



ECOLITERACY VALUES IN INDONESIAN FOLKLORE AS LEARNING RESOURCES FOR STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines ecoliteracy values represented in Indonesian folklore and explores their potential as culturally responsive learning resources for strengthening students' environmental awareness. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the study applies ecocritical and ecoliteracy perspectives to selected folktales from several Indonesian regions. Data were collected through document analysis and examined using qualitative content analysis by identifying narrative elements, ecological messages, forms of local wisdom, and representations of human–nature relationships. The analysis reveals four major ecoliteracy values: environmental conservation, respect for living systems, responsible use of natural resources, and awareness of the consequences of human actions on ecological balance. These values are conveyed through characters, conflicts, settings, symbols, and moral messages embedded in the stories. The findings also indicate that Indonesian folklore offers contextual, culturally meaningful, and reflective materials for Indonesian language and literature learning. Its integration into classroom activities may support students in interpreting texts critically, connecting local cultural knowledge with contemporary environmental issues, and developing ecological responsibility. This study contributes to Indonesian language and literature education by positioning folklore not only as cultural heritage, but also as a pedagogical resource for ecoliteracy-oriented learning.

Keywords: *ecoliteracy; indonesian folklore; environmental awareness; ecocriticism; language learning*

INTRODUCTION

Environmental degradation has become one of the most urgent global challenges of the twenty-first century. Climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, pollution, and the overexploitation of natural resources have significantly affected both ecological sustainability and human well-being, indicating that environmental problems are no longer solely scientific issues but also educational, social, and cultural concerns requiring collective responsibility (IPCC, 2023; UNESCO, 2020; OECD, 2023). Consequently, educational institutions are expected to prepare students not only with academic competencies but also with environmental responsibility, critical awareness, and

sustainable behavior that enable them to respond effectively to increasingly complex ecological challenges (UNESCO, 2017; Monroe et al., 2019; Cincera et al., 2020).

One educational approach that has received increasing attention in addressing these challenges is **ecoliteracy**. Ecoliteracy emphasizes learners' ability to understand ecological systems and apply ecological principles in everyday decision-making through the integration of environmental knowledge, systems thinking, ethical values, and sustainable practices (Capra, 2007; Stone, 2010; Bartosch, 2025). Recent studies further indicate that ecoliteracy contributes to students' environmental awareness, pro-environmental behavior, critical thinking, and responsible citizenship, making it one of the essential competencies promoted within Education for Sustainable Development (Monroe et al., 2019; Cincera et al., 2020; Kazazoglu, 2025). Accordingly, integrating ecoliteracy into classroom learning has become an important strategy for fostering environmentally responsible future generations.

Language and literature learning provide meaningful opportunities for promoting ecoliteracy because literary texts represent human experiences, cultural beliefs, and environmental values that encourage readers to reflect critically on the relationship between humans and nature. From the perspective of ecocriticism, literature functions not merely as an aesthetic product but also as a cultural representation through which ecological values, environmental ethics, and sustainability issues are constructed and interpreted (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996; Buell, 2005; Garrard, 2023). Consequently, literary learning enables students to develop ecological sensitivity alongside language competence, particularly when literary texts are connected with authentic environmental issues and learners' sociocultural experiences (Kazazoglu, 2025; Bartosch, 2025).

Among various literary genres, Indonesian folklore possesses considerable potential as an ecoliteracy-based learning resource because it preserves ecological knowledge inherited from local communities through myths, legends, and folktales. These narratives portray harmonious relationships between humans and nature while communicating moral messages concerning environmental conservation, biodiversity protection, and the sustainable use of natural resources (Danandjaja, 2007; Bascom, 1965). Previous studies have similarly demonstrated that folklore serves not only as cultural heritage but also as an educational medium for transmitting local wisdom, environmental ethics, and community values across generations (Setiawan et al., 2023; Youpika et al., 2024; Müller & Rüdél, 2025). Therefore, integrating folklore into Indonesian language learning provides opportunities to strengthen both literary appreciation and students' environmental awareness simultaneously.

Growing evidence also suggests that literary learning grounded in ecological perspectives positively influences students' environmental literacy and critical understanding of sustainability issues. Studies have shown that ecological narratives embedded in literary texts encourage students to interpret environmental problems contextually, appreciate local wisdom, and develop responsible attitudes toward nature (Juanda, 2024; Setiawan et al., 2023; Kurniawan et al., 2022). Likewise, integrating folklore into classroom instruction enables students to connect traditional ecological knowledge with contemporary environmental challenges while simultaneously improving reading comprehension, critical literacy, and cultural understanding (Youpika et al., 2024; Utari, 2025). These findings indicate that folklore provides authentic learning materials



capable of bridging literary education and environmental education within Indonesian language classrooms.

Despite the increasing number of studies concerning ecoliteracy and environmental education, existing research has predominantly emphasized ecological values within literary texts or the implementation of environmental education in science classrooms. Comparatively fewer studies have investigated the integration of Indonesian folklore into language learning from an ecoliteracy perspective, particularly by positioning folklore as a contextual learning resource for strengthening students' environmental awareness (Juanda, 2024; Youpika et al., 2024; Utari, 2025). This situation indicates that the pedagogical potential of folklore remains underexplored despite its rich ecological content and cultural relevance.

Another limitation identified in previous studies concerns the tendency to examine folklore primarily as a cultural artifact rather than as an instructional resource capable of promoting twenty-first-century competencies. Contemporary education requires learning resources that simultaneously develop literacy, critical thinking, environmental responsibility, and appreciation of local culture, yet these dimensions are rarely integrated within a single pedagogical framework (UNESCO, 2020; OECD, 2023; Kazazoglu, 2025). Consequently, there remains a need for studies that connect ecological literacy, literary learning, and local wisdom in ways that respond to current educational demands.

The integration of ecoliteracy into Indonesian language learning through folklore also aligns with current educational policies emphasizing character education and sustainable development. Literary learning becomes more meaningful when students are encouraged not only to understand narrative structures and language features but also to interpret ecological messages and relate them to environmental issues encountered in their daily lives (Capra, 2007; Monroe et al., 2019; UNESCO, 2020). Such learning experiences enable students to construct environmental knowledge contextually while fostering empathy, responsibility, and ecological citizenship.

This study addresses the research gap by examining the ecoliteracy values embedded in Indonesian folklore and exploring their potential as learning resources for strengthening students' environmental awareness in Indonesian language education. Unlike previous studies that primarily identify ecological messages within literary texts, this research positions folklore as a culturally responsive instructional resource that integrates literary appreciation, local wisdom, and environmental education within a single learning framework (Setiawan et al., 2023; Youpika et al., 2024; Bartosch, 2025). Accordingly, the findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of ecocritical studies in Indonesian literature and practically to the design of Indonesian language learning that supports sustainable education.

Overall, this study aims to analyze the ecoliteracy values represented in Indonesian folklore and examine their relevance as contextual learning resources for strengthening environmental awareness among students. By integrating ecoliteracy, ecocriticism, and folklore within Indonesian language learning, this study is expected to provide an alternative pedagogical framework that promotes environmental responsibility while preserving Indonesia's rich cultural heritage, thereby contributing to the broader goals of

Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2020; OECD, 2023; Youpika et al., 2024). Contributions can be offered to language teachers in designing effective and meaningful collaborative writing activities.

METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design using content analysis to examine the ecoliteracy values embedded in Indonesian folklore and explore their potential as learning resources for strengthening environmental awareness in Indonesian language education. Qualitative content analysis was selected because it enables researchers to interpret meanings, values, and ecological messages systematically within literary texts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The analysis was guided by the theoretical perspectives of ecoliteracy (Capra, 2007; Stone, 2010) and ecocriticism (Glottfelty & Fromm, 1996; Garrard, 2023), which served as analytical frameworks for identifying ecological values represented in the narratives.

The data sources consisted of selected Indonesian folktales originating from different regions of Indonesia. The folktales were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) the stories contain explicit or implicit ecological values; (2) they represent local wisdom related to environmental conservation, biodiversity, or sustainable use of natural resources; and (3) they have the potential to be integrated into Indonesian language learning at the elementary school level. The unit of analysis included words, phrases, sentences, dialogues, narrative events, settings, and symbols that represented ecological values within each story.

2.2 Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through document analysis of Indonesian folktales obtained from published books and officially documented folklore collections. Each folktale was read repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of its narrative structure and ecological content. During the reading process, relevant textual units representing ecoliteracy values were identified and recorded using an analysis sheet developed from the dimensions of ecoliteracy proposed by Capra (2007) and Stone (2010). The analysis focused on five principal dimensions: environmental awareness, environmental responsibility, respect for biodiversity, sustainable use of natural resources, and harmonious relationships between humans and nature. Notes were also taken regarding literary elements—including characterization, setting, conflict, symbolism, and moral messages—that reinforced the ecological meanings represented in the narratives.

2.3 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of three interrelated stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the data condensation stage, textual data containing ecological values were selected, coded, and classified into thematic categories based on the established ecoliteracy framework. Subsequently, the categorized data were organized into matrices to facilitate comparison of ecological values across different



folktales. Finally, the identified themes were interpreted using an ecocritical perspective to explain how ecological values were represented in the narratives and to evaluate their relevance as learning resources for strengthening students' environmental awareness in Indonesian language education.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied credibility, dependability, and confirmability criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility was established through prolonged engagement with the texts and theoretical triangulation by comparing interpretations from ecoliteracy and ecocriticism perspectives. Dependability was maintained by documenting each stage of the coding and analysis process, while confirmability was ensured through an audit trail that enabled the analytical procedures and interpretations to be systematically reviewed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Ecoliteracy Values Represented in Indonesian Folklore

The content analysis identified that Indonesian folklore consistently represents ecoliteracy through four major thematic values: environmental conservation, respect for nature, responsibility toward natural resources, and awareness of the consequences of human **actions on ecological balance**. These values were repeatedly found across the literature reviewed and various Indonesian folktales originating from different cultural regions, indicating that ecological wisdom constitutes an essential component of Indonesia's oral tradition. Rather than functioning merely as entertainment, folklore serves as a cultural mechanism for transmitting environmental ethics and local ecological knowledge from one generation to another (Sultoni et al., 2022; Santoso & Umayra, 2025; Nurweni Sapawuryandari, 2023). This finding supports Capra's concept of ecoliteracy, which emphasizes that sustainable living requires individuals to understand the interconnectedness of ecological systems while acting responsibly within them (Hempel, 2014; Keraf, 2013).

The analysis further reveals that environmental conservation is the most dominant ecoliteracy value represented in Indonesian folklore. Numerous stories portray forests, rivers, mountains, and wildlife as sacred entities that must be protected rather than exploited. Environmental destruction is frequently depicted as leading to disasters, curses, or social imbalance, whereas environmental stewardship results in prosperity and harmony. Similar patterns have been identified in Banyumas folklore, where ecological narratives function as a medium for transmitting environmental conservation values, as well as in Papuan folklore, which emphasizes harmonious relationships between humans and nature through representations of wilderness, biodiversity, and traditional ecological knowledge (Sultoni et al., 2022; Santoso & Umayra, 2025). These findings demonstrate that Indonesian folklore naturally embodies conservation principles aligned with contemporary environmental education.

Table 1. Major Ecoliteracy Values Identified in Indonesian Folklore

Ecoliteracy Value	Description	Educational Implication
Environmental conservation	Protection of forests, rivers, flora, and fauna	Develops environmental stewardship
Respect for nature	Nature is portrayed as an equal living entity rather than merely a resource	Strengthens ecological ethics
Responsibility toward natural resources	Encourages sustainable use of natural resources	Promotes responsible environmental behavior
Awareness of ecological consequences	Human exploitation of nature results in ecological imbalance and social punishment	Develops critical environmental awareness

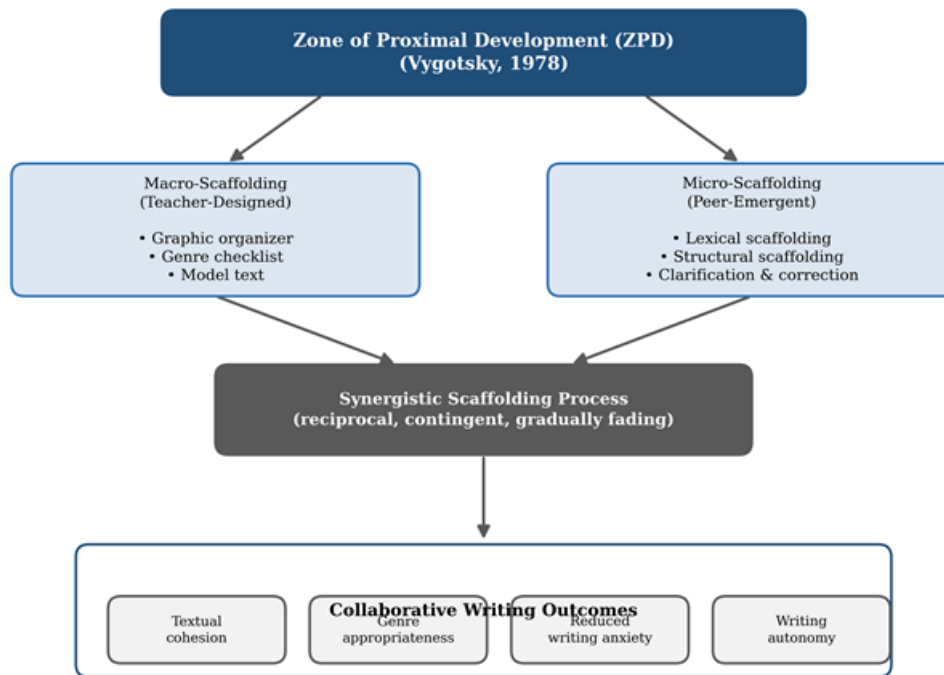


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of collaborative scaffolding dynamics identified in this study



The findings also indicate that these ecological values correspond closely with the principles of environmental ethics proposed by Keraf (2013), particularly respect for nature, responsibility, solidarity with all living beings, and sustainable lifestyles. Likewise, Capra's ecological principles including networks, cycles, nested systems, and dynamic balance—are reflected implicitly through narrative structures that portray the interdependence between humans and nature.

3.2 Ecological Messages Embedded in Folklore Narratives

Beyond identifying ecological values, the analysis demonstrates that Indonesian folklore communicates environmental messages through symbolic narrative structures. Ecological values are represented not only through explicit moral messages but also through settings, characters, conflicts, and resolutions that illustrate the consequences of human interactions with nature. Stories portraying damaged forests, polluted rivers, or excessive exploitation of natural resources consistently conclude with ecological or social consequences, emphasizing the importance of maintaining environmental balance (Firnanda et al., 2025; Hermawan & Wulandari, 2021).

Another important finding concerns the representation of local wisdom as ecological knowledge. Rather than presenting environmental conservation as scientific information, folklore contextualizes ecological values within cultural beliefs familiar to local communities. This narrative strategy enables environmental ethics to become more accessible, meaningful, and emotionally engaging for learners. Previous studies similarly argue that local wisdom embedded in folklore contributes significantly to ecological literacy because it encourages students to interpret environmental issues through cultural perspectives while strengthening their appreciation of indigenous knowledge systems (Meliani, 2022; Yonanda et al., 2024; Lailaturrahmah et al., 2026).

The findings further reveal that folklore reflects several principles of ecocriticism proposed by Glotfelty and Garrard, particularly the representation of nature as an active participant rather than merely a narrative background. Natural environments frequently determine the direction of the story, influence human behavior, and function as moral agents rewarding environmentally responsible actions while sanctioning ecological exploitation. Such representations encourage readers to reconsider anthropocentric perspectives and develop more ecocentric understandings of human–nature relationships (Buell, 2005; Garrard, 2023).

3.1 Implications for Indonesian Language Learning

The findings indicate that Indonesian folklore possesses considerable pedagogical potential as a learning resource for strengthening environmental awareness within Indonesian language education. Unlike conventional environmental instruction that often emphasizes factual knowledge, folklore integrates ecological values into meaningful narratives that simultaneously develop language competence, cultural literacy, and environmental responsibility. This integration is consistent with recent studies demonstrating that literature-based learning enhances ecological awareness while

strengthening students' reading comprehension, critical literacy, and character education (Nada & Listiana, 2024; Yonanda et al., 2024; Youpika et al., 2024).

Another important implication concerns the implementation of the **Merdeka Curriculum**, which encourages contextual, culturally responsive, and project-based learning. The ecological values identified in Indonesian folklore can be transformed into various learning activities, including critical reading, reflective discussion, storytelling, project-based environmental campaigns, and contextual writing tasks. Through these activities, students are encouraged to interpret ecological messages critically while connecting traditional wisdom with contemporary environmental challenges. This pedagogical approach enables Indonesian language learning to contribute simultaneously to literacy development, character education, and sustainable environmental awareness.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Indonesian folklore functions not merely as cultural heritage but also as an alternative ecoliteracy-based learning resource capable of integrating environmental education with language learning. By combining literary appreciation, local wisdom, and ecological values within a single instructional framework, folklore provides meaningful opportunities for developing environmentally responsible citizens while preserving Indonesia's rich cultural traditions. This finding extends previous studies that primarily focused on ecocritical interpretation by highlighting the pedagogical transformation of folklore into contextual learning resources for Indonesian language education.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Indonesian folklore contains substantial ecoliteracy values that can be utilized as meaningful learning resources for strengthening students' environmental awareness. Through qualitative content analysis, four dominant ecoliteracy values were identified: environmental conservation, respect for nature, responsibility toward natural resources, and awareness of the ecological consequences of human actions. These values are embedded in narrative structures, characters, symbols, and moral messages that portray harmonious relationships between humans and the natural environment while emphasizing the importance of ecological balance and sustainable living.

The findings also indicate that Indonesian folklore possesses significant pedagogical potential for Indonesian language education. Beyond preserving cultural heritage, folklore provides contextual and culturally responsive learning materials that encourage students to develop ecological awareness, critical thinking, and environmental responsibility through literary learning. The integration of ecoliteracy and ecocritical perspectives enables folklore to function not only as literary texts but also as educational resources that support the implementation of Education for Sustainable Development and the Merdeka Curriculum by connecting local wisdom with contemporary environmental issues.

Despite these contributions, this study is limited to qualitative content analysis of selected Indonesian folktales and does not evaluate the effectiveness of their classroom implementation. Future research is therefore recommended to develop and validate folklore-based teaching materials, investigate their impact on students' environmental awareness through experimental or design-based research, and examine their applicability



across different educational levels and cultural contexts. Such studies would strengthen the practical contribution of ecoliteracy-based folklore in promoting sustainable environmental education while preserving Indonesia's rich cultural heritage.

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