

## The Contribution of Sustainability Courses to the Motivation of Preparatory Class Students: A Qualitative Case Study

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### Abstract

This study investigates how sustainability-themed English lessons impact the motivation of B1-level English preparatory students in an EFL context. Conducted over three academic terms at Türk Hava Kurumu University - a private university in Ankara, Türkiye with 43 students, this qualitative case study integrates sustainability into content-based language instruction. Students attended a one-hour sustainability session each week, covering themes such as climate change, recycling, food waste, and biodiversity. Each lesson combined thematic vocabulary instruction, visual or textual input (e.g., videos or articles), and communicative activities such as group discussions or debates. Using triangulated qualitative tools—student reflections, interviews, exit slips, and teacher journals—thematic content analysis revealed that such integrative instruction enhances student motivation, engagement, and language development. Notably, 85% of students reported feeling more connected to lesson content and more willing to participate in English due to the real-world relevance of sustainability topics. Grounded in Self-Determination Theory, CLIL, and the L2 Motivational Self System, findings support the pedagogical value of authentic, real-world content in fostering meaningful learning experiences. The findings are discussed through the lenses of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005), highlighting how meaningful content can fulfill learners' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The study contributes to the growing literature on integrating global citizenship themes into language education and suggests pedagogical pathways for motivating EFL learners through authentic, interdisciplinary content.

### Keywords

Motivation, sustainability education, content-based instruction, CLIL, English as a foreign language, self-determination theory.