

Representing Sustainable Communication in Ecofashion Posters: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of English Education Students' Works

Hasanul Misbah

UIN Raden Intan Lampung, Indonesia

hasanul@radenintan.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Background: Sustainable communication is increasingly recognized as an important approach to promoting environmental awareness. However, limited research has examined how pre-service English teachers construct sustainability messages through multimodal learning activities.

Aims: This study investigates how undergraduate English education students represent sustainable communication in ecofashion posters and explores the interaction between visual and verbal elements in conveying environmental messages.

Methods: A qualitative design employing Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) was adopted. Six ecofashion posters were purposively selected from projects produced by 180 students enrolled in six English education classes. The data were analyzed using a Multimodal Analytical Protocol integrating Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar with Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics.

Results: Three major themes emerged: circular fashion and resource conservation, minimalist consumption through capsule wardrobes, and eco-literacy through digital content creation. The posters demonstrated coherent visual-verbal integration, combining material processes, imperative expressions, conceptual visual structures, and offer gazes to communicate sustainability as a practical and relatable lifestyle rather than a moral obligation.

Conclusion: The findings suggest that multimodal composition activities can strengthen eco-literacy, multimodal competence, and critical communication skills. Integrating sustainability-oriented multimodal projects into English language education may provide meaningful opportunities for developing both language proficiency and environmental awareness.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Submitted: May 16, 2026

Accepted: June 21, 2026

Published: July 08, 2026

KEYWORD

Ecofashion;
English Language Teaching
(ELT);
Multimodal Discourse Analysis;
Sustainable Communication;
Visual Grammar;

Introduction

The fashion industry has become one of the sectors most closely associated with contemporary sustainability challenges due to its extensive consumption of natural resources, high carbon emissions, and growing volume of textile waste. Rapid production cycles and changing consumer preferences have accelerated the expansion of fast fashion, intensifying environmental degradation while encouraging unsustainable patterns of consumption (Garcia-Ortega et al., 2023; Olivar Aponte et al., 2024). In response to these concerns, sustainability has gradually shifted from being viewed solely as an industrial responsibility to becoming a broader social issue that requires active public participation through effective communication (Fotopoulou, 2021; Webler & Tuler, 2021). Sustainable communication has therefore emerged as an interdisciplinary field that examines how environmental values, ethical consumption, and ecological responsibility are communicated across diverse social contexts. Rather than merely disseminating information, sustainable communication seeks to shape public understanding and influence behavioral change through meaningful and persuasive messages (Essa & Mardikaningsih, 2021; Voci & Karmasin, 2023). As visual and digital media increasingly dominate contemporary communication, multimodal texts have become essential platforms for presenting sustainability issues in ways that are both accessible and socially engaging.

The growing concern over environmental sustainability has also transformed the way fashion-related issues are communicated to the public. Beyond promoting environmentally friendly products, sustainability campaigns increasingly encourage individuals to reconsider everyday consumption habits, including purchasing decisions, clothing reuse, and waste reduction (Soyer & Dittrich, 2021; Yap et al., 2026). Recent reports indicate that digital platforms have become one of the primary channels for

disseminating these messages, particularly among younger generations who engage with visual content more frequently than conventional media (Filieri et al., 2025; Peters et al., 2022). Consequently, visual communication is no longer viewed as a supplementary element but as a central component in shaping environmental awareness and influencing public attitudes. This development has stimulated the emergence of ecofashion campaigns that integrate persuasive language, visual symbolism, and digital storytelling to communicate sustainable lifestyles in more relatable ways. As environmental messages become increasingly multimodal, understanding how visual and verbal resources work together to construct sustainability discourse has become an important area of inquiry across communication and education research.

The increasing prominence of multimodal communication has prompted significant changes in language education, particularly in English Language Teaching (ELT). Contemporary language learning extends beyond the mastery of linguistic forms, requiring students to interpret and produce meaning through the integration of written language, images, typography, colour, and spatial design (Rahmanu & Molnár, 2024). This shift is closely aligned with the concept of multiliteracies, which emphasizes learners' ability to communicate effectively across diverse media and social contexts. Within this perspective, environmental themes provide authentic opportunities for students to engage with real-world issues while simultaneously developing critical literacy and communicative competence. Recent educational research has therefore encouraged the incorporation of sustainability-related projects into language classrooms, allowing learners to connect language use with social responsibility and global citizenship (Alharbi, 2026; Kazazoglu, 2025). Rather than functioning solely as language exercises, multimodal tasks can encourage students to negotiate meaning, express personal perspectives, and construct persuasive messages that respond to contemporary environmental challenges. Consequently, integrating sustainability into multimodal language learning offers a meaningful pedagogical approach for preparing future educators to communicate complex societal issues in increasingly visual and digital environments.

Among the various forms of multimodal learning, student-generated digital posters have gained increasing attention because they require learners to combine linguistic, visual, and rhetorical resources within a single communicative product (Guo et al., 2026; Karki et al., 2026). Designing environmental advocacy posters involves more than presenting information; it requires students to make deliberate decisions about how words, images, colours, and layout interact to communicate persuasive sustainability messages. Such learning activities also provide valuable opportunities for pre-service teachers to develop eco-literacy while applying language knowledge in authentic and socially relevant contexts. From a research perspective, these multimodal artefacts offer rich evidence of how students interpret, negotiate, and reconstruct environmental discourse through their own semiotic choices (Wanselin et al., 2023; Wilmes & Siry, 2021). Examining these artefacts therefore enables researchers to move beyond evaluating language accuracy alone and to explore how meaning is collaboratively constructed across multiple communicative modes. Given the growing emphasis on sustainability education and multimodal literacy in higher education, investigating student-produced ecofashion posters offers important insights into how future English teachers develop communicative competence alongside environmental awareness.

Recent scholarship has demonstrated growing interest in sustainable communication, particularly in relation to environmental campaigns, digital media, and consumer behaviour. Studies have consistently shown that visual communication plays a central role in shaping environmental awareness by combining linguistic and non-linguistic resources to make sustainability messages more persuasive and accessible (Abbamonte & Cavaliere, 2022). Within the fashion sector, researchers have primarily examined how brands and organizations employ multimodal strategies to promote sustainable consumption, strengthen green branding, and influence purchasing intentions (Huan & Bashir, 2025; Sinha et al., 2022). Parallel developments in multimodal discourse studies have further demonstrated that meaning is constructed through the interaction of verbal language, visual design, typography, colour, and spatial composition rather than through written text alone (Kress & Bezemer, 2023). In educational

contexts, multimodal learning has also been associated with improvements in critical literacy, creativity, and collaborative knowledge construction, particularly when learners engage in authentic communication tasks that address contemporary social issues (Mirra & Garcia). Collectively, these studies confirm the growing relevance of multimodal communication for sustainability education while highlighting its potential to connect language learning with broader social and environmental concerns.

Despite these important contributions, several limitations remain evident in the existing body of knowledge. Most studies on sustainable communication have concentrated on professionally produced materials, such as corporate advertisements, commercial branding, or institutional awareness campaigns, where communication strategies are designed by experts rather than learners (Mahmood & Uddin, 2020). Although multimodal discourse analysis has been widely applied to media texts, comparatively little attention has been given to student-generated multimodal artefacts that reflect how sustainability concepts are interpreted and reconstructed within educational settings. Similarly, research in English language education has predominantly examined the effectiveness of multimodal learning for improving language skills, while the communicative representation of environmental values through multimodal design remains insufficiently explored (Anis & Khan, 2023; Rahmanu & Molnár, 2024). As a result, current scholarship provides only limited understanding of how pre-service English teachers combine visual and verbal resources to construct persuasive sustainability messages and demonstrate eco-literacy through authentic classroom tasks. Addressing this gap is important because student-produced multimodal texts not only reveal learners' communicative competence but also illustrate how environmental knowledge is transformed into meaningful social discourse within language education (Karjagdi Çolak, 2024).

Building upon the gaps identified in previous studies, this research examines how undergraduate English education students represent sustainable communication through ecofashion posters by employing a Multimodal Discourse Analysis framework. Specifically, the study explores the dimensions of sustainable communication reflected in students' multimodal compositions and investigates how visual and verbal resources interact to construct persuasive environmental messages. The study contributes theoretically by extending the application of Multimodal Discourse Analysis from professionally produced environmental campaigns to learner-generated multimodal artefacts within English language education. It also enriches current discussions on eco-literacy and multiliteracies by demonstrating how sustainability concepts are interpreted, negotiated, and communicated through authentic classroom practices. From a pedagogical perspective, the findings are expected to provide practical insights for English language educators seeking to integrate sustainability themes into multimodal learning activities while fostering students' communicative competence and critical environmental awareness. By connecting sustainable communication, multimodal discourse, and English language education within a single analytical framework, this study offers a broader understanding of how language classrooms can support both literacy development and sustainability education.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) to investigate how sustainable communication was represented in ecofashion posters created by undergraduate English education students. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to interpret the meanings embedded in multimodal artefacts rather than quantify relationships among variables. The analysis focused on the ways visual and verbal resources interacted to communicate environmental messages within an educational context. The analytical framework combined Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to examine the linguistic dimension of the posters with Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar to interpret visual representations and their communicative functions. Integrating these complementary perspectives enabled a systematic examination of how students constructed sustainability discourse through the coordinated use of

language, imagery, typography, colour, and spatial organisation. This design was selected because it provides a comprehensive understanding of multimodal meaning-making and has been widely adopted in studies examining visual communication, educational discourse, and environmental representation (Andini, 2026).

Participants

The participants comprised 180 undergraduate students enrolled in six English Education classes at a public university in Indonesia during the 2025/2026 academic year. All participants completed the same course assignment, which required them to collaboratively design digital ecofashion posters as part of a multimodal learning project addressing sustainable communication. Since the objective of the study was to obtain in-depth insights into the representation of sustainability discourse rather than to achieve statistical generalization, purposive sampling was employed to identify information-rich cases suitable for qualitative analysis. The unit of analysis was the completed poster rather than the individual student because each artefact reflected collective meaning-making developed through group collaboration. From all submitted posters, six multimodal artefacts were selected for detailed analysis, with one poster representing each class. This strategy ensured variation in design approaches while maintaining balanced representation across the participating classes. The selection process followed four inclusion criteria: (1) the poster explicitly addressed ecofashion or sustainable fashion as its primary theme; (2) verbal and visual elements were intentionally integrated to communicate environmental messages; (3) the artefact demonstrated sufficient multimodal complexity to support systematic discourse analysis; and (4) the submitted file was complete and of adequate visual quality for detailed examination. Posters that contained incomplete visual components, minimal textual content, or weak integration between verbal and visual elements were excluded. Applying these criteria enabled the researchers to focus on artefacts that offered substantial analytical depth while remaining consistent with the interpretive purpose of qualitative multimodal inquiry.

Instruments

The primary source of data in this study was a set of student-generated ecofashion posters produced as the final outcome of a multimodal classroom project. As the research focused on interpreting multimodal meanings embedded in visual artefacts, the researchers served as the principal instrument for data collection and interpretation, consistent with the interpretive nature of qualitative inquiry (Sommer, 2021). To enhance analytical consistency, a Multimodal Analytical Protocol (MAP) was developed prior to data analysis. The protocol was constructed by synthesising the analytical principles of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar, enabling a systematic examination of verbal and visual meaning-making within each poster.

The MAP consisted of three interconnected analytical dimensions. The verbal dimension examined linguistic features, including experiential meanings, transitivity processes, lexical choices, interpersonal meanings, and mood structures used to communicate sustainability messages. The visual dimension focused on representational, interactive, and compositional meanings, including image salience, colour, typography, framing, gaze, vectors, spatial arrangement, and information value. The third dimension, intersemiotic integration, explored how verbal and visual resources interacted to reinforce, complement, or extend one another in constructing coherent sustainability discourse. These dimensions enabled the researchers to analyse multimodal artefacts holistically rather than treating textual and visual elements as separate communicative systems. To strengthen the credibility of the analytical instrument, the protocol was reviewed by two scholars with expertise in multimodal discourse analysis and applied linguistics before the formal analysis commenced. Feedback from the reviewers was incorporated to refine the operational definitions of each analytical category and to minimise potential ambiguity during the coding process. Rather than relying on numerical validation procedures commonly associated with quantitative research, the study emphasised content validity through expert review and theoretical alignment with established multimodal analytical frameworks. This procedure ensured that

the protocol provided a coherent and reliable guide for interpreting multimodal representations of sustainable communication.

Procedures

The research was conducted through four sequential stages over a six-week period, beginning in early March and ending in mid-April 2026. Prior to the implementation of the project, students were introduced to the concepts of sustainable communication, ecofashion, and multimodal composition through classroom discussions and guided learning activities. They were informed that the project aimed to design persuasive digital posters integrating visual and verbal elements to promote environmentally responsible fashion practices. Students were then organized into small collaborative groups consisting of three to four members, with each group working independently to develop a single ecofashion poster. Throughout the design process, the lecturer provided general academic guidance regarding project expectations without directing the content or visual design of the posters, allowing students to construct their own representations of sustainability. Upon completion of the project, all posters produced by the participating classes were collected and catalogued in digital format. Each submission was reviewed to ensure that it met the technical requirements for analysis, including readability, image quality, and completeness of both textual and visual components. The researchers subsequently applied the predetermined inclusion criteria to identify posters that were most appropriate for multimodal discourse analysis. Following this screening process, six posters were purposively selected as the primary corpus representing the six participating classes.

The selected posters were then prepared for systematic analysis using the Multimodal Analytical Protocol (MAP). Each poster was independently examined by the researchers to identify salient verbal and visual features according to the established analytical framework. Initial coding focused on the verbal and visual dimensions separately before examining the relationships between both modes to understand how meaning was constructed across the artefacts. Throughout the analytical process, coding decisions were continuously reviewed and refined to ensure consistency in interpreting multimodal representations. The final stage involved comparing patterns across all six posters to identify recurring themes and broader representations of sustainable communication, which subsequently formed the basis for the presentation of the research findings.

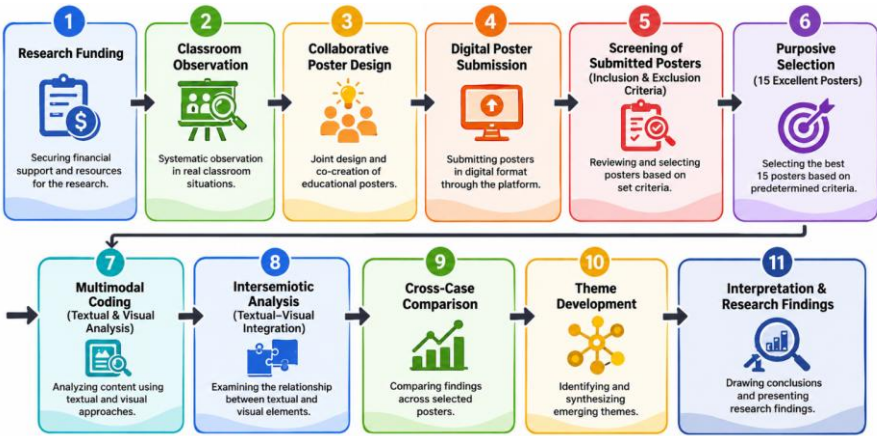


Figure 1. Research Procedure

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using a systematic Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) procedure informed by Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar. The analytical process was iterative rather than linear, allowing interpretations to be continuously refined as patterns emerged across the dataset. Initially, each poster was examined independently to gain an overall understanding of its communicative structure before detailed coding was undertaken. During this stage, verbal and visual elements were analysed separately to identify their individual communicative functions prior to exploring their combined contribution to meaning

construction. The verbal analysis focused on linguistic features associated with the ideational and interpersonal metafunctions of language. Particular attention was given to lexical choices, transitivity processes, mood structures, and evaluative expressions used to communicate sustainability messages. The visual analysis examined representational, interactive, and compositional meanings, including image salience, colour symbolism, typography, framing, gaze, vectors, spatial organisation, and information value. Following these separate analyses, an intersemiotic analysis was conducted to investigate how visual and verbal resources complemented, reinforced, or extended one another in constructing coherent representations of sustainable communication.

Coding was conducted through an iterative process involving repeated reading, comparison, and refinement of analytical categories. Emerging patterns were subsequently organised into broader thematic categories that reflected recurring representations of sustainability across the selected posters. Rather than relying on predetermined themes, the final thematic structure was developed inductively through continuous comparison between individual cases while remaining theoretically informed by the analytical framework. Cross-case analysis was then undertaken to identify similarities and distinctive characteristics among the six multimodal artefacts, enabling broader interpretations to be developed beyond individual poster descriptions. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, the coding process was independently reviewed by two researchers with experience in multimodal discourse analysis and applied linguistics. Differences in interpretation were discussed through analytical debriefing until agreement was achieved regarding the classification and interpretation of the multimodal features. Throughout the analysis, coding decisions, analytical memos, and category revisions were systematically documented to maintain an auditable record of the interpretive process. This combination of iterative coding, peer review, and transparent documentation strengthened the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the analysis while reducing the potential influence of individual researcher bias.

Results and Discussion

Results

Dimensions of Sustainable Communication Represented

The multimodal discourse analysis of the student-generated posters reveals that pre-service English education students localized the vast, abstract discourse of environmentalism into distinct, actionable sub-dimensions of sustainable communication tailored to youth culture. Rather than presenting sustainability as an amorphous global crisis, the students categorized it into three prominent thematic dimensions:

1. Circular Fashion, Resource Conservation, and Lifetime Extension

This dimension is defined by the very powerful rhetorical call to challenge the linear take-make-waste model of fast fashion as it exists. This is articulated most clearly in Poster 2 and Poster 5.

- a) **Verbal Realization:** In **Poster 2**, students utilize empirical, quantified eco-metrics as a primary rhetorical device, notably the headline "SAVE 2,700L OF WATER" and the explanatory text stating that "One thrifted shirt saves 2.5 years of drinking water used to produce new items". In Poster 5, this is reinforced through the vocabulary of life extension: "Reuse old clothing," "Extends clothing lifespan," and "Give clothes a second life".
- b) **Visual Realization:** Both posters rely heavily on recycling iconography. Poster 2 depicts a green t-shirt stamped with a large, universally recognized triangular recycling vector alongside an infographic of stacked clothes tagged as "SECOND HAND". Similarly, Poster 5 employs a circular tripartite infographic loop containing the words "CHOOSE, REUSE, REWEAR, REPEAT" to visually mimic industrial circularity.



Figure 2. Poster 2 (left) & Poster 5 (right)

2. Structural Minimalism and the "Capsule Wardrobe" Alternative

Instead of focusing purely on recycling what already exists, this dimension advocates for a proactive reduction of consumption through lifestyle modification, as seen in Poster 1 and Poster 6.

- Verbal Realization: Poster 6 elevates the minimalist fashion philosophy using aphorisms such as "Less is More: Quality Over Quantity," "Simplify Your Wardrobe," and the tripartite descriptors "Timeless • Sustainable • Minimalist". This aligns with the imperative commands found in Poster 1 under the section "Sikap Peduli Lingkungan," which tells the audience to "Tidak boros membeli baju" (Do not wastefully buy clothes) and "Membeli pakaian seperlunya" (Buy clothes only as needed).
- Visual Realization: In Poster 6, minimalism is represented through geometric categorization. The poster features a central, abstract line-art outline of a shirt and skirt surrounded by four distinct, symmetrical polaroid-style frames. Each frame displays a highly curated, neutral-colored outfit pairing (e.g., a basic white t-shirt with beige trousers; a plain black top with light-wash jeans). This visual setup codes "sustainability" not as a lack of options, but as an elegant, hyper-organized, and structured aesthetic.

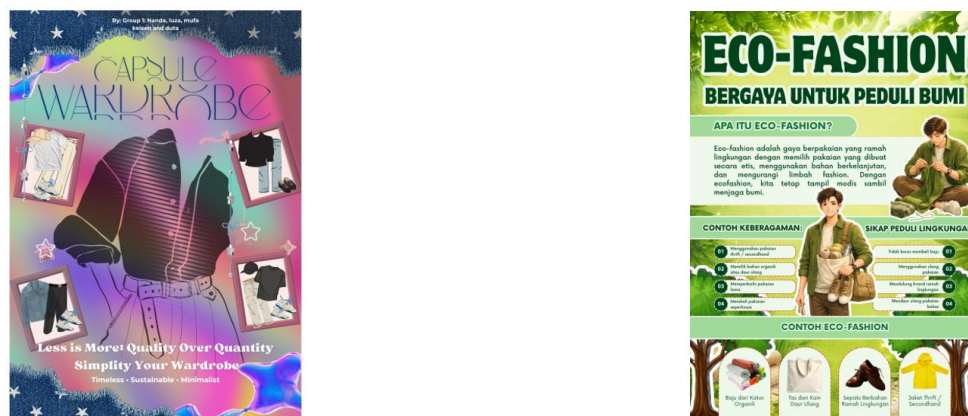


Figure 3. Poster 1 (left) Poster 6 (right)

3. Eco-Literacy and Semiotic Agency (Green Content Creation)

Unique among the sample, Poster 4 moves completely away from the consumer's wardrobe and recontextualizes sustainable communication as an act of professional, discursive media production.

- Verbal Realization: The poster introduces the compound concept "ECOLINGUISTICS: Eco Content Creator". The verbal slogans shift from fashion-centric instructions to communication-centric

declarations: "Green Storytelling," "Eco-Friendly Content," "Raise Awareness," "Speak for the Earth," and "Use Words to Protect Nature!"

- b) Visual Realization: The poster features a high-salience, central character viewed from a back-facing, over-the-shoulder perspective. The character is a media creator looking out over a lush, green valley with wind turbines, operating a professional camera mounted on a tripod. Surrounding him are digital tools—a smartphone displaying "SAVE OUR PLANET" and a laptop screen displaying "ECO LINGUISTICS". The entire scene is framed by thick vines and foliage creeping inward from the borders, creating a visual blend of digital technology and wild nature.

4. Aesthetic and Purpose-Driven Agency

In Poster 3, the core verbal thesis, "ECO-FASHION style with purpose," combined with the visual image of eight diverse, stylish, and calm characters, positions sustainability as an identity that combines personal aesthetics with ethical consciousness (UNEP & UN Climate Change, 2023). Sustainable fashion is thus communicated not as a sacrifice of style, but as a lifestyle upgrade with a moral anchor.



Figure 4. Poster 3 (left) Poster 4 (right)

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that undergraduate English education students predominantly represented sustainable communication through the interconnected themes of circular fashion, resource conservation, and product lifetime extension. Rather than portraying sustainability as an abstract environmental issue, the students translated global ecological concerns into practical consumption practices that are closely aligned with everyday experiences, such as reusing clothing, purchasing second-hand products, and extending garment lifespan. From a conceptual perspective, this tendency suggests that sustainability was understood not merely as environmental knowledge but as a set of actionable behaviours that individuals can incorporate into their daily lives. This interpretation is consistent with the principles of sustainable communication, which emphasize the transformation of environmental awareness into socially meaningful practices capable of encouraging behavioural change rather than simply transmitting ecological information (Adeyemi et al., 2025; Weder, 2023). The findings also resonate with the circular economy perspective proposed by Dissanayake & Weerasinghe (2022), which positions product longevity and responsible consumption as fundamental strategies for reducing the environmental burden associated with the fashion industry. However, unlike many previous studies that have primarily examined how sustainability narratives are strategically constructed by fashion brands or institutional campaigns Kynigos & Diamantidis (2022) Ojeda et al. (2022), the present study demonstrates that similar discourses can emerge organically within student-generated learning artefacts. This distinction suggests that multimodal learning activities may function not only as instructional exercises but also as spaces where learners actively reinterpret global sustainability

narratives according to their own social and educational contexts, thereby extending current understandings of sustainable communication within English language education.

Another noteworthy finding concerns the prominence of structural minimalism, particularly through the representation of capsule wardrobes as a sustainable lifestyle strategy. Rather than framing sustainability as a form of sacrifice or restricted consumption, the students portrayed minimalist fashion as an intentional lifestyle that balances aesthetic appeal, functionality, and environmental responsibility (Bardey et al., 2026). This perspective indicates a shift from viewing sustainability as a reactive response to environmental degradation toward understanding it as a proactive process of making thoughtful consumption decisions. Such an interpretation is closely aligned with sustainable consumption theory, which argues that behavioural change is more likely to occur when environmentally responsible practices are perceived as desirable, practical, and compatible with personal identity rather than as externally imposed obligations (van der Werff et al., 2021). The findings also support previous studies suggesting that minimalist consumption can strengthen pro-environmental behaviour by encouraging consumers to prioritize product quality, durability, and long-term utility over excessive purchasing (Nguyen et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the present study offers a different perspective by demonstrating that these sustainability values were communicated through multimodal educational artefacts instead of commercial marketing campaigns. This distinction is important because it suggests that classroom-based multimodal projects may enable learners to internalise sustainability principles and express them creatively through their own communicative choices. Consequently, the findings broaden existing discussions on sustainable communication by illustrating that educational settings can function not only as spaces for knowledge acquisition but also as environments where sustainable identities are actively negotiated and represented through multimodal meaning-making.

An equally significant finding is the emergence of eco-literacy as a communicative practice, particularly through students' representation of themselves as environmental content creators rather than passive recipients of sustainability messages. Instead of positioning environmental communication solely within the domains of policy advocacy or corporate responsibility, the posters portrayed communication itself as an act of environmental participation. This shift suggests that students perceived language not merely as a medium for transmitting information but as a social resource for influencing attitudes and encouraging collective environmental responsibility. Such an interpretation resonates with the principles of ecolinguistics, which conceptualise language as a powerful means of shaping ecological relationships and transforming the narratives through which people understand environmental issues (Steffensen, 2025). At the same time, the findings reinforce the pedagogical orientation of Green Pedagogy, where language learning extends beyond linguistic proficiency to cultivate ecological awareness, ethical reflection, and civic engagement (Davari et al., 2025). Previous studies have reported that sustainability-oriented language activities can strengthen learners' environmental awareness and critical literacy (Aydın Yıldız, 2025), yet these investigations have generally evaluated changes in attitudes or learning outcomes rather than examining how learners themselves construct sustainability discourse through multimodal composition. The present study therefore contributes a different perspective by demonstrating that multimodal design activities enable pre-service English teachers to move beyond learning about sustainability toward actively producing environmental narratives that integrate linguistic, visual, and social meanings. From this perspective, multimodal composition should be understood not only as a language-learning strategy but also as a pedagogical space in which learners negotiate professional identity, social responsibility, and environmental citizenship through authentic communicative practice.

Beyond the sustainability themes reflected in the posters, the findings underscore the importance of visual-verbal integration in shaping persuasive environmental communication. The effectiveness of the posters did not depend on either textual or visual elements alone; instead, meaning emerged from the coordinated interaction between linguistic choices, visual composition, and spatial organisation. This pattern supports the systemic functional perspective that communication is inherently multimodal, with

different semiotic resources working together to realise complementary meanings rather than functioning independently (Logi & Zappavigna, 2023). The frequent use of imperative expressions alongside conceptual visual structures and offer gazes illustrates how students combined interpersonal and representational meanings to encourage environmental responsibility without adopting an overly directive or confrontational tone. Such semiotic orchestration suggests that the students demonstrated an emerging awareness of audience engagement, carefully balancing informational content with visual appeal to enhance message accessibility. Similar observations have been reported in studies of multimodal communication, where effective environmental messages are characterised by coherent relationships between visual design and linguistic expression rather than by the dominance of a single communicative mode (Krysanova, 2024). Nevertheless, unlike previous investigations that predominantly analysed professionally designed public campaigns, this study reveals that comparable multimodal strategies can also emerge from classroom-based learning activities. This finding extends current understandings of multimodal competence by suggesting that pre-service English teachers are capable of applying sophisticated semiotic principles in authentic educational tasks, even without formal training in visual communication or graphic design.

Taken together, these findings suggest that multimodal composition should be viewed as more than an instructional technique for developing language proficiency. Instead, it represents a dynamic process through which learners interpret global sustainability issues, negotiate personal values, and reconstruct environmental discourse within their own sociocultural contexts. This perspective extends conventional applications of Multimodal Discourse Analysis, which have largely concentrated on interpreting professionally produced media, by demonstrating its value for examining how meanings are actively generated through educational practice (Kress & Bezemer, 2023). It also contributes to the growing body of literature on Green Pedagogy by illustrating that environmental learning is not confined to the acquisition of ecological knowledge but is closely associated with students' capacity to communicate, reinterpret, and contextualise sustainability through multimodal expression (Lubis, 2025). A possible explanation for this pattern lies in the authentic nature of the classroom task, which required students to transform abstract sustainability concepts into persuasive messages intended for real audiences. Unlike studies that evaluate environmental education primarily through knowledge acquisition or attitudinal change (Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024), the present research demonstrates that multimodal artefacts can reveal the cognitive, linguistic, and semiotic processes underlying students' environmental reasoning. Consequently, this study broadens current discussions on sustainability education by positioning multimodal communication not simply as an instructional outcome, but as evidence of learners' developing ability to integrate disciplinary knowledge, communicative competence, and ecological responsibility within a single educational experience.

Collectively, the findings highlight the growing importance of integrating sustainability education with multimodal language learning in preparing future English teachers for increasingly complex communication environments. The study demonstrates that multimodal classroom projects can function as meaningful spaces where learners not only acquire linguistic knowledge but also develop the capacity to interpret, communicate, and critically respond to contemporary environmental issues through diverse semiotic resources. This perspective reinforces recent calls for language education to move beyond traditional literacy instruction by embracing multiliteracies that reflect the communicative demands of digitally mediated societies. At the same time, the findings suggest that sustainability should not be positioned merely as supplementary classroom content but as a meaningful context through which students learn to construct arguments, negotiate perspectives, and engage with authentic social concerns. From a broader educational standpoint, the study offers empirical evidence that multimodal discourse analysis can serve not only as a research methodology but also as a valuable pedagogical framework for examining how learners construct knowledge across multiple communicative modes. Although the present investigation was conducted within a single institutional context, the conceptual insights generated may inform future studies examining sustainability communication across different

educational settings, cultural contexts, and multimodal learning environments. In this way, the study contributes to ongoing international discussions on multimodal literacy, sustainable communication, and English language education by demonstrating how these three domains can be meaningfully integrated within authentic classroom practice.

Implications

The present study highlights the educational value of integrating sustainability issues into multimodal language learning. Rather than treating environmental topics as supplementary classroom content, the findings demonstrate that sustainability can serve as an authentic context through which learners simultaneously develop linguistic competence, visual communication skills, and critical awareness of contemporary social issues. This perspective reinforces the view that language learning is most meaningful when students engage with real-world problems requiring interpretation, reflection, and communication across multiple semiotic resources. In this respect, multimodal composition extends beyond a creative classroom activity to become a pedagogical approach that encourages learners to construct knowledge while positioning themselves as active participants in social and environmental discourse. From a scholarly perspective, the study expands current applications of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) within English language education. Existing research has predominantly examined professionally produced texts, whereas the present findings illustrate how learner-generated artefacts can reveal the processes through which sustainability meanings are interpreted, negotiated, and reconstructed in educational settings. Bringing together sustainable communication, eco-literacy, and multimodal composition also offers a broader conceptual perspective for future research exploring the intersection of applied linguistics, environmental education, and multiliteracies. Such integration contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how language classrooms can foster not only communicative competence but also socially responsible forms of meaning-making.

Limitations

The findings should be interpreted with consideration of several methodological boundaries. The analysis was based on a relatively small corpus of multimodal artefacts drawn from a single institutional setting, reflecting the experiences of one group of pre-service English teachers. While this context provided rich opportunities for in-depth interpretation, it may not fully represent how sustainability discourse is constructed in different educational environments or cultural contexts. In addition, the study focused exclusively on students' completed posters, meaning that the analytical emphasis remained on the final multimodal products rather than on the creative processes through which those artefacts were developed. As a result, the study was unable to capture the discussions, negotiations, and design decisions that occurred during collaborative poster production. Another limitation concerns the exclusive use of static visual media. Contemporary environmental communication increasingly relies on dynamic multimodal platforms such as short-form videos and interactive social media content, which involve additional semiotic resources beyond those examined in this investigation. These considerations do not diminish the value of the findings but instead define the scope within which the interpretations should be understood.

Suggestions

The present findings open several opportunities for further investigation. Future studies could examine how sustainability discourse is constructed across different educational institutions, disciplines, or cultural contexts to determine whether similar multimodal patterns emerge in more diverse learning environments. Extending the analysis to dynamic media, including digital storytelling, video campaigns, or social media productions, would also provide a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary multimodal communication. Combining multimodal discourse analysis with interviews, reflective journals, or stimulated-recall sessions may further illuminate the reasoning behind students' linguistic and visual choices, offering insights that cannot be obtained from artefact analysis alone. Longitudinal research would likewise be valuable for exploring how sustained engagement with multimodal

sustainability projects influences the development of eco-literacy, multimodal competence, and professional identity throughout teacher education. Such directions would not only strengthen the empirical foundation of sustainability-oriented language education but also contribute to the continuing evolution of multimodal research within applied linguistics.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that multimodal composition provides a meaningful approach to exploring how pre-service English teachers interpret and communicate sustainability through ecofashion posters. Rather than reproducing environmental messages, the students reconstructed sustainability as a practical and socially relevant discourse by integrating visual and verbal resources to promote responsible consumption, environmental awareness, and eco-literacy. These findings indicate that multimodal learning extends beyond language development by enabling learners to engage critically with contemporary issues while expressing ideas through diverse semiotic resources. The study also illustrates the value of Multimodal Discourse Analysis in revealing how linguistic and visual elements work together to shape environmental meanings within educational settings. By connecting sustainable communication, multimodal literacy, and English language education, this research offers a broader perspective on the role of classroom-based multimodal practices in preparing future educators who are capable of communicating complex societal challenges in thoughtful, creative, and socially responsible ways. Overall, the findings reinforce the potential of sustainability-oriented multimodal learning to enrich language education while contributing to ongoing discussions on environmental communication and twenty-first-century literacy.

Author Contributions Statement

Hasanul Misbah conceived and designed the study, developed the research framework, collected and analyzed the data, interpreted the findings, drafted and revised the manuscript, and approved the final version for publication. The author accepts full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of all aspects of the research.

References

- Abbamonte, L., & Cavaliere, F. (2022). Going green with communication: A comparative analysis of opposing campaigns. *Iperstoria*, 20. <https://doi.org/10.13136/2281-4582/2022.i20.1113>
- Adeyemi, A. E., Ahn, J., Xu, Z., Muko, H., & Matt, B. (2025). Promoting SDGs through education: A theory of planned behavior analysis of Japanese and Nigerian students' sustainability actions. *Sustainable Development*, 33(5), 6901–6916. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.3493>
- Alharbi, M. S. (2026). Greening the classroom: Cultivating sustainable futures through English language teaching. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 13, 102491. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2026.102491>
- Andini, P. A. (2026). Multimodal representation of environmental messages in Indonesian eco-murals. *Indonesian Journal of Language, Space, and Visual Arts*, 1(1), 21–30.
- Anis, M., & Khan, R. (2023). Integrating multimodal approaches in English language teaching for inclusive education: A pedagogical exploration. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 2(3), 241–257.
- Aydın Yıldız, T. (2025). Sustainability education in L2 writing: AI-based multimodal awareness and engagement. *Sustainability*, 17(21), 9376. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17219376>
- Bardey, A., Ritch, E. L., & Labruere-Chazal, C. (2026). The perks of being minimalist: Assessing the relationship between consumers' wellbeing, sustainable fashion attitudes and fashion involvement. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 35(5), 6367–6381. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.70507>

- Davari, H., Hassani, G., Iranmehr, A., & Ghorbanpour, A. (2025). Environmental communication through language education: Iranian teachers' perceptions on integrating environmental communication pedagogy into English language teaching. *Environmental Communication*, 19(7), 1342–1358. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2025.2464171>
- Dissanayake, D. G. K., & Weerasinghe, D. (2022). Towards circular economy in fashion: Review of strategies, barriers and enablers. *Circular Economy and Sustainability*, 2(1), 25–45. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43615-021-00090-5>
- Dushkova, D., & Ivlieva, O. (2024). Empowering communities to act for a change: A review of community empowerment programs towards sustainability and resilience. *Sustainability*, 16(19), 8700. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16198700>
- Essa, N. E., & Mardikaningsih, R. (2021). Sustainability communication through green marketing: Strengthening consumer awareness and corporate environmental integrity. *Journal of Social Science Studies*, 1(2), 233–238.
- Filieri, R., Christodoulides, G., & Nicolau, J. L. (2025). Emerging sources, formats, channels, devices, and audiences in modern eWOM communications. *Psychology & Marketing*, 42(9), 2430–2443. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.22239>
- Fotopoulou, A. (2021). Conceptualising critical data literacies for civil society organisations: Agency, care, and social responsibility. *Information, Communication & Society*, 24(11), 1640–1657. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2020.1716041>
- Garcia-Ortega, B., Galan-Cubillo, J., Llorens-Montes, F. J., & de-Miguel-Molina, B. (2023). Sufficient consumption as a missing link toward sustainability: The case of fast fashion. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 399, 136678. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2023.136678>
- Guo, K., Li, D., & Jiang, L. (2026). Evaluating generative artificial intelligence's role in enhancing feedback for digital multimodal compositions: A comparative study. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 1–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2026.2640476>
- Huan, L. C., & Bashir, N. N. M. (2025). Multimodal copywriting strategies through CaaS and DCO in sustainability advertising. *Electronic Journal of Business and Management*, 10(1), 54–64. <https://doi.org/10.65136/ejbm.v10i1.8>
- Karjagdi Çolak, M. (2024). Pathways to motivation and learning in English language education: A case of two youths engaging in multiliteracies. *English Teaching: Practice & Critique*, 23(4), 442–462. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ETPC-11-2023-0148>
- Karki, J., Barros, S., & Ojha, L. P. (2026). Fostering linguistic and epistemic inclusion among multilingual students through translanguaging and multimodal composition. *The Language Learning Journal*, 54(2), 282–301. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2025.2598286>
- Kazazoglu, S. (2025). Environmental education through eco-literacy: Integrating sustainability into English language teaching. *Sustainability*, 17(5), 2156. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17052156>
- Kress, G., & Bezemer, J. (2023). Multimodal discourse analysis. In J. Flowerdew & J. E. Richardson (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Krysanova, T. (2024). Unveiling the eco-storytelling: Multimodal layers of meaning in Greenpeace's environmental videos. *Cognition, Communication, Discourse*, 28, 33–57. <https://doi.org/10.26565/2218-2926-2024-28-03>
- Kynigos, C., & Diamantidis, D. (2022). Creativity in engineering mathematical models through programming. *ZDM–Mathematics Education*, 54(1), 149–162. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11858-021-01314-6>
- Logi, L., & Zappavigna, M. (2023). A social semiotic perspective on emoji: How emoji and language interact to make meaning in digital messages. *New Media & Society*, 25(12), 3222–3246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211032965>
- Lubis, B. N. A. (2025). Multimodal-based approaches in teaching ecological literacy: Enhancing environmental awareness through textual, visual, and auditory integration. *STAIRS: English Language Education Journal*, 6(1), 53–68. <https://doi.org/10.21009/stairs.6.1.6>

- Mahmood, Z., & Uddin, S. (2020). Institutional logics and practice variations in sustainability reporting: Evidence from an emerging field. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 34(5), 1163–1189. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AAAJ-07-2019-4086>
- Mirra, N., & Garcia, A. *Reading Research Quarterly*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.313>
- Nguyen, K. H., Tran, M. D., & Adomako, S. (2025). Less is more: Exploring the role of minimalism in sustainable consumption. *Sustainable Development*, 33(Suppl. 1), 1091–1106. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.70059>
- Ojeda, J., Salomon, A. K., Rowe, J. K., & Ban, N. C. (2022). Reciprocal contributions between people and nature: A conceptual intervention. *BioScience*, 72(10), 952–962. <https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biac053>
- Olivar Aponte, N., Hernández Gómez, J., Torres Argüelles, V., & Smith, E. D. (2024). Fast fashion consumption and its environmental impact: A literature review. *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy*, 20(1), 2381871. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15487733.2024.2381871>
- Peters, C., Schröder, K. C., Lehaff, J., & Vulpius, J. (2022). News as they know it: Young adults' information repertoires in the digital media landscape. *Digital Journalism*, 10(1), 62–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2021.1885986>
- Rahmanu, I. W. E. D., & Molnár, G. (2024). Multimodal immersion in English language learning in higher education: A systematic review. *Heliyon*, 10(19), e38357. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e38357>
- Sinha, P., Sharma, M., & Agrawal, R. (2022). A systematic review and future research agenda for sustainable fashion in the apparel industry. *Benchmarking: An International Journal*, 30(9), 3482–3507. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BIJ-02-2022-0142>
- Sommer, V. (2021). Multimodal analysis in qualitative research: Extending grounded theory through the lens of social semiotics. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 27(8–9), 1102–1113. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800420978746>
- Soyer, M., & Dittrich, K. (2021). Sustainable consumer behavior in purchasing, using and disposing of clothes. *Sustainability*, 13(15), 8333. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13158333>
- Steffensen, S. V. (2025). Surveying ecolinguistics. *Journal of World Languages*, 11(1), 1–49. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jwl-2024-0044>
- van der Werff, E., Steg, L., & Ruerpert, A. (2021). My company is green, so am I: The relationship between perceived environmental responsibility of organisations and government, environmental self-identity, and pro-environmental behaviours. *Energy Efficiency*, 14(5), 50. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12053-021-09958-9>
- Voci, D., & Karmasin, M. (2023). Sustainability communication: How to communicate an inconvenient truth in the era of scientific mistrust. *Journal of Communication Management*, 28(1), 15–40. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-05-2022-0060>
- Wanselin, H., Danielsson, K., & Wikman, S. (2023). Meaning-making in ecology education: Analysis of students' multimodal texts. *Education Sciences*, 13(5), 443. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13050443>
- Webler, T., & Tuler, S. (2021). Four decades of public participation in risk decision making. *Risk Analysis*, 41(3), 503–518. <https://doi.org/10.1111/risa.13250>
- Weder, F. (2023). Cultivation of sustainability in a discourse of change: Perspectives on communication for sustainability as new norm and principle of action in socio-ecological transformation processes. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 22(5), 577–600. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.22122.wed>
- Wilmes, S. E. D., & Siry, C. (2021). Multimodal interaction analysis: A powerful tool for examining plurilingual students' engagement in science practices. *Research in Science Education*, 51(1), 71–91. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-020-09977-z>
- Yap, C. S.-F., Stewart, C. R., Rai, M., & Tan, L. (2026). Sustainable living: The push and pull of everyday practices. *European Journal of Marketing*, 60(13), 574–630. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-06-2024-0498>