

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established by the United Nations in 2015, aim to address critical global challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, and educational access. Integrating sustainability into education, particularly through English Language Teaching (ELT), supports SDG 4, which emphasizes inclusive and quality education. The article explores the global trends and local implementations of sustainability integration into ELT, highlighting its role in fostering global citizenship, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Globally, examples such as sustainability-focused curricula in Japan and the Green English Language Teaching (GELT) approach in Turkey demonstrate successful practices in embedding environmental literacy into EFL. Locally, Uzbekistan has reformed its education system to align with the SDGs by incorporating sustainability themes into language textbooks and teacher training programs. Despite these advances, challenges such as insufficient teaching resources, uneven SDG content distribution, and limited teacher training persist. Addressing these gaps, it is essential to empower future generations through sustainable ELT practices.

Keywords: *sustainable development goals, English Language Teaching, global context, integration.*

Introduction

In 2015 the United Nations created the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a crucial foundation for the larger 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Halişçelik, E., & Soytaş, M. A., 2019, p.2). Consisting of 17 interrelated objectives, SDGs goal is to address some of the most important issues the world faces today, such as poverty, health disparities, inequality, educational access, climate change, environmental problems, and the pursuit of peace and justice. The SDGs' universality—which emphasizes the idea of "leaving no one behind"—makes them especially important since they are intended to be applicable to all nations and populations (Weiland et al., 2021, p.91). The SDGs are more than just a set of goals; they provide a strategic blueprint for collective action, guiding governments, organizations, and individuals in making decisions that contribute to a fairer and more sustainable world (Sachs, J. D., 2015, p.61). In order to achieve SDGs goals it is crucial to integrate sustainability into education and among these SDG 4, which focuses on providing inclusive, equitable, high-quality education.

In English Language Teaching (ELT), integration of sustainability plays an important role, since incorporating topics linked to the SDGs into curricula helps to promote global citizenship and sustainable thinking. Language goes beyond simply mastering vocabulary and grammar; it is a powerful tool for influencing attitudes, behaviours and perceptions (Bekteshi, E.; Xhaferi, 2020, p.80). Therefore, teachers should use the English language to encourage environmental and sustainable practices across cultural boundaries.

There are several reasons why integration of sustainability is pivotal in ELT. First, the global nature of environmental challenges requires solutions that go beyond national boundaries (Al Amin, M.; Greenwood, J., 2018, p. 119.). As global lingua franca, English is a powerful tool to present and discuss the concepts of sustainability. Moreover, SDGs foster a sense of global citizenship, encouraging

young individuals to broaden their perspectives beyond local contexts and consider the impact of their decisions on the shared future of humanity (Strachan et al., 2021, pp 2-3). Educating students through the lens of the SDGs equips students with essential skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration, which are crucial for addressing complex global challenges (Fang & O'Toole, 2023, p.2).

Global Prospects for Integrating SDGs into ELT

Incorporating SDGs into English Language Teaching is an increasingly growing trend across the globe. Numerous studies have been undertaken by scholars in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) worldwide, with several notable research efforts distinguished by their exemplary integration of sustainability into EFL curricula. One of them was conducted in Japan, the the authors designed an EFL curriculum focused on sustainability themes, which included guest lectures from environmental specialists and service-learning projects in collaboration with local NGOs. The study involved 76 and 75 students, respectively, across two semesters and six distinct classes. The research spanned two semesters, with one course based on traditional lectures and the other incorporating sustainability topics. This approach promoted significant engagement with sustainability issues and improved language proficiency, particularly in academic writing and oral presentations. (Jodoin, J.J, 2020, pp 779, 797-798).

The Green English Language Teaching (GELT) strategy, which focuses on integrating environmental literacy into the English language curriculum, was developed by educators in Turkey through content analysis of 58 lessons in five books (Akban, Y.E.; Yavuz, A., 2022, pp 15,17). This involves using environmental issues through literature, films, and activities. Instructors encourage their students to engage in outdoor activities that promote sustainability, carry out eco-friendly projects, and have English-language conversations on these subjects.

In 2019, Mohammadnia, Z., and Moghadam, F. D. did another content analysis study on EFL textbooks used in Iran. They developed a framework for the

content analysis based on the UNESCO Roadmap for Implementing the Global Action Program on Sustainable Development and the Earth Charter's principles. Eighteen textbooks were evaluated and it was found that sustainability concepts were covered in all of them. Some publications, however, covered a lot of the SDGs topics, while others covered none at all (Mohammadnia, Z., & Moghadam, F. D., 2019, pp 108-113). They concluded that using stories can be a good source to introduce sustainability-related topics. Moreover, they highlight the role of a teacher in organizing lesson plans to implement sustainability values when it is possible.

Kwee, C.T.T. in 2021 conducted a case study of incorporating SDGs in English Language Teaching that involved participants from such countries as the UK, Hong Kong and Australia. Data were collected from different sources including interviews and classroom observations. The findings reveal that teachers' personal beliefs, achievement of teaching goals, and supportive school management can all have a positive impact on their self-efficacy and increase their motivation to incorporate SDGs into their English instruction (Kwee, C.T.T., 2021, pp 1-14).

Despite the successes of implementing sustainability-related topics into language teaching, the experts point out that there are some challenges as well. There is a lack of accessible materials that can align with language teaching objectives and inadequate training for teachers (Kwee, C.T.T., 2021, p. 46). Mohammadnia, Z., and Moghadam, F. D. emphasize the need for a more balanced distribution of SDG-related topics in EFL textbooks, as certain textbooks lack sufficient coverage of these themes. Institution-supported professional development programs play a crucial role in equipping teachers to effectively incorporate sustainability topics into their teaching practices, thereby addressing deficiencies in teacher training. Well-structured workshops, specialized courses, and learning communities focused on sustainability pedagogies for language educators specifically target and bridge these gaps in teacher preparation (Yu, B.; Guo, W.Y.; Fu, H., 2024, pp 8-9).

Local Implementations in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan has undertaken significant reforms in its education system to align with the Sustainable Development Goals, with a particular emphasis on enhancing the quality of foreign language instruction. The National Strategy for Education Development 2030 highlights the need to equip students with global competencies, including knowledge and skills related to sustainability (Ministry of Education of Uzbekistan, 2020). Sustainability-related content is becoming more and more prevalent in foreign language classes in Uzbekistan. For example, reading passages and discussion questions on subjects like gender equality, renewable energy, and cultural heritage preservation are now common in secondary school English language textbooks. These resources help students develop their language skills while promoting critical engagement with global issues.

Uzbekistan's teacher training programs have started implementing sustainability-focused approaches to help integrate SDGs into FLT. International partners like the British Council host workshops and seminars that give teachers tips on how to integrate SDG themes into their lectures. However, despite the insights, there is a significant gap in empirical research on the evaluation of effectiveness of EFL textbooks containing sustainability topics used in secondary and tertiary education in Uzbekistan. Additionally, there is a lack of research evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of different pedagogical approaches, including curriculum design, classroom activities, and assessment methods used in EFL classrooms in Uzbekistan. Furthermore, research is needed to examine the competencies of EFL teachers in Uzbekistan required to effectively integrate sustainability education into the ELT classroom.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into English Language Teaching (ELT) represents a crucial step toward fostering global citizenship and addressing global challenges. The global and local efforts

highlighted in this article demonstrate the potential of ELT to contribute to sustainable development by promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, and environmental literacy. While several countries have made significant strides in embedding sustainability into their curricula, the findings emphasize the need for further research, particularly in Uzbekistan, to assess the effectiveness of existing educational materials, pedagogical approaches, and teacher competencies. To overcome existing challenges, it is essential to provide educators with adequate training, resources, and support to effectively incorporate sustainability themes into their teaching. By doing so, future generations can be empowered with the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to a more equitable, sustainable, and inclusive world.

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