

Enacting Green Pedagogy in the EFL classrooms in Bangladesh: Prospects, Challenges and Pragmatic Breakthroughs

Mozaffor Hossain *

Northern University of Business and Technology Khulna, Bangladesh

*Corresponding author: alirumashuhana74@gmail.com

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Abstract Bangladesh suffers scores of manmade environmental issues, like air pollution, water pollution, sound pollution, soil erosion, deforestation and dumping waste materials etc. leading to many natural disasters, such as flood, cyclones, draught, hill collapse and the like round the year. For greater welfare of the country as well as its people, environmental consciousness is a must and increasingly demanded among the teeming young generation, of who a greater number are students. Among the students, almost all pursue English language skills at various institutes, for English is mandatory in all academic stages as well as in attaining a better career in this country. Hence, English lessons focusing environmental awareness and guidance can lead the learners to play commendable transformative roles in protecting the environment from further degeneration. Accordingly, this study intends to explore the possibility of enacting green pedagogy concentrating atmospheric betterment in the EFL classrooms in Bangladesh. In the process, it attempts to find out the pragmatic approaches to converge EFL instructions and green natural phenomena to succeed in achieving two targets simultaneously, one being improved English language skills and another being consolidated environmental awareness.

Keywords: *enacting, green pedagogy, EFL, Bangladesh, prospects, challenges, pragmatic breakthroughs*

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1. Introduction

Bangladesh is a country possessing fewer amounts of tree and environmental resource than necessary, for which it suffers various kinds of natural calamities and climate-oriented hazards round the year. Consequently, people from all walks of life have to try and implement every possible means to increase tree plantations and green revolution across the country for keeping its natural balance. For the purpose, engaging the students from schools, colleges and universities into the task of revitalizing the environmental resource of the country can be a worth-praising venture. Conde and Sanchez [1] work on school curriculum and environmental education, and explore that environmental education possesses significant prowess to lead the society to prosperity, which is why it is imperative to promote it to such a level that inspires senses of dutifulness and commitments among the people. Study on education based on environmental issues and welfare has the possibility to challenge traditional research on education, and proves that the former is concerned more on sustainable development and human betterment than just the pedagogical prosperity [1]. As such, provision of green teaching in the EFL classrooms, which

generally contain a huge number of students at the tertiary level of education in the country, appears to be a promising attempt to involve the teeming number of students and teachers in the task of protecting and preserving the atmosphere. In addition, English language education occupies a paramount existence in all the stages of the education system of Bangladesh, for which it can be a considerable field to activate the teaching relating to environmental welfare among the students. Nkwetisama [2] attempts to enact eco-applied linguistic approach in the EFL classrooms in Cameroon and asserts that even EFL practitioners can contribute to sustainable and environmental development through practicing green pedagogy in the classrooms. It can include both the EFL teachers and learners to act consciously in eco-friendly manner in their daily life as well as in the institutions [2]. Regarding the imperativeness of the EFL students to be having adequate knowledge and awareness concerning the surrounding environment and its betterment, Veselinovska & Kirova [3] work together on blending environmental education and English language teaching in the settings of Macedonia, and come to the understanding that without having relevant knowledge and ideas about the contemporary world around, the students will in not be able to effectuate target language efficiency in an expected manner. Veselinovska & Kirova [3] thereby emphasize that for

having environmental consciousness as responsible citizens and attaining desired language proficiency, EFL learners obviously need a pragmatic application of green pedagogy in the classroom. Furthermore, Mwendwa [4] believes that integration of environmental education in regular classroom lessons and nurturing strengthens the possibility of sustainable education. Thus, from major human-improving considerations, going green in the EFL classrooms is the aim and issue of investigation of this article.

2. Research Objectives

Research into the combination of environment and education offers that it can lead to substantial changes in the thoughts and attitudes of the teachers and learners regarding their roles and duties in the improvement of wholesome atmosphere around them [5]. Accordingly, this study aims at exploring the following objectives:

- (i) If green pedagogy should be integrated into the EFL contexts of Bangladesh.
- (ii) The existing and probable obstacles to implement green pedagogy in the EFL contexts of Bangladesh.
- (iii) The pragmatic approaches to enact green pedagogy in the EFL classrooms in Bangladesh.
- (iv) How the EFL learners of Bangladesh accept and react to the incorporation of green pedagogy.

3. Literature Review

Preston [6] defines that green pedagogy involves instructing and leading the learners to exercise critical thinking on environment, environmental phenomena and activities. Jorgenson [7] considers green pedagogy as signifying critical literacy and refers it to be a kind of transformative teaching which engages the teachers to impart environmental education in the classrooms so as to motivate and guide the students to engage themselves in nurturing and protecting the essential ingredients of the environment in their day to day life. Similarly, Riordan and Klein [5] present that green pedagogy that deals basically with environment education is established on the motto of making teaching an innovative and dynamic procedure which encourages and engages both the teachers and the students to work together to bring solutions to environmental problems. That being presented, it is quite understandable that blending environmental education into the classroom signifies to be green pedagogy, which is a deserving issue in the world of the teachers and learners.

Emphasizing collective benefits, Conde and Sanchez [1] state that incorporation of environmental phenomena into regular education is an innovated concern that strengthens the involvement and inspiration of learners into community welfare. For the purpose, Hauschild, Poltavtchenko and Stoller [8] suggest content-based teaching English where the contents have to be based on environmental issues so that the EFL learners attain both English language skills and knowledge about the environment. Hauschild, Poltavtchenko and Stoller [8] also argue that among the unlimited themes that can be the contents for teaching

English, environmental as well as natural phenomena should be some of the very demanding components for studying and learning. Referring to the paramount importance of green pedagogy in the mainstream educational ventures, Riegerova [9] asserts that environmental education has been so important an academic issue now-a-days all over the world many countries and institutions have incorporated it in their curricula.

While presenting the imperativeness of environmental education in Bangladesh, Masum and Akhir (n.d.) [10] posit that Bangladesh encounters constant challenges of environmental problems, like contaminated air, recurring natural calamities and shrinking natural resource, and the country suffers a very tiny land-man ratio which incites frequent overexploitation of nature. If these pressing issues are to be solved and if the country is to be upgraded environmentally, education has a considerable part to play, given that educated communities solve problems more practically. Moreover, the curriculum of the education in Bangladesh has a huge scope to include and implement green literacy that can contribute to atmospheric welfare in a substantial manner [11]. Contemplating this, Chowdhury [11] assesses the national curriculum of the country concentrating the elements and focus on environmental education, and explores that the school course materials on environmental issues both ill organized and lacking in integrity for logical progression. Therefore, it is recommended that a re-orientation and holistic approach is needed to integrate environmental learning in all the disciplines of education in Bangladesh [11]. Whereas the general education in the country is bereft of sufficient nature-oriented teaching and learning, the EFL arrangement here has so far experienced almost no link with environmental discussions.

4. Green Pedagogy in the EFL Classroom

Fien [12] proposes that green skills in the classroom aim to make the learners work on the motto, “[w]e are going to make the world a better place!” which ensures low carbon emission, resource efficiency and social inclusion. Likewise, Setyoati and Widiati [13] study on integrating environmental education into EFL classroom and realize that the concept of greenery has a palpable value in inspiring the pupils to be motivated to protect the ecosystem that they live in. Accordingly, Riegerova [9] proposes practical ways of effectuating environmental education in the English language classroom where the author offers to inspire the learners to read texts regarding the environment, write about it and learn the vocabulary on it. In the same way, many other explicitly atmospheric things can be practiced in the set up of the classrooms and in the everyday utensils used by the teachers and students. On different days, learners can wear uniform green dresses and take green lunch (food made with vegetables only) together, as Jorgenson [7] proposes, to enact pedagogy in the institutions, the color green is to be focused on for it has a default association with the environment and environmental feelings that may connect both the teachers and students to be participating in actions good for the environment. Sometimes, the whole class led by their teacher can go out, plant trees on

roadsides and send an environment-oriented message to the people. The students can be given assignments on gardening or planting trees in and around their living areas, on which they will receive marks, as Gonzalez [14] presents an instance of garden-in-school program innovated by Stephen Ritz, a South Bronx teacher, who has led the students along with the school people to launch gardens as part of the education procedure. Gonzalez [14] describes that Stephen Ritz and his teams accompanied by the students arrange cooking classes, camping and gardening both inside and outside the institution, through which they inspire the learners to feed the community sometimes. This way, the teachers have to make sure that they make and motivate the learners to talk as well as write on each and every environmental task they perform both inside and outside the classroom.

To enact green pedagogy particularly in the EFL classrooms, both the language facilitators and the learners have quite a few things to do. Firstly, the materials on the four skills of English (Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking) have to be prepared with a comprehensive concentration on the green phenomena. That means, all the teaching materials of the mentioned skills have to be created with audio tapes, video recordings, readable texts, writing tasks, and speaking topics and questions that deal with environment-related matters and discussions. It is mainly the EFL teachers who are to manage these teaching resources for the green pedagogy-integrated classrooms. Lessons highlighting the ecological, human life-related, medicinal and nutritional utilities of different trees, plants, flowers and vegetables might be presented in the classrooms, which will be followed by learners' presentations on such topics. The teachers and learners concertedly may visit various botanical gardens and safari parks, where they can be familiar with multiple trees, and their beauties and services towards humans. It will be convenient on the part of the teacher if she/he does some basic study on how different trees, plants, vegetables and the like can be grown and taken care of, which subsequently she/he will disseminate among the EFL learners.

5. Research Method

The research method followed in the study is a combined one having both qualitative and quantitative approaches that involved a four-month teaching and observing the students, and conducting a survey about the feedback of the participants on green pedagogy in EFL classrooms. During the course, I provided the learners with English language learning tasks and materials relating to environmental problems, their possible breakthroughs, and what the learners can do to save and upgrade the environment. In addition, I instructed and motivated them to talk on green phenomena, like how they can plant trees around their habitats, how they can take care of the existing vegetations and how they can contribute to protecting the wildlife. They were also encouraged to discuss issues, like how they can safeguard the atmosphere from pollutions, how they can increase environmental awareness in the community and such aspects as parts of their language attainment and

expression. Accordingly, I put emphasis on their learning environment-related vocabularies and terms which in return helped them nurture environmental responsibility.

In the class sessions, I enquired the participants about if they had performed any good jobs to the environment in the meantime. Thus I would come to know what environmental tasks they performed and what improvement regarding tree plantation they achieved. Simultaneously I observed the day to day language awareness they developed.

At the end of the course I conducted a survey on the participants with questions targeting to realize what they learnt about green pedagogy and how they reacted to it. The learners had to respond to close ended questions intending their notions and feedback towards the ingredients of green pedagogy they received in the class sessions. The findings helped me conclude on the efficacy of the incorporation of green pedagogy into the EFL classrooms in Bangladesh.

5.1. Participants

The study was conducted on 35 students of Computer Science and Engineering Department of Northern University of Business and Technology Khulna. The participants belonged to the course titled "English Language II: Reading & Writing", for which I was the assigned teacher. I intended to enact green pedagogy to teach reading and writing to them. Accordingly, I designed the teaching materials based on green issues, like trees, tree plantation, clean and safe environment, vegetables and fruits. The students had to read texts on environmental and natural phenomena, and write relating to greeneries.

5.2. Instruments

The utilized instruments in the study were basically classroom materials that involved texts and contents relating to environmental topics and discussions. As to the survey, I used a questionnaire having twelve questions that targeted to know the thoughts, ideas, feelings and reactions of the participants regarding the integration of green pedagogy in the EFL classroom.

5.3. Data Collection

Basically primary data were collected from the participants on the basis of a number of criteria aiming to know their notions and reactions towards the combination of green pedagogy and EFL learning in the classroom. The participants had to respond to statements as to whether they had learnt sufficient English language skills together with environmental awareness. There were total thirty-five students who attended the classes regularly and responded spontaneously to the enquiries at the end of the program. The collected data were mainly quantitative ones revealing their achievement and belief in the incorporation of English language education and green learning.

5.4. Findings & Analysis

The participants displayed noticeable consciousness and dutifulness towards plants and trees in their thought and manner. Around 43% of the participants assure of

their maximum learning regarding environment whereas 29% assert that they have learnt about environmental phenomena to some extent in the EFL classrooms. Through the lessons of green pedagogy, about 40% respondents believe they have been highly conscious of their own responsibility towards the surrounding environment while 34% have been at least slightly aware of their environmental roles. Approximately 40% of the participants declare that they have started to take care of their surrounding environment due to the green-oriented knowledge earned in the green pedagogy classroom. A greater improvement relating to being more careful not to

cause any harm to the trees and environment has been ensured by total 72% participants (46% responded very much, 26% somewhat), who emphasize that they injure any plant or pollute the atmosphere neither consciously nor unconsciously. In addition, a good number of the students (45% in total) reassure that they have already begun planting trees to various extents in their habitat and neighborhood. Furthermore, 6% of the learners think that they have attained satisfactory English language proficiency while 34% believe they have received enough skill in the language by virtue of the integration of green pedagogy in the EFL classroom.

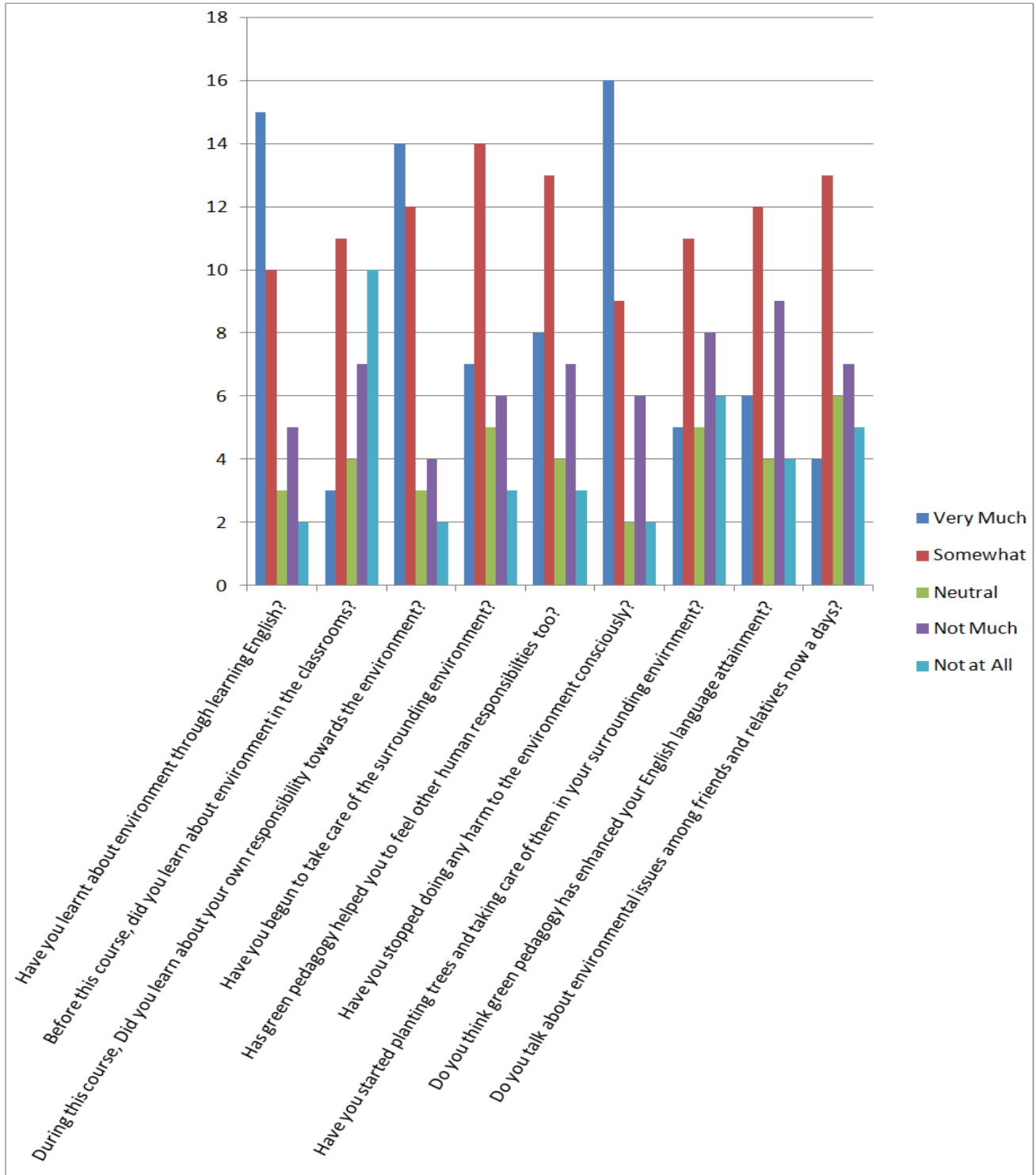


Figure 1. Participants' responses on the benefit and efficacy of Green Pedagogy

6. Limitations

In general, matters related to plants, trees, vegetation, air, water and environment receive the least amount of coverage in the daily life of the students in Bangladesh, which is why the lessons and discussions on the atmosphere and its possible betterment did not get satisfactory reception from the learners in the first place. Besides, as environmental phenomena are not on the menu on the class curriculum and materials, many students did not seem to be familiar with green pedagogy or even the idea of involving going green in the EFL classrooms. In addition, since there has been almost no experiment and work on integrating green concepts into English education in the country, it was obviously difficult to find data and information which would be helpful for the study. Furthermore, with regard to the teaching materials, I encountered difficulty in getting related texts and writings for the purpose of instructing the learners on the target. However, all the obstacles got reduced when the learners received motivations and could understand the significance of the process.

7. Recommendation

Though the vibe of environmental education works slowly among the learners at the initial level of the course, it gets stronger and more vibrant with time. Students start showing vivid proof of the existence and nurturing of green practice in their everyday manner and thoughts. Many of the participants begin to garden around their habitats, and preserve as well as take care of the trees and vegetations in their surroundings. They refrain from polluting the environment by dumping rubbish and waste materials only in the dustbins, stopping using polythene bags and using less wood furniture. They also start planting trees, turning food habit to more green items and using non-polluting vehicles. Simultaneously, they learn the target skills of English at a satisfactory level knowing the diction and expressions regarding green learning.

Therefore, EFL teachers and learners in Bangladesh can positively put green pedagogy in practice with a view to materializing a greater opportunity of saving the environment and assimilating desired expertise together. The academicians at different levels of education can give the approach of green pedagogy a sincere try in other faculties and disciplines too for disseminating the innovation across the nation. Thus, if implemented in all the stages of the education system, green pedagogy will bring an appreciable improvement in the environmental as well educational field of the country.

8. Conclusion

In a country like Bangladesh, where population have always been increasing, but trees and greeneries are ever declining, any fruitful attempt to save the environment and

thereby playing any positive role to benefit the nation is certainly welcome. Therefore, green pedagogy incorporated into EFL classrooms deserves substantial acceptance. Only an environment-loving mindset from both the teachers' and learners' sides is the prerequisite to get the approach implemented.

In fact, a number of explorations will come into existence once green pedagogy is actualized in teaching and learning English. One of them is the fact that learners will be able to give vent to their thoughts and ideas on familiar issues, which is very essential in case of learning English. Another important issue is that green pedagogy can receive significant coverage in EFL context. Lastly, but most importantly, green pedagogy can help English language education turn to be critical literacy that will be contributing to transform people's lives.

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