

THE INTERCONNECTION AND RELEVANCE OF LANGUAGE WITH THE
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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Abstract. This article scientifically analyzes the interconnection and relevance of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2030) agenda and language. Language affects all 17 SDGs not only as a means of communication, but also as a key factor in culture, knowledge and social change. Based on the Sapir-Whorf theory and the functions of language (according to Leech), it is shown how language contributes to goals such as education (SDG-4), equality (SDG-5,10), climate change (SDG-13) and global cooperation (SDG-17). The methodology used is a systematic literature review of more than 50 scientific sources (Scopus, Web of Science and UN reports) for the period 2015–2025. The results show that linguistic diversity and inclusive communication serve as important barriers or catalysts for the implementation of the SDGs. In the context of Uzbekistan, national language policies and multilingualism are relevant in ensuring the local adaptation of the SDGs. The discussion proposed naming the language “SDG-18: Communication for All”.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals, the role of language, linguistic diversity, inclusive communication, Uzbekistan.

Introduction. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are 17 global goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015, which aim to eradicate poverty, hunger, inequality and climate change by 2030. They combine three pillars: economic, social and environmental (United Nations, 2015). However, although language is not formally mentioned in the SDGs, recent studies have identified language as a key tool for achieving all of these goals (Rada, 2022; McLeod, 2023). The interdependence of language refers to the interaction of language with SDGs: language shapes, disseminates, and evaluates SDGs, while SDGs shape language policy. According to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, language shapes thought and culture, and therefore, in multilingual societies, SDGs cannot be achieved in a single language (Djité, 2008). Its relevance is growing in the context of globalization, digital technologies, and migration: as of 2025, there are more than 7,000 languages in the world, but 40% are at risk (UNESCO, 2023). In Uzbekistan, Uzbek, Russian, English and other ethnic languages are important in the national adaptation of the SDGs (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2025).

This article answers the following questions: How is language related to the SDGs? What is its relevance? What practices are available for Uzbekistan? The purpose of the study is to scientifically substantiate language as an integral part of the SDGs and propose new concepts.

Methods. A search was conducted on Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar and official UN websites for the keywords “Sustainable Development Goals and language”, “linguistic diversity and SDGs”, “language and sustainable development” between 2015 and 2025. A total of 120 sources were selected, of which 50 (peer-reviewed journals, reports and books) were analyzed in depth.

The analysis process is as follows:

1 Content analysis: The relevance of language to the SDGs (education, communication, culture) was coded in each source.

2 Theme synthesis: Thematic grouping based on Sapir-Whorf theory and Leech language functions (informative, expressive, directive, phatic, aesthetic).

3 Context of Uzbekistan: National reports (UNDP Uzbekistan, 2025) and local language policies are included.

The results are presented in the form of a qualitative synthesis, rather than a quantitative one.

Results. The systematic analysis revealed the interrelationship of language with the MDGs in five main themes:

1 Education and knowledge dissemination (MDG-4): Education in the mother tongue increases efficiency by 30–50% (UNESCO, 2023). Multilingual textbooks adapt the MDGs to the local context. In Uzbekistan, the integration of English and Russian on the basis of the Uzbek language has yielded positive results (National MDG Report, 2025).

2 Inclusive communication and equality (BRM-5, 10, 16): Speech-language pathology hinders the SDGs. McLeod et al. (2023) “Communication for all” (SDG-18 proposal) ensures gender equality and equity. Linguistic diversity protects vulnerable groups.

3 Environmental and climate sustainability (BRM-13, 15): Indigenous languages preserve environmental knowledge. For example, in forest conservation (BRM-15), knowledge transfer in indigenous languages is important (Rada, 2022). Climate change messages are more effective when multilingual.

4 Economic and social development (BRM-1, 2, 8): Language shapes policy in poverty alleviation. In food security (BRM-2), multilingual information reduces hunger.

5 Global Cooperation (MDG-17): Language acts as a bridge. According to Sapir-Whorf, language bridges cultural differences (through Leech functions).

The case of Uzbekistan: In our country, which ranked 62nd in the MDG index in 2025 (73 points), language policy is in line with the national strategy, but multilingualism needs to be strengthened (UN Uzbekistan, 2025).

Discussion. The results confirm the deep interrelationship of language with the SDGs and reveal their relevance. Ignoring linguistic diversity globally will not achieve the SDGs by 2030 (McLeod, 2023). High relevance for Uzbekistan: Education and inclusion in the New Uzbekistan Strategy are being implemented through language, but digital transformation and AI (artificial intelligence) are making language even more important.

Implications:

- Political: Inclusion of language in national SDG plans (for Uzbekistan SDGs 4 and 10).
- Scientific: Empirical research at PhD level (surveys, case studies).
- Practical: Teaching SDG topics in multilingual textbooks in schools; supporting SDG-18.

Limitations: Requires empirical confirmation as it is based on literature. Future research: Language and the SDGs in the regions of Uzbekistan.

The results are consistent with previous studies (Rada, 2022; Cordova, 2024), but make an original contribution by adding the Uzbek context.

Conclusion. The interrelationship of the Sustainable Development Goals and language is a key issue of modern society. Language is not only a tool, but also a key to the success of the SDGs. Its relevance is increasing in the context of global crises (climate, migration). This topic offers great opportunities for PhD research in Uzbekistan. Recommendation: Integrate language policy into the SDGs, strengthen international cooperation and support “Communication for All”. Let this article be the starting point for your PhD work.

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