

ENHANCING STUDENTS' ECOLINGUISTIC AWARENESS AS A KEY EDUCATIONAL PRIORITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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XXI ASRDA TALABALAR EKOLINGVISTIK ONGINI OSHIRISH TA'LIMNING DOLZARB VAZIFALARIDAN BIRI SIFATIDA

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ПОВЫШЕНИЕ ЭКОЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКОЙ ГРАМОТНОСТИ УЧАЩИХСЯ КАК ОДНА ИЗ АКТУАЛЬНЫХ ЗАДАЧ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ В XXI ВЕКЕ

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Abstract. This article discusses the improvement of students' ecolinguistic awareness as one of the important tasks in education in the 21st century. Today, climate change, environmental problems and the role of language in these problems are increasing, therefore, improving students' ecolinguistic knowledge is becoming more and more relevant. The need to educate an environmentally conscious and sustainable development-oriented generation is the main task facing the education system. The existing environmental problems in Uzbekistan (Aral Sea tragedy, water shortage, land degradation, etc.) are reflected in ecology and environmental sciences, but it is a matter of concern that they are not sufficiently covered in the language education process and that students do not sufficiently understand the linguistic aspects of environmental problems. At the same time, the article proposes introducing an ecolinguistic approach to foreign language lessons, integrating the principles of "green" pedagogy into educational programs, and involving students in global issues such as environmental justice and the climate crisis through a critical approach. Developing students' environmental awareness through language teaching enhances their critical thinking, civic responsibility, global awareness, and environmental literacy. In particular, this process can be effectively implemented through pedagogical methods consistent with the CEFR system and the Sustainable Development Goals. In conclusion, it can be said

that the integration of ecolinguistics and “green” pedagogy into foreign language lessons is an innovative approach based on understanding the connection between environmental sustainability, language, and culture, and is an important tool in preparing students for building a sustainable and just future.

Keywords: ecolinguistics; “green” pedagogy; ecological awareness; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); ecolinguistic approach.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada XXI asrda talabalarining ekolingvistik ongini oshirish ta’limning muhim vazifalaridan biri sifatida ko’rib chiqilgan. Bugungi kunda iqlim o’zgarishi, ekologik muammolar va tilning ushbu muammolarni yoritishdagi roli tobora ortib bormoqda, shuning uchun ham talabalarining ekolingvistik bilimini oshirish dolzarblik kasb etadi. Ekologik ongli va barqaror rivojlanishga yo’naltirilgan avlodni tarbiyalash zarurati ta’lim tizimi oldida turgan asosiy vazifadir. O’zbekistonda mavjud ekologik muammolar (Orol fojiasi, suv tanqisligi, yer degradatsiyasi va boshqalar) atrof-muhitga oid fanlarda o’z aksini topgan, ammo til ta’limi jarayonida yetarlicha yoritilmayotgani va talabalar ekologik muammolarning lingvistik jihatlarini yetarlicha anglamasligi tashvishlanarli holatdir. Shu bilan birga, maqolada xorijiy til darslariga ekolingvistik yondashuvni kiritish, “yashil” pedagogika tamoyillarini ta’lim dasturlariga integratsiya qilish va talabalarni ekologik adolat, iqlim inqirozi kabi global masalalarga tanqidiy yondashuv orqali jalb etish taklif etilgan. Talabalarining ekologik ongini til o’qitish orqali rivojlantirish ularning tanqidiy fikrlash, fuqarolik mas’uliyati, global xabardorlik va ekologik savodxonligini oshiradi. Xususan, CEFR tizimi va “Barqaror rivojlanish maqsadlari”ga mos pedagogik usullar orqali bu jarayon samarali amalga oshirilishi mumkin. Xulosa o’rinda aytish mumkinki, ekolingvistika va “yashil” pedagogikani xorijiy til darslariga integratsiya qilish — ekologik barqarorlik, til va madaniyat o’rtasidagi bog’liqlikni tushunishga asoslangan innovatsion yondashuv bo’lib, talabalarni barqaror va adolatli kelajak qurishga tayyorlashda muhim vosita hisoblanadi.

Kalit so’zlar: ekolingvistika; “yashil” pedagogika; ekologik xabardorlik; Barqaror rivojlanish maqsadlari (BRM); ekolingvistik yondashuv.

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается повышение эколингвистического уровня знаний учащихся как одна из важных задач в XXI веке. Необходимость воспитания экологически сознательного и ориентированного на устойчивое развитие поколения является основной задачей, стоящей перед системой образования. Существующие экологические проблемы в Узбекистане (трагедия Аральского моря, нехватка воды, деградация земель и т. д.) отражены в экологических науках, но вызывает беспокойство то, что они недостаточно освещены в процессе языкового образования и что учащиеся недостаточно понимают лингвистические аспекты экологических проблем. В то же время в статье предлагается внедрение эколингвистического подхода на уроках иностранного языка, интеграция принципов зеленой педагогики в образовательные программы, вовлечение учащихся в глобальные проблемы, такие как экологическая справедливость и климатический кризис, посредством критического подхода. Развитие экологической осведомленности учащихся посредством обучения языку повышает их критическое мышление, гражданскую ответственность, глобальную осведомленность и экологическую грамотность. В частности,

этот процесс может быть эффективно реализован с помощью педагогических методов, соответствующих системе CEFR и Целям устойчивого развития. Интеграция эколоингвистики и зеленой педагогики в уроки иностранного языка является инновационным подходом, основанным на понимании связи между экологической устойчивостью, языком и культурой, и является важным инструментом в подготовке учащихся к построению устойчивого и справедливого будущего.

Ключевые слова: эколоингвистика; зеленая педагогика; экологическое сознание; Цели устойчивого развития (ЦУР); эколоингвистический подход.

Introduction

In Uzbekistan, several significant initiatives are being undertaken in the 21st century to enhance students' eco-linguistic awareness, promote "green" pedagogy, and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These areas are aimed at developing environmental awareness in the education system and society, transitioning to a "green" economy, and protecting the environment. Nevertheless, today Uzbekistan faces a number of serious environmental problems that directly affect the country's economy, population health, and social stability. Approximately 80 percent of the country's water resources originate from outside its borders, and the risk of water shortages is escalating due to climate change. Environmental problems include land degradation, soil salinization, decreased water quality, wind and water erosion, and reduced crop yields. The drying up of the Aral Sea demonstrates the need for sustainable water management and rational use of resources [UNDP, [Sobirova 2018].

The drying up of the Aral Sea is recognized as one of the largest environmental disasters in the world. In the Aral Sea region, salinity has increased, soil erosion has increased, and dust and salts rising into the air have a negative impact on the health of the population. Dust particles can reach distances of hundreds of kilometers. [Permanent Mission of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the United Nations 2017].

We believe that it is the supreme duty of every citizen to prevent and mitigate the consequences of the above-mentioned ecological and climate change problems as much as possible. It is appropriate that increasing students' ecological awareness should not only be carried out in ecology or environmental lessons, but should also have its place and importance in the teaching of each subject. Including, it is urgent to increase students' ecological awareness and improve ecolinguistic competencies in foreign language classes.

Researchers who have been involved in the field of ecolinguistics since its early days, Jörgen Chr. Bang and Jörgen Doer, defined ecolinguistics in 1993 as follows: "Ecolinguistics is a branch of critical, applied linguistics concerned with the ways in which language and linguistics participate in the ecological crisis. Ecolinguistics is a critical theory of language/linguistics that is both biased and objective. Language and ecolinguistics are part of culture, social formation, and practice;

therefore, language and linguistics are organized around the fundamental contradictions of our social practice" [Jørgen n.d.].

A brief look at the history of the origin of the term "ecolinguistics" is explained in The Routledge Handbook of Ecolinguistics as follows: (See Figure 1) [Fill & Penz 2018].

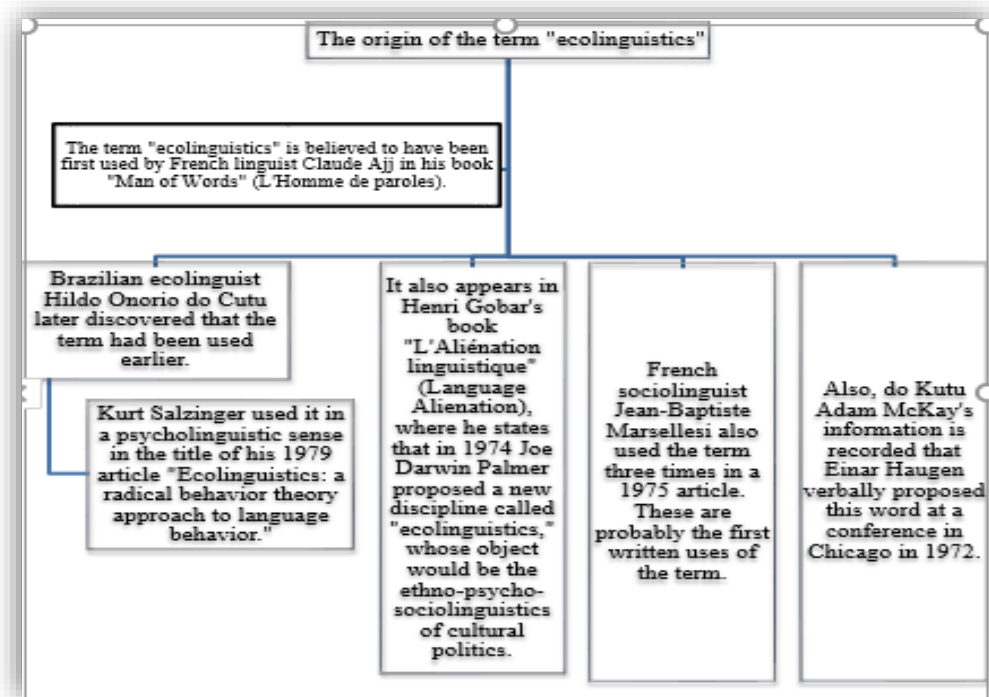


Figure 1. History of the development of the term ecolinguistics

Ecolinguistics, or ecological linguistics, emerged as a new direction in linguistics in the 1990s. It expanded the concept of sociolinguistics to study language not only in relation to its social environment, but also to nature, other living things, and the physical environment.

Main part

Michael Halliday's 1990 article "New ways of Meaning: the challenge to applied linguistics" is widely regarded as the seminal work that prompted linguists to consider the ecological context and implications of language. Ecolinguistics has developed in a variety of directions since Halliday's initial remarks, using a variety of linguistic tools to study language in its ecological context. In particular, Halliday's call was to focus linguistics on the problems and concerns of the 21st century, in particular on environmental issues. The field of ecolinguistics has developed considerably since Halliday's initial remarks, one of the most recent developments being the application of ecolinguistics to Education for Sustainability [Fill 1996].

Steffensen states that the 2014 report by Steffensen and Fill is probably the most influential and most cited journal article in the field of ecolinguistics. At the same time, Steffensen notes that the field has

undergone changes in the last decade, such as the establishment of the International Association of Ecolinguists, the publication of new book series, and the holding of regular conferences, and that the number of scientific papers on ecolinguistic topics has more than quadrupled, according to the results of a Scopus search conducted in April 2024, while 281 ecolinguistic publications were published in 1987–2013, this number has increased to 1175 in 2014–2023 [Steffensen 2024]. This indicates that the field has undergone significant development over the past decade and has garnered the attention of scholars.

According to Skutnabb-Kangas and Harmon, Krauss was the first to show, using numbers, that 50 percent, or even 90 percent, of the world's languages could “become extinct” by 2100. Krauss's numerical approach was simple, but two papers by Harmon, published a few years later, took the idea further. They were the first to (1) group the world's languages by the number of native speakers, finding that most languages have fewer than 10,000 speakers, and (2) systematically calculate how linguistic and biological diversity is distributed across the globe [Skutnabb-Kangas & Harmon 2018].

Stibbe defines ecolinguistics as the scientific field that studies the relationship and diversity of language, analyzing the connections between language and the environment. The term is used in a variety of fields, from the study of texts to identifying the connections between local languages and the environment. Ecolinguistics, in conjunction with the broader ecological humanities, views language as part of ecology, which describes the interactions between humans, other organisms, and the environment. Language is an integral part of ecology because it is a primary means of human interaction. Language is seen as part of ecology because it is a primary means of human interaction, just as animals use sounds and gestures to communicate, or as the messages that trees send to each other through their mycorrhizal networks. Furthermore, the ‘eco’ component of ecolinguistics is concerned with the life-sustaining interactions between humans, other organisms, and the physical environment, and with normative orientations aimed at maintaining the well-being of life [Stibbe 2021].

Usama and Tarai, based on Stibbe's seminal work, argue that ecolinguistics research shows that language plays a crucial role in shaping the relationship between humans and nature. Stibbe argues that through language learning, we can develop more sustainable relationships with our environment by critically examining the narratives that underpin our ecological behaviors and beliefs. This perspective has subsequently provided the basis for empirical research examining the practical application of ecolinguistic principles in educational settings [Usama & Tarai 2024].

The International Association for Ecolinguistics defines ecolinguistics as follows: “The study of ecolinguistics focuses on the function of language in the relationships between humans, other animals, and nature” (see Figure 2) [The International Ecolinguistics Association. <https://www.ecolinguistics-association.org/>].

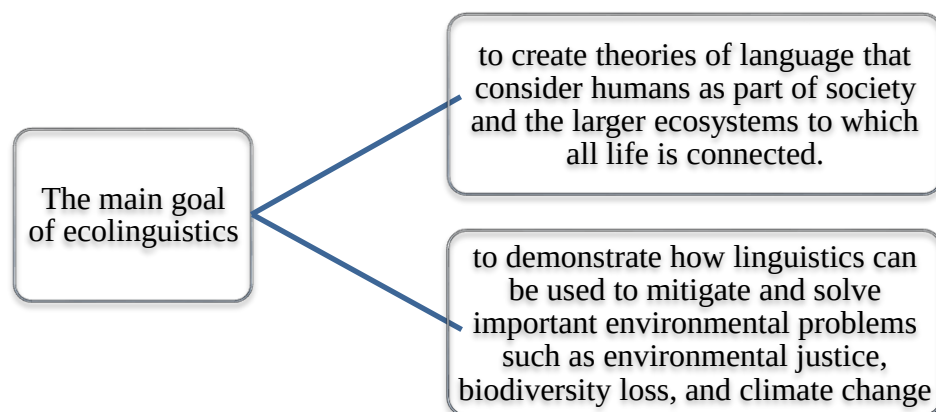


Figure 2. The main goal of ecolinguistics

Thus, the "eco" in ecolinguistics and ecology literally refers to the interaction between living things, including humans, and their natural environment. In addition, the term "ecolinguistics" has been used figuratively to refer to "ecology" without taking into account the requirements of other species or the natural environment, such as "linguistic ecology", "communication ecology" or "learning ecology".

Pilaeva Ye. M. states that several possible directions for the development of ecolinguistics can be distinguished:

- linguistic diversity (causes, functions, consequences);
- preservation of endangered and small languages;
- the relationship between cultural and biological diversity;
- search for ecological and non-ecological elements in the grammar of languages;
- analysis of texts that affect environmental problems;
- teaching environmental literacy [Pilayeva 2011].

In this article, the focus is on the issues of how linguistics can be used to mitigate and solve important environmental problems, such as environmental justice, biodiversity loss, and climate change, which are among the current goals of ecolinguistics.

In some scientific sources, the issue of using linguistics to achieve environmental justice, mitigate and address urgent environmental problems such as biodiversity loss and climate change, as one of the goals of ecolinguistics, is sometimes expressed by the term "green" pedagogy. We will discuss some of them below.

According to Riegerova, the growing awareness of the importance of environmental problems has led to an increased focus on "green" issues. In fact, environmental education has become an integral component of curricula in educational institutions worldwide, and teachers incorporate environmental topics into their courses at all subject levels and grade levels [Riegerova 2011]. English teachers also play an important role in developing and improving such skills.

Drašković believes that green skills, such as sustainable resource management, energy efficiency analysis, and renewable energy, are the foundation for the transition to an environmentally sustainable economy

and are key to unlocking the human potential to drive this change. More opportunities are needed for individuals with green skills, as well as upskilling workers who currently lack these skills. Future generations also need to be equipped with green skills as a core part of their skill set [Drašković 2024].

Yıldırım M. and Aytan T. explain that "The concept of "green" pedagogy is an educational approach that focuses on sustainability and environmental awareness. This approach is considered a revolutionary, innovative and modern method in the field of language teaching due to its unique characteristics. "Green" pedagogy combines environmental awareness with language skills and aims to develop not only the linguistic potential of language learners, but also to form the knowledge, attitudes, worldview and actions necessary to solve the environmental crises they face today [Yıldırım & Aytan 2025].

According to R. Alexander, the integration of ecolinguistics into the education system, particularly in English language education, enables a deeper understanding and focus on sustainability issues. By incorporating ecolinguistic approaches into the curriculum, teachers can encourage students to critically analyze linguistic expressions of the environment and consider the impact of their language use on environmental awareness. This approach to education is consistent with the broader goals of UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which aims to enable learners to make informed decisions and take responsible actions for ecological integrity, economic viability and a just society [Alexander 2017] [UNESCO 2017].

What is climate justice? There are many definitions, but at its core, climate justice emphasizes that environmental change is not just a natural problem, but also a social and political one. Unfortunately, not everyone contributes equally to environmental and climate problems, and their consequences are not equally shared. While environmental change affects everyone, it affects the poorest people, women, and other disadvantaged groups first and hardest. Recognizing this disparity and taking action to protect the environment while challenging racism, inequality, and prejudice is what climate justice is all about [Kind 2023].

Language teachers play a critical role in ensuring that students engage with the climate crisis and climate justice.

Several strands of the climate justice divide the concept into key areas that help address the multidimensional complexity of the problem:

- social, racial, and environmental justice;
- natural climate action;
- community resilience and adaptation;
- natural climate solutions;
- engaging climate education.

It is the latter that is particularly useful for language teachers to engage in climate education, namely by delving deeper into the reasons why we need to consume less, why we need to change, reduce, and generally rethink our lifestyles.

The Center for Climate Justice points out: "We need education that is not just about climate science, but also about the interconnectedness of climate

change with a range of other social, racial, and environmental issues that shape our daily experiences" [Kind 2023].

There are deep historical connections between the inequalities people experience and the use of language, particularly English, and how it has been used to promote values that are often aspirational and unstable.

According to Vaselevska and Kivora, working with environmental issues and terms not only increases focus, but also significantly reduces the tension and fear that comes with foreign languages. This fear manifests itself in the sense of discomfort, tension, and uncertainty that people experience when they have to speak, read, or write in English, or when they have to understand English speakers. The authors also emphasized that not every lesson needs to focus exclusively on the environment, but that environmental education should be a permanent part of the curriculum, using communicative approaches such as task-based and content-based teaching that prioritize meaningful communication [Vaselevska & Kivora 2013].

Developing students' understanding of climate justice, the cause-and-effect relationships that affect people around the world, and raising awareness about climate justice is one aspect of mitigating the consequences of environmental problems in foreign language classes. However, this task also requires working together to change students' attitudes towards climate justice in other subjects, such as geography, science, and history. Therefore, improving students' environmental knowledge not only in ecology but also in foreign language classes is one of the highest tasks of every teacher.

Why is ecolinguistics important in education?

Teachers play a critical role in guiding students' understanding of global issues, challenges, and climate justice. By helping students understand the interconnectedness of language, culture, and social issues in the classroom, teachers can facilitate a deeper understanding of the interrelationships between language, culture, and social issues. Language lessons are rich context programs for learning about climate justice because they include exploration of natural settings, conversations about cultures, and worldviews [García & Wei 2014].

According to Susan Toth, environmental education involves connecting people with their natural and built environments, asking questions about problems, and providing practical assistance in solving them. This type of education is effective in the classroom, but also outside, in everyday life, and is beneficial for young people, teachers, and entire communities. The reason is that it stimulates students' imagination, develops critical and creative thinking, facilitates interdisciplinary learning, encourages healthy lifestyles, and strengthens teamwork, it fosters respect for nature and environmental awareness in children. Susan cites 10 practical benefits of environmental education:

- Students become more enthusiastic and creative;
- Learning goes beyond the classroom;
- Critical and creative thinking is developed;
- Tolerance is developed;
- Creates a foundation for multidisciplinary teaching;

- Fear of nature is reduced;
- Healthy lifestyles are supported;
- Community participation is increased;
- Responsible environmental actions are encouraged;
- Students and teachers become empowered and active [Toth 2025].

Foreign language classes play an important role in developing ecological awareness and ecolinguistic competencies of language learners, Byram emphasizes, because language teaching is not limited to learning grammar and vocabulary, but also includes developing the skills necessary for understanding culture and perceiving different perspectives [Byram 1997].

Green pedagogy is an approach to education based on the principles of environmental protection and sustainable development, which aims to develop critical thinking, ethical responsibility and practical skills in students by incorporating environmental issues into the curriculum. This approach is consistent with the principles of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and is also supported by UNESCO. Green pedagogy has two main goals: to develop language skills and to increase environmental literacy. This approach allows students to not only learn the language, but also to gain a deeper understanding of global environmental issues through topics related to climate change, renewable energy and sustainable lifestyles. Green pedagogy also encourages students to analyze their own roles critically and inspires them to take positive, practical actions to protect the environment.

According to Mete, creative solutions to environmental problems are important and English language learners should be actively involved in the process of solving these problems. After reading a text about an environmental problem, English language learners can suggest original ways to solve the problem in a group work activity, they can conduct research on the topic and prepare a presentation on how to solve the problem. It is noted that, because language teachers need additional time to prepare for the topics, little research has been conducted on the use of taxonomy in increasing environmental literacy and developing skills in critical evaluation of environmental texts. If taxonomy is used within the framework of environmental education, it can help other language teachers create activities that are appropriate for content-appropriate strategies [Mete 2018].

According to P. Uma, the role of using sustainability ideas in teaching English is very important. The introduction of environmental sustainability principles into English language education is distinguished by several important aspects:

- Formation of ecological thinking: By including sustainability topics in English lessons, students will gain a broader understanding of current issues such as climate change, environmental pollution and depletion of natural resources, which will make them responsible individuals who are not indifferent to environmental problems.
- Development of life skills: Through the use of sustainability ideas in lessons, students will acquire practical skills such as critical thinking,

problem solving and adaptation to different situations, which will prepare them to be active participants in environmental protection.

- **Interdisciplinary approach:** By integrating sustainability with English, students are not only given a broader understanding of the language, but also of ecology, sustainable development, and society. This integration helps to deepen their understanding of the connections between different fields.

- **Encourage creative and critical thinking:** Students develop creative thinking by deeply analyzing environmental problems, understanding their causes and consequences, and proposing innovative solutions.

- **Understand cultural diversity:** Students develop empathy and cultural tolerance by learning about the responses to environmental problems and sustainability strategies of different cultures around the world.

- **Prepare for the future:** Incorporating sustainability approaches into English language teaching provides students with the knowledge and skills needed to understand and address contemporary environmental issues, preparing them to build a sustainable future.

In short, integrating sustainability ideas into English language teaching enhances students' environmental literacy, develops critical and creative thinking, educates them in the spirit of global citizenship, and encourages them to contribute to positive change in society [Uma 2024].

It is emphasized that by integrating sustainability ideas into the educational process, it is possible to prepare students to solve environmental, economic, and social problems, develop critical thinking, innovative approaches, and leadership skills. Foreign language education is an important tool in this regard, as it allows for the formation of global awareness, intercultural competence and environmental responsibility. It also states that "language is not only a means of communication, but also an essential, inclusive, functional and culturally-related component of sustainable education. It is through language that individuals and societies learn, collaborate and act responsibly towards a sustainable world. In this sense, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) provides a flexible framework that allows for the integration of sustainability issues into education. It enables foreign language learners to develop the language skills and critical thinking needed to address emerging global challenges. The flexibility of the CEFR allows teachers to integrate sustainability themes into language teaching, equipping learners with the linguistic and cultural skills needed to address global challenges. This enables learners to acquire the linguistic and cultural skills needed to address global challenges. UNESCO's 2024 report also specifically recognizes the role of sustainability topics in language teaching in developing critical thinking and environmental awareness [Yıldırım & Aytan 2025].

Conde and Sanchez explain that incorporating green pedagogy into the curriculum involves more than simply "adding" environmental issues to existing materials. Greening the curriculum involves systematically integrating the intellectual and methodological principles of green pedagogy into the curriculum. They argue that "Integrating environmental education into school life requires a coordinated approach on various

fronts to achieve sustainable development within the school itself. The basic principle is that environmental management, greening the curriculum, the type of organization, and the relationships between members of the learning community should be consistent with the environmental education being promoted. The entire learning community of the school should be involved in achieving a comprehensive commitment" [Conde & Sanchez 2010].

Improving students' ecolinguistic competences, increasing their knowledge of climate justice, and implementing climate justice in foreign language classes can pose some challenges. Some students or parents may believe that language learning should only focus on language skills. Others may view climate change discussions as a political issue. To overcome these challenges, teachers should emphasize the educational value of discussing global issues in linguistic and cultural terms. Presenting climate justice not only as an ecological or political issue, but also as an issue of human rights, justice, and compassion, can help to focus attention on the universal aspects of the problem [Kramsch 2014; Marshall 2015; Osler & Starkey 2018].

Conclusion

Based on the above considerations, we will give several reasons why it is important to increase students' ecolinguistic awareness in the 21st century.

The scope and relevance of global environmental problems: Global environmental problems such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, and resource depletion are becoming increasingly urgent. The solution to these problems depends not only on technological innovations, but also on the development of people's ecological consciousness. Students with ecological awareness understand these problems and actively participate in their solution.

The connection between language and ecology: Language is not only a means of communication, but also a force that shapes people's worldview, values, and behavior. In order to talk about environmental problems, analyze them, and discuss solutions, students must have ecolinguistic awareness. Ecolinguistic awareness is the understanding of the connection between language and environmental problems and the ability to influence the environment through language.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals: Raising an environmentally conscious generation is essential to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Students with eco-consciousness promote sustainable development ideas, support environmentally friendly technologies, and are environmentally responsible.

Developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills: Eco-consciousness helps students develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and problem-solving skills. Because environmental problems are multifaceted and complex, solving them requires students to analyze different perspectives, draw conclusions based on evidence, and propose effective solutions.

Increasing civic responsibility: Ecolinguistic awareness helps to increase civic responsibility in students. Students with ecolinguistic awareness are more likely to be sensitive to environmental damage, join environmental organizations, and participate in projects aimed at protecting the environment.

Language classes can not only increase students' ecolinguistic competences and awareness of climate justice issues, but also play a crucial role. Teachers can provide students with the skills they need to think critically about the world, develop empathy for others, and communicate successfully across cultural boundaries, helping future generations to advocate for a more just and sustainable future.

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