

# Student Podcasts in the Anthropocene

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## *Abstract*

In this article, we argue for the value of student podcasts for fostering dialogue around questions of poetry and sustainable futures in an English as a foreign language context. Our research draws on our experiences of inviting student teachers to create their own podcasts on a recently published poem about nature or the Anthropocene, or both, in our first-year literature course for those studying to become upper secondary school teachers of English in Sweden. The aim of this assignment was twofold: first, for the student teachers to analyze literature in English from an ecocritical perspective, including considerations of biodiversity, species loss, and nonhuman perspectives, and second, for student teachers to practice the kinds of student-led dialogue and discussion that are crucial for imagining more sustainable futures. We will share our experiences with using the student podcast format for the purposes of generating critical engagement with the Anthropocene.

Keywords: sustainability; teacher education; English as a foreign language; poetry; social learning

This article will explore the benefits of student-led podcasts to foster dialogue about sustainable futures. Our article will draw on our experiences of inviting student teachers to create their own podcasts on a contemporary poem about nature or the Anthropocene, or both, in our first-year teacher education literature course at a university in Sweden. The objective of this assignment was twofold: first, for student teachers to hone their English communication and interpretation skills by analyzing literature from an ecocritical perspective, including considerations of biodiversity, species loss, and nonhuman perspectives, and second, for student teachers to practice the kinds of student-led dialogue and discussion that are crucial for imagining more sustainable futures.

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The aim of this reflection piece is to present and evaluate this podcast assignment through the lens of education for sustainable development. We argue that the student podcast format is a useful way to meet the demands of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher education and to invite student teachers to critically engage with the concepts of sustainability and the Anthropocene, concepts that will be defined and differentiated further below, and both of which are discussed, to different degrees, in the curricular guidance provided by the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket).

Our article will begin with a background section to familiarize the reader with current research on poetry, EFL instruction, the Anthropocene, and sustainability. The ensuing section will address sustainability and the use of podcasts in education, or so-called podagogies. We will then offer a brief overview of the assignment structure and scaffolding, and follow this with critical reflections on what worked well with this assignment, including how the student teachers engaged with the human-nonhuman boundary, the idea of scale in regard to the natural world, and anthropocentrism. We will also consider how this podcast assignment is a form of sustainable labor both for our student teachers and ourselves as instructors. We will also speculate on how we might further develop this assignment in the future to incorporate more opportunities for individual reflection and formative assessment, and to address the disconnect between poetic form and content we noted in some of the podcasts. Finally, we will consider how sharing work from the recent literary and philosophical movement ‘against sustainability’ (Neely 2020) could invite student teachers to recognize and interrogate the potential anthropocentrism of terms like ‘sustainability’ and ‘Anthropocene’, leading to considerations of what alternative concepts we might use to foster a more livable and equitable world.

#### *Poetry, EFL education, the Anthropocene, and sustainability*

Our interest in poetry, EFL, the Anthropocene, and sustainability has emerged from our experiences in teaching literature to student teachers. The course in question typically enrolls around fifty to sixty student teachers and includes lectures, small group work, and larger group seminars. Part of the mission of this course is to equip student teachers with the knowledge and pedagogical skills they need to teach EFL classes in a Swedish upper secondary context. As Baki Özen and Behbood

Mohammadzadeh (2012) have argued, poetry instruction supports vocabulary acquisition among EFL students, while Harlan Kellern (2009) shows how poetry helps students attend to pronunciation, rhythm, and stress in English (12). Our poetry unit aims to prepare student teachers to analyze and appreciate poems, in a broader sense, by paying attention to explicit and implicit meaning, and to the varieties of interpretive possibilities poetry can offer, as we attend to the Swedish National Agency for Education's goals of teaching upper secondary school students interpretation, form, and content in English courses (Skolverket, 'Engelska'). That is to say, in this unit we strive to communicate to student teachers all the ways that poetry is meaningful for engaging both with language learning and with literary analysis.

Furthermore, if future teachers are to harness the potential of poetry in their own classrooms, they need to be provided with a scaffolded encounter to the genre as part of their teacher education (Sigvardsson 2020). While poetry is not the only genre we analyze in this course, we do show student teachers how poems, especially shorter ones, can be useful objects of study given the time constraints many teachers face, how poems can reward collaborative reading and re-reading with a focus both on language and content, and how searchable online databases of poetry organized by modes and themes, such as the *poets.org* site run by the Academy of American Poets, are valuable resources that make poems freely accessible to students and teachers.

Our podcast assignment draws on guidelines from the Swedish National Agency for Education on sustainable teaching in schools. According to these guidelines, environment and sustainability are topics that should permeate all aspects of the curriculum, regardless of the specific subject (Skolverket, 'Utveckla undervisningen'). The curriculum for upper secondary school stresses the importance of integrating an environmental perspective in teaching with the goal of facilitating personal reflection on how individuals and society can contribute to sustainable living practices (Skolverket, 'Gymnasieskolan'). We understand 'sustainability', in general, as it was defined by the United Nations Brundtland Commission in 1987, namely 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs', although we also recognize the limitations of and problems with this term, as we will discuss below (United Nations, 'Sustainability').

More specifically, we draw on the UNESCO outline for education for sustainable development, which envisages that education should not only integrate ‘key sustainable development issues into teaching and learning; for example, climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, poverty reduction, and sustainable consumption’ but, crucially for us, necessitates ‘participatory teaching and learning methods that motivate and empower learners to change their behaviour and take action for sustainable development’ (UNESCO, ‘Education for sustainable development’).

We see the integration of sustainable teaching practices from the perspective of the teacher part and parcel of modelling how empowering pedagogies can benefit both teacher and learner, thus contributing to a positive and sustainable cycle in terms of professional teacher development (Higgs and McMillan 2006). At the same time, by inviting student teachers to collectively shape and share their own responses to poetry on environmental topics through self-designed podcasts, we also have taken inspiration from Per Esben Myren-Svelstad’s (2024) transactional approach to teaching poetry for sustainability, in which knowledge is not understood as ‘established truths to be transmitted from an expert, for example, a teacher, to readers, for example, students, but as something classroom participants construct in dialogue’ (676).

Our podcast assignment also responds to the rise of ecocriticism and the concept of the Anthropocene in poetry studies (see, for example, Solnick 2016; DeLoughrey 2019; Farrier 2019; Anolue 2024; Reddick 2024). In an article published on the Swedish National Agency for Education’s website, Ingrid Bosseldal (2023) notes that, while students at different school levels should be educated about sustainable development, research by Bob Jickling and Arjen E. J. Wals (2008) and Louise Sund and Johan Öhman (2014) cautions that this education should not be too instrumental and human-centered (Bosseldal). As an alternative, the idea of the Anthropocene can open up questions about the relationship between nature and culture, as well as human accountability for the planet and the planet’s life forms (Bosseldal). Bosseldal incorporates the posthumanist perspectives of Donna Haraway (2016) and Bruno Latour (2018) to emphasize the imbrication of all species together on the planet and the impossibility of separating nature from culture.

It is important to note that Bosseldal’s article focuses mostly on how research on the Anthropocene might influence pedagogy in preschools, but the article’s attention to the posthumanist dissolution of the nature-culture

divide, together with the resources on sustainability discussed above, offer rich support for engaging student teachers on the topic of poetry and the Anthropocene. In David Farrier's (2019) words, poetry can 'perform the kind of bold linkages that it would take reams of academic argument to plot; it can widen the aperture of our gaze or deposit us on the brink of transformation' while showing 'an Anthropocenic perspective in which our sense of relationship and proximity (and from this, our ethics) is stretched and tested against the Anthropocene's warping effects' (5). In our introductory lecture on poetry in this course, we share some of Skolverket's guidance on sustainability, while, in our opening discussion of an Anthropocene poem by Jay Parini (discussed further below), we invite students to think about how the poem collapses the nature-culture divide and introduces the 'warping effects' of the Anthropocene into the familiar setting of a classroom, albeit one made sweltering and unfit for instruction due to rising global temperatures.

Our introductory lecture is further informed by excerpts from Robert S. Didham's 'Poetic learning for a sustainable future' (2021), which argues that poetry denaturalizes dominant economic narratives of growth and exploitation, for instance if a poem is written from a nonhuman subject position, or if it asks us to engage less anthropocentrically with the natural world (129). He also makes the point that if we want to think less exploitatively about the natural world, then we need new kinds of language and concepts to think with, and poetry provides these (122). This is a feature of poetry, we would add, that directly links to the goals of literary analysis, with its emphasis on interpretation, nuance, and perspective, as well as EFL education, with its attention to vocabulary building, denotation, and connotation.

Moreover, the shifts in scale and perspective afforded by poetry are central to comprehending the complexities of life in the Anthropocene. Julia Hoydis, Roman Bartosch and Jens Martin Gurr (2023) bring together research on both literature and literacy education in our era of climate change to emphasize a teaching approach that centers on 'interpretation and analysis, reflexion and readerly agency' (8) and the process of 'thinking complexity' (8) instead of looking to easy answers or simplistic solutions.

The social dimension of the learning process is central to this understanding of complexity. As Sofia Ahlberg (2021) argues, teaching in times of crisis involves helping students understand major changes not as

‘unsolvable problems with pessimistic outcomes’ but rather as ‘processes that are unfolding and amenable to their input’ (1). A dialogic approach to teaching literature supports this goal because it situates the reader in relation to many other readers and perspectives, shifting ‘the locus of learning away from the individual (although a crisis is often painfully felt by the individual) to the community (past, present, and future) with whom readers enter into dialogue’ (3). Didham writes that ‘reframing, as part of a social learning process, requires a change of meaning that often includes the establishment of new vocabulary and new use of words to capture our transformed views of the world. Poetry can play a unique role in these efforts’ (133). However, Didham does not specify a particular format or medium for this kind of social learning, and it is here, we argue, that research on podcasting can offer ways of promoting social learning both within and beyond the physical classroom setting.

#### *‘Podagogies’ and sustainability*

The use of podcasts in educational settings is now well established. Almost two decades ago, in 2005, the word ‘podcast’ was given the accolade of Word of the Year by the *New Oxford American Dictionary* (BBC News 2005), and in the proceeding years podcasts have featured in higher education classrooms in various guises. In the early days of podcasting, the format tended to be utilized for the delivery of instructional content (Lee, McLoughlin and Chan 2008; Fernandez, Simo and Sallan 2009), but in more recent years there has been a move from teacher generated instructional podcasts, towards creative student generated products (Hall and Jones 2023). As Hall and Jones state, previous research tends to remark upon the potential of podcast form assessment to develop metacognitive and reflective skills of students, but perhaps one of the more distinctive benefits of using learning generated podcasts rests in the collaborative nature of the medium (2023). The current attention on podcasts in pedagogy has, according to Chester (2018), amounted to ‘an emerging call for dedicated pedagogies or “podagogies”’ (710).

It is the emphasis on promoting deep learning that seems to be at the heart of calls to podagogies, and perhaps the key to its increasing popularity, with Therese Kenna (2023) noting the ‘emerging debate around the possibility for improved learning outcomes from student-generated or creative podcasts’ (535). There are a number of other features of student-generated podcasts that align them closely with sustainable

assessment practices. For instance, podcasts are widely viewed as an inherently democratic medium (Montgomery 2014). Podcast recording requires minimal resources (an internet connection and a recording device will suffice), and the ubiquity of podcasting tools and tutorials mean there are low barriers to entry to podcast production. In an educational context, research has found that though most students are positive towards podcast production in class, nontraditional students are the most likely to be drawn to the format (Gachago, Livingston and Ivala 2016). Likewise, podcasting has been recognized as a format that ‘can be harnessed as a pedagogical tool that invites marginalized voices’ (King and Watt 2024: 14). Furthermore, podcasts place creative control directly in the hands of the host/s with no requirements for editorial interventions. Finally, the format destabilizes conventional power binaries as much as is possible in the context of examination. The podcast format focuses on centering the authentic voices and experiences of the producers; podcasts bond listener and host in a unique relationship which facilitates empathetic awareness and community building as hosts connect directly with their audience (McHugh 2022).

The power hierarchies and group dynamics in operation *within* podcast groups are also worthy of consideration, especially where there may exist variations in levels of both competency and ambition between students. However, research has suggested that despite these potential imbalances within groups, collaboration on group podcast projects in a second or foreign language context serves ‘a valuable purpose, because this type of community development leads to the creation of stronger bonds among classmates’ (Lord 2008: 376).

Although we understand the podcast format to be socially and educationally sustainable, the issue of environmental sustainability also needs to be addressed. Calculating the carbon footprint of the podcast assessment format, in comparison to conventional assessment formats, is clearly beyond the scope of this present paper, but there are some key elements that point to podcasting as a relatively environmentally sustainable format. For instance, podcasts can be recorded remotely limiting the need for participant travel, require relatively little equipment, and utilize audio rather than video files. Audio files are smaller and thus require less energy to store and stream compared to video files. In fact, it has been estimated that to produce video over audio files results in ‘75 times the energy and correlated emissions’ (Bonsignore 2023: 90).

Furthermore, it has been noted that the podcast assessment format seems to be especially suited for grappling with pressing global issues and wicked problems (Wakefield, Pike and Amici-Dargan 2022), and this is supported by existing research on the use of podcasts in higher education which tends to be centered around disciplines such as geography and biology in subject areas which focus on human interactions with the natural world. For instance, one study exploring the use of student-generated podcasts within geomorphology concluded that the format facilitated education in public outreach by ‘engaging students actively in the transfer of information in society, and helping them respond to modern challenges’ (Kemp et al. 2012: 128). Kenna (2023) agrees that podcasts can be useful for education for sustainable development which ‘attend[s] to broader societal challenges’ (533). We believe that podcasts, too, can be a powerful tool in the humanities classroom. We see podcasts as means for student teachers to engage with literary approaches to sustainable themes, through a creative and collaborative medium.

*What we did: Using podcasts on our Introduction to Literature course*

Our podcast assignment was structured in four stages. First, we scaffolded the assignment through a poetry seminar on literary devices where we looked at different poetic vocabulary together and read some excerpts from Didham and from the Swedish National Agency for Education site. We then held a student-led workshop where we read and analyzed Jay Parini’s poem ‘Some Effects of Global Warming in Lackawanna County’ (2016), about trying to teach in sweltering conditions. We then gave the student teachers a selection of poems on environmental themes and asked them to choose one of these poems and record a podcast in groups of four; we also gave them a set of guidelines (see Appendix) about the length of the finished podcast and a set of poems to choose from, as well as formatting requirements.

We also provided student teachers with a link to National Public Radio’s ‘Starting Your Podcast: A Guide for Students’, a helpful introductory resource, as well as a link to Gonchar, Hicks, and Winnick’s (2018) pedagogical resource in *The New York Times*, ‘Project Audio: Teaching Students How to Produce Their Own Podcasts’, for student teachers who wanted to consider using podcasts in their own future teaching. We offered student teachers the possibility of either recording their podcasts in person or over Zoom.



Finally, to ensure that the student teachers had time to work on this project, we gave them a week off from their regular lecture, group work, and seminar schedule, and offered support in helping them find recording space on campus. In total, we received twelve group podcast submissions. In the qualitative written feedback that we provided on each submission, we focused our attention on engaging in dialogue with aspects related to sustainability that had been raised in each recording, as well as where the student teachers had connected their analyses with their own experiences, emotions, and opinions. In the next section, we offer some reflections on what worked well in our assignment format and our students' submissions, as well as observations on how this assignment could be made better in the future.

*Insights from the student teacher podcasts: Critical reflections and suggestions*

Previous research has emphasized the role that podcasts play in facilitating the kind of social learning that we witnessed on the course (Pammer et al. 2021) and we found it illuminating to hear podcast conversations seeming to evolve organically through the process of dialogue. A telling instance occurred when group members seamlessly contributed to each other's thoughts, collaboratively concluding that the poem's main message was that 'beauty and purpose are distinct concepts, and one doesn't need to be purposeful to be beautiful, or beautiful to be purposeful'. One student teacher initiated the thought, and others quickly completed it together. We believe this supports the idea that such dialogue can enable student teachers to reach interpretations that might not be achievable individually, a shared reading that students often chose to voluntarily engage in by reading lines of their chosen poem aloud, in turns, even though we did not specifically prompt them to do so.

One aspect of the podcast assessment format that worked particularly well was in the facilitation of personal engagement with the texts and the environmental challenges and dilemmas articulated therein. In this respect, the assignment is aligned closely with the upper secondary school curriculum and its directives to encourage an active and personal engagement with topics around sustainability (Skolverket, 'Gymnasieskolan'). In two of the poems students worked with, this personal engagement was facilitated by the use of the second person point-of-view that broke down the boundary between the human and the more

than human. For instance, one group chose to use the provocatively addressed and personal and confrontational ‘you’ in Dungy’s poem ‘Characteristics of Life’ (‘What part of your nature drives you?/ You, in your cubicle ought to understand me’), as a springboard to sharing how they engaged with the poem and how they could relate it to their own lives. Imagining themselves as the implied audience of Dungy’s poem, which asks readers to consider the world from the perspectives of various invertebrates, functioned as an invitation to respond to the very question of how nature serves as a driving force in their own lives. Several of the groups were also drawn to the idea of the collective in Harjo’s poem ‘Remember’ where they remarked upon the lines ‘Remember you are this universe and this / universe is you’. In relation to these lines specifically, they articulated how they felt invited to bring themselves, both as individuals and communities of readers, into the dialogue through the use of the second person speaker.

One connection that often appeared in the podcasts was the idea of how poems can shift scale, focusing both on large and small features of the environment, and the human’s relationship to them. Many student teachers who chose Sze’s (2015) poem ‘Unpacking a Globe’, for example, discussed how the speaker’s gaze shifts from the Pacific Ocean to a single rabbit and a single flower, and how the speaker expresses a wish to be alive to these (1, 19–20). Harjo’s ‘Remember’ offered another opportunity for students to think about scale, urging readers to remember back through their human predecessors but also the sky, the stars, and the wind who ‘know[] the / origin of this universe’ (17–18). These responses affirm Farrier’s (2019) concept, discussed above, of the ‘bold linkages’ enacted by Anthropocene poetics.

Student teachers also engaged in lively discussions of denotation and connotation. Dungy’s ‘Characteristics of Life’ takes up the plight of endangered animals without backbones, such as snails, damselflies, and mollusks, speaking ‘from the time before spinelessness was frowned upon’ (10). Many student teachers unpacked the pejorative associations of the term ‘spineless’ and considered the inherent anthropocentrism of this term. These discussions concentrated on the decentering of the human that Bosseldal (2023) explores as a pedagogically useful heuristic, and constitute a first step towards Didham’s point that thinking less exploitatively about the natural world involves first creating new language

and concepts (133). This discussion also helped emphasize attention to both denotation and connotation in an EFL learning context

From our perspective as instructors on the course, we would also like to reflect on how integrating the podcast assignment impacted the sustainability of our working situation. While university teachers work to deliver education that aligns with various UN sustainability goals, one potential conflict that has been recognized in the literature is the inattention paid to teachers' own wellbeing. This conflict rests between a 'higher education teacher's responsibilities and retaining a moderate workload, as part of maintaining good health and wellbeing' (Buerkle et al. 2023: 14). We not only see the podcast assessment format as one that allows us to address concerns with including written assignments in the Chat-GPT era, but a format that has a lower labor requirement when it comes to assessment. The fact that this was a low-stakes assignment, and the only criterion for scoring full points on the assignment was that the instructions were followed, meant that we were able to place greater emphasis on formative and content-based feedback. We ensured consistency between the two sets of feedback given by the two instructors by having shared discussions about the nature of feedback provided. In our experience, the podcast assignments were efficient to process, and comments could be written while simultaneously performing a second listen of the given recording. It was also refreshing to assess a sound recording rather than written text.

#### *Lessons for the future*

While we have noted the praiseworthy creative work in addition to the more conventionally valued critical work that the student teachers did on this assignment, we also reflected on some areas where our prompts and scaffolding could be improved in future courses. One area for improvement we noticed was a rupture between poetic form and literary-environmental content in some of the podcasts, in which student teachers listed formal aspects of the poems (such as alliteration and imagery) before moving on to the environmental themes they noticed. From this, we understood that more work could be done in the lecture and seminar to help student teachers integrate form and content, and to attend to formal features to enhance a thematic analysis, rather than approaching the two as separate.

Additionally, while the aim and focus of this assignment was to invite student teachers to explore how poetry can foster a more nuanced understanding of the Anthropocene, and invite discussions of sustainability in line with the guidelines of the Swedish National Agency for Education, we recognize that this focus might also convey the impression, for some, that poetry is primarily a means to an end. In our lectures elsewhere on the course, we also discuss broader questions about the function of literature and literature analysis, and perhaps some of these questions could be integrated into the assignment. We will also further explore how poetry can be a way to challenge histories of systematic exclusion and injustice by viewing and discussing Amanda Gorman's powerful TED Talk (2018) titled 'Using Your Voice is a Political Choice'. Finally, we will also acquaint student teachers with *poetryfoundation.org*, another free online poetry site that will be a valuable resource both for this assignment and for student teachers who wish to integrate poetry into their future teaching.

We have noted that other studies exploring the use of student-generated podcasts in higher education have provided a higher degree of scaffolding than we used on our course (Hall and Jones 2023; Wakefield, Pike and Amici-Dargan 2022). Based on our pilot and on our now greater knowledge of pedagogies in general, we are convinced that utilizing a more scaffolded process will lead to enhanced learning outcomes. This scaffolding could take a number of forms including more scheduled on-campus workshops where student teachers can work together on the task at various stages of development.

We also envisage that peer review of podcasts and possible formative teacher feedback will be beneficial in terms of making the process even more dialogic and sustainable, promoting a deeper level of reflection and consequently learning. Dianne Forbes (2015) suggests that when students are recording for a genuine audience, their motivation to participate in podcast assignments increases (197), and by integrating a peer review component, we are ensuring more critical friends besides just course instructors. Forbes describes how peer review in their case allowed for students to 'reshape and re-record their podcasts prior to final submission' (202); this is certainly something that we would like to take on board as it aligns well with our ethos of deep learning and sustainable pedagogies. Not only will peer review make the assignment more authentic, but it will also allow student teachers to have more reflective

and sustained engagement with the poems and with sustainability-related topics. We are, however, mindful of the fact that introducing such a supplementary exercise as part of the assignment will increase both student and teacher workload, and thus we need to consider how other parts of the course design could be adjusted to accommodate these potential future developments.

Another way in which a more sustained engagement with the learning material could be generated in these podcast assignments would be to make better use of what the podcast format has to offer in terms of its episodic structure. Asking student teachers to produce several episodes also gives them the opportunity to, as Forbes and Khoo (2015) remark, 'develop and improve with successive attempts' (340). As our model stands, we required student teachers to make just a single episode, however, asking them to produce two or more podcast episodes on related themes could further help them to see connections and deepen their understandings.

Research suggests that effective podcast assessment models require appropriate reflective tasks to support the process (Ng'ambi 2008). To address challenges in assessing individual contributions within group work, we acknowledge the value of incorporating supplementary individual written reflections (Davies 2009) and propose including such a component in future iterations of our course. In this reflection, our suggestion is that student teachers reflect on their own role in the podcast creation, as well as how the podcast activity has helped them to deepen their knowledge of poetry analysis and sustainability. In summary, this metalevel reflective task could enhance both accountability at an individual level and enhance the overall effectiveness of the assignment in terms of learning gains. However, as we have mentioned previously in relation to other proposals to expand the assignment, considerations need to be paid to the increased demands that this would place on both student and instructor, and thus any revisions need to be considered holistically.

The individual reflection could also be a space where student teachers make deeper connections between the mode and content of the assignment, and their future tasks as teacher of English in upper secondary school. This could be part of a more concerted effort on our part to make the task more explicitly connected to the student teachers' future teaching profession. After all, as Devin King and Jennifer Watt (2014) propose, the podcast in the context of teacher education offers 'opportunities across time and

space for our professional and personal selves to be in conversation and relation to each other' (214). Questions that student teachers could reflect on include: 1) How did the podcast assignment help me to develop my voice as a future teacher of English?; 2) How could I integrate themes and content discussed in the podcast in my own future classroom?; and 3) How might the podcast format be relevant in teaching and learning?

The social learning context of our course has allowed us to avoid some of the challenges highlighted in previous research. For example, Naomi M. Hall and Jason M. Jones (2023) note that a lack of technical skills and unfamiliarity with required technology, along with potential student reluctance toward group work, can present obstacles. However, we did not encounter these issues, which may be due to several factors. In Sweden, educational settings often emphasize collaborative learning, meaning that there might be less initial resistance to group work. Additionally, the environment grounded in social learning enabled student teachers to share skill sets. In groups of four, even if only one student was proficient with audio recording, they could effectively guide and support the others. However, concurrently we acknowledge that learning outcomes could be improved by making better use of existing infrastructure at our university in order to facilitate more equal access to both expertise and equipment, thus boosting the sustainable and democratic nature of the assignment.

Finally, we want to invite student teachers to use their attention to implication and connotation to reflect on the term 'sustainability' itself. Critics of the term have pointed out that the concept of sustainability does not do enough to address the climate crisis. Michelle Neely's recent book *Against Sustainability* (2020), for instance, argues that the term implicitly seeks to preserve resources for white elites and focuses too much on continuity rather than the radical rethinking and actions we need to mitigate environmental disaster (8–11). In the future, we would like to invite student teachers to reflect on the uses and limitations of the term 'sustainability' and think about what other language—perhaps even language in or inspired by the poems themselves—might be equally or even better suited to imagining ethical planetary futures. When does a term offer a 'reframing', to borrow Didham's term, and when does it not go far enough? When does a term decenter the human and place the human in relation to all forms of life on our planet, and when does it merely reinforce a sense of human dominance and resource use that has had disastrous environmental effects? Such questions can work to integrate Bosseldal's

(2023) exploration of posthuman thought as a useful pedagogical tool for student teachers working through the complexities of the Anthropocene. In future iterations of this assignment, we plan to invite student teachers to respond to these questions as part of their closing reflections on the podcast activity, and to identify possible future terms and concepts that might deepen their own reading, thinking, and teaching.

In this time of resource depletion, species loss, and environmental degradation known as the Anthropocene, this podcast assignment was a generative, sobering, and also inspiring medium that helped both us and our student teachers begin to grapple with the urgency of our present crisis and develop and strengthen the vocabularies we need to comprehend the radical shifts in thought and behavior that the Anthropocene requires. Student-generated podcasts are a valuable tool that gives student teachers an opportunity to link the linguistic and interpretive emphasis of EFL instruction with broader issues in ecocriticism and the environmental humanities, while showcasing their skills of communication and collaboration in accessible digital formats.

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## *Appendix*

### Assignment Prompt

- You will work together to compose and record a short podcast episode (up to 15 minutes long) in which you discuss the theme of nature and sustainability in a poem. Your podcast should make use of relevant terms and concepts from the lecture and workshop on sustainability. Other than these materials, there is no need for outside sources, and the analysis should be your own. You may choose one of these poems to discuss: ‘The Carolina Wren’ by Laura Donnelly, ‘Characteristics of Life’ by Camille T. Dungy, ‘Remember’ by Joy Harjo, or ‘Unpacking a Globe’ by Arthur Sze, all available on *poets.org*.
- We do not expect anything fancy in terms of production (and you will not be graded on your technological or presentation skills), but we do ask that however you decide to record your podcast, it is downloadable as an mp3 file. The podcast should take the form of a conversation and all group members should play a speaking role. As you prepare, it is a good idea to jointly generate the questions and prompts that you will respond to, and if you choose, you can script and practice responses before you record.