Research Journal in Advanced Humanities

RJAH

https://doi.org/10.58256/kq6m6380

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Section: *Literature, Linguistics & Criticism*

Exploring the role of literary and media translation in forging new economic paradigms, environmental accountability, and health sovereignty

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable development is argued and negotiated through narratives that travel across languages, media platforms, and educational systems. Economic "reform", environmental "responsibility", and public "health" are not neutral topics; they are storylines that define problems, distribute agency and blame, and authorize particular futures. Translation is one of the main infrastructures through which these storylines become portable and persuasive. Drawing on translation studies, critical discourse analysis, ecolinguistics, and critical language education, this article synthesizes interdisciplinary scholarship (2000-2024) to conceptualize literary and media translation as a form of narrative governance. The synthesis identifies recurrent translation mechanisms - lexical choice, metaphor shifts, omission and compression, paratextual framing, and audience-oriented recontextualization - that can either reproduce dominant paradigms (e.g., technocratic neoliberalism, consumerist environmentalism, biomedical paternalism) or enable counter-narratives oriented toward justice, dignity, and ecological care. Building on these insights, the article proposes a practical framework for critical EFL in which learners analyze and produce translations of literary and media texts to develop sustainability literacy, health communication competence, and civic agency. The framework integrates content-based instruction/CLIL, task-based learning, multimodal literacy, and critical reading, and it provides guidance for text selection, translation task design (e.g., subtitling, captioning, and translator's notes), assessment, and teacher professional development. Finally, the paper maps the framework to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and discusses implications for national development agendas, including Vision 2030. Translation is repositioned not as a peripheral language exercise, but as a teachable site where learners practice how public meanings about economy, environment, and health are made - and how they might be remade.

KEYWORDS: translation studies, media translation, literary translation, critical EFL, sustainability literacy, health communication, ecolinguistics, SDGs

Research Journal in Advanced Humanities

Volume 7, Issue 1, 2026

ISSN: 2708-5945 (Print)

ISSN: 2708-5953 (Online)

ARTICLE HISTORY

Submitted: 01 **December 2025**

Accepted: 11 **January 2026**

Published: 02 **February 2026**

HOW TO CITE

Alharahsheh, A. M., Ismail, S. M., & Koka, N. A. (2026). Exploring the role of literary and media translation in forging new economic paradigms, environmental accountability, and health sovereignty. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, 7(1). https://doi.org/10.58256/kq6m6380

Published in Nairobi, Kenya by Royallite Global, an imprint of Royallite Publishers Limited

1. Introduction

Translation is often treated as a technical convenience - an invisible service that simply carries "real" work in politics, science, and education from one language to another. That view is increasingly untenable. Contemporary public life depends on the rapid circulation of explanations, warnings, and promises; and whenever those accounts move across borders, translation is one of the main infrastructures through which they acquire authority. Translation does not merely transmit content; it selects which voices travel, what counts as evidence, and which interpretations become commonsense (Baker, 2006; Bielsa & Bassnett, 2009).

Sustainable development discourse is especially sensitive to translation because it is prescriptive rather than descriptive. It is not only about "what is" but also about "what should be", and it mobilizes contested keywords such as growth, resilience, transition, security, equity, and sovereignty (UN, 2015; UNESCO, 2017). When these keywords migrate across languages, seemingly small lexical and grammatical decisions can amplify particular interpretations and silence others. A term translated as a neutral technical label can depoliticize structural conflict; a term translated as a moral claim can mobilize solidarity; and a term translated through familiar metaphors can normalize particular economic or environmental imaginaries.

The relevance of translation is not limited to official documents. Media translation and audiovisual translation shape public agendas: headlines, subtitles, and social media captions determine what counts as urgent, who is portrayed as responsible, and which solutions appear plausible (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2021; O'Hagan, 2016; Schäffner, 2004). Literary translation works on a slower timescale, but it is no less consequential. Stories do not simply entertain; they train imagination, emotion, and moral judgment. In this sense, literary and media translation are not peripheral to sustainability; they are among the arenas where publics learn to desire certain futures - and to tolerate certain harms (Apter, 2006; Baker, 2006; Venuti, 1995).

Education matters because schools are where many learners first encounter global narratives in a sustained way. English is widely positioned as a gateway to higher education, mobility, and global citizenship, and sustainability topics are increasingly present in EFL materials. Yet language education can unintentionally reproduce unequal and ecologically damaging narratives if it treats sustainability and health as neutral topics rather than as discursive battlegrounds (Benesch, 2001; Pennycook, 2001; Stibbe, 2021). At the same time, classrooms are rich sites for critical work because learners already translate in everyday life: they interpret policy slogans, media clips, health messages, and popular culture across languages. Rather than banning this practice in the name of monolingual purity, critical pedagogy invites us to make it visible, teachable, and ethically accountable (Freire, 1970; García & Wei, 2014; Janks, 2010).

This article addresses a dual problem. First, translation is under-recognized as a form of narrative governance: a set of institutional practices that shapes what societies can say, feel, and do about economy, environment, and health. Second, language education has not fully leveraged translation as a resource for critical literacy and civic agency. To respond, the paper develops a conceptual synthesis and a practical framework for translation-mediated critical EFL that connects three pillars of sustainable development narratives: (a) new economic paradigms (how value and progress are defined), (b) environmental accountability (how responsibility and harm are distributed), and (c) health sovereignty (how trust, risk, and agency are negotiated in multilingual settings).

Three research questions guide the synthesis and the pedagogical proposal:

RQ1: How do literary and media translation practices shape public narratives about economy, environment, and health?

RQ2: Which recurring translation mechanisms tend to reproduce dominant frames, and which can enable counter-narratives?

RQ3: How can translation be designed as a pedagogical resource in critical EFL to advance sustainability literacy and health communication competence?

Figure 1 visualizes the central claim: translation functions as a hinge between source narratives, institutional gatekeepers, and target publics. Table 1 summarizes the analytic lenses and the scope of the synthetic review. The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 develops conceptual foundations from translation studies, critical discourse analysis, ecolinguistics, and critical language education. Section 3 explains the synthetic

review method. Sections 4 and 5 synthesize translation mechanisms and theorize their narrative effects. Section 6 translates these insights into a classroom framework, including design principles, an implementation cycle, and sample units. Section 7 maps the framework to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and discusses policy implications, including relevance to national development agendas such as Vision 2030. The conclusion highlights implications for research and practice.

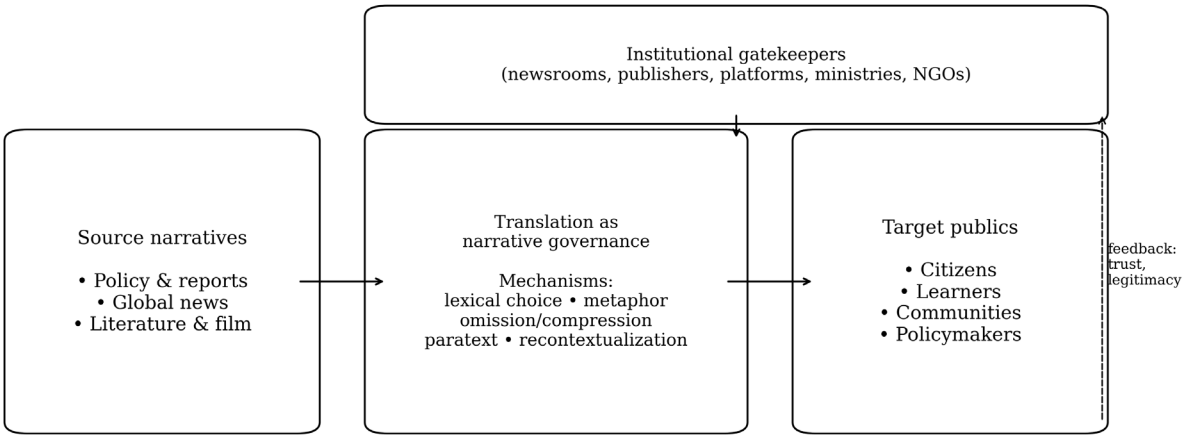

Figure 1. Translation as narrative governance in sustainable development discourse.

Table 1. Analytic lenses for reading translation as sustainability and health governance.

Cluster	Focus	Typical data/texts	Analytic lens	Contribution to this article
Translation studies	Norms, ethics, mediation, visibility	Literary translation, news translation, audiovisual translation	Norms & ethics; narrative theory	Explains how translations are produced under constraints and how choices carry ideological effects.
Critical discourse analysis	Power, framing, agency, legitimation	Policy briefs, headlines, subtitles, classroom talk	CDA (agency, modality, nominalization)	Provides tools for tracing how translation redistributes responsibility and constructs common sense.
Ecolinguistics	Stories to live by; human–nature relations	Climate discourse, sustainability campaigns, environmental narratives	Ecolinguistic framing analysis	Links linguistic patterns to ecological ethics and to competing narratives of care vs exploitation.
Health communication	Risk, trust, multilingual access, stigma	Public health guidance, outbreak headlines, translated advisories	Risk framing & pragmatics	Highlights how translation shapes trust and whether messages protect dignity and inclusion.
Critical language education	Critical literacy, civic agency, pedagogy	EFL materials, student translations, multimodal projects	Critical pedagogy; CLIL; TBLT	Translates theoretical claims into classroom design, tasks, and assessment.

2. Conceptual Foundations: Translation, Discourse, and Sustainability Learning

2.1 Translation as Ideological and Institutional Practice

Translation studies has long challenged the assumption that translation is a transparent bridge between stable meanings. From norm-based accounts of how translations are shaped by target-culture expectations (Toury, 1995) to critiques of translator "invisibility" and domestication (Venuti, 1995), the field has shown that translation is a socially regulated practice with ethical and political consequences. Translators work under

constraints - editorial policies, institutional mandates, time and space limits, platform affordances - that shape what can be said and how it can be said.

These constraints become especially visible in mediated settings. News translation, for example, is rarely a literal transfer. It involves selection, summarization, reframing, and sometimes re-authoring, often under severe deadlines and with assumptions about audience knowledge and sensibilities (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2009; Schäffner, 2004). Audiovisual translation intensifies such pressures: subtitles and captions compress complex claims into brief, readable segments, and the result can change the perceived certainty, agency, or urgency of a message (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2021). Digital translation ecosystems add further layers, including algorithmic curation and machine translation, which can reproduce dominant language ideologies if left unexamined (O'Hagan, 2016).

The point is not to romanticize "faithfulness" or to treat translators as omnipotent. Rather, it is to recognize that translation is a site where meaning is negotiated in relation to power. In contexts of sustainable development and public health, translation decisions can affect trust, compliance, stigma, and perceptions of responsibility. This is why translation can be understood as governance: it participates in the management of public meaning, sometimes subtly, through routines that appear merely linguistic (Baker, 2006; Tymoczko, 2007).

2.2 Narrative, Framing, and Critical Discourse Analysis

To link translation to sustainable development, it is useful to treat sustainability discourse as narrative rather than as a collection of facts. Narratives are patterned accounts that assign roles (heroes, victims, culprits), establish causal chains, and project futures. Baker's narrative approach foregrounds how translation participates in the circulation and contestation of such storylines, particularly in conflict and crisis communication (Baker, 2006). In sustainable development debates, narratives often compete over what counts as "progress" and who must bear the costs of transition.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) provides complementary tools for examining how narratives are realized linguistically and institutionally. CDA approaches discourse as a site where social power is produced and resisted, and it draws attention to how grammar and vocabulary can naturalize ideologies (Fairclough, 1992, 1995; van Dijk, 1998). Analytically, CDA invites attention to patterns such as nominalization (turning actions into things), agency suppression (erasing actors), modality (degrees of certainty and obligation), and evaluative language. These patterns are highly relevant to translation because translators must decide whether to preserve, intensify, or soften them.

Framing work extends the analysis by emphasizing how discourse organizes interpretation through selection and salience. Frames foreground some aspects of reality while backgrounding others: they define what is at stake, what is imaginable, and what is thinkable. In translation, framing can occur through lexical choices, metaphor shifts, reordering of information, and paratextual elements such as headlines, captions, introductions, and editorial commentary (Machin & Mayr, 2012; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Treating translation as framing does not imply manipulation; it recognizes that any communicative act must choose a perspective, and that such choices have consequences.

2.3 Ecolinguistics, Health Communication, and Critical Language Education

Ecolinguistics extends discourse analysis to the relationship between language, ecology, and sustainability. It asks which stories about humans and the nonhuman world encourage care and responsibility, and which normalize extraction, waste, or denial (Stibbe, 2021). Ecolinguistic analysis often focuses on metaphor, evaluation, and agency because these resources shape whether environmental harm is represented as accidental, inevitable, or preventable. For language educators, ecolinguistics offers a principled way to connect textual analysis to ecological ethics without reducing sustainability to a vocabulary list.

Health communication scholarship likewise highlights the discursive conditions of trust, compliance, and stigma. Public health messaging is rarely only informational; it is relational. It signals whose knowledge counts, whose bodies are at risk, and which communities are blamed. Multilingual settings intensify these dynamics because translation can either widen or narrow access to timely, intelligible guidance (Piller, 2016; Piller et al., 2020). Risk messages are also culturally framed: what counts as "responsible" behavior, and what

counts as "misinformation", is often contested.

Critical language education provides the pedagogical bridge. In traditions shaped by Freirean critical pedagogy, language learning is not merely skill acquisition; it is participation in social meaning-making (Freire, 1970; Pennycook, 2001). Critical literacy approaches ask learners to interrogate whose interests texts serve, how identities are positioned, and how alternative readings can be constructed (Janks, 2010; Wallace, 2003). In multilingual contexts, critical pedagogy is enhanced by translanguaging and translingual perspectives that treat learners' full linguistic repertoires as resources for analysis and action (Canagarajah, 2013; García & Wei, 2014).

2.4 Translation in Language Education: From Taboo to Resource

In many EFL traditions, translation has been treated ambivalently. It is sometimes associated with outdated grammar-translation methods and with fears that learners will "depend" on their L1. Such assumptions mirror broader monolingual ideologies: the belief that effective language learning requires the suppression of other languages. Yet decades of scholarship in applied linguistics has complicated this view by showing that bilingual and multilingual speakers routinely mobilize multiple languages to think, learn, and communicate (Cook, 2010; García & Wei, 2014).

From this perspective, translation is not an error to be eliminated but a practice to be refined. It can support noticing, contrastive awareness, and rhetorical sensitivity, especially when tasks go beyond word substitution to consider audience, genre, and ideology (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Kramsch, 2009). Translation is also a form of intercultural mediation: it requires learners to anticipate what will be unfamiliar, what will be misread, and what needs explanation (Byram, 1997; Pym, 2012).

For sustainability and health, translation tasks are particularly valuable because they foreground the politics of keywords and the ethics of representation. Learners can compare how "sustainability", "carbon", "gender", "public health", or "vaccine" are framed across languages and genres, and they can practice writing translator's notes or captions that make assumptions and uncertainties transparent. Such work aligns with content-based instruction and CLIL, which integrate language learning with disciplinary meaning-making (Coyle et al., 2010; Dalton-Puffer, 2011), and with task-based language teaching, which emphasizes purposeful communication and iterative development of form and meaning (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2015).

Table 2 positions translation-mediated critical EFL alongside established pedagogical orientations. The table is not meant to replace these approaches; it shows how translation can function as a connective tissue: a way to bring critical literacy, multimodal analysis, and sustainability content into a coherent set of classroom practices.

Table 2. Pedagogical orientations that can support translation-mediated sustainability EFL.

Model	Core principle	Translation-mediated practices	Sustainability/health affordance	Caution
Content-based instruction	Language develops through meaningful content	Bilingual glossaries; translated readings	Builds conceptual precision for SDG topics	Risk of treating content as neutral facts; add critical questions.
CLIL	Integrate content, communication, cognition, culture	Comparing translations; audience-specific retranslation	Supports disciplinary literacy and intercultural competence	Requires scaffolding and teacher confidence with content.
Task-based language teaching	Meaningful tasks drive language use	Subtitling clips; translating campus messages	Links language to public impact and authentic audiences	Tasks must include reflection to avoid superficial production.
Critical literacy	Analyze ideology and power in texts	CDA of translated headlines; paratext analysis	Makes narrative governance visible; supports agency	Needs careful facilitation and respectful discussion norms.
Translanguaging pedagogy	Use full repertoires for meaning-making	Multiple translations; bilingual peer review	Legitimizes local languages and strengthens inclusion	Requires clear criteria so multilingual work remains rigorous.

3. Method: Synthetic Review and Conceptual Synthesis

Because scholarship on translation, sustainability discourse, and language pedagogy is dispersed across disciplines, this article adopts a synthetic review approach. Rather than conducting a narrow meta-analysis of a single empirical variable, the goal is conceptual integration: to identify recurring mechanisms, analytic lenses, and pedagogical implications that emerge across translation studies, discourse studies, ecolinguistics, and applied linguistics (Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010). The method therefore combines structured searching with iterative thematic coding and conceptual modeling.

3.1 Search and selection strategy

A structured search strategy was designed to capture work in three overlapping clusters: (a) translation studies on ideology, media translation, literary translation, and translation ethics; (b) discourse-oriented sustainability research, including ecolinguistics and environmental communication; and (c) scholarship on critical language education, multilingualism, and content-based or task-based pedagogy. Searches were conducted using keywords such as translation and ideology, news translation, audiovisual translation, ecolinguistics, sustainability discourse, health communication, critical literacy, translanguaging, CLIL, and task-based learning. The selection prioritised peer-reviewed books and journal articles published between 2000 and 2024, with seminal earlier works included where necessary for theoretical grounding (e.g., Fairclough, 1992; Freire, 1970).

Inclusion criteria focused on relevance to at least one of the following: (1) mechanisms through which translation shapes meaning, agency, evaluation, or framing; (2) analysis of sustainability, environmental, economic, or health narratives in public discourse; or (3) pedagogical approaches that connect language learning with critical reading, multimodal analysis, and civic action. The final corpus (summarized in Table 1) is intentionally eclectic, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the research problem.

3.2 Analytic Procedure

Selected sources were coded thematically with attention to three analytic layers. The first layer identified translation mechanisms (e.g., lexical shifts, metaphor changes, omission/compression, paratextual framing, and audience recontextualization). The second layer examined narrative effects: how those mechanisms influenced representations of agency, responsibility, risk, value, and legitimacy. The third layer translated conceptual insights into pedagogical implications for EFL, including task types, assessment possibilities, and teacher development needs.

Coding was iterative rather than linear. Early coding cycles generated a provisional list of mechanisms and narrative effects; subsequent cycles refined categories and tested their explanatory power across domains (economy, environment, and health). The process also involved conceptual triangulation: reading mechanisms through multiple lenses (translation studies, CDA, ecolinguistics) to avoid reductive interpretations. The outcome is a synthesis that aims to be usable by educators while remaining theoretically accountable.

3.3 Scope Conditions, Ethics, and Limitations

The synthesis is constrained by the breadth of the topic. It does not claim exhaustive coverage of all sustainability or health discourse, nor does it replace empirical studies of particular contexts. The analysis is also shaped by language and publication access: English-language scholarship is more visible in the databases consulted, which risks reproducing the very asymmetries this paper critiques. For this reason, the framework explicitly encourages the inclusion of local-language texts and community voices in classroom materials whenever possible.

Ethically, the pedagogical proposal assumes that translation work should be conducted with care for represented communities. Students should not be encouraged to "speak for" others or to treat crisis narratives as exotic content. Instead, translation tasks are framed as practices of accountable mediation: making interpretive choices visible, interrogating one's own assumptions, and foregrounding uncertainty where it matters (Pym, 2012; Venuti, 1995).

4. Findings: Translation Mechanisms and Sustainability Narratives

Two overarching findings emerged from the synthesis. First, across economic, environmental, and health discourse, translation practices repeatedly function as framing devices: they reshape agency, evaluation, and

causality through patterned mechanisms. These mechanisms often reproduce dominant paradigms because they align with institutional routines and audience expectations. Second, translation can also be designed to enable counter-narratives. When translators and educators foreground uncertainty, restore suppressed agency, and make interpretive choices transparent, translation becomes a site of critique and ethical mediation rather than a conduit for ready-made frames.

The following sections organize the mechanisms into two clusters - those that tend to reproduce dominant frames (Section 4.1) and those that can enable counter-narratives (Section 4.2) - before synthesizing how they operate across the three thematic pillars (Section 4.3). A final subsection distills pedagogical models that can translate these insights into classroom practice (Section 4.4).

4.1 Mechanisms that Reproduce Dominant Frames

Dominant frames rarely persist because audiences are coerced into believing them; they persist because they are normalized through everyday discursive routines. Translation is one such routine. In institutional settings, translation is often expected to produce clarity, neutrality, and "professional" tone. These expectations can unintentionally depoliticize structural conflict and foreground technical management over moral debate.

4.1.1 Depoliticizing Terminology and Technocratic Drift

A common effect of institutional translation is technocratic drift: the movement from politically charged language toward administrative or managerial terminology. Terms related to inequality, labor exploitation, or ecological injustice may be rendered into abstract nouns that obscure who acts and who benefits. CDA describes this drift through processes such as nominalization and agency suppression (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 1998). In sustainability discourse, the drift can convert debates about redistribution into discussions of "efficiency" or "capacity building"; it can transform accountability claims into references to "stakeholder engagement" without specifying obligations.

Translation norms contribute to this pattern. When translators are evaluated primarily on fluency and institutional tone, they may avoid formulations that sound confrontational in the target language. The result is not necessarily "bias" in an individual translator; it is the cumulative effect of norms and gatekeeping practices that prioritize stability and manageability (Toury, 1995; Schäffner & Bassnett, 2010).

4.1.2 Selective Omission, Compression, and The Loss of Context

Media translation is constrained by time, space, and platform formats. Subtitling, dubbing, and social media captioning require compression; news translation often requires summarization and rapid recontextualization (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2021; Bielsa & Bassnett, 2009). Compression is not inherently problematic, but it can systematically remove qualifying information - historical context, attribution, uncertainty, or contested evidence - that enables critical interpretation.

In sustainability and health discourse, loss of context can produce high-stakes distortions. A shortened translation may intensify certainty (turning cautious probability into apparent fact), obscure who issued a recommendation, or erase the social conditions that shape risk. Such shifts can change whether an audience interprets a message as advice, obligation, or propaganda. When public trust is fragile, these micro-shifts can matter as much as the "headline" content (Piller et al., 2020).

4.1.3 Domestication and Alignment with Familiar Moral Economies

Domestication can make texts readable and culturally resonant, but it can also align sustainability narratives with familiar moral economies in ways that narrow the horizon of possible futures (Venuti, 1995). For example, environmental discourse translated through consumerist metaphors can frame sustainability as a matter of individual lifestyle choice rather than of collective regulation and structural change. Likewise, economic discourse translated through entrepreneurial success stories can naturalize competitive individualism even when source texts emphasize social protection or redistribution.

The risk is not that domestication is always wrong; rather, unexamined domestication can pre-empt critical debate by making dominant frames feel "natural" in the target context. Conversely, strategic moments of "foreignness" - retaining unfamiliar terms, or using paratextual explanation - can signal that alternative ways of imagining economy and ecology exist (Cronin, 2017; Venuti, 1995).

4.2 Mechanisms that Enable Counter-Narratives

The synthesis also identifies mechanisms through which translation can enable counter-narratives. These mechanisms are not simply the reverse of the dominant ones; they require deliberate ethical and pedagogical choices. They often involve making the translation process visible, restoring suppressed agency, and creating space for multilingual dialogue.

4.2.1 Strategic Explicitation and The Restoration of Agency

Explicitation is sometimes treated as a technical tendency (making implicit relations explicit), but it can also be an ethical strategy when it restores agency and accountability. For instance, translators can choose active constructions where source texts use impersonal phrasing, or they can clarify who is responsible for decisions when institutional language obscures actors. Such choices align with CDA concerns about how grammar distributes responsibility (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998).

In educational contexts, explicitation can be taught as a reflective practice. Learners can compare alternative translations and ask: What actors become visible? What obligations are implied? What assumptions about readers are built into the text? This is not about producing a single "correct" translation; it is about cultivating the ability to recognize that linguistic form is ethically consequential.

4.2.2 Paratext and Interpretive Transparency

Paratextual elements - translator notes, introductions, captions, editorial clarifications, and metadata - can create interpretive transparency. Rather than hiding interpretive dilemmas, paratext can acknowledge uncertainty, explain culturally specific references, and disclose the translator's positionality. Such practices resonate with arguments for ethical visibility in translation (Venuti, 1995; Tymoczko, 2007).

In the context of sustainability and health, paratext can also counter misinformation by clarifying sources and evidentiary status. For example, a subtitle or caption can distinguish between evidence-based guidance and opinion, or it can signal when a claim is contested. In classrooms, writing paratext encourages students to practice accountable mediation rather than merely reproducing persuasive rhetoric.

4.2.3 Multivoiced Translation and Translanguaging as Civic Competence

Translation can also enable counter-narratives by foregrounding multivoicedness. Community translation practices, bilingual media, and classroom translanguaging can create spaces where multiple linguistic resources coexist, contest each other, and build collective understanding (Canagarajah, 2013; García & Wei, 2014). Rather than treating the target language as the only legitimate medium of public reasoning, multivoiced translation recognizes that civic participation often requires moving between languages.

This matters for sustainability and health because marginalized communities are often disadvantaged not only economically but also discursively: their languages may be absent from official channels, and their knowledge may be dismissed as "local" or "unscientific". Translation that invites multiple voices can challenge such hierarchies by treating language diversity as a resource for sense-making and solidarity (Norton, 2013; Piller, 2016).

4.3 Domain Synthesis: Economy, Environment, and Health

The three pillars - new economic paradigms, environmental accountability, and health sovereignty - are analytically distinct but empirically intertwined. Economic narratives shape what societies imagine as possible; environmental narratives define the terms of responsibility; and health narratives mediate trust and risk in everyday life. Across these domains, translation can either stabilize dominant paradigms or open space for alternative futures.

4.3.1 New Economic Paradigms and The Politics of Value

Economic narratives depend on theories of value: what counts as productivity, what counts as waste, and whose labor counts. Translation becomes political when it renders terms such as growth, efficiency, reform, entrepreneurship, or austerity as either common sense or contested ideology. In many development discourses, a technocratic lexicon can obscure distributive conflict by framing policy choices as neutral optimization.

Conversely, translations that preserve moral and political vocabulary can keep questions of justice visible.
A second issue is the translation of "new" economic imaginaries - circular economy, degrowth, wellbeing economy, social protection, or solidarity economy. Such terms often lack established equivalents, which creates opportunities for innovation but also for capture. If new terms are translated into familiar market-centric language, they may be absorbed into the old paradigm; if they are translated with careful explanation, they can help publics imagine alternatives (Cronin, 2017; Tymoczko, 2007).

4.3.2 Environmental Accountability and The Grammar of Responsibility

Environmental accountability is a struggle over how responsibility is represented. Discourse can depict ecological harm as nobody's fault ("emissions increased"), as an inevitable side effect of progress, or as the outcome of identifiable decisions by states, corporations, and consumers. Ecolinguistics highlights how language choices - particularly agency, metaphor, and evaluation - shape whether harm is normalized or contested (Stibbe, 2021; Nerlich et al., 2010).

Translation matters because metaphors and evaluative patterns do not travel automatically. A metaphor that frames the earth as a "resource" may encourage extraction; a metaphor that frames ecosystems as "relations" may encourage care. Similarly, translations that compress scientific uncertainty can undermine public understanding of risk, while translations that exaggerate certainty can fuel skepticism when predictions do not match lived experience. Critical translation therefore involves not only transferring terms like carbon footprint or net zero, but also interrogating the storylines those terms activate.

4.3.3 Health Sovereignty, Trust, and Multilingual Risk Communication

Health sovereignty refers to the capacity of communities to make informed decisions about health in relation to local conditions, trust networks, and cultural meanings. In multilingual societies, health sovereignty is partly a translation problem: access to reliable information depends on whether messages are available in languages people use, and on whether translations respect cultural understandings rather than assuming deficit or irrationality (Piller et al., 2020).

Translation can undermine health sovereignty when it produces opaque technical jargon, erases uncertainty, or adopts paternalistic tone that triggers resistance. It can strengthen health sovereignty when it clarifies evidence, acknowledges uncertainty, and invites dialogue. This is not merely about linguistic equivalence; it is about relational communication that recognizes audiences as agents rather than as passive recipients (Piller, 2016; Norton, 2013).

Table 3. Translation mechanisms and their likely narrative effects across economy, environment, and health.

Mechanism	Typical narrative effect	Classroom noticing prompt	Risk if unexamined	Counter-strategy
Technocratic lexicalization	Depoliticizes contested concepts	Which terms sound 'official'? What alternatives exist?	Naturalizes one policy agenda as neutral	Compare outlets; add brief translator notes about contestation.
Omission / compression	Removes context and responsibility	What is missing between transcript and subtitle?	Shifts blame to individuals or to 'everyone'	Restore key agents within constraints; add captions that signal omissions.
Metaphor shift	Changes urgency and moral framing	What metaphor is used in each language (war, balance, care)?	Justifies coercion or minimizes crisis	Select metaphors that align with care, justice, and evidence.
Voice and agency shifts	Hides or foregrounds actors	Who is doing what to whom in each version?	Erases accountability of institutions	Use active voice strategically when ethically appropriate.
Paratextual framing	Guides interpretation and credibility	What does the headline/caption invite you to believe?	Creates one-sided interpretations	Add contextual notes; triangulate with sources; practice transparency.

4.4 Pedagogical Models Emerging from The Synthesis

Across language education literature, several pedagogical models recur as useful for translation-mediated

sustainability EFL. Content-based instruction and CLIL provide structures for integrating disciplinary knowledge with language development (Coyle et al., 2010; Dalton-Puffer, 2011). Task-based language teaching contributes principles for sequencing meaningful tasks and supporting form-function development through cycles of planning, performance, and reflection (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2015). Critical literacy adds tools for interrogating ideologies, identities, and power relations in texts (Janks, 2010; Wallace, 2003).

Translation can connect these models by providing a concrete set of practices in which learners must both comprehend and (re)produce discourse for real audiences. When translation tasks include commentary and justification - why one term was chosen, what alternatives were rejected, what ethical risks were considered - learners practice metalinguistic awareness and civic reasoning simultaneously (Hyland, 2005; Pym, 2012). This synthesis motivates the pedagogical framework developed in Section 6.

5. Discussion: Translation as Narrative Governance

The findings support a broader theoretical claim: translation can be understood as narrative governance. Governance here does not mean only state policy; it refers to the dispersed practices through which institutions and media manage what can be said, believed, and demanded in public life. Translation is one such practice because it selects which narratives become widely available, and it calibrates those narratives for particular audiences. In sustainability and health, this calibration often takes the form of depoliticization (rendering conflict as management) or moralization (rendering structural issues as individual virtue).

Seeing translation as governance clarifies why seemingly "micro" linguistic choices have "macro" consequences. When agency is suppressed, responsibility becomes difficult to assign; when uncertainty is erased, trust becomes fragile; when metaphors naturalize extraction, ecological harm appears inevitable. CDA provides the diagnostic vocabulary for these effects (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998), while translation studies explains how they arise through norms, gatekeeping, and the pursuit of fluency and acceptability (Toury, 1995; Venuti, 1995).

At the same time, the framework avoids a cynical conclusion that translation is only a tool of domination. Counter-narratives are possible precisely because translation is a site of choice and creativity. Explicitation, paratext, and multivoiced translation do not guarantee justice, but they can widen interpretive space. They can make the terms of debate explicit and invite audiences to question what is presented as common sense (Baker, 2006; Tymoczko, 2007).

The pedagogical implication is straightforward but demanding: if translation participates in governance, then translation literacy is a civic competence. Learners need not become professional translators to benefit from this competence. They need opportunities to practice reading translations as situated interpretations, and to practice producing translations that are ethically accountable. This is where critical EFL can contribute: classrooms can function as laboratories for public meaning-making, where students learn to interrogate sustainability and health narratives and to write back to them.

One practical consequence of the governance lens is that translation choices differ systematically by genre. Literary translation often permits ambiguity, polyphony, and slow interpretation; news translation, by contrast, privileges speed, coherence, and a single authoritative voice (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2009). Audiovisual translation adds multimodal constraints: subtitles must coordinate with images and sound, and this coordination can either amplify or counter the visuals (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2021; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). For sustainability education, these differences are pedagogically useful. They allow learners to see that the "same issue" (e.g., climate risk) becomes a different moral and political object when narrated as a personal story, a policy briefing, a corporate campaign, or a public health alert. The governance lens also helps educators resist the temptation to teach translation as a purely linguistic equivalence exercise. Instead, translation becomes an occasion to ask: What genre conventions are we reproducing? What institutional interests do they serve? And what alternative conventions might better support accountability and care? These questions resonate with critical applied linguistics, which treats language practices as historically situated and ideologically loaded (Pennycook, 2010), and with intercultural education, which views mediation as an ethical relation rather than mere information transfer (Byram, 1997). In practice, comparative translations show that every "plain" wording is interpretive and therefore open to collective ethical debate.

6. Pedagogical Framework for Critical EFL: From Translated Texts to Civic Agency

This section translates the conceptual synthesis into classroom practice. The aim is not to add "translation" as an extra skill on top of an already crowded curriculum. Rather, the proposal treats translation as an organizing practice through which language learning, critical literacy, and sustainability/health content can be integrated. The framework is adaptable across proficiency levels and institutional constraints because it emphasizes principled task design rather than a fixed syllabus.

6.1 Design Principles

Principle 1: Select texts as narrative artifacts, not neutral topics. Text selection should privilege materials that clearly reveal contested meanings: policy excerpts, op-eds, NGO campaigns, corporate sustainability reports, health advisories, documentary clips, and short literary texts. Teachers can also invite learners to bring local-language materials from their communities to avoid treating sustainability as an imported discourse.

Principle 2: Teach translation as a series of accountable decisions. Students should not be graded on producing a single "correct" equivalent. Instead, they should be asked to justify choices, identify alternatives, and anticipate effects on readers. Short reflective commentaries - what was difficult, what was gained, what might be lost - turn translation into a visible practice of interpretation (Pym, 2012; Venuti, 1995).

Principle 3: Foreground multimodality and media routines. Sustainability narratives circulate through images, sound, layout, and platform conventions. Translation tasks should therefore include subtitles, captions, headlines, and infographic text, not only paragraphs. Multimodal analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Machin & Mayr, 2012) helps learners see how language interacts with visuals to produce persuasion and legitimacy.

Principle 4: Design tasks that lead to agency and publicness. Translation-mediated learning becomes civic when students address real or simulated audiences: classmates, families, school communities, or online publics. Publishing translations (with appropriate ethical safeguards) and reflecting on audience responses helps learners connect language work to participation in sustainability and health debates (Norton, 2013; Wallace, 2003).

6.2 The Four-Phase Implementation Cycle

To operationalize these principles, teachers can adopt a four-phase cycle that structures work from text selection to reflective action. The cycle is intentionally recursive: each iteration allows learners to refine linguistic choices, deepen critical analysis, and expand the publics they address. Figure 2 summarizes the cycle.

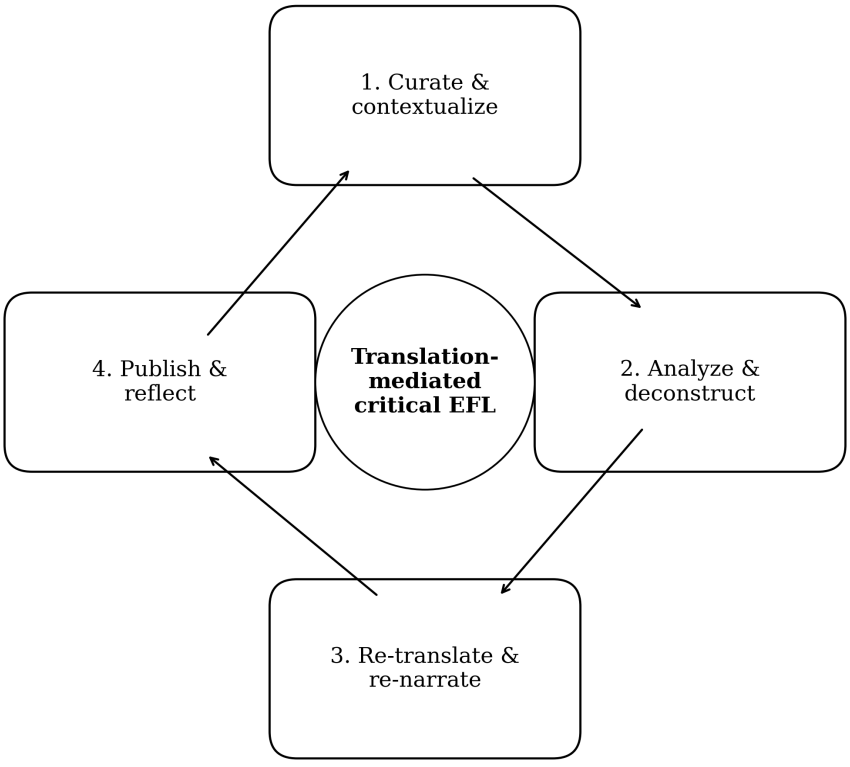

Figure 2. A four-phase cycle for translation-mediated critical EFL.

Phase 1 (Curate and contextualize) involves selecting a text and building shared background knowledge. Students identify the genre, the producer, the intended audience, and the social stakes. Teachers provide or co-construct a minimal context: what event prompted the text, which institutions are involved, and which sustainability/health debates are activated. At this stage, students also map key terms and metaphors across languages, noting where equivalents are uncertain or ideologically loaded.

Phase 2 (Analyze and deconstruct) focuses on close reading and discourse analysis. Students examine how agency and responsibility are distributed: Who is named as an actor? Who is erased? They analyze evaluative language, modality, metaphors, and presuppositions, drawing on CDA and ecolinguistic tools (Fairclough, 1995; Stibbe, 2021). Importantly, they also examine multimodal elements where relevant: images, layout, soundtrack, and platform conventions.

Phase 3 (Re-translate and re-narrate) is the production phase. Students create a translation, subtitle set, or bilingual version, and they draft paratext (translator notes, captions, disclaimers, glossary entries) that makes interpretive choices transparent. They experiment with alternatives: a technocratic version and a justice-oriented version; a consumerist environmental frame and an accountability frame; a paternalistic health message and a dialogic one. Peer review emphasizes rhetorical effects rather than surface error-counting: What does this version invite readers to feel and do?

Phase 4 (Publish and reflect) connects classroom work to audiences. Depending on institutional constraints, students can present translations to classmates, create posters, contribute to a school newsletter, or produce a private class anthology. Reflection is central: students evaluate what changed through translation, which choices were ethically risky, and how audience feedback reshaped their understanding. This phase closes the loop by generating criteria for the next iteration of the cycle.

6.3 Sample Unit Designs

To make the framework concrete, this subsection sketches three sample units aligned with the three pillars. Each unit can be scaled to fit a two-week module or expanded into a longer project. The units assume intermediate proficiency but can be adapted by simplifying texts, using bilingual scaffolds, or focusing on shorter segments.

Unit A: Translating new economic paradigms. Students compare how economic reform and "green growth" are framed in an English-language policy excerpt and in local-language commentary. After deconstructing key terms (e.g., efficiency, productivity, subsidy, protection, wellbeing), students produce two translations: one that prioritizes institutional fluency and one that foregrounds distributive questions (who gains, who pays). A short translator's note explains the ethical trade-offs. The unit ends with a structured debate in English in which students defend their translation choices as policy arguments and propose a third "hybrid" version that attempts to balance clarity, fairness, and accountability.

Unit B: Subtitling environmental accountability. Students analyze a short documentary clip or news segment about pollution, water scarcity, or energy transition. They examine how visuals and voiceover allocate blame and responsibility, then produce subtitles and captions in another language (or bilingual subtitles). Students experiment with agency: do subtitles keep passive constructions ("waste is produced") or restore actors ("companies discharge waste")? They also test metaphor choices and evaluate the effects on tone. The final product is a subtitled clip presented to peers, accompanied by a reflection on how subtitling constraints forced prioritization and how alternative subtitle versions changed the clip's implied politics.

Unit C: Translating health sovereignty. Students work with a health advisory, infographic, or public service announcement related to vaccination, nutrition, mental health, or disease prevention. They identify where messages assume a deficit model ("people must comply") and redesign the translation to invite dialogue and trust. Tasks include simplifying technical language without distortion, adding culturally appropriate examples, and drafting disclaimers that clarify what is known and unknown. Where ethically appropriate, students can conduct brief interviews with family members or peers about how the message is received, using the feedback to revise the translation and to discuss the relationship between language, trust, and health behavior.

6.4 Assessment and Teacher Development

Assessment should match the framework's aims. If translation is treated as accountable decision-making, then assessment should reward interpretive reasoning, rhetorical awareness, and ethical reflection, not only

surface accuracy. Practical options include translation portfolios (drafts, revisions, and commentaries), peer-review records, and short analytic memos in which students explain how particular choices shaped agency, evaluation, or trust. Rubrics can integrate language criteria (clarity, cohesion, genre control) with discourse criteria (representation of actors, handling of uncertainty, appropriateness of metaphor) and with reflective criteria (justification, awareness of alternatives).

Teacher development is essential because critical translation pedagogy asks teachers to work across domains: language, discourse analysis, sustainability content, and media literacy. Professional learning communities can support this work by sharing text sets, task designs, and assessment tools. Partnerships with subject teachers (science, social studies) and with local organizations can also broaden the authenticity of projects and reduce the burden on individual teachers (Coyle et al., 2010; Stoller, 2004).

Finally, digital tools should be approached critically rather than rejected. Machine translation and AI-assisted writing are increasingly present in students' lives. Rather than treating these tools as cheating devices, educators can use them as objects of inquiry: students can compare machine outputs with human translations, identify where rhetorical nuance or ethical framing is lost, and discuss how algorithmic systems embed language hierarchies (O'Hagan, 2016).

7. SDG Mapping and Policy Implications

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a shared vocabulary for linking classroom work to global priorities. Translation-mediated critical EFL aligns most directly with SDG 4 (Quality Education) because it develops language, literacy, and civic competence. However, the framework is also a method for engaging with other goals: it trains learners to read and write the narratives through which economic, environmental, and health policies become legitimate.

Figure 3 offers an overview of how the three pillars connect to the SDGs and highlights cross-cutting enabling conditions (education, institutions, and partnerships). Table 4 provides a more detailed mapping between translation tasks, learning outcomes, and SDGs.

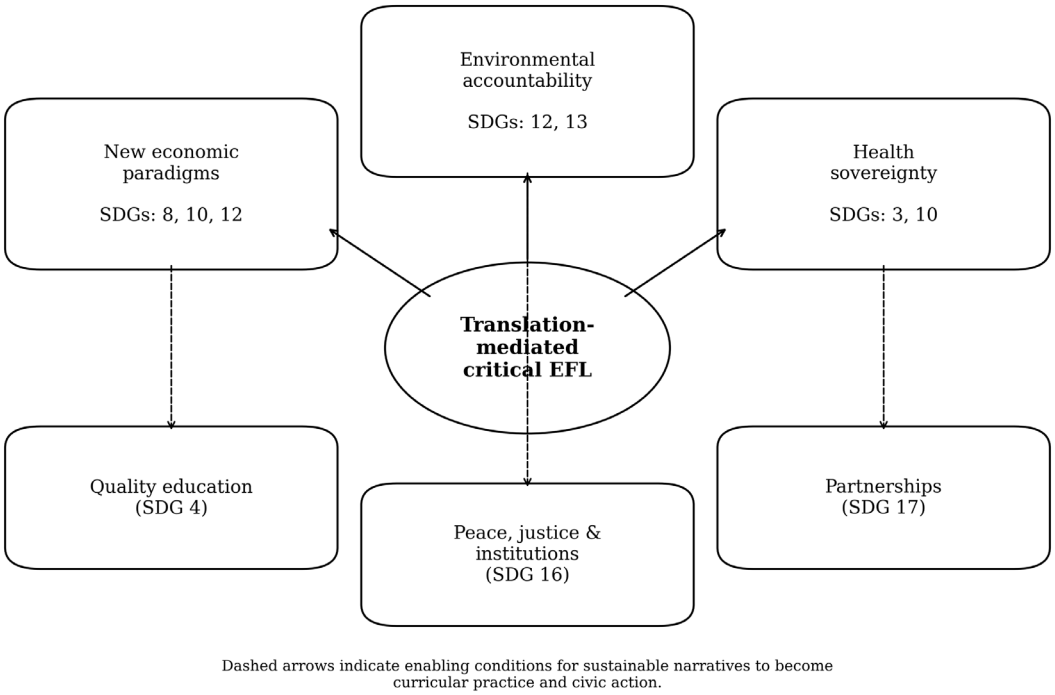

Figure 3. SDG mapping overview for translation-mediated critical EFL.

Table 4. SDG mapping of translation-mediated critical EFL (selected targets and learning outcomes).

SDG	Link to pillars	EFL learning outcomes	Sample tasks	Possible indicators
SDG 4 Quality Education	Cross-cutting	Critical reading, argumentation, multimodal literacy	Compare translations; write reflective commentary	Rubric scores; portfolio growth; student self-assessment
SDG 3 Good Health and Well-being	Health sovereignty	Risk communication, audience-aware writing	Translate and adapt health guidance; role-play Q&A	Clarity and dignity criteria; reduction of stigmatizing language
SDG 13 Climate Action	Environmental accountability	CDA of agency and responsibility; persuasive speaking	Revise subtitles to restore accountability; produce bilingual infographic	Accuracy under constraints; evidence citation
SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth	New economic paradigms	Genre awareness (policy summary, op-ed)	Translate a 'green economy' paragraph for different audiences	Audience fit; rhetorical justification quality
SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities	Economy & health	Ethical stance, inclusive language	Translate stories of inequality; create advocacy messages	Inclusive framing; empathy and perspective-taking evidence
SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production	Economy & environment	Vocabulary for systems and consumption	Translate product sustainability claims; fact-check and rewrite	Ability to detect greenwashing; source triangulation
SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Governance / trust	Source evaluation, stance and hedging	Translate policy announcements with transparency about uncertainty	Appropriate modality; trust and clarity ratings
SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals	Cross-cutting	Collaborative communication and peer review	Co-produce bilingual materials with a community partner	Participation logs; partner feedback; revision cycles

7.1 Relevance to National Development Agendas

National development agendas often emphasize human capital, innovation, social cohesion, and sustainability. In many contexts, including those pursuing ambitious transformation plans such as Vision 2030, English education is positioned as a strategic resource for global engagement. This paper's framework is compatible with such agendas, but it also offers a caution: language education should not be reduced to employability training divorced from ethical and ecological questions. If sustainability is taught only as "green vocabulary" or as public relations, learners may acquire language skills without developing the interpretive competence needed for responsible participation.

Translation-mediated critical EFL can support development agendas by building a workforce that is not only linguistically competent but also critically literate. Students learn to evaluate international reports, translate technical claims for community audiences, and identify where narratives conceal or reveal accountability. These skills are relevant to public sector communication, media industries, healthcare settings, and environmental management, all of which require multilingual mediation.

Implementation requires attention to local conditions. Curriculum designers should encourage the inclusion of local-language materials and local sustainability concerns (water, energy, public health, labor conditions) so that translation projects do not remain abstract. Where political sensitivities exist, educators can focus on analytic skills (how agency is represented, how uncertainty is expressed) and on constructive re-narration rather than on partisan debate. The aim is not to import a single ideology but to cultivate interpretive responsibility.

7.2 Evaluation and Research Agenda

A practical research agenda follows from the framework. Empirically, studies could examine how translation-mediated tasks affect (a) language development (lexis, cohesion, genre control), (b) critical literacy (ability to

analyze agency, evaluation, and evidence), and (c) sustainability and health literacies (understanding of key concepts and ability to communicate them responsibly). Mixed-method designs are particularly appropriate: pre/post measures of language and literacy can be complemented by discourse analysis of student translations and by interviews that capture changes in ethical reasoning and civic orientation.

Evaluation should also include classroom feasibility and teacher workload. Translation projects can be intensive; they benefit from curated text sets, shared rubrics, and digital repositories of tasks and exemplars. Research should therefore investigate how teacher professional communities and institutional supports affect sustainability of implementation. In addition, ethical safeguards should be documented, especially when projects involve community audiences or sensitive health topics.

8. Conclusion

This article has argued that literary and media translation should be treated as an essential infrastructure of sustainable development and health discourse. Translation is not simply a linguistic afterthought; it is a practice of narrative governance that calibrates agency, responsibility, risk, and legitimacy as narratives travel across languages and publics (Baker, 2006; Fairclough, 1995). The synthesis identified mechanisms through which translation can reproduce dominant frames - technocratic drift, selective omission, and unexamined domestication - and mechanisms through which it can enable counter-narratives, including strategic explicitation, paratextual transparency, and multivoiced translation.

On this basis, the paper proposed a framework for translation-mediated critical EFL that integrates discourse analysis, ecolinguistics, and critical pedagogy with content- and task-based approaches. The framework invites educators to treat translation as a civic competence: a teachable practice through which learners learn how public meanings about economy, environment, and health are made - and how they might be remade. The SDG mapping illustrates that such pedagogy can contribute to global and national development agendas while resisting the reduction of language education to technocratic skills training.

Future research should test the framework in diverse contexts, attend to learners' multilingual repertoires, and examine how digital translation technologies reshape both public discourse and classroom practice. If translation is where societies negotiate the language of sustainable futures, then translation literacy is not a luxury. It is part of what it means to educate for sustainability, dignity, and shared wellbeing.

Funding:

The authors extend their appreciation to Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University for funding this research work through the project number (PSAU **2025/02/36726**)

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