INTEGRATING GREEN ELT PRACTICES AND THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: ADDRESSING CLIMATE ANXIETY AND PROMOTING SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

By

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the role of Green English Language Teaching (ELT) in addressing pressing global environmental issues and climate change within the classroom. It investigates how incorporating environmental topics and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into ELT curriculum can equip learners with the skills necessary to engage with critical global challenges. The study further delves into the psychological impacts of climate anxiety among learners and how Green ELT can act as a tool for social responsibility, fostering an awareness of sustainable development, preserving natural habitats, and promoting global education for a more equitable future. Through the examination of initiatives like ELT Footprint, Renewable English, and Green Action ELT, the paper aims to propose effective pedagogical strategies for integrating green issues into ELT and building a more sustainable, climate-conscious generation.

Keywords: Green ELT, Climate Education, Environmental Awareness, Sustainable Pedagogy, Climate Anxiety.

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to explore the intersection of Green ELT and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizing how ELT can help mitigate climate anxiety and promote social responsibility. By investigating the role of Green ELT in addressing climate change through teaching practices, this paper proposes ways to incorporate environmental awareness into language learning. It focuses on strategies for fostering a sustainable future while preparing learners to discuss complex global challenges responsibly. The goal is to highlight pedagogical approaches that equip learners with the tools to tackle climate-related issues effectively and engage in meaningful discourse about the sustainability of our planet.

The growing urgency of global environmental issues such as climate change, pollution, and resource depletion has spurred international efforts to combat these challenges through various educational frameworks. English Language Teaching (ELT) plays a pivotal role in shaping global citizens who not only possess linguistic competencies but also an awareness of the issues impacting their world. With the climate crisis becoming more pronounced, the need to integrate sustainability into the ELT curriculum is crucial. Green ELT promotes environmental education and instills eco-consciousness within language learners, helping them become better equipped to engage with real-world issues. Through language, learners gain the ability to express, understand, and debate the complexities of climate change while

This paper has objectives related to SDGs

also developing the skills necessary for advocacy. As environmental concerns affect not only ecosystems but also social and economic structures, Green ELT offers an avenue to empower learners to act as responsible global citizens. The rise of platforms such as ELT Footprint and Green Action ELT demonstrates a growing consensus in the ELT community that language teaching should transcend traditional boundaries to include crucial, real-time global issues (Haase, 2011; Kramsch, 2013).

1. Literature Review

Green ELT focuses on embedding environmental sustainability within language education, blending linguistic development with ecological literacy. Baker-Bell (2020) underscored the importance of integrating sustainability into curricula to foster students' awareness of pressing environmental issues and their capacity for advocacy. By addressing topics such as climate change, conservation, and renewable energy, Green ELT empowers learners to engage in sustainability dialogues through linguistic means (Evans et al., 2020). Nur et al. (2022) highlighted the transformative potential of Green ELT in equipping students with language skills and critical ecological knowledge necessary for societal change.

The psychological impacts of climate change, particularly climate anxiety or eco-anxiety, significantly affect learners' emotional well-being and academic performance. Kazazoglu (2025) documented how environmental crises create stress and fear, especially among younger learners, hindering their ability to concentrate and engage. By integrating environmental education into ELT, teachers can provide students with a supportive environment to discuss their anxieties, explore solutions, and gain a sense of agency. Research suggests that these practices alleviate emotional distress and enhance learners' motivation and critical thinking skills.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a universal framework for addressing global challenges, including quality education (Goal 4), climate action (Goal 13), and responsible consumption (Goal 12). Richards and Burns (2012) argued that incorporating SDG themes into ELT fosters an understanding of the interconnectedness of global issues, enhancing students' ability to articulate complex problems. Metzger et al. (2017) advocated for interdisciplinary approaches to teaching sustainability, emphasizing the role of language education in promoting global citizenship and social responsibility. Through activities like reading comprehension, debates, and project-based learning, SDG-aligned content enhances learners' awareness and engagement with sustainability topics (Agbedahin, 2019; Shutaleva et al., 2023).

Green ELT plays a pivotal role in mitigating climate anxiety by providing constructive avenues for students to voice their concerns and explore solutions. Rahman et al. (2019) highlighted that reflective journaling, group discussions, and mindfulness exercises are effective strategies for managing eco-anxiety.

Furthermore, emphasizing environmental success stories and student-led initiatives fosters a sense of hope and agency. Task-based and project-based learning help students channel their anxieties into meaningful actions while developing linguistic and critical thinking skills, as suggested by Raine (2016).

Task-based learning (TBL) and project-based learning (PBL) emerge as effective methodologies for embedding environmental themes in ELT. TBL involves engaging students in tasks such as designing renewable energy models or creating awareness campaigns, fostering linguistic and problem-solving skills (Nur et al., 2022). Similarly, PBL allows students to work on long-term projects addressing local environmental challenges, reinforcing the relevance of sustainability in their lives (ELT Footprint, 2023). According to Ocetkiewicz et al. (2017), collaborative learning further enhances these approaches by promoting teamwork, critical thinking, and the exchange of diverse perspectives on environmental issues.

Despite its promise, Green ELT faces challenges, including limited resources, rigid curricula, and a lack of teacher training. Metzger et al. (2017) emphasized the need for targeted professional development and accessible teaching materials to equip educators for integrating

green topics effectively. Additionally, initiatives like ELT Footprint and Renewable English provide valuable platforms for sharing strategies, lesson plans, and success stories, bridging resource gaps and fostering a global community of practice. Encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration and student engagement with relatable, localized environmental issues further addresses barriers to implementation (Richards & Burns, 2012).

2. Defining Green ELT

Green English Language Teaching (Green ELT) refers to an innovative approach in language education that incorporates environmental sustainability into the language learning process. Rather than treating environmental issues as peripheral topics, Green ELT integrates them directly into the curriculum, encouraging students to develop both their linguistic and ecological literacy. This method not only teaches the language of sustainability but also instills a deeper understanding of environmental challenges, fostering critical thinking and advocacy among learners. Green ELT seeks to engage students in discussions about global concerns such as climate change, conservation, and resource management, empowering them to articulate their thoughts on these issues. By using language as a vehicle for social change, Green ELT provides a platform to cultivate environmental awareness through activities such as reading materials on green topics, debating environmental policies, and role-playing scenarios that involve environmental decision-making. In this way, it transforms language teaching into a dynamic, impactful tool for societal change, helping learners recognize their individual role in the sustainability dialogue.

3. Impact of Climate Change on ELT Learners

The effects of climate change are felt globally, and its impact on learners cannot be understated. Students living in areas affected by extreme weather conditions, such as flooding, droughts, or wildfires, carry the emotional burden of these crises into the classroom. This phenomenon, known as climate anxiety or eco-anxiety, can cause stress, fear, and a sense of helplessness among young learners. It creates a psychological barrier to effective learning and can impede students' ability to focus on academic tasks. Climate anxiety may also manifest as a lack of motivation, depression, or a desire to withdraw from engaging with the world. By incorporating climate education and environmental topics into the ELT curriculum, teachers can offer students a constructive outlet for discussing their concerns and fears. Green ELT provides a space where students can voice their anxieties, develop coping strategies, and gain a sense of agency by learning about real-world solutions. Additionally, discussing environmental topics in a classroom setting allows students to see that they are not alone in their concerns, reducing feelings of isolation and reinforcing a collective responsibility for change.

4. Incorporating the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in ELT

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call to action aimed at ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring prosperity for all (United Nations, 2015). Adopted in 2015, the SDGs consist of 17 goals that provide a comprehensive framework for achieving a sustainable future by 2030. These goals address pressing global issues, including climate change, environmental degradation, inequality, and the need for quality education. The SDGs are interrelated, meaning that progress in one area leads to advancements in others. For example, ensuring access to quality education (Goal 4) can drive progress on other SDGs by empowering individuals to participate in sustainable development initiatives (Seraj, 2024). By incorporating the SDGs into ELT, teachers can help students understand the interconnectedness of global challenges and the collective effort required to solve them. The SDGs also provide a common language for discussing complex global issues, making them an excellent framework for teaching environmental sustainability and social responsibility through language.

4.1 Relevance of SDGs in ELT

The integration of SDGs into ELT has become increasingly important as educators recognize the role of language teaching in shaping responsible global citizens. SDGs

such as Quality Education (Goal 4), Climate Action (Goal 13), Responsible Consumption (Goal 12), and Life on Land (Goal 15) are especially relevant in the context of Green ELT. By addressing these goals in the classroom, teachers not only raise students' awareness about global issues but also provide them with the tools to act. Through SDG-related content such as texts on climate change, conservation, renewable energy, or ethical consumption, students are exposed to diverse perspectives on how to make the world more sustainable. Moreover, by using ELT as a platform for promoting SDGs, educators can help students develop critical skills for engaging with global challenges, such as communication, problem-solving, and collaboration. Teachers can introduce SDG-related themes through reading comprehension exercises, debates, discussions, and project-based learning, making these topics more accessible and relatable to learners. By focusing on SDGs, Green ELT encourages students to consider how their actions and decisions can contribute to a better, more sustainable future.

5. Addressing Climate Anxiety through Green ELT

Climate anxiety, or eco-anxiety, refers to the distress and fear that individuals experience when confronted with the overwhelming scale of environmental challenges, such as climate change, resource depletion, and ecological destruction. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent among younger generations, who are more acutely aware of the long-term consequences of environmental degradation. The constant media coverage of natural disasters, environmental degradation, and political inaction can exacerbate feelings of helplessness, confusion, and fear. For students, these emotions can interfere with learning, making it difficult for them to concentrate on academic tasks or engage meaningfully with their studies. Moreover, the absence of effective mechanisms for addressing these concerns can lead to feelings of isolation and powerlessness. As a response, Green ELT aims to alleviate climate anxiety by providing a safe, supportive space for students to express their worries while also exploring ways to positively impact the environment.

5.1 Pedagogical Strategies for Managing Climate Anxiety

Teachers can adopt a variety of strategies to help manage and mitigate climate anxiety in the classroom. One effective approach is to create a supportive, open environment where students feel comfortable discussing their feelings and concerns about climate change. This could involve activities such as reflective journaling, group discussions, or mindfulness exercises. Additionally, by focusing on solutions rather than problems, Green ELT can offer students a sense of agency and empowerment. Tasks that encourage students to engage with environmental advocacy, such as writing letters to policymakers, organizing awareness campaigns, or designing eco-friendly projects, allow learners to feel that they can make a difference. Teachers can also introduce role-playing activities, where students take on roles as environmental activists, policymakers, or community leaders, fostering a sense of responsibility and collective action. Finally, including positive narratives of environmental success stories, such as the restoration of ecosystems or the rise of renewable energy technologies, can help shift the focus from despair to hope, motivating students to take meaningful action toward sustainability.

6. Pedagogical Approaches for Integrating Green Issues into ELT

6.1 Gamified Environmental Learning Approach

Gamified Environmental Simulations offer an engaging pedagogical approach for integrating sustainability themes into ELT. In this approach, students participate in immersive, game-like scenarios where they role-play as policymakers, activists, or corporate leaders tackling real-world environmental challenges. These simulations encourage learners to navigate complex scenarios such as climate change negotiations, pollution management, or sustainable development planning, using English as the primary mode of communication.

For example, a class could simulate a United Nations Climate Summit, where students represent various countries or organizations and work collaboratively to negotiate agreements aimed at reducing global carbon emissions (United Nations, 2015). Throughout the activity,

students must present arguments, debate solutions, and draft resolutions in English, ensuring the language is applied in meaningful and impactful ways.

By participating in these simulations, students not only enhance their language proficiency but also develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork skills. This dynamic and interactive method empowers learners to take ownership of their learning while applying their knowledge to real-world contexts. Moreover, gamified simulations foster a sense of responsibility and advocacy, encouraging students to contribute actively to global sustainability efforts.

6.2 Adaptive AI-Driven Eco-Learning Approach

AI-powered eco-education modules offer a cutting-edge pedagogical approach for integrating sustainability themes into ELT. In this approach, students engage with AI-driven tools to navigate adaptive learning paths designed to their individual needs and interests. These modules utilize advanced technologies such as chatbots, personalized quizzes, and interactive simulations to immerse students in real-world environmental challenges while enhancing their language skills.

For example, students could interact with an AI chatbot programmed to simulate environmental scenarios, such as the impact of deforestation on local ecosystems. During the activity, learners work collaboratively in English to propose solutions, like designing a reforestation plan or drafting an awareness campaign. This ensures that their language learning is rooted in meaningful and contextually relevant experiences.

By engaging with AI-powered modules, students not only improve their linguistic proficiency but also develop problem-solving, critical thinking, and collaborative skills. This dynamic and personalized approach allows learners to take ownership of their educational journey while applying their knowledge to address pressing global issues. Furthermore, the integration of AI fosters a highly interactive and engaging learning environment, encouraging students to actively participate in sustainability efforts and global citizenship.

6.3 Service-Learning Approach in Sustainability Education

Service-learning projects are an innovative pedagogical approach that combines community service with language education to address environmental issues. In this approach, students engage in real-world environmental conservation activities, such as cleaning parks or planting trees, while simultaneously using English to document and reflect on their experiences. For Green ELT, students could partner with local environmental groups to participate in conservation activities and then create blogs, videos, or reports in English to share their efforts. This project not only improves language proficiency but also develops critical thinking, reflection, and an understanding of the environmental issues at hand.

Service-learning projects offer a dynamic learning experience, allowing students to take active roles in addressing environmental challenges while enhancing their communication and reflective skills. The integration of practical action and language use fosters a sense of personal growth and social responsibility, encouraging students to become more engaged and responsible global citizens.

6.4 Green Innovation Learning Approach

Green Entrepreneurship Labs are an innovative pedagogical approach designed to integrate sustainability and language learning by encouraging students to brainstorm, develop, and pitch eco-friendly business ideas in English. In this approach, students engage in real-world tasks that require both entrepreneurial thinking and language skills, fostering creativity and critical thinking while addressing environmental challenges.

For Green ELT, students work in groups to design sustainable products, such as biodegradable packaging or renewable energy solutions. They then pitch these ideas in a "Shark Tank"-style presentation, using English to communicate their business concepts, explain their environmental impact, and propose practical solutions.

Green Entrepreneurship Labs offer a dynamic and

interactive learning experience where students take ownership of their work, applying their language skills in meaningful business contexts. This approach fosters creativity and professional communication while promoting environmental consciousness and entrepreneurial spirit. Through collaboration, students also enhance their teamwork and problem-solving skills, contributing to global sustainability efforts and developing the competencies needed for future careers in green industries.

6.5 Art-Based Eco Storytelling Learning Method

Art-Based Eco Storytelling is an innovative pedagogical approach that integrates visual and performing arts with language learning to explore environmental themes. In this approach, students use creative expression to communicate ideas about sustainability, allowing them to practice English while addressing pressing environmental issues.

For Green ELT, students engage in tasks such as creating digital stories that highlight the impact of climate change in their communities or performing plays that dramatize the challenges and solutions of SDGs. Through these activities, learners not only improve their language proficiency but also gain a deeper understanding of environmental concerns and how to communicate them effectively.

Art-Based Eco Storytelling provides a dynamic and immersive learning experience, where students express their thoughts and ideas creatively through various artistic mediums. This approach fosters emotional and cultural engagement, making language learning more impactful and memorable. Through collaboration and reflection, students develop critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills while also raising awareness about global sustainability challenges.

6.6 Eco-Citizen Diplomacy Learning Approach

Eco-citizen diplomacy is an innovative pedagogical approach that fosters global citizenship and cross-cultural learning through virtual exchanges and dialogues on environmental issues. In this approach, students from different countries collaborate to discuss and share solutions to local environmental challenges, using English as the primary mode of communication.

For Green ELT, students from countries like India and Sweden might engage in virtual discussions about renewable energy, where they exchange ideas, discuss challenges, and propose solutions. This approach allows students to practice real-world communication skills while gaining a deeper understanding of global sustainability issues.

Eco-citizen diplomacy offers a dynamic and interactive learning experience, promoting cultural exchange and collaborative problem-solving. It enhances students' global awareness and communication skills while encouraging them to think critically about environmental issues from diverse perspectives. Through these virtual dialogues, students not only improve their language proficiency but also develop the competencies needed to engage with global challenges, fostering a sense of responsibility and advocacy for sustainable practices.

7. Examples from Green ELT Initiatives

Several organizations have emerged in recent years to promote the integration of green issues into the ELT field. ELT Footprint, for instance, offers a range of resources for teachers, including lesson plans, articles, and toolkits that focus on environmental sustainability. These resources help educators incorporate green topics into their classrooms in a way that is relevant and engaging. Similarly, Renewable English promotes a curriculum that links English language learning with renewable energy topics, allowing students to explore how sustainable energy practices are shaping the future. Through these platforms, teachers are encouraged to share their own experiences, materials, and strategies for teaching about climate change, sustainability, and environmental justice. By participating in these global networks, educators can stay updated on the latest pedagogical methods for integrating green issues into their classrooms. Such initiatives also help create a community of practice where teachers can collaborate, learn from each other, and expand their professional horizons in the field of Green ELT.

8. Psychological Impact of Climate Change on Learners

Climate anxiety, characterized by feelings of fear, helplessness, and dread in response to environmental degradation, is a growing concern among students, particularly those from younger generations who will inherit the consequences of today's environmental decisions. The overwhelming nature of climate change, coupled with frequent media portrayals of environmental disasters, contributes to heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and uncertainty. In the classroom, these emotions can hinder students' focus, engagement, and overall well-being, making it essential for educators to address these concerns in a compassionate and constructive way. Students may express their feelings through emotional reactions or disengagement, and this can affect their academic performance and social interactions. Teachers must be attuned to these psychological impacts and provide spaces for students to discuss their worries. Understanding the emotional dimension of climate change is vital for educators in order to create a nurturing and empathetic environment that can help alleviate the stress associated with climate anxiety.

9. Teacher Strategies for Addressing Anxiety

 Teachers play a crucial role in managing climate anxiety by fostering a supportive environment where students can express their feelings openly and feel heard. One approach is to create opportunities for reflective discussions where students can talk about their concerns and experiences regarding environmental issues. Mindfulness techniques, such as guided breathing exercises or meditation, can also be effective in helping students manage anxiety and promote emotional well-being. It is important for teachers to balance the discussions of alarming environmental issues with hopeful and empowering narratives that emphasize solutions. Introducing students to stories of environmental progress, such as successful reforestation efforts, the rise of renewable energy, or grassroots movements for environmental justice, can help shift the focus from despair to hope. Furthermore, teachers can encourage students to take action by organizing initiatives like local clean-up events or creating awareness campaigns. These actions give students a sense of agency and control, reducing feelings of helplessness and reinforcing the idea that collective action can create positive change. By adopting these strategies, educators can help students build resilience, improve their emotional well-being, and empower them to become proactive agents of environmental change.

10. Challenges in Integrating Green ELT

Despite its many benefits, integrating Green ELT into the classroom comes with several challenges. One of the primary barriers is the lack of sufficient resources and materials designed to Green ELT. Teachers may find it difficult to access relevant content, lesson plans, or activities that align with environmental topics and language learning objectives. In some cases, school curricula may not be flexible enough to accommodate the integration of green issues, especially in regions where environmental education is not a priority. Furthermore, teachers may lack the training or knowledge required to effectively teach environmental topics while maintaining a focus on language development. This may leave educators feeling unprepared to tackle the complexity of climate change and sustainability within the confines of their language teaching duties. Additionally, students themselves may be resistant to engaging with environmental topics, especially if they feel overwhelmed by the scale of the issues or if the subject matter feels disconnected from their personal lives.

10.1 Overcoming Barriers

To overcome these challenges, it is essential for educational institutions and policymakers to invest in teacher training and professional development in Green ELT. Providing teachers with access to high-quality resources, ongoing training programs, and platforms for sharing ideas can help them feel more equipped to address environmental issues in their classrooms. Collaboration among educators, environmental organizations, and NGOs can also help bridge the resource gap by providing teachers with ready-to-use materials, lesson plans, and guest speakers who can

enrich the classroom experience. Moreover, integrating environmental topics into interdisciplinary projects that connect ELT with science, geography, or social studies can make it easier to approach green ELT without overhauling the curriculum. Teachers can also address student resistance by introducing green topics in engaging and relatable ways, such as through multimedia, games, or case studies that highlight local environmental issues. When students see how environmental concerns directly affect their lives and communities, they are more likely to engage meaningfully with the content.

Conclusion

This research highlights the critical role of Green English Language Teaching (Green ELT) in addressing pressing global challenges, fostering ecological literacy, and equipping learners to actively participate in building a sustainable future. By integrating environmental sustainability into language education, Green ELT offers a transformative approach that combines linguistic development with critical thinking, advocacy, and social responsibility. Through innovative strategies like gamified learning, adaptive AI tools, service-learning projects, art-based storytelling, and eco-citizen diplomacy, Green ELT goes beyond traditional language teaching to empower students as agents of change.

The incorporation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the ELT framework further enhances the relevance and impact of Green ELT (United Nations, 2015). These goals provide a universal language for addressing interconnected global challenges, enabling educators to contextualize language learning within real-world issues like climate action, responsible consumption, and life on land. By fostering discussions, debates, and projects centered on SDG themes, Green ELT nurtures students' ability to articulate complex environmental concerns while promoting collaborative problem-solving and global citizenship.

The exploration of Green ELT approaches highlights the dual focus on linguistic proficiency and critical ecological engagement, equipping students to articulate and

address global environmental issues. Addressing climate anxiety, a psychological barrier increasingly affecting learners, has emerged as a cornerstone of Green ELT. By providing safe spaces for reflection, discussions, and solution-focused activities, educators can help students manage eco-anxiety and transform their feelings of fear or helplessness into a sense of hope and agency. Strategies such as mindfulness exercises, role-playing, and highlighting positive environmental narratives play a vital role in maintaining students' emotional well-being while motivating them to take meaningful action.

However, the integration of Green ELT faces challenges, including limited resources, insufficient teacher training, and rigid curricula. To overcome these barriers, a collaborative effort among educators, policymakers, environmental organizations, and local communities is essential. Investment in professional development, the creation of accessible teaching materials, and interdisciplinary approaches can ensure that Green ELT becomes a viable and impactful part of education systems worldwide.

Looking ahead, the future of Green ELT lies in its ability to evolve and adapt to the dynamic needs of both learners and the environment. Further research should explore the long-term outcomes of Green ELT on students' ecological literacy, behaviors, and advocacy efforts. Additionally, exploring synergies with other disciplines like science and geography could pave the way for a holistic educational framework that prepares students to navigate a complex and interconnected world.

In conclusion, Green ELT represents a powerful tool for fostering a generation of environmentally conscious, socially responsible, and linguistically proficient global citizens. By bridging the gap between language education and sustainability, it redefines the purpose of education as a force for positive change, ensuring that students not only succeed academically but also contribute meaningfully to creating a sustainable and equitable future for all.

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