

USING *THE PEARL* AND *THE SEA WOLF* IN EFL CLASS: ENHANCING LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY FOR BLUE ECONOMY

Novita Dewi^{1*}, Firma Sulistiyowati², Maria Corazon Saturnina A. Castro³

^{1,2}Sanata Dharma University, Indonesia

³University of the Philippines-Diliman, Philippines

novitadewi@usd.ac.id¹, firma@usd.ac.id², mcsacastro@gmail.com³

*correspondence: novitadewi@usd.ac.id

<https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.v28i2.9007>

received 28 June 2024; accepted 29 July 2025

Abstract

This research explores the use of American classic novels in EFL teaching to promote sustainable practices in Indonesia's blue economy, which refers to the utilization of oceanic resources for economic growth while protecting the ocean ecosystem. It proposes *The Pearl* written in 1947 by John Steinbeck and *The Sea Wolf* in 1904 by Jack London to enhance communication skills, cultural understanding, and ecological literacy among EFL learners. The study applies a close reading of the literary texts to compare with the context of Indonesia's marine economy. Class exercises and activities are constructed based on the two novels to boost EFL learners' language ability while preparing them to become a generation committed to marine sustainability. While *The Pearl* is a metaphor of human greed, *The Sea Wolf* symbolizes the danger of exploitation. The aesthetic value of both novels can enhance EFL learners' critical thinking and ecological awareness. Incorporating ecological perspectives into EFL instruction via maritime literature helps students build the skills and mindset needed to support long-term development in Indonesia's blue economy. The article suggests that using more maritime narratives into EFL teaching can help improve linguistic proficiency, cultural sensitivity, and environmental consciousness, preparing students for sustainable development.

Keywords: blue economy, EFL, maritime literature, sustainability

Introduction

Indonesia, being one of the world's biggest maritime countries with its vast coastline and 17,500 islands, has the potential to adopt a marine economy. The blue economy concept, developed during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2012, advocates for sustainable ocean resource use for economic growth and improved livelihoods. Sungkawati (2024) argued that Indonesia's marine economy is estimated at \$1.34 billion, with revenue from coastal culture, fishing, shipwrecks, marine tourism, coral reefs, seagrass, and mangroves. Indonesia could invest 10% of its marine economic output towards ocean governance and health to tackle population

growth and tidal flooding. However, Indonesia has experienced hurdles in developing its maritime economy, including resource overexploitation, pollution, habitat destruction, and unequal benefit distributions (Chapsos & Hamilton, 2019). Reducing bycatch and combating illegal fishing is crucial for maintaining fish stocks and marine ecosystems (Gumilar, 2020; Mackay et al., 2020). Maritime literature has involved discourses on postcolonialism, globalization, and environmentalism.

American literature concerning oceanic stories could offer valuable insights into Indonesia's blue economy, highlighting the impacts of resource exploitation and sustainable practices. The argument is that Indonesia's sustainable ocean-based economy can learn from American maritime novels, such as industrial expansion and natural resource abuse, which harm small, ordinary people. This ecological knowledge is important in managing natural capital, including marine resources, mitigating climate change, and promoting sustainable development in Indonesia.

Previous studies have analyzed maritime novels like *Moby Dick*, *The Old Man and the Sea*, *Call of the Wild*, and *The Pearl* for over a century, especially through the lens of the human fight against nature. The bulk of research on *Moby Dick*, for example, focuses on its symbol (Buell, 2008; Sobreira, 2021), themes (Pritchard, 2003; Santhakumar, 2020), and historical context (Bryant, 2010; Dodd, 2022; Pfeiler, 2013). Meanwhile, *Call of the Wild* explores nature, animal-human relationships, and Jack London's socialist views (Bartosch, 2010). Existing research on *The Pearl* focuses on individual struggle within nature (e.g., Giay, 2022) and other aspects of the novel, such as stylistic (Sallomi & Nayel, 2020), racism (Abbas, 2020), and escapism in pop culture (Doublesin, 2024).

It is important to analyse further the themes of greed, power, and human-nature relationships often seen in American maritime novels. Bartosch (2010), for example, depicts the consequences of industrial expansion and unsustainable resource exploitation in *The Pearl*, criticizing greed and its destructive impact on people and nature. The dangers of greed depicted in *The Pearl* are a powerful reminder for Indonesia to promote and affirm inclusivity—that the benefits of the blue economy must be shared not only by the big maritime businesses but also fisherfolks and marginalized fishing communities. Among the wealth of recent research on *The Pearl*, a handful of studies particularly explore the novel using an ecocritical lens (Nyongesa, 2021; Zapf & Müller, 2022), but none explore ecological sea exploitation at length.

Similarly, the struggle for survival shown in *The Sea Wolf* is relevant in Indonesia's context as its blue economy must show resilience in the light of the human-nature relationship, such as climate change and other negative consequences that result from unethical and unsustainable maritime practices. Several studies have been done on *The Sea Wolf* from character analysis, especially that of Wolf Larsen (Badal, 2008; Brophy, 2012; Link, 2010), history (Papa Jr, 1999; Link, 2013), to ecolinguistics (Li, 2022). None of these studies, however, contextualizes the novel with the marine economy.

The present research addresses the gap by examining *The Pearl* and *The Sea Wolf* by providing a fresh perspective on the potential dangers of the maritime economy, particularly relevant to the Indonesian context. In addition to addressing climate change and other negative effects, *The Pearl* and *The Sea Wolf* resonate

with the value of inclusivity in Indonesia's blue economy and the necessity of shared benefits among fishermen, maritime companies, and marginalized communities. Both novels effectively critique greed and its detrimental effects on people and nature, showcasing the dark side of global business practices from which Indonesia's maritime economy may learn.

Zapf and Müller (2022) argue that the value of literary texts lies in their aesthetic features, such as multiperspectivity, empathetic imagination, and participatory inclusion. The near-extinction of sea creature populations, as well as the characters' dehumanization, demonstrate how the novels' *multiperspectivity* reveals ecological and human greediness. The novels chosen for this study underline the importance of inclusive policies that consider the perspectives of all stakeholders in order to mitigate similar abuse in Indonesia's blue economy. Next, readers with *emphatic imaginations* can easily relate to the plight and moral dilemma of the poor fisherman Kino in Steinbeck's novel. Similarly, like human beings with feelings, seals depicted in London's novel were killed voraciously out of greed in such a way that it invites readers to sympathize. *Participatory inclusion*, the third value of literary texts discussed by Zapf and Müller (2022) can motivate readers to ask moral and social questions about systemic issues. Impacts of greed and profit-driven efforts depicted in literature may encourage policymakers to incorporate ecosystem protection and community welfare into marine economic planning. Both novels provide lessons for community engagement. This study will thus explore the complex relationship between human desire for power and money and the delicate balance between humanity and the natural world via the two novels.

At the same time, this study contends that literature can be used in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class to address various needs of the learners. Not only does literature provide students with authentic materials to read, it also presents the students with real contexts for communicative situations that contribute enormously to their linguistic, mental, and holistic development as individuals. Therefore, the current study will also highlight the importance of integrating the blue economy perspectives into EFL teaching through maritime literature to prepare students for sustainable development.

Method

This research utilizes the aesthetic value of literature to teach language, critical thinking, and ethical awareness by introducing the marine economics perspective into EFL teaching in three stages, i.e., close textual analysis of both maritime novels, contextualization with Indonesian maritime practices, and synthesis for EFL teaching plan development.

First, the chosen American maritime novels, i.e., *The Pearl* by John Steinbeck, published in 1947 (republished by Penguin Classics in 2000), and Jack London's *The Sea Wolf*, written in 1904, are examined closely to see their relevance to the blue economy. Although the two novels differ in themes, they were chosen because both depict complex human situations with maritime life as their overarching context. The data gathering process involves selecting significant sections from each book that illustrate economic hardships, environmental relationships, and marine-related activities. The analysis focuses on each novel's characterization, symbolism, and themes.

Second, the novels are contextualized with real-world examples of sustainable practices in Indonesian communities. Here, the secondary data on sustainable marine practices are gathered from government reports, academic publications, and reliable internet sources using keywords such as “Indonesian marine economy,” “sustainable fisheries Indonesia,” “ocean wealth/health,” etc. The cultural significance of the sea within Indonesian discourse and traditions is also emphasized at this second stage. Contextualization of literary works involves analysing texts within their historical, cultural, social, and political circumstances. A concluding remark is drawn based on the novels’ resonance with the Indonesian context. Features of the novels that relate to Indonesia’s blue economy are highlighted at the end of the analysis.

Finally, the last step is making inferences about the novels’ applicability to Indonesian maritime situations and developing a teaching plan for EFL students. To inform the teaching strategy, additional data collection is done by reviewing EFL pedagogical literature (e.g., recent articles on literature-based language education, EFL research reports, etc.) Using the themes, plots, and characters of the two novels, exercises/activities that enhance the students’ eco-critical awareness and language skills—both oral and written—are constructed. The suggested set of activities for the EFL classes is a creative way to teach classic novels with environmental themes. The aim is to foster creativity, critical thinking, and a deeper understanding of the novels and ecological challenges today.

Findings and Discussion

This section examines *The Pearl* to see its relevance to Indonesia’s ocean-based economy. It aims to highlight sustainable maritime practices and the importance of environmental stewardship in policy discourse.

The Pearl: Greed and perils of the pearl trade

This current study argues that Steinbeck’s *The Pearl* can teach Indonesians about the importance of sustainable practices in the marine industry, emphasizing the ocean’s potential for wealth and the consequences of unsustainable practices. Also clear in this classic American novel is the corrupting influence of the ocean wealth.

To begin with the novel’s plot, a poor Indian-Mexican-American family, Kino, Juana, and their son Coyotito, live a fairly happy life in a remote seaside village in the Gulf until a scorpion bites Coyotito, threatening his life. Kino sends Coyotito to a doctor for help, but is turned away due to a lack of payment. Kino takes his canoe to find a pearl to pay the doctor. He finds a large pearl that attracts the attention of the villagers. The doctor returns and tricks the family into treating Coyotito, who is already healed, and makes him sick again to get paid more. When the doctor asks for payment, Kino tells him his plans to sell the pearl. The doctor tricks Kino into revealing where he has hidden the pearl. That night, an intruder sent by the doctor arrives, and Kino fights off the intruder. Kino’s brother, Juan Tomas, warns him about the potential for underbidding dealers. Disasters ensue, including a destroyed canoe and a house set on fire. The family hides at Juan Tomas’ house until it is safe to sell the pearl. They travel up a mountain to the capital city, followed by trackers. Kino kills them but finds his

son shot. Later in the afternoon, Kino and Juana return to their village, carrying Coyotito's dead body. They reach the beach, where Kino offers Juana the pearl to throw in the sea, but she refuses. Kino throws the pearl, sinking to the bottom. The discussion that follows is to examine the novel's insights on firstly, the sea as both provider and disrupter, and secondly, the consequences of greed.

Of nature and man

As a traditional pearl diver, Kino lives harmoniously with nature. Nature is Kino's friend. Steinbeck writes:

The beach was yellow sand, but at the water's edge a rubble of shell and algae took its place. Fiddler crabs bubbled and sputtered in their holes in the sand, and in the shallows little lobsters popped in and out of their tiny homes in the rubble and sand. The sea bottom was rich with crawling and swimming and growing things. The brown algae waved in the gentle currents and the green eel grass swayed and little sea horses clung to its stems. Spotted botete, the poison fish, lay on the bottom in the eel-grass beds, and the bright-colored swimming crabs scampered over them. (Steinbeck, 2000, p. 34)

The pearl found by Kino represents the ocean's worth, but overfishing and excessive diving could deplete these resources. The pearl's negative impact on Kino's life demonstrates the ocean's importance beyond commerce, as it sustains communities and provides livelihoods, necessitating respect rather than plundering. The evil caused by reports can be likened to the scorpion that bit little Coyotito. The scorpion bite represents the clash between humans and nature. The hardship of dealing with nature is obvious here. This is to suggest that nature is depicted as both a friend and an enemy to humans.

Despite Kino's low economic level, he maintains human dignity and is unaware of exploitation. The novel explores the reactions of priests, doctors, beggars, and pearl buyers to discovering a pearl, which affects the entire town and makes Kino "every man's enemy." Kino's pursuit of wealth leads to tragedy, emphasizing the social and environmental costs of unsustainable resource extraction. His obsession with a pearl, seen as a gift, destroys him and threatens his relationship with the gods and soul. The pearl identifies with his soul, and keeping it means losing it. Throwing the pearl saves his soul. Kino's and Juana's reconciliation with nature is evident in the last scene of the novel:

And the pearl settled into the lovely green water and dropped toward the bottom. The waving branches of the algae called to it and beckoned to it. The lights on its surface were green and lovely. It settled down to the sand bottom. (Steinbeck, 2000, p. 132)

Here we see that Steinbeck's portrayal of the sea as a source of wealth and the consequences of unsustainable practices resonates with modern marine conservation concerns.

The price of unsustainable practices

The discussion now turns to how literature portrays the economic consequences of overexploitation and unsustainable practices in marine industries. The pearl trade in town takes advantage of Kino's desperation, revealing unfair trade practices. The dealers are excited about Kino's arrival and the pearl's beauty. A fatherly man tricks a pearl buyer with coins. When Kino arrives with the big pearl, three pearl buyers follow their pre-arranged roles: one refuses, the second believes the pearl will die shortly, and the third offers five hundred pesos. The pearl buyers misjudge their clients and announce they will sell the pearl in the capital. The main buyer raises his offer to fifteen hundred pesos, only to be declined by Kino. Here, the pearl buyers exploit ocean resources, offering low prices to fishermen like Kino. Sustainable practices should prioritize fair prices and respect for those who provide resources, as seen in the scene where Kino attempts to sell the pearl.

The Pearl explores themes of environmental degradation and its impact, that is greed. Before exploring the novel's relevance of the socio-dynamics of Indonesia's blue economy, a brief overview of Indonesia's pearl trade is necessary. The pearl trade in Indonesia faces challenges due to several factors, such as the maritime borders dispute. For example, there has been uncertainty between Indonesia and Australia concerning legal pearl fishing locations in the Timor and Arafura Seas (Prabawaningtyas, 2017). The shift towards stricter state control of maritime resources, including fisheries, may make pearl farming or harvesting more difficult. Another factor is the blue economy paradox: While using marine resources for development, there lies a gap between the potential of these resources and the actual benefit to local communities (Wardhani et al. 2023). This dilemma could apply to the pearl trade, where local communities may not fully benefit from the industry's potential. The challenges for the pearl trade in Indonesia resulted from these issues.

Thus, mindful of the above challenges, Indonesia's marine economy must ensure a sustainable pearl trade that benefits the local community via a holistic approach to the industry, which includes clear regulations for managing global competition and marine wealth and health. To achieve a sustainable pearl trade, Indonesia's marine economy can learn from Steinbeck's novel, given its ecological perspectives. Before writing *The Pearl*, Steinbeck and his friend Ed Ricketts explored the seacoast's ecological functions and learned about the story of the "Pearl of the World," a large pearl that was tossed back into the sea. Critics view this as Steinbeck's comment on the importance of maintaining undisturbed ecology, as removing a great pearl from its natural setting could lead to disaster (Wyse, 2019). The novel provides glimpses into unsustainable behaviors of the time (late 19th /early 20th century), although it does not directly address modern sustainability concepts. The story explores timeless topics related to resource depletion. Searching for a pearl is an activity that, if not managed properly, can become unsustainable. Excessive hunting can reduce populations and damage ecosystems.

To sum up, *The Pearl* is a powerful allegory for Indonesia's sustainable ocean-based economy, highlighting the need for an ecological and equitable pearl trade that benefits both the environment and local communities. It serves as a cautionary tale against greed and short-sighted resource exploitation. Indonesia

should invest in environmentally friendly pearl farming techniques and promote responsible consumer practices that value ethically sourced pearls.

The Sea Wolf: The danger of ruthless exploitation

Jack London explores themes of survival, nature, and the struggle between civilization and savagery in *The Sea Wolf*. Published in 1904, the novel serves as a precursor to later works highlighting human actions' impact on the environment. This section shows that while *The Sea Wolf* barely offers a policy brief for sustainable maritime management, it provides a cautionary tale and prompts reflection through contrasting themes. The main theme revealed in the novel is the characters' differing views about the environment.

The plot summary is as follows. The wealthy scholar Humphrey Van Weyden survives a shipwreck accident and is saved by Wolf Larsen, the brutal captain of the *Ghost*, a seal-hunting vessel. He must battle with Larsen's amoral philosophy, which values power and considers gentleness as weakness, and ruthless survivalism. Van Weyden befriends Maud Brewster, another hostage, and together they devise a plan of escape. Van Weyden finds himself in a power struggle where he must decide between taking revenge on Larsen and fulfilling a higher calling after the *Ghost* gets shipwrecked on a lonely island. The novel closes with a climactic twist that challenges humanity, fortitude, and strength.

This psychological adventure novel presents environmental issues through its portrayal of the seal hunt. It questions the sustainability of hunting practices and their impact on animal populations. What follows is a thematic and contextual analysis of the novel with a marine economy.

Unconscious use of ocean resource

The Sea Wolf's depiction of vicious seal hunting is an example of the perils associated with the unchecked use of marine resources. The preference for quantity over long-term survival emphasizes how crucial limits, regulations, and ethical fishing methods are in the contemporary world. Humphrey Van Weyden is concerned about the seaman's obsession with seal hunting, claiming that it is wasteful to kill the seals. On the contrary, Larsen rejects the idea that the soul is everlasting. He believes that the only purposes of life are survival and pleasure, and has grown to detest and minimize all human life. For him, life is about killing, and he hardly sees the distinction between a man murdering cattle and a seal killing a fish. "I believe that life is a mess," Larsen tells Van Weyden about his belief (London, 1904, p. 42). For the seaman, life is a chaotic process, like yeast that moves and eventually stops. People's choices, such as eating the big, strong, or lucky, have a tremendous impact on their lives. Larsen represents the survival-of-the-fittest viewpoint incorrectly, in which the strong dominate while the weak parties are exploited.

Several critics (e.g., Faulstick, 2015; Ward, 1983) liken Wolf Larsen to a Nietzschean superman owing to his desire for power, amorality, and independence. However, the depiction is problematic since Larsen's harsh and destructive character sharply contrasts with Nietzsche's idea of the creator. Animal welfare is ignored by Larsen, who views the prey he hunts as nothing more than a resource. He has little regard for their existence or ecological role.

This disdain for the welfare of living things demonstrates Larsen's obsession with power and supremacy even more.

A sustainable approach calls for collaboration and international agreements for ocean health and shared marine resources. Cooperation and shared power are lacking in Wolf Larsen. The decline of the seal population due to overhunting foreshadows the potential consequences of neglecting environmental factors in maritime activities. Sustainable management requires considering the impact on the entire ecosystem. The crew's hunger was caused by diminishing food supplies, underlining the dangers of neglect.

It is precisely resource dependence and unchecked exploitation that make *The Sea Wolf* relevant to Indonesia's sustainable economy. Home to rare flora and fauna, Indonesia has to deal with conservation problems. Law No. 5 of 1990 on the Conservation of the Earth's Natural Resources and Environment stipulates criminal penalties for trading wild animals, but these penalties are not in proportion to the profits gained by the perpetrators, hence preventing them from deterring others (Pesak, 2020). Animal trading on social media in Indonesia is also widespread, mostly via Facebook (Nijman, 2017; Pesak, 2020). The increasing number of violations against protected animals in Indonesia, such as the massacre of orangutans in Kalimantan and online animal trafficking, has led to an imbalance in the ecosystem and raised significant concerns.

Revisiting man-nature relationships

It must be noted at the outset that when Jack London published *The Sea Wolf*, ecological awareness was not as developed as it is today. Conservation movements had just gained momentum, focusing on deforestation, wildlife extinction, and scenic landscape preservation, not sustainability. For example, the naturalist and conservationist John Muir (1838-1914) called for a spiritual connection with nature, allowing middle-class people to rejuvenate by communicating with nature (Duke, 2016; Lankford, 1991). However, resource depletion is implied in *The Sea Wolf* through the main antagonist, Wolf Larsen, who embodies an anthropocentric view and contends that humans are superior to nature. London's portrayal of the harsh environment and Larsen's hunting methods draw attention to unsustainable practices and human impacts on the natural world. Further, the protagonist, Humphrey Van Weyden, initially disconnects from nature but eventually develops a newfound respect for its power and the need for co-existence.

The description of the stormy water is clear at the opening of Chapter 23 of the book. It shows the Ghost traveling north with favorable winds, reaching the 44th parallel north of Oregon. London writes:

Brave winds, blowing fair, swiftly drove the Ghost northward into the seal herd. We encountered it well up to the forty-fourth parallel, in a raw and stormy sea across which the wind harried the fogbanks in eternal flight. For days at a time we could never see the sun nor take an observation; then the wind would sweep the face of the ocean clean, the waves would ripple and flash, and we would learn where we were. A day of clear weather might follow, or three days or four, and

then the fog would settle down upon us, seemingly thicker than ever.
(London, 1904, p. 170)

The harsh sea and thick fog make navigation difficult, but brief clear skies provide glimpses of their position. The narration shows that the crew is actively hunting seals, a perilous task, as hunting boats disappear into the fog.

The passage continues below, recounting the return of boats at night, referred to as “sea-wraiths,” and the story of Wainwright, a hunter captured by Wolf Larsen, who escapes in the fog. Again, it highlights the dangers faced by the crew and the potential for fleeing and dissension.

The hunting was perilous; yet the boats, lowered day after day, were swallowed up in the grey obscurity, and were seen no more till nightfall, and often not till long after, when they would creep in like sea-wraiths, one by one, out of the grey. Wainwright—the hunter whom Wolf Larsen had stolen with boat and men—took advantage of the veiled sea and escaped. He disappeared one morning in the encircling fog with his two men, and we never saw them again, though it was not many days when we learned that they had passed from schooner to schooner until they finally regained their own. (London, 1904, p. 170)

Although Wainwright’s escape underscores the force of nature, i.e., the harsh weather and the perils of the hunt, his decision can be attributed to Wolf Larsen’s draconian leadership in forcing the crew to continue working despite the severe conditions. Here we see the differing man-nature relationships. Wolf Larsen’s extractive approach is that of the dominator model and unsustainable exploitation. Wainwright, like many other people on board *The Ghost*, for example, runs away because he disagrees with the captain. Meanwhile, Humphrey Van Weyden’s existence suggests respectful adaptation, a survival partnership, and learning from nature. London describes the learned man’s transformation in the last paragraph of Chapter 27:

And yet, I aver it, and I aver it again, I was unafraid. The death which Wolf Larsen and even Thomas Mugridge had made me fear, I no longer feared. The coming of Maud Brewster into my life seemed to have transformed me. After all, I thought, it is better and finer to love than to be loved, if it makes something in life so worthwhile that one is not loath to die for it. (London, 1904, pp. 214-5)

Van Weyden becomes fearless, despite fearing death from Wolf Larsen and Thomas Mugridge. Indeed, his transformation is attributed to Maud Brewster’s presence, replacing fear with a sense of purpose. This love makes life valuable, and he feels a newfound desire to live, even though he scarcely values his own life as much. He further says, “I forget my own life in the love of another life...I never had so much reason for living, was my concluding thought.” (London, 1904, p.0) Here, Van Weyden finds a new motivation to live in his love for Maud,

preserving his own life and protecting her from the hardship of life at sea. His protective commitment to Maud is seen in his willingness to respond to danger.

To sum up, *The Sea-Wolf* explores human conflicts and survival struggles, with nature as a backdrop. The novel thus illustrates the need for a balanced relationship with nature whilst criticizing human dominance. It emphasizes the ongoing struggle for sustainable living alongside nature and suggests a dynamic equilibrium for harmony.

Finally, to contextualize Indonesia's blue economy, climate change and ocean resource exploitation remain major threats. The novel reflects early ecological awareness and a world where humans saw themselves as separate from nature. This classic maritime novel provides a starting point for discussions about human-nature relationships, sustainability, and ecological balance, allowing Indonesia to learn to manage its ocean wealth and health wisely.

Using maritime novels in EFL teaching for cultural and ecological literacies

This section proposes a combination of creativity and eco-literacy in English as a Foreign Language. This approach fosters creativity, critical thinking, and a better understanding of ecological challenges.

Inspired by, among other things, Bakhtinian dialogic essence of language, Rob Pope (2009) suggests the dynamic nature of language, that is, a model incorporating a dialogue between linguistic creativity and literary creation. Pope uses the terms "recreating English" and "Englishing creativity" to describe how language evolves and reshapes itself through everyday use (2009, p. 132).

Meanwhile, Micalay-Hurtado and Poole (2022), for example, assert that Critical Language Awareness (CLA) fosters social justice by addressing power dynamics in literacy development and instruction. However, CLA's approach to ELT often fails to address climate change's urgent effects on learners. They then propose the eco-CLA approach to English language instruction, emphasizing its compatibility with ecolinguistics and the intersection of social, linguistic, and environmental justice. The eco-CLA principles include connecting learning to the physical world, promoting well-being, developing ecological consciousness, advocating for marginalized students, and promoting equal instruction. It is therefore important to emphasize creativity and critical thinking to improve eco-literacy in EFL.

Based on the above viewpoints, the current study recommends teaching *The Pearl* and *The Seawolf* by involving EFL students in various eco-reimagining projects. This pedagogical approach encourages creativity, critical thinking, and a deeper understanding of environmental issues. The project is a creative way to teach classic novels with environmental themes. The aim is to foster creativity, critical thinking, and a deeper understanding of the novel and ecological challenges today. The following are two sample activities.

LESSON PLAN ONE: Finding Kino

Objectives: This lesson will help the students to

- Develop persuasive and creative writing skills
- Explore human-nature relationships in literature critically

Direction and methods:

1. Introduce the setting of *The Pearl* and the characters' ocean resource-dependent livelihood;
2. Choose one scene in the novel where Kino sets out to do something important (e.g., doctor visit, selling the pearl) This can be an individual or group work;
3. Imagine that Kino never returns, and write an "eco-version" of the scene using descriptive language to highlight the environmental impact;
4. Present the "Finding Kino with an Eco-Twist" to the class;
5. Discuss how environmental changes impacted the story's themes and characters.
6. Give examples of real-life ecological problems and economic injustice affecting coastal communities and their practical solutions.
7. Optional activities: Assign students to write a different ending to the novel: After throwing the pearl into the sea, Kino has an afterthought. He swims to fetch the pearl back, never to be seen again. Figure out what happened to him.

Summary and application:

This lesson plan focuses on developing persuasive and creative writing skills using *The Pearl* and an eco-twist to rewrite new scenes. The aim is to reveal the environmental changes and their impact on characters and the relationship between human behavior and the environment. Students will present their rewritten scenes to the class and discuss their relevance to real ecological problems they know.

LESSON PLAN TWO: Quo Vadis Seal-Hunting?
--

Objectives: This lesson will help the students to

- Recognize and use a wider range of vocabulary about ecological issues;
- Deliver and communicate ideas on sustainability with clarity and confidence;
- Increase students' competence in speaking publicly in various contexts.

Direction and methods:

1. Introduce the setting of *The Sea Wolf* and the characters' struggles on board the seal-hunting ship, The Ghost;
2. Explain briefly the talk show topic, i.e., (un)sustainable practice of seal-hunting (or any other ocean plundering activities);
3. Assign one student as the host and several students for the guests (e.g., environmental activists, actors playing different characters in *The Sea Wolf*, local fish farmers, etc.)
4. Interview each one's perspective on ocean source depletion, blue economy, and related ecological issues;
5. Ask the remaining students being the "audience" to raise questions;
6. Ask the host to wrap up the talk show.
7. Hold a class discussion after the talk show to review both the show and the novel to see how they are relevant to real ecological problems and the marine economy.

Summary and application:

Using a talk show format to discuss sustainable seal-hunting activities, this lesson focuses on teaching students about ecological issues using *The Sea Wolf*. The aim is to enhance their vocabulary, public speaking skills, and understanding of the novel. It involves introducing the show, assigning a student as host, interviewing different guests, and having the remaining students as the audience. The lesson concludes with a discussion of its relevance to modern-day environmental and marine-based economic challenges.

The lesson plans presented support a literature-based language learning. The pedagogical approach of the lesson plans is in line with theories in Communicative Language Teaching, which highlight meaningful language use in contexts, and Critical Literacy Pedagogy, which provides awareness of the role of language in social relationships and related issues like power, ethnicity, class, identity, and others (Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016). Following Kramsch (1993) that learners are motivated to participate in activities when they encounter texts relevant to their cultural background and experiences, Hossain (2024) has identified the potential of literature-based language learning. Vo (2025) contends that assertive learning objectives and outcomes are critical to ensuring that literature-based EFL students strengthen their overall linguistic, aesthetic, and social skills. Placing *The Pearl* and *The Sea Wolf* within the context of contemporary environmental crises can certainly add to students' interest in discussing and writing about topics to which they can relate. Both teaching plans highlight a context-rich approach to language education that helps the learners develop not only language proficiency but also cultural awareness and understanding, and critical thinking.

Conclusion

This article has shown that the American maritime novels *The Pearl* and *The Sea Wolf* offer valuable lessons on perseverance, resilience, and the danger of unsustainable practices. Both novels directly deal with the lives and struggles of people dependent on the sea for their livelihood. The characters' plights are resonant with sustainable practices within communities in the blue economy.

This article has also shown the socioeconomic dynamics in American maritime stories that can help navigate the practice of Indonesia's blue economy. The novels explore poverty, greed, and the impact of unsustainable practices on the environment and communities. Such lessons give a strong foundation for managing the challenges and opportunities within the marine economy. The importance of both novels for Indonesian communities lies in *first*, the narratives' capacity for adaptation strategies; and *second*, their discursive, cultural connection to the sea. This is to say that literature has the potential to inform policy and promote environmental stewardship within Indonesia's maritime resources. Fictional solutions to problems depicted in *The Pearl* and *The Sea Wolf* can inspire creative thinking in real-world scenarios. Analyzing ethical dilemmas in literary works can help identify potential concerns related to policies and guide decision-making, hence a valuable complementary tool when developing practical documents such as policy briefs and guidelines for Indonesia's blue economy.

To end, the study emphasizes the significance of incorporating maritime narratives into EFL teaching to enhance linguistic proficiency, cultural

understanding, and environmental consciousness, thereby preparing students for sustainable development efforts. The eco-reimagining EFL activities proposed here combine creativity and eco-literacy, promoting critical thinking and understanding of environmental issues through activities as varied as creative rewriting and class discussions.

In conclusion, *The Pearl* and *The Sea Wolf* serve as cautionary tales about the dangers of overexploitation and the importance of respecting the ocean. While they hardly advocate for specific policies, both novels underline the destructive nature of greed and unchecked exploitation, arguing for a more balanced approach to ocean profit. As for suggestions for future research, Jack London's other novel *The Call of the Wild* is worth exploring. Set in a specific historical period and focusing on the wilderness rather than the economic aspects of the ocean, the novel also highlights resource depletion and the destructive nature of obsession, which are potential starting points for reducing the destructive nature of the sustainable ocean-based economy and its implications, such as greed and ecological injustice. This study's interdisciplinary approach connects literary analysis to real-world sustainability issues, providing a framework for incorporating context into a close reading of literary text and language education. The current study recommends teaching *The Pearl* and *The Seawolf* by involving EFL students in various eco-reimagining projects. This pedagogical approach encourages creativity, critical thinking, and a deeper understanding of environmental issues. More efforts should be made in EFL classrooms to incorporate great literary works with environmental reflections to foster creativity, critical thinking, and a more in-depth understanding of the works and real environmental problems.

References

- Abbas, A. (2020). The racist fact against American-Indians in Steinbeck's *The Pearl*. *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 3(3), 376-392. <https://doi.org/10.34050/elsjsh.v3i3.11347>
- Badal, A. (2008). *The embodiment of masculinity in Jack London's The Sea-Wolf* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Tribhuvan University, Nepal.
- Bartosch, R. (2010). Call of the Wild and the ethics of narrative strategies. *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, 1(2), 87-96. <https://doi.org/10.37536/ECOZONA.2010.1.2.364>
- Bobkina, J. and Stefanova, S. (2016). Literature and critical literacy pedagogy in the EFL classroom: Towards a model of teaching critical thinking skills. *Studies in Second Language and Teaching*, 6(4), 677-696. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2016.6.4.6>
- Brophy, M. (2012). A body of work: Imperial labor and the writing of American manhood in London's *The Sea-Wolf*. In M. Tokarczyk (Ed.), *Critical approaches to American working-class literature* (pp. 177–203). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203813072>
- Bryant, J. (2010). Rewriting Moby-Dick: Politics, textual identity, and the revision narrative. *PMLA*, 125(4), 1043-1060. <https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2010.125.4.1043>
- Buell, L. (2008). The unkillable dream of the Great American Novel: Moby-Dick as test case. *American Literary History*, 20(1-2), 132-155.

- Chapsos, I., & Hamilton, S. (2019). Illegal fishing and fisheries crime as a transnational organized crime in Indonesia. *Trends in Organized Crime*, 22(3), 255-273. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-018-9329-8>
- Dodd, P. (2022). 'Draught of a Draught': Moby-Dick as a living American document. *The Macksey Journal*, 3(1), Article 52.
- Doublesin, C. (2024). The deceptive third place: Comparing Steinbeck's *The Pearl* to modern cell phone escapism. *Quest*, 8(1), Article 2. <https://digitalcommons.collin.edu/quest/vol8/iss1/2/>
- Duke, J. A. (2016). Three men in the wilderness: Ideas and concepts of nature during the Progressive Era with Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot and John Muir. [Unpublished master's thesis]. University of Northern Iowa <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/etd/307/>
- Faulstick, D. (2015). "The preacher thought as I think": Wolf Larsen, Humphrey Van Weyden, and Jack London's ecclesiastes. *Studies in American Naturalism*, 10(1), 1–21. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/san.2015.0004>
- Giay, L. J. (2022). *The other side of a maritime frontier pearl-shelling in Aru, 1870-1942* [Doctoral dissertation]. Murdoch University.
- Gumilar, H. R. (2022). Illegal fishing in Indonesia and the role of international maritime law on illegal fishing action. *Indonesian Journal of Environmental Law and Sustainable Development*, 1(1), 29-46. <https://journal.unnes.ac.id/sju/index.php/ijel/article/view/56839>
- Hossain, K. I. (2024). Literature-based language learning: Challenges, and opportunities for English learners. *Ampersand*, 13, Article 100201. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amper.2024.100201>
- Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Lankford, S. (1991). *John Muir and the nature of the West: An ecology of American life, 1864-1914*. Stanford University.
- Li, Y. (2022). The ecological discourse analysis of Jack London's *The Sea Wolf* from a systemic functional perspective. *International Journal of Education and Humanities*, 5(2), 278–284.
- Link, E. C. (2010). The five deaths of Wolf Larsen. *Studies in American Naturalism*, 5(2), 151–163.
- Link, E. C. (2013). Jack London, 'The Sea-Wolf', and the natural history of love. *Studies in American Naturalism*, 8(2), 171–185.
- London, J. (1904). *The Sea Wolf*. Retrieved from <https://www.aliceandbooks.com>
- Mackay, M., Hardesty, B. D., & Wilcox, C. (2020). The intersection between illegal fishing, crimes at sea, and social well-being. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 7, Article 589000. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2020.589000/full>
- Micalay-Hurtado, M. A., & Poole, R. (2022). Eco-critical language awareness for English language teaching (ELT): Promoting justice, wellbeing, and sustainability in the classroom. *Journal of World Languages*, 8(2), 371-390. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/jwl-2022-0023/html>
- Nijman, V. (2017). Orangutan trade, confiscations, and lack of prosecutions in Indonesia. *American Journal of Primatology*, 79(11), Article 22652.
- Nyongesa, A. (2021). *Re-centring mother earth: Ecological reading of contemporary works of fiction*. African Books Collective.

- Papa Jr., J. A. (1999). Canvas and steam: Historical conflict in Jack London's Sea-Wolf. *The Midwest Quarterly*, 40, 1-7.
- Pesak, D. N. (2020). Pemidanaan terhadap pelaku perdagangan hewan langka menurut Undang-Undang Nomor 5 Tahun 1990 tentang konservasi sumber daya alam hayati dan ekosistemnya [Punishment of perpetrators of rare animal trade according to Law Number 5 of 1990 on the conservation of biological natural resources and their ecosystems]. *Lex Privatum*, 8(3), 37-45. <https://ejournal.unsrat.ac.id/index.php/lexprivatum/article/view/29804>
- Pfeiler, M. (2013). Hunting Moby Dick: Melville in the global context of the American Studies classroom. *Leviathan* 15(3), 81-89. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lvn.2013.0031>.
- Pope, R. (2009). English and creativity. In J. Maybin & J. Swann (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to English language studies* (pp. 134-145). Routledge.
- Prabawaningtyas, S. (2017). Contested space of transborder fishing in Timor and Arafura Seas. *Indonesian Historical Studies*, 1(1), 1-24. <https://ejournal2.undip.ac.id/index.php/ihis/article/view/1233>
- Pritchard, G. (2003). "Moby-Dick" and the philosopher of pessimism. *Australasian Journal of American Studies*, 22(1), 34-48. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41415981>
- Sallomi, A. H., & Nayel, D. K. (2020). A stylistic study of Steinbeck's "The Pearl". *Al-Bahith Journal*, 36(11), 162-173.
- Santhakumar, J. (2020). Nature vs man: A thematic study of Herman Melville's Moby Dick. *Scholar: National School of Leadership*, 9(1.0). Retrieved from <https://jconsortium.com/index.php/scholar/article/view/414>
- Sobreira, R. (2021). Corpses, fire, and dangerous mammals: Revisiting the symbols in Roddam's Television Adaptation of Moby Dick by Herman Melville. *Anglo Saxonica*, 19(1). 1-14. <https://revista-anglo-saxonica.org/articles/10.5334/as.10>
- Steinback, J. (2000). *The Pearl*. Penguin Classics.
- Sungkawati, E. (2024). Opportunities and challenges: Adopting "Blue-Green Economy" terms to achieve SDGs. *Revenue Journal: Management and Entrepreneurship*, 2(1), 1-13. <https://journal.assyfa.com/index.php/rjme/article/view/333>
- Vo, L. H. (2025). English literature in EFL classes: The case of a university in Vietnam. *LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching*, 28(1), 58-70. <https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.v28i1.8728>
- Ward, S. (1983). Social philosophy as best-seller: Jack London's "The Sea-Wolf." *Western American Literature*, 17(4), 321-332.
- Wardhani, B., Dugis, V., Santoso, Y. W., Mubah, A. S., Yu, Y. W., & Pratamasari, A. (2023). The trap of the blue economy: Evidence from Lombok Island, Indonesia. *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures*, 12(3), 224-239. <https://doi.org/10.21463/jmic.2023.12.3.15>
- Wyse, L. (2019). Of mollusks and men: An ecocritical approach to The Pearl. In L. Nicosia & J. F. Nicosia (Eds.), *Critical insights: The Pearl, by John Steinbeck* (pp. 61-76). Salem Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ALH/AJT017>
- Zapf, H., & Müller, T. (2022). Ecology in American literature. In H. Zapf & T. Müller (Eds.), *Oxford research encyclopedia of environmental science*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199389414.013.808>