

Towards an Educational Linguistics for Peace

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The world is facing a confluence of crises, from poverty, misinformation, and intolerance to disease, climate change, and geopolitical conflict. In 2015, the United Nations set an ambitious agenda for worldwide sustainable development to accomplish by 2030 in the form of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Halfway to this deadline, only 15% of SDG targets to inter alia reduce poverty, enhance education, advance equality, ensure health and well-being, and preserve natural resources are on track (United Nations, 2023). It is easy to feel despair and hopelessness. What can educational linguists and language teachers do in the face of such daunting challenges?

Since its inception, it has been a central tenet of educational linguistics to be theme-based and problem-driven (Hornberger, 2001; Hult, 2010a). That is to say, we begin with a practical problem and look to relevant principles, theories, and methods that allow us to investigate and address it (Hornberger, 2006). There is, perhaps, no greater thematic challenge today than the threat to peace. In their work on peacebuilding in language education, Oxford et al. (2021) emphasize that peace is not simply the absence of violence and war but the positive presence of equitable social structures that foster human rights for everyone and that language educators have a pivotal role to play in cultivating peace (cf. Skutnabb-Kangas, et al., 2009).

Accordingly, I argue that peace studies (e.g., Curtis, 2022; Manojlovic, 2018) is a useful addition to the fields and disciplines that inform educational linguistics. In particular, I examine how Oxford's multidimensional Language of Peace Approach (Oxford et al., 2021), which includes inner peace, interpersonal peace, intergroup peace, intercultural peace, international peace, and ecological peace, aligns with the intellectual roots of educational linguistics as a way to account for the socially situated nature of language (in) education (e.g., Douglas Fir Group, 2016; Hornberger, 2003; Hult, 2010b, 2019; Hult & King, 2011; Spolsky, 1972; Van Lier, 1994, 2004). To that end, I discuss how my own work and that of others applying ecology of language and nexus analysis (Hult, 2013, 2017; cf. Scollon & Scollon, 2004) can advance an educational linguistics for peace. I describe how language education policy and practice can be leveraged to foster peace and how educational stakeholders as social actors can become agents for peace. As we search for hope in turbulent times, we can begin looking right in our own classrooms.

Bio

Francis M. Hult works at the crossroads of education, discourse studies, and sociolinguistics. He is currently professor of education at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). Professor Hult's research focuses on multilingualism in policy and practice, investigating ideological dimensions of national language policies, policy formation and implementation, language teacher engagement with educational policy discourses, and visual

language use in multilingual communities. A thought leader in the field of educational linguistics, his books include *Directions and Prospects in Educational Linguistics*, *Educational Linguistics in Practice* (with Kendall King), and the *Handbook of Educational Linguistics* (with Bernard Spolsky). He serves on the editorial boards of numerous scholarly journals, among them *Educational Linguistics* and *Pedagogical Linguistics*, and he is the editor of the *Educational Linguistics* book series published by Springer as well as the founder and manager of the *Educational Linguistics List* (Edling), an international forum and network for researchers of language (in) education.

While working at Lund University and Jönköping University, he was instrumental in advancing the field of educational linguistics in the Scandinavian context, serving a three-year term on the Swedish Research Council and consulting for the Swedish Agency for Education (Skolverket) and the Language Council of Norway, among other institutions. His empirical work on language education policy and practice in Sweden, drawing upon ethnographic and discourse analytic methods, has been influential on the practice of multilingual teaching and learning in Swedish schools and on the training of doctoral researchers in language and education.

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