

CHAPTER 10

Teaching English for Sustainable Development

Affah Linda Sari

Universitas Islam Negeri Antasari Banjarmasin

afifahlinda@uin-antasari.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, the global commitment to sustainable development has created significant effects on lots of sectors, including education. The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has led educators to reconsider not only what students learn, but why and how they learn. Sustainability has developed as an important theme in English language teaching, connecting language learning to real-world issues like protecting the environment, social responsibility, and ethical decision-making.

Aligning the SDGs into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) marks an important change in how the English subject is taught. It means teaching English is not merely about bringing grammar, vocabulary, and reading in English classroom (Yu et al., 2024), but English teacher can incorporate global issues and sustainable development into their lessons, inspiring students to become active global citizens who are ready to face the challenges (Barber, 2023) and support a more sustainable future (Usman et al., 2025). For instance, the teacher asks the students to analyze literary works such as poems, songs, short stories, news reading, article, and others which are part of the language teaching materials dealing with environmental issues and their relationship with humans and non-humans (Saiful & Setyorini, 2023). Thus, bringing relevant global issues into the classroom allows teachers to provide students with a variety of activities and topics that enrich their

understanding of diverse cultures and issues that are important both locally and globally (Cordova, 2024; Hasby et al., 2025).

A study reported that many teachers feel that they do not have enough knowledge about the SDGs or the teaching strategies needed to bring sustainability topics into their English lessons in meaningful ways (Sulisworo et al., 2025). Therefore, this part will be a valuable reference for the educators who want to teach English for Sustainable Development in order to develop Linguistics competencies and language learners' sustainable competencies, such critical thinking. By embedding sustainability into ESP instruction, English becomes a medium through which learners explore professional responsibilities, reflect on global challenges, and develop the communicative competence required to participate in sustainable development efforts within their future careers.

2. INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

2.1 Course Objective and Content

The main objective of Teaching English for Sustainable Development in an ESP context is to provide learners with the language skills needed to succeed in their specific fields while fostering sustainability awareness. Through this course the students are also expected to express ideas, arguments, and solutions related to sustainability through spoken and written English, and to develop critical awareness, ethical sensitivity, and reflective thinking as future professionals.

The course is arranged for a semester (16 meetings) which consist of several topics, involve:

- Introduction to ESP in Education for Sustainable Development (meetings 1-2).
- Professional Vocabulary and Discourse for Sustainable Development (meetings 3-4).
- Reading and Listening to Sustainable Issues (meetings 5-6).
- Speaking for Sustainable Professional Communication (meetings 7-8).
- Writing for Sustainable Development in ESP (meetings 9-10).

- Project-Based Learning and Reflection (meetings 11-12).
- Religious or moral perspectives on sustainable development (meetings 13-14).
- Evaluation and Course Review (meetings 15-16).

The topic selection and sequencing follow a progressive learning model, moving from conceptual understanding to language development and finally to application and reflection (Hasbi et al., 2026). Early units focus on building foundational knowledge, middle units strengthen linguistic and communicative competence, and final units emphasize integration and real-world relevance.

2.2 Teaching Method

Teaching English for Sustainable Development within an ESP framework requires several methods to apply, such as: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Project-Based Learning (PBL), Genre-Based Approach, Critical Pedagogy, Experiential and Reflective Learning, and Technological Pedagogical Knowledge (TPK).

CLT allows learners to practice English as it is used in real professional contexts, making language learning purposeful and relevant. Then, TBLT aligns well with ESD principles by promoting active learning, collaboration, and practical problem-solving using English. This approach can be continued by making project through PBL to discuss whether social or environmental issue.

The students critically examine sustainability narratives, policies, and professional practices while using English to express informed perspectives. Then, they emphasize learning through experience, followed by reflection.

2.3 Activity Types

Learning activities is designed based on the topic of SDGs, targeted language skills, and the stage of learning which can create meaningful learning, for instance, collaborative activities such as group discussions, problem solving discussions, debates on sustainable issues, role plays

and simulations, presentations, and project work are particularly valuable. These activities promote both language development and critical engagement with sustainable development concepts.

Dealing with meaningful activities, (Ausubel, 2012) demonstrated five stages of meaningful learning,

- Students explore and review what they already understand about a new topic of Sustainable Development.
- Students analyze a new topic by looking at its key ideas, arguments, sources, and main points.
- Students compare the new information with their prior knowledge to find similarities and differences.
- Students become aware of how the new learning changes their thinking and adjust their understanding through self-reflection.
- Students apply the new knowledge and meanings to real-life situations and use them to solve everyday problems.

2.4 Materials and Media

There are some materials and media selected to implement this course. Learning materials and instructional media should be authentic, contextual and multimodal (Hasbi, 2023), for instance, learning text material in form of article, short story, news, and script. Besides, audio and audio-visual materials support listening skills and expose learners to different accents, speech styles, and registers. Visual elements help learners better understand sustainability issues and make abstract concepts more concrete.

The following table describe 17 goals of Sustainable Development with the source of materials that can be discussed in English class.

Goal 1: No poverty	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T7qiM0quEf4
Goal 2: Zero hunger	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifCQ4LqT8G8
Goal 3: Good health	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARmBC14nid0

Goal 4: Quality education	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIExX9St4oA
Goal 5: Gender equality	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-OURmsmEKO
Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpaUBR18c6A
Goal 7: Renewable energy	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVgvK8Kfxwc
Goal 8: Good jobs and economic growth	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lj0JlrIWx2k
Goal 9: Innovation and infrastructure	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J57rRolByqY
Goal 10: Reduced inequalities	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-5wo1ArN88w
Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hEYtozmb5o
Goal 12: Responsible consumption	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dn-hLQk49eA
Goal 13: Climate action	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhoa3OHivN8
Goal 14: Life below water	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-l3KfmFNx0
Goal 15: Life on land	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HRtua9GpzhY
Goal 16: Peace and justice	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ki33yMnfAso
Goal 17: Partnerships for the goals	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcfoWx14lv0

Another material which also can be used as a references for teaching language is a book of compilation edited by (Maley & Peachey,

2017) entitled “Integrating Global Issues in The Creative English Language Classroom: With Reference to The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals” which offers practical and creative language teaching ideas.

2.5 Vocabulary and Grammar Building

Vocabulary and grammar should be purposeful and contextual (Hasbi et al., 2025). Through this study, students can learn vocabulary in thematic clusters and word families, for example: sustain-sustainable-sustainability. Besides, they will learn common vocabularies in exploring SDG, such as: responsibility, accountability, transparency, fairness, ethical practice, social impact, community engagement, and so on.

In grammar focus area, the students will learn passive voice, conditional sentences, complex sentences and clause structures, modal verbs for obligation, recommendation, and possibility. Students can practice vocabulary and grammar through tasks such as writing reports, presenting sustainability proposals, or discussing case studies. This approach reinforces language forms through use rather than memorization.

2.6 Targeted Language Skills

Speaking is a priority skill in learning English for Sustainable Development because it often requires to discuss the global issues, presents ideas, find the solutions for sustainable problems, and communicate sustainability concepts clearly and persuasively. Then, writing is another skill to this study as sustainability communication frequently occurs through reports, proposals, emails, digital writing, and project documentation.

Beyond of priority skill, reading and listening are classified into supporting skills. Reading supports both speaking and writing by providing content knowledge, vocabulary, and discourse patterns. Meanwhile, listening is essential for understanding professional discourse such as lectures, interviews, meetings, and presentations

related to sustainability. It supports speaking development by exposing learners to authentic language use.

2.7 Assessment and Evaluation

Formative and summative assessment used to measure students' ability in this lesson which cover three main dimensions: Language Accuracy, Communicative Effectiveness, Content and Sustainability Awareness. Formative assessment emphasizes assessment for learning which is conducted weekly after each topic end. This assessment can be in form of participation in discussions and tasks, short written assignments, presentations, role plays, reflective journals, peer and self-assessment.

Meanwhile, summative assessment applies at the end of semester to evaluate overall achievement of course learning objectives. This assessment can be in kind of final project, written portfolio, or poster presentation. In other side, evaluation goes beyond assessing students, it also involves reviewing the effectiveness of the course itself. The evaluation is divided into student learning evaluation, such as reflection on learning progress and self-assessment reports, and course and instructional evaluation to check the relevance of topics and materials and the effectiveness of activities and assessments.

3. FURTHER DISCUSSION

English language teaching for Sustainable Development is still rarely found as a course in educational institutions. In its implementation, it does not stand alone but can be integrated through topics in English language learning in speaking, writing, reading, and listening. Another important consideration for aligning Sustainable Development topic in English lesson lies in teacher readiness and contextual relevance. It requires English teachers who are not only competent in language pedagogy but also in sustainability concepts and critical pedagogy (Mambu, 2023). Without sufficient training and institutional support, the integration of sustainability themes which align with students' learning goals as well as the subject content can be challenging (Kwee, 2021).

However, Indonesia's participation in the SDGs agenda and the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* emphasize the development of critical thinking, project-based learning, and character education aligned with sustainability values. Within this framework, ESP courses that integrate sustainable development can function as a bridge between language education and national priorities, enabling students to engage with environmental, social, and ethical issues relevant to Indonesia's local and professional realities. Thus, this chapter recommends to Indonesian higher education institutions to adopt a flexible and contextualized Sustainable Development topics through ESP framework, provide sustained teacher training on Education for Sustainable Development, and encourage the use of locally relevant materials and case studies. In this way, teaching English for Sustainable Development in ESP offers a relevant and pedagogically grounded response to Indonesia's current educational and societal challenges.

Author



Afifah Linda Sari, M.Pd, is a lecturer at the English Language Education Department of UIN Antasari Banjarmasin. Her research focuses on teaching English as a foreign language. Passionate about English Language Teaching (ELT) for Sustainable Development, she enjoys exploring creative and meaningful ways to make language learning engaging for her students. Connect with her at afifahlinda@uin-antasari.ac.id.

References

- Ausubel, D. P. (2012). *The acquisition and retention of knowledge: A cognitive view*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Barber, D. (2023). The SDGs and Language Teaching, <https://infocus.eltngl.com/2023/03/27/the-sdgs-and-english-language-teaching/>
- Cordova, M. (2024). Integrating sustainable development goals in English language and literature teaching. *Frontiers in Education*, <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1330034>
- Hasbi, M. (2023). *Digital Teaching Material Production Activities Through Infographics and Learning Videos Creation Modelled by Pre-Service English Teachers of IAIN Salatiga*. Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat (LP2M) IAIN Salatiga.
- Hasbi, M., Perdana, M. T., Madkur, A., Sari, E. D. P., Nor, H. (2025). *Powerful Vocabulary and Grammar Classroom Activities*. Rizquna. <http://e-repository.perpus.iainsalatiga.ac.id/23749/>
- Hasbi, M., Fata, I. A., Maknun, L., Hasanah, N. I., Budiana, K. M., Susyeta, A., Sulisty, T. (2026). *Teaching University-Level English Courses: A Practical Guidebook*. Rizquna.
- Hasby, N., Faisal, A., Misrita, M., Anoeграjekti, N., Kodriyah, L., Islamiah, N., & Ramadani, F. (2025). Cross-cultural comparisons of folktales: Implications for teaching English language and cultural awareness. *International Journal of Pedagogy and Learning Community (IJPLC)*, 2(2), 98-105.
- Kwee, C. T. T. (2021). I want to teach sustainable development in my English classroom: A case study of incorporating sustainable development goals in English teaching. *Sustainability*, 13(8), 4195. doi: 10.3390/su13084195
- Maley, A., & Peachey, N. (2017). Integrating global issues in the creative English language classroom: With reference to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. In: London: British Council.

- Mambu, J. E. (2023). Embracing sustainable development goals critically to explore life purposes in english language teacher education. *Teflin Journal*, 34(2), 264-282. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.15639/teflinjournal.v34i2/264-282>
- Saiful, J. A., & Setyorini, A. (2023). Ecocriticism course: Development of English pre-service teachers' pedagogical content knowledge of sustainability. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, 24(2), 5-18. doi: 10.2478/jtes-2022-0013
- Sulisworo, D., Maryani, I., & Budijati, S. M. (2025). Teacher Readiness for Implementing Sustainable Education: A Comparative Synthesis of Predictive Factors Across Diverse Educational Contexts. *Buletin Edukasi Indonesia*, 4(03), 131-141. <https://doi.org/10.56741/bei.v4i03.130>
- Usman, J., Yulia, A., Muluk, S., Hasan, K. K., & Jarjani, J. S. (2025). Sustainability Integration in EFL Curricula: Evidence from Indonesian and Malaysian Universities. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 12(3), 1492-1508. <https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v12i3.41046>
- Yu, B., Guo, W. Y., & Fu, H. (2024). Sustainability in English Language Teaching: Strategies for Empowering Students to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals [Review]. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 16(8), Article 3325. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16083325>