

## TEXT COMMUNICATION CYCLE: A SOCIO-PRAGMATIC STUDY OF SELECTED REPORTS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

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### **Abstract**

This study introduces and theorises the Text Communication Cycle as a linguistic framework for analyzing the socio-pragmatic dimensions of communication has been applied to official reports, specifically focusing on the yearly Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) reports. This research aims to unveil the evolving communicative strategies employed by the United Nations in its efforts to inform, persuade, and mobilize global stakeholders towards achieving the 2030 Agenda by examining the communicative intents, encoding strategies, transmission channels, anticipated reception, and feedback mechanisms embedded within these crucial documents. A socio-pragmatic lens is applied to selected SDG reports from 2020 to 2025, analyzing linguistic choices, narrative structures, visual communication, politeness strategies, implicatures, speech acts, and framing. Findings reveal significant adaptations in the UN's communication strategies over time, particularly in response to global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and escalating climate change. This theoretical and empirical investigation provides a robust methodology for future research into the communicative dynamics of global governance and sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Text Communication Cycle, Socio-pragmatics, Sustainable Development Goals, Discourse analysis, Global governance communication.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, represent a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030 [10]. These 17 interconnected goals, ranging from ending hunger and poverty to promoting gender equality and climate action, serve as a blueprint for a more sustainable future. Central to the global effort to achieve the SDGs is effective communication, particularly through official reports that track progress, highlight challenges, and galvanize action among diverse stakeholders, including governments, civil society, the private sector, and the general public.

While the content of these reports—the data, statistics, and policy recommendations— is extensively scrutinized, the how of their communication often receives less attention. Yet, the way in which information is presented, the underlying communicative intents, and the socio-pragmatic strategies employed are crucial for shaping understanding, influencing perceptions, and ultimately driving action [14]. This research addresses this gap by proposing and applying a novel theoretical framework, the Text Communication Cycle, to conduct a socio- pragmatic study of selected yearly SDG reports.

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The significance of this study lies in its potential to illuminate the complex communicative dynamics that underpin global governance and international development efforts. As the world grapples with unprecedented challenges—from climate change and biodiversity loss to persistent inequalities and emerging health crises—understanding how international organizations communicate these challenges becomes increasingly critical [2]. The yearly SDG reports serve as a unique lens through which to examine these communicative processes, as they represent sustained, systematic efforts to track progress, maintain momentum, and adapt messaging in response to evolving global circumstances.

This study aims to achieve several objectives: first, to theorize the Text Communication Cycle as a comprehensive analytical tool for understanding the multi-faceted nature of text-based communication in a global governance context; second, to apply this framework to a corpus of yearly SDG reports (2020-2025) to identify patterns, shifts, and adaptations in the UN's communicative strategies over time; and third, to contribute to the broader academic discourse on socio-pragmatics, discourse analysis, and international development communication.

The research questions guiding this investigation are:

1. How can the Text Communication Cycle be theorized as a framework for analyzing socio-pragmatic dimensions of official reports?
2. What patterns and shifts in communicative strategies can be identified across the yearly SDG reports from 2020 to 2025?
3. How do socio-pragmatic elements such as politeness strategies, implicatures, speech acts, and framing evolve in response to changing global contexts?
4. What implications do these findings have for understanding the effectiveness of global governance communication?

The subsequent sections of this study details the theoretical underpinnings of the Text Communication Cycle, outline the methodology employed for the socio-pragmatic analysis of the SDG reports, present the key findings from the empirical investigation, discuss their implications for understanding global communication on sustainable development, and conclude with a summary of contributions and avenues for future research.

### **2. THEORISING TEXT COMMUNICATION**

In order to systematically analyze the socio-pragmatic dimensions of communication within the SDG reports, this study introduces and elaborates on the Text Communication Cycle (TCC). Building upon established theories of communication, discourse analysis, and pragmatics, the TCC provides a dynamic and iterative model that accounts for the complex processes involved in the creation, dissemination, reception, and impact of written texts in a specific socio-political context. Unlike linear models of communication, the TCC emphasizes the cyclical nature of communication, where feedback and anticipated responses continuously shape subsequent communicative acts.

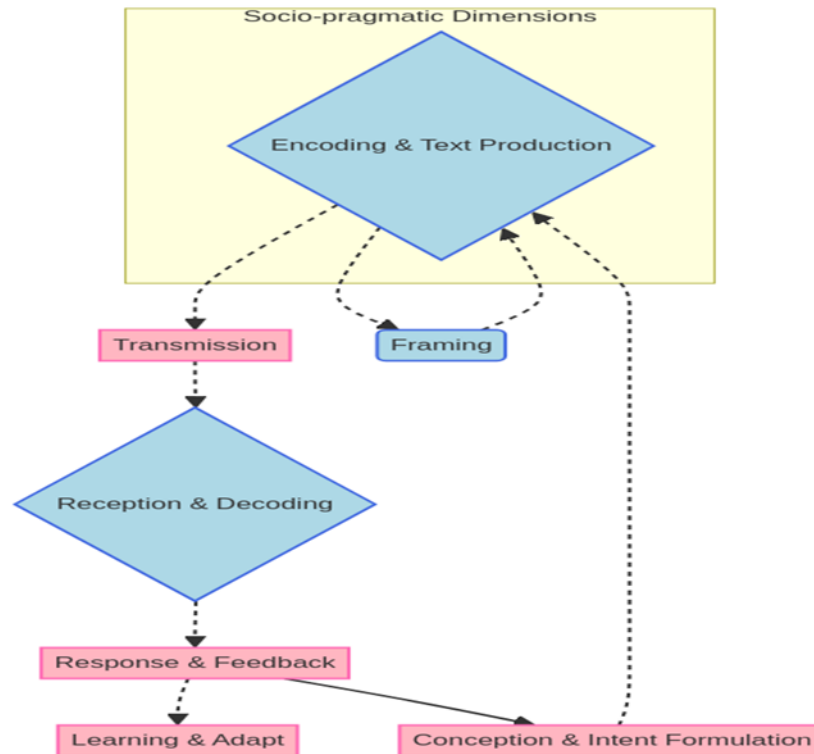


Figure 1. Text Communication Cycle  
*Text Communication Cycle (TCC)*

## 2.1 Conceptualizing the Text Communication Cycle

The Text Communication Cycle comprises six interconnected phases, each representing a crucial stage in the life of a communicative text, particularly within institutional settings:

1. **Conception and Intent Formulation (Sender's End):** This initial phase involves the ideation of the text and the determination of its primary communicative goals. For the SDG reports, this includes the UN's overarching objectives—such as informing Member States, persuading stakeholders to increase commitment, mobilizing resources, or reporting on progress and challenges. It also encompasses the identification of target audiences and the strategic decisions regarding the desired impact of the communication.
2. **Encoding and Text Production (Sender's End):** In this phase, the conceived intentions are translated into a concrete written text. This involves crucial choices regarding linguistic features (vocabulary, syntax, rhetorical devices), narrative structure (how information is organized and presented), and visual communication (use of charts, graphs, images). From a socio-pragmatic perspective, this phase is where politeness strategies, implicatures, speech acts, and framing are consciously or unconsciously embedded into the text to achieve specific communicative effects and manage inter-personal or inter-institutional relations.
3. **Transmission (Channel):** This phase refers to the means by which the text is disseminated to its intended audience. For the SDG reports, this primarily involves digital publication (PDFs, web pages, interactive platforms). The choice of channel can influence accessibility,

reach, and the potential for engagement, as well as the persistence and retrievability of the information.

4. **Reception and Decoding (Receiver's End - Inferred/Anticipated):** While direct observation of receiver decoding is often challenging in large-scale communication, this phase focuses on the anticipated interpretation of the text by its various target audiences. It considers how the sender (the UN) designs the text to be understood, what background knowledge is presupposed, and what potential for misinterpretation might exist. This anticipatory aspect is crucial as it feeds back into the sender's encoding strategies.
5. **Response and Feedback (Inferred/Anticipated):** This phase considers the desired and anticipated reactions or actions from the receivers. For SDG reports, this could range from policy changes, increased funding, and public awareness to behavioral shifts. While direct feedback mechanisms might be limited, the UN anticipates certain responses, and the absence or presence of these responses (e.g., continued lack of progress on certain goals) serves as implicit feedback. This feedback loop is vital for the iterative nature of the TCC.
6. **Learning and Adaptation (Across Cycles):** This final, yet continuous, phase acknowledges that insights gained from previous communication cycles (i.e., the impact and reception of earlier reports) inform and adapt subsequent communicative acts. This includes observable shifts in communicative intents, encoding strategies, and socio-pragmatic approaches over time, often in response to evolving global contexts, new challenges, or the perceived effectiveness of past communication. This phase highlights the dynamic and evolutionary nature of institutional communication.

## **2.2 Socio-pragmatic Dimensions within the TCC**

The application of the TCC to the SDG reports is enriched by a socio-pragmatic lens, which examines how language is used in social contexts to achieve specific communicative functions and manage social relations [5]. Key socio-pragmatic concepts integrated into the TCC analysis include:

1. **Politeness Strategies:** How sensitive topics (e.g., lack of progress, failures, inequalities) are presented to maintain face for reporting entities or Member States, or to mitigate potential negative reactions. This can involve indirectness, hedging, or positive framing [1].
2. **Implicature and Presupposition:** What is implied but not explicitly stated in the reports, and what background knowledge or assumptions are taken for granted on the part of the reader. This reveals underlying messages and the assumed shared understanding between the UN and its audience [4].
3. **Speech Acts:** The identification of prominent speech acts performed within the reports (e.g., assertions of fact, declarations of commitment, directives for action, warnings, commendations). Analyzing how these acts are performed linguistically provides insight into the report's persuasive and influential functions [8].
4. **Framing:** How issues, challenges, and successes are presented and interpreted. Framing influences how audiences perceive the information and can be used to emphasize certain

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aspects while downplaying others (e.g., framing a crisis as an opportunity for collective action)[3].

The fusion of these socio-pragmatic dimensions into each phase of the Text Communication Cycle has allowed this study to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the nuanced and strategic communication embedded within the SDG reports. This approach moves beyond a mere content analysis to explore the deeper communicative intentions and effects, and how these evolve over time in response to the complex realities of global sustainable development efforts.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a qualitative, socio-pragmatic discourse analysis approach, guided by the newly theorized Text Communication Cycle (TCC) framework, to examine selected yearly Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) reports. The methodology is designed to systematically uncover the communicative intents, encoding strategies, and anticipated effects embedded within these official documents, as well as to track their evolution over time.

#### **3.1 Corpus Selection**

The primary corpus for this study consists of the official annual Sustainable Development Goals Report published by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) for the years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025. These reports were selected due to their authoritative nature, comprehensive coverage of SDG progress, and consistent annual publication, providing a longitudinal dataset for observing communicative shifts. While efforts were made to include the 2019 report, technical difficulties prevented its full download and analysis at the time of writing. Therefore, the analysis focuses on the available reports from 2020 to 2025.

#### **3.2 Data Collection**

The SDG reports were downloaded in PDF format directly from the official United Nations Sustainable Development Goals website. Each report was then processed to extract its textual content for detailed analysis. Key sections, including the Foreword, Introduction, Overview, and the sections dedicated to each of the 17 SDGs, were prioritized for in-depth examination. Visual elements such as charts, graphs, and infographics were also considered as integral components of the communication strategy.

#### **3.3 Applying the Text Communication Cycle**

The analysis of each SDG report was conducted iteratively, applying the six phases of the Text Communication Cycle (TCC) as an analytical lens:

**Conception and Intent Formulation:** For each report, the overarching communicative intent(s) were identified by examining the foreword, introduction, and executive summaries. Questions addressed included: What is the primary message? Who are the intended audiences? What actions or responses are being sought?

**Encoding and Text Production:** This phase involved a detailed socio-pragmatic analysis of the linguistic and rhetorical choices made within the reports. Specific attention was paid to:

1. **Linguistic Features:** Analysis of vocabulary (e.g., use of technical jargon vs. accessible language, emotive vs. neutral terms), sentence structure, and recurring lexical patterns.

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2. **Narrative Structure:** Examination of how the reports are organized, the storylines they construct (e.g., progress narratives, crisis narratives), and the use of rhetorical strategies to persuade or inform.
3. **Visual Communication:** Analysis of charts, graphs, and images to understand how they complement or reinforce the textual message, and how they contribute to the overall communicative effect.

**Transmission:** The channels of dissemination (primarily digital PDFs and web-based reports) were noted, along with their implications for accessibility and audience engagement.

**Reception and Decoding (Inferred/Anticipated):** Based on the encoding strategies, this phase involved inferring the anticipated reception by the target audiences. For instance, the use of urgent and direct language implies an expectation of an alarmed and mobilized response.

**Response and Feedback (Inferred/Anticipated):** The analysis considered the types of responses the reports were designed to elicit (e.g., policy changes, increased funding, public discourse) and how the absence or presence of these responses might serve as implicit feedback for subsequent reports.

**Learning and Adaptation:** This phase identified shifts in communicative strategies over time, interpreting these shifts as evidence of a learning and adaptation process within the UN.

### 3.4 Socio-pragmatic Analytical Framework

Within the TCC, a detailed socio-pragmatic analysis was conducted, focusing on:

**Politeness Strategies:** Following Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework, the analysis identified instances of positive and negative politeness, off-record strategies, and face-threatening acts, particularly in discussions of setbacks or sensitive issues [1].

**Implicature and Presupposition:** Drawing on Grice (1975), the analysis examined what the reports imply without explicit statement and what background knowledge they presuppose, revealing underlying assumptions and unspoken messages [4].

**Speech Acts:** Guided by Searle (1969), the analysis categorized the dominant speech acts (e.g., assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, declaratives) to understand the functional intent of the language used [8].

**Framing:** Inspired by Goffman (1974), the study analyzed how issues were framed to influence interpretation, such as framing challenges as opportunities or framing inaction as a catastrophic risk [3].

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The longitudinal analysis of the SDG reports from 2020 to 2025 reveals a significant evolution in the UN's communicative strategies, largely driven by the escalating global crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and geopolitical conflicts. The findings are organized according to the key socio-pragmatic dimensions analyzed within the Text Communication Cycle.

### 4.1 Evolution of Communicative Intentions and Institutional Voice

**Early Reports (2020-2021):** The primary communicative intent was to inform the world about the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SDG progress. The institutional voice was one of concern and alarm, but it maintained a hopeful tone, emphasizing global solidarity and the

potential for a sustainable recovery. The 2020 report, for instance, framed the pandemic as a “mirror” reflecting the vulnerabilities of societies, while the 2021 report called for a “course correction” to get the SDGs back on track.

**Later Reports (2022-2025):** The communicative intent shifted from informing to urgently mobilizing and demanding action. The institutional voice became more assertive, direct, and at times, desperate. The 2022 report declared a “global development emergency,” and the 2023 Special Edition report, issued at the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, stated that the SDGs were in “deep trouble.” The 2024 and 2025 reports intensified this urgency, framing the situation as an “inflection point for humanity” and warning that the window of opportunity to achieve the goals was rapidly closing. This shift reflects a growing frustration with the lack of progress and a strategic decision to adopt a more forceful and persuasive stance.

## **4.2 Shifts in Encoding and Socio-pragmatic Strategies**

### **4.2.1 Politeness Strategies: Balancing Urgency and Diplomacy**

**Early Reports (2020-2021):** These reports employed more positive politeness strategies, emphasizing shared responsibility and collective effort. While highlighting the negative impacts of the pandemic, the language was often inclusive (e.g., “we are all in this together”), aiming to foster a sense of global community without assigning blame.

**Later Reports (2022-2025):** While maintaining a degree of diplomatic decorum, there was a noticeable shift towards less indirectness and more on-record statements about failures and inequalities. The 2023 report, for example, explicitly called out the “unjust” global financial system and the failure of developed countries to meet their commitments. This indicates a strategic decision to prioritize urgency and directness over face-saving for certain actors, reflecting the gravity of the situation.

### **4.2.2 Implicature and Presupposition: Unveiling Underlying Assumptions**

**Early Reports (2020-2021):** These reports often implied that the pandemic had exposed pre-existing vulnerabilities and inequalities, rather than solely creating them. They presupposed a shared commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the UN's role as a guiding authority.

**Later Reports (2022-2025):** The implicature became stronger, suggesting that existing global governance and financial systems were inadequate and unjust, necessitating fundamental reform. For instance, the 2023 report's call for a “new Bretton Woods moment” strongly implied that the current international financial architecture was failing. These reports increasingly presupposed a shared understanding of the interconnectedness of global crises and the urgency of systemic change, moving beyond mere awareness to an expectation of radical transformation.

### **4.2.3 Speech Acts: From Reporting to Directives and Warnings**

**Assertive Acts:** All reports consistently performed assertive speech acts, providing factual information about SDG progress and setbacks. However, the nature of these assertions evolved from reporting on general trends to highlighting specific, alarming regressions.

**Warning Acts:** Warning speech acts became increasingly prominent and forceful over time. The 2020 report warned of the pandemic's impacts, while later reports (2022-2025) issued dire warnings about the “global development emergency,” the “peril” of the SDGs, and the closing

window for climate action. These warnings were often coupled with explicit statements about the consequences of inaction.

**Directive Acts:** Directive speech acts, urging specific actions, intensified significantly. Initially, directives were more general calls for “recovery” and “solidarity.” By 2023-2025, they became more specific and demanding, including calls for an “SDG Stimulus,” “financial architecture reform,” “peace,” and acceleration in “six critical SDG transitions.” This shift reflects a move from general guidance to prescriptive demands for action.

**Commissive Acts:** The UN consistently reaffirmed its commitment to the 2030 Agenda through commissive acts. However, these were increasingly framed within the context of needing greater commitment from Member States and other stakeholders to match the UN's resolve.

#### ***4.2.4 Framing: From Challenge to Existential Threat and Opportunity:***

Early Framing (2020-2021): The pandemic was initially framed as a significant challenge and a “mirror for the world” reflecting underlying issues. The SDGs were framed as the roadmap for “building back better.”

Later Framing (2022-2025): The framing evolved to portray the global situation as an “age of polycrisis” and an “existential threat” to humanity and the planet. The SDGs, while still the roadmap, were increasingly framed as a “rescue plan” (2023) or the only path to navigate an “inflection point” (2025). This shift in framing aimed to elevate the perceived stakes and underscore the critical urgency of the situation, transforming the narrative from one of mere challenge to one of survival and fundamental transformation.

#### **4.3 Transmission, Reception, and Feedback (Inferred/Anticipated)**

The primary mode of transmission remained consistent (PDFs via the UN website), ensuring broad accessibility. However, the analysis of encoding strategies allows for inferences about anticipated reception and feedback:

**Anticipated Interpretation:** The increasingly urgent and direct language, coupled with stark data visualizations, suggests an anticipation that the reports would be interpreted as critical warnings requiring immediate attention. The shift towards more prescriptive directives indicates an expectation of concrete policy responses and resource mobilization from key actors.

**Anticipated Impact:** The reports consistently aimed to elicit policy changes, increased funding, and accelerated implementation. The heightened urgency in later reports implies a growing frustration with the pace of response and a stronger desire to provoke a more robust and timely reaction from the international community. The explicit calls for financial reform and specific transitions indicate a targeted anticipation of systemic changes.

**Feedback Loop:** While direct feedback mechanisms are not embedded within the reports, the observed evolution in communicative strategies across the years serves as evidence of an implicit learning and adaptation process. The UN's messaging appears to respond to the perceived lack of sufficient progress and the ongoing global crises, indicating that the absence of desired outcomes

acts as a form of negative feedback, prompting more forceful and direct communication in subsequent reports.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This socio-pragmatic study, guided by the newly theorized Text Communication Cycle (TCC) framework, has provided a comprehensive analysis of the evolving communicative strategies employed by the United Nations in its annual Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) reports from 2020 to 2025. The findings reveal a significant and strategic adaptation in the UN's communication, moving from an initial acknowledgment of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact to an increasingly urgent and direct call for transformative action in the face of compounding global crises.

The TCC proved to be a robust analytical tool, enabling a nuanced understanding of how the UN's communicative intents, encoding strategies, and anticipated reception shifted over time. We observed a clear trajectory in the UN's institutional voice, transitioning from a concerned yet hopeful tone to one of stark alarm and prescriptive demand for systemic change. This was reflected in the linguistic choices, which became more emphatic and emotive, and in the narrative structure, which increasingly adopted a crisis-solution framework.

Crucially, the socio-pragmatic analysis highlighted the dynamic interplay of politeness strategies, implicatures, speech acts, and framing. While early reports balanced directness with inclusive language to foster collective responsibility, later reports adopted a more assertive stance, implying the inadequacy of existing systems and issuing forceful directives for financial reform and accelerated implementation. The framing of global challenges evolved from mere obstacles to existential threats, with the SDGs consistently positioned as the essential roadmap or “rescue plan” for humanity.

The study underscores the critical role of official reports in global governance communication and contributes a theoretical base to the study of sociolinguistics and pragmatics. They are not merely factual accounts but strategically crafted texts designed to influence perceptions, mobilize action, and navigate complex political landscapes. The observed shifts in the UN's communication demonstrate a learning and adaptation process, where the absence of desired outcomes acts as implicit feedback, prompting more direct and urgent messaging.

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