

Educating for global citizenship and peace through awakening to languages: A study with institutionalised children

VERA SILVA

MÓNICA LOURENÇO

University of Aveiro

Received: 15/11/2022 / Accepted: 31/03/2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30827/portalin.vi40.26655>

ISSN paper edition: 1697-7467, ISSN digital edition: 2695-8244

ABSTRACT: Global citizenship education (GCE) has been deemed an educational imperative to respond to the times of unprecedented change we are living in. Existing research with preschool children indicates that GCE nurtures personal respect and respect for others, and raises children's civic engagement, which are both fundamental aspects in creating and sustaining peaceful societies. Despite this, empirical studies focusing on GCE pedagogies for the early years are still lacking, particularly with vulnerable groups of children. This qualitative case study aims to understand the contribution of the Awakening to Languages approach in the development of attitudes, values and skills conducive to global citizenship and positive peace. The study was conducted with a group of Portuguese children aged 3 to 6 living in a care home run by a religious congregation. Children participated in a five-month project titled *A house where we all fit*, which included multilingual activities and virtual exchanges with children in similar institutions in Colombia and Tanzania. Data were collected via questionnaires, self-assessment sheets and fieldnotes, which were treated using descriptive statistics and content analysis. Results suggest that the activities promoted children's awareness of and respect for diversity, raised their self-knowledge and self-esteem, and developed communication and collaboration skills.

Key words: global citizenship education, positive peace, awakening to languages, institutionalised children, case study

Educación para la ciudadanía global y la paz a través del Despertar a las Lenguas: un estudio con niños institucionalizados

RESUMEN: La educación para la ciudadanía global (ECG) se considera un imperativo educativo para responder a los tiempos de cambio sin precedentes en los que vivimos. La investigación existente realizada con niños en edad preescolar indica que la ECG fomenta el respeto personal y el respeto por los demás, y aumenta el compromiso cívico de los niños, aspectos que son fundamentales para crear y mantener sociedades pacíficas. A pesar de esto, todavía faltan estudios empíricos centrados en las pedagogías de la ECG para los primeros años, particularmente con grupos vulnerables de niños. Este estudio de caso cualitativo tiene como objetivo comprender la contribución del enfoque Despertar a las Lenguas en el desa-

rollo de actitudes, valores y habilidades conducentes a una ciudadanía global y paz positiva. El estudio se llevó a cabo con un grupo de niños portugueses de 3 a 6 años que vivían en un hogar convivencial administrado por una congregación religiosa. Los niños participaron en un proyecto de cinco meses titulado *Una casa donde cabemos todos*, que incluía actividades multilingües e intercambios virtuales con niños en hogares convivenciales similares en Colombia y Tanzania. Los datos fueron recolectados a través de cuestionarios, hojas de autoevaluación y notas de campo, que fueron tratados mediante estadística descriptiva y análisis de contenido. Los resultados sugieren que las actividades promovieron la conciencia y el respeto de los niños por la diversidad, aumentaron su autoconocimiento y autoestima, y desarrollaron habilidades de comunicación y colaboración.

Palabras clave: educación para la ciudadanía global, paz positiva, despertar a las lenguas, niños institucionalizados, estudio de caso

1. INTRODUCTION

In the last book published before his 1968 assassination, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and social justice campaigner Martin Luther King Jr. wrote the following:

Some years ago a famous novelist died. Among his papers was found a list of suggested plots for future stories, the most prominently underscored being this one: “A widely separated family inherits a house in which they have to live together.” This is the great problem of mankind. We have inherited a large house, a great ‘world house’ in which we have to live together—black and white, Easterner and Westerner, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Muslim and Hindu—a family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interest, who, because we can never again live apart, must learn somehow to live with each other in peace (King, 1968, p. 177).

More than fifty years after these words were written, humanity has not yet fully learned how to coexist peacefully, as recent events show. Terrorist attacks, gender, racial and religious discrimination, and, more recently, an armed conflict in Europe (which triggered one of the largest and fastest refugee movements since the end of World War II), are but some examples of the challenges affecting our global societies, especially the most vulnerable groups of the population. The urgency of educating citizens who are able to build a more just, fraternal and inclusive world is, therefore, undeniable. In this context, global citizenship education (GCE) has emerged as a viable possibility to foster a positive sense of identity and belonging to a ‘common home’, promote respect for diversity, and increase children and young people’s resilience to violent and discriminatory messaging, thus building peaceful mindsets through education from the early years onwards (UNESCO, 2014; Wintersteiner, 2019).

The study reported in this paper addresses these concerns and revolves around the following question: how can we teach children, particularly those in vulnerable situations, to live together in peace in this ‘world house’ that is planet Earth? In line with this question, a case study was developed aiming to understand the contribution of the Awakening to Languages (AtL) approach, a multilingual and cross-curricular approach to language education, in the development of attitudes, values and skills conducive to global citizenship and positive peace. The study focused on a group of Portuguese children, aged 3 to 6, living in

residential care, who participated in a multilingual project titled *A house where we all fit*. The project included multilingual activities, such as reading stories, listening to songs, watching videos or playing games involving different languages; as well as virtual exchanges with children living in Colombia and Tanzania. The effects of the project on the development of Portuguese children's competencies were examined via questionnaires, self-assessment sheets and fieldnotes. The resulting data were treated using statistical and content analysis.

Although prior research has already focused on sharing the effects of AtL approaches in formal early years settings (Coelho et al., 2018; Lourenço & Andrade, 2014) and, to a lesser degree, reporting the impact of GCE projects for young children (Hancock, 2017; Twigg et al., 2015), empirical studies bringing these two perspectives together, i.e., focusing on AtL as a GCE pedagogy for the early years while applying a peace education (PE) lens, are still lacking. This adds to the relevance and timeliness of this research.

In the sections that follow a review of key literature on GCE, PE and AtL is given. Then, the study is described detailing the methodological design, the context, the participants, and the intervention project. This is followed by a presentation of the results, according to each category of analysis. The paper ends with a discussion and a conclusion where the main findings and limitations of the study are examined and implications for research and practice are addressed.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Global citizenship and peace education

Global citizenship education is an extensively debated topic with no widely accepted definition. On the contrary, multiple and sometimes conflicting interpretations exist, as recently noted by Pashby et al. (2021). Since it is beyond the scope of this paper to address GCE's conceptual debates, UNESCO's definition will be highlighted, as it best suits the purpose of our study: "Global Citizenship Education is a framing paradigm which encapsulates how education can develop the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes learners need for securing a world which is more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable" (2014, p. 9).

GCE drew attention of the international community in 2012, following the publication of the *Global Education First Initiative* (GEFI) by former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon. The document set forth "fostering global citizenship" as one of its three main priorities, along with "put every child in school" and "improve the quality of learning". In 2015 the inclusion of GCE in the *Education 2030 Agenda and Framework for Action* cemented its position as an educational goal. Target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals advocates that by 2030 it is fundamental to "ensure that all learners are provided with the knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development, including, among others (...) a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity" (United Nations, 2015, p. 19).

Although it may be by chance that global citizenship is mentioned immediately after promotion of a culture of peace, it is unquestionable that GCE and PE are inherently related. As emphasised by Wintersteiner (2019), "global citizenship (education) loses much of its meaning and its transformational energy if it is not closely linked to the concept of a

culture of peace, which implies the need for a profound change of our basic assumptions, ways of life, habits and cultural practices” (p. 15).

According to Galtung (1969, 1996), the ‘father’ of peace studies, there are two types of peace: ‘negative peace’, which is the absence of direct physical violence or fear of violence, and ‘positive peace’, the absence of structural violence or entrenched systems that perpetuate inequality and poverty. Positive peace requires egalitarian distribution of power and resources and is oriented towards transformation and social change. In this respect, it is closely linked to the transformative dimension of GCE, which aims to help individuals understand the structural causes of inequalities at a global level and dismantle power relations to create alternative (i.e., more socially just) modes of living (Andreotti, 2016; Bamber et al., 2018).

For Jares (2002), Spanish professor and author of books related to peace, conflict and coexistence, positive peace is important both socio-economically and educationally. Therefore, he argues it should be promoted since childhood, drawing on activities that are based on play and laughter in order to foster friendship, communication, cooperation, participation, empathy and respect for diversity.

Empirical research has been reporting the development of these skills and attitudes in GCE early years’ programmes. Hancock (2017), for instance, analysed the impact of a GCE curriculum in a small community preschool serving 85 children between the ages of 2 and 5, mainly with an African American background. The analysis of audio recordings of classroom interactions revealed that by understanding the bonds they have with children around the world, participants were able to develop empathy and respect for others, as well as to counter negative conceptions of self. She concluded that validation, agency, collaboration and self-care are useful tools for children to engage in the world, reinforcing their self-identity and developing strong relationships.

In the Australian context, Twigg et al. (2015) conducted a project involving 25 children from kindergarten classrooms in the Brisbane area from three different care centers. Using in-depth interviews, they explored children’s lived experiences as global citizens and discovered that 3–4-year-old children express genuine curiosity about others and find ways to communicate and interact with them. They also reveal a profound dislike for social injustice and are willing to act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place. The authors conclude that it is important to expose very young children to the attitudes and behaviours associated with global citizenry, since they mature more rapidly as thinkers and doers.

These studies show that it is fundamental to pursue research in this field to find appropriate approaches to educate children as global citizens and prepare them to deal with difficult and uncertain situations in the individual and social plane, to collaborate and communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries, and to engage in building a more peaceful world. From the authors’ point of view, multilingual approaches, such as AtL, can serve this purpose.

2.2. The Awakening to Languages approach

AtL is a pedagogical approach with roots in the Language Awareness movement (Hawkins, 1987), which focuses on promoting contact with linguistic diversity from a young age. According to Candelier and Kervran (2018), AtL refers to the implementation of comparative

activities between several languages in class. Those languages include the language(s) of schooling, the ‘foreign’, local or minority language(s) taught in the target context but also languages that are NOT intended to be taught, which may or may not be the mother tongues of some pupils (Candelier & Kervran, 2018, p. 10).

The aim of this approach is to develop language culture, metalinguistic aptitudes, as well as foster open attitudes towards other languages, cultures and speakers, in order to prepare children for language learning and intercultural dialogue (Candelier et al., 2004). These are two educational aims that need to be pursued in the context of current multilingual and multicultural societies.

Past studies have highlighted the positive effects of AtL in what concerns the development of children’s communication skills (Coelho et al., 2018), phonological awareness (Lourenço & Andrade, 2014), critical thinking (Ben Maad, 2020) and openness to diversity (Ben Maad, 2016). Research on AtL has also suggested benefits related to the promotion of a culture of peace. After developing a peace-themed AtL project in a preschool classroom, Dias (2016) concluded that this approach successfully promoted children’s understanding and acceptance of differences, which are fundamental attitudes to live with others in a peaceful way. Alves (2016), who developed a multicultural exchange project in a preschool classroom, shared the same conclusions. According to her, “multicultural education is a valuable teaching tool to facilitate and open children’s mind to understand and accept differences among people” (Alves, 2016, p. 43). Recently, Pearce et al. (2020) looked into STEAM learning and plurilingual education through the lens of peace in an elementary school in Japan. Their study shows that the incorporation of a subject about languages and cultures (*Gengo Bunka*) into the core curriculum promotes multiperspectivity, reflexivity, critical thinking, openness to languages and diversity, while fostering children’s awareness about their agency as peacebuilders.

Despite these examples, empirical studies specifically exploring the role of the AtL approach to promote positive peace and global citizenship in the early years are, to our knowledge, non-existent, particularly with vulnerable groups of children who are at a higher risk of facing (and developing) extreme and discriminatory views. The study reported in this paper attempts to bridge this gap.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research aims and method

The study focuses on the following research question: What is the contribution of the AtL approach in the development of attitudes, values and skills conducive to global citizenship and positive peace by children in residential care? More specifically, we sought to understand the contribution of an AtL project in the development of the children’s self-knowledge and self-esteem; in fostering respect for others and valorisation of linguistic and cultural diversity; and in promoting communication and collaboration skills. These competencies have been shown in the literature to be fundamental in educating global citizens who are aware of the world around them and of their responsibilities in contributing to a more peaceful and sustainable world (see, for instance, Oxfam, 2015).

Considering these aims, a qualitative case study (Yin, 2009) was designed to provide the researchers with a more systematic and integrated view of the participant children and their learning achievements, and to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of intervention project sessions taking place in the residential home.

3.2. Context and participants

Participants in the study were six Portuguese children, aged 3 to 6, of both sexes – four girls and two boys. In terms of age, two children were 6 years old, two were 5, one was 4 and another was 3. All children lived in a residential care home belonging to a religious congregation, where the first author works as a volunteer. This temporary residential care centre takes in children between 0 and 12 years old under a legal protective measure named ‘residential care’ for unprotected children at family and/or social risk, namely those who were left by or taken from their families. It is the main response of Portuguese society for imminent danger situations, according to the Commission for the Protection of Children and Young People, “with the central objective of making child and familial diagnoses and defining life projects” (Institute of Social Security, 2007, p. 19).

Five children in Colombia and four children in Tanzania, who lived in care homes belonging to the same religious congregation, participated in some of the project’s activities, namely in virtual exchanges with the Portuguese children. Other participants included the religious sisters: four sisters in Portugal, each from a different nationality (Portuguese, Spanish, Colombian and Italian), who assisted the researcher in developing the sessions; a Colombian sister, who conducted some activities with the Colombian children; and a Kenyan sister, who developed similar activities with the Tanzanian group.

The children’s tutors, as well as the Provincial Superior of the congregation signed informed consent forms prior to the study, which received ethical approval from the University of Aveiro.

3.3. The intervention project

The intervention project titled *A house where we all fit!* addressed children’s perspectives about the world and about three topics in particular—preferences, experiences and emotions. The project lasted five months and included 13 face-to-face sessions led by the researcher and held with the children inside the residential home. The sessions were divided into four phases. Phase 1, titled *My world: eat, play, feel!*, involved one-to-one conversations between the researcher and the child, drawings about their identity (e.g., their self-portrait), as well as video recordings of a short presentation in the children’s mother tongue. These activities were simultaneously conducted in Colombia and Tanzania in two face-to-face sessions led by the sisters of the Congregation. The videos and drawings were shared between the children in the three countries, as part of a virtual exchange.

Phases 2 and 3—respectively titled *The world out there* and *Here we are*—included group conversations and child-oriented activities, such as preparing a fruit salad, playing games, listening to songs, watching short films and reading stories in different languages,

namely Portuguese, English, French, Spanish, Italian, Swahili, Welsh, Chinese and, per the children's suggestion, Ukrainian and Russian. In particular, the children explored the picturebook *Here we are – Notes for living on Planet Earth* by Oliver Jeffers in Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, French and English (the languages spoken by some of the sisters and the children in the three houses) and Welsh (one of the languages of the English bilingual version of the book).

Phase 4, *A house where we all fit!*, comprised the following activities: playing games and watching multilingual videos in Spanish and Swahili (the mother tongues of Colombian and Tanzanian children), and decorating a cardboard house (Figure 1), a metaphor of planet Earth. Decoration was made by the children with all the drawings made during Phase 1, arts and crafts related to nature, as well as words written in the participants' languages. The roof of the house was covered by the sky and the stars on one side, depicting night; the sun and some clouds on the other side, picturing day; and a 'thank you' note in the languages used in the exchange. The 'common home' had no doors and was open to everyone. So, a bridge was built with the word 'peace' written in different languages, including Afrikaans, Bengali, Romani and Turkish, as a sign of respect to the people the sisters had met during their missions.



Figure 1. Our 'common home'

3.4. Data collection and analysis

Data were collected via questionnaires, self-assessment sheets and fieldnotes. The questionnaire (Appendix 1) was filled in by the children, with the support of the researcher and first author of this paper, in the first and final phases of the intervention project to compare their responses. In the questionnaire children had to express their agreement or disagreement with 13 statements (e.g., “All children in the world speak the same language”) on a 3-point-Likert scale (agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree) displayed with emoticons. The questionnaire was tested for face and content validity by a panel of experts, which included an expert on GCE, an early years’ teacher and a child psychologist. The panel assessed the appropriateness and comprehensiveness of the questionnaire in relation to the aims of the study and the participants’ age. Statements were also reviewed for readability, clarity and comprehensiveness. The experts’ comments were discussed and analysed critically by the two researchers/authors involved in this study and changes for improvement were negotiated. These included reformulating some statements for greater clarity, reordering and adding more statements.

At the end of each phase of the project, the children completed self-assessment sheets concerning what they liked the most, what they learned and what they wanted to know or do. Each child was asked to express their opinion through drawings, and notes were taken of what they verbalised. Fieldnotes were also taken during and after each session by the researcher with the purpose of describing and reflecting about the children’s participation, levels of engagement and performance in the activities, as well as to describe the sessions, the context and the intervention of other participants. Apart from the questionnaires, which were statistically analysed, all data were treated using deductive content analysis, according to a categorisation matrix (Table 1).

Table 1. *Categorisation matrix*

CATEGORIES	DESCRIPTION
Self-knowledge and self-esteem	Awareness of physical appearance, preferences, emotions and respective triggers, strengths and weaknesses; sense of personal worth.
Respect and valorisation of diversity	Respect for the opinions of others; appreciation for the diversity of languages, cultures and people.
Communication	Ability to communicate effectively with peers and other participants.
Collaboration	Ability to work together, in pairs and in a large group, sharing ideas and resources, and developing a common project.

4. RESULTS

Results are organised in three subsections, according to the categories of analysis presented in Table 1. Considering that the questionnaire aimed to assess children's awareness of and attitudes towards diversity, its results will be discussed in section 4.2 titled 'Respect and valorisation of diversity'. The results pertaining to the categories 'communication' and 'collaboration' are presented together, as they address the same learning domain –skills. Children's voices are included (under pseudonyms and with a reference to their age) and their statements are used to support the authors' claims. Quotes were translated from Portuguese into English for purposes of clarity.

4.1. Self-knowledge and self-esteem

The activities conducted during Phase 1 of the intervention project, titled 'My world: eat, play, feel!', gave children the opportunity to think about who they are as individuals. While making drawings about their physical appearance, their preferences and emotions, children got to know themselves better and became more confident when expressing their feelings. The following quotes support these statements: "I am happy when I behave '5 stars'!" (Deniz, 5); "I am happy when my mother comes to visit." (Yıldız, 6); "I get sad when someone wants to beat me and when someone says that my parents are theirs." (Yağmur, 5); "I get angry with you... the adults." (Melek, 4); "When I get angry, I throw tantrums." (Aydan, 6); "I am happy when I am here alone." (Akara, 3); "I get sad when I am alone." (Melek, 4).

After watching the self-presentation videos made by their peers and the children in Colombia and Tanzania, the children became aware that all of them share things in common, regardless of where they come from. While making a drawing in the self-assessment sheet, Yıldız, 6, mentioned that she learned that other children are afraid too and that it is OK to feel sad, angry and afraid. Akara, 3, Melek, 4 and Yağmur, 5 (from Portugal) noticed that Buana (6, Tanzania) also loves chips, and that both Duscha (4, Colombia) and Melek (4, Portugal) chose rice as their favourite food. The Portuguese children were amazed when Elya (6, Colombia) said that she felt very happy when they were allowed to go for a walk, to the swimming pool or to the park, because they also have these resources in the Portuguese house and love to do that too. They were also very impressed when they learned that you could play with tyres, as the Tanzanian children mentioned in the videos, and wanted to try that out in the house. Playing hide and seek, running and playing ball were the favourite games of the children in the three countries. "I like it too!" was a sentence often repeated when watching the videos.

During the sessions, children also became more self-aware of their strengths and weaknesses and recognised that there are some things that they are still unable to do ("I can't draw a horse."–Yağmur, 5). Therefore, they started asking for help whenever this happened, at first to adults but gradually to other children. Sometimes they volunteered to help others ("Do you want me to do that? Do you?" –Yıldız, 6; "I can take it off, I can!"–Melek, 4), and this raised their self-esteem.

One of the children's favourite activities during the project was making a fruit salad. The idea of starting the group work with the preparation of this dessert was due to two reasons: firstly, fruit is the dessert Portuguese children have during meals at home; sec-

only, the final product shows that diversity is a good thing, and that all together we can do something extraordinary. This served as a warm-up for the activities that would follow, which showed the children a glimpse of the linguistic and cultural richness that our world possesses. During this activity, the children were very involved, performing it with pleasure and joy. They often asked for validation (“Look, I’ve put it all in!”–Yıldız, 6) and felt ‘grown up’, because they were performing an “adult’s task”. At the end of the activity, they were really excited and proud of their achievements, as the following quotes show: “Oh, it looks so perfect!” (Aydan, 6); “See how nice the salad is!” (Yağmur, 5); “And we are the cooks!” (Yağmur, 5); “We are excellent cooks!” (Deniz, 5).

In short, the project activities allowed children to become more aware of their own identity (and that of others) and to improve their self-confidence regarding their abilities and anxieties.

4.2. Respect and valorisation of diversity

Throughout the project children’s eagerness to learn about the diversity of people, languages and cultures grew stronger. They asked the researcher to play the videos repeatedly, especially the ones about their ‘virtual friends’. When they were asked “Is it good to be different?”, they immediately replied “Yes, it is!”. They often searched for similarities and differences between languages (“It’s (not) the same!”–Deniz, 5) and expressed their opinions about linguistic and cultural diversity (“My words are funny!” – Yağmur, 5, referring to words in Swahili). In the self-assessment worksheets, most children expressed a desire to learn other languages, as manifested by Yağmur, 5, who wanted to learn Swahili, and Deniz, 5, who wanted to learn “all the languages in the world”.

Comparing the children’s replies to the questionnaire before and after the project, it is possible to see that these changed substantially (see Figures 2 and 3). Initial perceptions included an agreement with the following statements: “All children in the world can be friends” (Statement 13, 100%); “All children in the world eat, drink and play” (Statement 4, 83%); “...play with the same things” (Statement 8, 83%); “...like to play” (Statement 7, 67%); “...are the same: they have the same colour of hair, eyes, skin, etc.” (Statement 1, 67%). Fifty percent of the children agreed that all children speak the same language (Statement 2); eat the same food (Statement 5); feel happy, sad, angry and afraid (Statement 9); feel happy or sad about the same things (Statement 10) and feel angry for the same reasons (Statement 11). Two statements caused some uncertainty (33%): “All children in the world like the same food” (Statement 6) and “All children in the world are afraid of the same things” (Statement 12). Finally, sixty-seven percent of the children disagreed with the statement “All children in the world should speak the same language” (Statement 3), while the remaining agreed or felt unsure.

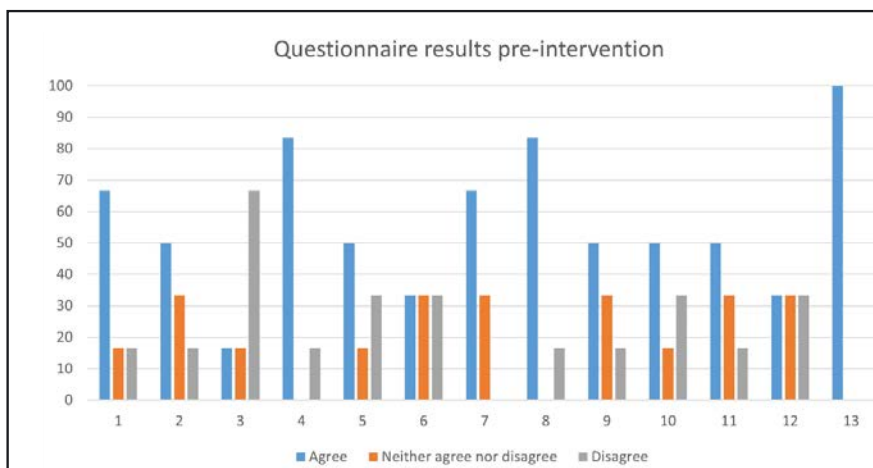


Figure 2. Questionnaire results pre-intervention

Later perceptions changed to a unanimous disagreement (100%) with the following statements: “All children are the same: they have the same colour of hair, eyes, skin, etc.” (Statement 1); “...speak the same language” (Statement 2); “...should speak the same language” (Statement 3); “...eat the same food” (Statement 5); “...are afraid of the same things” (Statement 12). There was unanimous agreement with the statements: “All children in the world eat, drink and play” (Statement 4), “All children in the world like to play” (Statement 7), and “All children in the world can be friends” (Statement 13). Eighty-three percent disagreed that all children like the same food (Statement 6); play with the same things (Statement 8); and feel angry for the same reasons (Statement 11). Eighty-three percent agreed that all children feel happy, sad, angry and afraid (Statement 9), but according to sixty-seven percent of the children they are not happy or sad about the same things (Statement 10).

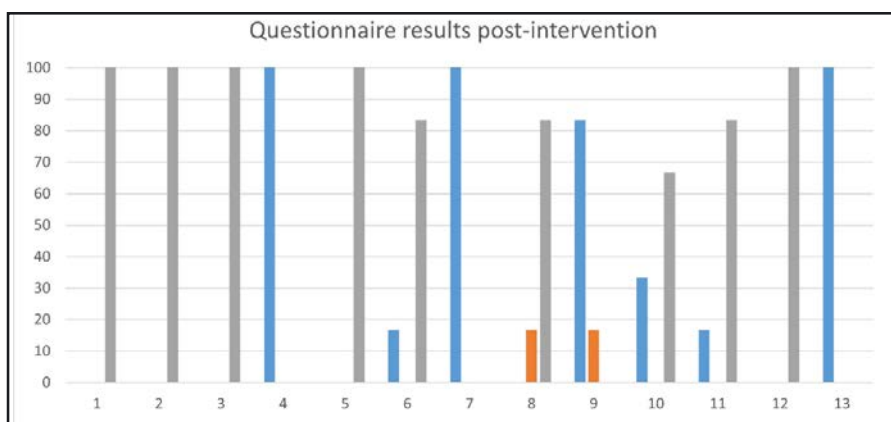


Figure 3. Questionnaire results post-intervention

While completing the questionnaire, the researcher required children to justify their choices regarding two statements: “All children in the world should speak the same language” (Statement 3) and “All children in the world can be friends” (Statement 13). Initially, children could not think about reasons why they agreed or disagreed with the statements. This was not the case after the project. They explained that children should not speak the same language, “because they come from other countries” (Yıldız, 6), “some children speak English, some speak Spanish, some speak Italian, Portuguese, French, Russian, the children of Ukraine... and that is OK” (Deniz, 5). They also agreed that all children can be friends “because they all like to play, to be happy...” (Akara, 3). They concluded that we may speak different languages, come from different countries, but we can all be friends.

4.3. Communication and collaboration

According to the care home psychologist, this particular group of children is used to and reproduces physical and verbal aggressiveness, as a result of family and individual dysfunctions, and reveals emotional adjustment difficulties, like most of the children and young people who are in institutional care. Their cognitive assessment performance is below the norm, and they face learning difficulties that they try to hide to avoid being ashamed or feeling diminished. Supporting children in developing their communication and collaboration skills was, therefore, one of the project’s goals.

When analysing the results, we can see that there were moments when children communicated effectively with each other and with the adults in the house (sisters, volunteers, friends), showing them what they were doing or learning. Even Melek, 4, the most introverted child, participated gladly in the project and was eager to express her opinion: “Let’s go on!”, “What?!”, “I know!”, “I want to see which colour...”. While filling in the self-assessment worksheet, Yıldız, 6, who had trouble communicating with others, grabbed the book *Here we are* and retold the story, explaining what she had learned

I learned about what exists here, in the countries, what’s on planet Earth. When the day comes, when the night comes... The countries, I learned all the animals. I did not know, and I learned everything. I didn’t know there was an eagle...

The children also improved their ability to work together, which the sisters considered to be their ‘Achilles heel’. While preparing the fruit salad, they helped each other, shared tools and worked together. They also cooperated happily in group games. For instance, when putting together a jigsaw puzzle on countries and continents, the children sat on the floor and talked to each other, deciding which pieces fit together, as the following quotes show:

Deniz, 5: Where is this?

Melek, 4: It’s here!

Aydan, 6 [taking a piece and exclaiming]: It’s here, Yağmur!

Yağmur, 5: No, it’s not!

After playing the game *Swat that fly*, in which children had to spot the fruit in the foreign language they were listening to and splat it with a fly swat, Aydan, 6 and Deniz, 5,

tied for first place and were happy with it. In the reading activities, Aydan, 6, shared her book with Özgür, 3, willingly. Finally, while building the ‘common home’, they completely took over the stage and decided among themselves which materials to be used, what to put in the house, where and how: Aydan and Yıldız, both 6, started to decorate the house together; Melek, 4, quickly came forward and the rest of the children joined the group. They wanted to include everything that all the children had done.

The children also stated that collaboration was a good thing in the self-evaluation worksheets. While explaining what he had learned during Phase 3, Deniz, 5, recalled the video about conviviality (Pixar’s “For the Birds”, by Ralph Eggleston) mentioning that he learned that “the little birds had to be good, not argue with each other and learn to play together with the big one that was blue.” Aydan, 6, also expressed what she learned after Phase 2: “To help others, adults included”.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study sought to understand the contribution of the AtL approach in the development of attitudes, values and skills conducive to global citizenship and positive peace. With this goal in mind, a qualitative case study was developed with 3 to 6-year-old children living in a residential home, who participated in a multilingual project. Data were collected via questionnaires, self-assessment sheets and fieldnotes, which were treated using statistical or content analysis, according to four categories: self-knowledge and self-esteem; respect and valorisation of diversity; communication; and collaboration.

In what concerns the first category, results show that the children became more self-aware, acknowledging their preferences, their emotions and what triggers them. This might help them regulate their anxieties and better plan how to react in the future. The possibility to share their feelings with others—their peers, but also the sisters, the researcher and their virtual friends—was fundamental to reassure them that these feelings are normal and to help them empathise with others. Performing tasks, which are often in the hands of adults, such as preparing a fruit salad or choosing a book to read, raised children’s self-esteem and made them feel more confident about their abilities. All in all, children matured and developed a more grounded sense of confidence and optimism, which is aligned with prior research on GCE (see, for instance Hancock, 2017).

Regarding the second category, children became more aware about the world and about linguistic and cultural diversity. They learned about their virtual friends’ preferences and experiences, and became more open to diversity (see Ben Maad, 2016), as their desire to play with tyres like the Tanzanian children suggests. After exploring linguistic and cultural diversity via songs, books and games, children expressed willingness to learn languages in the future, which is key to thriving in a global and multicultural world.

Concerning the third category, children developed their ability to communicate with others; to express their feelings, learning achievements and desires; to (re)tell stories and voice their experiences. This supports data from past research that shows that “placing children in an environment where many languages are spoken can have a positive effect on their language abilities” (Coelho et al., 2018, p. 2). Research has also revealed that children who participate in AtL projects develop collaboration skills (see, for instance, Dias, 2016),

as these activities often involve doing things together, such as playing games or solving problems in small groups. In this study, children learned about and enacted collaboration as they negotiated what to do, took turns and helped each other.

In short, findings suggest that the AtL project contributed to improving children's self-knowledge and self-esteem; promoting their awareness of and respect for diversity (of languages, cultures and people); broadening their linguistic and cultural repertoire; and developing their communication and collaboration skills. By coming into contact with linguistic and cultural diversity and discovering the links they have with other children around the world, the six boys and girls were able to develop empathy towards otherness and a broader sense of belonging. They also increased their curiosity about the world 'out there', becoming more motivated towards 'foreign' languages and cultures, a result that is also heavily displayed in the literature on AtL (Candelier & Kervran, 2018).

Overall, our findings suggest that the AtL approach can be a valuable tool to promote values, attitudes and skills conducive to global citizenship and positive peace, even with younger groups of children. This has important implications for formal language education policy and practice, making a strong case for the inclusion of pluralistic approaches in the early years' curriculum. Furthermore, it supports a broader understanding of language education more aligned with a 'didactics of plurilingualism' (Nussbaum, 2014), which takes into account all of the communicative repertoires of the learners (but also of the teaching and non-teaching staff), thus contributing to more inclusive learning communities.

However, this study is not without limitations. A first shortcoming is related to the study's small sample. Considering that only six children participated in the study, it is impossible to generalise its results. This factor also made it impossible to use inferential statistics to analyse the significance of changes noted in the post-intervention questionnaires, as well as to explore the possible effects of specific variables (such as gender or age) in children's choices. Secondly, it is important to highlight that this was a qualitative case study conducted by a researcher who was also the teacher responsible for conducting the intervention sessions. This means that subjectivity and positionality might have influenced data analysis. This was further compromised by that fact that, due to ethical limitations, it was not possible to make audio or video recordings of the children's interactions, relying uniquely on fieldnotes. Finally, it should not be forgotten that, although children showed that they had developed important attitudes, values and skills, that does not necessarily mean that they have become global and responsible citizens. It is important that these projects are not restricted to isolated activities but are part of children's curricular and extracurricular activities throughout their lives.

In light of the above, it is important to keep researching on this topical and socially relevant theme, particularly with vulnerable groups of children (such as migrants and refugees) whose voices are often absent in the literature. This may also involve conducting longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term effects of these projects, as well as carrying out studies of comparative nature targeting children in different contexts and settings (e.g., formal and informal, multilingual or monolingual). Another important step would be to invest in (pre-service and in-service) teacher education in order to build teachers' confidence, especially in the early years, in adopting the AtL approach. This would allow teachers to promote children's self-esteem and openness to diversity early on, which may be key in helping them play a defining role in building more peaceful, respectful, inclusive and secure societies.




6. REFERENCES

- Alves, I. (2016). *Teaching multiculturalism in a preschool classroom* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Instituto Superior de Educação e Ciências de Lisboa, Portugal. <http://hdl.handle.net/10400.26/1916>
- Andreotti, V. (2016). Global education and social change: The imperative to engage with different discourses. In H. Hartmeyer & L. Wegimont, L. (Eds.), *Global education in Europe revisited: Strategies and structures, policy, practice and challenges* (pp. 199–203). Waxmann.
- Bamber, P., Lewin, D., & White, M. (2018). (Dis-)Locating the transformative dimension of global citizenship education. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 50(2), 204–230. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2017.1328077>
- Ben Maad, M.R. (2020). Any role for foreign languages in promoting children's critical thinking? The case of stereotyping. *Language Awareness*, 29(1), 60–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2019.1686508>
- Ben Maad, M.R. (2016). Awakening young children to foreign languages: openness to diversity highlighted. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 29(3), 319–336. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2016.1184679>
- Candelier, M. (Ed.). (2004). *Janua Linguarum – The gateway to languages. The introduction of language awareness into the curriculum: Awakening to languages*. Council of Europe.
- Candelier, M., & Kervran, M. (2018). 1997-2017: Twenty years of innovation and research about Awakening to Languages-Evlang heritage. *International Journal of Bias, Identity and Diversities in Education*, 3(1), 10–21. <https://doi.org/10.4018/ijbide.2018010102>
- Coelho, D., Andrade, A.I., & Portugal, G. (2018). The 'Awakening to Languages' approach at preschool: developing children's communicative competence. *Language Awareness*, 27(3), 197–221. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2018.1486407>
- Dias, T. (2016). *Educação para a paz no jardim de infância: uma educação livre de conflitos* [Peace education in kindergarten: a conflict-free education] [Unpublished master's thesis]. Universidade de Aveiro, Aveiro, Portugal. <http://hdl.handle.net/10773/21396>
- Galtung, J. (1996). *Peace by peaceful means: Peace and conflict, development and civilization*. Sage.
- Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167–191.
- Hancock, R.E. (2017). Global citizenship education: Emancipatory practice in a New York preschool. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 31(4), 571–580. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2017.1346731>
- Hawkins, E. (1987). *Awareness of language: An introduction* (revised ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Institute of Social Security (2007). *Portuguese Child Policy Social Security*. Institute of Social Security, I.P, Portugal.
- Jares, X.R. (2002). *Educação para a paz: sua teoria e sua prática* [Education for peace: its theory and practice] (2nd ed.). Artmed.
- Ki-Moon, B. (2012). *Global Education First Initiative*. United Nations.
- King, M.L. (1968). *Where do we go from here: Chaos or community?* Beacon Press.
- Lourenço, M., & Andrade, A.I. (2014). Promoting phonological awareness in pre-primary education: Possibilities of the 'awakening to languages' approach. *Language Awareness*, 23(4), 304–318.
- Nussbaum, L. (2014). Una didàctica del plurilingüisme. *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching & Learning Language & Literature*, 7 (3), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/jtl3.590>
- Oxfam. (2015). *Education for global citizenship: A guide for schools*. Oxfam GB.

- Pashby, K., da Costa, M., Stein, S., Andreotti, V. (2020). A meta-review of typologies of global citizenship education. *Comparative Education*, 56(2), 144–164. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2020.1723352>
- Pearce, D.R., Oyama, M., Moore, D., & Irisawa, K. (2020). Plurilingualism and STEAM: Unfolding the paper crane of peace at an elementary school in Japan. *International Journal of Bias, Identity and Diversities in Education*, 5(2), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.4018/IJBIDE.2020070101>
- Twigg, D., Pendergast, D., & Twigg, J. (2015). Growing global citizens: Young children's lived experiences with the development of their own social world. *International Research in Early Childhood Education* 6(1), 79–91.
- UNESCO (2014). *Global citizenship education: preparing learners for the challenges of the 21st century*. UNESCO.
- United Nations (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. United Nations.
- Wintersteiner, W. (2019). Peace education for global citizenship: The genuine global dimension of Betty Reardon's concept of Peace Education. In I. Breines (Ed.), *Exploring Betty A. Reardon's perspective on peace* (pp. 15–28). Springer.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: design and methods* (4th ed.). Sage.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Pre- and post-intervention questionnaire

STATEMENTS	SCALE		
	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
			
1. All children in the world are the same: they have the same colour of hair, eyes, skin, etc.			
2. All children in the world speak the same language.			
3. All children in the world should speak the same language.*			
4. All children in the world eat, drink and play.			
5. All children in the world eat the same food.			
6. All children in the world like the same food.			
7. All children in the world like to play.			
8. All children in the world play with the same things.			
9. All children in the world feel happy, sad, angry and afraid.			
10. All children in the world feel happy/sad about the same things.			
11. All children in the world feel angry for the same reasons.			
12. All children in the world are afraid of the same things.			
13. All children in the world can be friends.*			

*Statements which required an oral justification from the children.