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## Realization of Language Teacher's Ideal Identity as Peacebuilder

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### Abstract

Language teaching has the potential not only to teach language skills but also to create a peaceful learning environment where students feel relaxed, safe and valued. To achieve this goal, teachers need to develop an ideal identity that reflects their commitment to promoting peace in their classrooms. In the interest of developing peacebuilder language teachers, this study investigated the ideal identity of English language teachers as peacebuilders, the strategies they employ to achieve their peacebuilder identities, and the manifestation of peace language: hope, help, and harmony (Oxford & Curtis, 2020). The narratives of three Iranian language teachers were thematically analyzed to understand their hopeful, helpful, and harmonious experiences. Our findings indicate that teachers' ideal peacebuilder selves are becoming 'an encouraging teacher', 'a more hopeful and caring teacher', and 'a patient teacher'. To achieve their peacebuilder identity, they proposed strategies such as encouraging students to communicate internationally, caring about students' success, pursuing academic studies, and improving emotion-regulation skills. The findings of this study contribute to incorporating peace in language education and developing peacebuilder language.

**Keywords:** *Peace Language, Teacher Identity, Peacebuilding, English Language Education, Ideal Identity Realization*

### <sup>1</sup>Introduction

The world we live in is, now more than ever, in dire need of peace among all individuals with various beliefs, cultures, orientations, and backgrounds. More notably, peace is needed within the self (inner peace) and between individuals and whatever exists in the environment, that is nature, living creatures, and available resources (Oxford, Gregersen, et al., 2020).

The role of education in promoting peace has been widely recognized, and language learning is one of the key areas where this can be achieved. Numerous recent studies have

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focused on incorporating peacebuilding and peace lessons into education (e.g., Benjamin et al., 2022; Ganjvar, 2022; Gürsel-Bilgin, 2020; Wibowo, 2022). According to Snauwaert (2020), peace education is a route to reduce violence, inhumanity, tensions, and lack of harmony in the world through personal, interpersonal, and ecological peace. Adopting a postcritical approach, Kester (2022) states that in alignment with global citizenship and decentralization, peace education expands peace among individuals and communities through educating to live in harmony with one another. Therefore, as Oxford, Gregersen et al. (2020) concluded, dramatic changes would occur if peace, love, and harmony are recognized and employed in our private and public worlds and become frequent themes of our daily interactions. Every human being, no matter what their profession, should try to foster peace by adding peacebuilding activities to their personal and professional lives.

Perhaps the best-known study introducing the language of peace and how peace can be incorporated into our daily lives through peace discourse was carried out by Oxford and Curtis (2020). It elaborates on the use of the positive 3-H words (hope, help, and harmony) as the language of peace and highlights the importance of taking peacebuilding actions in language education.

The English language as an international lingua franca (ELF) (Seidlhofer, 2005) with a global scope of use has a great potential for building peace. Oxford, Gregersen et al. (2020) advised that language scholars, language teacher educators, and language teachers should attempt to consider language, communication, and discourse as a medium of understanding and spreading peace globally and locally. Likewise, Gkonou et al. (2020) believed that English language teachers can play a central role in becoming peacebuilders to bring hope, help, and harmony to their classrooms. Therefore, Olivero and Oxford (2018) emphasize the need to prepare beginning teachers of English to establish an identity as peacebuilders in language education.

One's ideal identity as a peacebuilder is the desired self with certain peace-related qualities and goals. It is an amalgamation of one's desires for future peaceful thoughts, actions, and emotions. An ideal identity as a peacebuilder is developed by individuals who desire to contribute to sowing the seeds of peace in the world. Establishing a peacebuilder ideal identity and investing in realizing it could be done through incorporating peace language in one's personal and professional practices and in the verbal and non-verbal interactions with those they encounter.

Peace is necessary in today's world and the entire world needs to achieve peace in its various dimensions (Gkonou et al., 2020). According to Olivero et al. (2020), taking actions informed by research findings for incorporating peacebuilding in language education and in our routine lives can trigger the implementation of peace theories and the execution of peacebuilding activities. Hence, conducting research studies on peacebuilding in language education seems crucial. Despite the multitude of studies conducted on peace linguistics, peace education, and/or peacebuilding to date (Kester, 2022; Kester et al., 2021; Romano et al., 2022; Wenden & Schäffner, 1995), few known studies, except for Barcelos (2020) in *Peacebuilding in language education*, have focused on investigating language teachers who seek to realize their ideal identity as the agents of peace. Less clear, likewise, are their ideal identities as peacebuilders and their identity realization strategies.

In response to the call for research on peacebuilding in language education (Oxford, Olivero et al., 2020) and the interest in contributing to developing peacebuilder language teachers, the present study is an attempt to explore the ideal identity of language teachers as peacebuilders, the peacebuilding strategies they adopt, and the manifestation of peace in their actions within the framework of positive 3-H words: hope, help, and harmony (see Oxford & Curtis, 2020).

## Literature Review

### *Peace and the Language of Peace: Hope, Help, Harmony*

Peace as defined by Martin Luther King (paraphrased in Oxford (2013) is found where there is harmony and productive work, even though differing standpoints exist. Peace could have diverse interpretations from every individual's point of view. However, in general, peace is divided into negative and positive peace. The former is basically the absence of conflict or hostility while the latter is seen in the favorable conditions (Pennington & Richards, 2016) in which individuals live harmoniously, their well-being is promoted, and they can thrive (Gregersen et al., 2022; Lenzenweger, 2004; Mercer, 2021). According to Oxford, Olivero, et al. (2020), peace could be understood and studied in six dimensions: inner peace within the self; interpersonal peace with people we know; intergroup peace between various groups of people; intercultural peace and harmony among different cultures; international peace between people from diverse countries; and ecological peace, which involves living in harmony with and showing care for nature (Gorsevski, 2015; Oxford, 2017).

Peace language is a medium for communicating peace ideas containing particular peace-related themes: positive 3-H words. The phrase positive 3-H words was introduced by Oxford and Curtis (2020) and stand for hope, help, and harmony. All individuals could have an interpretation of peace particular to themselves and express it in their own way. Oxford and Curtis (2020) believe that each individual could experience hopeful thoughts, helpful collaborations, and harmonious conditions. These peaceful experiences could impact one's identity and be manifested in their narratives (Barcelos, 2020).

Positive 3-H words embody positive psychology by focusing on positive emotions such as inspiration, hope, resilience, and pleasurable affect (Tugade et al., 2016) through which individuals can prosper and experience peace and well-being (Mercer et al., 2016) in various aspects of their lives (Dewaele, 2015; Li, 2020; MacIntyre et al., 2022). The first element 'hope' is the fuel to one's engine. Hope, in positive psychology, is explained as the expectation of achieving a desired goal (Snyder et al., 2002) and the feeling of being determined to initiate and sustain moving towards and reaching a desired end. According to Ghadyani et al. (2022, p.35) hope is "a significant resource for academic achievement". 'Help', in language education, is defined as offering or receiving assistance, comfort, and support. Many factors can be the source of anxiety to both language teachers and learners (Nishar, 2018). In such bitter situations receiving hopeful remarks from a teacher, student, mentor, peer, and/or any other peacebuilder person is a great help to avoid losing hope and to bounce back from adversities (Oxford & Bolaños-Sánchez, 2016). Thus, through caring help, hopeful words, and peaceful language, teachers' and learners' feeling of hopelessness can be reduced. The other term, 'harmony', is used to refer to the situation of living and working with one another constructively where the diversity of perspectives increases productivity. It is defined as the pleasing combination of

ideas, feelings, or actions. Harmony and peace do not mean only the absence of conflict; they mean the presence of tranquility and agreement through flexibly understanding differences and respecting them. A representation of experiencing harmony is the momentary yet significant occasions of self-actualization which Maslow (1970) calls 'peak experiences'. The person who enjoys a peak experience feels empathy, harmony, and unity.

### *Teacher Ideal Identity*

One's identity, as Pennington and Richards (2016) explained it, is the individual's set of distinctive characteristics relative to the understandings of other individuals. Teacher identity, therefore, is a teacher's unique perceptions and interpretations of being a teacher as well as his/her corresponding professional character. The identity of a language teacher encompasses a language teacher's overall perception of what is meant by being a language teacher as well as the meaning of the professional qualification(s) required for being a language teacher (Mendieta Aguilar & Rützi-Joy, 2023).

Teacher identity, by nature, has various aspects and components and is to a great extent impacted by the past, present, and future selves of the teachers (Richards, 2021). One crucial constituent of language teacher professional identity is the desire to realize a more competent version of themselves (Pennington & Richards, 2016). Their future ideal selves influence their present behavior and choice. Language teachers can invest in achieving their ideal identities so as to gain their anticipated symbolic capital, i.e., new roles, competencies, literacies, communities and networks of people. One's ideal identity is a sensible abstract representation of the desired future self which is accompanied by viable plans and strategies aimed at constructing the desired identity in the future, whereas there is no clear plan for fulfilling fantasies.

Taylor's model (2010) of identity consists of four types of identity: ideal, imposed, private and public. The ideal self, in this quadripolar model, is defined as "a personal representation of what somebody would like to be in the future, irrespective of other people's desires and expectations" (Taylor, 2011, p.81). Unlike the imposed identity, which is driven by external factors such as workplace norms and standards, the ideal identity is internal. According to this model, teacher ideal self ensures a motivational train of events with a number of significant aspects and components or identity aspirations (Weinreich & Saunderson, 2005) that are an individual's desires toward actualizing the type of person one prefers to be in the future. For instance, language teachers would like to obtain particular qualifications such as more expertise in certain areas, new skills with regard to the role they desire, and/or literacies that they think would enhance their ideal self.

Identity aspirations are of two types: (1) positive and (2) negative. Positive aspirations are those types of aspirations that are linked with meeting the desired and favored qualities one would like to have whereas negative aspirations are the perturbing qualities one avoids having in the future. A positive aspiration linked with language teachers' peacebuilding identity could be their desire to think, speak, and act in a way that contributes to developing peace in their everyday life. On the contrary, a negative aspiration could be the capability of managing the circumstances so that peace-threatening situations are avoided or at least reduced. According to Weinreich and Saunderson (2005), identity aspirations are mirrored and verbalized in one's discourse. Therefore, the main themes of peace language are discernible in the words of a

teacher with peacebuilder ideal identity. Becoming a peacebuilder requires gaining peace knowledge and peace competencies such as ethnocultural empathy, intercultural understanding, emotion regulation and cognitive flexibility (Gkonou et al., 2020).

### *Positioning Peacebuilding in Language Education in Recent Studies*

During the past decade, peace education and weaving it into teacher identity and language education have become appealing topics of research and debate among scholars. For instance, in most of the works in peace literature (Gorsevski, 2015; Johnson, 2017; R. Oxford, 2017; Oxford, Olivero, et al., 2020), crucial aspects of peace have been introduced (inner, interpersonal, intergroup, international, intercultural, and ecological) along with how teachers, especially language teachers, can boost peacebuilding. She has offered various peacebuilding activities to encourage language teachers, teacher educators, language scholars, and learners to contribute to creating peace by means of communication and interpersonal interactions. According to Oxford, Gregersen, et al. (2020) and Standish et al. (2022), peace is a suitable remedy for today's conflict-stricken world.

Previous studies have reported on various ways in which peace can be traced in language teachers' practice. Barcelos (2020) maintained that revolutionary love, that is helpfulness and bringing harmony to collaborations with others, has not been researched in applied linguistics; however, it can be recognized and put into practice so as to broaden the circle of peacebuilding. In their study on the impact of emotion-regulation on building peace in society, Wamsler and Restoy (2020) found that the ability to regulate negative emotions such as anger, demotivation, and fear enhance building peace even in adverse circumstances. Furthermore, to illuminate the advantages of peacebuilding strategies, Fu (2021) investigated the impact of different aspects of peace and peacebuilding strategies on the quality of the interactions between students and their teachers. In a postcritical study, Kester (2022) found that a promising way to attain peace, at intergroup, international, and intercultural levels, is to take global citizenship and refrain from limiting ourselves to political boundaries. He also found that peace education expands peace among individuals and communities through educating to live in harmony with one another.

Several dimensions of peace can be observed in the studies on language teachers' personal and professional selves. To illustrate, Tajeddin and Bolouri (2023) found that the ability to make effective decisions while teaching helps novice teachers establish inner and interpersonal peace between themselves and their learners. Likewise, Parathyas and Zorbas (2020) stated that the establishment of interpersonal and intercultural peace could be recognized where trusting interactions between supervising teachers and teachers take place

Language learning is a complex process that involves not only the acquisition of linguistic skills but also the development of (inter)cultural awareness, peace and kindness. In this context, peace in language education refers to creating a learning environment that fosters respect, understanding, and empathy among students. In the context of language education, an ideal identity should reflect teachers' commitment to promoting intercultural understanding, respect for diversity, and social justice. Teachers with a peacebuilder ideal identity are more likely to create a positive classroom climate where students feel safe to express their opinions and ideas without fear of discrimination or prejudice.

## **The study**

In order to explore the ideal identity of teachers as peacebuilders in language education and to unpack the interpretation of their experiences from their points of view (Vaivio, 2012), this study adopted a qualitative research design benefiting from a rich set of narrative data from three participants. Data concerning the participating language teachers' ideal identity realization and the manifestation of peace in their narratives were collected through in-person and/or online semi-structured interviews (via google meet). Thematic content analysis was utilized to analyze their narratives within the framework of Oxford and Curtis's (2020) positive 3-H words: hope, help, and harmony. The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

**RQ1:** How do language teachers perceive their ideal selves as peacebuilders?

**RQ2:** What strategies do they employ to realize their peacebuilder ideal identity?

**RQ3:** How is the language of peace (positive 3-H words) manifested in their discourse and actions?

## *Participants*

Drawing on Dornyei's (2011) description of the purposive sampling technique, the participants had to satisfy a particular criterion to maximize our understanding of the topic. The criterion for participant recruitment in this research was the tendency toward becoming a peacebuilder language teacher. Participation in this study was voluntary.

The participants of this study included three English language teachers who were teaching language courses at several language institutions in Iran (in three different cities: Shiraz, Tehran, and Kazerun). They (hereafter we use these pseudonyms to refer to them, Reza, Sima, and Kiarash) were either early-career or experienced language teachers. Reza, holding a master's degree in English language teaching, was a 26-year-old man who had been involved with teaching English for 5 years. According to herself, Sima (44 years old) had been teaching English for more than half of her life. She held a bachelor's degree in a major irrelevant to language teaching; however, at the time of the study, Sima was a master's student of English language teaching. The third participant was Kiarash, a twenty-year-old early-career teacher. He had recently completed his BA in English language teaching and started his teaching job at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## *Instruments*

Postmodernist perspectives hold that truth is multiple and subjective and reality is not objective (Sim, 2012). According to post-modernists, the self, identity, and individuality vary across individuals and contexts (Yin, 2018). Therefore, as recommended by Sarup (2021), to uncover subjective reality of peacebuilder ideal identity of language teachers, this study employed from narrative interviews. According to Barkhuizen et al. (2013), interviewing is a fitting manner of exploring how individuals experience the world and interpret their experiences in their contexts. Semi-structured interviews are the most regularly used research instrument in qualitative studies since they position the interview within the framework of the emerging themes and provide the participants with the opportunity to elaborate on their lived experiences (Barkhuizen et al., 2013). Therefore, data for this narrative inquiry were collected through administering face-to-face and/or online semi-structured interviews with each participant individually.

### *Data Collection*

As noted above, in order to gain a profound understanding of the realization of participating language teacher's ideal identity as peacebuilders in language education, peace-related experiences, and manifestation of peace in their narratives, this study used a qualitative design. Semi-structured online interviews were conducted with each of the participants. The interviews were held in English, Persian, or a mixture of these two languages, whichever the informants preferred. Each interview lasted between 45 to 60 minutes.

The interview questions delved into the teachers' peak experiences and reflections on what they desired as future peacebuilders. For instance, they were asked about the strategies they were adopting to realize their peacebuilder identity, the hopeful, helpful and harmonious experiences they might have had during their courses, significant individuals and/or events, the types of peacebuilder person they desired to become, and the opportunities and challenges they might encounter. In addition, they were asked how those opportunities and challenges would affect their peacebuilder identity creation.

### *Ethics*

All of the participants were informed about the aims of this research and assured of the confidentiality of their responses. They were asked whether they consented for their interview to be audio-recorded and transcribed for possible publication as research findings.

### **Data Analysis**

The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and then read carefully and repeatedly. Those pieces of data indicating the language teachers' processes of peacebuilding identity construction, the critical moments, significant individuals, critical peacebuilding experiences, engagement in helpful, hopeful, and harmonious experiences, their interpretation of peacebuilding experiences, and their aspirations towards their possible peacebuilder-selves were codified via MAXQDA. With a focus on addressing the research questions, data analysis followed an inductive approach in order to categorize the elicited codes into relevant categories and a number of comprehensive themes. The inductive approach allows unanticipated themes to be discovered. For a reliable set of data, 15 % of the transcribed data were coded by another coder. Next, the codes were compared with the main codes extracted by the researchers to screen the potential similarities and differences in the coding procedures.

### **Results and Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to portray the realization of the peacebuilder identity of three English language teachers as their ideal identity and the manifestation of six dimensions of peace and peace language (hope, help, and harmony) in their narrative accounts. We also inspected the strategies the teachers employed to realize their peacebuilder identity. Choosing to become a peacebuilder is a critical decision a language teacher, just like any other individual, arrives at. This decision is generally made under the influence of contextual factors and/or personal desires for bringing peace to what people do and where they live. Nowadays, adding color to the currently pale picture of peace requires teamwork, research-based knowledge and active collaboration. The language teachers had diverse backgrounds, conditions, and desires. Therefore, we used their narratives to investigate the formation of their peacebuilder identity.

The data were categorized and interpreted in accordance with the order of the three research questions. The questions addressed the following themes respectively: (1) the peacebuilder identity of language teachers as their ideal self (2) the strategies they employed to realize their peacebuilder identity, and (3) the manifestation of peace language (positive 3-H words) in their past experiences and future desires. Drawn on the dimensions of peace in Oxford (2013) and the language of peace (hope, help, and harmony), each dimension and language of peace found in Reza, Sima, and Kiarash's narratives are discussed below.

#### *The Ideal Identity of Language Teachers as Peacebuilders*

When asked to describe his desired peacebuilder self to the interviewer, Reza replied:

*I want to make learning English an enjoyable process for my learners. I think in this way I can build peace. Because by learning a second language my learners can enjoy having interactions with new people from other countries. I can encourage them [his students] and make it a stress-free process.*

In Reza's narrative, his ideal peacebuilder identity is depicted as a 'helpful encouraging teacher' who shares hope with his students by harmonizing the journey of mastering the English language. Fundamental constructs of the dimensions of interpersonal and international peace (Oxford, Gregersen, et al., 2020) were revealed in his ideal identity for himself and his language learners. Interpersonal peace is built through the help and hope (Oxford & Curtis, 2020) he offers in the relationships with his students when he desires to become a helpful teacher who contributes to boosting hope in his students' language learning. Reza desires to build international peace by encouraging his students to communicate with people from all over the world. This finding agrees with that of Kester (2022) that a promising way to attain peace is to take global citizenship and refrain from being limited by political boundaries.

Sima illustrated her peacebuilder ideal self as a 'motivated caring teacher' which can be inferred from this excerpt:

*I always try to care for my students; not just for their learning, but for their success in their lives. Their progress makes me happy; they're kind of my friends. In the future, like in 5 years from now, I want to be more energetic like I used to be in the past.*

In her narratives, Sima stated that she builds effective interpersonal relationships with her students. They remain in contact even for 15-20 years. Although Sima experiences moments of harmony, inner-fulfilment, and inner peace when she observes her students' life accomplishments, she still aspires to experience more harmony and be a more motivated teacher. As visible in the above excerpt, she desired to reclaim her motivation and hope to reestablish her inner peace. This finding corroborates Meijer and his associates' (2009) results that language teachers find themselves more in *flow* where they establish connections between personal and professional aspects of their teaching career. It can be concluded from Sima's narratives that she herself is the agent of building interpersonal peace with her students.

Kiarash, the other male participant, stated that he is a responsible teacher and his ideal peacebuilder identity is realized when he becomes a 'patient teacher'.



*In the first days of my job as a language teacher, I figured out that teachers could get really tired because they need to take care of many things at the same time. Some of my teenage students came to language classes just because of their parents' pressure. Sometimes I get angry when I see some students who do not want to learn English but they sit in class and make everything harder. I've had bad days due to this situation.*

Tranquility and emotion-regulation, in Kiarash's narrative, are the key elements to construct his peacebuilder identity. This finding corresponds with those reported by Wamsler and Restoy (2020) who concluded that managing disruptive emotions establish peaceful relationships even in disharmonic conditions. Kiarash desires to be able to bring harmony to his relationships with his profession, his students, and his students' parents. His ideal peacebuilder identity is a patient teacher who is adept at managing adverse situations, dealing more patiently with his difficult students. Tajeddin and Bolouri's (2023) findings demonstrate how improving language teachers' decision-making skill through teacher education programs could be an effective strategy to build interpersonal peace among novice teachers and their students. Nevertheless, it can be concluded from his narratives that a disfavoring condition, contrary to what Pennington and Richards (2016) maintained, could lead to the development of a language teacher's identity. This identity can bring harmony to his relationship with his new career and become a peacebuilder by helping those students who suffer from avolition in language classes to experience harmonious language learning.

#### *Strategies for Constructing the Peacebuilder Identity*

The strategies the teachers employed to realize their peacebuilder ideal identity were diverse with regard to each teacher's personal and contextual needs and preferences. Reza, for instance, was concerned with peace among various cultures. His strategy to build such a dimension of peace is apparent below:

*My students seem to enjoy one common activity in my classes. That is when we learn new facts about the way people from other cultures live or think. I can take this opportunity to encourage my students to chat with foreign people online to use English and know other people.*

Reza has educated his language learners to seek opportunities to make peaceful interactions with various people in English as a strategy to build peace. This peacebuilding strategy is in tandem with Barcelos' (2020) findings that attempting to find peace and harmony in various types of interactions with people from all around the world is an effective strategy to broaden the circles of building peace. Reza's strategy was to encourage his language learners to communicate with people of various cultures authentically by not being limited by political boundaries and cultural stereotypes and viewing people with various cultures as citizens of a global village. This finding supports Kester's (2022) research into peacebuilding through seeking global citizenship. Reza helps raise intercultural awareness of his students which is a fundamental element of building intercultural peace. As noted by Johnson (2017), building such a peace culture in a language class is what a peacebuilder teacher can do.

Sima mentioned experiencing some degrees of demotivation in the past few years. When asked to elaborate on her source of demotivation, she answered:

*I have been teaching similar courses at one language institute for more than two decades. I guess this routine work is the reason. [...]. [S]o, my husband helped me to start doing a master's degree. With an MA in language teaching, I can think of finding other places to teach at.*

As illustrated above, when Sima identified the lack of hope and harmonious moments in her routinized professional life, pursuing her higher education was her strategy for recovering her emotional well-being (MacIntyre et al., 2022), hope, and inner peace (Oxford & Curtis, 2020). According to Standish et al. (2022), trying various strategies to bring peace in our lives is what everyone can do so that many of the problems in the world we live in would be resolved. Sima also, as understood from her narratives, implemented this strategy to build peace.

Kiarash described his strategy for constructing his peacebuilder identity when he explained his emotion-regulation strategies to become a patient teacher:

*I am working on my ability to connect with all of my students because I want to be a good teacher. Some of the students are difficult to deal with because they are not motivated at all. It's really challenging but it's my duty to teach them and manage the situation. [T]he manager of the institute also talked to me about how I can become a better teacher.*

According to Kiarash's narratives, in order to build his ideal identity, that is 'a patient teacher', he needs to develop a well-built interpersonal peace with his students, improve his ability to establish rapport, and manage adverse conditions constructively (Wamsler & Restoy, 2020). This finding agrees with the findings of Barcelos (2020), Fu (2021), Parathyas and Zorbas (2020), and Tajeddin and Bolouri (2023), who have all stated that gaining competence in better managing interpersonal interactions would lead to more peaceful relationships with people with whom language teachers professionally interact, including students and colleagues.

#### *The Manifestation of Peace Language: Hope, help, Harmony*

In order to address the third research question, the realization of the three components of peace language, the positive words, hope, help, and harmony (Oxford & Curtis, 2020) were detected in the participants' narratives:

Reza reported on experiencing peace and harmony in an adverse situation in one of his online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic in this excerpt:

*A few months ago, a class observer came to evaluate my performance, I lost my Internet connection and got kicked out of the class without being able to inform the observer or the students. Obviously, she [the observer] must have been really offended. So, I felt shameful and after a few days called her to apologize to her [...]. She told me not to get frustrated. She was very understanding.*

In Reza's unpleasant experience of anxiety and fear of being poorly evaluated, thanks to the help he received from his understanding supervisor, he overcame his anxiety and felt the genial support from one of his experienced colleagues. The hope and harmony (Oxford & Curtis, 2020) that the observer brought back to Reza's professional life provided him with inner

peace. These results further support the findings of Meijer et al. (2009) who indicated how language teachers find hope and harmony following the intervention of supervisors. From this narrative, we can infer how disseminating peace would result in the ripple effect of transformative peacebuilding, as was stated by Oxford, Olivero, et al. (2020) and Barcelos (2021). Moreover, this finding matches those observed by Parathyas and Zorbas (2020) who believed that trustworthy interactions among supervisors and teachers contribute to the construction of interpersonal peace.

Sima's choice to pursue her academic studies was influenced by the help she received from her supportive husband. The desire for regaining harmony and happiness in teaching English involves her hope to develop as a teacher by improving her qualifications and teaching competencies. She believed the help she received from her husband was bringing back her inner peace. According to Standish et al. (2022), peace could be a remedy for today's world. In Sima's case, help was the key to regaining her hope for finding harmony; therefore, interpersonal and inner peace improved her world. She also infuses hope into her professional ideal identity through her students' achievements.

Kiarash had lost his inner and interpersonal peace and was striving to overcome the lack of harmony in his professional life. He explained how he found hope by experiencing a heartening moment:

*One day I asked my students to write a paragraph. One of the most unwilling students had correctly used the expressions and structures that I had taught her before. It was really encouraging. It made my day! It was a special moment that I felt like [being] helpful.*

Kiarash was hoping that he could harmonize the difficult situations he confronted in the beginning years of his profession by improving his emotion-regulation skills. This strategy to build peace among language teachers and students was also reported by Tajeddin and Bolouri (2023) and Wamsler and Restoy (2020). He also hoped to experience peace and harmony in his interpersonal interactions with his students by receiving help (Oxford & Curtis, 2020) from a more experienced person. As another peace strategy, Kiarash received help from the manager of the language center where he started his teaching profession. This finding is consistent with those of Meijer et al. (2009) that language teachers develop presence and find harmony after receiving help from a more competent other. Kiarash further mentioned that after about eight months he found that some of his unenthusiastic students were expressing signs of interest in the lessons and his manner of teaching. By experiencing the state of being a helpful person, he recaptured his jeopardized harmony and regained his hope.

## **Implications**

Findings from this study can have several practical implications for teacher educators as well as experienced and novice language teachers. Developing a professional identity as a peacebuilder along with fostering language teachers' personal identities helps language teachers connect more effectively with their profession itself and the people they encounter as a result of their teaching profession. Furthermore, it seems that language teachers can build better student-teacher and self-profession relationships if research-informed content on peace,

regarding its dimensions, strategies, and language, be included in language teacher education programs. Constructing a peacebuilder identity can also help early-career teachers to transform their professional identity tensions into harmonious experiences of finding love and peace in their teaching. Likewise, experienced teachers and supervising teachers, should they gain peace knowledge and develop a peacebuilder identity, could build peace in their interactions with their early-career colleagues.


## **Conclusion**


As mentioned earlier, the number of studies on language teacher identity and peace is limited. Future studies could investigate language teachers' peacebuilder identity in different educational contexts and countries. Larger numbers of participants could also help to make the results more generalizable. Research on peacebuilder identity of language teachers could yield further results if, for instance, researcher-teachers employed different methodologies such as autoethnographic research to communicate how they integrate peace into their own lives and the lives of others.

This study was an attempt to illuminate the ideal peacebuilder identity of English language teachers, who, according to Olivero and Oxford (2018), have the potential to effectively incorporate peace into language education. The process of constructing peace is fundamentally dependent on communication and the use of the three words of peace language: hope, help, and harmony (Oxford & Curtis, 2020) across six dimensions of peace: inner, interpersonal, intergroup, intercultural, international, and ecological peace (Oxford, 2013). This study also presented the strategies language teachers employed to fulfill their desired peacebuilder identity.

The findings from the teachers' narratives have made clear the manifestation of the three themes of hope, help, and harmony within the framework of the positive 3-H words (Oxford & Curtis, 2020). Involvement in hopeful, helpful, and/or harmonious interpersonal interactions is a turning point in the construction of the language teachers' peacebuilder identity. Developing a professional identity as a peacebuilder along with fostering their personal identities helps language teachers to connect more effectively with their profession and the people they encounter as a result of their teaching profession. Furthermore, it seems that language teachers can build better student-teacher and self-profession relationships if research-informed content on peace, regarding its dimensions, strategies, and language, were included in language teacher education programs. Constructing a peacebuilder identity can also help early-career teachers to transform their professional identity tensions into harmonious experiences of finding love and peace in their profession.

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## Appendix

### Interview Schedule

1. Would you please introduce yourself?
2. How do you define peace?
3. If you want to build peace as a teacher, what type of teacher will you try to become?
4. Have you ever found peace in your interactions with your students, colleagues, and/or supervisors?
5. What can you do in the future to build peace in your professional interactions?
6. What can you do to connect with (build peace between you and) your job?
7. Who can **help** you in becoming a peacebuilder teacher?
8. How does **hope** play a role in making peace?
9. Have you ever lost **harmony** in your professional life?
10. What brings harmony and peace to your teaching job?
11. What was the most peaceful moment you experienced in your job?
12. Would you like to elaborate on anything else about becoming a peacebuilder teacher?