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An Eco-Linguistic Analysis of Sri Lankan School English Textbooks: Examining Environmental Discourse and Language Use

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Abstract: This study examines the representation of environmental themes in Sri Lankan school English textbooks from an ecolinguistic perspective. School text books, as the main material of Sri Lankan school education, are central to shaping learners' attitudes. Hence, making such analysis is timely in the current environmental crisis around the world. English textbooks prescribed by the Sri Lankan national curriculum for Junior Secondary (Grades 6-9), Senior Secondary (Grades 10-11), and Post-Secondary/General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) were selected. Thus, altogether 07 text books were selected covering a range of content, and all of them have been in use since 2015/16, undergoing consecutive re-prints. From an initial 650 lexical items referencing the environment, 389 were identified as ecologically relevant. The selected list was further checked with Ecolexicon for their environmental relatedness, and 60 lexical items were further selected. A qualitative content analysis was conducted applying three main eco-linguistic concepts: ecological metaphors, framing of environmental issues, and ideologies of sustainability. These discourses contained the particular lexical items, or were related to them through semantic fields. The findings reveal that ecological metaphors construct a narrative of personal risk, vulnerability, and conflict. The framings of environmental issues highlight the severity, causes, and consequences of ecological degradation. The ideologies of sustainability view environmental protection as a proactive responsibility. However, a critical gap emerges when examining the pedagogical activities that accompany the environment-related lessons. While the content of the texts often reflects sustainability values, the tasks that follow are overwhelmingly focused on linguistic skills such as reading comprehension, grammar, vocabulary building, and writing practice. Little emphasis is placed on cultivating ecological awareness, critical reflection, or value-based education that could meaningfully connect language learning to environmental action. This disconnect suggests that although the textbooks incorporate environmental discourse, they have not fully integrated sustainability education into English language teaching. The study recommends use of eco-pedagogical approaches in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom enriching both environmental education and English proficiency.

Keywords: eco-linguistic, environment, language, Sri Lankan, textbooks

Introduction

Language plays a fundamental role in shaping human perceptions of the world, including how we interact with our environment. Language frames the way we conceptualize nature, influences our attitudes toward ecological issues, and guides our actions in either protecting or exploiting natural resources. In educational contexts, mainly in school education, textbooks serve as the key resource material for conveying societal values, norms, and

ideologies to students, significantly influencing how young learners perceive the world, including their views on the environment. Studies have shown that education can either contribute to developing eco-consciousness or maintain the status quo of environmental neglect, depending on how environmental topics are presented in curricula and textbooks (Srinivas, 2011). According to Gough (2002), school textbooks can shape specific ideologies related to the environment, either encouraging environmental responsibility or reinforcing anthropocentric and exploitative perspectives on nature. Pauwels (2005) found that many textbooks promote anthropocentric views of nature, where the environment is seen primarily as a resource for human exploitation. This exploitative view is often reinforced through metaphors that depict nature as something to be controlled or mastered, rather than a living system to be respected. Textbooks can also marginalize environmental concerns by framing them as secondary to economic or industrial development (Gough, 2002). Textbooks may frame environmental problems like deforestation or pollution as isolated issues with simple solutions, rather than as systemic problems requiring broad societal change (Alexander, 2008). In the context of Sri Lanka, where developmental concerns often override environmental ethics, significant environmental challenges such as deforestation and biodiversity loss have emerged. Hence, environmental education is a critical component of addressing these challenges, and textbooks play a key role in shaping the environmental consciousness of students (Seneviratne, 2009).

Gap in the Literature and Contribution of the Study

In Sri Lanka, English is taught as a second language, and holds a significant position within the national education system, serving as a key link between local and global knowledge. School English textbooks aim to enhance students' language skills while also exposing them to a range of social, cultural, and environmental topics. While textbook analysis has been conducted in other educational contexts, the intersection of eco-linguistics and textbook analysis is still underexplored, notably in the Sri Lankan context. Previous studies have focused more broadly on environmental education, without examining the relationship between language and the environment. For example, Bandara (2012) examined the content of environmental education programs but did not focus on the language structures that shape students' understanding of environmental issues. The present study aims to fill that gap by using an eco-linguistic framework to analyze how the language in Sri Lankan school English textbooks conveys nature and environmental issues, and the corresponding ideologies reflected in such discourses. By applying eco-linguistics to the educational context of Sri Lanka, this research will provide valuable insights into how language contributes to shaping environmental attitudes in schoolchildren, whether the educational content promotes a harmonious relationship with the natural world or perpetuate harmful ideologies. It will also contribute to the broader field of eco-linguistics by demonstrating how eco-linguistic concepts can be applied in the analysis of educational materials in a developing country context. Ultimately, this study hopes to inform more ecologically aware and sustainable approaches to textbook development and environmental education in Sri Lanka.

Theoretical Foundations: Eco-Linguistics

Eco-linguistics is an interdisciplinary field that examines the relationship between language and the environment. It offers valuable insights into how ecological ideologies and environmental concerns are embedded within discourse. As an interdisciplinary field that has gained significant attention in recent years, it is based on the premise that language not only influences but also mirrors societal perspectives on nature and environmental issues (Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2001). Halliday (2001) was one of the early scholars to advance this field, emphasizing how linguistic choices can affect ecological sustainability. His work provided a basis for subsequent research on the relationship between language and the environment.

Stibbe (2015) developed this framework further, identifying how certain linguistic structures—such as metaphors, narratives, and discourses—can either promote ecological well-being or contribute to environmental degradation. He introduced the concept of "stories we live by," which refers to the dominant narratives embedded in language that shape our relationship with the environment. Stibbe argues that ideologies embedded in language can either promote or undermine sustainable practices. He distinguishes between discourses that contribute to ecological harm, such as growth-oriented discourses that prioritize economic development, and discourses that promote sustainability, such as those emphasizing conservation and ecological balance. Stibbe's work is central to this study, as it provides the eco-linguistic tools necessary to analyze how Sri Lankan school textbooks construct environmental discourse. In particular, his exploration of ecological metaphors and framing is relevant to the present study in examining how textbooks portray nature and environmental issues.

Objectives

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze the Sri Lankan school English textbooks from an eco-linguistic perspective, particularly focusing on how environmental themes are presented in them.
2. To assess whether the textbooks promote ecological values and awareness of sustainability issues, and to identify areas where improvements could be made to integrate eco-linguistic principles more effectively into English language education.

Research Questions

This study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How are environmental themes presented in Sri Lankan school English textbooks?
This research question explores what kind of environmental themes, in what form, and what vocabulary and discourses are used to frame the environment, and, are the students encouraged to critically reflect on the environmental issues, or just passively receive information?
2. Do the textbooks reflect eco-linguistic principles that encourage sustainable and harmonious relationships with the environment, and how can the representation of environmental themes in the textbooks be improved to align with eco-linguistic principles?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a qualitative content analysis approach, focusing on Sri Lankan school English textbooks used at various grade levels. The methodology is divided into the following steps:

Sample Selection:

a) Textbook Selection:

English textbooks prescribed by the Sri Lankan national curriculum for Junior Secondary (Grades 6-9), Senior Secondary (Grades 10-11), and Post-Secondary/General Certificate of Education / Advanced Level) were selected. Thus, altogether 07 text books were analyzed to cover a range of content. The rationale for selecting this sample is that, in Sri Lankan national school system, English medium curriculum begins at Grade 6 (Junior Secondary) and continues till Grade 13. Further, from Grade 6 onward, environmental content is integrated within other subjects such as Science, Geography, Global Studies, and related learning areas rather than as a standalone “environment subject.”

All the text books have been in use since 2015/16, undergoing consecutive re-prints.

Table 1: Textbooks and Lesson Content

Textbook	Lesson Topic /Reading Paragraph
Grade 6	Unit 6: What We Do, Unit 11: Eco-Friends (Nature Lovers, My Favorite Animal)
Grade 7	Unit 9: Our Beautiful World, Pleasure Activity
Grade 8	Unit 4: Mother Nature
Grade 9	Unit 4: Extinct Friends, Unit 7: Where We Are, Unit 8: Success Through Creativity, Unit 10: A Day Without the Sun
Grade 10	Unit 5: Best Practices, Unit 9: Nature, Unit 13: Future
Grade 11	Unit 4: For a Better Tomorrow, (Animals on the verge of extinction)
Grade 12, 13	(No environment-related lessons)

Note. Prepared by the author.

As shown in the table, environment related lessons appear in all text books, except in ‘*General English*’ textbook used for both Grade 12 and 13.

b) Lexical Items

From an initial pool of 650 lexical items identified across lessons that included environmental references, 389 words and phrases were manually selected for their explicit or implicit relevance to ecological issues. To ensure accuracy

and relevance, these items were cross-checked with ¹Eco-Lexicon, and selected a further filtered list of 60 items. These are given below.

c) Verified in Eco-Lexicon

Acid rain, atmosphere, biodiversity, change, climate, cultivation, crops, destructive, disease, dispose, endangered, energy, environmental, environmental impact, ecosystem, exploitation, extinction, extraction, fauna, fertilizer, flora, food, freezing point, global warming, greenhouse effect, greenhouse gas, ground, habitat, health, herbivore, air-pollution, manure, mineral, natural resources, pollution, process, rain, rain water, recycle, renewable, sea, sea level rise, sewage, species, substance, temperature, waste, water, water-pollution, weather

Table 2 shows a thematic grouping of the above lexical items, based on Eco-Lexicon.

Table 2: Thematic Grouping of Items

Environmental Concepts and Processes	Biodiversity and Living Things	Agriculture and Land Use	Climate change and Atmosphere	Water and Rain	Pollution and Waste
Change Climate Desertification Ecosystem Ecology Environmental Environmental-impact, Natural-resources, Process Renewable	Biodiversity Endangered Extinction Fauna Flora Habitat Herbivore Species	Cultivation Crops Fertilizer Ground Manure Substance	Atmosphere Freezing-point Global-warming Greenhouse-effect Greenhouse-gas Temperature Weather	Acid rain Rain Rain water Sea Sea-level-rise Water Water-pollution	Destructive Disease Dispose Energy Exploitation Extraction Air-pollution Pollution Recycle Sewage Waste Health

Source: Prepared by the author.

Analysis

Eco-Linguistic Framework

The analysis was guided by an eco-linguistic framework, focusing on how language represents nature, environmental issues, and human interaction with the environment. The following key eco-linguistic concepts developed by Arran Stibbe (2015) were applied in the analysis.

- 1) Ecological Metaphors
- 2) Framing of Environmental Issues
- 3) Ideologies of Sustainability

The following section provides exact examples of ecological metaphors, framings, and ideologies of sustainability that can be identified from the environment-related lessons in the text books. These metaphors, framings, and ideologies of sustainability contain lexical items that are either directly found within such discourses, or have conceptual connotations to these lexical items in the form of semantic fields, as illustrated in the eco-lexicon.

1) Ecological Metaphors

- *"Oceans will be farmed"* - oceans conceptualized as farms
- *"Forests may turn into deserts"* – forest-to-desert metaphor
- *"Mother Nature"* –nature as a nurturing figure
- *"Unhealthy environment"* –metaphor for a degraded ecosystem
- *"Lions were wide-ranging animals"* –lions' former expansiveness is contrasted with their current restricted existence.
- *"Majestic animal"* – The term "majestic" positions lions as a symbol of natural grandeur and nobility

¹ A specialized terminological resource for environmental reference

- *"Adding life to the vegetation"* –interconnectedness of water and plant life
- *"The Sun is the centre of our solar system"*- Sun as the "anchor" or "centre" of life.
- *"Swim in the oceans of the world"* –expansiveness of blue whales
- *"Global celebration"* – Earth Hour as a metaphor for collective action.
- *"Heart at rest"* –peace and tranquility in natural settings
- *"Breeding grounds for mosquitoes"* –polythene waste leads to negative ecological transformations, turning waste into a hazard
- *"World's largest animals on land"* – This metaphor emphasizes the majestic and dominant presence of elephants in the animal kingdom

2) Framing of Environmental Issues

- *"Polythene has become a major environmental issue"* –The framing positions polythene as one of the most pressing environmental challenges.
- *"Polar bears are the first animals to be threatened because of global warming"* – Frames polar bears as a symbol of the broader impact of climate change on wildlife. This frames global warming as an immediate and urgent threat.
- *"Hunted for blubber and body parts"* –unsustainable exploitation- This frame places the responsibility for the blue whales' plight directly on human activities.
- *"Poaching for ivory"* –Frames the elephants as victims of economic greed and market demand.
- *"People will suffer illnesses due to pollution and global warming"*. Frames environmental issues through human health impacts.
- *"Nature will not be able to supply food..."*- Frames nature as insufficient, needing human intervention.
- *"Scientists warn that if these activities are to continue"* – This is a warning frame, suggesting that the future of lions is uncertain unless immediate action is taken to stop destructive activities. The inclusion of scientists adds a sense of authority and credibility, reinforcing the urgency of the issue.
- *"Forests are decreased due to clearance of land"* – This frame focuses on the habitat destruction caused by deforestation for human development, portraying humans as the primary agents of the problem. It also highlights the environmental trade-offs associated with development projects.
- *"Blocks sewage systems and water sources"* – Frames the issue as more than just litter; it suggests that polythene leads to infrastructural problems that affect water management and public health.
- *"A lot of animals die after eating polythene"* – Frames the issue in terms of animal welfare, suggesting that polythene waste leads to the suffering and death of wildlife.
- *"Now they are confined to Africa and to a small area in India"* – This frames the issue as one of geographical restriction and the dramatic reduction of the lions' once expansive range. It emphasizes the severity of habitat loss and points to the imbalance created by humans encroaching on natural spaces.
- *"Global warming also harms blue whales"* – The inclusion of global warming shifts emphasis from just hunting to the broader problem of climate change, connecting it to larger environmental systems that affect whale migration and survival.
- *"Temperature changes in water due to global warming may induce migration to wrong places where food supply could be low"* – This frame highlights the ecological impacts of global warming, showing how it disrupts the whales' natural behavior and survival instincts, potentially leading them into inhospitable environments.

3) Ideologies of Sustainability

- *"We contributed to make the place clean and attractive"* – This statement conveys the ideology of ownership and pride in the environmental efforts of the children.
- *"We have worked very hard to keep that area clean"* – This reflects the ideology of community-led environmental concern. It suggests that maintaining clean and safe public spaces is a shared responsibility among residents.
- *"Protect nature to have a healthy natural environment"*. Promotes sustainability by valuing protection of nature.
- *"They (Polar bears) need a cold climate, snow, and ice to survive"* – Reflects the ideology of maintaining environmental balance and preserving natural habitats, highlighting that climate action is essential not just for humans but for all living organisms.

- *"I am happy that we contributed"* – This statement reflects an ideology of personal satisfaction and social responsibility. The children take pride in the fact that they worked together to improve their environment, reinforcing the idea that sustainability is a shared responsibility.
- *"Minimize the use of polythene"* – Advocates for reducing the consumption of harmful materials, aligning with the ideology of sustainability by suggesting that small changes in behavior (such as using reusable bags) can have a positive environmental impact.
- *"Life on Earth depends entirely on the Sun."* Highlights the interconnectedness of cosmic, ecological, and human systems.
- *"Let's go in. I want to go on a swing"* – This girl's excitement reflects how a clean environment invites positive social and recreational activities. It suggests that improving the environment makes spaces more enjoyable and usable for the community.
- *"Conserve the natural beauty of Sri Lanka"* – The text promotes a conservationist ideology, urging readers not just to visit but also to take part in preserving the natural environment. The idea of conservation is subtly woven into the description, framing the reserve as a place of both beauty and responsibility.
- *"Sustainable Use of Resources"* –using seeds and roots as food implies an ideology of sustainable resource management. It suggests that while humans can benefit from the lotus, it is important to do so in a way that does not threaten the plant's survival, advocating for practices that ensure ecological balance.
- *"Symbol of Resilience and Renewal"* – The lotus, often symbolizing purity and rebirth in many cultures, embodies the ideology of resilience. It promotes the idea that sustainability involves not just survival but thriving in harmony with nature.

Table 3: Typology of Metaphors, Frames, and Ideologies of Sustainability

Ecological Metaphors	Framing	Ideologies of Sustainability
Domination/ Control related metaphors	Problem / Issue framing	Community leadership ideology
Threat related metaphors	Threat framing	Protection ideology
Protection related metaphors	Authority Framing	Habitat preservation ideology
Health related metaphors	Warning framing	Social responsibility ideology
Freedom/Loss related metaphors	Exploitation framing	Behavioral change ideology
Vitality/Interdependence related metaphors	Human cause / Responsibility framing	Interdependence ideology
Celebration related metaphors	Economic greed framing	
Centrality related metaphors	Health framing	
	Economic scarcity framing	
	Conservation framing	
	Technological control framing	

Source: Prepared by the author.

Discussion

Discussion of Ecological Metaphors

The analysis of ecological metaphors in Sri Lankan school English textbooks constructs a narrative that reveals a range of underlying attitudes toward the natural environment. The metaphors highlight both positive orientations and problematic tendencies. These metaphors not only shape how learners perceive the environment but also indicate the kinds of ecological worldviews that the curriculum fosters.

Domination/Control-related metaphors position humans as superior to nature. They portray the environment as an object to be controlled or managed for human benefit. While such metaphors reflect long-standing anthropocentric practices, they risk reinforcing exploitative attitudes among learners, potentially undermining sustainability-oriented values.

Threat-related metaphors depict the environment as fragile, endangered, or under constant attack. This construction has the potential to raise awareness of environmental degradation and instill a sense of urgency. They alert the learners to adopt constructive ecological practices.

Protection-related metaphors counterbalance exploitative human interventions by presenting humans as guardians or agents of protection. These metaphors encourage responsibility and ethical care, aligning with sustainability goals by promoting proactive engagement. They help instill values of conservation and respect, which are crucial in the Sri Lankan context where biodiversity is both rich and vulnerable.

Health-related metaphors present ecosystems as living bodies that can become sick or healed. This personification emphasizes the significance of maintaining ecological balance and the consequences of environmental neglect. By framing environmental issues in terms of illness and recovery, these metaphors encourage restorative practices and highlight the need for collective action.

Freedom/Loss-related metaphors highlight the disappearance of natural spaces, species, or resources, often invoking a sense of grief or deprivation. While such metaphors may raise ecological awareness, they can also construct the environment in terms of scarcity and loss, presenting it as a depleting resource.

Vitality/Interdependence-related metaphors foreground the interconnectedness of all life forms. These metaphors resonate strongly with ecolinguistic principles by highlighting ecological harmony, mutual dependence, and the co-existence of humans and nonhumans. Such emphasis is particularly valuable in cultivating positive attitudes among learners, encouraging them to view sustainability as a shared responsibility across species.

Celebration-related metaphors present the environment as a source of beauty, joy, and inspiration. They help cultivate emotional attachment to nature, which can motivate sustainable behaviors rather than destructive action. By fostering appreciation, such metaphors open space for learners to experience ecological worth and belonging.

Centrality-related metaphors emphasize the environment as essential to human survival and well-being, placing it at the core of life rather than as a peripheral concern. These metaphors challenge utilitarian views by recognizing ecological systems as foundational. They help educate the learners to develop a holistic worldview, highlighting that the environment is not an optional concern but a central one.

Taken together, these metaphors reveal a complex interplay of anthropocentric and ecocentric directions in Sri Lankan school English textbooks. Domination and threat-based metaphors reflect traditional human-centered ideologies, whereas metaphors of protection, vitality, celebration, and centrality point toward a more sustainable ecological worldview. The challenge lies in convincing the learner how to make a clear distinction between the two so that the empowering, interconnected, and appreciative metaphors become core environment-related values in their life. In this way, English language education can contribute to shaping learners' ecological consciousness and encourage values that align with global sustainability discourses while remaining sensitive to Sri Lanka's unique ecological and cultural context.

Discussion of Ecological Framings

The framings of environmental issues in Sri Lankan school English textbooks reveal the discursive strategies through which learners are encouraged to understand and be part of ecological concerns. These framings both reflect and construct ideologies about human–nature relationships, sustainability, and responsibility.

Problem/Issue framing positions the environment primarily as a victim of human intervention. This approach can be pedagogically effective in drawing attention to pressing issues such as deforestation, pollution, or climate change. Its strong focus on problems create a sense of despair compelling urgent solutions.

Threat framing intensifies the situation by presenting environmental degradation as a looming danger to human life, livelihoods, and future generations. Such framing powerfully portrays the risks involved and creates an ecological anxiety in the learners.

Authority framing constructs environmental knowledge as coming from experts, government bodies, or international organizations. This can help establish legitimacy and reliability, but it may also suppress local knowledge systems and traditional ecological practices, which are particularly significant in Sri Lanka's cultural context.

Warning framing emphasizes urgency by portraying environmental actions or inactions as carrying immediate and often dire consequences. Such framing can foster precautionary attitudes, and sensitize learners to engage more with environmental responsibility.

Exploitation framing highlights human actions that damage nature, often through overuse of resources, deforestation, or pollution. This framing is important for revealing unsustainable practices.

Human cause/Responsibility framing directly links environmental problems to human behavior, emphasizing accountability. This framing aligns strongly with eco-linguistic goals, as it encourages learners to recognize their role in both creating and solving ecological issues. By fostering responsibility, it can nurture ethical and sustainable decision-making.

Economic greed framing critiques the pursuit of profit and material gain at the expense of ecological balance. Such framing questions global discourses of sustainability, highlighting how consumerism and industrial exploitation lead to environmental crises. They alert the learner to question development paradigms and critically think of alternative, eco-friendly economic models.

Health framing presents environmental degradation as harmful to human physical well-being, for instance, caused by polluted air, contaminated water, or unsafe food systems. This framing makes environmental issues personally relevant to learners, connecting ecological health with human health.

Economic scarcity framing emphasizes the depletion of natural resources and the risks of shortages in food, water, or energy. While this framing can cultivate awareness of finite ecological limits, it may also reinforce utilitarian views of nature as an exploitative resource for human needs rather than as a system with intrinsic worth.

Conservation framing shifts attention to positive practices such as protection, preservation, and sustainable use of resources. This is one of the most constructive framings, as it foregrounds solutions and instills responsibility. It encourages learners to view themselves as agents of ecological care, which is essential for fostering long-term sustainability attitudes.

Technological control framing depicts science and technology as tools for solving environmental problems. Solutions may be reached through renewable energy, waste management systems, or innovations in agriculture. While this framing provides hope and emphasizes human capacity, it may entirely depend on technological advancements without adequately addressing underlying cultural, behavioral, and systemic issues causing environmental degradation.

Taken together, these framings reveal a range of ecological discourses in Sri Lankan English textbooks. On one end, problem, threat, and warning framings draw urgent attention to crises, while on the other, conservation and responsibility framings open space for positive ecological thinking. Authority and technological framings highlight external solutions, whereas economic greed and exploitation framings critique harmful human practices. The overall challenge lies in cultivating hope, responsibility, and a deep ecological worldview in the learner fostering constructive action.

Discussion of Ideologies of Sustainability

The ideologies of sustainability identified in Sri Lankan school English textbooks demonstrate the underlying values and belief systems conveyed in the environment-related lessons in these textbooks. These ideologies not only shape ecological consciousness but also influence the kinds of actions and values students are encouraged to adopt.

Community leadership ideology emphasizes the role of collective action and community leadership in addressing environmental challenges. By highlighting community-driven initiatives of different types, this ideology fosters a sense of belonging and shared responsibility. In the Sri Lankan context, where rural communities are closely tied to natural resources, such ideology can empower learners to contribute to finding grassroots level solutions alongside global solutions.

Protection ideology foregrounds the need to safeguard the natural world from harm. It positions humans as guardians, responsible for ensuring the survival of ecosystems for future generations. While this aligns strongly with sustainability principles, its effectiveness depends on whether it encourages proactive engagement rather than portraying protection as a passive or symbolic act. Such ideology is quite significant in Sri Lankan context where environmental engagement happens more as celebratory practices than sustainable practices.

Habitat preservation ideology stresses the importance of conserving natural habitats such as forests, rivers, and coastal areas. This ideology highlights biodiversity as an essential component of sustainability. In Sri Lanka, a biodiversity hotspot, such ideologies are crucial in nurturing appreciation of the country's ecological resources and encouraging learners to support conservation policies and practices.

Social responsibility ideology constructs environmental protection as an ethical obligation of individuals and groups. It underscores the moral dimension of sustainability, linking ecological well-being to human responsibility. This

ideology helps students understand that sustainability is not merely a technical or scientific matter but also a decisive factor in their life, extending beyond individual benefit to collective good.

Behavioral change ideology underlines the role of individual and collective lifestyle choices in promoting sustainability. By encouraging practices such as recycling, reducing waste, or using resources mindfully, this ideology translates abstract ecological concerns into practical, everyday actions. For school learners, it provides a tangible way to connect personal behavior with global environmental outcomes.

Interdependence ideology situates humans and the environment in a co-existing relationship, where the survival of one depends on the health of the other. This ideology aligns most closely with ecolinguistic principles, as it challenges anthropocentric worldviews and promotes ecological well-being. By recognizing interdependence, learners can move beyond seeing the environment merely as a backdrop to human life and instead view it as an interconnected system of which they are an integral part.

Overall, the ideologies of sustainability in Sri Lankan English textbooks reveal both strengths and challenges. On the one hand, protection, preservation, and responsibility ideologies cultivate awareness of ecological values. On the other, they need to be transformed into behavioral change on the part of learners to act meaningfully within their immediate environments. By presenting sustainability as both a collective duty and an interconnected system, textbooks can contribute significantly to shaping ecologically literate citizens who are prepared to address Sri Lanka's environmental challenges in harmony with global sustainability discourses.

As discussed above, the analysis of Sri Lankan school English textbooks through an ecolinguistic framework reveals how ecological metaphors, framings, and ideologies of sustainability weave a network of narratives shaping learners' perceptions of the environment. Together, they provide insights into the ecological worldviews promoted within the curriculum, shaping not only environmental awareness but also the values and practices learners are encouraged to adopt. Ultimately, the integration of metaphors, framings, and ideologies in Sri Lankan English textbooks demonstrates the potential of language education to shape ecological consciousness. By fostering such discourses, textbooks can contribute to cultivating a generation of learners who are not only linguistically competent but also ecologically literate, prepared to engage with both local and global environmental challenges.

Discussion of Pedagogical Implications

This section discusses how the environmental topics in Sri Lankan school English textbooks are mediated through specific textual forms, the corresponding classroom activities, and their pedagogical implications.

The examination of the text books reveals that the environmental issues are introduced to learners through a range of genres—letters, notices, dialogues, reading passages, posters, individual sentences, TV interviews, and poems. While this diversity of text types ensures exposure to environmental content in multiple linguistic contexts, it often remains at a surface level, emphasizing comprehension and form rather than critical ecological engagement.

The associated activities similarly highlight this tendency. Students are asked to engage in tasks such as writing replies to letters, constructing dialogues, vocabulary matching, completing tables, describing pictures, and answering questions. Although activities such as debating, role-playing, and critical-level writing provide opportunities for learners to engage with environmental issues more analytically, these are limited in number. As a result, the majority of tasks focus primarily on the development of reading skills, grammatical competence, and general language proficiency.

This orientation has two major implications. First, environmental themes risk being reduced to linguistic content, serving mainly as a backdrop for language practice rather than as a means of cultivating ecological awareness. Second, the lack of emphasis on critical reflection means that learners are more likely to passively receive information about the environment instead of questioning underlying causes, exploring alternative viewpoints, or considering their own role in sustainability. This limits the transformative potential of environmental discourse in language education, rather than fostering ecological responsibility among the learners. For environmental education to be pedagogically effective within English language learning, textbooks need to move beyond information transfer and grammar focus, toward activities that encourage critical reflection, value formation, and action-oriented learning. Tasks such as structured debates, reflective essays, creative writing, and project-based activities could help learners not only practice language but also develop the capacity to think critically about ecological issues, connect them to their lived experiences, and envision sustainable futures. By integrating such approaches, English textbooks can serve a dual purpose: strengthening language competence while simultaneously nurturing the ecological literacy necessary for addressing Sri Lanka's pressing environmental challenges.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis of ecological metaphors, framings, ideologies, and pedagogical practices in Sri Lankan school English textbooks, several recommendations can be made to enhance their effectiveness in promoting both language learning and ecological literacy.

1. Integrate Critical and Reflective Tasks

- a) Include more activities such as debates, role-plays, reflective essays, and problem-solving tasks that encourage learners to question causes of environmental issues and explore solutions.
- b) Shift from passive comprehension tasks to inquiry-based learning that stimulates critical thinking about sustainability.

2. Adopt Project-Based Learning Approaches

Design projects where learners research local environmental problems (e.g., waste management, deforestation, water pollution) and present their findings through reports, posters, or presentations in English.

3. Incorporate Local Ecological Knowledge

Draw on Sri Lanka's cultural and ecological diversity by including examples of traditional farming, indigenous conservation practices, and local biodiversity. This can be facilitated by using locally relevant case studies to help learners connect textbook content with their immediate environment.

4. Promote Action-Oriented Pedagogy

Encourage students to engage in practical activities such as tree planting, recycling campaigns, or school-based conservation clubs, integrating language practice with ecological action. This can link classroom learning to real-life sustainability practices, fostering a sense of agency.

5. Incorporate Multimodal Resources

Incorporate visual, digital, and audiovisual materials (e.g., posters, infographics, documentaries, TV interviews) to make environmental topics more engaging and relatable. Further, encourage students to create their own multimodal texts—short videos, posters, or digital stories—about environmental issues in their communities.

6. Encourage cross-curricular links

Coordinate with science, geography, and civics content to enrich English lessons with interdisciplinary perspectives on environmental sustainability. This can be done by establishing a proper coordination among school textbook writers to have some common themes across the selected textbooks, and then making the school teachers sufficiently aware of such cross-curricular links and utilize those in their actual classroom teaching.

By adopting these recommendations, Sri Lankan English textbooks can move beyond treating the environment as merely a backdrop for language learning. Instead, they can serve as powerful tools for cultivating ecologically conscious, critically reflective, and linguistically competent learners who are prepared to contribute to both national and global sustainability efforts.

Conclusion

This study examined Sri Lankan school English textbooks from an ecolinguistic framework, focusing on ecological metaphors, framings of environmental issues, and ideologies of sustainability. The findings reveal a mixture of anthropocentric and ecocentric orientations, where discourses of domination, threat, and authority coexist with discourses of interdependence, protection, and responsibility. While the inclusion of environmental content in textbooks is an important step toward integrating sustainability into language education, the pedagogical treatment of such content often remains at an informational level, prioritizing linguistic competence over critical ecological reflection. Pedagogically, the textbooks expose learners to environmental topics through diverse textual forms and activities. However, the majority of these activities emphasize reading comprehension, writing competence, and grammatical accuracy, with limited opportunities for critical engagement. As a result, learners are more likely to passively absorb information rather than develop ecological literacy and agency.

The recommendations of this study emphasize the need for a shift toward pedagogies that integrate critical reflection, project-based and action-oriented learning, and the incorporation of local ecological knowledge. By balancing

language development with ecological awareness, Sri Lankan English textbooks can better serve as tools for cultivating both linguistic proficiency and sustainability values. Embedding ecolinguistic principles in textbook design and pedagogy will therefore contribute to developing a generation of learners who are not only competent in English but also conscious, responsible, and active agents in building a sustainable future.

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