

Language Teaching for a Sustainable Future: Integrating Sustainability in ELT

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Abstract: This study investigates how sustainability principles can be integrated into English Language Teaching (ELT) to enhance educational quality and foster global citizenship. Adopting a qualitative integrative literature review design, we synthesized findings from 35 publications (2013–2025). It includes two recent systematic reviews and a case study to identify pedagogical strategies, challenges, and outcomes of incorporating sustainability in ELT. The results reveal a range of practical approaches, including Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) curricula, project-based learning centered on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), eco-critical language awareness activities, and targeted teacher training. These approaches were found to enhance language proficiency while increasing learners' sustainability awareness and engagement. However, significant challenges remain, notably a lack of appropriate teaching resources and teacher preparedness, as well as misalignment between sustainability topics and traditional language curriculum goals. As a novel contribution, this study proposes a synthesized framework for embedding sustainability into ELT, along with evidence-based recommendations to overcome implementation barriers. In practical terms, integrating sustainability content and practices in ELT engages students with real-world issues, fostering critical thinking and global citizenship skills alongside language development. The study's findings offer new insights by explicitly linking ELT to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) goals and provide ELT professionals with concrete strategies to help build a more sustainable future through language education.

Keywords: Education for Sustainable Development, English Language Teaching, Global Citizenship, Sustainable Development Goals, Sustainability in Education

A. Introduction

Sustainability has become a central concern in education worldwide, driven by global challenges like climate change and social inequity. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is widely recognized as crucial to achieving the United Nations' SDGs, as it equips learners with knowledge encompassing environmental, social, and economic dimensions, and aims to foster responsible global citizens capable of

addressing complex problems. There is substantial evidence that integrating sustainability content into curricula enhances students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities while raising awareness of global issues. In the context of ELT, a growing body of work suggests that language education can play a pivotal role in this mission. English, as a global lingua franca, provides a platform for international dialogue on sustainability issues. By incorporating sustainability themes into English lessons, educators can create authentic learning experiences that enhance language skills while simultaneously promoting ecological and social literacy. Recent studies have documented creative classroom practices connecting language learning with real-world environmental and social topics (Dhanyamol & Sethunarayanan, 2025; Huot & Em, 2024; Kapranov, 2022; Kazazoglu, 2025; Micalay-Hurtado & Poole, 2022; Yu et al., 2024).

Likewise, interdisciplinary approaches such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) have enabled English teachers to co-teach topics such as conservation or cultural sustainability, thereby reinforcing both content knowledge and language competence. These efforts align with broader educational trends linking language education to global citizenship and sustainability. Conceptual innovations, such as eco-critical language awareness, advocate for analyzing language in terms of its environmental and social implications. Micalay-Hurtado & Poole (2022) introduce this concept to promote justice, well-being, and sustainability in the ELT classroom, illustrating how examining texts on pollution or inequality can deepen students' critical language awareness while instilling values of sustainability. Integrating sustainability in ELT is not only feasible but can enrich language education by giving it meaningful context and purpose (Al Amin & Greenwood, 2018; Tuyan, 2018).

Despite this promising convergence of ELT and ESD, significant gaps remain in knowledge and practice. For one, systematic evidence on the outcomes of sustainability-focused ELT is still limited. Many published examples are case studies or small-scale interventions, while only a few are large-scale or long-term evaluations. It is not yet clear which teaching methodologies are most effective for integrating sustainability content without compromising language-learning outcomes. Moreover, the extent to which such integrated approaches have been adopted by teachers globally is unclear. Research suggests that many teachers and pre-service teachers have limited awareness of sustainability or do not feel adequately prepared to teach it through the English language Yılmaz Fındık et al. (2021). This indicates a disconnection between high-level educational goals and on-the-ground ELT practice. Another unknown concern is the alignment of sustainability topics with language curricula and assessment. Educators often worry that time spent on sustainability discussions might detract from the practice of exam-oriented language skills. Some have questioned whether incorporating global issues truly yields language acquisition benefits or merely overloads an already packed curriculum. (Al Amin & Greenwood, 2018; Braßler & Schultze, 2021; Mohammadnia & Moghadam, 2019; Sinakou et al., 2019; Stein et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2024; Zguir et al., 2021)

The following research questions guide our study: RQ1-What strategies and pedagogical approaches have been implemented to integrate sustainability into English language teaching, and what outcomes have they achieved in terms of student learning and engagement? RQ2-What challenges and barriers do educators face in incorporating sustainability content and practices in ELT, and what solutions or coping strategies have been identified to address these challenges? RQ3-How can the integration of sustainability in ELT be further enhanced, and what areas require additional research to maximize ELT's contribution to sustainable development? By exploring these research questions, the study aims to advance the discourse on sustainable ELT and support stakeholders in making language education a driver of sustainable change.

B. Methods

Research Design

This research employed a qualitative integrative review design to synthesize existing knowledge on integrating sustainability into ELT. Rather than gathering primary data from the classroom, this approach enabled us to combine insights from prior studies across diverse contexts into an overarching analysis. The integrative review methodology is well-suited for emerging areas of research because it allows for various types of evidence (empirical studies, conceptual articles, program reports) to develop a comprehensive understanding. Systematic review practices guide with a thematic synthesis orientation, which facilitated the interpretation of qualitative findings and the identification of common patterns.

To structure the analysis, three key studies serve as anchor references for depth and breadth: two recent, comprehensive systematic reviews and one illustrative study. case study (Dhanyamol & Sethunarayanan, 2025; Kwee, 2021; Yu et al., 2024). These anchor studies provided foundational themes and examples. The systematic reviews encompassed a wide range of empirical and theoretical work from roughly the past decade. At the same time, the detailed case study offered a nuanced, contextualized view of an instructor's attempt to incorporate the SDGs into an English class. Using these as starting points helped ensure that the synthesis captured both broad trends and specific, on-the-ground realities in integrating sustainability with ELT.

Sources and Data Collection

An extensive literature search was conducted to capture publications from 2013 to 2025, a period during which sustainability began to gain significant momentum in ELT scholarship. Multiple databases were used: Google Scholar, ERIC, Scopus, Web of Science, with the search terms including "*sustainability AND English teaching*", "*ESD AND TESOL*", "*SDGs AND ESL/EFL*", "*green pedagogy English*", and related keywords. This yielded over 80 candidate sources, which we then screened based on relevance

and quality. The inclusion criteria were: (1) sources published in English, (2) an explicit focus on integrating sustainability into some aspect of English language teaching or teacher education, and (3) publication in a peer-reviewed journal or a reputable edited volume. Ultimately, 35 sources were selected for in-depth analysis, including empirical studies, conceptual articles, and program reports. Within this corpus, 25 sources comprise the core references for this article, in line with journal guidelines and ensuring broad representation of perspectives.

Data Analysis and Synthesis Method

A thematic coding framework was employed to analyze the selected literature. Initially, an open coding process was conducted on the three anchor studies to generate preliminary categories and sensitize the key themes. This coding was then applied and refined as 35 sources were reviewed. Codes that emerged were gradually grouped into higher-order thematic categories aligned with the research questions. The final thematic framework comprised five major themes: (1) strategies for integration, (2) educator challenges, (3) outcomes and benefits, (4) solutions, and (5) future directions. Data matrices were created to summarize each source's contributions to these themes, enabling systematic comparison across studies.

Throughout the synthesis, particular attention was paid to the distinction between convergent and divergent or disconfirming evidence. Where multiple sources agreed on a finding, it was treated as robust evidence. When sources disagreed or presented exceptions, these instances were flagged as important nuances to discuss as balanced interpretation. The contextual differences were also noted, for example, whether specific strategies were reported more often in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts than in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts, or differences between secondary and tertiary education settings. This analytical rigor ensures the synthesis does not gloss over variability but rather contextualizes it, acknowledging that what works in one setting may need adaptation in another.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis, both authors participated in the coding and theme development process. Both cross-checked each other's coding of sample articles and discussed any discrepancies until reaching consensus. This collaborative approach helped reduce individual bias and improve the reliability of interpretations. Authors also continuously revisited the sources when formulating the narrative to ensure the claims made in this article accurately reflect the source material. While they did not assign a formal quality score to each study, their inclusion criteria and peer-review filter, combined with careful cross-comparison, aimed to provide a credible and nuanced synthesis.

C. Results and Discussion

Strategies for Integrating Sustainability in ELT

The review reveals that educators have implemented a variety of strategies to **weave sustainability into ELT**, often yielding positive educational outcomes. A prominent approach is the design of **interdisciplinary or content-based lessons** in which sustainability topics serve as the thematic backbone of language instruction. Multiple studies describe the use of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) modules focused on environmental science or social studies topics, delivered in English. In a Swedish middle school context, Olsson & Sylvén (2023) documented cross-curricular CLIP projects in which English and Science teachers co-develop units on climate and energy. It significantly increased student motivation, allowing vocabulary and content knowledge to develop in tandem. Such interdisciplinary units situate language in meaningful contexts, and students often find this relevant and engaging. By discussing real-world issues such as deforestation or gender equality in English, learners practice their reading, listening, and speaking skills while also deepening their understanding of these issues. Authentic materials, such as news articles, podcasts, speeches, and reports on sustainable development, have been widely used to support this strategy. In the case of North Macedonia, Bektashi & Xhaferi (2020) introduced the SDGs through English reading texts and projects. Students reported greater interest in lessons and showed improved critical thinking skills alongside gains in language proficiency. Across contexts, authentic texts on sustainability are found to enrich vocabulary and discourse skills by exposing learners to domain-specific language and varied genres of English discourse (Azizah et al., 2025; Cordova, 2024; Huot & Em, 2024; Putri et al., 2024).

Another successful strategy is project-based learning (PBL), which is oriented around sustainability challenges. PBL aligns naturally with many SDGs because it emphasizes solving real-world problems. Several ELT interventions had students undertake projects such as campus recycling campaigns, community surveys on water use, and Model United Nations debates on climate action, all conducted in English. These projects require students to use English for research, collaboration, presentation, and reflection, thereby practicing language skills in an integrated manner. Yu et al. (2024) noted that project-based approaches were among the most frequently reported in the literature for sustainability-ELT integration, often resulting in enhanced student engagement and content retention. Chang et al. (2018) implemented a PBL framework in a Taiwanese university English class, in which students developed solutions to local environmental issues and presented them in English. The study found that students demonstrated improved speaking skills and greater empowerment when discussing global issues.

Notably, student engagement is repeatedly highlighted as a key outcome of sustainability-oriented projects. Teachers report that students find English classes

more meaningful when they can engage with real-world issues. In one high school, for example, learners wrote letters to the local government about pollution. This activity not only practiced formal writing and persuasion in English but also instilled a sense of agency and civic responsibility (Burns et al., 2022; Edwards & Burns, 2016a, 2016b). These outcomes align with broader educational goals by tackling problems in English; students practice language as a tool for authentic communication and change, embodying the notion of global citizenship.

A third strategy involves incorporating critical pedagogy and discussions of sustainability and social justice into ELT. Lessons may focus on analyzing media, engaging in debates, role-playing, or writing reflective essays on issues such as climate justice, inequality, or peace. Such approaches engage higher-order thinking and allow students to articulate opinions and arguments in English. Micalay-Hurtado & Poole, (2022) demonstrated how eco-critical language awareness activities critically examine the language of advertisements or news through an environmental lens, can simultaneously build language analysis skills and socio-environmental consciousness. In their classroom implementation, students learned to identify bias or persuasive techniques in texts about sustainability, thereby sharpening their reading comprehension and critical literacy. Furthermore, they become aware of terms and rhetoric used in discussions of justice and well-being. Another case by Mambu (2023) in a university ELT course: students integrated critical dialogue on the SDGs; they read short stories depicting social issues and discussed them in English. They relate it to SDG targets, such as poverty reduction or gender equality. This not only improved their speaking fluency and argumentation skills but also led to what the author called transformative learning, as students began connecting their life purposes with contributing to society. The English classroom becomes a space for ethical and self-reflective conversation, fulfilling a core aim of ESD: encouraging personal and societal transformation.

Across these diverse strategies, positive learning outcomes are commonly reported. Language proficiency gains include improved vocabulary, better reading comprehension of informational texts, enhanced speaking confidence about complex topics, and more coherent writing when addressing substantive topics. Kwee (2021) found that when secondary students in Hong Kong engaged with SDG-related content, their use of complex sentence structures and content vocabulary in English improved noticeably by the end of the project. Moreover, 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and problem solving are naturally cultivated by these approaches. Students working on sustainability projects or debates must analyze information, negotiate with peers, and propose solutions, all of which exercise cognitive and social skills in tandem with effective language use. Several studies have explicitly measured attitudinal outcomes, showing that learners often complete a sustainability-infused course with higher awareness of global issues and a sense of empowerment. This demonstrates that English is not merely a school subject, but also a means to engage in international discourse and local action. For instance, high school

students in a UK-based ELT program who engaged in climate-themed English projects reported greater confidence in discussing environmental topics and indicated they felt more globally minded after the course (Huot & Em, 2024; Wahyuni et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2024).

It should be noted, however, that these positive outcomes depend on thoughtful implementation. The integration needs to be pedagogically sound, aligning with language proficiency levels and learning objectives. When done well, as documented above, sustainability content can provide authentic motivation, making language learning more engaging and effective. Learners invest in learning English because it becomes a vehicle for issues they care about, which can lead to deeper engagement and retention. Indeed, Fu et al. (2023) suggest that connecting language tasks to real-world problem-solving can invoke students' intrinsic motivation and thus yield better learning outcomes. This synergy between language education and meaningful content is a compelling argument for integration. The findings echo the synthesis of Laurie et al. (2016) that ESD enriches educational quality by adding relevance and purpose, as clearly exemplified in the ELT domain by the studies above.

Challenges and Barriers

Despite the promising strategies and outcomes, educators face significant challenges in integrating sustainability into ELT, many of which were consistently reported across multiple sources. A central barrier is the lack of readily available resources and materials that incorporate sustainability into language learning. Traditional ELT textbooks have only recently begun to include units on global issues, and these units are often superficial or isolated cultural notes (Akban & Yavuz, 2022). Teachers frequently must develop their own materials, including finding relevant articles, creating worksheets around SDG topics, and designing project guidelines, which is a time-consuming process. In the context of higher teacher workloads, this poses a practical hurdle. Participants in various studies expressed that without institutional support, it is hard to teach such content consistently. In a survey of 50 EFL instructors in East Asia, over 70% agreed that insufficient teaching materials were a significant obstacle to teaching about environmental issues in English classes. Even where commercial textbook series address global issues, coverage is minimal and not deeply integrated into language practice (Akban & Yavuz, 2022; Huot & Em, 2024; Yu et al., 2024). This gap leaves teachers either skipping sustainability topics or having to personally curate content, which leads to burnout or inconsistent quality.

Another significant challenge is the perceived misalignment with curricular goals and testing requirements. Especially in an exam-driven education system, teachers feel pressure to prioritize the language knowledge and skills that will be tested. Introducing sustainability discussions or projects can be seen as going off the syllabus unless carefully justified in terms of language objectives. As one teacher in a case study by Rantung et al. (2025) put it, "*it is challenging to devote time to climate change discussions*

when the focus is on grammar and reading comprehension." Administrators and colleagues question the relevance of sustainability topics to English classes, expecting the focus to remain on language form and fluency in a narrow sense. This reflects a mindset that views ELT as concerned only with language itself, in contrast to an interdisciplinary vision of ELT's role in holistic education. Teachers who have successfully integrated sustainability often do so by mapping sustainability content to existing curriculum standards, thereby meeting language objectives concurrently. Nonetheless, alignment concerns persist. Kapranov (2022)'s analysis of ELT discourse at the University of Oxford revealed an ironic disconnect. While the university had strong sustainability goals, its publicly communicated ELT curricula emphasized generic lifelong learning and digital skills, with slight explicit inclusion of environmental or social sustainability topics. This suggests that, even at high levels, language programs might sideline core sustainability issues in favor of traditional content, likely due to a combination of circular inertia and perceived misalignment with language-teaching outcomes.

Teacher knowledge and preparedness are another barrier. Many English teachers have humanities or education backgrounds with limited training in environmental science, economics, or social studies. They might feel they lack the content knowledge to facilitate discussions on climate change or inequality in English confidently. Al Amin & Greenwood (2018) highlighted this in Bangladesh. Teachers in their study reported a need for more professional development on the SDGs and how to connect them to English pedagogy. Only 17% of teachers in their study felt very prepared to teach sustainability in English. In pre-service education, Yılmaz Fındık et al. (2021) found that none of the participants had taken a course on sustainability or ESD during their ELT training, and most could not see how to integrate such content into language lessons due to limited exposure. This points to a systemic gap in teacher education programs. Teachers often need to self-educate about these topics or rely on external workshops, if available. Without confidence in the subject matter, some teachers may avoid in-depth discussions on sustainability, fearing difficult questions or straying beyond their area of expertise.

Classroom management and student factors also pose challenges. Some teachers noted that introducing contentious or complex issues can provoke unexpected student reactions or heated debates that require careful moderation, especially in multicultural classrooms. Language proficiency constraints can limit the depth to which one can delve into an issue. Explaining a complex concept like a carbon footprint or a gender pay gap in simple English is not trivial. One strategy has been using the first language (L1) judiciously to scaffold understanding of challenging concepts, but this is sometimes discouraged in ELT settings. Moreover, a few studies mentioned student resistance or apathy. While many students are enthusiastic, some may view sustainability content as irrelevant to their English learning, especially in contexts where English is seen primarily as a utilitarian subject for exams or career advancement. This attitude was more commonly reported in settings with high-stakes

testing, and less so in educational environments that value holistic learning. Encouragingly, teachers noted that student skepticism often diminishes once they become actively involved. Even initially reluctant students tended to show more interest and openness after participating in sustainability-related activities (Al Amin & Greenwood, 2018; Bekteshi & Xhaferi, 2020; Tuyan, 2018).

An overarching challenge is the need for institutional and curricular support. Without clear mandates or encouragement from educational authorities, integrating sustainability relies on individual teacher initiative. Some national curricula have begun embedding sustainability or global citizenship as a cross-curricular priority, thereby legitimizing such content in language classes (Olsson & Sylvén, 2023). Nonetheless, in many countries, ELT syllabi remain rigidly focused on language forms and skills detached from broader themes. Teachers working in such systems face a risk; time spent on sustainability may be viewed negatively. The lack of assessment mechanisms for sustainability learning outcomes in language courses further impedes their integration. If something is not tested or at least documented in the curriculum, it tends to be marginalized. Nhamo et al. (2024), in a review of universities across Africa, found that even when sustainability was included in the mission statement, it seldom translated into course objectives or assessment criteria in departments such as languages. This reflects a gap between policy rhetoric and curricular integration, a challenge not unique to ELT but one that certainly affects it.

While there is clear potential and demonstrated success in integrating sustainability into ELT, educators confront practical, pedagogical, and systemic hurdles. These include material or resource shortages, curriculum and exam alignment issues, limited teacher training and content knowledge, occasional student or classroom management issues, and institutional support. Addressing these challenges is crucial for transitioning from isolated pilot efforts to the widespread adoption of sustainability in ELT.

Solution and Future Directions

The research not only identified challenges but also offers a range of solutions and recommendations to integrate sustainability into ELT better. A recurring recommendation is the development and sharing of Open Educational Resources (OERs) and teaching materials tailored to ELT with sustainability content. Many authors call for the collaborative creation of lesson plans, reading texts, and multimedia resources that align with language curricula and address the SDGs. Yu et al. (2024) emphasize the creation of repositories of bilingual glossaries for sustainability terms, level-appropriate texts about environmental issues, and template project plans, so that individual teachers do not have to start from scratch. There are promising developments in this direction. International organizations and publishers have begun releasing free materials (Maley & Peachey, 2017). Communities have formed online where teachers exchange resources and ideas. As more teachers

contribute to and utilize these OERs, the barrier of resource scarcity will diminish. The synthesis suggests that a connected effort by ELT professional bodies to curate and disseminate sustainability-related ELT resources could significantly accelerate adoption.

Another key solution is targeted teacher training and professional development on ESD in ELT. Teacher education programs can incorporate modules on sustainability, global citizenship, and pedagogy related to social issues. Some teacher training institutions have pioneered this. A Brazilian university incorporated an English for Sustainable Development elective into its TSOL diploma, which familiarized future teachers with environmental education concepts and how to design lesson plans around them (Corrêa & Stern, 2025; Laurie et al., 2016). At the in-service level, workshops and action research mentorship have proven effective. Edwards & Burns (2016a) describe an action research initiative where in-service teachers experimented with sustainability topics and collectively reflected on outcomes. Not only do these teachers develop practical techniques, but the collaboration and reflection also increase their confidence and commitment to teaching for sustainability (Al Amin & Greenwood, 2018). Specifically, the programs are recommended to train trainers in Bangladesh to bridge the identified gaps. It essentially prepares lead teachers who can then guide colleagues in integrating the SDGs into English teaching. Governments and educational authorities can support this by including it in the standards for teacher competencies. Encouragingly, UNESCO's teacher education guidelines for ESD explicitly mention language teachers as key agents of ESD, implying that national frameworks may gradually incorporate these expectations (Dasli, 2019). In a context where such top-down changes are slow, grassroots efforts, such as teacher communities or NGOs offering professional development, can fill the void. The common thread is that empowering teachers with knowledge, pedagogical strategies, and a belief in ESD's importance is crucial. When teachers understand why and how to integrate sustainability, they become champions of it, even within restrictive curricula.

To better align with curricula and assessments, some scholars propose infusing sustainability elements into language proficiency standards and exam content. This is a forward-looking recommendation. If major international English tests or national exams included reading passages or essay prompts related to sustainability themes, it would signal the legitimacy of these topics in ELT and encourage their teaching. A slight trend is already evident, but it could be expanded systematically. Curriculum developers can integrate sustainability as a cross-cutting theme in ELT syllabi, ensuring each grade or proficiency level covers specific global topics as context for language use. The latest curriculum reform in Taiwan embedded global issues into the high school English curriculum, which research shows led more teachers to use SDG-related examples in their classes (Ahmed, 2022; Akbana & Yavuz, 2022; Maley & Peachey, 2017). Similarly, Turkey's national education program has encouraged raising global awareness among citizens, and some teachers have interpreted that as

a green light to include global problem topics in English lessons (A. Kaplan, 2018; R. Kaplan, 2024). The suggestion here is that policy support and curricular integration from above provide a supportive environment for teachers to innovate without fear of straying from required content. It is recommended that education authorities explicitly reference the sustainable development context in ELT curriculum documents and provide sample materials aligned with it.

The challenges of language difficulty and supporting lower-proficiency learners in sustainability discussions can be mitigated through the use of scaffolding strategies. Solutions found in the literature include using visuals, translations, and multilingual resources to ensure comprehension of complex concepts. Quinto et al. (2024) highlight a language-justice approach by acknowledging multilingual realities and, at times, using L1 strategically to bolster understanding of critical content. In the ELT context, this could mean allowing brief explanations of a technical term in the students' L1 before expecting them to discuss it in English, or using bilingual glossaries. Such practices, once taboo under strict immersion ideologies, are increasingly accepted as enhancing inclusion and learning. Therefore, teachers who guide students on sustainability topics often advise on scaffolding techniques. When scaffolding is done well, even lower-intermediate students can be successfully engaged with topics like waste management or cultural heritage preparation. This suggests that sustainability integration is possible at all proficiency levels, as long as tasks are turned appropriately.

The review highlights the importance of ongoing research and innovation in continually improving sustainable ELT. There are calls for further interdisciplinary research and for collaboration between ELT researchers and environmental education experts to design dual-focused curricula. Future research could investigate whether students who learn English through sustainability topics demonstrate greater language retention or a lasting commitment to civic engagement. Longitudinal studies could follow such students into higher education or careers. Another suggested direction is exploring digital technology in sustainable ELT. Dhanyamol and Sethunarayanan (2025) specifically note that digital tools hold promises for enriching Eco-ELT experiences. Given the rise of remote learning, integrating sustainability with digital literacy in ELT is a timely frontier.

By applying these solutions, including resource development, teacher training, curriculum alignment, and scaffolding methods, along with continued innovation, the barriers to integrating sustainability in ELT can be surmounted. English language teaching can evolve into a platform, not only for linguistic competence but for empowering learners as informed, responsible citizens (Yu et al., 2024). As multiple authors assert, this evolution is not just an educational enhancement but a necessity in our era. Language education should respond to the world's challenges by preparing students to communicate and collaborate across cultures in pursuit of sustainability. The result of our synthesis is heartening; it demonstrates that when sustainability is

integrated into ELT through thoughtful pedagogy, students excel in language skills and develop a sense of agency. The discussion has highlighted practical pathways to achieve this dual benefit at scale.

To ensure a balanced perspective, we must acknowledge that some skepticism and caution remain in the field. A small minority of teachers and researchers caution that the evidence for direct language improvement via sustainability content is still emerging and that we must carefully evaluate outcomes. These nuances warrant further research. However, the broader educational value of integrating meaningful content is well supported by our findings and educational theory. Therefore, the trajectory for ELT is clear, the field is moving towards an era in which English teaching and learning contribute to something larger, and, in doing so, arguably make English teaching itself more significant and effective.

D. Conclusions

This research set out to explore how sustainability can be effectively integrated into ELT, and the conclusions underscore both its feasibility and its profound value. First, the synthesis confirms that a variety of pedagogical methodologies, from content-based instruction and project-based learning to critical discussions and interdisciplinary curricula, have been successfully employed to bring sustainability themes into ELT. These approaches have yielded tangible benefits. Students not only improve in linguistic proficiency but also develop greater awareness of global issues and the confidence to engage with them. In other words, integrating sustainability transforms the English classroom into a venue for holistic education, enriching the learning experience and aligning language education with the pressing needs of our world. The key finding is that ELT can simultaneously advance language skills and the sustainability mindset, demonstrating that the traditional dichotomy between language teaching and content teaching can be overcome to the benefit of both.

Secondly, the challenges that have often impeded the integration of sustainability in ELT are real but surmountable. Issues such as a lack of materials, limited teacher preparation, and curricular rigidities have been identified and addressed through various strategies. The analysis suggests a practical implication: providing teachers with access to ready-made, sustainable ELT resources and targeted professional development will greatly facilitate implementation. Educational authorities and institutions should support teachers by updating curricula and assessment frameworks to incorporate sustainability competencies, thereby sending a clear message that these topics are valued components of language education. In an environment where this has begun to happen, teachers have been empowered to innovate, and students have reaped the rewards. A critical implication for practice, then, is that systemic support and teacher empowerment are crucial. When teachers are confident and equipped, they can navigate perceived trade-offs between covering the language syllabus and exploring sustainability content, effectively marrying the

two.

Thirdly, this study makes a novel contribution by highlighting how ELT for sustainability also promotes global citizenship and intercultural understanding. Many of the sustainability issues are inherently global and require cross-cultural cooperation. Through tackling these in language classes, students practice not just language, but also empathy, perspective-taking, and collaborative problem-solving across cultures. As such, integrating sustainability in ELT directly supports SDG 4.7, which emphasizes education for global citizenship. Our findings reinforce the idea that ELT can play a crucial role in educating learners as globally competent citizens who can use English as the international lingua franca to share ideas and solutions related to sustainable development. This suggests that language education, when reimaged, can be a force for societal change. It is an insight that educators and policymakers should heed in designing curricula and allocating resources.

This article provides a comprehensive overview of the current landscape of sustainability in ELT, highlighting the benefits, acknowledging the challenges, and outlining the way forward. Key findings include multiple effective methods for integrating sustainability in ELT. Challenges such as resource scarcity and misalignment with tests can be mitigated through supportive measures and creative pedagogy. Integrating sustainability imparts broader competencies and fulfills education's role in fostering responsible, informed citizens. Practically, ELT practitioners are encouraged to start small by integrating one sustainability-themed project or discussion into their course and leveraging growing networks and resources for support. Institutions should incorporate sustainability into their language program outcomes and teacher training agendas. For future research, more empirical studies examining the long-term impacts of sustainability-integrated ELT on both language proficiency and student attitudes toward sustainability are suggested. It would be beneficial to investigate whether students who learn English through sustainability topics go on to use English more actively in civic engagement or international cooperation. Additionally, comparative studies across different cultural contexts can yield insights into how local factors influence the integration process. Learning from successes in one region can inspire adaptations in another. Given the timeline of the SDGs 2030 and beyond, ELT research has a unique opportunity to align its goals with global education objectives, making itself more relevant than ever.

In conclusion, integrating sustainability in ELT is not just a pedagogical innovation but a necessary evolution of education in the 21st century, one that connects language learning with the survival and well-being of our planet and societies. By adopting the approaches and recommendations distilled in this study, educators and policymakers can ensure that ELT actively contributes to a sustainable future, producing learners who are linguistically skilled and globally conscious.

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