

# Integrating UN SDGs in ELT: How Far Tertiary EFL Teachers in Oman Are Successful

Moosa Ahmed Bait Ali Sulaiman<sup>1</sup>, Nagwa Mohammed Khallaf<sup>2</sup> & Mohammed Abdulgalil Abugohar<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> CPS, Dhofar University, Salalah, Oman. E-mail: moosa@du.edu.om ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3775-6165>

<sup>2</sup> CPS, Dhofar University, Salalah, Oman. E-mail: nkhallaf@du.edu.om ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-0034-7544>

<sup>3</sup> CPS, Dhofar University, Salalah, Oman. E-mail: mabugohar@du.edu.om ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0091-9397>

Correspondence: Mohammed Abugohar, Dhofar University, Salalah, Oman. E-mail: mabugohar@du.edu.om

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## Abstract

Sustainability has emerged as a global priority, promoting educators across disciplines to integrate sustainability-related themes into their curricula. In English Language Teaching (ELT), embedding the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offers an opportunity not only to enhance linguistic competence but also to foster global citizenship, critical thinking, and socio-cultural awareness. This study investigated how tertiary-level English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Oman perceive and integrate SDGs into their ELT practices. The study also explored the challenges encountered, as well as the support needed to ensure successful and meaningful fusion of the SDGs into ELT practices. Adopting a mixed-methods approach in an explanatory, sequential design, the study involved 82 EFL teachers from private universities across Oman. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and focus group discussions. The findings indicated that while the majority of the participants acknowledged the value of embedding SDGs in ELT; particularly for enhancing students' critical thinking and global awareness, most were still in the early stages of the comprehensive integration. However, several significant barriers were identified, including students' low language proficiency, limited instructional time, lack of appropriate teaching resources, unclear assessment practices, instructional overload, and insufficient institutional support. The study concluded that there is a need for targeted professional development, institutional collaboration, and support systems to enhance the integration of SDGs within the ELT context in Oman. For EFL teachers, they can project role models for learners in sustainability-oriented education, along with themes like energy saving and maintaining class equipment, to raise students' awareness.

**Keywords:** sustainability, development goals integration, UN, English Language Teaching (ELT), tertiary EFL teachers

## 1. Introduction

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) are considered a valuable global guideline that helps with planning efforts to tackle environmental, economic, and social challenges. Among the 17 SDGs, education is a central goal, mainly Goal 4, which intends to ensure quality, equitable, and comprehensive education for all. English language teaching (ELT), as a key factor for modern education, has the demonstrable potential to contribute to the attainment of the SDGs. As English is considered an international lingua franca, its role in promoting collaboration, communication, and global awareness cannot be overstated.

The integration of the UN SDGs into ELT entails reflective implications for adopting social responsibility, critical thinking, and global awareness among teachers/learners (UNESCO, 2021). As the English language serves as an international language for communication, its starring role in shaping learners' perspectives on global citizenship and sustainability cannot be ignored (Crystal, 2012). However, despite the importance of education for sustainable development, there is a lack of empirical research findings on how successfully English language teachers integrate SDGs into their teaching context (Paletta & Bonoli, 2019).

This study examines the integration of the UN SDGs into English Language Teaching (ELT), investigating how effective teachers are embedding UN SDGs within their teaching practice. While several studies stress the importance of integrating global challenges into education curricula, empirical evidence on exploring how ELT teachers perceive these SDGs in their classrooms remains limited. This paper aims to bridge this gap by investigating the challenges, strategies, and successes that Foundation Program (FP) teachers experience when embedding the SDGs with their teaching methods.

The current study is significant as it specifies insights into the extent to which English language teachers integrate sustainability goals in their teaching context. By examining teachers' methods and approaches, practices, and reflections, this research paper contributes to the discourse on sustainable language teaching and education (Bilsborough, 2022). Reflecting on these dynamic factors can inform teacher training programs, curriculum designers, and policymakers, ensuring that education in general and English language teaching in particular align with broader sustainability standards (Tilbury, 2011).

By focusing on FP teachers' perspectives, this study seeks to contribute constructive awareness into the effectiveness of incorporating

global sustainability goals into English language teaching, with recommendations for both curriculum developers and teacher trainers. Ultimately, the findings of the study will provide a thorough understanding of how far FP teachers are able to adopt a teaching environment of sustainability and global knowledge within the context of their classroom instructions.

Furthermore, the findings of the current study will encourage institutions in designing their own frameworks and proposals for embedding the UN SDGs into the English language teaching curriculum. As UNESCO (2021) stresses, incorporating sustainability within teaching curricula can support learners with the target skills to address global challenges. Thus, this study contributes to academic education literature while also providing practical and reasonable recommendations to support the role of English educators in promoting sustainable development.

The current study aimed to investigate how far tertiary EFL teachers in Oman integrate the UN's education-related SDGs into their teaching practices, identify the barriers tertiary EFL teachers in Oman face on integrating the UN's education-related SDGs into ELT, and explore the working practices and effective strategies that can further enhance global awareness and sustainable education in the EFL context.

This research was conducted to find answers to three research questions (RQs) to attain the previously set objectives (ROs): to what extent could tertiary EFL teachers in Oman incorporate the UN's education-related SDGs into ELT? what are the challenges that might slow down the integration of the UN's education-related SDGs into ELT at the tertiary level in Oman? and how can ELT infuse the UN's education-related SDGs successfully and effectively?

## 2. Literature Review

UN SDGs, established and adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, comprise 17 interconnected sustainable development objectives, which are designed to address global challenges such as poverty, inequality, and environmental issues by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). Education, particularly English Language Teaching (ELT), plays an indispensable role in achieving these goals by fostering global citizenship, critical thinking, and cross-cultural communication skills, among others. Consequently, the incorporation of the UN SDGs into education in general has been given significant scholarly attention in recent years, as depicted in the considerable number of recently conducted studies; however, when it comes to ELT specifically, there is still a need for more research. In this section, authors critically discuss existing literature, taking into account that detecting a gap or more in a study does not usually mean a defect with it; it is more about finding room for future research, since it is not expected by any means that one study will do everything.

Literature has provided a rich record highlighting the integration of UN SDGs across various fields. One example is Corbett and Guilherme (2021). In a special issue Editorial Letter, Corbett and Guilherme (2021) solicited scholars and educationalists worldwide to offer a critical analysis of the continuing international influence of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy on contemporary educational paradigms, particularly in relation to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4) on quality education. They reported that authors' responses focused on Freire's emphasis on dialogues, empowerment and social justice that stand as foundational principles in intercultural and multilingual education while addressing global inequalities in education at the same time. Another review paper by Alcántara-Rubio, Valderrama-Hernández, Solís-Espallargas and Ruiz-Morales (2022) systematically reviewed studies published between 2015 and 2020 on integrating SDGs in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Their findings confirmed that SDG 4 (Quality Education) was the most frequently referenced goal, with universities primarily addressing SDGs through research and education. Thirdly, Park, Cho and Bong (2023) analyzed 85 journal articles published between 2004 and 2023, identifying action learning as a highly effective pedagogical tool for fostering critical thinking and problem-solving. Three themes were highlighted: research focus, literature analysis and comparison of global and Korean contexts. One last example was that by Amorós Molina, Helldán, Alfvén, Niemi, Leander, Nordenstedt, Rehn, Ndejjo, Wanyenze and Biermann (2023) who reviewed 20 peer-reviewed articles and 38 grey literature sources to explore how SDGs have been integrated into higher education universally. They could find out that when it comes to higher educational institutions otherwise regarded as HEIs, high-income countries adopt an academic approach, whereas low-to-middle-income countries emphasize real-world problem-solving. However, the role of language teaching, especially English, was not substantively addressed in any of review papers available to the researchers of the current study.

From an arching view of policies and strategic plans in HEIs, most studies criticized the status of effectively adopting SDGs into curricula which has posed a significant challenge on HEIs (Bautista Chamizo, Martinez-Martinez, Andrades Peña, Herrera Madueño & Larrán Jorge, 2024; Hong, Calderon & Coates, 2023; Leite, 2022; Nhamo, Chapungu & Dube, 2024; Prior, Seshadrinath, Zhang & McCormack, 2024). They argued that the majority of practices were supplementary to traditional curricula, rather than transforming the core of education. Their findings showed that contributions to the SDGs were inconsistent across universities, suggesting a generally low level of sustainability planning. They recommended stressing the need for educational policy reforms to truly incorporate UN SDGs into higher education with standardized frameworks for assessing SDG engagement into strategic and operational plans.

Justice and the quality of Education have received a great deal of interest in the literature. Some studies have revealed the dominance of some languages and marginalization of indigenous language speakers, tapping into an urgent need for inclusive language policies in sustainability-related communication where equitable access to multilingual learning resources remains underexplored (Quinto, Gando, Nantin & Novilla, 2024). In an attempt to promote SDGs 3, 4, 10, and 17, Khattab, Abdelwahab, Al-Shdifat, Alsiddiqi, Floccia, Hreich, McKean, Messarra, Odeh and Trebacz, (2023) addressed gaps in early language development support across Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Palestinian Territories. Their findings revealed disparities linked to maternal education, highlighting the importance of cross-sector

collaboration and family involvement.

Investigating students' knowledge, perception, and awareness of SDGs in an Indonesian public university, Novieastari, Pujasari, Abdul Rahman, Ganefianty and Rerung (2022) collected the responses of 138 students across various disciplines through an online survey. They unveiled a paradox among responses: while 76.8% of students demonstrated good theoretical knowledge of SDGs and 73.9% express favorable attitudes toward sustainability frameworks, nearly half (42%) struggle to contextualize these goals within real-world socioecological systems. These findings underscore the urgency of curricular reforms that move beyond declarative knowledge to foster applied, critical engagement with sustainability principles.

To reiterate and narrow the focus of this section on the growing global interest in the embedding of the UN SDGs into English language teaching (ELT), which is increasingly reflective of the attention now being paid to SDGs in ELT. Recent sources (e.g., Barber, 2023; Buller & Waters, 2024) emphasize that this global interest provides an opportunity for sustainability education to broaden its focus even more. These studies advocate adjusting and reframing ELT through a sustainability lens and embedding sustainability principles to reform the ELT curriculum. ELT, they argue, must be interlinked with the principles of sustainability if it is to further the realization of UN SDGs.

In their chapter, Chen and Lin (2021) discussed Taiwan's recent shift in English education, aligning it with broader goals of global competency and sustainable development. With the 2019 curriculum reform, English instruction extended beyond language skills to include cross-cultural awareness and an understanding of global issues, reflecting the 17 UN SDGs. The authors reviewed global competence education and detailed how they integrated both the SDGs and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) framework into a primary-level pre-service English teacher training course. This approach was expected to prepare future teachers not only to meet national educational reforms, such as the 12-Year Basic Education Curriculum and International Education Project 2.0, but also to design lessons that support students in becoming informed, adaptable, and socially responsible individuals. Moreover, Kwee's (2021) Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) driven study, which adopted synthesizing interviews and classroom observations, dissects institutional and psychological barriers to SDG integration in ELT. Teachers with institutional support and self-efficacy embedded sustainability into language curricula, while others dismissed it as peripheral—a tension Kwee attributes to fragmented professional training and siloed academic cultures. Though pioneering SCCT's role in sustainability education, the study overlooks whether such pedagogies foster critical language skills or merely rhetorical awareness. This lacuna highlights the urgency of studies tracking SDG-embedded ELT's dual impact on linguistic and ecological literacies. In an EFL context, Yılmaz Fındık, Bayram and Canaran (2021) analyzed Turkish pre-service ELT teachers' interpretations of sustainability through a mixed-methods study (N=133), revealing a neoliberal skew: most conflated Sustainable Development (SD) with economic agendas, neglecting ecological and sociocultural dimensions. Participants' awareness tended to be narrow, and no clear connections were made between SD and ELT. However, participants showed strong interest in an ELT-specific SD course, preferring it to be interactive, contextually relevant, and practice-oriented. Despite being limited to one institution, the study offered a context-based syllabus proposal that aimed to improve teacher candidates' awareness and ability to address SD themes in language education. In one more EFL context, Alcantud-Díaz and Lloret-Catalá (2023) explored qualitatively how inquiry-based learning (IBL) in EFL teacher training advances SDG integration, finding it boosts critical reflection and community engagement in pre-service educators. While IBL embeds sustainability into teaching methods, the study's narrow scope limits the claim of broader applicability. It urges cross-context studies to test scalability in linguistically diverse, policy-divergent settings.

Zorba (2023) investigated English for Academic Purposes (EAP) students' conceptualization of SDGs and its implications for higher education using a descriptive survey design with 360 undergraduate students from an English language and literature department at a Turkish state university. This cross-sectional study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods, revealing a predominant systems-thinking approach among students in quantitative data, indicating that participants viewed SDGs as an interconnected whole. However, qualitative findings revealed gaps in students' conceptualization of SDGs, suggesting a lack of critical engagement with sustainability themes beyond surface-level understanding. They stated that there is a pressing need for ELT programs to develop deeper pedagogical strategies that move beyond mere awareness-building to designing instructional materials that foster critical and interdisciplinary engagement with SDGs in higher education. Nevertheless, how ELT can better bridge general knowledge of SDGs with real-world sustainability challenges through experiential learning requires more investigation.

Mambu (2023) conducted a case study on embedding Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into critical English language teaching and learning (ELTL) in an undergraduate course in Indonesia. The study explored how English language instruction can serve as a platform for fostering critical engagement with global issues, particularly in non-English-speaking developing countries. Using teacher-selected SDG texts, teacher-initiated prompts, student worksheet responses, and classroom discussions, Mambu (2023) examined how students developed critical awareness of SDGs at linguistic, cognitive, pedagogical, and philosophical levels. Findings revealed that students critically engaged with sustainability topics by analyzing texts at word, sentence, and discourse levels, with responses shaped by Marxist, postmodernist/poststructuralist, and postcolonial critical perspectives. The study concluded that SDGs integration in ELTL could elicit students' critical literacy and global awareness. However, assessing the long-term impact of critical SDG-based ELTL on students' real-world interdisciplinary learning remains a gap to explore.

Cardiff, Polczynska and Brown (2024) examined higher education curriculum design for sustainable development, particularly within foreign language education, to address the slow integration of ESD in language curricula. Their study responded to the gap between

policy-driven SDG initiatives and practical implementation strategies, offering a transformative approach to ELT. Using a content and language integrated learning (CLIL) framework, they developed three elective English courses integrating SDG themes, focusing on global issues beyond environmental sustainability. Their findings emphasized the importance of socio-cultural context, teaching environment, and instructor expertise in shaping ESD-oriented language curricula. However, they acknowledged that the lack of structured institutional support and assessment frameworks hinders the systematic integration of SDGs in ELT.

Baker, Boonsuk, Ra, Sangiamchit and Snodin (2025) interrogated Thai study abroad (SA) students' intercultural citizenship formation within English-medium education (EME), contending that ELT remains central yet underdeveloped as a conduit for critical global engagement. Through semi-structured interviews with 14 students from three Thai universities, the study found diverse understandings of intercultural citizenship and English use, revealing a disconnect between ELT preparation and the multilingual, multicultural demands of international HE. While internationalized higher education (HE) aims to foster global citizens through intercultural interaction, concrete strategies to achieve this remain underdeveloped, necessitating further research.

Building on the existing literature, empirical evidence from EFL classrooms illustrates how SDG-related competencies such as sustainable thinking and ethical decision-making can be operationalized through language instruction. Previous studies revealed that when sustainability themes were embedded into language tasks, learners demonstrated higher levels of engagement and critical reflection. Similarly, there is potential for a critical pedagogy approach to integrate global citizenship ideals into ELT. While the theoretical promise is strong, the practical enactment of these ideas requires substantial positive perceptions and attitudes among teachers, tailored training, and curricular support. Together, these contributions lay a solid conceptual groundwork that positions the SDGs as both a challenge and an opportunity for ELT reform. Consequently, this study is a step towards this holistic goal. Despite this recent remarkable number of publications on SDGs and education, one research gap remains in its integration, specifically in ELT and assessing the long-term effectiveness of global competence training on teachers' classroom practices and students' learning outcomes, indicating the need for empirical studies on how SDG-focused pedagogy translates into actual ELT instruction and student engagement in sustainable development.

One more significant research gap that could be unveiled lies in the absence of empirical data concerning EFL teachers' perceptions, preparedness, and practical challenges in implementing SDG-aligned ELT within the Omani context. While prior studies have addressed teacher motivation and efficacy in integrating sustainability goals (e.g., Kwee, 2021; Chen & Lin, 2021), few have examined these dimensions in Middle Eastern educational settings, particularly in Oman, where English is taught as a foreign language and sustainability education is still developing within national policies. Limited evidence exists on how teachers in such contexts conceptualize the SDGs, their awareness and institutional support, or the teaching strategies they use to embed sustainability into language instruction. This study, using a broad-scale questionnaire and in-depth focus groups, seeks to address this void by examining Omani EFL teachers' engagement with the SDGs, identifying barriers to implementation, and capturing their practical suggestions. Unlike existing research that concentrates on curriculum frameworks (Cardiff, Polczynska & Brown, 2024) or critical pedagogy (Mambu, 2023), this investigation prioritizes data-driven insights into teacher perceptions and contextual constraints, thereby offering meaningful implications for policymakers, curriculum designers, and teacher education initiatives in light of Oman's 2040 Vision.

### 3. Research Design

#### 3.1 Materials and Methods

##### a. Mixed-Methods research

The current study utilized a mixed-methods research approach in an explanatory, sequential design, with data collected across two phases.

##### b. Participants of the study

The participants in the study consisted of 82 English Language teachers in Omani private universities, all of whom were teaching English courses in the Foundation programs. These teachers were selected as research samples representing the target population.

##### c. Data collection instrument

This study follows a mixed-methods approach using an explanatory sequential design (Creswell, 2017). The study utilized both quantitative and qualitative data, incorporating the use of a questionnaire and focus group sessions. The research was conducted in two phases, integrating the two types of instruments throughout the process.

In the first phase, a questionnaire was designed and was electronically distributed to 82 English language teachers in the Foundation Programs in Oman. The questionnaires were used to gather insights into teachers' awareness, their challenges while integrating SDGs, their professional development attempts and personal attitudes towards the SDGs. The results of the 82 participants are presented in the data analysis section.

The second phase involved focus group sessions, and the data collected were used as a reference to enhance the understanding of teachers' awareness and perceptions, the challenges they face in integrating SDGs, their professional development attempts and their personal attitudes towards SDGs. A total of 12 teachers were invited, but only 11 participated, with 5 in the first group and 6 in the second. Participants were divided into two groups based on varied teaching backgrounds and nationalities. They were asked five questions about their awareness, the integration process of SDGs and the challenges they face in integrating SDGs into their teaching practices. The

sessions were recorded with their permission, and transcripts were prepared immediately after the discussions. This phase provided valuable qualitative data.

#### d. Validity & Reliability

Both the questionnaire and focus group discussions were validated by a panel of EFL specialists in relation to the main and sub-questions. Based on the feedback received, some modifications were made to the questionnaire-and to the focus group discussion. The reliability statistics for the questionnaire represented a high level of internal consistency. With a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.926, both the original and standardized item analyses show strong reliability, indicating that the items within the questionnaire consistently measure the same underlying construct across the 6 sections. Table 1 shows the internal consistency of the questionnaire.

Table 1. Internal Consistency of the Questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.926	30

\*The calculated correlation value is significant at 0.5 level.

#### e. Limitations of the Study

One notable limitation of this study is its small scale. The research involved a sample of 82 EFL teachers from Foundation Programs across private universities in Oman. While this sample provides valuable insights, the findings may not be fully generalizable to all EFL teachers, particularly those working in public institutions or other educational contexts.

### 4. Analysis and Discussion

Data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 30.0.0).

#### 4.1 Phase 1: Data Analysis of the Questionnaire

In this part of the analysis, the responses of 82 participants who provided feedback on the integration of SDGs in the English Foundation Programs were examined. The questionnaire consisted of six sections. First, section 1 aimed to collect background information about the respondents' teaching profiles. Second, section 2 sought to assess participants' familiarity and awareness of SDGs. Section 3 aimed to investigate the extent to which teachers integrate the SDGs into their teaching. Section 4 tried to identify the challenges teachers face in integrating SDGs into their teaching practices. Section 5 was designed to explore teachers' professional development attempts regarding SDGs. While section 6 sought to identify teachers' attitudes towards integrating SDGs into their teaching.

This six-section framework comprehensively encompasses the demographic characteristics of the participants, as well as their insights and perceptions regarding the integration of SDGs, offering an integrated perspective on the entire integration of UN SDGs within language teaching courses in the Foundation Programs.

#### Section 1: Demographic data

The data in Table 2 illustrate the composition of the respondents (n=82) based on their gender: thirty-six males (43.9%) and forty-six females (56.1%).

Table 2. Frequency of Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	36	43.9	43.9	43.9
Female	46	56.1	56.1	100.0
Total	82	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 represents the respondents' experience in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at the tertiary level. The collected demographic data showed that all participants are currently teaching English in Omani private universities, and 54.9% of the participants have more than 10 years of experience of teaching English.

Table 3. Frequency of Years of Experience

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Less than 2	12	14.6	14.6	14.6
2-4	16	19.5	19.5	34.1
5-7	3	3.7	3.7	37.8
8-10	6	7.3	7.3	45.1
more than 10	45	54.9	54.9	100.0
Total	82	100.0	100.0	

Years of experience in EFL at tertiary level

82 responses

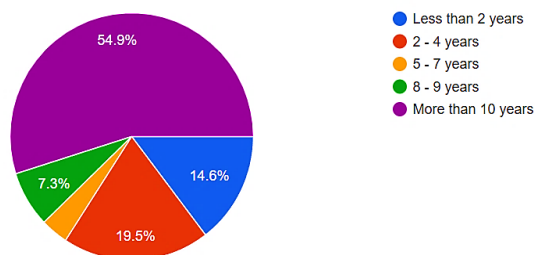


Figure 1. Participants' Years of Experience

## Section 2: Awareness of SDGs

Table 4 below tabularizes all descriptive statistics of the results collected for the six statements in Section 2 of the questionnaire in terms of respondents' awareness and perceptions of UN SDGs. Table 4 presents the mean scores, standard deviations, and range, among other calculations of each item individually, as well as for the overall section. More than half of the participants (59.7%) confirmed their knowledge of the SDGs. Moreover, 79.3% of participants declared the importance of SDGs in addressing global challenges. Another important element was confirmed by 70.7% of the participants that they can identify sustainability issues relevant to education. Also, 73.2% believed that SDGs are relevant and applicable to EFL teaching and 62.2% of the participants can effectively explain the concept of sustainability and SDGs to their students. However, 53.7% of the respondents indicated that they lack knowledge about the national and international initiatives related to SDGs.

Table 4. Awareness of SDGs

Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am familiar with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).	82	1.00	5.00	3.5488	1.04412
I understand the significance of SDGs in addressing global challenges.	82	1.00	5.00	3.8780	.89429
I can identify key sustainability issues that are relevant to education	82	1.00	5.00	3.7317	.87558
I believe that SDGs are relevant and applicable to EFL teaching.	82	1.00	5.00	3.8293	.82858
I can effectively explain the concept of sustainability and SDGs to my students.	82	1.00	5.00	3.6098	.93961
I am aware of national and international educational initiatives related to the SDGs.	82	1.00	5.00	3.3171	1.01687
Total	82	1.00	5.00	3.7195	.77099
Valid N (listwise)	82				

## Section 3: Integration of SDGs in EFL

Table 5 summarizes all descriptive statistics collected from Section 3 of the questionnaire, which tried to see to what extent teachers integrate SDGs in their teaching. The table shows the mean scores and the standard deviations of each item individually, as well as for the overall section. 80.5% of participants asserted the significant effect of incorporating SDGs into ELT in enhancing students' global awareness and critical thinking skills, 73.2% confirmed their attempts to engage students in discussions related to real-world sustainability challenges. Around 70% of the participants mentioned that their teaching practices encourage students to reflect on their role in achieving sustainability goals, and they use SDG-related topics and examples to teach core language skills. Only 48.8% mentioned that they develop lesson plans that align with SDGs whereas the remaining did not.

Table 5. Integration of SDGs in EFL

Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Incorporating SDGs into EFL lessons enhances students' global awareness and critical thinking skills.	82	1.00	5.00	3.9756	.86031
I actively engage students in discussions and activities that explore real-world sustainability challenges.	82	1.00	5.00	3.8659	.91304
I adapt my teaching materials and activities to include themes related to SDGs, such as climate change, gender equality, and poverty.	82	1.00	5.00	3.8415	.89539
My teaching practices encourage students to reflect on their role in achieving sustainability goals.	82	1.00	5.00	3.7805	.87523
I use SDG-related topics and examples to teach core language skills.	82	1.00	5.00	3.7195	.90642
I develop lesson plans that align with the themes of SDGs to foster deeper understanding.	82	1.00	5.00	3.3780	.93809
Total	82	1.50	5.00	3.7602	.66672
Valid N (listwise)	82				

#### Section 4: Challenges in Integrating SDGs

Table 6 below shows all the descriptive statistics related to the six items in Section 4 of the questionnaire, which tried to identify the challenges that teachers face while integrating SDGs into ELT. This table represents the mean score and the standard deviations of each item in this section individually, as well as for the overall section. 45.1% confirmed that the lack of professional training on SDGs limits their ability to integrate it into ELT teaching, while 41.5% were neutral and couldn't confirm. 47.5% indicated that finding adequate resources to integrate SDGs into teaching is a challenge for them while the remaining didn't agree that the availability of resources is a challenge. Additionally, 45.1% indicated that limited institutional support is an impediment to integrating SDGs, while 43% were neutral. 69.5% revealed that the main challenge is to have significant time and effort to integrate SDGs within the curriculum objectives. Almost two-thirds of the participants (60.6%) stated that students' attitudes are the main obstacle to integrating SDGs. Only 34.2% agreed that adapting SDG content to meet the diverse language proficiency levels of students is not a priority in the EFL curriculum, while the remaining disagreed or were unsure.

Table 6. Challenges in Integrating SDGs

Statements	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Lack of adequate professional training limits my ability to integrate SDGs into my teaching effectively.	82	1.00	5.00	3.4390	.91756
Finding appropriate and relevant resources to incorporate SDGs into EFL lessons is challenging.	82	1.00	5.00	3.4146	.87420
Limited institutional support for embedding SDGs into the EFL curriculum hinders implementation.	82	1.00	5.00	3.3659	.88209
Integrating SDG themes into EFL lessons requires significant time and effort to align with curriculum objectives.	82	1.00	5.00	3.7927	.91271
Students' varying levels of interest and engagement with SDG-related topics create obstacles in teaching.	82	1.00	5.00	3.6585	.98406
Adapting SDG content to meet the diverse language proficiency levels of students is not a priority in the EFL curriculum.	82	1.00	5.00	3.0610	1.10384
Total	82	1.00	5.00	3.4553	.70955
Valid N (listwise)	82				

#### Section 5: Professional Development

Table 7 displays all the descriptive statistics related to the six items in Section 5 of the questionnaire, which identified the professional development attempts of the teachers to integrate SDGs into ELT. This table represents the mean score and the standard deviations of each item individually, as well as for the overall section. More than half of the participants (57.4%) asserted that they haven't attended sufficient training focused on incorporating SDGs into ELT. 54.9% confirmed their ability to design EFL lessons around SDGs, while the remaining were not confident. Another important element was confirmed by 74.4% about the importance of professional development programs for EFL teachers. Another valuable element was confirmed by 84.2% of the participants that collaboration with colleagues boosts their ability to integrate SDGs into teaching practices. 61% asserted their willingness to seek resources and training to expand their knowledge of SDGs and their integration into EFL. The majority of the participants (84.1%) affirmed having a dedicated platform providing SDG-related EFL resources to support their teaching.

Table 7. Professional Development

Statements	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I have attended sufficient training or workshops focused on incorporating SDGs into ELT.	82	1.00	5.00	2.4756	1.15711
I feel confident in my ability to design EFL lessons centered around SDGs.	82	1.00	5.00	3.5000	.94608
Professional development programs focused on SDGs are essential for EFL teachers.	82	1.00	5.00	3.9268	.88583
Collaboration with colleagues can boost my ability to integrate SDGs into my teaching practices.	82	1.00	5.00	4.0366	.72767
I actively seek resources and training to expand my knowledge of SDGs and their integration into EFL.	82	1.00	5.00	3.6585	.89193
A dedicated platform providing SDG-related EFL resources would support my teaching.	82	1.00	5.00	4.0854	.72352
Total	82	1.00	5.00	3.6138	.61802
Valid N (listwise)	82				

#### Section 6: Personal Attributes Towards SDGs

Table 8 encapsulates all the descriptive statistics related to the six items in Section 6 of the questionnaire, which tried to identify teachers' personal attributes towards SDGs. This table summarizes the mean score and the standard deviations of each item individually, as well as for the overall section. 63 participants (76.9%) mentioned that integrating SDGs into their teaching aligns with their personal values and teaching philosophy. Around 46.3 % agreed that teaching SDGs contributes to building students as responsible global citizens, 76.9%

asserted that sustainability education is equally important as teaching language skills in EFL and 79.2% agreed that incorporating SDGs in EFL inspires students to take action on global sustainability challenges. Almost 90% believed that promoting SDGs awareness in their teaching enhances students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. More than two-thirds of the participants (68.3%) agreed that raising awareness about global challenges through SDGs is a critical responsibility of EFL teachers.

Table 8. Personal Attributes Towards SDGs

Statements	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Integrating SDGs into my teaching aligns with my personal values and teaching philosophy.	82	1.00	5.00	3.8902	.75369
Teaching SDGs contributes to building students as responsible global citizens.	82	1.00	5.00	4.2439	.76273
Sustainability education is equally important as teaching language skills in EFL.	82	1.00	5.00	3.9878	.89572
Incorporating SDGs in EFL inspires students to take action on global sustainability challenges.	82	1.00	5.00	4.1098	.80133
I believe that promoting awareness of SDGs in my teaching enhances students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.	82	1.00	5.00	4.1463	.68713
Raising awareness about global challenges through SDGs is a critical responsibility of EFL teachers.	82	1.00	5.00	3.7805	.80161
Total	82	1.00	5.00	4.0264	.64175
Valid N (listwise)	82				

The statistical analysis indicates that all non-demographic sections of the questionnaire are relevant. Table 9 represents the descriptive statistics for sections 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. It displays the minimum and maximum values, mean scores and the standard deviations for each of the five sections, demonstrating their internal consistency and relevance.

Table 9. The Five Sections of the Questionnaire

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Awareness of SDGs	82	1.00	5.00	3.7195	.77099
Integration of SDGs in EFL	82	1.50	5.00	3.7602	.66672
Challenges in integrating SDGs	82	1.00	5.00	3.4553	.70955
Professional Development	82	1.00	5.00	3.6138	.61802
Personal Attributes Towards SDGs	82	1.00	5.00	4.0264	.64175
Valid N (listwise)	82				

To identify the differences between the research groups, the researchers performed a *t*-test analysis to examine the difference between male and female participants' awareness of the SDGs. The results revealed that there is no significant difference between males and females in their responses. The researchers ascribe this to several factors: all participants teach the same language courses, have similar levels of teaching experiences, and work at private universities in Oman, where they teach students of comparable academic level and cultural background.

Table 10 shows that there are no statistically significant differences between both males and females as *t*-test value (0.719) is non-significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

Table 10. Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Awareness	Equal variances assumed	.602	.440	.719	80	.474	.12367	.17208	-.21878	.46612
	Equal variances not assumed			.745	79.794	.458	.12367	.16600	-.20670	.45404

Not significant at 0.05 level

Additionally, the researchers used a one-way ANOVA test to compare awareness level across different years of teaching experience. The results showed a strong positive correlation level between participants' awareness level of SDGs and their years of experience. Participants with more than 10 years of experience demonstrated higher levels of awareness and perception of SDGs.

Tables 11 and 12 represent the results of the ANOVA analysis and post hoc analysis.



Table 11. Awareness across years of Experience

Dependent Variable	Tukey HSD						95% Confidence Interval	
	(I) Experience	(J) Experience	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
AA	Less than 2	2-4	-.45833	.27390	.456		-.1.2235	.3068
		5-7	.33333	.46298	.951		-.9600	1.6266
		8-10	.06667	.35862	1.000		-.9351	1.0685
		more than 10	-.69333*	.23303	.031		-.1.3443	-.0424
	2-4	Less than 2	.45833	.27390	.456		-.3068	1.2235
		5-7	.79167	.45125	.408		-.4689	2.0522
		8-10	.52500	.34335	.547		-.4341	1.4841
		more than 10	-.23500	.20877	.793		-.8182	.3482
	5-7	Less than 2	-.33333	.46298	.951		-.1.6266	.9600
		2-4	-.79167	.45125	.408		-.2.0522	.4689
		8-10	-.26667	.50717	.984		-.1.6834	1.1501
		more than 10	-1.02667	.42768	.126		-.2.2214	.1680
	8-10	Less than 2	-.06667	.35862	1.000		-.1.0685	.9351
		2-4	-.52500	.34335	.547		-.1.4841	.4341
		5-7	.26667	.50717	.984		-.1.1501	1.6834
		more than 10	-.76000	.31172	.116		-.1.6308	.1108
	more than 10	Less than 2	.69333*	.23303	.031		.0424	1.3443
		2-4	.23500	.20877	.793		-.3482	.8182
		5-7	1.02667	.42768	.126		-.1.680	2.2214
		8-10	.76000	.31172	.116		-.1.108	1.6308

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 12. Post hoc Analysis of Awareness &amp; Experience

Experience	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05
		1
5-7	3	2.9333
8-10	6	3.2000
Less than 2	12	3.2667
2-4	16	3.7250
more than 10	45	3.9600
Sig.		.053

The researchers also identified the relationship between respondents' awareness of SDGs and the extent they integrate the SDGs in their teaching practices. A Pearson Correlation test was conducted to examine the relationship between these variables. The results revealed a positive correlation (.538) at 0.01 level between teachers' awareness of the SDGs and their integration of the goals into their teaching. Table 13 represents the correlation results.

Table 13. Correlations between Teachers' awareness and integration of SDGs

Awareness of SDGs	Pearson Correlation	Awareness of SDGs	Integration of SDGs
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	82	82
Integration of SDGs	Pearson Correlation	.538**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	82	82

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

#### 4.2 Phase 2 Data Analysis of the Focus Group Results

The researchers conducted two sessions for focus group discussion, consisting of 11 participants who are experienced in teaching English. Following ethical guidelines for qualitative research, discussions were recorded with prior consent and later transcribed. Thematic analysis was applied to the transcripts using an inductive approach guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. These sessions provided valuable qualitative data. The sessions started with the researchers presenting five questions about teachers' integration of the UN SDGs into their ELT classrooms, the challenges they face in integrating SDGs in ELT classrooms, and the kind of support they need to overcome these challenges. Eleven (11) participants were divided into two groups and were invited to discuss the questions provided. Each group consisted of participants with varied teaching backgrounds, experiences and different nationalities. Each group responded to the questions and offered reasons to support their opinions. The data gathered unveiled valuable insights into the participants' awareness of the SDGs and the extent to which they integrate these goals into ELT. Furthermore, the discussions revealed remarkable insights into the challenges that ELT teachers encounter when integrating SDGs into their teaching and revealed their suggestions for the support needed from higher education institutes. Most of the participants emphasized that their awareness of SDGs is recent through professional development sessions and institutional

initiatives. Despite this, there is a growing recognition of the relevance of SDGs to ELT. *"From my personal experience, I didn't know anything about the SDGs until this academic year, when the director of the International Relations Office at DU came and gave a professional development for us, and part of her professional development was the SDGs, which were enlightening."* *"I would just say that we have got that sense of awareness that has been created towards what sustainability is, and how it can be applied, how we can just take that and apply it in our day-to-day functions."* *"So, when we got the mail invitation to participate in the research, that's when I actually thought about sustainability"*. Teachers are only beginning to understand the role of SDGs in ELT; they are aware of some of the SDGs, not all of them. One teacher mentioned that he is aware of the goals, but not in detail. *"I am aware of the goals generally, but not all of them in detail.....I know SDG 4 quality education"...* *"this policy has only been highlighted recently, within the last year to a little bit over a year.....I would say that this is not being used by myself, personally."*

Several participants noted that ELT inherently supports SDGs, especially through its role in promoting global citizenship, cross-cultural communication, and critical thinking. *"I think learning English itself aligns with the sustainability goal, because that makes them aware of what's happening internationally, plus it kind of prepares them to be a global citizen, instead of just, you know, focusing within the community or within the nation itself. So, ELT as a concept itself, I think aligns with sustainable development."*... *"language teachers have got that upper hand ..... we can cover a variety of topics ..... which can touch upon many SDGs."* Most of the teachers confirmed that SDGs topics emerge naturally while teaching English but without a structured content *"Teaching English gives us opportunities to talk about the SDGs and global issues, so it fits naturally."* *"So, we are actually, knowingly, unknowingly, we are dealing with all these topics .... but we don't actually relate it."* *"All of this has been under the umbrella of "we're just teaching them English"..."* *"not necessarily explaining to our students, why are we learning this."*

Participants referred to some concrete examples of embedding SDGs-related contents into classroom activities across different academic levels *"I can give an example from level two. Unit Three, we have transportation topic which is also in alignment with one of the SDG goals, sustainable development of cities. So, I use it for a discussion session .....students find the most sustainable way to improve transportation ....., to align language objectives with the content, I pre taught the functional language and the vocabulary. Before starting the discussion, they already had information like what kind of phrases they could use and what kind of target vocabulary they are supposed to use. So, this way we were able to balance."* *"unit eight, which deals with natural....the writing skill, is to discuss causes and solutions for a problem, and because of the topic of the unit it is going to be an environmental problem"*. *"Also, unit 1: relationships...we can talk about gender equality in families."* There is recognition that contextualizing SDGs within Oman society and students' lives increases engagement and relevance *"I usually brought also the Oman 2030, goals and how sustainability is part of that. And they know a lot about it, actually."* *"80% of the deaths in Oman are caused by NCDs, so non communicable diseases..... by creating more awareness for the kids about health and wellness and physical activity, you reduce those levels and the strain on the medical system as well."* *"we did one on animals, like we asked the students to select two animals and make a kind of a zoo in Oman and then write a compare and contrast essay. We targeted the language there of compare and contrast. We also did it with cities....So actually, we've been using this in our day-to-day lessons, but without knowing that these were SDGs."* While some SDGs-related contents are present in course materials or organically emerge in class, they lack explicit framing, intentional linkage to global goals, and reflective teaching practices.

Participants identified several obstacles to deeper integration, including language proficiency, limited time, students' attitudes, assessment misalignment, and instructional overload. The most noticeable obstacle is the language proficiency level *"Language barrier; language barrier is the most, noticeable one because we are dealing with students mostly with low level in English. So, let's say A2- B1 they cannot understand this kind of concepts and words."* *"if the students' levels are very low, it's difficult for them to understand the vocabulary"*. Participants also mentioned that time constraints were another barrier *"Most of us will focus on students' perspective. If you are considering the teacher's perspective, we are under pressure because we have only 12 weeks of teaching to focus on the curriculum itself, assessments, which midterm final exams quizzes in between, and then to include, you know, these goals, they might need more time to focus so teachers might feel that there is a pressure when it comes to integration of the goals with the current curriculum."* Students' attitude is another obstacle for integrating SDGs in ELT. *"some students who are not passionate about certain topics, for example, sustainable energy..... they don't care, and they don't want to discuss sustainable energy sources.....They don't want to put in much work on it."* Another barrier is assessment misalignment with SDGs. *"Another barrier, I would say, is assessment. Because assessment is not aligned with SDGs. We focus more on language acquisition and our learning outcomes, our assessments, they are language-focused more than sustainability-focused."* Some participants indicated that the assessment process stands as a basic barrier, as they have to follow the assessment scheme presented by the college, which doesn't incorporate the assessment of the SDGs in its practices.

One last obstacle was instructional overload. *"As an instructor, that's a barrier for me to know what's what is mine to prioritize? Are they equally important? Should I prioritize some of the goals more than I do others in the ELT curriculum. I think when we look at the curriculum that we have, we can tick off a number of them, but there are some that are there are gaps. Is that mine to fill? I think that's a barrier for me when I look at how to put them into the content that I teach."* Participants highlighted the need for clear clarifications on the number of SDGs needed to be covered and which ones should be emphasized based on the institutional vision and mission.

Although efforts are being made to integrate SDGs, participants feel that its impact on their students' critical thinking, linguistic development and global citizenship is still limited and under-realized. *"Maybe I would just say that we are in the preliminary level of introducing this kind of stuff into our curriculum...it may take some more time."* *"I think the unfulfilled potential is that it that we have curricula, and we have extra curricula, and I think our unfulfilled potential is the extra curricula."*

Some participants acknowledged that institutional support and instructional professional development sessions play a vital role in initiating awareness and actions: *“two things, awareness and training. Because awareness, the awareness session we’ve had earlier, has really made a big difference. So that’s one part, plus intensive training sessions. These two I think could support teachers in fulfilling these SDGs.” “I think first thing we need good training, provide us with training workshops.”*

In conclusion, the integration of SDGs into ELT at the tertiary level in Oman is still in the early but promising stages. While awareness and willingness among educators are growing, there are some substantial barriers, especially at the pedagogical and structural levels, that must be addressed to realize the full potential of SDGs-related education in language teaching.

#### 4.3 Discussion

To answer the research questions, both the questionnaire responses and the focus group discussions were analyzed. The following are revealed in response to the research questions:

Research question 1 aimed to determine the extent to which tertiary EFL teachers in Oman can incorporate the UN’s education-related SDGs into ELT. The data analysis showed that EFL teachers in private universities in Oman are indeed capable of incorporating the UN’s education-related SDGs into their English language teaching. In fact, 80.5% of participants confirmed the significant effect of integrating SDGs into ELT in improving students’ global awareness and developing their critical thinking skills. Furthermore, 73.2% of the participants reported actively engaging their students in discussions related to real-world sustainability challenges. In addition, 70% respondents to the questionnaire and nearly all the focus group participants highlighted that the textbooks currently in use include sustainability-related topics. They also noted that their teaching practices encourage students to reflect deeply on their roles in achieving the desired goals.

However, the findings also indicated that most teachers are still in the early stages of familiarizing themselves with the SDGs and how to integrate them into their practices. Many participants emphasized the need for more professional development sessions to support the successful and meaningful integration of SDGs-related content into their teaching practices.

**Research Question 2** sought to identify the challenges that may hinder the integration of the UN’s education-related SDGs into ELT at the tertiary level in Oman. Data analysis revealed several perceived barriers reported by the participants. One of the most prominent challenges mentioned by nearly all focus group participants was students’ low language proficiency. Teachers explained that students often struggle with comprehending sustainability-related terms and texts or engaging in meaningful discussions about global issues, which limits the depth of integration of SDGs into the curriculum.

Another significant barrier was limited instructional time. Approximately 69.5% of respondents highlighted that the substantial time and effort required to align SDGs-related content with existing curriculum objectives may make it difficult to incorporate sustainability topics effectively. Closely related to this is the reported lack of adequate resources, as highlighted by 47.5% of the respondents, who emphasized the scarcity of appropriate teaching materials that support SDGs integration in EFL context.

In addition, unclear and misaligned assessment techniques and uncertainty about how they can be applied were also cited as a hindrance. Many teachers expressed uncertainty regarding how to assess and evaluate students’ learning outcomes in relation to SDGs-related content. Furthermore, 60.6% of the teachers confirmed that students’ negative attitudes or general unwillingness to engage with sustainability issues represented a significant obstacle. These attitudinal challenges were seen as closely tied to students’ motivation and awareness levels.

Other challenges included a lack of adequate professional training on how to incorporate SDGs effectively, as well as instructional overload with teachers already managing a heavy workload. Limited institutional support was also noted, with 45.1% of the participants. Collectively, these challenges are consistently identified as serious barriers to the effective implementation of SDGs into ELT practices at the tertiary level in Oman.

**Research Question 3** explored how English language teachers can successfully and effectively infuse the UN’s education-related SDGs in their ELT context. The results indicated that more than two-thirds of the participants emphasized the need for intensive professional development courses to effectively incorporate SDGs into their ELT practices. At the same time, 54.9% of the teachers confirmed their ability to plan lessons around sustainability goals. Furthermore, 84.2% highlighted the importance of collaborating with their colleagues to enhance their capacity for successful SDGs integration.

Additionally, (61%) of the participants expressed a willingness to seek out resources and training to expand their knowledge of SDGs and their application in EFL. A large majority (84.1) agreed that having access to a dedicated platform offering SDG-related EFL resources would significantly support their teaching efforts.

Notably, 76.9% (63 participants) reported that integrating sustainability goals into their teaching affiliates with their personal values and teaching philosophy. Similarly, 46.3 % of teachers supported the view that teaching SDGs contributes to building students into responsible global citizens. Another 76.9% stated that sustainability education is equally important as teaching language skills in EFL contexts.

The study also found that 79.2% of the participants agreed that incorporating SDGs in EFL encourages students to engage actively with global sustainability challenges. Moreover, 90% of the teachers believed that promoting SDGs awareness in their teaching enhances students’ critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Finally, more than two-thirds of the participants (68.3%) affirmed that raising awareness of global challenges through SDGs is a key responsibility of EFL educators.

Lastly, the findings of this study provide valuable insight into the integration of the UN’s SDGs into ELT at the tertiary level in Oman. The

data clearly demonstrated that EFL teachers in private universities are both aware of and willing to incorporate SDGs into their teaching, recognizing the potential of such integration to enhance students' global awareness, critical thinking, and engagement with real-world issues. However, the study highlights several significant barriers that must be addressed – namely: students' language proficiency, time constraints, lack of resources and training, unclear assessment strategies, and limited institutional support. The results also indicate strong teacher motivation and a shared belief in the value of sustainability education. Many educators expressed a desire for professional development, collaboration, and resource sharing platforms to better support their efforts. Collectively, these findings underscore the need for systemic support and targeted interventions to empower EFL teachers in Oman to effectively embed SDGs into their pedagogical practices and foster a generation of learners equipped to tackle global sustainability challenges.

The findings from the current study reveal remarkable alignment with existing literature while highlighting context-driven distinctions in SDG integration within ELT. In relation to existing literature (Corbett & Guilherme, 2021; Alcántara-Rubio et al., 2022), EFL teachers in the Omani higher education sector demonstrated a strong conceptual understanding of SDG 4's importance (79.3% *recognized SDGs' role in addressing global challenges*), reinforcing quality education as a foundational priority. This consistency reflects shared exposure to international sustainability discourses. Furthermore, mirroring critiques by Cardiff, Polczynska and Brown (2024) and Bautista Chamizo, Martinez-Martinez, Andrades Peña, Herrera Madueño and Larrán Jorge (2024), less than half participants reported institutional barriers hindering systematic integration (45.1% *cited limited support*), confirming that supplementary adoption persists globally due to insufficient structural frameworks. However, some key variations were found during the process of cross-checking of findings. Unlike East Asian contexts, where curriculum reform drives integration (Chen & Lin, 2021), teachers in the Omani EFL context emphasized pragmatic adaptation to low student proficiency (as in the thematic analysis: *the most noticeable obstacle is language proficiency level*), reflecting Oman's unique sociolinguistic context priorities. Surprisingly, while studies in Turkey and Indonesia identified neoliberal interpretations of sustainability (Yılmaz Fındık, Bayram & Canaran, 2021) or critical pedagogy gaps (Mambu, 2023), this research scrutinized results unveiled teacher-driven demands for localized resources and collaborative professional development (84.1% *prioritized dedicated SDG-ELT platforms*). This variation likely stems from methodological focus, coupled with Oman's policy-led educational modernization. The strong correlation ( $r=.538, p<.01$ ) between teaching awareness and SDG integration further distinguishes this study, suggesting contextual expertise mediates implementation capacity. These alignments validate persistent systemic challenges, while the distinctions highlight the significant influence of regional educational policies and linguistic contexts on pedagogical practices.

## 5. Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations

This study examined the extent to which tertiary EFL teachers at private universities in Oman are integrating the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into English Language teaching, as well as the challenges and support mechanisms involved. The findings demonstrate that a significant number of EFL teachers are actively incorporating SDGs-related themes into their teaching practices, recognizing their importance in enhancing students' global awareness, critical thinking, and engagement with real-world issues. While there is clear willingness and conceptual understanding among educators, the study also revealed persistence barriers, including low student language performance, limited instructional time, inadequate resources, unclear assessment techniques, and insufficient institutional support. Despite these obstacles, the strong alignment between teachers' values and sustainability education, along with a demand for professional development and collaboration, offers a promising foundation for deepening SDGs integration into the EFL context in Oman.

The results of this study have several practical and theoretical implications, among which are the following. The first highlight is that the teacher's agency is critical. In other words, teachers' personal commitment and values significantly influence the success of SDGs integration, underscoring the need to empower teachers as change agents. Additionally, professional capacity building is important as there is an urgent need to design context-sensitive training programs that build teachers' pedagogical skills and content knowledge around SDGs. Moreover, curricula and institutional alignment as the integration of SDGs shall be supported by curriculum reform, clearer assessment frameworks, and institutional policies that reflect sustainability priorities. The last highlight is the localization of resources. The call for culturally and linguistically appropriate SDG-related teaching materials emphasizes the importance of localized approaches over imported frameworks.

In light of the study's findings and the challenges identified, the following ten recommendations are proposed. First, targeted professional development programs that focus on practical methods of integrating SDGs into ELT should be tailored to the linguistic and cultural realities of Omani learners to enhance teachers' capacity for SDGs integration. Second, dedicated resource platforms shall be created with more institutional backing. These steps will ensure developing localized SDG-aligned teaching resources through a centralized platform accessible to EFL instructors nationwide. Third, instructional collaboration and policy support could be encouraged, ensuring that universities provide the necessary time, training, and resources for effective SDG integration. Fourth, assessment frameworks would be designed to allow teachers to evaluate students' learning outcomes related to sustainability themes in addition to language proficiency. Fifth, awareness should be raised among students in order to support their engagement through language-level-appropriate sustainability activities that foster both language skills and responsible citizenship. Sixth, curriculum objectives shall be aligned with sustainability themes by embedding SDG-related learning outcomes into course design. Seventh and simultaneously, initiating awareness campaigns or classroom discussions will help students understand the relevance of sustainability, and thereby enhance both engagement and implementation. Eighth, supporting EFL teachers in integrating SDGs meaningfully into ELT can contribute to fostering responsible, globally minded learners capable of engaging with the world's most pressing challenges. Ninth, EFL teachers shall project role models for learners in sustainability-oriented education. Lastly, themes like energy saving and maintaining class electrical and electronic equipment should be

prioritized to raise students' awareness.

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### **Authors' contributions**

All authors, Dr. Bait Ali Sulaiman, Dr. Khallaf and Dr. Abugohar, have contributed substantially and equally to the conduction of this study from the conceptualization, design, preparation, data collection, data analysis and interpretation to the drafting, finalizing, and editing of the manuscript.

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### **Competing interests**

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### **Informed consent**

All participants' consent was obtained at the onset of data collection while maintaining their full liberty whether to participate or not and the option to withdraw and exclude their responses at any stage of research. Participants' identities were kept confidential and anonymous without fail.

### **Ethics approval**

Dhofar University Research Ethics & Biosafety Committee has approved that this study meets the ethics criteria and approved means and methods of data collection under the reference number of (DU-AY-24-25-QUES-019).

Throughout all stages and procedures of the current research, guidelines and regulations of the 1963 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments were considered and followed.

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