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### Context-sensitive Pedagogy for Sustainable English Language Teaching: Prospect and Practice

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#### Abstract

*The global discussion on social justice and inclusive education has made it imperative to redefine English Language Teaching (ELT) from the lens of sustainability principles. In this vein, it is argued that sustainability in English Language Teaching (ELT) should be pursued through context-sensitive pedagogy that responds to local socio-linguistics realities, environmental challenges, and global sustainability goals (SDG 4.7). Based on post-method theory, translanguaging, Eco linguistics, and UNESCO's ESD for 2030 agenda, the study synthesizes secondary data and empirical studies from the global and Nepalese contexts. Using a systematic desk-based review and thematic synthesis of empirical reports, peer-reviewed articles and policy documents (2014–2025), the study identifies how teacher agency, translanguaging practices, multimodal tasks and Eco linguistic analysis have been used in ELT to promote sustainability competencies. Findings reveal that teachers employ context-sensitive moves (e.g., translanguaging, local texts) which support equity and engagement but face constraints from high-stakes assessments and rigid EMI policy. Eco linguistics and multimodal projects can provide practical dimensions to link language skills with sustainability literacy and system alignment (policy, curriculum, assessment, teacher education) is essential to implement context-sensitive sustainability in ELT. The study concludes with concrete implications for curriculum design, assessment reform, teacher professional development (TPD), and future research priorities for Nepal and similar multilingual contexts.*

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## Introduction

Sustainable education is now a global discourse for addressing the crisis related to climate change and global warming, through environmental integrity, social justice, and participation. In this regard, education is the only hope for bringing change as stated in the Incheon Declaration Article 5 of the World Education Forum (WEF) and its Declaration on global Education by 2030 agenda: “Our vision is to transform lives through education, recognizing the important role of education as a main driver of development and in achieving the other proposed SDGs through a renewed education agenda that is holistic, ambitious and aspirational, leaving no one behind” (UNESCO, 2015, p. 12).

Moreover, global education agenda by 2030 is specifically based on “a humanistic vision of education and development education is a public good, a fundamental human right and a basis for guaranteeing the realization of other right. It is essential for peace, tolerance, human fulfillment and sustainable development” (UNESCO, p.12). Subsequently, UNESCO’s ESD for 2030 advocates for the mainstreaming of sustainability and global citizenship in curricula, teacher education and assessment. Consequently, for English language teaching (ELT), it requires context-sensitive pedagogy that sustains learners, languages and communities. Similarly, Nepal National Framework (NNF) for Education 2030 localizes SDG 4 (Quality education), highlighting inclusive, culturally responsive provision and teacher capacity (Government of Nepal (GoN), 2019) which are directly relevant to ELT courses, assessment design and teacher professionalism. In this line, the SDG 4: Nepal National Framework (NNF) has set the goal “oriental philosophies serve as the foundation for setting Nepal’s agenda of education drawing on local cultures, knowledge systems, history, indigenous skills and cosmologies” (GoN, 2019, p. ix). Thus, sustainability in ELT requires pedagogy that is responsive to local sociolinguistic ecologies and power relations, thereby developing students' competencies for deliberation and action.

The priority of English language teaching needs a paradigm shift for a long run practice of developing linguistic proficiency of students alongside bringing awareness about socio-cultural and ecological aspects. Essentially, the imperatives of sustainability for the 21<sup>st</sup> century global citizenship can be practically realized through sustainable education based on context-sensitive pedagogical approach (Kumaravadivelu, 2001; García & Li Wei, 2014; Stibbe, 2015/2021). The complex intersections of diversity namely: linguistic, soci-cultural and educational practices in the Nepalese landscape require a

pedagogical approach that can assemble all the diversities together for making a complete whole. Thus, context-sensitive pedagogy can be an alternate approach for addressing all the complexities as it is based on various principles and theories; post method theory, translanguaging, and eco-linguistics. Unlike universal methods, post method theory addresses particularity, practicality and possibility (Kumaravadivelu, 2001), whereas translanguaging use various kinds of diversity as pedagogical resources (Garcia & Li Wei, 2014) that are relatable to students.

Additionally, the eco-linguistic dimension of pedagogy promotes linguistic proficiency of students involving them in dealing with existing local challenges (Stibbe, 2015; Stibbe, 2021). In doing so, they use language as an analytical tool for eco-critical awareness through sustainable discourses. Thus, context-sensitive pedagogical approach to English language teaching can holistically prepare the young minds for local to global citizenship by strengthening their inner capacity and outer performance for a better world.

The status of English in the multilingual context of Nepal is as a foreign language; however, the English-only policy basically reflects its priority in academic institutions and professional fields. Therefore, the contents of ELT need to address various sort of local and global diversities or realities (Giri, 2010; Phyak, 2021) for fostering sustainability. On the contrary, the ground reality of English language teaching in Nepal is based on universal methods, English-only policy, lack of culturally responsive teaching contents and resources, and lack of teacher adaptability to local realities (Poudel & Choi, 2021).

In this sense, it is crucial to determine whether context-sensitive pedagogy can be an alternate approach for sustainable English language teaching or not. With this purpose, the study has reviewed the theoretical perspectives of postmethod theory, translanguaging, and eco-linguistics. It also reviewed empirical studies primarily based on sustainability goals and English language teaching in Nepal and outside.

### **Theoretical Review**

For the review of theoretical literature, mainly postmethod pedagogy, translanguaging, and eco-linguistics are selected because they align with context-sensitive pedagogy for sustainable English language teaching. They are as below:

#### ***Post Method Pedagogy***

Against the backdrop of hegemonic prescriptive methods for teaching second or foreign language, postmethod pedagogy can be an alternate route that is based on three

dimensional pedagogic parameters: particularity, practicality and possibility (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). These three parameters interact with each other for facilitating context-sensitive pedagogy with the teachers' role "to theorize from their practice and practice what they theorize" and bringing linguistic proficiency outside the classroom for "a continual quest for identity formation and social transformation" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p.545). Instead of a one-size-fits for all method, the context-sensitive approach insists to take pedagogic decision in combination of socio-cultural context, learners' need and the purpose of education (Bax, 2003). Becker (1986) states "particularity is something, we arrive at is something and we learn is something we achieve (p. 29).

Similarly, pedagogy of practicality refers to a theory of practice that is "an ongoing, living, working theory" (Chambers, 1992, p. 13). Pedagogy of possibility is grounded in critical pedagogy developed by the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire and advocated by Simon (1988) and Giroux (1988) to see pedagogy from the lens of power and dominance that has created and sustained social imbalance. Thus, there is "the need to develop theories, forms of knowledge and social practices that work with the experiences that people bring to the pedagogical setting" (Giroux, 1988, p.134).

In short, post method pedagogy advocates for context sensitive pedagogy in the sense that it incorporates the existing local knowledge and practices to develop sustainable skills in students. Moreover, the course contents delivered to students are highly relevant and based on sustainability goals.

### ***Translanguaging as Pedagogy***

Cen Williams has been credited for conceptualizing the term 'translanguaging' in Welsh in 1996 and was further extended by Gracia (2009) and Wei (2011). In the multilingual context like Nepal, translanguaging opens the door for addressing all existing languages equally. It refers to meaning making process being grounded in diverse socio-cultural and linguistic contexts that consists of 'multiple discursive practices' (Gracia, 2009). Additionally, it brings contents from students' locality 'to gain knowledge, to make sense, to articulate their thought and to communicate about using their language' (Li, 2011, p. 1223).

Translanguaging pedagogy uses students' linguistic repertoire for metacognitive reflection, and conceptual clarity alongside English for performing classroom tasks (García & Wei, 2014). In contexts with strong English-only ideologies, the legitimization of the linguistic repertoire can be transformative for access and inclusion. Thus, unlike monolingual approach, translanguaging promotes students to break language related

barriers and use linguistic resources for knowledge construction through appropriate classroom participation (Baker, 2011; Gracia, 2009; García & Wei, 2014). Consequently, it helps strengthen their confidence for participating in meaning making process and its implication in real life context.

### ***Eco linguistics and Eco-Critical Language Awareness***

Eco linguistics examines how discourse and stories influence human–environment relations, thereby affecting attitudes and practices related to sustainability (Stibbe, 2015; Stibbe, 2021). When integrated into ELT, ecolinguistic tasks involve critical analysis of media, policy and everyday texts to identify metaphors, agency and framing that sustain or challenge unsustainable narratives. Pedagogically, ecolinguistics can be used to craft tasks that combine textual analysis with action projects, e.g., producing public-facing multimodal campaigns, thereby linking language learning with community engagement and environmental literacy. Similarly, eco-critical language awareness pedagogy enables students to analyze the contents of their textbooks from the perspectives of ecological awareness (Haig, 2003, p.201). Furthermore, it combines the four pedagogical trends of global issues discussion, content-based learning, critical language awareness and learner autonomy.

### ***Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)***

Education for sustainable development (ESD) is in the lead role of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality education). Thus, ESD for 2030, UNESCO's strategic framework for the decade, identifies five priority action areas: policy learning environments, educator capacity, youth and community action and emphasizes the need for mainstreaming sustainability learning across curricula (UNESCO, 2020). Additionally, SDG Target 4.7.1 emphasizes education for sustainable development and global citizenship, providing guidelines and indicators that can guide national curriculum reforms and program evaluation. For English language teaching, the strategies of ESD can guide language learning outcomes through persuasive writing, critical reading, communication for participation that will ensure sustainability competencies based on cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioral aspects (UNESCO, 2020).

### **Empirical Review**

Globally, sustainable ELT practices are emerging through culturally responsive pedagogy, ecological curriculum design and teacher agency. Translanguaging in bilingual/multilingual context promotes students' meaning making skills using their

linguistic repertoire (Gracia, 2017). In Japan, Saito (2020) found that incorporating eco-critical content in English lessons improved both linguistic competence and environmental awareness. Moreover, in the context of Nepal, Shrestha (2017) found that exclusion of local indigenous knowledge from textbook contents is a major shortcoming of the existing curriculum.

Similarly, Phyak (2018) found that translanguaging pedagogy against English-only policy-built students' confidence in knowledge construction on the basis of negotiation and active classroom participation. Dewan (2020) revealed that integration of eco-critical contents in English as a foreign language classroom made students' aware of environmental things. Poudel and Choi (2021) found that English as a medium of instruction (EMI) discouraged students from active classroom participation because of English-only policy and advocated for context-sensitive pedagogy. Collectively, these studies provide empirical grounding for context-sensitive pedagogy for sustainable English language teaching in Nepal.

## Methods

This paper employs a descriptive qualitative research design based on a systematic, desk-based review and thematic synthesis of secondary data following Cooper's (2016) guidelines for integrative peer-reviewed journal articles, policy documents, practitioner reports and recent empirical studies from Nepal and the global literature, focusing on the period 2014–2025. The approach is integrative: rather than statistical meta-analysis, the study used qualitative synthesis to identify recurring themes, pedagogical strategies and systemic constraints. This design is suitable because the research questions are conceptual and policy-oriented and also because much of the Nepalese evidence is qualitative, practice-based or policy-linked.

### ***Search Strategy and Selection Criteria***

Literature searches were conducted in academic databases (e.g., Taylor & Francis Online, ScienceDirect, Wiley Online Library) and institutional repositories for the terms: "sustainability and ELT," "ecolinguistics and ELT," "translanguaging and Nepal," "postmethod pedagogy," "ESD for 2030," and "English medium instruction Nepal," supplemented by targeted searches for key authors (e.g., Kumaravadivelu, García, Stibbe, Phyak, Sah, Shrestha). Key institutional sources included UNESCO (WEF, 2015; ESD for 2030 road-map) and the British Council report on ELT in Nepal (2022).

Inclusion criteria: empirical focus (classroom studies, policy analyses, teacher inquiry reports), publication date 2014-2025 (to align with SDG era scholarship), and relevance to ELT pedagogy, assessment, or policy. Grey literature (reports, practitioner blogs) was included that additionally provided contextual or implementation evidence. All selected sources were critically appraised for methodological transparency and relevance.

### ***Data Extraction and Analysis***

From each source, the data were extracted related to: context (country, school type), participants (teachers, students), pedagogical practices described, evidence of outcomes (participation, learning, action), constraints (assessment, policy) and study design. Thematic synthesis involved coding of extracted data into specific themes: teacher agency and postmethod enactment; translanguaging and linguistic justice; multimodal/eco-project approaches; assessment and systemic alignment and barriers/enablers for scaling. Additionally, excerpts from empirical studies were used to illustrate practices and impacts.

### ***Data Analysis and Interpretation***

Analysis of data has been conducted in three phases: descriptive mapping of empirical evidence (who, where, what), thematic coding of pedagogical practices and reported outcomes, and cross-case interpretation to identify conditions that support or inhibit sustainability-aligned ELT. Given the predominance of qualitative studies in the Nepal corpus (case studies, practitioner inquiry, policy analysis), interpretive synthesis emphasized patterns of practice and system-level interactions rather than statistical effect sizes. All analytic memos were cross-checked against source material to preserve the integrity of original claims.

## **Results and Discussion**

The analysis of secondary data produced five major thematic findings based on global and Nepalese studies: teacher agency and postmethod pedagogy; translanguaging as pedagogy for linguistic justice; multimodal and ecolinguistic task design; assessment and accountability pressures; and gap in policy and practice. The themes are interpreted below:

### ***Teacher Agency and Post Method Pedagogy***

Empirical studies from Nepal consistently report that teachers exercise professional judgement to adapt materials, select local texts and co-design tasks that align with postmethod principles of particularity and practicality (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). British

council's review of ELT in Nepal documents many instances where teachers modified textbook tasks or used local stories and signage as instructional materials to make lessons relevant to students' lives (Shrestha et al., 2022). Similarly, Phyak (2018/2022) documents teacher-led translanguaging strategies in English-medium schools are depended on teachers' initiative and reflective practice. These studies find that teacher agency is a core enabling condition for sustainability-aligned practices. Evidently, students demonstrated higher engagement and a stronger sense of civic reasoning when assigned project-based units on local water issues than the textbook-based projects (Shrestha et al., 2022). Thus, teacher professional development should prioritize inquiry cycles and reflective practice over prescriptive methods to produce rich learning experiences aligned with sustainability for students.

### ***Translanguaging Pedagogy for Linguistic Justice***

Translanguaging pedagogy enables students to overcome linguistic boundaries and naturally utilize multiple linguistic resources (García, 2009; García & Li, 2014). It enhances comprehension, participation and affirmation of identity. English-only policies in English-medium instruction (EMI) contexts can alienate learners and perpetuate inequity while deliberate translanguaging fosters inclusion and concept mastery (Phyak, 2018/2022; Sah, 2022; Sah & Li, 2024). Translanguaging pedagogy is described not as ad hoc use of L1 but as a planned pedagogic resource. Teachers scaffold conceptual work in local languages and support students in re-rendering ideas in English for communicative purposes (Neupane, 2021). Translanguaging practices could reduce comprehension gaps and increase participation among marginalized language groups; however, policy or school norms insist on monolingual/ English making translanguaging covert and less effective (Sah & Li, 2022). It is commendable that school language policies should explicitly permit strategic use of home languages in ELT classrooms and guide planned translanguaging sequences.

### ***Multimodal and Eco linguistic Task Design***

Ecolinguistics and multimodal literacies provide practical pathways for linking language learning with sustainability literacy. Global case studies demonstrate that tasks involving critical discourse analysis (e.g., examining metaphors in media about nature) as well as multimodal productions such as podcasts, posters, videos, and community outreach, lead to both language gains and increased environmental awareness (Stibbe, 2015/2021). In Nepal, practitioner reports and classroom inquiries documented project work including multilingual campaigns on water conservation, school garden projects, and community

interviews, which were used within English lessons to develop students' argumentation and civic participation (Shrestha & Gautam, 2022). Evidently, they found that the tasks designed based on multimodal posts and eco-linguistic contents through translanguaging pedagogy enhanced students' awareness regarding natural calamity.

### **Assessment and Accountability Pressure**

The practice of paper-pencil test and standardized assessment system generally assess students' linguistic performance based on grammar, vocabulary and skills whereas teachers need to be accountable for having good results in examination regardless of students' competencies (Shrestha & Gautam, 2022). It shows that the systemic barriers are the major hindrance for teachers to be focused on results instead of knowledge and skills. In this sense, English-only policy and teachers' accountability pressure for examination and result are not going in line with context-sensitive pedagogy. Consequently, the traditional forms of assessment are responsible for low proficiency of students in the English language.

### **Gaps in Policy and Practice**

The reviewed empirical studies (Phyak, 2018/2022; Sah & Li, 2022; Sah & Li, 2024; Shrestha & Gautam, 2022) from the context of Nepal evidently highlight the existing wide gap between policy and practice. Even though, the policies namely, Nepal's Education-2030 National Framework (UNESCO, 2019) and UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2020) framework prioritize inclusive, competency-based education for sustainability, these are not addressed in practice. Thus, the gap is seen at various interconnected levels: teacher education program, curriculum, and assessment system that are not going parallel to Sustainable Development Goal 4.7. Essentially, the Ministry of Education and the language department should develop ELT specific ESD implementation guides and allocate resources for teacher training and assessment reform to narrow down the existing gaps.

### **Discussions**

The study has focused on the pertinent concern of integrating context-sensitive pedagogy in ELT which can contribute to sustainable education outcomes overcoming systemic barriers for implementation. Regarding this, a comprehensive account of theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence from the globe and from the Nepalese contexts has been presented. The empirical synthesis brought the insight that school teachers in Nepal have already been practicing context-sensitive, sustainable ELT to some extent; however,

systemic constraints, such as the assessment mode and prescriptive EMI policies are the prime causes of limiting teachers' classroom practices.

The theoretical frameworks of post method pedagogy, translanguaging, Eco linguistics and ESD provide proper grounds for context-sensitive, sustainable ELT in the Nepalese context. Moreover, the three interrelated key highlights are: sustainability in ELT is a pedagogical and systemic problem more than a curricular one; linguistic justice is central to sustainable learning and ecolinguistics and multimodal projects can operationalize sustainability competencies. UNESCO's ESD framework can effectively guide the alignment across the curriculum, assessment and teacher education programs regarding classroom practices based on ecolinguistics modules through translanguaging projects (UNESCO, 2020; Nepal Education 2030 framework, 2019). Similarly, in the multilingual context of Nepal, translanguaging can help narrow the mismatch between students' diverse home languages and English-only guided assessments by sustaining learners' repertoires and identities for long-term educational resilience and inclusion (García & Li, 2014; Sah, 2022).

Likewise, English language teachers can operationalize sustainability competencies in students by incorporating tasks based on local environmental issues. By doing so, such tasks will not only develop language proficiency but also cultivate the habit of critical thinking and a sense of civic responsibility that can mobilize them as agents of change from local to the broader contexts.

## Conclusion

The study is based on secondary data to unearth the relevance of context-sensitive pedagogy for sustainable ELT. The theoretical review of postmethod pedagogy, translanguaging pedagogy and eco-linguistics approach provided the lens to understand the requirements of context-sensitive pedagogy. Additionally, the policy review of Nepal's Education-2030 Framework (2019) and UNESCO's ESD (2020) has the road-map to guide practice; however, the mismatch among the components such as policy, teacher education program, curriculum and assessment system are the major barriers to competency based sustainable ELT.

## Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study is desk-based research and entirely based on secondary data analyses and published reports. It does not present primary empirical findings. Moreover, the empirical studies are confined to qualitative research approach. Thus, there is a dire need for mixed-

methods and longitudinal research studies on language learning outcomes, identity measures, and community impact over time. Future empirical studies should: develop and validate rubrics for sustainability competencies in ELT; conduct quasi-experimental or longitudinal studies to examine the learning outcomes associated with translanguaging and Eco linguistics-embedded units and evaluate the effects of assessment reforms based on sustainable pedagogy.

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