THE PEACE DIVIDEND OF VALUING NON-DOMINANT LANGUAGES IN LANGUAGE-IN-EDUCATION POLICIES IN MYANMAR

Mary Shepard Wong[1]
Azusa Pacific University, USA

Abstract

This article is a literature review and analysis of the links between social cohesion/peacebuilding and the use of Non-Dominant Languages (NDLs) in education with an application for Myanmar, a country rich in linguistic diversity, rife with political conflict, and in the midst educational reforms. Findings indicate that investment in multilingual education (MLE) has the potential to enhance learning and foster peacebuilding. This paper provides a description of an adapted "4R" theoretical framework (Novelli & Sayed, 2016) and a summary of educational reforms in Myanmar to contextualize the discussion. The paper argues that the double threat to the NDLs that comes from Burmese and/or English as the medium of instruction can endanger minority languages, learning, and peacebuilding. Finally, findings suggest that engaging in dialogue, research, advocacy and teacher development in MLE can raise awareness of the peace dividend of valuing language diversity and the importance of language policies vis-à-vis learning and peacebuilding.

Keywords: Myanmar, language-in-education policy, multilingual education, ethnolinguistic minority

Introduction

This article examines language-in-education policies and practices in Myanmar, reviewing the literature and analyzing the extent to which mother tongue-based multilingual education (MLE) can be a resource for learning and peace building. Specifically, it argues that there is a connection between language policies in education and social cohesion. It begins by discussing the impact language policies can have on social cohesion, learning, and marginalization, as well as the impact of English used in education generally. It suggests an adapted 4R framework to analyze teacher agency in promoting peace, which highlights the

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[1] *Correspondence*: Global Studies, Sociology, & TESOL Department, 901 East Alosta Ave., Azusa, CA 91702-7000; Email: mwong@apu.edu.

importance of language policies and practices. The next section contextualizes the inquiry in Myanmar, providing an overview of the ongoing peace process and the history of language-in-education in Myanmar, before providing two cases of NDLs use in education in Myanmar today. The final section begins with a re-articulation of the peace dividend of valuing languages by locating the studies discussed in this paper into five categories: language as a problem, right, resource, power, and pathway to peace. It concludes with four approaches to move forward, which are 1) *political*: engaging in the processes to facilitate dialogue; 2) *scholarly*: collecting data, networking, and conducting research on language use in education; 3) *legal:* advocating for legislation for language rights, laws, and policies; and 4) *educational*: investing in MLE and teacher development. The purpose of this paper to is draw attention to the importance of language policies vis-à-vis learning and peacebuilding and apply an adapted version of the 4R theoretical framework (Novelli et al. 2015) taking Myanmar as a case in point. Myanmar is chosen as the focus because of its rich linguistic and cultural diversity with over 100 languages spoken by 30% of the population, and also for its need for peace with its long history of ethnic conflict that spans six decades.

This paper uses the following definitions of key terms. The country Myanmar is referred to as "Burma" when discussing events pre-1989, as that is what it was referred to at the time in the literature. The dominant language of the country, the language of the Burman tribe, is referred to as "Burmese". Although most people today refer to this language as "Myanmar," the author agrees with Callahan (2003) who contends this is confusing and dismissive of the more than one hundred other languages spoken there. Non-dominant languages (NDLs) refers to language varieties that are not considered the most prominent in terms of number, prestige, or official use by the government or educational system (Southeast Asian Ministers Education Organization SEAMEO, 2009, p. 12). Finally, MLE refers to education that begins in the language that the learner speaks most fluently, and then gradually introduces other languages (United National Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO definition).

Language Policies vis-à-vis Social Cohesion and Education

The impact of language policies on social cohesion

Biodiversity is essential for ecosystems, yet linguistic diversity is often seen as a problem while it, too, could be viewed as contributing to human flourishing. Even though all people have an ethnicity, those in the minority are referred to as "ethnic groups," and issues associated with ethnic groups are called "ethnic problems" however unsettling it may be to view one's identity as a "problem". Brown and Ganguly (2003) contend that "ethnic problems [sic] are important political problems" because they can "disrupt political and economical development [and] rip a country apart" (p. 1). They also note that "ethnic problems" are shaped by political leaders, governments, and policies. Because language is a critical marker for many groups, language policies, in particular, are highly important and often contentious, even to the point of being the catalyst of revolts and armed conflicts. History has shown that those in power have used language policies to legitimize, maintain, and extend their power, and that many armed conflicts have ignited over misguided language policies. Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson (2017) speak of the close connection of language diversity and peace quite convincingly, citing the examples of Ukraine and Bangladesh to demonstrate that "unduly restricting [language rights] can trigger major political upheavals" (p.13). They note that laws in Ukraine that restricted the use of the Russian language led to the 2014 crisis and later a civil war. Likewise, the imposition of Urdu as Bangladesh's sole official language

in 1948, in spite of the fact that over 90% of the population in Bangladesh have Bangla/Bengali as their mother tongue, was a key factor in the Bangladesh genocide where estimates of more than 200,000 people were slaughtered in 1971 (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2017).

While Brown and Ganguly's (2003) assessment of the importance of language policies is a valid one, Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (2017) show that viewing ethnic and linguistic diversity as a "problem" is limited and overly simplistic. I concur, as this view misses the opportunity of harnessing the benefits of language diversity for the purposes of peacebuilding. An alternative view is to see language diversity as a resource rather than a problem (Ruiz, 1988), which can be used to promote the social cohesion of a nation. A similar argument was made by Omer and Springs (2013) about religion in their book on religious nationalism. If religion is seen as uniquely prone to cause division and violence, then one is blinded to the potential contribution it can have to promote peace. Omer and Springs (2013) ask, "Is it possible to critically assess negative versions of such interconnections [in their case, of religion and political engagement] and to reconceive and deploy them constructively? What might constructive examples look like? (p. xiv). I ask what a reconceived and reconstructed understanding of the value of language diversity might look like. Language diversity, like religious diversity, is not anti-modern, backward, essentially volatile, an economic drain, or a detriment to a nation. It is, in fact, a national resource, and valuing diversity, whether it is ethnic, religious, or linguistic, which are often fused and not easily separated, may be the very means through which sustainable peace can be achieved in Myanmar.

The impact of language policies on learning and marginalization

There are substantial gains and losses at stake to citizens and their nations in the language policy debates. Scholars have demonstrated many benefits that MLE can have on students such as giving children who do not speak the dominant language greater confidence, a connection with their home language, culture, and identity, and improved education gains, just to name a few. See Wisbey (2017) for other contributions of MLE. These gains are multiplied as students in MLE are less likely to drop out of school and more likely to contribute to society. In addition, these students and their families are more inclined to view the state with less suspicion if their cultures are no longer ignored and their language rights are not denied. One must also consider the potential harm and cost of not providing education in a language that children can comprehend. Civil unrest can result when groups feel they are not respected and find themselves with fewer resources to advance due to an incomplete and inadequate education. Benson (2004) highlights the monumental task of learning in a language one does not comprehend, using "submersion" (Skutnabb-Kangas's term) instead of immersion to describe the process as it is like holding students under water instead of teaching them to swim. This is often exacerbated by the dire educational conditions that these children of marginalized communities face including inadequate and substandard teacher education, curricula, and school facilities. As Benson (2004) notes, "submersion makes both learning and teaching extremely difficult, particularly when the language of instruction is also foreign to the teacher" (p.2).

Considering the case of Myanmar, which is discussed in more detail in the section below, Lall and South (2018) found that the majority (70%) of teachers working in Myanmar's ethnic minority areas do not speak local languages. This is because government school teachers who are sent to these areas often speak Burmese and not the local languages. This impacts a large number of students in Myanmar because it is estimated that 30 percent of

children do not speak Burmese when entering the education system (Kosonen, 2009) which presents a major challenge for their learning. This maintains the vicious cycle, as the process of being "pushed out" of the education system exacerbates their marginalization because they are left with little means to improve their economic and social standing. Some people might argue that the cost of providing MLE is too high. However, the cost of not providing an education for children in a language they can understand is even higher if one considers its impact on families, communities, and even the nation. To put this in a positive way using a business analogy, I contend that there is an untapped peace dividend to supporting student learning with MLE, as the investment yields much needed peace "returns" for the nation.

The impact of English in education

As for the role of English in this discussion, myths such as the more English taught in schools the better and the earlier English is taught the better, need to be exposed and contested (Phillipson, 1992). Policy makers need to ask themselves English at what cost? This is especially true of the ten nations of ASEAN, who may be swept up in the race to learn English now that it is the official language of the ASEAN organization. It is important that these nations remember to value and protect the over one thousand NDLs spoken in the region (Simons & Fennig, 2017), just as they would value and project other national resources (Redacted, 2017).   If too much English is offered too soon without the support of mother tongue languages, and in some cases replacing the mother tongues, the learning of thousands of children who do speak the dominant languages will be put in jeopardy (Bunce, Phillipson, Rapatahana, & Tupas, 2016).

South and Lall (2016a, 2016b) have shown in schools in Myanmar that when NDLs are valued and maintained in early primary education, this can support social cohesion. In addition, when the national language is used as the medium of instruction in the later primary years and on into secondary school, a sense of citizenship is maintained. Kirkpatrick (2012a, 2012b, 2014) argues that local languages should be used as the medium of instruction (MOI) in the first three years of primary school, and the national language used as the MOI after that with continued support of the L1 in order to maintain the mother tongue. Moreover, English, Kirkpatrick contends, should be delayed until secondary school, using an Asian lingua-franca approach, which draws from local forms of Englishes and local materials. This allows for the NDLs to be prioritized, while not dismissing the role that English might play in gaining access to regional, and international communities.

Many scholars (Benson & Kosonen, 2013; Kirkpatrick, 2012a, 2012b; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2017) note other negative consequences of inequitable language policies, such as when a language policy calls for a dominant language to replace the local language in primary education. Some scholars have referred to English as "the big bad wolf" (Skutnabb-Kangas et al., 2009, p. 325) and the "hydra" (Bunce et al., 2016) due to the damaging impact that prioritization of English can have on other languages and cultures when used uncritically in education. Bunce et al. (2016) note that English expansion often leads to the loss of other languages and cultures, and argue that "Language policy needs to change in more equitable directions . . . [with] greater respect for languages other than English" (p.1). They argue that English can be used alongside students' first languages and other relevant local languages. In the case of Myanmar, these other languages would be Burmese, and in some cases an additional language spoken by a larger ethnolinguistic group in the area, in addition to the student's mother tongue. Bunce et al. (2016) state that unfortunately, English is replacing local languages at a fast pace and call for government officials to instate language policies that protect NDLs. As noted previously, if this is not

done, it could disrupt social cohesion or lead to language loss. This is tragic because education should be used to promote peace instead of undermine it. The following section suggests how this might be done and describes a theological framework that scholars are using to examine the extent that education, and more specifically, teachers can be engaged as agents of peace.

Applying the 4R Framework to Promote Peace

Language policies have power; they can enhance learning or thwart it, support justice or deny it, promote peace or undermine it. Pope Paul VI (1972) said, "If you want peace, work for justice" (p. 1). Novelli et al. (2015) apply a peace and social justice framework to analyze teachers' role as peace agents in Myanmar referred to as the 4Rs (Redistribution, Recognition, Representation, Reconciliation). It should be noted that a holistic approach is needed to understand the full potential teachers can have in promoting peace and social cohesion, which acknowledges that transformation of enduring and systemic unjust structures is necessary in addition to educational and teacher-led efforts (Lopes Cardozo & Maber, 2019).

Table 1
Analyzing teacher agency through the 4 Rs with special consideration of language-in-education policies and practices (adapted from Novelli & Sayed, 2016, p. 19).

	Potential indicators that education is supporting teacher agency for peacebuilding	Potential indicators that language policies and practices are supporting peacebuilding
Redistribution (addressing inequalities)	• Equitable resource distribution as well as vocational and developmental opportunities for teachers from diverse identity groups • Targeted deployment and recruitment to redress inequities • Capacity development to effectively address inequalities in the classroom, and the school	• Equitable language resource distribution as well as vocational and developmental for teachers from diverse language groups • Targeted deployment and recruitment to redress inequities in language use • Capacity development to effectively address inequalities in the classroom, and school in terms of language use
Recognition (respecting difference)	• Diversification of the teaching work force • Empowering teachers to recognize and respect differences • Empowering teachers to communicate differences empathically and conflict-sensitively	• Diversification of the teaching work force in terms of their language use • Empowering teachers to recognize and respect linguistic differences • Empowering teachers to communicate language differences empathically and conflict-sensitively
Representation (encouraging participation)	• Ensuring opportunities of participation and representation of teachers in education structures, across backgrounds and identity groups	• Ensuring opportunities of participation and representation of teachers in education structures, across linguistic backgrounds and identity groups

	Potential indicators that education is supporting teacher agency for peacebuilding	Potential indicators that language policies and practices are supporting peacebuilding
	• The right to join trade unions • Participatory school culture and administration • Enabling teachers to foster active participation in the classroom	• The right to join language rights groups • Multilingual school culture and administration • Enabling teachers to foster active participation in the language classroom
Reconciliation (dealing with past, present and future injustices)	• Teaching the past, present and future • Understanding one's own positionality when teaching the past, present and future • Healing and 'understanding that humanizes' • Teaching multiple narratives and histories	• Teaching Myanmar's language policies' past, present and future • Understanding one's own positionality when teaching the past, present and future of Myanmar's language policies • Healing and 'understanding that humanizes' those who speak different languages • Teaching multiple narratives and histories in different languages and about different language groups

Novelli and Sayed's (2016) table of teacher agency uses the 4R framework as a tool to gauge how education is supporting the peace process. The table helps to examine the extent to which inequalities are addressed in the redistribution of resources, the recognition of difference, the representation and participation of teachers in education and peace process, and in the reconciliation process, referring to dealing with past wrongs and injustices. I have added an additional column on the right that can be used to examine how language policies and practices in particular are supporting peacebuilding, extending the theoretical framework to highlight concerns raised on language policies in Myanmar (see the last column, "Potential indicators that language policies and practices support peacebuilding"). Although language policies and practices might be understood to be included in the previous column, the addition of this language focused column ensures languages issues are specifically addressed.

Skutnabb-Kangas contends that language rights advocates need to be aware of and make use of existing laws, policies, and documents that support language rights. This is relevant because Myanmar agreed to work toward the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 4.7. includes language about rights, peace, and diversity. It states:

> By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, **through education** for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, **human rights**, gender equality, promotion of a **culture of peace** and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of **cultural diversity** and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. (United Nations, 2015, emphasis added)

Thus, working toward the language focused indicators in the far righthand column would

help Myanmar fulfill its pledge to support this SDG.

Contextualizing the Inquiry in Myanmar

Overview of the peace process in current day Myanmar

Myanmar is at a crucial turning point, or what some have called a "critical juncture" (Lall & South, 2018, p. 482). Reconciliation of ethnolinguistic minority groups and the state has been identified as a major challenge facing Myanmar, which has the notorious distinction of having one of the longest civil wars in history. For example, the Karen and Kachin ethnic groups have been engaged in a decades-long armed resistance struggle with the Burman-dominated Central State, and their respective Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAO) have been the two groups leading the struggle for social justice and greater autonomy. In November 2015, Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) swept the national elections, ushering in Myanmar's first civilian government since 1962. However, peace under the new NLD-led government has not been realized, and armed conflicts have escalated in some regions.

A report on the role of education in peacebuilding in Myanmar stated that "At present, there is a stark divide between the national peace process and education reform" (Higgins, Maber, Lopez Cardozo, & Shah, 2016, p. 10) and that better consideration of the role of education in the peace process is needed. Ethnic tensions are one of the key issues Myanmar needs to address as it seeks to join the global economy after decades of neglect of the education sector under military rule. Research that provides deeper and more nuanced understandings of how language policy, teachers, and education might contribute to peacebuilding has implications not only for Myanmar but also for Southeast Asia and beyond. Four substantial reports have been published in this area with support from the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and UNESCO, namely Novelli et al. (2015); South & Lall (2016b); Higgins et al. (2016); and Lo Bianco & UNICEF (2016).

Apart from these four reports, two other substantial research studies have been conducted, linking language, peace, and education in Myanmar. Through data collected in Myanmar between 2014-2016, Novelli and Sayed (2016) explored the potential and limitations of teachers as peace agents and the ways their agency is both enabled and constrained. Drawing upon work by Galtung (1976) and Lederach (1995; 1997), which looks at negative peace (stopping violence), positive peace (addressing the causes of violence), and drivers of conflict, they examine horizontal inequities, such as those between tribes, religions, and languages. Novelli and Sayed (2016) contend that studies show "a robust and consistent statistical relationship, across five decades, between higher levels of inequality in educational attainment between ethnic and religious groups, and the likelihood that a country will experience violent conflict" (p. 18). Through analysis of documents and transcripts of interviews and focus groups, they sought to identify elements of educational practices and policies that both enabled and constrained teachers as agents of peace.

Novelli and Sayed (2016) discuss the complexities involved in understanding and addressing conflicting local and national histories. They note that sometimes efforts to address the 4 Rs are in tension. They ask whether reconciliation should take priority over representation/recognition, for example when policies "intended to vindicate representation and recognition issues —might come into tension with policies that seek to smooth over difference and build national unity" (p. 22). Another example of the tension is when policies of redistribution, such as encouraging ethnolinguistic minority teachers to work in remote

areas, might produce resentment from others who feel threatened. Decisions of such policies are complex and must be contextualized and include all the stakeholders in the decision making process.

Another substantial article that speaks to the connections of language, peace, and education in Myanmar is authored by Lall & South (2018) which focuses on the issue of power dynamics in education policy debates, arguing that governmental and international agencies edged out the voices of the less powerful and less resourced "ordinary" citizens in the conflict affected areas, where language issues are of key importance. They note that these local actors were further marginalized when their schools were "flipped" into government schools that use Burmese as the MOI, instead of the students' mother tongue, and employ teachers who do not speak the languages of the students. Ironically, this was done in an effort to support the peace process, which sought to extend state-based education to the ethnic minority areas. In reality, however, it undermined the peace process as many of the ethnolinguistic minority groups' major grievance is language rights, which were taken away by opening the new government schools in which the students' mother tongues were no longer the MOI. Lall and South's (2018) analysis found that the attempt of the government to promote peace through education actually undermined it in some cases, which they believe was due to the fact that not all actors were represented in the process, which in terms of the 4R framework, is a representation issue.

In summary, these reports provide useful baseline studies on language-in-education policies and practices in Myanmar. Yet more needs to be done to interrogate the policies and investigate how the language practices are being experienced by actors on the ground and how this impacts the peacebuilding process. To better understand the context of this analysis, a brief history of language-in-education policies and practices in the context of Myanmar is needed, which is where we now turn.

Overview of language-in-education in Burma/Myanmar past and present

Analysis of language-in-education in Burma/Myanmar needs to be contextualized by identifying the location, political period, and actors under question. This is important as language policies and practices differ significantly according to these three variables of place, time, and persons. Consider location, for example. Substantial variations can be found in language-in-education practices in the central region, dominated by Burmans (who are mostly Buddhist), compared to language practices in the former "Frontier Areas," a term used in the literature to refer to areas populated largely by ethnolinguistic minorities which includes groups who are Buddhist, but also groups who are mostly Christian, Muslim, Animist, or from other religious groups.

Key historic periods to consider when analyzing language-in-education policies in Burma/Myanmar include the pre-colonial era (up to1884), colonial period (1885-1948), post-independence (1948-1962), socialist period (1962-1988), and military rule / NLD leadership (1988- current). Finally, in addition to where and when they are situated, language-in-education policies and practices vary according to the actors or institutions themselves, whether they be well-off Chinese in post-independence Rangoon (current day Yangon) attending a private Chinese medium school, or a struggling ethnolinguistic minority community in the former Frontier Areas, forced to build and attend a Burmese medium school (Callahan, 2003, p.171). Thus, place, time, and person are all crucial factors to consider when seeking to understand language-in-education policies and practices.

The earliest schools in Burma, monastic schools, date back to the 11th century, and in most cases used Burmese as the MOI, although many other languages were used in the

former Frontier Areas (Callahan, 2003). In pre-colonial government schools in the central region, Burmese was the MOI, but this began to change in the early to mid-1800s when the British colonial government starting using English in schools in many of the 5,000 non-monastic schools that they established (Cheesman, 2003; Hillman, 1946). Although the British started off using Burmese as the MOI, local parents demanded English because they assumed it would provide greater economic benefits (Callahan, 2003). The English language was viewed as important to the British, as it prepared local civil servants to serve the colonial government. The 'English Schools' that used English as the sole MOI were considered the most elite schools in Burma at that time (Hillman, 1946).

The British occupation did not go uncontested, and resentment erupted resulting in a push back on English, which took the form of Burmanization and Burmese literacy campaigns. The Our Burma Association (Dobama Asiayone) promoted Burmese over English while ignoring the scores of local NDLs as expressed in their slogan:

> Burma is our country.
> Burmese is our literature.
> Burmese language is our language.
> Love our country.
> Praise our literature.
> Respect our language (Callahan, 2003, p. 151)

In the 1920s, resentment to the British increased leading up to Burma's independence from Britain in 1948. At this time, there was a concern in Burma that using English as the MOI had resulted in a devaluing of the native languages and cultures of Burma (Kyaw, 1993). In response to this sentiment, in1964 the language of instruction at all levels of state-run primary and secondary schools was changed to Burmese, with English taught only as a secondary language starting in grade five (Allott, 1985). In 1965 universities followed suit, with the New University Law making the language of instruction in all university classes, Burmese, and no longer English. In the following decade, students' English language quality declined due in part to the change to Burmese as MOI in schools (Lall, 2016). Some people regretted this decline and felt mastery of both Myanmar and English would help Myanmar. The New Education Programme was introduced in 1981, making English a compulsory subject at every grade level, beginning in kindergarten and establishing English as the language of instruction for science subjects and economics in upper secondary grades (Fen, 2005).

Callahan (2003) contends that from colonial rule to post independence in Burma, that "insider politics" dominated over "outsider politics," meaning the struggle for power in the center of the country took precedence over contending with the issues of the ethnolinguistic minority groups on the periphery. With this focus on the center of the country, many ethnolinguistic minority groups in the former Frontier Areas of Burma were able to educate their children in their own languages. This changed in the 1980's when "outsider politics" became a priority and the Burmanization efforts and literacy campaigns finally reached the former Frontier Areas. This was experienced by the minorities as a kind of "internal colonization" (Callahan, 2003, p. 159). By 1982, ethnolinguistic minorities felt they were under "linguistic siege from Rangoon" (Callahan, 2003, p. 164). In government schools, Burmese was now the language of education and the status of minority languages was undermined.

After 1988, the government's cultural homogenization process virtually criminalized teaching in non-Burmese Indigenous languages, although now this has eased up and teaching in Indigenous languages is allowed in many areas. These policies favored an elite group over all others, and one language over all others which was a means of shaming other languages into nonexistence. An ironic result of the spread of Burmese among the many minority groups is that now the ethnolinguistic minority groups have a common language with which to use to face their monolingual opposition. Fluency in Burmese "allows minorities to negotiate with the soldiers who commandeer local men, rice, land and cattle for development or counterinsurgency projects" (Callahan, 2003, p. 174), and allows minorities to speak back to authority.

Overview of current educational reforms in Myanmar

Myanmar is currently in the midst of several educational reforms. In 2010, the Myanmar government launched the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR, 2014) with financial and technical support from international development partners to analyze the education system and provide recommendations for reform. Several of the recommendations that originated in the CESR are being implemented; for example, the Ministry of Education is developing new textbooks for primary and secondary students (Japan International Cooperation Agency JICA, 2017) that encourage more active learning rather than relying on rote memorization. Other national-level reforms involve teacher training. The Ministry of Education is currently establishing national teacher education standards so that teacher education programs across the country will be aligned and students will be provided similar knowledge and skills (UNESCO, 2016, p. 19). In addition, UNESCO has provided technical assistance to upgrade Myanmar's Education Colleges from 2-year to 4-year degree-granting institutions, with updated textbooks and a revised curriculum (Ei Shwe Phyu, 2017; UNESCO, 2016). Finally, the ministry has started to transform the former 5-4-2 system of basic education to K +12 system starting in the 2016-2017 academic year (Myanmar's letter to UNESCO president, 2017).

This process of educational reform has not gone uncontested, due in part to the lack of representation and recognition felt by ethnic groups who were marginalized in the process. Lall and South (2018) discuss the power dynamics of language and education policy and highlight the "missed opportunities for transformative change to address the concerns of marginalized groups" (p. 482) in the reform process and identify major differences in the views among three main groups: the ordinary citizens such as those in the remote areas most affected by language policies; national organizations and civic and political groups; and the international donor agencies. They lament that the strong link between language-in-education policies and the peace process has all but been ignored, which was demonstrated in the limited attention to language and language policy at the latest Union Peace Conferences in August 2016, May 2017, and July 2018 (p. 485). This is in spite of the fact that "[s]ince the 1960s, the suppression of minority languages [. . .] has been one of the main grievances underlying more than half a century of armed conflict" (p. 486).

It is regrettable that the educational reforms have not prioritized the larger role that education can have in promoting peace, especially through language-in-education policies and educational practices. This is especially true because of the connections between teacher recruitment/deployment and peace building. However, teacher recruitment and deployment are not the only key issues. Teacher education is also important in seeking to establish a multilingual teacher base that can promote peacebuilding through MLE. Who is selected or invited to become teachers and who is provided in-service training are key questions to ask.

But even before that can take place, the quality of the teacher educators, as well as the quality of the teacher education curriculum, methodology, and the practicum experience must be established as all of these factors will greatly impact how effectively teachers use MLE to support student learning.   Other key issues apart from recruitment and deployment mentioned earlier, and the quality of teacher education/development, are compensation and promotion; because after teacher candidates are selected, trained, and deployed, they need to be motivated to stay in their positions.

Educational reforms need to address inequities faced by NDL speakers in the current educational system. My colleagues and I interviewed 17 students, teachers, teacher-educators, and administrators in Yangon and Mandalay universities who voiced concerns over the disparities found in remote schools. They spoke of the low pay, lack of promotion opportunities, and difficult teaching conditions that discouraged teachers from taking and/or keeping positions in ethnolinguistic minority areas (Redacted, et al., 2019). Novelli and Sayed (2016) also found inequities in resources and provision of teachers between the government, monastic, ethnic education systems. They noted that when the least qualified and youngest teachers who are sent to some of the most challenging environments, this exacerbates the situation and leads to further inequities in outcomes. There are no easy answers to this problem, for as one seeks to balance the 4 Rs in a contextualized response, it can pit local/regional issues against national issues. Novelli and Sayed (2016) note that providing incentives to train local teachers to work in remote areas addresses the local recognition issue, but may do so at the expense of national issues of nation building. Conversely, if teachers from the center are sent to the periphery, this addresses redistribution, but may negatively impact the local teachers' sense of self-worth and confidence.

Lall and South (2016) found that in some areas, minority languages are being introduced in state schools. Although this is to be applauded, there is a risk that in seeking to relocate mother-tongue speaking teachers to teach non-dominant languages in state schools, these teachers are "poached," from the remote areas, leaving the most vulnerable communities with fewer teachers (p. 141). Priority needs to be placed upon the most vulnerable students, and efforts to support peace need to be discussed from multiple perspectives, with consideration of the potential negative ramifications. Involving local stakeholders such as teachers and parents in planning and implementing possible solutions will help to mitigate such negative consequences. In spite of these complexities, and one might argue indeed because of them, a commitment to peacebuilding is needed within teacher education programs to equip Myanmar teachers to prepare its future leaders. This is not easy due to the lack of attention to NDLs as well as the complex political context in which the current educational reforms are taking place (Lall & South, 2018; South & Lall, 2015).

International partners such as international Non-government Organizations (INGOs) and agencies have also had an impact on the peace process. In contrast to Lall and South's (2018) analysis describing the rather negative impact that these INGOs and agencies have had on peacebuilding in Myanmar, Novelli and Sayed (2016) contend that external partners have spurred innovation, helping local teachers find a balance between respect for the current military rule and a reflection of renewal and a more inclusive future in reforms in pedagogy and curriculum. They found that with support from JICA, Myanmar's primary curriculum is being reformed and this includes the representation of different minority groups and a reduction of past references to the military.

Two cases of NDLs use in education systems in Myanmar

Lall and South (2014) document two examples of the use of NDLs in education in Myanmar, comparing the Karen and Mon ethnolinguistic minority education approaches. Both of these ethnic communities/nationalities have been engaged in armed conflicts with the government on and off for over half a century and have developed, in the words of Lall & South (2014), "extensive ethno-nationalist-orientated school systems running parallel to those of the official state system – which has effectively banned ethnic language education, since the 1960s" (p. 298-299). As noted previously, one of the main grievances of these groups is their forcible assimilation ("Burmanisation") by state actors, which is manifested in policies that do not allow them to use their NDLs in the state school system (Lall & South, 2014, p. 299). This is true in spite of research that documents that mother tongue instruction improves the quality of education and promotes equity (Benson & Kosonen, 2013; SEAMEO, 2009).

Lall and South (2014) describe the different results of these two mother-tongue based educational systems. It is important to note that the two groups have very different political histories and conditions that led to their different approaches to MLE, so in some ways a direct comparison may not seem fair. However, the comparison is informative and "fair" as long as readers keep in mind their different political situations which continue to evolve. It may not be surprising that the group with the longer conflict with the military, the Karen, have a more separatist identity. Karen students who graduate from their MLE system often do not have sufficient skills in Burmese to join the Myanmar higher education system. They have learned English and (Sgaw) Karen languages but have not learned Burmese, so are left at a disadvantage to engage with the government. As Lall and South (2014) state, "To a significant degree, the separatist nature of the Karen education regime can be explained by the failure of the Karen National Union (KNU) to reach a ceasefire agreement with the government in the 1990s" (p. 318). There is hope that the KNU will be able to re-imagine and reform their Karen education once a true case-fire takes place. And it is the Mon system, described below, that the Karen can consider when they are ready.

Lall and South (2014) contend that the Mon case is a potential model or "template" for non-state ethnic education as it supports the local NDL (Mon), while also providing support for the local dominant language (Burmese), all while keeping the international language (English) at bay. They suggest that the Mon's case combines the best of both worlds, maintaining their own Mon culture and language, without rejecting Burmese. The Mon have not experienced armed conflict for over two decades, so this more inclusive system works for them. We have yet to see if the Karen might follow suit, after a period of peace once some trust has been developed and the advantages of working with and not apart from the government system becomes a potential reality.

The Peace Dividend of Valuing Languages

Overview. I have argued that viewing languages as resources can result in not only educational benefits, but also benefits for social cohesion and reconciliation. Ruiz (1988) contends that a language-as resource orientation "can help to ease tensions between majority and minority communities" (p. 15). Lo Bianco (2013, 2016a, 2016b) has researched and reported on the link between language policies and social cohesion in Myanmar. He asserts that language policies can lead to conflict, either in a covert, overt, or camouflaged manner, and that languages are "both a marker of ethnic identity and the mediator of cultural, symbolic and material resources" (Lo Bianco, 2013, p. 27). He contends that language has a powerful influence on all aspects of life, as it is a gatekeeper in schools, the means by which

one is promoted in the workforce, and the mechanism used by nation-states to either include or exclude its people. Lo Bianco, Slaughter, & Schapper (2016), discussing strategies to develop multilingual education in Myanmar, call for a comprehensive and inclusive approach, stating "there is an urgent need for inclusive, democratic, language planning to take account of all communication needs of communities. National language planning activities should address, in a comprehensive way, the totality of a nation's communication needs" (p. 40). Lo Bianco (2016b) notes the unique pathway to peace that language can provide, stating "disputes around language problems often represent a positive opening as well, sometimes the means where by entry to solutions can be explored" (p. 3). He promotes a "language-problem-solving facilitated dialogue," strategy, detailed more below.

Language as a problem, right, resource, power, and pathway to peace. Before moving on to the next section, which suggests possible ways forward, I will summarize the contributions and approaches presented in this article so far by scholars who have researched issues of language-in-education and peacebuilding in countries such as Myanmar. First, I noted that Brown and Ganguly (2003) argued that language diversity is an important "problem" that must be taken into consideration when working toward peacebuilding, thus highlighting language in the discussion, but from a *language-as-problem* orientation.

Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson's work (2017) demonstrated the threat that dominant languages such as Burmese and English can have on NDLs, arguing from a *language-as-rights* approach. Skutnabb-Kangas and others have portrayed dominant languages such as English as the "big bad wolf" and a "hydra." They contend dominant languages should be contained, not discarded, and are best used alongside children's mother tongues in the early years of primary school, but not in place of them.

Lall and South (2014; 2018) concur, but adopt a *language-as-resource* approach. They also argue that the NDLs should be prioritized for young learners, and that the dominant language should be introduced soon thereafter, because a good command of Burmese allows graduates to contribute to the larger society, while valuing children's home languages supports their learning and cultural identity formation. Burmese is a threat if used as the *sole* MOI for minority children, but it can also be seen as a pathway to peace when used alongside the mother tongue to promote a sense of citizenship. Lall and South (2014) contend that the Mon educational approach is a potential model, avoiding the separatist agenda of the Karen educational approach, which resulted in an isolated ethnic group that could not fully engage with the nation-state. In their most recent work, Lall and South (2018) highlight the power dynamics at play and the importance that language policies and practices have in the peacebuilding process. They argue that the "ordinary citizens," referring to many minorities in the remote areas, are the actors who are often the most impacted by language-in-education policies and yet are the ones left out of the process of forming the policies. This might be conceived as *language-as-power* approach.

The approach of Novelli and Sayed (2016) is not from a specific language as problem, right, resource, or power approach, although it focuses on social justice. They attempt to view the issue holistically, placing the spotlight not as much on language, but on the teacher as the change agent and catalyst for transformation through the application of the 4R framework. I have argued that an adapted 4R framework that looks specifically at language might be considered. And finally, Lo Bianco's (2014, 2015, 2017) work showcases the power of language policy for good or for ill, and the potential of negotiated dialogue in forming language policies, thus creating what may be called *a pathway-to-peace* approach, which is where we turn now.

Possible Ways Forward

Why do government officials and even some educational actors fail to see the value of NDLs and the link between MLE and the peace process? As one respondent noted in the Lall and South (2018) study, "If the government wants peace, then they must recognize ethnic languages" (p. 492). Lall and South (2018) have come to the conclusion that "the peace process has largely failed to engage with issues of language and education policy, while education reforms have generally not addressed the aspirations and concerns of ethnic minority concerns" (p. 19). Perhaps the more pressing question is what can be done to cash in on the peace dividend of valuing NDLs in education? To address this question, four approaches are presented below, namely political, scholarly, legal, and educational.

Engage in the processes to facilitate dialogue (political approach)

A political approach, or one that includes the ministry of education and other government groups is one possible way forward. A collaborative process that has included governmental stakeholders has been used with some success in Myanmar. Lo Bianco's (2016b) "language problem-solving facilitated dialogue" (p. 4) uses "guided, collective study of evidence and shared authoring of solutions" (Lo Bianco, 2017, p. 2) to assist stakeholders to work toward reconciliation. With the support of the Language Education for Social Cohesion (LESC) Initiative (Lo Bianco & UNICEF, 2016) and its subsequent expansion into a Myanmar-specific project entitled "peace-promoting language planning" financed by the Myanmar office of UNICEF under the auspices of the Myanmar Ministry of Education and some state governments in the country, Lo Bianco brought together 68 people from 12 ethnic groups in 2014, using at least six languages to seek solutions to deep conflicts. The outcome was a 32-page language rights declaration and the launch of MINE, the Myanmar Indigenous Network for Education (Lo Bianco, 2016b, p.5). This is based on the premise that "Language is a common underlying cause of conflict in multi-ethnic societies" and that facilitated dialogue can be used as a method of conflict mediation in countries such as Myanmar "to mitigate language-based conflict, acknowledge language rights, and encourage societies to adopt a culture of dialogue" (Lo Bianco, 2017, p. 1). I prefer to see language as a resource rather than a problem, and while I concur that conflicts occur over language, this may be due in part to the "language as problem" orientation (Ruiz, 1988). Nonetheless, the process of facilitated dialogue holds much promise to not only form good policies, but also to use language policy formation as an inroad to peace. Due to the global importance of language and the links of language to peace, more research is needed to better understand the critical role of language in conflict resolution and social cohesion. As for the type of research needed, specific suggestions are provided in the following section.

Collect data, network, and conduct research on language use in education (scholarly/research approach)

Kosonen and Young (2009) have made several recommendations for the countries in Southeast Asia who want to support MLE, which involve data collection, research, and networking. They recommend that national-level reviews of current language and educational policies be conducted with the goal to provide legal status and support for ethnic minority languages. In the case of Myanmar, learning achievement surveys in the mother tongue and Burmese should be conducted so comparisons can be made between students based on their home languages. Accurate data that is disaggregated on the basis of the mother tongue of learners is needed. Ethnolinguistic classifications need to be based on actual use, and people's actual home languages, not on what is assumed based on their ethnicity or on

the ethnicities often assigned to people in the Southeast Asian context. Collaboration of educational planners and linguistic researchers needs to take place to complete language mapping. In addition to horizontal collaboration at the national level between Ministries of Education and universities working on these language issues, Kosonen and Young (2009) also recommend partnerships, collaborations, and networking at the regional level making the most of the expertise and assistance from international organizations.

Advocate for legislation for language rights, laws, and policies (legal approach)

Some of the strongest statements and most convincing support for language rights and laws can be found in the four-volume series on Language Rights (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2017). Readers are encouraged to see the 101 chapters for specific ways to address issues in their contexts. More specific to the region of Southeast Asia are policies recommended by Kosonen and Young (2009), which are paraphrased here and included due to their perceived relevance to Myanmar:

- Authorize use of oral mother tongue in classrooms where minority students are present, which requires teachers who can speak in students' mother tongues
- Use the learners' mother tongue at the pre-primary and primary levels
- Use the learners' mother tongue as a school subject in addition to a MOI at the early levels
- Attract more teachers from ethnolinguistic backgrounds for training in MLE approaches without "poaching" them from remote schools
- Develop reading materials in n NDLs and in some cases development of orthography of the NDLs. (p. 192).

Invest in MLE teacher development (educational approach)

The greatest inroads to change and transformation in Myanmar's peacebuilding process will no doubt come through teachers. Metro (2016), Redacted (2017), Redacted et al. (2019), and Novelli and Sayed (2016) come to this same conclusion. Metro (2016) found in her ethnographic research that teachers were not waiting for the state to make changes; they were instigating change on their own. My colleagues and I found teachers in training voiced strong concerns about inequitable distribution of educational resources for minority children in remote areas (Redacted et al., 2019). In a study of eight ethnolinguistic minority teachers in seminaries in Myanmar conducted in 2016, I found that all participants highly valued NDLs, and actively engaged in multilingual practices in their classrooms and communities and felt they had some role to play to promoting peace (Redacted , 2017). Novelli and Sayed (2016) also found teachers to be key in the peacebuilding process and described the "potent potential force" of teaches and their intense conviction and commitment. For more suggestions, see the third column of Table 1 for potential indicators that support language practices that support peacebuilding.

Conclusion

While some have suggested language policies and educational reform may be a possible inroad to peacebuilding in Myanmar, Lall and South (2018) have described educational reform as power-laden, complex and contentious, expressing concern that the opportunity to enact transformational change may be missed at this "critical juncture." This paper demonstrates how practices and policies that support and value language diversity and MLE may contribute to the reduction of armed conflict and help to foster social cohesion.

Paying greater attention to the power of language-in-education policies to better educate almost one-third of Myanmar children who speak languages other than Burmese at home, comes with an added "peace dividend" that is equally if not more important to the educational benefit. This untapped national resource of language diversity as a pathway to peace is good news for Myanmar, but also for linguistically rich regions such as northeast India, southern Thailand, and southern Philippines. The question remains, then, why is language diversity so undervalued? It was stated earlier that language diversity, like religious diversity, may be considered by some as a detriment to a nation-state, so the question remains of what can be done to change that perception.

This paper has addressed that question by demonstrating the important role that language policy has in social cohesion and peacebuilding as well as in education and learning. It contextualized this discussion in Myanmar by providing an overview of the ongoing and still incomplete peace process and educational reforms and the history of language-in-education policies in Myanmar. It provided an expanded version for the 4R theoretical framework, one that focuses on language as well as the teacher. It reviewed findings from recent major studies on language, education, and the peace process in Myanmar, placing the studies on a language as problem, right, resource, power, and pathway to peace approach continuum. There are several limitations to this paper. Reliable information on education in Myanmar is sometimes difficult to obtain as the circumstances are changing and conditions vary by region. Moreover, this paper would have been strengthened by local Myanmar-based co-authors, who could speak to the feasibility of the four possible ways forward in an attempt to link educational reforms with the peacebuilding process in Myanmar. These ways forward included engaging in dialogue, research, advocacy and teacher education to promote inclusive, equitable education.

More specifically, in the first way forward, Lo Bianco (2016b) provided a process to bring together major actors, including political stakeholders, to meet and discuss language policy and to produce documents that summarize their collaboration. While Lall and South (2018) note that some people felt that they were excluded from this UNICEF-led process, Lall and South admit that the UNICEF project was a step forward in raising awareness of the ethnic minority language issues. Lo Bianco's approach has potential, as it is through interaction and dialogue that perceptions and attitudes will be changed. Benson, Kosonen, Young, and others demonstrated a scholarly approach, emphasizing the need to network, collect data, and conduct research on language use and policies. Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson (2017), Bunce et al. (2016) and others call for a legal approach that leverages the power of advocacy and the legal system to support linguistic human rights, a necessary prerequisite to peace. Finally, Novelli and Sayed's (2016) work that focuses on the teacher as change agent and Lopes Cardozo and Maber's (2019) work on teachers as agents of peace, are also promising, as teachers are numerous and have a tremendous influence on a large amount of people. This combined with a focus on teacher education and development are needed to support MLE. In conclusion, it must be said that there is room for multiple actors employing multiple strategies and approaches to harness the potential power of language and education to promote peace in Myanmar, provided inclusive, evidenced-based language policies are in place to guide them.

At the 39th session of the UNESCO General Conference held in November 2017, the head of the Myanmar delegation, Dr. Myo Thein Gyi, stated the following to the president of UNESCO "Education must be inclusive, equitable and efficient for lifelong learning." He noted gains Myanmar had made in support for the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (United Nations, 2015), namely that "the number of the local languages that were taught at

their respective schools has increased from 32 languages in 2016-2017 Academic Year to 49 languages in 2017-2018 Academic Year" (Myanmar letter to UNESCO, 2017). As more children in Myanmar are provided an early education in a language they understand, and the languages and cultures of marginalized groups are recognized, represented, and respected in the curriculum and school classrooms, the peace dividend of these improved educational conditions will surely be realized.

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Author Bio

Mary Shepard Wong, PhD, is Professor at Azusa Pacific University (APU) in the department of Global Studies, Sociology and TESOL where she directs the field-based graduate TESOL program. She is two-time Fulbright scholar and has a PhD in International & Intercultural Education (USC), and Master degrees in Chinese (UCLA) and TESOL (APU). She has taught for over three decades in the U.S., China, Thailand, and Myanmar. She has conducted over 100 presentations and has publications with Routledge, Cambridge, and Multilingual Matters. Her research interests include teacher religious identity and English language teaching, and peacebuilding and education in Myanmar.