


The Discursive Carbon Footprint of Textbooks: Environmental (Un)Sustainability in Bangladeshi EFL Materials

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: <i>Critical Discourse Analysis, Ecolinguistics, Environmental Sustainability, EFL Textbooks, Hegemony</i></p> <p>Article history: Received 21 April 2026 Revised 6 June 2026 Accepted 8 June 2026 Available online 30 June 2026</p>	<p>At a time when environmental crises demand urgent and informed action, this study examines the “carbon footprint” of Bangladeshi EFL textbooks by analyzing how environmental (un)sustainability is constructed in English for Today textbooks for Classes 6-10. The analysis reveals that these textbooks construct a profoundly unsustainable environmental discourse. Nature is aesthetically framed as a passive spectacle, while crises are trivialized as individual tragedies. Responsibility is systematically individualized onto consumer choices, paradoxically celebrated alongside the high-carbon technologies driving the climate crisis. Climate change is discursively distanced as a future, abstract threat, and a resounding silence on systemic drivers, corporate power, capitalism, and global inequality renders structural critique impossible. Through these strategies, the textbooks function hegemonically to depoliticize environmental engagement, producing students equipped for individual virtue but disabled from the collective action necessary for ecological transformation. In a climate-vulnerable nation, the textbooks systematically deny students the conceptual vocabulary to name, analyze, or challenge the structural drivers of the ecological crisis they inherit. Therefore, the study concludes by calling for critical textbook reform that centers environmental justice, structural analysis, and the cultivation of ecological citizenship.</p>
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1. Introduction

Across the world, education is no longer seen as neutral or value-free (Giroux, 2011; Biesta, 2010); rather, it is understood as a powerful space where ideas about society, economy, and the environment are shaped and shared (Spring, 2009). In this context, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks play a key role because they not only teach language but also communicate social meanings, cultural values, and everyday practices (Xu & Liu, 2022; Xiong & Hu, 2022). Recent studies show that EFL materials often include environmental topics. Yet, they may present them in limited or simplified ways, sometimes focusing on individual actions while ignoring larger structural problems such as industrial pollution or global inequality (Triyono et al., 2023; Dhanyamol & Sethunaryanan, 2025). This raises an important and timely question: do textbooks support real environmental sustainability, or do they quietly reproduce unsustainable ideas?

The concept of a “carbon footprint” is central to this debate. A carbon footprint refers to the total amount of greenhouse gas emissions caused directly or indirectly by human activities, including production, consumption, and daily practices (Seraj, 2024). When applied metaphorically to textbooks, it goes beyond physical paper use and highlights the hidden environmental messages within the content itself. In other words, textbooks may have a “discursive carbon footprint” if they promote consumerism, ignore local environmental crises, or fail to encourage critical thinking about sustainability. At the same time, environmental (un)sustainability refers not only to ecological balance but also to whether social practices presented in texts support long-term environmental health or contribute to damage and inequality (Yu et al., 2024). Thus, sustainability in education is not just about adding “green topics”, but about how these topics are framed, whose voices are heard, and what actions are encouraged.

To critically examine these issues, this study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which explores how language reflects and shapes power, ideology, and social realities (Fairclough, 1995). CDA is especially useful in textbook studies because it helps reveal hidden assumptions and dominant narratives that may not be obvious at first reading. For example, previous research has shown that EFL textbooks can shape learners’ understanding of nature by presenting it as a resource for human use rather than as a system that requires protection (Mliless & Larouz, 2018). Similarly, ecolinguistic and eco-critical approaches highlight how language choices in textbooks can either support environmental awareness or normalize harmful behaviors (Awal, 2025; Onee et al., 2024). These findings suggest that textbooks are not passive tools; they actively construct knowledge and influence how learners think about the environment.

In the specific context of Bangladesh, this issue becomes even more urgent. Bangladesh faces serious environmental challenges, including river erosion, air and water pollution, and the ecological impacts of the garment industry. Despite this, studies indicate that EFL textbooks used in the country may not fully reflect local realities or may present environmental issues in a general, global way (Afrin & Saha, 2023). As a result, learners might not develop a deep understanding of their own environmental context or the critical skills needed to address it. This gap between global discourse and local experience makes it necessary to examine how environmental meanings are constructed in Bangladeshi EFL materials.

2. Literature Review

The study of Brown (2024) analyzed 3,837 Japanese ELT materials, finding that 73.4% normalized unsustainable behaviors through unmarked depictions of consumption and tourism, demonstrating how the hidden curriculum operates at cross-purposes with official sustainability policies. Similarly, Essa and Harvey (2022) exposed significant gaps between Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 rhetoric and its actual implementation, identifying vague language, the absence of strategic planning, and superficial engagement with environmental education as evidence of a performative rather than substantive commitment.

In South Asian contexts, Shah et al. (2025) critically examined Pakistani EFL textbooks through a posthumanist lens, revealing a systematic anthropocentric framing that positions humans as dominant over nature while obscuring the systemic actors responsible for ecological degradation. Complementing this, Yasmin et al. (2026) conducted an ecolinguistic analysis of Pakistani textbooks, documenting the predominance of ambivalent discourse that presents environmental issues without

fostering meaningful behavioral change, alongside increasing erasure of environmental content at higher grade levels.

Within Indonesia, Komarawan et al. (2025) employed multimodal critical discourse analysis to uncover how textbooks exclude human agency through conversion techniques and nominalization, producing ambivalent discourses that superficially support environmental care while advancing neoliberal individualism. Seli et al. (2025) further identified a dominance of material processes that emphasize practical environmental actions, but noted significant gaps in fostering sustainable attitudes and collective responsibility.

Extending this body of work, Liu et al. (2024) examined Chinese university English textbooks, finding rich inclusion of environmental semantic domains alongside critical discussions of sustainable environmentalism and energy efficiency, though systemic policy-level engagement remained limited. Javahery et al. (2025) comparatively analyzed four global ELT coursebook series, revealing uneven treatment of SDG 13: consumerist narratives dominated some texts, while others offered counter-stories of care, yet all ultimately positioned sustainability as peripheral rather than structurally integrated, leaving teachers to mediate these gaps through individual improvisation. Lasekan et al. (2023) demonstrated how grammatical exercises, such as the passive voice and conditional sentences, can foster sustainability competencies. Yet, their analysis remained confined to a single textbook series and did not interrogate its ideological underpinnings.

These textbook patterns mirror broader development discourse. For instance, Ala-Uddin (2019) critically deconstructed the UN's 2030 Agenda itself, revealing how the SDG discourse reinforces neoliberal hegemony through oversimplified promises, economic reductionism, and omission of political empowerment, arguing that development discourse perpetuates asymmetrical power relations under the guise of participation and universality.

Comparative studies have further illuminated how climate change discourses vary across educational contexts. Trædal et al. (2022) compared geography textbooks in South Africa and Norway, finding that both predominantly leaned toward green governmentality and belief in international agreements, while civic environmentalism and global injustice perspectives remained marginal despite expectations of stronger justice framings in South African materials. Bonilla and Quesada (2024) analyzed Colombian natural science textbooks, revealing that climate change coverage averaged less than one page per book, with simplistic approaches overlooking complexities, though scientific validity was generally acceptable. Similarly, Baarova and Hibszer (2022) examined Czech and Polish geography textbooks, documenting adequate coverage of the causes and consequences of climate, but noting significant differences in curriculum structure and textbook approval mechanisms between the two countries.

In the United States, Román and Busch (2015) conducted a systemic functional analysis of middle-school science textbooks, revealing that the textbooks framed climate change as scientifically uncertain through modal verbs, unquantifiable determiners such as "some scientists," and an emphasis on natural climate variability, thereby mirroring public discourse of doubt rather than scientific consensus. Ansari and Landin (2022) extended this analysis across five decades of introductory biology textbooks, finding that while coverage of climate change effects increased substantially, actionable solutions peaked in the 1990s and declined thereafter, with individual-level solutions disproportionately emphasizing low-impact behaviors like recycling while

ignoring high-impact actions such as dietary change or family planning. Complementing these findings, Yoho and Rittmann (2018) analyzed introductory biology, chemistry, and physics textbooks, revealing that climate change and energy technologies occupied, on average, $\leq 4\%$ of textbook pages, with nuclear energy receiving $\leq 1\%$ coverage and unfavorable representation, and significant variation among individual textbooks and disciplines.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study utilizes a three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2010) and ecolinguistics (Stibbe, 2021) frameworks. CDA posits that discourse is constitutive of social life: it shapes identities, social relations, and systems of knowledge and belief (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). The central premise guiding this framework is that ideologies, understood as particular representations of the world that serve specific power interests, are not merely reflected in language but are actively produced, naturalized, and reproduced through discursive practices (Dijk, 1998). For this study, the textbook is conceptualized not as a neutral vehicle for grammar instruction but as a powerful ideological apparatus that mediates students' understanding of their social and natural worlds.

The framework provides a systematic method for analyzing discourse at three interconnected levels: text, discursive practice, and social practice (Fairclough, 1995). The text dimension concerns the formal linguistic features: vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and transitivity, that encode particular representations. Secondly, the discursive practice dimension examines the processes of text production, distribution, and consumption, focusing on how textbooks are authored, approved by national curriculum authorities, and received by teachers and students who rarely possess the institutional power to challenge their content. Finally, the social practice dimension situates discourse within broader structures of power and ideology.

Further theoretical depth is derived from the concept of hegemony as developed by Antonio Gramsci and adapted within CDA by Fairclough (2010). Hegemony refers to dominance achieved not through overt coercion but through the construction of consent, in which subordinate groups come to accept the values and interests of the dominant group as natural and inevitable. Within the context of textbook analysis, this concept is invaluable. Textbooks, carrying the institutional authority of the state, often render their ideological content largely invisible and uncontested by the learners who depend on them (Apple, 2002). CDA thus provides the theoretical justification for this study.

While CDA provides the tools to interrogate power and ideology, it does not inherently possess an ecological ethic. To address this theoretical limitation, this study integrates ecolinguistics, which explicitly investigates the role of language in the life-sustaining relationships among humans, other species, and the physical environment (Stibbe, 2021). A foundational distinction within ecolinguistics (Stibbe, 2021) is between destructive, ambiguous, and beneficial discourses. Destructive discourses are those that actively encourage behaviors harmful to ecological systems, such as narratives of unlimited economic growth, anthropocentrism (the belief that humans are superior to and separate from nature), and consumerism. Ambiguous discourses are those that contain a mixture of harmful and beneficial elements and require critical unpacking. Beneficial discourses are those that promote ecological awareness, care, and sustainable practices.

Finally, “Naess (1995) uses the term ecosophy (a shortening of ‘ecological philosophy’) to describe a set of philosophical principles which include ecological consideration” (Stibbe, 2021, p. 12). Ecosophy provides an ethical framework for judging language in terms of values such as environmental care, social fairness, and sustainability (Stibbe, 2014). This approach helps researchers examine not only what textbooks say but also what they leave unsaid, such as ignoring local environmental problems or failing to question the impacts of industry.

4. Methodology

The data were purposively selected from the state-prescribed secondary-level English textbooks, English for Today, for Classes 6 to 10, which were officially distributed in 2026 across Bangladesh. These textbooks were chosen because they represent the national curriculum and dominant educational discourse, influencing a large number of learners during a critical stage of their development. However, the study analyzed only the environmental content depicted in Table 1, including lessons, passages, and activities related to nature, pollution, climate, and sustainability.

Table 1. Environmental contents in EFL textbooks

Class Name	Lesson/Unit Number	Lesson/ Unit Title	Page Range
Class 6	Lesson 16	Boats Sail on the Rivers	52
	Lesson 31	Too much or too little Water	90-91
	Lesson 33	The Garden	94-100
Class 7	Unit Nine	Climate Change	98-107
Class 8	Unit Five	Humans and Environment	44-57
	Unit Seven	Occupations at Risk	80-93
	Unit Nine	Lesson 3: The Fastest Wheel on Earth	119-121
		Lesson 4: Taking off	122-125
		Lesson 5: Future Aircraft	125-127
		Lesson 7: Contemplation	130-131
Class 9-10	Unit Two	Climate Change	8-22
	Unit Fourteen	Renewable Energy	175-184

For analysis, the study employed Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First, the selected contents were read several times to ensure familiarity. Then, the data were uploaded into NVivo, where relevant segments were coded based on emerging environmental ideas such as pollution, responsibility, or resource use. These codes were not fixed at the outset; instead, they developed inductively, emerging from the data itself rather than being imposed beforehand. Then, these initial codes were gradually grouped into broader categories (nodes), which were then refined into key themes through constant comparison. NVivo supported this process by helping to organize, connect, and visualize patterns in the data, making the analysis more systematic and transparent. The final themes were developed following the standard stages of thematic analysis. Finally, these themes were interpreted through the lenses of CDA and ecolinguistics. This integrated approach ensures that the study not only identifies what

is present in the textbooks but also questions why it is presented in that way and what impact it may have on learners' understanding of sustainability.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1 Aestheticizing Nature as a Subdued Environment

The analysis reveals a pervasive aestheticization of nature, constructed through linguistic and rhetorical patterns that present it as visually pleasing, static, and separate from human activity. Christina Rossetti's poem "Boats Sail on the Rivers" clearly illustrates this tendency: "*Boats sail on the rivers, / And ships sail on the seas; / But clouds that sail across the sky / Are prettier far than these*" (Class 6, p. 52). The verbs "sail" and "are" depict gentle motion and states of being, placing human-made objects alongside natural elements within the same aesthetic frame. This grammatical alignment minimizes functional differences and reframes both as objects of visual appreciation. The poem's conclusion, "*But the bow that bridges heaven, / And overtops the trees, / And builds a road from earth to sky, / Is prettier far than these*" (Class 6, p. 52), further reinforces this gaze. Although the rainbow is anthropomorphized through verbs like "bridges", "overtops", and "builds", its agency remains symbolic rather than material. The evaluative term "prettier" ultimately reduces rivers, seas, clouds, and the rainbow to their visual appeal, reflecting what Stibbe (2021) would describe as an ambiguous yet potentially destructive discourse that objectifies nature within an anthropocentric framework.

This aesthetic framing becomes even more pronounced: "*I see the green and gentle fields / All bounded in with hedge / And shining rivers swimming through / The rushes on the edge*" (Class 8, p. 131). Adjectives such as "green", "gentle", and "shining" produce an idealized landscape, while "bounded" suggests containment and subtle control. Movement is softened and rendered harmless, with rivers "swimming through" and sheep that "play all day" and "run": "*And little sheep who play all day / I watch them as they run, / While far away the roofs of town / Are shining in the sun*" (Class 8, p. 131). These images strip away ecological complexity, presenting nature as a picturesque, consumable scene. The speaker's position reinforces this dynamic: "*I think it's very nice to sit / So high and look so far*" (Class 8, p. 131). Through repeated first-person constructions, "I see", "I watch", "I think", the human subject is foregrounded as active, while nature becomes a passive object of perception. From a critical discourse perspective, this transitivity pattern encodes an ideological relationship between observer and observed, in which nature is not an interacting presence but a silent spectacle shaped for human appreciation.

Discursively, this pattern acquires sharper ideological significance within its institutional setting. The *English for Today* series, produced by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), does not simply deliver language instruction; it codifies what counts as legitimate knowledge and desirable sensibility for young citizens. The recurrent selection of texts that aestheticize nature as serene, decorative, and non-agentive thus exceeds stylistic preference, functioning instead as a subtle pedagogic directive. Through repeated exposure across grade levels, this representation is sedimented into a taken-for-granted "common sense", shaping how students are encouraged to see and feel the natural world.

Crucially, this discourse is rarely unsettled in the classroom. Teachers, themselves products of the same curricular logic, often reproduce rather than interrogate these meanings. In this way, textbooks operate as carriers of official knowledge (Apple, 2002),

embedding ideology within seemingly neutral language exercises. When students encounter lines that privilege distant beauty or contemplative stillness, they are not only acquiring linguistic competence; they are being positioned as passive spectators of nature, oriented toward appreciation rather than engagement, responsibility, or critique.

This process reveals a specific hegemonic discourse of environmentalism. By presenting nature as peaceful and aesthetically pleasing, the textbooks promote a form of environmental awareness compatible with existing social and economic systems. Imperatively, it reinforces an anthropocentric worldview in which the environment exists for human benefit. If nature is primarily a source of beauty and tranquility, then environmental concern can remain at the level of personal appreciation. There is no need to question industrial practices, economic inequalities, or political decisions that contribute to environmental degradation. In this way, the aestheticization of nature depoliticizes environmental issues, shifting attention away from systemic problems and toward individual, contemplative experiences.

At the level of social practice, the discourse constructs a specific kind of subjectivity for the learner: what I call the aesthetic environmental subject. This subject engages with nature privately and emotionally, through observation and reflection, rather than through collective action or critical inquiry. The child who sits in a tree, admiring the landscape, becomes a model of how students are expected to relate to the environment. Such a subjectivity is fundamentally limited because it does not equip learners with the tools or motivation to address complex environmental challenges such as global warming.

Moreover, there is little representation of nature as a site of conflict, injustice, or struggle. Stories of communities affected by pollution, climate displacement, or resource exploitation are either absent or segregated into separate units. This separation reinforces the idea that there is a “proper” way to think about nature, as beautiful and serene, while more troubling realities are treated as exceptions. As Giroux (2011) argues, education is never neutral; it is always a site of political and cultural struggle. The aestheticization of nature in these textbooks represents one side of that struggle, the side that seeks to contain environmental concern within safe, individualistic, and apolitical boundaries.

Finally, the absence of texts that depict environmental activism or collective resistance highlights the ideological limits of the curriculum. Because “language cannot escape ideology” (Lukin, 2019, p. 16). By excluding narratives of agency and struggle, the textbooks restrict the range of subject positions available to students. They are invited to be observers, not participants; admirers, not advocates. This aligns with the broader function of hegemonic discourse, which seeks to maintain existing social arrangements by shaping how individuals perceive their roles within them.

5.2 The Trivialization of Environmental Crises

This section shows that the analyzed texts frame crises as individual tragedies rather than structural issues, thereby trivializing them. Literally, Meherjan's narrative serves as a central example. Her story is rendered with emotional intensity: “*Not long ago Meherjan had everything, a family, arable land and cattle. The erosion of the Jamuna gradually consumed all her land property. It finally claimed her only shelter during the last monsoon. It took the river only a day to devour Meher's house, trees, vegetable garden and the bamboo bush*” (Class 9-10, p. 9). This description foregrounds

loss and devastation. However, its grammatical structure is particularly revealing. The river is repeatedly positioned as the active subject, “consumed”, “claimed”, “devour”. At the same time, Meherjan is constructed as passive, someone to whom things happen. This transitivity pattern (Halliday, 2014) assigns agency to nature, especially through the personification of the “greedy Jamuna,” while erasing human responsibility.

Therefore, if the river is “greedy”, if it acts with agency and intent, then the problem is not human activity, not the global carbon emissions that accelerate glacial melt and intensify monsoon flooding, not the upstream development that alters river flow, not the lack of political will to implement adaptation measures, but rather the inherent nature of the river itself. The textual construction naturalizes the disaster, making it seem like an inevitable feature of living near a “mighty” river rather than a consequence of human choices.

By presenting the river as an intentional, almost moral agent, the text displaces attention from the human causes of environmental degradation, such as climate change, global emissions, upstream interventions, and governance failures. Instead, the disaster is naturalized, appearing as an inevitable consequence of living near a powerful river. Even Meherjan’s broader suffering is framed passively: she “*lost her husband and her family to diseases that cruel hunger and poverty brought to the family*” (Class 9-10, p. 9). The cumulative effect is an ideological representation in which the environmental crisis is detached from systemic causation and reimagined as a natural misfortune.

A similar pattern appears in “The Little Bird” by Leo Tolstoy, though here the focus shifts from naturalization to individual moralization. The story centers on Seryozha, who captures a bird and is admonished by his mother: “*It’s not a nice toy at all. What do you want to do with little birds? Why do you want to torment them?*” (Class 8, p. 45). In this case, Seryozha is clearly the active subject (“I’ll put them in cages”), while the bird is the passive object. When the bird dies after escaping, the narrative concludes: “*Never again did Seryozha catch another bird*” (Class 8, p. 47). The grammar of this closing sentence is significant, as Seryozha is positioned as the subject of the negative action “did catch”, emphasizing his personal moral reform and framing the issue as an individual ethical choice.

From an ecolinguistic perspective, such a discourse is “destructive” because it confines environmental concern to the level of personal morality while ignoring broader systemic forces. The story does not question why bird-catching nets are produced, marketed, and normalized as toys, nor does it address the economic and ecological systems that commodify wildlife and destroy habitats. Instead, it invites emotional identification and moral reflection, encouraging learners to admire Seryozha’s ethical growth while leaving structural conditions unexamined. Thus, responsibility is individualized, and systemic critique is foreclosed.

At the discursive level, the ideological implications deepen when considering how these texts are selected and used within the Bangladeshi educational system. Their inclusion reflects implicit assumptions about how environmental issues should be taught, through emotional engagement and moral lessons rather than critical analysis of power, inequality, or policy.

Besides, students encounter environmental suffering primarily as personal tragedy, mediated through naturalized or individualized narratives. Classroom practices further reinforce this framing. Textbook questions such as “*What do you know about Meherjan’s family?*” and “*Why is the phrase ‘greedy Jamuna’ used to describe the river?*” (Class 9-10, p. 10) encourage comprehension and limited reflection but stop short of

prompting critical inquiry into causation or responsibility. As a result, the texts are consumed in ways that normalize their ideological assumptions. This process can be understood as a form of ideological reproduction (Fairclough's, 2010).

Considering the broader social implications, these discourses depoliticize environmental crises by transforming them into matters of sympathy and personal ethics. The Meherjan story, for instance, evokes empathy but not outrage. By attributing her suffering to a "greedy" river rather than global inequalities in carbon emissions, it obscures the injustice of climate change, particularly in a country like Bangladesh that contributes minimally to global emissions yet suffers disproportionately. Learners are positioned as compassionate observers rather than potential agents of change.

Similarly, the siskin story reinforces a neoliberal logic in which environmental problems are framed as solvable through individual virtue. It implies that ethical behavior at the personal level is sufficient, ignoring the scale and complexity of environmental degradation driven by industrial systems and global markets.

Appealingly, the Meherjan story fails to foreground structural injustice, while the siskin story reduces environmental ethics to a matter of personal choice. Together, they construct a "tragic" environmental subjectivity characterized by emotional engagement without political empowerment. Learners are encouraged to feel deeply but are given no tools to understand or challenge the underlying causes of environmental crises.

The hegemonic nature of this discourse becomes even clearer when considering what is absent. Environmental crisis is never presented as a site of political struggle or transformative action. These omissions are significant, as they limit students' imaginative horizons, shaping not only what they know but also how they conceive their role in relation to environmental issues. In doing so, it reproduces environmental unsustainability by fostering an awareness that is emotionally rich but politically inert. Students learn to empathize with loss but not to question or transform the conditions that produce it.

5.3 The Individualization of Responsibility

Stylistically, this theme presents environmental problems as something individuals can solve on their own. For example, "*If your family has a car, use it less and walk to the shops... You can save energy by changing your lifestyle... you can often avoid the air-conditioning in summer and use hand fans instead*" (Class 7, p. 105). The verbs "use", "walk", "save", and "avoid" position the reader as the active agent. This linguistic structure suggests that environmental protection depends mainly on personal choices and habits. The text continues with similar suggestions, such as using solar energy, installing energy-efficient bulbs, and growing food at home (Class 7, p. 105). Together, these examples form a destructive discourse because they emphasize individual responsibility while ignoring larger structural causes of environmental damage.

Furthermore, this focus on the individual is reinforced by lists and tables. The "Dos and Don'ts" table in the same unit presents environmental responsibility as a checklist of simple actions: "*Walk to your school... Dry your clothes... Plant trees... Use jute or paper-made bags...*" (Class 7, p. 107). Each sentence starts with a verb, creating a sense of clear and easy action. Similarly, the "Don'ts" list includes instructions such as avoiding cars and plastic bags, and avoiding water waste (Class 7, p. 107). These short, direct commands make environmental action appear simple and fully controllable by individuals. According to Fairclough (1995), this creates a naturalized discourse in which a specific idea is presented as common sense rather than a debatable issue.

The same pattern continues in higher grades. In Class 9-10's lesson "A Friend of the Earth", environmental responsibility is organized around the "three Rs": "REDUCE!" "REUSE!" and "RECYCLE!" The lesson encourages students to think carefully before buying things by asking questions such as "*Do I really need this?*" (Class 9-10, p. 21). It also suggests using reusable items such as ceramic cups to reduce waste (Class 9-10, p. 21). Here, environmental action is closely linked to consumer behavior. Students are guided to make better choices as consumers rather than to question the larger economic system. As Stibbe (2021) explains, this reflects the story of consumerism, in which environmental solutions are limited to making consumption slightly more sustainable rather than challenging the system itself.

When we move to the level of discursive practice, the ideological meaning of this individualization becomes clearer. The repetition of this message across different grades, from Class 6 to Class 10, ensures that students encounter the same idea repeatedly. This repeated exposure strengthens the belief that environmental responsibility is mainly about personal behavior. In the classroom, students also actively reproduce this discourse. For example, after reading the "Dos and Don'ts" table, students are asked to create slogans such as "Don't throw your waste" or "People must use..." (Class 7, p. 107). Through such activities, students not only learn the message but also practice expressing it themselves. In this way, the discourse of individual responsibility becomes internalized and normalized.

At the level of social practice, the focus on individual action works as a hegemonic strategy. It directs attention away from larger structural issues such as industrial pollution, fossil fuel use, and global economic systems. If environmental problems are seen as solvable through small personal actions like turning off lights or using jute bags, then there is no need to question powerful industries or demand policy changes. In this way, the discourse supports the existing system by limiting the scope of environmental action.

Furthermore, this approach promotes a form of consumer environmentalism that misunderstands the scale of the problem. Individual actions, while useful, have a very small impact compared to industrial emissions and global supply chains. For instance, recycling is often presented as a key solution, but in reality, much plastic is never recycled, and the process itself requires energy. By focusing on such actions, the discourse gives students a sense of control while obscuring the larger changes needed.

Thus, these discourses figure social change not as transformation toward sustainability but as the reproduction of the status quo through slightly greener consumption. It shapes structures by naturalizing the framework of consumer capitalism, presenting it as the unchangeable context within which individuals must make moral choices about their purchasing behavior. As Fairclough (2010) would argue, this is the essence of hegemony: the construction of consent through the naturalization of a particular worldview (Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

Emphatically, the contradictions within this discourse are particularly revealing. The student who is told to walk to the shops in one lesson is invited to marvel at supersonic aircraft (Class 8, p. 122) and high-speed trains (Class 8, p. 119) in another. The student who is told to use hand fans instead of air conditioning is presented with the Falcon HTV-2 (Class 8, p.125-126), a military-funded hypersonic plane, as a triumph of human achievement. These contradictions are not merely inconsistencies; they are the product of a hegemonic discourse that must simultaneously contain environmental concern through individualization while maintaining its commitment to the growth-

oriented, technologically-driven model of development that produces environmental destruction in the first place. The textbooks thus speak with a forked tongue, promoting individual responsibility for the poor while celebrating technological excess for the powerful.

5.4 The Prioritization of Technology and Progress

The fourth theme shows a strong focus on technology and progress. Initially, the books use specific language to present speed and technological success as always positive. For instance, in the lesson *"The Fastest Wheel on Earth"*, the French TGV is praised: *"A TGV test train set the world record for the fastest conventional wheeled train on 3 April 2007. It reached the speed of 574.8 km/h (357.2 m/h) on the test run"* (Class 8, p. 119). Here, the train is shown as the main actor; it *"set the world record"* and *"reached the speed"*. The exact numbers make the achievement look scientific and impressive. Similar descriptions are used for the Japanese Bullet Train and the Chinese *"Harmony Express"*. As a result, speed itself becomes a measure of value. The faster the technology, the better it is seen. This reflects what Stibbe (2021) calls a destructive discourse, where progress is linked to speed, efficiency, and control over nature.

This idea becomes even clearer in lessons like *"Taking off"* and *"Future Aircraft"*. The story of flight is described as a heroic journey. The text says: *"Human beings conquered the distance on earth by discovering wheels. They endeavored further. Then on December 17, 1903, the Wright brothers in America made the first experiment of flying in a plane"* (Class 8, p. 122). Words like *"conquered"* and *"endeavored"* show technology as a victory over nature. The excitement continues with: *"And now, they have got a supersonic speed. At supersonic speed, something travels faster than sound! So the sky's the limit now!"* (Class 8, p. 122). The exclamation marks and phrase *"the sky's the limit"* create a sense of endless possibility. Technology is shown as always improving, step by step, leading to greater speed. This reflects the *"growth story"*, where human progress means more movement, more consumption, and more control.

In *"Future Aircraft"*, this idea reaches its peak with the Falcon HTV-2. It is described as *"the fastest plane ever built by human beings"* that *"would fly from London to Sydney in less than an hour"* (Class 8, p. 126). The text highlights extreme abilities, such as: *"would withstand temperatures of almost 2,000 degrees C. This temperature is hotter than the melting point of steel"* (Class 8, p. 126). These details make the technology seem powerful and almost extraordinary. Again, the plane is the subject: it *"would withstand"* and *"would fly"*. It is also called *"mankind's dream aircraft"* (Class 8, p. 126), suggesting that all humans share this goal. In this way, the desire for speed is presented as natural and universal, while the environmental costs are not mentioned.

Discursively, these texts gain more meaning. Their inclusion in Class 8 is important because students are still forming their ideas about the world. The book places lessons on technology next to lessons on environmental protection. This creates a silent message: students should admire both, even if they contradict each other. In classrooms, teachers usually focus on facts like speed, dates, and distances. There is little space to question environmental impact or social priorities.

Moreover, the texts also connect technology with national identity. The French TGV, Japanese Bullet Train, and Chinese *"Harmony Express"* are shown as symbols of national success. Students are asked to compare them and choose their favorite: *"Discuss in groups to decide which of the above three rail services you like best and why"* (Class 8, p. 120). This activity turns technology into a matter of pride and personal

choice. It encourages admiration, not critical thinking. According to Fairclough (2010), this is a form of hegemonic practice, where one idea of progress, fast, competitive, and technology-driven, is presented as normal and natural.

Interestingly, the focus on technology supports economic systems that harm the environment. When progress is always seen as good, its costs become invisible. High-speed trains and aircraft require large amounts of energy and resources, but these issues are not discussed. The texts create a world where technology exists without limits. Students are not encouraged to ask whether such speed is necessary or sustainable. From Stibbe's (2021) ecosophy, this is harmful because it promotes a "technofix" belief. This is the idea that technology can solve all problems, even those it creates. For example, admiring the Falcon HTV-2 does not lead students to question its purpose or impact. Instead, it supports the belief that more advanced technology is always the answer. This ignores simpler and more sustainable solutions.

Steadfastly, this discourse also affects how Bangladesh is positioned. By praising foreign technologies, the books suggest that countries like France, Japan, and China are models to follow. However, they do not ask whether such models are suitable for Bangladesh. Issues like climate vulnerability and local needs are ignored. This supports a development model that emulates industrial nations rather than exploring sustainable alternatives.

5.5 Climate Change as a Distant, Abstract Threat

This section shows how the *English for Today* textbooks create a strong sense of distance between climate change and the real lives of Bangladeshi students. Syntactically, one key strategy is the use of statistics. For example, "*It is estimated that a 45-centimetre rise of sea level will flood almost 10.9 percent of our territory and will make 5.5 million people of our coastal regions homeless*" (Class 7, p. 102). This sentence uses a passive form: "*it is estimated*", which hides who is making the prediction. As a result, the statement appears neutral and scientific. The numbers: "*45-centimetre*", "*10.9 percent*", "*5.5 million*" create a sense of accuracy, but they also reduce human suffering to abstract figures. In this way, climate change becomes something measurable rather than something deeply human. This reflects a destructive discourse in which real suffering is rendered less visible by numbers.

The use of the future tense also reinforces the sense of distance. The textbook says sea-level rise "*will flood*" and "*will make*" people homeless. These verbs frame the crisis as future, even though climate change is already affecting Bangladesh today. Many people are already losing homes due to river erosion or saltwater intrusion. However, by presenting the issue as inevitable, the text reduces urgency. It suggests that there is still time and that solutions may come later. This creates a psychological distance between students and the crisis.

Geographical and cultural distance are other important features. In Class 8, the lesson "*Sea Prayer*" includes emotional lines such as: "*I have heard it said we are the uninvited. / We are the unwelcome. We should take our misfortune elsewhere*" (Class 8, p. 92). The story of Marwan and the reference to "*a three-year-old Syrian refugee who drowned in the Mediterranean Sea in September 2015 while trying to reach Europe safely*" (Class 8, p. 93) builds empathy. However, they also shift attention to distant places like Syria and Europe. Bangladeshi students are positioned as observers of others' suffering, not as people who may face similar risks. The text does not connect this story

to local experiences, such as displacement within Bangladesh. As a result, climate change appears as a foreign problem rather than a local reality.

From the perspective of discursive practice, this pattern reflects how the textbooks are produced and used. The curriculum includes global statistics, international stories, and future scenarios because they are considered “proper” knowledge. Local experiences are largely ignored. This shows that institutions prefer scientific and global narratives over community-based knowledge. As students read these texts across different grades, they repeatedly encounter climate change in distant, abstract terms.

Classroom practices further reinforce this distancing. For example, questions about “*Sea Prayer*” include: “*Where did Marwan’s father and his brothers sleep during the summers of his childhood?*” and “*What sounds did Marwan’s father wake up to in the mornings at the farmhouse?*” (Class 8, p. 93). These questions focus on details, not on deeper connections. Students are not asked to relate the story to their own lives or to think about climate displacement in Bangladesh. Thus, climate change becomes a topic for comprehension rather than for reflection or action.

At the level of social practice, the effects are even more serious. This discourse creates a hegemonic understanding of climate change as distant and non-urgent. When students see climate change as a future problem or as something happening elsewhere, they are less likely to feel responsible or motivated to act. There is no strong sense of personal involvement or collective responsibility. This undermines the potential for environmental activism or political awareness. From an ecosophy perspective (Stibbe, 2021), the textbooks encourage a spectator consciousness in which students watch and understand but do not engage. They may feel sympathy for victims but do not see themselves as part of the problem or the solution. This limits their ability to notice environmental changes in their own surroundings or to understand their causes.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study reveals that Bangladeshi EFL textbooks are not neutral carriers of environmental knowledge; rather, they function as discursive sites where sustainability is selectively constructed, simplified, and sometimes silenced. While the textbooks appear to promote environmental awareness, this awareness is often shaped through individualized, decontextualized, and anthropocentric narratives that limit deeper ecological understanding. The dominant discourse frames environmental care as a matter of personal responsibility, while structural causes and local environmental crises remain largely invisible. In this sense, the textbooks do not merely reflect environmental reality; they reframe it as a manageable, non-confrontational narrative, in which complexity is reduced and critical engagement is softened.

At the same time, the study shows that absence is as powerful as presence (Fairclough, 2010). The marginalization of local issues such as industrial pollution or river erosion creates a form of discursive erasure in which learners are distanced from their own ecological realities. Nowhere in the extensive units on climate change, pollution, and renewable energy is there any mention of the ready-made garment industry, the backbone of the Bangladeshi economy and one of the largest sources of industrial pollution in the country. This aligns with the idea that discourse operates not only through what is said, but also through what is strategically left unsaid. As a result, the textbooks produce a version of sustainability that is globally recognizable but locally disconnected, limiting learners’ ability to critically relate language learning to their lived environment.

7. Recommendations

1. Each textbook should include short, real-life case studies (e.g., river pollution, garment waste) with guided questions, so students can connect language learning with actual environmental problems in Bangladesh.
2. Replace simple “do and don’t” exercises with tasks like debates, problem-solving, and role-play to develop critical awareness and agency.
3. Include texts that clearly show the roles of government, industries, and global systems, so responsibility is not placed only on individuals but understood as shared and complex.
4. Revise textbook language to consistently present humans as part of nature, not above it, encouraging an ecocentric worldview across lessons.
5. Provide teacher guidelines that encourage questioning textbook content, adding local examples, and facilitating discussion, so textbooks become starting points, not final authorities.

Ultimately, if education is to play a meaningful role in addressing today’s environmental crisis, then EFL textbooks in Bangladesh must move beyond simplified messages and engage learners with complex, real-world environmental challenges. Reducing the “carbon footprint” of textbooks, therefore, is not just a symbolic idea; it is an urgent educational task with long-term social and ecological consequences.

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