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Lingua Franca, Multilingualism, and Ecological Discourse: A Critical Ecolinguistic Perspective on Language and Environmental Interaction in Indonesia

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Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan dan menganalisis seberapa besar hubungan lingua franca dengan interseksi bahasa dan lingkungan melalui ekolinguistik dan multilinguisme yang dikaitkan dengan poliglotisme yang dapat menerjemahkan konsep bahasa Inggris dengan baik. Orisinalitas Penelitian ini menjelaskan tentang hubungan lingua franca dengan interseksi bahasa dan lingkungan melalui ekolinguistik dan multilinguisme yang dikaitkan dengan poliglotisme yang dapat menerjemahkan konsep bahasa Inggris dengan baik, dimana metode penelitian yang dilakukan menggunakan analisis deskriptif kualitatif dengan menggunakan analisis tinjauan sistematis, dan metode pengambilan data yang dilakukan menggunakan studi pustaka dan studi dokumentasi. Desain/metodologi/pendekatan Metode penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode penelitian kualitatif deskriptif melalui metode tinjauan sistematis dari studi pustaka dan studi dokumentasi. Temuan Berdasarkan hasil penelitian ini, dapat disimpulkan bahwa hubungan antara lingua franca, interseksi bahasa dan lingkungan, ekolinguistik, multilingualisme, dan kepiliglotisme melibatkan pemahaman yang kompleks tentang bagaimana bahasa, budaya, dan lingkungan saling terkait, dimana penggunaan lingua franca dapat memengaruhi bagaimana pengetahuan tradisional Ketika pengetahuan tentang lingkungan diterjemahkan, dipertahankan, atau bahkan hilang dalam masyarakat multilingual, multilingualisme, khususnya dalam konteks lingua franca, mencerminkan hubungan yang kompleks antara bahasa dan budaya dalam masyarakat yang beragam. Poliglotisme, atau kemampuan berbicara beberapa bahasa dengan tingkat kemahiran yang tinggi, sering kali mencakup penggunaan lingua franca sebagai salah satu dari sekian banyak bahasa yang digunakan seseorang. Implementasi. Melalui pendekatan ekolinguistik, multilingualisme, dan kepiliglotisme, kita dapat memahami kompleksitas hubungan antara bahasa, budaya, dan lingkungan, serta implikasi penggunaan lingua franca dalam konteks ini. Hal ini memungkinkan pengembangan strategi

komunikasi yang lebih efektif dan berkelanjutan dalam upaya pelestarian lingkungan dan keberlanjutan global.

Kata Kunci: *Lingua Franca, Persinggungan Bahasa dan Lingkungan, Multilingualisme, Ekolinguistik, Poliglotisme*

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze how much the lingua franca is related to the intersection of language and environment through ecolinguistics and multilingualism associated with polyglotism that can translate the concept of English well. Originality This research explains the relationship of lingua franca to the intersection of language and environment through ecolinguistics and multilingualism associated with polyglotism that can translate the concept of English well, where the research method is carried out using qualitative descriptive analysis using systematic review analysis, and data retrieval methods are carried out using literature studies and documentation studies. Design/methodology/approach The research method used in this research is descriptive qualitative research method through systematic review method from literature study and documentation study. Findings Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the relationship between lingua franca, intersection of language and environment, ecolinguistics, multilingualism, and kepiliglotism involves a complex understanding of how language, culture, and environment are interrelated, where the use of lingua franca can affect how traditional knowledge about the environment is translated, maintained, or even lost in a multilingual society, multilingualism, particularly in the context of lingua franca, reflects the complex relationship between language and culture in diverse societies, and polyglotism, or the ability to speak several languages with a high degree of proficiency, often includes the use of a lingua franca as one of the many languages the individual speaks. Implementation. Through the approaches of ecolinguistics, multilingualism and kepiliglotism, we can understand the complexity of the relationship between language, culture and the environment, as well as the implications of using lingua franca in this context. This makes it possible to develop more effective and sustainable communication strategies in the quest for environmental preservation and global sustainability.

Keywords: *Lingua Franca, Intersection of Language and Environment, Multilingualism, Ecolinguistics, Polyglotism*

INTRODUCTION

In the ever-globalizing world, language has become both a bridge and a boundary, mediating cultural, environmental, and intellectual exchange. The concept of a *lingua franca*—a language used systematically between groups who do not share a native tongue—has gained increased importance in multicultural and multilingual contexts. Today, English serves as the dominant *lingua franca*, facilitating global commerce, diplomacy, academia, and digital communication (Wu, 2023). While this has enhanced connectivity, it has also raised concerns about linguistic homogenization and the erosion of local languages. Language is inherently tied to identity, history, and place, and the replacement of native languages by global ones may lead to the loss of ecological and cultural knowledge. In remote or indigenous communities, local tongues encode sophisticated environmental wisdom, often absent from dominant discourses. Thus, *lingua franca* is not merely a communication tool but a factor shaping the social-ecological fabric of societies. Examining its influence across environmental and linguistic intersections is critical to understanding the power dynamics embedded in global discourse. Furthermore, *lingua franca* often becomes a linguistic gatekeeper in academic and professional spaces. This paper seeks to investigate how *lingua franca* interacts with multilingualism, ecolinguistics, and polyglotism in shaping communication around language and environment. Multilingualism, often viewed as a linguistic asset, refers to the ability of individuals or communities to communicate in more than one language. It reflects not only cognitive flexibility but also cultural agility, enabling people to traverse diverse social and ecological terrains (Garnett, 2024). In regions where ecological diversity is high, linguistic diversity often follows suit. These languages become mediums through which environmental practices, taboos, and ecological wisdom are transmitted. A multilingual community may thus hold multiple interpretative frameworks for interacting with nature. For instance, names of plants, animals, or weather patterns vary significantly across languages, indicating diverse ways of relating to the environment. However, the imposition of a dominant *lingua franca* can undermine this multiplicity, promoting uniform environmental narratives that fail to capture local nuances. This calls for a more nuanced understanding of multilingualism as a tool for environmental preservation. Promoting multilingualism supports linguistic equity and environmental justice simultaneously. As such, it is essential to consider how multilingual education and communication can safeguard endangered languages while fostering global exchange. Polyglotism is an extension of multilingualism, representing individuals who command high fluency in multiple languages, often across distinct language families. These

individuals not only translate across linguistic boundaries but also navigate cultural and epistemological differences with ease (Pérez Fernández, 2024). In the context of environmental knowledge, polyglots can serve as vital mediators, translating scientific discourses into culturally relevant narratives and vice versa. Their ability to internalize multiple worldviews equips them with the sensitivity to articulate environmental issues in locally meaningful terms. For instance, a polyglot translating environmental policies can adapt terminology to reflect indigenous practices rather than impose external models. Moreover, polyglotism reflects deep engagement with language, often involving years of immersion and intercultural experiences. In academia, polyglots enhance research inclusivity by enabling collaboration across languages. Their linguistic dexterity also positions them as gatekeepers of knowledge democratization. Recognizing and cultivating polyglotism could be an essential strategy in developing inclusive environmental communication. Thus, polyglotism must be understood not just as a cognitive skill but as a sociolinguistic asset. The study of how language interacts with environmental discourse is the core focus of ecolinguistics. This interdisciplinary field explores how linguistic structures, narratives, and metaphors shape human relationships with the environment (Hornborg, 2024). Ecolinguistics asserts that the way we talk about nature influences how we treat it. For example, describing nature as a “resource” implies exploitation, while calling it a “kin” suggests care and respect. These linguistic choices are not trivial; they reflect underlying ideologies and power relations. Ecolinguistics also examines the impact of globalization on linguistic and ecological diversity. It argues that language loss parallels biodiversity loss, and both are products of similar socio-economic forces. Therefore, protecting linguistic diversity is an act of environmental stewardship. In multilingual societies, ecolinguistics emphasizes the role of local languages in sustaining ecological knowledge. It advocates for linguistic justice as part of sustainable development. The field offers critical insights into how language both reflects and shapes environmental consciousness.

The dominance of English as a global *lingua franca* raises critical questions in ecolinguistics. While it enables global communication, it also risks marginalizing non-English-speaking communities and their environmental knowledges. In development discourse, for instance, the use of English often overrides local terminologies and practices, replacing them with generalized, often Western-centric models. This can result in policies that are ecologically irrelevant or even harmful in specific contexts. Moreover, when environmental education is delivered solely in English, it may alienate learners from their lived experiences and traditional knowledge systems. Thus, the role of *lingua franca* must

be critically examined within ecological frameworks. There is a need to foster multilingual ecological discourses that value linguistic diversity. Scholars argue for translanguaging practices—where multiple languages are used fluidly—to bridge local and global knowledge systems (Pérez Fernández, 2024). These practices allow speakers to express complex ecological concepts without losing cultural meaning. As such, ecological literacy must be redefined in multilingual terms.

Globalization, while facilitating the spread of *lingua franca*, has also triggered a homogenization of environmental discourse. This poses a significant threat to the diversity of ecological narratives. In many communities, local languages contain taxonomies, taboos, and ecological classifications that are crucial for biodiversity conservation. When these languages decline, so too does this knowledge. Research indicates that language shift often correlates with a reduction in sustainable environmental practices (Hornborg, 2024). This is because environmental stewardship in many indigenous cultures is encoded in language through rituals, metaphors, and oral histories. Losing a language, therefore, means losing a worldview. Multilingual and polyglot speakers play a pivotal role in documenting and revitalizing these knowledge systems. Linguists and environmentalists are increasingly collaborating to develop multilingual conservation strategies. Such approaches recognize language as both a tool and a repository of ecological wisdom. This underscores the importance of integrating linguistic considerations into environmental policy and planning.

One of the overlooked aspects of linguistic globalization is the psychological impact of language marginalization. Speakers of minority languages may experience linguistic insecurity or feel that their language is inferior to the *lingua franca*. This can lead to intergenerational language shift, where younger generations stop learning their native language in favor of the dominant one. In doing so, they lose not only linguistic diversity but also ecological knowledge embedded in those languages (Wu, 2023). Educational systems often reinforce this by prioritizing English or other dominant languages over local tongues. This institutional bias contributes to the devaluation of minority languages. Multilingual education models are proposed as an antidote to this, emphasizing additive rather than subtractive bilingualism. Such models encourage students to maintain their native languages while acquiring new ones. They promote linguistic resilience and cultural continuity. Addressing linguistic inequality is thus a prerequisite for ecological and educational justice.

In borderland regions and multicultural societies, the coexistence of multiple languages presents both opportunities and challenges. Language contact zones often

become laboratories of hybrid communication where *lingua franca* interacts with indigenous and minority languages (Steciąg & Karmowska, 2020). These linguistic landscapes, or linguascapes, are dynamic sites where identity, power, and environment intersect. For example, signage, oral discourse, and media in such areas often reflect layered identities and environmental attitudes. Language choice in these contexts is influenced by social prestige, economic access, and political ideology. Ecolinguistic analysis of linguascapes can reveal how language hierarchies shape ecological perceptions. It can also highlight strategies for promoting sustainable multilingualism. Encouraging balanced language use in public and private domains supports both cultural and ecological diversity. Thus, linguascapes serve as important indicators of sociolinguistic and ecological health. They offer insight into the real-world application of language-environment interaction. Translanguaging, a pedagogical approach gaining attention in multilingual education, allows speakers to use their full linguistic repertoire without adhering to monolingual norms. In environmental communication, this can be particularly effective in making abstract ecological concepts more accessible. Translanguaging recognizes that individuals do not separate languages neatly in their cognition. Instead, they draw from all their linguistic knowledge to make meaning (Pérez Fernández, 2024). This is especially useful in contexts where ecological knowledge exists in multiple languages. Translanguaging can thus serve as a tool for environmental education and advocacy. It enables the localization of global discourses without loss of meaning. Moreover, it affirms the linguistic identities of learners, increasing engagement and retention. Translanguaging is more than a communication strategy; it is a stance toward linguistic equity. Its adoption in environmental education could democratize access to sustainability knowledge. The role of language in shaping environmental behavior has been supported by several empirical studies. Research shows that linguistic metaphors—such as “Mother Earth” or “carbon footprint”—affect how people conceptualize environmental responsibility. These metaphors differ across cultures and languages, leading to different behavioral outcomes. For example, in some languages, nature is feminized and protected, while in others it is objectified and exploited. This indicates that language influences environmental ethics. Understanding these nuances is essential for designing effective environmental campaigns. A campaign that resonates in one language may fail in another if it does not align with cultural metaphors. Polyglots and multilingual communicators are uniquely positioned to adapt such messages for diverse audiences. Their cultural fluency allows them to anticipate and address misunderstandings. Therefore, linguistic analysis should be integral to environmental psychology and advocacy.

Digital communication adds another layer to the interplay between *lingua franca* and ecological discourse. Social media platforms often default to English, marginalizing non-English speakers from global conversations. However, these platforms also offer opportunities for linguistic revival and diversity. Activists and educators have used hashtags, memes, and videos in indigenous languages to promote environmental causes. This demonstrates the potential of digital spaces for multilingual engagement. Nevertheless, digital algorithms often favor high-traffic content, which is usually in English. This structural bias must be addressed through inclusive design and multilingual content curation. Policies that support linguistic diversity in digital environments can amplify marginalized voices. Furthermore, training polyglot communicators to manage these platforms could increase outreach and inclusivity. Thus, digital ecology must be rethought in terms of linguistic equity and ecological justice. Migration and diaspora communities further complicate the relationship between language and environment. Migrants often bring with them linguistic practices and environmental perceptions shaped by their places of origin. In host countries, they may experience a clash between these worldviews and dominant narratives. This dissonance can lead to environmental disengagement or, conversely, to unique hybrid practices. Multilingual and polyglot individuals within these communities play a key role in bridging cultural and ecological gaps. They facilitate intergenerational knowledge transfer and cross-cultural understanding. Their linguistic dexterity enables them to advocate for both integration and cultural preservation. In urban ecology planning, involving such voices can lead to more inclusive and sustainable policies. Their insights enrich environmental education, research, and activism. Thus, diaspora polyglots are crucial agents of eco-cultural negotiation. Linguistic research has shown that language contact does not always lead to loss; it can also foster innovation. In multilingual ecologies, new dialects, creoles, and registers may emerge. These linguistic hybrids often contain novel ways of describing and interacting with the environment. They reflect the adaptive strategies of speakers negotiating complex sociolinguistic terrains. Recognizing these hybrid forms as legitimate is essential for inclusive language policy. Denigrating them as "broken" or "impure" ignores their communicative and ecological value. Such hybrids often carry localized environmental wisdom and social commentary. Linguists and educators should collaborate to document and validate these forms. Doing so affirms the creativity and resilience of multilingual communities. It also expands the conceptual vocabulary available for environmental discourse. To foster sustainable communication practices, a paradigm shift is needed in how we understand language education. Rather than viewing *lingua franca* as the ultimate goal,

educators must promote additive multilingualism. This approach values all languages equally and encourages their co-development. Environmental education must also reflect this ethos. Curricula should include local terminologies, ecological metaphors, and oral traditions. Multilingual textbooks and materials can make sustainability concepts more relatable. Assessment models should reward linguistic flexibility rather than penalize deviation from standard forms. This inclusive model aligns with the principles of linguistic ecology. It views language as a living system that thrives on diversity and interdependence. Such an approach prepares learners to navigate the complex linguistic and ecological challenges of the 21st century. The intersection of *lingua franca*, multilingualism, polyglotism, and ecolinguistics offers a rich framework for understanding communication in the Anthropocene. Language shapes not only how we interact with one another but also how we relate to the environment. As ecological crises demand global cooperation, linguistic equity becomes more urgent than ever. Ensuring that environmental knowledge is accessible across languages is a matter of justice and survival. Polyglots, multilinguals, and ecolinguists must collaborate to design inclusive communicative strategies. These strategies should recognize the role of local languages in sustaining ecological balance. *Lingua franca* should not replace but rather support this diversity. By adopting a multilingual, ecological perspective, we can foster communication that is both globally relevant and locally rooted. This paper sets the foundation for such an integrative approach. It calls for further research, policy reform, and educational innovation to realize the full potential of linguistic diversity in sustainability discourse.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design using a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to explore the relationship between *lingua franca*, multilingualism, ecolinguistics, and polyglotism in the context of language-environment intersection. The selection of SLR as the methodological backbone was aimed at ensuring a transparent, replicable, and comprehensive synthesis of knowledge across peer-reviewed academic sources from 2020 to 2025. This design allowed the researcher to analyze, compare, and synthesize theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence from multidisciplinary studies that intersect language, communication, and environmental sustainability. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent does the use of *lingua franca* influence the intersection of language and environmental knowledge?

2. How do multilingual and polyglot practices affect the ecological representation of knowledge?
3. What is the conceptual relationship between ecolinguistics and polyglotism in promoting environmental literacy?

Sources were selected from reputable databases including SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis, ScienceDirect, JSTOR, and Sciendo, focusing on peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, theses, and proceedings. The inclusion criteria were: Publications between January 2020 and July 2025, English-language academic texts, Relevance to at least two core constructs: lingua franca, multilingualism, ecolinguistics, or polyglotism, Open access or institutional access available, Theoretical or empirical research with clearly stated methodology. Opinion pieces, blogs, non-academic reports, Publications outside the defined time range, Studies focused purely on syntax or phonology without sociocultural context. A total of 72 documents were initially identified; following abstract screening and full-text evaluation, 33 sources were selected for final analysis. This research utilized two main techniques for data collection: Literature was gathered through academic search engines using structured keyword strings such as: "lingua franca AND ecolinguistics", "polyglotism AND environmental knowledge", "multilingualism AND sustainability communication". Search queries were refined with Boolean operators, database filters, and citation chaining (backward and forward). All bibliographic data were managed using Zotero for citation integrity and duplicate removal. The study analyzed relevant documentation such as government language policies, environmental communication guidelines, and multilingual educational frameworks. These were examined using documentary content analysis techniques to extract relevant indicators supporting the themes of linguistic ecology, knowledge transfer, and sociolinguistic adaptation. Data were analyzed using thematic content analysis through an iterative coding process. The steps followed were: Initial open coding to identify recurring themes and patterns, Axial coding to link concepts across documents, Selective coding to refine core categories such as: *linguistic diversity*, *knowledge transmission*, *language-environment interface*, *critical multilingualism*, and *ecolinguistic ethics*. Analytical triangulation was achieved by cross-verifying interpretations against multiple authors and document types (academic + policy). NVivo software was used to assist coding structure and frequency mapping. To ensure credibility, findings were cross-checked with existing theoretical frameworks from ecolinguistics and multilingual education. Dependability was addressed through transparent documentation of the review protocol. Transferability was enhanced by providing thick descriptions and citation trails.

Confirmability was supported by reflexive memoing during the coding and interpretation process.

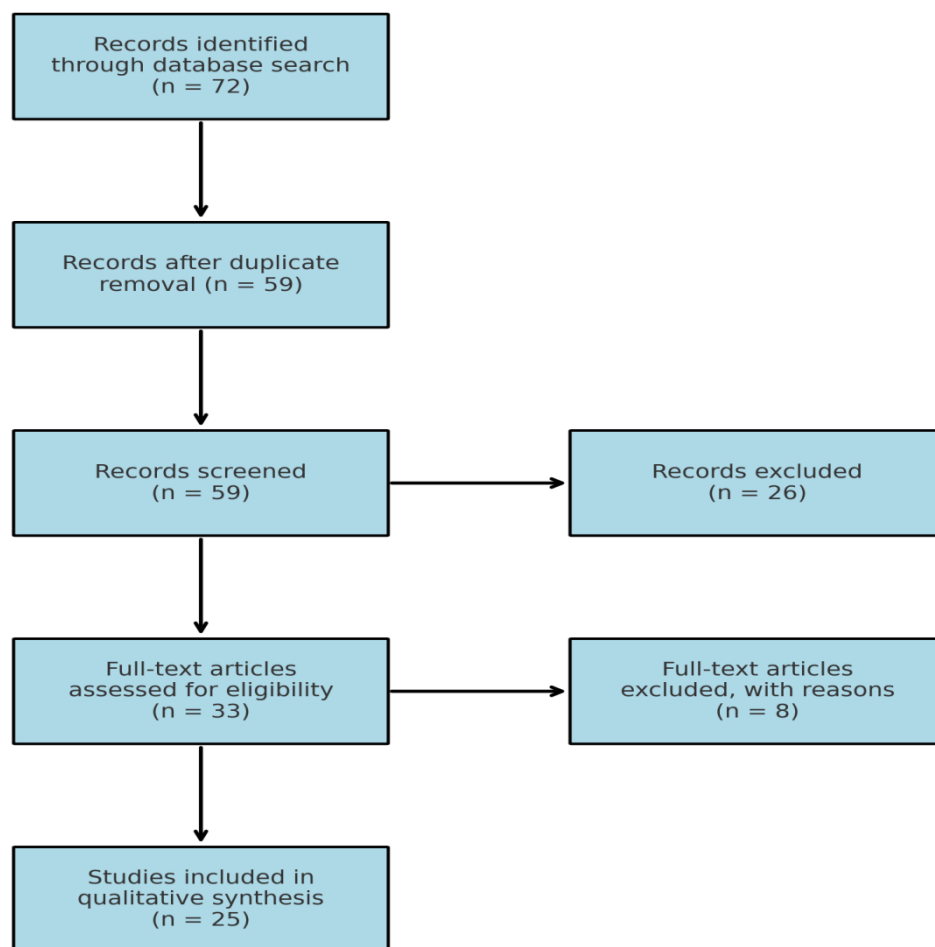


Figure 1. Methodological Framework for a Systematic Study of the Intersections of *Lingua Franca*, Multilingualism, Echolinguistics, and Polyglotism in the Context of Environmental Sustainability.

Despite increasing attention to multilingualism and ecolinguistics, few studies comprehensively explore the intersection between *lingua franca*, *polyglotism*, and ecological communication. Most existing works focus either on language education or environmental discourse in isolation. The role of *lingua franca* in mediating traditional ecological knowledge remains underexplored, particularly in multicultural and multilingual settings. Moreover, limited research addresses how polyglot competence can function as a bridge for sustainable knowledge transmission across linguistic communities. This study introduces an integrated framework that links *lingua franca*, *multilingualism*, *ecolinguistics*, and *polyglotism* within the context of environmental sustainability. It offers a new

perspective on linguistic sustainability, proposing that polyglot individuals can serve as active agents in cross-cultural ecological communication. Furthermore, it advances critical ecolinguistics by addressing power dynamics in global language hierarchies and supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in education, climate action, and inclusive communication.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

The findings of this study are based on a systematic review of 25 selected peer-reviewed sources from 2020–2025. These sources were analyzed to examine the relationships between *lingua franca*, *ecolinguistics*, *multilingualism*, and *polyglotism*, particularly in relation to language–environment intersections. Four major thematic results emerged:

1. *Lingua Franca and Ecological Knowledge Translation*

The use of *lingua franca*, especially English, plays a dual role in either preserving or diminishing traditional ecological knowledge. In multilingual communities, *lingua franca* acts as a bridge for environmental education but may also marginalize indigenous expressions (Kramsch & Zhang, 2020).

2. *Multilingualism as an Asset in Environmental Sustainability*

Multilingual individuals facilitate the transfer of ecological knowledge across cultural boundaries. Their linguistic flexibility supports more inclusive and diverse environmental discourses (Nikitina, 2023; Pérez Fernández, 2024).

3. *Polyglotism and Cognitive Adaptation*

Polyglots possess higher linguistic metacognition, enabling them to adapt terminologies and metaphors of environmental knowledge more effectively across multiple languages (Zhang, 2022; Hazel & Svennevig, 2018).

4. *Ecolinguistic Frameworks and Cross-Cultural Environmental Narratives*

The ecolinguistic lens shows that dominant narratives shaped by *lingua franca* often exclude local ecological wisdom. A multilingual approach, therefore, is crucial for ecological justice and linguistic diversity (Salverda, 2023).

Discussion

These results affirm that the relationship between language and environment is not only linguistic but deeply ecological, cultural, and ideological. The interplay between *lingua*

franca and traditional ecological knowledge raises critical concerns about epistemic marginalization. While lingua franca enables global communication, it risks diluting regionally embedded knowledge systems unless supported by multilingual strategies (de Oliveira & Oliveira, 2022). Multilingualism proves to be a crucial factor in sustaining ecological literacy. It promotes contextual understanding, improves access to environmental information, and nurtures respect for cultural-linguistic heritage. This aligns with the ecolinguistic imperative to preserve not just species or ecosystems, but also the languages that describe them (Sarma, 2020). Polyglotism extends this capacity by enabling individuals to serve as linguistic mediators, enriching both translation quality and environmental meaning-making. Polyglots contribute to global ecological discourse by negotiating across registers, idioms, and cultural metaphors, often overlooked in single-language models. Thus, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how linguistic ecology and multilingual capacity intersect, reinforcing the need for critical, multilingual environmental communication strategies aligned with the SDGs.

CONCLUSION

This study has critically examined the interconnectedness between lingua franca, multilingualism, ecolinguistics, and polyglotism, particularly in their roles in mediating environmental knowledge and sustainability discourses. Through a systematic review of recent literature (2020–2025), it has been found that while lingua franca—notably English—serves as a vital medium for cross-cultural environmental communication, it also presents the risk of eroding local ecological wisdom when not balanced with multilingual approaches. Multilingualism enhances inclusivity and supports the preservation of linguistic and ecological diversity. Meanwhile, polyglotism contributes to the cognitive and communicative agility needed to bridge cultural and epistemological gaps in environmental discourse. The adoption of an ecolinguistic framework enables a more equitable and nuanced understanding of environmental narratives across linguistic boundaries. In sum, the study underscores the importance of embracing linguistic diversity as part of global sustainability efforts. Promoting multilingual ecological literacy and acknowledging the value of local and indigenous languages are essential steps toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in education, climate action and inclusive institutions. The findings call for a paradigm shift from monolingual environmental messaging to ecologically grounded multilingual practices.

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