Sustainable Development in Language Education

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Abstract. The goal of the study is to identify the components of sustainable development—economic, social, and cultural—as recommended by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization and how they apply to the foreign language instruction process at Iraqi universities. The development of sustainable development principles is considered while evaluating the importance of two fundamental components of high-quality education: the learning environment and the curriculum. The research employs a qualitative design and uses an observational instrument with a sample of fifty students at second-year English department/college of education (Ibn-Rushd) at Baghdad University. The survey's findings, which sought to learn how students saw these two, are shown. An examination of efficient methods for enhancing pupils' proficiency in learning the presentation includes cross-cultural elements and English that are appropriate for sustainable development. Practical implementation suggestions are made about the implications of students participating in multidisciplinary activities and events that aim to achieve sustainable development objectives.

Keywords: sustainable development dimensions, education for sustainable development, educational content and the learning environment

1. Introduction

It is well acknowledged that education plays a critical role in fostering a sustainable world, which is the primary goal of sustainable development. The global society, public servants, academics, and instructors working in various kinds of educational institutions all have this same opinion. A student needs access to high-quality education in order to gain the knowledge and skills necessary for comprehending the concept of sustainable development and

putting its principles into practice. These objectives and components have been the focus of numerous studies and discussions in a variety of contexts over the past few decades(Han, Geng, & Wang, 2021). A crucial component of high-quality education, according to UNESCO, is "holistic and transformational education which addresses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy, and the learning environment" (Kim & Pae, 2019). This includes education for sustainable development.

Incorporating the notion of sustainable development into education necessitates focusing on the learning process and student outcomes. It is important to prioritize interdisciplinary curriculum design since it equips students with information from many domains. The learning material, which includes subjects like biodiversity, contemporary economic processes, and the difficulties faced by culturally varied populations, is given special consideration. These topics are connected to both local and worldwide critical concerns that follow nature conservation initiatives (Baran, 2021).

The learning outcomes encompass not only the information but also the skills that students gain during the education process related to sustainable development. These are the fundamental skills required to support students in succeeding in a range of real-world situations. The so-called soft skills— capabilities like taking initiative, being able to think critically and solve problems, being ready to work in a team and share decision-making—are among the most in-demand in today's professional and social lives. These objectives can be addressed by using reputable and successful teaching strategies together with a learner-centered strategy that balances students' accountability for their own academic performance with their enjoyment in the learning process.

In contemporary literature, pedagogical strategies and tactics for inspiring the next generation to take action for sustainability are widely explored. The hybrid model of teaching in both online and physical settings has shown to be reliable in the current climate. Modern digital technologies and e-learning are widely used in conjunction with sustainable development methods in education. They have the demonstrated ability to support education for sustainable development and give students the chance to acquire the information and skills necessary to lead sustainable lives (Kim & Pae, 2019).

There has been much research on the integration of sustainable development concepts education into higher education. Most academics agree that colleges

have a crucial role to play in putting sustainable development strategies into practice. Nonetheless, several researches contend that this execution ineluctably presents specific obstacles that contemporary universities must deal with. Research examining how students see the learning settings in higher education for sustainable development are undoubtedly highly interesting. Maurer and Bogner's study examine how 464 first-year students see education for sustainable development as well as environmental education. There is a notable disparity in how students perceive sustainability ideas and how these concepts are analyzed (Baran, 2021).

Most studies address the problem of incorporating sustainable development policies into higher education in relation to the operations of higher education institutions. Recent research has focused especially on university instructors' participation in processes of educational sustainable growth. Training academic staff members and taking part in professional development programs are seen to be essential for the successful integration of education for sustainable development. The necessity of universities' joint efforts and activities targeted at accomplishing this objective is another topic for discussion and consideration in the sphere of teaching educators themselves. An excellent illustration of successful collaboration in this area is the Baltic and Mediterranean regions' cooperation in implementing and developing education for sustainable development concepts in higher education (Baran, 2021).

Many studies primarily address environmental education and related issues because the original concept of education for sustainable development was centered on the learners' developing knowledge and skills in the field of nature conservation and the interaction between the natural environment and society (Han, Geng, Wang, 2021). Education for sustainable development began to focus more and more on anticipating and resolving social and environmental issues. These days, an increasing number of scholars and educators use its ideas while instructing students in a variety of subjects, including foreign languages, history, and mathematics. Learning about the environment from an ecological, economic, social, and cultural perspective helps students better grasp the demands and interests of many civilizations and the modern world.

Compared to other learning domains, language and foreign language education for sustainable development has received a great deal less attention in contemporary literature. Language, which is a component of culture and is

important for fostering human relationships, may be a vital tool for addressing issues and difficulties on a global scale. A student can get a wide range of abilities related to foreign language instruction for sustainable development programs, which are essential for building successful international collaboration and communication.

In light of the current world's intense migratory patterns, learning a foreign language and becoming aware of cultural variations in beliefs and behaviours are crucial for the sustainable growth of the global community. A study of the literature demonstrates that resolving issues that arise in multilingual educational environments is essential to achieving the goals of sustainable development (Kim & Pae, 2019).

Representatives of many ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds may interact and find common ground since English is a global language and lingua franca. Therefore, the foundation for the sustainable growth of a global society is provided by the English as a Foreign Language teaching process.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Dimensions of Sustainability in Education

Education was promoted as a component of the solution during the 1972 UN conference on environmental issues, and this view persists today (UN, 2015; UNESCO, 2017; UN Sustainable Development Goal 4, 2019). The issue of how to support or comprehend sustainability arises. coming up often. Environmental education and nature conservation education are components of the ecological dimension. An emphasis on nature-based activities and environmental awareness are said to be closely related, according to several researches ((Kim & Pae,2019).). But this simple, linear causal relationship between being in nature and feeling linked to it is also disputed (Dickinson, 2016), which emphasizes the need for educators to understand how to support learning that goes beyond reproduction. Furthermore, the necessity of distributing resources and reducing poverty becomes evident in achieving sustainability.

Sustainable development is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" and is characterized by three dimensions: ecological, economics, and social/cultural components. According to the research, recognizing both current and future requirements and recognizing the significance of individuals

leading fulfilling lives—which depend on interpersonal ties and cultural belonging—require lowering poverty and allocating resources more fairly.

A comparable way of defining sustainable development is to expand the notion of future development beyond ecology to encompass human and economic viewpoints. According to Boldermo and Ødegaard (2019), sustainability has three dimensions: ecological, economic, and social/cultural, and goes beyond environmental challenges. Initially, the educators tackled ecological and economic sustainability by attempting to restrict consumption and minimize the use of resources, which is detrimental to the environment. They created a mechanism for reuse based on how our culture handles reuse the most, and as a result they also addressed the aspect of society and culture (Sverdrup & Myrstad, 2019).

2.2 Ecological sustainability

The evolution of environmental education approaches may be summed up as follows: from environmental education in the 1970s to education in nature (1980s), education for the environment (1990s), and finally, at the start of the 1990s, a participatory focus on education for sustainability. year (Kim & Pae, 2019). According to Biesta's definition, education in nature include learning about nature, reflecting the qualifying feature. However, there are cultural variations in the way that knowledge about environment is imparted.

This illustrates how cultural variations manifest when cultures collide and an overlap between ecological and social/cultural sustainability is portrayed, for example, by stressing distinct learning settings and approaches to attain sustainability. Experiences directed by teachers, as those reported from China (Hammer & He, 2019), appear to run counter to the Nordic philosophy of play. In spite of this paradox, it is almost universally acknowledged that both teacher-led activities and unstructured play offer a variety of learning possibilities. Both strategies can be used for socialization and qualification when taking Biesta's ideas into account.

Additionally, learners may come up with something novel or unexpected during play or in structural learning activities that might challenge our established ways of thinking and lead to qualitative improvements to address unsustainability. Managing the wonderful risk of education and making allowances for newly arising conflicts as stated in the RDA and learners' subjectivity as explained by (Biesta,2014) provide a difficulty.

2.3 Social and cultural sustainability

A development that guarantees everyone's rights to safety, social rights, and decent living circumstances is indicated by social and cultural sustainability. Class, gender, race, religion, and culture are among them. Another definition of social sustainability is "a life-promoting situation within communities, and a procedure that communities might use to accomplish this goal (McKenzie, 2004, p. 12). Creating environments that incorporate and encourage good interactions, such as working to foster a sense of community and a sense of belonging to the place where we live, can be seen as social/cultural sustainability in the context of learning. Put simply, it's a sense of security and kinship with the neighborhood. This facilitates communication between groups and generations while also holding common references within the learning community (Horrigmo, 2014).

Since Biesta's emphasis on the cultural component of education is not obvious, these aid operations look more akin to socialization, qualifying, and colonization than they do to qualitative reforms. Even with the best of intentions, they don't lead to greater fairness. Learners can be exposed to ideas that demonstrate how things may operate differently in order to become change agents and challenge our preconceived notions about how society should function. For example, they can be made aware of the fact that there are many enjoyable activities that have no negative environmental effects and that living in a different way can be fulfilling and inspiring. According to Boldermo and Ødegaard (2019), presenting such concepts might open up more space for suggestions for qualitative improvements. This is consistent with Biesta's theory of subjectification.

2.4 Economic sustainability

closely related to the subject of teaching for sustainable economic growth. Because of pollution problems and overuse of natural resources, consumption poses a danger to ecological sustainability. The main focus of consumption is teaching on sharing, reusing, mending, and recycling as ways to minimize consumption. However, there is also emphasis on activities that promote respect for manufactured things and the need to care for them, which makes the social and cultural dimension clear. In order to illustrate the ecological dimension, the theme of value emphasizes utility value above economic value and encourages learning activities that make students happy without leaving a large ecological imprint (Sverdrup & Myrstad, 2019).

3 Materials and methods

The study's objectives are to examine the content and learning environment—two components of high-quality education—and demonstrate how they apply to the fields of education for sustainable development by using instances from English language instruction and learning at the Iraqi University of Baghdad. Qualitative research methods have been applied to have a deeper understanding of each component's efficacy. Students' activities, both extracurricular and curricular, have been noted, examined, evaluated, and documented. The survey findings, which enable the identification of 50 second-year students and their opinions of the university's curriculum and learning environment, are also included in the research.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Content

The implementation of a range of exercises and activities within the communicative language teaching technique is made possible by the study of material relevant to environmental concerns. As students engage with written and spoken texts, lexical exercises, and written and oral resources, their reading, speaking, listening, and writing skills increase. Numerous styles and methods, such as round tables, case studies, online quests, projects, oral presentations, and discussions, can be used to study this subject. Composing an essay, a mandatory learning task related to the subject of environmental preservation, fosters students' capacity to think critically and independently about the problem at hand as well as their ability to write in a foreign language.

The results of the poll show that a considerable majority of second-year students (95%) believe that discussions about concepts and themes related to the natural world are important, engaging, and relevant. A little over 80% of survey participants concurred that leading a green lifestyle encourages sustainability and resource efficiency. Furthermore, almost 60% of participants recognize that participating in class discussions, completing individual and group projects, and considering more environmentally friendly daily routines and lifestyles.

Second-year English majors are also instructed on academic content pertaining to intercultural communication. All English language learners are equipped to identify and understand other groups and lifestyles since learning a foreign language typically requires accepting concepts from a different

culture. many social and cultural topics, such as "Elements of Culture," "Different styles," and so on this course for university students covers a variety of topics, including "Elements of Culture," "Different styles of communication," "Cross-cultural negotiations," and many more. By taking part in lectures, seminars, and group and individual project work, students who participate in the course learn how to foster cross-cultural engagement. A genuinely cross-cultural learning environment is fostered in the classroom by the presence of international students. Discussions and idea-sharing aid in the development of fundamental skills in Iraqi pupils. This helps young adults acquire the intercultural communication skills necessary to carry out sustainable development initiatives and comprehend the basics of living in a globalized world. One of the most important aspects of studying different cultures is cultivating an attitude of respect and tolerance towards different beliefs and behaviours.

In a few years, students will probably be working in multinational teams, and these teams will highly value intercultural communication abilities. The poll results indicate that students are eager to learn about different cultures and have a keen interest in doing so (95% of second-year students), based on the knowledge they have gained during their studies. The majority of respondents, or 72%, are certain that their exposure to the global economy has enhanced their communication abilities. About 60% of students acknowledge that they have become more tolerant and receptive to "the other". About 30% of the respondents acknowledged that, before to completing the course, they knew very little about navigating cultural differences and that they were curious to find out more. These answers validate the results of previous research and emphasize the necessity of teaching cross-cultural understanding to modern university students.

4.2 Learning environment

One can show how important foreign language education is for achieving sustainable development goals by taking a transdisciplinary approach, creating an effective learning environment, and integrating English with the major educational disciplines of the University of Baghdad. The foreign languages department of the university trains undergraduates and graduates for jobs in a

range of fields in collaboration with other departments. The task at hand is learning English language proficiency as well as assisting young individuals in succeeding in their chosen professional professions. Therefore, the principal academic interests of the students are definitely taken into consideration when creating the curriculum and extracurricular activities. When they are learning, students successfully apply the knowledge they have learnt from studying their primary subjects and disciplines.

Yet another distinctive feature of the university learning environment is the way research skills are developed when students are studying a foreign language. Most of the campaigns and activities aimed at its creation are carried out in cooperation with Baghdad and the university administrative offices. Throughout the academic year, the English department sponsors a number of events, including the following:

1. A yearly academic gathering for students in their second year. The conference sections and topics of the students' oral presentations and papers are initially negotiated with the English department teaching staff. These subjects are pertinent to the students' major fields of study, where curriculum-related subjects are taught and students have the chance to apply.

2. Teaching students the terminology used in academic debates and round tables enables them to properly introduce and defend their points of view as well as interact with other round table participants.

3. arranging the "Socio-cultural links as the basis for trust sustainable development" academic international competition.

4. Advice from English-language instructors on academic writing and publishing for students

research conducted in English.

A lot of activities are designed to help students improve their research, professional, and foreign language abilities. They also help them build soft skills like effective communication, teamwork, decision-making, and critical thinking, among others.

5. Conclusion

The two most significant basic elements influencing education are thought to be the assessments of the learning environment and the curriculum. Appropriate curriculum design and the establishment of a productive learning

environment illustrate how successful foreign language education is at achieving sustainable development goals. By adding activities and resources from social and intercultural communication to their foreign language curriculum, students may alter their lives and get a deeper understanding of sustainability.

They can also learn to be more accepting of different cultures and better equip themselves to live and work in an increasingly globalized society. Analyses of educational material and the learning environment in the context of English as a Foreign Language education, as well as evaluations of the learners' experiences in activities, demonstrate the relevance of foreign language education for introducing and fostering sustainable development principles. The results of the survey allow us to make inferences about students' positive views regarding policies related to sustainable development as well as their excellent aptitude for picking up and applying a variety of other skills, including foreign languages, to cope with the challenges of the modern global environment.

As was previously said, the goal of education for sustainable development was to increase students' understanding and proficiency in subjects like environmental conservation and ecological concerns. Several academic disciplines research how to educate about environmental subjects, including foreign language instruction. College students should be interested in this topic because it addresses significant current issues that they will likely face in their everyday lives and for which they will need to find alternate solutions.

In order to help students learn about and gain a deeper understanding of major ecological issues like global warming and the greenhouse effect, water, land, and air pollution, overpopulation, the depletion of natural resources, and others, foreign language departments have developed educational programs that use teaching materials. The main contemporary environmental challenges are discussed together with their causes, effects, and the creation and implementation of preventative and mitigating solutions. A thorough discussion is held on how to strengthen the bond between humans and the natural world. Not only is the curriculum's substance important, but so are the assignments' layout and the ways in which students engage in extracurricular activities.

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التنمية المستدامة في تعليم اللغة

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المستخلص. تهدف الدراسة إلى التعرف على مكونات التنمية المستدامة – الاقتصادية والاجتماعية والثقافية – كما أوصت بها منظمة الأمم المتحدة للتربية والعلم والثقافة وكيفية تطبيقها على عملية تعليم اللغات الأجنبية في الجامعات العراقية. يتم أخذ تطوير مبادئ التنمية المستدامة في الاعتبار عند تقييم أهمية عنصرين أساسيين للتعليم عالي الجودة: بيئة التعلم والمناهج الدراسية. استخدم البحث التصميم النوعي واستخدم أداة الملاحظة مع عينة مكونة من خمسين طالباً في السنة الثانية قسم اللغة الإنجليزية / كلية التربية (ابن رشد) في جامعة بغداد. يتم عرض نتائج الاستطلاع، الذي سعى إلى معرفة كيف رأى الطلاب هذين الاثنين. يشمل فحص الأساليب الفعالة لتعزيز كفاءة التلاميذ في تعلم العرض التقديمي عناصر متعددة الثقافات واللغة الإنجليزية المناسبة للتنمية المستدامة. يتم تقديم اقتراحات التنفيذ العملي حول الآثار المترتبة على مشاركة الطلاب في الأنشطة والفعاليات متعددة التخصصات التي تهدف إلى تحقيق أهداف التنمية المستدامة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أبعاد التنمية المستدامة، التعليم من أجل التنمية المستدامة، المحتوى التعليمي وبيئة التعلم