



## THE ROLE OF ECO-LITERATURE IN EDUCATING CHILDREN ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE IN UZBEKISTAN

**Shakirova Asal-oy Safar qizi**

*Faculty of Philology and teaching languages (English)*

*Academic supervisor: Hamidova Durдона,*

*teacher in the department of*

*English Applied Aspects, UzSWLU*

**Abstract.** *Climate change has emerged as a key challenge of the 21st century globally, and calls for both scientific responses and education, and associated cultural responses. In Uzbekistan, which has been experiencing social and ecological challenges for decades due to issues such as water shortages, desertification and the Aral Sea catastrophe, it is particularly urgent to instill a sense of responsibility toward life on our planet in children. This article focuses on the contribution of Eco-literature in teaching children climate change in Uzbekistan. It discusses how environmental literature for children serves as a mediator in terms of awareness building, formation of environmental values and stimulation of sustainable behavior at an early age. Engaging a qualitative, descriptive analysis, the research considers representative children's literature text and educational materials from Uzbekistan to learn about dominant ethical messages, narrative methods and cultural emphasis. The results indicate that Eco-literature serves to simplify complicated environmental issues for children, and leads to the development of an ecological consciousness based on regional cultural history.*

**Key words:** *climate change, eco-literature, children's literature, environmental education, sustainability, ecological awareness, environmental values, Uzbekistan, climate education, cultural narratives, children and youth*

Uzbekistan is increasingly affected by climate change in its territory, creating significant environmental, social, and economic risks. The country's average temperature has increased dramatically over the last few decades, causing more frequent droughts, water shortages and land degradation. Among its most devastating ecological effects, the drying of the Aral Sea has led to a host of environmental problems and health afflictions in the region, including dust storms and chronic disease. Challenges associated with climate change have also become increasingly apparent in urban areas in recent years, particularly in the capital Tashkent. Higher temperatures have made heatwaves more extreme and the urban heat island effect stronger so that, making summer months hotter and extending their duration is one impact of urbanization and extensive vehicular traffic together with urban construction that is not complying with official health guidelines. Concerns of pressure from antiquated infrastructure and climate change have triggered a shortage of water and have made what water we have more polluted. These problems are exacerbated by

aetiologies that are undeniable health threats to children. These health threats also compromise their educational attainments and everyday living conditions. This underscores the close of climate education. The importance of climate change and its impacts to our children can not be overstated. The function of education systems is irreplaceable, and a paste is needed to integrate language education with climate change in a more efficient manner. In Uzbekistan, English is widely taught as a global language, offering opportunities to integrate environmental topics into language-learning materials. Incorporating themes related to ecology, climate change, and global warming into English-language textbooks, reading passages, fairy tales, and illustrated stories can foster environmental awareness while simultaneously developing language skills. Introducing such content at an early stage can help children develop a sense of responsibility toward nature and encourage environmentally sustainable attitudes and behaviors.



What attracts children to ecological fairy tales the most is their unique story-lines and their departure from conventional dramatic narratives [1]. Children are also particularly interested in vivid characters such as wild and domestic animals, birds, and insects, as well as in their lifestyles and animated behavior [2]. The purpose of such fairy tales is to introduce children to the complexities of natural phenomena, both domesticated and undomesticated, including the existence of animal and plant life, their life cycles, and the various properties of the environment [3]. In fairy tales, emotionally rich characters and events are presented so vividly that children become emotionally attached to them. Children feel compassion for characters who face difficulties and often attempt to rescue or protect them [4]. The empathy children develop through fairy tales helps them establish a strong and positive relationship with nature in real life. This emotional connection contributes to the formation of appropriate attitudes and responsible behavior toward the environment and lays the foundation for rational and eco-proficient conduct [5]. Fairy tales also provide a basic scientific understanding of the world by explaining complex natural processes, such as



how living organisms adapt to environmental conditions, the interaction between living and non-living elements, and the circulation of matter in nature [6]. The inclusion of fairy tales, stories, and other literary works that encourage children to love and respect nature, care for the environment, and protect ecosystems has become a common practice in Uzbekistan's preschool and primary environmental education [7]. Educational literature in Uzbekistan places a strong emphasis on nature, which, alongside other educational activities, fosters a nurturing and respectful attitude toward the environment [8]. Studies conducted in Uzbekistan indicate that combining literature, storytelling, and nature-oriented games helps children develop emotional responsiveness, environmental responsibility, and essential ecological knowledge, which is often lacking in modern society [9].

In the past, children's literature was predominately utilized to impart moral lessons, as well as to explain the social and cultural values of different societies. More recently, it has taken on the additional responsibility of educating children about the environment. More so than the usual educational format of environmental statistics and lectures, children's literature has the ability to explain and bring to life complex environmental issues affecting the world. When children read about the deforestation of a particular forest, or the loss of a home of an animal, children begin to develop an understanding of the value of life and the associated negative consequences of the loss of such life. Stories encouraging children to value and protect life begin to motivate children to become advocates of environment. Literature encourages children to appreciate the value of life by protecting and planting trees, conserving water, and picking up litter in their neighborhoods. Stories of young children acting with courage to save their environment from pollution empowers other children to do the same. Educators have observed that children who have read environment themed literature participate more in classroom and community activities aimed at the environment. With these story children gain the motivation to act and about the environment. This is the reason why children's literature has become an integral part of educating children about their environment [10].

Educating people on climate issues should absolutely include literature, as Hoydis et al suggest [11]. Winning literature prizes means the authors of these books not only embed ecology within the dominating themes of their work, but they also tackle pressing issues within their contemporary societies [12]. It is therefore easy to understand why ecology is included within the themes of books that target younger audiences. There has been a noticeable presence of an ecological lens, even in texts not primarily categorized within ecological literature, in the Children's and Young Adult literature (CYL) in the last decade [13]. Modern ideas about Environmental Education have their roots in the educational ideas and practices about Nature Study, Conservation, and Outdoor Education from the late 19th to early 20th century. Starting in the 1970's UNESCO has been a major actor in defining and re-defining the concept of Environmental Education [14]. It is in the context of this definition that Environmental Education as a simple, one-way, imparting body of knowledge came to be understanding educational practices that aim at nurturing a



population that is knowledgeable, skilled, and very much committed to resolving environmental issues collaboratively or even in isolated personal capacities [15]. Furthermore, environmental education as conceived by UNESCO–UNEP was purposed to address a number of essential goals namely Awareness, Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, Ability to Evaluate and Participation [16]. Formal and non-formal environmental education has gained recognition since the 1970s [17]. UNICEF and others point out that the world's youth demographic is substantial and their inclusion in environmental discussions is critical [18]. This has only become more pressing in recent decades as climate change and the loss of biodiversity, among other things, require an educated and skilled workforce suitable to the challenges of the 21st century [19]. Studies show that both formal and non-formal environmental experiences in youth contribute to developing environmental literacy and positive attitudes toward the environment in adulthood [20].

Several children's books have successfully raised environmental awareness and become classics. One of the most famous is Hans Christian Andersen's 'The Daisy' (1847). This story focuses on a small, humble daisy growing in nature. The daisy is happy with sunlight, birds, and fresh air. Humans, however, pick flowers without care, and the daisy is eventually destroyed.

Another significant book is Lynne Cherry's 'A River Ran Wild'(1992). The book tells the true story of a river that was once clean and full of life but became polluted because of factories and human activity. Later, people realize their mistakes and work together to clean and restore the river.

Another book of Lynne Cherry's 'The Great Kapok Tree' (1990) is about a man who plans to cut down a giant kapok tree in the Amazon rainforest. As he sleeps, animals and nature speak to him, explaining how the tree supports the entire ecosystem.

Climate change especially threatens the health and well-being of children, and even more so in Uzbekistan, where the children form the weakest socio-economic strata of the population. This article has demonstrated the potential of domestic eco-literature as a conduit to children's hearts and minds, and the accompanying emotional and intellectual crown management regarding complicated environmental issues found in literature. The environmental literature for children and youth creates a unique atmosphere to develop the eco-empathy and eco-responsibility in children. Using a narrative associated with children's everyday realities, the literature builds a deeper understanding of the complex problems of climate change, water scarcity, and ecological issues that promote empathy and ethical awareness.



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