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READING NATURE REFLECTIVELY: A METACOGNITIVE APPROACH IN ECOLOGICAL LITERATURE LEARNING THROUGH THE POEMS OF SAPARDI DJOKO DAMONO

Heri Isnaini

IKIP Siliwangi
Email: heriisnaini@ikipsiliwangi.ac.id,

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Abstract

This study aims to explore how metacognitive approaches can be used as a framework in ecological literature learning through poems by Sapardi Djoko Damono. The focus of the research lies in the process of reflective reading, which invites readers not only to understand the text, but also to realize, monitor, and evaluate their strategies for their interpretation of the relationship between humans and nature presented in poetry. The method used is qualitative descriptive, based on literature studies and text analysis, by integrating the perspective of ecocriticism and metacognitive theory. The results of the study show that metacognitive strategies through the stages of planning, monitoring, and evaluation can encourage readers to build reflective ecological awareness, enrich symbolic understanding, and internalize ethical values towards the environment. The novelty of the research lies in the integration of metacognitive approaches in the learning of ecological literature, which emphasizes the reflection of the reader's thought process in understanding the relationship between humans and nature, thus expanding the traditional ecocriticism perspective that focuses more on textual analysis alone. The implications of the research are theoretical and pedagogical. Theoretically, this study enriches the interdisciplinary literature between literary education, ecocriticism, and cognitive psychology. Pedagogically, the results of the research can be a reference for literature educators to design learning that emphasizes reflective awareness, thinking strategies, and environmental literacy.

Keywords: Metakognitive, ecological literary learning, reflective reading, ecocriticism, environmental literacy

INTRODUCTION

The issue of ecological crisis and increasing awareness of the relationship between humans and the environment makes education require an approach that is not only informative but also reflective. In the realm of environmental humanities, literature is seen as a medium that is able to connect aesthetic experiences with the ecological reflection of readers, especially when the literary work contains strong natural elements. The ecocriticism approach emphasizes that literature not only passively reflects the environment but also has the potential to increase readers' ecological awareness through critical reading of literary texts such as poetry and prose. Studies show that the integration of ecocritical approaches in literary learning, for example in poetry learning, can encourage students to understand the relationship between humans and nature and actively increase their environmental awareness (Neloy & Shahin, 2025).

In addition, the study of ecology in literary education has not been systematically explored through metacognitive strategies, namely the awareness and regulation of the reader's own thought process. Educational research shows that metacognition is essential in improving reader engagement and deep understanding of texts, including improving inferential and reflective abilities (Martelletti, Luzuriaga, & Furman, 2023).

On the other hand, research on metacognitive strategies in education shows that learning that facilitates students' thinking processes including planning, monitoring, and evaluation of the reading process can increase students' cognitive engagement and awareness of the learning process itself (Hernika, Wahab, & Susetya, 2025). Metacognitive strategies are important because they encourage the reader to be aware of his or her thought process, rather than simply absorbing the content of the text, and therefore have the potential to open up a richer reflective pathway to understanding complex phenomena such as the relationship between humans and the environment.

Ecocriticism studies integrated into poetry teaching also show that literary learning with this approach can strengthen students' emotional and cognitive involvement with environmental issues, as well as help them develop an ecocentric relationship with nature through the context of texts that are explored thematically and reflectively (Wirawan & Abdillah, 2025). This shows that literature, through the analysis of poetry texts, can be an effective educational tool to increase ecological awareness, but there is still a need for a theoretical framework that connects reflective (metacognitive) thinking strategies with the ecocritical approach.

Although there are studies that examine metacognitive strategies in the context of critical reading learning in general, as well as studies that review the use of the ecocritical approach in poetry learning, there is still a significant gap in the literature, namely that there are not many studies that theoretically incorporate metacognitive as a reflective ecological literary learning framework, especially in the realm of poetry as an aesthetic medium for environmental awareness. Existing metacognitive research tends to focus on reading skills in general, while ecocritical studies often pay attention to the analysis of the content of the text without optimizing the role of the reader's reflective thinking strategies in the learning process (state of the art) (Hernika et al., 2025).

Furthermore, Sapardi Djoko Damono's poems are known to have strong and touching images of nature, making them an ideal object to test how conscious and reflective reading strategies can enrich readers' experiences of ecological values in literary texts. Several studies have shown that environmentally-themed literary works can be an effective tool to motivate readers to understand and reflect on ecological issues, including through a structured learning process (Sihotang et al., 2025).

Sapardi Djoko Damono is one of the Indonesian writers whose works are often associated with the theme of nature and the environment symbolically, so his poetry provides a strong opportunity to analyze the learning process of ecological literature that combines metacognitive theory and ecocriticism. Previous studies of Sapardi's poetry, despite its focus on imagery or linguistic structure, show that his poetry has potential for studies relevant to the reader's understanding of natural symbols and emotions, as well as pedagogical implications in the context of literary learning in schools (Agustian Aryanti, Fitrah, & Budiyono, 2021).

Taking into account this emptiness and the unique potential of Sapardi Djoko Damono's poem, this study aims to develop a metacognitive framework in ecological literary learning, with a focus on the process of reflective reading that connects the reader's conscious thinking strategies with the formation of ecological awareness.

Literature Review

Metacognitive Learning in the Context of Reading Literature

Research on metacognitive reading strategies shows that awareness and regulation of thinking strategies are very significant in improving text comprehension, especially in the context of language learning. A systematic review of metacognitive reading strategies reveals that the consistent use of this strategy can improve readers' critical reading skills and self-regulation, especially in the context of foreign language learning (EFL), although the main focus is still on general understanding and not on the ecological context directly. The metacognitive strategy in question includes the stages of planning, monitoring, and evaluating the reading process carried out by the learner, so as to be able to create readers who are more aware of their own thought process when reading teks kompleks. (Yulita & Napitupulu, 2023)

This finding provides an empirical basis that the development of metacognitive awareness in the context of literary learning, including poetry, can be a bridge to deepen the understanding of texts that are loaded with symbols, images, and implicit meanings, although the specific area of environmental literature has not been explicitly studied. Ecocriticism is an approach in literature study that places the human-environment relationship as the focus of analysis, not just the background or decoration of the text. Ecocriticism shows how literary works represent nature and environmental issues in a systemic and ethical way. Recent ecocriticism studies in Indonesian literature show that this approach is used to analyze representations of nature, human relations with the environment, and criticism of ecosystem damage in contemporary poetry and prose (Aprilia & Sudaryanto, 2025).

In addition, implementive research on language and literature learning shows that ecocriticism can be used to develop teaching materials that motivate students to understand the human-nature relationship through literary texts, including poems with environmental themes. For example, the development of ecocriticism-based enrichment books on poetry that raises environmental crises has succeeded in demonstrating the potential of literature to foster ecological awareness in the context of education (Astuti, Yarsama, & Sujaya, 2025). Conceptually, this study confirms that ecocriticism is not only a tool for text analysis but can also function as a pedagogical approach, which is relevant to the purpose of this study to combine metacognitive and ecocriticism in the learning of ecological literature.

Integration of Literary Learning and Environmental Awareness

The empirical literature shows a growing number of studies that combine literature with environmental issues in the context of education. For example, research on the implementation of literary ecology in digital short stories shows that stories that contain environmental values can be integrated into language and literature learning to raise students' awareness of environmental issues and develop critical thinking skills.

In addition, the anthropological approach in poetry learning shows that the incorporation of cultural and environmental values in the poetry learning process can increase student engagement and enrich their imagination and environmental awareness, although the research still focuses on students' experiences empirically (Sihotang et al., 2025). The existence of this study reflects the state of the art where literature is increasingly positioned not only as an object of aesthetic appreciation, but also as a medium to instill social and environmental values through a reflective learning process. However, a significant research gap is still seen in the systematic integration of metacognitive frameworks in ecological literary learning, especially in the study of symbol-rich poetry texts. In the context of Indonesian literature, Sapardi Djoko Damono's poetry is known to have a strong image of

nature and opens up space for reflective interpretation of the relationship between humans and nature. The power of this image is a strong basis for placing his work as an object of study in research that combines metacognitive and ecocritical frameworks, because popular poetry such as Sapardi's often evokes the reader's reflection on the existential dimension and environment inherent in the text.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive-interpretive qualitative approach with an orientation to text analysis and literature review. This approach was chosen because the main purpose of the research is not to measure readers' behavior empirically, but to understand in depth how the metacognitive approach can function as a learning framework for ecological literature through poetry reading. Thus, literary texts are positioned as the main field of meaning production, while the process of reading is understood as a cognitive and reflective activity that can be analyzed theoretically.

The object of this research is poems by Sapardi Djoko Damono which present natural imagery, environmental landscapes, and symbolic relationships between humans and the non-human world. The selection of texts is purposively carried out by considering the intensity of ecological representation and its reflective potential, as seen in poems that utilize rain, seasons, light, soil, and space as existential metaphors. Primary data in the form of poetry texts were obtained from official anthologies and legal editions, while secondary data came from scientific literature on metacognitive theory, ecocriticism, and ecological literature learning.

The analysis in this study was carried out by integrating the perspective of ecocriticism and metacognitive theory. Ecocriticism is used to identify and interpret how nature is represented, how human–environmental relations are constructed, and what ecological values are implied in poetry. Meanwhile, metacognitive theory serves to map the process of reflective reading, namely how readers plan meaning, monitor understanding, and evaluate the results of their own interpretation when dealing with literary texts.

The analysis procedure begins with an intensive reading of the poem text to identify ecological elements such as natural imagery, environmental symbols, and relational narratives between humans and the natural world. Furthermore, these texts are interpreted ecocritically to reveal the ecological meaning they contain. In the next stage, the reading process is mapped into a metacognitive framework, examining how the reader can conceptually establish an initial focus on ecological meaning (planning), realize and assess his or her understanding during reading (monitoring), and reflect and reassess the meaning and ethical implications of the text after the reading is complete (evaluation). The results of these two layers of analysis were then synthesized to formulate a reflective reading model that integrates ecological awareness and cognitive readers' awareness.

The validity of the analysis is maintained through theoretical triangulation by comparing the results of the interpretation of the poem with the latest literature on ecocriticism and metacognition, as well as through conceptual consistency between the theoretical framework, the process of analysis, and the findings produced. Documentation of text citations and scientific references are used to ensure data traceability and transparency of interpretation.

Through this methodological procedure, the research produces a conceptual mapping of how poetry as a literary text can be a reflective ecological literary learning medium, as well as producing a metacognitive-based pedagogical model that can be used as a reference in

the development of literary learning oriented towards environmental awareness and readers' awareness of thinking.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Poems of Sapardi Djoko Damono and Natural Wisdom

In Javanese mystical cosmology, rain and water are not just natural phenomena, but ontological symbols of the process *of sangkan paraning dumadi*, which is the journey of existence from the origin to return to its source. Water is understood as a medium of transition, which connects the born and the returned, the visible and the transcendent. In the framework of ecocriticism, this symbolization shows that nature is not placed as a passive setting, but rather as a cosmic subject that is active in shaping human consciousness. It is at this point that Sapardi Djoko Damono's poems present rain as an ethical agent that works in a system of ecological and spiritual relations at the same time.

Poem "Rain in June" (Damono, 1994) Displaying rain is not a meteorological event, but as a figure who practices ethical practices: perseverance, wisdom, and wisdom. This personification shifts the position of rain from a natural object to a moral subject. In the perspective of ecocriticism, rain here serves as a representation of nature that has agency, which is able to respond, care for, and maintain the balance of the world. Meanwhile, in a metacognitive framework, the reader is directed to reflect again on the way they understand nature: whether nature is merely a resource, or rather an existential partner in human existence.

The steadfastness of the rain that "hides the drizzle of longing for the flowering tree" represents the principle *rumangsa* (of being able to feel), namely the ability to feel others as part of oneself (Endraswara, 2016, 2018). Ecologically, it reflects the interdependent relationship between rain, plants, soil, and life. Metacognitively, the rows activate the reader's reflective consciousness to monitor how meaning is constructed: rain is no longer read as a physical phenomenon, but as an expression of cosmic empathy. Thus, this poem teaches an ecological way of thinking that is not exploitative, but relational.

Concept *memayu hayuning bawana*, efforts to beautify and maintain world harmony (Isnaini, 2021a), In this poem it is not articulated as a moral slogan, but is manifested through the act of rain that erases traces, absorbs the unspeakable, and gives space for the fragile to grow. In the context of ecocriticism, these actions represent an ethics of care (*ethics of care*) to the environment. In the metacognitive context, the reader is invited to re-evaluate the position of the human subject in ecological relations: not as rulers, but as part of the network of life.

This dimension of harmony is expanded in the poem "Rain, Starlings, and Guava Leaves" (Damono, 1969, 1974, 1983), which brings together rain, birds, leaves, and humans in one semiotic landscape. The intertwined dictions of nature create an image of ecological balance, which in Javanese mysticism is the way to recognize the Divine. Nature, in this case, is not only a mirror of God, but also a pedagogical medium that teaches relational awareness. This process of reading poetry, metacognitively, encourages the reader to realize how spiritual meaning arises precisely through ecological details.

On poems such as "When the Rain Comes" and "Releasing the Rain" (Damono, 2009a, 2009b), Rain appears as a protector of life. The array of "trees are busy caring for their young" shows that rain activates the ecological maintenance cycle. In the framework of ecocriticism, rain here is a trigger for regeneration, not just a natural event. Within a metacognitive framework, the reader is directed to monitor ecological cause-and-effect relationships that are often overlooked in everyday life.

This relationship continues in the poem "Butterfly Night", when a small creature comes out after rain to go towards the light. The light that appears after the rain signifies the rebirth of life, a metaphor for the existential cycle that is in line with the concept *of sangkan paraning dumadi*. A reflective reader not only captures the beauty of the image, but also understands the structure of the ecological meaning that accompanies it.

The river, in Sapardi's poems, appears as an ethical and cognitive space at the same time. In "River, Tabanan" and "Bintang and River", the river is not just a flow of water, but a space for encounter, contemplation, and self-awareness. In Javanese mysticism, the river reflects the principles *keryenak tyasing sesama*, namely prioritizing collective balance (Isnaini, 2021b). Ecocritically, rivers are positioned as the center of the ecosystem. Metacognitively, the river becomes a metaphor for the thought process: flowing, bouncing and reflecting on the self.

The symbol of the tree deepens this network of meanings. In "About the Tree" and "The Tree of Life", the tree becomes the center of a small cosmos: where birds, wind, and humans interdepend. These poems construct the tree as an ecological and spiritual axis. The critique of logging and urbanization in "Trees on the Roadside" shows a keen awareness of ecocriticism: modernity has replaced trees with power poles, yet it has lost its ecological and ethical function. In a metacognitive context, readers are invited to evaluate the narrative of progress they receive and reconsider their impact on the balance of the cosmos.

In a darker constellation, rain is also interpreted as a metaphor for death. In sonnets and mourning poems, rain appears as a marker of mortality and the end of the journey. However, in the framework of *sangkan paraning dumadi*, death is not an absence, but a transitional phase to origin. Thus, rain remains in the same cosmic cycle: ending as well as beginning.

Overall, the poems of rain, rivers, and trees in Sapardi's work build a reflective ecological pedagogy. Through the integration of ecocriticism and metacognition, these texts present nature not only as an aesthetic object, but as an ontological and ethical learning field. Readers not only understand nature, but also learn how to understand the way they understand nature. That's where poetry becomes a space of ecological and spiritual awareness that strengthens each other.

Literary Ecological Learning in School

The relationship between the ecocritical-mystical reading of Sapardi's poems with the metacognitive approach in learning ecological literature in schools lies in the way in which these texts can be functioned not only as material for literary appreciation, but as a medium for reflection thinking about the relationship between humans and nature. The poems of rain, rivers, and trees that have been analyzed previously provide a very rich symbolic field for developing students' metacognitive awareness, that is, awareness of how they understand, interpret, and interpret the ecological world through literary language.

In the framework of learning, the metacognitive approach invites students not to stop at the question "what is the meaning of this poem?", but to go further towards "how did I arrive at that meaning?" and "what are my assumptions about nature at work when I read this array?". When students read "June Rain," for example, they are not only invited to identify the personification of rain as "steadfast, wise, and wise," but also reflect on why they tend to interpret rain as a neutral or even disruptive event in their daily lives. At this point, poetry works as a tool to disrupt anthropocentric cognitive habits and open up a more relational ecological thinking space.

In ecological literary learning, Sapardi's poem can be positioned as a metacognizable triggering text. Teachers can design reflective reading activities through three main stages: planning, monitoring, and evaluation. In the planning stage, students are asked to be aware of their initial knowledge of rain, rivers, and trees, whether as resources, threats, or simply a backdrop. This stage is important because this initial awareness determines how they enter the text. In the context of ecological disasters such as floods or forest destruction, this stage also opens up the awareness that students' socio-ecological experiences shape the way they read poetry.

In the monitoring stage, when students read Sapardi's poems, they were invited to record the changes in understanding that occurred. For example, when rain is personified as a creature that "keeps its longing secret", students might be asked to ask: "Do I still see rain as just falling water, or as part of an empathic relationship between the elements of nature?" This process makes reading a conscious activity, not a passive consumption of meaning. This is where ecocriticism works side by side with metacognition: text produces ecological awareness, while metacognition produces awareness of the process of meaning itself.

The evaluation stage then invites students to reassess their understanding: did the way they view nature change after reading the poems? Do they begin to see rivers not just as waterways, but as living ecosystems that have a "right" to be protected, as described in the poems "River, Tabanan" or "Stars and Rivers"? At this stage, the learning of ecological literature does not stop at knowledge, but moves towards environmental attitudes and ethics.

In this way, the reading of rain, rivers, and trees in Sapardi's poem becomes a pedagogical means to build reflective ecological literacy. Students learn that the meaning of nature in poetry is not something that is given for granted, but is built through the thought process, experience, and value they bring. This awareness is at the heart of the metacognitive approach: students become not only readers of poetry, but also readers of their own way of understanding the world.

The implication is that literary learning in school is no longer trapped in memorizing the meaning or biography of the author, but transforms into a space for ecological thinking practice. Sapardi's poems, with their network of symbols of rain, rivers, and trees, provide the ideal material to train students to read nature reflectively. Through a metacognitive approach, literature serves as a bridge between aesthetic awareness, ecological awareness, and self-awareness as subjects living within, rather than above, nature.

Strengthening Research Results through Synthesis with Previous Research

The main findings of this study show that the reading of Sapardi Djoko Damono's poems through a metacognitive approach in the framework of ecological literature is able to build readers' reflective awareness of the relationship between humans and nature. These findings do not stand alone, but expand and integrate two research paths that have been running relatively separately, namely the study of literary ecocriticism and metacognitive strategies in reading learning.

Textually, the research of Agustian Aryanti, Fitrah, and Budiyono (2021) has proven that Sapardi's poems are rich in natural imagery that builds layers of symbolic and emotional meaning. However, the research stops at aesthetic and imagery mapping, not yet placing the image as a tool for shaping readers' ecological awareness. This research goes further by showing that the imagery of rain, rivers, and trees in Sapardi's poem is not just a poetic ornament, but a reflective field that can be activated through metacognitive strategies so that readers are aware of their own way of interpreting nature.

Meanwhile, ecocriticism studies such as those conducted by Aprilia and Sudaryanto (2025) on the poetry of WS Rendra and Astuti, Yarsama, and Sujaya (2025) in the

development of ecocriticism-based enrichment books show that poetry is effective as a medium of environmental education. However, both studies still place the reader as the recipient of ecological values, not as the subject who consciously constructs his or her understanding. This is where the contribution of this research becomes significant: the metacognitive approach makes readers not only learn about nature from poetry, but also learn about how they think about nature through poetry.

In the pedagogical realm, these findings are in line with and at the same time expand the research of Hernika, Wahab, and Susetya (2025) which proves the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies in learning critical reading. However, the research has not touched on the ecological and literary dimensions. This study shows that metacognition not only improves the ability to understand texts cognitively, but also deepens ethical and ecological awareness when the text read is nature-themed poetry. This is in line with the findings of Martelletti, Luzuriaga, and Furman (2023) that metacognition strengthens inference and deep understanding in reading, but this study adds a new dimension, namely ecological inference and human-nature relational reflection.

From the perspective of environmental literacy, the research of Neloy and Shahin (2025) and Wirawan and Abdillah (2025) shows that the ecocritical approach in literary learning increases students' environmental awareness. However, the approach is still thematic and affective. This research strengthens their findings by providing a cognitive mechanism that explains how awareness is formed, namely through the process of planning, monitoring, and evaluating readers' understanding when interacting with ecological poetry texts.

Furthermore, the anthropo-ecological approach in poetry learning as proposed by Sihotang et al. (2025) emphasizes the importance of integrating cultural and environmental values. This research shows that such integration becomes much more effective when associated with metacognition, as students not only internalize values, but also consciously reflect on how those values are produced by the language of poetry and their reading experiences.

Finally, a systematic study by Yulita and Napitupulu (2023) confirms that metacognitive strategies are key to improving reading comprehension. This research extends the findings into the realm of literature and ecology, proving that metacognition not only enhances literal and inferential understanding, but also deepens ecological awareness and environmental ethics through literary texts.

Thus, this research occupies the position of state of the art as a conceptual bridge between literary ecocriticism and metacognitive theory. He not only asserts that poetry can teach love of nature, but also explains how ecological awareness is constructively constructed in the reader's mind. This is the main contribution that distinguishes this research from previous studies and at the same time strengthens its relevance in the context of literary education and contemporary ecological crises.

CONCLUSION

Based on the overall discussion, this study concludes that Sapardi Djoko Damono's poems have a very strong potential as a medium for learning ecological literature when read through a metacognitive approach. The representation of rain, rivers, and trees in these poems does not merely serve as an aesthetic imagery, but rather as a relational symbol that reflects man's connection to nature within the framework of cosmic balance. In the perspective of ecocriticism, nature exists as a living subject, has intrinsic value, and demands an ethical attitude from humans, not just a passive background or exploitative resource.

The metacognitive approach allows readers, especially learners, to be aware, monitor, and evaluate their own thought processes when interpreting ecological literary texts. Through the stages of planning, monitoring, and evaluation, poetry reading becomes a reflective activity that encourages deep ecological awareness. Students not only understand the symbolic meaning of rain as harmony, rivers as centers of life and self-reflection, and trees as the support of the balance of the cosmos, but also reflect on how their anthropocentric experiences, values, and assumptions influence the way they understand nature.

The integration of metacognition and ecocriticism in literary learning shows that environmental awareness is not born instantly, but rather through conscious and continuous cognitive processes. Thus, the learning of ecological literature based on Sapardi Djoko Damono's poetry contributes not only to strengthening literary literacy competencies, but also to the formation of ethical attitudes and ecological responsibilities of students. Literature, in this context, serves as a pedagogical space to simultaneously train thinking sensitivity, self-awareness, and ecological awareness.

Theoretically, this study enriches the interdisciplinary study between literature, ecocriticism, and cognitive psychology by showing that metacognition can be a productive conceptual framework in reading ecological literary texts. Pedagogically, these findings offer a more reflective model of literary learning in schools that is more reflective, contextual, and relevant to contemporary environmental crises. Thus, reading poetry no longer stops at appreciative activities, but develops into an educational praxis that fosters ecological and humanitarian awareness in a sustainable manner.

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