



TeachingEnglish

British Council: TeachingEnglish

A podcast series for teachers
of English



**Episode 7: How can I
integrate the Sustainable
Development Goals into my
teaching?**

Show notes



Episode overview

We are now into the last decade of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and their emphasis on promoting education, improving health outcomes and eradicating poverty have never been more crucial. Despite their importance, many students around the world know little about them. In this podcast, we hear from three ELT writers who contributed articles to the British Council publication [Integrating global issues in the creative English language classroom](#). We then speak to Margarita Kosior about how these ideas can be effectively contextualised in the classroom, showing that it is possible to meet language goals – and prepare students for examinations – by teaching about the Sustainable Development Goals.

In this episode

I deeply believe that teachers' responsibility is complex acting to prepare children to cope well in their future lives

It's vital that students, and children in particular, learn about the Sustainable Development Goals in a child-friendly and age-appropriate way

Teachers don't sometimes realise how much influence they have as role models

I also try to teach them how to think, and feel – show them inspiration, aspiration, cooperation, participation, consolation, innovation ... help them think about globalization, exploitation, confrontation, incarceration, discrimination, degradation, subjugation, how inequality brings poverty, how intolerance brings violence, how need is denied by greed, how – isms become prisons, how thinking and feeling can bring about healing

Teaching a language is not only teaching the grammar and the vocabulary but teaching how to use them

Classroom application

Think about your own practice

- Do you think it's important that your students learn about the SDGs?
- How much do you talk about the SDGs in your own lessons?
- How do you think your students would respond if you talked more about the SDGs?
- Which of the SDGs would your students be most interested in learning about?
- Are there ways in which you could talk about them more, and link them to language learning?

Classroom activity: Global Goal connections and Project Action Plan

Aims

- To explore connections between Global Goals
- To make an action plan to achieve one Global Goal (leading to a project)

Language focus

Talking about causation, e.g. If ..., then ...; making suggestions, e.g. Let's ... / What about ...? / Why don't we ...?

Creative focus

Thinking creatively and critically to establish links between Global Goals; brainstorming ideas for a plan of action (leading to a project)

Level: A2+

Age: 10–14

Time: 60 minutes

Preparation

Make copies of Global Goal icons cut into sets (as in the earlier activities); large sheet of card (one for each group), (optional) coloured straws or pipe cleaners.

Procedure

- Divide the students into groups. Give each group a set of Global Goal icons, a large piece of card, glue and (optionally) coloured straws or pipe cleaners.
- Students stick the icons (spaced out in any position or order) on the card.
- Explain and demonstrate that students should take turns to draw lines (or stick coloured straws or pipe cleaners) to create a spidergram showing connections between the Global Goals and give reasons as they do this, e.g. 'If children are hungry (Goal 2), then it is difficult for them to concentrate and learn at school (Goal 4).' / 'If people don't have jobs (Goal 8), they are poor (Goal 1).' / 'If there isn't clean water to drink (Goal 6), people get ill (Goal 3).' If you like, set a time limit for this, e.g. 15 minutes.
- Groups take turns to report back and compare the Global Goal spidergrams they have created.
- Use the results to talk about how global problems and solutions are linked.

- Ask the groups to choose one Global Goal and brainstorm ideas for an action plan (in English or their own language) of what they can personally do to help achieve the Goal. Elicit ideas for one Goal as an example, e.g.



- Students work together and make their plans. Set a time limit for this, e.g. 15 minutes.
- Groups take turns to present and comment on each other's ideas and plans.
- Ask the groups to decide which of their ideas they would like to act on as a project (possibly working on one idea each in pairs).
- Finish by briefly getting students to review what they have done and learned.

Follow-up

- Get students to make a detailed plan for their project. Establish a timeline and success criteria for the projects. The projects can be carried out as part of several subsequent lessons and/or at home.

Social media

Please share your views about this episode, and the series, on social media using the hashtag #TEBC. Let us know your thoughts, reflections, comments and whether you have been able to use any of the ideas in your teaching.

Detailed notes

Use these notes to find out more about the contents of Episode 6.

Phrase	Explanation and Further Information
<p>Sustainable Development Goals</p>	<p>According to the United Nations, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are “a call for action by all countries – poor, rich and middle-income – to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection. More important than ever, the goals provide a critical framework for COVID-19 recovery.” More information can be found at https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/.</p>
<p>Poem by Alan Maley</p>	<p>The full text of Alan’s poem ‘Teacher’, taken from the introduction to the publication, is as follows:</p> <p>Teacher</p> <p>What do you do? I’m a teacher.</p> <p>What do you teach? People.</p> <p>What do you teach them? English.</p> <p>You mean grammar, verbs, nouns, pronunciation, conjugation, articles and particles, negatives and interrogatives ...? That too.</p> <p>What do you mean, ‘that too’? Well, I also try to teach them how to think, and feel – show them inspiration, aspiration, cooperation, participation, consolation, innovation, ... help them think about globalization, exploitation, confrontation, incarceration, discrimination, degradation, subjugation, ...how inequality brings poverty, how intolerance brings violence, how need is denied by greed, how –isms become prisons, how thinking and feeling can bring about healing.</p> <p>Well I don’t know about that. Maybe you should stick to language, forget about anguish. You can’t change the world. But if I did that, I’d be a cheater, not a teacher.</p>
<p>Field Report: Integrating Global Issues in the Creative English Language Classroom</p>	
<p>Integrating Global Issues in the</p>	<p>This excellent publication by the British Council can be accessed here. The publication foreword introduces its main contents:</p>

Creative English Language Classroom	“The various tasks involve learners in making sense of infographics, creating a photo gallery, engaging in a simulated UN discussion, inventing a slogan for a piece of street art, writing their own poems and stories, designing sustainable homes and cities, and puzzling over the richness of life in a rainforest, to name but a few. Language aims are integrated with educational aims, for example students improve their presentation skills while at the same time learning about the vital role water plays in our lives.”
Alan Maley	Alan Maley is the editor of the publication, and also wrote an article entitled “Reduce inequality within and among countries”.
Sylwia Zabor-Zakowska	Sylwia Zabor-Zakowska’s article is entitled “End poverty in all its forms everywhere”.
Carol Read	Carol Read’s article is entitled “Developing children’s understanding of the Global Goals”.
A novel called ‘I Am A Slave’	Find out more about this book at https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/178460.Slave
Common European Framework for Languages	According to Cambridge English, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is an international standard for describing language ability. It describes language ability on a six-point scale, from A1 for beginners, up to C2 for those who have mastered a language. This makes it easy for anyone involved in language teaching and testing, such as teachers or learners, to see the level of different qualifications. It also means that employers and educational institutions can easily compare our qualifications to other exams in their country.
The World's Largest Lesson website	Visit https://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org/ to find out more.
Interview with Margarita Kosior	
Margarita Kosior	Find out more about Margarita and her work at https://www.margaritakosior.com/
ELT Calendar of Special Days	This very special teachers’ resource book will help teachers across the globe to teach their students about some of these important events. It can be accessed here .

International Day of Persons with Disabilities	This UN-recognised day is on December 3 rd . It focuses on promoting an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. It also seeks to increase awareness of gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.
World Bicycle Day	This UN-recognised day is on June 3 rd . It encourages stakeholders to emphasize and advance the use of the bicycle as a means of fostering sustainable development, strengthening education, including physical education, for children and young people, promoting health, preventing disease, promoting tolerance, mutual understanding and respect and facilitating social inclusion and a culture of peace.
Malala’s Magic Pencil	Click here for more details about this book written by Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai.
Sir David Attenborough’s speech at the COP26 Climate Summit	You can watch this speech by clicking here . One of the main arguments which he makes is that politicians should be “motivated by hope rather than fear” to avoid climate catastrophe.
International Day of Charity	This UN-recognised day is on September 5 th . The International Day of Charity was established with the objective of sensitizing and mobilizing people, NGOs, and stakeholders all around the world to help others through volunteer and philanthropic activities.
21st century skills	21st century skills comprise skills, abilities, and learning dispositions that have been identified as being required for success in 21st century society and workplaces. This includes skills such as communication, creativity, flexibility, resilience, problem solving and critical thinking.

Useful links

- [UNESCO resources for the teaching the SDGs](#)
- [Teach SDGs](#)
- [SDG Teach-in with SOS-UK](#)
- [Articles and information about a British Council conference about “Language and the SDGs”](#)
- [World’s Largest Lesson](#)

Glossary

The following words at the B2, C1 and C2 level (according to the [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages](#)) are used in this episode.

B2 words

abandoned
abstract
actual
additional
adopted
affected
aimed at
amongst
analysed
appeal
appropriate
authority
basically
billion
calculation
capacity
cause
citizens
civilization
climate change
closely
companion
comparisons
complex
concept
confidently
conflict
content
context
contribute
cooperate
cope
council
creations
critical
cure
decent
deeply
demonstrate
denied
depression
depriving
designed for
disabilities
distinguishing
donate
economic
edited
educated
educating
effective
enable

ensure
entitled
episode
equality
equals
eventually
express
extract
extraordinarily
extreme
features
fellow
focus
follow up
freely
gender
generate
global
growth
healing
host
icons
identify
images
impact
influence
input
inspiration
instantly
institutions
intelligences
interpret
invest
justice
leading to
learners
linked
maintain
manner
medical
memorable
mental
nations
nicely
origin
overcome
participated
placed
poverty
practical
presenters
presumably
primary

process
publication
reflect
refugees
relatively
relevant
remote
researchers
resource
responsibility
rewrite
ruled
sake
satisfy
shelter
slave
specific
states
statistics
stimulate
strategies
structures
suffer
survival
tackle
task
threat
tragedy
treatment
trivial
turns to
united
universal
unlimited
varied
victims
violence
vital
volunteer
wealth
willingness

C1 words

awareness
campaign
collaborate
convey
dedicated
discrimination
duration
engage
enhances
focuses

fulfilling
globalization
greed
gross
inclusive
innovation
integrate
motivate
multiple
neglected
negotiate
obstacles
overview
peers
perspective
quote
randomly
related to
scope
self
sensitivity
slavery
status
summit
sustainable
triumph

C2 words

accountable
accounts for
aspiration
confrontation
dignity
empathy
followers
framework
fraud
fundamental
humiliating
inequality
insecurity
intolerance
obscene
particles
practitioner
spark
sustainability
tolerance
unprecedented
vaccinations