the hegemonic imbalance of power between the Centre and Periphery in global English language education.

Once the barriers of structural violence are dismantled in ways that promote more equitable distributions of power, there exists a state of negative peace. Negative peace focuses on containing and eliminating structural and physical violence. However, in doing so, negative peace involves a different (often lesser) form of violence. For example, to eliminate systemic discrimination, the government may pass laws that compel obedience. Transgression would lead to sanctions, which for Galtung is a milder form of structural violence. As such, while negative peace can be celebrated as an accomplishment in controlling both physical and structural violence, the conflict itself is not completely resolved, but only contained (Galtung, 1969).

For Galtung, positive peace is the ideal state. With positive peace, there is also the absence of physical and structural violence, but more importantly, it is the movement toward preventing further violence. According to Fischer (2007), positive peace is the “promotion of peace cultural, mutual learning, global communication and dialogues, development of peaceful cultures” (p. 188; as cited in Kruger, 2016, p. 50). Negative peace seeks to prevent greater inequality and injustice through institutions, practices, and norms that repress conflict, such as the common social norm of not discussing controversial topics that could provoke division. In contrast, positive peace seeks to empower individuals to resolve their own conflicts without resorting to external intervention, such as finding ways to engage in practices, including dialogue, to dissolve the ideologies that form the root source of conflict. It is the state of positive peace that we also idealized for global EFL teacher training.

Violence: Structural power imbalance in EFL/ESL

We have adopted the view that a focus on peace is fundamental to equitable and just English language teaching (ELT) and EFL teacher training. Drawing

from Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony as taken up in the field of critical applied linguistics (Pennycook, 1998), we take the position that the teaching and learning Global English is not apolitical (Pennycook, 1999; Phillipson, 1992). Language and by definition language teaching, should not be seen as an "a priori ontological system" but as a "social, political, and cultural act" (Pennycook, 1994, p. 29). Proponents of this view (e.g., Phillipson, 1992) have argued that the teaching of English is inherently part of the Western (specifically Anglo-American) imperialistic enterprise. In opposition, theorists such as Crystal (1998) have argued that English language teaching can be apolitical. However, as outlined by Kachru (1992) and Schneider (2007), the international spread of the language has been complex and multi-varied. Pennycook (2006) argues that language itself is best thought of as a "flow" that is connected to cultural in ways that are not fixed. This allows for the reclaiming of the "local" language in face of the "global" (Canagarajah, 2005) and creates spaces for the localized appropriation of language systems as well as critical adaption of language learning pedagogies (Canagarajah, 2009; Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Despite the passage of time and growth of scholarly interest in critical applied linguistics, hegemonic forces in ELT persist (Pennycook, 2017; Phillipson, 2012).

One domain where this subjugation is particularly acute is in the development and implementation of curriculum, materials, standardized tests and teacher training, all of which are largely determined and disseminated to the local EFL contexts by the Western universities and associated Western publishing houses. (Kumaravadivelu, 2016). In this way, the ESL/EFL industry is a prime example of the core-periphery model (Myrdal, 1957). As a result, as Ellis (2016) documented, alienation has become a common feeling among non-native teachers of English. Many teachers who seek professional development abroad feel that they essentially forfeit their positionality as experienced teachers and sources of linguistic knowledge or pedagogical expertise, especially if professional development courses are designed from a top-down colonial-knowledge perspective (Canagarajah, 2005; Gonzalez, 2007). Depending on how they experience this professional development, they commonly feel that they have (re-)become students, receivers of knowledge, and most problematically, "silenced" (Park, 2006). In short, they come to feel powerless. On this basis, we contend that issues of empowerment and equality need to be directly addressed in EFL teacher education to undo the cultural hegemony of Western TESOL's domination of the ELT industry.

Case: The project

The CPDP was delivered at the Faculty of Education at a large research-based university in Eastern Canada. Extensive consultation around the curricular

aspects of the project was held with the CSC, the Embassy of China, and the BLCU. In view of the challenges and trends noted above, the CSC established two broad goals for this project: to help Yunnan English teachers improve their second language teaching practices and to improve their levels of English language proficiency.

The 35 English teachers from the 2016 cohort who took part in the project worked in middle and secondary schools throughout Yunnan province. Half belonged to various ethnic and linguistic minorities and the other half were of Han ethnicity, the dominant ethnic group in China (see Table 1). Most were from agriculturally based communities in remote parts of the province. As such, the socioeconomic conditions for many of the rural teachers differed significantly from the few participants that taught in the provincial capital, Kunming. While several were relatively novice teachers, the majority had between 5 and 10 years of teaching experience with some veterans boasting over 20 years in the classroom. Three quarters of the teachers were women and one quarter were men. Some were homeroom teachers or heads of their local school English teaching departments, and all had English as their primary teaching subject. None of the teachers came from middle- or upper-income brackets, further highlighting their marginality from China's educational and political elite centered in Beijing.

The CPDP forms part of the stated effort by the Chinese central government to improve the educational conditions in rural China and create increased opportunity for marginalized ethnolinguistic minorities. The central government, in consultation with the CSC and the provincial educational authority selected various schools to participate by nominating potential teachers, who were then granted full scholarships to study in the project.

Table 1. Demographic information of the research participants.

Pseudonym	Sex	Age (years)	Ethnicity	Education (highest degree attained)	Current position	Experience in EFL (years)
Susan	F	37	Han	Master	High school teacher	14
Kelly	F	31	Lisu	Bachelor	Middle school teacher	10
Catherine	F	28	Dali	Master	High school teacher	5
Megan	F	30	Han	Bachelor	Middle school teacher	7
Tess	F	29	Han	Bachelor	Middle school teacher	7
Lucy	F	33	Han	Bachelor	High school teacher	9
Jenny	F	38	Han	Bachelor	Middle school teacher	11
Axel	M	33	Han	Diploma	High School Head Teacher	11
John	M	30	Yi	Bachelor	Middle school teacher	6
Mary	F	35	Yi	Bachelor	High School Head Teacher	13
Alice	F	40	Han	Master	High School Head Teacher	18
Steve	M	33	Bai	Bachelor	Middle School Vice- principal/Teacher	9
Adam	M	37	Han	Bachelor	Middle school teacher	14

As reflected in the data gathered, these Yunnan teachers were enthusiastic about participating, especially since most had never travelled beyond their home province. Participation, in fact, was considered an honor.

Before arriving in Canada, the teachers first attended a 120-hr predeparture orientation at BLCU conducted by local Chinese professors and visiting teachers of English from the United Kingdom and Canada. This involved training in language development (e.g., listening, speaking, pronunciation, newspaper reading); cultural preparation (e.g., basic English for everyday communication in an English speaking context, etiquette), methodology (e.g., theories and approaches to teaching English, classroom activities, lesson planning), and team building. As these Yunnan teachers rarely knew each other before this predeparture orientation, the team-building exercises were instrumental in building peer cooperation and leadership selection.²

At the host Canadian university, a team of multicultural multilingual professors and graduate students originally from Anglophone and Francophone Canada, France, Iran, Chile, and China designed and delivered the project. All were specialists in second language education and had extensive international teaching experience in China, Korea, Iran, and Chile. Three professors and four graduate students formed the core of the teaching staff. Numerous undergraduate students participated as volunteers or were employed as one-on-one language facilitators. A program manager organized the extracurricular activities, tended to the logistics, and provided orientation.³

Upon arrival, the teachers were accommodated in university residences and given orientations to local stores, resources, the university and the city. The three-month program started with extensive visits to local schools over the course of two weeks. This was followed by a two-week introduction to pedagogical technology in computer laboratories and a one-week set of special lectures on learning theories. The curriculum for the remaining six weeks is detailed subsequently.

Mornings started with a lecture on such topics as concrete approaches to lesson planning, overall curriculum design, general linguistics, the creation and adaptation of teaching materials, the role of grammar, bilingualism, decentralized curriculum decision making, student-centered pedagogical approaches, antiracist education, critical multiculturalism, alternate forms of educational leadership, critical curriculum theory, problematizing Canadian culture, multicultural citizenship, globalization, and postcolonial discourse.

Then, most days were followed by 3 hr of study was devoted to the methodology course. The curriculum was divided in week long modules (15 hr/week) and included approaches to teaching, classroom management, teaching vocabulary, teaching grammar, teaching speaking, teaching listening, teaching reading, teaching writing, and error correction and assessment.

The methodology curriculum focused on small group “hands-on” training centered on concrete aspects of teaching practice, classroom activities and material development.

The formal instruction for most days ended with 2 hr of English language training designed to improve the English communicative abilities of the participants. This portion of the program was administered through the Faculty of Arts, Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute, yet still in close collaboration with the Faculty of Education project leaders.

The lectures were formal session in which all 35 teachers attended. In the subsequent sessions, the participants were divided into small groups so to provide greater opportunity for trainer-trainee engagement.

Peace in the program

Peace, as broadly defined to include both positive and negative peace, was used conceptually to address imbalances of power and create room for transformation for both the Chinese participants and ourselves as curriculum designer-instructor-researchers of an EFL teacher professional development program. To counter the potential of a unidirectional dissemination of knowledge from (Western center) teacher to (peripheral) learner, various measures were put into place.

First, the syllabus, which was initially drafted by the project directors at the host university, was modified after several months of negotiations and revisions that involved Chinese Embassy officials and BLCU. The project structure and logistics were then approved by the CSC. Once the overall structure of the program had been established, the instructional team at the host university began to prepare the lectures, methodology workshops, and English language training course materials. It is important to note that the EFL methodology curriculum was intentionally decentralized from the project director and placed in the hands of the methodology course instructors who conducted the direct day-to-day work with the Yunnan teachers. This measure allowed the methodology course instructors to quickly modify their training materials as required to meet the needs and interests of the participants. This reflects the importance given to the principle of flexibility in program delivery in the context of cooperation between the hosting Canadian university, BLCU, and the Chinese Ministry of Education. As such, ongoing flexible scheduling was necessary on the part of the host university to accommodate tasks and responsibilities delegated from BLCU and the CSC in Beijing.

Second, a central tenet in the project was that the visiting teachers should be viewed as the “experts” of their local contexts. The participants were positioned as “experts” in terms of deciding which pedagogies would best

meet the needs of their learners back home in China. Throughout the lectures and methodology workshops, the participants were encouraged to reflect critically and evaluate (the multiplicity of) dominant trends within current second language teaching theory and classroom practice so that they could determine for themselves the most useful approaches for their own teaching contexts.

Doing so required the dismantling of the myth of “native-speakerism,” which sets up an impossible and monolingual ideal that represented most speakers of English as deficient (Cook, 1997). As a way counter the common discourse surrounding the monolingual ideal, the project drew on examples from the diversity of the Canadian linguistic landscape and (more importantly) members of multilingual team themselves at the host university.

This professional development project sought to empower the visiting teachers with the skills and knowledge to think critically and to act as they deemed appropriate and effective within their English language-learning context. Through this empowerment, as reflected in the data collected, we helped to foster a heightened sense of agency among the visiting teachers and assisted them in participating in spaces that validated counters to the hegemony of core-periphery discourses. These spaces helped make voices of those marginalized in ELT heard.

Methodology

Research objective and question

As noted previously, our aim was to examine how visiting Chinese EFL teachers experience peace in a Canadian professional development-training course. The research question that guided our exploration was: How do the concepts of positive and negative peace manifest in the experiences of visiting EFL teachers participating in a study abroad TESL professional development study abroad programs?

Recruitment procedure and participants

The research team⁴ obtained ethics approval from the university’s institutional review board before starting the data collection process. All 35 teachers enrolled in the summer 2016 project were invited to participate in the research study through invitation letters and consent forms translated into Mandarin (the official language of mainland China). Thirteen teachers volunteered to participate. To maintain anonymity, pseudonyms a reused throughout what follows. These pseudonyms were self-selected at the beginning of the interviews (see [Table 1](#) for participant demographics).⁵

Data collection and analysis

The data was collected through semistructured interviews with each participant and one focus group (of four participants) conducted at the end of the project. All data collection was conducted in English. The interviews took approximately 1 hr and covered the following topics: demographic information, their experience in the predeparture course in BCLU and their experience and the curriculum at the host university in Canada. The interview questions focused largely on the teaching style, activities, course content, assignments, workload, language development, theoretical knowledge and concrete application, and their experience in the sociocultural activities at the host site. Likewise, the focus group probed into the participants' experiences in the course, their performances, and the effectiveness of the course on their EFL teacher identity and future practice. To be clear, the interview tool that guided the data collection was designed to explore the experiences of the visiting teachers in the program. Peace was not incorporated in the original interview design. The presence of peace as a significant theme only emerged after the first round of analysis, once the audio-taped interviews were transcribed.

All data sources were transcribed and uploaded to Transana (qualitative study software; Transana, Madison, WI) for analysis. A thematic approach was used to analyze the data sets based on common themes reflected in the design of the project. From this set of coding, categories and subcategories were created for each theme (see Appendix A). However, for the discussion on the presence of peace as experienced and expressed by the participants, a second round of coding was conducted. Under the newly developed theme of peace, the following subthemes were determined, listed here in alphabetical order: appropriating materials, bilateral exchange, Chinese culture, differences, English as opportunity, native speaker, positive aspects of Canadian education, suggestions for improvement, teachers as students, teachers learning from each other, Western pedagogy as advanced (see Appendix B for a code description). Next, we present the reanalysis of the interview data based on the previous codes under the theme of peace.

Findings

Approaching the data from the lens of positive and negative peace, the interview data discussed below highlights how the counterdiscourse between the visiting teachers and the instructors/researchers works to dismantle hegemonic ideologies and structures that have served the interests of the dominant group. These excerpts can be viewed as positive peace working toward equity, in this case, balanced relations between the Core-periphery, trainer/trainee, expert/novice, and hosting/visiting. In other words, between

Western Anglophone university faculty and visiting Chinese EFL teachers. As we argue in our conclusion, our analysis of the interview data presented suggest positive peace through counterdiscourse. For ease of reading and comparison we present the data below in a numbered format.

1. Diverging views on language learning pedagogy
 - 1a. Opposition to teaching English in English.

As mentioned previously, a longstanding principle in English language teaching is the belief that English (as the target language) is best learned through instruction in English, preferably through a native speaker (Crystal, 1998). Even in EFL contexts where English is not used outside of the language classroom, local languages are considered as interference and inferior to the quality of native speaker monolingual delivery. As found in the data, however, Axel, a teacher in senior secondary school thought otherwise. He explicitly questioned the utility and feasibility of using English as the medium of instruction to teach English:

Axel: I asked Beijing [education project administrators] what would happen if I just use English to teach my students. They just answered me “Are you kidding. The students cannot understand anything”. Actually, what I really wanted to get was some suggestions on how we can increase our use of English in our teaching, but she [the administrator] just thought I was joking. I think I will change [my teaching] in other ways. . . maybe in grammar lesson, I have to speak Chinese to make my students understand. Except for that I will try to speak English.

For TESL trainers, particularly those working in ESL contexts, Axel’s views may be contentious. Trainers may disapprove of Axel’s use of translated texts and disagree with his insistence that Mandarin is necessary for complex classroom management. Language educators that are fluent in the target language (as native speakers, or near-native speakers) and are accustomed to teaching English in linguistic heterogeneous ESL classroom, may have never experienced the necessity to, and the utility of, reverting to a common language.

We argue that Axel’s transcript reflects positive peace and empowerment when the visiting teachers remain the “expert” of their local context and the “expert” in deciding which pedagogies could best meet the needs of their students. More specifically, Axel’s open dissent of the widely revered principle points to his confidence to go against prevailing ELT ideology. We argue that Axel’s comments were made possible by creating a space for visiting teachers to express diverging views. This is evidence of positive peace. The following transcripts further reflect peace in the teacher’s willingness to share their experiences, opinions, and plans, even if they may be viewed as “deficient” and less than ideal by the trainers.

1b. Continued support for standardized test.

Standardized tests are a pillar of the Chinese education. The national higher education entrance examination, referred to as Gaokao, is largely based on students' performance on province-wide standardized test. Even movement from junior middle school to senior middle school is based on test achievement making the visiting teachers particularly concerned about how to help their students improve their English test scores.⁶

Standardized testing is a contentious issue. Many Western educators claiming to hold more "progressive" views are critical of its supposed exclusionary nature. However, some of the Yunnan teachers at the senior secondary school level voiced support for the use of standardized tests. Standardized tests were viewed as an opportunity to break the cycle of poverty. Diverging views between the instructors and one of the visiting teachers on this issue is expressed in this exchange:

Interviewer: Is there anything you would change about the educational system in China?

Susan: I think the entrance examination is good. Some students and some colleagues might think that we are punishing them too hard. That the students have to rush into a bridge, and some students will pass and others will fail. Maybe they think it's terrible. Many students would describe this experience or something like that, but I don't think so because every child, every student has the chance if they study hard. All of them can have a chance to change themselves.

It is important to note that Susan responds to the interviewer's questions by defending the use of examinations rather than explaining what she would change about the educational system. Susan's reply can be viewed as an exercise of agency where she creates the opportunity to explain the merits of state-wide exams to the researcher. In doing so, she makes her understanding of the counterarguments clear: despite critiques of standardized testing (such as that espoused by many in Western education), her view remains based on the benefits it may hold for students fighting to escape the poverty and marginalization of growing up in rural Yunnan. Again, we suggest that Susan's ability to voice her views reflects the projects efforts to promote positive peace.

2. Incorporating the local in the global

2a. Prioritizing local curriculum.

In the interviews, teachers were asked about their experience in various aspects of the project. Specifically, they were asked about how we could improve the CPDP. One common response to this question related to the relevance of the content in the teaching methodology component and in the

technology integration modules. For example, Catherine, a novice senior middle school teacher offered the following:

Catherine: And my suggestion for the course and for the next group of teachers is likely to be like this. . . can we use . . . ask the teachers to have a good look at our textbook and our course curriculum from china and then show us the Canadian education system and the Canadian language course and the Canadian lesson plan and some teaching videos. . .

Catherine's comment is particularly powerful in suggesting that the university faculty should first learn about the Chinese curriculum and the local Yunnan context before teaching others about the Canadian approach. In essence, this recommendation counters the notion of the Western "expert" by alluding to the host teachers' insufficient knowledge of Chinese contexts. Catherine's comment can also be read as prioritizing instruction on how to adapt teaching methodologies to the Chinese context over learning about the Canadian education system. These words should not be taken lightly. Despite her young age, Catherine held a position of significant responsibility within the cohort and was tasked with providing daily reports to the program administrators in China on the course content presented in the training program. She also demonstrated considerable enthusiasm for the methodology course by regularly taking to WeeChat (a Chinese messaging and social networking app) to share the materials and content presented in class with her colleagues at her Yunnan high school. In other words, Catherine could only be described as highly invested in the training program.

2b. Connecting theory and methods to our content

For Chinese high school students, the university entrance examination plays a critical role in determining their future education, and naturally, preparing students to excel on this examination is a priority for high school English teachers. As such, the high school teachers were gravely concerned with the appropriation of the methodology course materials to their test-focused culture. On this point, greater consideration of the local teaching context in Yunnan was expressed by Lucy in the following exchange:

Lucy: I have recommendation for G's class⁷ Because G teaches different methods to teach different area of English. . .for example, reading, writing and speaking. . . so if G can take a look at our senior high school textbooks in advance or do some research on our textbooks, I think she can connect the teaching theory or methods to our content.

Interviewer: I think she did that.

Lucy: [Coughing]

Interviewer: I am not sure, but I think she did that. Lucy: Yes, she did some, but I think she can do it better.

Lucy continued:

Do some research on our textbooks... on different part of the textbooks, or she can do some... Okay... Also, teachers here can do some research on our college entrance examination in English maybe. Because in Canada they have no... entrance test...

Interviewer: Entrance exam...

Lucy: Yes, so we have different context.

Lucy acknowledges that the trainer made efforts to integrate the Chinese curriculum into the methodology course; however, she thought that more could have been done. This, we argue, is evidence of positive peace whereby the Lucy feels able and safe to offer critique and challenge the expertise and professionalism of the instructors.

It might be tempting to read Lucy and Catherine's comments as criticism and dissatisfaction with the course content, but both expressed overwhelmingly positive feedback on the same methodology course. Furthermore, both were notably enthusiastic, keen, and eager to learn and often referred to their obligation to learn as much information as possible and share it with their colleagues in China. We argue that positive peace can be seen in Catherine and Lucy's sense of agency to advocate for their rights as students to learn about material or content that is most relevant to their needs.

3. Learn from us

3a. Cultural pride.

By reaffirming the visiting teachers as "experts" of their local teaching context, the instructional team at the host university also learned about the reality of global EFL from the visiting teachers. Reciprocal exchange of knowledge, skills, culture, and values was expressed by two respondents. Megan, of the Han ethnic group (the dominant ethnicity in China) took pride in the ethnic-cultural-linguistic-diversity of the Yunnan cohort and offered one recommendation to improve the study abroad program in upcoming year:

Interviewer: Is there anything you'd like us to do different for next year?

Megan: Maybe Dr. F⁸ can ask some requirement for Beijing. Let us prepare some performances or bring some ethnic dresses. We are all ethnic people in Yunnan, so we'd like to, how do you say, bring some cosmetics, costumes, special dresses, and prepare some performances before we come here. Yeah, we have 26 ethnic groups.

Proud displays of Yunnan's multiethnic tradition and culture were prominent throughout the three-month program. For example, at formal opening and closing ceremonies, the visiting teachers took the opportunity to showcase their diverse cultural richness with a costumed song and dance representing the culture of Yunnan minority groups (Yi, Bai, and Dali). Similarly, at informal get-togethers, after class, and even as an entertainment break to liven a day full of lectures and workshops, the teachers enjoyed sharing their talents in singing traditional folk music.

By revisiting the interview data through the lens of peace, Megan's comment takes on new meaning. In one sense, Megan's suggestion can be read as a(nother) gracious offer to share the multi-ethnic traditions that make Yunnan province unique; in another sense, we take notice of her suggestion to incorporate bilateral cultural exchange as a requirement of the program implemented through/or in conjunction with the Program Administrators in Beijing. Furthermore, while such performances of culture can be reduced to Halverson's (1985) "big C," that is culture as music, literature, and art, this should not detract from the symbolism in Megan's recommendation to "officially place Yunnan cultural-performances into the program."

3b. Learning something from China.

A more provocative response was put forward by Steve, a middle school teacher and appointed vice-principal, a commendable achievement given his young age of 33 years old.

Interviewer: Do you think your students will appreciate your new teaching?

Steve: Yes of course. We have to learn something, but you should learn something from China...it was mentioned in a TV report last year, the UK needed 40 math teachers from China. You know why? They have to learn something from China. You know most UK teachers, they needed something, and you know most Chinese young people are good at doing math.

In this interview segment, Steve redirects the question of how his learning in the study abroad program will impact his teaching practice. Instead of elaborating on his affirmative response, Steve takes this opportunity to explain how Chinese education is sought after and exported to the West to train British teachers. By contrasting the value of the training program to Chinese EFL education with the value of Chinese education to the English-speaking world (United Kingdom), Steve complicates the teacher-student dynamic he is experiencing in the study abroad program. It is important to note that the interviewer is also an instructor in the program, but not the instructor of his class, and that when probed by the interviewer, Steve did not clearly identify what the instructional team should learn from China. Rather,

Steve reiterated that we could all learn something from one another as evidenced in this following exchange:

Steve: Yes, but don't forget, not only are we students, but we are also teachers. Interviewer: So, are you getting used to being a student?

Steve: Sometimes I want to be a student, sometimes I want to be a teacher too.

Interviewer: Of course.

Steve: So sometimes I am a student, but outside of class, equal relations you and I, we have to learn from each other, we have respect for each other. If I find that I am not interested in what you teach, you should change your teaching style maybe.

Interviewer: Yes, I agree.

Steve: It is equal.

Tensions between Steve's positionality as a teacher-student, expert-novice become apparent. This is an aberration to the experiences reported in the interview data from the other 12 respondents. In fact, most of the interview data emphasized the pedagogical, linguistic, and cultural value of the study abroad program and how participating in the professional development course has dramatically enhanced their confidence as EFL teachers.

Steve's comments directly address the unidirectional transmission of knowledge and values from the core to the periphery. His comments provoked that interviewer, and later the research team to wonder whether there were underlying tensions experienced by the visiting Chinese teachers in the PD program that were not expressed. More specifically, it made us wonder whether the absence of constructive criticism was negative peace that is, the absence or suppression of disagreement, or whether positive peace and efforts by the participants to readdress unequal power structures may be present in ways that we did not notice.

Discussion

In the present article we argue that the opportunity to build peace is present in study abroad EFL teacher training and that these sites of peace negotiation play an important role in delivering equitable and just EFL teacher training. Through Galtung's (1964, 1969) concept of positive peace, we examine how peace may be experienced and expressed in a unique collaborative international TESL program between EFL teachers from Yunnan province China, and the faculty at the hosting Canadian university. The global imbalance of power in ELT between the Centre and Periphery has been well documented (e.g., Braine, 1999; Canagarajah, 2001). Furthermore, recent investigations on language teacher study abroad professional development training show that many visiting teachers feel particularly vulnerable

when shifting from a position of expert (in their home context) to novice (at the host site), teacher to student, resident to visitor, and insider to outside (Park, 2006; Trent, 2011). Then, for any international TEFL professional development program to be considered “successful,” it must do more than develop pedagogical and linguistic skill to enhance language teaching. We remind that language learning and teaching is not apolitical, and the field of EFL has not been spared the ramifications of Western imperialism. As Phillipson (2012) maintains, hegemonic forces in EFL persist.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of center-based TESL professional development programs to place the issue of structural imbalance and inequality at the forefront of their program design. Doing so allows visiting EFL teachers to take their learning of English as a global language back into their own hands. Such a move begins with the expectation that teacher training curriculum be sensitive to diverse language educational contexts. TESL curriculum must also emphasize critical thinking in order to assess the appropriateness of Western methods, and critical reflection so to make locally informed pedagogical decisions. Finally, as center-based TESL educators, we must encourage teachers from the periphery to find voice and challenge methodologies, ideologies, and practices that work to further perpetuate EFL hegemony.

In the case of the TESL study abroad program described in the present article, this includes re-considering how the coming together of language educators from disparately different socio-economic-linguistic-cultural backgrounds, the visiting teachers and the host faculty, can produce sites of conflict as in the disagreement expressed by the participants, yet can also build peace through the unsilencing of teacher participants that may have once been silenced.

We acknowledge that some of the comments reported previously may be dismissed as constructive criticism, but given the ethno-socio-economic-linguistic-cultural marginality of the visiting teachers within their home country of China coupled with the hegemonic forces of center-based ELT, we believe that the data presented should not be read as simply feedback or participant input. If we accept the premise that an unequal distribution of power may be present in this EFL teacher professional development program, then their counterdiscourse can only be read as evidence of positive peace.

In that sense, we are proud that these teacher participants voiced the comments that they did. This, for us, is an achievement in creating a space where visiting teachers can directly critique, disagree, and contest the knowledge, practices, and ideologies of the hosting university instructional team. These voices may not have been heard in the same way without the conditions for positive peace instilled into the program and without having revisited the data through the lens of positive peace. On this point, we clearly do not suggest that the instructional team alone enabled positive peace to be

produced, but rather creating peaceful conditions lies in the hands of all parties involved. Indeed, the participants enacted agency to directly counter the interviewers, who were also their instructors for the three-month program. Positive peace only occurs when the traditionally dominated group can engage, free from fear of reprisal, in discourse that challenges the ideologies, knowledge, and practices, put to them by the dominant group. Through this dialogue, we can strive toward more reciprocal power dynamics in TESL study abroad professional development projects.

Notes

1. Waterhouse (2017) complicated the notion of “safe space” in refugee Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada. On this basis, we only presuppose the possibility for “safe space” and the potential for TEFL training to promote peace building.
2. Information of the BLCU curriculum was received secondhand through administrative officers and reports from the visiting teachers. Without direct access to the documents, we cannot attest to the content or ideologies promoted in their materials.
3. This team of instructors and the manager also composed the research team that conducted the study and performed all the tasks related to data collection, analysis, and reporting of findings.
4. The research team included the program director, program manager, two methodology teachers, and one language training teacher.
5. The choice of an English name, as opposed to a name in a local Yunnan language or Mandarin, was made by the participant.
6. The exam-driven educational context of China was expressed by all the respondents, and despite differing opinions on its function in improving language learning, all respondents acknowledged that at this current point in time, standardized testing remains a fundamental part of their teaching.
7. G is a pseudonym selected by one of the program instructors.
8. This pseudonym was selected by the instructor named.

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Appendix A

Emergent Themes and Codes from the Data

Prearrival to Canada

- (1) Beijing Experience-Experience as trainees preparing to go abroad/meeting teachers/sightseeing in Beijing/preparation for Canada
- (2) Beijing Training-Content-What they learned/were taught in terms of content, skills, information
- (3) Opportunity-Enthusiasm, eagerness, excitement over opportunity to learn methodology in Canada/travel to Canada
- (1) Preparation-Specific actions, activities, thoughts, attitudes to prepare for Canada
- (2) Prior knowledge of Canada-Knowledge of Canada/expectations
- (3) Prior knowledge of Canadian Education-Knowledge/expectations regarding teaching/learning in Canada-classroom-size, teaching styles

Program Selection

- (1) Experience of Selection-Emotions, thoughts, encouragement, support during selection process
- (2) Procedure for selection-Steps, stages, and procedures for program application/selection

Teaching Context in China

- (1) Being a teacher- How/why they became teachers-roles/responsibilities, ambitions as a teacher
- (2) Classroom Context- Instruction, preparation, delivery in class-students, materials, learning goals, practices
- (3) Education System- Education system in China in general including national curriculum, university entrance, and employment opportunities
- (4) Local school context-Where, who what, and how they teach; information relating to general school/local education
- (5) Structural Constraints-Challenges to teaching-classroom size, lack of technology

During Program-Experience in WPC/Ottawa

- (1) Challenges/limitations-Critique of course material, structure, content, delivery including appropriation of materials to home context
- (2) External Factors-Factors outside of WCP program curriculum that influenced experience in Ottawa/WCP program-ex. friendly locals,
- (3) Extracurricular outings- Outings to introduce Canadian culture/Canadian context
- (4) Language Proficiency-Development in language proficiency, confidence, attitudes toward language use/teaching/learning
- (5) Methodology Learning Outcomes-What was learned/developed in relation to teaching pedagogy/teaching styles, content, theory, activities,

- (6) WCP experience-Experience in program-description of activities, experiences, thoughts, feedback of program in general

Post-End of program

- (1) Impact on future teaching-Direct impact on future teaching-modifications/incorporation of new content/skills to teaching back home
- (2) Professional Development-transformation-Impact on sense of self as a language teacher
- (3) Take-aways-What was gained in terms of knowledge, skills, linguistic development

Appendix B

Recoding the Data: Keywords and codes for the theme of Peace

- (1) Appropriating materials
- (2) Relevance of materials/strategies and pedagogy-modifications and appropriation to Chinese context
- (3) Bi-lateral exchange
- (4) Two way learning between Canada and China
- (5) Chinese Culture
- (6) Sharing and promoting Chinese culture
- (7) Differences
- (8) Differences between Chinese education/language teaching/culture and Canada
- (9) English as opportunity
- (10) English as necessary for university, career, greater opportunity
- (11) Native Speaker
- (12) Comparison/reference to native speaker/non-native speaker
- (13) Positive Aspects of Canadian Education
- (14) Advantages in Canada's education system
- (15) Suggestions for improvement
- (16) Suggesting from teachers on how to improve program for next year
- (17) Teacher as students
- (18) Teachers learning from each other-bi-lateral between faculty and teachers as students
- (19) Western pedagogy as advanced
- (20) Western pedagogy as advanced, up-to-date, better than traditional methods used in China