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ECOPEDAGOGY IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: PROMOTING JUSTICE, CARE, AND RELATIONALITY

16-17 April 2026
Sala B, Ca' Bernardo

The International Conference on ***Ecopedagogy in the Foreign Language Classroom: Promoting Justice, Care, and Relationality*** establishes an interdisciplinary forum for reimagining foreign language education as a vital site for climate action. This gathering explores the potential of the English language classroom to foster eco-critical literacy, emotional resilience, and a deep sense of care within a shared human–non-human ecosystem. By positioning language learning as a tool for confronting the ecological crisis, the event examines how educators can help students navigate complex environmental relationality.

The academic programme is structured around themes that bridge the gap between abstract theory and classroom praxis, including ecocriticism, climate anxiety, and decoloniality. Rather than reinforcing "doom-and-gloom" narratives that lead to learner paralysis, the conference highlights the role of creativity, hope, and digital storytelling to empower young people. By integrating indigenous knowledge and multilingual approaches, the forum challenges the hierarchies underpinning ecological injustice and acknowledges the profound link between biological and linguistic diversity.

Through plenary sessions with distinguished scholars, literary conversations, reflection activities, and creative workshops, the event moves from reflection to tangible change. Participants will also engage with the practical outputs of the EcoStories project. Ultimately, the conference seeks to build a global community of practitioners dedicated to advancing the essential intersection of ecopedagogy and language learning for a sustainable future.

To register for the conference, please fill in the google form at this link:

<https://forms.gle/kDQpne4mf8FTDEce7>

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THURSDAY, 16 April 2026

Eco Isn't Extra: Fostering Ecoliteracy in the Foreign Language Classroom

Prof. Dr. Christian Ludwig

We live in a world facing escalating environmental crises, where international organizations and governments often struggle to implement effective solutions. These ecological challenges also have a profound impact on the mental health and well-being of young people, highlighting the urgency of educational responses. Foreign language classrooms offer a unique space to engage students with these pressing issues, fostering ecoliteracy as a meaningful and relevant literacy for the 21st century. This plenary talk lays the groundwork for why ecoliteracy should be promoted, what it entails, and how it can be authentically integrated into language learning.

Ecoliteracy goes beyond the acquisition of environmental knowledge; it encompasses critical thinking, ethical reflection, and the ability to respond empathetically to global challenges. Literature and multimodal texts play a central role in this process. Through narratives, digital media, and interactive resources, students can explore potential futures, reflect on human-environment interactions, and develop strategies to navigate complex realities. These texts also cultivate empathy, global awareness, and agency, fostering essential skills in an era marked by both environmental and emotional crises.

This talk will showcase practical strategies for incorporating literature and multimodal resources into language classrooms, demonstrating how these approaches can promote ecoliteracy alongside other key 21st-century skills. Participants will gain actionable insights into pedagogy that integrates language learning, critical thinking, and environmental consciousness.



Christian Ludwig is Guest Professor of English as a Foreign Language at the Free University of Berlin, Germany. His research and publications explore the intersections of environmental learning, mental health, positive psychology, and digital media/AI. He frequently presents at national and international conferences and events, connecting theory, research, and classroom practice. His latest book *Happy Learning: How to Learn Languages* (Hueber Verlag GmbH, 2024) successfully offers practical insights for effective and mindful language learning.

Teaching English Hopefully: On Vulnerability, Resilience, and Environmental Stories

Prof. Dr. Uwe Küchler

(Foreign) Language educators increasingly engage with environmental topics in the classroom, selecting authentic texts and materials relevant to learners' lives. Yet current environmental discourse—in news media and academic publications alike—often emphasizes doom-and-gloom scenarios, cataloguing catastrophes to underscore urgency. While this approach may unsettle policymakers, does it constitute an effective pedagogical strategy? Must teachers really shock young learners into awareness?

This talk argues that core principles of language education can paradoxically conflict with effective environmental pedagogy. Drawing on environmental psychology research, the presentation examines interconnected challenges: acknowledging learners' vulnerability without reinforcing catastrophe narratives, developing strategies that support coping and agency rather than despair or cynicism, and finding diverse materials beyond the catastrophe-laden news cycles. After all, environmental psychology suggests that doom-focused approaches breed overwhelm and helplessness, leaving learners feeling muted rather than empowered.

The talk explores how insights from environmental psychology can inform more thoughtful text selection and pedagogical approaches to (foreign) language teaching. It considers how environmental storytelling practices operate within culturally diverse contexts where environmental concerns are experienced differently. Rather than offering definitive solutions, one question is woven throughout: How can hopefulness be conceptualized to sustain learner agency while maintaining honesty about environmental realities?



Uwe Küchler has been a Professor of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) at Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen (Germany) since 2016. Before his current appointments, he conducted research and taught at universities in Bonn, Halle-Wittenberg, and Dortmund. Küchler studied at Berlin's Humboldt-Universität (Germany), the University of London's Goldsmiths' College (Great Britain), and Georgetown University in Washington DC (USA). He recently published the students' handbook *Environmental Literacy and the Teaching of English* (Narr, 2025).

Ecolinguistics and ELT:
Creating Environmental Awareness through Ecological Discourse Analysis
Prof. Hermine Penz

Ecolinguistics studies the influence of language on the life-sustaining relationships of humans with each other, with other organisms and with the natural environment. It examines how language can have a beneficial, detrimental or neutral effect on the environment.

This presentation briefly introduces the field of ecolinguistics and demonstrates how ecolinguistic analyses can be applied in ELT to create an awareness of how language is used to construct nature and environmental issues. Words are not just neutral ways of describing the world around us; they also evaluate it (e.g. dandelion vs. weed). We can also foreground or background certain aspects by the way we use language or try to 'erase' them by not talking about them. Companies also misrepresent products as being environmentally friendly by 'greenwashing' strategies.

After demonstrating how ecolinguistics has been applied to analyse texts and multimodal discourses, some practical examples of how to create environmental/ecological awareness in the EFL classroom will be presented. The topics will range from climate change to biodiversity and human interactions with the more-than-human world. In addition to discourse analytical skills, a focus will also be placed on engaging in sensory perception for ecological awareness raising.



Hermine Penz is a Professor of English Linguistics at the Department of English Studies at the University of Graz. Her main research interests lie in the fields of discourse analysis, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics with a focus on ecolinguistics and intercultural communication. She has worked in the field of ecolinguistics since the mid-1990s and has organized conferences, held keynotes, published articles and co-edited numerous books. She is co-editor (with Alwin F. Fill) of *The Routledge Handbook of Ecolinguistics* (Routledge, 2018) and is Special Issues Editor of the journal *Pragmatics and Society* (John Benjamins). In addition, she is closely connected to the European Centre of Modern Languages (ECML) in her capacity as the Chair of the Austrian Association of the ECML.

WORKSHOP SESSION

Participants can choose to participate in ONE of the following workshops. Each workshop session is capped at 20 participants. Specific logistical information will be shared closer to the conference date. To register for the workshops, please fill in the google form at this link: <https://forms.gle/kDQpne4mf8FTDEce7>

WORKSHOP 1-Holding the Climate Wound: Storytelling as a Healing Practice in Times of Ecological Crisis

This workshop explores storytelling as a relational and healing practice through which personal experience can be connected to the planetary realities of climate change. Through a sequence of guided writing prompts, participants move from close observation of climate-related events and everyday objects to character-driven narratives that centre on emotional crisis, vulnerability, and care. The workshop invites both an attentive confrontation with climate grief, anxiety, and responsibility, and a reflection on distraction and avoidance as embodied responses to ecological precarity. By sharing and listening together, participants experience storytelling as a space of holding where narrative becomes a form of collective sense-making, resilience, and gentle repair, with particular relevance for language education and ELT classrooms. The activities are designed to be flexible and reproducible, making them applicable across a range of ELT learning environments and transferable to educational settings, within and beyond language teaching.



Michela Gronchi is a Teaching and Research Assistant in Educational Linguistics at Ca' Foscari University of Venice and a doctoral researcher at the University of St Andrews. Her work explores professional identity, emotion, and lived experience in multilingual higher education, using phenomenological, storytelling, and arts-based approaches to bridge research and inclusive educational practice.

This workshop will be held from 15.00 to 17.00 in the SALA CONFERENZE (Palazzo Cosulich), Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

WORKSHOP 2-*The Carrier Bag of Ecostories: from the Whale to the World*

What connects fish, migration, climate change and fossil fuels? Are there ghosts of whales in our own backyard? Inspired, among others, by Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, Ursula K. Le Guin's "Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction" and Rebecca Giggs' *Fathoms: The World in the Whale*, this workshop will ask participants to creatively weave together snippets of seemingly unrelated stories, theories and concepts. We will imagine journeys of both horror and wonder across our era of ecological breakdown; and we will reflect, discuss and disagree on ways to use fiction and nonfiction – from literary classics and theoretical texts to young adult novels and reportages – as a pedagogical tool to reveal the entanglements between humans and nonhumans that shape of our world.



Lucio De Capitani is a tenure-track researcher at Ca' Foscari University of Venice since 2025. His research interests include Anglophone, colonial, postcolonial, and Indigenous literatures (particularly the work of Robert Louis Stevenson, Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Cherie Dimaline), theories of world literature, connections between anthropology and literary studies, as well as ecocriticism and speculative fiction, with a focus on cli-fi, solarpunk, abolitionist, utopian, and dystopian imaginaries.

This workshop will be held from 15.00 to 17.00 at the [Natural History Museum in Venice](#)

Housed in the Fontego dei Turchi on the Grand Canal, the Natural History Museum ensures the preservation and growth of scientific collections and organises scientific education activities for both schools and the general public. The new permanent exhibitions, inaugurated in 2011, mediate the complexity of scientific content through an engaging layout and simple communication that allows the visitor to take an active role. Supported by important historical collections and a specialist library, the scientific staff carries out systematic naturalistic research in the field and in the laboratory in the areas of biology and ecology of the Venice Lagoon, the Adriatic, and the Veneto region in general.

The Museum welcomes visitors at the entrance with a charming garden open to the public. The exhibition route, situated on the second floor, is organised into three sections, each of which is effectively a museum within a museum. On the Trail of Life is a section dedicated to palaeontology which, by following the "traces" of fossils, helps visitors understand the birth

and evolution of life on Earth. Collecting to Amaze, Collecting to Study is dedicated to the explorers and researchers of yesterday and today, telling the story of the evolution of collecting and the birth of scientific museology. Finally, Life Strategies offers a journey into the complexity of nature and living forms characterised by profound differences but also by surprising analogies.

On the ground floor, the Cetacean Gallery, enriched by splendid underwater murals, houses the skeletons of a large fin whale and a young sperm whale suspended from the ceiling. Additionally, an inclusive and multisensory area dedicated to the Fontego dei Turchi houses two 3D models specifically designed for tactile use.

WORKSHOP 3-*Io Vado al Museo – Decolonising the Eco-Classroom through Plurilingualism*

In collaboration with the "Io Vado al Museo" project of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, this workshop invites language teachers to transform the museum from a site of silent observation into a dynamic laboratory for decolonial pedagogy. Moving beyond "English-only" frameworks, we explore the collection as a space where art, ecology, and multilingualism intersect to challenge traditional power structures in education. Participants will engage with modern masterpieces to practise plurilingual strategies that treat students' home languages not as "interference", but as vital repositories of ecological and cultural knowledge. By "going to the museum" with a decolonial lens, teachers will learn to facilitate the acquisition of the target language while simultaneously promoting and respecting the linguistic and cultural diversity of their students. This approach reclaims the museum as a site of epistemic justice, where diverse ways of knowing are harnessed to address the urgent environmental challenges of our time.



Claudia Meneghetti is a PostDoc Research Fellow in Educational Linguistics at Ca' Foscari University (Venice), where she explores innovative approaches to language education. Her research focuses on plurilingual education and L2 teaching in traditional classrooms and beyond. In 2020, she co-founded the MILE (*Museums and Innovation in Language Education*) research group with Fabianza Fazzi to design transformative language experiences across the framing of schools and museums.

This workshop will be held from 16.30 to 18.00 at the [Peggy Guggenheim Collection](#)

The Peggy Guggenheim Collection is one of the most important museums of European and American art of the twentieth century in Italy, and it is the personal collection of the legendary patron of the arts Peggy Guggenheim (1898-1979), a niece of Solomon R. Guggenheim. It includes major holdings of Cubism, Abstraction, Surrealism, early American Abstract Expressionism, and postwar European and American painting and sculpture. Artists comprise masterpieces by Jean Arp, Umberto Boccioni, Alexander Calder, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, René Magritte, Joan Miró, Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Germaine Richier, Gino Severini, Clyfford Still, and Emilio Vedova, among others. Housed in Palazzo Venier dei Leoni on the Grand Canal in Venice where Guggenheim spent the last thirty years of her life, the collection is the Italian branch of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation.

The museum's mission is to preserve the legacy of Peggy Guggenheim through education and the promotion of art as a tool for personal growth and the development of critical thinking. Art is paramount and should remain accessible to everyone.

The Peggy Guggenheim Collection also exhibits the Hannelore B. and Rudolph B. Collection of European and American art that was added to the collection of the Guggenheim Foundation in Venice in 2012. In addition, exhibitions are organized and presented in temporary exhibition galleries of the museum.

WORKSHOP 4-Fluid Worlds: An Ecocritical Workshop at TBA21–Academy's Ocean Space

Ocean Space as a collaborative platform for Ocean Imagination and Ocean Action invites its visitors to dive into a somewhat alternative exhibition experience which resembles the complex entanglements of our world. After visiting the current project "Tide of Returns", we are inviting you to join us in a one-hour workshop to unpack the displayed art installation through an ecocritical lens in order to collaboratively think about how cultural spaces can function as ecopedagogical venues for foreign language classrooms and beyond. The aim of the workshop is to, firstly, discuss and share thoughts about the project. Secondly, present exhibition-based methods for ecocritical readings of exhibitions; and to finally, experiment with ideas about a fluid world where contemporary ways of thinking are overcome and speculative world building is encouraged.



Nicole Haring is (Senior) Scientist of American Studies and Director of the Center for Inter-American Studies at the University of Graz, Austria. Her research interests focus on gender and feminist theory, contemporary US-American literature, Inter-American studies, and environmental humanities. Her teaching and research is informed by participatory approaches, interdisciplinary attempts, and critical pedagogies. She is a researcher in the Erasmus+ project "Eco-Stories" (www.ecostories.org) and the co-editor of the volume *Entanglements, Narratives, and the Environment: Inter-American Perspectives* (Lexington, 2024) with E. Bauer, and R. Maierhofer.



Fabiana Fazzi is a PostDoc Research Fellow in Educational Linguistics and Learning Coordinator of the Master Programme in Foreign Language Teaching Didactics at Ca' Foscari University (Venice). Her research interests lay in the area of: language learning beyond the classroom, multiliteracies and global citizenship skills development in an additional language, arts-based methods (i.e. digital storytelling, drama, and artistic methods), and bilingual education (i.e. CLIL).



Eva Katharina Bauer is research assistant and PhD student at the Center for Inter-American Studies at the University of Graz, Austria, where she also coordinates the Erasmus+ project “Eco-Stories” (www.ecostories.org). Her ongoing research investigates the temporal aspects of environmental concerns in the field of ecolinguistics, intersectional environmentalism and Inter-American Studies.

This workshop will be held from 15.00 to 17.30 at TBA21–Academy’s Ocean Space

Located in the Church of San Lorenzo in Venice, Ocean Space is a planetary center for exhibitions, research, and public programs catalyzing critical ocean literacy, collaborative research, and environmental advocacy through the arts. Established and led by TBA21–Academy and building on its expansive work, this embassy for the Ocean fosters wonder, engagement, and collective action.

Ocean Space operates an annual program and is open to the public from spring to autumn. The space opened to the public in 2019 after extensive renovations, following a period of over 100 years during which it had been largely closed to the public. Alongside the Comune di Venezia, this restoration was initiated by the contemporary art and advocacy foundation TBA21 and led by its Founder and Chairwoman, Francesca Thyssen-Bornemisza, a philanthropist and art collector with a long track record of bringing new life to historical buildings with great sensitivity and respect. Upon the completion of the revitalization process, TBA21 handed the baton to TBA21–Academy, the foundation’s research arm

focused on a deeper understanding and relationship with the Ocean and wider ecologies, to lead and program the newly established Ocean Space.

Ocean Space is a place open to all. Built on an ethos of transdisciplinary practice, this hub is dedicated to nurturing a polyvocal community, engendering creative propositions for the most pressing issues of our time. At the same time, it is steeped in the history, culture, and waters of Venice. Tending to its surrounding communities and ecologies, Ocean Space seeks to amplify local issues so that they reverberate far beyond the expanse of the church into global dialogues.

FRIDAY, 17 April 2026

The Children Who Wouldn't Touch Grass: Exploring how Digital Storytelling can Enable Young People to Think Ecologically and Create Stories of Hopefulness

Prof. Vicky MacLeroy

Digital storytelling comes out of a background of experimental theatre, cultural activism, and media justice, and a strong belief in the power of shared stories to tell hard truths. This talk draws on the ongoing research and work, for over a decade, of a global multilingual digital storytelling project, Critical Connections (CC). I look at how multilingual literacy can be developed through drama, poetry, creative writing, artwork and filmmaking across global communities. Our digital storytelling work is underpinned by an ethic of social justice and activist citizenship and explores how young people use filmmaking to imagine otherwise. Story work is viewed as the quiet place around which the storm blows, and a digital story as a place of calm and hopefulness (Lambert 2018).

The CC project focuses on how digital storytelling can transform language education and open spaces within education for experimental, purposeful, passion-led learning that enables students to become skilled multilingual filmmakers and storytellers. As digital storytellers, young people start to think about how the lives of people in their community are understood and how the shaping and sharing of digital stories can be viewed as a political act. I examine excerpts from five digital stories created in India, UK, US, and Zimbabwe by students (7-18-years-old) across seven languages (Arabic, Dari, English, French, Japanese, Shona, Tamil) and exhibited at the '[Care, Community and Hope Festival 2025](#)'. I share insights into how young people developed ecological thinking, stories of hopefulness, and intercultural responsibility through multilingual filmmaking.



Vicky MacLeroy is a Professor of Language and Literacy. She was Director of the Centre for Language, Culture and Learning, and Head of the MA Children's Literature and Secondary PGCE English, Media and Drama programmes. She now works in the Graduate School, Goldsmiths, University of London and is Co-Director of the Critical Connections research project. Her work focuses on children's literature and linguistic diversity; multilingual literacy, poetry and digital storytelling; activist citizenship and transformative pedagogy.

**Multilingual Education, Inequality, and Sustainability:
Perspectives from Indigenous Language Education**
Prof. Haley De Korne

Language diversity plays a key role in education and in sustainability agendas (Hult 2023). For multilingual and minoritized language populations, however, formal education has sometimes served to increase inequalities rather than reduce them (Battiste 2013; Henne-Ochoa et al. 2020). It is important to learn from historical inequalities in order to imagine and build socially just language education systems in the present and the future. In this lecture I examine some of the links between language education, sociocultural diversity, social inequality, and the relationship between humans and the natural environment. This discussion serves as a basis to illustrate the importance of language education that aims to resist and reverse linguistic inequalities. Educators have a crucial role to play in these efforts. Drawing on the case study of Isthmus Zapotec, an Indigenous language of Mexico, I explore educators' strategies for creating context-appropriate language education in a context of language diversity. Despite the constraints of wider systems and policies, examples abound of educators building alliances and strategies to support socially just language education. Potential strategies that educators and scholars can employ will be discussed, and participants will be invited to reflect on whether and how these strategies might be useful in their educational context.



Haley De Korne is Professor of Multilingualism at the Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies at the University of Oslo. She conducts research at the intersection of linguistics, education, and anthropology to examine and contribute to language learning, literacy practices, language politics and social justice in multilingual education contexts. She is the author of the book *Language activism: Imaginaries and strategies of minority language equality* (De Gruyter Brill, 2021). At the University of Oslo, she has worked closely on the development of a MA program in Multilingualism, and has established the interdisciplinary research group *Language endangerment, documentation and revitalization*.

In conversation with writer and researcher Dr. Kim Simonsen

What is the Philosophy of the Fish? Eco-poetic Explorations

This talk moves between literature, philosophy, ecology, and language, shaped by water as both material and method. At its centre are the ocean and a river from my childhood in the Faroe Islands, a restless line of water that has shaped memory, perception, and bodily experience throughout my life. Approached as a living force, the river becomes a site where grief, trauma, and human–non-human entanglement unfold, grounded in what I describe as geopoetry following the death of my father. A central question runs through the talk: what is the philosophy of the fish? This question emerges from my poetry collection *The Biological Composition of a Drop of Seawater Resembles the Blood in My Veins* (2023), an eco-poetic exploration of grief, matter, and entanglement rooted in seascapes. Drawing on speculative realism, new materialism, and environmental humanities, the sea functions as both biological and philosophical force, carrying cyclical temporalities and ecological ways of thinking. The talk situates this work within a broader intellectual lineage combining poetry, science, aesthetics, and environmental reflection. Two films screened alongside the talk extend these concerns as parallel works, exploring flow, fracture, and return through image, sound, and duration. Together, the talk and films propose art as a way of inhabiting the world rather than representing it, asking how landscapes carry memory and how rivers and seas continue to live inside us.



Kim Simonsen is a writer and scholar whose work moves between literature, philosophy, and ecology. He holds a Ph.D. from Denmark and has been affiliated with institutions including the University of Amsterdam, the University of Bergen, Oxford University, Stanford University, and Columbia University. His writing engages with ecocriticism, posthumanist thought, non-anthropocentric perspectives, and speculative realism, often exploring the entanglements of nature, memory, language, and place. He has received several literary awards, including the Faroese Literature Prize and the Atlantic Airways Cultural Award (2025), and was nominated for the Nordic Council Literature Prize in 2024. His books have been translated into five languages and published internationally, including in Italy, Hungary, Denmark, North Macedonia, and the United States, with Chinese rights recently acquired. His work has appeared in a range of American journals and

anthologies, such as *Best Literary Translations 2025*, and has been featured by *Asymptote* and *Words Without Borders*.

Organising and Scientific Committee

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Partner Institutions

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