



Sustainable development of EFL teachers' skills towards communication

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Abstract

A fundamental tenet of EFL training is the notion that students can concurrently learn a new language and important subject through sustainable development. As a counterweight to teaching methods that place more emphasis on output skills of communication than other traditional methods, sustainable development has emerged as a skill-focused approach where language acquisition is a tool to absorb meaningful knowledge. The goal of the current study was to ascertain if a methodology course that uses a sustainable development and language-skills learning paradigm may improve EFL majors' communication abilities and vocabulary acquisition. The sample consisted of 15 EFL educators from different Babylonian schools. The study employed a pretest-posttest one-group design to collect quantitative data utilizing two communication skills and subject vocabulary learning tests. According to the study's findings, the sustainable development and language-skill learning paradigm had positive effects on participants' communication abilities and post-test scores for subject vocabulary acquisition. The findings were analyzed in light of the current debate regarding the role that sustainable development plays in helping students (educators) learn through language as they develop subject comprehension, listening, speaking, reading and writing to learn about the language in the context of language learning, and use language in a meaningful and intentional way.

Keywords: Techniques, EFL majors, Communicative abilities, Vocabulary acquisition, Long-term growth, and Language communicative abilities

Introduction

Some of the articles in the present Special Issue have emphasized the value of acquiring a second or foreign language (henceforth referred to as L2) and how it contributes to an individual's sustainable development (Godemann, 2011) [28]. Sustainable development, according to (Tilbury, 2011) [46] is primarily focused on each person's personal life as they acquire experience interacting with others. Since cultural diversity and globalization are increasing in our world, L2 is important in mediating the relationship between people, society, and the environment in cross-cultural encounters. The secret to sustainable development is the acquisition, application, and consolidation of L2 communication abilities (Wiek *et al*, 2014) [49]. For example, having cross-cultural communication with speakers of the L2 (such as English) gives access to a range of scholarly materials, enabling both new and seasoned researchers to engage in the field's continuous activity. Not unexpectedly, communication competence may be the primary goal for learners who are having difficulty mastering an L2 (Filho *et al*, 2013) [24].

It does not, however, immediately lead to genuine L2 communication; learners must also be open to communicating. The willingness to communicate (WTC) is the propensity to actively participate in communication. Enhancing L2 WTC has emerged as a key objective of L2 pedagogy globally due to the increased focus on real communication in language acquisition. However, the comprehension of L2 WTC and the endeavor to promote it (for example, by putting particular methods and interventions into practice) must take into account its pertinent

antecedents, such as the setting in which communication occurs (MacIntyre *et al*, 1998) [41].

In the first language that teachers and/or students speak and use can be used to identify context from an instructional standpoint (Sterling, S. (2014) [42]. For instance, "the class is usually multilingual and living in the culture of the target language" in an English as a second language (ESL) context, while "the class is usually monolingual and living in their own country" in an English as a foreign language context. In both ESL and EFL environments, notable differences in the actions of L2 learners are noted in the classroom. Given the disparity in the learning and teaching cultures of these two contexts and the growing interest in studying overseas among Iraqi educators—who are generally characterized as reticent and highly receptive language learners (Li, S., 2020) [40].

One might wonder if exposure to the ESL teaching style increases their willingness to communicate. Are Iraqi English educators L2 WTC impacted in any way by ESL with teaching methods (henceforth TTS)? We contend that providing answers to these queries may help educators better understand how their students interpret their L2 WTC. In fact, within the past 20 years, L2 WTC has developed into a thriving topic of study in applied linguistics and second language acquisition (SLA) (Dewaele, J.-M.;2018) [20].

A variety of researchers have attempted to determine the determinants of L2 WTC. One area of research focuses on examining how teacher factors affect students' L2 WTC. However, it has been discovered that teaching methods, attitudes, engagement, and immediacy are likely to have

sociocultural, affective-cognitive, and motivational effects on educators' L2 WTC (Amiri, M., & Fatemi, A.) (2014) [3].

There are still a number of significant uncertainties about how these instructor variables—such as TTS—affect L2 WTC. The role of learning context in moderating the relationship between TTS and L2 WTC has not gotten enough attention since the L2 WTC of Iraqi educators teaching in Iraq and those studying overseas has been examined independently rather than concurrently. Furthermore, the majority of study on this subject has been done in classrooms, with little focus on how TTS affects L2 WTC outside of them. By comparing the effects of TTS on Iraqi English educators' L2 WTC in two contexts—Iraq, an EFL environment, and overseas, an ESL setting—the current study seeks to close these gaps (Dewaele, J.-M.2019) [21].

Next, we will attempt to determine the degree to which TTS in each situation influences the L2 WTC of Iraqi educators both within and outside of the classroom. Lastly, we will look into whether Iraqi educators who teaching in Iraq and those teaching overseas experience TTS's impacts on L2 WTC differently. The literature that influenced the current study's design will be reviewed in the section that follows. First, viewpoints and concerns regarding WTC in L2 research are discussed, with an emphasis on L2 WTC for Iraqi English

educator. Following an analysis of TTS's function in L2 pedagogy, the connection between L2 WTC and TTS is discussed (Taguchi, N. Cognition 2008) [48].

Theoretical framing of sustainability communication

One of biggest challenges is to give students the tools they need to improve their SC competency. The notion of SC, its components, teaching strategies, and learning tactics that could be employed to effectively develop SC competency through EFL learning processes should all be introduced to students while the study programs are being presented. referencing Wiek *et al.* (2014) [49], Flowerdew (2013) [25], and Godemann (2011) [28]. One could argue that the content of sustainable development is linked to the following: methodological-instrumental (knowledge and skills of a particular profession), social (demonstrating ability to protect the environment), transformative (demonstrating ability to bring about positive change), personal (ability to manage internal and external elements), cross-cultural (foreign language skills and knowledge about different cultures), and core competencies (IT, mother tongue, mathematics, and so on).

As with sustainable development competency and its constituents, SC is heavily impacted by social and mass media, resulting in a range of attributes depicted in Figure 1.

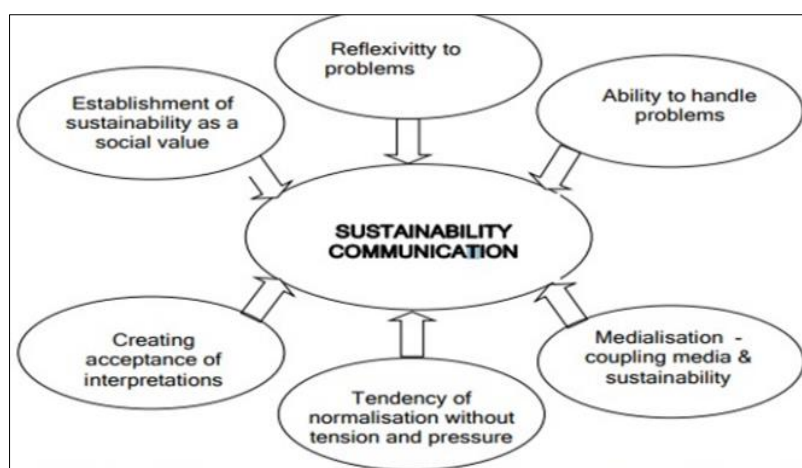


Fig 1: Sustainability communication characteristics according to Godemann (2011) [28]

Among the traits of sustainability communication are: Reflexivity about different issues; aptitude to successfully handle challenging circumstances; medicalization as an attempt to align sustainability discourse with mass media formats in order to combat the trend toward normalcy; tendencies toward normalization, with the potential that the more sustainability is discussed and accepted, the less pressure there will be to understand one another; Establishing sustainability as an inherent social value and the associated problem of reaching consensus, as well as the potential for multiple interpretations of sustainability, have a big impact and should be taken into account when designing EFL teaching procedures and developing curricula (Amiryousefi, M2018) [4]. Furthermore, social networks—which are composed of both individual and collective actors and their "bridges"—are growing. These ties, which have their own unique online

practices, regulations, network relationships, and technical capabilities, are exemplified by the mediated forms of communication and social interaction processes. As a result, managing this trans-disciplinary complexity is essential to the sustainability conversation. Furthermore, communication about sustainable development involves communication about the knowledge and experiences of sustainable development. However, students' understanding of sustainable development cannot be increased by only highlighting the significance of the notion of sustainability. Systemic knowledge, or the understanding of functions, processes, and interrelationships, must be obtained because knowledge must have a practical use. Knowledge on sustainable development must be integrated with moral principles, ethical perspectives on the interdependencies between people and the natural world, and

firsthand experiences that entail emotionality and significance (Cao, Y.2011) [17].

The medium and long-term objective of EFL instruction is to help students not only become more proficient in the language but also gain a foundational understanding of sustainability so they can actively express its concepts and connect them to actions. Systemic knowledge, or the understanding of functions, processes, and interrelationships, must be obtained because knowledge must have a practical use. Knowledge on sustainable development must be integrated with moral principles, ethical perspectives on the interdependencies between people and the natural world, and firsthand experiences that entail emotionality and significance Peng, J.E.2007) [44].

The medium and long-term objective of EFL instruction is to help students not only become more proficient in the language but also gain a foundational understanding of sustainability so they can actively express its concepts and connect them to actions. The goal of teaching EFL is to improve and develop communication about sustainability so that students can discuss their ideas in the classroom, on social media, at home, and in other settings. This will help students become more aware of what is socially acceptable, economically viable, and ecologically responsible in both their personal and professional lives. Since SC is categorized as a "soft" tool and is one of several widely used tools, allowing students to solve their own problems gives them the chance to modify their behavior in ways that will impact their lives now and in the future.

Fluency in speech

Since communicative skills boosts self-esteem and confidence, it is crucial for effective communication. People usually converse verbally because language is essentially speech. Thus, improving communicative skills is crucial for effective communication. It is maintained that all learners want to become proficient in the target language, regardless of their current proficiency level (Goh & Burns, 2012) [29]. For EFL teachers to build relationship with their learners, communicative skills are crucial. According to Abd-Al-Galil (2019) [1], the main goal of teaching English as a foreign language in Egypt is to enable learners to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts. She went on to say that being able to communicate well is crucial for establishing positive social connections and connecting with others.

Background of the problem

Since the Egyptian educational system adopted a communicative language teaching style in 1999, communicative skills development has become essential to communicative competence in the target language. Nonetheless, the researcher's experience as an EFL teacher educator led to the observation that the communicative skills of EFL majors at the Faculty of Education was low. This finding is in line with earlier research, they couldn't use the English language to express their thoughts, emotions, and objectives. In addition, they committed several grammatical, pronunciation, and vocabulary errors. For example, individuals

had trouble coming up with the right phrases to use when discussing educational subjects and expressing their thoughts (Abd-Al-Galil, 2019) [1].

The necessity of the current study is highlighted by the deficiency of these critical abilities among EFL pre-service teachers. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no research has been done in the context of this study to examine how using sustainable development of EFL can improve learning skills and communicative skills in learning of EFL majors. The current work thus aims to close this gap.

The aim of the research

The study's aim was to use sustainable development of EFL teachers learning skills and communicative skills in learning EFL majors.

The study's questions

The five questions that the current study sought to address were:

- What communicative skills abilities are required of EFL majors?
- To what extent are Arabic- English educators willing to communicate in English inside and outside classrooms?
- What are the attitudes of Arabic- English educators studying in both groups (controlled and experimental) towards their teachers and teaching styles (TTS)?
- To what extent do Arabic English educators' attitudes towards TTS affect their L2 WTC inside and outside classrooms in each group?
- Are there any differences in the influences of Arabic English educators' attitudes towards TTS on their L2 WTC inside and outside classrooms between the two groups?
- If any, what are the possible reasons?

Study hypotheses

The evaluation of relevant literature and earlier research served as the foundation for the development of the following two hypotheses.

- The study group's mean scores on the communicative skills pre/post test would differ statistically significantly more in favor of the post-test at the 0.05 level.
- The study group's mean scores on the pre/post test of content vocabulary achievement would differ statistically significantly in favor of the post-test at the 0.05 level.

Relevance of the research

Curriculum designers, teacher educators, and EFL pre-service and in-service teachers can all benefit from the study's conclusions. The usage of sustained development helps pre-service instructors improve their language skills. The sustained development model could be applied by in-service teachers that prioritize subject learning. With the launch of the Connect and Connect Plus series, this practice is becoming prevalent in Egyptian schools (Amirian, Z.;2021) [5]. By providing an educational model that they can utilize with their learners in beginning teacher preparation programs, the current study benefits teacher educators. The results of the current study can

be used by EFL curriculum designers as helpful guidance for creating sustained development textbook content. The goal of the current study is to add to the conversation about how sustained development helps EFL majors improve their language skills, especially in the areas of content vocabulary and communicative skills

Study delimitations

The five communicative skills—accuracy, meaning formation, nonverbal cue utilization, pronunciation, and smoothness of utterance—were the only focus of this study. A survey of relevant communicative skills literature served as the basis for the selection of these abilities. The creation of a checklist of communicative skills abilities suggested by TEFL specialists came next. The vocabulary items associated with the four areas that comprised the course syllabus—that is, the knowledge and principles of teaching English to primary-stage learners, the planning and preparation of lessons for primary-stage learners, teaching to primary-stage learners, and evaluating the learning of primary-stage learners—were also the exclusive focus of the current study. As part of their teacher preparation program to teach English as a foreign language in the primary grades. The 14-week program, which lasted three hours each and included two sessions for giving the pre/post examinations of communicative skills and content vocabulary learning, was conducted during the first term of the academic year 2024–2025. Throughout the EFL Methodology course, the instruction was provided.

Fluency in speech

"The features which give a speech the qualities of being natural and normal, including the native-like use of pausing, rhythm, intonation, stress, the rate of speaking, and use of interjections and interruptions" (p. 204) is how Richards and Schmidt (2002) described communicative skills. The phrase "rapid, smooth, accurate, lucid and efficient translation of thought or communicative intention into language" (p. 1) was coined by Bhat *et al.* (2010). Communicative skills, according to De Jong (2016), is the ability to quickly convert ideas into understandable sounds. Wang and Handley (2018, p. 5).

"Fluency refers to speaking at a good pace without pausing or hesitating." The ability of EFL majors in the Faculty of Education to effectively produce and construct confident, meaningful utterances that are well-pronounced, well-structured, and well-understood in relation to one of the subjects and concepts covered in the EFL methodology course is referred to in the current study as communicative skills.

Learning vocabulary

Vocabulary, according to Rieder-Bünemann *et al.* (2022) ^[45], is defined as subject-specific words, terms, or phrases in a certain domain or topic area that are rarely seen outside of their particular area. Subject-specific terms are lexical items (including multi-word units) that are employed exclusively, mostly, or with a particular meaning in a subject, according to Nation (2016). According to the current study, participants' vocabulary knowledge pertaining to the subjects and ideas

covered in the methodology course is referred to as vocabulary learning.

Design of the method

The current study compared the participants' performance in communicative skills and vocabulary learning before and after the course using a one-group pretest-posttest design. One known disadvantage of the current study is the use of a single group pretest-posttest design. This is due to the fact that the study's intact group consisted of English language educators in Babylon.

Tools

The participants' learning of content knowledge and communicative skills were assessed using two pre/post assessments. Below is a description of these two tests.

The communicative skills test before and after

The communicative skills pre/post-test was designed to evaluate the communicative skills abilities of EFL pre-service teachers. Each of the 14 course topics had two cards on the test, which had a total of 28 cards. A question pertaining to one of the subjects was on each card. The researcher prepared the questions. Every card was placed on the main desk. Each examinee was evaluated separately. Three cards were set out on the front desk, and the examinee was invited to select one. Following a one-minute preparation period, the examinee was given a maximum of four minutes to discuss a single topic. During the preparation period, the examinees were permitted to take notes, but they were not permitted to view these notes while they were speaking. The responses were evaluated using an assessment rubric. Each of the five communicative skills was evaluated using a rubric that included four ratings. A grading system from 1 to 4 was used to assign a score to each talent. "1" stood for subpar performance, "2" for mediocre performance, "3" for good performance, and "4" for outstanding performance. The examinee's score was determined by adding their ratings. The test had a minimum score of five and a maximum score of twenty. As noted by Srikaew *et al.* (2015) ^[43], raters who evaluate communicative skills are frequently prejudiced and subjective. In order to obtain interpreter reliability, the subjects were evaluated by a different examiner. The mean score was calculated by adding the two examiners' scores and dividing the result by two.

The vocabulary learning material before and after the test

The purpose of the subject vocabulary learning pre/post-test was to evaluate the vocabulary acquisition of EFL pre-service teachers in relation to the course topics. 50 questions made up the test, which evaluated the participants' mastery of terminology related to the four course subjects. Every question was multiple-choice, and each right response was worth one mark. Based on the teaching knowledge test for young learners, the test was modified (Cambridge Assessment English, 2019) ^[14].

Reliability and validity

A panel of five TEFL specialists reviewed the draft versions of the two tests to ensure that the questions were pertinent to the sub- skills for each exam and that the test content was genuine. The final versions were developed in response to the jury members' feedback. Cronbach's Alpha ratings for the communicative skills pre/post test and the content vocabulary accomplishment pre/post test reached (.878) and (.784), respectively, indicating that the two tests had a high degree of internal consistency reliability.

The educational resources

Based on the targeted learning outcomes of the Methodology course for educators who teach English for Iraq series of sixth grade in primary schools who enrolled in the course as part of their preparation program to teach English at the primary level, the fourteen course subjects were chosen. Four topics were determined to be crucial to the course. These included (1) understanding the fundamentals of teaching English to primary school learners, (2) organizing and preparing lessons for primary school learners, (3) instructing primary school learners, and (4) evaluating the learning of primary school learners. The learning materials provided during the course were divided into a number of subtopics under each main theme. The four topics listed above were addressed in the 8th units that made up the course.

Methodology

The researcher has conducted an experiment on two samples to achieve the aims of the study and test the hypothesis. In addition, he has explained the procedures adopted to accomplish the empirical part of the study. This section, therefore, discusses the following points-

- Describing the experiment design
- Selecting the population and the sample of the study
- Administrating pre- post-tests
- Describing the statistical tools and methods used in data analysis.

The experiment design is a "procedural blueprint and conceptual structure that shows the researchers how the experiment should be conducted" (Best and Kahn, 2006: 177). According to Tavakoli (2012:2006) an experiment design is a pack of plans and stages in which the research hypothesis can be evaluated to achieve logical results and conclusions that reveal the impact "of the independent variable" upon "the dependent variable". The selection of a particular design relies on the goals, the requirements of the experiment, and various types of variables to be manipulated. The present study, therefore deals with intact and pre-assembled groups. i.e., groups which were previously presented in the present study, a pre-test/post-test design is adopted. The study sample is located in the center of Babylon Governorate- Hillah. The population of sample was taken from Al-Istiqlal, Wadi Al-Rafidein, Al-Entifadha Al-Sha'bania, Yihia Ghareeb, Humrabi, Al Tomouh, Ibn Al-Nafees, Adan, and Ibn Hisham primary schools for boys. The researcher has randomly selected the population and divided it into two groups; "group (a) represents the

experimental group" (EG) and group (b) represents the control group" (CG). Both groups (EG) and (CG) have undertaken the pre-test for measuring previous knowledge. The sustained development of EFL skills was implemented with (EG), while the conventional teaching method was taught to (CG) according to the prescribed teacher' Guide. After conducting the experiment within 8 weeks and 5 days, both groups (EG) and (CG) have undertaken the post-test by which we can statistically measure and determine the extent of the potential impact of the independent variable by drawing a comparison of the results.

The population of the present study" is limited to primary school teachers located in the center of Babylon during the academic year (2024-2025). The sample of the study includes (30) teachers of English randomly grouped in two classes (a) and (b) to maintain randomness in conducting the experiment. Class (a) represents the experimental group (EG) which includes (15) teachers, and class (b) represents the control group (C G) which includes (15) teachers. The total number settled in the whole process is (30) teachers of English without exclusion.

Pre-test description

The researcher has designed the pre-test with 50 multiple choice questions concerning speech fluency and vocabulary learning 25 marks for each phase. Examinees had to check the correct answer with (True or False). The pretest scoring scheme is designed to measure each point with one mark and zero marks for incorrect answer.

Post-test description

After administrating the experiment, the researcher has designed the post-test with 50 multiple choice questions concerning speech fluency and vocabulary learning 25 marks for each phase equals the pre-test amount number, and the examinees had to check the correct answer with (True or False) concerning the given test points. The post-test scoring scheme is designed to measure the output of the experiment for each point with one mark for correct answers and zero marks for incorrect ones.

Statistical tools

The researcher used T-test to compare the outcomes of the two tests, pre- and post- tests for the two groups (control and experimental).

- **Paired t-test:**
 - *T-statistic* = 6.63
 - *P-value* = 0.0000113 (significant at $p < 0.05$)

Results

- **Paired t-test:**
 - *T-statistic* = 6.63
 - *P-value* = 0.0000113 (significant at $p < 0.05$)

Effect Size (Cohen's d) = 1.71

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare pretest and posttest scores. There was a statistically significant increase in scores from the pretest ($M = 30.07$, $SD = 6.71$) to the posttest ($M = 36.47$, $SD = 5.73$), $t(14) = 6.63$, $p < .001$. The effect size was large, Cohen's $d = 1.71$, indicating a strong impact of the intervention.

Metric	Pretest	Posttest
Count	15	15
Mean	30.07	36.47
Std. Dev.	6.71	5.73
Min	19.00	23.00
Max	42.00	44.00
Median	30.00	37.00

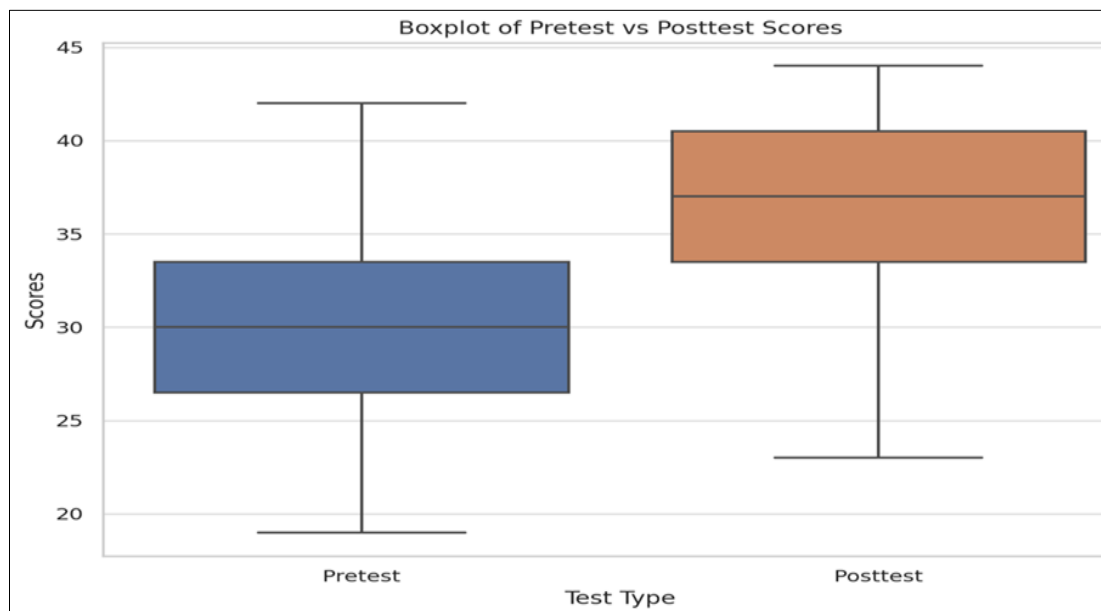


Fig 2

Discussion

The current study's results demonstrated how well the sustained development and teachers skills towards communication worked to raise participants' post-test scores. Thus, the initial supposition is kept. The results showed that the participants' communicative skills improved when the sustained development of teachers skills was used. This outcome is in line with earlier research. For example, Brunfaut and Green (2017) [13] discovered that learners found it simpler to speak English when discussing subjects they were already familiar with. Fluent speech requires background knowledge on the issue, which the study's participants gained by being fully engaged in the technique themes.

The fact that sustained development emphasizes a "counterbalanced instructional approach" is another factor contributing to the participants' increased communicative skills (Tedick, 2024) [47]. As a result, participants prioritize meaning-focused learning to master the skills of communication while also enhancing their L2 competency by focusing on language (a counterweight). Teachers switch between focusing on language and topic in counterbalanced instruction. Depending on the needs of their learners, teachers should decide whether to emphasize language over communication or strike a balance between the two (Reynolds *et al.*, 2022) [45].

Additionally, the participants worked harder to switch their focus from language to sustained development. The participants' increased effort deepens their processing and

fortifies their metalinguistic awareness. Individuals can effectively interact with increasingly complicated language that has the potential to improve their language skills by studying discipline subject while simultaneously learning the language that encodes it.

It is worth highlighting here that implementing a counterbalance approach requires careful planning due to the daunting task of integrating sustained development and language. Therefore, instructors who attempt to use sustainable development need to consider effective ways of balancing the integration between skills of communication and language. Teacher educators should develop ways to help sustained development- teachers counterbalance instruction and achieve language and skills integration. Tedick (2024) [47] pointed out that such balance could be achieved through reactive and proactive approaches. Reactive approaches use specific questioning strategies and follow-up tactics during classroom interactions to respond to learners' language production. Teachers could also point out linguistic faults to learners by giving them corrected comments. To guarantee that communication is clear and supports both language and sustainable development learning, teachers must also be conscious of their language use and interactions with learners.

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