

DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK OF PEACE INTEGRATED CONSTRUCTIVE COMMUNICATION FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

This paper reports the first cycle of an action research in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classroom, which examined the causes of aggressive communication and explored how integrating Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Peace Linguistics (PL) promotes communicative peace. Sixty voluntary participants engaged in a structured intervention involving discussions, observations, and self-reflection reports, followed by immediate and delayed post-study discussions to assess learner perceptions and the sustainability of outcomes. Thematic content analysis revealed that SEL and PL integration enables and enhances constructive communication, critical inquiry, and reflective thinking, while also supporting global competencies and employability skills. The findings suggest the need for a reimagined ESP pedagogy that prioritizes holistic learner development beyond academic achievement.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes; Peace Linguistics; Social Emotional Learning; Communicative Peace; Sustainable Development Goals.

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1. Introduction

It has been observed, while teaching English to learners of a premier private engineering university in India, that even those who excel in their STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects continue to face challenges in overcoming aggressive communication tendencies, despite completing their English for Communication courses or their equivalent ones during the period of their academic programme. The aggression inside the classroom when learners encounter differences of opinion or feel that their points are not well-received could stem from various interconnected factors. These may include aspects such as the culture nurtured at home and school, individual personality traits, the influence of friends and family members, as well as engagement in social media activities or online gaming. Aggressive communication could also be a by-product of the socio-political realities that learners are exposed to, as Cohen (2006) argues, “the political and social issues that divide the country grow in bitterness, and compromise is looked upon as a dirty word” (p. 228).

While it is imperative to inculcate global competencies in learners to ensure employability, English teachers face difficulties in cultivating constructive communication because of the aggressive patterns learners follow inside and outside classrooms. Teachers, therefore, need to train learners not only to be proficient in language skills but also to “navigate the unwritten rules of the social and emotional landscape” (Pentón Herrera, 2020, p. 3). In this context, the idea of communicative peace becomes crucial, as it emphasizes peaceful and constructive ways of interaction free from aggression.

Developing global competence involves equipping learners with the ability to understand and appreciate diverse worldviews, engage thoughtfully with intercultural issues, and act responsibly for collective well-being (OECD, 2018). Equally important is training in constructive communication, which Connors (2013) describes as communication that is clear, sufficiently detailed for comprehension, and directed toward building understanding in relationships. It values multiple perspectives through a respectful and supportive attitude, provides space for others to be heard, and seeks outcomes that benefit all sides. Constructive communication also reduces the harm caused by negative verbal habits and enables collaboration even in difficult contexts. In classrooms, it encourages English learners to participate in dialogue that is inclusive, supportive, and oriented toward peace. The study reports the first cycle of an action research which explored the roots of aggressive communication in classroom contexts and considers how a SEL–PL informed ESP pedagogy can cultivate constructive and peaceful interaction. It involves sixty learners who engaged in a structured intervention of discussions, reflective tasks, and classroom observations. Data from learner reflections and post-intervention discussions were thematically analysed to trace both immediate and sustained effects. The next section situates this inquiry within scholarship on Social Emotional Learning, peace education,

and Peace Linguistics, and presents the theoretical framework for peace-integrated constructive communication.

2. Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

From a Vygotskian perspective, emotions and thinking are inseparable, as he postulated that all aspects of human life are interconnected, including internal and external experiences (Smagorinsky, 2013). Negative feelings and limited vocabulary create distance between learners, their peers, and teachers (Pentón Herrera, 2020). When learners gain the vocabulary to express their emotions, they understand that emotions do not define them and begin to comprehend their feelings better (Srinivasan, 2019). Teaching learners the skills to use language to express their emotions effectively helps them understand their feelings and recognize when to seek help. ESOL classrooms should transcend traditional English instruction, using language as a tool for the restoration, support, and healing of English learners (Pentón Herrera & McNair, 2020). Social Emotional Learning is the process through which individuals of all ages acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (CASEL, 2024a). There are five core competencies of SEL: self-awareness, which involves reflecting on one's own feelings, values, and behaviours; social awareness, which entails viewing situations from another perspective, respecting social and cultural norms, and celebrating diversity; relationship skills, which encompass the ability to initiate and sustain positive connections with peers, teachers, families, and other groups; self-management, which includes self-motivation, goal-setting, personal organization, self-discipline, impulse control, and coping strategies for stress; and responsible decision-making, which is the ability to make choices that consider the well-being of oneself and others (CASEL, 2024 b).

While SEL has been widely recognized as central to holistic education, much of the existing scholarship positions it within general schooling contexts rather than in English language learning. Critics also caution that SEL may risk being reduced to individualistic or decontextualized skills if not anchored in cultural and linguistic realities (Hoffman, 2009; Durlak et.al.(2015). In multilingual classrooms, emotional expression and regulation are inseparable from linguistic competence, yet research connecting SEL to ESL/EFL pedagogy remains sparse. This depicts a conceptual gap: the need to examine how SEL competencies can be mobilized through language learning practices to enable constructive communication among learners from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

By equipping learners with emotional awareness, empathy, and responsible decision-making, SEL lays the foundation for more harmonious interactions within and beyond the classroom. These competencies not only strengthen individual growth but also prepare learners to engage in communication that

values mutual respect and collective well-being. In this sense, SEL creates the conditions for peace-oriented pedagogies, making the transition to peace education a natural extension of its goals.

3. Peace Education

Pentón Herrera (2020) suggests four practices for integrating SEL into the ESL pedagogy, such as bibliotherapy, mindfulness, peace education, and restorative practices. While SEL encompasses elements of all these four strands, peace education serves as a vital theoretical underpinning for developing communicative peace (Gomes de Matos, 2000). Gomes de Matos (2005) characterizes communicative peace as “a new, thought-and-action-provoking way of humanizing competence” (p. 211). According to him, it is not enough to communicate with accuracy, fluency, and appropriateness. He asserts that our communication must also be constructive and promote well-being (Gomes de Matos, 2000).

The individual’s social-emotional learning enhances peaceful communication across various social contexts. In this study, peace is understood as a broader social-emotional construct. Curtis (2017) asserts that peace encompasses the absence of violence in all its forms, including conflict, threats to life, social degradation, discrimination, oppression, exploitation, poverty, and injustice. This expansive perspective emphasises that peace is not solely the absence of war or physical violence but also the elimination of systemic and structural harms that impact individuals and communities.

The primary goal of peace education is to teach individuals and societies how to prevent conflict through principles of social justice, respect, equality, tolerance, and nonviolence (Fountain, 1999). To achieve this, peace education explores, clarifies, and educates about the causes of violence and conflict while providing solutions for nurturing nonviolent attitudes and promoting peaceful, peace-making approaches (Salomon & Cairns, 2009). Incorporating peace education in the classroom requires achieving peace through active dialogue and consensual processes. Imposing peace through power or domination results in structural oppression, not conflict resolution (Pentón Herrera, 2020). Harris (2004) discusses various types of peace education practiced globally and emphasizes that maintaining healthy dialogues and providing a collaborative environment within the educational context are crucial for effective peace education.

4. Peace Linguistics, Communicative Peace, and Constructive Communication

Peace Linguistics falls within the broader framework of peace education and emphasizes the importance of constructive communication through peaceful language. Crystal (1999) outlined the potential of linguistics to contribute to global peace and human rights, emphasising respect for linguistic

diversity, multilingualism, and the dignity of speech communities. Building on this orientation, Gomes de Matos (2000, 2005) introduced the concept of communicative peace, arguing that communication should not only aim for accuracy, fluency, and appropriateness but also actively promote well-being and constructive interaction. Together, these contributions shaped the foundation of Peace Linguistics as a field concerned with enhancing non-aggressive and humanizing uses of language. Peace Linguistics (PL) thus promotes peaceful language in a conflict-ridden world (Friedrich, 2007). Research has examined hate speech on social media, demonstrating its widespread presence and harmful effects on interpersonal relations (Mamayabay & Baradillo, 2024). Other studies have explored conversational topic preferences and the use of taboo words, euphemisms, and cathartic expressions, showing how these choices reflect cultural attitudes and emotional regulation in communication (Batang et al., 2018; Domingo et al., 2019). Investigations into pre-service teachers' language practices reveal persistent tendencies to use swearing and foul language despite awareness of their negative implications (Mangad et al., 2022). Similarly, studies of the film and television industry document how abusive language is normalized and circulated through popular media (Glo et al., 2023). Together, these findings underscore the pervasive nature of aggressive communication and the urgent need for pedagogical approaches like PL to encourage constructive and respectful language use.

In ESL and EFL contexts, significant power imbalances from varying English proficiency levels, combined with pragmatic features of different languages intersecting without adequate attention to politeness formulas, can lead to aggressive classroom situations. Integrating peace linguistics into language classrooms can establish a foundation for constructive communication (Whetten & Cameron, 2002) and promote communicative peace (Gomes de Matos, 2005). However, studies on the application of PL in ESL classrooms are scarce, with Parcon and Andriano (2024) being an exception. Though they analysed certain cases to trace the instructor's perspectives and presented a framework that was elucidated from their findings, the actual practice in the classroom was not discussed. The present study, therefore, documents an action research conducted in the ESP class using SEL-oriented materials and methods that defined the intervention phase and the aspects of PL that emerged from the data.

4.1 Theoretical Framework for Peace Integrated Constructive Communication

Using the SEL core competencies and mapping them with the aspects of PL that focused on the development of communicative peace, the following framework of constructive communication was developed for integrating it into the materials and methods during intervention, and also as categories for thematically analysing the qualitative data.

Figure 1: A theoretical framework for peace integrated constructive communication using the SEL and PL aspects



Source: Author

This framework systematically integrates SEL's core competencies with PL's emphasis on communicative peace, an approach seldom used in ESL or ESP classrooms. Unlike earlier studies, it serves as a pedagogical design tool that informed the intervention and as an analytic tool that structured the thematic interpretation of classroom data. This dual role makes it both conceptually generative and methodologically distinctive. By grounding the framework in the multilingual and often high-stakes context of ESP classrooms in India, the study demonstrates how theories of SEL and PL can be adapted to address local challenges of aggressive communication. Thus, it contributes an original model that not only fills a conceptual and pedagogical gap but also connects with advocacies for linguistic human rights (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2017), offering practical insights for language educators working in diverse sociolinguistic environments. Using this framework, this classroom research attempts to answer two research questions:

1. What are the reasons for aggressive communication in classroom contexts?
2. How far would a SEL-PL based ESL pedagogy enable constructive communication?

5. Methodology

This qualitative action research was conducted over 8 weeks at a private engineering university in India, where an ESP course was mandatory for first-year learners. These learners often questioned the relevance of English as another required 'subject' and did not take the course seriously. Due to such indifference and instances of aggressive communication in the classroom, I designed an intervention embedding SEL competencies and aspects of PL into the ESP syllabus without altering the language learning objectives.

Creswell (2014) asserts that qualitative research is particularly effective for investigating intricate social phenomena within their natural environments, as it facilitates the in-depth exploration of meanings, experiences, and interactions. Action research, by its very nature, is practical and designed to address real-world issues through a repetitive cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). A distinctive feature of action research is the dual role of the teacher-researcher, which allows individuals to critically assess their practice and implement informed changes to enhance educational outcomes. Herr and Anderson (2005) argue that this insider perspective leads to a more genuine and contextually relevant examination of the educational setting. Moreover, action research inherently empowers collaboration and democratic inquiry, encouraging joint efforts between researchers and participants (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2003). Therefore, a qualitative action research design was adapted for this study.

The research incorporated data from classroom interactions, capturing aggressive attitudes through written responses to a mob lynching case, spoken discourses on sensitive topics like gender and religion, and observations of learners' reluctance to collaborate and their use of aggressive vocabulary during group disagreements. I assumed the role of a teacher-researcher in the intervention because I was an insider as well as an outsider when the actual mode of the study is considered.

5.1 Participants

Sixty undergraduate learners participated in this 8-week study, including 34 female and 26 male learners. Their language profiles and cultural backgrounds varied, making the sample fairly representative of India's multilingual and multicultural landscape. Among them, seven learners came from underprivileged backgrounds, with high proficiency in their subjects but very limited proficiency in English. The selection of this sample was purposeful rather than random, as the learners represented the actual teaching context in which aggressive communication and resistance to English instruction were observed. Since action research emphasizes solving context-specific problems through teacher-led inquiry (Herr & Anderson, 2005), working with my own classroom provided both authenticity and immediacy. The participants' multilingual and multicultural profiles, along with their mixed proficiency levels, made them particularly

suitable for examining how SEL and PL could address challenges of aggression, disengagement, and linguistic inequality in ESP classrooms.

5.2 Ethical Consent¹

The learners were informed about the study, and permission was secured from the academic head of the institution. Participants gave their written consent for the use of the materials they produced, whether written, spoken, or graphic, in the research paper, with assurances of anonymity regarding their identities.

5.3 Data Collection Tools

Non-participatory observation and informal background discussions were used as data collection tools before the intervention. During the intervention phase, which involved teaching the syllabus content using the peace integrated constructive communication framework, data sources included the teacher-researcher's diary entries documenting key classroom episodes, audio-recorded discussions with learners, learners' written self-reflection reports, and transcripts and notes from the learners. Post-intervention data were gathered from audio-recorded discussions, and a delayed discussion was conducted 6 months after the intervention to comprehend the effectiveness of the intervention strategies and their impact on the learners.

To maintain anonymity, learners were coded as L1, L2, L3, and so on. The following codes were used for each tool.

Table 1: Data collection tools and their codes

Data collection tool	Code
Observation Notes	ON
Audio-recorded Background Discussion	BD
Teacher-Researcher's Diary	RD
Self-Reflection Reports of Learners	RR
Post-Study Discussion	PD
Delayed Discussion	DD

Source: Author

5.4 Procedure

The study began when the teacher-researcher observed that some learners displayed biased and intolerant attitudes toward others, as evidenced by their

responses to a question about mob lynching cases in India. Additionally, it was noted that these learners demonstrated aggressive communication both outside and occasionally inside the classroom, especially during group tasks. The learners' reluctance to accept diverse perspectives, collaborate effectively, and use respectful language during disagreements, along with the rudeness in their jokes, were key factors prompting this study.

Figure 2: Design of the study

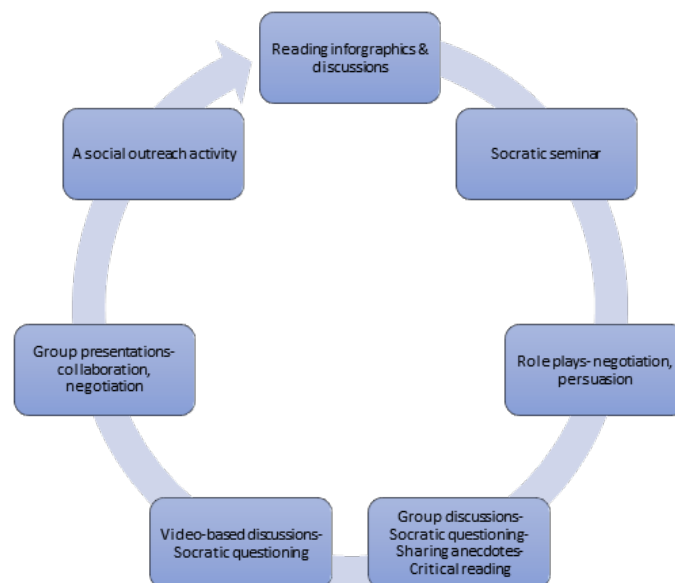


Source: Author

Background discussions with the learners revealed that these aggressive and impolite communication patterns extended to their interactions with peers, parents, siblings, strangers, and sometimes teachers. Based on insights from these discussions and observation notes, several causes of these aggressive communication patterns were identified. An intervention was then developed, incorporating SEL competencies and PL elements, to develop constructive communication based on the framework outlined in Figure 1.

The intervention phase comprised discussions, role plays, video-based discussions, Socratic seminars², self-reflection reports, and a social outreach activity.

Figure 3: Structure of the intervention



Source: Author

The syllabus for the particular phase of the semester included reading infographics, report writing, and presentation skills. While academic language conventions and communication skills in English were emphasized, the peace integrated constructive communication framework was incorporated without altering the prescribed syllabus components.

Figure 4: Mapping syllabus components to elements of constructive communication

Syllabus Component	Activities	Elements of Constructive Communication
Interpret infographics	Infographic of Tham Luang Cave rescue mission Infographic on 'Miracle of Hudson'	Discussion on abstract themes such as humanity, patience, empathy, notions of right and wrong
Report Writing	3 topics - gender bias, issues in education, superstitions in society. Collaborative research and report writing	Discussions on the topics, analysing various perspectives, breaking stereotypes, rationalising and critically analysing situations, collaboration, constructive communication
Presentation Skills	Group presentation of the research results	Assigning roles, assuming responsibility, assisting team members, empathetic communication

Source: Author

Socratic questioning facilitated critical thinking among the learners. Videos addressing social issues such as caste struggles, gender inequity, and superstitions prompted engaging discussions. Reading materials that depicted ethical and moral dilemmas further encouraged critical questioning and dialogue. While initial questions were prompted, learners eventually began generating their own. Their language use was monitored throughout the activities, and spoken feedback was provided after each task. The teacher-researcher drew on observation notes to identify instances of aggressive communication, which were then addressed in the feedback. Importantly, the focus was on the aggressive nature of the communication rather than on the individual who initiated it, thereby safeguarding learners' morale and ensuring that feedback remained constructive and inclusive.

With permission from the competent authorities, the social outreach activity involved taking the learners to a nearby government school that serves underprivileged children. The learners were prepared to teach English language components through various activities. Interacting with these children led the learners to reassess some of their previously held biased opinions, as revealed in the post-study discussion. A delayed discussion was conducted to determine if they continued to apply the constructive communication skills.

5.5 Data Analysis

The data gathered through various tools were qualitatively analysed using a thematic content analysis framework. This method involves identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data through a systematic process of coding and categorization to uncover meanings, perceptions, and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic content analysis was particularly appropriate for this study as it facilitated a thorough examination of the learners' reflections, discussions, and transcripts, revealing intricate details of their communicative practices within the peace-integrated constructive communication framework.

The categories derived from the constructive communication framework (see Figure 1) were used to code the data excerpts. Audio recordings were transcribed and analysed. The excerpts from the transcripts provided as evidence here are the learners' responses exactly as recorded, with all language features preserved without any modifications. While aspects of constructive communication were integrated into the sessions, they were not specifically assessed for grading, except for the score for teamwork and collaboration, which was included in the criteria for group presentations.

5.5.1 Self-awareness

The BD analysis showed that learners held strong stereotypes related to caste, gender, and beliefs, and many were affected by biases they had either experienced or observed. The ON revealed that their school culture, popular media, and limited exposure to diverse cultures might have contributed to these aggressive attitudes, a finding supported by the BD. The excerpt below from a learner's discussion exemplifies some issues:

Not only me, most of us have gone through the pressure from family to join a reputed institute for engineering. It's a lot of money they spent on us. They want us to be the toppers. The entrance exam pressure itself made me mad. I think it is the same story with everyone. Whether we want it or not we are forced to compete. You know, eventually, we are cold. It is the pressure. Comparisons that they make. And we lose the good times good things that we should have because we have no time to think about anything else but to score higher than the other one. (RR: L3)

Such open discussions were enlightening for the learners, as they realized that they all face similar difficulties. Questions about decision-making prompted them to introspect, increasing their self-awareness and helping them identify their strengths and weaknesses.

through the reading of the Thai cave rescue incident and the infographic on the Miracle of Hudson followed by the discussions on self-regulation,

control over emotions, decision making etc. I for the first time started thinking about my issues in talking to others. Without listening to the other person I speak. Sometimes I just didn't care what others say. When they speak to me, I will be framing my replies in my mind. This led to many issues. (RR: L16)

Forty-eight learners reported that they would engage in introspection and recognized that issues such as ego, rudeness, and an unwillingness to accept others' opinions hindered effective communication. They expressed their intention to address these issues to enhance their communication skills. The remaining 12 learners mentioned that, although they did not engage in aggressive communication, they were not effective listeners and sometimes resorted to stonewalling. They stated their intention to work on improving their listening skills.

5.5.2 Self-regulation

Initially, learners were more focused on persuading rather than negotiating and arguing rather than listening to others. However, they eventually managed to control their emotions, even though anger often arose from differences of opinion. They also used inappropriate vocabulary at times. While terms like 'please,' 'thank you,' and 'sorry' were rarely used at first, by the end of the intervention, their speech increasingly included these politeness markers. It was noted in the RD that:

They began to interact with each other more calmly even during disagreements. The 'rude' vocabulary still occurs but they immediately tend to apologise and use the right word. It looks like the rounds of discussions on the so-called sensitive topics are helping them to understand that people have diverse opinions. (RD: 09/09/2018)

A learner's reflection note confirms that there was an increase in self-regulation before, during, and after the communication event.

Now, I am more conscious about my emotional issues, ego, and the need to be a little more careful in handling such things. The role plays were difficult for me because we had sensitive topics like gender inequality and caste system and the like. I am usually very straight forward and I don't edit my thoughts. People sometimes get hurt. Now when I talk I am more careful to not hurt others. I control my emotions a lot. The role plays and the discussions helped me a lot to understand myself more (RR: L13)

All the learners found the discussion on the Tham Luang incident ³ and the Miracle of Hudson ⁴ particularly engaging. The screening of the film Sully and the subsequent discussions prompted them to identify their "own strengths and

weaknesses and to practice peaceful communication” (RR: L50) with themselves and others.

5.5.3 Empathy

All learners stated that they were empathetic, but they never thought about “empathy being very important in communication” (PD: L34). The importance of empathy in communication was discussed using Socratic questioning, and through various role plays they did.

The final self-reflection reports that captured the overall experience of the learners revealed that they,

over a period of time developed empathy to listen to others, understand others’ perspectives, negotiate some decisions for the larger benefit of the group, and to be an effective part of the team without being bossy or becoming a bully (RR: L39)

About the infographic reading task and the ensuing discussions, a learner reflected in his notes.

I skimmed through the news when it was on my social media feed. But I never think about the struggles. Never imagined the possible struggles. Reading and discussing such survival stories can actually make us more kind I feel. I started thinking- if I were that coach would I have survived? Would I have helped the other children? I am sure I would not have. It needs courage. I now think I can develop it. From reading and discussing the Thai cave incident, I learned about the importance of peace, calmness and empathy in place of anger, hurry, and restlessness (that I had). I will have to work on my emotions and need to control them. I liked this activity. (RR: L54)

Others also reported similar reflections on empathetic communication and the importance of empathy in building and sustaining relationships.

5.5.4 Social Skills

The activities were centred around developing effective interpersonal skills. Learners had the chance to practice discussion, negotiation, and persuasion through role plays. Various scenarios required them to take on different roles and engage in communication while respecting others’ perspectives. Adaptability and collaboration were identified as areas where learners faced challenges initially. Through numerous discussions, activities, and open dialogues on the importance of interpersonal skills—illustrated by anecdotes and case studies—the learners became more mindful of their social interactions. They demonstrated better turn-taking and showed that they divided the work not just equally but according to

the principle of equity. A learner captures this succinctly in his reflection report as:

This presentation was different. Earlier, we used to have problems- a lot of problems- in our group because the division of the work is never good. When we divide the work we used to divide it equally- if 6 members are there then 12 slides. So everyone has to prepare two slides. But the problem with this is that we never thought of the equity in terms of workload. Some people get it very easy- one diagram – one slide. Some others will have to spend a lot of time in finding facts and stringing them properly. Discussions on collaboration, importance of teamwork etc made us think. And also everytime we were empathetic when some of us struggled with language or design aspect. So in the presentation everybody participated. We cannot say equally. But happily we all contributed. Those who took extra work, took it happily without complaining. This was a new experience. We planned it better this time because as you know some of the team members had language issues. So we gave them the less heavy tasks. They were also happy and thankful for not being under pressure. I also noticed that when I made a mistake in the presentation, without hurting me, my friend corrected it. We were also good and polite in answering the questions. Sometimes some of them ask silly questions to put us under pressure or to mock us. This time, the questions were sensible and that allowed more discussion. Some questions were very good that we began to rethink our point of view. It was a very good teamwork and a very nice experience. (RR:L26)

The learners' perception changes were evident in the reflection notes on the report writing activity as well:

This report writing was very different. It was about facts. But it was also about refining some bad ideas that we had earlier. I thought women had enough freedom, I thought caste system is not existing anymore, I thought some superstitions are harmless. But from the questioning that we did in groups, the homework we did, the discussions we had in class, I realised that they are harsh realities. We still have to progress more. I think the change should begin from me, with me. So if you ask me about how I changed some of my bad ideas- I would say I started respecting all women. I started caring for my female classmates and friends. More affectionately and I think I can understand certain issues better now. I look at my mother's struggles to balance her work and home life. I think I am more helpful than before. I stopped shouting at her for random things. I am more like a caring person now. And of course I am very careful about my language use. (RR:L12)

These reflection reports demonstrate that learners have developed a strong culture of collaboration and work ethics, enhancing their self-regulation and self-awareness. It also emphasizes the growth in their collaboration and critical thinking skills through class activities.

5.5.5 Conflict Resolution

Initially, resolving disagreements was challenging for the learners because they expressed their views strongly and engaged in arguments when others disagreed. Issues arose even in tasks such as dividing work within their groups, taking stances during discussions, or managing turn-taking. These disagreements sometimes resulted in some learners staying silent while others took on leadership roles. Learners who were less proficient in English struggled to articulate their points clearly and often resorted to their mother tongue. This created complications in the multilingual environment, as some learners could not understand the languages being used, leading to unrest. Over time, this intolerance decreased through discussions and a Socratic seminar focused on cultural and linguistic diversity. Additionally, a storytelling session where learners narrated stories about conflict resolution proved to be enlightening. As one learner noted in the post-study discussion:

I began to listen more carefully to others. I used to be the speaker all the time. Now I understand that every problem has multiple interpretations. So even when I have a feeling to rush through the conversation and lead it in a sense, I consciously try not to do it. I listen to others. It is difficult but I am trying. (PD:L18)

Another learner stated that:

I used to ignore some of my friends when they say their suggestions. Their English is not good and it takes a lot of time for them to explain things. We have to do timed tasks. So generally I used to hurry things up. But through the discussions and story telling sessions, I learned that I need to accept differences. And to my great surprise I must say that the ideas of the one whom I ignored were actually better than mine. If I had not allowed him to express his ideas, we would have missed some interesting points in our presentation. He actually said it in Telugu and someone else translated it for me. Now we all feel more connected and happy. (PD: L33)

When learners actively practised conflict resolution, the classroom atmosphere improved noticeably. Many noted that the impact extended beyond the classroom, as they began to thoughtfully manage their responses to conflicts and differing opinions in their daily lives as well.

5.5.6 Relationship Building

Learners who were already friends had their own comfort groups. However, the groups they worked in for the classroom tasks were not the same. It was initially difficult for them to adapt to the new team. There were a few ice-breaking activities done, which focused on team building and team playing skills. After a few rounds of discussions, the learners began to be more interested in each other. Outside their comfort group, they had friends, and they enjoyed the tasks

because the work culture within their group was positive. As one of them stated in the post-study discussion:

Getting to know each other was not easy for me. Not only for me but for many of us because we were already in our own groups. I was upset in the beginning when we were all split into different groups. But through the activities we were kind of compelled to collaborate and to be frank though I was not happy with it initially, later I started enjoying it. It was fun knowing the new people because they had so much new things to share. (PD:L19)

Another learner spoke about transcending language and cultural barriers:

Some of my team mates were so different. They had their own troubles in terms of language. From rural India they made it to this university. They struggle with their language. They still try. They learn new things here but still stick to their culture. I was actually not quite caring about them initially. But when we collaborated, through the activities I understood that they were brilliant. I had a stereotype in my mind about learners who come from rural backgrounds. I had to change it. The questions which we were asked were thought provoking. This kind of a thinking exercise helped me to remove the stereotypes associated with English proficiency, one's geographical location, even caste and class etc. (PD: L43)

Throughout various tasks, learners had numerous opportunities to develop their interpersonal skills. The teacher-researcher intervened only on specific occasions when the learners struggled to negotiate effectively.

5.5.7. Reflective Practices

Learners were asked to keep a diary to record their thoughts, although these entries were not used in the study as they were considered personal reflections. Initially, the learners did not take the task seriously, but over time, they began to make regular entries. While a model of writing was provided, it was not prescriptive, allowing them the freedom to choose their own modes of expression. Some learners mentioned that they wrote poems about the emotions they frequently experienced, which helped them to calm down. The reflection notes on their own behaviour during the tasks made them initiate certain changes in their character, they said.

I wasn't happy about the diary. But later I thought that it is a brilliant idea. I sat quietly, listening to some soothing music and I think about the activities and how was my mindset during the time when I participated in the activities. I could write down when I was angry and also wrote down what made me angry. I also wrote down my immediate responses to such situation as per the sample sheet given. Every Sunday evening I check these notes and I could see that there was differences in my responses. I

could see myself becoming calm. It made me think of this thinking and behaving pattern more and more. (RR, L53)

In similar lines, another learner also reflected on the importance of self-evaluation through self-reflection:

Writing the diary was such a huge relief. I did not only stick to the given sample. I started thinking about other instances and events also. Especially when we are part of the organising committee of the cultural festival. We had lots of conflicts and I think I was pretty harsh in my responses. Even now I am stern but the review of diary notes made me more and more conscious about my responses to conflicts. I kind of started thinking if there was a better way of responding to the same situation. This helped me to resolve several issues we had in our committee. (RR, L4)

Most of the learners stated that they had been continuously analysing their behavioural patterns, especially during times of conflicts or arguments. The diary writing practice proved to be an effective tool for enhancing their self-reflection ability, and they reported that reflecting on their communication patterns enabled them to regulate their reactions and voice them in a socially acceptable and polite manner.

6. Findings

This classroom research explored the causes of aggressive communication within this specific context and assessed the effectiveness of integrating an SEL-PL teaching approach into the English language classroom. Analysis of diary entries (RD) and observation notes (ON) revealed several factors contributing to learners' aggressive communication, which can be broadly categorized into three areas: a lack of understanding of diversity, a tendency to stereotype, and a deficiency in empathy.

Figure 5: Reasons and Rationale for Learners' Aggressive Communication with Sample Evidence

Reasons	Rationale for the reasons	Evidence (Sample)
Lack of understanding of diversity	Lack of opportunity to mingle with people from different cultures, homogenous school climate, familial conditioning	"They don't understand my context at all. They are so narrow minded"
Stereotyping (gender, caste)	Social conditioning, films and media influence, jokes on social media, school climate	"I don't blame her. Girls are like that... gold, gossips and shopping"
Lack of empathy	Strong belief of belongingness to a particular group, limited access to shared experiences, strict family conditioning, school climate	"Why should he even be given a chance? I get irritated when others cannot see what I say"

Source: Author

The intervention based on the peace integrated constructive communication framework confirmed the value of integrating aspects of SEL and Peace Linguistics in emphasising effective communication, as the tasks and framework competently addressed the challenges identified. As per the delayed discussion (DD) conducted six months after the intervention, most learners continued to maintain a reflective journal, though not consistently. Twenty-two learners reported that they still practised competencies such as self-regulation, empathy, conflict resolution, social skills, and reflective practices. However, they also noted that sustaining critical questioning skills was challenging due to limited opportunities for dialogue and discussion, which had been a component of the classroom tasks. This scarcity of opportunities diminished their inclination to use Socratic questioning. Some learners commented, "It had a negative impact on the questioning ability as opportunities are rare to ask questions and to have discussions" (DD: L2).

Data analysis demonstrated that integrating SEL-PL into the English classroom facilitated constructive communication among learners. Of the 22 learners who reported maintaining these constructive communication skills even after the intervention, some mentioned that the lack of peer support occasionally made them feel reluctant to engage with the new practice. Despite this, they continued due to the sense of happiness and calmness it brought them (DD: L12). Others noted that the new approach to thinking and behaving helped reduce the frequency of negatively charged communication (DD: L55). Overall, all these learners reported a positive experience with the activities. These 22 learners asserted that they experienced "satisfaction, peace, emotional wellness, effective anger management, social commitment, better learning experiences, and questioning ability" (RD on DD: 10/08/2019). Numerous statements and phrases capturing episodes of aggressive communication were corrected by learners in groups once they became aware of the impoliteness embedded in their language. Several learners mentioned that they now consciously monitor their speech

for such unempathetic expressions and replace them with more empathetic and considerate language. The evidence of aggressive language use and the corresponding constructive versions presented in Table 2 were extracted from the teacher-researcher's observation notes. Each pair illustrates how the same student who initially used aggressive communication subsequently reformulated it in a more constructive manner.

Table 2: Evidence of aggressive language use and their corresponding constructive versions

Code for the learner	Evidence of aggressive language use (captured during the discussion on the infographics)	Modified statements (captured during the preparatory discussion for the social outreach activity)
L52	You're just so wrong! How can you not understand this silly concept?	I see your point, but I have a different perspective. Let's explore this together to understand it better.
L43	That idea is ridiculous; it doesn't make any sense at all!	I'm not sure I agree with that idea. Could you explain your reasoning a bit more so we can discuss it?
L17	You're always talking too much; let someone else speak for once!	I appreciate your contributions, but let's make sure everyone has a chance to share their thoughts.
L32	How can you not know this? It's so basic!	This concept can be tricky. Let's go over it again to make sure everyone is on the same page.
L15	Why do you keep making the same mistakes? Pay attention.	Seems this is tricky. Let's go through it again.
L53	Hold it like this.	Can you hold that board for me... like this. Let me stick the notes there.
L28	Don't act dumb!	Let me explain it once again. Let's see if it needs more clarity.

Source: Author

It was also observed that learners gradually made deliberate efforts to eliminate gendered language and use polite phrases. They also improved in turn-taking during discussions and managed to control aggressive body language, such as dragging chairs, making faces, and pointing at each other. Additionally, there was a noticeable increase in discipline and self-efficacy among the learners, marking a first step towards autonomy. This improvement was particularly evident when the teacher-researcher intentionally delayed her entry into the classroom, only to realise that the learners had already started the day's discussion tasks within their groups.

7. Discussion

The study's findings foreground several essential imperatives for incorporating a peace-integrated constructive communication framework into English language classrooms. Tulgar (2017) argues that as global relations have advanced, foreign language teaching has gained significance, with studies and materials now focusing on language skills and integrating concepts like peace to cultivate early awareness and commitment to peaceful approaches among learners. For Oxford (2017), 'peace consciousness' incorporates awareness, attention, intention, and effort in the direction of peace. Wenden (2003) argues that "Despite the multifaceted roles language plays in promoting direct and indirect violence, activities that would develop linguistic knowledge and critical language skills for understanding how discourse shapes individual and group beliefs and prompts social action are conspicuously absent..." (p.163).

The present study documented a vignette from an English language classroom that used authentic materials and critical questioning for promoting communicative peace. Chang-Bacon and Salerno (2023) state the necessity of disrupting normative, monolingual ideologies that perpetuate neo-nationalist rhetoric and addressing microaggressions in TESOL environments. Their emphasis on the role of teachers in challenging restrictive norms and cultivating supportive and reflective classroom dynamics connects with the current study's focus on the importance of sustainable teacher dialogues in promoting communicative peace in the classroom.

It was observed that engaging teacher dialogue is pivotal in cultivating empathetic and constructive communication among learners. The use of SEL-PL focused authentic materials in the language classroom was found to enhance critical thinking skills. Furthermore, prompting questions and introducing learners to a variety of cultures and perspectives were instrumental in enhancing critical thinking abilities. The integration of diverse viewpoints, along with structured pair and group work within the classroom, encouraged greater collaboration among learners. Collectively, the elements of collaborative tasks, increased interaction, peer feedback, and intentional teacher dialogue were found to play a significant role in enhancing the elements of constructive communication and communicative peace.

Wright (2021) asserts the significance of the vast and varied nature of English Language Teaching (ELT) activities, emphasizing their broad influence. Given the considerable potential impact of these activities, understanding and integrating the concept of communicative peace in its many forms within our classrooms and communities is crucial. Wright (2021) further argues that developing communicative competence with a peacebuilding mindset can inspire various stakeholders, such as materials developers, teacher educators, teachers as role models, educational leaders, and researchers as influencers, to advance the essential goal of nurturing peace both locally and globally, from the grassroots to higher levels of influence.

When this cycle of action research presented a possible way in which a peace-integrated constructive communication framework can be useful for English classrooms, it also encountered several limitations. Assessing language skills in conjunction with the development of communicative peace proved particularly challenging. While evaluating the activities created a competitive environment for learners, determining how well they enhanced SEL competencies to sustain communicative peace was a significant hurdle. The absence of scientific, psychometric tools for measuring learners' SEL competencies and the achievement of communicative peace meant the research relied solely on qualitative data gathered from the participants.

At the same time, the study also revealed cases of resistance that reveal sociocultural complexities in implementing a peace-oriented framework. Some learners initially perceived reflective and dialogic tasks as distractions from "real" language learning aimed at examinations. This aligns with Skutnabb-Kangas's (2000) caution that educational practices grounded in human rights or peace perspectives often challenge dominant ideologies that treat language primarily as an economic or instrumental skill. Teacher colleagues also expressed reservations about the feasibility of embedding SEL-PL activities given syllabus constraints, a form of resistance reflecting institutional pressures. Sociocultural dynamics such as gender norms and linguistic hierarchies further shaped how freely learners engaged in dialogic exchanges, with some students more hesitant to challenge stereotypes or to participate in critical questioning. Such resistance, as Friedrich (2007) argues, is not merely an obstacle but an indicator of the deeper ideological struggles embedded in language education. Recognizing these tensions underscores the need for SEL-PL integration to move beyond being an "add-on" and instead address the broader sociocultural forces that language teaching often reproduces.

English language teachers considering similar projects might struggle to implement them due to space and time constraints, often exacerbated by a lack of administrative support. The pressure to complete the syllabus could deter many teachers from engaging in such initiatives, a challenge also encountered in this study. Flipping the classroom was the only troubleshooting strategy employed. However, in the post-pandemic era, where virtual teaching is viable, flipping the classroom can be effectively executed using online platforms. This study was conducted in a trial-and-error manner, with the action research evolving from instances of aggressive communication. Revamping the syllabus to incorporate SEL competencies and selecting materials that align with these goals could significantly enhance the effectiveness of the course. It is crucial for teachers to adopt a more sustainable approach to language teaching, where they go beyond teaching language for specific purposes and also focus on teaching "language for peacebuilding purposes" (Curtis, 2018, p. 3). Gomes De Matos (2000) asserts the importance of language practitioners focusing on new methods of teaching which involve communicative peace and PL perspectives to nourish the social-emotional competencies of their learners. He argues that:

as interdisciplinarians committed to describing, explaining, enhancing, and sustaining socially dignifying practices mediated by language, it is incumbent on us to exercise our professional communicative responsibility so as to contribute to universalizing communicative peace, not only as an analytical concept but as a pervasive process characterizing micro and macro social structures. (Gomes De Matos, 2000: p. 340).

Integrating SEL and communicative peace into the curriculum supports this broader goal by enhancing skills essential for peacebuilding, such as empathy, communication, and emotional regulation, thereby equipping learners to use language as a tool for creating and sustaining peaceful interactions.

8. Conclusion

In this study, the core competencies of SEL and the features of PL, in particular communicative peace, are integrated with the features of constructive communication. This perspective and the framework allowed the teacher-researcher to explore the possibilities of modifying the current syllabus and course plan by objectively and creatively integrating materials that address learners' SEL competencies to promote peaceful interactions and enhance learners' constructive communication skills. The study, thus, emphasized peaceful interactions, including the use of polite phrases, negotiations, and critical discussions, with instruction primarily delivered through the Socratic seminar method. This method also enhanced critical questioning skills among the learners.

The findings suggest that sociocultural background, school culture, home environment, and various social pressures can contribute to anxiety and aggression among adolescent tertiary-level learners. Without addressing these affective factors, language education may fall short of achieving its intended outcomes. Therefore, it is crucial to incorporate elements of communicative peace into the language syllabus. While not all learners consistently maintain the aspects of communicative peace developed through such integration, the study highlights positive changes in the communication patterns and mindsets of several learners.

It is essential to explore the extent to which learners are equipped to critically examine contemporary issues of local, global, and intercultural significance. Additionally, future research should also investigate how well learners understand and appreciate multiple cultural perspectives, including their own, and how effectively they can manage differences and conflicts. Another area for future exploration is the degree to which learners are prepared to interact respectfully across cultural differences. Lastly, it would be valuable to assess the extent to which learners are motivated to care about the world, act to positively impact others' lives, and contribute to environmental sustainability. These questions can guide future inquiries aimed at understanding and enhancing learners' capacities in these critical areas.

When education aims to develop not only subject matter expertise but also the holistic character of individuals, the significance of such studies lies not in their generalizability but in their potential to initiate transformative changes at an individual level, which can gradually expand to a collective scale. English language classrooms play a crucial role in this process by integrating Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), constructive communication, and communicative peace into their teaching practices. These elements develop not only linguistic competence but also emotional intelligence, empathy, and respectful discourse, essential for nurturing well-rounded individuals. As this cycle of the action research focused on addressing the 16th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)- Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions- it provided a model for incorporating other socially relevant focal areas in the language classrooms to ensure language education is socially responsible and sustainable. In other words, by embedding SDGs into the syllabus, English language education can contribute to sustainable educational practices, ensuring that the learning environment promotes both academic growth and the development of constructive, peaceful communicators who are equipped to positively impact society.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT: Datasets related to this research will be available upon contact with the corresponding author.

End notes

1. This study is based on classroom research conducted with formal institutional approval. In the Indian higher education context, especially in Humanities research involving student participants, ethical oversight is often carried out by academic heads in institutions that do not have a dedicated Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC) for non-clinical research. At the institute where this study was conducted, there is no separate ethics board for Humanities; hence, ethical clearance was sought through established internal procedures. A detailed research summary outlining the study's objectives, methods, and use of student-generated data was submitted to the Head of the Department and the Dean Academics. The proposal was reviewed to ensure that participant rights, voluntary participation, data confidentiality, and responsible research practices were adequately addressed. Approval to proceed was granted following this review. All student participants were clearly informed about the scope of the study and how their responses, written materials, and classroom interactions might be used. Written consent was obtained from each participant, who were assured anonymity and confidentiality in all published material. Identifying information has not been included, and all data have been handled with care to maintain participants' privacy and dignity.
2. Socratic seminars are structured dialogues rooted in the Socratic method, where learners and facilitators engage through open-ended, inquiry-based questioning to develop deeper understanding and critical thinking in a collaborative learning environment (Elder & Paul, 1998)
3. Graphic News. (2018, July 10). Rescue mission: Thai cave rescue complete. Retrieved October 8, 2025, from <https://www.graphicnews.com/en/pages/38132/rescue-mission-thai-cave-rescue-complete>

4. https://ru.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A4%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%BB:US_Airways_Flight_1549.svg
5. (accessed October 8, 2025).

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Submission date: 29/05/2025

Acceptance date: 11/10/2025

Guest editors: Leonardo da Silva,
Priscila Fabiane Farias, Graham V. Crookes