

Multicultural Communication between Jews and Arabs in English Teacher Training

Maureen Rajuan

Achva Academic College and Hebrew University, Israel

Orly Michael

Achva Academic College and Bar Ilan University, Israel

This paper presents a research project carried out by student teachers in the framework of the English Department of an Israeli teacher training college. Two Jewish student teachers volunteered to do their student teaching practicum in a southern Bedouin village. The student teachers developed and taught a unit in English as Second Language on the differences and similarities between Jewish and Arab cultures for the purpose of promoting intercultural awareness and acceptance. Pen pal letters were written in English and exchanged between children of the Bedouin school and children of a Jewish school. Questionnaires were administered to 58 Bedouin elementary school children before and after the teaching unit in order to investigate the Bedouin children's attitudes towards multicultural communication between Jews and Arabs. The responses to the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively and figure drawings of Jewish and Arab people made by the children were analyzed qualitatively as measures of attitudes and stereotypes. It was found that many negative stereotypes were changed as a result of the culture unit taught by the student teachers. As teacher trainers and researchers, we present this project as an example of a researched-based training method for student teachers that have implications for the design of practicum programs.

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents a research project carried out by student teachers under the supervision of their teacher trainers (the authors) in the framework of the English Department of an Israeli teacher training college. Our teachers college is situated in the South of Israel and seeks to meet the educational needs of the diverse populations of the area. Among these ethnic and religious minority groups is the Bedouin of the Negev, who have enrolled in the college in increasing numbers over the last few years due to the high birthrate and the need to certify teachers to serve the rapidly expanding number of schools. Graduates of the college now fill various positions in the Bedouin schools. In addition, the college is home to a growing number of first-generation Bedouin women who have been given permission by their extended families to partake in higher education (Pessate-Schubert, 2003).

The English Department of the college has seen its task as not only the preparation and certification of English as Second Language teachers, but as instrumental in the promotion and implementation of democratic values deemed important to Israeli society, among which is improvement in Jewish-Arab relations. In addition, English Department policy strives to provide opportunities for student teachers to undergo diversified practicum experiences in order to prepare them for a wide range of teaching roles in different multicultural contexts in the education system.

For all of the above reasons, we chose an elementary school in the largest Bedouin city in the south as one of our sites of teaching practice. Two Jewish student teachers volunteered to do their student teaching practicum in the 6th grade classes of this school. The student teachers developed and taught a unit on the differences and similarities between Jewish and Arab cultures for the purpose of promoting intercultural awareness and acceptance between children of the two cultures. In addition, the student teachers carried out a research project to document their fieldwork experiences and implement an experimental research design.

The purpose of the students' research project was threefold:

1. To promote intercultural communication between Jews and Arabs.
2. To change attitudes and stereotypes.
3. To teach and use English as an authentic means of communication through pen pal writing.

In addition to the goals of the students' project, we, as researchers and teacher trainers, wanted to investigate the training method of research-based student teaching that combines learning about research with implementation in the field. We saw this as an opportunity to bridge the gap between theory and practice in student teacher learning.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Multicultural Education

Due to the increase in global immigration and migration trends, refugee upheavals and processes of colonization and de-colonization, multiculturalism is a major phenomenon whose influence is felt throughout the world today (Berry, 1990). In different countries, there is an approach to multiculturalism on the national level that is translated into "goals, aims, missions or visions" that guide educational policy-making and/or principles on which curriculum is based. There are those that focus on educational outcomes and the obstacles to achievement of these outcomes (Boutte, 1999; Cohen & Man Manion, 1983).

Multiculturalism is a worldview that rejects the global centrality of any single culture or historical perspective. It is a principle, an approach or a set of rules of conduct that guides the interactions and influences the perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Multicultural education is an umbrella concept that refers to educational practice that is directed toward social equality regardless of race, culture, language, social class, gender, handicap or other characteristics (Boutte, 1999).

Although many of the generalities found in the literature about the effects of absorption or acculturation have been based on a single type of group, it is clear that there are numerous types, and adaptations may vary depending upon this factor. Five different groups were identified by Berry (1990) that include immigrants, refugees, ethnic groups, sojourners and native peoples. The generic term, ethnic groups, is most frequently used to refer to people who identify with, and exhibit, a common heritage in the second or subsequent generations. Immigrants and refugees are both first-generation arrivals into the population by way of migration from some other part of the world, whereas sojourners are temporary immigrants who reside for specific purposes and time periods, and who intend to eventually return to their country of origin. The term indigenous groups refer to those groups that were resident prior to immigration of the dominant group and who remain as nations (in the cultural sense) within the larger society (Berry, 1990). The goals of acculturation of indigenous groups are not necessarily directed toward modernity, although the dominant culture might believe this to be true and articulate it in its policy statements. The preferred attitudes of individuals and leaders of indigenous groups may be to retain their cultural heritage while moving to participate as an integral part of the larger social network. When this occurs out of choice and desire on the part of the minority culture, it is called integration. However, the concept of marginalization is used to describe situations of being on the margin of two cultures, neither accepted nor supported by either one. In the case of the Bedouins in Israel as an indigenous minority group, the typology of Banks (1981) is applicable. He speaks of stages of ethnicity in which people perceive themselves and their ability to move from lower to higher stages. The lowest stage of ethnic psychological captivity is the stage in which people of minority groups internalize society's negative perceptions of them. Banks (1981) suggests helping children of minority groups reexamine stereotypes about themselves, as well as others, in order to increase self-esteem.

The knowledge teachers possess is not necessarily relevant in relation to minority groups (Michael, 2000). Pre-knowledge assumptions of the dominant

culture often prevent children of minority cultures from learning. Pre-knowledge assumptions related to language, nonverbal communication and examples from history, humor, etc. give rise to different problems. Words that seem trivial to us may be unknown to the pupil; similarly, concepts that we attempt to explain may be clear to us and unknown to the pupil. Connections to current events and associations may confuse the pupil because he/she doesn't make the same connections. In summary, pre-knowledge is assumed when this is not always true (Michael, 2004).

Our approach to multicultural education is based on the human relations approach (Sleeter & Grant, 1988) that seeks to help pupils communicate with people who are different from themselves, feel good about themselves and about their group membership and reduce or eliminate stereotypes that children have about themselves and others.

The Concept of Stereotypes

The origin of the word “stereotype” comes from the Greek stereos, meaning form or solid and *typos*, meaning impression or image, a particular kind, class or *group*. Stereotype means a standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion, emotional attitude, or uncritical judgment (Webster’s New Encyclopedic Dictionary, 1996). Hilgard and Atkinson (1967) claim that one of the results of frustration is stereotypical behavior, behavior that is blind, repetitive and fixed. Everyday problem solving demands flexibility and openness to new directions. When an individual is frustrated, he loses some of his behavioral flexibility and reacts by repeating activities or thoughts without variation despite the fact that the results may be unsuccessful.

Social psychologists define stereotypes as a set of beliefs about attributes and behaviors of members of a social category in which individuals are attributed characteristics of the category to which they are believed to belong. Sani, Bennett, Mullally and MacPherson (2003) question the accepted assumption of the cognitive-structured view that stereotypes are fixed and

rigid concepts that are stored in memory and automatically activated in order to categorize or evaluate people. Their research gives evidence that stereotyping is inherently comparative, flexible and variable. They found that children as young as five to seven years old possess the ability to vary their stereotypes of an “out group” in comparison with different “out groups.” This would mean, for example, that Bedouin children would perceive Jewish people to be very different from themselves. However, if presented with pictures and information about Indians, Eskimos and Chinese people, they would see Jewish children as more similar to themselves than the other “out groups.”

In coping with the concept of stereotypes among children, we gained insight from the developmental theory of Raviv, Oppenheimer and Bar-Tal (1999) on how children understand war and peace. They claim that an awareness of how children and adolescents understand the concepts under question and what kind of meanings they ascribe to them serve as an important basis for attitudinal and behavioral change. In their formulation, children’s understanding of concepts is shaped by developmental factors, external sources of information and experience within socio-cultural settings.

Developmentally, knowledge that is acquired during childhood and adolescence is crucial for the way the world is perceived in adulthood (Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1999). Children move from the beginning stage of egocentric viewpoints to higher-level stages of role-taking ability. The stage in which one places oneself in the position of the other in order to understand the feelings, attitudes and opinions of others is seen as a fundamental condition for qualitative change in concepts to occur. The understanding of the reciprocal nature of interpersonal relationships (stage 3) emerges between the ages of 10 and 15, the age of our population sample.

The second factor, external sources of information, was provided by the student teachers in the form of lessons that focused on the concepts of friendship and cultural information about the similarities and differences between Jews and Arabs. Sleeter and Grant (1988) recommend presenting children with positive information about their own group to counter negative

perceptions and thus build self-esteem in the minority group. When bringing a minority group in contact with a more dominant group, the minority's self-identity needs to be supported (Salomon & Nevo, 2002).

The third factor, experience within socio-cultural settings, was provided by an authentic *whole* experience within the children's own environment, rather than merely in settings in which adults teach children. Raviv, Oppenheimer and Bar-Tal (1999) write that the personal socio-cultural construction of concepts is the product of co-constructivism in which each individual child and the environment actively participate. Although contact with Jewish student teachers played a part in influencing the children's attitudes towards the target group, the opportunity for the Bedouin pupils to write and receive real letters from Jewish children served as an additional circumstance for "*seeing and remembering*" (p. 3). Sleeter and Grant (1988), also based on a cognitive development theory, believe that direct contact with members of another group during carefully structured situations will provide accurate information about that group that will challenge stereotypes. Our student teachers' lesson plans were designed to create carefully structured situations as they moved from the general subject of friendship to friendship with people of other cultures around the world and finally to communication with Jewish children through letter-writing in English, a neutral language.

Self-categorization theorists (Sani, Bennett, Mullally, & MacPherson, 2003) believe that stereotypes are only possible in relation to the stereotypes of the "in group," that usually creates stereotypes of the other in order to see themselves in a more positive light in comparison. For this reason, much attention was given in the student teachers' lesson plans to comparisons between the Arab and Jewish cultures, traditional foods and dress, ceremonies, holidays and children's games.

Children's Drawings

The development of drawing among children parallels the development in growth. Therefore, the attempt to measure the stages of children's drawing is

in accordance with the age-related averages that parallel children's developmental growth. Setting characteristic age boundaries to the different stages aids in the diagnosis of individual differences that are above and below the standard. The best way to diagnose children psychologically through drawing is through the human figure drawing that gives us information about the child's self-image, his/her social interaction, his/her developmental level and identification with the surroundings (Harris, 1963). In the interpretation of children's drawing, more attention is given to the quality of the drawing than to the final product.

The children whose drawings are analyzed in this study are in the fifth stage, the pseudo-naturalistic stage, which gives social expression to emotions and eases the entry from the stage of childish expression to the stage of expression that is acceptable to adults. The children of this stage attach much importance to the final product of their drawings. They begin to become more aware of external standards and only partially express their personality in a direct way. Emotional content will appear directly or symbolically as exaggerated forms in line and color.

The concept of "inner group" (Abraham, 1990) was utilized to better understand the existing images and stereotypes of the children. The "inner group" is an individual's intra-psychic construct based on one's internalized experiences with the primary group, the family, and fantasized experiences with various secondary membership groups throughout life. The primary group images are whole (those of mother, father and siblings), while the secondary images are partial, contaminated by internalized common cultural stereotypes. Drawings, more than verbal modes of expression, provide the best means for projection of the unconscious levels of the individual's inner group (Abraham, 1990). Pictorial images, therefore, contain both group heritage of the collective unconscious together with the individual's most genuine and creative way of expressing perceptions of nature, the human world and the inner world. We requested that the children draw an Arab and a Jewish person in order to investigate the children's perceptions of stereotypes towards the two cultures, as well as the organization of human social

distances and contacts (Abraham, 1990).

The Bedouin Culture and Society

The Bedouin community in the Negev is comprised of numerous tribes that are among the minority population of indigenous Arabs who remained in Israel after the 1948 War of Independence (Abu-Saad, 1991). In the early 1970's, the confiscation of lands and forced urbanization of the Negev Bedouins by the Israeli government resulted in the end of traditional nomadic living patterns and loss of livelihood from agriculture, animal herds and animal products. This created an almost complete economic dependence on Israeli society, forcing Bedouin men to seek jobs as unskilled laborers and drivers (Abu-Saad, Abu-Saad, Lewando-Hundt, Forman, Belmaker, Berendes, & Chang, 1998). The Bedouin community in Israel is a culture apart from mainstream Israeli society. Being a traditional society, outsiders in the country, the Bedouins have kept themselves more separated than other cultures, perhaps in order to maintain their identity. Their unique position in Israeli society is due to the fact that they are not seen by many Arabs as Arabs because of their participation in the Israeli army and, on the other hand, they are seen as Arabs by the Jewish population because of their native language, Arabic, and their religion, Moslem with Bedouin customs. Bedouin communities in Israel are known for their customs of hospitality that is extended to all visitors within their midst, based on the ancient tradition of housing wanderers in the desert for 3 nights. The student teachers write: *At first, we were overwhelmed by the reception and the warm hospitality of the school staff.*

As a society in transition from a traditional nomadic way of life to integration into the dominant modern Western life of Israel, the Bedouins are an underprivileged minority socially, economically and educationally (Abu-Saad, 1991; Abu-Saad, 1997; Kedar, 2002). Schools, on a large scale, were first introduced into the settled villages in the 1970's and over 90% of the women and 55% of the men have never had any formal education (Abu-Saad,

et al., 1998). Schools are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and belong to the Arab sector in which the language of instruction is Arabic. According to Ministry of Education statistics (Abu-Saad, 1995), the Bedouin dropout rate is the highest in the country: between the fifth and the eighth grade, 60 percent of boys and 70 percent of girls will leave the school system (Abu-Saad, 1995). Only 28 percent complete high school with a matriculation certificate.

The socio-political setting in which our project took place was during the second *Intifada* and the then upcoming war in Iraq, Desert Storm. Bedouin children underwent a period of anti-Western and anti-Israeli propaganda broadcasted on satellite television. During this period, there was also a decline in educational programs aimed at meetings between Jews and Arabs, resulting in Bedouin children's isolation from children outside their city.

English as an Authentic Language of Communication

Hebrew is the dominant language in Israeli society and minority groups learn Hebrew in order to participate in the economic, health and welfare and political networks of the larger society. Bedouin schools are part of the Arab sector of the education system and the language of instruction is in their native language, Arabic. Hebrew is taught as the second compulsory language and English as the third compulsory language. Despite the poor physical conditions in the schools (electricity is only used when necessary), the teachers offer a variety of activities and the level of English is quite adequate in the lower grades.

Since Jewish children do not know Arabic and Bedouin children do not know Hebrew well, English, as a compulsory language learned in the schools, was seen as a neutral language that allowed for equality of communication between the children. In addition, the lack of a common first language placed the Jewish student teachers in a context of "English only" as the means of instruction. In the words of the student teachers:

For two Jewish student teachers knowing only two words in Arabic – “Salam Alekum” – coming to do fieldwork practice in the Bedouin city of Rahat was very challenging.

Despite anti-American attitudes during the period of our study, there existed much motivation among the children to learn English. As Hasman (2000) writes, English is losing its political and cultural connotations, as more people realize that English is not the property of a few countries, but a tool that is used globally to open up opportunities. People no longer fear that English will replace other languages. They see English supplementing or co-existing with the native language and making it possible for strangers to communicate across linguistic boundaries (Hasman, 2000).

In the case of the Bedouins in Israel, the community understands the value of education in general and English in particular as conditions for entrance into higher education for their children. Surprisingly, Abu-Saad et al. (1998) found that Bedouin mothers’ aspirations for their children are extremely high: 98 percent of mothers would like to see their sons finish high school and 81 percent would like to see their daughters finish high school, despite familial and financial barriers.

According to the rationale of the newly revised English Curriculum of the Israeli Ministry of Education (2001):

English is the customary language... for overcoming barriers to the flow of information, goods and people across... boundaries. It is the language that, after Hebrew and Arabic, is considered the most valuable asset of a plurilingual Israeli citizen. (p. 9)

The goal of the curriculum is to set standards in 4 domains: social interaction, access to information, presentation and appreciation of culture and language. The unique context of the student teaching site, in which native languages were ineffective for purposes of communication, presented the student teachers and the pupils in the classroom with an authentic learning situation that reinforced the goals of the curriculum. The student teachers write: *All lessons were in English with a large variety of materials and body*

movements for illustration.

Further, the learning goal of letter writing was seen as an authentic performance task. Performance-based learning is described as an instructional style that provides pupils with a large variety of opportunities to learn and demonstrate achievement (Cody, 2000). The focus should center on a significant issue or question to which pupils will want to find a solution. In our case, the pupils were extremely motivated to find out more about Jewish children. Determining an authentic audience gives the task relevance that goes past the confines of the classroom. When learners interact with others meaningfully, they become emotionally involved in the task and utilize both cognitive and affective social strategies (Abu Rass, 2000). The currently popular term “whole language” means making the classroom part of the real world and the real world part of the classroom (Akstein, 2000) in which the language goal is communication. We based our goals of communication between the student teachers and the pupils, as well as between Jewish and Arab children, on the principles of a “whole language” English-speaking and writing environment.

METHOD

Sample

The participants were 58 Bedouin children, citizens of Israel, in two 6th-grade classes in an elementary school in one of the largest Bedouin cities in the South of Israel. The school includes a kindergarten and an elementary school from first to eighth grades. It is made up of old buildings and caravans spread all over the school ground. Electricity does exist, but is used only when necessary.

Procedure

The student teachers taught two sixth-grade classes one weekly hour each over the span of the 2002-2003 school year. The research questions were investigated by a pre-test and a post-test questionnaire (see Appendix 1). The questionnaire was written by the student teachers under the guidance of their teacher trainer and translated into Arabic by the English teacher of the pupils. The questionnaire was administered by the English teacher when the student teachers were not present in order to obtain the most honest data from the pupils. The questionnaire was anonymous. The pupils' answers to the questionnaire were written in Arabic in order to allow for the free expression of opinions and feelings. The pupils' answers were translated into English by the English teacher. The purpose of the questionnaire was to learn about the pupils' knowledge and familiarity with Jewish people in general and about their attitudes towards friendship with Jewish people in particular. In addition, the questionnaire aimed to illicit stereotypes towards the pupils' own culture and towards that of the people of the Jewish culture. The questionnaire contained three parts:

- 1) questions on friendship according to a Likert-type scale, 2) an open-ended free-association task to write descriptors of Arab people and of Jewish people and 3) directions for drawing an Arab person and a Jewish person (with no gender implied).

The teaching unit was built by the student teachers and included the following subjects: friendship as a positive value, differences and similarities between Arabs and Jews and letter writing to new Jewish friends in a Jewish school. All lessons were in English with a large variety of materials, visual aids and body movement for illustration.

Data Analysis

The purpose of the first part of the questionnaire was to elicit the pupils'

attitudes toward Jewish people. The children's responses to the Likert-type scale were calculated quantitatively according to the distribution of answers.

The free-association task from the second part of the questionnaire yielded descriptors of Jewish people. The descriptors were analyzed qualitatively according to formation of categories based on a grounded theory approach. The categories were based on the degree of negative versus positive feelings associated with each descriptor. A high degree of inter-rater agreement was reached among the two student teachers. Disagreement was decided by discussion among the raters. Points were given for each descriptor according to the following division: 2 points for very positive, 1 point for positive, 0 points for neutral, -1 point for negative, -2 points for very negative, and -3 points for extremely negative. The number of times a descriptor was used was also recorded.

The third part of the questionnaire, the children's drawings, was analyzed by a clinical psychologist according to guidelines suggested by the relevant literature.

Pre-test and post-test answers were compared for each of the three parts of the questionnaire.

RESULTS

58 participants answered the pre-test and 55 participants answered the post-test. The following sections will present the results for each part of the questionnaire:

Attitudes Towards Friendship with Jewish People

The first part of the questionnaire concerning the Bedouin children's attitudes toward Jewish people is presented in Table 1. The pre-test answers revealed that most Bedouin children reported that they know only a little about Jewish people (89.6%) and that they have never met (know no) Jewish

people (37.9%). Surprisingly, it was also found that the Bedouin children have a strong desire and much curiosity to know about Jewish people and would like to meet them in person.

The results of the post-test showed improvement in the knowledge about and attitudes towards friendship with Jewish people. A large percentage (37.9%) reported that they know little about Jews in the pre-test as compared to only 5.5% in the post-test. Similarly, knowing a small amount about Jews also decreased from 89.6% in the pre-test to 67.2% in the post-test. 12.7% more reported that they know a lot about Jewish people in the post-test than in the pre-test, after the educational intervention that was designed to give them information about the culture and life of Jewish people. There was little change in their high degree of desire to know more about Jewish people or to know more Jewish people in person.

TABLE 1
Comparison of Distributions of Attitudes Toward Jewish People According to Frequencies and Percentages Before and After Educational Intervention

Question	Nothing/No		A little/A few		A lot/Many		No answer	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
	N= 58	N=55	N= 58	N=55	N= 58	N=55	N= 58	N=55
I know about Jews	4 6.9%	9 16.4%	52 89.6%	37 67.2%	0 0.0%	7 12.7 %	2 3.4 %	2 3.6 %
I know no Jews	22 37.9 %	3 5.5 %	26 44.8%	37 67.2%	4 6.9 %	9 16.3 %	6 10.3 %	6 10.9 %

Free-Association Descriptors of Jewish people

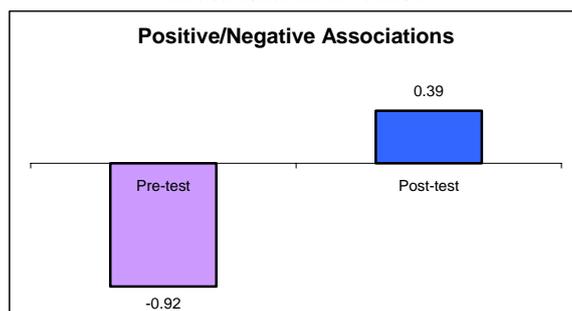
The categories of descriptors with number of times each descriptor was given are presented in Appendix 2. Examples of descriptors of all categories are presented below in Table 2, according to the analysis of the student teachers.

TABLE 2
Examples of Descriptors in Category System

Examples of descriptors					
Extremely negative (-3)	Very negative (-2)	Negative (-1)	Neutral (0)	Positive (1)	Very positive (2)
Satan	liars	love	talk Hebrew	nice	loving
terrorists	jealous	themselves	have different	educated	friends of
enemies	cheaters	wrong-doers	religion	polite	Arabs
murderers	bad	afraid of	interested in fashion	smart	love &
criminals	dirty	Arabs	Semitic people	good	forgive
		lazy	play		believe in
		fighters	basketball/football		peace
					respect
					Arabs

The total point values for the descriptors before and after the educational intervention were averaged and compared. Graph 1 shows that the descriptors used by the children to describe Jewish people was negative (-0.92) before the intervention and rose to positive (+0.39) after the project.

FIGURE 1
Comparison of Averages of Descriptors of Jewish People Before and After Educational Intervention



We have presented here the authentic work of the student teachers as part

of their project requirements. As teacher trainers and researchers, we built a different categorization system of the descriptors, combining all the negative descriptors into one category and all the positive descriptors into another category, yielding three categories, negative, neutral and positive. The results of the re-categorization are presented in Table 3. We see that the children's negative descriptors of Jewish people in the pre-test were more than half of the total list (57.0%). The negative descriptors decreased in the post-test to only 25.5%, showing a significant reduction in negative opinions and stereotypes formerly held. Further, the positive descriptors increased from 22.3% in the pre-test to more than half of the total list (57.0%) in the post-test, evidence that information about and communication with another group yielded more positive opinions about members of that Figure.

TABLE 3
Comparison of Distributions of Frequencies and Percentages of Descriptors
According to Categories Before and After Educational Intervention

Pupils' statements	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total
Pre-test	102 57.0%	37 20.7%	40 22.3%	179 100%
Post-test	35 25.5%	24 17.5%	78 57.0%	137 100%

The descriptors were also analyzed qualitatively and yielded some interesting multicultural insights regarding the cultural characteristics of Bedouin children. Descriptors related to religion were dominant and included both positive and negative perspectives about Jewish people. The descriptor Godless was written 11 times in the pre-test and decreased to 7 times in the post-test, more than any other negative descriptor. This was an interesting finding in itself in terms of the great importance the Bedouin children place on religion (both positive and negative expressions) in comparison to the Jewish children who would place no, or very little, importance on an expression such as Godless. On the positive side, descriptors relating to the religion of Jews, such as have a religion, have a different religion, respect

their religion, appeared 12 times in the pre-test and only 3 times in the post-test. Similarly, respect the Arabs' religion appeared 5 times in the pre-test and not at all in the post-test. A possible explanation for this is that religion became a much less important issue from the perspective of the Bedouin children after meeting the Jewish children, as expressed in the high number of times respectful (7 times) and other positive personal qualities, such as honorable, loving, nice and faithful were written in the post-test. Similarly, other cultural issues related to religion were expressed in the pre-test, but less in the post-test. Examples are: wear exposed clothing, interested in fashion and drink alcohol, all based on principles important to Moslems. It appears that letter writing and getting to know the children on a personal basis changed their perceptions from external appearances to internal characteristics.

We can observe a tendency on the part of the Bedouin children to find closeness and similarity in the post-test between themselves and the Jewish children in such expressions as *cousins* (3 times) and *Semitic people* (2 times). Even the descriptors *Christians* (3 times) and *Druze* (1 time) may reflect the Bedouin children's misunderstanding in their desire to perceive the Jewish children as having a religion closer to their own, one which other Arabs ascribe to.

Friendship was the most frequently used descriptor in the post-test. It appeared in many forms: *friends*, *friends of Arabs*, *believe in friendship*, *know the meaning of friendship*, *close friends*, etc. for a total of 23 times as compared to only 3 times in the pre-test.

Another category of descriptors dealing with war and peace was expressed in words related to violence such as *enemies*, *terrorists*, *murderers*, *criminals* that have a high frequency in the pre-test and a low frequency in the post-test, as opposed to words of reconciliation and connection, such as *love and forgive*, *believe in peace*, *like to get to know people*, found frequently in the post-test.

A category that was found predominantly in the pre-test was that of Jewish people described metaphorically as animals: *dogs* (4), *cows* (2), *donkeys* (1) and *goats* (1) that virtually disappeared in the post-test.

Negative physical characteristics listed in the pre-test included *dwarfs* (2) and *short* (2), as well as ugly and dirty. These were non-existent in the post-test.

Language, as another barrier to connection, was listed 9 times in the pre-test in expressions such as, *their language is not respectful* (1), *have their own language* (1) and *talk in Hebrew* (7). In the post-test, the same expression, *talk in Hebrew*, decreased to 5 times with the addition of the expressions *don't speak* (1) and *quiet* (2), possibly showing the beginning of a bridge in communication through the use of English as a neutral language.

Children's Drawings of Arab People and Jewish People

The directions given to the children were to draw a Jewish person and an Arab person (with no gender indicated). The children drew pictures twice, once before the educational intervention and once after. The two groups of drawings were analyzed by a developmental psychologist according to four qualitative categories that emerged from the data: 1) drawings containing signs of violence, 2) drawings containing neither signs of violence nor signs of friendship (neutral), 3) drawings containing signs of friendship 4) empty pages in which no drawings were drawn. Following are the details of the results:

Children's Drawings Before the Educational Intervention

We chose to illustrate the results of the pre-test based on two representative examples of drawings. In general, it can be seen that the drawings are characterized by cultural and national symbols and that there is no connection between the two figures, although drawn by the same pupil.

Some of the drawings are characterized by cultural symbols. In one drawing, for example, the Jewish figure is drawn with hair locks and skullcap and the Arab figure is drawn with headdress and sword. The cultural symbols are of a violent nature: the Arab figure contains weapons of war, a knife in

his belt, a sword protruding from his back and a stick in his hand. There is no connection between the two figures and they are equal in size. Although the Jewish figure is drawn with no weapons of aggression, the arms of the Jewish figure are raised upward and the fists are clenched in an aggressive stance. The fists of the Jewish figure are smaller than the hands of the Arab figure and the Arab figure appears to be the stronger of the two, being more equipped with weapons of war.

In another drawing, the Arab girl is considerably bigger, more elaborately drawn and decorated with more investment in comparison to the drawing of the Jewish girl. Also in these drawings, we see cultural characteristics in the modest dress of the Arab girl in comparison to the exposed dress of the Jewish girl. As in the first set of drawings, there is no connection between the two figures, neither in hand contact nor in eye contact.

Children's Drawings After the Educational Intervention

The drawings were divided into four categories that will be explained here:

1. The category of drawings with signs of violence included figures with weapons of war, clenched teeth in the mouth of a Jewish figure in comparison with no teeth in the mouth of an Arab figure and a figure with no facial features or hands, that are symbolic expressions of anxiety. In this category, there are also characteristic ethnic and cultural symbols. The Jewish figure is drawn as a traditionally religious figure of a Jew with a pistol in his hand. The Arab figure is a warrior with a sword. However, we see hope for the future in the olive branch drawn between the two national flags.

2. The neutral category of drawings containing neither signs of violence nor signs of friendship included cultural and ethnic symbols such as modest and exposed dress, head coverings, beards for religious male figures (both Jews and Arabs) and the carrying of objects on the head. It appears that the majority of drawings in this category were drawn by girls according to the nature of the pictures: we see that the modest dress of the Arab woman is dominant. There is no contact between the two figures. What distinguishes

this group of drawings is that there are no signs of violence. In one of the drawings in this category, we see the cultural sign of carrying an object on the head, clear differences in the style of dress and, more significantly, the Jewish figure has no hands, a sign of lack of contact and availability. The Arab's hands are in the air, signifying that she attends to her matters with no regard for the Jewish figure next to her.

3. The category of drawings containing signs of friendship still includes ethnic and cultural symbols, however, there are drawings in which this has disappeared. Signs of friendship and peace are what distinguishes this group from the others, including the holding of hands, flowers in the hands of the figures, figures of equal size and captions coming from the mouths of the figures with the words "friends" and "peace." Further, the investment in the graphic details of the drawings shows equal investment of effort. We can also see signs of peaceful activities, such as talking about peace, holding hands and holding flowers. There are weapons in this group of drawings, but they are smaller and laid at the side. In one drawing, we see two figures in characteristic ethnic appearance, but they are holding hands together with a branch that has a flower. In another, we cannot differentiate between the Arab and the Jewish figure. They are both drawn in the same size, decorated in the same manner, equally pretty in appearance and holding hands in a graphically emphasized way. This is possibly the optimal drawing of friendship and peace between the two groups.

We categorized the group of drawings made after the educational intervention into the four categories for each of the two 6th-grade classes. In total, 54 drawings were analyzed and the results are presented in the following table:

TABLE 4
Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages of Children’s Drawings After the Educational Intervention According to Categories

	Violence	Neutral	Friendship	No drawing	Total
Class 1	3 9.7%	7 22.6%	12 38.7%	9 29.0%	31 100%
Class 2	4 17.4%	8 34.8%	8 34.8%	3 13%	23 100%
Total	7 13.0%	15 27.8%	20 37.0%	12 22.2%	54 100%

From Table 4 we can see that, after the educational intervention, the amount of drawings with signs of violence is small (13%) and the amount of drawings with signs of friendship is much larger (37.0%). The number of neutral drawings is average (27.8%) in comparison to the other two types of drawing. The number of pictures that were not drawn is also average (22.2%). This finding is different from the drawings before the educational intervention in which the majority of drawings contained signs of violence and a portion of the drawings were neutral with very little signs of friendship.

Conclusions and Discussion

Our results show that children are curious and desire to know more about the “other.” Based on the motivation of the children in our project, we see that cultural differences are an asset, rather than a hindrance (Michael, 2006), that should be emphasized in designs for multicultural teaching units. Classroom activities that focused on the concept of friendship between children of different cultures served as a basis for initial communication through letter writing in a neutral language. Similar results were found in the “describe a Jewish person and an Arab person” task and in the children’s drawings of a Jewish and an Arab person: stereotypes, both negative and positive, decreased to a significant degree as a result of the educational program designed and implemented by the student teachers.

This finding is in accordance with the research literature that claims that

children's stereotypes are flexible and variable (Sani, Bennett, Mullally, & MacPherson, 2003) and given to change through external sources of information (Sleeter & Grant, 1988) provided by the student teachers in the form of lessons that focused on the concepts of friendship and cultural similarities and differences. We recommend letter writing in English between children of different cultures to help bridge the gap between Jews and Arabs. Multicultural teaching units and correspondence between different cultural groups leads to external sources of information and experience within socio-cultural settings that are prerequisites for the acquisition of knowledge (Kierman & Mosher-Ashley, 2002) necessary for changing stereotypes (Raviv, Oppenheimer, & Bar-Tal, 1999).

Language, as part of culture, religion and national identity, was seen by the children in our study as a source of difference and a barrier to communication and connection. The use of English as a neutral language served to enable communication and bridge the gap between diverse social and cultural worlds. It appears that letter writing and getting to know the children on a personal basis through a neutral means of communication changed the Bedouin children's perceptions from external appearances to internal characteristics.

In addition, the results support our claim that the educational intervention was age-appropriate in terms of the children's developmental stage, at ages 11 and 12, in which the ability to role-take and empathize from the point of view of the "other" was sufficiently developed (Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1999). We make no claim regarding the developmental stage in which changes in stereotypes are optimal, but recommend more comparative research in this area.

The current study was conducted by student teachers in the framework of the requirements of the teacher education program of our college. One of the objectives of the project was for the student teachers to learn about and implement the elements of the research study under the supervision of their teacher trainers. There was an attempt to allow the student teachers to design the experiment and the research tools on their own. For this reason, methodological limitations were often overlooked and resulted in a situation

in which we were unable to perform more sophisticated analysis on the data.

Our student teachers had limited access to the pupils in the classroom. However, their identities as Jewish people served to reinforce the principle of structured contact with members of a different cultural group. Another limitation of the project presented here was that it was not comprehensive or school-wide, as recommended by Stendler and Martin (1953). Despite these limitations, the positive direction of the findings and the qualitative results point clearly to the influence of the educational intervention on the change in attitudes of the Bedouin children toward Jewish children. We were not able to investigate the change in attitudes among the Jewish children who participated in this project, but hope to do so in a future project including more schools.

Our study has shown that two student teachers can make a difference, in the micro context of the classroom that affects the macro context of society, in a limited amount of time with no additional funding, in the way children perceive the “other” in times of conflict and animosity. The project resulted in many positive attitude changes among the participants that included the student teachers, the cooperating teachers and the children in both the Jewish and the Arab schools involved.

As a result of the exchange of letters, the Bedouin children spontaneously requested to meet the Jewish children and their English teacher organized a trip to the Jewish school for this purpose. The wonderful meeting between the children created a desire on the part of the Jewish children to repay the visit and the school principal reciprocated. The Arab and Jewish children’s parents, who gave permission for their children’s participation in the visit, were also influenced by the attitudes of their children and overcame fears and prejudices with their granting of permission to allow their children to visit the “other.” We are very encouraged by the results of this pilot program and plan to implement a more inclusive program accompanied by both qualitative and quantitative research in the coming academic year.

As teacher trainers and researchers, we present this project as an example of a researched-based training method for student teachers that has

implications for the design of practicum programs.

We end this article with the words of the Jewish school principal:

If it were up to the children, we would have peace long ago.

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THE AUTHORS

Maureen Rajuan is a teacher trainer at Achva Academic College of Teacher Education and a lecturer of EFL at Hebrew University, Israel. She is currently in the final stage of completing her doctorate dissertation in mentoring relationships in teacher education practicum programs at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands.

Dr. Orly Michael is a lecturer at the School of Education, Bar Ilan University, and Achva Academic College of Teacher Education, Israel. She specializes in teacher training, pedagogical instruction, multicultural education and tutoring projects.

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APPENDIX 1
Pre-test and Post-test Questionnaire

Circle your answer.

I am [an Arab / a Jew].

I live in _____.

I know [nothing / little / a lot] about Arabs.

I know [nothing / little / a lot] about Jews.

I know [a few / many] Arabs.

Who are they? _____
_____.

I know [no / a few / many] Jews.

Who are they? _____
_____.

I have [a few / some / many] Arab friends.

I have [a few / some / many] Jewish friends.

My parents have [a few / some / many] Arab friends.

My parents have [a few / some / many] Jewish friends.

I would like to have more friends. [Yes / No]

I would like to know more about Jewish people. [Yes / No]

If yes, about what? [games / schools / holidays / songs]

I would like to know Jewish people. [Yes / No]

Arabs are _____.

Jews are _____.



APPENDIX 2
Sentence Completion Results

Descriptors of Jewish People Before Educational Project

Extremely Negative (-3)	Very Negative (-2)	Negative (-1)	Neutral (0)	Positive (+1)	Very Positive (+2)
Sometimes satans (1)	Their language is not respectful (1)	Afraid (3)	Drink juice (1)	Generous (1)	Kind (2)
Don't have compassion in their hearts (2)	Sharon doesn't believe in God (1)	Chatters (2)	Drink alcohol (2)	Nice (1)	Like to get to know people (1)
Don't have mercy (1)	Cunning (1)	Scribblers (1)	Interested in fashion (1)	Polite (1)	Respectful people (3)
Don't have mercy for Arabs (3)	Sharon is cunning (1)	Don't understand (1)	Wear short clothes (1)	Good (1)	Friends with Arabs (2)
Dogs (4)	Insensitive (1)	Fighters (1)	Talk in Hebrew (7)	Keep clean (1)	Respect the Arab's religion (5)
Cows (2)	Arrogant (2)	Not polite (1)	Have their own language (1)	Respect their religion (2)	Respect Arabs (9)
Donkies (1)	Thieves (1)	Lazy (3)	Their symbol: Menorah (1)	Neighbors (1)	
Goats (1)	Liars (4)	Simple (1)	Messiah (1)	Beautiful (1)	
Murderers (2)	Cheaters (1)	Short (2)	They have their own religion (3)	Loving people (2)	
Bastards (1)	Proud (6)	Fools (1)	They have the Bible (1)	Friends (1)	
Enemies (1)	Dwarfs (2)	Ugly (2)	Their religion is Torah (1)	Nice to Arabs (1)	
Vitality (8)	Godless (11)	Cold (1)	Work for one God (1)	Interested in us (1)	
Criminals (3)	Bad (2)	Don't like Arabs (2)	Different from Arabs (1)	Smart (3)	
Dirty (2)	Crazy (3)	Don't respect Arabs (1)	Jews (1)	Famous (1)	

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Ignorant and proud (1)	Take other people's rights (1)	Aren't interested in people (1)	Believe only in their religion (1)
Morons (1)		Worship the candelabra (1)	
Violent (1)		Don't worship God (2)	
They don't have meaning (1)		Don't know God (1)	
They are not useful (1)			

Descriptors of Jewish People After Educational Project

Extremely Negative (-3)	Very Negative (-2)	Negative (-1)	Neutral (0)	Positive (+1)	Very Positive (+2)
Dirty (1)	Weak (1)	Partly smart (1)	Talk in Hebrew (5)	Nice people (3)	Kind (3)
Enemies (2)	Liars (3)	Partly generous (1)	Play basketball/football (4)	Organized (2)	Loving (3)
Hate (1)	Jealous (2)	Afraid of Arabs (3)	Wear exposed clothing (1)	Right (2)	Friends (15)
Terrorists (3)	Godless (7)	More or less give respect (1)	Have different religion (1)	Active (1)	Friends of Arabs (3)
Dogs (1)	Lower (1)	Love themselves (1)	Have a religion (2)	Quiet (2)	Believe in friendship (1)
	Unfair (2)	Impulsive people (1)	Like being rich (1)	Educated/studious (5)	Respectful (7)
	Love their own blood (1)	Don't worship God (1)	Rich (1)	Polite (1)	Honorable (3)
		Do wrong (1)	Don't speak Semitic people (2)	Good (2)	Love and forgive (1)
				Smart (2)	Believe in peace (1)

Christians (3)	Some like Arabs (2)	Closeness (1)
Druze (1)	Have morals (1)	Close friends (2)
Lovers (2)	Cousins (3)	Like to get to know people (2)
Love (2)	Understand each other (3)	Faithful (4)
Progressive (1)	Love each other (1)	Generous (1)
Free people (1)		Know the meaning of friendship (1)
Strong personality (2)		
Strong (4)		
Developing (1)		
See a lot of Arabs (1)		
Friends with Arabs (1)		
