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GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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Abstract

The paper addresses the UN sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the lens of English language instruction, centred around English for law enforcement. It elaborates on the link between SDGs and law enforcement and English language instruction, offering ideas for presenting SDGs-related topics and vocabulary in the classroom. It focuses on classroom activities for presenting vocabulary on gender-based violence in English, in the context of SDG5 - Gender Equality. The suggested activities are aimed at raising learners' awareness of the importance of the issue of gender equality through elaboration of this topic and acquisition of gender-based violence vocabulary. They will help them identify the semantic nuances between different concepts related to gender-based violence and will also enhance their professional skills necessary for their future profession, including the achievement of the SDGs linked to law enforcement.

Keywords: English; gender-based violence vocabulary; instruction; classroom activities

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, envisaged as “a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity” (United Nations 2024d), which “also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom” (ibid). This Agenda is based on 17 Strategic Development Goals, each comprising several targets to be reached in the initially set fifteen-year period. These goals and targets are focused on the economic, social and environmental aspect of sustainable development (ibid). They are primarily inspired by the poverty, inequality, global threats to security and health, high levels of unemployment, as well as environmental challenges, which altogether pose a risk to the existence of life on the planet, as well as its own one. The achievement of these goals and targets will contribute to making balance between the countries and people, in terms of access to and quality of education, inclusion in the society, respect for human rights, etc., making the planet a better place to live. More specifically, the Strategic Development Goals refer to the following: 1) No Poverty ; 2) Zero Hunger; 3) Good Health and Well-Being; 4) Quality Education; 5) Gender Equality; 6) Clean Water and Sanitation; 7) Affordable and Clean Energy; 8) Decent Work and Economic Growth; 9) Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; 10) Reduced Inequalities; 11) Sustainable Cities and Communities; 12) Responsible Consumption and Production; 13) Climate Action; 14) Life Below Water; 15) Life On Land;

16) Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions; and 17) Partnerships for the Goals (United Nations 2024c).

To achieve these goals by 2030 the countries will take measures, which, inter alia, means engagement of professionals specializing in the specific fields covered by the said Agenda. This, as well, means inclusion of teachers, who, at various levels, contribute to development of students' skills and knowledge necessary for reaching the envisaged goals. Language teachers may also play an important role in this process, taking into consideration that through language instruction and presentation of different topics, they develop other skills among the students which prepare them for life. In this aspect, we agree with Maley and Peachey (2017, 7) that “through what they teach and their attitudes and practices, they have an enduring influence on the future attitudes and personalities of their students”. This also applies to their engagement in the context of the SDGs later in their lives and professional careers.

In this regard, we also recognise the role of teachers of languages for specific purposes (LSP), including teachers of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), who may contribute to shaping learners' attitudes and raise their awareness of the relevance of certain issues, through LSP instruction. If we analyse the projected SDGs, we may conclude that many of them cover topics that can be linked to the domain of law enforcement. Therefore, they can serve as the basis for extracting relevant vocabulary to be taught in the English language classroom. One such example is the SDG addressing gender equality, which encompasses many aspects, including violence against women which may be triggered by the inequality women face. Thus, familiarity with vocabulary linked to gender-based violence is of utmost importance to learners of law-enforcement English. Considering this, in the sections that follow we will select relevant vocabulary related to gender-based violence and will offer practical ideas for its presentation to the learners.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

The achievement of UN SDGs can serve as a resource and inspiration for English language teachers, since various topics they cover can be presented to learners through the lens of SDGs. The impact from the selection of such topics is manifold. On the one hand, the learners acquire knowledge of vocabulary covered by specific SDGs and corresponding grammar content based on contextual use of the language, while on the other one, they also become more aware of the existence and importance of SDGs. This raised awareness may positively impact their beliefs and actions in the future, thus making them active participants in the achievement of these goals as law enforcement officers.

At first glance, one may say that SDG16, briefly titled *Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions*, is most closely linked to the fields of security and law enforcement. SDG16 “articulates the key role that governance and the rule of law play in promoting peaceful, just, and inclusive societies and in ensuring sustainable development” (United Nations 2024b). This goal “aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels” (ibid). Therefore, a plethora of topics that fall within SDG16 may be developed for English language instruction. For example, the English language students may benefit from activities addressing vocabulary, related, among other things, to the following topics: 1) *corruption and bribery*, which are considered a major problem threatening the rule of law and human rights and whose reduction is targeted through the UN goals; 2) *environmental crimes*, which seriously affect the environment and the future of the entire planet; 3) *organised crime*,

which hinders sustainable development at many levels; 4) *hate speech*, *misinformation* and *disinformation* and their threat to sustainable development especially in the context of freedom of expression (Deutsche Welle 2023); 5) *cybercrime*, with reference to the relevance of cybersecurity for achieving the SDGs, etc.

However, despite the obviously strong connection between SDG16 and security and law enforcement, links can also be identified with other SDGs as well. One such instance is SDG5, briefly titled *Gender Equality*. It aims “to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” (United Nations 2024a), while its main targets, inter alia, include the following: ending discrimination against women and girls in all forms, elimination of violence against women and girls including trafficking and exploitation, elimination of harmful practices, such as forced marriages and other harmful behaviours, etc. (ibid), which can be related to the domains of security and law enforcement. Therefore, they can also be exploited for extraction of vocabulary which can be taught in the English language classroom. More specifically, the focus should be on vocabulary related to violence against women, since the SDG5 goal clearly suggests that gender equality in this context refers to women and girls, and the corresponding targets center around them as the vulnerable gender.

TEACHING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE VOCABULARY IN THE LAW-ENFORCEMENT ENGLISH CLASSROOM

Understanding the notion of gender-based violence

When teaching English vocabulary related to a specific notion, it is of crucial importance to make sure that learners understand the notion itself, with reference to its semantic peculiarities. To achieve this, English language instructors usually rely on general English dictionaries, specialised English dictionaries, specialised literature, official documents addressing the issue in question. Considering that this paper focuses on gender-based violence vocabulary, a key to the acquisition of lexical knowledge in this domain would be the students’ understanding of gender-based violence as a concept. For this purpose, the instructor may either present the specificities of gender-based violence or engage the students’ themselves in inferring the key semantic elements of this notion. One of the possible strategies for achieving this could be the comparison of official explanations and definitions of *gender-based violence*. One such source could be the European Commission which emphasise the fact that gender-based violence “can take different forms and mostly affects women and girls” (European Commission 2024) and defines it as “violence directed against a person because of that person's gender or violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately” (ibid). Similarly, at the website of the Council of Europe the students can read that “gender-based violence and violence against women are two terms that are often used interchangeably, as most violence against women is inflicted (by men) for gender-based reasons, and gender-based violence affects women disproportionately” (Council of Europe 2024). Through the analysis of these sentences, the students may infer that the common semantic elements of the concept of gender-based violence are: *violence*, *women (as victims)*, *disproportion* etc. The students can also be asked to work in groups and try to identify the link between gender-based violence and UN SDGs with particular emphasis on those addressing this issue. This activity will raise their awareness of the existence of gender-based violence and its importance in terms of its topicality in the context of the achievement of the UN SDGs.

Expressions related to the concept of *victim*

An important aspect of the concept of gender-based violence is the victim, which is of specific gender, usually a woman. Considering this, we think that vocabulary related to the victim should be taught in the English for law enforcement classroom when dealing with the topic of gender-based violence. It is important for the students to know that in the context of gender-based violence, the terms *victim* and *survivor* are sometimes used interchangeably, although they are not full synonyms. Thus, they can be given the task to think of the elements constituting the notion of *victim*, on the one hand, and those constituting the notion of *survivor*, on the other one, and compare their guesses with the dictionary definitions of these words. In general terms, the noun *victim* refers to “a person who has been attacked, injured, or killed as the result of a crime, a disease, an accident, etc.” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries 2024i), while *survivor* refers to “a person who continues to live, especially despite being nearly killed or experiencing great danger or difficulty” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries 2024g). The students should then compare general dictionaries definitions of *victim* and *survivor* with the use of these words in the context of gender-based violence. This should help them draw a conclusion about the more “positive” and the more “negative” term from the aspect of the person affected by gender-based violence. It is generally accepted that the “positive” one, with encouraging connotation is *survivor*, while the “negative” one is *victim*. When they finish, they may be asked to work in pairs and try to find other pairs of words which relate to the same notions but whose usage may be considered positive or negative from the viewpoint of their referents. An example of such a pair could be *prisoner* vs. *convict*. This activity could be followed by a discussion about the effect of the language we use and the labels that certain words might be associated with, the use of euphemisms etc.

The noun *victim* can also serve as the root word for other terms in the context of gender-based violence. In the English classroom, this can be used for practising derivation through affixation, both prefixation and suffixation. Thus, the noun *victim* can be transformed into the verb *victimise*, which, on the other hand can be transformed into the noun *victimisation*. In addition, with the prefix *re-*, this noun turns into another noun, namely *re-victimisation*, which is another important concept in the context of gender-based violence. Also, with the prefix *poly-*, *victimisation* turns into *poly-victimisation*, which is also a relevant gender-based term.

It may also be useful for learners of English to get familiarized with various acts targeting victims in general, as well as victims in the context of gender-based violence. One such example could be the act of *victim blaming* which is a very common practice when the victims are of specific gender, particularly women. Generally, the term *victim blaming* refers to “the practice of saying or implying that a person who has suffered harm or injury is responsible for it, rather than the person who caused the harm or injury” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries 2024h). In the English language classroom, the presentation of this term can be accompanied by practising the use of the third conditional. An activity of this type can be carried out through pair work. Each pair may be given the task to talk about an imaginary common female friend who experienced gender-based violence. Student A should use third conditional, victim-blaming sentences, while Student B should take the opposite stance, trying to persuade Student A that their friend was not to blame for what happened to her, using third conditional as well. The dialogues may go as follows:

Pair 1 (talking about common friend Stephany)

Student A: “Did you hear what happened to Stephany? Jack did that again to her! It was all her fault! If she hadn’t provoked him, Jack wouldn’t have hurt her!”

Student B: “No, you are totally wrong. I think that even if Stephany hadn’t said anything to Jack, he would have hurt her. That’s the way he is!...”

Pair 2 (talking about common friend Vanessa)

Student A: “Ah, Vanessa went to a club last night and a visitor tried to rape her! She really is to blame! She wore a short transparent skirt! That visitor to the club wouldn’t have tried to rape her, if she hadn’t worn the short and transparent skirt.”

Student B: “She is to blame?!?! Of course not! I’m sure that the visitor to the night club would have tried to rape Vanessa, even if she had worn jeans and a long-sleeved woollen sweater!...”

Pair 3 (talking about common friend Barbara)

Student A: “Barbara had another incident with Tom last night. She really deserved what she got! If she hadn’t asked Tim to stop drinking, he wouldn’t have hit her with the wine bottle!”

Student B: “That’s nonsense! I believe that even if she hadn’t mentioned the wine at all, Tim would have attacked her. He has become really aggressive lately”...

Expressions with the adjective *sexual*

The adjective *sexual* is very productive when forming collocations related to gender-based violence. Since it can be encountered in many expressions, it is the language instructor’s choice how this adjective can be presented in the classroom. One possible approach is to start with the expression *sexual violence*, as one of the possible forms that gender-based violence may take and present it as its hyponym. Then, the term *sexual violence* can further be analysed in the context of its own hyponyms referring to different types of sexual violence. This group includes the following expressions, all collocating with the adjective *sexual*: *sexual exploitation*, *sexual coercion*, *sexual harassment*, *sexual assault* etc. In some cases, even these expressions can be analysed in terms of their hyponyms. One such example is the term *sexual exploitation*, which can be found in collocations such as *child sexual exploitation*, when the victims of the exploitation are specifically children, *commercial sexual exploitation* when the activity is carried out with the intent of profiting from it, etc.

As opposed to these violence-related collocations with *sexual*, as a follow-up activity the students can be given the task to make a list of other collocations with *sexual* which are not considered violence. This group includes terms such as *sexual rights*, *sexual worker*, *sexual stereotype* etc.

Different types of *-cides*

With one of its meanings, the combining word *-cide* in English refers to “the act of killing” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries 2024a), and is usually added to nouns which denote the target of the act. For instance, it may be found in words such as *genocide*, *regicide*, *patricide* etc. In the field of law enforcement, students typically come across the noun *homicide* as the broadest term denoting murder of another person, and the noun *suicide*, when a person kills himself/herself. However, in the context of gender-based violence, it would be relevant for the learners to be able to distinguish between different types of murders which are related to gender, one way or another. Thus, an activity can be designed in which the students will identify the terms related to gender-based violence, given in pairs. For instance, they may be asked to distinguish between *homicide* as “the act of killing another person, especially when it is a crime” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries 2024d) and the narrower notion of *femicide* which is defined as “the crime of killing a woman or girl because she is female” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries 2024b). In this case, they should recognize the term *femicide* as one related to gender-based violence. Taking into account the element of killing which is the root of the combining word *-cide*, and the woman as the target of the term *femicide*, when

discussing the notion of killing women, the students may also be introduced to the term *honour killing* whose victims are usually women, since it refers to “the murder of a relative, usually a girl or woman, because she has done something that is thought to bring shame on her family” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries 2024e). Also, they could be asked to distinguish between *infanticide* as “the crime of a mother killing her child when it is less than one year old” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries 2024f), on the one hand and *female infanticide* referring to “intentional killing of baby girls due to the preference for male babies and from the low value associated with the birth of females” (European Institute for Gender Equality 2024a), on the other one. In this pair, they should identify *female infanticide* as a term related to gender-based violence.

Expressions with the adjective *forced*

In its essence, gender-based violence typically involves the use of some kind of force. Therefore, when dealing with gender-based violence vocabulary, emphasis may also be put on terms which contain the adjective *forced*, which refers to something “happening or done against somebody’s will” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries 2024c). In cases when the victims are specifically women, we think it is important for the students to become aware of the concepts of *forced pregnancy*, *forced abortion* and *forced sterilisation*, which are related to the woman’s reproductive rights. Thus, in general terms, *forced pregnancy* refers to “the practice of forcing a woman or girl to become pregnant or remain pregnant against her will” (Wikipedia 2024a), which, on the other hand is contrasted with *forced abortion*, which refers to “intentional termination of pregnancy without the prior and informed consent of the victim (woman or girl)” (European Institute for Gender Equality 2024b) and *forced sterilisation* which means “performing surgery which has the purpose or effect of terminating a woman’s capacity to naturally reproduce without her prior and informed consent or understanding of the procedure” (European Institute for Gender Equality 2024c). One of the activities that can be implemented in the English classroom could be asking the students to work in groups and try to find the relevant legal definitions of these terms in various international documents and then discuss them. This activity should enable them insight into the complexity of these terms and inspire discussion on their gravity in a legal context. The elaboration of these terms can further be followed by a discussion on the concept of “informed consent” which is an important semantic element of the definitions of these terms. Thus, activities could be developed which will focus on the difference between *consent* on the one hand and *informed consent* on the other one.

Other terms from this category that could be presented to learners include *forced marriage* and *forced prostitution*. *Forced marriage* refers to “a marriage that happens without the agreement of one or either of the people getting married” (Cambridge Dictionary 2024). Although any person could be married against their will, in most cases the victims are women or girls, often while they are still minors, which in most countries is considered crime. Hence the relevance of this term in the context of gender-based violence vocabulary. Another relevant term is *forced prostitution*, which also affects mainly women, and means “prostitution or sexual slavery that takes place as a result of coercion by a third party” (Wikipedia 2024b). In the English language classroom, when practising these terms, the students may be asked to find out whether the adjective *forced* can be replaced with a synonym in collocation with *marriage* and *prostitution*. Thus, for example, in the term *forced prostitution*, the adjective *forced* can be substituted with *involuntary* thus forming the expression *involuntary prostitution*, or with the adjective *compulsory* to make the expression *compulsory prostitution*. Another option would be to give them a list of synonyms of, for example, *forced marriage*, then add an expression that is not its synonym, and ask the students to work in groups and find the odd one out, i.e. the one that does not necessarily

imply the use of some kind of force. Thus, for example, from among *involuntary marriage*, *coerced marriage* and *arranged marriage*, the odd one out would be *arranged marriage*, as the one which does not necessarily involve force.

CONCLUSION

The elaboration of the selected expressions show that UN SDGs can, inter alia, find their way to the law-enforcement English language classroom in the form of vocabulary instruction, with particular emphasis on SDG5 – *Gender Equality*. Using pair work and group work, students can successfully be introduced to gender-based violence vocabulary that fall within the notion of gender equality. They can be presented concepts collocating with the adjective *sexual*, such as *sexual violence* or *sexual exploitation*, different types of gender-based deprivations of life such as *femicide* or *female infanticide*, victim-related concepts such as *victim blaming*, affixational derivatives from the noun *victim*, collocations with the adjective *forced* such as *forced marriage* and *forced prostitution* etc. The acquisition of these terms will undoubtedly familiarize the students with the semantic peculiarities of the concepts they lexicalize, which will be useful for them in their future work as law-enforcement professionals whose duties will contribute to the achievement of the UN SDGs, one way or another.

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