

# Is language the missing link in sustainability learning?

## About

At the University of Greenwich, Dr Anna Costantino, an applied linguist and language teacher, is conducting research on integrating sustainability and social justice into language education. Her work explores how global challenges, particularly those related to climate change and social justice, can be effectively addressed at the local educational level through language pedagogy.

## Work

One key strand of her research focuses on creating materials and activities that emphasise sustainability's pedagogical relevance. Through participatory and exploratory approaches, she engages students in understanding complex systems such as climate change, not only as a scientific or political issue but as a deeply human experience. For example, her classroom activities encourage sensory and embodied learning experiences that connect the global climate crisis to students' local realities.

Anna has developed classroom exercises that engage students in role-playing activities where they explore the viewpoints of different stakeholders in climate justice issues. These activities not only enhance language proficiency but also help students build empathy, resilience and ethical reasoning skills.

Her work is particularly critical in addressing the contradictions within the sustainability-through-growth paradigm, encouraging students to question how economic growth-driven approaches to sustainability can marginalise vulnerable populations and ecosystems.

Anna critiques mainstream sustainability paradigms, particularly the "sustainability-through-growth" model, which she sees as problematic. In contrast, her pedagogical approach emphasises fairness, critical thinking, adaptability and compassion, encouraging students to develop political agencies and take collective and individual action toward sustainability.

This work has profound implications for how we educate future generations on climate justice. By fostering interdisciplinary skills and values, Anna's research provides educators with tools to cultivate a more holistic, justice-oriented view of sustainability, moving beyond growth-centric models toward more equitable and environmentally conscious futures.

## SDGs

