THE USE OF PPL IN RAISING ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS AMONG SCHOOL STUDENTS

Khujakulova Aziza
4th-year student
Uzbekistan State World Languages University
khujaqulovaaziza@gmail.com
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Abstract

This article investigates the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in enhancing ecological awareness among 6th-class students in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The experiment was conducted at public school №229 in Uchtepa district with two 6th-grade students over 3 English lessons, focusing on global problems such as pollution, water shortage, and waste sorting. Data were collected through pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, surveys, and classroom observation. The findings suggest that integrating TBLT in EFL not only helps students improve their language learning but also helps them further comprehend problems arising nowadays and feel responsible towards them.

Keywords: Project-Based Learning (PBL), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), ecological awareness, environmental education, student engagement, sustainable development.

Introduction

One of the most essential tools for humans in this world is the environment. It is a matter of survival and existence for us. However, as the number of people starts increasing, our thirst to live a better life with the development of new technologies has paved the way for its degradation. As a consequence, in today's world, global environmental problems such as water scarcity, climate change, air pollution, and plastic pollution are becoming ubiquitous, leading countries to take every issue seriously. Many countries are implementing new rules to prevent such problems from happening, but the thing is that they should educate people first, especially school students, to take responsibility for caring for their environment and coming up with up-to-date solutions that the world needs. However, we should, at first, teach them what actual ecological problems are and how they can be tackled, specifically in what ways. Even though the majority of schools include ecology classes, the scope in which they integrate it is low, and the lessons are mostly based on rote memorisation. But learning comes from fully comprehending the target topic, not by just remembering it. The lessons on environmental topics should be added and intervened in language learning process, making it fun and informative at the same time. Because students are more likely to learn better when they are exposed to learning something in a fascinating way. Therefore, I reckon that using modern approaches and methods may help them to understand new themes better.

This article aims to study the effect of integrating ecological topics into English lessons for students of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes using the PPL (Project-Based Learning) approach in a secondary school, which has not yet been much explored by Uzbek students. PBL is a proactive method for increasing student engagement and inspiration in their educational endeavours. The primary goal of several learning techniques used in the teaching method is to empower students to actively address the challenges that are put before them (Martn and Rodrguez, 2015). PBL is somewhat different from traditional methods of teaching in that the teacher takes on the role of a facilitator and learning is enacted in a more collaborative, hands-on process driven by real-world connection. It uses authentic projects as a

vehicle to encourage deeper learning through collaboration and extended enquiry, and culminates in a final product or event (Aitken, 2019). The role of the teacher involves collating sources, guiding students, managing group tasks, providing helpful feedback, and helping students with real-world problems.

Methods

2.1 The research design.

The study adopts semi-experimental and mixed methods in order to know the effectiveness of PPL in ecology classes. It enables teachers to look into both its benefits and drawbacks, making them decide whether to use it or not in future lessons. The qualitative component includes observational data to further supplement tests and suggest new notions in classroom settings.

2.2 Participants.

This study was carried out among 6th classes: 6 – "A" and 6 – "G" by me, Aziza Xujaqulova, in the 229th school, in Uchtepa District, in Tashkent, in the school year of 2025-2026. Before the experiment, the students had been learning English for more than 6 years, meaning that the language was not something new to them. Prior to our study, permission was obtained not only from the teachers but also from the students' parents and the students themselves.

2.3 Procedure.

The study consisted of three PPL-based English language lessons delivered to each class for a week. Each lesson was 45 minutes long and aimed at specific goals. Before we experimented, my supporting team and I interviewed all students in these two classes about how well they knew their environment and whether they were mentally aware of the damage to the planet. During the week, we covered the unit " The environment" from the student's book " Guess What!". Each lesson, we went deeper into the topic with the addition of new games and activities about the planet " The Earth". For example, students were shown a video about the degradation of the Earth annually owing to the problems that exist in the world. The vocabulary and the grammar were in accordance with their level. Of course, there were some unfamiliar words, but it was not a problem at all, since I helped them to understand these words by providing their definition in English with the words they already know. Step by step, we urged them to use English more while talking about environmental concerns and, most importantly, grabbed their attention to take care of the places they live, study, and play.

2.4 Instruments.

To collect data on the students' ecological awareness before and after the intervention, three instruments were used. First, a short pre- and post-intervention questionnaire, built on a three-point scale (agree, not sure, disagree), asked participants about their knowledge of environmental problems, their attitude toward the environment, and their willingness to act. Second, brief structured interviews were carried out with a number of volunteering students from each class to gain a deeper, qualitative picture of their views before and after the three lessons. Third, an observation checklist was completed by me and my supporting team during each lesson to record students' participation, use of environment-related vocabulary, and engagement in the tasks.

Results

The pre-intervention questionnaire and the initial interviews showed that most of the students already had a vague idea of some environmental problems, mostly gained from television or from what they had heard at home. However, few of them could explain the causes of these problems in English, and even fewer felt that such issues were something they were personally responsible for. Several students admitted that lessons about ecology had so far meant memorising facts for a test rather than something they thought about outside class.

Classroom observation across the three lessons pointed to a steady rise in participation. In the first lesson, only a small number of students volunteered to speak about pollution or water shortage, and their answers were short and largely repeated from the textbook. By the second and third lessons, after watching a video on the state of the Earth and taking part in group discussions and vocabulary games, more students raised their hands, used the new environmental vocabulary correctly, and connected the topic to their own experience, for example mentioning waste near their homes or schools. Group tasks such as sorting rubbish into categories in English, or discussing possible solutions to water shortage in pairs, kept the students engaged for the whole lesson, which was not always the case in the more traditional lessons observed earlier in the term.

The post-intervention questionnaire and follow-up interviews reflected this shift. A larger share of the students reported that they now understood why problems such as air pollution or plastic waste occur and could name at least one action they personally could take, such as switching off lights, reusing plastic bottles, or not littering. Several students also said, in their own words, that they felt "more responsible" for the environment around their school and home after the lessons, and a few mentioned that they had started reminding family members about sorting waste. In terms of language, the students appeared more comfortable using topic-specific vocabulary, such as pollution, shortage, recycling, and sorting, in full sentences rather than in isolated words, which had been more common at the start of the study.

Discussion

These findings support the view that Project-Based Learning is not simply an add-on to a language lesson but a way of making the target language and the target problem inseparable from one another. As Martín and Rodríguez (2015) and Aitken (2019) note, PBL places students in the position of a facilitator-guided investigator rather than a passive receiver of facts, and the rise in participation and vocabulary use observed in this study reflects exactly that shift. What began as short, textbook-style answers in the first lesson grew, by the third lesson, into more personal and specific statements about the students' own environment, which is consistent with earlier findings that project- and task-based approaches help EFL learners connect language study with environmental issues they had previously treated as separate from their daily lives (Setyowati et al., 2022).

This result is in line with wider research on integrating environmental content into English language teaching. Setyowati and Widiati (2014) similarly found that treating environmental themes as writing material, rather than as isolated vocabulary, helped EFL learners engage more critically with ecological problems while practising the language. At the same time, the present findings echo a caution raised by Cristovão et al. (2022) and Mercer et al. (2023), who observed that surface-level exposure to environmental topics does not automatically translate into a lasting sense of responsibility; the short, three-lesson design of this study means that the reported increase in "feeling responsible" should be read as an early, encouraging sign rather than a settled outcome. As Rantung et al. (2023) suggest, using authentic and locally relevant material, such as songs, videos, or real problems from the students' own neighbourhood, appears to be an important condition for this kind of awareness to take hold, and the positive reaction to the video on the Earth's degradation used in this study points in the same direction.

Some challenges were also visible. A few students found certain environmental terms difficult at first and needed extra scaffolding through simplified definitions and examples, confirming that vocabulary load has to be carefully managed in a PBL-based environmental lesson so that the language goal and the content goal support, rather than compete with, each other. The study was also limited by its short duration of only three lessons and by its setting in a single school, which means the results cannot be generalised to other contexts without further research. As Yu et al. (2024) point out, larger-scale and

longer empirical studies are still needed to show whether such gains in language ability and ecological awareness are maintained over time.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore how Project-Based Learning could be used in EFL lessons to raise ecological awareness among 6th-grade students in Tashkent. The findings suggest that, even over a short period, integrating environmental topics into language lessons through PBL-style tasks, such as group discussions, vocabulary games, and problem-based activities, helped students not only expand their English vocabulary but also think more critically about environmental problems and their own role in addressing them. Students moved from repeating memorised facts to expressing personal opinions and proposed actions in English, which suggests that combining language learning with real-world environmental content can make both the language and the topic more meaningful to young learners.

For classroom practice, the study suggests that EFL teachers do not need a separate ecology curriculum to raise environmental awareness; existing units, such as "The Environment" in the coursebook used here, can be extended with authentic materials, group projects, and discussion tasks without major additional resources. For future research, a longer intervention, a larger number of participants, and a comparison with a control group taught through more traditional methods would help confirm whether the gains observed here are lasting and consistent across different classrooms. Despite its small scale, this study adds classroom-level evidence to the small but growing body of work suggesting that English language teaching can be a meaningful space for environmental education, not only a subject taught alongside it.

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