

Multilingual ESD at the example of two secondary school student conferences

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Biographical Note

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Abstract (500 words)

Abstract (300 words)

The philosopher Wittgenstein (1963) once postulated: “The limits of my languages define the borders of my world.” This statement highlights the significance of language learning and the increasing necessity for global citizenship education (GCE) in the era of postmodern globalization (Osterhammel, 2019).

Given the urgent need to address 21st century challenges through quality education in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, this paper advocates a multilingual, global, and transdisciplinary approach to education for sustainable development (ESD) (Nijhawan, 2024). It posits that creating multilingual classroom glocalities is vital for fostering GCE as an integral part of ESD (Nijhawan et al., 2021a; Elsner, 2021). Emphasizing the transformative potential of pedagogical translanguaging (García & Li, 2014), Nijhawan (2022a, b) proposed a comprehensive teaching model for multilingual content and language integrated learning (CLIL). This CLIL-based strategy supports ESD due to their transdisciplinary and methodological parity (Diehr, 2022).

Empirical data from two multilingual secondary school student conferences demonstrates this pedagogical approach:

1. **climonomics (2019): Approximately 200 students participated in a European Union parliamentary debate simulation on “climate action,” widely featured in audiovisual and print media.**

savetheblueplanet (2022): Around 360 students participated online in a debate on ocean protection, assuming the roles of personalities and everyday characters.

Following the presentation of the multilingual and differentiated concepts and methods (Nijhawan et al., 2021b; Brink et al., 2024), evaluation data shows that multilingual teaching promotes ESD. The CLIL-model leverages pre-existing linguistic resources, elevating the role of first languages beyond regional and global lingua franca English while simultaneously supporting second and foreign language learning. It fosters inclusivity and empowerment, advancing ESD and agency within a super-diverse society (Vertovec, 2007). Therefore, with a refined multilingual pedagogy and the integration of natural and social sciences as well as the humanities, ESD can evidently herald GCE and the SDGs.

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