



**THE PRESENCE OF ECOLOGICAL TOPICS IN TEXTBOOKS OF ENGLISH AS
A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

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S y n o p s i s

This paper deals with the introduction of ecological topics into teaching EFL in English textbooks that being used lately in primary and secondary schools in Macedonia as well as those used for teaching courses of English.

Modern and effective teaching of EFL comprises not only the learning how to speak the language fluently but also the development of the ecological awareness as, finally, this is the question that has influence on all of us, and mankind is the only power that could prevent the ecological catastrophe.

The social responsibility of teachers of English and teachers generally is emphasized in relation to ecological themes.

Key words: English language, ecological awareness, teaching aims, globalization, education.

S i n o p s i s

***PRISUSTVO EKOLOŠKIH TEMA U UDŽBENICIMA ENGLESKOG JEZIKA KAO STRANOG
JEZIKA***

Ovaj rad se bavi uvođenjem ekoloških tema u nastavu engleskog jezika, i to u udžbenicima koji su poslednjih godina u upotrebi u osnovnim i srednjim školama u R. Makedoniji, kao i onima koji se koriste u nastavi na kursevima.

Moderna i efikasna nastava engleskog jezika kao stranog podrazumeva ne samo sticanje veštine tečne upotrebe tog jezika, već i razvijanje ekološke svesti zato što je to, u krajnjoj liniji, pitanje koje utiče na sve nas i ljudi su jedini koji mogu da spreče ekološku katastrofu.

Naglašava se društvena odgovornost nastavnika engleskog jezika i nastavnika uopšte i na polju ekologije.

Ključne reči: engleski jezik, ekološka svest, ciljevi nastave, globalizacija, obrazovanje.

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INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century came to its end with a great number of pressing global questions in which people are getting more and more interested and an increasing half of them realizes the importance of these problems and the urgent need for their solving. As these global problems enter every area of human life, it is only natural that they found their place in education as well. Planetary themes as peace, understanding and tolerance, human rights, violence, possible ecological catastrophe, global terrorism, expansion of AIDS and many others must find their place in teaching different subjects, one of which is English as a foreign language. This becomes an imperative because English is becoming a planetary language day after day.

The question why English is taught is not very often asked all around the world. This is simply a fact and we take facts for granted. English is being taught for such a long time that hardly anyone at all asks why. However, more and more teachers of this language think that new teaching aims should be defined and that it is insufficient to just enable students for speaking English fluently, but that this teaching should be given a new purpose and it should produce young people with a moral and ecological awareness and responsibility.

Many people understand the importance of the content that is being taught and its influence on students because the language is one of the ways to perceive the world that surrounds us to the contents used to achieve this goal are essential. The teaching profession has always been socially and morally responsible and this is even more important today when mankind is faced with numerous threats.

One of these threats is the possible ecological catastrophe so this paper will deal concretely with ecology, i.e. how this topic is presented in the textbooks of English as a foreign language (EFL) that are presently used in Macedonian schools and for English courses.

TEXTBOOKS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

For more than 10 years English textbooks which have ecological themes are being used in Macedonia. Let us begin with the textbook by Macedonian authors which was the last of its kind in primary schools. After this, new textbooks *Open Doors* by English authors were introduced. The previously mentioned textbook is *Basic English* for the eighth grade and its Unit 12 is completely dedicated to the preservation and protection of the environment. It speaks about pollution, ways of protection, national parks and endangered animal species. There are some discussion exercises and tasks for essay writing about mentioned topics. We should bear in mind that the textbook in question was approved of for usage in primary schools in 1987.

Each book of the *Open Doors* series from the fifth to the eighth grade near the end has a unit entitled *English across the curriculum* that deals with various ecological themes. The one for the fifth grade speaks about the protection of the environment and animals, the next for the sixth grade about rain forests in Brazil and their importance etc.

Recently primary schools have begun using a new series of textbooks *Dream Team* that also contain ecological topics. They also have a part *English across the curriculum* dealing with ecological themes adjusted to the children's age. For example, in the fifth grade the children can learn something about animals in danger.

TEXTBOOKS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

As for the secondary school textbooks, a few years ago the series *Headway (Oxford)* was introduced. *Headway Pre-Intermediate* in Unit 9 deals with the question how much each of us is "green", i.e. what each person individually could do to protect our planet with joint forces.

Another book from this series *Upper-Intermediate* in the last Unit 12 has a text about the first atomic bomb and its disastrous consequences. This is one of the greatest threats of today and it could turn our planet into a total wasteland in which the term ecology would have no meaning.

The books from the *Headway* series are still being used in some secondary schools although some schools have introduced the series *Opportunities (Longman)*. The part entitled *Culture Corner 3 (Opportunities Pre-Intermediate)* tells the students about some animals and plants that are characteristic for New Zealand because of its geographical isolation in the past.

In the textbook *Matrix* that was also in use for a certain period of time there is a part speaking about global warming, the ozone hole and the melting of the polar caps. This book was soon replaced by the *Opportunities* series

TEXTBOOKS FOR ENGLISH COURSES

A variety of textbooks for English courses by different English publishers and authors is used in Macedonia at present so we will mention only a few. Three books of the *GO!* series are about a group of children who are members of an international organization for conservation and protection named *Sea Watch* and they also publish a magazine *Greenline*.

TWIST 1 in Issue 2 entitled *Culture Zone* speaks about environmental problems and how to take part in some activities in order to protect the environment. In *Blueprint Upper-Intermediate* Lesson 26 introduces terms like environment, overpopulation, nuclear waste, famine, natural resources, endangered species etc. and induces children to think about the future.

The textbook *Progress to First Certificate (Cambridge)* the third unit has the title *Nature and environment*. It contains a great variety of environmental terms, speaks about natural balance and has a text about the greenhouse effect. Various way of recycling waste are also mentioned.

First Certificate Gold dedicates Unit 11 to the planet Earth and has a very interesting article about the Easter Islands and how that culture was destroyed due to a number of reasons, one of which was the destruction of forests that lead to the soil erosion. This could be understood as a warning about the possible consequences for our environment if we are not more careful in future.

The book *Think First* in Unit 7 gives an abundance of ecological terms, it speaks about the international organization *Greenpeace*, exhaustion fumes air pollution, world famine, the Galapagos Islands that are the home of many animal species that cannot be found anywhere else etc.

SUMMARY

In this paper we have mentioned only a number of textbooks of English language which contain issues related to ecology. The examples mentioned confirm that the teachers and writers of English textbooks have understood the importance of environment protection and ecology as a science in general, and that they have made a noticeable step toward the popularization of this problem with young people through teaching English as a foreign language. We can also state that the choice of these textbooks in Macedonia, although perhaps not a planned one, still represents a step forward in the development of ecological culture and consciousness, especially in young people.

It is still a disputable question whether this level of representation of ecological issues is satisfactory. However, we can state that there is a positive trend in this direction in Macedonia, because in teaching English we have been using a considerable number of textbooks that contain the mentioned issues, for about fifteen years now.

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