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Co-constructing stories of possibility: Chilean teachers' perspectives on environmental education in English language learning

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Abstract

Around the globe, widespread environmental degradation and the climate emergency have made cross-curricular inclusion of environmental education imperative. Building on a framework including teacher agency and the necessity for new, hopeful narratives to visualise environmentally conscious school cultures, this qualitative study explores Chilean English as a Foreign Language teachers' perspective on addressing environmental contents in their classes asking: What opportunities and challenges have they experienced when teaching environmental topics in English classes? What possibilities do the teachers see to implement motivating tasks and projects when teaching environmental issues? Results from six focus groups and six individual interviews reveal some challenges including insufficient teacher preparation, lack of structures for interdisciplinary planning, and difficulties to develop content-based language teaching at a basic proficiency level. However, in rich exchanges during group interviews, teachers explored a variety of opportunities for possible and plausible tasks and projects, including cross-curricular project-based learning, whole-school interventions and outdoor learning experiences. Two in-depth cases illustrate the affordances of teacher collaboration and the use of relational agency to create meaningful instances for linking English learning and environmental education.

Keywords: Chile, eco-literacy, English as a foreign language, hope, educators