

ANTHROPOCENTRIC AND ECOCENTRIC DISCOURSES IN BANGLADESH'S EFL TEXTBOOKS: IMPLICATIONS FOR PEDAGOGIES OF RESILIENCE

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: May 2026 Revised: July 2026 Accepted: September 2026 Published: October 2026	<i>In the Anthropocene, the epoch of profound human impact on Earth, Bangladeshi ELT textbooks are not passive tools of language learning but active carriers of eco-political ideologies. Employing an eco-linguistic framework, this study investigates the eco-political discourses within Bangladeshi secondary-level English textbooks (Grades 6-10) through critical discourse analysis technique. The findings reveal a predominant anthropocentric narrative that individualizes responsibility for environmental crises, externalizes climate change as a distant threat, and promotes an instrumentalist view of nature as a resource for human use. These discourses, it is argued, collectively foster a depoliticized and limited eco-critical literacy, emphasizing personal responsibility over systemic critique and obscuring the embedded socio-political dimensions of the ecological crisis. Conversely, marginalized counter-narratives in select texts affirm nature's intrinsic value and promote embodied, localized knowledge. They point toward relational worldviews and community resilience, while exposing what mainstream curricula often overlook. The study reimagines English pedagogy for the Anthropocene, urging its shift from neutral transmission to a critical medium that cultivates ethical reflection, climate justice, and ecological citizenship, empowering students as active, critically literate environmental advocates. However, future study must transcend textual analysis as this study is limited to this, by developing pedagogical interventions that weaponize a curriculum's own counter-narratives to subvert its hegemonic discourses.</i>
Keywords Bangladeshi textbooks; Discourse analysis; Ecocritical literacy; Eco-pedagogy; Eco-political discourse;	
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INTRODUCTION

People are now living in the Anthropocene, a new geological age where human activity is the dominant force changing the planet (Crutzen, 2002). This reality poses an immense challenge to our global community and demands that we rethink many of our established systems, especially education, which shapes the minds of the next generation. In this context, English Language Teaching (ELT) holds significant influence. Because English is a global

language, it is more than just a communication tool; it carries ideas, values, and stories across the world (Pennycook, 2007). This means the English classroom becomes an important space where students learn and absorb specific ways of seeing the world, including our relationship with nature. Given this urgency, this study investigates how standard English teaching materials in Bangladesh present environmental issues. Our goal is to explore how English teaching can be transformed to better meet the pressing needs of our current era.

The selection of Bangladesh as the focus of this inquiry is of paramount significance. As a densely populated, low-lying deltaic nation, Bangladesh is consistently ranked among the countries most vulnerable to the detrimental effects of climate change, confronting existential threats from sea-level rise, riverine erosion, increased salinity, and intensified cyclonic events (Ali, 1996). The nation's future sustainability and resilience are inextricably linked to the ecological literacy of its citizens and their capacity to engage critically with environmental governance. Acknowledging this vulnerability, the English textbook, as a primary conduit of sanctioned knowledge within this curriculum, therefore becomes a vital object of analysis. These textbooks are far from inert containers of grammatical structures and vocabulary; they are dynamic cultural artefacts embedded with particular worldviews, power dynamics, and discursive constructions of reality (Apple, 2004). A critical examination of how these texts represent the environment is, therefore, not an academic exercise but a necessary investigation into the foundational ideas that will shape the country's adaptive capacity and ecological future.

This investigation is prompted by a recognized inadequacy in traditional ELT approaches, which have historically privileged apolitical, functional, and decontextualized models of language learning. Such models often focus on transactional communication skills while deliberately avoiding contentious socio-political and ecological issues (Crookes, 2013). In the face of the interconnected crises of the Anthropocene, this depoliticized stance is not only obsolete but potentially detrimental.

Literature Review

In the English language learning class rooms of the future, as envisioned by Verma and Ara (2025), students will not only deconstruct sentences but also learn to safeguard the Earth. The researchers are calling for this critical pivot in how we teach. In our current era of significant environmental change, they believe English classes have a greater purpose. Through “eco-pedagogy”, teachers can merge language lessons with environmental awareness, inspiring a new generation of “eco-warriors”. Rooted in Freirean principles (Freire, 2004), their method grounds language learning in the reality of local ecological problems, making it deeply meaningful. The goal transcends fluency: it is about fostering the critical thinkers and passionate caretakers our world urgently needs. Echoing this call for change, Kidman and Chang (2025) argue for “planetary pedagogies”. They suggest that subjects like geography must break down their traditional walls and teach students about the complex and often uncertain connections between society and the environment. Their vision for education includes respecting indigenous knowledge and focuses on ethical relationships with nature. For them, the true purpose of learning is to equip students to contribute to “planetary repair”, moving beyond simply memorizing facts to actively engaging with the world's challenges.

Complementing these views, Lloro-Bidart (2015) critiques the persistent humanism in education that reinforces nature-culture binaries. Through a political ecology of education framework, she examines how policy documents like the “Framework for K–12 Science Education” perpetuate technocentric and managerial approaches to environmental issues. She advocates for ecofeminist and posthumanist perspectives that reconfigure human-nature relations, urging pedagogies that acknowledge multispecies entanglements and confront the anthropocentric assumptions underpinning educational practice in the Anthropocene.

Furthermore, we need to fundamentally rethink education to face our era's ecological crises, as Wark and Jandrić (2016) argue, by seeing knowledge as a planetary responsibility. In their view, true learning fosters relational thinking, connecting us to non-humans and ecosystems, and positions teaching not as a neutral task, but as a transformative one. This principle is already taking root in practice. As Yastibaş (2021) highlights, English teacher programs in Turkey are integrating environmental education. By framing sustainability as a core social responsibility, they use language pedagogy to cultivate pro-environmental values. This demonstrates that for education to be relevant in the Anthropocene, it must be interdisciplinary, embedding ecological literacy into the very fabric of classroom life.

Besides, the study of Goulah (2015) "calls on the field of TESOL to respond to the planet's growing climatic and ecological crisis, conceptualizing climate change beyond just standards-based language and content curriculum" (p. 90). Thus, in the context of Finnish social studies textbooks, Satokangas & Mikander (2024) examine how agency concerning the climate crisis is discursively constructed. They identify four rhetorical orientations: constructing agency against the crisis, stating systemic unsustainability, enlisting general impact-making methods, and representing the crisis's absence. Their analysis reveals a predominant emphasis on individual consumer choices, with limited engagement in collective or systemic action, thereby constraining the development of critical eco-political literacy and falling short of fostering transformative citizenship. In addition, learners' agency is also depicted in advanced EFL students' practices in formal and informal language learning settings where "students demonstrated an awareness of language learning processes and an ability to reflect on aspects of their agency, referring, among others, to their intentions and motivations in pursuing their objectives" (Chodkiewicz, 2023, p. 57).

Similarly, Trædal et al. (2022) compare geography textbooks from Norway and South Africa, identifying dominant climate change discourses such as ecological modernization, green governmentality, and civic environmentalism. They find that textbooks in both countries heavily emphasize international agreements and state-led solutions, while perspectives on climate justice and civic action remain marginal. This reflects a global policyscape that prioritizes technical and governmental responses over critical, justice-oriented eco-political discourse, limiting students' understanding of structural causes and equitable solutions.

To illustrate, "ecopedagogy seeks the possibility of the creation of a new ecologically sustainable civilization and see it in the fundamental, democratic and planetary reconstruction of educational systems" (Grigorov & Fleuri, 2012, p. 433). In contrast, a study of U.S. history textbooks reveals that they often portray climate change as a matter of debate, not scientific fact, and emphasize top-down solutions from leaders and government projects (D'Apice & Bromley, 2023). This mirrors Dryzek's (2013) claim that "the whole environmental area is home to heated debates and disputes, ranging from the details of the implementation of policy choices in particular localities, to the appropriate construction of responses to global environmental change" (p. 3). Ergo, this framing, the researchers note (D'Apice & Bromley, 2023), minimizes the role of collective civic action and critical analysis of systems, ultimately limiting students' potential for robust eco-political engagement. This also emphasizes the notion that "life itself and its future(s), more than ever, depend now on humanizing and transforming education" (Grigorov & Fleuri, 2012, p. 433).

Finally, Colston and Thomas (2019) expose how climate denialist children's books in the U.S. function as pseudo-textbooks that reproduce eco-political discourse in favor of conservative agendas. Since "the way we construct, interpret, discuss, and analyze environmental problems has all kinds of consequences" (Dryzek, 2013, p. 11), by framing climate change as a non-problem and undermining scientific consensus, these texts foster skepticism and polarization. Building on these insights, Schauss et al. (2024) highlight how

visuals in German geography textbooks further shape eco-political discourse. Their study finds that images overwhelmingly depict impacts: melting glaciers, natural disasters, endangered species while sidelining representations of mitigation or agency. This imbalance cultivates a discourse of victimhood and passivity, echoing the silences and omissions seen in textual analyses.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the dialectical-relational approach (DRA) within Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) (Fairclough, 2013). The DRA views discourse as both shaped by and shaping social practices, institutions, and power relations. However, Fairclough (2013) argues, “discourse is commonly used in various senses including meaning-making as an element of the social process (p. 230). He called it “semiosis” which “is viewed here as an element of the social process which is dialectically related to others – hence a ‘dialectical–relational’ approach. Relations between elements are dialectical in the sense of being different but not ‘discrete’, i.e., not fully separate” (p. 230-231). Thus, this is crucial for analyzing educational texts, since school curricula not only reflect social ideologies but actively participate in reproducing or contesting them. Through this lens, Bangladeshi English textbooks are treated as sites where ecological worldviews and eco-political discourses are dialectically entangled with broader sociopolitical and economic trajectories in the Anthropocene.

Complementing this, the study employs ecolinguistic framework which examines the interrelationships between language and the ecological systems that sustain life (Stibbe, 2015). This study particularly foregrounds the distinction between ecocentric discourses, rooted in Naess’s (1973) philosophy of deep ecology, and anthropocentric discourses, typically aligned with shallow ecology or the industrial growth paradigm. Ecocentric discourses emphasize interconnectedness, intrinsic value of non-human life, and sustainable ways of being, whereas anthropocentric discourses reproduce instrumentalist logics that subordinate nature to human progress and economic development. In contexts like Bangladesh, where climate vulnerability intersects with educational modernization, these discursive tensions acquire heightened significance. Thus, examining the lexical patterns and narrative framings in textbooks can reveal whether they normalize anthropocentric values or foster ecological consciousness. Drury (2025) argues that such analyses reveal global-local dynamics of sustainability discourse, showing how local pedagogical materials embody or resist transnational ecological narratives.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design and Data Sources

This study employs a deliberate, criteria-driven sampling strategy, centering on the official *English For Today* textbooks for grades 6 through 10 in Bangladesh, as mandated by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) for the year 2025. This focused selection is intentional; these textbooks embody the centralized, state-sanctioned curriculum that arrives in the hands of the vast majority of the nation’s secondary students. As such, they constitute a pivotal source for the production of cultural and ideological discourse. Our specific object of study is the “environmental narrative” contained within these texts.

Table 1
Contents from the textbooks

Class Name	Lesson/Unit Number	Lesson/ Unit Title	Page Range
Class 6	Lesson 31	Too much or too little Water	95-96
Class 7	Unit Nine	Climate Change	103-112
Class 8	Unit Five	Humans and Environment	48-63
Class 9-10	Unit Two	Climate Change	13-27
	Unit Fourteen	Renewable Energy	180-189

This is defined as any discrete piece of text, whether a story, lesson, or passage, that engages, either directly or indirectly, with themes of nature, the environment, ecology, climate, the relationship between humans and the natural world, or pertinent environmental concerns. The procedure for corpus compilation involved a systematic, multi-stage screening process. First, a complete set of textbooks from grades 6 to 10 was obtained. Second, a thorough page-by-page reading was conducted to identify all potential units of analysis. A unit could be a full story, a poem, a reading comprehension passage, a dialogue, or a descriptive article, with its accompanying caption and related text. The primary criterion for inclusion was any substantive engagement with an environmental theme. This process resulted in the creation of a specialized corpus of environmental narratives, which forms the primary data for the analysis.

Moreover, to find the main themes, we employed a careful, step-by-step process that was facilitated by NVivo software. This approach meant every step of the analysis was clear and traceable. The work started with an initial coding stage, where we went through the text line by line and tagged meaningful passages with short, descriptive labels. A phrase like “the forests give us timber”, for instance, was coded as “nature_as_resource”. At this early stage, the coding was guided mainly by the data itself, producing a broad set of basic codes that highlighted the more obvious ideas within the narratives.

Data Analysis

Following this, the analysis moved into the theme development phase, which relied heavily on NVivo’s analytical tools to manage the complexity of the codes. The researcher used features, Query tool and Cluster Analysis, to examine relationships and patterns among the initial codes. This involved grouping similar codes together into potential candidate themes. For instance, codes such as “nature_as_resource”, “ecosystem_services”, and “land_for_development” were aggregated under the broader candidate theme of “Instrumental Value of Nature”. This was not a linear process but a recursive one, constantly checking the candidate themes against the original data extracts to ensure they formed a coherent and meaningful pattern.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Pedagogy of Personal Burden

The analysis identified that these textbooks position personal lifestyle modifications as the primary mechanism for addressing ecological crises. For instance, *If your family has a car, use it less and walk to the shops... You can save energy by changing your lifestyle. For example, you can often avoid the air-conditioning in summer and use hand fans instead... Do you know that if you eat fewer meat and dairy products, you can reduce greenhouse gas output? (Class 7, p. 105).* This lesson explicitly directs students to “use [the car] less”, “avoid the air-conditioning”, and “eat fewer meat and dairy products”, framing these actions as direct pathways to saving energy and reducing greenhouse gases. Similarly, “There are many things you can do on your own every day to help save the planet. Here are some suggestions: REDUCE!... REUSE!... RECYCLE!...” (Class 9-10, p. 20-21). The lesson distills environmental stewardship into the three Rs, “REDUCE! REUSE! RECYCLE!”, and emphasizes actions one can do “on your own every day”. This consistent narrative across grade levels constructs a specific version of environmentalism, one that is heavily reliant on consumer choices and personal ethics rather than systemic or institutional change.

The textbooks, as authoritative educational instruments, do not merely describe environmental issues but actively construct a particular “common-sense” reality. The discourse of individualized responsibility functions to obscure the dialectical relationship between individual action and the broader political-economic structures (Shaikh, 2026) that are the primary drivers of ecological degradation. By repeatedly emphasizing what “you can

do”, the discourse implicitly shifts the burden of responsibility away from corporate actors, industrial policies, and global economic systems and onto the shoulders of the individual student and their family. This creates a “mystification” of the social and power relations that underpin the Anthropocene, framing a colossal, collective action problem as a matter of personal virtue and consumption habits.

This discursive framing aligns closely with “shallow ecology” or an anthropocentric perspective. An anthropocentric worldview places human interests, particularly economic and utilitarian ones, at the center of environmental concern. The textbook advice, while promoting pro-environmental behavior, ultimately does so within the confines of the existing industrial growth paradigm. The suggestions do not challenge the fundamental structures that necessitate high energy consumption or intensive animal agriculture; instead, they offer ways for individuals to marginally reduce their personal impact while the system itself remains unchallenged. This resonates with previous literature that critiques the neoliberal co-optation of environmentalism, where systemic failures are re-framed as personal responsibilities (Littler, 2011). The discourse is not about transforming society towards an “ecocentric” or “deep ecological” vision, which would involve recognizing the intrinsic value of nature and advocating for profound changes in economic and social organization. Rather, it is about making minor adjustments to ensure the continuity of a human-centered, growth-oriented model, thereby sustaining what can be termed the “industrial growth narrative”.

“Today, of course, we not only have an environment, but most of the important things that happen to it are the subject of politics, and the target of public policy” (Dryzek, 2013, p. 6). Thus, the emphasis on consumer-based solutions, such as choosing to recycle or buy less, further reinforces a neoliberal ideology that positions the market as the ultimate arena for civic action. This finding aligns with studies in other contexts that reveal how environmental education often shifts responsibility onto individuals (Hursh et al., 2015). By spotlighting the consumer, Bangladeshi textbooks sidestep the state’s responsibility to regulate polluting industries, invest in large-scale renewable energy, and safeguard shared natural resources. They also erase conversations about global inequality, where the historic and ongoing carbon emissions of industrialized nations far exceed those of Bangladesh that bears a disproportionate burden of climate change. Such discourse not only distorts the true scale of the crisis but also risks leaving students feeling powerless or wrongly guilty when their personal actions cannot counter systemic ecological collapse.

Right now, focusing only on student behaviour and simple actions is a very uncreative approach to teaching English in this modern age of environmental change. The English classroom should be a place where students learn to think carefully about our relationship with the planet. Instead of a basic view of nature, we should include ideas that put the environment at the center. This means using English lessons to look at writings about deep ecology, the wisdom of indigenous peoples, and stories that are not just about humans. So, rather than just learning words like “recycling”, students could use their English to discuss climate fairness, examine what world leaders are saying, or write letters calling for real change. The current pedagogy, as evidenced by these excerpts, provides the linguistic tools for compliance, not for critique. It teaches students how to be better occupants of a failing system, but not how to question the system itself. To truly serve students in the Anthropocene, English pedagogy must move beyond the comfort of “reduce, reuse, recycle” and dare to introduce the more complex, but essential, vocabulary of “restructure, reimagine, and repair”. It must humanize the crisis not as a series of personal chores, but as a collective story that demands collective, systemic answers.

Anthropogenic Climate Change as an External Threat

This theme reveals that climate change is consistently represented as an external threat that affects the nation’s socio-economic and ecological stability. To illustrate, *Climate change*

has already started bringing disasters to Bangladesh. We remember the damage caused by the Aila in 2009... It is estimated that a 45-centimetre rise of sea-level will flood almost 10.9 percent of our territory and will make 5.5 million people homeless. (Class 7, p. 102)

In this extract, climate change is introduced as an imminent danger that is already producing disasters such as cyclones and flooding. The text stresses the destructive impact of Cyclone Aila in 2009, as well as projected sea-level rise that could displace millions of people. This representation situates Bangladesh as a victim of global warming caused by forces largely outside of its control. The emphasis on quantifiable threats, such as the figure of 10.9 percent of land submerged and 5.5 million people displaced, demonstrates a discourse of urgency and vulnerability. From theoretical perspective, such framing reflects a textual practice of problematization, where the social reality of climate change is constructed through alarming statistics and emotionally charged references to past disasters. Yet, the broader relational dimension reveals that agency is displaced: the responsibility for action is not explicitly assigned to specific actors, whether local or global. For students at the Class 7 level, this form of pedagogy may cultivate empathy but does little to foster critical ecological agency or encourage systemic questioning of global industrial practices.

Accordingly, *It took the river only a day to devour Meher's house, trees, vegetable garden and the bamboo bush...The greedy Jamuna has shattered her dreams and happiness... In fact, river erosion is one of the main dangers caused by climate change. (Class 9-10, p. 9)*

This passage advances the narrative by personifying the Jamuna River as “greedy”, a rhetorical device that dramatizes the suffering of Meherjan, a woman whose life is devastated by river erosion. The text links this erosion directly to climate change, thereby framing ecological transformation as the root cause of socio-economic precarity. While the personalization of environmental destruction through Meherjan’s story offers a powerful emotional entry point for students, it also illustrates Fairclough’s notion of discursive recontextualization: complex processes of hydrological change and development policy are reduced into a simplified moral tale of victimhood. Moreover, the anthropomorphic portrayal of the river as “greedy” subtly displaces human accountability by attributing agency to nature itself.

On one hand, the text foregrounds the destructive force of nature, which resonates with shallow ecological framings that see the environment primarily as a threat to human survival. On the other hand, there is little sign of a deeper ecocentric recognition of interdependence, where the human and non-human worlds are viewed as mutually sustaining. Instead, the discourse aligns more closely with an industrial growth narrative (Dryzek, 2013), where climate change is seen as an obstacle to development and well-being, rather than as a call to reconfigure humanity’s relationship with the natural world. However, the verb “devour” is particularly potent, painting the river as a ravenous beast, a mythological dragon consuming everything in its path. This framing transforms a complex geomorphological process, river erosion, into a simple, terrifying story of a monster and its prey.

This discourse has a direct and limiting impact on the development of a sophisticated eco-critical literacy in students. If climate change is an external monster, then the required response is not systemic introspection or a critical examination of our own societal structures, but rather a form of defense, adaptation, or, at best, a plea for the monster to be tamed by others. It fosters a mindset of vulnerability and passivity. Students learn to see themselves as potential “climate change victims”. While this accurately describes a tragic reality, when left uncontextualized by a discourse of justice and systemic cause, it risks teaching a lesson of helplessness. A truly critical ecological literacy would empower students to ask difficult questions. But, the current narrative encourages mourning and resilience in the face of an attack, but it does not equally encourage the critical thinking needed to understand the attacker’s origins and the political and economic structures that sustain it.

Thus, when this same narrative is uncritically embedded in pedagogy, it can have an unintended side effect. It can obscure the need for critical self-reflection on *internal* environmental governance. By focusing solely on the global “monster”, the discourse can divert attention from domestic issues such as the management of internal river systems, the enforcement of environmental regulations on its own industries, and the sustainability of its own development path. The threat is always out *there*, in the rising seas, in the shifting global climate, never partially embedded *here*, in local policies and practices that may exacerbate vulnerability. A student might rightly learn to blame the industrialized world for the CO₂ that warms the planet, but they may not be equipped to critically analyze a local project like the Rampal Power Plant that destroys a mangrove forest, which is a natural barrier against cyclones, in the name of development. The external threat narrative, while geopolitically apt, can therefore stifle a necessary internal civic dialogue about national environmental responsibility and sustainable development.

Consequently, the current approach uses English to deliver a pre-digested, alarming truth: you are in danger. This can create climate anxiety without offering a pathway to agential engagement beyond the individual behaviors discussed previously. The pedagogy becomes one of warning and mourning. A reimagined pedagogy would use the power of English not just to describe the threat, but to deconstruct it. From a pedagogical standpoint, for Class 7 students, who encounter the stark statistics of land loss, the pedagogical challenge is to move beyond passive reception of frightening data. A reimagined pedagogy could use these very statistics as a starting point for participatory projects. Students could be tasked with using English to research and write simple reports on local adaptation projects, such as floating gardens or saline-resistant crops, thereby shifting the narrative from one of pure victimhood to one of active, local resilience. This transforms the English classroom from a site of receiving grim facts to a laboratory for articulating solutions.

For older students in Classes 9-10, narratives such as Meherjan’s can be reimagined within an ecocentric framework. Instead of solely portraying her as a victim of river erosion, the pedagogy can emphasize adaptive strategies, community resilience, and the interconnectedness of river ecosystems with livelihoods. Such approaches would resonate with Naess’s deep ecology, which insists on recognizing the intrinsic value of non-human life and the necessity of sustainable co-existence. In this sense, the text could shift from a “catastrophe pedagogy” to an “eco-political pedagogy”, where students are not only emotionally moved but also intellectually equipped to see themselves as agents of ecological justice.

Ultimately, a critical English pedagogy for the Anthropocene must help students read both the word and the world. It must equip them to analyze not only the grammatical structures of a sentence about a “greedy” river but also the ideological structures that such a metaphor supports and obscures. By complementing the existing curriculum’s valuable focus on impacts with critical tools for analyzing cause and responsibility, English language teaching can foster a generation of eco-political literates. For these students, English would become a tool not just to describe their climate vulnerability, but to fight for justice, analyze the complex local and global dynamics, and envision a future, not of mere survival, but of forging a new, ecocentric relationship with their inherited planet.

Instrumental Value of Nature

This perspective evaluates natural elements and processes based on their utility and impact on human society. The data from Class 6 provides a clear example, framing the phenomenon of rain exclusively through its human consequences: “Sometimes it rains so heavily that floods occur... If there is too little water, that causes a lot of suffering to the people” (p. 90-91). In this construction, water is not an entity with its own intrinsic worth or part of a complex ecological system; its value is contingent upon its quantity and its direct

effect on human well-being. It is “good” or “bad” only in relation to its ability to prevent human suffering or facilitate human benefit, establishing a fundamentally utilitarian relationship between people and the natural world.

Fairclough’s (2013) dialectical-relational approach emphasizes that language is a social practice that both reflects and reinforces power structures and ideologies. The textbook’s framing of water establishes a binary and transactional logic: nature is a resource to be managed, and its primary importance lies in its service to human needs. This discourse obscures the more complex, dialectical reality where human societies are embedded within, not separate from, ecological systems. By repeatedly presenting nature in this instrumental way, the text naturalizes an anthropocentric worldview. It teaches students to see the environment as a background for human drama, a set of variables that either support or hinder societal stability, rather than as an active participant in a shared planetary system. This implies that mainstream educational materials often perpetuate a human-nature dichotomy, failing to represent the deeply interconnected reality of the Anthropocene.

This framing aligns precisely with what Naess (1973) categorised as an “anthropocentric” worldview, characteristic of “shallow ecology”. In this perspective, the protection of nature is advocated only when it directly serves human interests. The concern about flooding or drought is not for the health of the watershed ecosystem itself, but for the damage and suffering inflicted upon human communities. This stands in stark contrast to an “ecocentric” or “deep ecology” perspective, which would attribute intrinsic value to the river, the rain, and the entire hydrological cycle, regardless of their utility to people. An ecocentric view would recognize that a river has a right to flow, and an ecosystem has a right to exist, outside of its service to humanity. The textbook’s discourse, therefore, implicitly supports an “industrial growth narrative” by reinforcing the idea that the non-human world is a collection of resources and hazards, a narrative that has historically justified exploitation and environmental degradation for economic gain.

A reimagined English pedagogy for younger students must therefore consciously design activities that use language and creativity not to describe nature as a tool, but to build a sense of wonder, connection, and ethical responsibility towards the more-than-human world, planting the seeds for a more ecocentric worldview from an early age. At this developmental stage, Class 6 learners, abstract philosophical concepts can be effectively introduced through concrete, imaginative, and language-based activities. The English classroom, therefore, becomes a vital space for cultivating a new ecological imagination.

Instead of merely learning vocabulary about natural disasters, students could engage in creative writing exercises that personify natural elements. For example, they could be prompted to write a short story or a simple poem from the perspective of a river, describing its journey from the mountains to the sea, the creatures it supports, and its feelings when it is clean or polluted. This activity uses English language learning to develop perspective-taking and empathy, directly challenging the instrumental view by encouraging students to see the world through a non-human lens.

The Whisper of a Different Relationship

The first and most powerful example of this is the poignant story of “The Little Bird” by Leo Tolstoy. The narrative is not about ecosystems or resources, but about a direct, ethical encounter between a child and a non-human life. Seryozha’s initial desire to possess the siskin is met with the bird’s clear will to live free. The climax of the story is a masterclass in fostering empathy, forcing the reader to confront the visceral reality of suffering: *Seryozha came running, picked up the little bird and took it back to the cage. The siskin was alive, but it lay on its breast with its little wings spread out and was breathing jerkily... When Seryozha went up to the cage the next morning he saw the siskin lying on its back with its legs curled up. It was dead.* (Class 8, p. 45-46).

The story's power lies in its lack of a moralizing lecture about biodiversity. Instead, it delivers its lesson through the raw, human emotions of guilt, grief, and the final, solemn vow: "Never again did Seryozha catch another bird" (Class 8, p. 46). This is a lesson in intrinsic value learned not through theory, but through the heart, the understanding that the siskin's life had a purpose and a right that existed entirely separate from Seryozha's desire for entertainment. This theme is further developed in the poem "Something Told the Wild Geese", which attributes a deep, innate wisdom to the non-human world. The geese are not mere migrants; they are beings attuned to a cosmic rhythm that humans can only observe. "Something told the wild geese / It was time to fly. / Summer sun was on their wings, / Winter in their cry." (Class 8, p. 48). The "something" is the mystery of nature's own intelligence, a force that commands respect, not control. Similarly, "Green Escape" by Joseph Auslander articulates a profound yearning for this connection, a conscious turning away from the human-dominated world. The poet declares, *I have turned my face / Away from streets and crowds / To a windy place / And clouds... I will stand like a stone / All day in the grass / Where the bees drone / And pass and repass.* (Class 8, p. 49). This is not a visit to a resource depot; it is an act of immersion and reverence, a desire to be "rooted in the deep ground", to find one's identity within the natural tapestry, not outside of it.

However, in a country where everyone is always focused on *surviving* and *getting ahead*, these ideas drop a whole new set of values onto the table. They gently, but firmly, reject the old way of thinking that everything is only valuable if we can measure it or use it. Take the story of the siskin (that little bird): it says flat out that the bird's right to fly free matters more than a kid just *wanting* to catch it. That is a core lesson in ecological justice. It draws the moral circle wider than just humans. Thus, when this idea matures, it is not just about a birdcage. It makes us question the massive, destructive acts we take for granted, like damming a river and wiping out life, or clear-cutting a forest that supports countless creatures we never even see.

This thematic cluster demonstrates a clear alignment with ecocentric principles and deep ecology. The narrative of "The Little Bird" fundamentally challenges an anthropocentric view by asserting the intrinsic value and right to freedom of a non-human creature. Its moral force derives from the bird's own experience of suffering, not from its usefulness to humans. The poems exemplify a biocentric egalitarianism in practice, by simply observing and honoring the innate rhythms of geese and the value of standing still in grass. Participating in the miracle of life itself brings the joy of a deep ecological recognition that affirms the interconnectedness of all living things. This represents a significant departure from the "shallow ecology" concern for human resource management and moves towards a vision where human flourishing is intertwined with the flourishing of the entire biotic community.

For students in Bangladesh, the poems and stories provide an emotional and ethical vocabulary for the love of their land that goes beyond its capacity to grow rice or host fish. This love, for the whisper in the paddy fields, the timeless flow of the rivers, the cry of the geese overhead, can become the most powerful motivator for protection. A citizenry that sees the natural world as family will fight for it with a passion that a citizenry viewing it as a mere tool never will. This intrinsic connection is the bedrock of resilience, the reason why a farmer might choose to protect a mangrove forest that buffers storms, not because a government policy told him to, but because he feels, like the poet, that he is rooted in that very ground.

This leads to the vital task of reimagining English pedagogy in the Anthropocene. Imagine an English classroom where "The Little Bird" is not just read, but becomes a springboard. Students could be asked to write from the perspective of the caged siskin, describing its fear and longing. They could debate the ethics of zoos or wildlife conservation. They could translate the emotional core of the story into a campaign to protect a local wetland or a species of urban bird. The poems would not be mere recitation exercises, but invitations

to practice the “green escape” themselves. Lessons could involve nature journaling, where students use descriptive English to document the life in a city park, learning to see the world not as a backdrop, but as a subject worthy of attentive, loving description.

In essence, the heart of this approach is to help people express their deep, local love for their own surroundings in a way that connects globally. We need more than just people who understand the Anthropocene; we need those who are emotionally and ethically rooted enough to help heal it. Picture a generation that sees a siskin and acknowledges its right to exist, or watches a goose and perceives its inherent wisdom. These are the individuals who would naturally become the most passionate and impactful guardians of our planet, not because they view it as something to own, but because they recognize it as their home.

Human-Nature Relations in ELT Discourse

This critical analysis of Bangladeshi English textbooks has systematically uncovered a complex and often contradictory eco-political discourse, revealing how the language presented to students shape their understanding of the environmental crises of the Anthropocene. The journey through the curriculum reveals a landscape not of a single, monolithic narrative, but of a contested terrain where competing ideologies of humanity’s place in the natural world vie for dominance. The central finding of this study is the persistent tension between a dominant paradigm that individualizes responsibility, instrumentalizes nature, and promotes technological solutions, and a subordinate, yet potent, counter-narrative that fosters intrinsic value, empathetic connection, and participatory belonging. It is within this very tension that the potential for a reimagined English pedagogy lies. The analysis crystallizes around four key thematic constellations. First, the discourse of individualized responsibility and behavioralism places the onus for planetary health on the personal choices of the student, advocating for reduced consumption and recycling. While promoting pro-environmental awareness, this framing, obscures the larger political and economic structures that drive ecological degradation, effectively mystifying power relations.

Second, the construction of Anthropogenic climate change as an external threat, while accurately highlighting Bangladesh’s profound vulnerability, often portrays the nation as a passive victim of global forces. “Climate science is just a social construction that serves a political purpose, requiring in their response a social construction of nature that does not allow human caused climate change” (Dryzek, 2013, p. 12). As a result, this narrative, while eliciting justified concern, can eclipse discussions of internal socio-ecological justice and local adaptive agency, reinforcing a sense of powerlessness. Third, the pervasive theme of the instrumental value of nature, which evaluates ecological elements like water solely through their utility or danger to human society, entrenches an anthropocentric worldview that aligns with Naess’s (1973) concept of “shallow ecology”.

However, a fourth, more radical discourse emerges, centering on the intrinsic value and connection to the natural world. Through literary narratives like “The Little Bird”, which cultivates empathy for non-human life, and poetry that invites reverence for nature’s inherent rhythms, this strand of the curriculum offers the foundational elements for an ecocentric or deep ecological perspective.

CONCLUSION

The textbooks paint a picture of a country at a crossroads. Bangladesh is a nation deeply connected to its rural past, yet it is urgently confronting the threats of a changing climate while also racing toward a modern future. This is why the lessons often focus on practical development, disaster preparedness, and energy independence, essential goals for a crowded, river-rich country facing the direct effects of climate change. Conversely, the emergent discourses of intrinsic value and connection tap into deep cultural and spiritual ties to the land and rivers, offering a form of ecological patriotism that could fuel more profound,

culturally-grounded conservation ethics. Freire (2004) emphasizes that “action is human only when it is not merely an occupation but also a preoccupation, that is when it is not dichotomized from reflection” (p. 53). Therefore, the central eco-political challenge, as revealed by the textbooks analysis, is navigating a path that harnesses technological innovation for survival and development without succumbing to a technocratic mindset that further severs the vital emotional and ethical bonds between people and their environment.

This analysis compellingly argues for a transformative approach to English Pedagogy in the Anthropocene. The English classroom must be reconceptualized from a passive site of language reception into an active laboratory for critical eco-political literacy. Because, “some people deny that environmental issues matter at all (how else could President Ronald Reagan have once said that ‘90 per cent of pollution is caused by trees’?), that they are just cover for insidious political agendas” (Dryzek, 2013, p. 6). Therefore, this integrates language learning with civic engagement, transforming students from recipients of a pre-defined eco-political reality into articulate, critical, and empowered participants in shaping their own sustainable future.

This study, while illuminating, is not without its limitations. Its focus on a selected sample of textbooks provides a deep but necessarily partial view. The findings reveal what is encoded in the curriculum but cannot account for how these discourses are actually decoded and enacted by teachers and students in the dynamic space of the classroom. The socio-economic realities of different schools, the personal beliefs of educators, and the lived experiences of students all act as powerful mediators of the textbook’s intended messages. Therefore, future studies can address these issues. In conclusion, the textbooks, as analyzed, are a microcosm of the broader societal negotiation over the meaning of sustainability. They contain both the language of the status quo and the seeds of its transformation. A reimagined English pedagogy for the Anthropocene has the profound responsibility and opportunity to nurture those seeds. By equipping students with the critical literacy to question dominant narratives and the creative language skills to articulate alternatives, we can foster a generation that does not just speak English, but uses it to advocate for a more just, empathetic, and ecocentric world.

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GENERATIVE AI STATEMENT

The authors declare that no Generative AI tool is used, at any stage, to prepare this study.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data analyzed in this study are derived from publicly available state-prescribed EFL textbooks. The analyzed corpus and coding materials are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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