

Land Art in the English Class: A Proposal of Environmental Awareness Activities through Holistic Methods

Land Art en la clase de inglés: una propuesta de conciencia ambiental mediante métodos holísticos

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Abstract

Land art in the English class is a proposal to promote environmental awareness in a group of 30 students from the Integrated English Course Three at Sección Regional Huetar Norte y Caribe, National University Sarapiqui Campus, Costa Rica. The base of this proposal is the development of class activities under the concepts of the Suggestopedia methodology, by Georgi Lozanov, and some aspects of the holistic approach. This proposal responds to the necessity of encouraging the topic of Mother Earth and its importance. Environmental awareness is a fundamental attitude to start changing actions. Suggestopedia proposes to enable students to learn a language in a relaxing atmosphere, full of stimuli that liberate them from the restrictive influences and rigor that more traditional classroom settings usually have (Chastain, 1988, p.104; cited in Omaggio, 1993, p.117). The group of students previously mentioned attended a class where the atmosphere was comfortable and relaxing. To stimulate the senses, the teacher used attractive pictures, colorful card phrases related to the topic, baroque music, videos, songs, soft aroma, and, finally, the contact with nature elements to express a message. As a result, many students had positive reactions toward the class activities. They considered this class methodology different, more interesting, and more meaningful than the traditional classes. They felt more motivated and less stressed to express themselves in English. Students produced some posters and land art videos to express their concerns, feelings, and reflections regarding the environmental topic. In conclusion, this group could give an environmental message in English in a satisfactory way.

Keywords: suggestopedia; land art; environmental awareness.

Resumen

Land art en la clase de inglés es una propuesta para promover la conciencia ambiental en un grupo de 30 estudiantes del Tercer Curso Integrado de Inglés, en la Sección Regional Huetar Norte y Caribe, Campus de Sarapiquí, Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica. La base de esta propuesta es el desarrollo de actividades de clase con base en los conceptos de la metodología de la Sugestopedia, de Georgi Lozanov, y algunos aspectos del abordaje holístico. Esta propuesta responde a la necesidad de promover el tema de la Madre Tierra y su importancia. La conciencia ambiental es una actitud fundamental para iniciar acciones de cambio. La Sugestopedia propone a los estudiantes el aprendizaje de un idioma en una atmósfera de relajación, lleno de estímulos que los libera de influencias restrictivas y rigor que tienen muchas clases tradicionales (Chastain, 1988, p.104; cited in Omaggio, 1993, p.117) El grupo de estudiantes antes mencionado estuvo en una clase donde había un ambiente confortable y relajado. Para estimular los sentidos, el profesor utilizó imágenes atractivas, tarjetas de colores relacionadas con los temas, música barroca, videos, canciones, un aroma suave y, finalmente, el contacto con elementos de la naturaleza para expresar un mensaje. Como resultado, muchos estudiantes tuvieron reacciones positivas hacia las actividades en clase. Ellos consideraron esta metodología en clase diferente, más interesante y más significativa que la clase tradicional. Se sintieron motivados y menos estresados para expresarse en inglés. Los estudiantes produjeron algunos pósteres y videos de Land art para expresar sus preocupaciones, sentimientos y reflexiones con relación al tema ambiental. En conclusión, este grupo pudo transmitir un mensaje en inglés sobre el ambiente de manera satisfactoria

Palabras clave: sugestopedia; land art; conciencia ambiental.

Introduction

CSUCA, Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano (Central American University Superior Council), declared 2016 as the Mother Earth's year. This declaration responds to the international trends related to the protection of nature and to the change of the environmental problems we have at present. Many academic, cultural, and social activities have been organized to raise awareness of the importance of Mother Earth in our lives. Behind all these activities, there is an intention of promoting environmental awareness in the society.

The English class is a good place where teachers and students can concentrate on specific themes and contents, not only to develop language skills, but also to become more informed and critical citizens. The environmental problem is a global issue that must be part of our curricula and personal interests.

To awake students' interest in this kind of topics, it is important to design meaningful class activities that can produce positive reactions. Land art is a wonderful art technique that gives the teacher and students the possibility to have contact with nature and, at the same time, express their ideas about Mother Earth.

A language teacher, as a facilitator, has to identify and understand different language methods, strategies, and/or techniques to maximize learning opportunities and promote learner autonomy (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, cited by Venkanna and Glory). Suggestopedia is one of these methods that are humanistic in nature and consider learners from global and holistic perspectives. This strategy particularly emphasizes the affective aspects of learner and learning situation in an effort to decrease psychological barriers such as tension, anxiety, fear, frustration, inhibition, boredom, and other factors (Venkanna and Glory 2015, p.129). This holistic method is considered an effective and successful language teaching technique that motivates students to learn and use their language skills in a relaxing atmosphere.

The purpose of this document is to describe and share class experiences through the use of some suggestopedic activities and Land Art as tools to motivate students to express environmental awareness messages.

Background

The difference between environmental awareness and pro-environmental behavior

Many studies and models propose various positions to explain why people act environmentally and what the barriers are to pro-environmental behavior. This attitude is necessary to start changing the environmental problems. Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) report important and interesting research findings, definitions, facts, theory, and practice in environmental education to open a dialogue regarding different options might help educators develop pro-environmental behavior in their classrooms.

Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) describe some models and factors that influence the theory and practice of proenvironmental behavior. They give descriptions of altruism, empathy and pro-social behavior, and sociological models. On the other hand, they also describe demographic, internal factors (e.g., institutional, economic, social, and cultural factors) and external factors (e.g., motivation, environmental knowledge, awareness, values, emotions, attitudes, locus of control, responsibilities, and priorities).

"Environmental awareness is defined as knowing of the impact of human behavior on the environment" (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002, p.253). At the same time, they define pro-environmental behavior as "behavior that consciously seeks to minimize the negative impact of one's actions on the natural and built world" (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002, p.240). Taking these two definitions into account, I can infer that knowing about the environmental problems is not the same as doing something to minimize the negative impact humans have caused.

One is the knowledge, and the other is the action. Both aspects are necessary. If students are aware, know, and care about the problem, they will start making decisions to start protecting nature.

Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) recognize that it is difficult to have the perfect model to encourage concrete changes in society's behavior regarding the protection of nature, because many factors and conflicts are competing to shape people's decisions and actions. Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) propose a model (see figure 1) that takes the best of the internal and external factors to face the barriers; in some way, this model directs people's actions to more pro-environmental behaviors. Based on this, environmental educators can take the advantages of both the internal and external factors to give students the possibility to explore the necessary aspects to make decisions.

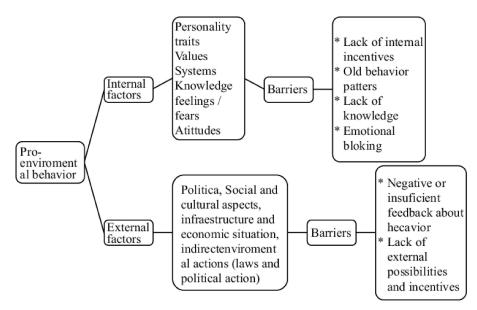


Figure 1. Inspired by Kollmuss and Agyeman model (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002, p. 257).

Environmental education in language teaching

As a matter of fact, language educators are not specialists in environmental education, but they can include the topic in the lesson plan as a content-based instruction to give students the opportunity to learn and communicate their ideas regarding global interest issues.

Hauschild, Poltavtchenko, and Stoller (2012) state that language teachers have the responsibility to include critical situations affecting people globally—like the destruction of the environment—in order to provide learners the opportunity not only to develop language skills, but also to become more informed citizens who will take a critical position about the environmental topic.

By integrating environmental education in language teaching teachers can:

- 1. Heighten students' interest in contemporary issues that might directly influence their futures.
- 2. Teach students how to contribute to a healthier, more sustainable world.
- 3. Promote language learning and meaningful communication. (Hauschild, Poltavtchenko, and Stoller, 2012, p. 3).

The promotion of environmental awareness and pro-environmental behavior in language teaching could be successful if teachers focus on an agency-promoting curriculum. Van Lier (2010) defines agency as movement or lack of movement in terms of action and interaction. There are different levels or types of manifestations. This can be seen as the organism moving in the ecosystem to live and grow; but in the case of education, learners move to live, learn and grow in some way. Autonomy and motivation are products of students' agency.

In order to make significant progress in the learning process, enduring strides, and moving to lifelong learning, learners need to make choices and employ agency in more self-directed ways. This agency is also closely related to

identity, and this emphasizes the social and the dialogical side of agency. It depends not only on the individual but also in the environment where learning process is taking place (Van Lier, 2010, p.5).

The agency-promoting curriculum can help teachers and learners to be actively involved in challenging projects as members of a learning community.

Suggestopedia: a holistic method

The use of holistic methods in language teaching can help educators and students to reinforce the agency proposed by Van Lier and the internal factor (e.g. motivation, environmental knowledge, awareness, values, emotions, attitudes, locus of control, responsibilities and priorities) mentioned by Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002), as well as to reach environmental awareness and pro-environmental behavior.

There are two meanings on the holistic approach to language teaching:

- 1. "An approach to language teaching which seeks to focus on language in its entirety rather than breaking it down into separated components." (Richards and Schmidt, 1985, 240, as cited in Thornbury, 2010, May).
- 2. "An approach that engages the whole learner: intellectually, emotionally, and even physically. The holistic and multisensory nature of learning which involves head, heart, and hands." (Legutke and Thomas, 1991, p. 159; cited by Thornbury, 2012, May).

Taking into consideration the second meaning of the holistic approach that sees the learner as a whole, I chose the suggestopedia method to plan the activities and material to promote environmental awareness in my English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class. I believe that creating conditions in which learners are alert and receptive has a positive effect on motivation. Motivation and actions have a strong relationship to influence people to make decisions on awareness to make changes.

Suggestopedia is considered a holistic method aiming to enable students to learn a language in a relaxing atmosphere, full of stimuli that liberate them from the restrictive influences and rigor more traditional classroom settings usually have. (Chastain, 1988, p.104; cited in Omaggio, 1993, p.117).

Suggestopedia is a teaching method based on how the brain works and how we learn. It was created by Georgi Lozanov in the 1970s. This method is a language teaching system that have recourse to all the possibilities tender suggestion can offer (e.g., music, aromatherapy, images, comfortable place, and other). A suggestion is something that can make students feel joy in teaching and learning process of a second language. Lozanov says that suggestopedia is very effective, students can learn three to five times as quickly as conventional methods. (Lozanov, 2005; Cited by kharismawati, 2014, p. 2).

Suggestopedia helps learners to face and eliminate their psychological barrier by giving them the possibility of being in a comfortable atmosphere that invites students to feel relaxed and have fun.

This method consists of four main stages (Lozanov, 1982, 32, cited by Vekanna and Glory, 2015, p, 130):

- 1. **Presentation:** A preparatory stage in which students are helped to relax and move into a positive frame of mind, with the feeling that the learning is going to be easy and fun.
- 2. **First Concert "Active Concert":** This involves the active presentation of the material to be learned.
- 3. **Second Concert "Passive Review":** The students are now invited to relax and listen to some Baroque music, with the text being read very quietly in the background to bring students into the optimum mental state for the effortless acquisition of the target language.
- 4. **Practice:** The use of games, puzzles, art, etc. to review and consolidate learning during the classroom process.

Some authors (Stevic, 1980, p.112. Richards and Rogers 1986, cited by Vekanna and Glory, 2015, p, 130) agree that suggestopedia also includes:

• a rich, sensory, and learning environment, which is needed because the students might feel better when the teacher includes several pictures, statues and even flowers in the classroom setting;

- a positive expectation of success;
- the use of a varied range of strategies: dramatized texts, music, active participation in songs and games, etc.;
- the suggested background music that should be adopted according to the theme of the lesson taught;
- the use of supplementary texts to make language learning interesting and meaningful;
- the themes, environment, objects, and stories focused on the textbook; these may take learners to an imaginary world;
- suggestions that can be provided by way of images, music, etc., instead of totally relying on the child imagination;
- the use of music to get students sit back and relax, and to enhance the power of the mind;
- the vital role the teacher plays, since she/he is the source of all information.

In their research, Venkanna and Glory (2015) have found that it is better to adopt different innovative strategies to maximize learning processes and to enhance learners' participation, rather than use only one teaching method. In their research, these authors also suggest that the teachers should be creative to create the best classroom atmosphere and implement the useful material that attract students' interest in the learning process of the language and the content of the study.

Land art and the suggestopedia

Art is one of the elements proposed by the suggestopedia. Land art is a wonderful technique suggested in this document to use in the English class to motivate students to express their concerns about the environment.

This art expression is also known as Earthworks or Earth Land. Land Art (2016) describes it as a North American contemporary art movement that started around the 1960s. Robert Smithson is one of the most representative artists. One of the goals of this kind of art is to heighten public awareness of man's relationship with the natural world. The technique uses the natural environment and its resources like rocks, trunks, leaves, trees, flowers, and others to create a piece of art without damaging nature.

I think this contact with nature gives people the opportunity to get the inspiration and feel the special energy from Mother Earth to give a message. This natural setting stimulates the senses and provides students a relaxing atmosphere, as suggestopedia recommends, to learn the language and interact in the class.

Methodology

This research uses a qualitative research design and takes into consideration the epistemological approach that makes a relationship between theory and practice in context. The qualitative study is used to find the participants' point of view about the contrast between the holistic methods and traditional teaching methods in the language class. At the same time, it analyzes students' perspective of the use of suggestopedia method and land art in environmental awareness activities. The author also describes the most significant parts of the implementation of land art in the English class through the use of suggestopedia to raise students' environmental awareness.

Objectives

The following are the main objectives of this class experience:

- 1. To raise learners' environmental awareness.
- 2. To improve learners' language skills in English to express their opinions and concerns about the importance of Mother Earth (through land art).
- 3. To encourage classroom activities to promote environmental awareness.

Research questions

- 4. Does the use of suggestopedia raise learners' environmental awareness?
- 5. Does the use of suggestopedia and land art improve learners' English abilities to express their opinions and concerns about the importance of Mother Earth?
- 6. Does the use of suggestopedia and land art promote classroom activities to raise environmental awareness?

Variables of the Study

- 1. Independent variable: the use of land art and holistic methods like the suggestopedia.
- 2. Dependent variable: learners' environmental awareness, learners' language abilities, classroom activities processes.

Target group and data collection instruments

The sample of this study was a group of 30 students from the Integrated English Course Three at Sección Regional Huetar Norte y Caribe, UNA Campus Sarapiqui, Costa Rica. This group actively participated in the class activities. The language teacher observed students' reactions since the previous stages of the activities and had the responsibility to guide the students through the entire process. The teacher used a checklist to recognize students' interest, active participation, and principal emotions toward the activities.

After the class activities, students answered an evaluation instrument to recognize and evaluate their points of view regarding two specific aspects. The first one was their preference between traditional class methods and creative and holistic methods. The second aspect was their perspective of the suggestopedic activities and land art activity related to raising their environmental awareness.

Table 1Description of aspects of the evaluation tool

Instrument of Evaluation: Surv	vey
Aspect 1: About the comparison between holistic method and traditional method	Aspect 2: about the suggestopedic activities and land art activity
 The instrument has a list of four statements; it evaluates the information in a scale of frequency adverbs (always, usually, sometimes, hardly ever, and never). In this aspect, the instrument evaluates students' perspective regarding both methods' 	 The instrument has a list of five statements; it evaluates the information in a scale of frequency adverbs (always, usually, sometimes, hardly ever, and never). In this aspect, the instrument evaluates students' perspectives about three principal issues: first, the importance and the main objective of the activities; second, effectiveness of the

attractiveness and motivation.

- One of the questions directly asks students' favorite method: traditional or holistic.
- classroom activities to raise students' environmental awareness. **English** abilities, and teamwork skills achieve the classroom tasks and project; finally, the reflection about learners' contribution to express artistic environmental awareness messages.
- Some open questions ask students about their emotions in the suggestopedic activities and atmosphere (music, pictures, videos, songs, aroma, etc.), the activity they like the most, and opportunities to give recommendations improve the class activities.

On the other hand, the teacher used a checklist to identify students' main emotions related to interest, as well as active and positive participation in individual or tasks in groups. In this instrument, there was a list of five statements that the teacher used to recognize the following scale: the entire class, the majority of the students, or few students.

Description of the experience

This academic experience was divided into three parts. The first part was an introduction to the language content and the theme of the class using the different stages of the suggestopedia method and some aspects of the holistic approach. These class activities took place in the classroom for four days. The second part was a group project using the project-based instruction to guide students to create their land art documentary videos. This activity took place in the classroom (where instructions and examples were given) and out of the classroom (in a natural setting like a forest, river, or mountain). Finally, the third session was the formal presentation of the land art projects where students not only described and gave details of their projects, but also reflected on their teamwork and their feelings throughout the process.

Table 2Description of the stages of the class.

Part Class activities	Material	Time
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Part	Class activities	Material	Time
Part 1: -Introduction -Suggestopedic activities -Language and theme content	Suggestopedia stages: Presentation: A preparatory stage in which students are helped to relax and move into a positive frame of mind (breathing and meditation exercises) with the feeling that the learning is going to be easy and fun. First Concert - "Active Concert": This involves the active presentation of the material to be learned. The teacher reads a fictitious environmental story that mentions some students' names as the protagonist of the story. Second Concert - "Passive Review": The students are now invited to relax and listen to some Baroque music, with the text being read very quietly in the background to bring students into the optimum mental state for the effortless acquisition of the target language. Practice: Students participate in different activities. Every student works with a worksheet. In the worksheet, there are four activities. The activities are: Activity 1: Group Discussion Students listen to a song and watch a video, based on these two resources they discuss some questions and share their ideas with the class.	Classroom Preparation: the class is decorated with attractive pictures, and colorful card phrases related to the topic. The class seats are arranged in a circle. There are baroque music and aroma diffuser. Material: environmental pictures or photos, cards with phrases, magazines, markers, construction paper, scissors, glue, cardboard, copies of the worksheets. Equipment: Video beam, computer, screen, speakers, internet connection.	Day 1 and 2 Session of two hours every day.
	Activity 2: Environmental problems Games Students participate in a memory game with vocabulary and pictures. In groups of four participants, students play a game about environmental causes and effects. Activity 3: Environmental poster: important actions to protect and help the environment In groups, students create a poster to express ideas using modals of necessity, obligation, and prohibition. At the end of the class, students present their posters and share their ideas.		

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Part	Class activities	Material	Time
Part 2: Land art projects/instruction, design, and creation	In this second part, students continue participating in the activities Activity 4: Reflections Students express their opinions and emotions about the class experiences and the environmental topic. They answer some questions and share their ideas. Introduction to land art: students watch a video and some land art pictures to understand the concept and see some examples. The teacher gives instructions and guidelines to follow the land art project steps. Students get together in groups of four to plan the project. Students decide where they will create and shoot the land art documentary videos (river, mountain, or forest).		Day 3 Session of two hours.
Part 3: Land art projects presentations	In this part students present their land art documentary video and express their feeling regarding the creation of this project. We close the activity with a group reflection and the teacher's feedback comments.		Day 4 Session of two hours

Data interpretation and analysis

The data of this study were analyzed using a qualitative method. First, the main data obtained from the students' survey were identified and analyzed. Then, the researcher evaluated the data obtained from the observation checklist and the teacher's general observations. Finally, the researcher considered the students' performance in the classroom, and the final products (poster and land art videos). A checklist with three-point scale (the entire class; the majority of the students, more than 20; few students) was administered to the teachers.

Statistical analysis

The following statistical issues were found from the instruments.

About the learners' perspective and preference between the traditional class and holistic creative and dynamic class, students had the following positions:

- For 30 % of the students, traditional classes sometimes are profitable and interesting. On the contrary, 70 % think that the classes are not profitable and interesting.
- However, 75 % of the students believe that the classes featuring holistic methods, creativity, and dynamics are always interesting, attractive, and profitable for them; against 25 % who think that this kind of class is usually interesting, attractive, and profitable for them.
- For 53% of the students, traditional methods hardly ever motive them to participate in the class. For 17% of them, the traditional class never motivates them; for 17%, it sometimes does; and for 13%, this class usually motivates them.
- Instead, 90 % of the students prefer holistic, creative and dynamic activities than traditional classes.
- About the learners' perspective of the suggestopedic activities and land art project, here are the results:

• Of the students participating in the survey, 80 % always recognize the importance and the purpose of the land art project and the suggestopedic activities.

- Likewise, 63 % of the students consider that these two activities always help them be aware of the environmental problems and the importance of Mother Earth and humans' responsibility to protect nature, and 27 % think that they usually help them be more aware; instead, 10 % consider that the activities are sometimes helpful.
- For 73 % of the learners, suggestopedic activities and land art project always help them improve their team work abilities; for 23%, the activities usually help; and for 3 %, they sometimes help.
- Forty percent of the students agree that these activities always help them improve their English skills; 50 % think they usually help them; and for 10 %, they sometimes do.
- Sixty-three percent of the learners believe that the suggestopedic activities and land art project always encourage and help them express an original environmental awareness message in an attractive way. Thirty percent think that they usually encourage and help them; for 7 %, the activities sometimes do.
- In the observation checklist the teacher perceived the following points:
- Most of the students were interested and alert.
- Many students reacted positively to the atmosphere of the class. They were relaxed and comfortable. Some students were amazed and interested.
- Few students participated in the oral discussion with the whole class and the teacher; but in the small group discussion, they participated more.
- In the creation of the poster, all the students worked efficiently and together; they completed the task successfully.
- Students said they preferred another kind of instrumental music.

Findings, achievements, and suggestions

Based on the results of the study and the progress of the class activities, here are some findings:

- The results of this study show that the use of Suggestopedia can motivate and catch students' interest in the language content and the topic. Most of the students recognized the importance of the topic.
- The use of Suggestopedia method in a content-based instruction can have an influence on both the students and the teacher.
- The students enjoyed teaching and learning activities, because the setting of the classroom made them feel comfortable.
- The suggested use of music, soft aromas, and dramatized texts helped them concentrate. Students experience the sensation of controlled relaxation, which helps them reduce anxiety and be more willing to participate and learn the language content.
- The use of suggestopedia removes most of the emotional barriers and instills in students the qualities of achievement motivation, arouses interest towards the classroom processes, and stimulates active participation for better learning.
- It is important to take into consideration different methods to adopt their different techniques and strategies, so that to maximize the learning process and to enhance learners' participation.
- Students were satisfactorily able to work in a team and to express their ideas in English.
- The use of art enhances students' creativity.
- The project-based instruction activities enhance students' teamwork abilities.
- Students were able to create environmental awareness messages through the use of land art and technology.
- The use of holistic methods in language teaching can help teachers and learners to be actively involved in challenging projects as members of a learning community.

Recommendations

• The language teacher must be very creative to prepare the material and look for the significant resources to provoke good reactions in the students.

- The teacher needs to have a positive attitude during the class to arouse students' interest in learning the language.
- The use of soft fragrance of essential oils (lemon, peppermint, or lavender) as part of the atmosphere can also stimulate students to feel alert and interested in the class.
- It is recommended to use baroque music; but the teacher can explore other types of chillout or soft instrumental music, such as jazz or bossa nova.
- It is highly recommended to use music not only in the concert session, but also in the group task activities.
- It is meaningful to give students positive feedback about their work, especially during the reflection activities.
- It is meaningful to move the class to a natural setting when carrying out the land art project. The relaxation and meditation session at the natural setting will help students to feel and see nature differently; at the same time, the energy and inspiration to create the land art can be significant.
- It is useful to implement other innovative strategies because these will help the language teacher understand the learners' needs and interests in order to support their language learning process.
- The English class is a good place where teachers and students can concentrate on global interest themes and content not only to develop language skills, but also to become more informed and critical citizens.

Conclusions

For improving the practice of EFL teaching, it is important to mention that language teachers play a crucial role in the design and planning of the lessons. The effectiveness and success of any class activity depend on the teachers' abilities to understand the demands of the curricula, the students' needs and the concerns surrounding global trends. The language classroom is not only a place to learn English contents, but also a place where students can explore their emotions, values, and actions regarding global interest issues like the protection of the environment.

Students can have an active participation in the environmental awareness, if they can express their opinions. To promote pro-environmental behaviors in the English class, the teacher has to handle various strategies for effective environmental education and language teaching at the same time.

The use of holistic methods in language teaching can help teachers and learners to be actively involved in challenging projects as members of a learning community. Hence, to ensure quality education, teachers need to explore new methods, approaches, and techniques of teaching; and they should be applying them, whenever required, to obtain the best results. So, teachers can make significant progress in the learning process, enduring strides, and moving to lifelong learning.

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