Going Green in the EFL Classroom:
An Introduction

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In August 2020, California experienced extreme wildfires, causing both economic and environmental damage (Lee n.p.). Although human error and lightening appear to be the most common causes for the devastating forest fires, it is undeniable that climate change has turned California's environment into a "flammable ecosystem" as Jennifer Balch, a fire scientist from the University of Colorado, recently pointed out (qtd. in Borenstein n.p.) Wildfire activity has increased, not only in California but worldwide, destroying people's homes, entire ecosystems, and in themselves contributing to the emissions that increase climate change. Although fire is a natural component in sustaining ecosystems, and many trees, such as the sequoia have a thick bark to protect it from fire, the spreading to coastal areas is, to quote Newsom, a "proof point" (qtd. in Flores n.p.) of a changing climate, which, as McNutt convincingly argues, represents "one of the most important challenges of our time" (435).

The social and economic damage resulting from the rise in global temperatures will lead to an irreversible change of the face of our planet but even more so the very fabric of our society as, for example, famines, the number of climate refugees, and damages to infrastructure will increase. The political measures being taken by governments and international institutions with the target of limiting global warming to below 2°C as agreed upon at the Paris climate conference in 2015 may most likely not be enough to mitigate climate change, especially considering the fact that many governments, companies, as well as individuals remain resistant to comprehensive action.

In 2018, the fast and increasing speed of climate change as well as the slow global response to contain it created a new global youth movement to protest against climate change and demand urgent action to combat it. According to the United Kingdom Student Climate Network the strikers had four key demands, including the demand to "teach the future," i.e. "to teach young people about urgency, severity, and scientific basis of the climate crisis" (United Kingdom Student Climate Network n.p.). The demands illustrate that education is a vital part of the global fight against climate change, requiring curricular reforms and teacher training (UNESCO "Climate Change Education and Awareness" n.p.). However, as Goodbody points out, "[...] it will take more than just the natural sciences to

meet the challenge of climate change" (93). Quite the contrary, developing climate literacy needs to be recognised as a universal goal across the curriculum, also including English as a Foreign Language Classroom (EFL). As Mayer and Wilson point out:

> The classic objectives of environmental education—the creation of awareness and concern about the environment, the creation of environmental knowledge and the acquisition of skills to identify, evaluate and solve environmental problems—must also be reached by means of education in the various disciplines of the humanities, among them the fields of language teaching, literary and cultural studies. (1)

In the following, we will peruse some of the key pedagogical approaches which have been put forward in the last decades to raise students' awareness of environmental issues, including climate change, and foster more environmentally-friendly lifestyles. From its beginnings, ecocriticism or green cultural studies, literary and cultural criticism carried out from an environmentally-oriented perspective, has had an important pedagogical dimension. Early studies such as Waage's *Teaching Environmental Literature: Materials, Methods, Resources* developed a place-based ecocritical pedagogy, which combined the teaching of nature writing with direct experience of the outdoors. More recent eco-pedagogical studies depart from this place-based 'first-wave ecocritical pedagogy' by turning attention, for example, to ecofeminist concerns (e.g. Gaard and Murphy), global environmental issues (e.g. Thomashow), an expanded canon of texts informed by postcolonial perspectives or non-literary 'eco-media' (e.g. Beach et al.). Next to these developments in ecocriticism, eco-pedagogical discourses have also emerged in educational studies and at a national and international political level informed by international organisations such as the United Nations. Environmental education (EE) approaches developed in the late 1960s and became part of UN educational policy with the launch of the *International Environmental Education Programme* (IEEP, 1975–1995) in 1975 in Belgrade. According to the *Belgrade Charter*

> [t]he goal of environmental education is to develop a world population that is aware of and concerned about, the environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations, and commitment to work individually and collectively towards solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones. (UNESCO "The Belgrade Charter" 21)

In this context, the acquisition of 'environmental literacy' was set as a key goal of environmental education and a guideline for assessment in both the Belgrade Charter (UNESCO, "The Belgrade Charter") and the Tbilisi Declaration (UNESCO, "Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education" n.p.), two founding documents of the environmental education field. In various guises, the concept of environmental literacy continues to remain central to approaches of eco-pedagogy.[1] Based on popular education movements of Latin America and the pedagogy of Paulo Freire, a contemporary formulation of critical environmental literacies proposed by Misiaszek focuses in particular on fostering skills in deconstructing forms of environmental oppression and inequalities and questioning (sustainable) development

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[1] For an overview of the emergence of notions of environmental literacy, ecological and eco-literacy see McBride et al.

processes. According to Misiaszek, critical environmental literacies can be defined as "the ability to read and re-read [...] environmental problems and then reflect upon actions needed to save the planet from various perspectives, with specific attention to perspectives of those who struggle the most with the problem" (21).

Taking Misiaszek's understanding of critical environmental literacies as a starting point, Deetjen and Ludwig (forthcoming 2021) define environmental literacies as "the ability to recognise and critically evaluate local as well as global environmental practices and problems from various perspectives and across multiple scales of space and time and to react accordingly both as an individual and collectively" (13).

Since the 1980s, the discourse of environmental education has shifted to education for sustainable development (ESD) which has most forcefully been promoted by the United Nations through the establishment of a global action programme, the so-called Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, "UN Decade of ESD" n.p.) and its follow-up, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which have aimed to "integrate the values inherent in sustainable development into all aspects of learning to encourage changes in behaviour that allow for a more sustainable and just society for all" (UN, "Transforming Our World" n.p.). Based on the UN framework, ESD is currently being implemented in education systems worldwide.

In addition, the role of environmental issues in the context of approaches such as global education or global citizenship education deserves closer attention as these approaches provide further opportunities to incorporate green issues into the classroom and promote sustainable behaviour among our students as they become engaged in real world challenges (Gough 13–23). The basic idea behind global education is to address global concerns such as the unequal distribution of resources, prosperity, peace, human and animal rights, environmental protection, and help students develop global perspectives on global issues. As Tye puts it, global education "involves learning about [...] problems and issues which cut across national boundaries and about the interconnectedness of systems—cultural, ecological, economic, political, and technological" (5).

However, global learning is not only about critically examining global issues but also developing an awareness of the role of the individual in finding solutions for global challenges in a globally-interdependent world. Moreover, closely related to the concept of global learning, approaches such as global citizenship education also aim to raise students' awareness of global sustainability challenges and prepare them for their future role as global citizens. In fact, there have long been close ties between these sub-fields of education. Global citizenship education approaches, for example, have drawn on the ideal of sustainability in formulating their aims: "Global citizenship education aims to empower learners to engage and assume active roles both locally and globally and resolve global challenges and ultimately to become proactive contributors to a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable world" (UNESCO, "Global Citizenship Education" n.p.).

On the other hand, EE and ESD approaches have also, since their inception, been concerned with educating for global citizenship. The *Global Action Programme on*

Education for Sustainable Development for example highlights the importance of educating for global citizenship since "sustainable development challenges have acquired even more urgency since the beginning of the Decade and new concerns have come to the fore, such as the need to promote global citizenship" (UNESCO, "Roadmap for Implementing the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development" n.p.).

This special section "Going Green in the EFL Classroom" explores anthropocentric as well as biocentric tendencies in environmental education in the context of English as a foreign language learning. Taking this as a starting point, the articles in this section illustrate, in an exemplary fashion, the important role of the inter-and transcultural foreign language classroom in promoting processes of environmental learning on a cognitive, emotional and behavioural level. In this, they focus on a diverse range of what Summer terms eco-artefacts, i.e. "textual, visual, and/or auditive input that explicitly deals with issues of environmental concern or invites the reader to reflect upon environmental topics" (166) while, at the same time, developing students' foreign language competencies.

The first article, "Ecology, Cultural Awareness, Anti-Racism and Critical Thinking: Integrating Multiple Perspectives in Foreign Language Teaching", by Silke Braselmann, Katharina Glas, and Laurenz Volkmann suggests a critical approach to enhancing students' environmental literacies by dealing with multi-text selections, allowing students not only to expand their knowledge but also reflect and synthesise multiple perspectives. The Mapuche, a Chilean indigenous minority group, serve as an example to illustrate how intercultural/global learning (ethnic repression), environmental learning (environmental degradation), and postcolonial issues (the exploitation of Mapuche land) can be brought together as students engage with multiple texts and multiple voices, giving them the opportunity to discover and challenge dominant discriminatory discourses in the context of Mapuche resistance and environmental justice in Chile.

The following article by Theresa Summer, "Applying Ecomusicology to Foreign Language Education", addresses ecomusicology as a relatively new and interdisciplinary field of research that holds great potential for foreign language education. Ecomusicology can offer inspiring approaches and new directions to the field of foreign language education generally and, more specifically, to global education. After an inspection of the term itself, this contribution applies ecomusicology to foreign language education by identifying fields that are of potential interest to conceptual theorising and teaching practice. Given the lack of research into the potential of ecomusicology for language education, this paper aims to fill an important gap in research by presenting reasons why ecomusicology deserves to be discussed and integrated in discussions surrounding foreign language education and global education.

In her contribution, "Teaching Rivers. Swimming, Collecting, and Alternative Mapping with Alice Oswald's poem Dart", Stefanie Jung argues that nature should no longer be seen as a mere object of study. Drawing on findings of material ecocriticism, phenomenology and anthropology, Jung develops a "participatory approach" for the foreign language classroom that allows students to develop alternative concepts of

nature, a cognitive, emotional, and sensomotoric access to the 'outside world' that they are a part of. Taking Alice Oswald's long poem "Dart", which addresses, among other things, the relationship between human beings and rivers, as an example, Jung demonstrates how this may be achieved by engaging with poetry in the extended language classroom.

""There is no such thing as 'away'" – An Inquiry-Based Approach to Developing Learners' Sustainability Literacy in the EFL Classroom" by Christian Ludwig explores the potential of inquiry-based approaches for developing students' sustainability literacy in the EFL classroom. The article explores how discussing (illegal) global e-waste streams and their environmental impacts presents a worthwhile topic for the EFL classroom. The focus on Nigeria, one of the world's largest e-waste dumps then serves as an example to investigate e-waste disposal in the context of global sustainability initiatives. The practical part of the paper takes an inquiry-based approach which engages learners in global e-waste discourses which allow them to develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

The section concludes by taking environmental learning out of the classroom and into the garden. Against the background of garden-based education, Bärbel Turner-Hill in "Teaching in the Garden – School Gardens as a Space for Environmental and English Learning" discusses how school gardens can provide a powerful environmental learning space. In university seminars, students engage in various small-scale projects which not only develop their linguistic skills but also their environmental literacies and teach them how to take responsibility for their environment. By doing so, they also acquire knowledge and competences to build a foundation for a better understanding of environmental issues in their future classrooms.

The contributions to this volume explore the role of formal English language learning in promoting environmental literacies and showcase the still largely untapped and underestimated potential of a variety of artefacts to adapt to trends related to climate change, deal with climate-related information, and help develop environmental awareness. We hope to encourage practitioners and researchers to explore this path further.

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