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Research Article

The Earth as Narrative: An Ecolinguistic Study of Sustainable Narratives in the Creative Writing of Higher Secondary Students

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Abstract

In classical literary theory, nature often appears as a passive background scenery, an assumption that is presently on the brink of an existential and sustainable clash with the present degradation of the ecological system. This article investigates the phenomenon of the blossoming of sustainable narratives in the creative writing of higher secondary students through the lens of ecolinguistics, creative pedagogy, and environmental education. In transforming the instructional paradigm from anthropocentric grammar to “Green Pedagogy,” this study analyses the stories written by secondary school students about the biosphere. In this study, the Transitivity System by Michael Halliday along with Conceptual Metaphor Theory is employed to analyse student poetry and thus establish a clear shift from being a mere spectator to a non-anthropocentric empathising agent. In addition, the study highlights how certain language strategies—mostly expansion of non-human agency and personification—have broken through consumerist discourses. As a result, this paper claims that inclusion of ecolinguistics in literature education results in a profound development of ecological identity. Creative writing becomes not only a form of art but also a means of intervention which can overcome the gulf between scientific data and sustainability.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Collision

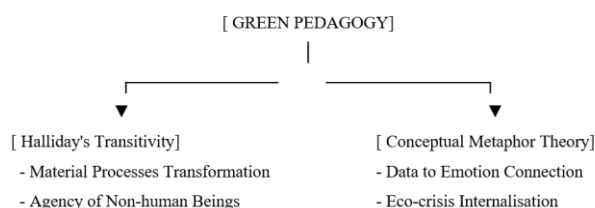
The language through which humankind expresses its relationship with the natural world sets the parameters for sustainable development. In today's world, there is an increasingly evident clash of an unsustainable kind—the violent disruption of the harmonious relationship between man and nature that is romanticized and poetic on one side and destructive and materialistic on the other. For students of higher secondary education, this is more than just an empirical problem.

In previous years, standard classroom English has been a source of a dichotomy of ideology whereby people are positioned as subjects of language whereas nature remains the passive object (e.g., “We cut the grass”; “I observed the landscape”). This linguistic inequality perpetuates the exploitation of the environment.

The current research focuses on how the fusion of “Green Pedagogy” and ecolinguistics can help eliminate these stereotypes. Through restructuring the grammatical structure, educational institutions can move from seeing the environment as a passive scenery to positioning it as an active participant.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

To measure the transformative power of student poetry, this research integrates two key linguistic paradigms under the ecolinguistic paradigm:



Hallidayan Transitivity Analysis

According to Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, “grammar is a means of organizing experience” [Halliday, 1994]. In Halliday's Transitivity System, the world is organized into various types of processes (Material, Mental, Relational, Behavioral, Verbal, and Existential). In the anthropocentric discourses, human participants have a monopoly on Material Processes (doing/creating/destroying), and non-human things become entangled in Goals (those things affected by the action). By mapping the choices made in the student's poetry, we can track changes in agency and identify instances when non-human participants have been raised from passive Goals to the position of Actors.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

In cognitive linguistics, the Conceptual Metaphor Theory argues that metaphor is not simply a figure of speech but is a basic cognitive structure used for understanding complex experiences [Stibbe, 2015]. In environmental education, the

CMT acts as a vital interpretative tool. It allows us to trace how students conceptualize their bodily experiences and concepts in terms of environmental phenomena, thus experiencing ecological crises internally.

Grammatical Mutations: Shifting Agency in Student Poetry

Where pedagogy actively breaks anthropocentric structure, there is a clear mutation in the structural framework of student poetry. Instead of viewing nature as an object of perception or consumption by human beings, linguistic devices are employed by students which give agencies back to the environment.

Take for instance the following structural example common in modern environmental secondary education seminars:

“The Earth revolves, a live ball,

A treasured possession, always cherished.” [Jagran Josh, 2025]

A close reading of this couplet shows that it deviates drastically from previous traditions of environmental poetry: Phrase, Grammatical Element, Ecolinguistic Function “The Earth rotates” Process/Non-human Actor Conveys the ability to move without any human involvement. “A vibrant ball” Attribute.

Asserts the innate liveliness instead of utilitarian purpose. Using Earth as the Actor in the process, the student excludes himself as the observer from the event altogether. The writer is not merely enjoying a picturesque view anymore; he is now witnessing the live existence of the actor that has its own movement independent of human presence.

Revising the Consumerist Discourse by Way of Metaphor

The consumerist ideology of modern institutional discourse includes the portrayal of ecosystems as “natural resources,” “ecosystem services,” or “supply chains.” By encouraging green pedagogical practices such as creative writing, the students get an opportunity to resist this commodifying discourse and recognize that one's identity as a human being is inseparable from the physical world.

The revision of such cognitive framework becomes evident from the metaphoric description of environmental pollution:

“Plastic raincoats, plastic rain.

Plastic in our hearts and brains.” (Brown & Williamson, 2024).

[Industrial Waste / Microplastics] — (Conceptual Metaphor)

— [Human Affect / Bodily Integrity]

The use of conceptual metaphor reveals a different way to think about the boundary of one's body. Here the student totally ignores the medical and scientific language used in biology books concerning the microplastic invasion. Rather, the author applies the structural metaphor where the human body equals the polluted environment.

Through embodying the pollutant in the “hearts and minds”—the conventional biological seat of emotion and reason—this act of writing converts what was merely a factual datum at some distance into an urgent crisis of ethics and of the body. The distinction between the individual self and poisonous waste is obliterated.

Green Pedagogy and Ecological Identity

The main aim of Green Pedagogy does not lie merely in imparting lessons about the environment, in this case, lessons on environmental rules, such as the practice of recycling; rather,

it seeks to establish the development of an enduring ecological identity, which happens through the psychological transformation of non-human personification, enabling radical empathy.

This criticism of exploitation is particularly apparent in motifs common in secondary eco-poetry:

“From seed to tree,

A bird gets a home for free.” (IPPL Journal, 2025).

Though this verse might be seemingly simplistic in its rhyme scheme, it operates as a critique of commodification. In a socio-economic structure where every element – including space, shelter, and survival – is completely commodified, the student points out an ecosystem that exists entirely without any transactions. “For Free,” on the other hand, acknowledges a relationship between different species that exists entirely outside the realm of the market economy.

This student narrative closely mirrors the thematic structure observed in the works of famous eco-poets, like A.K. Ramanujan. In his well-known poem Ecology, Ramanujan portrays a family home that “shivers” in response to the forceful and blinding scent of the surrounding Red Champak trees [Ramanujan, 1986].

[Ramanujan's “Ecology”]

↳ Porous nature of the boundary between “human house” and “natural environment”



| (Pedagogical Congruity)



[Higher Secondary Poem]

↳ Refusal to reduce the biosphere to a transactional entity

As Ramanujan has realised, the boundary between “human property” and “environment” is porous for these higher secondary students too.

3. CONCLUSION: POETRY AS A STORY-INTERVENTION APPROACH

In a world where the defining characteristic is climate catastrophe, science-based information usually fails to motivate people since it lacks affective warmth. On the other hand, stories have emotional warmth that makes them influential. As higher secondary students, who are at a stage where they can develop core ideology, learn about ecology through science, they treat it as something foreign to them – environmental degradation – which is viewed from the perspective of something to be resolved via engineering solutions. The poetry ecolinguistics approach is an essential story-intervention strategy for students, as it demands from them to develop an extensive notion of their agency, making them move out of the center of the universe to take part in a big, ancient living system.

The Green Pedagogy is successful in achieving psychological transformation by means of changing the grammar of

expression of the students. Thus, introducing ecolinguistics to literature classes not only helps make young people more skillful in literary devices but also changes their cognition regarding the planet, providing an opportunity for them to get away from the consumer culture and enter the kinship culture.

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Anushya M is a Research Scholar at Sri Krishna Arts and Science College, Coimbatore. She brings two years of experience as an Assistant Professor, having served in various academic institutions. Anushya has contributed to her field through the publication of two peer-reviewed papers. In addition to her scholarly pursuits, she is a published poet; her collection, *Pinks and Blues*, poignantly explores her personal journey through the postpartum period, blending her academic rigour with a profound creative voice.