

**From words to action: fostering environmental citizenship in the second-grade English
classroom**

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Abstract

Although teaching English and environmental awareness have been priorities in Colombian education programs, there hasn't been much discussion of how English classes might effectively create awareness of the environmental challenges that urgently need to be addressed today. This study emerges from the need to expand the mere linguistic approach in English teaching, the current relevance of fostering environmental citizenship in all educational contexts, and the critical stance that teachers can bring to the classroom by designing their own material. This action research's primary goal is to examine how using teacher-designed materials helps second-grade students at a public school in Bogotá develop their environmental citizenship and their English learning process. As an action research with a qualitative approach, this study aims at gaining deep understanding of the educational context and it also regards participants as an essential and active part of the research project itself. The data collected through fieldwork journals, artifacts, and interviews revealed an emerging moral stance toward environmental issues among students, a clear awareness of linguistic expressions, and a sustained critical perspective on classroom materials and instructional strategies.

Key words: Environmental citizenship, language learning and teacher-designed material.

Chapter I: Contextualization

Statement of the problem

This research project emerged from two main aspects: English language teaching in the Colombian context and the need to foster environmental citizenship through education in the current society. Even though these two aspects have been relevant in the past few years, not much has been said about how the English class can become an effective space to raise awareness about the environmental issues that so imperatively need to be addressed today.

According to UNESCO (2021):

We use more resources than the planet can generate each year – if we continue to live the way we do today, we will need three earths by 2050. The way we currently live is not sustainable. Urgent change is needed, but lasting change is impossible without education. Governments, education policy-makers, academics, and environmental stakeholders need to further commit to Education for Sustainable Development. (p. 3)

Clearly, such an urgent need should be present in all the educational fields where future generations are involved, and English class should not be an exception. This project aimed at finding out how environmental citizenship could be fostered in second-grade English language students through material design. This objective was supported by the need to extend the borders of the English class in order to encompass other aspects that go beyond the mere linguistic competence. In other words and, as Pennycook (1990) asserts, “if we view ourselves as educators whose principal aim is the empowerment of our students and whose transformative project is to go beyond helping students simply to *make it* then clearly, we must do more than teach functional language skills within a competency-based curriculum” (p. 311). Hence, the underlying idea of this research is to transform the notion that prevails about the English class as

a space where only linguistic skills are practiced, so that it can become a place where social issues (in this particular case, environmental issues) are discussed.

Regarding foreign language teaching in Colombia, different policies and programs have been designed to foster bilingualism in the country. As described by Gómez (2017), the importance of English in the country has been reflected in several ways, from the design of policies and strategies to regulate English language teaching to the adoption of discourses that support English as a direct equivalent of concepts like “development” and “competitiveness”. Therefore, it seems undeniable the significant role that English has had for Colombian education, which is why this subject is worthy of being studied, especially by those who care about what lies ahead in terms of teaching and learning practices.

In regard to the importance of environmental citizenship in the Colombian context, there have been great efforts to implement a national policy for environmental education; it all started back in 2002 with the creation of a National Policy of Environmental Education. This initiative, according to the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (2002), was based on the idea of environmental education as a process in which individuals understand the relations they establish with their surroundings, so that they are able to construct perspectives and habits that show value and respect towards nature.

Despite this national project that intends to encourage environmental citizenship as a cross-curricular element of school education, this topic seems to be included only in a well-defined set of subjects (such as Natural Science and Social Sciences), leaving English classes out of the scope. Proof of this is the absolute absence of environment-related content in the DBA documents for English subject published by the National Ministry of Education (NME). Conversely, the NME (2016) urges teachers in charge of social and natural sciences to address

topics like the influence of human intervention in environmental problems (p. 25), or the damage that industrialization has caused to local nature (p. 40). This context sets the grounds from which this project's concern emerged: English class should not be disregarded when talking about social relevant concerns. Moreover, the English class can turn into an opportunity to address environmental issues and foster awareness towards a more ecological perspective. By doing this, English would become a more relevant subject; this change would also contribute to the crosswise nature of environmental education that has been promulgated through the national projects already mentioned.

In this respect, a valuable point of view is presented by Lee (2020); this author's main concern is to connect students with their local community and, more explicitly, to the environmental affairs at a municipal level. Lee (2020) explains that the English class can be a space where teachers:

should encourage students to start where they are, from their own human centers: their families, friends, and neighbors; their educational and local/regional/national communities. From here they can better approach the global realm to which English offers a door, and, simultaneously, they can be better prepared to widen their knowledge and cognizance and share that which they already possess, of their own neighborhoods, cities, lands, and beyond, buoyed by a reaffirmed recognition of being at home in the world and in their own perceptions of it yet able to express their place in a new language and to a greatly expanded audience. In cautiously considering what our students might do in the future, cultivating this general type of perception and ability can be both pedagogically equitable, if properly planned and executed, and environmentally sound. (p. 256)

This impression on what the English class should be about explains why environmental citizenship is a pertinent topic to make students connect with their local realities, as this is precisely a way in which language can become a means for them to share their perceptions and their concerns about issues that affect their daily lives. Therefore, this study was based on the conviction that language is expected to be the means for something else, rather than the ultimate goal of the English class.

Now, a question that arises from this need to connect English teaching with environmental issues is *How can we materialize this linkage in practical terms?* This project is supported by the principle that a good means to achieve this is through material design. This aspect of language teaching has been a matter of discussion, for it is one of the main elements that determines how significant learning can be within any class. For this particular research, material design is seen as a powerful instrument that can lead to deep changes in the way language class is developed; furthermore, teaching material is one of the main aspects that needs to be addressed in order to transform education practices in any context. As a matter of fact, the unquestioned reliance on pre-determined textbooks and material designed by international organizations has been discussed in many academic fields, and has been held as one of the key aspects that needs to be reconsidered in order to develop lessons that students feel more familiar with. A good example of this is the discussion that Kumaravadivelu (2012) has established around this matter, as he asserts that it is an imminent need to have teachers design context-sensitive materials, which should be a possibility now more than ever as:

The information revolution that has spawned online newspapers, blogs tweets, YouTube, Facebook, and other forms of social networking are valuable sources that can be exploited for designing instructional materials. It is true that the prevailing practice in

several countries compels teachers to use Center-produced, Ministry-approved textbooks. But, if we are deterred by difficulties, we can never make the changes that we deem desirable. A beginning can be made if teachers design, and use in their classes, more and more systematically produced “supplementary” materials which, eventually, can pave the way for teacher-generated textbook production and, eventually, for breaking the epistemic dependency on Center-produced textbooks. (p. 21)

Therefore, material design constitutes a relevant element not only to develop meaningful English classes, but also to empower teachers to be more active participants of educational changes.

Having set the aim and the context that gave rise to this project, it is also important to clarify that this research was developed with second-grade students from Liceo Femenino Mercedes Nariño School, located in Bogotá. The topics that inspired the design of the material that was used to integrate environmental citizenship in the English class were connected to nature-related issues and human actions towards nature. In this sense, some of the topics that were included were related to the relationship between human beings and their natural surroundings, recycling practices, and the use of water.

There is also an important connection between environmental citizenship and the context of this project, since Liceo Femenino Mercedes Nariño School has been implementing environment-oriented projects for the past few years. The school buildings and walls are testimony to this: it is common to see signs and posters that invite the whole community to maintain ecological practices, such as recycling and separating waste. In addition, educating women who have “respect towards life, human beings and their natural environment, where life is conceived as a maximum gift” (Red Académica 2.0, 2023) has been set as one of the main

values of this institution. Being coherent with this, the school has implemented some sustainable projects, such as having workshops with students where they learn how to lower their carbon footprint. These practices that already make part of the school values constitute an additional support for this project, since implementing environment-oriented material and actions in the English class would also contribute to the institution's purpose of educating women who are concerned about their environment.

One final aspect that is worth mentioning regarding the context of this project is the fact that, at the school, the English classes have been planned by the teachers in charge following a *topic sequence logic* where the main goal has been to enrich students' language knowledge. During the initial interactions with the teacher in charge it was found that the guidelines to develop the English class revolved around vocabulary topics, such as *Members of the family* and *Parts of the body*. Notwithstanding that, what would happen if a different approach were taken when planning these English lessons? What if the institution found a new space within the English class where the ecological values and projects that were previously mentioned turned into more solid and cross-wide strategies? This project also emerged as an alternative for this institution to regard the English class as a space where students can contribute to the school's ecological purpose.

Justification

In a world where globalization discourses have transformed the way humans live, language teaching has positioned itself as one of the main instruments to connect people and places. Nevertheless, from a critical perspective, language teaching should not be limited to be a mere communication tool; as Cates (2002) asserts, the main responsibility that language teachers have today is to “enable students to effectively acquire a foreign language while empowering

them with the knowledge, skills, and commitment required by world citizens to solve global problems” (p. 41). This research was enacted as a practical instance of how the English classroom can become a space where students are not only language learners, but also global citizens whose thoughts and actions can transform the world. Moreover, having little kids as the research population pointed out an important aspect: it represented a possibility to reevaluate teachers’ responsibility when working with elementary levels. Having very young language learners should motivate questions other than *how can they be stimulated to acquire as much language as possible?* It should also incite a pedagogical reflection about finding ways in which they start unearthing the kind of individuals and citizens they want to be and the contributions they want to provide to their communities. Hence, this study represents a considerable contribution to the critical and transformative language teaching approaches, where English teachers are active and discerning agents of their own practice, and where students’ realities are the center of the language learning process.

In regard to the contribution to the researcher’s professional field, this study was conceived as a way to bring to light the moral position that the language teaching role entails. Being an English teacher is much more than just instructing English grammar and vocabulary; it implies a social responsibility, a commitment to edify human beings with critical thinking and a deep awareness of social matters. Hence, this research represented an opportunity to bring these social commitments into the classroom and transform them into real and meaningful experiences with the students. In particular, this study resolved to work around environmental citizenship because, in addition to being a universal issue that concerns every single individual on this planet, it also illustrates a window for young learners to discover an explicit action field where they can find concrete involvement paths in their communities.

All in all, this research is a good example of how real-world issues and teachers' social responsibility can be integrated in the English classroom to achieve an imperative need: to turn the English class into a socially relevant matter and to contribute to the education of human beings who care about transforming the world.

Research Question

In order to establish a much clearer path to carry out this project, the following research question and objectives are presented:

-How can environmental citizenship be fostered through the use of teacher-designed material in the English class with second grade students from Liceo Femenino Mercedes Nariño school?

General Objective

Analyze in which ways the use of teacher-designed material contributes to both English learning process and the construction of environmental citizenship in second-grade students from Liceo Femenino Mercedes Nariño school.

Specific Objectives

-Examine the ways in which environmental citizenship aspects can be evidenced through teacher-designed material with second-grade students.

-Explore the impact that the use of teacher-designed materials can have on the English learning process of second-grade students.

Chapter II: Theoretical Considerations

Literature Review

With the purpose of having a deeper understanding of how previous authors and studies have addressed the topics included in this research, the insights about related literature review will be presented. This literature review was performed around two main topics: environmental citizenship in the English class and material design for EFL teaching.

Environmental citizenship in the English class

While research projects that aim to incorporate environmental topics into the English class seem to be scarce in the Colombian context, two studies show that this is a subject that, although unexplored, can be a potential point of discussion for upcoming research. One example is the action research carried out by Urrutia & Gutierrez (2011), which aimed at sensitizing students about environmental care through the writing of short descriptive texts in the English class; this study was developed with high school students at Aquileo Parra school in Bogota. The main idea behind the project was to motivate students to perfect their writing skills through topics that were relevant to them. This is where environmental care had an important role since, according to the authors, “relating ecology to writing in English could be a way to offer different opportunities for students to improve their writing skills because it is a relevant topic and they can apply knowledge in their own environment” (p. 14). Then, environmental care was implemented as a resource for students to feel more identified with their texts, since they wrote about both issues that impacted their immediate realities (such as floods and global warming) and ecological messages to invite their community to take action about such issues. The findings of this project show that applied strategies promoted interdisciplinary work around environmental topics as well as the development of writing skills. This study provides good evidence about how environmental issues are a great way to bring relevant and real topics into

the English class. Nevertheless, the study also shows an obvious focus on English writing skills, since the results were also interpreted in terms of how correct the descriptive texts were. In this regard, it would be important to deviate from this skill-centered approach, in order to assess other aspects (such as how good the strategies were to foster environmental citizenship among students), and make out of the English class a space where other social-related skills are also considered.

Another research that took place in the Colombian context and which also aimed to use environmental citizenship as a way to use relevant content in the English class was the study made by Guerrero (2024). This study presents a qualitative action research where the main goal was to propose strategies to develop a sense of care for the environment while using English orally with fourth grade students at Instituto Pedagógico Nacional. Just as the first reviewed research, Guerrero (2024) also presented some of the study findings in terms of the improvements that students had in regard to language skills, such as the use of vocabulary and the ability to express complete ideas in an oral way. Nevertheless, this project approach is very valuable, since it also made an evident effort to describe how students “began to develop their dispositional dimension, meaning that students began to create a position on how their actions could have a positive or negative impact on the preservation of natural spaces” (p. 67). So, this project provides a useful model for current research, as it shows a possibility to assess both language and environmental aspects in a complementary way.

In the Latin American context, environmental-related topics have become a way to foster skills that go beyond linguistic competence. This is precisely the case of the research carried out by Porto (2015), in which the main goal was to integrate ecological citizenship as a core aspect of the English class. This research consisted of a case study in which online English classes were

implemented with elementary students from Argentina and Denmark. Through online discussions, students were able to use foreign language to share experiences and perspectives regarding the different environmental issues that they faced in their contexts; as Porto (2015) explains in her final report, “in so doing, they discovered commonalities among themselves, reflected on the fact that their interest in the environment brought them together and in this way they created a sense of bonding that transcended geographical boundaries” (p. 11). Hence, one of the main contributions of this study was the reflection about the English class as a space to talk about environmental issues and, at the same time, gaining understanding about the fact that these issues affect the whole humanity. This perspective provides significant contributions to this current research, as it establishes a different perspective about the students’ profiles that can be considered in EFL contexts: beyond simply preparing second-language speakers, current society’s demands urge English teachers to think of other attributes, such as the ecological citizenship that was mentioned in the project developed by Porto (2015).

In relation to the importance of this ecological or environmental citizenship, Cad et al. (2022) implemented an action research project in which the main goal was to raise students’ environmental awareness in an ELT primary school in Argentina through the use of picture books. The project idea arose from the belief that English teaching should not be reduced to improve language skills, for this concept has evolved and, as Cad et al (2022) assert, “there is nowadays a reconceptualization of language education as an important contributor to a number of educational missions. Among those missions, promoting environmental citizenship stands out since it is vital to the success of life in society” (p. 101). In this study, this approach allowed researchers to realize that the English classroom “can be a space where young learners can address a pressing issue of our time and of their own experience” (p. 14). The remark about the

students' experience was related to the fact that wildfires were a common problem that affected students' daily routines. This shows how environmental citizenship in the English class can be a way to make students feel more related and more identified with the class topics. Even though this study design was based on the use of specific material (picture books), very little reflection was made around the nature of such material, since it was only analyzed in terms of how appealing it was for students. In this regard, it would also be germane to transcend the aesthetic aspects of teaching materials in order to reflect upon other features, such as who these materials are designed by (which is a matter that this research intends to address).

Material design for EFL teaching

Literature review also showed some studies that highlighted the importance of the source and the nature of English class materials. This is the case of the action research developed by Morales & Beltran (2006), in which the authors explored how the selection of specific materials improved listening skills at a technological institution in Bogota, Colombia. This study provided constructive insights about how essential it is to be careful with the criteria that is considered at the time of selecting teaching materials. In this research, it was found that students' listening skills highly improved when teaching material was selected based not only on linguistic aspects, but also on cultural elements (formality, informality, social context) and applicability criteria (students' needs, relation between learner's reality and the material itself). Even though Morales & Beltran (2006) focused on material implementation rather on material design, the criteria mentioned in their study provide useful insight about the aspects that should be considered when creating material for the English class, which is a key aspect of this project.

Despite of just presenting a discussion around materials development in the Colombian context without developing a specific research project, the perspectives offered by Holguin &

Morales (2014) constitute a relevant reference when addressing this topic. In this text, the authors highlight the importance of exploring the effects of designing materials by Colombian teachers, since this would alleviate the negative effects that commercial materials have on the students' learning process. For these authors, commercial materials are often decontextualized and "provide content which tends to generalize students' needs and do not fulfill both learners' and teachers' expectations" (p. 135). As a response to this issue, they assert that Colombian teachers should design their own materials, for this initiative would promote "the connection between innovation and research, the possibility to work towards a more inclusive environment for education, and the opportunity to close the gap between home and school" (p. 137). In other words, it can be argued that through the design of their own materials, English language teachers can apply more contextualized content and strategies. In fact, this was one of the main findings that Augusto (2015) spotted after implementing a descriptive study that aimed to explore the impact of material design in teacher education at a public university in the southeast of Brazil. Through reflections and descriptions of the experiences of a teacher educator of EFL student teachers, Augusto (2015) concluded that "the design of teaching materials in the teacher education process is not a solution for all challenges that teacher educators have, but it can certainly bring some inspiring contribution, because it grants (student) teachers opportunities to have an active role in the planning, designing and redesigning of their own practice, considering situated contexts" (p. 135). Therefore, these two papers highlight the huge contribution that material design can have not only for more contextualized English classes, but also for more thoughtful teaching practices.

Other studies have focused not on the teaching practice itself, but on the benefits that material design can have on the particular development of EFL lessons and skills. This is the

case of the qualitative action research developed by Mosquera (2023), where it was examined how teacher-made materials could contribute to the development of writing skills among tenth-grade students. The study, carried out with high school students at a school located in Caquetá, Colombia, showed that the use of teacher-made material:

served the purpose of meeting students' profiles and needs, facilitated the process of language learning and use, supported students' self-investment to encourage them to work on the completion of the suggested learning activities, and helped them become aware of their own language learning process. (p. 28)

Then, besides contributing to the improvement of a particular language skill, the study also showed that students were more engaged in their own learning process. This was also the case of the research carried out by Ötügen (2016), in which the perceptions of students at a private school in Turkey were explored when presented with worksheets designed by their own teachers in the English class. Through the collected data, Ötügen (2016) found that:

studying with worksheets was preferred by participant students mainly because worksheets were better than coursebooks in terms of content, organization, and their contribution to the enjoyment of the lesson. Students found instruction with (teacher-made) worksheets effective since they were clear and free of unnecessary details. (p. 31)

These studies provide evidence regarding positive outcomes of implementing teacher-designed material in the English class, setting a favorable precedent for this project.

Finally, the paper published by Nkwetisama (2011) consisted of a descriptive research project carried out with Cameroonian EFL teacher educators that aimed to understand their perspectives towards environmental education. One of the main findings of this study was the difficulty that teachers face when trying to include environmental education in the English class.

As a response to this finding, Nkwetisama (2011) brings up the nature of the materials that can help teachers solve this problem. For this author, teachers should not have to struggle trying to find the perfect material to talk about nature in the English class; instead, “materials for the simultaneous teaching of English and development of environmental awareness among learners can be created both by the teachers and the learners” (p. 113). Some suggestions from this author include the gathering of internet articles related with environmental issues, recording and playing-back songs in English that are related to environmental education, and debates on environmental topics that are related to events taking place where students live. While this researcher highlights the importance of implementing different strategies for teachers and students to build their own materials, the study does not really explore the impact that such materials can have in both the English learning process and the environmental citizenship assembly among students. This is precisely one of the main points that this project aims to address.

All in all, this literature review shows that, even though environmental citizenship in the English class has been somehow discussed, there is still plenty of room to explore the possibilities that this topic can create in the EFL teaching field. As an example, it is necessary to look into the possible ways in which environmental citizenship can be fostered in elementary grades through a broader approach that does not necessarily focus on language skills. While some environmental-related topics have been included in the English learning process in previous studies, there is still an evident focus on how accurate students’ language performance is, leaving room for other approaches where the non-linguistic dimensions of students (such as their ecological practices) are also observed or, at least, discussed.

Additionally, the literature review shows that the interconnection between environmental issues and language teaching has not been a matter of interest in the Colombian context. This is why this project was designed as an intent to cover these knowledge and research gaps.

Theoretical Framework

In order to have a clear perspective about the different aspects that were addressed in this research, this section consists of a theoretical framework that aims to provide a critical discussion about the two main concepts involved in this project: environmental citizenship and teacher-designed material.

Environmental citizenship

As a starting point, it is necessary to understand the context in which the concept of environmental citizenship has been discussed. Because of different social initiatives and political agendas, sustainability, green politics, and ecological awareness have become recurrent expressions over the past few years. As Cao (2015) states:

Environment has always been central to humanity. However, it is only in the past decades, and particularly since the turn of the century, that we find references to the state of the environment everywhere we turn, often telling us we need to do something about it, and fast!. (p. 5)

This is precisely the context in which environmental citizenship has emerged as a relevant matter to address with current and future generations. According to Cao (2015), environmental citizenship is a new field of study that emerged from the convergence of environment and citizenship; more precisely, it is a “subfield of environmental politics, and is closely related to the rethinking of the relationship between ecology and democracy brought about by the influence of green political thought” (p. 5). This definition, rather than just

presenting an idea of what environmental citizenship is about, presents the dimension and the importance of this concept: it has become a crucial aspect of contemporary politics, for it has allowed the understanding that ecology and environment are matters of global concern.

Besides understanding the important role that this concept has gained today, it is also necessary to establish a definition that is closer to the local approach that this project aspires to. In this regard, Dobson & Bell (2006) assert that environmental citizenship is a “holistic condition. The environmental citizen will be concerned not only about the environment but about the social practices” (p. 8). Furthermore, these authors explain that environmental citizens constantly question how they live their lives in particular ways, “it is an examination, then, of the everyday, rather than campaigns, protests, and participation in organizations. It has to do with how these lives are lived locally” (p.8). Therefore, environmental citizenship can be understood as a politics field that has obtained global relevance but, at the same time (and for the purpose of this project) it is also related to the everyday and the local actions that human beings observe and question in light of the environmental issues that predominate today. It is a concept that allows the connection between individuals and the common good through the never-ending promotion of sustainability.

Along with understanding what environmental citizenship is, it is also relevant to discern what this concept involves. Since environmental citizenship is closely related to the transformation of habits, mindsets, and the relations between humans and the world, education holds a key role in the construction of the knowledge that is needed to achieve such transformation. This connection between education and environmental citizenship is clearly presented by Russ (as cited in Hadjichambis et al., 2020) when he asserts that what environmental citizenship pursues:

Requires a formal and non-formal education that is close to reality, one that fosters the understanding of what is happening in our world, develops critical thinking and democratic competencies and reveals universal values (social justice, wisdom, synergy with nature, equality, inner harmony, responsibility, creativity, self-respect, etc.).

Together, these elements (reality, understanding, competencies and values) have to be part of the learning process and of the outcome of this education. (p. 71)

Therefore, it is understood that the linkage between education and environmental citizenship not only builds the path to hold the latter as a viable and achievable end, but it also sets the ground to comprehend that it is an opportunity where other social skills can be fostered in educational contexts.

Nevertheless, some authors have a different stance about the connection between education and environmental citizenship. As an example, Dobson (2003) explains that it has become a popular current to think that schools, institutes and colleges are the ideal contexts where ecological thought can be constructed; however, he believes that environmental citizenship is something that cannot be taught, as it is rather something that needs to be experienced. This is why Dobson (2003) declares that “school textbooks should be replaced by environmental programs, and an hour of lived experience can produce more politicization than a whole year of classes” (p. 6).

Both Russ’s perspective and Dobson’s mindset, though contradictory, set foundation for an important claim: it is imperative to leave aside the narrow perspective that the relation between education and environmental citizenship might suggest. While educational contexts can be pivotal spaces to foster social and environmental transformation, it is also important to understand that this essential role implies much more than just bringing environment-related

topics to a classroom or integrating ecological content into textbooks. In other words, it is necessary to bring real and contextualized experiences to schools, so that future generations can construct an active role and a dynamic perspective about what being an environmental citizen is about.

This urge for social transformation and for real experiences that environmental citizenship can incite in educational fields is precisely what this project aims to propose for the English class. A language class that only focuses on proficiency and linguistic rules overlooks the potential that other perspectives proffer; this is where environmental citizenship constitutes a possibility to use language as an instrument to discuss imperious social changes, as well as the means through which students can communicate how they experience the world.

Now, when talking about the active human role that environmental citizenship suggests and how it converges with language teaching, it is imperative to establish some adherence to a particular perspective about what language is and what it is for. It is important to establish a particular stance about how language is perceived when talking about relevant social matters such as environmental citizenship. If language is the main instrument to make such issues visible in the English class, then the conception about such an instrument cannot be overlooked. A common approach that has traditionally prevailed in the foreign language classroom is related to communication. Crystal (2005) provides a good example of this approach, as he suggests an idea of language as the primary means of human communication which main properties are productivity and duality: on one hand, language has “the capacity to express and understand utterances” (p.7) and, on the other, it has “two fundamental levels of structural organization... at one level we find the use of sounds and letters with no intrinsic meaning... at another level, we find these sounds or letters combining in different ways to form elements that do convey

meaning” (p. 7). Clearly, this conception about language fosters the idea of it as something that should be described, studied, and understood. Nevertheless, when trying to connect language teaching to social transformation, a more pragmatic notion should be considered.

In this regard, Pennycook (2010) presents an idea of language as something that humans do as a result of their understanding of their surroundings, rather than something they merely study in a particular place:

Viewing language as action and as part of how places are interpreted, how the meaning of places is reinforced or changed, suggests that thinking about language and locality can no longer be contained with a notion of language in context. The notion of language as practice takes us away from a notion of language as a pre-given entity that may be used in a location and looks, by contrast, at language as part of diverse social activity. (p. 2)

This notion of language as a social practice and as a tool to yield meaning to the place where it is used allows the understanding of it as a transformation instrument, rather than just an unrealistic system that needs to be decoded. In Pennycook’s (2010) words:

To look at language as a practice is to view language as an activity rather than a structure, as something we do rather than a system we draw on, as a material part of social and cultural life rather than an abstract entity. Practices are the key way in which everyday social activity is organized, and language practices, as one such set of practices, are a central part of daily social organization. (p. 2)

Perceiving language as something humans do has clear implications in the language teaching field. If teachers stop asking themselves how students are mastering and using the language, then there is room to frame different questions, such as which realities are being built or changed with that language, or what interpretation of the local context can be inferred from

the way students are using the language. From this perspective, language functions not only to communicate among individuals or communities, but also to understand and reinterpret the world. Such reinterpretation of the world can take many forms, one of which is precisely the need to preserve it through more sustainable and environment-oriented practices, which is the axiom behind the need to foster environmental citizenship.

Teacher-designed material

As it was previously stated, teacher-resigned material was the main resource to foster environmental citizenship in the English class, since this element set the possibility to bring environment-related topics into the school and, as it will be discussed later, it set the ground to reflect upon the teacher's role in language education.

Before addressing the specific notion and implications of teacher-designed materials, it is important to understand what materials, in their most basic sense, are. Tomlinson (2013) provides a general, yet clear definition of this concept:

Materials include anything which can be used to facilitate the learning of a language.

They can be linguistic, visual, auditory or kinaesthetic. They can be instructional, experiential, elicitive or exploratory, in that they can inform learners about the language, they can provide experience of the language in use, they can stimulate language use or they can help learners to make discoveries about the language for themselves. (p.8)

Hence, it is possible to assert that teacher-designed materials refer to any of the resources that are developed by teachers themselves, whose main goal is to enhance students' language learning process.

While depicting teacher-designed materials might seem a simple task, it is actually more complex than just providing a definition about it. It is also important to understand their

significance and contributions to the language learning process. In this regard, Howard & Major (2004) assert that teacher-designed materials have gained relevance today more than ever, since modern teaching trends and technologies have highly focused on individual needs; consequently, the authors affirm that:

English language classrooms are diverse places not only in terms of where they are situated, but also in terms of the individual learners within each context. Teacher-designed materials can be responsive to the heterogeneity inherent in the classroom. A teacher can develop materials that incorporate elements of the learners' first language and culture, or at least provide opportunities for acknowledgement and use alongside English. (p. 102)

This remark highlights the importance of understanding not only the notion, but also the convenience that teacher-designed materials have for nowadays students' needs.

In addition to the perspective provided by Howard & Major, Gray & Block (2014) also discuss the pertinence of teacher-designed material; however, these authors define this resource as something that goes beyond a mere step for class development, since it is also an approach and a critical stance against traditional materials, such as coursebooks:

Coursebooks frequently provide content that is limited in terms of topics, decontextualized, culturally-and ideologically-biased, and present heteronormative sexual identities in an uncritical fashion. Strict adherence to coursebooks may also stifle teachers' creativity, preventing them from bringing innovation into the classroom. All these aspects pose problems for the teaching-learning process. To address them, there is a compelling need for teachers to engage in developing their materials. (p. 48)

Therefore, teacher-created materials can also be conceived as a mechanism to respond to the issues that conventional materials might bring into the language learning process. This stance supports the critical perspective that has set the ground for this research: teacher-designed materials, rather than just being the instrument to integrate a specific topic in the English class, are a symbolic way to highlight the imperative need to have more active and critical language teachers who are able to resist the ideologies and the methods imposed by the so called “experts” who design most of the materials used to teach English nowadays.

By taking a similar perspective, Cirocki et al. (2024) explain that having teacher-designed materials in the English class is significant as long as some specific objectives are considered when designing such resources:

The objectives of these will be to achieve greater local relevance; engage students in meaningful communication; support the teaching-learning process with personalization activities and tasks; combine global and local topics so students understand better how they are connected; boost learners’ engagement; promote learner autonomy and agency in and outside the classroom; and achieve impact by arousing learners’ attention, interest, and curiosity. (p. 11)

These authors’ perspective provides an additional value for teacher-designed materials: they open a window to connect students with their local and global realities. This is also connected to the previous concept presented in this section, since environmental citizenship can be addressed from a local perspective through contextualized materials and, at the same time, it can raise awareness among students about the responsibilities that they have as global citizens.

This chapter has presented the main sources to understand how environmental citizenship and teacher-designed material were conceived for this project. The authors and definitions that

this chapter explored allow to understand that both environmental citizenship (as a global concern and as an educational imperative) and teacher-designed material (as a significant instrument to contextualize learning and to critically conduct teaching practice) are key elements to turn the English class into a transformative and meaningful space.

Chapter III: Methodological Framework

In order to better understand how this research project was developed, the following section presents the methodological framework that includes the research specifics, the context, the data instruments and the analysis approach that conformed the guidelines for this project materialization.

Qualitative research

This project was developed as qualitative research. Denzin & Lincoln define qualitative research as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible” (as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 14). This definition presents a key aspect of qualitative research: the need to observe and go beyond the mere description to decipher what this observation is saying about the context itself. This definition provided is closely related to the one offered by Ritchie et al. (2013), who conceive qualitative research as “a naturalistic, interpretative approach, concerned with exploring phenomena from the interior and taking the perspectives and accounts of research participants as a starting point (p. 11). In addition, these authors explain that what makes a research project a qualitative one is its “concern with *what*, *why* and *how* questions rather than *how many*” (p. 11). Therefore, the nature of this research revolved around a deep understanding of how the environmental citizenship and the English language teaching can be related considering students’ perspectives and experiences.

Regarding the nature of qualitative research, Merriam & Tisdell (2016) explain that this research type has four main characteristics “the focus on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive” (p. 15). Hence, qualitative research focuses on comprehending how others construct the meaning of their realities and on how the human

perspective of the researcher can enrich the information gathering process; in addition, qualitative research intends to take particular data to construct more general theories, which is done through deep and detailed descriptions.

Evidently, this is the type of research that better responds to the research objectives that were previously presented in this document. Since the main objective involves the understanding of an educational phenomenon, it is necessary to be based on a research paradigm that can open room for exploring and comprehending the nature of a specific context, rather than just measuring superficial aspects.

Action research

Regarding the research design, this project was framed as action research. According to Merriam & Tisdell (2016), action research “not only seeks to understand how participants make meaning or interpret a particular phenomenon or problem in their workplace, community, or practice, but it also usually seeks to engage participants at some level in the process in order to solve a practical problem” (p. 49). Therefore, this design offers two favorable elements: besides setting possibilities to understand a particular situation, it also involves the research participants in a more impelling way.

The importance that action research gives to participants is also evidenced in other authors’ perspectives. In fact, Craig (2009) defines action research as an approach that “encourages the researcher to consider the interconnectedness of the environment and everyone in it, the conditions present in the environment, and the interactions among the individuals in the environment. Action research is typically community-based.” (p. 3). This perspective offers a valuable insight into how the nature of action research connects with the sense of community that is often discussed in educational fields, since this is precisely one of the core values that

schools intend to foster. Therefore, beyond producing information about a problem and a course of action, action research can also be regarded as an important instrument to build knowledge as a community in the educational contexts.

Taking this into account, when it comes to talking about the relation between action research and this project, it is necessary to highlight the nature of the participants. As Merriam & Tisdell (2016) assert, “action research is generally not done *on* participants; it is done *with* participants” (p. 51). This principle of action research is closely connected with the approach and the conviction behind this research: the idea is to foster environmental citizenship in the English class so that students construct a future generation of active and critical subjects that take command of social transformation. This active role is coherent with the action research approach, in which participants are not just passive subjects that are simply observed by an “outsider”, but are rather an essential and participating part of the research project itself. This active role is mainly evidenced through the data collection instruments, since the collected artifacts were made by the students and their perceptions were also a fundamental part of the analysis.

An additional aspect that is worth mentioning about the action research design is the cycle structure. As Herr & Anderson (2015) assert, action research often constitutes a spiral of action cycles in which the researcher comes up with of a plan, implements that plan, observes the effects of action in the context and then reflects on these effects as a basis for further planning; as they state, “this cycle of activities forms an action research spiral in which each cycle increases the researcher’s knowledge of the original question, puzzle, or problem and, it is hoped, leads to its solution” (p. 38). This study was designed following this structure. The first cycle involved initial observations of the context and the participants, along with the implementation of

preliminary materials to better understand students' needs. In the second cycle, insights gained from the first cycle informed the design of materials and activities that were subsequently implemented. Finally, the third cycle provided an opportunity to refine strategies and materials that did not work as expected during the second cycle, while reinforcing those that proved effective. This cycling structure, besides being a useful tool to plan and execute the different research stages, was also a way to reflect about language teaching as a practice that requires constant examination and refinement. Having a critical approach towards language teaching is also related to teachers' responsibility to be the judges of their own work, and the power to adapt it based on what they observe in the actual teaching field.

A final aspect that can be discussed in terms of the pertinence of action research is the possibilities that this approach gives to pre-service and active teachers. This is one of the essential aspects that Craig (2009) highlights, since she affirms that "action research is selected as a method for conducting research by those who want to solve problems, address issues, and improve situations and conditions because the process promotes professional growth, improvement, and change. The process enables teachers and practitioners to become *experts in the field* because findings are based on true inquiry and therefore inform practice" (p. 6). Hence, action research also constitutes a path for teachers to claim their role as builders of their own knowledge through the observation and reflection of their own practice.

Context

This research was developed at Liceo Femenino Mercedes Nariño school, located in Bogota, Colombia. This school is located in a highly commercial neighborhood called San José Sur, traditionally known for its important shoe and leather industry.

Regarding the institution's goal, the school aims to develop critical and creative thinking among students through the promotion of human values such as respect, honesty, identity, solidarity, and autonomy. By doing this, the institution seeks to allow the transformation of the contexts where students interact, so that they can harmoniously coexist. This call for transformation that has so inherently been conceived in the school's philosophy concurs with the ideals that motivated this study: the goal is precisely to achieve the change of mindsets and social realities, particularly in the ways in which human beings interact and acquire responsibilities towards their environment.

In regard to the approach that the institution has towards English language teaching, the school is widely recognized for its focus on bilingual education in both English and French. In fact, one of the main goals of Liceo Femenino Mercedes Nariño school is to foster a bilingual and intercultural acquisition of foreign languages so that students graduate from high school with a B2-C1 level according to the CEFR. In order to achieve such a level, the school is one of the few public institutions that implement bilingual classes in other subjects, such as social and natural sciences. Because of its focus on second language education, this institution has received important distinctions from foreign entities, such as the Ministry of Europe (Secretaría de Educación Distrital, 2020).

In terms of environmental citizenship, in its PEI the institution gives special consideration to topics like sensitivity and sustainability towards the use of natural resources. Furthermore, the school aims to strengthen and create projects that make it possible to restore the environmental balance within and outside the institution. Hence, fostering environmental citizenship in the English class is a one of the many ways in which these institutional values can be materialized in the classroom.

Participants

The research population was composed of 36 female second-grade students who were between 6 and 8 years old. Students participated during their English class, which took place two hours a week, on Tuesdays.

Regarding the research viewpoint on the population, it is important to clarify that, in this particular case, these 36 students constituted a convenience type of sampling which, according to Merriam & Tisdell (2016), is when “you select a sample based on time, money, location, availability of sites or respondents, and so on” (p. 98). More precisely, this research sample was determined by the availability of grades and time offered by the school.

Data Collection Instruments

This section introduces the main instruments that allowed to collect relevant information to achieve the research objectives; the main instruments were fieldwork journals, artifacts and interviews.

Fieldwork journals

Most of the information collected during the research process derived from fieldwork journals. According to Merriam & Tisdell (2016), a fieldwork journal is a descriptive record that is not only based on the observation of events and interactions, but also contains some preliminary analysis and interpretation. Hence, this instrument was used to gather information about the context and its relationship with the concepts that were relevant to the study (this is, the events or the situations that evidence some connection between the English class and environmental citizenship). At the same time, fieldwork journals contain relevant information about reflections and thoughts that arise from the observations of such connections. The main purpose of implementing these fieldwork journals was to identify to what extent environmental citizenship was addressed in the English class; in addition, this instrument was used to gain a

deeper understanding of the classroom dynamics and the different students' behaviors and reactions that served as a source for teacher-designed material.

Fieldwork journals were filled out at the end of each lesson. They included observed elements and situations based on the criteria mentioned above, as well as a reflection in terms of the aspects that were relevant for the project (See Appendix A). In addition, since teacher-designed material was also a big component of this project, each journal included an assessment format in which significant criteria (clarity, engagement, and environmental pertinence) of the different activities and resources were evaluated.

Artifacts

Considering the active role of the research participants, it was necessary to have an instrument that provided evidence of their perspectives and experiences. In this regard, artifacts also constituted an important source for this project. Merriam & Tisdell (2016) define artifacts as any of the physical objects that can be found in the study setting; these authors also explain that “artifacts that participants create or use to express themselves can be a valuable source of data and can provide another avenue of expression that can be captured in symbols as well as words” (p. 174). This conception allows an understanding of the pertinence of this instrument for this research: since participants were elementary students between 6 and 8 years old, it was relevant to consider any objects or elements that could provide insight about their emotions and their perspectives regarding both the English class and environmental-related topics. In these elementary grades students usually express themselves through varied means other than the conventional written texts, such as drawings. Hence, these artifacts were used to gain a deeper understanding of participants' standpoints.

Interviews

Given the importance that this study concedes to participants, interviews were a relevant instrument to get a deeper understanding of students' perceptions about the materials and contents. Merriam & Tisdell (2016) define interview as a verbal interchange that aims at eliciting information, opinions or beliefs from one person (the researcher, in this case) to another. In qualitative research, interviews are usually an effective tool to get into other people's perspectives. In view of this, this research conducted interviews with some of the participants at the end of the last cycle in order to collect information about how students conceived environmental citizenship. The interview structure consisted of seven questions which main purpose was to comprehend how the different activities and materials that were implemented throughout the different cycles had an impact on students' perceptions about their environment and their regular actions towards it. (See Appendix B)

Data analysis approach

This study performed a qualitative analysis of the data that was collected through the different instruments. The information collected through field diaries, interviews, and students' artifacts were studied using a grounded theory approach.

The first stage of this analysis was made around what authors such as Lincoln & Guba and Dey (as cited in Merriam & Tisdell 2016) have brought together under the concept of open coding. Here, the corpus was carefully read, and some comments and observations were written next to relevant fragments. These observations corresponded to general insights and reflections that emerged from the collected information. As the authors explain, these comments were not limited by pre-established theories or categories but were rather the result of open interpretation (See Appendix C).

In the subsequent stage of this analysis, the comments and observations were revised in order to identify connections among them. In what Charmaz and Corbin & Strauss ((as cited in Merriam & Tisdell 2016) refer to as axial coding, a more coherent and systematic organization was made, considering the conceptual relations that existed among the segments of data and their corresponding observations (See Appendix D).

Finally, the analysis concluded with the categorization stage, where the connections that were made in the axial coding phase were consolidated into concrete and well-defined conceptual categories.

In brief, the information was subject to a constant comparative method that aimed at identifying similarities and differences throughout the different segments of data. Following this path, the identified patterns were used to establish categories; hence, the data was examined in light of the research objectives and interpreted in terms of the meanings that could lead to more explicit and readable notions. (See Figure 1 in Chapter V to see the connection between research objectives and final categories).

Ethical Considerations

Since the research participants were second-grade students who were not older than 8 years old, a consent form was sent to their legal guardians to notify them about the ongoing project (see Appendix E). This form served as a written authorization to collect some information from students and have their permission to take pictures of their artifacts throughout the different sessions.

Students' identities were protected through the use of number-based labels (Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.), and the instruments exclusively collected the details that were relevant to the research questions.

Besides the previous measures, at the end of the study the institution where the project was developed is expected to receive a copy of the final document, along with the teaching material developed throughout the research. This is held as a way to inform the school about the different activities and reports that were carried out during the project fulfillment.

Finally, it is important to mention that some artificial intelligence resources were used during the development of this study. More specifically, *Google Gemini* and *Bing AI Image Creator* were implemented throughout the research for some particular purposes. Google Gemini was mainly used during the final document writing stage in order to refine the text and avoid issues such as redundancy or inadequate academic writing style; hence, the tool was mainly used for style correction and synonyms search, In regard to the use of Bing AI Image creator, this website was the primary resource to create the images included in the teacher-designed material.

While nowadays there are ongoing discussions about the overuse of AI resources, it is also important to recognize that such tools can be valuable for teachers, as long as they do not replace responsibilities inherent to such practice. Therefore, it is worth noting that AI constituted an important part of the material design process, as it enabled the creation of images with highly specific elements needed to effectively convey the ideas developed around the topic of environmental citizenship.

Activities timeline

In order to provide a chronological account of the project process, the following table presents the different activities that were carried out throughout the study.

2024 – 2					
Activities	Dates				
Consolidation of research proposal.	August 8th - December 3rd				
2025-1					
Activities	February	March	April	May	June
First meeting with school teacher and principals.					

Initial search of authors and referents for theoretical framework.					
Fieldwork journals design.					
First cycle of action research: Material and instruments design – First stage of data collection					
Design of teacher-designed material (first unit).					
Collection of artifacts (from first and second lesson plans).					
Literature review for document.					
Collection of fieldwork journal observations (from first and second lesson plans).					
Second cycle of action research: Material design – Second stage of data collection					
Design of teacher-designed material (second unit).					
Collection of artifacts (from third and fourth lesson plans).					
Document writing (first chapters).					
Collection of fieldwork journal observations (from third and fourth lesson plans).					
Collection of artifacts (from fifth lesson plan).					
Collection of fieldwork journal observations (from fifth lesson plan).					
Third cycle of action research: Final stage of data collection and data analysis					
2025-2					
Activities	August	September	October	November	
Design of teacher-designed material (third unit).					
Interview questions design.					
Collection of artifacts (from sixth and seventh lesson plans).					
Collection of fieldwork journal observations (from sixth and seventh lesson plans).					
Interview implementation.					
Data analysis.					
Conclusions of the research.					
2026-1					
Final document review.	March 3rd – April 20th				

Chapter IV: Instructional Design

This chapter presents the theoretical ground that supports the methodological approach of this project. For such a purpose, the visions of language, learning, learners and teaching approach are introduced. In addition, the pedagogical approach is also discussed. Such discussions adhere to the critical perspective proposed in this study; more precisely, this chapter evidences how the vision of language gets back to the relation between language and social transformation that was earlier discussed in this document.

Vision of language

Since this project aims at understanding the English class as a space where social transformation is key, it is important to conceive language as something that goes beyond a mere signs system. Pennycook (2010) defines language as “a local practice, and therefore a central organizing activity of social life that is acted out in specific places” (p. 10). The main point here is that the way in which language is used can explain how people conceive and interact with the places they inhabit, thus affirming that:

A discussion of language in place will open up an understanding of the interactive nature of our physical environments, suggesting not so much that language happens in particular places, but rather that language use is part of a multifaceted interplay between humans and the world. What we do with language in a particular place is a result of our interpretation of that place; and the language practices we engage in reinforce that reading of place. (Pennycook, 2010, p.11)

Hence, this conception of language as a local practice is valuable in two ways: it sets the ground to connect language practices with local reality, and it challenges the idea of language as an abstract system that needs to be figured out, replacing it with the notion of language as a form of action and even transformation (which is connected to this research's purpose). Understanding

that language is much more than a means of communication makes it plausible to explore its potential to be a transformative tool to enhance social skills such as environmental citizenship.

This “language as doing” perspective is closely related to the one proposed by Tudor (2001). While he addresses the functional perspective of language in terms of the teaching approach (rather than the social transformation suggested by Pennycook), this author still emphasizes the relevance of understanding language as a socially constructed system, which makes it:

The medium by which members of a speech community express concepts, perceptions, and values which have significance to them as members of this community. (...) In this view, language learners are social actors whose learning goals are defined by the contexts in which they will be required to use the language and the messages they will wish to convey in these contexts. (p. 57)

From this stance, there is a reaffirmation of language as a social manifestation that transcends the use of abstract signs: it is the instrument through which human beings strengthen their social relations and convey what is significant for them according to their contexts. This notion of language as a social manifestation of what is relevant in a specific context is highly connected to this project’s idea. The English class should be a space where language is seen as a way to materialize current, relevant and contextualized matters, and building environmental citizenship in the language class can be a good example of how to achieve this.

Vision of language learning

In the context of environmental citizenship, it is important to have a vision of language learning that transcends the linguistic-centered skills development notion. For Hymes (1972), it is necessary to part ways with the notion of competence, for it usually refers to individual and

linguistic abilities that are often linked to biological conditions; instead, he asserts that the notion of knowledge would be more precise when talking about language learning. In this regard, the author asserts that:

We have to account for the fact that a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences not only as grammatical but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, and in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishments by others. (p. 277)

This rupture with the conventional notion of competence aligns with the critical perspective of this project and deviates from the technical approach to language learning. Hence, the idea is for students to know English and get familiar with its use, rather than only developing language skills or being “proficient”. This understanding of language learning as knowing is closely related to the underlying goal of this study, which is to help students learn the language not only to speak it accurately, but also to know how to use it towards a shared objective which, in this case, is to discuss and be aware of environmental-related issues.

By having a more comprehensive approach to the notion of learning, Kumaravadivelu (2008) understands this concept as a negotiating and reflective process in which both internal and external components are involved. Among these, he considers the environmental factors, which “refer to the wider milieu in which language learning and teaching take place. These include the global, national, social, cultural, political, economic, educational, and family contexts” (p. 43). This conception of learning as a situated process that is influenced by all these spaces where learners reside is coherent with an aspect that was discussed earlier in this document: environmental issues are relevant in all these contexts. Therefore, a learning approach where

environmental citizenship is an ever-present aspect should make language use more relevant for students. This is where teacher-designed material plays an important role, for it is precisely the medium that serves as a platform for teachers to explore the context and bring meaningful and relevant issues into the English class.

Vision of learners

Being coherent with the previous idea of learning as a process where students not only use the language but actually know it, it is necessary to understand learners as active social agents rather than just passive recipients of structures and rules. In this regard, Aronowitz & Giroux (1993) define learner as a social agent, “one that could individually and collectively imagine a global society that combines freedom and social justice modeled after the imperatives of a radical and inclusive democracy” (p. 58). This perspective sets the ground to conceive learners as active and socially aware agents who engage in real issues (in this particular case, environmental-related issues). Furthermore, this notion challenges traditional paradigms of education, for it conceives learners as individuals who are involved in their own learning and transform it into an empowerment process to achieve social change.

This view aligns with the one proposed by Crookes (2013) and Freire (1970); these authors take critical pedagogy as a starting point to disregard the conception of learner as a task performer or as a mere student of the language. Instead, language learners are conceived as potentially active agents in society who not only consume knowledge but also produce it. This line of thinking, according to Crookes (2013), also considers the possibility for learners to engage in their own learning process from a critical stance and “develop tools for seeing the ways in which language has position, interest, power, and can act to disadvantage those on lower rungs of a hierarchical society” (p. 28). Hence, in the context of this research, learners are

regarded as much more than language users, for they are expected to use the linguistic tools and knowledge they get to make a difference in society.

Teaching approach

This project followed a critical teaching approach. This critical stance conceives the language teacher not as a language expert, but as a critical individual who constantly seeks to understand what students need. According to Crookes (2013), this critical teaching approach should:

Address students' needs, considering them in terms of the role of the learner as a potentially active agent in society not merely as a worker performing tasks or a student studying the language; overall, the perspective derives from a critical view of society, and has always been part of critical pedagogy. (p.55)

In other words, having a critical teaching approach considers students (and therefore, society) as the main source to make decisions about what topics and issues should be brought into the classroom.

In addition to the permanent consideration of students' needs, the critical teaching approach is also focused on giving precedence to locally related matters, even if they are not part of the dominant ideologies and discourses. In this regard, Canagarajah (2005) asserts that a critical teaching approach needs to:

Point to ways in which the negotiation of the global can be conducted by taking greater account of the local and respecting its value and validity. (...) Making a space for the local doesn't mean merely adding another component or subfield to the paradigms that already dominate many fields. It means radically reexamining our disciplines to orientate

to language identity, knowledge, and social relations from a totally different perspective.

(p. 14)

This critical teaching approach where local matters are prioritized as a way to withstand leading ideologies, is also a central part of this project: making room for local-centered material and issues is considered a germane tool to resist the idea that the English class should purely revolve around linguistic proficiency.

Pedagogical intervention

In order to establish a logical connection between the research design and the teaching proposal of this project, three didactic units were designed and developed (one for each research cycle). For the first cycle, the didactic unit and the lesson plans were focused on providing students with tools to describe their surroundings in English; on the second cycle, the didactic resources and the planning revolved around helping students understand good and bad practices towards the environment; the third unit was designed to give special attention to concrete actions that can be done to protect the environment. (See Appendix F)

The axis of the didactic units was environmental citizenship and included resources that were locally relevant for students (in coherence with the vision of language as a local practice that was presented earlier in this chapter). Hence, the media included in the units was taken from the actual spaces that students knew and saw during their school activities. Having the school as a main resource and as a shared space that gains relevance for students to build a sense of community in the English class is also part of the vision of learning as a situated process that was discussed earlier.

Didactic units

Unit 1: recognizing my surroundings. In this initial unit, the main objective was to provide students with activities that allowed them to name the different elements that they could find in the spaces they frequented. This unit also intended to get a deeper understanding of how students interpreted the different elements that they could find in their surroundings. The activities on this unit had a clear focus on vocabulary, since it was considered an essential tool for learners to describe what their surroundings looked like.

Unit 2: understanding our environment. This unit included contrast-based activities where students were able to make distinctions between positive and negative aspects of both the elements that they can witness in the environment (such as smoke or garbage) and actions that somehow impact the environment (such as wasting food). The main goal of this unit was to help students identify the main issues that are currently affecting the environment.

Unit 3: small actions for a big future. This final unit was designed as a way to conclude the process developed during the previous units: having acquired the necessary vocabulary to describe their surroundings, and having recognized what was good and bad for the environment, students worked on some activities that allowed them to better understand what concrete actions they can do in order to take care of the environment.

Material structure

The teacher-designed material that was implemented throughout the different sessions had some particular sections that included the following characteristics:

Let's give it a name. This section, presented at the beginning of each didactic unit, was mainly focused on introducing the new words and expressions that students needed to further discuss the topics that the didactic unit explored. This section also suggested some activities that could help students practice the understanding of those new words and expressions.

The environment... OUR environment. In this section, students were able to find some activities that led them to look into the environmental factors that they could find in their own contexts. The main objective was to present contextualized items (such as pictures of the actual spaces that the students knew) that could help learners feel more related to the environmental topics that were discussed.

Problems – Solutions. This segment presented some contrast-based activities where students went through the different issues that they could identify in the school and its surroundings; at the same time, students were prompted to recognize the possible changes and habits that could straighten out those issues.

Exploration time. Each one of the didactic units included a specific part where students could find some general guidelines to physically explore the school spaces and put into practice what they had learnt through the different activities. This exploration segment was designed to work as a transition between the didactic unit activities and the didactic unit project.

Since this action research was developed in three different cycles, three didactic units were implemented as well. Each didactic unit was implemented throughout different lessons, as the following table shows:

Unit 1: Recognizing my surroundings	Lesson 1: Students developed activities to identify some vocabulary and expressions in English related to elements from their surroundings. This lesson also held some time to ask reflective questions about students' habits towards the environment.
	Lesson 2: Students practiced vocabulary through different activities (coloring, match, and games). This lesson also had room for students to reflect on the importance of reusing material as a good environmental practice.

Unit 2: Understanding our environment	Lesson 3: Students completed some activities that allowed them to learn new expressions to describe their environment. They also identified the ideas and perceptions they have about some of the elements that are present in their surroundings.
	Lesson 4: Students learnt and practiced some vocabulary that allowed them to describe some actions that have an impact on the environment. Students also identified good and bad habits that the school's community has towards the environment.
	Lesson 5: Students kept practicing with some English expressions to talk about the good and the bad habits that they could observe in school. As a way to close this cycle, students made a group graphic representation of both the habits that could be observed at the school and that harm the environment and the actions that, as citizenships, students could perform to have a more sustainable planet.
Unit 3: Small actions for a big future	Lesson Plan 7: Students used the vocabulary learnt during the previous units to decide on one good action to represent in a creative piece made with recycled materials.
	Lesson Plan 8: Students completed an activity that allowed them to connect the good and bad actions they had learnt before with their daily practices. They recognized which of these actions were easy or difficult to perform in their particular contexts.
	Lesson Plan 9: As a final project, students created an ecological mailbox where they included pieces of paper with the vocabulary they knew related to good actions towards their surroundings.

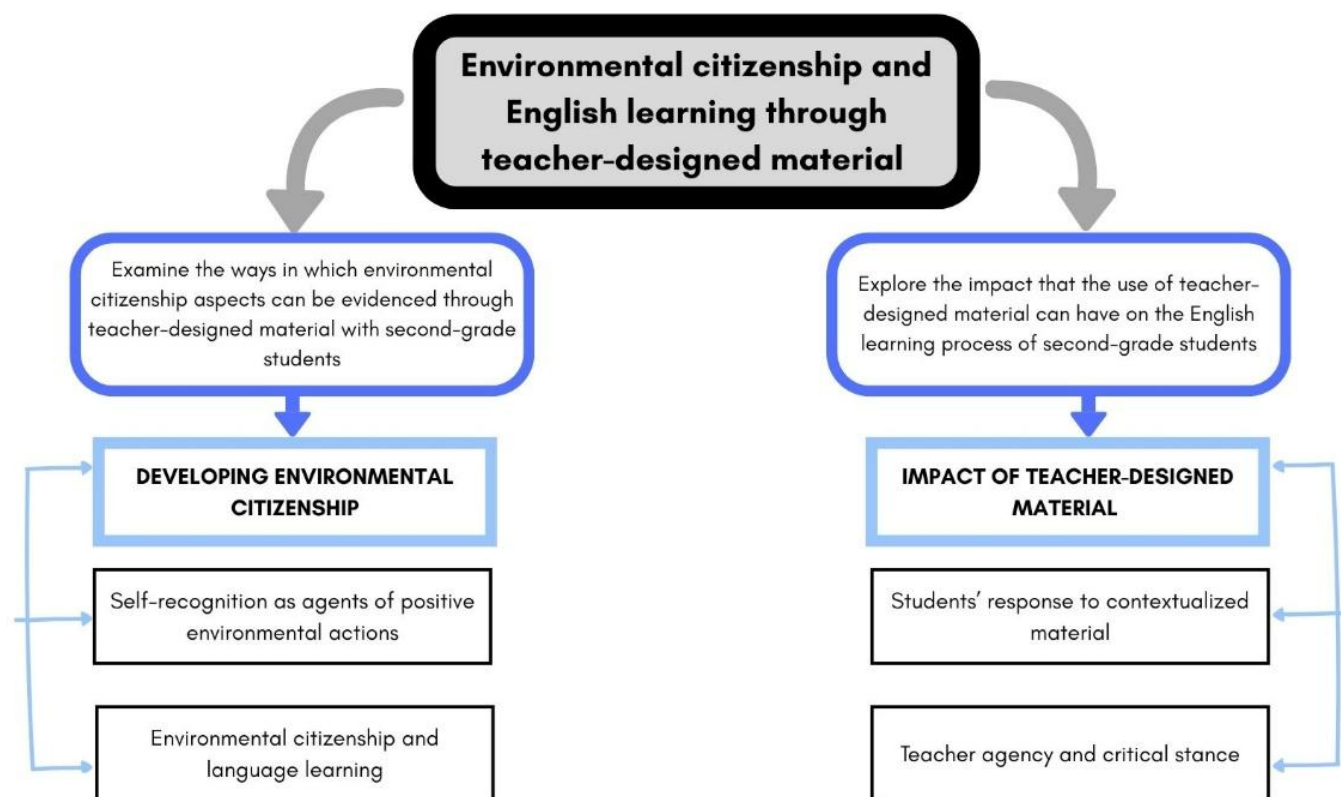
Chapter V: Data Analysis

Having presented the theoretical, methodological and instructional aspects of this study, this chapter presents how the data analysis was carried out on the basis of these parameters, as well as on the research objectives. The collected information was coded and examined in order to explore the impact that the teacher-designed material had on the students' construction of environmental citizenship and on their English learning process.

This section presents the results of the analysis made on the data that was collected through fieldwork journals, students' artifacts and students' interviews. This analysis resulted in two global categories: *Developing environmental citizenship* and the *Impact of teacher-designed material*, which are also divided into the subcategories that are presented below:

Figure 1.

Specific objectives, global categories and subcategories



Developing environmental citizenship

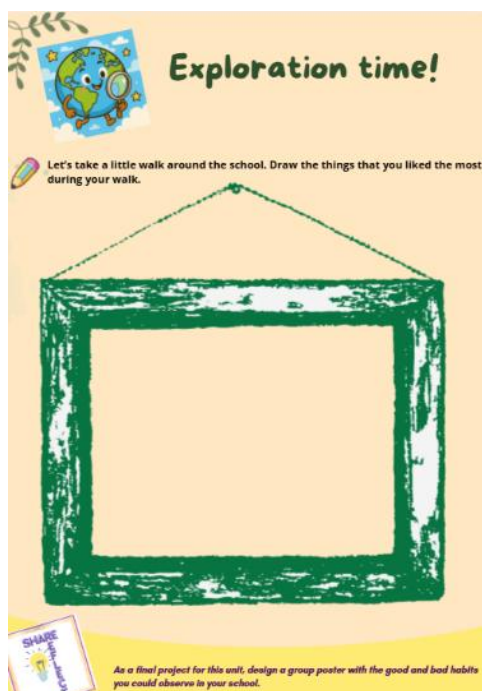
This category emerged from all the data that was collected and that was related to those aspects that evidenced an awareness about what was important towards the environment.

According to the theoretical framework previously presented in this document, Dobson & Bell (2006) explain that environmental citizenship is not only related to the knowledge of what the environment is, but also to the daily practices, observations, and discussions that aim at constructing a more sustainable world. In this sense, this category is framed by all the aspects that show how students recognized themselves as important agents of environmental care and how they used language to describe their environment along with the positive and negative things they could find in it. Within this perspective, the two subcategories that arose from the analysis were related to how students recognized themselves as agents of positive actions towards the environment and the way in which relevant aspects of their sense of environmental citizenship were represented through language use.

Self- recognition as agents of positive environmental actions

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, authors like Russ (as cited in Hadjichambis et al., 2020) regard social responsibility as an essential component of environmental citizenship, which has to do with how citizens understand that individual actions impact the environment and also the other members of their communities. Throughout the different sessions, students completed some activities that resulted in artifacts that allowed them not only to practice the lesson topics, but also to represent their own perspectives about their own roles towards environmental care. A good example of this was the result of the first unit final project:

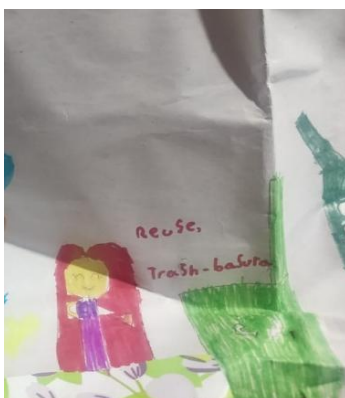
Unit 1, Activity 3



As it can be seen in the *Share, Reflect* section of this final activity, students were supposed to design a group poster with the different habits that they were able to observe at the school; in addition to this instruction, students were asked to draw the good and bad environmental practices that they had observed in their neighborhoods.

As it is exemplified with Participants 1 and 3, this activity resulted in students' representations of themselves performing actions that had been previously introduced to the group as positive practices that humans can have to protect the environment:

Participant 1's drawing where she is reusing items from trash.



Participant 3's drawing where she is throwing garbage inside a trash can.



Artifacts show that, when representing good actions towards the environment (such as reusing or throwing garbage in the appropriate place), students often represented themselves as the ones performing those good actions. When participating in this final project, students constantly manifested that the good actions were performed by themselves, which was documented in the fieldwork journal # 7:

When walking around the different groups, a student mentioned that she drew herself reusing material like we did in the classroom. Immediately, all the girls in the group started showing how they had also drawn themselves doing other related things such as recycling and saving water. Field journal # 7.

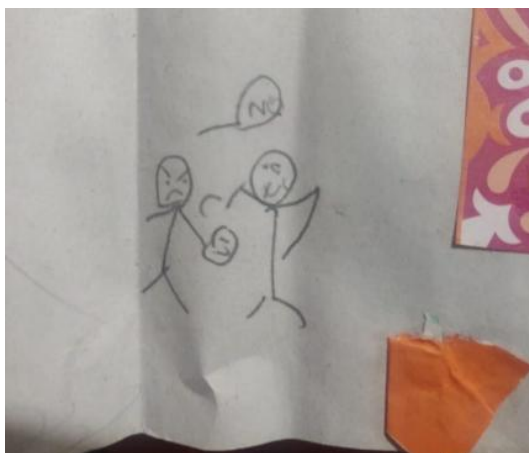
These findings evidenced an emerging moral position among students about what their role was towards the environment: students not only showed that they understood what a good environmental action was, but they also conceived themselves as potential active agents of these positive practices.

An interesting finding that became evident during the data analysis process and that was also related to the artifacts that resulted from the first cycle final project was the contrast that students made between the actions performed by themselves in their drawings and those performed by others. Two good examples of such contrast can be found below:

Participant 15's drawing where a boy is wasting water and she is collecting water instead.



Participant 21's drawing where two boys are throwing trash on the ground.



While it was evident that students represented other people different from them (because most of the drawings correspond to male figures), students' perspectives about what they were drawing on the group poster were also documented in the fieldwork journal # 7:

I realized that most of the girls were finishing their drawings, so I decided to ask them about what they were trying to represent in the poster. I went to the group that was close to the board and asked them about their drawings. One of the students pointed at the two people on her drawing and explained that it was a little boy she had once seen wasting water in her neighborhood and, next to him, she was collecting some rainwater, since it was something she used to do with her mom. I told her that it was a beautiful drawing and then the student that was next to her working on the same poster section explained that she had also seen some men throwing trash to the ground near her house and that's what she had drawn. I also told her that I liked her drawing, and I took advantage of this moment to remind them about the correct way to say water and trash in English. Field journal # 7

It is also worth noting that students were prone to include adults in their perceptions of those who have negative practices towards the environment. Evidence of this could be observed in the responses provided by participants 11 and 12 when being asked about other insights at the end of the interview and about their environmental practices, respectively:

Uno también puede recoger la basura en cualquier lado para no ensuciar el medio ambiente porque hay señores y señoras que botan la basura y el medio ambiente se puede ensuciar. Participant # 11

Cuido el agua, y cuando mi familia la va a gastar les digo que no la gasten.

Participant # 12

Going back to the perspective offered by Dobson & Bell (2006), the holistic nature of environmental citizenship is evidenced in the awareness that people develop about their position as part of an ecological community, rather as mere isolated individuals. This data evidence that

students recognized themselves as positive agents of environmental actions, but they also paid attention to the other individuals that are part of such ecological community and to the negative practices that they had observed in them. Consequently, students showed an emerging realization about how protecting the environment is not just a matter of completing a list of positive tasks, but it also involves a persistent observation of how the other members of their community impact the surroundings. This is also connected to what Cao (2015) explains about environmental citizenship being an ever- present aspect of today's global reality where people are constantly searching for concrete actions to problematize and for tangible solutions: students seemed to connect problematic actions to others and, in contrast, they related tangible actions to what they could do to protect their environment.

Another aspect that emerged as a relevant finding was how students were able to relate the class content to their daily practice outside the classroom. As Dobson & Bell (2006) claim, environmental citizenship can be evidenced when simple awareness evolves to actual social and observable sustainable actions. The following pictures show some of the results of the third cycle first activity, where students made an ecological flower and wrote the most important environmental action for them:

Participant 4's artifact "saving water".



Participant 6's artifact "recycle".



Participant 13's artifact "reusing".



In this activity, each student was expected to constantly perform the specific action that they had selected as the most relevant one for the environment. This commitment was later evidenced during the interviews, where students also declared that class discussions about good actions for the environment had an impact outside the school:

Si, yo siempre hago eso (reciclar) en la casa... en el colegio, en cualquier lado. El agua... si yo veo como algo abrido, el agua abrida entonces lo tengo que cerrar.

Participant # 6.

Interviewer: *¿Tú has aplicado algo de lo que hemos visto en clases en tu vida diaria?*

Student: *En la casa, en el colegio y de vez en cuando en la calle... no malgasto el agua, en la casa recojo los papeles.* Participant # 13.

Hence, the interviews show that students not only recognized the actions that can have a positive impact and that can transform their environment, but they also conceived them as part of their practices beyond the English class discussions.

Environmental citizenship and language learning

Even though the focus of the different sessions was to develop environmental citizenship among students, the material also fostered permanent language practice. According to what Pennycook (2010) asserts, language should not be regarded as an abstract system of signs, but rather as the means through which humans construct their world and their realities; this is why this subcategory focuses on those linguistic forms that students practiced and that gave some understanding of how they were interpreting their surroundings. A good example of this is illustrated through one of the activities that was implemented during the first cycle:

Unit 1, Activity 2



This activity was designed with real pictures of places close to the school; its main objective was to help students recognize the good and the bad things that could be found in their surroundings. The instruction was to add a heart sign under the pictures that they could relate to the expression “I like this” and an X sign under the pictures that they could connect to the expression “I don’t like this”. This exercise resulted in artifacts and contributions that demonstrated this connection between environmental citizenship and language use:

Participant 3’s artifact.



This activity demonstrated that students used language input to identify the things that, intuitively, they recognized as negative and positive aspects in the environment. This connection between students’ ability to identify positive and negative elements in their surroundings and English use was also documented through fieldwork journal # 9:

I asked in English if they had already finished and most of the girls confirmed that they had. I then asked in Spanish if they had any examples of things that they had liked from the pictures. Several girls raised their hands, I asked one of the students to say her example and she said in Spanish that she had liked the two pictures with the trees and the plants because she liked to play in those kinds of areas. Then I asked her to use the

expression that we had previously learnt, she took a few seconds to remember and then she said “I like tree”. I wrote on the board the complete sentence “I like trees and plants”; she repeated this sentence and then the other girls that were close to her translated it into Spanish confirming they understood that it meant they enjoyed seeing trees and plants. Fieldwork journal # 5.

Both the artifact and the field journal entry are good examples of how students used a particular linguistic expression to communicate how they perceived some of the elements that were present in their environment. Building on what was previously quoted from Pennycook (2010), language became a manifestation of students’ realities, rather than an abstract manifestation of linguistic patterns: students connected a specific language form to their perception of their reality and to the observable elements in their context.

In addition, students also learnt new vocabulary that allowed them to name those elements that were constantly present in the environment and that were later useful to talk about problems and actions related to it:

Participant 11’s artifact



In this regard, some students mentioned during the interviews that the vocabulary activities were the most interesting for them. When referring to these activities, students acknowledged that it was important to know the words in English to name the elements that they constantly saw in their surroundings:

Para mí esta de vocabulario (the student points at one of the vocabulary activities as the most interesting for her) porque esa nos enseña a saber cómo se llaman las cosas.

Participant # 4.

La del vocabulario, porque para mí cuando estamos en otro lugar aprendemos a hablar con las demás personas y a interactuar. Participant # 19.

The interview excerpts also demonstrated that, besides being the means to name environmental elements, students also understood vocabulary as a tool to interact with others, which helped them conceive English as an element that can play a relevant role in their daily experiences.

Impact of teacher-designed material

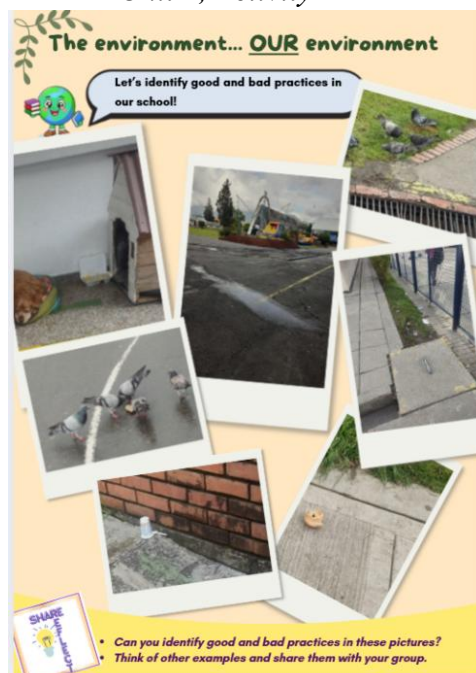
This category encompasses all reflections and findings derived from the use of the teacher-designed materials implemented during the project. As it was mentioned in the first chapter of this document, authors such as Cirocki et al. (2024) and Gray & Block (2014) consider teacher-designed materials as instruments that allow contextualized learning and critical teaching practice. Given this perspective, the data was analyzed in order to identify how the material influenced the students' learning process and the teaching practice itself.

Students' response to contextualized material

A remarkable observation that was made throughout the different sessions was that, in general, students had a positive response towards the different material and the activities that

were implemented in the classes. Nevertheless, there was a noticeable contrast between the material that included real pictures and the one that included internet-based images. This was precisely the case of an activity where students were asked to identify good and bad practices towards the environment based on some pictures that were taken inside the school:

Unit 2, Activity 2



The following fragment shows the reflection that was documented in the field journal that corresponded to this class:

I noticed that, unlike some of the first activities that I designed with internet pictures, this worksheet with real pictures did not give room to misunderstandings in terms of what each picture represented. The only questions girls asked were related to the pertinence of their answers, but the instructions and the pictures seemed to be clear enough for them. Moreover, the girls participated more (compared to the other material with internet pictures) and they connected to the images in a very particular way. Several students started mentioning the name of the dog and said that, just as Tony (the school director's dog), all animals should be protected. Field journal # 9

In contrast, the following fragment shows an observation that was made during an activity where students were expected to practice some vocabulary that had been introduced in the previous class, and which material was designed with internet images:

I started saying “smoke”, and I repeated at least five times. I walked around the desks and helped some students that had trouble identifying the correct image. I continued with the word “garbage”; even though some students identified and colored the correct image, most of them were doubtful between the correct image and the one that was supposed to represent “trash can”. I clarified this information in Spanish to clear any doubts, but the pictures were still confusing for most of the students. Since the time of the class was over, I explained that we would continue next class. Field journal # 3

These two observations showed a direct contrast: students seemed to better understand the instructions and to make clearer connections between the image and the concept when the material included real pictures of the school. In addition, these pictures had a deep impact on the way they contributed to the class discussion, since they were able to connect to real aspects of their everyday life in school. This finding is also connected to what Cirocki et al. (2024) claimed: teacher-designed material represents a possibility to enhance students’ learning process through resources that are relevant for them.

It is also important to mention that students found clear connections between the material and the environmental purpose embedded in it. An illustration of this can be found in the response of participant 21 when being questioned about the material and activities that she had found more appealing throughout the different sessions. In this regard, this student referred to the final project of the third cycle (Unit 3, Activity 4), where the material intended to guide students to make an ecological mailbox with some cards about good actions for the environment:

Porque esa actividad se trataba de cuidar la naturaleza y de cuidar más cosas, y a mí me gustó porque cuidar la naturaleza eso es lo que a mí me gusta porque nosotros no debemos ensuciar el medio ambiente ni lo debemos dañar para que las flores ni los animales se lastimen ni nada de eso. Participant # 21.

Unit 3, Activity 4.



This final project also resulted in a group mailbox and some artifacts made by students:

Ecological mailbox



Participant 21's artifact



Participant 1's artifact



Participant 12's artifact



Both the artifacts and the interview response are a confirmation of what Cirocki et al. (2024) explain about the local relevance that teacher-designed material represents within language learning contexts: the fact that students understand the meaning and the context from which the material emerges not only boosts their engagement, but it also makes apparent the intention behind every activity.

Teacher agency and critical stance

As stated by Gray & Block (2014), when teachers design their own material, they are changing their own mindset about their own practice: they become more active and critical participants of the teaching process rather than just material implementers. This active nature was evidenced through the constant reflection that appeared during the assessment of the different activities and resources, which is exemplified in the following field journal reflection:

The material seemed to be challenging for some students. Even though it included an example of what they needed to do, students were not clear if they had to just match the words or write them in the correct way. Therefore, as a way to improve this particular worksheet, it would be good to clearly state the steps that they need to follow instead of just blending all the activities in the same point. For example, the first point could be re-designed so that they just need to re-write the words and then there should be another item where they are only asked to match the image with the correct word.

Fieldwork journal # 1.

This constant examination of how the material could be refined in order to better respond to students' needs is a good example of the critical and reflective approach that arises when didactic material is regarded as a pedagogical construction based on actual observations of class dynamics.

Building on this perspective, the process of material design positioned the teacher as an ongoing evaluator of pedagogical decisions, aligning with Gray and Block's (2014) view of teachers as active agents who continuously negotiate meaning in the classroom. Hence, rather than regarding the material as a finished product, it was approached as a flexible pedagogical tool that was at all times subject to revision based on students' responses, engagement, and difficulties. A good example of this is the fieldwork journal # 3:

During the activity, I noticed that some students completed the task very quickly without fully engaging in the purpose of the exercise. This made me question whether the instructions and the format of the material were properly guiding them toward meaningful interaction rather than superficial completion. In future versions of this material, I should rethink the type of prompts used and include guiding questions that encourage students to reflect before answering. Fieldwork journal # 3.

These reflections illustrate how the act of designing and revising didactic material fostered a critical stance grounded in classroom realities, where teaching decisions were continuously interrogated and adjusted in response to students' learning processes.

Conclusions

This study used a grounded theory approach and an action research methodology to examine how the use of teacher-designed materials affected second-grade kids' development of environmental citizenship as well as their English learning process. A deeper comprehension of the data gathered by the instruments was made possible by the interpretation of the research findings in terms of the categories listed in the Data Analysis chapter. The findings of this analysis are presented in this chapter around two primary topics: the consequences of teacher-designed content and the intersection of language learning and environmental citizenship.

One of the main findings was related to how English learning and environmental citizenship notions came together throughout the different sessions: students were able to use English new words and expressions to reveal how they conceived their role towards the environment. Students made an evident emphasis on positive actions (such as recycling and reusing) and represented themselves performing those actions. This finding was essential to understand how language learning was strongly attached to the students' emerging awareness of their environmental responsibility. Moreover, this realization proved that having students learn a new language while discussing real social issues was not only feasible, but also extremely fruitful in terms of learners' self-recognition.

Another significant observation that emerged from this study was how implementing the different activities resulted in a deep reflection from students about the difference between them and adults. As mentioned earlier in this document, Dobson & Bell (2006) highlight the social dimension of environmental citizenship, where human beings are conceived as members of communities rather than isolated individuals. In this regard, the study showed that, when environmental issues are brought into the classroom, it becomes a space where students reflect about themselves, but also about others' roles. Students made a clear distinction between what they could do to help the environment as little kids and what adults usually did to harm it, showing students' insights about what was in their power to ease others' negative practices. This is a significant aspect because, as mentioned in the Literature Review section of this document, most of the existing studies that aimed to connect English learning to social matters very often focused on adult populations. In this respect, this study constitutes valuable confirmation of how even very young learners can manifest a critical and reflective position when the material and the activities inspire them and give them the chance to communicate what they think.

Implications

In relation to language use, this study proved that bringing environment-related content to the class did not minimize language learning, but quite the opposite: students used new vocabulary and new expressions in ways that allowed them to connect with real spaces and real issues that were part of their daily lives. This finding represents an important contribution, for it highlights how positive it was for students to use English to talk about their own realities and how this helped them gain a deeper understanding of the new language elements.

With respect to teacher-designed material, this study proved how this resource can be a meaningful opportunity for students to be more engaged and connected with the class contents. As it was discussed in the Data Analysis chapter, the material included pictures of real spaces that were part of students' everyday lives; this allowed them to recognize those spaces, participate more and feel more connected with the activities. This reflects how the fact that teachers design their own material constitutes both a pedagogical strategy and a critical stance. When material is perceived as a tool to take students' realities as the heart of the teaching practice, the English class becomes an opportunity to make language more relevant and meaningful for them; at the same time, implementing teacher-designed material is a decision that implies switching the idea of teachers as just material implementers to a notion where they are active and self-governing agents. In this sense, this study represents a call for language teachers to explore new possibilities to assimilate the critical role that transformative education requires them to hold.

Limitations

Research is very often affected by external aspects such as institution guidelines, time restrictions and population changes. This study was not an exception: the implementation of the

didactic material and the data collection instruments was somehow impacted by school restrictions and practices, and even by weather conditions.

One of the main limitations of this study was time. Even though each research cycle had been carefully planned, the different institutional and extracurricular activities organized by the school had an impact on such planning. Due to these events, some of the activities and projects had to be implemented in a shorter time or at a different occasion in order to gather sufficient data, which limited the level of exploration that had been originally planned.

An additional challenge was the pre-established school curriculum. Since the head teacher had to comply with some specific content that the school had already determined, the material and the content that had been designed to prioritize environment-related topics had to be modified in order to align with the school demands. Furthermore, this condition affected the initial depth and focus that the original material had towards environmental citizenship, since it had to open some room to other aspects such as specific vocabulary items and skills demanded by school. This fact arises a reflection about the tension that can exist between innovative pedagogical initiatives and institutional stipulations.

An additional limitation was related to the activities that were included in the “Exploration time” category in the teacher-designed material. These activities were not developed according to their original design due to external factors such as weather and school restrictions. Even though they were meant to make students have more contact with nature and take environment discussions beyond the classroom, this was accomplished only partially at the end of the final cycle.

All in all, this study faced some limitations in terms of time, curriculum requirements, and contextual aspects. While they allow a deeper understanding of the scope and clarity of the

study, they also provide the opportunity to reflect about the challenges of conducting research in school contexts and about the permanent gap between research design and research actual implementation.

Further research

With the purpose of contributing to a broader understanding of the interconnection between environmental citizenship and English teaching, this section presents some recommendations for future research. These suggestions became visible after considering the whole research design and development.

Considering that this study was made in a female school, future research could adapt some activities and strategies from this project to more diverse contexts. This would allow such studies insights to be further applicable to more wide-ranging contexts (compared to the present study).

An additional suggestion is closely related to the researcher role inside the context being studied. Despite the valuable insights and experiences that emerged from this study, it was also evident that the pre-service teacher role represented a constraint in some respects. Hence, having future researchers with more flexibility and freedom would pave the way for valuable opportunities to explore the matters proposed in this study. Implementing more alternatives, expanding the scope of the research, and even involving more education agents would greatly contribute to a deeper exploration and understanding of the pedagogical and social possibilities that this topic can provide.

Finally, taking into account that this study exclusively focused on students' voices, future research could also extend the population so that other education agents, like teachers and parents are involved. Considering these agents' perspectives would provide a more exhaustive

view of the implications that the interconnection between environmental citizenship and English teaching can have, which would certainly enrich the discussion in the field.

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Appendix A. Fieldwork journal sample.

 UNIVERSIDAD PEDAGÓGICA NACIONAL	Field Journal # 1	Name: Karen Galvis Sierra
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Date:	March 11th, 2025
Institution:	Liceo Femenino Mercedes Nariño
Group:	Second grade - 202
Subject:	English
Process:	First class intervention
Observed aspects:	General class dynamics, students' response to both lesson plan and didactic material.

DESCRIPTION	REFLECTION
The class started at 8:30 am after the students had the food that was provided by the school. The head-teacher took care of the first 20 minutes of the class and asked students to complete a short worksheet where they needed to write down some personal information and color some drawings. After this, it was my turn to start with my part of the lesson. I decided to start by catching students' attention through a simple activity called "Double this, Double that", which is a short game where students need to mimic my hand movements and sing the song. First, I asked students to do it individually and then I asked them to do it in pairs. This activity took around seven minutes and, while some students were still doing something different (such cutting pieces of paper on their desks or talking to each other), in general it worked to make students pay some attention to what I said. Then, I explained to the students that we were going to work with some new vocabulary related to the environment. I tried to say this in English, but students either did not pay attention or explicitly said that they did not understand what I was saying. I decided to make	The use of visual resources, such as flashcards, was a very important tool to make students feel more familiar with new vocabulary. In this particular case, I used images related to a popular TV show for kids (Bluey); while it was a little bit distracting, because they started to mention the characters' names and they also asked me things like who my favorite character was, I believe that it was also relevant and it might have had some influence in the way they remembered the words in an easy way. This observation also leads to a reflection about how some teachers prefer not to include images that are too popular among kids to avoid distractions, but this trend could also keep us from discovering some potential in this kind of material. Group dynamics were important at all times. Even if the students were not working in specific groups, they were constantly observing their classmates, and they even adapted their responses based on how their classmates answered different questions and activities. The fact that they corrected themselves based not only on my feedback, but also on their classmates' answers

the explanation in Spanish then. I started by asking students if they knew how to say the word “Agua” in English, and they all said that they didn’t. I proceeded to say “Water” in a loud and slow way and then I asked them to repeat, which most of them did. I also wrote the word on the board and showed a big flashcard so that they could relate the word with an image that we would be using later on. Three girls came to the front of the classroom and asked me if they needed to write the words in their notebooks. I explained to them that it was not necessary as they only needed to pay attention; they went back to their seats. I repeated the same process with the four other words that were included in the didactic unit (tree, air, animals, and plants). Even though some students did not repeat the words because they were focused on different activities not related to the class, most of them followed the instructions. After that, I confirmed they had understood the words by showing the flashcards one at a time and asking them to say the correct word in English. Most of students said the right word and, even though some students answered incorrectly, they immediately corrected themselves after hearing the rest of the group. After finishing the presentation of the new words, I gave a printed worksheet to each student. While I was doing so, two students asked me if they could help so I gave them a few pieces, and they made sure to pass them around. I asked in English if any girl was missing the worksheet but, once again, students did not seem to understand what I was saying so I immediately switched to Spanish to make sure they understood the instruction. I continued in Spanish and explained to them that they just needed to arrange the letters of each word and write the correct word in the correct order. I asked students if the instructions were clear, and most of them confirmed. While students were supposed to work individually, they constantly talked to each other and some of them even	was proof that group work can be developed from very early stages in the learning process. In this particular case, language use was challenging since students did not seem to be used to be given the instructions in English. As a teacher, it was difficult for me to know exactly what to prioritize in these moments: was it more important to make absolutely sure that students perfectly understood what they needed to do or was it more relevant to spend the necessary time to make them understand and use the second language? In this class I also realized that I need to work on finding strategies to use English with students and still guarantee that they are understanding what I am saying. The material seemed to be challenging for some students. Even though it included an example of what they needed to do, students were not clear if they had to just match the words or write them in the correct way. Therefore, as a way to improve this particular worksheet, it would be good to clearly state the steps that they need to follow instead of just blending all the activities in the same point. For example, the first point could be re-designed so that they just need to re-write the words and then there should be another item where they are only asked to match the image with the correct word.
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stood up and went to a different desk to talk to their classmates. During this activity, a lot of students asked me to repeat the instructions and some of them also wrote the words incorrectly or wrote them in the wrong field. I tried to repeat the instructions to the whole group twice, but since students kept making some mistakes, I explained to them individually as they came to ask me. Despite the challenges, most of the students were able to complete the exercise in a correct way. After completing this activity, students stuck the piece of paper on their notebooks and then they went out to have their break. The class ended at 9:40 am.	
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Material Assessment			
	Yes	No	Comments
Clarity The instructions were clear for students and did not lead to confusion.		X	The section where students were supposed to rewrite the incorrect words was not clear enough. In addition, students were unsure about which of the two sections they needed to do first. The material could be redesigned in order to divide the activity into two different exercises, so that students can follow a clearer sequence.
Engagement The activities were engaging for students and fostered active participation throughout the class.	X		Most of the students completed the activity and were engaged in it. The images were appealing, and the words were familiar to them.

Environmental pertinence The material that was used worked as a valuable tool to address environmental topics in the class.	X	The material allowed students to learn new words of elements that they find in their everyday life. It also allowed them to practice the writing of these new words and the material included an option for them to practice outside the classroom.
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Appendix B. Interview sample.

Researcher: Ahora te voy a hacer algunas preguntas relacionadas con lo que hemos hecho en nuestras clases de inglés. ¿Cómo te han parecido las clases?

Participant # 1: Para mí son increíbles porque para mí nos enseñan cosas fáciles, son muy buenas porque la materia de inglés sirve mucho para cuando vayamos a otro país.

Researcher: ¿Cómo te has sentido cuando hablamos sobre el medio ambiente?

Participant # 1: Me gusta porque son para cosas que toca hacer, reciclar en el colegio, y también el agua porque eso sirve mucho, si no tuviéramos agua no pudiéramos tomar.

Researcher: ¿Qué recuerdas de lo que hemos aprendido en clase?

Participant #1: Recuerdo que tú nos dijiste de las frutas, de los vegetales, de banana, de tomate... estábamos hablando de eso y también de reciclar.

Researcher: ¿Has aplicado algo de lo que has aprendido en tu vida diaria?

Participant #1: Si, yo siempre hago eso en la casa, en el colegio, en cualquier lado. El agua, si yo veo como abrido, el agua abierta, entonces lo tengo que cerrar, porque en cualquier momento se llena mucho de agua.

Researcher: Te voy a mostrar algunos de los materiales que hemos utilizado en las clases, ¿cuál de estos materiales recuerdas más o te gustó más?

Participant #1: Me acuerdo de estos (señala las actividades de la flor, rompecabezas de las buenas acciones hacia el medio ambiente y una de vocabulario). Y las de reciclar.

Researcher: Te voy a mostrar algunas de las actividades que hemos hecho en las clases, ¿cuál de estas actividades disfrutaste más?

Participant #1: Para mí esta de vocabulario porque esa nos enseña a saber cómo se llaman las cosas.

Researcher: ¿Te gustaría decir algo más acerca de las clases?

Participant #1: Para mí, que sigan diciendo esas cosas de reciclar porque son muy buenas para toda la salud de nuestros papás, de nuestras mamás, de todo el mundo.

Appendix C. Open coding examples.

words in an easy way. This observation also leads to a reflection about how some teachers prefer not to include images that are too popular among kids to avoid distractions, but this trend could also keep us from discovering some potential in this kind of material. **COMMON PERCEPTIONS ABOUT MATERIAL**

The material seemed to be challenging for some students. Even though it included an example of what they needed to do, students were not clear if they had to just match the words or write them in the correct way. Therefore, as a way to improve this particular worksheet, it would be good to clearly state the steps that they need to follow instead of just blending all the activities in the same point. **MAKING OUR OWN MATERIAL ALLOW US TO RE-DESIGN IT AS WELL.** For example, the

The artifacts show that students recognized the word that they were asked to color. **LINGUISTIC ASPECT** Some of them even noticed that inside the trees there were elements that corresponded to one of the new words (animals,) and decided not to color them. Although coloring is a strategy usually implemented at schools to keep students busy, these artifacts demonstrate that this kind of conventional strategy can be revised so that they can serve a different purpose. **POSSIBILITIES THAT ARISE FROM TEACHER-DESIGNED MATERIAL**



they watched in the video, such as earth, recycle and reuse.

While the instruction was to represent what they were able to observe in the whole community, students decided to represent themselves as part of the positive contribution to the environment. This evidence shows that they recognize themselves as important agents of environmental care. **STUDENTS RECOGNIZE THEMSELVES AS IMPORTANT AGENTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CARE**



En la casa, en el colegio y de vez en cuando en la calle... no malgasto el agua, en la casa recojo los papeles. **ENVIRONMENTAL GOOD ACTIONS THAT WERE DISCUSSED IN CLASS TRANSCEND TO OTHER SPACES**

Para mi esta de vocabulario porque esa nos enseña a saber cómo se llaman las cosas. **THERE IS A RECOGNITION OF THE VALUE OF LANGUAGE ITEMS AND A CONNECTION TO REAL THINGS**

Appendix D. Axial coding example.

	LANGUAGE	ENVIRONMENT	MATERIAL
ARTIFACTS	Students use English vocabulary to describe their environment (++)	Students have preconceptions about good and bad things present in their surroundings.	Rethinking "conventional" strategies
	Students use English vocabulary to describe others' actions towards environment	Shared perceptions about good and bad things or actions towards environment	Possibilities to improve material design (++)
		Students recognize themselves as change agents towards environment (++)	Students' positive response towards real pictures in material
		Students prefer to focus on good actions when they are asked to represent what they observe in their surroundings	
FIELD DIARIES	Students' first language is important when discussing everyday matters such as environment	Reused material for class activities	Rethinking "common" perceptions about didactic material
	Students use English structures to describe good and bad things in their environment	Class discussions about reusing material	Challenges to design material according to institution guidelines (+)
	Students use English vocabulary to describe their own actions towards environment (+)	Students have their own ideas about how to reuse material for the class	Teacher-designed material with real pictures led to fewer questions and misunderstandings compared to material with internet images
	Language is used to describe everyday habits and elements rather than abstract structures	There are shared perceptions about the things that are good or bad for the environment	The possibility to connect classroom strategies with environmental citizenship
INTERVIEWS	Students recognize vocabulary as an important aspect and as a way to interact with real people and objects	Students make clear differences between good and bad actions towards environment	Students have preferences towards materials where they were more active and that included aspects of their real lives
	Students relate vocabulary activities with opportunities to improve aspects of their daily lives	Students recognize a difference between adults and themselves	

Appendix E. Legal consent format.

 UNIVERSIDAD PEDAGÓGICA NACIONAL	FORMATO		
	AUTORIZACIÓN TRATAMIENTO DE DATOS PERSONALES Y DE MENORES DE EDAD		
	Resolución 787 de 18 de junio 2018		
FOR009GSI	Fecha de Aprobación: 18-06-2018	Versión: 01	Página 2 de 2

AUTORIZACIÓN TRATAMIENTO DE DATOS PERSONALES DE MENORES DE EDAD

Ciudad y fecha: _____

Yo, _____, identificado con C.C. ☐ C.E. ☐ No. _____ expedida en _____, representante legal del menor _____, identificado con T.I. ☐ NUIP ☐ No. _____ declaro que he sido informado por LA UNIVERSIDAD PEDAGÓGICA NACIONAL (en adelante la UPN), identificada con NIT. 899.999.124-4, con domicilio en la ciudad de Bogotá y sede principal en la calle 72 No. 11 – 86 de Bogotá, que, de conformidad con los procedimientos establecidos en la Ley 1581 de 2012, Decreto Reglamentario 1377 de 2013 y el *Manual de política interna y procedimientos para el tratamiento y protección de datos personales de la Universidad*, disponible en la página web www.pedagogica.edu.co, actuará como Responsable del tratamiento de mis datos personales¹, necesarios para el cumplimiento de la misión de la UPN, obtenidos a través de canales y dependencias institucionales y que podrá recolectar, almacenar, usar, actualizar, transmitir, transferir y poner en circulación o suprimirlos, mediante el uso de las medidas necesarias para otorgar seguridad a los registros, evitando su adulteración, pérdida, consulta, uso o acceso no autorizado o fraudulento incluso por terceros.

Que tratándose de datos sensibles² y de menores de edad no está obligado a autorizar su tratamiento, salvo las excepciones consagradas en la ley o que medie su consentimiento expreso. Que es de carácter facultativo responder a las preguntas que traten de datos sensibles o menores de edad.

Como representante legal del menor, debo velar por los derechos consagrados en la Constitución y la Ley sobre sus datos, especialmente el derecho a conocer, actualizar, rectificar y suprimir información personal, así como el derecho a revocar el consentimiento otorgado para el tratamiento de datos personales del menor, en los casos en que sea procedente. Las inquietudes o solicitudes relacionadas con el tratamiento dichos datos, pueden ser tramitadas a través del e-mail: quejasvireclamos@pedagogica.edu.co

La Universidad garantiza la confidencialidad, libertad, seguridad, veracidad, transparencia, acceso y circulación restringida de los datos y se reserva el derecho de modificar su Política de Tratamiento de datos personales en cualquier momento. Cualquier cambio será informado y publicado oportunamente en la página web.

Teniendo en cuenta lo anterior, autorizo de manera voluntaria, previa, explícita, informada e inequívoca a la UPN para tratar los datos personales del menor que represento, de acuerdo con el *Manual de política interna y procedimientos para el tratamiento y protección de datos personales de la Universidad* y para los fines relacionados con su Misión.

Leído lo anterior, manifiesto que la información para el Tratamiento de los datos personales del menor de edad que represento, ha sido suministrada de forma voluntaria y es veraz, completa, exacta, actualizada, comprobable y comprensible.

FIRMA

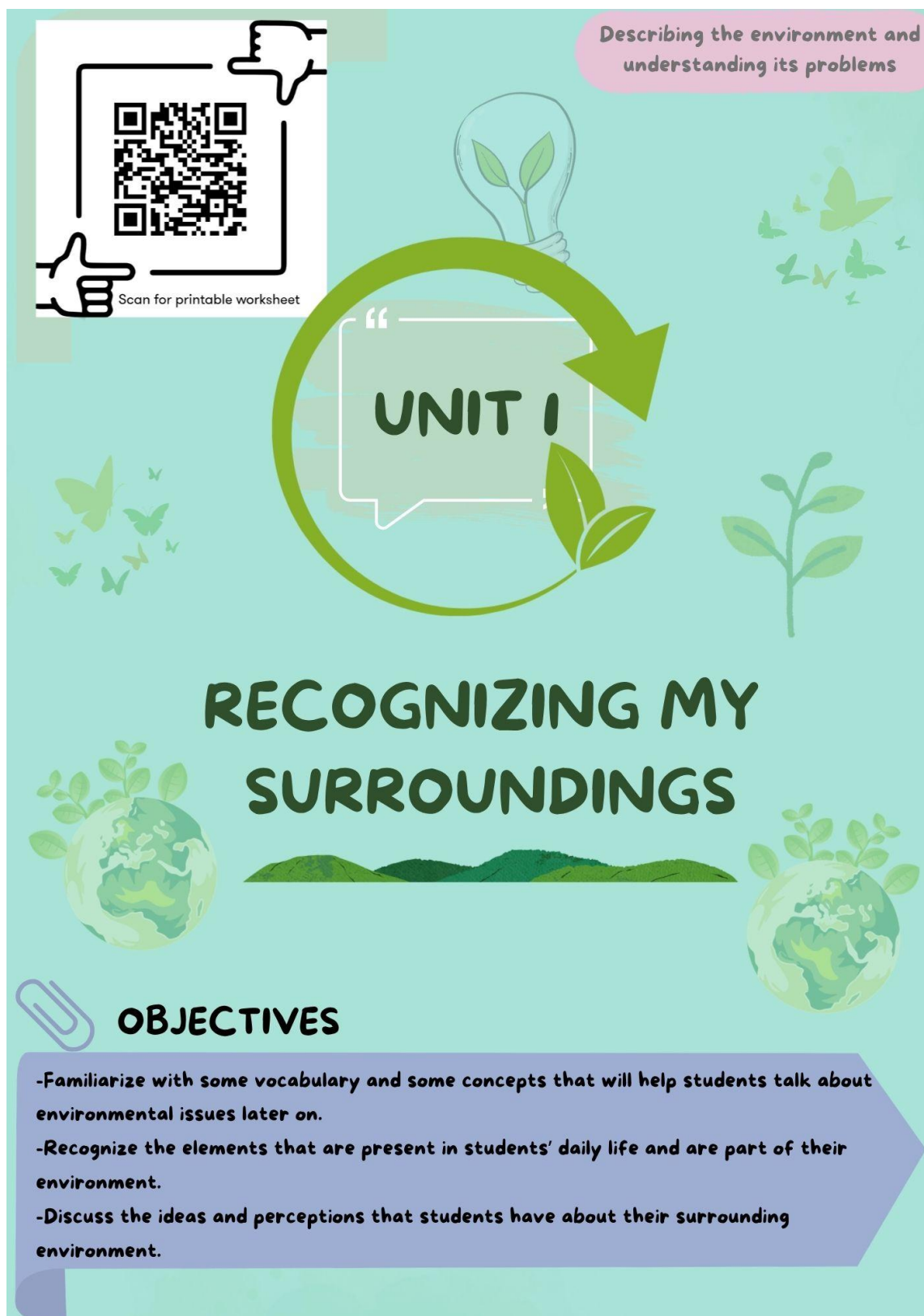
Nombre: _____

Identificación: _____

¹ La UPN garantiza la confidencialidad, libertad, seguridad, veracidad, transparencia, acceso y circulación restringida de mis datos y se reserva el derecho de modificar su Política de Tratamiento de datos personales en cualquier momento. Cualquier cambio será informado y publicado oportunamente en la página web.

² Son datos sensibles aquellos que afectan la intimidad del Titular o cuyo uso indebido puede generar su discriminación, tales como aquellos que revelen el origen racial o étnico, la orientación política, las convicciones religiosas o filosóficas, la pertenencia a sindicatos, organizaciones sociales, de derechos humanos o que promueva intereses de cualquier partido político o que garanticen los derechos y garantías de partidos políticos de oposición, así como los datos relativos a la salud, a la vida sexual, y los datos biométricos (Art. 5º Ley 1581 de 2012, art. 3º Decreto 1377 de 2013).

Appendix F. Teacher-designed material sample.



Describing the environment and understanding its problems

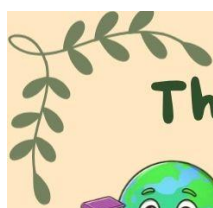
Scan for printable worksheet

UNIT 1

RECOGNIZING MY SURROUNDINGS

 **OBJECTIVES**

- Familiarize with some vocabulary and some concepts that will help students talk about environmental issues later on.
- Recognize the elements that are present in students' daily life and are part of their environment.
- Discuss the ideas and perceptions that students have about their surrounding environment.



The environment... OUR environment

Let's discover what you like and don't like about your environment.



Add the correct sign depending on the instruction: ♥ → I like this

✗ → I don't like this

1



2



3



6



4



5



8



7



- Share your answers with one classmate
- Compare your answers
- Were they the same? Were they different?



Identifying good and bad practices
towards the environment

UNIT 2

UNDERSTANDING OUR ENVIRONMENT



OBJECTIVES

- Explore the positive and negative elements that students can find in their environment.
- Identify which actions are good and which are bad for the environment.



Problems → Solutions



Let's identify good and bad practices in our school!



Draw ☺ for good practices or ☹ for bad practices:



Waste food

☐


Recycle

☐


Protect

☐


Plastic overuse

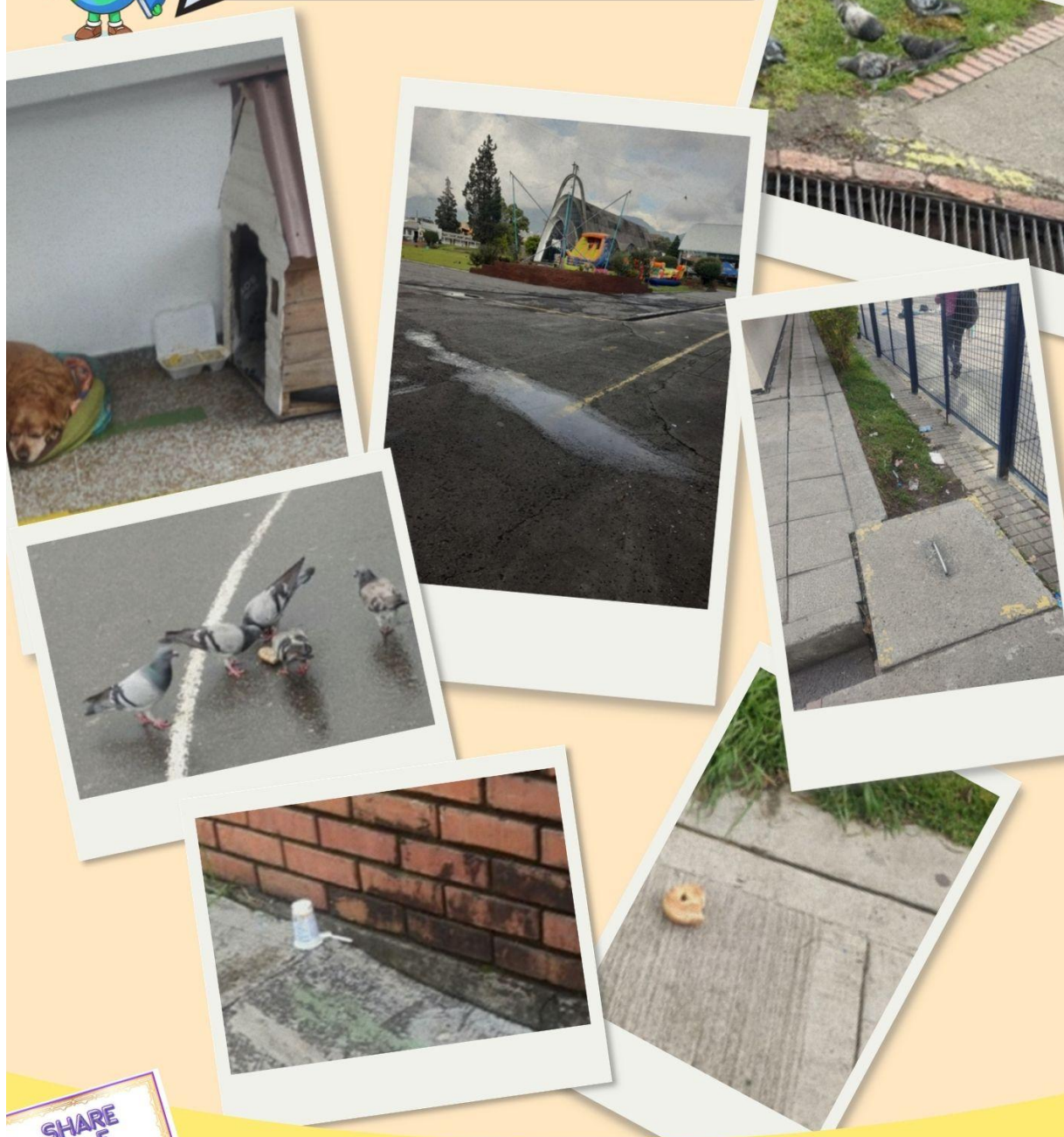
☐



The environment... OUR environment



Let's identify good and bad practices in our school!



- Can you identify good and bad practices in these pictures?
- Think of other examples and share them with your group.



Recognizing what we can do to
protect our environment

UNIT 3

SMALL ACTIONS FOR A BIG FUTURE



OBJECTIVES

- Identify new vocabulary and expressions related to good habits towards the environment.
- Recognize which are the concrete actions that students can do in order to take care of their environment.



The environment... OUR environment



There are good things we can do for our environment.



Draw 😊 for the actions that are EASY for you to do and draw ☹️ for the actions that are DIFFICULT for you to do.

Recycle



Save water



Reuse





Problems → Solutions



Our environment has problems but you can do something about it...



Complete the words about good actions for the environment.

R _ _ _ y _ _ _

R _ _ _ _ e

S _ _ _ _
_ _ _ t _ _ _



Write a good action for each problem.

