

Global Business Languages

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Introduction

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Introduction

Every volume of *Global Business Languages* sits squarely within the dynamic and inherently interdisciplinary field of languages for specific purposes (LSP), where language learning is closely tied to professional domains, cultural contexts, and real-world challenges. Volume 26 zooms in on sustainability as a defining challenge of our time. The impetus for this special volume stemmed from the ongoing cross-disciplinary partnership between the co-editors—faculty from two different yet complementary fields—bringing together perspectives from language pedagogy and international business to support and advance a shared focus on sustainability within LSP.

The relevance of sustainability to the language teaching community in general lies in its fundamentally global nature. The challenges it presents transcend national borders and demand cross-cultural understanding, communication, and, above all, action. LSP educators who integrate sustainability into their courses and curricula know that these challenges must also be addressed across all professions. Indeed, sustainability’s inherently interdisciplinary character aligns closely with the foundations of LSP. Addressing sustainability requires insights from multiple fields, including business, the humanities, and the social sciences. LSP, in turn, is built on this kind of integration, connecting language learning to disciplinary knowledge and professional practice. This shared emphasis makes the intersection of sustainability and LSP particularly productive. The articles in this volume demonstrate how language education can serve as a powerful vehicle for engaging students with questions of sustainability, equipping them with the linguistic, intercultural, and analytical tools needed to navigate and help address global challenges.

In line with established scholarship in the United States and beyond, sustainability is understood here through a three-pillar model that includes environmental, social, and economic dimensions, underscoring that the concept extends far beyond environmental protection. This broader perspective is reflected across the articles in the volume, which explore how issues of climate change, social equity, and economic development intersect in complex and often unexpected ways. The brief article summaries below show the breadth of coverage in this volume of the three pillars of sustainability across a wide range of languages, cultures, and professional fields.

The volume opens with an article that offers a valuable and timely perspective by foregrounding health and well-being—key factors in social sustainability—through the lens of language. The article “Bridging Language Gaps in Mental Health Counseling Services in the United States: The Case for Spanish Language Training,” by authors Ann Warner-Ault, Regina Morin, Christina Kadelski, and Lauren Dilloian, addresses a pressing gap in US mental health care by examining the intersection of language, access, and well-being among Spanish-speaking immigrant communities. It synthesizes existing research to show how limited English proficiency and a shortage of bilingual health care providers create systemic barriers to culturally appropriate mental health services. In response, the authors argue for targeted Spanish language training for counseling professionals and present an applied solution: the development of an undergraduate certificate in Spanish for Counseling and Human Services at The College of New Jersey. The article outlines the program’s structure, implementation challenges, and future directions, positioning it as a scalable model for improving linguistic and cultural competence in the field. It demonstrates how language education can function as a tool for addressing inequities in access to care, thereby linking linguistic competence directly to more just and sustainable

communities. By connecting language training to real-world professional contexts and societal needs, the article exemplifies how LSP can advance sustainability goals, most notably in promoting inclusive, equitable health systems.

The volume continues with an article that places environmental sustainability and climate action at the center of language pedagogy. In “Climate Change, Sustainability Education, and Community Engagement in Postsecondary German Classes: A Framework for Action-Oriented Pedagogy,” authors Gisela Hoecherl-Alden and Susanne Wagner explore how sustainability education can be meaningfully integrated into college-level German language instruction across proficiency levels. Drawing on several classroom-based sustainability projects, the authors propose a pedagogical framework that combines language learning with experiential, participatory, and community-engaged approaches. Grounded in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the approach emphasizes student agency and cross-cultural collaboration, while fostering leadership skills and resilience in the face of evolving climate challenges. By embedding real-world problem solving and hands-on engagement into the curriculum, the authors demonstrate how language classrooms can serve as spaces for both developing linguistic skills and taking climate action. This article adds to the volume by illustrating how sustainability can be operationalized in the classroom by linking environmental concerns with community engagement and skill development that have long-term economic and societal implications. GBL readers will appreciate that this article provides concrete, adaptable ideas for integrating sustainability into all language courses.

In their article “Embedding Sustainability in LSP Curricula: A Transductive Approach for Professionalization and Internationalization,” Cédric Bruderemann and Muriel Grosbois examine how sustainability can be meaningfully integrated into language education for non-specialist students in higher education in France, with particular attention to its role in fostering professionalization and internationalization. Building on Robert Narcy-Combes’s concept of a dynamic, “transductive” relationship between language, culture, and disciplinary knowledge, the authors propose a revised model in which these dimensions evolve interdependently through a sustainability lens. This framework is illustrated through three practitioner-based pedagogical initiatives: an AI-supported online English learning pathway, the use of digital twins in a virtual chemistry lab, and a serious (educational) game focused on international logistics and carbon footprint. Each example demonstrates how sustainability themes can be embedded in discipline-specific contexts while simultaneously advancing language proficiency and professional skills. The article’s contribution to this sustainability-focused volume lies in its focus on the development of transversal competencies, such as intercultural competence and professional communication, within globally relevant, sustainability-inflected learning environments. Its practitioner-oriented perspective, combined with its theoretical reframing of the language-culture-discipline nexus, offers a flexible and transferable model for LSP curricula.

Bringing an innovative perspective to the volume, the next article highlights the role of entrepreneurship education in advancing sustainability within language learning contexts. In “Fostering Entrepreneurial Competences and a Sustainable Entrepreneurship Mindset in English for Specific Purposes Courses in Higher Education,” authors Anna Nicolaou and Antonia Christou examine how sustainable entrepreneurship training can be integrated into English for specific purposes (ESP) courses at the post-secondary level. Anchored in the EntreComp framework and aligned with the SDGs, the study draws on a challenge-based learning approach implemented with first-year business students. Over the course of a focused training module, students engaged with climate-related challenges designed to foster key “entrepreneurial

competences” such as creativity, opportunity recognition, and perseverance. The post-intervention survey results suggest that students perceived growth in these areas, while also developing a stronger awareness of sustainability challenges as potential business opportunities, as well as a deeper appreciation for the role of entrepreneurship in addressing climate change. This article underscores how sustainability can be advanced through entrepreneurship, highlighting business innovation as a practical pathway toward more sustainable development. At the same time, it demonstrates the interconnectedness of the three pillars of sustainability by linking economic opportunity with environmental responsibility and broader societal impact.

In her article “Developing Sustainability Knowledge and Competencies through Language Education: Evidence from a Spanish Instructional Unit on Climate Migration,” María José de la Fuente presents an exploratory study that investigates the impact of integrating education for sustainable development into advanced language instruction. The focus is a sixth-semester Spanish course centered on climate change and climate migration. Framed by the United Nations’ SDGs, the study analyzes data from a four-week instructional unit using a mixed-methods design. Quantitative results from pre- and post-surveys indicate significant gains in students’ self-reported achievement of sustainability-oriented learning outcomes, with marked gains in systems thinking, normative competence, and global citizenship. These findings are reinforced by qualitative thematic analysis of student reflections, which reveal a progression from a primarily environmental understanding of climate change to a more complex, systems-based perspective that incorporates social, ethical, and intercultural dimensions, including issues of inequality and migration. Unlike more conceptual or programmatic approaches, this study provides evidence that sustainability-integrated language instruction can foster the development of key sustainability competencies while deepening linguistic and intercultural engagement. Its emphasis on student learning processes, most notably on the evolution of ethical awareness and global perspective, highlights the transformative potential of language classrooms as spaces for cultivating sustainability literacy.

The volume concludes with an article by Haidan Wang and Song Jiang that shines a light on place-based and experiential learning as a pathway for engaging sustainability through language education. In “Stepping Out and Walking In: Place-based Experiential Learning in an Atayal Indigenous Community,” the authors present a pedagogical approach embedded within a university study abroad program for learners of Chinese as a second language. Centered on a one-day field experience in an Atayal Indigenous community in Taiwan, the program immerses students in the community’s physical, cultural, and historical environment. Through participation in ancestral rituals, traditional survival practices, and hands-on crafting activities, as well as engagement with culturally situated language use, students are invited to experience language learning as an embodied and context-driven process. Drawing on multiple forms of student data, including worksheets, observations, feedback, and interviews, the study shows how even short, well-designed experiential learning scenarios can deepen cultural understanding and heighten environmental awareness while supporting language development, primarily through contextual and embodied engagement. This article illustrates how sustainability extends beyond abstract concepts to lived experiences, most clearly in the context of Indigenous knowledge systems and human-environment relationships. It offers readers a compelling example of how language education can foster not only linguistic and intercultural competence—at the core of study abroad—but also ethical awareness and ecological sensitivity.

Publication of a GBL special volume centered on sustainability is long overdue. The large number of submissions we received underscores that many LSP colleagues have long been

engaged in “greening” their courses, recognizing both the pedagogical value of this work and the urgency of the global challenges to be addressed. One might easily argue, however, that the timing for this focus is of heightened significance. Environmental threats have reached an all-time high, disregard for human rights is becoming more widespread and evident even in historically stable contexts, and economic disparities are becoming increasingly pronounced. In this context, the LSP approach offers a uniquely well-suited and powerful model. By equipping learners with the linguistic, intercultural, and domain-specific competencies needed to navigate complex global systems, LSP education positions itself not only as responsive to current conditions, but as essential to fostering collaborative, informed action to ensure a more sustainable and equitable future for us all.

Margaret Gonglewski, Editor
with Anna Helm, Guest Co-Editor
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