

Perceptions of Iraqi EFL Pre-service Teachers of Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Sustainable development (SD) is an improvement that meets present needs but jeopardizes the ability of new populations to do the same. It is vital to acquaint EFL students with the terminology and idiomatic expressions of this discipline. Nowadays, sustainable development and the environment have been prioritized in every aspect of life. Since culture and the teaching of Foreign language English cannot be separated, the English language becomes the mean of communication in health, economics, education, and politics. Thus, integrating sustainable development goals within language learning and teaching is very important. This descriptive quantitative study aims to investigate the perception of EFL pre-service teachers of sustainable development. Students in their fourth year at the "College of Education for Women" for the academic year 2021-2022 are selected as the study sample and Balakrishna et al (2020) questionnaire is adopted and modified to be used as the study tool. The validity and reliability of the study tool have been ascertained by using face validity and the Alpha Cronbach formula respectively. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, weighting means, percentages) are used to find the results. The results indicate that EFL student-teachers' perception of sustainable development is moderate in their perception of sustainable development. Accordingly, suitable recommendations and suggestions are set forward.

Keywords: ecology in language learning, efl pre-service teachers, environmental dimensions, sustainable development in efl.

ادراكٌ معلمي اللغة الإنكليزية لغة أجنبية العراقيين الغير منخرطي في الخدمة للتنمية المسندامة

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التنمية المسندامة (SD) هي التنمية التي تلبي متطلبات الحاضر دون تعريض قدرة الأجيال القادمة للخطر عند فعل الشيء نفسه. من الضروري تعريف طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية بالمصطلحات والتعبيرات الاصطلاحية لهذا التخصص. في الوقت الحاضر ، تم إعطاء الأولوية للتنمية المسندامة والبيئة في كل جانب من جوانب الحياة. نظرًا لأنه لا يمكن الفصل بين الثقافة وتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية أصبحت اللغة الإنجليزية وسيلة الاتصال في الصحة والاقتصاد والتعليم والسياسة ، وبالتالي ، فإن دمج أهداف التنمية المسندامة في تعلم اللغة وتدريسها أمر مهم للغاية. تهدف هذه الدراسة الوصفية الكمية إلى التحقق من ادراك معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية قبل الخدمة للتنمية المسندامة. تم اختيار طالبات السنة الرابعة في "كلية التربية للبنات" للعام الدراسي ٢٠٢١-٢٠٢٢ عينة للدراسة ، وتبني استبيان (Balakrishna et al., 2020) وتعديله لاستخدامه أداة للدراسة. تم التحقق من صدق وثبات أداة الدراسة

باستخدام الصدق الظاهري و الفا كروميخ ، واستخدام الاحصاء الوصفي

(التكرارات ، و الوسط المرجح ، والنسب المئوية) للتوصل للنتائج. تشير النتائج إلى أن ادراك الطلاب- المعلمين للغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية للتنمية المسندامة معتدل. وعليه ، تم وضع التوصيات والاقتراحات المناسبة

الكلمات المفتاحية: علم البيئة في تعلم اللغة ، معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية ، الأبعاد البيئية ، التنمية المسندامة في اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية.

Introduction

Concerns over socioeconomic inequality, climate change, pollution, and the depletion of natural resources first surfaced in the 20th century as a direct result of the immense technical and industrial growth that occurred throughout that century. Concerns such as these gave rise to several ways of talking about development, such as "post-development," "human progress," "sustainability," and "other improvement" (Vanhuist and Beling 2014). Alternative learning perspectives, such as "learning of ecologically knowledge," education for sustainable development (ESD), and "education programs," were spawned as a result of these competing interpretations of "development" (Orr, 1992). ESD is a kind of substitute perspectives on teaching that emphasizes teaching learners to the intricate interrelationships between environmental, social, and economic concerns. In addition to this, it seeks to change the attitudes and actions of pupils about the environment and society.

Many studies deal with teacher education cognitively (Saalh, 2020; Saalh, & Salim, 2020, and Saalh & Esmaeel, 2022), and in personality (Mahdi, 2009). While this study deals with relatively new trends in education and sustainable development. There have been a variety of studies conducted on the subject of incorporating education for sustainable development ideas into higher education. However, this topic is far across the times had been handled in other pictures such as the absurd drama that handled the effect of the industrial revolution on society and in teaching by technology (Saalh & Srayisah, 2017). Many people are interested in research that investigates how students to promote sustainable growth in higher education perceive learning settings available to them. This encompasses how students feel about environmental education as well as sustainable development through education. The studies that the students do on various views and ideas related to sustainability reveal a considerable disparity. In the context of the operations of higher educational institutions, the research investigates the question of how to best incorporate policies for environmentally responsible development into higher education. In recent research, the participation of academic learners in learning processes of continuous improvement has received a significant amount of focus and consideration. (Barron, 2010). In the realm of education for educators themselves, another topic worthy of analysis and discussion is the need for collaborative efforts and actions on the part of educational institutions targeted at accomplishing this objective.

At its inception, the idea of education for sustainable development placed primary emphasis on the students' acquisition of information and abilities about the subject of environmental protection and the relationship that exists between the the environment in which it operates and culture. The education of the public on environmental problems and related topics is the primary focus of many research. Gradually, teaching process for continuous improvement started to concentrate on foreseeing and resolving environmental and social problems. such as academic bullying and how students can overcome the obstacles that are present in their academic environment. (Saalh & Kadhim, 2020). In today's world, an increasing

number of academics and teachers use its concepts as a foundation for instruction in a variety of subjects, including history, mathematics, and foreign languages (Toppo, and Rahman,2020). Learners will have a better grasp of the contemporary world and the many civilizations' goals and requirements if they do an environmental analysis that considers not just environmental factors, but also economical, sociological, and cultural ones of the environment. This new approach to learning was used in the field of Iraqi studies, and it combined video lectures with experiential learning to improve students' communicative activities. The approach focused on scaffolding and social learning (Alsaadi & Mahdi, 2013; Saalh, 2014).

In contemporary literature, language and foreign language instruction have received far less share of attention than other fields of learning, despite their importance to long-term sustainable growth. Language, which is an inherent component of culture and plays a vital part in the formation of human interactions, has the potential to become an essential tool in the fight against global issues and difficulties. A student may gain a variety of skills for developing successful international communication and collaboration by participating in educational programs that focus on the use of foreign languages to promote sustainable development. The understanding of other languages and the awareness of variations in national ideas and behaviors that may be learned via the study of foreign languages are crucial for the sustainable development of the contemporary world, which is characterized by extensive migration movements. An examination of the relevant literature demonstrates that the objectives of sustainable development cannot be achieved without first finding solutions to the challenges that arise in educational settings that include several languages (Tomas et al., 2017).

English's status as a lingua franca and as a worldwide method of communication makes it possible for people of varying cultural backgrounds and racial backgrounds to interact with one another and identify areas of common ground. As a consequence of this, the educational process of teaching English to speakers of other languages lays the groundwork for the long-term growth of global society.

In the process of adopting ESD in universities, the role of educators is of the utmost importance (UNESCO 2005). Educators in the fields of sustainability and ESD have been the focus of a variety of professional development initiatives. One of them is the incorporation of ESD-related material into already-established young instructors courses, in addition to the provision of a separate ESD-specific class. The majority of the attempts to equip teachers to be Individual teacher educators' passions serve as a guiding factor for ecological academics. Within their domains of influence, these educator learners engage with incorporating education for sustainable (Evans, 2019). It has been found that these initiatives improve pre-service faculty members' understanding of environmental problems or help them change their attitudes toward the environment, but it is not clear whether they help build pre-service educators' ability to incorporate ESD in and out of methods of education in universities.

The study tackles the dearth of research in the effects of EFL sustainability education at universities of the teachers' class practices. This research examines the perception of ESD interventions in the classroom practices of EFL pre-service teachers. The particular research topic for this study is:

What do Iraqi EFL pre-service teachers' perceptions of sustainable development?

Sustainable Development - the Concept and Definition

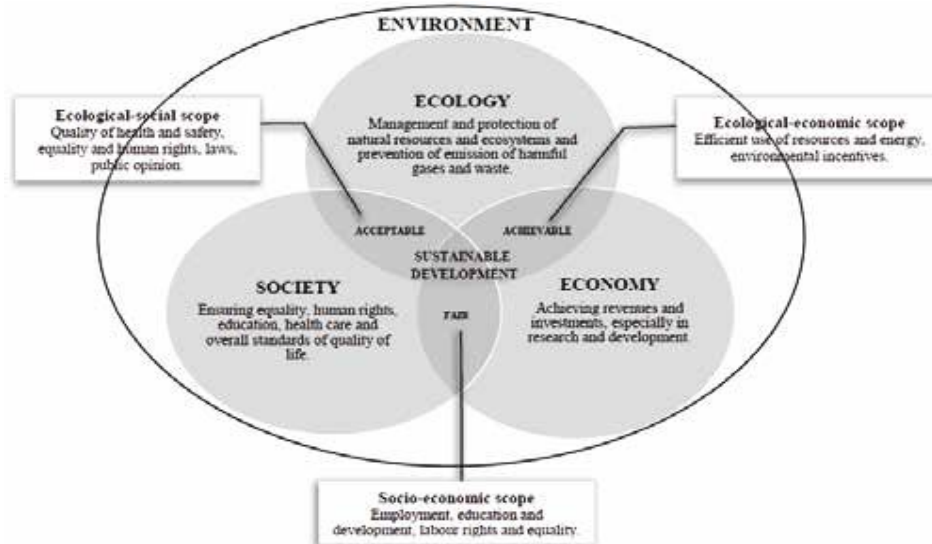
There are various taxonomies for the use of the term "improvement, may be found across the body of published work; nonetheless, the following definitions are highlighted the vast majority of the time: According to Vázquez and Sumner (2013), there are four different perspectives on development 1) Improvement as economic change; 2) Social Development; 3) Politics and Administration; and 4) Advancement as Sustainability Goals. Lele (1991) defined development as a purposeful change process it included establishing goals and dedicating resources to work towards such targets. Development, according to Thomas (2004), describes the favorable changes that society has undergone during time yet still continues today. The strategies, programs, projects, and activities that are carried out by specific institutions, governments, and other governmental and non-governmental organizations are described in Sharpley's (2009: 30) definition of development. Thomas's definition of Practices focus upon this culture that enables that society has undergone and is still undergoing. In light of this, the Human Development Index (HDI), which takes into account a number of categories of sociocultural, economical, ecological, and historical contexts specific places, is often regarded as the most reliable measure of progress in the field of development (Willis, 2005).

The definition of *sustainability* is "the capability of maintaining a thing, result, or process throughout time" (Jenkins, 2009). The overarching concept of sustainability may be conceptualized in a manner that is similar to all aspects of human and commercial endeavors. In addition, it does not deplete the resources that are necessary for capacity to exist.

The teaching of English incorporates sustainable development concepts throughout. The concept "environmental sustainability" first appeared in a study titled "Our Common Future" by the International Commission on Environment and Development in 1987. Consistent economic growth, the maintenance and safeguarding of the natural environment, and the advancement and respect of social and human rights are the three pillars of sustainable progress. The method in question is referred to as the integral or comprehensive approach.

The essential components and subcomponents of every sustainable development program are shown in Figure 1, regardless of the point of reference being used (company, community, region, or country). The aspects of social-ecological, socio-economic, and ecological economic development are represented by the intersections of the circle, which are also known as the pillars of economic development. Additionally, the idea is sometimes depicted as consisting of three pillars (economic growth, environmental preservation, and social advancement), all of which "hold" or

allow sustainable development in concert and in equal measure. Because a fair, livable, and sustainable world can only be shaped in this manner, it is imperative that all three interconnected aspects be sustainable at the same time.



Source: author interpretation according to Elkington, 1994; OECD, 2000; Dréo, 2006; Brooks, 2013.

Fig. 1. Three components of sustainability

The environmental field focuses on how progress in technology will affect the world and people in the long run. The economics subfield is concerned with the effects on regional, national, and global economies. Effects on social life and cultural practices are the focus of research in the social sciences. The following picture provides a useful framework for understanding the interconnected and mutually reinforcing nature of sustainable development's three main pillars: economic growth, environmental protection, and social inclusion. All three sustainability criteria need to be considered when deciding whether or not an action or policy is sustainable. Due to the dynamic nature of the three spheres, sustainable development must be seen as an ongoing process rather than a fixed concept. As a result, sustainable development on both the local and global scales necessitates a multifaceted and methodical approach to addressing these issues.

There are several interpretations of progress and the notion of continuous improvement in the present of other works. It has been proposed by Palfreyman(2014) that all definitions of sustainability may be broken down into five categories: Definitions of sustainability include the following: 1) a condition in which resources are used in a way that ensures humanity's ability to continue producing for the foreseeable future; 2) a condition in which the stock of natural capital does not decline over time; 3) a condition in which resources are used in a way that ensures a steady stream of income or yield; 4) a condition in which resources are used in a way that ensures future generations benefit from their use; 5) a set of definitions

Ecology of Language Learning

A learning ecosystem, according to Barron (2004), is "the available collection of situations, consisting of combinations of events, productive capacity, and connections, found in coordinated virtual or physical locations that give educational process." Each situation consists of a different arrangement of actions, productive capacity, connections, as well as the exchanges that result from them (Barron, 2006: 18). In other words, learning occurs in several contexts at once, and unique learning ecologies evolve in response to each person's interaction with their environment. In addition, students initiate or participate in extracurricular activities outside of the classroom.

Barron (2006: 19) regarded all these learning dynamics as an "individuals' overall learning ecology." She also described Ecology is described as "an expansive, diverse, adaptable system that is composed of variable, interrelated components. One factor that makes ecosystems so potent and adaptive modern environments in variety". Consequently, a process ecosystem is a network of educational institutions and universities, both online and off, that are driven by the interests of individual students and are in a permanent state of flux.

This study's ecological paradigm allows for a systemic investigation of the complexities and dynamics of language acquisition. Specifically, Van Lier (2010,10) said

A system of interrelations between all the components in the context, both at the community scale as well as the psychological and symbolic levels, is what an ecosystem perspective seeks to look at when examining the educational process, the actions and activities of teachers and learners, the multidimensional existence of engagement, and linguistic were using.

The ecological approach may stimulate many different types of study and practice since it is not a single technique or theory but rather a worldview and a style of working. Kramsch (2002) explains the genesis of the ecosystem metaphor as a result of two distinct research methodologies in applied linguistics, namely language acquisition and language socialization: The concept does seem provide a unique approach of pulling combined frameworks from different disciplines to illustrate the complicated relationship under inquiry since it reflects the interrelations among linguistic and the environment as that between components of a biological system.

When used the language acquisition, the ecological framework may emphasize how language emerges from context, how affordances are vital, and how language serves as a mediator in the classroom (Kramsch & Steffensen, 2008). Our ability to "rethink the link between people and diverse learning contexts outside of the classroom" is greatly enhanced by the ecological framework (Kramsch & Steffensen, 2008: 24).

Palfreyman (2014) described the components of constructing a language learning environment as variable 'resources': enabling resources (books, people), which more directly contribute to learning by providing access to learning resources, learning resources (knowledge, motivation), and discursive resources (approaches,

expectations, identities). The latter involves more psychological variables and can influence how learners and teachers understand the situations and internalize the information related to a learning opportunity.

Education and Environment Dimension

a. Natural Resources: People who have an education gain a greater appreciation for the planet's natural resources and are better able to exert pressure on their governments to utilize those resources in a responsible manner. Few countries that are rich in natural resources also make the effort to diversify their economy and their sources of revenue by investing in other businesses. Many academic investigations have shown that economies heavily reliant on natural resources cannot be maintained indefinitely.

Education is crucial because it raises people's levels of understanding about limited supply of natural resources and the requirement for action responsible production (Kramsch & Steffensen, 2008).

b. Ecological Production and Using: According to the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons' 2013 report, education raises public awareness of the need of adopting Ecological Production and Utilization. Reducing one's water, power, and other resource use on a daily basis has obvious implications for modern environmental concerns and may be taught in schools.

Previous Studies

The study of sustainable development is still a new theme that is hardly handled by EFL studies. However, there are some studies that handle these variables.

In their paper, Balakrishna et al. (2020) describe the perspectives and attitudes of Malaysian students regarding sustainable development. The research was conducted with the participation of 154 students from five Malaysian institutions. This study is based on a questionnaire survey that asked participants questions about their attitudes and opinions of sustainable development. Additionally, Chen et al. (2022) identified the desire to converse in English as a foreign language like crucial personal trait that influences the process of learning the target language. To nurture communication skills for environmental sustainability among students to assist them in becoming engaged global citizens, language instructors and educators must comprehend L2 WTC and identify strategies to enhance it. The current research investigates the impact of instructors 148 students from mainland China and 73 students from abroad were compared to determine the effects of teaching methods (TTS) on the L2 WTC(willingness to communicate) of Chinese English language learners. Online surveys on TTS opinions and perceptions as well as identity L2 WTC in and out of the classroom were completed by respondents. Eight of them were also interviewed. According to the findings, there were significant statistically significant differences in TTS across the categories, and WTC was usually low across the board. In the population of Mainland China, TTS was more closely associated with L2 WTC. The opportunities to use English in non-academic settings and the social norms of the host country are two major factors that contribute to the discrepancies. The findings of this

research may shed light on how English should be taught in schools, considering the language's multifaceted nature.

Methods

Design

A quantitative descriptive approach was used for this investigation. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001), the research methodology refers to the comprehensive procedures that a researcher follows before beginning a research project. The goal of obtaining findings via the use of analysis variables is the focus of the quantitative research approach.

Population

Fourth-year student in the Department of English Language/Morning Studies at the College of Education for Women/University of Baghdad serve as the study's sample. Fourth-year students in the Department of English Language/Morning Studies at the College of Education for Women/University of Baghdad serve as the study sample. 175 is the total study population in which 100 students have been selected randomly as study sample.

Instrument

The data for this study was to be obtained through closed questionnaire selected and then modified from (Balakrishna et al., 2020) questionnaire, which assesses the perception level. Each question in 4-point Likert scale, with alternatives 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree), is used by the respondents. This section of the questionnaire measured respondents' perceptions of the three fundamental elements of sustainability: "(1) social, (2) economic, and (3) environmental. In this section of the questionnaire, twelve questions were adjusted to meet the requirements of the research evaluating EFL student-teachers perceptions of social, economic, and environmental sustainability concerns".

Instrument correction method

The values of the alternatives are accordingly in the range (4–1). Finding out the level of student-teacher perception of each item allows for the identification of each item's value in the process of evaluating the results.

1) The scale's least rate, strongly disagree (1), is given to the number 4, followed by

2) 4-12.5-1 (1.2)

1+ 1= 2 (poor perceptual)

3) 2.1 + 1_3 (medium sight)

4) 3.1 + 1_4 (strong awareness) .

Face validity

Validity may be defined as whether or not a measuring instrument accurately measures the characteristic or quality that it was designed to measure. It is also a measurement of how effectively the instrument carries out the purpose for which it was designed (Anastasi and Urbina, 1997).

The members of the jury whose names are included in Table (1) complete the questionnaire to check its validity. The jurors agree that each question on the questionnaire is valid.

Table (1)

The Jury Members' Scientific Qualifications, Names, Specialties, and Places

N	Scientific Qualifications	Name	Specialties, and Places
1.	Prof Dr.	Shatha Alsaadi	Women's Educational College at the Baghdad University in ELT
2.	Asst. prof. Dr.	Hanan Dhia Alsalihi	Women's Educational College at the Baghdad University in ELT
3.	Asst. prof.	Maysaa Rashed	Women's Educational College at the Baghdad University in ELT
4.	Asst. prof.	Narmeen Mohmood	Women's Educational College at the Baghdad University in ELT
5.	Inst. Dr.	Sawsan Soud Aziz	Women's Educational College at the Baghdad University in ELT

Reliability

A measurement is said to be reliable if it produces findings that are consistent and have equal values (Blumberg et al., 2005). It evaluates aspects of a study such as its consistency, accuracy, reproducibility, and reliability (Chakrabarty, 2013). The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire, which was determined to be 0.82 with the use of the Alpha-Cronbach formula, is deemed to be satisfactory.

Statistical tools

The SPSS program determines the weighted values, frequency, and reliability factor.

Results, conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions.

Results and discussions

Table (2)

The Frequency Distributions of the Alternatives, Weighting Means, Percentages, and The perception level

N	Items	Item statement	Highly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Highly agree (4)	Weighting Means	Percentages	The perception level
1	8	Every student shall make the required steps to combat the impacts of climate change.	15	18	33	34	2.86	71.5	Moderate
2	11	The socioeconomic	15	20	32	33	2.83	71	Moderate

		disparities between the wealthy and the poor must be reduced							
3	10	Overconsumption of environmental assets does not endanger the wellbeing of better future in the name of economic development.	18	20	30	32	2.8	70.75	Moderate
4	9	High standards of life should be offered by industrialized nations to their individuals.	18	18	31	33	2.79	69.75	Moderate
5	2	A present generation must make sure the following generation gets today's level of health.	18	19	32	31	2.76	69	Moderate
6	4	Subsequent generations should benefit from a society's socio-culture.	17	21	33	29	2.74	68.5	Moderate
7	12	Unity in corporate activity is crucial for society's development.	18	22	30	30	2.72	68	Moderate
8	5	The ecosystem needs to be protected for both present and future generations.	18	21	34	27	2.7	67.5	Moderate
9	3	In today's world, gender equality is crucial.	20	22	30	28	2.66	66.5	Moderate
10	6	The need to preserve diversity is essential.	22	20	30	28	2.64	66	Moderate
11	1	People must acquire a solid education that imparts the information, abilities, and morals required for a fulfilling life.	19	27	30	24	2.59	64.75	Moderate
12	7	People are in charge of looking after the resources of the environment.	24	21	29	26	2.57	64.25	Moderate

Results

After analyzing the data according to the descriptive statistics, the frequencies, weighting means, and percentages of the items show that: item number (8) states that "Every student shall make the required steps to combat the impacts of climate change.," was recorded as the highest item with weighting mean and percentage (2.86), (71.5), respectively. While item number (7) states that "People are in charge of looking after the resources of the environment" it was recorded as the lowest item in weighting mean and percentage (2.57), (64.25), respectively. The comparison between the two descriptive statistics of the two items noted that there is no difference between the perception of the EFL students of the highest and the lowest ones. Moreover, the student's perception described all items as moderate. To sum up, the EFL students perceived sustainable development moderately.

Comparing the present study findings with the findings of the research conducted by Balakrishna et al. (2020), the respondents had favorable perspectives and attitudes the aspects of sustainability, with the exception of issues with economic and social boundaries, the economic, cultural, and ecological aspects. The Balakrishna et al. (2020) findings showed that undergraduate students at those institutions had been successfully raised with a proper sense of responsibility for sustainability through self sustaining education development at universities of higher education. These findings suggest that educators involved in the teaching of environmental sustainability should focus on the aspects of economics and society.

Conclusion

The weighted mean ranges are poor (1–2), medium (2.1–3), and powerful (3–4). All of the items are therefore medium. In light of this finding, the perception of sustainable development in EFL academic' classes is Moderate.

Recommendations

1. Teacher education programs should put an emphasis on instructional methods that are designed to improve the student teachers' perspectives of environmental growth
2. Programs for the education of teachers should place a greater emphasis on the significance of sustainable development.

Suggestions for Further Studies

1. Exploring the sustainable development issues in textbooks for secondary EFL schools.
2. Researching the impact of sustainable development as teaching strategies on the EFL students' performance.

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