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From Awareness to Action: Peace, Justice, and Civic Engagement in Bangladesh's *English for Today* under SDG 16

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how peace, justice, and civic engagement are represented in Bangladesh's *English for Today* textbook for Classes Nine and Ten in relation to Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16). It explores how textbook content may develop learners' awareness of human rights, equality, peaceful coexistence, social responsibility, and active citizenship. Using qualitative content analysis, the study examines seven selected units through the perspectives of peace education, critical literacy, and SDG 16. Particular attention is given to the relationship between textbook themes and learning activities, including discussion, reflection, problem-solving, and written communication. The analysis considers whether these materials offer opportunities for learners to move beyond basic awareness towards critical reflection and potential civic action. The selected units present relevant themes through identity, community problems, regional relationships, social contribution, occupational stereotypes, literary representations of justice, and public expression. However, the presence of these themes does not automatically ensure meaningful civic learning. The study recommends more explicit critical questions, locally relevant activities, and classroom practices that connect language learning with responsible participation in Bangladeshi society.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Education plays an important role in developing learners' knowledge, values, social awareness, and sense of responsibility. In addition to academic skills, education can help young people understand their relationships with others, recognize social problems, and participate responsibly in their communities. These aims are closely related to Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16), which promotes peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice, and effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions (United Nations, 2015). In Bangladesh, where secondary education serves learners from varied social, cultural, economic, and geographical backgrounds, these aims are relevant to the development of responsible citizenship.

English language textbooks can contribute to these educational goals because they present more than vocabulary and grammatical structures. Through stories, dialogues, biographies, illustrations, reading passages, and classroom activities, textbooks can introduce learners to questions of identity, equality, discrimination, social responsibility,

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and peaceful coexistence. Cunningsworth (1995) explains the importance of evaluating course books in relation to their educational purposes and learners' needs. Similarly, Sheldon (1988) highlights the importance of examining the content and suitability of language teaching materials rather than treating textbooks as neutral collections of language exercises.

In Bangladesh, *English for Today* is a central English language learning resource at the secondary level. The textbook for Classes Nine and Ten includes materials related to personal identity, social problems, neighboring countries, notable individuals, unconventional occupations, literature, and graffiti. These themes offer opportunities to connect English language learning with social awareness and civic values. For example, discussions of community problems can encourage learners to consider shared responsibilities, while literary representations of legal disputes can introduce questions of fairness and justice. Similarly, texts about identity and occupations may provide opportunities to discuss social expectations and unequal treatment.

However, the inclusion of a socially relevant topic does not necessarily mean that learners will examine it critically. Students may complete a reading comprehension exercise or memorize information without considering the social assumptions behind a text. A lesson about a community problem, for instance, may raise awareness but provide little opportunity to examine its causes, consider different perspectives, or discuss possible responses. Therefore, it is important to examine not only what a textbook presents but also what its activities invite learners to do with that content.

This distinction is particularly significant in the Bangladeshi educational context, where textbook-based learning and examination requirements can influence classroom practices. Socially relevant content may support broader learning when teachers encourage students to ask questions, exchange views respectfully, consider evidence, and relate classroom discussions to their surroundings. UNESCO (2017) emphasizes the importance of learning objectives that support knowledge, skills, values, and responsible responses to sustainable development challenges. From this perspective, English language education can provide opportunities to develop communication skills alongside social understanding.

The present study therefore examines selected units of *English for Today* for Classes Nine and Ten to explore their potential contribution to peace, justice, and civic engagement in Bangladesh. It uses an awareness-to-action perspective to consider whether textbook content offers opportunities for learners to recognize social issues, reflect on them critically, participate in discussion, and formulate possible responses. The study does not assume that textbook activities automatically produce real-world action. Instead, it investigates the educational opportunities available in the materials and considers how these opportunities might be strengthened.

1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to examine how peace, justice, and civic engagement are represented in selected units of Bangladesh's *English for Today* textbook for Classes Nine and Ten in relation to SDG 16.

The specific objectives are:

- To identify themes related to peace, justice, human rights, inclusion, and civic responsibility in the selected units.
- To examine how the textbook represents equality, cultural diversity, social expectations, and responsible participation.
- To analyze the selected materials' strengths and limitations in contributing to SDG 16-related learning by examining opportunities for awareness, critical reflection, discussion, collaboration, and potential civic action.
- To suggest practical ways to strengthen the connection between English language learning and responsible citizenship in Bangladesh.

1.3 Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** How are peace, justice, inclusion, and civic engagement represented in the selected units of *English for Today* for Classes Nine and Ten?

- **RQ2:** To what extent do the selected texts and activities offer opportunities to question stereotypes, consider different perspectives, and reflect on social issues in Bangladesh and beyond?
- **RQ3:** How do the learning activities support movement from awareness towards critical reflection, participation, and potential civic action?
- **RQ4:** What changes could strengthen the textbook's contribution to peace, justice, and responsible citizenship in the Bangladeshi secondary education context?

1.4 Significance and Scope of the Study

This study is significant because it connects English language textbook analysis with citizenship education and peacebuilding. It considers how language learning materials may contribute to learners' understanding of social relationships, fairness, inclusion, and public responsibility. The findings may be useful for English teachers, textbook writers, curriculum developers, and researchers interested in English language teaching and education for sustainable development in Bangladesh.

The study focuses on seven selected units of *English for Today* for Classes Nine and Ten: Unit One, "Sense of Self"; Unit Five, "Problems Around Us"; Unit Six, "Our Neighbors"; Unit Seven, "People Who Stand Out"; Unit Nine, "Unconventional Jobs"; Unit Eleven, "Reading from English Literature"; and Unit Sixteen, "Graffiti." These units were selected because their themes offer relevant connections to identity, community concerns, peaceful coexistence, social contribution, equal treatment, justice, and public expression (National Curriculum and Textbook Board [NCTB], 2026).

The study is limited to the content and learning opportunities found in the selected textbook materials. It does not directly measure students' attitudes, teachers' classroom practices, or changes in learners' civic behavior. Accordingly, the analysis discusses the potential of textbook content rather than claiming that the materials produce specific learning outcomes. This distinction is important because the educational value of an activity depends partly on how it is interpreted, taught, and discussed in the classroom.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Peace, Justice, and Education

Peace education examines how education can support peaceful relationships, reduce harmful forms of conflict, and encourage learners to understand the conditions that produce injustice. Galtung (1969) distinguishes between negative peace, understood as the absence of direct violence, and positive peace, which requires attention to wider social structures that create inequality and prevent people from meeting their needs. This distinction broadens the understanding of peace beyond the absence of open conflict. A society may appear peaceful while some groups continue to experience exclusion, discrimination, or unequal access to opportunities.

This perspective is relevant to secondary education in Bangladesh. Learners encounter social differences related to income, gender, occupation, location, culture, and access to resources. Educational materials can help them recognize these differences and discuss how people can treat one another fairly. Textbook content about identity, community problems, and social expectations may therefore contribute to peace education when learners are encouraged to examine the reasons behind social tensions and consider respectful responses.

Peace education also involves developing the ability to listen, communicate, cooperate, and manage disagreement. Salomon and Nevo (2002) present peace education as a field shaped by different social and political contexts, rather than a single approach suitable for every setting. In language classrooms, these aims may be supported through structured discussion, collaborative tasks, and activities that ask learners to consider more than one perspective. Such practices can help students communicate disagreements without treating difference as a reason for hostility.

Nevertheless, mentioning peace or cooperation in a textbook is not enough to establish a strong peace education approach. Learners need opportunities to interpret situations, consider the experiences of different people, and evaluate possible responses. For example, a passage about neighboring countries may increase geographical and cultural knowledge, but a follow-up activity comparing different perspectives on regional cooperation could

provide a deeper learning opportunity. The distinction between presenting a theme and examining it critically is central to the present study.

Justice is closely connected to peace education because unfair treatment, discrimination, and unequal access to rights can create social tension. In educational materials, justice may appear directly through stories about legal decisions or indirectly through discussions of gender expectations, occupational status, and community responsibilities. Analyzing these representations can reveal whether textbook content simply describes social conditions or also invites learners to question fairness and consider the rights and responsibilities of different groups.

2.2 SDG 16 and the Role of Education

SDG 16 is part of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It calls for peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice for all, and effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels (United Nations, 2015). Although its targets address a broad range of institutional and social issues, its educational relevance includes respect for rights, peaceful conflict resolution, inclusion, accountability, and responsible participation.

Education can contribute to these aims by helping learners understand social problems, communicate across differences, and recognize the importance of fair and accountable systems. UNESCO (2017) highlights that education for sustainable development should develop not only knowledge but also skills, values, and the capacity to respond to sustainability challenges. UNESCO (2015) similarly identifies knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes as important dimensions of global citizenship education. These perspectives support the use of classroom materials to connect subject learning with broader social responsibilities.

Textbooks are particularly important because they organize knowledge and present examples of people, institutions, relationships, and social expectations. The way a textbook represents these topics may influence which perspectives receive attention and which issues remain unexplored. Textbook development therefore involves choices about content, representation, and the kinds of learning activities that accompany a text (Batton et al., 2015). In English language education, such choices can affect both language learning and the social meanings learners encounter through reading and discussion.

For Bangladesh, SDG 16 provides a useful framework for examining whether English language materials offer opportunities to discuss community wellbeing, fairness, peaceful relationships, and responsible participation. A lesson on local problems, for instance, may connect with civic responsibility if learners consider how public concerns can be communicated constructively. A literary text involving a legal dispute may create an opportunity to discuss the relationship between rules, fairness, and ethical judgement. A unit about public expression may invite reflection on how people communicate demands and how expression relates to responsibility.

These connections should be interpreted carefully. Not every social issue belongs directly to every target of SDG 16, and a textbook does not need to cover all SDG 16 targets in detail. The purpose of the present analysis is not to label every socially relevant topic as a direct representation of the goal. Rather, it examines how selected materials may support learning related to peace, justice, inclusion, and civic engagement.

2.3 English Language Textbooks and Social Values

English language textbooks have both linguistic and educational functions. They provide reading passages, vocabulary, grammar, and communication activities, but they also present cultural information and social relationships. Cunningsworth (1995) argues that course books should be evaluated in relation to learning objectives and learners' needs. Sheldon (1988) similarly emphasizes the importance of evaluating teaching materials systematically. These perspectives support a broader analysis of textbooks that considers not only language content but also the suitability and educational implications of the materials.

Textbook analysis is particularly important when learning materials include representations of gender, occupation, cultural identity, and social status. Such representations may challenge stereotypes, but they may also reproduce them if presented without opportunities for discussion. For example, a task asking students to identify occupations traditionally associated with men or women could simply reinforce existing categories if learners are not encouraged to examine why those associations exist. By contrast, open-ended questions about ability, opportunity, and social expectations may help students recognize that occupational roles are not naturally limited to one gender.

Research on language textbooks has examined their representation of peace-related values and global issues. Gebregeorgis (2017), in a study of an English textbook used in Ethiopia, examined the representation of peace values and identified both positive values and concerns about representation. Although the educational context differs from Bangladesh, the study illustrates why textbook content should be examined for the values it communicates and the assumptions it may reproduce. Akbana and Yavuz (2022) also explored global issues in English as a Foreign Language textbooks and considered their implications for peace education. Their work supports the view that language materials can create opportunities to address social issues, while the depth of those opportunities depends on the content and associated tasks.

Materials do not operate independently of teachers and learners. Tomlinson (2011) discusses materials development as a field concerned with how teaching resources support language learning, while McGrath (2002) provides a framework for evaluating and designing language teaching materials. These approaches encourage attention to learners' needs, teaching aims, and the ways materials are used. In the Bangladeshi context, this means that a textbook's civic potential should be considered alongside the demands of language learning, classroom time, and the local educational environment.

The present study builds on this literature by examining selected units of *English for Today* through a combined focus on social themes and learning activities. It asks whether the materials offer opportunities to move beyond understanding a passage towards examining its assumptions, discussing its implications, and considering possible responses.

2.4 Civic Engagement and Critical Literacy

Civic engagement involves more than knowing about society. It includes understanding shared concerns, considering different perspectives, communicating responsibly, and participating in efforts to address community issues. In education, civic learning may begin with awareness but can also involve evaluating information, discussing public concerns, and proposing realistic responses. These activities do not guarantee participation outside the classroom, but they can provide a foundation for responsible citizenship.

Banks (2008) emphasizes the importance of multicultural education in helping learners understand diversity and the relationship between identity and society. This is relevant to a country such as Bangladesh, where learners may have different linguistic, cultural, economic, and regional experiences. Educational materials can support respectful engagement when they present diversity without reducing people to stereotypes and when classroom activities allow students to compare experiences thoughtfully.

Critical literacy provides another useful perspective. Janks (2010) highlights the relationship between literacy, power, and representation. From this perspective, reading is not limited to identifying information or understanding vocabulary. Learners can also examine whose experiences are represented, whose voices receive attention, which assumptions shape a text, and how language may influence readers' understanding of an issue. These questions are relevant to textbook units dealing with gender expectations, occupational stereotypes, legal disputes, and public expression.

Freire (2000) argues for an educational approach in which learners actively engage with and question the social realities around them, rather than functioning only as passive recipients of information. Applied to English language teaching, this perspective supports activities that ask students to explain their views, provide reasons, compare interpretations, and discuss possible solutions. Such activities can serve language objectives while also encouraging reflection on social questions.

Critical literacy does not require every reading lesson to become a political debate. Instead, it involves creating suitable opportunities to interpret messages and examine assumptions in an age-appropriate and evidence-based manner. In a Bangladeshi secondary classroom, students might discuss whether a social expectation is fair, consider how a community problem affects different people, or compare legal rules with ethical concerns in a literary text. Teachers would need to manage these discussions respectfully and ensure that students can disagree without being personally attacked.

The relationship between civic engagement and critical literacy is therefore important to this study. A textbook may introduce a social issue, but critical questions and participatory tasks can help learners examine its causes, consequences, and possible responses. The analysis considers this relationship when evaluating the selected units and their potential contribution to SDG 16-related learning.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study uses four connected perspectives: peace education, critical literacy, SDG 16, and an awareness-to-action continuum. Together, these perspectives provide a basis for examining both the social themes presented in *English for Today* and the learning opportunities created by its activities.

Peace education helps identify content related to peaceful coexistence, cooperation, conflict, and social justice. Critical literacy directs attention to representation, power, stereotypes, and opportunities to question assumptions. SDG 16 provides the broader framework for considering peace, justice, inclusion, and responsible institutions. Finally, the awareness-to-action continuum helps distinguish between introducing a social issue and encouraging learners to reflect on it, discuss it, and consider possible responses.

These perspectives are complementary rather than interchangeable. A text may be relevant to peace education without directly addressing institutional accountability. Similarly, an activity may encourage critical reflection without leading to practical civic participation. The framework therefore evaluates the selected materials according to their particular content and learning opportunities rather than assuming that all activities contribute equally to every aspect of SDG 16.

3.1 Peace Education and Critical Literacy

Peace education provides a way to examine how educational materials represent cooperation, social relationships, conflict, and fairness. Drawing on Galtung (1969), the study considers peace not simply as the absence of violence but also in relation to the social conditions that support dignity and reduce injustice. Salomon and Nevo (2002) further demonstrate that peace education takes different forms according to educational and social contexts.

Critical literacy complements this perspective by examining how texts represent people and social issues. Following Janks (2010), the study considers whether activities invite learners to question assumptions, consider different viewpoints, and recognize the relationship between representation and power. For example, a text about occupations may provide an opportunity to question gender-based expectations, while a literary account of a legal dispute may encourage discussion of fairness and ethical judgement.

The two perspectives are used together to examine whether textbook activities offer more than factual understanding. The analysis considers whether learners are invited to interpret social meanings, question stereotypes, evaluate different perspectives, and formulate reasoned responses.

3.2 SDG 16 and the Awareness-to-Action Continuum

SDG 16 provides the main thematic reference for the study. The analysis focuses on peace, justice, inclusion, equality, accountability, and civic engagement, while recognizing that the selected units may relate to these themes in different ways (United Nations, 2015).

The awareness-to-action continuum is used as an analytical guide rather than a fixed sequence. It distinguishes four broad types of learning opportunity:

- **Awareness:** learners encounter or understand a social issue through reading, vocabulary, comprehension, or factual information.
- **Critical reflection:** learners examine reasons, assumptions, consequences, or different perspectives.
- **Participation:** learners exchange views, collaborate, present ideas, or engage in structured discussion.
- **Potential action:** learners formulate a proposal, write to an appropriate audience, develop a public message, or consider a feasible response to a problem.

These categories may overlap. A group presentation, for instance, may involve awareness and participation, while a persuasive letter may require reflection as well as potential action. The categories describe the opportunities provided by an activity, not a guaranteed progression in students' learning.

It is also important to distinguish classroom participation from actual civic action. Writing a letter as a classroom exercise does not demonstrate that a learner has contacted a public authority or influenced a decision. The study therefore uses the term potential action when discussing activities that may prepare learners to communicate or respond responsibly beyond the immediate lesson.

Table 1. Analytical framework for the study

Perspective	**Main focus**	**Application to the selected textbook units**
Peace education	Peaceful coexistence, cooperation, conflict resolution, and social justice	Examining themes of cooperation, fairness, and respectful relationships
Critical literacy	Representation, power, stereotypes, and questioning assumptions	Identifying opportunities to examine social expectations and competing viewpoints
SDG 16	Peace, justice, inclusion, and accountable institutions	Relating textbook themes to relevant aspects of the goal
Awareness-to-action continuum	Awareness, reflection, participation, and potential action	Examining the depth and type of learning opportunities in textbook activities

Note. The framework is used to interpret the content and activities, not to measure actual student outcomes.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design and Materials

This study adopts a qualitative content analysis approach to examine selected units of *English for Today* for Classes Nine and Ten in Bangladesh. Qualitative content analysis is appropriate because the study focuses on the meanings, values, representations, and learning opportunities found in the textbook rather than on numerical measurement of student performance.

The primary material is the National Curriculum and Textbook Board's *English for Today: For Classes Nine and Ten*, revised for 2026 (NCTB, 2026). The analysis considers relevant reading passages, dialogues, literary texts, illustrations, comprehension questions, discussion prompts, and writing activities in the selected units.

The study focuses on seven units: Unit One, "Sense of Self"; Unit Five, "Problems Around Us"; Unit Six, "Our Neighbors"; Unit Seven, "People Who Stand Out"; Unit Nine, "Unconventional Jobs"; Unit Eleven, "Reading from English Literature"; and Unit Sixteen, "Graffiti." These units were selected because their subject matter offers opportunities to examine identity, social problems, cultural relationships, social contribution, occupational expectations, justice, and public expression.

4.2 Unit of Analysis and Sampling

The unit of analysis is an individual textbook item or a related set of items, such as a reading passage accompanied by comprehension questions, an illustration with an associated task, or a writing activity. Both explicit and implicit social meanings are considered. Explicit content includes direct references to social problems or legal issues, while implicit content includes opportunities to question stereotypes or consider the social implications of a text.

Purposive sampling was used to select units relevant to the research questions. The selection was guided by the presence of themes associated with peace, justice, human rights, inclusion, diversity, social responsibility, and civic engagement. This approach allows closer examination of materials relevant to the study's objectives, but it does not represent a complete analysis of every unit in the textbook.

The selected page ranges are Unit One, pages 1–7; Unit Five, pages 50–63; Unit Six, pages 64–83; Unit Seven, pages 84–101; Unit Nine, pages 113–121; Unit Eleven, pages 132–150; and Unit Sixteen, pages 196–200 (NCTB, 2026).

4.3 Analytical Categories and Procedure

The selected materials were examined using five categories:

- **Peace and conflict resolution:** cooperation, tolerance, dialogue, peaceful responses, and respectful relationships.
- **Justice and human rights:** fairness, dignity, equality, discrimination, rights, and ethical or institutional responsibility.
- **Inclusion and diversity:** gender expectations, social and cultural differences, occupational stereotypes, and opportunities for participation.
- **Civic engagement and responsibility:** community concerns, public communication, shared responsibility, and possible contributions to society.

Awareness-to-action opportunities: comprehension, critical reflection, discussion, collaboration, problem-solving, and the formulation of potential responses.

The analysis followed four broad steps. First, the selected units were read to identify relevant themes and activities. Second, the identified items were grouped according to the analytical categories. Third, the content and associated tasks were examined to determine whether they primarily supported awareness or also offered opportunities for reflection, participation, and potential action. Finally, patterns across the units were compared to identify strengths, limitations, and possible improvements.

Particular attention was given to the difference between a topic and the activity used to explore it. A passage may introduce a social issue, but the accompanying questions determine whether learners are asked only to recall information or are also invited to examine its causes, consider alternative views, and develop reasoned responses. The analysis therefore considers the content of each selected unit together with the learning opportunities associated with it.

4.4 Scope and Limitations

The analysis is interpretive and focuses on the educational potential of the selected textbook materials. It does not include classroom observations, teacher interviews, student interviews, or assessments of changes in learner behavior. As a result, the findings cannot establish whether students develop stronger civic awareness or participate more actively in their communities after using the textbook.

The analysis is also limited to seven purposively selected units. Other parts of the textbook may contain relevant themes that are not discussed here. Furthermore, the potential of an activity depends on how it is taught, the questions asked, the classroom environment, and the opportunities learners have to express their views. These limitations are taken into account when interpreting the findings and making recommendations.

5. Findings and Analysis

5.1 Overview of the Selected Units

The seven selected units present different themes that can be connected to peace, justice, inclusion, and civic engagement. Some units address social issues more directly, while others offer indirect opportunities for reflection. Unit Five, for example, focuses on problems around communities and provides a particularly relevant context for discussing public concerns. Unit Eleven offers a literary context for considering justice and ethical decisions, while Unit Sixteen raises questions about public expression and social messages.

Table 2. Selected units and their potential connections to SDG 16

Selected unit	Main theme examined	Potential connection to SDG 16	Learning opportunity
Unit One: Sense of Self	Identity, culture, gender expectations, and personal worth	Inclusion, equality, and respect for diversity	Questioning stereotypes and discussing social expectations
Unit Five: Problems Around Us	Community problems and public concerns	Responsible participation and peaceful communities	Identifying problems and communicating possible solutions

Unit Six: Our Neighbors	Neighboring countries and regional relationships	Peaceful coexistence and cooperation	Comparing perspectives and discussing regional understanding
Unit Seven: People Who Stand Out	Notable individuals and social contribution	Responsibility, ethical conduct, and participation	Reflecting on how individuals contribute to society
Unit Nine: Unconventional Jobs	Nontraditional occupations and social expectations	Inclusion and fair treatment	Examining occupational stereotypes and equal opportunity
Unit Eleven: Reading from English Literature	Literary representations of legal disputes and ethical decisions	Justice and fairness	Considering legal rules, moral choices, and different viewpoints
Unit Sixteen: Graffiti	Public art, messages, and expression	Civic expression and accountability	Interpreting public messages and considering responsible advocacy

Note. The table identifies analytical connections rather than claiming that every unit explicitly teaches all the listed SDG 16 principles. Some connections are indirect and depend on how the material is discussed in class.

Across the selected units, the textbook offers several entry points for social learning. Identity and occupation provide contexts for examining inclusion, while community problems create opportunities to discuss responsibility and possible responses. Literary and public-expression themes offer further opportunities to consider fairness, ethical judgement, and communication. However, the extent of these opportunities varies. A unit's relevance to a social issue does not, by itself, establish that learners are encouraged to analyze the issue critically.

5.2 Unit One: Sense of Self

Unit One, "Sense of Self," covers pages 1–7 and includes materials related to personal identity, family relationships, cultural expectations, and individual worth (NCTB, 2026). The selected materials include "Mr. Moti" by Rahad Abir, "Girl" by Jamaica Kincaid, and Walt Whitman's poem "O Me! O Life!" These texts provide different ways to explore how people understand themselves and how personal identity is shaped by social relationships and expectations.

The unit is relevant to inclusion because learners can consider how family, culture, gender, and society influence the way people see themselves and others. The text "Girl," for example, presents a series of instructions that can be examined in relation to expectations placed on girls and women. Activities connected with gender roles and occupations may encourage learners to think about why certain tasks or professions are commonly associated with men or women.

This opportunity is particularly relevant to Bangladesh, where ideas about suitable occupations, family responsibilities, and social behavior may differ across families and communities. A classroom discussion can invite learners to consider whether an expectation is based on ability, tradition, social pressure, or unequal access to opportunity. Students may also consider how gender expectations affect educational choices and future aspirations.

However, such activities require careful handling. If students are asked only to list occupations associated with men and women, they may reproduce familiar stereotypes without questioning them. The activity becomes more critically useful when learners discuss why these associations exist, whether they are fair, and what happens when individuals choose occupations that do not match conventional expectations. In this way, a language task can also support reflection on equality and inclusion.

The unit's discussion of personal worth and social roles also offers opportunities for empathy. Learners can consider how people are judged by their appearance, behavior, family background, or work. A debate around the statement "Man is known by his work, not by his looks" can encourage students to develop arguments, listen to alternative views, and distinguish between personal opinion and reasoned judgement. Teachers can guide the discussion towards respect for human dignity rather than allowing it to become a simple contest of opposing opinions.

The other texts provide additional opportunities for self-understanding and interpretation. A discussion of character motivation and family relationships can encourage learners to consider how people respond to their circumstances. A response to Whitman's poem may help learners reflect on personal purpose and their place in society. These activities do not directly address institutional justice, but they can support the values of dignity, respect, and inclusion that are relevant to a broader understanding of peaceful and just communities.

Overall, Unit One provides a useful foundation for discussing identity and social expectations. Its contribution to SDG 16-related learning is strongest when comprehension activities are followed by questions that encourage learners to examine stereotypes, explain their reasoning, and consider the experiences of others.

5.3 Unit Five: Problems Around Us

Unit Five, "Problems Around Us," covers pages 50–63 and focuses on social and community problems (NCTB, 2026). Its subject matter is closely connected to civic awareness because it directs attention towards issues that affect everyday life. Depending on the texts and activities used, learners can consider how community problems arise, whom they affect, and how people communicate concerns about them.

The unit is particularly relevant to the Bangladeshi context. Students may recognize community concerns related to waste disposal, road safety, public cleanliness, traffic, unsafe public spaces, and access to local services. These examples can help connect textbook learning to learners' surroundings without assuming that every community experiences the same problems. Such connections are important because civic awareness becomes more meaningful when learners can relate general ideas to situations they understand.

Reading comprehension and vocabulary activities can establish basic understanding of a problem. However, the civic value of these tasks depends on whether students are also encouraged to examine causes, compare possible responses, and consider the responsibilities of different people or institutions. For example, identifying a sanitation problem is a starting point. A deeper discussion might ask what causes it, how it affects residents, which actions are realistic, and how responsibility is shared between individuals and local authorities.

Writing activities such as letters to newspaper editors, slogans, and posters can provide a connection between language learning and public communication. A letter requires a writer to identify a concern, explain why it matters, organize supporting reasons, and address an intended audience. Posters and slogans require learners to communicate a message clearly and persuasively. These formats may therefore support both language development and responsible expression.

The unit also offers opportunities to discuss the difference between expressing concern and solving a problem. A poster can raise awareness, but a lasting response may require cooperation, resources, and action by relevant people or institutions. Recognizing this difference helps students understand that civic responsibility involves more than identifying what is wrong. It also involves communicating constructively and considering feasible solutions.

Additional classroom extensions could strengthen these opportunities. Students might analyze an illustration showing a familiar community problem, work in pairs to identify its possible causes, or collaborate to propose practical improvements related to public safety or sanitation. They could then draft a formal letter or email to an appropriate local representative as a writing exercise. Such extensions should be presented as suggested teaching activities unless they are explicitly included in the textbook itself.

The main strength of Unit Five is its potential to connect social awareness with written communication and problem-solving. It offers a particularly useful context for moving from awareness towards potential action. Nevertheless, the presence of a letter-writing or poster activity does not establish that learners will act outside the classroom. Its value lies in providing practice in identifying concerns, organizing arguments, and communicating possible responses responsibly.

5.4 Unit Six: Our Neighbors

Unit Six, "Our Neighbors," covers pages 64–83 and introduces learners to neighboring countries and regional relationships (NCTB, 2026). Its relevance to peace education lies mainly in opportunities to develop regional awareness, understand cultural differences, and consider the value of cooperation between societies.

For Bangladeshi learners, knowledge of neighboring countries can provide a starting point for discussing geographical proximity, cultural connections, economic relationships, and shared regional concerns. Reading and information-transfer tasks may help students understand factual information, while comparisons of lifestyles and cultural practices can broaden their awareness of different ways of living. These activities can support intercultural understanding when differences are presented respectfully.

Byram (1997) emphasizes intercultural communicative competence as an important aspect of language learning. From this perspective, understanding another culture involves more than memorizing facts. It also includes interpreting perspectives, recognizing one's own assumptions, and communicating appropriately across cultural differences. Unit Six can provide an entry point for such learning if students are encouraged to examine both similarities and differences without ranking cultures as superior or inferior.

This consideration matters in Bangladesh because regional relationships may involve complex questions concerning trade, migration, water resources, borders, environmental challenges, and political cooperation. These topics should be introduced in an age-appropriate and balanced manner. The aim is not to turn a language lesson into a political argument but to help learners understand that peaceful relations require communication, mutual respect, and consideration of shared interests.

Possible extensions include group presentations on cultural exchange, collaborative projects comparing everyday life in neighboring countries, or role-play activities in which students discuss a shared regional concern. An informative essay on peaceful relations could also help learners organize their ideas and use appropriate language to explain cooperation. These are possible teaching extensions and should not be confused with textbook activities unless they appear directly in the selected material.

The unit's main contribution is the opportunity to build knowledge and respect across national and cultural differences. However, factual knowledge about neighboring countries does not automatically develop conflict-resolution skills or a deeper understanding of peace. Stronger connections to peace education would require questions that invite learners to consider different perspectives, identify common concerns, and explain how cooperation can benefit people across borders.

5.5 Unit Seven: People Who Stand Out

Unit Seven, "People Who Stand Out," covers pages 84–101 and focuses on notable people and their contributions to society (NCTB, 2026). Biographical reading, comprehension questions, presentations, and writing about individuals can help learners consider the values, decisions, and actions associated with social contribution.

The unit can be connected to responsible citizenship because biographies provide examples of people whose work has affected others. Materials concerning figures such as Mother Teresa, alongside other notable individuals represented in the unit, may prompt learners to consider compassion, commitment, service, and responsibility. Rather than treating these figures only as subjects for factual recall, teachers can encourage students to examine what motivated their actions and what challenges they may have faced.

This approach can make the unit more relevant to learners' lives in Bangladesh. Students may consider how teachers, health workers, volunteers, community organizers, and other local contributors support their communities. They may also reflect on how people can help others through everyday responsibilities, rather than assuming that meaningful social contribution is limited to famous or exceptional individuals.

Biographical writing can support these aims by asking learners to explain not only what a person did but also why the contribution mattered. Group presentations can develop communication and collaboration, while discussion can

invite students to compare different forms of service and leadership. These activities can support language development and provide opportunities to consider ethical responsibility.

At the same time, a focus on outstanding individuals may create a limitation if social progress is presented as the result of individual effort alone. Community wellbeing also depends on cooperation, public services, social conditions, and institutions. An effective discussion can therefore connect individual contributions with collective responsibility and the role of organizations. Students might consider how a community can support positive work or why some social problems require coordinated responses rather than individual goodwill alone.

Suggested extensions could include writing a biography of a local community contributor, discussing the responsibilities of leadership, or comparing individual and collective approaches to a social problem. These activities could help students relate the unit's themes to their own surroundings while practicing research, speaking, and writing skills.

Overall, Unit Seven offers opportunities to reflect on ethical values and social contribution. Its connection to SDG 16 is indirect but relevant when learners consider responsible participation, cooperation, and the relationship between individual action and wider social conditions.

5.6 Unit Nine: Unconventional Jobs

Unit Nine, "Unconventional Jobs," covers pages 113–121 and addresses occupations that may fall outside familiar expectations (NCTB, 2026). Its relevance to inclusion lies in the opportunity to examine how people judge occupations and how social expectations may shape ideas about suitable work.

Occupational stereotypes can be connected to gender, social status, educational background, and assumptions about respectability. In Bangladesh, as in other contexts, some jobs may be valued more highly than others because of income, social prestige, or traditional expectations. Such attitudes can affect how workers are treated and how young people imagine their future careers. The unit provides a possible context for discussing why work is judged in different ways and whether those judgements are fair.

Reading comprehension and vocabulary tasks can introduce learners to different professions. However, deeper reflection requires students to consider the assumptions behind social judgements. They might discuss whether an occupation should be evaluated by its contribution, the skills it requires, the conditions in which it is performed, or the income and status attached to it. These questions can help learners distinguish between informed evaluation and prejudice.

Role-play interviews can also support language learning and critical reflection. Students may practice asking questions, responding clearly, and describing professional skills. If followed by a discussion of how employers should treat applicants fairly, the activity can be connected to equal opportunity and respect for workers. Writing tasks about occupations may similarly provide opportunities to challenge assumptions and explain why different forms of work deserve fair treatment.

These activities are relevant to inclusion, although employment equality is not the sole focus of SDG 16. The connection is strongest where students examine discrimination, fair treatment, social respect, and the responsibilities of people or organizations. It would be too broad to treat every discussion of careers as a direct lesson on peace and justice.

Possible classroom extensions include comparing stereotypes with evidence about the skills required in different occupations, conducting simulated interviews, or writing a paragraph advocating fair treatment of workers. Teachers could also ask learners how occupational stereotypes affect personal choices and what can be done to ensure that career decisions are not restricted by gender-based assumptions.

The main strength of Unit Nine is its potential to challenge narrow social expectations. Its contribution depends on whether activities invite learners to question assumptions rather than merely identify different professions. When supported by open-ended questions and respectful discussion, the unit can help connect English language learning with inclusion and social dignity.

5.7 Unit Eleven: Reading from English Literature

Unit Eleven, "Reading from English Literature," covers pages 132–150 and includes literary material that offers opportunities to examine human motives, ethical decisions, and relationships between rules and fairness (NCTB,

2026). The discussion in this study focuses on Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice, as identified in the selected materials.

The play provides a literary context for considering a legal bond, financial obligations, competing claims, and a courtroom decision. These issues can prompt learners to think about the relationship between legal rules and moral judgement. The unit is therefore relevant to justice-related learning, particularly when students are encouraged to examine why characters act as they do and how decisions affect different people.

A comprehension exercise may help learners understand the plot, character relationships, and important details. However, critical engagement can go further by asking whether a decision is fair, how power affects the characters' choices, and whether legal enforcement and moral responsibility always lead to the same conclusion. Such questions allow students to compare interpretations and support their arguments with evidence from the text.

These discussions should avoid reducing the play to a simple claim that one character is entirely right and another entirely wrong. Literary works often invite different interpretations, and students can learn from examining competing viewpoints. A structured debate about strict enforcement of an agreement and the possibility of mercy, for example, can encourage reasoning, respectful disagreement, and careful use of evidence.

The unit may also provide an opportunity to discuss why fair procedures and impartial decision-making matter. However, a literary courtroom should not be treated as a complete representation of Bangladesh's current legal system. The play belongs to a different historical and cultural context. Its value for the present study lies in the ethical questions it raises, which can be discussed comparatively without assuming that the legal institutions represented in the text are identical to those in Bangladesh.

Possible extensions include character analysis focused on fairness and responsibility, discussion of the difference between legal obligation and moral judgement, or reflective writing on what makes a decision just. Such tasks would be additional teaching recommendations unless explicitly included in the textbook.

Overall, Unit Eleven offers a valuable opportunity to connect literary study with ethical reflection. Its contribution to SDG 16-related learning depends on whether students are encouraged to analyze the conflict and consider multiple perspectives, rather than only memorizing plot details and character information.

5.8 Unit Sixteen: Graffiti

Unit Sixteen, "Graffiti," covers pages 196–200 and provides a context for examining public messages, visual expression, and the social meanings associated with writing or images in public spaces (NCTB, 2026). The unit can be connected to civic engagement because public expression may communicate concerns, challenge social attitudes, and draw attention to issues that matter to communities.

In Bangladesh, wall writing, posters, and street art can be visible forms of public communication. Depending on the context, these forms may be used to express demands, communicate political or social messages, or encourage collective awareness. They can also raise questions about ownership of public and private property, freedom of expression, public order, and responsibility. These issues make the unit suitable for examining the relationship between expression and civic responsibility.

The interpretation of graffiti requires attention to context. A public message may be understood differently by different audiences, and its meaning can depend on its wording, location, purpose, and circumstances. Learners can practice interpreting a message, identifying its intended audience, and considering what response it seeks to encourage. These tasks can develop reading and interpretation skills while introducing questions about communication in public life.

The unit also provides a possible opportunity to discuss the limits and responsibilities associated with public expression. Students might consider the difference between peaceful advocacy and damage to property, or discuss how people can communicate concerns without threatening or demeaning others. These discussions can help

learners recognize that civic expression involves both the ability to communicate and a responsibility to consider the rights and safety of others.

Suggested extensions include designing a message promoting peace or fairness, discussing how a public message may influence its audience, or comparing different ways of raising awareness about a community concern. Students could also reflect on how young people communicate through creative media and what makes a public message clear, respectful, and persuasive. Such tasks should be identified as suggested extensions where they are not directly specified in the textbook.

Unit Sixteen has a potentially strong connection to civic expression and public communication. Nevertheless, public messaging does not automatically lead to accountable institutions or meaningful social change. Its educational value is greater when learners examine the purpose, audience, ethical limits, and likely effects of different forms of expression.

5.9 Cross-Unit Comparison: From Awareness to Potential Action

The selected units differ in how directly they connect with civic participation. Some mainly introduce themes and build understanding, while others provide more obvious opportunities for reflection or public communication. The following comparison summarizes the types of learning opportunities identified in the analysis.

Table 3. Awareness-to-action opportunities across the selected units

Learning opportunity	**Examples of relevant activities**	**Units with particular relevance**	**Potential contribution**
Awareness	Reading, comprehension, vocabulary, factual information	Units One, Five, Six, Seven, Nine, Eleven, Sixteen	Introduces social, cultural, community, occupational, and ethical themes
Critical reflection	Debate, comparison, interpretation, reflective writing	Units One, Nine, Eleven, Sixteen	Encourages examination of assumptions and different perspectives
Participation	Group discussion, presentations, role-play, collaborative tasks	Units Five, Six, Seven, Eleven	Provides practice in communication and cooperation
Potential action	Persuasive writing, public messages, proposals, possible community responses	Especially Units Five and Sixteen; with possible extensions to Units Nine and Eleven	Helps learners formulate and communicate possible responses to social concerns

Note. The categories overlap. The table indicates potential learning opportunities and does not establish that every activity in a unit reaches the same level of engagement.

The comparison suggests that awareness is the most general opportunity across the selected units because each unit introduces content that learners can read, interpret, or discuss. Critical reflection depends more heavily on the questions accompanying the text. Learners may identify a stereotype without questioning it, or describe a legal dispute without evaluating the fairness of the decision. Activities that ask learners to explain reasons, compare perspectives, and support their views with evidence provide a stronger basis for critical engagement.

Participation can occur through discussion, group presentations, and role-play. These activities allow learners to practice expressing ideas and listening to others. Their effectiveness, however, depends on how the classroom is managed. If only a few students speak or if disagreement is treated negatively, the opportunity for meaningful participation may be limited. Teachers can improve participation by establishing respectful discussion rules and providing different ways for students to contribute.

Potential action is most visible in activities involving written communication or public messages, particularly in Units Five and Sixteen. These activities can help learners practice explaining concerns and developing persuasive

messages. Nevertheless, the term potential remains important. Classroom exercises can prepare students to think about possible responses, but they do not prove that learners will take action in their communities.

Across the units, the central finding is that *English for Today* provides socially relevant content that can support learning related to peace, justice, inclusion, and civic responsibility. The strength of that contribution depends on the depth of the activities and the way teachers connect language learning with critical reflection. The materials provide a foundation, but their full educational potential requires purposeful questions, inclusive discussion, and opportunities to formulate reasoned responses.

5.10 Main Strengths and Limitations of the Selected Materials

A major strength of the selected units is their thematic variety. Identity, gender expectations, community problems, regional relationships, social contribution, occupations, legal disputes, and public expression allow learners to encounter social issues through different forms of language learning. This variety is valuable because peace and justice are not limited to one topic or one type of text.

A second strength is the possibility of integrating social reflection with ordinary English language activities. Reading comprehension can lead to interpretation, vocabulary work can support discussion, and writing tasks can develop the ability to communicate concerns clearly. Activities such as letters, presentations, debates, and role-play can serve language-learning objectives while also creating opportunities to consider social responsibility.

A further strength is the connection between selected topics and familiar experiences in Bangladesh. Community problems, social expectations, and public communication can be discussed in relation to learners' own surroundings. This local relevance may make abstract ideas about inclusion and civic responsibility easier to understand.

However, the analysis also identifies limitations. First, the connection between the selected units and SDG 16 is not always direct. Some themes are relevant mainly because they create opportunities for discussion, rather than because they explicitly address peace, justice, or institutional accountability. Second, socially relevant content does not guarantee critical reflection. The depth of learning depends on the questions, classroom dialogue, and opportunities to consider different perspectives.

Third, the potential for action is uneven. Writing a letter or creating a poster can help learners practice public communication, but such activities do not necessarily lead to a response from an audience or a change in community conditions. Finally, the textbook alone cannot determine the outcome. Teachers' facilitation, classroom relationships, time constraints, and students' prior experiences can all influence how an activity is understood.

These findings suggest that the textbook should be viewed as a resource for civic learning rather than a complete program for achieving SDG 16. Its contribution can be strengthened by making social questions more explicit, encouraging evidence-based discussion, and providing age-appropriate ways for learners to consider responsible responses to problems in their communities.

6. Discussion and Recommendations

The findings suggest that Bangladesh's *English for Today* textbook for Classes Nine and Ten offers several opportunities to connect English language learning with peace, justice, inclusion, and civic engagement. The seven selected units address a range of social themes, including personal identity, community problems, regional relationships, social contribution, occupational expectations, literary representations of justice, and public expression. These themes are relevant to SDG 16, although their relationship to the goal varies across the units (NCTB, 2026; United Nations, 2015).

The main issue is not simply whether the textbook contains socially relevant material, but whether its activities encourage learners to engage meaningfully with that material. Reading about a community problem may create awareness, while examining its causes and considering possible solutions requires deeper reflection. Similarly, learning about different occupations may introduce diversity, but questioning stereotypes requires students to

consider why those stereotypes exist and how they affect people. This distinction supports the importance of evaluating both textbook content and the learning opportunities associated with it (Cunningsworth, 1995; Sheldon, 1988).

The following recommendations are intended to strengthen the educational potential of the selected units without requiring major changes to the textbook:

- **Connect social themes more explicitly with SDG 16-related learning:** Teachers and textbook developers can include short questions about fairness, inclusion, peaceful communication, and responsibility where appropriate. For example, discussions of community problems could ask who is affected, what responsibilities different people have, and how concerns might be communicated constructively. Literary discussions could ask students to compare legal obligations with ethical considerations. Such questions would help learners recognize connections between language activities and broader social issues without forcing every lesson into a discussion of sustainable development.
- **Strengthen critical reflection on gender and social stereotypes:** Units One and Nine provide opportunities to discuss gender expectations, occupational choices, and social judgements. These topics are particularly relevant when learners consider how assumptions may limit individual opportunities. Following the principles of critical literacy, students can be encouraged to identify assumptions, examine supporting evidence, and consider alternative perspectives (Janks, 2010). Teachers should avoid activities that merely ask learners to repeat conventional categories. Instead, they can ask why certain expectations exist, whether they are fair, and how people can be treated with equal respect.
- **Use Unit Six to encourage respectful intercultural understanding:** Learning about neighboring countries can provide a foundation for discussing cultural similarities, differences, and regional cooperation. Teachers could extend factual reading activities through comparative presentations, structured discussions, or role-play involving shared regional concerns. Such activities should promote curiosity and respectful disagreement rather than encourage simplistic comparisons between countries. Intercultural learning becomes more meaningful when students reflect on their own assumptions and try to understand the perspectives of others (Byram, 1997).
- **Develop the civic potential of Unit Five:** Community problems provide a direct opportunity to connect language learning with public responsibility. A structured classroom task could ask students to identify a local concern, discuss its possible causes, consider who is affected, and propose realistic responses. Learners could then write a letter, email, or short public message addressed to an appropriate audience. These activities would develop writing skills while helping students understand how concerns can be communicated in a clear and responsible manner. Any actual contact with public authorities should remain voluntary, appropriate, and subject to school guidance.
- **Connect individual contribution with collective responsibility:** Unit Seven can encourage students to consider the values and actions of notable people. However, teachers should also discuss how social progress depends on cooperation, community organizations, public services, and institutions. This broader perspective can prevent learners from assuming that social problems are solved only by exceptional individuals. Students could examine how ordinary people contribute to their communities and why coordinated efforts are often necessary.
- **Encourage balanced discussion of justice and public expression:** Unit Eleven can support reflection on legal rules, fairness, and ethical judgement, while Unit Sixteen can introduce questions about public messages and civic expression. Teachers can ask learners to explain different interpretations, support their views with evidence, and consider the rights and responsibilities involved. In discussions of graffiti, for instance, students can consider both the importance of public expression and the need to respect property and public spaces. These discussions should remain sensitive to the age and experiences of learners and should not treat a literary setting as an exact representation of Bangladesh's current legal institutions.
- **Support teachers and broaden assessment practices:** The educational value of socially relevant textbook content depends partly on classroom facilitation. Teachers need practical strategies for managing disagreement, encouraging quieter students, responding to discriminatory language, and maintaining respectful discussion. Assessment can also recognize reasoning, evidence, collaboration, and respectful communication alongside grammatical accuracy and vocabulary. This does not mean replacing language assessment with civic assessment. Rather, it means recognizing that language activities can develop communication skills and social understanding at the same time.

The recommendations should be understood as ways to strengthen the opportunities identified in the content analysis, not as evidence that the textbook currently produces particular civic outcomes. Further classroom-based research is needed to determine which approaches are feasible in different Bangladeshi secondary schools and how learners respond to them.

7. Conclusion

This study examined seven selected units of Bangladesh's *English for Today* textbook for Classes Nine and Ten in relation to SDG 16. The analysis identified opportunities to discuss identity, gender expectations, community problems, regional cooperation, social contribution, justice, and public expression. These themes provide a useful foundation for connecting English language learning with peace, inclusion, and civic responsibility. Units Five, Eleven, and Sixteen offer particularly relevant opportunities to consider community concerns, fairness, and public communication, while other units support reflection on identity and social relationships.

However, the presence of relevant topics does not guarantee meaningful civic learning. Students need opportunities to question assumptions, consider different perspectives, communicate respectfully, and formulate realistic responses. Teachers can strengthen these opportunities through locally relevant questions, collaborative activities, and writing tasks connected to responsible public communication.

The study is limited to textbook content and does not establish changes in students' attitudes, classroom practices, or civic behavior. Future research should therefore examine how teachers use these materials, how students interpret the selected texts, and whether classroom activities encourage sustained critical reflection and participation. Classroom observations, interviews, and comparative studies across Bangladeshi schools could provide further evidence. Overall, *English for Today* can support civic learning when its language activities are connected purposefully with reflection, inclusion, and responsible participation in society.

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