

Environmental Concerns and English Language Teaching in Saudi Context: Perceptions and Practices

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Abstract—The present study aims to analyze the English language teachers' perceptions and practices in Saudi Arabia from the perspective of environmental education. The drive is firstly to record and scrutinize teachers' perceptions regarding the incorporation of environmental education as part of ELT. Secondly, it explores whether or not they integrate environmental concerns into their teaching materials and practices. For this purpose, mixed-method research was used using a questionnaire and a focus group interview as tools of the study. The findings reveal not-up-to-par responses with respect to the attitudes of ELT teachers toward the integration of environmental education in the ELT curriculum. Moreover, their current practices also lack such focus in their classrooms though they apprehend its significance in light of contemporary environmental concerns. The study suggests that this needs to be focused on a preliminary basis by the concerned stakeholders to educate and equip the ELT teachers for the purpose.

Index Terms—environmental education, English language teaching, teachers' perspectives, focus group interview

I. INTRODUCTION

“Little we see in Nature that is ours;

We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!” (Wordsworth, 1965, p. 72).

While Wordsworth wrote these lines in the nineteenth century, he was hardly aware of the inbound disastrous effects of the insensitive attitudes of humans towards nature, where the consequences were observable, particularly during the twenty-first century. In fact, environmental crises are some of the biggest dilemmas of the present-day world that have caused treacherous effects on the ecosystem through abysmal climate change, extreme weather conditions, intensifying global warming, and often solemn geological calamities. Further, this detrimental impact on the ecosystem has negatively influenced all forms of life, from humans to plant kingdoms. Different programs and projects have been launched at individual, organizational, national, and international levels to lessen these pejorative impacts; raising awareness is also one of them. For the said reason, the philosophy of better and greener education has become a potent aspect of educational systems throughout the world. From United Nations to local communities, education has been granted the prestige of being a persuasive gadget for bringing a positive change in the environment. Putri (2018) quotes UNESCO's (2005) goals for sustainable education to favor environmental education as an imperative part of the contemporary education system around the world. In addition, United Nations' agenda for sustainability (2015) is primarily concerned with environmental sustainability as one of the keys to a sustainable future by 2030 and ponders education as a vehicle to endorse it. According to the UN general assembly resolution 72/222 held in 2017 (Education for Sustainable Development: A Roadmap, 2020), education is a key enabler to achieving all the desired sustainability goals including environmental sustainability. Thus, environmental education is the need of the time.

Environmental education is about enlightening the youth concerning the significance of the environment together with what actions, strategies, and policies can help to improve our natural surroundings. It aids us to comprehend our environment and how our activities can influence it positively or negatively. By understanding the consequences of our actions, we can make better, more sustainable choices for ourselves and our planet. According to Nkwetisama (2011), the ability to think and act green is what education should be about to tackle ecological complications. Crim et al. (2008) narrate that the education for environmental sustainability given to children today “will have a great impact on the future quality of life for generations to come” (p. 6). It is contended that ecological concerns should be focused on through all channels of education including language learning.

Li (2013) suggests that language learning is also a key field where students can be equipped with environmental education. Babcook (1993) states that effective language learning includes both the “learning of the micro and macro skills acquired into appropriate expressions of communication; and, environmental issues are rich subject matters of communication” (quoted in Nkwetisama, 2011, p. 112). Bhusal (2021) comments that the integration of environmental education into language teaching is crucial as language learning not only demands the students to use a language but to use it for functional purposes. Thus, the incorporation of environmental concerns in English language teaching, in theory, and practice, can produce not only better language users but also informed critical thinkers. Tang (2009) stresses

that through the incorporation of environmental education into EFL/ESL classrooms, students get a better understanding of global ecological crises and thus can be involved in the process of improvement. Nkwetisama (2021) comments that English language teaching is an apt field to include environmental concerns to produce problem solvers as these ecological issues are the prime concern of human survival at the moment. Al-Jamal and Al-Omari (2014) consider that English language teaching should not only be focused on improving linguistic, and socio-cultural competence but also should focus to make the learners aware of crucial global issues like ecological crises.

Considering the context of the present study, i.e. Saudi Arabia, it is commendable that many beneficial policies have been documented to protect the environment. Vision 2030, Saudi Green Initiative, and many other inspiring policy documents in the Kingdom have emphasized the need to focus the environmental concerns with priorities. Hameed et al. (2021) report that SGI is a kind of game changer for the Kingdom to achieve environmental sustainability goals, which will be fruitful not only for the local but also for the global region. The Saudi Vision (2030) also considers environmental education substantial to realize its goals (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020). The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia has also enlisted environmental protection as an important sustainable goal. According to a report by Arab Forum for Environment and Development (2019), there are a great number of academic programs in GCC countries including Saudi Arabia that focus the environmental education through various channels. As an essential part of the Green Initiative “to spread environmental knowledge in Saudi Arabia, the General Authority of Meteorology and Environmental Protection (GAMEP) launched a program to promote environmental education in pre-university educational institutions in 2008” (Al-Khouli, 2019, p. 126). This program, named “My Environment, My Life”, aims to promote awareness as well as practical skills to protect the environment through education (Al-Khouli, 2019). Furthermore, the Ministry of Education (Saudi Arabia) has also identified environment-related education as an important goal of learning (2021); the following sustainable goals are related to environmental education: “Increasing intellectual and scientific production to offset natural resource consumption; Conserving the environment and natural resources to ensure their availability for future generations, including climate change management and tackling natural environment decline” (Ministry of Education, 2021).

However, contemporary research believes that such education cannot be detached from other learning materials moreover science is not the only subject that can assist in this process. Many researchers argue that environmental education can be integrated into the English language learning/ teaching process as it is a global language that has deep connections with society's beliefs and practices (Tang, 2009; Bowden, 2010; Zygmunt, 2016; Nkwetisama, 2021). In this regard, an English language teaching portal can be an effective tool to create awareness of ecological problems. The question is, however, how far the current English language teaching curriculum and practices in the Saudi context contribute to environmental education. This would be explored in the present research. The research aims:

- To explore the English language teachers' practices of creating ecological awareness through textual and non-textual materials and methods
- To record the EL teachers' perceptions regarding environmental education in the ELT classrooms
- To provide valuable suggestions

The study is significant to evaluate the current ELT practices and to further suggest the ways environmental education can be promoted in the Kingdom, in line with UN sustainable development goals (2015- environmental sustainability), Paris Agreement on climate change (2015), Vision 2030, and Saudi Green Initiative (2021). The research is further significant in multiple ways. Firstly, it will probe deeply into the English language teaching system in the Kingdom to examine the materials and methods, through which environmental awareness is made part of the education system. Secondly, it would provide suggestions on how to address the gap (if present) in contemporary educational policies. Thirdly, it would recommend useful practices that can be implemented to create awareness of the various current ecological problems like climate change, global warming, etc. Finally, the suggestions provided can aid the Kingdom to achieve its green goals efficiently in line with UN sustainable development goals (2015).

In general, the study aims to focus on community awareness of environmental issues, and activities through English language teaching.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Education is not just a tool for filling learners with static facts and figures but to equip them with skills and strategies desirable to resolve twenty-first-century complications. Thus, it is imperious for them to be aware of the ecological issues and to ponder probable solutions, as it is one of the paramount issues that the human race is facing at present. No doubt, the anthropocentric attitudes of humans eventually have caused the world to face such climatic calamities, where survival has become a challenge. Thus, the need of the time is to prepare our future generations ready to handle this hurdle and education is the aptest for the purpose. Environmental education, as discussed above is a learning process that facilitates the learners to understand the significance of environment and environment-friendly activities. In addition, it assists to create awareness among the communities regarding what can be done to protect our natural habitat along with the other living species. The concept of environmental education can be based on the theories of social constructivism and transformative learning. The philosophy of social constructivism holds that knowledge is constructed socially through interactions between people and the environment. Santorck (2001) opines that learners learn well when they construct the knowledge themselves; thus by creating knowledge about the environment they

construct reality. Morin (2002; cited in Giron et al., 2012) suggests that environmental education when connected with the constructivist approach establishes a paradigm in which learners can be assisted to rebuild the ways humans think and act toward nature. In addition, considering environmental crises “as a matter of knowledge” (Giron et al., 2012, p. 142), it can be the knowledge only that needs to be transformed. This is what links environmental education to the underpinnings of transformative learning. At the core of Transformative learning theory lies self-study with critical reflection and appraisal of experiences, coupled with the interpretation and re-interpretation of these experiences (Cimen & Yilmaz, 2014). Cimen and Yilmaz (2014) further relate the transformative notion to environmental education as they stress that transformative philosophy holds the idea that people's attributes can be changed and their views on life and experiences can also be re-framed. Thus, they argue that a shift of this kind is thought to possibly lead to the hope of environmental recovery by transforming people's attitudes, dogmas, knowledge, conduct, and mindset toward the environment (Cimen & Yilmaz, 2014).

The present study links environmental education with the domain of English language teaching (ELT), thus it has to connect theories of constructivist and transformative learning with language teaching/learning. Kwee (2021) suggests that bringing education for sustainable development (where environmental education is a significant part) into the curriculum of English teaching is a reassurance of the transformative learning process. He has not precisely connected it to any theoretical stance however the ideas used to connect environmental education with ELT primarily encourage the concept of transformative learning. Moreover, when Fuente (2022) cites Pradanos (2015) “making an effort to learn to unlearn” (p. 3) to claim that connecting sustainability education (including environmental sustainability) to English classrooms is an act of construction, can be easily considered as evidence to constructivist approach. Bowden's statement: “ELT teachers and learners need to engage with the wider society in exploring, developing and manifesting sustainability values, enabling them to act as agents for change” (2010, p. 21) also endorses the fact that the transformative learning model can easily bridge the theoretical gap between two domains. However, In this regard, Bhusal (2021) comes up with an experiential learning theory that believes in learning by doing which means learners learn new things by getting experience or by doing new things. He explains that English language teachers can design activities and tasks that can be based on environmental topics and thus will help the learners to experience the relevant knowledge. The outcome can be again the transformation of old knowledge about the environment or the construction of new knowledge about the environment. Thus, it can be argued that all three theories can be used to connect ELT with environmental education. The connection can be presented as follows:

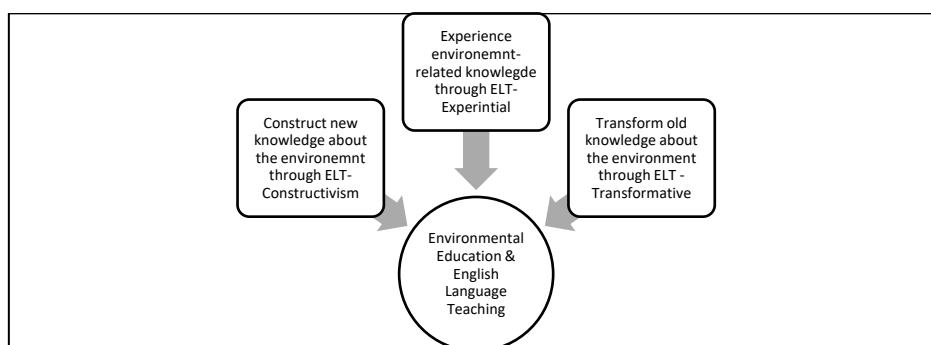


Figure 1. Theoretical Paradigm to Connect ELT With Environmental Education (Own Source)

In the teaching-learning process, teachers are one of the central figures that can have deep impacts on the whole scholastic progression. Said et al. (2003) comment that “throughout the course of formal education, teachers play a vital role in shaping the attitudes of children” (p. 306). So when ELT is connected with environmental education, it is the teachers who get an important standing to promote or demote the required ecological awareness. For this purpose, their knowledge, beliefs, perceptions, actions, practices everything matter. Zachariou et al. (2017) argue that the environmental attitudes of the teachers are directly connected to their actions and decisions to participate in environmental instruction. They further assert that for this purpose the teachers must have sufficient knowledge as well about the environmental issues, that should be provided to them during the training programs (Zachariou et al., 2017). UNESCO (2005) also considers the teachers' role as pivotal to promoting education for sustainable development, where environmental concerns are also a part. It can be concluded that once they have enough knowledge and a positive attitude toward ecological concerns, it would be reflected in their teaching practices. In relation to ELT, Fuente (2022) has identified several methodologies like content-based instruction, task-based language teaching, community language learning, etc. that can be effectively used by English language teachers to inculcate environmental education into their curriculum and practices. He asserts that in ELT classrooms “pedagogically, the curriculum needs to be informed by constructivist approaches to learning—pedagogies like problem-solving or community engagement that emphasize collaborative, participatory learning, balance content-language instruction, and get learners to their highest possible levels of linguistic development (Fuente, 2022, p. 4).

There are several studies that have focused on the concepts of ELT and environmental education from different perspectives. For example, Said et al. (2003) conducted a study to check the perceptions of Malaysian school teachers

regarding the incorporation of environmental education into their teaching practices and found a huge gap. Cantrell (2009) surveyed schools in California to examine the perceptions and practices of the teachers and found a huge disparity. He reported that the teachers had not sufficient knowledge of the environment and were also not interested to teach it in their classroom practices. A study by Gursoy and Saglam (2011) focused on the perceptions of EL teachers in Turkish schools regarding the incorporation of environmental education into their curriculum and practices. The findings revealed that they have mildly positive attitudes towards this integration but often neglected it in the actual practices. Turkoglu (2019) found that Turkish teachers had positive attitudes toward integrating environmental issues into their teaching, but did not have sufficient knowledge and confidence in doing so. Bektashi and Khaferi (2020) investigated the English teachers in Kosovo to examine their conceptions of environmental education through ELT classrooms. They reported that goals related to the planet (environment) were least prominent in their concerns. In fact, the teachers agreed that it was essential to focus on people and profit (social and economic sustainability) but not environmental sustainability. A study conducted by Petkou et al. (2021) in Greece surveyed English language teachers to inspect their attitudes and opinions about environmental education. The results exposed that the majority of the participants professed environmental education as an imperative topic to be used for teaching in English language classrooms, but lacked ample training and resources to effectually incorporate it into their actual practices. Likewise, the study established that most participants supposed that environmental education should be assimilated into all levels of instruction, from basic to advanced levels. Overall, these studies suggest that while English language educators recognize the significance of environmental education in their teaching, they lack adequate resources and training to effectively integrate it into their classrooms. This highlights the need for more research and educational initiatives to provide support for these teachers to help them incorporate meaningful lessons about sustainability into their instruction.

Within the Saudi context, few studies are available concerning sustainability education (where environmental education is just a part). For example, Aldosary (2016) studied the public educational system of Saudi Arabia for environmental education and found a huge disparity. According to his findings, some of the factors like ecosystem, biodiversity, soil, and water are introduced in the form of some chapters in Science but nothing was relevant to pollution, climate change, energy, etc. Moreover, he claimed that all education was based on mere concepts and nothing was in the form of activities and practice (Aldosary, 2016). Alkhayal et al. (2019) examined the awareness level of Saudi faculty members at the Higher education level regarding sustainability and suggested that they can be engaged in the process to achieve the goals of ESD. Essa and Harvey (2022) studied Saudi governmental policy documents and media discourse for the possible integration of Education for sustainable development (ESD). Their findings indicated that there is vagueness in this regard as no actions or strategies were available in the selected data (Essa & Harvey, 2022). There is no such research available that caters to analyzing the environmental education connection with English language teachers' perceptions within the Saudi context. The present research aims to fill the gap.

III. METHODOLOGY

The research used a mix-method research design as both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis tools will be in use at different stages of the research. Mix-method research provides a holistic picture of phenomena by adding both statistical data as well as comprehensive interpretation. As per the design, the research is exploratory in nature as it aims to investigate and explore English Language teachers' perceptions and practices regarding environmental education. This is carried out through the survey research method. The survey was conducted at two levels. At the first level, the questionnaire (prepared through a Google survey form) was distributed using electronic means (mainly through LinkedIn, Emails, and WhatsApp) among the desired population. Whereas, for the second phase, online interviews were conducted (via Zoom) with the selected population.

The sample population of the study was comprised of English language teachers at the university level from the selected Saudi universities. The questionnaire was distributed among several EL teachers in various Saudi universities, however, 66 responses were received back, from the following universities:

- Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University
- Prince Sultan University
- Ummul-Qura university
- Arab Open University
- Majmaah university

The gender ratio of the participants was as follows:

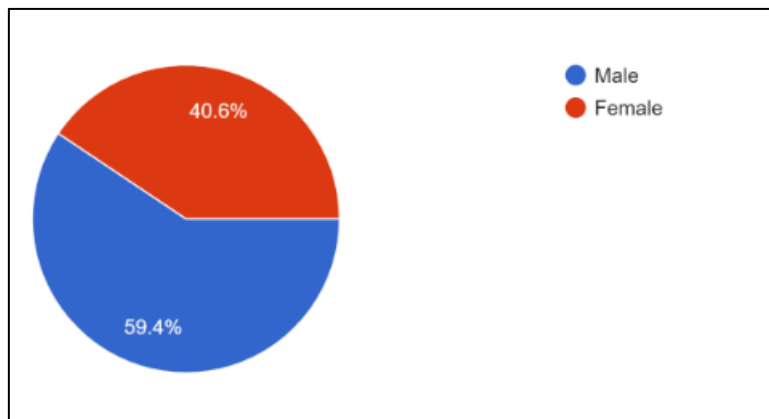


Figure 2. Gender Ratio of the Sample Population

As gender is not a variable for the present study, thus all responses were included for the data analysis purpose. Interestingly, all of the participants had a minimum of more than five years experience of in teaching English (see Figure 3 below).

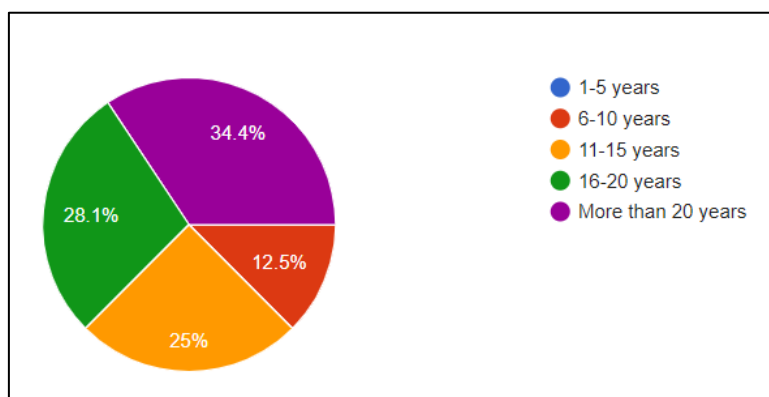


Figure 3. Teaching Experience (in Years) of the Participants

Furthermore, their level of education was from graduate (25%) to post-graduate levels (75%). For the interview purpose, ten teachers (5 males and 5 females) were selected using the convenient sampling method.

The following research instruments were used:

1. Questionnaire
2. Interview

The first instrument is a close-ended questionnaire, comprised of close-ended questions. The questions are related to teachers' general viewpoints about environmental education, its importance in the curriculum, the usage of such materials to raise awareness among their students, and their opinions and propositions. The questionnaire was adapted from Cantrell (2009) which he used to study High school teachers in California. The questionnaire is comprised of four parts. The first part is related to assessing the general knowledge of the population regarding the environment (comprised of ten multiple-choice questions). It contains questions regarding both the general environment and the local US environment. The second part comprises questions to evaluate the perceptions of the teachers towards environmental education and its inclusion in their classrooms. The third part is designed to examine their practices and the final part is formulated to gather demographic information. Moreover, the second and the third parts were comprised of Likert scale questions (with options ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree). For this study, the questions in the first part were completely replaced by the questions related to the local Saudi environment (context of the study), whereas for the remaining parts, the majority of the questions were included with partial changes. The reason for making changes in the second and third parts was mainly because the original study (from where the questionnaire was adapted) was about the inclusion of environmental education into the general curriculum and not specific to any domain (like ELT in the present study). Moreover, the context was also changed as per the requirements. It is to be noted, that level of questions in the first part was also simpler than the original questionnaire as the selected participants of the present study has specializations in English and they had gained their degrees in an era when environmental knowledge was not much of the concern, both theoretically and practically. Some of the questions were also simplified during the validation stage. As the questionnaire's reliability was already verified, thus face validity was considered only (because of some changes). The face validity was checked by three experts in the field and one of them suggested a few minor changes that were incorporated after discussion with other experts. The findings of the questionnaire were analyzed and presented using statistical procedures (as the questionnaire was mainly comprised of close-ended questions). The

second instrument was a semi-structured interview used with a focus group of teachers (only 8 teachers were interviewed as it was based on open-ended questions). These questions were based to know the perspectives of teachers concerning environmental education and the practices they use to integrate such material into their teaching activities. This part also aimed to collect their suggestions for the purpose. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The findings were analyzed through a qualitative content-analysis procedure.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first phase of the study is based on a survey questionnaire. The findings are presented below in three main categories: environmental knowledge, attitudes, and practices (As per the three sections of the questionnaire).

The first part is related to environmental knowledge. As per the questionnaire, there was a total of ten questions. 5 questions were related to the local context i.e. Saudi environment (for example, environment, flora, fauna, etc.) whereas 5 questions were related to general environment-related topics (like pollution, trees, endangered species, etc.) Table 1 below presents the statistical results of this part in graphical format (the data for the graph is available in appendix c).

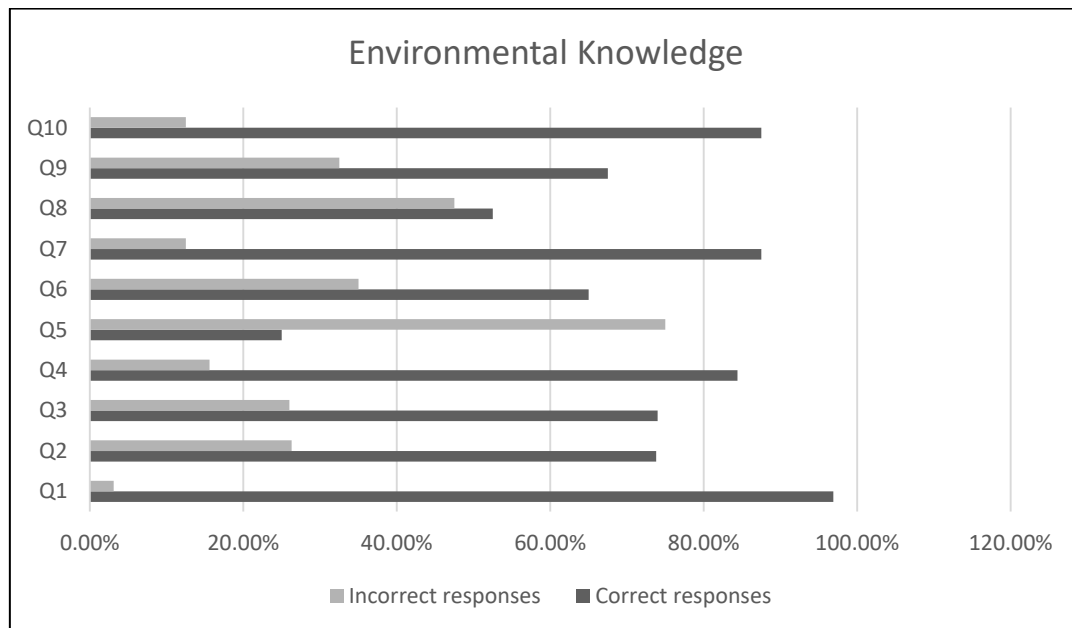


Figure 4. Environmental Knowledge of the Participants

The results of this part reveal that the majority of the teachers had good knowledge about the environment. The response percentage reveals that a great number of questions were answered correctly. In the part related to the Saudi environment, the majority of the respondents provided correct answers that demonstrated their knowledge about the local environment, whereas, in the second part, they comparatively showed little less competence. Overall, the findings expose their general understanding of the environment and environmental issues (for example some questions were related to their idea of pollution, its cause, and its impacts; another question was asked about extinct animals, etc.). Nkwetisama (2011) considers such knowledge valuable to solve contemporary ecological problems. In this regard, the findings expose that English teachers in Saudi universities have apt knowledge of the field. As awareness of environmental issues is the first step to the solution (Said et al., 2003), it can be commented that teachers with such knowledge would be valuable in the long run to stimulate ESD in general and environmental sustainability in particular.

The second part is concerning the attitudes and concerns of the teachers towards the inclusion of environmental education into English language pedagogy. This section was comprised of Likert scale values (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). To get a clear picture of the findings neutral values are ignored whereas strongly disagree-disagree and strongly agree-agree are calculated as single values.

Results have been presented in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1
ENVIRONMENTAL ATTITUDES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Statement	Strongly disagree	disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Environmental education is an important curriculum to teach in Saudi Arabia	18.8%	9.4%	21.9%	31.3%	18.8%
2. Environmental education can provide valuable life skills, for example, decision-making, problem-solving, etc.	25%	9.4%	15.6%	37.5%	12.5%
3. Training can help me further to incorporate environmental education in ELT.	13.1%	12.5%	43.1%	18.1%	13.1%
4. Education is the best way to help change behavior towards the environment.	21.9%	15.6%	12.5%	15.6%	34.4%
5. Environmental education is promoted in my institution.	15.6%	25.6%	18%	31.4%	9.4%
6. Teacher training in the environmental education-related curriculum would be valuable to me.	18.8%	18.1%	22.5%	31.3%	9.4%
7. I believe that teaching environmental education is important in all disciplines (including English).	25%	9.4%	9.4%	25%	31.3%
8. I believe it is important to integrate environmental concepts and issues into my English language teaching.	28.1%	9.4%	21.9%	18.8%	21.9%
9. I am knowledgeable about local and national environmental issues and can use them in my English classrooms.	12.5%	9.4%	25%	37.5%	15.6%
10. I would feel comfortable teaching a short unit on environmental education if given materials that fit my curricular area.	15.6%	21.9%	22.5%	18.1%	21.9%

The ten questions in this part were categorized as per the following themes: the teachers' perceptions of environmental education, and its capacity to transfer some life-long skills (for a better natural surrounding); the teachers' perceptions of institutional role in the preferment of such education; their willingness to get proper training for the purpose (i.e. to integrate environmental education in English language pedagogy); and finally their attitude towards such inclusion.

According to Table 1, 50.1% of the participants agree that environmental education can be an effective curriculum, whereas 28.2% disagree. This shows quite a positive attitude of the teachers towards the addition of environmental education into the university-level curriculum. In addition, they consider such education essential to obtain lifelong skills (50% agree). This reflects again their optimistic attitude, which is encouraging as Cantrell (2009) comments that if the teachers have a positive attitude towards a subject, it means that they are willing to cater to it in their teaching practices. Similarly, the majority of the participants (50% agree- 37.5% disagree- 12.5% neutral) approve that such education is important to bring a healthy change in the environment.

Regarding the question that environmental education is promoted by my institution, 40.8% agree whereas 41.2% disagree. Hence, there is no clarity regarding the role of institutions, and needs to be explored further in future research.

As the willingness of the teachers is concerned regarding the possible relevant training provision, 40.7% population agrees, and 36.9% disagree with one question. Whereas for another similar question, 31.2% agree, 25.6% disagree and 43.1% are neutral (not clear or not interested). Similarly, 40% agree to teach the relevant material in their English classrooms (that can be only suggested through training) and 37.5 % disagree. This shows they have mixed feelings regarding the provision of any relevant training. It is quite opposite to their positive beliefs towards environmental education, its importance, and its inclusion in the curriculum (as discussed above), and at the same time not ready to receive any training for the purpose.

Finally, as their overall attitude is concerned with the inclusion of environmental education specifically in ELT classrooms, they have a close range of agreement and disagreement. It is an interesting situation as 40.7% agree to include it in their ELT classrooms and 37.5% disagree. If we compare it with the results of the first statement, findings show that they are positive toward inclusion in the general curriculum but not much positive for ELT classrooms.

Overall, the findings of this section confirm that teachers have to some extent positive perceptions of environmental education and its possible inclusion in their materials and practices. Such concerns are quite contrary to the findings of Bekteshi and Xhaferi (2020) where teachers in Kosovo schools did not show any positive concerns in this regard. Zachariou et al. (2017) also comment that positive attitudes of the teachers are critical to obtaining environmental sustainability goals as desired by UNESCO (2005).

The third section of the questionnaire was designed to examine the practices of the participant ELT teachers in the selected Saudi universities. In this regard, all ten questions can be divided into two main categories: what they can do and what they do. What they can do includes depicts their potential to integrate environmental education into their English pedagogy and what they do displays their present-day routines in this regard. To get a clear depiction of the findings neutral values are disregarded while strongly agree-agree and strongly disagree-disagree are considered solitary values. The following tables 2 and 3 present the values as obtained during the study, while Figure 3 illustrates the overall scenario.

TABLE 2
TEACHING PRACTICES AS PER THE PARTICIPANTS' DATA

What teachers do Statement	Strongly disagree	disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I am not interested in teaching about the environment.	28.1%	21.9%	34.4%	6.3%	9.4%
2. I only teach what is included in the state standards for my ELT curriculum.	18.8%	9.4%	43.8%	21.9%	6.3%
3. A goal of my teaching is to increase students' level of environmental responsibility.	9.4%	12.5%	28.1%	43.8%	6.3%
4. I help students develop a set of values and feelings of concern for the environment through some of the activities/ assignments that I assign.	12.5%	12.5%	28.1%	34.4%	12.5%
5. I sometimes provide students with opportunities to gain actual experience in resolving environmental issues.	9.4%	21.9%	31.3%	34.4%	3.1%
6. I try to spend some percentage of my instructional time weekly or monthly on environmental education.	6.3%	31.3%	37.5%	18.8%	6.3%
7. There are often some environmental-related topics/ materials in ELT materials that I always focus on.	9.4%	9.4%	34.4%	40.6%	6.3%

TABLE 3
TEACHING PRACTICES THAT CAN BE CONSIDERED ACCORDING TO PARTICIPANTS

What teachers do Statement	Strongly disagree	disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Environmental education can be taught within almost any curriculum, including ELT.	6.3%	25%	28.1%	18.8%	21.9%
2. I can incorporate the study of environmental concepts and issues into my English language classroom, in direct or indirect ways.	9.4%	12.5%	34.4%	31.3%	12.5%
3. I am good at incorporating environmental concepts into exercise/ exam questions, in indirect ways.	0%	28.2%	43.1%	25%	3.1%

For Tables 2 and 3, the columns for the neutral option are unavoidable as values for the majority of the statements are often higher than the other options (within the range of a minimum of 28% and a maximum of 43%). It means for what teachers do and can do regarding environmental education in their ELT practices, they are either not sure or do not want to reveal it (opting for neutral). On the other hand, teachers agree or disagree on various statements with almost similar percentages which means that the situation is not encouraging. Said et al. (2003) state that without teachers' participation in the process, the implementation of the environmental sustainability awareness program is merely a dream. Thus, the above data is quite alarming in the sense that teachers are unable to consider the urgency of the matter and are not much ready in this regard.

The second phase of the study is based on the focus group interviews conducted with eight faculty members. There were only five open-ended questions aimed to collect details of respondents' perceptions, practices, and suggestions if provided. The results yielded can be summarized as following Figure 5.

Perceptions	Practices	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mildly positive attitudes Uncertain of the integration process Fears of implementation Fear of additional tasks Fear of time management Consider environmental topics as valuable informative pieces Aware of environmental issues and its importance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No practical implementation previously by majority Little concentration on environmental topics No clarity about the practical part Environmental topics provided in books are treated as regular content Main focus remains on language and not the content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical training is needed for the teachers to how to integrate ELT and environmental education Need suggestions of the ELT teaching methods that promote such learning Must be made crucial part of curriculum due to environmental emergency Some sample activities are needed to understand the process Can be beneficial in the long run, if implemented carefully Some workshops are needed to learn about the process of integration

Figure 5. Summary of Interview Responses

The findings of this section again divulge a dispiriting attitude of the ELT teachers as they have a lot of reservations regarding the inclusion of environmental education in their curriculum and classes. At the same time, they do

comprehend the significance of such education. This is not a satisfactory situation as according to UNESCO (2005), teachers are a critical part of environmental sustainability awareness and implementation processes. The findings are in line with Bekteshi and Xhaferi (2020) who observed similar attitudes among Kosovo school teachers. It is the need of the time to understand that language teaching in today's world is not merely limited to skills transfer rather content is an integral part of it. Nkwetisama (2021) that in the present situation inclusion of environmental-issues related content in English language classrooms is an effective way to achieve a better world.

The second set of questions was related to inquiry about the actual practices of the teachers. This part exposes a complete absence of such environmental-related content, practices, tasks, and projects in the actual teaching practices, except for some topics which are part of the textbooks. However, such texts are also taught as regular materials with no emphasis on highlighting environmental issues or problems. According to the teachers, they did not have the proper training for the purpose.

The final question asked the participants about their suggestions to implement environmental education in language classrooms. Their major recommendation was to arrange the workshops for the training purpose. The teachers were concerned that it would not be beneficial until they would not be trained for this purpose. They suggested that English language teachers must be made aware of the strategies and techniques that could help them to integrate environmental education into ELT pedagogy.

The overall findings of this study reveal that the current ELT pedagogy in the Kingdom is not sufficient to meet the needs of the environmental crises in the present times. In line with UNESCO's (2005) agenda, the curriculum and practices need revision.

V. CONCLUSION

This research aimed to collect and analyze the perceptions and practices of English language teachers in Saudi universities concerning the integration of environmental education. For this purpose, a mixed-method research design was used employing both quantitative and qualitative strategies to collect and analyze data. The main instruments of the study were a close-ended questionnaire and an open-ended interview. The questionnaire was distributed through an online survey form, whereas an interview was conducted with a limited number of available university teachers. The results of the study were not satisfactory in line with UNESCO's sustainable development goals and in particular the environment-related goals. The findings of the questionnaire part expose the fact that teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of environmental education into English language pedagogy are not satisfactory (as per part 2 results of the questionnaire), though they have very good knowledge about environmental issues and topics (according to part 1 results). Moreover, an analysis of their practices in part 3 of the questionnaire again exposes distressing results where they admit that they have never paid attention to environmental issues, topics, or concerns in particular. In addition, such topics (if a part of their textual materials) were also dealt with no proper attention to highlight the content. Concerning the interview data, teachers more acquiescently acknowledged that they had never concentrated on environmental education in their ELT practices and they also articulated qualms like they might not have time and training for this purpose.

The contemporary situation around the world concerning environmental catastrophes and climate issues has created uncertainties about an indefensible future for the coming generations. This concern has been enunciated on several local and global platforms around the world. It is a critical moment where all stakeholders including the educationists have to play their part to protect the environment and promise a sustainable future. According to a recent report by UNESCO ("UNESCO Urges Making Environmental Education a Core Curriculum Component in All Countries by 2025", 2021), environmental education must be entertained as a core curriculum component of academia. In this regard, English language teaching is an apt channel as well to endorse such education through indirect means. There is no doubt that the main purpose of language teaching curriculum is the language but if such content is updated with contemporary global crises, it would help the world to achieve its sustainable goals. It is what is also suggested by many researchers like Fuente (2022), Kwee (2021), Bowden (2010), etc. Thus, the present study suggests that English language teaching should be linked to environmental education from various perspectives like adding environment-related content for reading and listening purposes, discussing such issues in speaking and writing classes, giving projects related to highlighting environment protection in various skills classes, etc. This would serve a dual purpose. On one hand, it would definitely keep the focus on language skills but on the other hand, essential environmental education would also reach to masses. The study also suggests that teachers should also be trained for this purpose as they have expressed fears of lacking the required knowledge and skills for this purpose.

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