

# An Ecocritical Approach to English Language Teaching

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## **Abstract**

This paper aims to examine ELT coursebooks from an ecocritical perspective to find out how nature is represented in ELT coursebooks that are used in EFL classrooms worldwide. Coursebooks are laden with political, ideological and cultural codes and meanings. In recent years, great importance has been attached to ecostudies which aim to draw attention to and raise awareness about the problems and issues about nature and environment. In order to be more effective and inclusive with an emphasis on the interrelatedness and interdependence of different academic disciplines and fields of study, interdisciplinary studies have been encouraged in ecostudies. Global ecological enlightenment can be rendered possible for people through education by acquiring an ecological self and by recognizing how closely their human lives are linked to the non-human world. So, it will be a worthwhile attempt to find a way to integrate ecology into ELT to put it to useful service in reinforcing ecological consciousness. This study sets out to spark an interest in the potential of ELT coursebooks to generate green ideas when an ecologically-sensitive curriculum is implemented. For this purpose, this study has analyzed the discourses in the 7 coursebooks *Cutting Edge*, *Global*, *Language Leader*, *New Headway*, *Language in Use*, *Straight Forward*, *New Inside Out* in terms of the systematic language choices made in the constructions of nature to find out in what ways nature and natural entities are re/presented and how different representations of nature and natural entities reveal certain extra-textual realities including sociocultural norms and ideologies.

*Key Words: ELT coursebook, nature, ecostudies, discourse analysis, ecological consciousness*

## **Introduction**

There exist a great variety of different constructions and representations of nature which stem from different worldviews that are reflected in different discursive frames. The linguistic representations of nature reveal how we conceptualize, comprehend and treat the natural world as well as how we construct ideas about nature and our relationship to it. The terms we use to refer to nature such as wilderness, Eden, landscape, mother nature, virgin land are just the cultural and ideological interpretations of how we perceive the physical world. In other words, our perceptions and understandings of concepts and categories concerning nature, culture and human depend on how an ideologically loaded language represents them to us. Doubtless language, as a meaning-generating medium, shapes and determines how we conceive and approach the physical world around us to a certain extent. So language plays a vital role not only in constructing the knowledge about nature and ideological dimensions of human-nature interactions but also in circulating this constituted

reality. We cannot downplay the fact that language as a powerful tool has the potential to manipulate our perceptions of and attitudes towards nature and can present the reality of nature in a more idealized way or in a more restrictive, incomplete and misleading way. Throughout history, nature has been constructed in different ways in different socio-cultural contexts in the light of certain ideologies and gender/class/race politics. The textual representations of nature used in the coursebooks examined in this study illustrate that the existing political, economic and social systems and processes are intricately intertwined with the cultural, ideological and discursive constructions and positionings of nature and human beings in their interactions with each other.

The term *Ecology* was introduced by Ernst Haeckel in 1860s to describe the relations between organisms and their environment with an emphasis on the mutual interdependence and interconnectedness of all living systems within the ecosystem. Ecocriticism, in a simplest sense, deals with the study of the relationship between the physical environment and texts, and focuses on how and to what effect nature is conceptualized and represented in various literary, cultural, critical and disciplinary contexts (Gersdorf and Mayer, 2006, p.13). Ecolinguistics, on the other hand, has been defined as “the ecological study of language and the linguistic study of ecology” (Busse, 2006, p.133). The linguistic study of ecology acknowledges that language use is always correlated to socio-cultural practices and ideologies in a given historical context. Hence, it sheds light on the interaction between language, nature and environment by elaborating the role of language in the cultural shaping of the natural environment.

As Haq and Paul (2012) suggest, green has become a modern-day aspiration (75). Since the ecological problems are global and transcend the national territorial borders, our time is marked by the increasing importance of nature and environment. Glotfelty (1996) states that humanities disciplines such as history, sociology, religion, philosophy, law and literature have been greening since the 1970s (xviii). Today people are exposed to green issues from a great variety of sources with different approaches and perspectives. Governments, non-governmental organizations, companies and media address green agenda and the movie industry, television programs and celebrities are making contributions to rising green consciousness. Millions of people from different cultures and background at different ages from all walks of life all over the world are learning English. Since ELT coursebooks are globally consumed, they have perhaps the widest readership among academic publications. Coursebooks should not remain indifferent to environmental issues when their potential to make a worldwide call for green action is considered. They can assume the responsibility to reach the public consciousness by bringing into focus environmental issues and problems.

### **Objective of the study**

Representations of nature in ELT coursebooks have not been a subject of academic interest or study so far. This study intends to emphasize that cross-fertilization is possible between ecostudies and curriculum and materials development in ELT with a belief that coursebooks can promote environmental agenda and bring about changes in learners' attitudes toward the natural environment by nourishing their awareness of the physical world so that they can adopt more environmentally sound behaviour.

This study sets out to examine systematic language choices that are foregrounded in the textual constructions of nature in ELT coursebooks that are used in EFL classrooms worldwide from an ecocritical perspective to seek out in what ways nature is re/presented and how different representations of nature in the texts reveal extra-textual realities with their ideological and cultural implications and what/how ecological issues and crises are brought up and dealt with. The following research questions have been raised to be investigated for the aim of the study.

- How is nature constructed by human culture/perspective?
- Is this presentation/representation based on anthropocentric or eco-centric/bio-centric worldviews?
- Do the texts offer environmentally focused and ecologically sensitive perspectives?
- What kind of relationship between nature and human is established and promoted? What roles are assigned to both parties in this relationship?
- Do the texts emphasize the mutual interdependence and interconnectedness between human and non-human? Do the texts emphasize unity, connection and wholeness within the ecosystem?
- Do the texts present nature independently of human culture/civilization? Do the texts keep nature and human society/culture separate?
- Do the representations nourish, reinforce or challenge the patriarchal and anthropocentric culture's dualistic conception of culture/nature, human/nature, human/animal dichotomies?
- Do the texts cover ecology and ecological issues in relation with political, ideological and cultural issues?
- Do the text raise consciousness about green agenda?

## Methodology

Critical discourse analyses (CDA) have been utilized in this study to examine the linguistic constructions of nature since environmental crises are partly matters of linguistic and discursive representations and meanings imposed on nature by human meaning-making exercises. Fairclough (1995) defines CDA as an approach which seeks to investigate relationships between "(a) discursive practices, events and texts and (b) broader social and cultural structures, relations and processes [...] how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power [...] how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony" (132). CDA is useful since it brings together discursive and nondiscursive elements by paying close attention to extralinguistic factors like culture, society and ideology (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258). To study textual, social and cultural factors together within a broader framework provides a deeper insight into how discursive practices function in constituting and transmitting knowledge, in organizing social institutions or in exercising power (Wodak, 2001, p. 11).

For the discourse analyses, firstly, I have developed categories to indicate possible textual representations of nature within certain conceptual frameworks. Warren (1993) explains a conceptual framework as "the set of basic beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions that shape and reflect how one views oneself and one's world. Conceptual

frameworks are the socially constructed lenses or filters through which one perceives oneself and others" (p. 122). The categories developed reflect different approaches to nature including the cultural, pragmatic, sentimental, aesthetic, recreational, ecological and religious. The idea for the categories is derived from Lakoff and Johnson's book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) in which they examine how the metaphorical structuring of concepts form our thoughts, actions and attitudes as well as our relations with the objects. In order to understand the world and to function in it, we have to categorize the things and experiences we encounter in ways that make sense to us. These categories may emerge from directly our experience, the nature of our interactions with other people, objects and with our physical and social environments (Lakoff and Johnson, p. 162). According to Lakoff and Johnson, when we conceptualize something, we do it in terms of multidimensional structures of properties which are not inherent in the object but emerge naturally from our experience in the world. These multidimensional gestalts include the perceptual (the way they look, feel etc, conception of objects by means of our sensory apparatus), motor activity (what we do with our bodies in getting in or out of them, the nature of motor interactions with objects), purposive (based on the uses we can make of an object in a given situation), functional (based on our conception of the functions of the object) properties (pp. 121-122, 162). Below are the categories developed for nature by taking into considerations these gestalts.

- Nature as a provider for human needs
- Nature as wilderness
- Nature as an adversary
- Nature as an object of scientific scrutiny and knowledge
- Nature as a source of aesthetic pleasure and pastime
- Nature as an object of gaze
- Nature as a personification of human
- Nature as a commodity
- Nature as a source of inspiration for artistic/creative activities
- Nature as an entity to be protected and saved
- Nature as human artifice
- Nature as the reflection and revelation of God

Nature as the provider emerges as a substance and resource from which raw materials and energy are distracted; so it serves purposeful ends and is utilized for human interests. The texts which emphasize the instrumental value of the services nature provides through the supply of energy and the provision of raw materials and food are included in this category.

Nature as wilderness refers to wildlife in wild nature. The texts in which nature is constructed as a "vast realm of unknown, unmanageable or uncontrollable wild nonhuman activity" are examined under this category (Luke, 1997, p. 195).

Nature as an adversary poses physical and psychological challenges as an evil, hostile and destructive force, threatening human life, society and civilization. The texts which maintain that unpredictable and uncontrollable nature can hurt, harm and destroy man and what man has created are categorized in this group.

Nature is categorized as an object of scientific scrutiny and knowledge when scientists mechanically examine natural phenomena to discover the workings and secrets of the universe by empirically obtaining a body of objective knowledge.

Nature emerges as a source of aesthetic pleasure when it is presented as beautiful and attractive landscape for leisure pursuits, sports activities or holiday, providing entertainment, relaxation and joy. The texts which emphasize that nature exists to be enjoyed for its beauty and recreational value as the thing of the pastime are included in this category.

The category of nature as a commodity recognizes the values of nature in economic terms. Nature, characterized as a source of wealth, can be bought, sold or leased. The commodification and objectification of nature can be seen when nature is used for touristic purposes as well. This category deals with the texts which brings to the fore the monetary value of nature as an object of consumption.

Nature as human artifice refers to the nature as changed, built or designed by human action like zoos and parks. The category of nature as an entity to be saved highlights that nature has been endangered and it needs to be rescued by human action. Nature as the reflection and revelation of God is based on a religious point of view, and nature is seen as sacred.

Animism, the attribution of agency and spirit to the non-human, is another motif employed in the representations of nature. Personification picks out different and certain aspects of a person or ways of looking at a person and "allows us to make sense of phenomena in the world in human terms - terms that we can understand on the basis of our own motivations, goals, actions, and characteristics" (Lakoff and Johnson, p. 34). In the representations of nature as personified in human terms, human qualities are assigned mostly to animals which are considered to possess personalities like people and thus to act like them. Animals, measured according to human standards, are characterized as lazy, loyal, coward, hardworking, friendly, etc.

For the discourse analyses, Halliday's transitivity model has also been employed to find out whether any linguistic patterns with certain types of processes and participants in the analysed texts are made prominent and if there are any, how the predominance of certain linguistic choices signify and construct nature. The study of transitivity looks at what kinds of actions are used in a text (different processes are distinguished according to whether they represent physical actions, speech, states of mind or states of being), how actions are represented, who carries out them (who is an agent) and to whom the actions are directed (who is affected by the actions of others) (Halliday, 1985, p. 101).

The transitivity model proves useful for the ecolinguistic study of language in investigating how nature is represented as an ideologically and linguistically constructed reality as well as to "uncover how certain meanings are foregrounded while others are suppressed or obfuscated" (Simpson, 1993, p. 104). It is the obvious fact that different texts express different versions of reality and every text can be rewritten differently by different linguistic choices to construct a different or particular reality. As Burton (1996) puts it, "All knowledge is contained and produced within an ideological framework" (p. 226). Because of the selection and inclusion of certain texts constructed with particular linguistic choices rather than others, the coursebooks expose a certain world view and ideological stance about nature. The analyses reveal that the systematic language choices and the types of participant and process types vary according to the way nature is constructed and represented in a given text. Lastly, the key words that have been repeated in certain contexts have been identified to

highlight how certain experiences and relations with nature are encoded in the texts through a certain set of options.

## Results and Discussion

120 texts which are concerned with nature in seven coursebooks, *Cutting Edge*, *Global*, *Language Leader*, *New Headway*, *Language in Use*, *Straight Forward*, *New Inside Out* have been studied and examined for critical discourse analyses. The selection of these coursebooks has been made according to their availability in the Learning Resource Centre in the International Academy at Essex University, England. All the available levels of these coursebooks from beginners to advanced have been included in the analyses.

At this point, it is useful to point out the general conclusions reached before moving on to the detailed analyses of the texts. In the modern world basically two forces, science/technology and industrial economy, shape the social institutions and human relations with each other and the physical world. In this modern world the relationship between nature and human is based on either master-slave or conqueror-conquered or consumer-product dualities. This is the general framework which shapes the human/the non-human relations presented in the ELT coursebooks in question. The conceptual frameworks that determine the representations of nature in the coursebooks spring from the anthropocentric, androcentric and utilitarian view of nature and so they are based on dualistic hierarchies of culture/nature, human/non-human, human/animal and human/nature. Dualistic thinking does not only lead to separation and alienation but also to oppression and domination of the first items over the second items in the binary oppositions since the first items are considered to be intellectually superior, more competent and more rational.

Nature gains value only in relation to man and the interest in nature for its own sake is absent in the representations of nature in the coursebooks. The representations are organized mostly around the idea of what we can do with nature and how nature can be utilized for human needs and desires. No emphasis is placed on the fact that it is “valuable as habitat for species that have intrinsic, non-resource value – even rights – simply because they exist” (Coates, 1998, 14). On the contrary, these representations disclose the underlying ideology that nature exists for the benefits and interests of mankind. Thus, nature has no intrinsic value apart from the goods and services it provides for human beings as a source for economic use, scientific knowledge or aesthetic appreciation. Such representations put the human in a controlling master position who acts upon nature to exploit its resources, claiming for the ownership and domination over it. This perception also strengthens the idea that nature is around us but not part of us and nature belongs to us but we do not belong to nature.

Thus, most of the nature representations examined in this study reveal human-centred points of view and reflect the anthropocentric approach to nature. The environmental crises lie largely in this anthropocentric outlook which refers to any stance, perception or conception that takes the human as centre or norm. Thus it is essential for each and every one of us to change our understanding of the self/the human and the other/the non-human. ELT coursebooks also need to abandon a “human exemptionalism paradigm” and instead embrace a new ecological paradigm which is based on the idea that “humans are one of many interdependent species in the global ecosystem and part of a large web of

nature, that humans depend on a finite biophysical environment, and that humans cannot stand above ecological laws" (Catton and Dunlap, quoted in Gould and Lewis, 2009, p. 5). Coursebooks should adopt biocentrism which affirms the intrinsic value of all natural life forms and organisms. A biocentric stance emphasizes the integrity of the entire ecosystem without giving any privilege to one species (Clark, 2011, p. 3). One common point the representations in the coursebooks share is that no or very little emphasis is placed on the interdependence and interconnectedness between human and non-human worlds. The construction of nature as an alienated Other reveals man's loss of an organic connection with it. Biocentrism can help learners develop a sense of belongingness as a part of nature within an intertwined network of the ecological system. As Worster puts it, nature is "interconnected and interdependent community of living organisms on which our survival depends" (1993, p. 107). Keeping this in mind, nature should no longer be regarded as an object that should be dominated or controlled but a partner with which we should cooperate on equal terms.

Moreover, in almost all of these representations, nature is directly or indirectly reduced to an object to be gazed. The coursebooks construct a detached nature to be viewed and studied from the outside, which causes people to see themselves apart from nature and observe the natural environment with a feeling of superiority. This widens the separation between man and nature.

Another striking result the discourse analyses have yielded is that we have fragmented ways of presenting nature in the coursebooks. The coursebooks share the general tendency to take natural world and the issues concerning nature and environment out of context with no reference to the socio-political, cultural and economic bonds between human and non-human by presenting them in sentence-based linguistic forms or phrases, which trivializes significant, urgent and complex issues by reducing them to simplistic issues. A sentence-based presentation of the related issues without a context is not included in the analyses since they offer a very shallow and limited introduction and insight into the matter and thus fail to call attention to the importance of the subject.

The other finding discloses that the coursebooks have a very narrow and restricted view and coverage of nature which mostly include wild nature such as jungles, mountains and deserts, tourist attractions, natural disasters and scientific facts about the universe and animals. Thus, in the coursebooks humans engage in nature only in very particular ways as tourists, scientists, sportsmen and adventurers. However, when we are talking about nature, we are not talking about only beautiful landscapes, tourist attractions, wild life and extreme weather conditions, but we should also be talking about deforestation, desertification, climate changes, global warming, endangered animals, pollutions, degradation of nature and exploitation of natural resources, etc. The coursebooks include fauna but flora is completely excluded. There is also an obvious lack of interest in addressing environmental crises.

Out of the 120 texts in the selected coursebooks examined, 32 texts construct nature, natural environment and animals as an object of scientific knowledge. According to the frequency distribution, this is the most common type of representation of nature used in the coursebooks. With a closer look, the ideology of enlightenment can be traced as embedded in these texts. John Locke, Francis Bacon, Descartes and Newton are the key figures in establishing the ideological framework of enlightenment which deeply shaped the Western logic and thought system, promoting the scientific approach to nature.

Science is about knowledge and power. As Francis Bacon and Descartes suggest, knowledge is power and power gained through scientific knowledge should be exercised to bring nature under control and domination to make it subservient to human so that it can better serve human ends and purposes. The Scientific Revolution that took place in the 17<sup>th</sup> century initiated and encouraged the project of exploring and conquering nature with the help of technology. A scientific approach to nature is based on a mechanistic view of universe according to which nature operates like a clock-like machine within a self-regulating and a self-contained system and so just like a machine, it can be divided and dissected into parts to be investigated.

In these texts, one-on-one communication or a genuine and friendly relationship with the natural world on equal terms is not offered but instead one is kept at a distance to be informed of the mysteries of the universe and amazing facts about the workings of the ecosystem. Human, when situated as the scientific observer, takes the position of a detached and uninvolved viewer, which results in a feeling of detachment. In the relationship where feelings and ethics are completely absent, one inevitably feels disconnected from nature. The subject-object dualism has been maintained in the scientific studies for the sake of objectivity but this dualism reinforces the logic and practices of domination of nature. The domination of nature by the marriage of science and technology brings about an alienated relation to nature.

The systematic language choices made in these texts also establish nature as a self-operating system which manages itself. Nature is given active agency in this category with the highest frequency of material processes when compared to other categories and texts. Material processes are the processes of doing. This process type includes actional verbs which refer to obvious physical activity and movement (Halliday, p. 103). Yet, nature can act as an active agent only when human is absent on the stage. When man comes into the scene, nature is reduced to the object to be acted upon. Nature receives the action of human and passivated through subjection and beneficialization as a goal, recipient or receiver in the material processes performed by human beings. In these texts, relational processes are also prominently used to define what natural processes or entities are and what they are like. The relational process of transitivity expresses the process of being and reveals the attributes and identities one has (Halliday, p. 112). Since nature or natural entities are unable to produce a discourse, a regulatory discourse is imposed on them, defining and determining what they are.

The words that are repeatedly used in the texts are *solar system, universe, planet, earth, sun, atmosphere, rotate, asteroid, clash, hit, sun, warm/ing, mystery, energy, carbon and emission*. Some examples from the texts analysed are as follows:

The earth rotates at around 1500 km per hour (*New Cutting Edge, Elementary, Module 11*)

Antarctica is the fifth largest of the earth's seven continents. During the winter it doubles its size because of the large amount of sea ice that forms at its edges. [...] Because of its thick ice cover, it is the highest of all continents. [...] Braving winds that freeze the flesh, the constant threat of snow blindness, and the intense, unremitting cold are there for the extraordinary scientific treasures that await discovery. This is one place still untouched by man. (*New Headway, Upper-intermediate, Unit 6*)



The earth is the only place where life is known to exist. It has all the conditions that are suitable for supporting life. It is a perfect distance from the sun. The earth rotates on its axis. [...] Our atmosphere blocks harmful solar radiation but allows enough heat from the sun to warm us. (*New Headway*, Pre-intermediate, Unit 12).

The sun heats the sea. The water in the sea evaporates. It goes into the air. The water vapour forms clouds. [...] In the cold air the water vapour changes into rain. (*Language Leader*, Elementary, Unit 3).

Animals, when scientifically observed, are passivated as the object of gaze and scrutiny in the position of a phenomenon of mental processes performed by human. Mental processes refer to the processes of perception, cognition and feeling. Moreover, some interesting facts are presented about them predominantly in relational processes to illustrate the qualities animals have. However, unlike human actors who are personalized through specification, individualization and differentiation, animals are constituted as unspecified and anonymous through generalization, pluralisation and categorization. They are also given agency and described with a high number of material processes to demonstrate the things they can do and they cannot do. However, their agency is established mostly by intransitive verbs like *fly, jump, swim, talk, run, walk, climb, stand*. In most of the cases where they are represented as the actor of material processes with transitive verbs, they act upon themselves and so receive their own action. That animals can rarely direct their action onto the outside world weakens their agency because this indicates their inability and incapacity to take the control of the environment. Some examples from the texts are as follows:

On our trips we see a wide range of whales, dolphins and sea birds. Humpback whales are famous for their long songs and big jumps. We sometimes see them. Fin whales live for up to 100 years. They are common in the North Atlantic. Bootlenose Dolphins are very active. They jump very high. We always see them. We guarantee great photos. (*Language Leader*, Elementary, Unit 3).

Ants find their way to food and back to their nest by storing and activating memory images. Snakes manage to move by using their muscles. (*Global*, Advanced, 126, 128, 131)

Nature as a source of aesthetic pleasure and pastime is the second most common type of representation of nature with the 26 texts in total. These representations show that nature is good for outdoor sports and activities or as a tourist attraction. The aesthetic pleasure nature offers is derived from the pastoral or Arcadian landscape where you can take refuge when you escape from the complexities and mechanical routines of modern urban life. When nature is constructed as a place to go to carry out leisure activities, nature is reduced to a place to be enjoyed only in free time. The related words used with a high frequency in this context include *holiday, beach, popular, tourists, paradise, sunbathing, sandy, sun, spectacular views, landscape, sports and activities (climbing, skateboarding, snowboarding, swimming, skiing, surfing, scuba diving, fishing, sailing, mountain biking, trekking, sea kayaking, horse riding), watching, island, cruises*. The controlling ideology that gives structure to this type of representation regards nature as a commodity to be consumed by tourists. As indicated in the reading passage titled *Death by Tourism: Does Tourism Ruin Everything that It Touches* in *New Headway*, Upper-Intermediate, "tourism has been industrialized: landscapes, cultures, cuisines, and religions are consumer goods displayed in travel brochures." (Unit 2, p. 20).

The followings are some examples to illustrate how nature is established as a source of aesthetic pleasure or pastime:

I was actually on a windsurfing holiday in a small resort called Dahab. It is a perfect place for water sports (*New Inside out*, Intermediate, Unit 8)

We have a holiday home near a lake. So I go fishing a lot. My favourite season is autumn. I love the colours of the trees – red, gold, orange, yellow, and brown. In winter I play ice hockey and go ice-skating. In summer I go sailing. At weekends we drive to the beach to sunbathe and go windsurfing. I love summer. I like taking photographs of flowers, especially in spring (*New Headway*, Elementary, Unit 4)

A tropical paradise located in the warm blue waters. It is surrounded by white sandy beaches. (*New Cutting Edge*, Intermediate, Module 3).

Think about a lagoon hidden from the sea and passing boats by a high, curving wall of rock. Then imagine white sands and coral gardens never damaged by dynamite fishing or trawling nets. Fresh water falls scatter the island surrounded by jungle. [...] The most spectacular views of the coast can be seen from the cliffs overlooking the bay (*New Inside Out*, Intermediate, Unit 8)

We drove through one of the driest deserts in the world. I just stared out of the window at the wonderful scenery. The sandy colour of the mountains looked fantastic against the blue sky. The view is spectacular. Everybody got out and took photographs. (*New Inside out*, Intermediate, Unit 8)

The scenery is spectacular. Here you will find peace and quiet, beautiful beaches, and perfect weather. (*New Inside Out*, Pre-intermediate, Unit 2)

As the philosopher Mary Midgley (1978) puts it, “We are not tourists here...We are at home in this world because we were made for it” (p. 194). Tourism emerges as one of the factors that lead to the degradation and commercial exploitation of nature. However, out of the 26 texts, only 2 texts touch on the harmful effects of tourism that impinge on the ecological system. In these texts, nature is reduced to a docile body to be victimized and subjugated by human action and mostly described as the affected in the material and mental processes.

Building hotels and resorts can lead to short term jobs. But they can also lead to the destruction of habitats and so of livelihoods. Precious water supplies are often diverted to the large hotels or swimming pools (*New Inside Out*, Upper-intermediate, Unit 13)

More than 600 million tourists a year now travel the globe. The tourist industry will soon be the largest industry in the world. Many places that once were remote are now part of package tours. The Mediterranean shores have a resident population of 130 million. This swells to 230 million each summer because of the tourists. [...] The Mediterranean is the dirtiest sea in the whole world. (*New Headway*, Upper-intermediate, Unit 2)

With the 18 texts in total, the third most frequently used representation type of nature in the coursebooks is wildness/wilderness in which nature is constituted as a place empty of human beings with no physical or emotional connection, separated from human culture and away from human civilization, thus unreachable and inaccessible. The depictions of wild life in deserts, jungles and mountains along with wild animals are common in this category. In wilderness, nature and its inhabitants, with an emphasis on unusual and dangerous species, are constructed as an alienated and unknown other that exposes a threat against which humans must defend themselves. The wild nature, demonstrated in terms of difficult geographies which we need to get out of our living spaces to reach with great difficulties, deepens the separation between human culture and nature. Besides, the textually created mental image of uninhabited and dangerous wilderness is always reinforced by the photographs of wild life and animals.

As Wordsworth suggests, wild attracts. In most of the texts, wild nature is constructed as a place which is waiting for the people who are in pursuit of adventure to explore and conquer it by pushing the limits of human achievement further with their skills of survival. Thus, the message implicitly given here is that nature is a place to be overcome and subordinated. The activities for the ego-gratifying adventure include mountaineering and crossing a desert or ocean. The most frequently repeated words in the related texts are *achievement, hardship, difficult, impossible, madness, suffering, extreme, challenge, risk, explore and experience*.

The other striking motif the texts of wilderness foreground is the profile of the adventurers. The people who dare to embark on a trip into the heart of wilderness are white males who are guided by coloured local people. Only in one text the adventurer is white-female. This sexist and racist focus is just an extension of the patriarchal and androcentric western thought which is systematically built on hierarchically established dualities which see women, coloured people and nature as an inferior other who is less rational, weak and vulnerable and thus to be controlled and ruled over. Because of this ideological otherization, wild nature/environment is perceived mostly as an antagonistic force, posing a challenge with prospects of danger and mishap. Warren states that value-hierarchical thinking and logic which places "higher value, status, or prestige on what is 'Up' (men) or what is gender-identified with what is 'Up' (reason, rationality, aggressivity, control) than with what is 'Down' (women [and colored people]) or what is gender-identified with what is 'Down' (emotion, body, passivity, submissiveness)" lead to practices of power, privilege and domination (pp. 122-123). The person who steps outside the civilized order of reason and rationality to face the realm of irrationality in an attempt to test or prove his strength and power against unmanageable, untameable and savage wild nature is described as "mad" or "crazy" or "lunatics" and the encounter between the conqueror/intruder and the wild nature is described as "craziness" in some of these texts. This approach sets nature as a stage for the enactment of social or "cultural fantasies" about "freedom", "domination" and "individualism" (Caperk, 2009, p.16). Below are some examples:

Ed Stafford became the first man in history to walk the length of the Amazon River from the source to the sea. He walked for 860 days. He went through three countries, Peru, Columbia, and Brazil.

"I did it for the adventure" Cho said. When I first met Ed, I was working in the forest. I thought he was crazy. One day we were walking in a very dangerous part of the forest. When we saw a hostile tribe, they did not understand what Ed was doing there. I explained he was an adventurer. (*New Headway*, Pre-intermediate, Unit 3)

Bedaire is a small island. It is completely uninhabited and can only be reached by helicopter. Day time temperature is 40 C. There are dangerous crocodiles. The island is home to different types of insects plus spiders and snakes which can be dangerous. (*New Cutting Edge*, Pre-intermediate, Module 12).

Desert is an amazingly beautiful and spiritual place. It is also extremely dangerous. [...] Never ever go into the desert alone. You can experience extremes of climate. (*New Cutting Edge* Intermediate, Module 3).

Volunteers will go and live on a remote island. The aims of the programme are to see how modern people survive. The island chosen is uninhabited. Climate is tropical. It can be reached by boat or helicopter. Participants will be given basic food supplies. They are expected to gather and hunt for food themselves. (*New Cutting Edge*, Advanced, Module 7)

Reinhold Messner and Peter Habeler decided to attempt the ascent (the first ascent of Everest without Oxygen) without bottled oxygen. They were labelled lunatics who were placing themselves at risk of severe brain damage. [...] Trekking through the deep snow was exhausting so they were forced to climb the more challenging rock ridges. [...] On May 8 Messner and Habeler achieved what was believed to be impossible. (*New Inside Out*, Upper-intermediate, Unit 10)

In the coursebooks, wilderness is also promoted by the tourist industry and wrapped up in a very eye-catching package called Ecotourism. Adventure travel narratives show that ecotourism or eco-holiday take tourists away from established holiday destinations to places which are much less frequented, inaccessible to foreigners, most inhospitable places on earth to experience an extraordinary way of life. Wild nature advertised in the form of trips to deserts, jungles, canyons and mountains is marketed for tourist consumption. In the commodification process of nature, a market exchange value is attached to nature and the love of nature is abused to attract the consumers to gain economic benefits. Barbosa explains commodification as the transformation of anything, including human beings and nature, into goods or commodities that can be sold in the market (36). When the human relation to nature is based on consumption, a direct, organic relation or genuine experience becomes out of question. Only 3 texts draw attention to the fact that ecotourism disturbs the ecological systems because of infrastructure expansion, human intervention and human consumption. Instead of fostering commercialism, coursebooks can emphasize social, moral and environmental responsibilities and ethics.

Cape Town sits next to the beautiful Table Mountain. Table Mountain is 1086 metres high. It is the most famous mountain in South Africa. If you visit Cape Town, you must take a cable car up to the top of the mountain. You can also go walking around the top of the mountain. The ocean near Cape Town is famous for sharks. On special adventure tours you can go diving with a great shark. (*Straightforward*, Elementary, Unit 10)

You can experience the thrills of rock climbing. [...] You will see the incredible lakes, mountains and rivers (*Straightforward*, Intermediate, Unit 6)

You might think that the top of Mount Everest would be one of the few places that is left on our planet free from human rubbish. It is covered with the debris and litter left behind by the thousands of climbers who climbed the summit. Once climbers reach the top, they no longer need equipment. There is no reason to carry heavy loads back. The temptation is to leave everything behind. [...] The government has decided to take action. Each expedition that wants to climb the mountain has to pay a deposit. It is refunded when the climbers bring their rubbish back. Climbers are encouraged to use metal containers rather than plastic or glass. These can be crushed once they are recycled by local business which turns them into knives and forks (*Language Leader*, Upper-intermediate, Review Units 1-3)

The natural wilderness of the Antarctic is under threat because of the increasing number of tourists who are visiting the area. As many as 30000 are expected to come to Antarctica this year to observe penguins, seals and seabirds. Because of this, scientists worry that this curiosity to see the Antarctic are before the ice melts away will only hasten its deterioration. They believe that the growth in tourism could increase the risk to the marine environment and land eco-system. (*Language Leader*, Advanced, Lesson 2)

Many of the reefs in the Caribbean have serious problems as a result of pollution from the large hotels. So, when you have massive development of tourism it can create substantial problems, er, for the wildlife in the particular area. There are other areas where tourism can also cause what are, you could say, are more hidden...have more hidden consequences. For example, in the Galapagos Islands where you have a growth in tourism, an explosion in tourism that has basically resulted in more planes and more cargo ships arriving in the islands and bringing with them what we call invasive species. These are species that are not from the Galapagos that cause serious problems for the Galapagos species. It is one of the major reasons why the Galapagos is in so much trouble at the moment. So, in summary I'd say that tourism can be positive but needs to be managed effectively to make sure that it remains positive, er, for the conservations of the areas to which people go. (*Language Leader*, Advanced, Lesson 2)

When nature is represented as a wild space to go for adventure, nature is again constructed in linguistically disabling ways. That is, it is deprived of linguistic agency and constituted as an object to be gazed by a human eye from a distance or acted upon in a completely passive situation. Nature is docilized as a passive receiver in the positions of a goal, receiver, recipient or a phenomenon in its relation to people. On the other hand, people, mostly white men, are constructed with a large number of material processes in which he directs his action to either animals or other natural entities. The predominance of material processes in the construction of human in his relation to nature as a place to be conquered or controlled in their pursuit of adventure indicates his power, control and authority over nature.

In the fourth place comes the representation of nature as an adversary with the 14 texts in total which are concerned with natural disasters and hazards. In these texts, the hostility of nature is highlighted; nature, positioned as an actor of material processes, poses danger for human's comfortable and safe life, creates troubles and gives hard times to people

and thus nature needs to be strictly managed. The enmity of nature is emphasized through the descriptions of extreme weather conditions with negative adjectives such as *terrible*, *unbearable* and with the expressions of exaggeration and through the warning against extremely aggressive and dangerous animals out in nature.

Natural disasters, on the other hand, are mentioned with no cause. Human interference is obscured or erased. In these texts, people are constructed again predominantly with material processes, and human agency is constructed as a fighter who takes precautions and action to fight against and prevent the detrimental effects of nature. They also carry out a high number of mental processes as well to reveal how they feel about natural events. The key words predominantly used in the related discursive context are *extreme weather*, *natural disasters*, *climate change*, *shark*, *attack*, *hate*, *storm*, *scared* and *extreme*.

Hurricane Katrina hit the US coast. New Orleans is still suffering from strong wind and heavy rain. Thousands of people are waiting for help. Half of the city is under water [...] The green and pleasant land of England is turning brown. After two cold, dry winters and hot summers, the south-east of England is experiencing a serious drought. [...] Following yesterday's blizzards and the heavy fall of snow, the police in New Zealand are using helicopters to reach hundreds of people in the countryside. It is still very windy. Ice is causing problems for rescue teams. (*Language Leader*, Pre-intermediate, Unit 1)

Richard Grant went on holiday with his parents and his younger brother. One day they went fishing in a small motor boat on an enormous lagoon called San Martina. After an hour the motor stopped. [...] Suddenly, something moved in the water near the boat. [...] It was a big grey shark. It started knocking the boat. [...] The boat rocked from side to side. Grant's father tried to push the shark away. [...] Grant's father became a local hero. 2 or 3 weeks later a local fisherman caught the shark and put it in the main square. Everybody came to see the monster and took pictures of it (*New Inside Out*, Elementary, Unit 7).

For over 2 thousand years we have tried to understand our environment. Now we are beginning to control it as well. We are learning how to control the weather. One day we will learn to control earthquakes and volcanoes (*New Headway*, Pre-intermediate, Unit 12)

Coursebooks cover lots of things about modern life either with no reference to or with little emphasis on the fact that modern human activities risk damaging the environment, disturbing the balance in the ecosystem. Ecology is concerned with how natural communities sustain a healthy web of life and "they become disrupted causing death to the plant and animal life" (Ruether, p. 13). Human intervention is the most important reason causing such disruption.

Human impact on ecology cannot be ignored or denied. In the texts which are concerned with the human-induced ecological problems including climate change, global warming, endangered species, loss of biodiversity, pollution, etc., environmental issues are often debated in such ways to make sure that human societies and human activities are never identified as a cause or source of environmental degradation. Natural disasters, however, are not the doings of nature alone but they occur when human and nonhuman factors come together. Instead, the focus is placed on the effects or solutions. However, without acknowledging the cause, an effective solution cannot be produced. Since in the

ecosystem everything is connected to everything else and all the parts mutually affect each other, we can no longer turn a blind eye to our impact on nature and environment. Coursebooks should also focus on the harmful and destructive consequences of human activity on the natural environment. The following passages taken from *Straightforward*, Upper-intermediate present the same picture from two different perspectives, one is anthropocentric and the other ecocentric.

The girl was being attacked by a shark. The aggressor was a bottlenose dolphin. The victim had been playing with friends in the sea. When they spotted the dolphin a short distance from them, the children swam out to get a closer look. They were horrified when the dolphins viciously turned on them biting the girl on the arm. On the Dorset Coast in Britain a well-known dolphin called Georges has hurt several people who have tried to play with him [...] They are not the cute, cuddly animals of popular imagination. Like any other wild animal, dolphins will attack to protect their territory for their young. When they are faced with food shortages, they can become very aggressive. Recent research shows that dolphins will also kill their own young. Dolphins can actually be cold-blooded killers.

In the following text, the writer reacts against the article above which claims that dolphins are killers. "I was shocked and sickened to read your article *Cold-blooded Killers*. It is yet another example of how the popular press is forever filling its pages with sensationalist stories in the belief that this is going to help them sell more newspapers. The article in question is not only insensitive, it is inaccurate" (p. 17). This response is important to show the ideological constructedness of nature and natural entities in discourses, misfeeding and misleading our perceptions.

Dolphins are neither dangerous nor ferocious. They are inquisitive and playful. [...] The dolphin in Florida was probably more scared than the girl who was injured. It certainly would not have meant to harm her. The tourist operators do not know how to approach these animals. They are forever scaring them with their loud engines. They are attempting to play with the youngest dolphins. Then they complain they are attacked by an anxious mother. Is it common sense to observe wild animals at a distance? We should respect their privacy and natural habitat. These intelligent, sensitive creatures have helped and worked with people across the ages. They are actually very caring of their fellow dolphins. They will look after injured dolphins bringing them fish to eat holding them afloat on the surface until they recover. It is this side of their character that makes them ideal playmates for autistic children helping disabled children overcome their fears and handicaps. (*Straightforward*, Upper-intermediate, Unit 2)

The transitivity analyses have revealed that environmental problems and crises are introduced and explained with the high number of cases of omission of human agency. Human agency is also linguistically deemphasized and pushed in the background through passive voice and non-finite clauses. Inanimate entities, companies or governments are positioned as linguistic subjects. In the active constructions with human as an agent, individuals are not held responsible for ecological disintegration but governments, countries

or companies act as agents. In addition, natural entities are assigned finite verbs to create the impression that nature deteriorates and this destruction is not caused but happens naturally.

Lakes and rivers disappearing  
Oceans getting warmer  
Area of desert increasing  
Glacial ice melting  
Climate change is happening (*Global*, Pre-intermediate, Unit 4)

Sea levels are rising. The rate of rise has increased rapidly. Polar ice has been shrinking. Environmentalists have not achieved any significant results in their fight against global warming. The retreat of sea ice is forcing the world's wild polar bear population into an unnatural fast. It threatens the species with extinction. (*Language Leader*, Upper-intermediate, Unit 2)

Every week, a staggering 10000 square kilometres of tropical rainforest are cut down. An area of the size of France disappears every 12 months. The nation of the world, rich and poor alike continue to regard the sea as a convenient place to dump millions of tons of chemicals, sewage and industrial waste. (*Language in Use*, Intermediate, Unit 24).

Smoke from factories and coal-fired power stations not only pollute the air but also cause chemical changes in the atmosphere which result in acid rain. 250000 square kilometres of land has turned into desert. (*Language in Use*, Intermediate, Unit 24).

Pandas are one of the rarest animals in the world [...] There are only 500-1000 pandas surviving in the wild. The number is decreasing although they are protected. Pandas are still poached for their skins. (*Language in Use*, Intermediate, Unit 24).

As you know, many animals and plants face extinctions because their habitat is being destroyed or they are being hunted by human beings. Take the example of the African elephant, the world's largest land animal. The elephant population of Africa has suffered a catastrophic decline in recent years. [...] The African elephant is an endangered species and will become extinct unless solutions are found to protect it.

Why is the African elephant population declining so rapidly? Ell, most elephants have been killed for their ivory tusks, which are made into jewelry or souvenirs. The tusks and bones are often ground down to make medicines. Although the sale and trade of ivory and other elephant products is banned in a number of countries, many elephants are still shot illegally by poachers. Also, and this is a very important point, increasing populations has meant human beings are encroaching on land that used to be the natural habitat of the elephant. (*Language Leader*, Advanced, Listening Lesson 2.5)

The endangered nature to be protected and saved by human is the fifth most common type of representation with the 11 texts in total. Although nature is represented as exploited and victimized, humans are not established as destroyers, exploiters or victimizers in these cases but just the opposite, they are given active agency in the role of a saviour and hero with a high frequency of material processes to help nature to recover. Only one text indicates the cause of the environmental crisis along with the solution.



I became interested in green issues. I started worrying about climate change. I really wanted to do something to help the planet. I talked to Hazel and my children and we decided to go green. Since then we have made some big changes to our life. First we sold our car. We have all got bikes now. We have stopped eating meat. We started eating more vegetables. We do not go to the supermarket but we buy and eat food from local farmers. I grow a lot of vegetables in the garden (*New Inside Out*, Pre-intermediate, Review, p. 86).

If it is not very far, walk or cycle. Leave the car at home. Have a shower instead of a bath. Do not buy furniture made from tropical hardwoods (*Language in Use*, Intermediate, Unit 24).

Fines imposed on companies convicted of polluting the environment are insufficient. The criticism comes after yesterday's decision by Redford Magistrates to fine Ambrain Water Authority £15,000 for allowing sewage to leak into Lake Carston last year. The leakage killed a large proportion of the lake's wildlife as well as making it unfit for water sports. [...] The Sewage had overflowed from a blocked sewer causing the death of the lake's entire fish population, frogs and other wild life. Jerry Wexford called for tougher penalties for organizations found guilty of causing pollution. He urged courts to increase fines and impose prison sentences on company officials who are shown to be negligent. Larger fines would pay for the costs of clean-up operations. Jail sentences would serve as an encouragement to businesses to prevent such incidents occurring again. (*Straightforward*, Advanced, Unit 2).

The sixth most common representation with the number of 9 texts includes the personification of the non-human. Coursebooks are full of texts which describe animals in human terms with the focus mostly placed on pets, which discloses the fact that the representations of the animals are also influenced by the dominant anthropocentric approach in the western world. When animals are represented as pets, they are reduced to an object to be possessed, to be liked or hated. They are valued for their usefulness or for their likeness to humans with desirable qualities and abilities. In the texts in which human qualities are assigned to animals, animals are represented prominently in relational processes and they are identified with the abilities they have or described by the attributes assigned to them with adjectives including *intelligent, clean, friendly, nice, beautiful, awful, ugly, stupid, dirty, unfriendly* and etc. In other cases, animals attain agency to carry out material processes but to provide services for humans. People, on the other hand, are constructed not with the predominance of material processes but with mental processes which reveal that people's subjective attitudes and feelings toward animals/nature depend on to what extent they can be made use of and whether they possess desirable human qualities. In this case, animals are discursively positioned as the phenomenon of mental processes of affection including *like, dislike, love, stand, love, prefer* or the objects of the adjective+preposition collocations like *keen on, terrified of, fond of*.

People use dogs for defence, for carrying things, for transport and even for food. [...] In many parts of the world, people use dogs as companions and pets in the home. (*Global*, Elementary, Unit 3)

Cats are very popular animals for the home. People like cats because cats are clean. Cats don't need to go for a walk every day. Some people hate cats. Cats have a reputation as unfriendly animals. (*Global, Elementary, Unit 3*)

Many dogs work for human doing jobs like helping the blind, helping the police to find drugs and racing. (*New Cutting Edge, Elementary, Module 11*)

He (The most famous working dog Rin Tin Tin) earned his money. He made 50 films and earned about 44000 dollars for each one (*New Cutting Edge, Elementary, Module 11*)

The representation that directly reduces nature to an object of direct gaze to be seen, watched and photographed comes in the sixth place with the 6 texts in total. In most cases male human agency is established with a high number of material processes and mental processes of perception in which he directs his action to either animals or other natural entities, which indicates his active agency and complete control over nature. Nature is deprived of agency and constructed as a passive receiver as a goal, recipient or phenomenon.

The Kruger National Park covers 20000 square kilometres. It is the largest wildlife park in South Africa, a wonderful place to see animals in their natural home. You can drive through the park in your own car, and look at lions, zebras, giraffes, elephants and crocodiles (*Language in Use, Beginner, Unit 19*)

Miguel is a wildlife photographer. He travelled all over the world and took photographs of nature and animals. He visited animal parks in Malaysia and Borneo and he camped in Alaska to watch bears. He took the photos of active volcanoes in Hawaii and he went by boat to film the hippopotamuses in Zimbabwe. (*Global, Elementary, Unit 9*).

One of the least frequently used representation of nature in the coursebooks is constructed around renewable or non-renewable energy sources as the provider of human needs in the three texts. Nature as human artifice is described only in one text. There are no occurrences for the categories representing nature as a source of inspiration for artistic activities and as the reflection and revelation of God.

Biomass is a renewable plant source that can be used to produce heat and electricity. Fuel for cars comes from sugar cane. (*Global, Intermediate, Unit 3*)

The age-old power of the sun is revolutionizing the lives of some of the poorest people. The sun is capable of producing enough power to fuel energy consumption [...] Power of the sun that gave life to our planet can be its salvation. (*Global, Advanced, Unit 2*)

Fossil fuels such as coal, gas, and oil are being used up. Governments are keen to find alternative sources of energy that do not emit carbon dioxide. [...] Renewable energy sources include solar, wave and wind power. The UK government is keen to use these sources of power and hopes to generate some of its energy needs from renewable sources. (*Language Leader, Upper-intermediate, Unit 2*)

Zoos often encourage people to see animals as a form of entertainment. They also do a lot to educate people about wild life and the environment. (*Language in Use, Upper-intermediate, Unit 13*)

## Conclusion

Linguistic and discursive representations of nature and related categories about nature and natural entities condition the way that we interact with nature, and what we do with and about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship. Rather than reinforcing the established systems and existing ideologies which have given rise to ecological problems, ELT coursebooks should promote clear environmental messages and ecological ethics to develop deeper devotion to nature. ELT Coursebooks need to be designed to encourage heightened attentiveness to our place in the natural world as an equal partner and to develop intimacy with our environment. They can make a difference with ecologically sensitive coverage by addressing green agenda to foster environmentally friendly behavioural change. They can include reading and listening passages along with speaking and writing activities concerning how to attain more sustainable lives and a greener future. Language learners can be made more sensitive to our exploitative, wasteful, cruel approaches and treatments of nature as well if enough attention is devoted to natural degradation and deterioration of the environment by human action in coursebooks. Instead of filling the pages with the images of wild nature and wild animals, a more wholistic and inclusive vision of a universe can be brought to attention with the emphasis placed on the idea that the human and the natural should coexist, cooperate and flourish in the biosphere. Rather than the separation, the interdependence and interconnection between the human and the non-human should be foregrounded with the focus on the value of nature and species in their own right but not independently of humanity.

The results and conclusions derived from the critical discourse analyses of the texts are limited to these coursebooks and thus may not be generalized to other coursebooks. But still the results are promisingly significant since they more or less reflect the general tendencies as to how nature is constructed in some certain ways and how these certain constructions disclose deep-seated ideologies in ELT coursebooks. Further studies to examine a greater number of ELT coursebooks must be carried out to get more valid and reliable statistical data.

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