

Evaluating values

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PIM March 2023 Oxford Brookes: EAP for a more sustainable world

Aims

- to present a theory-informed approach to teaching of critical thinking related to sustainable development (SD),
- to present an approach focussed on analysing values in discourse.

A pair of hands gently cradles a small, colorful globe of the Earth. The globe shows continents in green and oceans in blue. The background is dark and out of focus, emphasizing the hands and the globe. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, sans-serif font.

What does evaluating values
have to do with EAP
for a more sustainable world?



Values

"Values permeate academic discourse.

They underpin evaluations of what is right and what is wrong; what is good and what is bad; what is worthwhile and what is worthless.

Although such evaluations are regularly contested across communities and intellectual fields, *within* communities or fields they are often remarkably consistent and stable; if one puts a foot wrong, it is obvious to all those listening. In this sense, evaluations do not just attribute meaning to that being evaluated, they also position the person doing the evaluation."

(Doran, 2020, p. 151)

What does it mean for students?

" For students learning a discipline, this means it is not sufficient to simply learn the 'content' of a field, they must also learn its values.

While in some disciplines these values will be heavily emphasised and in others they may be relatively downplayed, what is common is that they are often highly implicit and assumed by those who hold them." (Doran, 2020, p. 151)

In EAP (and arguably, beyond) this poses a problem for **how to see, evaluate, and challenge** these **values** and the language used to communicate them.



What can we do about it?

One idea of how to approach this is through theory, such as:

- a concept of *appraisal* from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Martin & White, 2005),
- a concept of *axiological constellations* from Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) (Maton, 2014),
- or both those concepts combined (Doran, 2020; Szenes, 2021).



Two-step analysis

STEP 1: Seeing values



STEP 2: Clustering values



Two-step analysis

STEP 1: Seeing values



Evaluative language



Who/what evaluates



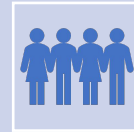
Who/what is being evaluated



Value (polarity)

Two-step analysis

STEP 2: Clustering values



Who/what is being valued positively/negatively



What evaluative language is used to support/downplay this value

Two-step analysis

STEP 1: Seeing values



Evaluative language



Who/what evaluates

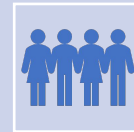


Who/what is being evaluated



Value (polarity)

STEP 2: Clustering values



Who/what is being valued
positively/negatively



What evaluative language is used
to support/downplay this value

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Values Analysis (worksheet)

analysing what is and what is not valued in the text, to what extent, and by whom

Text for analysis

[insert text reference]

Step 1: Seeing values

[Read the text and complete the table - highlighting evaluative language in the text while you are reading might help you with this task. This step will help you what is valued, how, and by whom.]

Evaluative language	Who/what evaluates	Who/what is being evaluated	Value (+/-)	Notes
[insert word/phrase indicating value] Example: will be important	[insert the evaluator/s] Example: author	[insert item being evaluated] Example: new global goals (SDGs)	[insert positive/negative value] Example: +	[optional: insert notes/questions]

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VALUES ANALYSIS EXAMPLE.docx

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Explainer: what

At the end of one of the largest summits at the United Nations headquarters in New York, government represen from all over the world will sign a commitment to new global development goals. These will replace the millenni development goals, setting objectives for bringing peace and prosperity, and reducing the impact of climate cha

UN member states have agreed on a list of 17 broad goals and 169 more specific targets. These goals are not leg binding but they will be important. They are aimed at eradicating hunger and poverty, while at the same time promoting peace, prosperity, health and education and combating climate change.

The SDGs come into effect at the end of 2015, following the completion of the millennium development goals (M and cover the period 2016-2030. Unlike the MDGs, which were aimed largely at poorer countries, the SDGs are designed to be universal. The idea is to involve the whole world in taking responsibility for development.

It is therefore not surprising which countries are predicted to meet the goals first. Sweden, according to one rep will lead the pack, while Norway, Denmark, Finland and Switzerland are likely to be close behind.

Different from millennium development goals?

The SDGs follow the tradition of the MDGs, which arose as a product of the consensus built in the United Nation during the 1990s. However, they cover a much broader range of issues. The millennium goals only covered "safe themes such as poverty, primary education and child mortality. The SDGS weigh in on more meaty topics, such a governance, institutions, human rights, inequality, ageing, peace and climate change.

This is thanks to the huge number of people who contributed their views on what the goals should be through massive consultations. Not only governments but also charities have been involved this time around. In total, m than 7m people have given their views.

So, thanks to contributions from organisations such as HelpAge International for example, older people are now explicitly mentioned in the 12 of the 17 goals. And, in a number of targets, there is a broader commitment that ' indicators should be disaggregated by sex, age, residence (urban/rural) and other characteristics, as relevant and possible". However, they could do more to break the information down by specific age groups.

Behind the pledges are two broad ideals: "no one will be left behind" and the aim "to reach the furthest behind This implies that every individual in the world will benefit from the rights and opportunities on offer and that the vulnerable will get the highest priority in the human development agenda.

These commitments could not come at a more opportune time – nor the idea that no goal is met unless it is met everyone. Billions of people around the world continue to live in poverty in societies where inequalities are risin

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These commitments could not come at a more opportune time – nor the idea that no goal is met unless it is met by everyone. Billions of people around the world continue to live in poverty, in societies where inequalities are rising.

Values Analysis (example)

analysing what is and what is not valued in the text, to what extent, and by whom

Text for analysis	Zaidi, A. (2015). Explainer: what are the UN sustainable development goals? The Conversation. Available from: https://theconversation.com/explainer-what-are-the-un-sustainable-development-goals-48126 and/or from the Appendix
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Step 1: Seeing values

Evaluative language	Who/what evaluates	Who/what is being evaluated	Value	Notes
will be important	Asghar Zaidi (author)	the new global development goals	+	
designed to be universal	Asghar Zaidi	the new global development goals	+	
not surprising	Asghar Zaidi	The prediction about the countries which will meet the goals first	-	rich countries will lead and poor will be left behind?
cover much broader issues	Asghar Zaidi	Range of issues covered by the SDGs	+	
'safe' themes such as poverty, primary education, child mortality	Asghar Zaidi	Themes covered by the MDGs	-	'safe' is negative here and it implies not covering more challenging topics
more meaty topics such as governance, human rights, inequality, ageing, peace and climate change	Asghar Zaidi	themes covered by SDGs	+	
thanks to the huge number of people (incl. govts and charities)	Asghar Zaidi	The (massive) contribution of others' views into SDGs	+	consultation on SDGs but not MDGs?

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Search (Option + Q)



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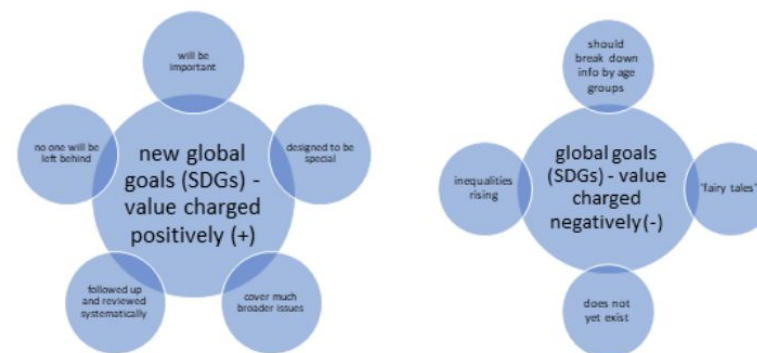
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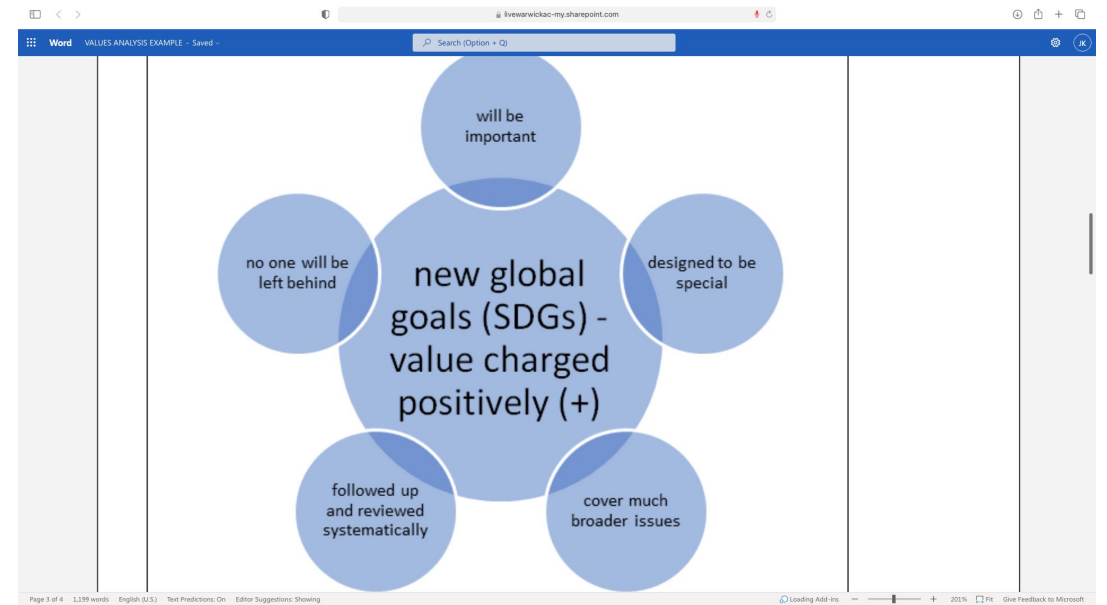
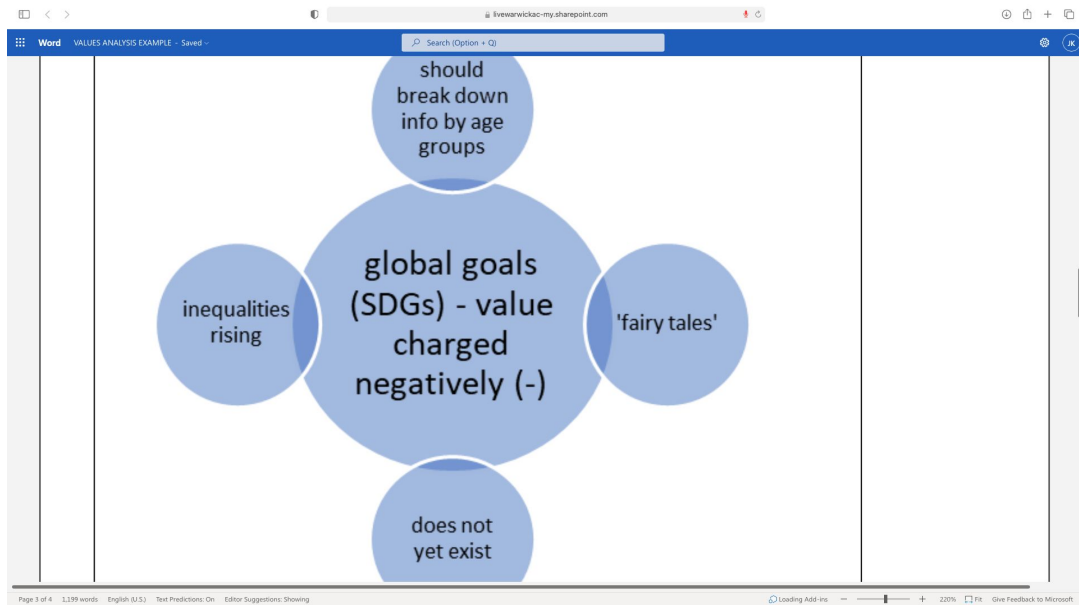
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could do more to break info down by spec age groups	Asghar Zaidi	age groups in SDGs	-	A limitation of SDGs, therefore negative evaluation
opportune	Asghar Zaidi	The time the SDGs have come about	+	
rising	Asghar Zaidi	Inequalities around the world	-	
"Fairy tales"	The Lancet	The SDGs	-	Fairy tales = not real, SDGs = not real (negative charging)?
followed-up and reviewed systematically	Asghar Zaidi	The SDGs and their targets	+	
does not yet exist	Asghar Zaidi	baseline data in some countries	-	

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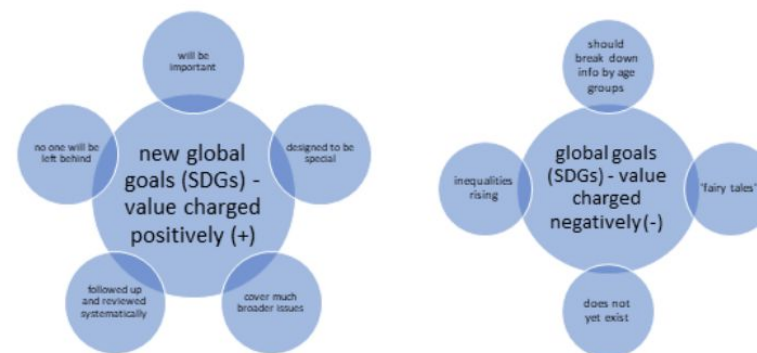
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Evaluation of the text

The analysis suggests that the text is heavily biased (one-sided) as most evaluative comments related to the value of SFGs are made by the author and only one is credited to a different source. This negatively affects the text's credibility.

Moreover, the analysis reveals that the author's (evaluator's) attitude towards SDGs is mostly positively charged in terms of the concept of SDGs, and negatively charged in relation to their effectiveness. This might mean that the author's stance on SDGs is that they cannot be achieved.



What is your key take-away?

Why?

What will be its implications for your practice?

References

- Doran, Y. (2020). Seeing values: Axiology and affording attitude in Australia's 'invasion'. In: J.R. Martin, K. Maton, Y.J. Doran (Eds), Accessing Academic Discourse: Systemic Functional Linguistics and Legitimation Code Theory. Routledge.
- Martin, J.R. & White, P.R.R. (2005). The language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Szenes, E. (2021). Neo-Nazi environmentalism: The linguistic construction of ecofascism in a Nordic Resistance Movement manifesto. Journal for Deradicalisation, 27.

Special thanks to

- Colleagues from the UK LCT Group
- Colleagues from University of Bristol Centre for Academic Language and Development LCT SIG