

Ecology and Buddhism:

A case study of Eco-concrete poem from Tree of life to English Students' works

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Abstract

This study aimed: 1) to investigate students for understanding Eco literature concept through concrete poems, 2) to evaluate ecocriticism effectiveness understanding of 1st year English students at Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Nakhon Phanom University. The data was 3 samples of concrete ecocriticism poems by students who are outstanding in Buddhist concept. The findings revealed that the most popular words of ecopoems are Buddhist, natural and environment, in which students make up the highest rate in occurrence frequency. In lexical relations, these selected words are relational semantics. The meaning of the word can be defined as the total set of meaning relations in which it participates. Moreover, the actual practice of relational semantics or relations of that kind in relations of hyponymy. In conclusion, the students can learn and concern about ecology and Buddhism through creative writing such a concrete poem. Besides, this is a way to create some literary works, it can contribute to point on the concerning about nature as well.

Keywords: Eco-concrete poem; Buddhism; semantic

Introduction

Tree of life is a book about the Buddhist perception of nature-are important new educational approaches to the ecological disasters resulting from man's destruction of nature, and what can and must be done to conserve the world's living resources. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama reminds us in his Declaration, plain human greed is a major cause of destruction of the natural world. (Davies, Shann.1987:2-3) The Buddhist Perception of Nature is great importance to the world conservation

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community, not only for Buddhist areas, but for wherever the health of our planet is threatened.

Ecocriticism explores the ways in which we imagine and portray the relationship between humans and environment in all areas of cultural production (Garrard, G.2004:1) even though in religion.

Doctor Jose Marrero (Jargal, O, 2019) who began to introduce himself to ecocriticism at the ends of 1990s in Spain and Latin American literary studies claims that *“But I see on it slightly different way of view and from different edges. The fundamental hypothesis is to consider that written words breathe, and as a consequence, criticism will have to search, analyze, and interpret the procedures through which literary texts breathe, regardless of the tradition to which they belong.”*

“Thus, to feel and diagnose “breath of word” in literature may require no less knowledge than an Asian traditional medicine doctor. This extraordinary idea allowed me to extend the scope of comparisons in Eco-criticism and Buddhist philosophy.”

“On the other hand, to listen to the “breath of the word”, it would appear to be the same as doing meditation. Buddhist major tenets come with meditation and the meditation begins with observing the breath. Therefore, it would be the same feelings of word breath in literature.”. It shows that Buddhism in literature can lead to concerning of ecology through using words which he used “breath of the word”. Moreover, Doctor Jose Marrero suggests that, *“... If culture forms part of nature, complex forms of literary writing seek to capture the immediate knowledge of nature ... ecocriticism should explore the trans bordering possibility of revealing the processes by which words breathe or, in other words, the processes by which literature proves to be the ultimate result of the natural evolution that rewards those who are able to grasp its beauty, that is, its regularities in time as well as its regularities in space.” JMMH (Jargal, O, 2019)*

There is the statement was prepared by Kevin Fossey, Buddhist educator and representative of Engaged Buddhism in Europe; Somdech Preah Maha Ghosananda, Patriarch of Cambodian Buddhism; His Excellency Sri Kushok Bakula, 20th Reincarnation of the Buddha’s Disciple Bakula, head of Ladakhi Buddhism, and initial rebuilders of Mongolian Buddhism; and Venerable Nhem Kim Teng, Patriarch of Vietnamese Buddhism. It shows that Buddhism as an ecological religion or a religious

ecology. The relationship between Buddhist ideals and the natural world can be explored within three contexts:

1. Nature as teacher
2. Nature as a spiritual force
3. Nature as a way of life.

In the words of Maha Ghosananda:

"When we respect the environment, then nature will be good to us. When our hearts are good, then the sky will be good to us. The trees are like our mother and father, they feed us, nourish us, and provide us with everything; the fruit, leaves, the branches, the trunk. They give us food and satisfy many of our needs. So we spread the Dharma (truth) of protecting ourselves and protecting our environment, which is the Dharma of the Buddha. When we accept that we are part of a great human family—that every being has the nature of Buddha—then we will sit, talk, make peace. I pray that this realization will spread throughout our troubled world and bring humankind and the earth to its fullest flowering. I pray that all of us will realize peace in this lifetime and save all beings from suffering.

"The suffering of the world has been deep. From this suffering comes great compassion. Great compassion makes a peaceful heart. A peaceful heart makes a peaceful person. A peaceful person makes a peaceful family. A peaceful family makes a peaceful community. A peaceful community makes a peaceful nation. A peaceful nation makes a peaceful world. May all beings live in happiness and peace." (Fossey, K.2003)

Furthermore, in the statement of Kevin Fossey, it shows the message of Ajahn Chah, the Buddhist monk in Ubonratchathani province, Thailand that *"Like the Buddha, we too should look around us and be observant, because everything in the world is ready to teach us. With even a little intuitive wisdom we will be able to see clearly through the ways of the world. We will come to understand that everything in the world is a teacher. Trees and vines, for example, can all reveal the true nature of reality. With wisdom there is no need to question anyone, no need to study. We can learn from Nature enough to be enlightened, because everything follows the way of Truth. It does not diverge from Truth."* (Ajahn Chah, Forest Sangha Newsletter in Fossey, K 2003) This message points on the concerning of nature in Buddhist teaching since the period of time of The Buddha. For the benefit of knowledge in ecology and literature, especially, a concrete poem, the researcher has been

interested in Buddhist's ecocriticism and concrete poems. Even though it is not quite a new form, many people are unfamiliar with. I assign my students create their ideas after studying ecocriticism and concrete poems. Finally, they can produce their works in the creative way.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate students for understanding Eco literature concept through Buddhist concrete poems
2. To evaluate ecocriticism effectiveness understanding

Research Hypothesis

The 1st year English major students, Nakhon Phanom University can understand the concept of Eco literature in works through composing their concrete poems.

Research Methods

Data collection

For Sampling, there are 3 samples of concrete ecocriticism poems by students that is outstanding in religion's concept. This paper used a book of Tree of life, books about Ecocriticism and Google search. For data analysis, semantically, the collected data were processed in terms of meaning students showed. Naturally, the study presented the natural features of the story. Furthermore, research procedures were: collecting the concrete ecocriticism poetry from 3 students, studying word choices of students' works, making tables of classifying the nature words and putting forward some suggestions for the study.

Research Results

Table 1: Frequency of ecocriticism words in students' concrete poems

No.	words	Occurrence	%
1	Buddhist	4	17.39
2	natural	4	17.39
3	environment	4	17.39
4	life	2	8.69

5	plant	1	4.34
6	temple	2	8.69
7	monks	3	13.04
8	world	2	8.69
9	humans	2	8.69
10	culture	2	8.69
11	conservationist	2	8.69
12	destruction	1	4.34
13	phenomenon	1	4.34
14	fuels	2	8.69
15	volcanic	1	4.34
16	weakening	1	4.34
17	atmosphere	1	4.34
18	development	2	8.69
19	greenhouse	1	4.34
20	wildlife	2	8.69
21	protection	1	4.34
22	Environment crisis	1	4.34
23	saving	1	4.34

From the table, the most popular words of ecopoems are Buddhist, natural and environment, in which students make up the highest rate in occurrence frequency. It is obviously from theme of the book. It may mean that the consciousness of students concerns about environment in these simple words and expresses through these ones immediately.

If we categorize these words in appropriate groups, they revealed in this table as follows:

Table 2: Category of the words in poems

No.	Words	Category
1	Buddhist, temple, monks, culture	Humans' invention from nature
2	Natural, environment, wildlife, life	Nature
3	Plant, fuels	Production from nature (direct)
4	World, atmosphere	Universe
5	Saving, protection, development, weakening, destruction	Effectiveness
6	Environment crisis, greenhouse, volcanic, phenomenon	Phenomenon of nature
7	Conservationist, humans, Buddhist	Humans
8	culture	Production from nature (indirect)

From the table, it shows that words in poems involving in nature both direct way and indirect way in semantic field. In lexical relations, these selected words are relational semantics. The meaning of the word can be defined as the total set of meaning relations in which it participates. Moreover, the actual practice of relational semantics or relations of that kind in relations of hyponymy. In the concept of humans' invention from nature, this group is likely indirect way of semantic in ecological field. Clearly, the words Buddhist, temple, monks and culture in the poems relate to ecological concept. In addition, the words in effectiveness sides both positive and negative effects are revealed in the poems that are: saving, protection, development, weakening and destruction. These selected words are grouped in effectiveness side. One more interesting found in the poems is the words in concept of phenomenon of nature that are: environment crisis, greenhouse, volcanic and phenomenon. It may mean that the students concern about environment from their changing. Some are the natural phenomena but some are from humans' activities.

In sum up, the students can learn and concern about ecology through creative writing such a concrete poem. Besides, this is a way to create some literary

works, it can contribute to point on the concerning about nature as well. They can recognize the changing of environment in their period of life. It may lead to solve the problems for better world in the future.

Research Discussion

Firstly, in order to make students be accustomed to ecocriticism, the best way to start introducing ecocriticism in classroom will be by teaching ecocriticism ideas first, then followed by showing movies. After getting used to hear ecocriticism words finally students can play roles and take part in using ecocriticism words. However, students should initially be acquainted with ecocriticism words.

Secondly, teacher can give students contents with various ecocriticism words or can give a list of words and assign them to create their concrete poems and say what they think the title might be.

Thirdly, teacher can give students a short content of ecocriticism and concrete poems and ask them to search the Internet. Teacher should instruct the students on word choices of language usage. Students can learn meanings, symbols from learning a language.

Body of Knowledge



Figure 1:

*Eco-Temple Community Development Project**International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)**Interfaith Climate and Ecology network (ICE) (2016)*

This figure shows the eco temple relating to many dimensions of any community such as economic, infrastructures, environment, business, education and other developments around the temple. This model points on the ecology as an important matter for sustainable development. For eco-literature, it may find in education side which many eco temples produce books from Buddhist monks such as monks in Wat Pah Nanachat (Bung Wai Forest Monastery), Ubonratchathani province.

Research Suggestions

1. Researchers should study the concept of Eco consciousness in different kinds of literary works widely both in Thai literary circle and foreign literary circles.
2. Researchers should relate the concept of Eco consciousness in any created writing to daily life's activities of humans for realizing the importance of environment.

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