

UNVEILING ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE JAMBI FOLKTALE “PUTRI TANGGUK”: AN ECOLINGUISTICS STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Folktales serve not only as cultural narratives but also as linguistic media that reflect human attitudes toward the natural environment. This study aims to unveil the environmental consciousness embedded in the Jambi folktale “Putri Tangguk” through an ecolinguistics perspective. Using a descriptive qualitative design, the study applied document analysis to the narrative text and examined how lexical choices, participant roles, pronouns, figurative language, and narrative structure represent human nature relationships, drawing on Stibbe’s ecolinguistics framework and the interactive model of qualitative data analysis of Miles et al. The findings reveal two opposing ecological discourses: a destructive anthropocentric discourse, in which an imperative verb, a minimizing particle, and a material noun reduce rice to disposable pavement, and a beneficial eco-centric discourse, in which rice is personified as a conscious collective that has a ruler, feels anger, and decides to leave. Read together, the two discourses form a cautionary story about reciprocity between humans and nature. The study concludes that the folktale carries indigenous ecosophy that warns against wastefulness and calls for respectful stewardship of natural resources. The findings also offer an authentic, locally rooted text for developing critical literacy and environmental awareness in language and literature classrooms.

Keywords: *Ecolinguistics; ecological discourse analysis; environmental consciousness; Jambi folktale; Putri Tangguk*

INTRODUCTION

Environmental degradation and ecological crises in the modern era are deeply intertwined with human perceptions, cultural values, and language use. Climate change, deforestation, and the loss of agricultural land are often discussed as technical or economic problems, yet the way societies talk about nature strongly shapes how they treat it. Ecolinguistics, a field whose roots lie in Haugen’s (1972) notion of the ecology of language and in Halliday’s (1990) call for applied linguistics to address ecological issues, posits that language plays a fundamental role in shaping how humans view, interact with, and treat the natural world (Alexander & Stibbe, 2014; Stibbe, 2015). Linguistic forms can either promote ecological harmony (beneficial discourse) or legitimize environmental exploitation and wastefulness (destructive discourse).

While contemporary ecolinguistics research frequently examines digital media, political speeches, and corporate advertising, traditional narratives, such as regional folktales, remain an essential yet under-explored domain containing indigenous

environmental wisdom (ecosophy). Folktales are told repeatedly across generations, which means that the views of nature embedded in their language are rehearsed and reinforced in the community. In this sense, a folktale is not only entertainment but also a durable discourse through which a society expresses what it considers right and wrong in its relationship with the environment.

Indonesian traditional literature is rich in moral values and ecological insights rooted in local cultures. Among Sumatran folklore, the Jambi folktale “Putri Tangguk” presents a compelling narrative regarding agricultural sustainability and human interaction with natural resources. The story recounts a prosperous woman who, out of arrogance and fatigue, scatters harvested rice on a muddy path as stepping stones to prevent her family from slipping. Consequently, the spirit of nature (rice) retreats, leaving her family facing sudden depletion of resources and severe starvation. Beyond its traditional moral function, “Putri Tangguk” functions as an ecological critique against resource misuse and anthropocentric dominance.

Although previous linguistic inquiries into “Putri Tangguk” have examined structural morphology through corpus-based analysis of affixes (Mardhatillah et al., 2024), few studies have explored its discourse through an ecolinguistic framework. This gap matters for language education as well, because folktales are familiar, locally grounded texts that can be used to develop learners’ critical literacy and environmental awareness. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to analyze the linguistic representations of environmental consciousness in the Jambi folktale “Putri Tangguk”. More specifically, the study seeks to identify the ecological discourses present in the text, to describe the linguistic features through which each discourse is constructed, and to interpret the ecosophy that the narrative conveys.

The study is significant in three respects. Theoretically, it extends Stibbe’s framework to a Sumatran folktale and shows how the framework can be applied to a short narrative text. Practically, it documents an element of Jambi’s oral literature from an ecological point of view. Pedagogically, it proposes how the same text can be used in language and literature classes to practice critical reading. By identifying the ecological discourses present in the text, this study highlights how traditional folklore serves as a linguistic vehicle for preserving environmental wisdom and promoting ecological literacy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ecolinguistics: Concept and Development

Ecolinguistics explores the interaction between language and the ecological systems that sustain life (Stibbe, 2015). The ecological perspective on language was introduced by Haugen (1972), who used the metaphor of ecology to describe the interaction between a language and its environment, and it was consolidated in collections such as Fill and Mühlhäusler (2001) and, more recently, Fill and Penz (2018). Halliday (1990) gave the field a different direction by arguing that the grammar and vocabulary of a language can build ideologies that are in conflict with ecological sustainability, for example the assumption that growth is always good, and that applied linguists therefore have a responsibility to examine them.

Alexander and Stibbe (2014) distinguish between two main trends in the discipline. The first is the analysis of ecological discourse, which studies texts that are explicitly about the environment. The second is the metaphorical notion of language ecology, which studies the relationship among languages. They argue that ecolinguistics is

primarily the ecological analysis of discourse: any text, whether or not it mentions the environment, can be examined for the way it shapes relationships among humans, other species, and the physical environment. Stibbe (2014) similarly positions ecolinguistics as an extension of critical discourse studies that adds ecological questions to the questions of power, class, and gender. Unlike traditional linguistics that focuses solely on internal language structures, ecolinguistics evaluates language based on its ecological impact. Reviews of the field show that it has grown into an established area of research (Chen, 2016; Cheng, 2022).

Stibbe's Ecolinguistics Framework: Stories We Live By

Stibbe (2015) builds his framework on the concept of “stories we live by”, defined as stories in the minds of multiple individuals across a culture that influence how people think, speak, and act. These are not stories in the narrow sense of a tale but mental models about how the world is, what is good, and what matters. They are carried and reproduced through language, and they can be ecologically harmful, ecologically beneficial, or mixed. The task of the ecolinguist is to uncover these stories through detailed analysis of texts and then to judge them against an ecosophy.

Stibbe (2015) identifies eight types of stories, summarized in Table 1. Ideologies, evaluations, and identities describe broad worldviews, while framing and metaphor describe how one area of life is understood through another. Convictions concern what is held to be true, and erasure and salience concern what is left out and what is brought to attention. In an analysis of a single narrative, these categories are useful because they connect small linguistic choices, such as a verb or a pronoun, with larger patterns of meaning.

Table 1. Types of stories in Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistics framework

Story type	Brief description
Ideology	A story about how the world is and should be, shared by members of a particular group
Framing	A story that uses a frame, a packet of knowledge about one area of life, to structure about another area
Metaphor	A framing in which the source and the target areas are made explicit, so that one area of life is described in terms of another
Evaluation	A story in people's minds about whether an area of life is good or bad
Identity	A story about what kind of person someone is, which language helps to construct
Conviction	A story about whether a description of the world is true or false, certain or uncertain
Erasure	A story that an area of life is unimportant or invisible, so that it is left out of consideration
Salience	A story that an area of life is important and worthy of attention, so that it is foregrounded

Framing and erasure are particularly relevant to the present study. When nature is framed as a resource, a tool, or a surface, it is easy to treat it as something to be used up. When nature is erased, that is, when the narrative or the grammar leaves it out as an actor or a victim, its destruction becomes invisible. Conversely, salience gives nature a place in the reader's attention, and when nature is given an identity and a voice, the reader is invited to care about it.

Ecosophy and the Idea of “Living”

A discourse cannot be called good or bad without a standard of judgment. In Stibbe’s framework this standard is an ecosophy, an ecological philosophy that expresses a set of values about the relationships between humans, other species, and the physical environment. The term goes back to Næss (1973), who distinguished a shallow ecology, which is concerned mainly with pollution and resource depletion for the benefit of affluent societies, from a deep ecology, which recognizes the intrinsic value of all living beings and the need to change the underlying worldview. Stibbe (2015) encourages analysts to state their own ecosophy openly. His own ecosophy, which he calls “Living!”, values the wellbeing of humans, other species, and the physical environment, and it places weight on care, on respecting environmental limits, and on the needs of future generations.

For the analysis of folktales, this means that the judgment of a discourse is not based on whether it mentions nature, but on whether it supports or undermines the flourishing of life. A story that praises abundance but ignores its limits may be judged destructive, while a story that grants nature respect and shows the consequences of its abuse may be judged beneficial, even if the text is old and was not written with environmentalism in mind.

Ecological Discourse Analysis (EDA) and Discourse Types

Ecological Discourse Analysis examines how lexical choices, transitivity patterns, personifications, and narrative framing influence ecological mindsets (Cheng, 2022; Stibbe, 2015). Stibbe (2015) categorizes discourses into three types according to their fit with the analyst’s ecosophy.

Destructive discourses are linguistic representations that encourage environmental harm, excessive consumption, or the treatment of nature purely as an exploited commodity. They often depend on framing nature as a resource or an object and on erasing the harm done to it. *Beneficial discourses* are linguistic expressions that foster respect, empathy, and protection for non-human species and ecosystems. They typically give nature a voice, an identity, or an active role. *Ambivalent discourses* are texts containing mixed or neutral signals regarding environmental awareness; their ecological effect depends on how the audience reads them.

Transitivity and Other Linguistic Resources in EDA

A key resource for EDA is the transitivity system of systemic functional grammar, which describes how clauses represent processes, the participants involved in them, and the circumstances surrounding them (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In a material process, for instance, the participant who does the action is the Actor and the participant who is affected is the Goal. Whether nature appears as an Actor or only as a Goal says much about the agency it is granted. Zaytoon (2022) shows that presenting nature as the actor in a clause is one of the ways in which stories foster environmental consciousness.

Other resources include lexical choice, which determines the name and the qualities given to natural entities, pronouns and deixis, which determine who is included in the “we” of a text and who is excluded, mood and modality, which determine how actions are commanded or reported, and figurative language such as personification. In Indonesian, additional resources include affixes such as *-kan* and *ter-*, reduplication, particles such as *saja*, and possessive suffixes such as *-mu*, all of which

carry meanings about intention, intensity, and ownership. These resources form the basis of the coding guide used in this study.

Folklore, Local Wisdom, and Ecological Consciousness

Folktales represent collective cultural heritage transmitting local wisdom across generations. According to Danandjaja (2007), folklore reflects traditional worldviews. Bascom (1954) identified four functions of folklore: to validate culture, to educate, to maintain conformity to accepted patterns of behavior, and to provide amusement or escape. The educational and regulative functions are central to ecological meanings, because a tale that shows the consequences of wrongdoing teaches the community what behavior is acceptable.

In many indigenous cultures, folklore functions as an informal ecological mandate, employing personification and taboos to regulate human behavior toward rivers, forests, and agricultural lands. Berkes (2012) describes traditional ecological knowledge as a body of knowledge, practice, and belief that evolves through adaptive processes and is handed down through generations by cultural transmission. Folktales are one of the vehicles of this transmission. In Indonesian terms, such knowledge is often called local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*), and it is embedded in stories, rituals, and customary rules.

Anthropocentrism and Ecocentrism in Literature

Ecocriticism, the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment, has long examined how texts position humans in relation to nature (Garrard, 2012). A central distinction is between anthropocentrism, which places human interests at the center of value, and ecocentrism, which recognizes the value of the ecological community as a whole. The two stances are not always separate in one text. A narrative may display anthropocentric behavior in its characters while taking an ecocentric stance in its overall structure, for example by letting the consequences of the characters' behavior fall on them. This distinction is useful for "Putri Tanguk", in which both stances appear in different parts of the story.

Critical Literacy and Language Education

Critical literacy treats reading and writing as social practices and asks learners to question how texts position people, groups, and the world (Janks, 2010). In language education this means moving from asking what a text says to asking how it says it and whose interests the choices serve. Ecolinguistics adds an ecological dimension to this question: a text can be examined for how it positions nature, whether as a resource, an obstacle, a partner, or a subject.

Folktales are well suited to this kind of work. They are short, familiar to learners, and rich in lexical and grammatical choices that can be examined closely. They also come from the learners' own cultural environment, which makes the analysis relevant to their lives. At the same time, research on Indonesian folktales in education has so far concentrated mainly on moral and behavioral values (Musthofa & Koentjoro, 2019; Nugraha et al., 2022), and the linguistic construction of ecological meaning in these texts deserves more attention.

Previous Studies

Ecolinguistics research on narratives has grown steadily. Indriyanto (2021) analyzed the Hawaiian folktale *The Wind Gourd of La'amaomao* using Stibbe's ecosophy and found a constructive discourse that recognizes sustainability and the emotional ties between people and their environment. Bhattacharjee and Sinha (2021) examined the ecosophy of the Jataka tales and argued that these stories encourage appreciation of nature and respect for all living beings, while Zaytoon (2022) showed that stories presenting nature as the actor of a clause foster environmental consciousness.

In the Indonesian context, folktales have mostly been studied for their cultural, moral, and educational value, for instance *Sang Kancil* as a cultural artefact (Kheong et al., 2019), as a form of moral literacy (Nugraha et al., 2022), and as a medium for engaging preschool children in environmental behavior (Musthofa & Koentjoro, 2019). Studies on "*Putri Tangguk*" itself have concentrated on affixation (Mardhatillah et al., 2024), which leaves its ecological discourse unexamined. The present study fills this gap by applying Stibbe's framework to the language of the tale.

Conceptual Framework

The study combines the concepts reviewed above in the following way. Stibbe's (2015) types of stories provide the categories for describing the meanings that the text constructs, and the transitivity system and the other linguistic resources provide the tools for locating these meanings in the wording of the text. The ecosophy of care for natural resources and respect for living beings provides the standard against which each discourse is judged. The folktale is treated as a vehicle of local wisdom in the sense of Danandjaja (2007) and Berkes (2012), and the findings are then related to language teaching through the notion of critical literacy.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design utilizing document analysis (Bowen, 2009) within an ecolinguistic framework (Stibbe, 2015). A qualitative design was chosen because the study aims to interpret the meanings that language constructs in a narrative and not to measure or count linguistic forms (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Document analysis is appropriate because the object of study is an existing text that is examined and interpreted to elicit meaning (Bowen, 2009). The design is descriptive because the study describes and interprets the ecological discourses found in the text without testing a hypothesis.

Data and Data Source

The primary source of data was the narrative text of the Jambi folktale "*Putri Tangguk*". The data are sentences, clauses, and dialogue fragments within the narrative that depict interactions between human characters (*Putri Tangguk* and her family) and natural entities (rice, soil, and agricultural land). The unit of analysis is the clause, because the clause is the basic unit through which participants, processes, and evaluations are expressed. Representative excerpts were then selected for presentation because they clearly show these interactions and the contrast between human and natural perspectives. The original Indonesian wording is retained in the analysis, and English translations are given for the reader.

Research Instrument and Coding Guide

The research instrument was the researchers acting as human instruments, supported by an ecolinguistics coding guide. The coding guide was developed from Stibbe's (2015) types of stories and from the transitivity system (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), and it was adapted to Indonesian grammar. Table 2 presents the codes, the linguistic markers, and the guiding questions used to read the data.

Table 2. Coding guide used in the analysis

Code	Linguistic markers	Guiding question
Lexical choice	Nouns, verbs, and adjectives that name nature and human action	How is rice named, and what is done to it?
Participant roles	Actor, goal, and other participants in the clause (transitivity)	Who acts, and who is acted upon?
Pronouns and deixis	<i>kita, kami, kau, ini</i> , and possessive suffixes	Who is included, who is addressed, and who owns what?
Mood and particles	Imperative verbs, perfective <i>telah</i> , particle <i>saja</i>	How are commands, actions, and decisions voiced?
Figurative language	Personification and titles such as <i>raja padi</i>	Is nature given agency, emotion, or status?
Evaluation and framing	Intensifiers, purpose clauses, and evaluative adjectives	What is presented as good or bad, and in which frame?

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted in four steps. First, the researchers read the whole narrative to understand the plot and the relationships among the characters and natural entities. Second, they identified the sentences, clauses, and dialogue fragments in which human character is interact with natural entities. Third, they recorded each fragment together with its position in the story and its speaker. Fourth, they selected the fragments that most clearly represent the destructive and the beneficial positions toward nature for detailed analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed through three stages following the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), with Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistics framework serving as the analytical lens. The first stage, *data condensation*, involved filtering linguistic markers, lexical choices, and figurative language related to environmental themes and coding them with the guide in Table 2. The second stage, *data display*, involved classifying narrative units into destructive anthropocentric discourse and beneficial eco-centric discourse and arranging them in matrices that show the linguistic features and the story types they construct. The third stage, *conclusion drawing*, involved interpreting the underlying ecosophy and environmental consciousness embedded in the text.

In the interpretation, each discourse was judged against an ecosophy that values respect for nature, care for food resources, and the needs of future generations, in line with the "Living!" ecosophy of Stibbe (2015). A discourse was classified as destructive when it normalizes the misuse or disrespect of natural resources, and as beneficial when it grants nature agency, status, or protection. Table 3 summarizes the stages of analysis, the activities carried out in each stage, and their outputs.

Table 3. Stages of analysis

Stage	Activity	Output
Data condensation	Reading the narrative, identifying clauses on human nature interaction, and coding them with the guide in Table 2	Coded excerpts
Data display	Classifying coded units into destructive and beneficial discourse and arranging them by story type	Matrices of features and story types
Conclusion drawing	Interpreting the matrices against the ecosophy and comparing the results with previous studies	Interpretation of ecosophy and environmental consciousness

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of “Putri Tangguk” reveals two prominent discourse patterns reflecting contrasting environmental mindsets: anthropocentric arrogance and eco-centric retribution. Table 4 summarizes the linguistic features and meanings of each pattern. The two patterns are discussed in turn, followed by an account of the stories we live by that they construct, an ecosophic evaluation, and implications for language teaching.

Table 4. Summary of the ecological discourses in “Putri Tangguk”

Discourse type	Linguistic features	Meaning and ecosophy
Destructive anthropocentric discourse	Imperative verb <i>taburkan</i> (“scatter”); particle <i>saja</i> (“just”); material noun <i>padi</i> (“rice”); purpose clause <i>agar kita tidak terpeleset</i>	Rice is treated as inanimate pavement; wastefulness and arrogance toward food resources
Beneficial eco-centric discourse	Pronoun <i>kami</i> (“we/us”); reduplicated verb <i>menginjak-injak</i> ; title <i>raja padi</i> ; verb <i>memutuskan untuk pergi</i> (“decided to leave”)	Rice becomes a conscious collective with agency; respect and stewardship of crops

Anthropocentric Discourse: Human Dominance and Resource Misuse

The first major finding highlights a destructive discourse characterized by human arrogance toward natural resources. In the narrative, agricultural yield (rice) is reduced to a disposable tool for immediate human convenience.

Excerpt 1: “*Jalan ini sangat licin. Taburkan saja padi yang kita bawa ini ke jalan agar kita tidak terpeleset!*” (“This path is very slippery. Scatter the harvested rice on the road so we will not slip!”)

Lexical choice and the framing of rice

Linguistically, the imperative verb *taburkan* (“scatter”) combined with the material noun *padi* (“rice”) illustrates an anthropocentric attitude where food resources are treated as inanimate pavement material rather than life-sustaining entities. The verb *menaburkan* is normally associated with spreading seeds or grains over a surface, and here it is used for spreading harvested rice over mud. The word choice therefore frames rice as a surface material, a frame that belongs to construction and not to food. The choice of word reflects a mindset of excess and arrogance, assuming that natural abundance will remain infinite regardless of human behavior. In Stibbe’s (2015) terms, this linguistic framing exemplifies a destructive discourse that normalizes wastefulness and disrespect toward agricultural ecosystems.

The particle *saja* (“just”) adds to this framing. By presenting the act of scattering rice as something one can “just” do, the speaker minimizes the act and treats it as trivial. Nothing in the clause signals that the rice has value or that the action requires hesitation. The destructive meaning is therefore carried not only by the verb and the noun but also by the small particle that makes the act sound ordinary.

Participant roles and the erasure of rice

The participant roles in Excerpt 1 are strongly asymmetrical. In the imperative clause, the implied Actor is the human addressee, and the rice is the Goal that is moved onto the road. The rice never appears as an Actor, and it is not described by any quality that would make it an entity with interests. The rice is also tied to its human owner through the relative clause *yang kita bawa ini* (“that we carry”), in which the inclusive pronoun *kita* and the demonstrative *ini* present the rice as something possessed and handled by the family. In terms of Stibbe’s (2015) categories, the value of rice as food is erased: the clause does not mention that it was harvested, that it feeds the family, or that it may be needed later.

Salience works in the opposite direction. The family’s safety is made prominent through the evaluation *sangat licin* (“very slippery”) and through the purpose clause *agar kita tidak terpeleset* (“so that we do not slip”). The prefix *ter-* in *terpeleset* marks an accidental event that happens to the person, which gives the risk of slipping an urgency that the loss of rice does not receive. The human body is foregrounded, and the rice is backgrounded. This pattern is a typical anthropocentric structure: the minor inconvenience of humans is treated as a sufficient reason to sacrifice a natural resource.

Discussion: a cautionary model

This finding differs from the constructive discourse that Indriyanto (2021) found in the Hawaiian folktale of La’amaomao. In “Putri Tangguk”, destructive language is not the message of the story but a negative model: the narrative first shows the misuse of rice and then lets the consequences follow, so that the destructive discourse serves as a cautionary example. This structure fits the educational and regulative functions of folklore described by Bascom (1954), since the story teaches the audience what not to do by showing what happens to someone who does it. It also reflects the ecocentric framing of the whole narrative that Garrard (2012) would describe as a critique of anthropocentric behavior, even though the character herself speaks from an anthropocentric position.

Eco-Centric Discourse: Personification and Environmental Retribution

In contrast to human arrogance, the narrative counterbalances human misuse through an eco-centric discourse that attributes agency and moral standing to nature.

Excerpt 2: “*Kami adalah padi yang kau serakkan di jalanan. Kau telah menginjak-injak kami. Raja padi sangat marah dan kami memutuskan untuk pergi dari lumbungmu.*” (“We are the rice that you scattered on the road. You stepped on us. The king of rice is deeply offended, and we have decided to leave your granary.”)

Personification and identity

This passage utilizes explicit personification (anthropomorphism). By employing the plural first-person pronoun *kami* (“we/us”) for rice and attributing emotional states (*sangat marah*, literally “very angry” and rendered “deeply offended” in the translation) and active decision-making (*memutuskan untuk pergi*, “decided to leave”), the language elevates the natural resource from a passive object to an active, conscious subject. The opening clause *Kami adalah padi* (“We are the rice”) is an identifying clause in which the rice names itself. In Stibbe’s (2015) terms this constructs an identity for the rice: it is no longer a substance that belongs to humans but a collective that can say who it is. Here the pronoun *kami* is also exclusive, since it excludes the addressee, which creates a clear boundary between the rice and the human who mistreated it.

Naming, hierarchy, and agency

The title *raja padi* (“king of rice”) gives the rice a ruler and therefore a social order of its own. The rice is framed not as a commodity but as a community, a kingdom, with authority and honor that can be offended. This framing reverses the framing in Excerpt 1: whereas the human speaker placed the rice under her feet, the rice now places itself above her as a ruler who can withdraw its favor. The possessive suffix in *lumbungmu* (“your granary”) is also revealing. The granary, which in Excerpt 1 would be the place where the harvest is stored for the human owner, becomes a place that the rice can choose to leave. Ownership is thus turned into hospitality, and hospitality can be ended.

Transitivity reversal and the representation of harm

The transitivity pattern of Excerpt 2 reverses that of Excerpt 1. In *padi yang kau serakkan* (“the rice that you scattered”) and *Kau telah menginjak-injak kami* (“You have stepped on us”), the human is still the Actor, but the rice now speaks of the actions as done to *us*, so that the harm is described from the perspective of the one harmed. The reduplicated verb *menginjak-injak* suggests repeated or intense stepping, which makes the offense heavier than a single act, and the perfective marker *telah* presents the harm as complete and irreversible. In the final clause, the rice becomes the Actor of a volitional process: *kami memutuskan untuk pergi* (“we decided to leave”). The harm that was erased in Excerpt 1 now becomes the most salient part of the passage.

Consequences and the narrative of reciprocity

The narrative concludes with environmental consequences: the sudden emptying of the granary and the growth of wild weeds instead of crops. This narrative resolution reinforces a beneficial ecological message: exploiting and disrespecting nature disrupts ecological balance, ultimately resulting in human hardship. The sequence of arrogance, offense, withdrawal, and depletion forms a narrative of reciprocity in which nature responds to the way it is treated. This personification aligns with traditional Sumatran ecosophy, which views crops not merely as commodities, but as sacred entities requiring respectful stewardship.

The finding is consistent with Zaytoon (2022), who reports that presenting nature as an actor in the clause fosters environmental consciousness, and with Bhattacharjee and Sinha (2021), who found that traditional tales encourage respect for living beings. It also supports the view that folklore functions as an informal ecological mandate that regulates human behavior toward natural resources (Danandjaja, 2007) and that traditional knowledge is transmitted through narrative (Berkes, 2012). Unlike the Wind Gourd of La’amaomao analyzed by Indriyanto (2021), however, the beneficial

discourse in “Putri Tangguk” does not come from a character who respects nature but from nature itself speaking back, which makes the ecological lesson explicit and punitive.

Narrative Structure as Ecological Discourse

The two excerpts do not stand alone. They are connected by a plot that moves from prosperity to depletion, and this plot is itself a part of the ecological discourse. Table 6 sets out the stages of the story and the ecological meaning of each stage.

Table 6. Narrative stages and their ecological meaning

Stage	Event in the story	Ecological meaning
Prosperity	Putri Tangguk is a prosperous woman	Abundance, which can encourage carelessness
Arrogance and fatigue	She acts out of arrogance and fatigue	The human motives behind the misuse
Misuse	She scatters harvested rice on a muddy path	Destructive discourse (Excerpt 1)
Response	The spirit of rice speaks and withdraws	Beneficial discourse (Excerpt 2)
Depletion	The granary empties, wild weeds grow, and the family faces starvation	The consequence of broken reciprocity

The stages show that the narrative treats the misuse of rice as the turning point of the story. Before the misuse, the family is prosperous, and after the rice withdraws, the family faces starvation. The story therefore ties the fortune of the family directly to its treatment of a natural resource. This is a form of what Stibbe (2015) calls a narrative: a story about how events unfold and what causes them. Here the cause of the family’s ruin is not an outside enemy but the family’s own attitude toward its food.

The motives of the character are also significant. The text attributes the act of scattering to arrogance and fatigue. Arrogance is an attitude of superiority over others, and in this case over the rice, while fatigue is a more sympathetic and ordinary motive. The combination shows that destructive behavior toward nature does not always come from malice. It may come from tiredness and from a sense of entitlement that comes with prosperity, which makes the story’s warning relevant to ordinary people and not only to villains.

Stories We Live By in “Putri Tangguk”

When the two excerpts are read with Stibbe’s (2015) categories, the contrast between the two discourses becomes clearer. Table 5 shows that the same event, the scattering of rice, is constructed through opposing ideologies, framings, identities, and evaluations depending on who is speaking. The human speaker’s story is one of convenience and entitlement, and the rice’s story is one of dignity and accountability.

Table 5. Stories we live by in the two excerpts

Story type	Excerpt 1 (destructive)	Excerpt 2 (beneficial)
Ideology	Human convenience outweighs the value of food	Humans are accountable to nature, which can respond to misuse
Framing	Rice is framed as a surface or tool for walking	Rice is framed as a community with a ruler and a home
Identity	The speaker is an authority who decides what happens to the rice	Rice is a collective “we” with its own identity and king

Story type	Excerpt 1 (destructive)	Excerpt 2 (beneficial)
Evaluation	The slippery road is bad; the rice is of no concern	Stepping on rice is a wrong that provokes anger
Conviction	Abundance is implicitly assumed to be unlimited	The rice states its identity and decision as plain fact
Erasure	The rice's value as food and as living resource is erased	The speaker's excuse of slipping is erased
Salience	The family's safety on the road is foregrounded	The rice's experience and loss are foregrounded

The table also shows why the narrative can function as a critique. The story does not simply condemn the human speaker from outside. It lets her story and the rice's story stand side by side, and it lets the plot decide between them. The audience first hears the destructive story in the voice of a character with whom they may sympathize, since she wants to protect her family, and then hears the beneficial story in the voice of the rice. The audience is thus invited to notice how easily a plausible reason, such as avoiding a slip, can lead to the destruction of a vital resource.

Ecosophic Evaluation

Judged against an ecosophy that values care for natural resources and the needs of the future, the discourse of Excerpt 1 is destructive because it normalizes wastefulness and ignores environmental limits. The assumption that rice can be scattered on a road without consequence is the same assumption that underlies modern wastefulness, namely that resources are abundant and replaceable. In Næss's (1973) terms, it expresses a shallow view of nature that values the rice only for its use to humans in the moment.

The discourse of Excerpt 2 is beneficial because it recognizes the rice as a living and valued entity, grants it agency, and shows that disrespect has consequences. It is closer to the deep ecological view that Næss (1973) described, in which nature has value in itself. At the level of the whole narrative, therefore, "Putri Tangguk" is a beneficial discourse that contains a destructive discourse as its negative example. The ambivalence that Stibbe (2015) describes for some texts does not apply here, because the narrative resolves the tension clearly in favor of respect for nature.

These findings show that environmental consciousness in the folktale is expressed through language and not only through plot. A summary of the story would capture the message that wasting rice is wrong, but the linguistic analysis shows how the message is built: through a verb, a particle, and a noun that make rice an object, and through a pronoun, a title, and a volitional verb that make it a subject. This is the contribution that an ecolinguistics reading adds to a purely thematic reading of the tale.

Rice, Food Resources, and Local Wisdom

The choice of rice as the natural entity in the story is not incidental. Rice is the staple food in Indonesia and the product of the agricultural labor on which many rural communities depend. A tale about the disrespectful treatment of rice therefore addresses a resource that the audience knows well and depends on daily. The personification of rice in Excerpt 2 turns this familiar resource into a being that deserves respect, and in doing so it expresses a form of local wisdom: food is not only to be consumed but also to be honored.

This kind of wisdom can be understood as part of the traditional ecological knowledge that is passed on through culture (Berkes, 2012). It does not take the form of a scientific explanation of soil, yield, or sustainability. It takes the form of a story that

makes the audience feel the consequences of waste. The folktale thus performs the educational and regulative functions that Bascom (1954) attributed to folklore, using the language of personification to give a moral message an emotional force.

Comparison with Previous Studies

Table 7 relates the findings of this study to the previous studies reviewed earlier. The comparison shows that the beneficial discourse in “*Putri Tangguk*” is consistent with other analyses of traditional stories that find respect for nature and the use of nature as an actor. It also shows a point of difference: in the study of the Hawaiian folktale by Indriyanto (2021), the discourse was constructive throughout, whereas “*Putri Tangguk*” contains both a destructive and a beneficial discourse and uses the contrast between them to teach.

Table 7. Comparison of the present findings with previous studies

Study	Text and framework	Main finding	Relation to this study
Indriyanto (2021)	Hawaiian folktale The Wind Gourd of La’amaomao; Stibbe’s ecosophy	Constructive discourse that recognizes sustainability and emotional ties to the environment	Contrast: here a destructive discourse is shown as a negative model
Bhattacharjee & Sinha (2021)	Jataka tales; Stibbe’s theories	Tales encourage valuing nature and respecting living beings	Similar: respect for living beings
Zaytoon (2022)	Children’s stories by Ruskin Bond; Stibbe’s model and transitivity	Nature as actor fosters environmental consciousness	Similar: rice becomes an actor
Mardhatillah et al. (2024)	“ <i>Putri Tangguk</i> ”; corpus linguistics	Analysis of affixation and its use in teaching	Complementary: this study moves from morphology to ecological discourse

The comparison also clarifies the contribution of this study to research on “*Putri Tangguk*”. The earlier study of the tale concerned affixation (Mardhatillah et al., 2024), and the present study shows that the same text can yield a different kind of knowledge when it is read at the level of discourse. The two kinds of analysis are complementary, since affixes such as *-kan* and *ter-* also carry the meanings of intention and accident that were interpreted in this study.

Applying Stibbe’s Framework to Indonesian Text

Most applications of Stibbe’s framework have been carried out on English texts, and the analysis here shows that the framework can be extended to Indonesian with some adaptation. The categories of story types worked well as an organizing device because they are not tied to a particular grammar. The linguistic resources, however, had to be read through Indonesian morphology and syntax. For instance, the active imperative in *taburkan* is formed with the suffix *-kan*, the sense of accident in *terpeleset* comes from the prefix *ter-*, the intensity of *menginjak-injak* comes from reduplication, and the ownership in *lambungmu* comes from a possessive suffix. An analyst who looked only for English-style transitivity would miss several of these meanings.

This observation has a practical consequence for future studies of regional literature in Indonesia. Researchers who use the framework on other folktales will need a coding guide that includes affixation, reduplication, particles, and pronoun systems, such as the inclusive and exclusive forms of “we” (*kita* and *kami*), which carried a clear

ecological meaning in the excerpts analyzed here. The coding guide in Table 2 is one attempt to provide such a tool, and it can be refined with larger sets of data.

Implications for Language and Literature Teaching

Beyond its ecological message, the folktale can serve as authentic material in language and literature classrooms. A close reading of the contrast between *taburkan* in Excerpt 1 and *kami* in Excerpt 2 can help students notice how lexical choices and grammatical roles position nature as an object or as a subject, which is a central concern of critical literacy (Janks, 2010). Because folktales are familiar to learners, they lower the barrier to discourse analysis tasks and link language learning with local culture and environmental values, as shown by the use of the Kancil folktale to engage children in environmental behavior (Musthofa & Koentjoro, 2019).

Table 8 outlines four classroom activities that follow from the analysis. The first two activities draw on the idea of participant roles and perspective, and they can be used in English or Indonesian classes at the secondary or tertiary level. The third activity extends the analysis to other local texts, and the fourth connects the folktale to translation, since the English rendering of *sangat marah* and *kami* determines whether the ecological meaning survives. These activities require no special equipment and can be carried out with the short excerpts analyzed in this study.

Table 8. Classroom activities based on the folktale

Activity	Language focus	Learning outcome
Who acts? Mapping participants	Actors and goals in clauses	Students notice how grammar positions nature as object or subject
Rewriting from the rice's perspective	Voice, pronouns, and evaluation	Students practice perspective-taking and produce a personified text
Sorting discourses	Destructive, beneficial, and ambivalent categories	Students classify local texts and justify their judgments
Comparing original and translation	Meaning of <i>sangat marah</i> and <i>kami</i> in English	Students discuss how translation choices keep or lose ecological meaning

The activities also address a practical problem in language teaching, which is how to connect language skills with real social issues. By asking students to question who acts and who is acted upon in a text, teachers can build the habit of reading critically and can connect classroom work with questions of sustainability that are part of students' own communities.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the Jambi folktale "Putri Tangguk" contains significant environmental consciousness communicated through contrasting ecological discourses. The narrative critiques anthropocentric greed and resource wastefulness while promoting an eco-centric ecosophy through the personification of agricultural entities. The destructive discourse is built through an imperative verb, the particle *saja*, and the framing of rice as pavement, which erase the value of rice as food. The beneficial discourse is built through the pronoun *kami*, the title *raja padi*, the reduplicated verb *menginjak-injak*, and the volitional verb *memutuskan untuk pergi*, which grant rice identity, status, and agency. Through its linguistic and narrative structure, "Putri

Tangguk” serves as a traditional medium of environmental warning, reminding human society of the necessity for respectful and sustainable resource stewardship.

Theoretically, the study shows that Stibbe’s (2015) framework can describe how a short traditional narrative constructs opposing stories about nature through a small number of linguistic choices. Practically, it offers a documented reading of a piece of Jambi’s oral literature that can be used by teachers, cultural workers, and researchers interested in the 14preservation of local wisdom. These contributions are modest in scale, but they point to a larger body of regional narratives that remain to be examined from an ecological perspective.

The study is limited to a single version of one folktale and a small set of representative excerpts, so its findings describe this text and should not be generalized to all Jambi folklore. The analysis also concerns the language of the text and does not examine how audiences receive the tale. Future researchers are encouraged to apply Ecological Discourse Analysis to other Jambi folktales and oral literature, or to compare different versions of “Putri Tangguk”, so that the findings can be broadened. Reception studies that ask learners or community members how they understand the tale would also complement the textual analysis. Language and literature teachers may use this folktale as authentic material to develop students’ critical literacy and environmental awareness in the classroom, and curriculum developers may consider including local folktales in materials for teaching English and Indonesian.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this work the author(s) used Claude (Anthropic) in order to help structure and draft sections of the manuscript. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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