



INTEGRATING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

Urgency of addressing global sustainability problems necessitates transformative approach in education. This article provides a systematic review of research that incorporates sustainability into English Language Teaching (ELT), highlighting the essential role of education in addressing global environmental issues through language acquisition. Moreover, this research is devoted to revealing effective approaches such as interdisciplinary curriculum designs, innovative classroom activities, and specialized teacher training that can enhance language proficiency, students' critical thinking, raise awareness of global sustainability challenges among them.

INTRODUCTION

As global environmental challenges intensify, the United Nations has introduced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to promote long-term global well-being. In this context, incorporating sustainability into education is no longer optional but essential for achieving the SDGs, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). Sustainability in education extends beyond merely teaching environmental topics; it requires the integration of sustainable practices and principles throughout the educational framework. This holistic approach aims to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for contributing to a more sustainable world. The concept encompasses economic, social, and environmental dimensions and is vital for nurturing responsible global citizens.

In the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), integrating sustainability offers a unique opportunity. Language learning goes beyond basic vocabulary and grammar; it serves as a powerful medium for shaping perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Through sustainability-focused ELT, educators can leverage the English language to inspire environmental action and promote sustainable practices across diverse cultures

METHODS

During this scientific research, qualitative and secondary data analysis methods were used, and several prior scientific works were analyzed. Several studies exemplify the effective integration of sustainability into English Language Teaching (ELT), highlighted as follows:

- **Cross-Curricular Project in Sweden:** At a high school in Sweden, a project involved 250 students and 20 teachers who collaborated on a cross-curricular initiative. Students tackled a local environmental issue by conducting research and presenting their proposed solutions in English. The results indicated a notable enhancement in both language proficiency and environmental awareness among the students.

- ***Sustainability-Focused EFL Curriculum in Japan:*** Researchers at a university in Japan developed an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum centered on sustainability themes. This curriculum included guest lectures from environmental experts and service-learning projects with local NGOs. The study involved 151 students across two semesters in six different classes, comparing outcomes between a traditional lecture-based course and one that integrated sustainability. The methodology led to increased engagement with sustainability issues and improvements in language skills, particularly in academic writing and oral presentations.
 - ***Community-Based ESL Program in Canada:*** An adult education center in Canada implemented a community-oriented English as a Second Language (ESL) program that combined language learning with local sustainability initiatives, such as community gardens and recycling efforts. The study engaged ESL instructors, the head of language programs, 36 learners from Durham Continuing Education, and regional managers over three months, utilizing questionnaires and focus groups. This approach not only enhanced language skills but also supported learners' integration into the community and increased their awareness of environmental practices.
 - ***Green English Language Teaching (GELT) Approach in Turkey:*** Educators in Turkey conducted a content analysis of 58 units from five textbooks to create the Green English Language Teaching (GELT) approach, which emphasizes environmental literacy within the English language curriculum. This approach incorporates texts, videos, and activities that focus on environmental issues. Teachers encourage discussions on these topics in English, promote environmentally friendly projects, and engage students in outdoor activities that raise awareness about sustainability.
- These studies illustrate various methodologies for setting sustainability into ELT, demonstrating positive effects on both language proficiency and environmental consciousness among learners.

RESULTS

The practical application of integrating sustainability into English Language Teaching (ELT) involves creating curricula that weave sustainability themes throughout the learning process. This includes employing pedagogical strategies that promote active learning, critical thinking, and collaboration. Utilizing authentic materials and real-world scenarios related to sustainability not only aids language acquisition but also sparks discussions among students about global challenges, their underlying causes, and potential solutions. Assessment strategies are also modified to align with these integrative learning objectives, emphasizing students' abilities to use language effectively for expressing ideas, problem-solving, and advocating for sustainable practices.

The review identified a range of successful methodologies for incorporating sustainability into ELT, illustrating a comprehensive approach that encompasses curriculum design, classroom activities, teacher training, and assessment techniques. These strategies have not only improved language proficiency but have also heightened students' awareness of environmental issues:

✚ ***Curriculum Design.*** Interdisciplinary methods were commonly observed, with sustainability themes integrated across subjects like environmental science, geography, and ethics. This holistic approach ensures that sustainability is a fundamental aspect of the language-learning experience rather than an afterthought.

✚ ***Classroom Activities.*** A variety of innovative activities were highlighted, including project-based learning, debates on environmental topics, simulation games, and collaborative research projects. These activities enhance language skills while fostering critical thinking and a deeper understanding of sustainability.

✚ **Teacher Training.** Effective teacher-training programs are essential, equipping educators with the knowledge and skills to incorporate sustainability topics into their teaching. These programs often feature workshops on sustainable pedagogies and provide access to specialized teaching resources.

✚ **Assessment Methods.** Innovative assessment techniques such as reflective journals, portfolios, and oral presentations on sustainability initiatives were noted. These methods evaluate both language proficiency and student engagement with sustainability issues.

Globally, the integration of sustainability into ELT varies widely across different cultural and educational contexts, reflecting the diverse pedagogical strategies employed by educators. For instance, Scandinavian countries prioritize experiential learning and outdoor education, often designing language-learning activities that connect students directly with natural environments. In contrast, East Asian contexts may adopt more traditional curricula that limit such experiential learning opportunities. Nonetheless, there is an increasing interest in incorporating sustainability themes through Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) interdisciplinary projects. The effectiveness of these varied pedagogical approaches largely joins with several factors, including institutional support, teacher competencies, and the relevance of sustainability themes to the local context. Research from Latin America indicates that project-based learning, especially when linked to community-based environmental issues that can significantly boost students' engagement and critical thinking skills related to sustainability.

DISCUSSION

This integration aligns with the global educational goal of promoting sustainable development while enhancing language learning by making it more relevant, engaging, and connected to students' lives and global issues. The various methodologies identified, ranging from interdisciplinary curriculum design to innovative classroom activities and assessment strategies that illustrate the creativity and adaptability possible in teaching sustainability within ELT contexts. These findings effectively address the research questions by presenting successful strategies for embedding sustainability into ELT, candidly discussing the challenges educators encounter, and proposing viable solutions that have worked in different settings. As viewed within the broader context of sustainability education, it is evident that language education serves as a powerful tool for fostering environmental awareness and inspiring action. Language influences thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors; therefore, ELT plays a crucial role in promoting a more sustainable future. By engaging students with sustainability topics through English, educators can cultivate green skills, eco-literacy, and global citizenship. The Turkish Green ELT (GELT) initiative serves as an example of how integrating sustainability into language education can be transformative. By incorporating environmental themes into English lessons using eco-focused texts, videos, and projects, GELT educators enhance students' language skills while also increasing their ecological awareness and commitment to sustainable practices. Such initiatives demonstrate the potential of ELT to contribute positively to global sustainability efforts. However, realizing this potential involves overcoming ongoing challenges. Key barriers include the limited availability of sustainability-oriented teaching materials, difficulties in aligning sustainability content with language objectives, and gaps in teacher training. These challenges underscore the necessity for systemic solutions. Developing and sharing Open Educational Resources (OERs) specifically designed for teaching sustainability within ELT presents a promising avenue for progress. By collaboratively creating and freely sharing lesson plans, activities, and media that integrate sustainability with language learning, the global ELT community can address resource shortages. Platforms for exchanging these OERs can also promote peer learning and inspire innovative teaching practices. Interdisciplinary collaboration is another essential strategy for effective integration. By partnering with experts in fields such as environmental science, ELT professionals can create curricula that advance both language skills and sustainability

competencies in a complementary manner. Such collaborations ensure that sustainability content enhances rather than competes with language-learning objectives. Models like interdisciplinary team teaching and project-based learning show promise for practical integration. Investing in teacher professional development is also vital. Workshops, courses, and learning communities that equip ELT educators with the necessary knowledge and skills to engage students with sustainability topics can help bridge preparation gaps. Encouraging a culture of reflective practice and action research within ELT can further assist educators in refining their approaches to teaching sustainability. Ultimately, applying sustainability initiatives within ELT will require supportive policies and institutional commitments to facilitate this integration effectively.

CONCLUSION

The key findings indicate a variety of innovative methodologies for implementing sustainability themes into ELT, including interdisciplinary curriculum design, interactive classroom activities, specialized teacher training, and unique assessment methods. These strategies not only improve language proficiency but also significantly increase students' awareness of environmental issues and their motivation to adopt sustainable practices. The findings emphasize the potential of ELT to act as a powerful conduit for sustainability education. By equipping learners with essential language skills and environmental consciousness, ELT can play a crucial role in shaping a more sustainable future. However, challenges remain, such as a lack of accessible resources, potential misalignment with language teaching goals, and inadequate teacher preparation. The review suggests effective strategies to overcome these obstacles, including the development of open educational resources, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and providing targeted professional development. The challenges and solutions highlighted in this review offer valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers, creating a pathway for more effective integration of sustainability into ELT practices. As research and practice in this field evolve, the ELT community must stay engaged and committed to sustainability education, recognizing its significant potential to influence both individual learners and the global community. In short, incorporating sustainability into ELT is not just an educational trend but a vital shift toward preparing students to be informed, responsible, and proactive global citizens. Ongoing exploration, innovation, and advocacy in this area will be essential in maximizing the capacity of ELT to contribute to a more sustainable world.

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