Dreams and Realities:
Developing Countries and the English Language

Edited by Hywel Coleman

Paper 15
English as a tool for conflict transformation
by Psyche Kennett

15

English as a tool for conflict transformation[1]

Psyche Kennett

Introduction

Armed conflict remains the number one cause of poverty in developing countries. In the past decade the number of armed conflicts between countries has declined but the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees claims in the annual Global Trends report for 2008 (UNHCR 2009) that the number of people affected by internal conflicts is at an all-time high. Ethnic, religious and territorial conflicts are tearing Gaza, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan and Iraq apart (Robinson 2006). Social inequality and conflict over democracy affect countries like Sri Lanka, Burma, Iran and Tibet. Kosovo, Timor Leste, Nepal and even Northern Ireland have emerging post-conflict status but maintain a fragile peace punctuated by violent incidents. Global warming and the energy crisis exacerbate conflicts over resources – in Bolivia, South Africa and Ghana over water (OECD 2005); in Russia and Georgia over gas; in Iraq and most recently Peru, over oil. Hyperinflation and economic recession have created conflict in Somalia and Zimbabwe while the international financial crisis is forecast to feed conflict over unemployment in China and Russia (Hollerman 2008).

The war may be over in Sri Lanka but the issues behind the conflict remain unresolved. Language is one of them. In the aftermath of the fighting, victims of conflict, military authorities, civil servants and international relief agencies struggle to restore basic services and keep food distribution and de-mining on track. The soldiers do not speak Tamil, the refugees do not speak Sinhala and the doctors from Médecins Sans Frontières do not speak either language. They all communicate in English.

In the past, English was considered divisive. The Sinhalese called it kaduwa – the sword that cut between the classes – a colonial legacy that they sought to remove, along with Tamil, in the Sinhala Only legislation that followed Independence. But more recent amendments to the constitution have brought English back as a link language and English continues to be used as the language of management in public service and of international development. In addition, English continues to be the second language that people in Sri Lanka most want to learn.

Recognising this fact, the Performance Improvement Project, implemented by German International Cooperation (GIZ) – on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Australian Government (AusAID) – works with Sri Lanka's Northern and Eastern Provincial Councils to encourage English as a link language and a tool for conflict transformation and development. This is part of the project's mandate to build capacity for provincial and local government and community-based organisations, so that they can work together towards sustainable socio-economic development in a participatory and conflict mitigating way. The project's main stakeholders are decision-making public servants in key offices in the Northern and Eastern Provincial Councils and local government as well as community leaders with an emphasis on Women's Rural Development Societies. Through these actors the project seeks to create a critical mass of change agents who will work towards building peace and social cohesion for good governance and development in the country. For this, the project's main tool is STEPS.

STEPS stands for Skills Through English for Public Servants, a suite of courses from post-elementary to lower advanced that GIZ has designed and contracted the British Council to deliver. As a Content and Language Integrated Learning programme, it combines good governance and development topics with skills in critical thinking, cross-cultural communication, conflict resolution and English. Staff of government bodies and non-government organisations (NGOs) gain confidence in problem solving, distinguishing factual information from media hype, finding ways of achieving equity and diversity in a deeply divided society and understanding the value of dissent. STEPS works towards removing traditional barriers within a largely hierarchical, seniority-based management system.

A placement test is used to group participants according to their English language needs alone. This throws together people from diverse backgrounds – from Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities, rural and urban districts, central and devolved government structures – and from different age groups and management positions. English works here as a connector, encouraging people who would never normally meet to sit down together and share ideas in an environment that inspires them to work together towards a more tolerant and diverse society.

By the middle of 2010, over 2,000 public servants and NGO staff working to support vulnerable, conflict-affected communities in the North and East of Sri Lanka had successfully completed at least one of the four-week intensive courses in the STEPS suite. GIZ's target is to double that number by 2013.

In the North, 40 per cent of places on STEPS courses are now being filled with English language and English medium Mathematics and Science teachers in a bid to support public service teachers who work with English in schools as well as public service managers who work with English in governance. STEPS participants can then reach out to children and citizens alike.

The need for conflict transformation

Conflict transformation to ensure social cohesion and lay the ground work for socio-economic development is beyond the remit of most English language educators working in development, but teaching conflict resolution in the classroom is relevant to all. Addressing domestic violence, community conflict and conflict in the workplace is appropriate in any capacity development project. So is promoting civic alternatives to violent conflict and teaching critical thinking and the value of dissent.

Interestingly, the same tools for conflict transformation at macro level, outlined in Wallensteen (2002) and Miall et al. (2005), also apply at micro level:

- *Shifting power relations* in order to de-militarise, de-marginalise and democratise society is not just a job for UN peacekeepers or heads of state. These things can be done in the classroom too.

- *Working towards social equality and empowering minorities* can also begin with the way participants are selected and grouped on a training programme.

- *Creating governable spaces* (Watts and Bohle 1993) – space for dialogue, empathy and grievance redress – can be done for the office as well as for the truth commission.

- *Resolving incompatibility and distrust* may take years, but getting divided groups to work together as participants on the same course is a good place to start.

- *Establishing new social networks and inclusive support structures* can start with the formation of informal networks during the course and continues after the course is over.

- *Changing social relationships, interests and public discourse* at a national level may take years, but it can begin with the way participants learn to listen to and address each other. Just as we can choose to talk about 'civilians' and 'ex-combatants', instead of 'collaborators' and 'terrorists', we can learn to say 'us' instead of 'them'.

When viewed in this way, many teachers might find that they are already working on conflict transformation in the classroom. The point is to make it an explicit process in lesson and programme planning and to consciously utilise content and task types that accentuate 'connectors' not 'dividers' (Anderson, 1999).

English as a link language

English has been used as a tool for conflict transformation, as a link language, a connector, for conflict-prone societies where national languages have traditionally become social or ethnic dividers. In Rwanda, English has replaced French as the official language for policy and secondary education, although KinyaRwanda is still the first language. Some argue that this benefits those who do not speak French, but latent conflict with France – and the fact that English is the language of the country's youth – makes French a greater 'divider' (Samuelson and Freedman 2010).

In Sri Lanka English was used in the past to divide and rule but it is now the one language that all three ethnic groups – Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims – are willing to learn. In principle it would be better to strengthen Tamil-Sinhala bilingualism and treat them as equal first languages for commerce, media and public life. But this is not possible in a country where Sinhala is associated with communal dominance and where subsequent amendments to the constitution have failed, in practice, to put the two languages on an equal footing. English remains for some, returns for others, as the language of business, management, law, higher education and public service above a certain level. As such, it links communities at several levels. Internationally it links the country to the outside world. At the end of a protracted and impoverishing civil war, all groups have a strong need to communicate with foreign governments and to be heard in the international arena. At the provincial level English links the civil service, local government, NGOs, bank-funded projects and other development actors working in the conflict-affected and mainly Tamil-speaking areas of the North and East with the Sinhala-speaking central government. At classroom level it links individuals from different walks of life who would not normally sit and study together. Here it becomes a common denominator that connects people by ability and need, not a subject that divides people by seniority or gender or ethnicity or religion.

In addition, the English language classroom can provide a neutral space where participants have the freedom to express new ideas in the safety of a foreign language. The connotations of nationalism or racism through one or the other national language are absent. If the teacher is also a foreigner, an 'outsider' and a good facilitator, then the 'space' for developing conflict sensitivity in a secure, non-judgmental environment is expanded. For this reason the Performance Improvement Project uses British Council teachers to deliver the STEPS suite, not only for their methodology and native English language skills but also because not being Sri Lankan allows them to create this neutral space in the classroom. People need to feel safe if they are going to discuss (and begin to resolve) conflict and the teacher needs to be a skilled facilitator to ensure that the participants' beliefs and experience are heard and respected.

This approach has resulted in the growth of informal networks between participants who have followed the course. A 2008 impact study showed that 36 per cent were still using their network contacts and their English, more than a year after their courses had finished, to solve problems between departments and to communicate between Sinhalese and Tamil-speaking organisations. In addition:

- 60 per cent reported increased knowledge in good governance and conflict transformation

- 55 per cent felt more empowered to deal with conflicts resulting from rank, ethnicity or gender

- 35 per cent reported using new conflict resolution strategies in the workplace

- 20 per cent reported maintaining cross-ethnic contacts once back at work and

- 85 per cent of senior managers clearly agreed that STEPS met the good governance capacity development needs of the Provincial Councils.

Impact studies from 2010 show that, in addition to the above, 85 per cent of participants show an increase of ten per cent in English language ability pre- and post-test scores and 50 per cent show an increase of more than 20 per cent.

Critical thinking and conflict transformation

The teaching and learning of English as a link language provides a platform for conflict transformation, particularly when critical thinking is taught as a sub-skill of reading, writing, listening and speaking. In many countries, critical thinking is taught in schools through mother tongue literacy. Students learn to deconstruct texts, express opinions, rationalise arguments, question the media and indeed question everything they read. They learn the value of dissent and how to use strategies to create their own factual, discursive or persuasive discourse. But in the Sri Lankan school system critical thinking is not taught as such. Rote learning and behaviourism based on outdated models leave little space in the textbooks for instilling the skills of cognitive hypothesising, inferring, problem solving, distinguishing fact from belief and expressing opinions. Worse than this, distortion of facts, myth masquerading as scientific reality and ethnically offensive materials are complaints levelled against the curriculum, particularly by the Tamil Teachers' Union (Wickrema and Colenso 2007). Outside school, freedom of speech is even more problematic: 24 journalists were killed in Sri Lanka between 1992 and 2010, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (2010), while the state-controlled media are left unchecked to reinforce existing hierarchies and stereotypes.

But if one of the aims of conflict transformation is to redefine social relationships, power structures and vested interests then critical thinking is a must. Teaching English to adults – and in particular to adults who are change agents within government service – is one way of reactivating critical thinking in a society where school has failed its citizens in this regard. This is one of the main strategies that informs the design of the STEPS programme.

Importantly, English language teaching methodology is task based; the task types it uses constitute the sub-skills of critical thinking. These include accessing information, deconstructing ideas and processes, categorising, evaluating, prioritising, improving, empathising, problem solving, agreeing and disagreeing, finding consensus. What is important is for educators to build up and recycle these task types in an explicit way so that participants become aware of the fact that they are acquiring not only English but also critical thinking and – by extension – skills for conflict transformation.

Take, for example, the skill of finding consensus. In a divided society where a significant minority are oppressed, learning to be consensus-oriented is a matter of learning not only to agree on what suits the majority of people but also to incorporate what suits the significant minority. On a course that uses a task-based approach to critical thinking, this can be done by setting a task where the group must find consensus, in a limited period of time, on a set of principles or ideas.

For example, participants are given a task to brainstorm as many ways as possible to improve the situation between two groups in conflict. (This could be an international mining corporation and the indigenous people who live in the mining

area, internally displaced women trying to join a benefit scheme where vested interest keeps them out, or internally displaced people who speak one language but are controlled by authorities who speak another). Participants compile their ideas for improving the situation between the conflicting parties in a common list – the longer the list the better. Each participant then writes down his or her top three choices from the common list. Then, in a series of limited-time encounters controlled by the trainer, they negotiate and agree on three common ideas. This is done in pairs, then groups of four, then groups of eight and so on until the whole class has arrived at three ideas that everyone agrees on. At each stage, the teacher allows only five minutes to negotiate and agree, after which time the group must arrive at consensus. Participants have to 'give up' one of their own ideas in order to accommodate someone else's so that they can move forward together.

In methodology terms this task type is called a pyramid and is well known for getting a group of people to agree on a limited number of items from a more extensive list. The extensive list constitutes the base of the pyramid and – through a series of negotiations – the group reaches consensus on a final shortlist at the top of the pyramid. In doing so, participants experience in microcosm the difficulty involved in arriving at consensus when many different opinions are held by communities in conflict. By extension, participants can project the strategies and the levels of tolerance and flexibility needed to find consensus in a real conflict situation.

Content and Language Integrated Learning

English becomes a tool for conflict transformation when:

- English is the motivation and the link that connects different ethnic groups on a training course

- studying in a safe environment enables participants to explore different ways of thinking and communicating with each other

- the methodology is task based and critical thinking can be taught through task types

- the course content includes conflict transformation as its 'non-language' subject matter and uses English as the vehicle for arriving at that subject matter.

This last point reflects an approach known as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). According to the European Commission (2008):

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) involves teaching a curricular subject through the medium of a language other than that normally used. The subject can be entirely unrelated to language learning, such as history lessons being taught in English in a school in Spain. CLIL is taking place and has been found to be effective in all sectors of education from primary through to adult and higher education. Its success has been growing over the past ten years and continues to do so.

Teachers working with CLIL are specialists in their own discipline rather than traditional language teachers. They are usually fluent speakers of the target language, bilingual or native speakers. In many institutions language teachers work in partnership with other departments to offer CLIL in various subjects. The key issue is that the learner is gaining new knowledge about the 'non-language' subject while encountering, using and learning the foreign language. The methodologies and approaches used are often linked to the subject area with the content leading the activities.

The CLIL course STEPS follows this model. It is a four-week course that teaches government servants and their civil society counterparts the basics of governance and development through four components: Economy, Conflict, Social Development and Environment. The one-week component on conflict transformation uses the medium of English to sensitise participants to different types of conflict: conflict at home and with neighbours, conflict in the workplace, causes and key issues in armed conflict and some strategies for conflict resolution. Conflict transformation is also integrated as a cross-cutting skill for daily use on the course, and later in the workplace, through the development of interpersonal skills, positive group dynamics, team building, negotiation skills and critical thinking.

One of the challenges of CLIL is how to combine complex concepts in the non-language syllabus with often quite low levels of English. Accuracy in English on CLIL courses often remains a problem, but if the subject matter is relevant and the tasks capture a real need to communicate, then enormous increases can be seen in participants' fluency and confidence as well as their knowledge of the subject matter. The participatory approach allows for 'experts' among the participants to come to the fore and share their experience. At the same time the trainer, as facilitator, can activate the less vocal human resources within the group and provide a positive management model for the workplace.

However, it is important not to make the teaching material too confrontational in the aftermath of war. Addressing conflict transformation through the STEPS programme is a delicate business. During the war years many people were reluctant to talk about the violence and now that the war is over there is pressure to sweep difficult issues under the carpet. Taking advice from GIZ's conflict transformation experts, the course designers used a progression from conflict at home and between men and women, through conflict with neighbours and in the workplace, to armed conflict and the rehabilitation of child soldiers. The emphasis in each case is on using conflict resolution skills. Participants learn how to use active listening to become less judgemental, how to recognise bias in the media, how to be assertive without being aggressive and how to promote discussion on emotionally or politically sensitive topics.

A variety of approaches is needed to motivate and empower learners, to build tolerance and to find ways forward. STEPS uses an ongoing storyline based on conflict in the workplace at a fictional NGO to look at miscommunication between national and international staff. Through this, participants deal with cross-cultural conflict in a dramatised, light-hearted way. A short film, *The Slipper* (Kowthaman 2003), about children who step on mines, is in stark contrast. Produced by the NGO

ScriptNet for a project called Reel Peace, the change in tone gives learners the opportunity to consider the media as a powerful tool for peace and reconciliation. Participants also learn how to deconstruct messages in print and, using similar discursive and persuasive text types, write their own project proposals to international donors in a bid to capture some of the post-conflict rehabilitation funds presently flowing into the war-ravaged Northern Province.

To illustrate these points, two extracts from the STEPS Trainer's Notes (Disken et al. 2008) are shown here.

Box 1 : STEPS Trainers' Notes : Session 2.5

Session 2.5 Conflict in the workplace (2)

Learner objectives

By the end of the session participants will be able to:
- listen for specific information
- get information about past events by asking questions
- differentiate between /p/ and /f/
- predict possible causes of conflict between two colleagues.

Time

90 minutes

Session overview

A	Listening	20 minutes
B	Language focus	15 minutes
C	Pronunciation	25 minutes
D	Speaking	30 minutes

Resources

Resource 2.5A	Tapescript 2.5A (parts 1 and 2)
Resource 2.5B	Tapescripts 2.5B and 2.5C

Two sets of different coloured cards (enough for participants to have one of each colour)

Worksheets

Worksheet 2.5A	Patrick and Fernando: their stories
Worksheet 2.5B	Timeline for Patrick (1)
Worksheet 2.5C	Timeline for Patrick (2)
Worksheet 2.5D	Timeline for Fernando (group A)
Worksheet 2.5E	Timeline for Fernando (group B)

Context

This session is the first in the saga of Patrick and Fernando which continues through this unit. The session sets the scene by highlighting their relationship as colleagues in the same office and the differences in approach and knowledge of procedure.

Patrick is a new expatriate manager in a fictional NGO (FLO). He is very procedure-oriented and assumes that everyone else is too. Fernando works in the same department but (as we find out later) is not aware of the procedures. He does his best to do a good job but, as he is unaware of the procedures, doesn't follow them.

There is a pronunciation focus in this session as misunderstanding of spoken instructions is one of Fernando's problems. The distinction between the /p/ and /f/ phonemes is difficult for Tamil speakers and can cause confusion.

The other mistakes that Fernando makes are not testing electrical equipment, buying things from his uncle's shop and failing to get three quotes before making a purchase (a requirement in many organisations' purchasing/procurement procedures in order to find the most competitive price). These mistakes are touched on in this session and are dealt with in Session 2.6.

Initially it looks like Fernando is in the wrong. Ultimately, though, in Session 2.12, we find out that it is Patrick's failure to provide training that is the real problem. Do not give that away in this session as it will be detrimental to Session 2.12.

The main point to come out of this and the following session is that misunderstanding can cause (potentially serious) conflict in the workplace. Clear communication is essential to avoid these misunderstandings.

STEPS : Trainer's Notes : Session 2.5   87

In Session 2.5 participants combine the language skills of listening, pronunciation and the use of the simple past tense with conflict sensitising skills of predicting causes of conflict in the workplace.

In Session 2.10, towards the end of the unit, participants consolidate their ideas about the victims of conflict and discuss ideas for peace building measures in the media while practising their fluency skills in English.

Course management and conflict transformation

One of the biggest successes of the STEPS programme in terms of conflict transformation is the way course content is mirrored in course management. Through the organisation and delivery of the sessions, key governance and conflict transformation concepts are seen in action. Towards the end of the course the 'loop' is made explicit and participants reflect on the way aspects of good governance and conflict transformation have been demonstrated throughout. The aim is to get participants to realise that participation, responsiveness, transparency, inclusion and the establishment of new social networks all happen during the course. This provides them with a model for their own working environment. Participants notice that:

■ the classes are managed in a participatory and consensus oriented way

■ the teachers demonstrate empathy and responsiveness through the use of learner-centred approaches and a syllabus which demonstrates an objective, needs-based approach

■ everyone is treated as an equal in a democratic environment; different voices are heard through different pairings and groupings

■ the use of objectively marked placement tests provides a platform for transparency, inclusion and diversity; participants are selected and grouped by ability, not seniority, gender or race.

The possibility of inclusiveness and the opportunity to work in harmony for a protracted period of time is perhaps the most empowering part of this 'loop'. The classes include a mixture of Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims with English as the leveller. Senior managers and support staff, men and women, old and young sit side by side. Staff from urban and rural contexts, central and devolved government structures, civil society and NGOs work together as equals to exchange views and experience. What is more, the intensive, long-term, residential courses help foster informal networks and support systems among participants. Cross-ethnic communication continues once they return to the workplace.

Box 2 : STEPS Trainers' Notes : Session 2.10

Session 2.10 Consolidation: effects of conflict

Learner objectives

By the end of this session participants will be able to:
- consolidate their ideas about the effects of armed conflict
- express opinions and speak at length on a topic
- use visual media – films and posters – for conflict sensitivity.

Time

90 minutes

Session overview

A Designing an anti-war film	35 minutes
B Film: *The Slipper*	55 minutes

Resources

Resource 2.10	Pairwork cards (cut-ups, 1 card per participant)
DVD	*The Slipper*

Worksheets

Worksheet 2.10A	Film outline
Worksheet 2.10B	*The Slipper* Points for discussion

Context

This session draws together ideas about victims of conflict and extends the concept of victims to cover 'truth', 'democracy', 'values' and 'communities' which are also destroyed by militarisation and armed conflict. Instead of getting participants to respond in terms of what they can do through their work as public servants, the session asks participants to respond on a more emotional level, and to view films and posters as vehicles for conflict sensitivity in terms of campaigning for empathy and understanding, as a pre-cursor to action.

The Slipper is a 10-minute film produced in 2003 by ScriptNetSL as part of a series of films which visualise the effects of conflict in Sri Lanka with the specific intention of generating discussion for conflict transformation. It is in Tamil with English subtitles, making it suitable for a mixed-language audience. It is not important that English is not spoken. The film serves as a vehicle to stimulate discussion in English, not to teach English-listening comprehension. (The English subtitles work as reading comprehension for Sinhala-speaking participants.) Viewers, especially those who have not lived in conflict affected areas of Sri Lanka, may find the content disturbing, so it is important for the trainer to anticipate emotional responses and to facilitate participants' reaction to the film with sensitivity and in an unbiased way. Immediately after the film is played, trainers should not expect participants to start speaking. Instead, quiet time should be provided, so that participants have a chance to reflect and digest the images before 'returning to the classroom'.

In terms of language focus, the session is designed to get participants to talk at length – consolidating their ideas and what they have learned in Sessions 2.7, 2.8 and 2.9. As such, the trainer should focus on participants' ability to put together structures already taught on the course, as in a production, or free practice, stage. Anticipated language items are *should, could* and *why don't we* … for making suggestions and the language of expressing opinions. In addition, participants get the opportunity to use the criteria for designing posters with good visual impact, as introduced in Session 2.9.

A critical mass of change agents

A CLIL approach to conflict transformation as described above will only make an impact in peace building terms if large numbers of people from government and civil society successfully complete longer and more intensive training like that which is provided by STEPS. Large numbers are needed because in conflict-affected areas there is a constant flux of personnel. Frequently, people move away and are replaced. Longer, more intensive courses are needed because attitudes and behaviours will not change after a short workshop or day-release training. Experience shows that 120 hours delivered in one block is the 'unit of change' in these situations.

The aim of such a strategy is to create a critical mass of change agents – a sustainable group of like-minded middle and senior managers in government and civil society – who are both willing and able to instigate conflict-sensitive change. With roughly 15,000 decision makers (public servants and community leaders) in the North and East of Sri Lanka, the Performance Improvement Project has targeted over 90 departments and organisations and defined its critical mass as one third of those decision makers. At the same time, the project endeavours to train a minimum of three staff from each organisation as a way of avoiding the challenge presented when an isolated 'changed' individual returns to an 'unchanged' environment.

But to make this critical mass happen, managers have to buy into releasing their key staff for periods of a month at a time. This often proves difficult at the start. STEPS tackled this problem by including senior management in publicity and training, by building a strong reputation for the course and by implementing a system that gave line managers choices on when and where they could send their staff for training. It is therefore important to note that a large pool of client organisations is needed not only to build a critical mass of change agents and to ensure an ethnic and social mix of participants but also to reduce pressure on human resource management and to keep managers supportive.

'STEPS stories' – qualitative impacts that are recorded and disseminated to project partners and donors – are key to ensuring the release of decision makers from their full-time jobs so that they can attend the courses. An example of a STEPS story is that of the probation officer who in March 2009 – after studying the unit on child soldiers – was put in charge of 600 children accused of being child soldiers. The probation officer's understanding (gained through her participation in STEPS) of the complex social issues that lead to child soldier recruitment and decommissioning helped to sensitise the judge and other colleagues who were handling the case.

Another STEPS story is that of the senior manager who, after learning about disaster management on STEPS, made sure that all his staff received adequate training in land mines awareness before being relocated to war-affected areas. Yet another example concerns the entire staff of the office of the Assistant Commissioner of Local Government, Vavuniya, who were in charge of water and sanitation for more than a quarter of a million internally placed people in Menik Farm at the end of the war in 2009. Undeterred by senior military officials who used English as a means of asserting their authority, the staff responded with their newly improved confidence and English skills (gained through STEPS), and, refusing to be intimidated, turned the situation into one of liaison and collaboration rather than one of division and conflict.

Sustainability

Using English as a tool for conflict transformation and development through CLIL programmes like STEPS will only begin to have an impact if sufficient numbers are involved, as described above. In addition, the course itself must be sustainable, in terms of teachers as well as learners. It is not easy to find teachers with the right balance of English language and conflict transformation skills willing to work

in a conflict-affected environment where displacement and transfers create a constant depletion of human capital. Course managers need to create some sense of permanency in an impermanent situation. One such approach is to ignore the traditional training cascade and create permanence through materials and systems instead. High quality, published course books with extensive notes for trainers and comprehensive course administration handbooks, like those for STEPS, will not disappear when the teachers leave or are transferred. Institutional memory and quality assurance can be retained in print or electronically when they cannot be retained in person.

At the same time it is crucial to be able to buy in the services of a quality CLIL provider. In this model, sustainability then depends on access to funding rather than access to a pool of local teachers. Such funding, contrary to common belief, may be more readily available in a conflict-emerging situation than in a more peaceful development context.

The Performance Improvement Project has taken this non-cascade approach to making STEPS sustainable in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan publishing rights of STEPS are owned by the Northern Provincial Council, as are the course administration system, the certification and the participant records. Northern Provincial Council staff are being trained to manage the STEPS placement test and quality assurance systems independently. With assistance from the Performance Improvement Project, the Chief Secretary and the Secretary of the Provincial Ministry of Education, Northern Province, have created the STEPS Institute in Jaffna where STEPS courses run on a regular basis and where the Provincial Ministry of Education pays for the running costs and administration staff.

But beyond the elementary level of the STEPS suite, which are now delivered by Sri Lankan teachers, the Performance Improvement Project has not worked with the Northern Provincial Council to train government teachers to take over the delivery of the higher level courses of STEPS. Several reasons inform this decision. In the conflict-affected Northern Province there are very few teachers or university staff able to deliver STEPS. Training them to have the right skills would be hard; getting them released to work full time, as STEPS would require, would be even harder; retaining them in the system would be almost impossible. Instead, the Performance Improvement Project has taken the perhaps unusual step of encouraging the Northern Provincial Council to continue to buy in the services of the British Council for course delivery and to pursue a realistic approach to sustainability in this way. Such an approach banks on the fact that money is available for the rehabilitation of the North now that the fighting has ceased, through new donors, and will continue to be available for years to come.

It is crucial for this type of sustainability that partners and stakeholders are trained in how to access donor funds to back existing products like STEPS. To do this, they need to be able to persuade donors not to reinvent the wheel but to pay for something that is already proven in the field. For example, instead of accepting USAID's offer to provide English language teaching in the Eastern Province in 2007 when STEPS had already been running there for three years, the Chief Secretary would have achieved better impact by persuading USAID to put their money into

STEPS. Although this did not work in 2008, in 2010 AusAID were convinced of the value of STEPS and signed up to back it through the Australian Communities Rehabilitation Project 3 (ACRP3) until 2013.

For partners and stakeholders to negotiate in this way with donors, they need to be able to argue that bought-in native speaker English language teachers, as outsiders, will ensure a neutral, conflict transforming space for learning and a level of expertise which is not readily available among local teachers. Thereafter the local stakeholders will also need some background in the business side of English Language Teaching (ELT) so that they can select the most appropriate service provider in terms of quality and qualifications as well as affordability. The local stakeholders will also need to be able to keep the placement testing and certification processes transparent and equitable and they will need to know how to sustain the right ethnic mix in the groups of participants who take part in the STEPS training.

In short, the future of STEPS depends on it being locally managed and internationally delivered by a team of like-minded change agents who understand the interface between language and development and who espouse the tenets of good governance and conflict transformation which are embedded in the course itself. Given the important impact that the STEPS programme has had on public service in the North and East since 2006, the extension of funding by the Australian and German governments until 2013 and the project's ability to operate successfully outside the national school system (where previous projects promoting English as a link language may have been less successful), the future of using English as a tool for conflict transformation in Sri Lanka looks positive.

Note

1. An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the 8th Language and Development Conference, Dhaka, 23–25 June 2009.

References

Anderson, M. 1999. *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – or War. London: Lynne Rienner.*

Committee to Protect Journalists. 2010. *18 Journalists Killed in Sri Lanka Since 1992/Motive Confirmed. New York: Committee to Protect Journalists.* Available online at *www.cpj.org/killed/asia/sri-lanka*

Disken, F., Edworthy, J., Horn, G. and Subhan-Brewer, Z. 2008. *Skills Through English for Public Servants, Trainer's Notes. Trincomalee: GTZ.*

European Commission. 2008. *Multilingualism: Content and Language Integrated Learning. Brussels: European Commission.* Available online at *http://ec.europa. eu/education/languages/language-teaching/doc236_en.htm*

Holleman, C. 2008. *Conflict, economic crisis and drought: A humanitarian emergency out of control. Humanitarian Exchange Magazine* Issue 40. *London: Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute.* Available online at *www.odihpn.org/report.asp?id=2944*

Kowthaman, K. 2003. *Seruppu (The Slipper). Reel Peace 6 Short Films. ScriptNet.* Available online at *www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GiljXULrjQ* (Reproduced in Disken et al. 2008.)

Miall, H., Ramsbotham, O. and Woodhouse T. 2005. *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflict. Cambridge: Polity.*

OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development). 2005. *Water and Violent Conflict.* (Issues Brief.) *Paris: Development Assistance Committee, OECD.*

Robinson, B.A. 2006. *Religiously-Based Civil Unrest and Warfare. Ontario: Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance.* Available online at *www.religioustolerance.org/curr_war.htm*

Samuelson, B.L. and Freedman, S.W. 2010. *Language policy, multilingual education and power in Rwanda. Language Policy* 9(3), 191-215.

UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). 2009. *2008 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons.* Geneva: UNHCR. Available online at *www.unhcr.org/4a375c426.html*

Wallensteen, P. 2002. *Understanding Conflict Resolution: War, Peace and the Global System. London: Sage.*

Watts, M. and Bohle, H.G. 1993. *The space of vulnerability: The causal structure of hunger and famine. Progress in Human Geography* 17(1), 43-67.

Wickrema, A. and Colenso, P. 2007. *Respect for Diversity in Educational Publications: The Sri Lankan Experience. Washington DC: World Bank.* Available online at *http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/ Resources/278200-1121703274255/1439264-1126807073059/Paper_Final.pdf*

In publishing this collection of papers, *Dreams and Realities: Developing Countries and the English Language*, the British Council seeks to make a powerful contribution to the growing debate about the role of English in the world. The book will be of interest to researchers working in a range of disciplines, such as applied linguistics and development studies, and indeed to anyone with an interest in the complex dynamics of language policy and practice.

Edited by Hywel Coleman

Hywel Coleman, editor of this publication, is a Life Fellow of the University of Leeds, UK, and also Honorary Senior Research Fellow in the School of Education there. He is a Trustee of the Language and Development Conferences. He lives in Jakarta, Indonesia.