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Intercultural Dimensions of Teaching Ecocritical Literature in Thai Higher Education

by

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

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INTERCULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF TEACHING ECOCRITICAL LITERATURE IN THAI HIGHER EDUCATION

Wasinrat Nualsiri

This research is designed as an ethnographic case study to examine Thai teacher's and students' responses to the representations of nature in Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (1991), Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) and Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004) in the *Environmental Literature and Criticism* module taught at a public university in Thailand. The study is based on the application of three theoretical frameworks: Claire Kramsch's 'third place' (2011) which refers to a negotiation of meaning across different cultures, Karen Risager's 'transnational paradigm' (2007) that is teaching foreign culture with an emphasis on cultural complexity, and Michael Byram's 'intercultural citizenship' (2008) which refers to teaching foreign-language texts that respond to socio-political issues. Cultural and literary analysis is also adopted as part of the supportive framework for data analysis. A qualitative approach is used to interpret the data obtained from classroom observations, teacher and student interviews, documentary data and field notes. The participants, a teacher and three students, were observed for four months and interviewed at the end of the semester.

The findings reveal that *Refuge*, *Ceremony*, *The Hungry Tide* and teaching approach concern the struggle of the marginalised: women, ethnic minorities and postcolonial countries. The teacher's presentation of the texts highlights the clashing views of nature held by different social groups and makes suggestions about how to reconcile these conflicts. Her explanation reflects an attempt to make the issues contained in the stories relevant to Thai students. The teacher compares similar ecological and socio-political problems in the texts and in Thailand. Her interpretation of the portrayals of nature reflects a circulation of values across different cultures in the texts and in the teaching context. The students' responses suggest that the teacher's explanation and the stories make them aware of the issues in the texts and in their own country. The students' interpretations are according to their individual interests and socio-cultural backgrounds.

Contents

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Wasinrat Nualsiri, declare that this thesis entitled

Intercultural Dimensions of Teaching Ecocritical Literature in Thai Higher Education

and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. Parts of this work have been published as:
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Signed: .....

Date: .....

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Introduction

> Bangkok floods: anger grows in deluged districts. Flood water has continued to pour into outer districts of the Thai capital, Bangkok, forcing residents to evacuate. (*BBC Asia-Pacific*, 1 Nov 2011)

> Keren villagers along the lead-contaminated waterway were recently awarded a cash settlement, but it can't wash away the environmental irresponsibility that has left one community member blinded and others sick and in fear for their unborn children. (*Bangkok Post*, 27 Jan 2013)

> Several hundred villagers [in Tak's Mae Sot district] had high levels of cadmium in their blood. The scientists believe the contamination came from eating cadmium-tainted rice. (*Bangkok Post*, 12 Apr 2013)

Environmental Problems

The three headlines refer to contemporary environmental problems in Thailand. The first example is about the worst deluge the country had experienced in half a century. Thailand is located in Southeast Asia and is frequently affected by flooding during the monsoon season. In 2011, the floods lasted for more than half a year from July 2011 to January 2012, and 65 out of Thailand's 77 provinces were pronounced flood disaster zones (Emergency Operation Centre 2012). This disaster was caused by Tropical Storm Nock-ten. Flood water from the north and the north-east had to gravitate through central provinces, including Bangkok, into the Gulf of Thailand. The headline refers to one part of the crisis when the government attempted to protect the heart of Bangkok from flooding. They built flood walls and drained flood water away from the capital city. This meant that Bangkok suburbs and surrounding provinces got submerged due to the lack of a direct waterway into the ocean. Residents outside the centre of Bangkok felt that their areas had been sacrificed to protect the city centre (Rachel Harvey 2011). The major industrial estates above the capital city, such as in Ayutthaya and Pathum Thani provinces were in water as much as 3 metres deep during the

floods. Thailand's Emergency Operation Centre finally reported the overall damage with a total of 815 deaths, 13.6 million people affected and over 20,000 square kilometres of rural farmland destroyed (Emergency Operation Centre: 2012).

The second headline reveals how the ethnic minorities, the Karen, have been suffering from the contamination of Klity Creek by a lead factory located nearby in the lower-western part of Thailand. The lead mine, called Bor Ngam, had been operating since 1970 in the deep forest close to the Thung Yai Naresuan Wildlife Sanctuary (Piyaporn Wongruang 2013: 9). The lead processing house was situated only 30 metres from the stream that 200-300 Klity villagers depended on for their water. In the late 1980s, people and livestock in Klity Lang village began dying. The bodies of some community members swelled and they suffered from severe headaches (Wongruang 2013: 9). It was not until 1998 that some of them had health checks in a hospital located a hundred kilometres away from the villages. The doctors found high levels of lead in the villagers' blood and the Geological Department at Kanchanaburi ordered the mine and processing house to stop operations in 1998. News of the impact of the lead mine on people's health then started to spread among the public. Since 2003, several groups of the Karen have fought in law courts for compensation and a clean-up of Klity Creek by the mining company. However, the heavy metal contamination of the only source of their water has been a tragedy for these ethnic groups (Wongruang 2013: 6).

The third example refers to the effect of the cadmium and zinc mining industry on massive rice plantations in the western part of the country. Padaeng Industry was granted permission by the Thai government in 1972 to mine zinc ore on a 40-hectare area in the Mae Sot district, Tak province. In early 2004, cadmium was detected in three districts nearby by foreign scientists from the International Water Management Institute (Apinya Wipatayotin 2013). State agencies then examined the area and concluded that cadmium contamination in the soil happened naturally because the area was situated near cadmium and zinc deposits.

However, villagers accused Padaeng Industry and the Tak Mining Company of polluting their residential area and their farmland (Wipatayotin 2013). In 2009, the affected residents filed their medical results and polluted rice field cases with the court. The villagers demanded that the Pollution Control Department should eliminate the toxic heavy metal from the area and charge the mining firms for compensation. In 2013, the Pollution Control Department detected cadmium contamination in Ma Tao and Mae Ku Creeks and drafted a plan to clean up the stream and the surrounding environment (Wipatayotin 2013).

Problem Causes and Long-Term Solutions

The three news reports reflect environmental problems in relation to the struggle of the affected groups. The latter two cases are not frequently reported in the local newspapers or on television programmes in Thailand. The responsibility and compensation to help the affected groups seem to be short-term reactions. Scholars have studied the root causes of the problems and suggested some solutions to solve them in the long-run. In his widely-cited book, *Sustainable Development* written in Thai, Prayudh Payutto examines the history of Thailand's development and industrialisation between the 1960s and 1970s. Payutto explains that during this period, many cities like Bangkok were urbanised as economic centres, while remote provinces became sites for the construction of power plants and industries (1996: 21). The country's industrialisation and agricultural trade have significantly contributed to national economic and financial growth. However, the development has come at a high price: the destruction of the natural environment, prolonged natural disasters, the widening of the socio-economic gap between different social groups, and the plight of the disadvantaged (Payutto 1996: 33). Payutto points out that these problems are interconnected and no simple solution can reconcile or compensate the affected groups. He suggests a revised plan for the country's development that balances the importance of economics, science, technology, environment and culture. In his view, creating awareness of socio-cultural and environmental issues can contribute to a sustainable

solution (1996: 153). Payutto recommends the development of the individuals' recognition of the link between different social groups and their relationship with the natural environment. This realisation helps people to think more carefully before they consume energy as their consumption may have an impact on others (Payutto 1996: 158).

As environmental and social issues in Thailand are closely related, it is important to consider social dimensions to understand the problems. In *The Marginalised Groups: From Thoughts to Reality* (2007), Thai social scientist Surichai Wun'gaeo investigates the country's development over the past four decades. He pays attention to the consequences for disadvantaged groups and makes suggestions for a reconsideration of the development policy. Wun'gaeo explains that the country's development in the last forty years aimed to develop national economic growth by supporting industries. However, the plan overlooked the consequences for underprivileged groups: the poor and ethnic minorities (Wun'gaeo 2007: 13). These people had been marginalised by the country's macroeconomic plan that allowed industrial firms to access most of the natural resources (Wun'gaeo 2007: 14). The poor not only had little opportunity to use natural resources, but there was also a direct risk of contamination from industrial sites located in their vicinity (Wun'gaeo 2007: 69). Wun'gaeo calls for a revision of the country's development plan that recognises the plight of these affected groups. He suggests that it is important to make advantaged groups and the general public aware of the problems (2007: 174). In his opinion, academic research and mass communication should address these problems by listening to the marginalised and highlighting their stories to develop social awareness. Moreover, educational institutions should develop understanding of the consequences of the country's development on disadvantaged groups (Wun'gaeo 2007: 174).

According to *The Environmental Imagination*, American literary and cultural scholar Lawrence Buell considers an environmental crisis as a 'crisis of imagination' (1995: 2). Buell suggests that the root causes of environmental problems relate to language and

culture. He identifies the impact of the cultural representation of nature through language on people's relationships with the natural environment. This concept is useful to make sense of the environmental and social issues in Thailand. In my understanding, 'crisis of imagination' in this context means language and culture that may justify the exploitation of the natural environment. This concept can also refer to an absence of ecological thinking and a lack of awareness of the interconnection between people in different social groups. In order to deal with ecological problems in the long term, Buell suggests 'better ways of imagining nature and humanity's relation to it' (1995: 2). Developing this understanding of the links between perception and its impact may therefore help people to modify their views and their relationship with the natural world. My review of the three important studies by Payutto, Wun'gaeo and Buell suggests that environmental problems are complex and the solutions to them require considerable effort from a variety of social and educational sectors.

The Role of Education

My attempt to address contemporary environmental problems is based on my own context in Thai higher education. My overview of ecological problems in Thailand and scholars' explanations indicates that understanding the issues and finding solutions to the crises are critical challenges to Thai society. The Thai government has realised that urgent action is necessary and this affects all parts of society, including higher education. The framework of the Long Term plan for Higher Education in Thailand for 2008-2022 states:

> Fossil energy utilization leads to the greenhouse gases, threatening all forms of lives and mankind. Universities must, therefore, create awareness on conservation of energy, preservation of the environment and natural resources, at all education levels and among the public. (The Commission on Higher Education 2008: 3)

This education policy stresses that universities must contribute to raising and developing ecological awareness. From my perspective as a Thai university teacher in the humanities, 'creating awareness' of the environment is not sufficient to highlight the interconnectedness

of social and environmental issues. Historian Donald Worster points out that dealing with environmental crises 'requires understanding those ethical systems and using that understanding to reform them' (1993: 27). Worster accepts that 'historians, along with literary scholars, anthropologists, and philosophers, cannot do the reforming, of course, but they can help with the understanding' (1993: 27). This explanation highlights the role the humanities play in dealing with environmental issues. Humanities subjects have the potential to create awareness and understanding of the problems and can suggest possible solutions.

The responses of the humanities to environmental crises have received increasing attention from scholars and teachers. Cheryll Glotfelty advocates the importance of literary studies and literature modules that can make a substantial contribution to ecological thinking (1996: xxii). She explains that this is because literary studies and teaching literature deal with value, meaning, tradition, point of view and language. According to her, 'students taking literature and composition courses will be encouraged to think seriously about the relationship of humans to nature, about the ethical and aesthetic dilemmas posed by the environmental crisis, and about how language and literature transmit values with profound ecological implications' (1996: xxv). Glotfelty suggests an interdisciplinary approach to environmental literary studies and pedagogy in related disciplines, such as anthropology, psychology and philosophy to develop an insight into ecological crises (Glotfelty 1996: xxi). In Buell's view, 'environmental crisis is a broadly cultural issue, not the property of a single discipline' (2005: vi). By this statement, Buell means that environmental humanities, i.e. philosophy, cultural geography and literature are as important as environmental studies, such as science, engineering and public policy. He asserts that 'issues of vision, value, culture, and imagination are keys to today's environmental crises' (2005: 5). Cultural analysis can therefore contribute to an understanding of the problems, and a reconsideration of views of nature as well as relationships with the environment (Buell 2005: 5).

Glotfelty and Buell emphasise the importance of value in relation to views of nature and environmental crises. The reconsideration of values is central to raising environmental awareness. James Banks's explanation of the role of education is useful to understand how teachers can encourage students to reconsider values. He advocates that teaching and learning primarily deal with the incompatibility of values, beliefs and attitudes. According to Banks, 'the student should be encouraged to predict and to consider the possible consequences of alternative values, and be helped to clarify conflicting and confused values. Not only are conflicting values widespread in the larger society, but within individuals there are many divergent beliefs, attitudes and values' (2006: 89). The role that education performs is thus to provide lessons to help students learn a variety of values, beliefs and attitudes and their implications. The concepts of values, beliefs and attitudes are important because they are based on a similar principle to the relationship with the environment and with people in different social groups.

Scholars have extensively studied the notions of values, beliefs and attitudes. They consider the three concepts as foundational aspects of thinking, decisions and behaviours. Milton Rokeach defines values as 'core conceptions of the desirable within every individual and society. They serve as standards or criteria to guide not only action but also judgment, choice, attitude, evaluation, argument, exhortation, rationalisation, and attribution of causality' (1979: 2). According to Martin O'Brien and Yvonne Guerrier, values also means reasons, motivations and justifications for actions (1995: xiii). They describe values as dynamic and subject to changes in society, culture and politics. In their words, 'values circulate and mutate, are foregrounded or back-grounded, adopted or excluded on the basis of a very wide range of social, cultural, economic and political priorities and commitments' (1995: xiii). Values also indicate plurality of culture in which the notions of rightness and wrongness are constructed, enhanced, challenged and transformed (O'Brien and Guerrier 1995: xiv). Values are significant to the discussion about the environment because they give

the ‘opportunities for democratising or re-empowering people’s relationships with the environment’ (O’Brien and Guerrier 1995: xiv-xv).

Rodney Needham describes belief as an operation of the mind and guidance for action and behaviour (1972: 52). He explains that belief is grounded in the individual’s experience of society and the culture one lives in. In Stuart Hampshire’s view, beliefs constitute the background to one’s active thought and observation. He describes that ‘the culture of which [one] is part is formed partly by the beliefs in which [one] grew up, almost without noticing them, and partly by the habits of action of social behaviour that are unthinking, unquestioned, but not unintentional’ (qtd. in Needham 1972: 57). The relationship between belief and reality is identified by D.M. Armstrong. He conceptualises that ‘beliefs are our interpretation of reality’ (1973: 4). Armstrong remarks that beliefs are formulated through an individual’s experiences and beliefs need to be checked against reality. The concept of belief is related to attitude. According to Milton Rokeach, attitude is ‘a relatively enduring organisation of beliefs around an object or situation pre-disposing one to respond in some preferential manner’ (1968: 112). However, attitude is not an ‘innate’ ability, but rather ‘a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given object’ (Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen 1975: 6). Alice Eagly and Shelly Chaiken conceive of attitudes as ‘tendencies to evaluate an entity with some degree of favour or disfavour, ordinarily expressed in cognitive, affective, and behavioural responses’ (1993: 155). My review of the concepts of values, beliefs and attitudes suggest that they are mental dispositions that are constructed through experience, society and culture. These fundamental concepts are useful to understand the link between perceptions of nature and interaction with the natural environment. The explanation of values, beliefs and attitudes suggests that they can be trained through the learning process and can be influenced by education. In particular, students’ engagement with texts in class may help modify their values, beliefs and attitudes towards the natural environment.

My Background and Motivation

Based on ecological issues in Thailand and the suggestions by scholars outlined above, it is important to explore the cultural aspects of environmental problems. Disconnection and lack of understanding between people in the cities and those living in more rural areas seem to be the main problem. My personal experience of having grown up in a rural community and gained my education in two big cities, one of them Thailand's capital, Bangkok, tells me that people in these environments tend to think differently. I studied at university in Chiang Mai in the municipality in the north for four years, and at university in Bangkok in the centre of Thailand, for another four years. After graduation, I taught English at a university in Phayao in the north for four years before moving to teach at the university in my hometown in Phitsanulok in the lower northern part of Thailand. I have witnessed the significant differences in lifestyle and culture between people living in urban and rural areas. However, although their lives and interests may differ, they are connected by ecological problems. My studying, working and travelling experiences in different parts of Thailand have made me recognise that activities in one province can have a huge impact on other provinces as well.

My experiences of living in various cultures and geographical locations have enabled me to recognise the link between cities and the countryside. For instance, deforestation in the north may cause the central region to experience severe floods or droughts. I have also learned that the generation of electricity in remote provinces is to satisfy ever-increasing energy consumption in the cities. However, power stations have produced ecological pollution that affects people who live in their vicinity. My hometown and workplace is located not far from the mining industries in the upper central province of Thailand. I therefore have first-hand knowledge that people whose residential areas are very close to the mining sites have had health problems because of ecological contamination.

These issues have made me recognise that people in cities and in the countryside are linked by ecological problems. The relationship between them should therefore be made explicit.

My research background in ecocritical literary study has also inspired me to think about environmental problems in Thai society in relation to other cultures. I studied the cultural representation of nature in English literary texts, but my BA study and MA research focused on context and culture within the texts. My teaching experience has taught me that students learn more effectively when they can see a relationship between the subject they are studying and their own experience. I have therefore thought of some ways in which literary studies can be related to the real world. My experiences of living in diverse contexts and cultures: the city/the country, and Asian-Thai/Western cultures has also made me aware of the interconnectedness of ecological problems at a local and global level. The environmental problems in Thailand and Thai people's interactions with foreign cultures have led me to focus my research on how to raise ecological awareness through teaching foreign-language texts in higher education in Thailand.

Teaching environmental literature at university level and its academic investigation are still limited in Thailand. However, there are some exceptions, a Thai lecturer of English literature at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok is one of them. In her book, *Probing Environmental Problems as Represented in Selected Contemporary American Literature* (2011), Darin Pradittatsanee points out that the field of ecocriticism is in its infancy in Thailand. She wrote this book in Thai and hopes to promote ecocriticism among literature teachers, university students and Thai public more generally. Her book offers textual analysis of some American environmental texts that she also uses in teaching her undergraduate and postgraduate modules. It deals with the following five texts: Daniel Quinn's *Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit* (1992), Susanne Antonetta's *Body Toxic: An Environmental Memoir* (2001), Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (1991), Karen Tei Yamashita's *Through the Arc of the Rain*

Forest (1990), and Ruth Ozeki's *All Over Creation* (2003). Pradittatsanee is primarily interested in socio-political and ecological issues represented in the texts and in how these issues are embedded in the American context. The topics that she focuses on include toxic contamination, health problems and environmental injustice. What is particularly useful for my own research is the conclusion of her book, in which she links issues discussed in her literary analysis to the Thai context, and to her own teaching responsibility.

She concludes that the manner in which environmental issues are depicted in these American texts can help us comprehend similar problems in Thailand (Pradittatsanee 2011: 182). In her comparison, Pradittatsanee points out how Thai people can learn from the problems in the American context. She parallels the issues raised by the texts to similar events in Thailand. In doing so, she highlights causes of environmental contamination in remote areas and their consequences on people's illnesses in both countries. Her suggestion of studying environmental issues in Western literature to gain a better understanding of those in Thailand, in my opinion, opens up the possibility to promote an intercultural perspective in teaching. Pradittatsanee ends her book with the following statement by Karen Kilcup that links the tasks of literary critic and teacher:

> The challenge for literary studies is to make an environmental perspective fundamental far beyond the discipline, to avoid making ecocriticism merely another interpretative system. I repeatedly ask, How can I most effectively move from recognition to responsibility and enable my students to do the same? How meaningful is traditional literary analysis in a world at risk? How can (and should) scholars in literature and language use their often privileged positions to contribute to the urgent project of global sustainability? How can I most effectively define activism? How can I practice what I teach? (qtd. in Pradittatsanee 2011: 186, Karen Kilcup 2009: 847)

This quotation suggests that Pradittatsanee herself is aware of her privileged position as a literature scholar and a university lecturer in Thai society. She leaves mentioning this to the very end of her book, and does not elaborate on how dealing with Western environmental

texts has informed her own teaching practice. Maybe this is because her research area of expertise is literary criticism rather than teaching foreign literature. She was my advisor when I completed my MA dissertation on American literature in 2006. Since 2011 her teaching included environmental literature and criticism modules at both the undergraduate and postgraduate level. As my own research interests focus on how environmental literature is taught at Thai HEIs, I secured my former teacher's permission to observe her modules. My own investigation sets in where her 2011 book ends, namely with the exploration of the intercultural dimensions of teaching and learning ecocritical texts, in order to understand how the teacher develops her students' comprehension of the issues in the texts. Whereas the teacher's book only deals with literature and textual criticism, my thesis is concerned more with the pedagogic side of environmental criticism. And it is this subfield, to which I hope to contribute with my research.

Research Questions

This project aims to supply empirical evidence concerning the relationship between views of nature and contemporary ecological problems across different cultures in Thai higher education. The aims of my project are formulated in the two following research questions:

1. How is nature represented in ecocritical literary texts in the English curriculum at a Thai university?
2. What features make these texts suitable or challenging for intercultural teaching and learning?
    2.a Why and how does the teacher present these literary texts in the classroom?
    2.b How do the students respond to the texts and to the teacher's explanation?

I hope that by suggesting answers to these questions, this thesis may contribute to a better understanding of intercultural teaching and learning through ecocritical literary texts. The

analysis of teaching materials based on the teacher's and her students' interpretations will indicate some of the current Thai values and beliefs about nature in relation to foreign cultures. In addition, by analysing the intercultural dimensions of teaching and learning, I hope to further understanding of ecological issues in the texts themselves and in the students' context of Thailand. In the course of exploring the teaching and learning of ecocritical texts I also hope to address the difficulties and challenges that both the teacher and her students encounter when studying Western ecocritical literature that is written in a language which is not their own.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1 begins with a discussion of teaching ecocriticism in Western education and in Thailand, in particular. The aim of this chapter is to provide background information pertaining to the study of literature and the environment in relation to pedagogy. It will focus on the ecocritical approach to literary analysis with an emphasis on issues of gender, race and class. The chapter will attempt to demonstrate the application of literary texts that represent the struggle of women, ethnic minorities and postcolonial countries. It will suggest that ecocritical pedagogies advocate these texts because they can help students to recognise the complexity of social and environmental problems in the contemporary world. The chapter will also review teaching literature about the environment at Thai higher education institutions. It will point out that while teaching ecocriticism at Western universities has been widely practised for some time now, teaching ecocriticism in Thailand has been practised at only a limited number of universities.

Chapter 2 takes up issues concerning the relationship between culture and language teaching. The chapter begins with the significant role that culture plays in foreign language and literature education. It will suggest that foreign-language teaching and learning ecocriticism share a concern about the recognition of the multiplicity of cultures. The

chapter will then focus on scholars' ideas regarding teaching approaches that aim to make students aware of how ideologies are conveyed through discourse, language and literature. It will also review scholars' suggestions of teaching materials that aim to represent a diverse choice of texts by writers who are from various socio-cultural backgrounds. This chapter will also outline the theoretical frameworks for my analysis of the intercultural dimensions of teaching and learning foreign-language texts. It will explain the methods by which the teacher and students negotiate meaning across different cultures in the texts and in their own contexts.

Chapter 3 details the rationale for the qualitative research approach. I will also explain the data collection methods that are used to examine intercultural dimensions of teaching and learning ecocritical texts. The chapter clarifies how the two research questions will be answered. It starts with a discussion of the combination of cultural analysis and ethnographic case study. The chapter will identify the use of intercultural theories underpinned by literary criticism as a method to investigate the cultural representations of nature in teaching materials. It will explain my approach of classroom ethnography which will be applied to analyse the Thai teacher's presentation of ecocritical texts and students' responses. The chapter will then describe the three research methods: classroom observation, interview and document analysis, by which primary data will be collected. This will be followed by an outline of the fieldwork at a Thai university in Bangkok, the pilot study, the context of the case study and the participants.

Chapter 4 presents my analysis of the Thai teacher's and students' responses to Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (1991). This chapter aims to investigate the participants' reflections on social and environmental injustice and the struggle of women. It will use Claire Kramsch's concept of 'third place', which refers to the mediation of meaning across different cultures inside and outside the text, to analyse their responses. The chapter will demonstrate how the teacher attempts to make the

issue of 'toxic discourse' in American society as represented in *Refuge* relevant to the Thai students. A discussion of the teacher's presentation of the text will exemplify the circulation of values across different cultures in the text and in her own background. The chapter will examine how gender differences between the teacher and her students make them approach *Refuge* in distinct ways. It will also suggest that the students' responses to the text and to their teacher's sample interpretations are shaped by their individual interests and generational differences.

Chapter 5 examines the Thai teacher's and students' ways of analysing Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977). This chapter aims to explore their responses to the representation of Native American cultures, values and beliefs, and the issue of ethnicity. It will deploy Karen Risager's notion of 'transnational paradigm' and related concepts to interpret their responses. The concepts deal with the teaching and learning of foreign-language texts with an emphasis on cultural complexity. The chapter will exemplify how the teacher points out the complexity of American cultures that are comprised of both white and indigenous cultures. A discussion of her lesson about the clashes between white and Native cultures aims to clarify how she makes students aware of the similar problems they are encountering in their own country. It will demonstrate how the teacher's ideas about the reconciliation of whites and Natives can serve as a lesson for students to think about political conflicts and their negotiation in the Thai context. The chapter will also show how the students' responses reflect the reciprocal relationship between themselves and the text.

Chapter 6 presents my analysis of the Thai teacher's and students' readings of Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004). This chapter explores the participants' reflections on socio-political and environmental problems in Third World countries and the class struggle. It will use Michael Byram's theory of 'intercultural citizenship' to analyse their interpretations. The concept deals with teaching and learning foreign-language texts that respond to socio-political issues in different contexts and cultures. The chapter will argue

that the teacher's comparison between the problems of nature conservation projects in India and in Thailand is designed to make the text relevant to the students. It will show how she points out that the conflicting views of nature held by Western environmentalists and indigenous people are the root causes of displacement and terrorism in both countries. The chapter will elucidate how the teacher addresses the possibility of solving the conflicts through mutual respect and co-operation between different groups of people. My discussion of her solution highlights her intention to stress social and environmental injustice to her students who are part of a privileged urban Thai society. The chapter will also suggest that the students' responses reflect how they learn about socio-political and environmental issues in India and in their own country.

Chapter 7 offers a wider picture of teaching and learning environmental texts in Thai higher education across different parts of the country. This brief chapter offers an overview of current teaching and learning practices, which differ from the module I observed. It is based on data I gained from interviews, which I conducted with eight Thai teachers of English, Comparative and Thai Literature as well as undergraduate students. The chapter will suggest that depending on the geographical location of the respective university (I include one at least from the centre, the north and the north-east) teachers choose different environmental texts, suggesting that they are linking the choice of text to students' experience. In this chapter I will point out that teaching techniques and learning activities are based on students' socio-cultural backgrounds from different regions.

In my conclusion I first summarise my answers to each research question. It then exemplify how English language barrier is a crucial challenge that the Thai teacher and her students encounter. This final part of the thesis will suggest that the intercultural theories I am relying upon in my analysis chapters need to be complimented by an explanation of linguistic differences in foreign language education. I will explain how the intercultural theories advocate foreign language teachers' occasional use of students' native language in

order to make students understand complex issues, and the integration of activity that can allow students to turn into practices the knowledge gained. This final part will offer a critical appreciation of the teaching approaches and materials that make it hard for the Thai students to be active and independent learners, in particular, the teacher's exclusive use of the English language in delivering all her lessons and in all students' discussions, as well as complex issues represented in the texts. I will close my thesis with identifying some limitations of my research.

Chapter 1

Teaching Ecocriticism

This chapter outlines the teaching of ecocriticism and related ideas in order to provide background information for my study. It first presents the characteristics of literary texts to which ecocritics have paid attention since the beginning of ecocriticism in the 1980s. I will then discuss some definitions of ecocriticism. Thereafter, I will draw attention to teaching materials suggested by ecocritics who are also university professors with an interest in ecocritical texts. I will review their teaching approaches and the pedagogical implications in teaching ecocriticism. Because my study focuses on the practice of ecocriticism in the English curriculum, the secondary literature in this section has mostly been produced by scholars from the USA and from Britain. I suggest that ecocritics are revaluing literary texts produced by women, ethnic minorities and postcolonial writers. This is because these writers present current ecological problems in relation to issues of gender, indigenous communities and postcolonial countries. Ecocritical pedagogies recommend the teaching of these texts because they can make students aware of the complexity of social and environmental problems in the modern world. Moreover, I will present an overview of teaching ecocriticism in Thailand to give some background information about this particular educational context. I point out that while teaching ecocriticism in Western universities has gained significant attention from professors, teaching ecocriticism in Thailand has remained a minority subject in university curricula across the country, with the exception of a few institutions.

Literary Texts

Scholars claim that any kind of literary text can be subjected to an ecocritical approach because texts written in different periods of time, genres and traditions offer a

variety of critical perspectives on literature and the environment. Ecocritic Cheryll Glotfelty identifies three different groups of texts on which critics have focused (1996: xxiii). In doing so, she relies on Elaine Showalter's model of three different stages of feminism: first, ecocritics started to pay attention to the classical, Romantic and canonical texts produced by British and American authors. They identified certain representations, images and stereotypes of nature, such as Eden, Arcadia, virgin land, swamp, wilderness and frontier. Next, ecocritics became interested in contemporary texts written by underprivileged groups, such as women and indigenous writers to examine their ecological worldviews. They analysed 'nature writing' and sought fiction and poetry that incorporated environmental thinking. More recently, ecocritics have developed a theoretical framework of ecocriticism that includes any kind of text that either encompasses or critiques hierarchical ways of thinking. They undermine dualistic paradigms of thought, such as mind/body, men/women and human/nature in order to demonstrate that these dichotomies are the root causes of social and ecological exploitation (Glotfelty 1996: xxiii).

Glotfelty's outline of three stages of ecocriticism suggests that literary scholars are interested in a diversity of texts. However, her work has been criticised by other critics, such as T.V. Reed (2002) who asserts that Glotfelty tends to focus on national texts, particularly American literature. Reed is critical of Glotfelty's categorisation of texts and argues that ecocriticism needs a 'serious environmental perspective' of texts in a global context (2002: 147). In my opinion, Glotfelty does examine a variety of texts from an international perspective in her suggestion of 'future ecocriticism' based on her realisation of global ecological crises. She seems to develop her historical framework of ecocriticism in her own context. Patrick Murphy views Glotfelty's study differently from Reed. Murphy compliments Glotfelty on providing a taxonomy of literary texts in ecocriticism. He himself distinguishes between two kinds of texts to which ecocritics have paid attention since the 1990s; first 'nature literature', and second, 'environmental literature'. Murphy writes:

> Nature literature as a large category would mean an orientation toward writing, regardless of genre, as exhibiting an attention to the details of the natural world and a concern for human-nonhuman relationships, and a representation through imagery and narration of a philosophy toward the place of humanity within the whole of nature. We often find in nonfiction prose the implicit authorial belief that a reader will be moved to deepen or change his or her views about nature and human nature through learning more information and through being presented with the author's own epiphanies. There is a faith in the contagiousness of nature appreciation and a belief in the timelessness of epiphany experience throughout much nature literature.
>
> Environmental literature, in contrast, does not presume contagion by shared appreciation and tends to be more concerned with timeliness rather than timelessness. It does presume a high degree of self-consciousness about ecological relationships and environmental crises, while sharing the other attributes of nature literature. (Murphy 2000: 46-47)

I quote Murphy's definition in full because he provides characteristics of the two main types of literary texts which are directly related to my study. He explains what Glotfelty means by 'nature writing', a kind of 'nature literature' that presents a writer's ecological worldview and incorporates belief, philosophy and faith. According to Murphy, 'nature literature' was a dominant genre in the 19th century in America, whereas 'environmental literature' is produced by contemporary writers in America and in other countries. Both have gained ecocritics' attention because they make explicit human relationships with the natural environment. However, the distinction between them is the representation of environmental issues. Whereas 'nature literature' portrays human relationships with the natural world in general, 'environmental literature' presents characters' direct experiences of contemporary ecological destruction (Murphy 2000: 55). What is important for my study is that 'nature literature' is likely to provide modern readers with issues that are less related to current environmental problems than 'environmental literature'. This means that 'environmental literature' seems to speak to modern readers more readily because it allows them to compare or contrast environmental problems with their personal experiences. The next section will

sample some ecocritics' works and their critical perspectives on social and environmental aspects represented in literary texts.

Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is a strand of literary studies that looks for the representation of environmental issues in connection with gender, race and class in the texts of various groups of writers. Glotfelty stresses the relationship between feminist and Marxist approaches that are applied in the ecocritical analysis of texts. She concedes that feminist and Marxist critics were dealing with the issue of the environment and its representation before ecocriticism emerged in the 1980s (1996: xxiii). Ecocritics are keen to reveal ideologies that are attached to images and stereotypes of nature in texts. For example, ecocritics point out that privileged white male authors, like the European colonisers in America, tend to portray nature as a submissive woman and a savage wilderness. This suggests an ideology aimed at subjugation of the land, women and the natives. In addition, ecocritics point out how contemporary women and indigenous writers tend to depict nature differently. They interpret the representation of nature by these groups and suggest that the writers are likely to encompass gender, race and class struggles against the opposing group; the privileged. Accordingly, Greg Garrard defines ecocriticism as

> an avowedly political mode of analysis, as the comparison with feminism and Marxism suggests. Ecocritics generally tie their cultural analyses explicitly to a 'green' moral and political agenda. […] Developing the insights of earlier critical movements, ecofeminists, social ecologies and environmental justice advocates seek a synthesis of environmental and social concerns. (2004: 3)

Garrard's definition is useful to my study because of the connection between ecocritical, feminist, Marxist and cultural studies. He emphasises that ecocriticism deals with power relationships between the privileged and the marginalised. More importantly, Garrard remarks that ecocriticism mediates between cultural constructions of nature and the actual

natural environment (2004: 10). While the representation of nature is based on imagination, the environmental crises represented in the texts are real. As a result, ecocriticism is connected with social and ecological issues, both in terms of representation in the text and as actual problems that require a solution. Garrard's definition of ecocriticism is useful to me because it points to the relationship between social and ecological aspects in the text as well as the world within which ecocritics and modern readers live. Moreover, the insight into the cultural construction of nature is central to my analysis, which deals with how contemporary readers of other cultures make sense of the nature that is constructed in the texts.

Another significant aspect of ecocriticism is that it is related to the environmental and socio-political movements in 1999 in the US. Ecocritics such as Joni Adamson explain that the protests were against government policy that justified the construction of power plants and dumping sites in the residential areas of the poor communities (Adamson et.al. 2002: 3-4). The activism arose in opposition to the negative outcomes of nature preservation projects in developing countries. These were supported by the developed countries and denied the natives settlement in conservation areas. The activists argued that forests in the Third World provide the habitat for indigenous people and wildlife who co-exist and are dependent on their natural environment. Ecocritics study how literary texts represent the marginalised groups' struggle against governments and businesses that ignore the problems of ecological contamination in poor living areas. They analyse how the texts critique nature preservation projects that result in the displacement of natives. As Richard Kerridge explains,

> 'The environmental justice movement' is a collective term for the efforts of poor communities to defend themselves against the dumping of toxic waste, the harmful contamination of their air, food, and water, the loss of their lands and livelihoods, and the indifference of governments and corporations. Ecocritics responsive to environmental justice will bring questions of class, race, gender, and colonialism into the ecocritical evaluation of texts and ideas, challenging versions of

> environmentalism that seem exclusively preoccupied with preservation of wild nature and ignore the aspiration of the poor. (2006: 531)

Kerridge further observes that 'the environmental justice movement' turns ecocritics' interest from the images of nature in the classical and Romantic traditions to the representation of social and environmental issues that affect the experience of marginalised groups in the late 20th century. In my understanding, this is because the texts that represent the struggle of women, ethnic minorities and postcolonial countries can contribute to a socio-political and environmental movement. The critical analyses of social and environmental aspects in the texts further promote empathy towards the poor, and make readers aware of the complexity of socio-political and environmental problems in the modern world. Kerridge's explanation helps me to understand the Thai teacher's selection of literary texts and her ecocritical approach. She chooses ecocritical texts that deal with a number of current issues, such as environmental contamination, health problems, social injustice, gender inequality, nature conservation projects and the displacement of indigenous people.

Ecocriticism deals with the complexity of environmental problems at the local and the global levels. Ursula Heise's concept of 'eco-cosmopolitanism' points out the necessity to study representations of ecological issues across different cultures and nations. Heise defines 'eco-cosmopolitanism' as 'an attempt to envision individuals and groups as part of planetary "imagined communities" of both human and nonhuman kinds' (2008: 61). She analyses how contemporary writers, such as John Cage, Don DeLillo and Christa Wolf, present the interconnectedness of environmental problems across borders. Heise emphasises that the issue of toxicity, such as pesticide, has a huge impact on not only the region but also globally. It is therefore, as she suggests, important to understand the effects of toxic contamination on world society at risk. She points out that representations of complex relationships between regional and global communities at risk offer the chance to discover new perspectives to cross-cultural awareness (2008: 121). By applying the concept of the

world risk society in the analysis of texts, 'new ways of imagining the planet' based on issues of the environment, politics and aesthetics (2008: 251) can be discovered. In her view, perceptions of local risks enhance our understanding of risks at the global level and vice versa. Heise's concept of 'eco-cosmopolitanism' is significant to my study because it foregrounds the link between environmental problems experienced by the local and the global communities. Her work focuses on how contemporary writers portray global connections through the issues of the environment based on local cultures and perceptions. My study relies on this idea of connection, and explores how the Thai teacher and her students imagine the issues depicted in Western ecocritical texts in their local Thai context. My review of ecocriticism in this section will be followed by ecocritics' suggestions of literary texts for the educational context.

Teaching Materials

Ecocritics who teach at universities agree that it can be advantageous for teaching materials to represent current ecological and social issues. For instance, Murphy suggests a selection of 'environmental literature' because texts offer lessons on contemporary crises that are important for students to understand (2000: 55). His recommendation for teaching ecocriticism is to take a 'transnational approach' in order to include texts written by international writers (Murphy 2010: 29). Literature curricula in universities in the US and the UK have incorporated a diversity of 'environmental literature' by these writers. Examples of module syllabi can be found on the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment websites: (http://www.asle.org/?s=syllabus) in the US, and (http://asle.org.uk/teaching/) in the UK and Ireland. David Mazel stresses the importance of 'environmental literature' for the inclusion of the perspectives of women, indigenous and postcolonial writers in the literature curriculum. He asserts that:

> By highlighting the ways in which environmental texts are structured by categories of race, class, gender and sexuality, ecocriticism helps ensure that the planet is not

> saved at the expense of those whose voices have traditionally been excluded from the discourse of environmentalism. (2010: 38)

Mazel explains that literary texts written by white male authors can be controversial in teaching ecocriticism. This is due to the fact that the depiction of nature by white male authors and their ecological thinking differs from that of women, indigenous and postcolonial writers. By including teaching materials produced by the latter groups, students are encouraged to comprehend issues of the environment from multi-dimensional worldviews (Mazel 2010: 38). T.V. Reed supports this claim by suggesting that the literature curriculum should include texts that concern social and environmental injustice to make students aware of the complex problems (2002: 146). Reed also recommends the study of 'environmental literature' by diverse writers because their stories can make students think about current issues. From what I have said so far it should have become clear that 'environmental literature' is appropriate teaching material for an ecocriticism module and in what way. Moreover, my outline of teaching materials demonstrates that teaching ecocriticism makes perspectives of women, ethnic minorities and postcolonial countries the centre of interest in an educational context.

Ecocritics highlight the importance of values, beliefs and worldviews represented in teaching materials to make students aware of the root causes of ecological problems. One of them is the dichotomous views of the environment that allow one group to view the relationship with nature as unproblematic while it brings about troubles for other groups through ecological damage (Tallmadge 2010: 4). Tallmadge understands 'environmental literature' as a source that can present this contradiction in teaching ecocriticism:

> [Environmental literature] engages the humanities in pressing concerns of the day. Environmental problems ultimately stem from our values, beliefs and ideas about the proper relations between human beings and nature. We will never solve them without understanding those beliefs, subjecting them to critique, and transforming them with capable imagination. (Tallmadge 2010: 4)

The explanation concerns the role that 'environmental literature' plays in the humanities that deal with the relationship between humans and nature. Tallmadge views 'values, beliefs and ideas' as important factors because they influence the perception of nature and the interaction with the natural environment (2010: 4). The way in which one perceives nature and other social groups influences one's interaction with them. Tallmadge's insight suggests the importance of the selection of teaching materials which contain a variety of 'values, beliefs and ideas' about nature because these texts can encourage students to think about the root causes of the problems. Therefore, texts written from the perspectives of diverse authors for example, men/women, white/indigenous and Western/non-Western can provide students with multiple views of nature. This is important because the juxtaposition of 'values, beliefs and ideas' about nature makes students aware of a link between socio-political and environmental problems. The next section outlines suggested teaching approaches that can enhance students' understanding of ecocritical literary texts.

Teaching Approaches

A selection of literary texts from a variety of perspectives can help students to make sense of ecological and social issues from diverse worldviews. However, teaching approach is also important because it is the teacher who incorporates ecocriticism and other related literary criticism into classroom practices (Tallmadge 2010: 4). Tallmadge recommends teaching approaches that 'ground interpretation in multiple intelligences and modes of experience that range beyond reading' (2010: 4). By this he means that the teacher's introduction of texts should provide students with historical references based on the real world outside the texts. In particular, the history of feminism, of indigenous displacement and of colonial countries will make students aware of the causes of gender, race and class struggles in the contemporary world. In Kerridge's view, the teacher's explanation of the historical background should link to present day environmental concerns. This is because it helps students to see a connection between history, literary texts and current problems

(2012: 13). This means that teaching ecocriticism introduces historical information to encourage students to understand not only the issues represented in the texts, but also the context within which the texts are produced.

In addition, in their teaching, ecocritics recommend a comparative approach between issues represented in the texts and students' own context. Comparison is useful because texts, especially those written by female, indigenous and postcolonial writers, can promote students' empathy with the lives of others who are in less privileged positions. Scott Slovic views teaching ecocriticism as a privileged academic activity that should train student to recognise underprivileged social groups. He describes his own teaching experiences in the American ecocriticism classroom as follows;

> Whether comparing the lives of people within the borders of the United States or across borders, one of the crucial purposes of studying literature in any comparatist context is to cultivate the empathy needed to appreciate and validate other points of view. (Slovic 2010: 208)

Slovic stresses the necessity of learning from people who have been marginalised by governments and through colonisation throughout history. This is because their stories tell different versions of history and can make students aware of social and environmental injustice. In Erin James's opinion, a comparative teaching approach to postcolonial texts can be a challenge for students in the US and the UK. Settings in postcolonial countries are unfamiliar and usually beyond students' comprehension (James 2012: 64). To facilitate students' comparative insight into the text, James suggests that teachers provide them with lessons on the history, geography, and culture to which the text belongs (2012: 65). Students are then encouraged to compare the representation of nature in the text with their own context. This comparative approach should also promote the questioning of students' own cultural relationship to their living environment (James 2012: 68). Eventually, the lessons provoke students to initiate their own personal engagement with the texts, and gives them insight into the global context. My review of teaching approaches by Western critics

in this section will be followed by an overview of teaching ecocriticism in Thai higher education.

Teaching Ecocriticism in Thailand

This section presents teaching ecocriticism and related concepts in Thailand to introduce the context of my study. As my analysis suggests an intertextual relationship between environmental literature and Thai literature, I will first outline views of nature represented in Thai literary texts. This is to examine Thai views about nature and ways of thinking. I will then examine the teaching of ecocriticism at Thai universities. I suggest that the different geographical locations of the universities that were part of my study and the students' backgrounds were the main factors in the teachers' selection of texts and their choice of teaching approach. I found that although the teaching of ecocriticism in Thailand remains limited, it is gaining attention from some Thai teachers. The aim of this section is to provide a brief overview of Thai perceptions of nature and literary criticism in preparation for my analysis of Thai readers' responses to the representations of nature in environmental literature.

To begin with, Thai literature in different historical periods portrays nature differently. According to Thai anthropologist Chonthira Sattayawattana, myths and ancient stories in Thailand and in other Asian countries reflect an attitude of respect and humans' dependent relationship with the natural world (Sangkhaphanthanon 2013: 66). In her view, myths and folktales convey traditional ecological knowledge which is integrated with people's ways of living in order to protect nature. Another Thai ecocritic, Thanya Sangkhaphanthanon, further explains that traditional Thai ecological knowledge is encompassed within Buddhist values and beliefs (2013: 152). Buddhist manuscripts from the Sukhothai period (1238-1347) reflect the view of an interconnection, interdependence and kinship between humans and nature. However, Thai literature from the Ayutthaya to the

early Rattanakosin periods (1351-1880s) tends to depict nature based on feudalism, which was a political system at that time (Sangkhaphanthanon 2013: 219). Literary texts reflect how the Thai view of nature has been shaped by a hierarchical way of thinking and by patriarchal society. Poets and authors who are male and royalist depict the natural world as subject to monarchy and kingship and justify a male-dominated paradigm of thoughts (Sangkhaphanthanon 2013: 219). Although feudalism is no longer a system of government in Thailand, this hierarchical worldview still has an impact on Thai perceptions of nature. Feudalism can be seen as one of the root causes of the Thai view of nature as property and a commodity. In the 1980s, the portrayal of nature in Thai literature tended to incorporate modern ecological thinking based on Western concepts of forest and wildlife conservation (Sangkhaphanthanon 2013: 38).

My review of the representation of nature in Thai literature over several periods suggests that Thai people have diverse views of nature. Thai perceptions of nature are influenced by a traditional way of living, a feudal system and Western environmental thinking respectively. The diversity of views reflect the complexity of how Thai people perceive and interact with the natural world. The review confirms that Thai people's perceptions of nature are related to social hierarchy and gender inequality. Additionally, Sangkhaphanthanon points out that traditional Thai literary criticism has focused on the analysis of language that describes natural settings rather than offering a critique of ideologies conveyed through images of nature (2013: 32). Because Thai epic poems written during the early Rattanakosin period (1782-1880s) tend to present nature as an inspiration, modern scholars have focused on figures of speech, stylistics and aesthetic elements rather than on a critique of social and ecological issues in the texts.

Thai critic Wit Siwasiyanon compares the early Rattanakosin literary tradition to the Romantic arts and literature movement in Western Europe in the 18th century where the natural world is depicted as a source of artists' and poets' imagination (Sangkhaphanthanon

2013: 31). The similarities between Thai and Western Romantic views of nature in 18th century literature suggests that literary texts in both cultures belonged to the privileged groups. During that time, Thai royals started to initiate contact with European countries and learn about Western culture. The Romantic tradition and its literary criticism were dominant in both contexts until the 1990s when modern Western and Thai ecocritics became interested in social and ecological issues, and turned their attention to marginalised worldviews in contemporary texts.

Ecocritical literary study in Thailand is a recent development. Sangkhaphanthanon points out the reason why Thai national curricula in the past excluded the topic and lessons about the natural environment. One of the earliest textbooks about nature and animal species, written by Phraya Sri Sunthorn Vohan in 1884, stated that lessons on these topics were childlike. This suggests that the Thai perception of environmental education was non-academic and suitable only for children (Sangkhaphanthanon 2013: 329). Sangkhaphanthanon further explains that this view is a result of the traditional Thai way of living being close to nature, and thus it was deemed unnecessary to study it in the 19th century (2013: 330). In other words, the topic was not regarded as important because Thai people learned about nature from their living environment. Cheryll Glotfelty offers a similar explanation about the absence of environmental literature in American universities until the late 20th century. Professors, she points out, considered it as a 'spare time' reading activity (1996: xxi). Both American and Thai scholars have recognised the necessity of including ecological topics in the literature curricula because of current environmental issues and the possibility of making students aware of these crises. Sattayawattana also supports the view that the national curricula in Thailand should include ecocritical literary study in higher education and in education at all levels (2013: 20).

To conceptualise current teaching practices in Thailand, I will focus on the English literature curriculum rather than the Thai one. The modules that I researched are part of the

English curricula. Traditional English curricula at Thai universities are similar to those offered in the UK and the US in terms of their choice of national teaching materials. In all these areas, English curricula favoured the classics, masterpieces, and canonical literature. Literary texts produced by other writers and those with a focus on ecological issues were neglected. More recently, teaching materials for English curricula at Thai universities have started to include writers like women, Native American and postcolonial writers. However, the study of literature with a focus on ecological issues has remained limited to a few public institutions. Where ecocriticism is part of Thai higher education, teachers seem to choose texts according to the location of their universities and students' backgrounds. In Chulalongkorn University in central Bangkok, contemporary texts that present marginalised worldviews are employed to present current ecological and social crises to students who belong to the privileged social groups (Darin Pradittatsanee 2011: 186). In Chiang Mai University in the northern region where the majority of students are female and follow traditional Lanna cultures, teachers choose ecofeminist and Native American texts (Sarawanee Sukhumvada 2011: i). Moreover, in Mahasarakham University in the north-eastern part of Thailand, world folklores about nature, storytelling activities and stories collected from older members of local communities are used to enhance the ecological awareness of students who are from rural backgrounds (Wajuppa Tossa 2014).

Conclusion

My review of teaching ecocriticism and related concepts suggests that Western and Thai ecocritics who also teach at universities have recognised the importance of promoting ecocriticism through the literature curriculum. In their view, environmental literature helps students to understand recent ecological crises. It can be useful for teachers to select contemporary texts written by international writers because their stories demonstrate social and environmental injustice, which can make students aware of the complexity of such issues. Scholars also agree that teaching approaches which integrate the history of the

marginalised and the geography and culture to which the texts belong can enhance students' understanding of the texts. Additionally, an approach that compares the issues in the texts with the students' context can encourage the latter to think about their own environment.

My review of teaching ecocriticism in Thailand has shown that Thai people have diverse views of nature because of the changes in their way of living, social hierarchy and contact with Western countries. English literature curricula in Thai higher education are now incorporating literary texts written from the perspectives of the marginalised, but literature about nature has so far been limited to a small number of universities. Whereas teaching ecocriticism has been developed in Western education since the 1990s, it has only recently been introduced in Thailand. My study of teaching ecocritical texts written in English in Thai higher education hopes to highlight how issues presented in Western texts can make Thai students think about their own context. Nevertheless, teaching ecocritical texts written in English in Thailand is different from teaching ecocriticism in Western universities because Thai students study English as a foreign language. I am aware of the limitations of using ecocriticism teaching methods suggested by Western scholars to illuminate the context of my study. This is because Thai teachers and students have a different background from the texts in terms of history, geography, culture and view of nature. In this respect, the next chapter outlines the intercultural dimensions of teaching ecocritical literature to better understand the teaching of foreign culture through literature, which is the focus of my own analysis.

Chapter 2

Intercultural Dimensions of Teaching Foreign Literature

This chapter outlines the intercultural dimensions of teaching and learning foreign literature to provide definitions and theories for my analysis chapters. I first examine the notion of culture and the important role that it has played in foreign-language teaching since the 1980s. I will then draw attention to the theoretical frameworks that I will use in my analysis of teaching ecocritical literature in Thai higher education context. Thereafter, I will explore scholars' and university professors' ideas of teaching materials and approaches that can contribute to the development of students' cultural and intercultural awareness. The theoretical approach in this chapter hopes to foreground the intercultural dimensions of teaching foreign cultures through engaging with environmental texts. I will only briefly introduce intercultural theories in this chapter, as they will be presented in detail in each analysis chapter. The secondary sources in this chapter are authored by critics from a diversity of contexts.

Culture and Language Teaching

Scholars have studied the relationship between culture and language from a variety of perspectives. Claire Kramsch analyses the roles that context and culture play in foreign-language education (1993, 1998). She defines culture as difference, variability, and a potential cause of conflict when incompatible cultures interact with one another (1993: 1). Moreover, a culture embodies socio-politics and ideology that can be difficult for people in other cultures to understand (Kramsch 1993: 188). While national cultures reflect the interests of dominant groups such as the government and educational institutions, they tend to suppress the wills of peripheral groups. Kramsch explains that:

> Culture is the product of socially and historically situated discourse communities, that are to a large extent imagined communities, created and shaped by language. A community's language and its material achievements represent a social patrimony and a symbolic capital that serve to perpetuate relationships of power and domination; they distinguish insiders from outsiders. But because cultures are fundamentally heterogeneous and changing, they are a constant site of struggle for recognition and legitimation. (1998: 10)

Cultural representation through language is a source of gender, race and class struggles. Kramsch further elucidates that an educational institution owns the authority to select cultural traditions and make students learn from these choices. The teaching of foreign languages therefore promotes the cultures, values and beliefs presented in teaching materials (Kramsch 1998: 10). Kramsch's notion of culture is useful to my analysis because it shows the complexity of a culture, and its association with language and power. This explanation makes me aware that there is never just a single culture at play and that national and other cultures compete with each other even within a single nation state.

Cultural awareness is a concept that has gained attention from scholars in most Western countries. The concept is important to my study because it is based on foreign-language education. Its core idea underlines the need for students to have insight into other cultures, as this understanding contributes to students' attitude and identity development (Risager 2004: 160). According to Risager, because of post-modern societies, scholars have become increasingly interested in cultural difference and the relationships between cultures based on the context of education (2004: 159). Some examples of cultural aspects that have been studied are ethnicity, society, region and institution. These topics have been integrated into the foreign language classroom in Western countries. Risager explains that,

> An important dimension of cultural awareness is the concept of reflexivity, i.e. the idea that insight into or experience of the practices or systems of meaning of other cultures is of significance for the individual's [teacher's and student's] cultural understanding of self and their own identity. (Risager 2004: 159)

The concept of reflexivity is the way in which teachers and students present their thoughts about foreign cultures in connection with their own cultures. According to Risager, cultural dimension of teaching foreign literature can be examined through teacher's explanation of historical background of texts that links to contemporary issues. The representation of cultures in teaching materials at either national or local level is another aspect that can reveal cultural awareness in foreign-language classroom (Risager 2004: 160). Although Risager's study is located in the context of Western education, I suggest that it is useful to apply her approach to examine foreign-language teaching and learning in a non-Western educational context. She highlights the need for students to understand foreign cultures to enable them to better comprehend their own culture. This is particularly important to my own study of the intercultural dimensions of teaching English-language ecocritical texts in Thai context.

Risager explains that in the 1990s, a 'national paradigm' of language teaching with an emphasis on the national culture was replaced by a 'transnational paradigm' with the inclusion of other cultures (2011: 485). It is worth pointing out that this move towards a 'transnational paradigm' in language teaching was developed in the same decade as the teaching of ecocriticism. This is perhaps due to a shared concern about the recognition of the complexity of other cultures. Both promote an approach that sensitises students to a perception of other cultures that is comprised of dominant and marginalised worldviews. Risager explains as follows the significance of a 'transnational paradigm' in foreign-language education:

> Language teaching must offer a knowledge of the world that students can use to develop their personal and cultural identity, via contact with many different discourses and cultural representations, fictive as well as non-fictive. By experimenting with openings in the transnational paradigm, language subjects can acquire a boarder role as subjects that contribute to the development of students' identity as world citizens, including their ability to cut across national boundaries and catch sight of transnational connections. (2007: 205)

This statement justifies practices in the teaching of foreign language and literature. The major concern of a 'transnational paradigm' in language teaching is that students are encouraged to see beyond the national framework of culture and to realise the relationship between different cultures. Risager's concept of a 'transnational paradigm' suggests that pedagogical approaches and teaching materials are factors that can enhance students' insight into other cultures. It is important that teachers' selection and interpretation of texts should mediate between national and other cultures.

While Western education systems have adopted the 'transnational paradigm' of language teaching, non-Western educational institutions still tend be based on a 'national paradigm' (William Baker 2015: 135). Baker suggests that the 'transnational paradigm' already used in the West should be implemented by non-Western higher education institutions. He asserts that cultural awareness of a national framework needs to include 'intercultural awareness' on a global scale (2015: 130). This extension is important because it helps to avoid cultural stereotyping and to develop students' understanding of other cultures. In his view, teaching English in an international context should be based more 'on the inter or trans cultural dimension where there is no clear language, culture [and] nation correlation' (Baker 2015: 131). Baker notes that recent research into foreign language and literature teaching promotes the significance of 'transnational culture', whereas teaching about national culture still underpins current practices (2015: 131). In particular, in the English literature classroom for non-native students of English, teaching materials and pedagogy still rely on the 'national paradigm'. Baker observes that in the context of Thailand:

> when discussing literature and providing examples of literature written in English, the text still focuses on the Anglophone world rather than looking at texts or literature produced by non-native speakers/writers, missing an important opportunity for more complex socio-cultural contextualisation of English. (2015: 135)

This statement points to a concern about the selection of texts and a warning about teaching literature according to a specific national culture. While I, as a Thai student and teacher of British and American literature at Thai universities, agree that Baker's observation is still largely correct, change seems to be underway. One of the aims of my study is to exemplify this change. Baker's study is useful to me because it discusses the potential impact of the use of Anglophone texts on cultural oversimplification. However, it should be noted that he identifies the problem of the choice of teaching materials in an international context without analysing teaching approaches. The main interest of his work is English language and communication rather than teaching literature. He focuses on how international students negotiate multiple cultures in order to achieve successful English language communication. Baker neither analyses teaching materials/techniques nor does he provide examples of teachers' and students' interpretations of literary texts.

Intercultural Theories

Kramsch suggests that the concept of 'third place' can help us to understand the symbolic dimension at work when teachers and students try to make sense of foreign cultures in literary texts. This concept is particularly useful to my study because it describes how readers negotiate meaning in texts belonging to foreign cultures by drawing on their own socio-cultural backgrounds. Kramsch et al. define 'third place' as 'the circulation of values and identities across cultures, the inversions, even inventions of meaning' (2011: 354). This concept refers to the negotiation of meaning across different cultures in the texts and in the readers' context. The explanation allows me to realise that in order to gain an insight into teachers' and students' responses to the texts, it is important to pay close attention to values and identities described in the texts when they are presented in the educational context. The mediation of values and identities in the in-between worlds, as depicted in the texts and in teaching context, create new meanings in the 'third place'.

The concept of self is another crucial aspect to consider. As Kramsch demonstrates, 'third place' is 'a process of positioning the self both inside and outside the discourse of others. It [third place] is the capacity to recognise the historical context of utterances and their intertextualities' (2011: 359). The in-between position in which teachers and students locate themselves when interpreting the texts is hence my focus. This includes the historical events and relationships of teaching materials and learning contexts. Kramsch further advocates the researcher's investigation of teachers' and students' selections of topics in their responses because it can reflect their intentions and ways of thinking (2011: 362). I will therefore rely on this suggestion in order to examine the Thai teacher's and students' engagement with ecocritical texts. The aspects that they highlight in the classroom, and the issues that they omit from discussion are also taken into my consideration. The concept of 'third place' will be presented in more detail in the analysis chapters in connection with the teacher's presentation of texts and students' responses.

Angela Scarino's study is helpful to my analysis because it deals with the teacher's interpretation and the relationship between literary texts and learner's background. The teacher's presentation of the texts is based on the culture to which the texts belong, their histories and their background knowledge. Scarino explains that the teacher's 'cumulative experiences, beliefs, ethical values, motivations, and commitments contribute to' his or her teaching approaches and lesson designs (2010: 325). My analysis of the teacher's choice of texts and explanations will be according to this explanation. Scarino further points out that students' responses are also shaped by their background experiences. She writes:

> Learning involves the reciprocal interpretation of meaning in and through interaction with people and texts, and all interpretation is linguistic. However, language is more than just a container for information, for it brings with it cultural histories that structure the dialogue of learning among people and their personal engagement with the world. (2010: 327)

Scarino's study provides me with a guideline to analyse teachers' and students' processes of meaning making. Their social and cultural backgrounds will be an important aspect to understand how they negotiate meaning across different cultures. However, as Gilberte Furstenberg points out, teachers' and students' constructions of meaning are sometimes processed through incompatible cultures. Their individual responses can reflect cultures and attitudes which are different from the ones represented in the texts (Furstenberg 2010: 331).

Keith Bishop et al. integrates the teaching of language with environmental education. They propose the concept of 'environmental literacy' to explain the development of students' environmental awareness through their engagement with texts (Bishop et al. 2000: 271). They distinguish between three different variants of 'environmental literacy'. The following categories are helpful to my study because they explain the relationship between language learning, environmental texts and students' contexts. First, 'functional environmental literacy', which refers to the understanding of the natural surroundings, ecological systems and current environmental issues related to students' own lives. Second, 'cultural environmental literacy' is the recognition of the cultural construction of nature and the similar views of nature across different cultures. Third, 'critical environmental literacy' denotes the ability to deal with the arguments in an environmental debate at ideological and philosophical levels. Critical literacy comprises the capacity to interpret texts and think about sensible political solutions for ecological problems (Bishop et al. 2000: 271). The concept of 'environmental literacy' is useful for my analysis because it deals with the use of texts to enhance students' environmental awareness in relation to their literacy development. The three aspects of environmental literacy provide me with a guideline to examine students' cultural and ecological awareness.

The intersection between foreign-language teaching and environmental education can help to explain the intercultural dimensions of teaching and learning ecocritical texts. Küchler's work is useful to my study because of the focus on the representation of nature in

foreign-language texts, and how students make sense of these representations. He suggests an integration of ecocritical study of literature and culture, and environmental education both in the classroom and research. This is in order to make a better connection between theory and practice. He argues that

> it would be rewarding from the perspectives of Cultural Studies as well as foreign language education to explore not how those features [views of nature and human relationship with nature] are constructed in one culture, but how similarities and differences in conception and use of environmental images feature across cultures. (Küchler 2011: 437)

According to Küchler, the integration of ecocriticism and teaching foreign-language texts can create empathy and tolerance for other cultures in students. Moreover, research into teaching materials and practices helps us gain an insight into teachers' and students' views of nature. He suggests studying what Mary Pratt regards as a 'contact zone', where cultures in the texts and in learning contexts interact with each other (2014: 30). Pratt defines the term 'contact zone' as 'an area where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other' (qtd. in Küchler 2014: 30). Investigating a 'contact zone' allows us to understand the process in which transcultural contexts meet and to explain the production of interculturality. While Pratt's 'contact zone' is to explore conflicting cultures in intercultural communication and learning, Kramsch's 'third place' is to comprehend teaching foreign texts and culture. The literature review in this section suggests that the intercultural theories are useful tools to examine the teaching and learning ecocriticial texts in the Thai literature classroom. The next section then explores characteristics of literary texts that have a potential to enhance students' intercultural and environmental awareness.

Teaching Materials

Scholars who are also university professors agree that texts written from a variety of perspectives encourage readers and students to draw connections between different cultures.

Stephanie Jones's view of 'international contemporary writing' seems to correspond with this. She explains in the context of literary studies that 'international contemporary writing' 'asks us to think about the material spaces in which the writing occurred or to which it refers and, at the same time, invites us to seek understanding across territories' (Jones 2011: 1). The study of literature according to Jones echoes a 'transnational paradigm' of foreign-language teaching that aims to facilitate students' insight into other cultures. Erin Kearney explains the reading of foreign language texts based on intercultural learning. She elucidates the advantage of a diverse selection of teaching materials in the foreign-language classroom for the following reason:

> Introducing a variety of cultural texts will not only contribute to a sense of being immersed in cultural meanings […] but will highlight the range of perspectives within a larger linguistic and cultural group. In this fashion, learners come into contact with a web of meanings that address, echo, and contradict each other and are prompted to recognise the complexity inherent in cultures. (2010: 334)

Kearney's explanation confirms the usefulness of drawing on a variety of teaching materials. A diverse selection of texts can facilitate intercultural learning because texts can make students engage with the multiplicity of other cultures. In the intercultural learning process, each student creates his or her own version of reading and interpretation through his or her cultural background. However, Kearney's explanation seems to disregard students' ability to read foreign-language texts in order to understand the complexity of other cultures. From my experience, this is only possible if the foreign-language texts are not too complicated for students to understand. Students' reading of literature written in English in non-English speaking countries therefore needs to be supported.

The choice of environmental text in the foreign-language classroom is based on the same suggestion with that of the intercultural learning. Küchler recommends a transnational topic about the environment because it can create students' insight into ecological issues at a global level (2014: 33). This is important because ecology is a global source. His study

suggests that the use of diverse texts is more likely to make students think about ecological problems across different countries. However, Küchler is critical of the selection of teaching materials for the foreign-language classroom as he observes that this often tends toward representations of catastrophes and gloomy perspectives (2014: 33). In his view, bleak stories can make students disinterested in environmental issues. I agree with this observation because a choice of texts that portrays the apocalyptic worldview without providing any possible solutions may not be appropriate for learners. However, in my opinion, it can be advantageous that teaching materials provide students with an understanding of the root causes, the complexity of problems and suggestions to solve the crises.

Teaching Approaches

Scholars suggest that intercultural dimensions in the teaching and learning of foreign-language texts incorporate a variety of teaching techniques. Manuela Guilherme explains that because cultural representation through language is complex, the teacher's presentation of texts in the classroom is not a simple task. Teachers then play an important role in students' reading comprehension and intercultural learning. Guilherme asserts that:

> [the] object of study [the cultural representation in the teaching material] is dynamic, fragmented, contradictory, complex and, therefore, we [teachers] cannot easily use it for our immediate purposes or to translate our cultures, equally dynamic and complex, into it in a straightforward manner. (2009: 86)

This statement highlights the fact that the complexity of literature and culture makes an intercultural lesson challenging for teachers to design. One significant issue raised by Guilherme's observation is that the literature teacher is responsible for negotiating between the meaning of a culture presented in the text and students' cultural backgrounds. As a result, the teacher's response and explanation should be based on an application of the texts to learners, as well as on the multiplicity of cultures in the texts and teaching context.

Critical pedagogy is another teaching approach linked to my study because it is based on cultural studies. According to Alison Phipps, critical pedagogy pays attention to cultural representation and social practices in relation to power (2004: 1). The teaching technique engages with various disciplines to make students learn from social phenomena pertaining to politics, the nation, class, ethnicity and gender. In the language classroom, the teacher has the opportunity to point out how cultural representation can uncover power struggles between people from different social groups. The learning concerns the interaction between the powerful and the powerless groups with a bias toward the disadvantaged (Phipps 2004: 2). Teachers present stories about the hardships people on the margins face by questioning social hierarchy that oppresses the poor. In Phipps's words:

> Critical pedagogy means addressing radical concerns, the abuses of power in intercultural contexts, in the acquisition of languages and in their circulation. [It is based on] the critical tradition of cultural studies and of longer Marxist critique, in examining and challenging common sense assumptions, hegemonic structures and any uncritical belief in the status quo. (2004: 1)

It is important to note that critical pedagogy shares with teaching ecocriticism a similar focus on the representation of culture and the attempt to identify unequal relationships. In both theories, a critique of social class and the belief systems that bring about an exploitation of the underprivileged; women, ethnic minorities and post-colonial countries plays a central role. Moreover, as Phipps suggests, critical pedagogy can be operated through critical dialogue and the different views of teachers and students. The teaching technique is then synonymous with a 'pedagogy of responsibility' intended to train students to be citizens of the world (Phipps 2004: 4). Because the concept highlights the teacher's implementation of cultural studies and critical pedagogy in foreign-language teaching, it is particularly useful to my analysis of the teaching and learning of ecocritical texts.

Guilherme's study of 'English as a cosmopolitan medium' complements Phipps's critical pedagogy. By this phrase, Guilherme means the teaching of English as a global

language that questions the ruling and the subordinate ideologies (2009: 78). She advocates teaching approaches that encompass the different narratives at local, national and global levels to examine the power relations in intercultural interactions. In Guilherme's view, the teaching of English as a foreign language is effective when:

> This process involves the acknowledgement not only of facts, that is, the input of geographical, historical, social or political data about English-speaking nations and cultures, but also of the complexity of hidden meanings, of underlying values, and how these articulate with the micro- and macro-contexts in which they/we exist. (2009: 79)

This explanation emphasises the importance of critical pedagogy that is designed to make students aware of cultural complexity, ideologies and values that are expressed through language. Guilherme suggests that a critical teaching approach has to be related to students' lives and background knowledge. This is because the teaching technique helps to stimulate students' curiosity and personal involvement, and this engagement will encourage them to seek a negotiation of meaning across different cultures (Guilherme 2009: 85). Guilherme's study promotes the use of critical pedagogy for language teaching and her focus is on intercultural communication. The concept is useful to my study because the teaching aims to enhance students' intercultural awareness of the relationship between language, power and ideologies.

The teaching approach that incorporates both foreign cultures and the politics of other nations is also significant for my analysis of teaching ecocritical texts in Thai context. Michael Byram proposes education in 'intercultural citizenship' based on teaching purposes and expected learning outcomes (2010: 318). 'Intercultural citizenship' refers to the teaching and learning of a foreign language that responds to socio-political and cultural issues (Byram 2008: 188). His concept concerns the necessity of addressing social changes and problems in the contemporary world. Education in 'intercultural citizenship' advocates teaching about conflicting values and the beliefs of people in different social groups, and

how they can be reconciled. According to Byram, teaching approaches should provide students with an opportunity to engage with and respond to cultural differences, and make them aware of socio-political aspects at a global level. For example, foreign language teachers should sensitise students to the ethical dimensions of human rights (Byram 2008: 96). The concept of 'intercultural citizenship' is particularly useful to my analysis of teachers' and students' responses to ecocritical texts because it highlights possible conflicts between values and beliefs in foreign-language teaching.

While foreign-language teachers play a significant role in enhancing students' insight into other cultures, they need to find a balance between guiding and allowing students to learn by themselves. According to constructivist-learning approach, it is necessary to engage students with lessons that can help them with connecting their new learning with their prior knowledge (Dunlap and Grabinger 1996: 74). Dunlap and Grabinger explain that constructivists argue that students construct knowledge rather than merely reproducing teachers' explanation (1996: 74). In this learning process, 'the teacher cannot map his or her representation onto the learner, because they don't share an isomorphic set of experiences and interpretations' (David Jonassen, et al. 1996: 95). The teachers' responsibility is to create learning environments that students are able to actively participate in in the classroom and to develop their own views. The constructivist model of teaching attempts to minimise the impact of the teacher's interpretation on students' understanding of the world (Jonassen, et al. 1996: 95). The method of constructivist learning is relevant to my study because it can help to examine teaching and learning activities in the ecocriticism module. Whereas it is important for the teachers to provide sufficient information of other cultures for students, they need to train students in becoming independent learners. In other words, the teachers give students examples of explanation while trying not to impose such interpretations on how students think.

The use of language is another factor that the teachers have to consider in the teaching and learning foreign culture. Risager explains that the 'national paradigm' of foreign-language teaching relies on native speakers to teach in the target language and its standard norm (2007: 191). In this traditional teaching approach, the teachers expect students to have sufficient linguistic ability to understand foreign cultures. The aim of the 'national paradigm' is to promote the standardised language norms together with the national culture. However, the more recent 'transnational paradigm' recognises linguistic and cultural complexity in the teaching of foreign language (Risager 2007: 194). This teaching approach accepts non-native speaker teachers who are able to use the target language and occasionally the students' first language for explanation. The purpose of the 'transnational paradigm' is to train students to become 'intercultural speakers' by developing their ability to negotiate different languages and cultures. Risager's examples primarily deal with Western educational context while my study aims to explore this issue in Thai educational context. Risager's distinction between the 'national' and the 'transnational' paradigm will help me to investigate the teaching and learning practices in the ecocritical literature module in Thailand. Although my study focuses on the interaction between cultures in the texts and in the teaching context, the teacher's and students' use of language will also be explored to gain a more comprehensive picture of their practices.

Conclusion

My review of secondary literature suggests that scholars have established the role that an understanding of culture plays in foreign language and literature teaching. They are aware of the necessity for developing students' cultural and intercultural awareness through the study of language and literature. Critical pedagogy based on Cultural Studies in teaching and learning practices can achieve this. The study of intercultural dimensions of teaching literature focuses on teachers' and students' negotiation of meaning across different cultures in the texts and in educational contexts. Some factors that can influence their construction

of interculturality pertain to values, beliefs, socio-cultural background, power relationship in the classroom and discourse. Critics and instructors recommend a diverse selection of teaching materials because the texts can offer students complex views of other cultures. Furthermore, my review of the link between teaching foreign literature and environmental education suggests that this field is developing and gaining increasing attention from scholars. My study combines the teaching of ecocriticism with intercultural dimensions of foreign language education. I use the theories of 'third place', 'transnational paradigm' and 'intercultural citizenship' in turn as guiding concepts in each of my analysis chapters while also referring to other related ideas in a supplementary manner.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology and Data Collection

This chapter outlines research questions, methodology and data collection. It also explains my fieldwork, pilot study, the context of the case study and the structure of my analysis chapters. To examine the intercultural dimensions of teaching ecocritical texts in the Thai higher education classroom, my research adopts two methodological approaches: cultural analysis and an ethnographic case study, which I am combining in order to understand Thai teachers' and students' responses to foreign texts. I will demonstrate their negotiation of meanings across different cultures represented in the texts and in the teaching context, and problems they encounter during their engagement with the texts. The two methods are applied to answer the following research questions:

1. How is nature represented in ecocritical literary texts in the English curriculum at a Thai university?
2. What features make these texts suitable or challenging for intercultural teaching and learning?

    2.a Why and how does the teacher present these literary texts in the classroom?

    2.b How do the students respond to the texts and to the teacher's explanation?

The first research question relies on cultural and literary analysis in order to examine the representations of nature in teaching materials. I have outlined ecocriticism and Cultural Studies in the previous chapters and this chapter focuses on classroom ethnography. The second question uses cultural analysis and an ethnographic case study to explore features that make the texts useful or difficult for intercultural teaching and learning in this context. I have employed three types of research method based on classroom ethnography to collect primary data for my analysis chapters. First, classroom observation was used to obtain information about the teacher's presentation of ecocritical texts and students' reflections. Second, interviews with the teacher and students were used to obtain more in depth

information about their opinions than could be gained from their dialogues in class. Third, documentation was used to gain information about the course syllabus and students' term papers. The data collected from my fieldwork will be interpreted in the analysis chapters using ecocritical and intercultural theories as outlined in the previous chapters.

Research Methodology

To answer the two research questions, I have chosen a qualitative research paradigm. Scholars have provided definitions of the characteristics of qualitative research. For example, Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln explain that 'qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. […] qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (2005: 3). This definition refers to the observer in context and the practice of qualitative research. Since my main interest is to understand how people create meanings in a particular setting, this approach is useful to my research project. Sharan Merriam's definition is also useful to me because it explains the processes in which people interpret their worlds in relation to their experiences. According to Merriam, 'qualitative researchers are interested in how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, what meaning they attribute to their experiences. The overall purposes of qualitative research are to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives' (2009: 14). As my research aims to understand why and how Thai teacher and students interpret issues represented in ecocritical texts, this research approach is an appropriate method. The way in which teacher and students make sense of characters' interaction with nature can reveal their value, belief and attitude as well as relationship with the natural environment.

Another important characteristic of qualitative research involves the concept of social constructivism. Constructionist approach is important to my study because it explains

both researchers' and participants' construction of meaning. According to Merriam, it is important for qualitative researchers to accept that their interpretations of people's views often conceal other plausible interpretations. She clarifies that 'interpretative research, which is where qualitative research is most often located, assumes that reality is socially constructed, that is, there is no single, observable reality. Rather, there are multiple realities, or interpretations, of a single event' (2009: 8). While researchers attempt to make sense of people's ideas as objectively as possible, their interpretations encompass researchers' own subjective and deterministic points of view. This explanation makes me aware that my analysis of participants' views are constructed through my own interpretations rather than reality.

It is important for qualitative researchers to be mindful that participants' worldviews are constructed through a variety of socio-cultural and historical factors. John Creswell highlights the fact that participants' views are not simple to qualify and to categorise. He explains that 'individuals [research participants] seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences. […] These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the research to look for the complexity of views' (2007: 20). Creswell emphasises that participants' perceptions are subjective, but they are mediated through their interactions with society and culture around them (Creswell 2007: 21). Based on the concept of social constructivism, qualitative approach provides me with a useful tool to interpret the module I observed rather than reality of the classroom.

My qualitative approach integrates cultural analysis with an ethnographic study to deal with the complexity of intercultural dimensions of teaching and learning ecocritical texts. Clifford Geertz, who has pioneered this approach, points out that cultural analysis combined with ethnography can be applied to a multiplicity of cultures and permits an interpretation of the data gained from a particular study context. He defines ethnography as 'thick description', an idea deriving from Gilbert Ryle, to refer to the holistic picture of

detailed descriptions of the behaviour of individuals in a specific context (1973: 10). His view of culture is context orientation. As he explains, 'culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviours, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly-that is thickly-described' (1973: 14). Ethnographers investigate people in a particular context and choose evidences before they offer an interpretation. In writing ethnography, Geertz suggests that 'what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to-is obscured because most of what we need to comprehend a particular event, ritual, custom, idea, or whatever is insinuated as background information before the thing itself is directly examined' (Geertz 1973: 9). This explanation emphasises that any meaning attributed to that data gathered in the field is always coloured by both the participants' and the ethnographer's intentions to convey meaning. This type of cultural analysis that is based on thick description is suitable to find a response to my research questions because it helps to examine the teacher's and students' responses to other cultures based on their own contexts. I am aware that my exploration and presentation of their responses are inevitably based on my own interpretations.

To gain an insight into the teacher's and students' engagement with foreign texts, I looked for other scholars whose explanations could help me to answer my research questions. Celia Roberts's suggestion is useful for my study because she highlights factors that influence intercultural dimensions of teaching and learning. She applies Geertz's interpretation of culture to a principle of education and classroom research. In combining cultural analysis with ethnography, according to Roberts, classroom 'practices are analysed in terms of values, meanings and beliefs which constitute them [the teacher and students] in particular local contexts […]. These local and everyday meanings are also analysed in terms of the wider power relations and economic conditions within society' (Roberts 2001: 28). I will show to what extent the teacher and students make connections between the values, meanings and beliefs that they encounter in the texts and in their own cultures. Socio-

economic factors in the teaching context are also taken into consideration. Both Geertz's and Roberts's studies indicate that an analysis of culture based on ethnography offers an appropriate way to investigate real situations in the foreign-language classroom. The method will help me to demonstrate the intercultural dimensions of teaching and learning foreign texts based on my investigation of the context and culture of the case study.

In order to comprehend how the teacher and students respond to cultures depicted in the texts, I have also drawn on Michael Byram's concept of intercultural learning. Byram advocates research that examines the relationship between the representations of cultures in teaching materials, the teacher's interpretation of the texts and an understanding of students' socio-cultural backgrounds (2008: 91). Byram identifies issues that a researcher can look for in the classroom:

> In many cases, a search for explanatory, causal relationships can be combined with an attempt to understand the learners' or teachers' experience of culture learning. An analyst might wish to understand learners' responses to and perceptions of being introduced to a culture that seems to threaten their own culture and identity. (2008: 93)

This observation is useful for my study because it highlights an investigation of the possible conflicting cultures between teachers'/students' backgrounds and the world inside the texts. This point is necessary for my study because it pertains to the clashes between cultures and how teachers and students negotiate meaning across different cultures. The way in which foreign cultures potentially 'threaten their own culture and identity' suggests not only cultural reconciliation but also incompatibility between different cultures. My study also explores some difficulties both the teacher and her students encountered when trying to make sense of the other cultures presented in the texts. In Byram's view, to examine intercultural dimensions of teaching and learning, 'analysts have constructed complex models that attempt to show the inter-relationships between attitudes, motivations, self-concepts, environmental factors and instructional factors' (2008: 94). This explanation

provides me with a guideline to interpret the teacher's and students' attitudes, inspiration, concepts of self and factors that influence their responses. According to Byram, an academic investigation starts from an exploration of the teachers' and students' encounters with foreign cultures. This is followed by an exploration of the teachers' and students' attempts to mediate and reconcile clashes between cultures. Thereafter, an investigation turns to their process of self-realisation of other cultures based on their own culture and identity. This pattern will be implemented in my interpretation of the teacher's and students' responses.

While Byram's research method focuses on conflicting cultures and negotiation of meaning, Angela Scarino assesses intercultural dimensions of foreign language learning. According to Scarino, it is important for classroom research to recognise that teaching and learning are holistic activities within unique socio-cultural and historical contexts (2010: 325). Teachers and students respond to the texts and interact with each other within a dynamic framework of experience and knowledge. She points out that:

> In assessing intercultural capability in language learning it is necessary to develop processes that capture its variable, culturally contexted, interpretative nature. Such procedures are akin to data gathering and analysis in research; they range from the transient (analyses of moment-to-moment interactions, conversations that probe students' meanings, observations of students in interaction) to a range of ongoing written work. (2010: 328)

This suggestion helps me to develop methods to find answers to the second research question, particularly students' intercultural learning. It advocates an investigation of students' prompt responses from their class discussion and interaction. The dialogues between teacher and students will be captured in order to reveal the reasons behind their ways of thinking and analysing the texts. Additionally, students' presentations and term papers will be examined to analyse their thoughts and their reflections regarding their teacher's interpretation of the texts.

To exemplify cultural representations in teaching materials and features that make them suitable or challenging for intercultural teaching and learning, I also apply Claire Kramsch's research paradigm. She suggests an analysis of 'third place' or an investigation of how teachers and students interpret foreign cultures. A classroom researcher studies teachers' and students' constructions of interculturality through their negotiation of meaning across different cultures in the texts and in their own context. Kramsch points out that, 'the symbolic dimension of intercultural competence calls for an approach to research and teaching that is discourse-based, historically grounded, aesthetically sensitive, and that takes into account the actual, the imagined and the virtual worlds in which we live' (2011: 354). This explanation is helpful for me to seek for answers for the two research questions because it suggests how to explore cultural representations in teaching materials, the teacher's presentation of the texts and students' responses. Kramsch urges an analysis of discourses as represented in the text and in class responses, historical information and aesthetic elements. Moreover, Kramsch advocates investigation into the representation of the world in the texts, the context within which the texts belong, and the world in which the teaching and learning takes place. Her theory of intercultural dimensions of teaching literature helps me to make sense of the teacher's and students' immersion into other cultures with which they interact. I will demonstrate to what extent the teacher's and students' insights into other cultures enable them to better understand their own cultures. My study also investigates some challenges that the teachers and students may encounter while they attempt to interpret foreign-language texts.

My two research questions can also be answered by a research paradigm that links foreign language education with the environment. Uwe Küchler advocates an exploration of different views of nature in foreign language teaching and learning. A researcher should observe teachers' and students' responses to cultural representations of nature in teaching

materials. In his view, this research approach allows us to understand contemporary environmental issues across different worldviews. He writes,

> Because ecological issues have not generated a larger extent of research in foreign language education, it seems imperative to empirically scrutinise the current state of development with regards to language learning as much as ecological thought in the EFL classroom. Data should be acquired and analysed with the help of an exploratory, qualitative and interpretative research design. (Küchler 2014: 33)

He suggests that research that combines foreign language education and the environment is still in its infancy and still requires extensive research from a variety of contexts. My own project hopes to advance the explanation of how teacher and students together can enhance their understanding of the environment through engaging with foreign language literary texts

To conclude this section, qualitative research method helps to gain an understanding of why and how teacher presents texts, and how students' ecological awareness is possibly developed and sensitised through reading foreign language texts. However, it is important to bear in mind that these intercultural theories have been developed by scholars based on the context of Western education. In particular, the negotiation of meaning seems to disregard the linguistic barriers that teachers and students in a non-Western English foreign language setting encounter. The Thai teachers and students have to deal with not only socio-cultural complexities in ecocritical texts but also the foreignness of the language. The qualitative research paradigm I adopt will allow me to explore cultures depicted in teaching materials, and also to see what makes these texts suitable or challenging for teachers and students in the context of higher education in Thailand.

Data Collection Methods

To examine intercultural dimensions of teaching and learning ecocritical texts at a Thai university, I have used three methods of data collection. According to Clifford Drew et al., 'qualitative research methods are most appropriate in very specific situations when the research problem or question does not allow for high control and the manipulation of variables' (1996: 162). My selection was based on an ethnographic case study, which included classroom observations, interviews and document analysis. Lawrence Stenhouse defines an ethnographic case study as 'a single case […] studied in depth by participant observation supported by interview, after the manner of cultural and social anthropology' (1985: 49). The main reason for my decision to conduct an ethnographic case study was that it offered an appropriate way to investigate situations in the classroom and helped me to develop an understanding of intercultural dimensions of teaching and learning. In addition, Louis Cohen and Lawrence Manion indicate that an ethnographic case study focuses on describing a phenomenon, explaining the reasons for a problem and providing background information about a situation in a local context (1989: 124). This application of an ethnographic case study enabled me to collect sufficient data for my analysis chapters.

Since an ethnographic case study merges ethnography with the case study, it is helpful to consider each one in turn. Andrew Sturman suggests that 'the distinguishing feature of a case study is the belief that human systems develop a characteristic wholeness or integrity and are not simply a loose collection of traits' (1994: 61). A case study can therefore promote an understanding of individuals in action and interaction within a particular setting. In her definition of ethnography, Carol Charles also suggests that it is 'holistic in nature, replete with detail, data gathered through naturalistic group observation, observer-researcher may function as member of group, and verbal data are analysed logically and contextually' (1998: 213). From these two descriptions, ethnography integrated with a case study was a useful approach because it allowed me to examine the

actions and cultural dimensions of a teacher and a group of students in the Thai context. It also permitted an interpretation of the data gained from both within and outside the texts.

In my data collection methods, classroom observation was selected as a means to obtain descriptions of the context and accounts of specific incidents and behaviours that were followed up in the interviews. Dick Allwright distinguishes between four categories of classroom behaviour: direct reference to texts, use of visual aids, students' interaction and variation of class structures (1988: 24). Moreover, the classroom ethnography takes into consideration many elements, such as physical setting, events, participants, commonalities, patterns of relationship, dominance and submission (Charles 1998: 216). These variables have guided my data collection in terms of the teacher's and students' responses to the cultural representation of nature in the classroom. My role as a researcher in the class was an 'observer as participant' because this role was relatively unobtrusive. Patricia Adler and Peter Adler define this 'observer as participant' as a 'peripheral membership role'. By this position they mean that researchers 'observe and interact closely enough with members to establish an insider's identity without participating in those activities constituting the core of group membership' (Adler and Adler 1998: 85). I observed the class and learned from the teacher's explanation of texts, but I did not actively participate in their teaching and learning activities. Sharan Merriam clarifies an 'observer as participant' position as follows, 'the researcher's observer activities are known to the group; participation in the group is definitely secondary to the role of information gatherer. Using this method, the researcher may have access to many people and a wide range of information (2009: 124). This role was suitable for me because it made the teacher and students feel comfortable while I audited their lessons. My appearance in the class was passive, sitting at the back of the room and observing the teacher's presentation of literary texts, the interactions between teacher and students, and the students' class presentations. I audio-recorded and took notes. My field notes included descriptions of setting, topics in lectures and Powerpoint slides, the teacher's references to quotations from literary texts and interpretations, as well as the

students' discussions and responses. The data gained from classroom observations will reveal the characteristics of teaching materials, teaching approaches and students' reflections.

Second, the interview method was chosen to obtain information about the teacher's and student participants' ways of thinking and interpreting the texts. Clifford Drew et al. describe the interview as providing 'a method through which the meaning of behaviours and events for the people involved can be conveyed. Following observations, for example, the researcher may wish to interview participants and ask them why they said or did something or how they were feeling' (1996: 174). As the teacher's and students' engagement with the texts in the class was my main concern, the most appropriate type was thus the open-ended semi-structured interview. This is because questions in this type of interview are flexible to allow the emergence of new topics and various perspectives from the interviewees. The interviews were audio-recorded and I took notes. The findings from my interviews with the teacher will show perceptions and expectations, whereas those with the students will reflect their ways of thinking. Third, course syllabi and students' term papers will document module objectives and students' learning experiences.

Fieldwork

To answer my research questions that concern cultural representations of nature in teaching materials and features that make the texts suitable or challenging for intercultural teaching and learning, and to adopt research approaches suggested by scholars, such as Geertz, Roberts and others as mentioned in the methodology section, I conducted my research fieldwork in Thailand. I observed two elective literature modules in the English curricula taught in the second semester of the academic year 2013/14 (28 October 2013–19 February 2014) at two Thai public universities: Chulalongkorn University and Chiang Mai University. Since there are a limited number of modules that focus on environmental

literature in Thai university curricula, my conclusion has to rely on these two examples of teaching and learning practice. Moreover, as the status of both courses was elective, it can be assumed that the students who registered on them were interested in the topic. Because the two modules were part of different levels of degree programmes, they permitted me to examine a wider range of teaching materials and teaching approaches.

The first module that I observed was *Environmental Literature and Criticism* in the Master of Arts programme in English at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, the central part of Thailand. The second module was *Issues in Contemporary Literature* in the Bachelor of Arts programme in English at Chiang Mai University in the northern region. The reason for choosing these two modules was that the teachers used literary texts as the principal materials to discuss issues pertaining to the environment. In the first module, the primary texts taught were Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854), Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (1991), Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977), Gary Snyder's *Turtle Island* (1969) and *Regarding Wave* (1967), and Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004). In my analysis chapters, I will choose three examples from these teaching materials that best represent the intercultural dimensions of the teaching and learning of ecocritical texts. In the second module, the primary texts taught were James Lovelock's 'The Gaia Hypothesis' (1979), Susan Griffin's 'Prologue' (1978), Opal Whiteley's 'The Joy-Song of Nature' (1986), Linda Hogan's 'Walking' (1990), Sarah Jewett's 'A White Heron' (1886), and Pam Houston's 'A Blizzard Under Blue Sky' (1992). I have not chosen to discuss any of these texts in my analysis chapters because the intercultural dimension of teaching and learning was less obvious in this module.

Classroom observations were carried out in the two literature modules mentioned above. In *Environmental Literature and Criticism*, the participants were one Thai lecturer and eight Thai postgraduate students. I observed all classes for the entire semester during the period 28 October 2013–19 February 2014. This class was divided into 16 weekly

periods and consisted of 48 hours of teaching in total. In *Issues in Contemporary Literature*, the participants were one Thai lecturer and thirty Thai undergraduate students. I attended all classes that focused on environmental literature which were delivered between 17 January 2014 and 11 February 2014. This topic was taught for 8 periods over 4 weeks and 12 hours in total.

I conducted two sets of semi-structured interviews with two groups of participants: 1) teachers and 2) students. The first set of interviews was conducted individually with Thai teachers and the second with Thai students in groups. The first group consisted of eight lecturers. My main interviews were with the two lecturers whose teaching I observed. However, I interviewed six additional lecturers because it was my intention to gain other perspectives on the teaching of ecocritical texts across different universities, and Thai ways of thinking about nature and other related aspects. The teacher participants were from four universities from three different parts of Thailand: Chulalongkorn University, Chiang Mai University, Mahasarakarm University in the north-eastern part, and Payap University in the north. Six of them were English literature lecturers, one was a comparative literature lecturer and another one was a writer and Thai literature lecturer. Seven of them were women and one was a man. All of them were interested in environmental issues and had experience of teaching literature about the environment at university level. The interview consisted of five parts: 1) background information about the interviewee, 2) teaching texts about the environment, 3) students' receptivity to the topic, 4) pedagogical practices, and 5) problems in teaching and learning. All interviews were conducted in the Thai language. Each interview took between one and two hours, and was audio-recorded with the interviewees' permission. Interviews were conducted in either the interviewees' offices or in meeting rooms at their workplaces.

The second set of semi-structured interviews was conducted with students who participated in the two modules that I observed. The first group interview consisted of four

postgraduate students and the other two group interviews each consisted of four third-year undergraduate students. Eight female and four male students agreed to be interviewed. The interview questions were grouped in four parts: 1) interviewees' experiences of studying literature, 2) perceptions of teaching materials, 3) class participation, and 4) practicality of their ecological thinking in lives. While the postgraduate group interview took about two hours, each undergraduate group interview took about one hour. All of the interviews were conducted in Thai at the end of the semester and took place on campus, one in the department's meeting room and the others in an open area of the faculty's buildings. Conducting an interview with a group not only created a pleasant atmosphere, but it also allowed the interviewees to exchange their feelings and views, providing additional information for my study.

Pilot Study

Before the main fieldwork was carried out, I conducted a pilot study in April 2013 to test interview questions and to gain additional information for my research design. I carried out the pilot at Chulalongkorn University, which was also one of the universities included in my main study. The subject was *Environment Literature*, an undergraduate elective module in the Bachelor of Arts programme in English taught in the second semester of the academic year 2012/13. My participants were one Thai teacher (who was also included in my main study) and two Thai third-year undergraduate students who majored in English literature. The interviews were conducted in English and included four main topics: 1) perception of teaching ecocritical literature in an urban context, 2) students' critical development, 3) teaching English as a foreign language, and 4) Thai culture. My student participants were volunteers and each interview was conducted individually. The literary texts studied in this class comprised Daniel Quinn's *Ishmael: An Adventure of Mind and Spirit* (1992), Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Dreams* (1990) and Susanne Antonetta's *Body Toxic: An Environmental Memoir* (2001).

Following my pilot study, I refined my initial research questions and data collection method. As I learned from the pilot interviews that my teacher and student participants had personal engagement with the texts and their interpretations of these texts were quite remarkable, I decided to focus my study on the teacher's and students' responses. The teacher pointed out the reason for her selection of teaching materials and teaching approaches. Her choices of literary texts were based on the values, beliefs and worldviews represented in the texts. She suggested that the ecological issues depicted in the texts seemed to develop students' understanding of the environment. The teacher also discussed with me the extent to which her students were receptive to the experiences of the characters in the texts. Moreover, my student participants reflected on their individual involvement with the lives of the characters in the texts they studied. They compared and contrasted the events in the stories with their own lives and pointed out some limitations to studying literature and the environment.

Responding to the reflections of the teacher and students, my methodology and data collection in the main fieldwork were guided by cultural analysis and an ethnographic case study with a focus on literary study. In class observations, I paid particular attention to the characteristics of the texts selected by the teachers and how they communicated ecological issues to students, as well as to the manner in which students interacted with the texts. Additionally, some of the interview questions which were deemed unclear in the pilot study were adjusted and others which proved less relevant to the teaching and learning of ecocritical texts were omitted. The data obtained from both the pilot and main studies will be used in my analysis chapters.

Main Study Selection

After I finished my data collection from the two modules, I decided to focus on the *Environmental Literature and Criticism* module in my analysis chapters because this context

allows me to best exemplify the intercultural dimensions of the teaching and learning of ecocritical texts. The entire module dealt with socio-political and environmental issues presented in the texts and in the context of learners. The course has been offered for postgraduate students of English literature since 2011. The module is part of the English curriculum, which is one of the longest established programmes in the Faculty of Arts at Chulalongkorn University. Established in 1917, this is the oldest university in Thailand. The location of the university is also an important consideration. The university is situated in the heart of the capital city of Bangkok where the government's policies are proposed. The lessons frequently addressed aspects of socio-economic and ecological problems in the city which have had devastating effects on the more remote provinces of Thailand. Moreover, I learned that the students in this module were from varied socio-cultural backgrounds. I have noted that their responses to the cultural representations of nature varied according to their backgrounds from different parts of Thailand: the north, north-east and centre. These factors have contributed to my selection of the module in my analysis of the intercultural dimensions of teaching and learning ecocritical texts.

I did not choose to analyse the teacher's and students' responses in the *Issues in Contemporary Literature* module because this context seemed to offer less intercultural dimensions of teaching and learning. In this undergraduate module, the teacher focused on an analysis of events and characters based on culture represented in the texts rather than taking a comparative approach to the context of learners. The teaching approach aimed at making students aware of the topic of the environment in literary study but there was no critique of the cultural representation of nature. However, observing this module in the north of Thailand helped me to distinguish the teacher's choices of literary texts and teaching techniques from the one in Bangkok. The distinction between them was as a result of the different geographical areas of the universities and the students' dissimilar socio-cultural backgrounds. My comparative approach to the modules in different parts of Thailand will be briefly presented in the final chapter.

In my analysis chapters, I chose not to analyse my interviews with the seven teachers across different universities. This was because a focus on one teacher participant in the module that I fully observed enabled me to identify the construction of interculturality of the teaching of ecocritical texts in depth. However, my interviews with these seven teachers allowed me to conceptualise current teaching and learning practices at Thai universities in various educational contexts. They have contributed to my comprehension of the module I observed in many aspects, such as the teacher's choices of literary texts, teaching approaches and the context of the learners. It is worth summarising some points that I learned from the teachers in this section. For example, the teachers' background interests are important in their choice of environmental texts for the literature classroom. One lecturer shared with me that her selection of teaching materials derived from the recent global environmental problems. Because she chose various ecofeminist texts, my observation is that her research background in feminist literary criticism may have contributed to her desire to include these texts in her module. My discussion of other teachers' opinions and suggestions for teaching texts about the environment will also be briefly discussed in the final chapter of this thesis. I hope that their insightful views will suggest potential research topics for future studies, and will offer teaching techniques in different contexts for teachers who are interested in the field. The opinions and comments from my undergraduate level student participants will also be included in the final chapter.

My Selection of Teaching Materials

The three main analysis chapters will focus on the *Environmental Literature and Criticism* module that I observed in its entirely. The teacher's selection of teaching materials for this course includes environmental, ecofeminist, indigenous and postcolonial texts. I only chose three out of the six texts that the teacher presented in the class. My three analysis chapters concern literary texts that deal with contemporary ecological issues in association with the struggles of women, indigenous people and the colonised. The

teacher's and students' responses to these issues clearly represent their intercultural teaching and learning in distinct ways.

My first example is Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (1991) representing ecofeminism and 'nature writing'. Scott Slovic explains that 'nature writing' 'explores the private experience of the individual human observer of the world, or reflects upon the political and philosophical implications of the relationships among human beings and the larger planet' (qtd. in Buell 2005: 144). *Refuge* is an autobiographical text. It is the memoir of a female curator and biologist in the Natural History Museum in Utah located in the vicinity of a nuclear test site in the Great Salt Lake. Terry Williams tells of the diseases and deaths in her family resulting from the contaminated environment in which they lived. She begins her story with the sickness of her female family members: her grandmother, her mother and her aunt, who all suffer from cancer and undergo chemotherapy. The illnesses of these women threaten to destroy the hope of all family members: her father, her brothers and particularly her own. This tragedy also happens to many other women in her community. Williams's text is part of the coping strategy with which she attempts to deal with the pain of losing her mother and grandmother. She gradually discovers that her experiences in the Great Salt Lake can help comfort her and can reduce the fear of her mother's and grandmother's passing away. Williams realises through many of her interactions with nature that death is an unavoidable natural phenomenon. However, she also learns to protest against 'unnatural' causes of death when she realises that her family's illnesses are a consequence of the Nevada nuclear bomb testing which began in 1951. Williams challenges the government's misconception of the desert area as a useless and remote place which is far away from people's homes. She points out that the incidents of breast and other cancers in her family and beyond are testimony to the interconnectedness of people and the ecosystem, which leads to the destruction of both humans and the earth. At the same time, she protests against the denial of this connection.

The second text I focus on is Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977). This is my example of an indigenous literary text. Donelle Dreese describes the characteristic of the indigenous text as 'challenges of sustaining or restoring ecocultural identity notwithstanding the traumas of cultural change, displacement, and discrimination' (2002: 116). *Ceremony* portrays the life-story of a Native-American veteran with a Laguna Pueblo mother and white father, whose experience and memory of the battle between the US and Japan in World War II haunts him. Silko presents the plight of an ethnic minority who struggle to gain acceptance from American society by volunteering for the war. Nevertheless, the discrimination against Native-Americans remains the same after the war ends. In addition, the killing and the loss of their comrades lead to the Native-American veterans' feeling of guilt and pain, mental disorders and alcoholism. Silko points out that the culture of Native-Americans, their values and beliefs which are linked with nature, collapses because the ancient stories and rituals are no longer able to cure the sickness caused by modern war. However, in the end the protagonist finds that his Laguna Pueblo spirituality and ceremony can be a source of healing and can uplift his troubled mind. Through this character's development, Silko suggests that traditional stories and tribal rituals need to be reinterpreted to explain the complex ecological and mental crises in the modern world. This veteran's story represents the transformation of the culture and values of the Native-Americans from the ancient to the modern world.

My third example is Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004). This represents the post-colonial text. Rob Nixon identifies post-colonial literature as depicting 'indigenous land rights, community displacement, and toxicity, often in the context of urban or poor rural experience' (2005: 244). *The Hungry Tide* indicates the tension between environmental concepts held in the modern West and the use of the land by the local people in India. The novel presents the hardship of life for the subalterns who are forced to leave their island because of Western environmental preservation projects. The female protagonist, born to Indian parents and raised in the US, is a marine biologist who comes to study an endangered

dolphin on the Sundarbans in the Bay of Bengal. There she discovers that her scientific knowledge and technological equipment are insufficient for surviving on the islands. She learns from the local way of life, which encompasses skills adapted specifically for the location. She gradually develops an understanding of the mutability of the natural world and realises the limitations of modern environmental thinking. Through her frequent contact with an indigenous fisherman, she discovers that the ecological wisdom of the local people is closely connected with their myths and a particular way of life. Ghosh suggests that Western ideas of environmentalism can benefit the life of the poor only if they are underpinned by a true understanding of local life.

Structure of Module

The teacher started the module with an introduction and an explanation of the syllabus texts. According to the syllabus, the course deals with 'selected texts that examine various aspects of the interactions between humans and the environment; discussion of issues related to environmental criticism'. The learning objectives are '1) to acquaint students with literary texts dealing with a wide range of issues related to the environment, 2) to provide students with the opportunity to read these texts analytically and critically, and 3) to train students to write critical and analytical essays in a coherent and well-substantiated fashion'. The teacher also explained the assignments, the reading list (including both required and supplementary texts) and assessment methods and criteria. Thereafter, she furnished students with background information about ecocriticism in relation to the issues of gender, race and class.

The module allowed equal time for each text. The teacher presented the texts in the following order: Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854), Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (1991), Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977), Gary Snyder's *Turtle Island* (1969) and *Regarding Wave* (1967), and Amitav

Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004). At the start of the module, students were instructed to select from these teaching materials to write a term paper, which was to be submitted at the end of the semester. They were also given an opportunity to present their term papers in the final class after all the teaching materials had been covered. The teacher's presentation of each text relied on frequent interaction with her students. However, this engagement between teacher and students offered little evidence of students' intercultural learning. I therefore decided not to focus on their discussion in my analysis of the teacher's presentation of the texts. The manner in which she encouraged her students to draw connections between issues dealt within the texts and their own experience suggested to me the intercultural character of her teaching. The students' voices emerge in my analysis of their class presentations, their term papers and my interviews with them. Together these three sets of data gave me an understanding of their intercultural learning.

The syllabus states that the evaluation criteria are designed to assess 'academic knowledge' and include a term paper worth 30% (4,500 words) and a final exam worth 40%. There is also an assessment of 'assigned tasks' which consists of a book review worth 15% and a presentation worth 15%. There were four students who audited the module and three registered students. Only the latter three were required to complete the assessments listed above. My analysis will focus on the three registered students who fully participated in this module. The students chose to analyse three different texts in their written assignments: Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*. I obtained the three students' term papers but I did not request their final exam papers from the teacher as the teacher's grading system is not within the scope of my study. The book review is an independent learning activity in which students can choose to write about any kind of text, such as a literary text, critical essay or document. I did not ask for students' book reviews because their primary and secondary texts were not taught in class. My focus is on the

literary texts that were presented by the teacher in lectures and the students' responses to her teaching approach.

Analysis Chapters

Each of my three analysis chapters will deal with the teacher's and students' responses to one of the texts. A focus on each literary text allows me to structure the analysis chapter in the following way. The chapter begins with the characteristics of the text and a brief biography of the writer. This is followed by a discussion of selected intercultural theories that correspond to the teaching and learning approach to the respective text. I then exemplify some literary criticism to give the readers an idea of the variety of critical approaches to the text. Thereafter, I analyse the teacher's presentation of the text based on a combination of my empirical data, secondary sources and my own interpretation. The final section of each chapter focuses on students' responses to the text and to the teacher's explanation.

Chapter 4

'Third Place' in Teaching Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*

> I have learned through writing that what is most personal is, in fact, what binds us together as human beings. The past becomes the present on the page. In the act of reading, words touch our hearts, relationships are forged, we breathe a book alive. (Williams 2001: 305)

In this passage, which is taken from her note to the reader of the tenth anniversary edition of *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (1991), Terry Tempest Williams describes how her readers engage with a story of her own mother's and her grandmother's suffering from cancer. From the feedback that she has received, Williams finds that her book contains experiences of cancer similar to those of her readers over ten years since the book was first published (2001: 305). She feels grateful for the compassion and encouragement with which her readers have supported her and her family. Moreover, Williams acknowledges the relationship between *Refuge* and her readers because the book brings the story of her family alive. The statement is important for my study in two respects: first, it reveals Williams's intention to make her story representative of those affected by ecological problems in America, and second, it suggests her recognition of her readers' personal engagement with her text. This chapter examines the process in which the Thai teacher and her students bring the issues represented in Williams's text alive in their own context and culture.

Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place is a first person narrative, in which Williams tells the story of her own and her family's life in Utah. The narrator, identified with Williams in the 'Prologue', recalls the memory of her childhood experiences in Salt Lake City where she developed her close connection with the environment. Williams

records her revisiting Great Salt Lake when she feels desperate about her own life and about her mother's developing ovarian cancer. The text narrates in parallel strands the overflowing of Great Salt Lake which destroys Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge and her mother's worsening symptoms until her passing away in 1983. Williams attempts to identify the cause of the cancer that the women in her family including herself and their neighbours have suffered from over three generations. Through her conversations with older people in the community, she learns about the nuclear explosions caused by atomic-bomb testing in Nevada in 1951 and 1962, and she starts to research the history of these events. She becomes convinced that the place, its people and wildlife, have been contaminated by nuclear fallout since that time. Through a dream, Williams presents what she regards as an act of civil disobedience in which women from around the world gather in the Salt Lake Desert. They protest against the American government asking them to stop the nuclear bomb testing that has caused the demise of so many women.

Williams's Biography

Terry Tempest Williams is an American writer. She is also a conservationist and a columnist (Chandler and Goldthwaite 2003). Williams received a Bachelor degree in English from the University of Utah in 1979 and a Master of Sciences in Environmental Education in 1984. After leaving university, she worked as a school teacher in Utah and as a curator of education and a naturalist-in-residence at the Utah Museum of Natural History until 1996. She was born in Corona, California, in 1955 but grew up in Salt Lake City, Utah. Williams's interest in the natural world was kindled during her childhood, mainly through the influence of her grandmother (Chandler and Goldthwaite 2003: x). They spent much time together reading stories about nature and bird watching. Williams's books of poetry and essays frequently demonstrate the relationship between language, culture and individual experience of nature (Chandler and Goldthwaite 2003: xi). In several publications, Williams draws on Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), and her warning

about the excessive use of pesticides in America, as an important source for her own thinking and writing. Williams notes that Carson's work has persuaded her to 'question every law, person, and practice that denies justice toward nature' (qtd. in Chandler and Goldthwaite 2003: x).

Kramsch's 'Third Place'

To analyse the Thai teacher's and her students' approach to *Refuge*, I have chosen Claire Kramsch's concept of 'third place' (2009, 2011) because the theory provides a framework for an understanding of readers' responses to foreign literature and culture. The concept is useful for my study as it highlights the role that context and culture play in foreign literature teaching. Kramsch regards 'third place' as the way in which teachers and students make sense of foreign literature and culture. The process of reading the text operates through what she calls 'the symbolic dimensions of the intercultural' (Kramsch 2011: 354). In her words, 'third place, third culture, and the sphere of interculturality are metaphors that attempt to capture through a place marker what is in fact a process of positioning the self both inside and outside the discourse of others' (2011: 359). She clarifies that 'third place' represents the mediation and negotiation of meaning across different cultures in the text and in the readers' context. Kramsch suggests that this teaching approach 'is discourse-based, historically grounded, aesthetically sensitive, and […] takes into account the actual, the imagined and the virtual worlds in which we live' (2011: 354). The notion of 'third place' is directly related to my analysis of the teaching and learning of *Refuge* in this respect.

There are three main aspects of Kramsch's theory which are useful for my purposes. The identification of each feature is according to my own categorisation, which I will discuss in my analysis. First, her understanding of 'third place' is based on the teacher's 'ability that is both theoretical and practical, and that emerges from the need to find

appropriate subject positions within and across the languages at hand' (2009: 200). This feature pertains to the teacher's endeavour to make the presentation of the text relevant to students in their learning context. Second, 'third place' can be characterised by 'the circulation of values and identities across cultures, the inversions, even inventions of meaning' (Kramsch et al. qtd. in Kramsch 2011: 354). In other words, the interpretation of foreign literature by teachers and students from other cultures indicates the relationship between the values and identities represented in the text and their own culture. Last, 'third place' can be identified in the teacher's and the students' 'ability to resignify [text and their teaching context], reframe them, re- and transcontexualise them and to play with the tension between text and context' (Kramsch 2011: 359). This idea illustrates the challenges offered by the text to both teachers and students in terms of their different opinions about the issues presented in the text.

Kramsch notes that 'third place' needs to be considered as 'a symbolic process of meaning-making that sees beyond the dualities of national' cultures (2011: 355). She warns of the dangers of misunderstanding 'third place' as a creation of two opposite cultures: the one represented in literature and the teaching context. Kramsch also emphasises that 'third place' is not constructed through 'binary' cultures, but is 'associated with ideologies, attitudes and beliefs, created and manipulated through the discourse' (2011: 355). This demonstrates that Kramsch is concerned with the complexity of cultures as they are portrayed in literature and in the teaching context. My comparative approach to American and Thai cultures aims to draw on similarities rather than differences. By American society and culture, I mean those represented by Williams in *Refuge*. In my analysis of the Thai teacher's and her students' approach, I use the concept of 'third place' to better understand social and ecological issues in the text and their interplay in Thailand. The chapter begins with an overview of how other scholars have interpreted *Refuge*. The review of selected literary criticism helps to contextualise the distinctive features of the teacher's presentation

of the text and the students' responses and is followed by my analysis of the teacher's approach and of the students' ways of reading.

Overview of Literary Criticism

Scholars have studied *Refuge* according to a variety of criteria and their analyses cannot be subsumed into any single approach. We can try to sort criticism of the text into three different groups, according to their focuses: 'autobiography', 'religion and belief' and 'ecofeminism'. My review of the secondary literature is based on critical essays written by Western critics. The selection aims to represent some of the Western ways of reading the text. The overview provides information about existing criticism so that I can point to the specific characteristics of the Thai teacher's presentation of the text in my analysis. None of the selected secondary literature in this section was chosen by the teacher, except for the text written by Cassandra Kircher that the teacher also used in her presentation of *Refuge*. My references to Kircher's arguments include those which are similar to and different from the teacher's focus in her lectures.

To begin with, critics have analysed *Refuge* in light of the autobiographical genre. For example, John Mallmadge 'Beyond the Excursion: Initiatory Themes in Annie Dillard and Terry Tempest Williams' (1998) considers *Refuge* as a 'story of suffering and transformation' (202). Mallmadge elucidates that the narrator takes shelter in the natural world in order to cope with the sickness and loss of her mother. He interprets the narrator's revisiting the hospital located in the city and the Great Salt Lake in the country as suggestive of nature's role in spiritual uplift. Whereas Williams associates the city with disease and desperation, she presents the Great Salt Lake in terms of calmness and retreat. Another example is Lisa Diedrich 'A New Thought in Familiar Country: Williams's Witnessing Ethics' (2003) that analyses the change in the narrator's perception of cancer in *Refuge*. Diedrich points out that Williams questions the image of cancer as an enemy and of its

treatment as a military battle. Williams suggests that this perception of cancer results in a negative attitude, a feeling of aggression and an antagonistic relation of the patient to her own body. Instead Williams depicts cancer as a creative process in order to bring peace to the mind of her mother, herself, her family and all patients (Diedrich 2003: 216).

Secondly, critics have offered different views about Williams's representation of Mormonism in *Refuge*. For instance, Cassandra Kircher's 'Rethinking Dichotomies in Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge*' (1998) pays attention to her critique of Mormonism. Kircher points out that the text challenges traditional Mormon culture that is based on 'patriarchal doctrines' (1998: 162). Williams criticises Mormon rituals that deny women full participation in religious ceremony. The narrator disapproves of the church's exclusion of her mother's and her grandmother's traditional blessings for their health. In contrast to Kircher's view, Katherine Chandler's 'Potsherds and Petroglyphs: Unearthing Latter-day Saint Sources for Williams's Environmental Vision' (2003) praises Williams's presentation of Mormonism in *Refuge*. Chandler acknowledges that Mormon cultures and doctrines contribute to Williams's belief in the spirituality of nature. Chandler claims that the narrator has frequently realised the embodiment of God in the natural world since an early age. In Chandler's view, the representation of the narrator's spiritual engagement with nature in the text suggests a Christian 'stewardship' of nature which is central to Mormonism (2003: 205).

Thirdly, *Refuge* has received ecofeminist literary criticism. For example, Kircher's 'Rethinking Dichotomies in Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge*' (1998) is sceptical about Williams's portrayal of the relationship between humans and nature as being shaped by patriarchy. Kircher points out that Williams's dualism of man/human and woman/nature in the text tends to be 'exaggerated' and simplistic (1998: 160). Kircher argues that instead of questioning the cultural representation of nature as feminine, Williams reinforces this gender-biased stereotype (1998: 161). In Kircher's view, Williams's ecofeminist struggle

against nuclear bomb testing by depicting a political demonstration implies that she still relies on the patriarchal culture. On the other hand, Tina Richardson's 'Corporeal Testimony: Counting the Bodies in *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*' (2003) views Williams's critique of patriarchy differently. Richardson supports Williams's argument that patriarchal ideology and its practices cause exploitation of both women and nature. The historical reference to the American government's nuclear bomb testing at the Nevada Test Site between 1951-1962 in *Refuge* is said to represent 'male privilege, perspective, and arrogance; the practice of colonisation' (Richardson 2003: 231). Richardson accepts the connection that Williams makes between breast cancer and environmental contamination and agrees with the profound similarity between women and nature who are victims of the patriarchal systems of ruling, suggested in *Refuge*.

My review of the secondary literature of *Refuge* suggests that critics have paid attention to Williams's autobiography, her religion and belief, and her gender struggle. Both Mallmadge and Diedrich identify the change in the narrator's perception of herself and of cancer from a pessimistic to an optimistic way of thinking. Moreover, Kircher, Chandler and Richardson offer diverse opinions about the text's representation of Mormonism and of Williams's critique of patriarchy. All selected critical analyses point to the complexity of social and ecological issues depicted in *Refuge*. The text raises challenging questions for Western scholars. The interpretation is guided by each critic's different interest and this, in turn, guides the selection of scene for analysis. However, this difference in the interpretation of the text is not my main focus. The diversity of critical views allows me to argue that through her engagement with Western criticism of the text, i.e. Cassandra Kircher's article, and her own interpretation, the Thai teacher occupies a 'third place'. The teacher has to be selective in her presentation of literary criticism about *Refuge*. Her approach to the text will help us to understand her 'third place' as constructed in-between the issues discussed in the text and in the teaching context. In the following section, I examine 'third place' in the teacher's way of analysing and teaching the text.

The Teacher's Presentation of *Refuge*

I suggest that the teacher deploys 'third place' by constructing a Thai response to the representation of social and ecological problems in *Refuge*. In my view, the Thai teacher's presentation of the text corresponds with Kramsch's concept in the three significant ways. First, the teacher attempts to identify the issues in the text according to their relevance to her students. Second, her analysis implies the circulation of values and identity across different cultures, in particular the one depicted in the text and her own. For example, the symbolism of nature as a mother's womb portrayed in the text is similar to that of the Thai worldview. Third, the gender difference between the teacher and her students constitutes a challenge as can be seen from the students' responses to the text. I will analyse the teacher's presentation of the text to demonstrate what I mean by her 'third place'. In another section, I will discuss the students' construction of their 'third place' from their responses to the teacher's way of reading the text and their own engagements with the text.

All of the lectures on *Refuge* were delivered over five classes (nine hours). The teacher divided her lessons into two main topics: 'toxicity' and 'ecofeminism integrated with autobiography'. The first lesson on 'toxic discourse' linked the ecological crises described in the text and those occurring in Thailand. The combination of ecofeminism and autobiography (in the text) allowed the teacher to point out environmental problems in association with gender struggle. The lectures on the two topics were connected and the teacher made frequent cross-references. She provided her students with various ways of interpreting *Refuge*. The teacher made use of critical essays to introduce different approaches to the text. My study of 'third place' analyses the data gained from my pilot interview, all lectures, the students' term papers, their class presentations, and my interviews with the teacher and the students at the end of the semester.

The teacher used Lawrence Buell's 'Toxic Discourse' (2001) as a way of introducing the text. She accepted that Buell's article is difficult and explained the features of 'toxic discourse'. In her view, 'toxic discourse' is a set of ideas which express anxiety. The fear of toxins in modern society is captured in the language. The concept of 'toxic discourse' refers to the representation of nature as an idyll juxtaposed with the picture of the contamination of the modern world. Another feature of this concept is the association between toxins and 'environmental justice' in the discourse about race, gender and class. 'Toxic discourse' is used by writers to tell the story of innocent people in poor areas and their struggle against chemical factories and irresponsible governments. The teacher offered the features of 'toxic discourse' to her students as guidance for their interpretation of the text.

The teacher suggested a similarity between the problems of toxicity in remote areas of America and Thailand. She pointed to the struggle of underprivileged people who live near power plants and toxic waste dumping sites in both countries. She explained:

> When we are talking about the whole issues of toxic discourse, the environmentalists who are interested tend to be the marginalised, the women, people living in the countryside, or the minorities. There has been research pointing out that in America, the areas where Black people live, tend to be affected by toxic dumping. This is pretty much like the situation that we have seen in Thailand. You could have like toxic waste – there wouldn't be here in Bangkok, near Chulalongkorn University in the heart of the capital. You would have to go somewhere else. You might have to go to Rayong – Map Ta Phut, or some remote areas in the Northeast of Thailand. And you find a place which is pretty much deserted, inhabited by poor people, uneducated. You use that area as a site of toxic dumping or devoted to construct nuclear power plant. You wouldn't build it right next to Siam Paragon [department store]. You wouldn't want to do that. You would push it somewhere else away from the upper-middle class, the bourgeois, the capitalist. This means that here we are talking about environmental injustice that is going on in the society. And Lawrence Buell tries to point out that here we are dealing with the issue of toxicity or toxic discourse which is also about the issue of

> class, the issue of gender and also the issue of race as well, especially in America or in our country. (Lecture 1, Minute 41:37)

The teacher pointed to social and ecological issues in the US and in Thailand before she directly dealt with *Refuge*. She used Buell's concepts of 'toxic discourse' and 'environmental injustice' to make sense of not only the text but also the actual situation in both countries. This introduction to the discussion of the text clearly indicated her intention to make the issues presented in *Refuge* relevant to the learning context of her students.

In order to better understand the teacher's comparative approach, I am consulting Thai critic Decharut Sukkumnoed's study about the relationship between the city and the country in Thailand (2011). Sukkumnoed points out that the National Economic and Social Development Plans of the Thai government since 1961 have resulted in an injustice. The plans have justified the prioritisation of the nation's economic and industrial growth (Sukkumnoed 2011: 77). Therefore, the government has constructed electricity generating power plants and coal mines in the countryside to support economic hubs located in the city. In 1987 the problems became increasing serious because people living near power plants were noticeably affected by the pollution of air, land and water (Sukkumnoed 2011: 79). Sukkumnoed provides the same examples as the teacher, notably, a dam in north-east Thailand and one of the largest shopping centres, Siam Paragon, in Bangkok. He explains that the construction of the Pak Mun dam in Ubon Ratchathani in the north-eastern province has caused the destruction and contamination of the ecosystem along the Mun and Mekong rivers (2011: 79). Even though the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand defends the dam because it produces electricity for the whole country, statistics reported by Chuenchom Sangarasri Greacen reveal that in 2006 the electricity consumption of Siam Paragon was almost double that of the province of Mae Hong Son in the North (Sukkumnoed 2011: 80). Sukkumnoed's study helps us to realise the complexity of environmental injustice in Thailand and to clarify the teacher's comparison. In this lesson, the teacher connected Bangkok, where the students were studying, with remote areas in other provinces. This was

in order to help her students become aware of environmental problems in their own country to aid their understanding of Williams's text.

Some examples of the teacher's responses to the ecological and social issues in Thailand can be found in her clarification of the discourse in the text. The teacher explained that, according to Buell, 'toxic discourse' draws a vivid picture of a contaminated environment. However, Buell also remarks that the writers tend to present the health problems caused by toxicity in terms of a discourse of allegation. Buell raised this in 2001 at a time when it had not yet been widely proven that toxins cause illness. The teacher still utilised the discourse of allegation observed by Buell to analyse *Refuge* in order to make her students understand the use of 'toxic discourse' in the text. She referred to the following passage in the text where the narrator desperately ponders her family's disease:

> I cannot prove that my mother, Diane Dixon Tempest, or my grandmothers, Lettie Romney Dixon and Kathryn Blackett Tempest, along with my aunts developed cancer from nuclear fallout in Utah. But I can't prove they didn't. (Williams 286)

The teacher explained that the narrator suggests that she is certain that all the cancers that have affected her family members are a direct result of the nuclear tests carried out in the Nevada dessert. However, there is no way for her to find substantial evidence to prove this. The teacher then pointed out in this lesson about the discourse of allegation that the narrator's identification with 'the clan of one-breasted women' (281) represents her evidence that proves the cause:

> It is like she is making connections between the illnesses that take place in her body. She is trying to explain the cause of it pointing that actually the illnesses of her bodily – her physical illness is caused by the illness of the earth itself. However, it can only be allegation and she is excusing. She cannot find firm proof to tell the people. (Lecture 2, Minute 40:05)

In this particular lecture, the teacher used secondary literature to provide students with an example of how to read the text with an awareness of existing secondary literature. She

showed them how the representation of the narrator as a victim corresponds with Buell's 'toxic discourse'. The teacher further pointed out that the discourse is used by the author of *Refuge* in order to challenge the American government into a response about the nuclear tests in Nevada. It could be said that this lesson about discourse of allegation was out of date because the situation has improved since the book's first publication. The teacher referred her students to the writer's note to the readers in the tenth anniversary edition of the text. In this note, the author updates her readers about how scientists and law courts have increasingly recognised the connection between certain cancers and ecological contamination (Williams 2001: 307). While scientific researches may have moved on in America, the teacher clearly felt that a focus on 'toxic discourse' in terms of Buell's 'allegation of toxin' was still relevant to the current situation in Thailand where similar problems remain insufficiently recognised.

The 'third place' that the teacher occupies in her responses to 'toxic discourse' in *Refuge* is her association with environmental issues in Thailand. The teaching of the text in her own context can be characterised by the 'inventions of meaning' (Kramsch et al. qtd. in Kramsch 2011: 354). That is, in the teacher's view, Williams's political message for the American government is also relevant to Thailand:

> Here, if we live, you know, we live in Map Ta Phut and we happen to have some kind of rashes, symptoms, headache, nostril. And if your house is surrounded by different kind of factories, how could your doctor tell you that all these rashes, symptoms come from a particular chemical? How do you know right from that particular factory? There is no way to do that, right? You can say that: 'I am sure that my illnesses are related to the cause of some kind of toxic waste, toxic disposal that come from this factory'. But you cannot really pin point that factory and that chemical cause these symptoms. So in some works that deal with toxic discourse, sometimes, scientific or medical statistics have also been used as a way to create the cause of links between physical illness and the physical environment outside. (Lecture 2, Minute 40:52)

The teacher's strategy to reinforce the 'toxic discourse' suggested by the text is to relate it to the contamination occurring in modern Thailand. In my view, this explanation functions on two levels. First, the teacher helps students to comprehend 'toxic discourse' in *Refuge* on the basis of the Thai context with which they are familiar. Second, she suggests to them that the common problems in America and Thailand are consequences of the ignorance of governments regarding the health issues of the people who live in risk areas. As Surichai Wun'gaeo points out, Map Ta Phut has been the site of the largest industrial park on the east coast of Thailand since the country's industrial revolution in 1988 (2001: 17-18). Wun'gaeo criticises the environmental policy and the management system that have failed to protect the people living in this area from the factories' toxic waste and periodic chemical explosions. He asks the Thai government to take responsibility, to deal with this problem and to educate people about this issue (2001: 20).

My interview with the teacher clarified the 'third place' that she symbolically constructs in her interpretation and her response to 'toxic discourse' in *Refuge*. The teacher recognises the representation of the victim in *Refuge* and in American society, and compares this with the Thai context. In our pilot interview, the teacher explained to me the reason for selecting this autobiographical text and her intention to point out the ecological problems in Thailand:

> The text that I have chosen would also somewhat reveal, for example, how the life of the privileged, I mean this is the whole issues of class as well. People like us living in Bangkok could affect the lives of those people who live near the factories. We may never ever imagine this kind of relationship between ourselves – walking in Siam Paragon, doing shopping and those people who live for years in Map Ta Phut, for example. And this text that I have selected aims to make them to create this connection seeing their role as being complicit to the environmental problems. (Pilot Interview, Hour 01:17:55)

The opinion that the teacher shared with me reveals that her text selection and interpretation are significant for the Thai students to learn from *Refuge*. In her opinion, Thai people lack

ecological awareness and there are wide social and economic gaps between the capital and the country. These factors prevent them from making the connection between people living in the city and those in the remote areas. It is important to note the way in which the teacher identifies herself and her students as belonging to the 'privileged' group because it implies her 'symbolic self'. Kramsch defines the 'symbolic self' as 'the self that is engaged in intercultural' dimension (2011: 354) of making sense of foreign literature. Kramsch explains that 'third place' symbolises 'a process of positioning the self both inside and outside the discourse of the others' (2011: 359). The perception of the teacher as a member of the 'privileged' is the interplay between environmental issues in *Refuge* and the Thai context. That is, the teacher assumes 'third place' through positioning herself and her students in order to make her students aware of themselves living safely in the city and those living in the risky country as in the case of Map Ta Phut. In this regard, her response to *Refuge* is due to the necessity of highlighting environmental and social injustice in Thailand and the complicity of the students' social groups.

We can gain a better understanding of the link the teacher makes between the issues of toxicity in *Refuge* and in the context of Thailand by consulting Ursula Heise's study of 'narrative in the world risk society' (2008: 11). Heise points out that contemporary American novels, such as Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1998) or Richard Power's *Gain* (1998) present the relationship between local and global communities through the image of the world at risk (2008: 13). In particular, the depiction of chemical exposure in these novels revolves around the characters' experiences in their residential areas which contribute to the global threats (Heise 2008: 12). In Heise's view, 'the study of risk perceptions and their sociocultural framing must form an integral part of an ecocritical understanding of culture' (Heise 2008: 13). She suggests that the analysis of representations of 'the world risk society' is important because it helps to better comprehend the complexity of issues in relation to a specific culture. The insight into one particular culture can then further an understanding of the problems at both a regional and global level (Heise 2008: 13). Heise's

study of ‘narrative in the world risk society’ is primarily based on literary and cultural analyses.

My observation of the Thai teacher suggests that she sees a clear connection between ‘narrative’ and the wider cultural context. She draws her students’ attention to the similarity between the issues of toxicity at the centre of Williams’s novel and the environmental problems in Thailand; by encompassing them to reflect about how their own consumerist behaviour might contribute to the environmental crises in remote Thai regions she evokes ‘the world risk society’. In other words, her cross referencing of the two contexts promotes the reciprocal understanding of the problems presented by the text and those in Thailand. Both the American and Thai societies, as the teacher explains, are at a high risk of ecological contamination, people’s health problems, and social and environmental injustice. Through this comparative approach, the teacher creates what Heise regards as ‘the environmental imagination of the global’ (2008: 17) to aid students’ comprehension of the issues.

Ecofeminist literary criticism is another approach that the teacher chose in her presentation of *Refuge*. She used Karen J. Warren’s ‘The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism’ (1998) to provide students with a conceptual framework to understand the ecofeminist standpoints. The teacher explained that, according to Warren, ecofeminist critics identify the relationship between humans and the environment as being shaped by patriarchy, where men are associated with ‘reason and intellect’ whereas women are connected to ‘nature and nurture’ (Warren 1998: 175). This dualistic perception promotes hierarchical thinking, and the subjugation of both women and nature. Women are thought to be intellectually inferior to men, and biologically closer to nature as signalled by their creation of life. Ecofeminist critics, according to the teacher, argue against the dichotomy between men/humans and women/nature because they think that this mindset is the root cause of gender and nature exploitation. In Warren’s view, it is important to study the

oppression of women and nature simultaneously to truly comprehend gender and environmental problems (1998: 173). The teacher pointed out that ecofeminist writers and critics aim to remove sexism and the exploitation of nature.

The teacher highlighted ecofeminist literary criticism to make students aware of the different ways of reading *Refuge*. One example that the teacher selected for discussion is the scene in which the narrator describes the landscape as her mother's womb. This is when her mother has completed six months of chemotherapy to treat her ovarian cancer. Williams feels worried about her mother's body and she contemplates her relationship with her mother and her own birth:

> Her womb is the first landscape we inhabit. It is here we can learn to respond – to move, to listen, to be nourished and grow. In her body we grow to be human as our tails disappear and our gills turn to lungs. Our maternal environment is perfectly safe – dark, warm, and wet. It is a residency inside the Feminine. When we outgrow our mother's body, our cramps become her own. We move. She labours. Our body turns upside down in hers as we journey through the birth canal. (Williams 50)

The teacher used this passage as an example of the representation of nature as female and reminded students of Warren's biological connection between woman and nature. The teacher suggested that Williams views both woman and nature as sharing the characteristics of a mother and a giver of life. She pointed to the narrator's perception:

> So here she is talking about the parallel between the mother's womb and the nature's womb. She is talking about how the mother's womb is the first landscape. Once she is out of her first landscape which is her mother's womb, she is launching to the second landscape that is the womb of the natural world of Mother Nature. She is depicting this image of herself as an animal, right?, as the fish with the tails and with gills moving in the womb of the mother which is compared to the landscape. And she is referring to the womb as our maternal environment. (Lecture 3, Hour 01:43:02)

Although the teacher says that she bases her explanation on the ecofeminist concept of nature, in my opinion, this is also reminiscent of Mother Nature in traditional Thai culture and belief. According to Thai critic Thanya Sangkhaphanthanon's *Ecofeminism in Thai Literature* (2013), Buddhist scripture draws a picture of the earth as a mother's womb through a metaphor of the 'navel of the earth' (79). Sangkhaphanthanon explains that the 'navel of the earth' is a sacred place where Lord Buddha sits meditating until his spiritual enlightenment. The navel signals Thai people's understanding of the earth as a womb that initiates, nurtures and blesses life (Sangkhaphanthanon 2013: 80). The teacher's focus on the portrayal of the landscape as a mother's womb implies 'the symbolic dimension of the intercultural'. That is, her positive perception of nature's womb is a result of 'the circulation of values and identities across cultures' and between the text and the Thai context (Kramsch et al. qtd. in Kramsch 2011: 354). The symbolic representation of nature as a mother's womb is implicit in both American and Thai traditional worldviews.

In continuing her lesson on the ecofeminist critique of patriarchy and its practices that oppress women and nature, the teacher relied on Gretchen T. Legler's 'Ecofeminist Literary Criticism' (1997) to present a critic's challenge to the patriarchal way of thinking that is said to underlie male authors' construction of nature. The teacher pointed out that Legler encourages readers to compare and contrast the depiction of nature by men with that offered by women writers because the two genders tend to portray nature differently. While the canonical texts produced by white male authors suggest that nature is female, submissive and inert, the works of contemporary women writers present nature as dynamic, changing and challenging (Legler 1997: 229). Legler emphasises that women authors re-define the construction of women and nature in their works. They propose 'emancipatory strategies' in the form of narratives that tell different stories to form an alternative relationship with the natural world (Legler 1997: 230). Legler's argument guides the teacher in her analysis of the representation of nature in *Refuge*.

Some examples of the teacher's ecofeminist reading of *Refuge* can be seen in her analysis of the narrator's experience of nature. She pointed out that the narrator identifies the male-dominated paradigm of thought as the root cause of the exploitation of women and nature. The teacher focused on the scene when Williams and her friend drive to the Great Salt Lake. Both women notice a recently created sign for the Canadian Goose Gun Club at the former location of the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge which is now disappearing. They condemn the practice of bird shooting and the destruction of the birds' natural shelter and see these as consequences of men's lack of intimacy with nature.

> We spoke of rage. Of women and landscape. How our bodies and the body of the earth have been mined. 'It has everything to do with intimacy,' I said. 'Men define intimacy through their bodies. It is physical. They define intimacy with the land in the same way'. 'Many men have forgotten what they are connected to,' my friend added. 'Subjugation of women and nature may be a loss of intimacy within themselves'. (Williams 10)

The teacher used Legler's 'emancipatory strategies' to make sense of this passage. Women writers, she explained, reconstruct nature as a 'bodied' subject, and erase the 'boundaries between inner and outer landscapes' (Legler 1997: 230). The teacher suggested that Williams depicts nature as a female body and criticises men's relationship with nature and women because it lacks spiritual engagement. She explained:

> That scene for the two women witness the disappearing of the birds. So you could see here that the focus is on the significance of the body – the significance of the physical intimacy. And again you could see how Terry is going to redefine the new physical intimacy. And you could see she is talking about how men define intimacy through their bodies. They are talking about a lot of men like to look at embodiment of women geography, a lot of men use the android – the physical aspects of women in a very superficial trait. It's a kind of relationship that looks down upon the body of the women. It's a kind of relationship that takes advantage of the body but, at the same time, it is useless that it deprives of spirituality. That is being critiqued here when Terry is talking about how men define intimacy through their bodies. (Lecture 4, Minute 6:05)

My observation is that the Thai teacher's emphasis on the issue of gender indirectly suggests the 'symbolic dimension of the intercultural' in her making sense of this ecofeminist text. The teacher shares her challenge to male-dominated society with Thai ecocritic Sangkhaphanthanon (2013). His analysis of Thai canonical literature points out that male poets and authors personify nature as a woman based on patriarchal ideologies (2013: 109). Sangkhaphanthanon references the well-known Thai epic poem *Phra Aphai Mani* (1831) by Sunthorn Phu, the royal poet in the Rattanakosin period. This epic is regarded as Thai folklore and has been part of the Thai national curriculum. The story is a romance in which the male protagonist travels the ocean and visits different islands where he meets his two wives; a mermaid and a female ogress. The way in which the poet associates these two female characters with animals and monsters suggests that he feels alienated from women and nature (Sangkhaphanthanon 2013: 111). A mermaid wife represents men's expectation of women as being obedient and sacrificing while a female ogress reflects men's fear and a desire to overcome nature (Sangkhaphanthanon 2013: 109). My reference to the Thai critic aids comprehension of the male-dominated paradigm of thought which underlies Thai literature and culture. The teacher's ecofeminist literary criticism of *Refuge* is probably her response to the Thai perception of nature and women.

The teacher tried to make ecofeminist literary criticism of *Refuge* clearer by analysing the narrator's various experiences of nature over a number of scenes. She pointed out that Williams reconstructs women and nature as suggested by ecofeminist critics. Her strategy to clarify the issue of gender derives from Donna Haraway's 'Situated Knowledge: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective' (1991). According to the teacher, Haraway asserts that nature is not as passive as depicted in many male writers' works, and therefore cannot be comprehended through any fixed images or generalised metaphors. In contrast, nature for Haraway is an elusive and multi-faceted agent that determines a variety of interactions and relationships with humans. The teacher gave an example of the narrator learning to comprehend the dynamic quality of the natural world.

She referred to the scene when Williams walks in the Salt Lake Desert and is fully aware of the unpredictability of the place:

> The understanding that I could die on the salt flats is no great epiphany. I could die anywhere. It's just that in the forsaken corners of Great Salt Lake there is no illusion of being safe. You stand in the throbbing silence of the Great Salt Lake, exposed and alone. On these occasions, I keep tight reins on my imagination. The pearl-handed pistol I carry in my car lends me no protection. Only the land's mercy and a calm mind can save my soul. And it is here I find grace. It's strange how deserts turn us into believers. I believe in walking in a landscape of mirages, because you learn humility. I believe in living in a land of little water because life is drawn together. And I believe in the gathering of bones as a testament to spirits that have moved on. (Williams 148)

The teacher interpreted this representation of nature as part of the process of the narrator's learning to acquire her 'self in relationship' as suggested by Haraway. She analysed the ambiguity of the desert as the writer's strategy to reconstruct nature as dynamic and as an active agent. In her own words, the teacher considered this portrayal as follows:

> Paradoxical nature of the desert, on the one hand, it is fatal, it could blow you with death. On the other hand, it is also the place she could also find grace. But here she is also talking about 'keeps tight reins on my imagination'. I have to keep control of my imagination. It is like if my imagination runs wild, I know that my soul will be saved with a calm mind and also land mercy. So you could see how she is describing her experience of walking in the desert, talking about the landscape of these mirages – think about the white sand, the reflection, the heat, the sunlight. She is talking about how the desert is the land of little water. And here you have the gathering of the bone, so imagine you are walking through the desert. You might see a lot of skeletons of the death animals eaten to the bone. So here, this is the realistic, very worldly experience of the woman walking through the desert. But at the same time she is connecting with the mundane experience – her spirituality pointing out that all these things would teach her a lot. For example, the idea of humility, we think that we know, we think that human being can firmly grasp reality. But in the desert, it is the mirages, you always have illusion. You don't know what's actually going on. You can really have a fear of the reality in front you. Your reality is actually distracted by the mirage or you could also see that the

> land with little water, learn how life is very precious. Be able to live, you've got to struggle to find the water to live here. (Lecture 5, Minute 39:35)

Moreover, the teacher considered the passage as a challenge to the perception of nature in the human-centred and male-dominated paradigm of thought. She pointed out that this depiction of the desert denies the anthropocentric view that regards the change of the natural environment to serve humans' interest as the first priority. She also indicated that the desert is portrayed as a powerful agent and that the female protagonist learns to adapt and immerse herself in its different manifestations. The experience in the desert, the teacher added, helps the narrator to understand obstacles in her own life.

My observation is that the teacher's ecofeminist analysis of the desert suggests Buddhist values. She highlights the quality of the natural world as a source of spiritual learning that can bring about tranquillity. According to Phra Phaisan Visalo, in Buddhist teaching, attitude towards nature is grounded in humility and humbleness. One of the ways to exercise the mind is to learn from the changing condition of nature, which gradually decreases arrogance and allows the person to live in peace (2003: 9). The teacher's interpretation of the narrator and the desert is probably also based on this concept. She considers the experience in the desert as a learning experience which transforms an antagonistic relationship and allows her to discover tranquillity in the natural world. In her words, 'calm mind and also land mercy' is a result of a changing attitude towards nature. My interview with the teacher further clarified the way that she interprets the text. In our pilot interview, she said:

> I believe that when we study literature, we would learn how to put ourselves in other people's position. We learn to understand ourselves through the analysis of characters. Yes, when you talk about literature, you talk about literary techniques, you talk about aesthetic technique. I, as a teacher, examine my own pedagogical philosophy. I do believe in the moral value, spiritual value of literature, and I want my course to be able to help cultivate the students' minds. (Pilot Interview, Minute 6:38)

This opinion suggests the 'symbolic dimension of the intercultural' in the teacher's presentation of *Refuge* in class. She suggests that her teaching approach does not simply embrace ecofeminist literary criticism but also her Buddhist worldview. In other words, her religious belief and moral values shape her construction of meaning and teaching of *Refuge.* The teacher's ecofeminist approach allows her to focus on the narrator's sense of peace rather than stressing her confusion and aggression. The teacher's highlighting of the narrator's transformation of attitude in order to heal her mind represents the Thai reading and interpretation of *Refuge*.

To explain the teacher's 'third place', I have tried to show how she interprets the place of women in Williams's story. The teacher does not refer to Thai view of women in her ecofeminist reading of *Refuge.* However, as I have demonstrated, we can gain more understanding of her 'third place' by looking at Thai folklore and Buddhist manuscript. My own position as a Thai researcher allows me to connect the representations of women in *Refuge* and in these Thai texts. Although I am not offering an ethnographic interpretation, I am conscious of Clifford Geertz's marking that an interpretation of culture is 'not social reality' (2000: 16). Geertz warns the fact by 'turning culture into folklore and collecting it' reduces cultural complexity because this method makes it 'essentially contestable' (2000: 29). This remark makes me aware that my interpretation of the teacher's 'third place' as based on Thai folklore and Buddhist worldview has its limitations. That is, identifying the circulation of values and identities across cultures, as Kramsch suggests, by pointing out foreign language text to teaching context is not simple and straightforward. It seems to be difficult to try to identify Thai values in the way the teacher presented *Refuge*. At this point, my comparison between the teacher's ecofeminist approach to *Refuge* and representations of women in Thai folklore and Buddhist text reduces Thai cultural complexity.

The teacher integrated ecofeminism with autobiography in her presentation of *Refuge*. She explained that the text presents the empowerment of self of the female protagonist. In her view, writing is an important process because it helps the narrator to learn from her life, unify her fragmented sense of self, and eventually acquire her sense of self in connection with the natural world. To exemplify this, the teacher pointed to the narrator's new realisation after her mother's passing away:

> I realise months afterward that my grief is much larger than I could ever have imagined. The headless snake without its rattles, the slaughtered birds, even the pumped lake and the flooded desert, become extensions of my family. Grief dares us to love once more. (Williams 252)

The teacher used this excerpt to identify the narrator's transformation of self, which enables her to heal her mind first, and thereafter gives her courage to deal with the ecological problem in her community. By healing the mind, the teacher meant the interaction with the natural world which allows the narrator to cope with her mother's and grandmother's deaths. The teacher explained:

> She is implying that now wherever she looks, she now sees not only Mother Nature, but also sees the spirit of her mother dwelling there. So you could see how the death of her mother and the death of the earth is going. She stands up with fight to protect the natural world. All these things – actually her mother, the spirit of lives deprived by cancer, her relatives who have the same destiny, the rattle snake, the slaughtered birds, the pumped lake, the desert; all these things are extension of her family connected with her mother. (Lecture 5, Minute 23:11)

This new realisation of self, according to the teacher, provokes the narrator to be aware of her role as a writer to tell her life-story to represent the destructive consequences of nuclear fallout and to challenge the American government.

To comprehend the teacher's ecofeminist approach to *Refuge* combined with an autobiographical reading of the text, I am consulting studies of ecocriticism by scholars Cheryll Glotfelty, Annette Kolodny and Greg Garrard. In *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996),

Glotfelty surveys ecocritical studies in an American context. Glotfelty points out that contemporary American women writers tend to present landscapes as unpredictable and powerful women. This is in order to criticise the traditional depiction of nature as a passive and submissive woman in the American literary canon by Western male white authors (1996: xxiv). Additionally, in 'Unearthing Herstory' (1996) Kolodny suggests that the portrayal of the land as a woman distinguishes the American pastoral from that of the European. Kolodny explains that European people's settlement in America has shaped their literary imagination of the landscape as a woman and as an object to be conquered and colonised (1996: 173). What is important for my study in Glotfelty's and Kolodny's investigations is that they consider the issues of gender and nature in a similar way to the Thai teacher in her ecofeminist reading of *Refuge*.

In *Ecocriticism* (2004), Garrard surveys ecocritical studies in the light of reproduction of rhetoric. He proposes the analysis of rhetorical allusion in which nature has been imagined and represented in British and North American literary traditions. He defines rhetoric as the construction, reconstruction and transformation of metaphors that function in specific social situations (2004: 7). Examples of rhetoric studied by Garrard include the pastoral and wilderness, which he claims to be the dominant images in Western literary texts. My point is that his study of the changes of meaning of the pastoral to serve particular social interests can also be applied to the analysis of *Refuge*. My example of such an interpretation of *Refuge* is that the text relies on the Romantic pastoral in its opposition between the city and the country. Whereas the text associates the city with frustration, chemotherapy and decay, it presents the lake as spiritually uplifting, serene and an escape from the burdens of life. This way of analysing the text is similar to critic Mallmadge's interpretation (1998) that I discussed in my overview of literary criticism. However, the Thai teacher tended to marginalise the discussion of rhetoric, i.e. the pastoral and wilderness and instead focused on a contemporary aspect of 'toxic discourse'.

In a Thai context, the study of rhetorical allusion seems to be less relevant to students than ecofeminism and autobiography. This is because the rhetorical approach tends to focus on the reproduction of classical imagery whereas ecofeminist and autobiographical approaches allow Thai readers to directly address contemporary gender and ecological issues. This is the reason why the Thai teacher favours 'toxic discourse', ecofeminist and autobiographical readings of the text. Her teaching approach is based on how theory and literary criticism are related to her students. She chooses to discuss the text in terms of an exploitation of gender and nature to highlight social and ecological problems rather than focusing on the writer's use of rhetorical allusion.

The teacher's interpretation of *Refuge* suggests her positive attitude towards the writer's presentation of the gender struggle and ecological protection. She reads the narrator's imagination of the ecofeminist movement as a creative activity. This can be seen from the final scene when the narrator recalls her dream that women around the world protest against nuclear fallout in the Salt Lake Desert:

> One night, I dreamed women from all over the world circled a blazing fire in the desert. They spoke of change, how they hold the moon in their bellies and wax and wane with its phases. They mocked the presumption of even-tempered beings and made promises that they would never fear the witch inside themselves. The women danced wildly as sparks broke away from the flames and entered the night sky as stars. And they sang a song given to them by Shoshone grandmothers. Consider the rabbits. How gently they walk on the earth. (Williams 286-7)

According to the teacher, the passage presents an ecofeminist political demonstration against the American government's nuclear testing sites in Nevada. Accordingly, she applied ecofeminist criticism to make sense of the narrator's dream:

> She is referring to her dream. She is collecting all women together. So again the image of women as witches and also how the image of witches here could be used as positive force for their fight against patriarchal wrong doings. So, at this point, she is drawing the traditional beliefs in different traditions: Mormons, witchery and also Native Americans. So here this is corresponding with what we have discussed about

> the ecofeminist movement. Some of the ecofeminists would try to draw upon the traditional native belief, traditional beliefs, indigenous beliefs that give importance to the animals, all women. (Lecture 5, Hour 01:00:58)

This explanation implies that, in the teacher's view, the ecofeminist movement provides a creative force for marginalised groups of women to protect nature. My opinion is that the teacher's optimistic perception of ecofeminism indirectly reflects her 'symbolic self' and her 'cultural expectations' (Kramsch 2011: 365). Both her gender and Thai identity are likely to make her support ecofeminist standpoints. At the same time, she helps students to understand the reasons why the text undermines patriarchal society and how this can be achieved in the Thai context.

Nonetheless, the teacher also allows her students to develop a sense of 'third place' by pointing out some of the limitations of ecofeminism. She used one of the articles that I refer to in my overview of literary criticism, Kircher's 'Rethinking Dichotomies' (1998) to exemplify criticism of *Refuge*. In the last class devoted to the text, the teacher drew her students' attention to Kircher's critique of Williams's representation of nature as a woman. In Kircher's reading, the teacher noted, the text's depiction of nature as female is contradictory and problematic. While Williams attempts to subvert the dichotomy between men/humans and women/nature, her depiction of nature as a woman is culturally constructed. This means that women tend to perceive the relationship with nature in the same way as men. The teacher further explained that the image of nature is based on an essentialist view of women. There is a tendency of Williams to put blame on men and to push men away from the community of women and from ecological protection. In other words, while women try to find ways to fight against patriarchal society, they can only act within their culture, for example, the political demonstration in *Refuge*. The teacher noted that Kircher warns readers to be mindful of Williams's binary opposition although Kircher also defends the book. For instance, Kircher believes that the text does not condemn patriarchal society as totally destructive. An institution like the Utah Museum of Natural

History where the narrator works enhances the community's awareness of the changes in the natural world as a result of the atomic bomb testing. The teacher's references to Kircher's example argument suggest that she aims to provide students with a kind of 'third place' that allows them to analyse the text according to their own opinions and reasons.

As I hope to have shown, the teacher's presentation of *Refuge* justifies the concept of 'third place' in its three dimensions. First, 'toxic discourse' makes the issues in the text relevant to the context of Thailand. The teacher identified the problems of environmental injustice in the US and in Thailand. She used the impact of nuclear fallout on people's health to highlight similar effects of industrialisation in Thailand, thereby evoking Heise's concept of 'world risk society'. Second, her discussion of ecofeminism combined with autobiography pointed to values and identity issues across different cultures. The symbolic representation of nature as mother is mediated between her analysis of the depiction of nature in *Refuge* and the Thai worldview. The teacher's integration of autobiography and ecofeminism aimed to point out the development of the narrator's sense of self in her relationship with the natural world and her understanding of ecological problems. Third, the teacher's analysis of the narrator's ecofeminist thinking and its limitations again suggest that she provides students with a sense of 'third place'. That is, she enables her students to come up with their own responses to the text which can be positive as well as sceptical. The next section discusses students' ways of thinking as a result of listening to the teacher's lectures and tries to identify their personal engagement with the text.

Students' Responses

My analysis of students' reactions to *Refuge* suggests that gender background and individual interest construct 'third place'. The module had three registered students. I identify each student's way of thinking based on their term papers and class presentations. The two activities allowed each student to reflect their thoughts in their own ways. In their

term papers, students were able to choose one of the three different texts they had studied. Only student A selected *Refuge*, and he presented his argument written in a term paper and in a class presentation. Students B and C shared their views about *Refuge* in brief in class presentations. My discussion of student A's 'third place' is based on his term paper, his class presentation and my interview with him. My analysis of the 'third place' of students B and C is based on their class presentations. I will discuss in order of their class presentations how each student constructs his or her 'third place'.

To begin with, student A used an autobiographical approach to analyse *Refuge* in a gender-neutral way. He volunteered to be the first presenter in class and he shared with his classmates that he was interested in the way in which the narrator handles her own and her mother's sickness. The title of student A's term paper was ' "This story is my return": The Reconstruction of Self through Autobiography in Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge'*. In his paper, Student A adopts the teacher's autobiographical approach, but he omits the ecofeminist angle of her criticism. His argument is that:

> Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* is mostly sheded light upon in the light of ecofeminism. Most critics tend to emphasize upon Terry's use of dichotomy to decipher the text. […] This paper will, nevertheless, approach the text in a different light by using autobiographical genre and how this use of autobiographical writing allows Terry to regain her fragmented self so that she can be able to cope with her family's death and her illness. (Term paper: page 1)

In his essay, student A points to the importance of memory in facilitating the narrator's recovery of her self. This response corresponds with the teacher's presentation of the text. The student refers to James Olney's *Memory and Narrative: The Weave of Life-Writing* (1998) to guide his interpretation. According to student A, Olney identifies memories in the autobiographical text in two forms: 'the archaeological and the processual'. Student A then relies on this idea to demonstrate how the two features of memory are interwoven in

Williams's text. He analyses the process in which the narrator recalls the moment where she consoled her mother:

> The reader is taken into Terry's healing narrative in which she is fighting with cancer. She employs her memory and reconceptualizes it to cope with her illness, "Perhaps you can help me visualize a river – I can imagine the chemotherapy to be a river running through me, flushing the cancer cells out" (Williams 39). Terry recalls the conversation with her mother to visualize her chemotherapy as a river running through her. It is something natural that heals her body. (Term paper: page 6)

Student A highlights the image of the river running through the narrator's memory to point out this process of healing which involves bringing together memory and writing. While the teacher's selection of secondary sources in her interpretation is guided by an ecofeminist approach to autobiography, student A concentrates on the significance of memory and the restoration of identity in a non-gender specific perspective.

The omission of ecofeminism from student A's analysis suggests his 'third place' where he negotiates between the teacher's interpretation and his own response to *Refuge*. Student A explained to me in our interview his reasons for choosing to analyse *Refuge*. He said that *Refuge* creates a sense of peace and this made him appreciate the text. However, my observation was that he felt quite uncomfortable when describing some scenes that depict the landscape as a female body in his class presentation. Kramsch identifies 'third place' as a symbolic 'process of positioning the self both inside and outside the discourse of others' and as 'the capacity' to 'reframe' the events (2011: 359). Kramsch explains that students occupy a 'third place' where they deal with tension between issues represented in the text and their own ideas. According to this definition, student A responds to Williams's text and to his teacher's lecture according to his own interest in autobiography and possibly his gender difference from the female character and the teacher. He seems to avoid this issue by solely applying an autobiographical approach to analyse the text.

An example of how student A marginalises ecofeminism can be seen from his focus on 'ecobiography' in his interpretation of *Refuge*. Student A uses Peter Perretan's 'Eco-Autobiography. Portrait of Place: Self-Portrait' (2003) to analyse Williams's depiction of nature as a mother's womb. According to student A's essay, 'ecobiography' is a branch of autobiography that presents the author's own story to acquire a sense of 'immersion' with nature. Moreover, ecobiographical texts delineate the narrator's appreciation of 'wildness' that contributes to 'emotional growth' and to the reconstruction of a sense of self. Student A relies on this definition to interpret the scene in which the narrator describes her close relationship with the Salt Lake Desert. Student A writes:

> Terry also relates her family into the circle of nature which altogether collaborates her 'self', "The heartbeats I felt in the womb – two heartbeats, at once, my mother's and my own – are heartbeats of the land. All the life drums and beats, at once, sustaining a rhythm audible only to the spirit […] I drum back my return" (Williams 85). The interconnection between Terry, her family, and the land is depicted in this passage. She draws upon nature to interfere within her spirit and makes it reform her life. As she says, 'I drum back my return', it connotes that Terry's constructed self through nature allows her to reintegrate herself. In other words, the element of 'wildness' is used to construct her spirit within. (Term paper: page 11)

In student A's view, the passage presents the narrator's perception of the land as her 'family' rather than specifically her mother. He does not comment on the portrayal of nature as a mother's womb. The teacher, in contrast, highlighted the image of nature as a mother's womb in terms of female landscape in this particular scene. The teacher suggested that nature is reconstructed as an active agent by female writers in order to undermine the male-dominated paradigm of thought. As I have demonstrated, the teacher's emphasis on Mother Nature is reminiscent of her Thai traditional worldview. In my opinion, the difference between student A's and his teacher's responses suggests how they occupy the 'third place' differently. That is, student A's disregard of ecofeminism is possibly not merely due to his gender identity but also to his worldview, which is different from that of his teacher. In this respect, student A's 'third place' is defined by his personal interest, his gender background

and his individual worldview. Following student A's class presentation, the teacher did not comment on his exclusive focus on autobiography.

My observation of student A's disregard for ecofeminism is according to Kramsch's suggestion of an exploration of student's omitted point in foreign language classroom (2010: 364). I have pointed out that the teacher's emphasis on ecofeminist literary criticism and the student's exclusion of it point to a difference in the 'third place' each of them occupies. When I observed the class, I thought that student A eliminated ecofeminist criticism because of his gender identity. The student ignored gender issues probably, I thought, because ecofeminist writers and critics, including his teacher, are critical of patriarchy and men's exploitation of women and nature. However, on reflection I realise that this interpretation could be based on my own gender bias. While the teacher and I are women, student A is a man. To avoid this bias I therefore need to consider the possibility that the student did not mention ecofeminism in order not to repeat what the teacher had said in class. Feminist literary critics have to be aware that the analysis of 'third place' in conjunction with gender difference in class needs careful thought. Indeed, as a later found out from the student himself, he chose to analyse Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Dreams*, an ecofeminist literary text that had not been discussed in class in his MA thesis. The choice of Kingsolver's text for his thesis demonstrates that his male gender probably played no role in his discussion of Williams's novel. My own ambivalence towards student A's response to *Refuge* has demonstrated to me the interpretation of culture, as Geertz has pointed out, has to reckon with diverse factors of social reality.

Student B is interested in *Refuge* from the aspects of 'toxic discourse' and 'interconnectedness'. She does not pay attention to ecofeminism either, but the issue of waste is a lesson that she gains from reading the text. In her class presentation, student B expressed her view as follows:

> The idea that interests me is like the toxic discourse, the idea of interconnectedness. After I have learned about the problems and the issues of the garbage, I am thinking I use plastic bag in one time and then scratch away and throw it in the river. I start to think about the fish, I see the fish and oh! it causes other environmental problem. It is not just about the thinking but the whole process of thinking. (Presentation, Minute 26: 51)

While student A focuses on the representation of nature and narrative in *Refuge*, student B's reflection suggests the practical application of the text to her own context. The characteristic of 'third place' in Kramsch's view pertains to a student's ability to 'transcontextualise', i.e. to apply insight gained from the text to his or her society and culture (2011: 359). According to this definition, student B's 'third place' is her endeavour to apply an ecological issue studied in *Refuge* to her daily life. This means that both reading *Refuge* and listening to the teacher's lectures make student B aware of her living environment. The teacher supported student B's opinion by talking about ecological problems in their urban context:

> She [student B] is thinking about plastic, her action and her decision not to take a plastic bag. She is able to think about the whole process how one plastic bag is connected to other thing else – see our action is connected to other thing else. […] When we have talked about environmental issues in Map Tha Phut. We would blame cooperation in the big businesses, the entrepreneurs. But I think, as consumers, we ourselves are complicit in whole act. We are consuming and using all these products unthinking. (Presentation, Minute 33:45)

The teacher's response to student B exemplifies 'third place' in that student B and the teacher use the issues represented in *Refuge* to comprehend similar problems in Thailand. The teacher's identification of her students and herself as 'consumers' allows her to help her students to see their complicity in the problem. In the lecture, as I have pointed out, the discourse of allegation was discussed by the teacher from the perspective of victims who live near polluted sites in the Salt Lake Desert and in Map Ta Phut. However, the teacher's explanation here refers directly to the students' experiences of life in Bangkok. The teacher asserts that the city residents consume products and energy produced from industries located

in the remote provinces. The city waste is then dumped in the countryside where people who live there are affected by ecological contamination. The teacher's point is that the city people tend to use plastics and waste energy because the problems of toxic waste and dumping sites are invisible to them.

Furthermore, student C's reflection implies that he seems to be aware of the 'third place' offered by the teacher. Student C points out that the teacher's selection of criticism and analysis enable him to make sense of *Refuge* from a variety of perspectives. In his class presentation, student C outlined the teaching approach to *Refuge*:

> Before beginning to investigate deeply into the text, we have got to read some articles that pave a way for our understanding of the real text. We have got to read some theoretical articles that provide our background about the text. And after we finish the text, we also read some criticisms about the text, that both positively, and negatively. But that helps to develop our critical thinking skills that not every text is highly celebrated by every critics. Every critics always have something to comment about the text. That's what I like because we don't solely appreciate the text, but we also see some weak points of the text. (Presentation, Hour 01:52:43)

Student C's reflection suggests that the teacher's lectures do not aim to make students conform to her reading approach but encourage them to learn from different dimensions of the text. In Michael Byram's view, teachers of foreign literature 'should provide students with opportunities to help them define and design for themselves their "third place" or "third culture", a sphere of interculturity' (qtd. in Kramsch 2011: 354). Student C's statement points out that the teacher's use of critical essays and argumentative aspects of *Refuge* contribute to preparing students for their 'third place'. By learning from various perspectives, students are motivated to agree or disagree with the text, its critics and their teacher.

From student C's point of view, *Refuge* presents a problematic ecofeminist standpoint. He reasons that Williams's gender struggle maintains an opposing view between men/humans and women/nature. His argument is similar to the teacher's reference to Kircher's 'Rethinking Dichotomies' (1998) that is sceptical about an ecofeminist political demonstration. Student C shared this feeling in his class presentation. He said that:

> *Refuge* incorporates the idea of gender into the text, right? For me, it's quite radical in some ways because we see at the end of the novel that a lot of women come out to fight against the patriarchal society – patriarchal government that suppresses both women and nature. But what I don't like about *Refuge* is that in her grand project to fight against the government, she does not include male members of society – she includes only female and I think that she is still stick into binary opposition – male and female, right? (Presentation, Hour 01:54:53)

Although student C's response was a challenge to the teacher's selection of *Refuge* and her interpretation, she accepted his opinion. In my view, student C's rejection of the narrator's ecofeminist protest indirectly calls for the man's inclusion in environmental activism. This response also reflects student C's 'symbolic self' which is part of his 'personal and social identity' (Kramsch 2011: 354). Kramsch, Levy and Zarate explain this construction of 'symbolic self' as a consequence of the 'circulation of values and identities across cultures, the inversions, even inventions of meaning' (qtd. in Kramsch 2011: 354). Student C's 'third place' is that he makes a comment on the ecofeminist values that incline to prioritise women over men from his gender position. This standpoint then shapes his ideas about ecofeminism and his criticism of the limitations of its binary worldview.

My analysis of students' 'third place' points out that they respond to *Refuge* according to their interests, worldview and gender identity. Kramsch considers the 'learner's third place as a place that preserves the diversity of styles, purposes, and interests among learners, and the variety of local educational cultures' (1993: 247). Student A's 'third place' is constituted by his choice to focus on autobiography because ecofeminism seems to go against his gender background. Student A's omission of the ecofeminist

struggle in his work means that gender can possibly be one of the factors that can influence 'third place'. My observation of student A's response also reflects the concern about gender bias towards male student in a classroom ethnographic case study. Student B's reflection echoes the teacher's attempt to make the text relevant to her students. The student's thinking suggests 'third place' in the way in which she makes the connection between her reading of *Refuge* and her own environment. Student C's awareness of the possibility of interpreting the text from a critical perspective implies his 'third place'. He realises that the text can be read in different ways and that the specific interpretations that have been offered by his teacher and by critics, such as ecofeminism, also have limitations. Student C seems to call for the co-operation of both genders in the protection of the environment.

In conclusion, 'third place' in the Thai teaching and learning of *Refuge* involves the teacher's and the students' responses based on Western literary criticism and on Thai society and culture. My analysis of the teacher's interpretation suggests that the teacher selected and interpreted *Refuge* guided by the need to address 'toxic discourse' in the text and in the Thai context. She negotiated the concept of 'toxic discourse' in the American context in association with the ecological problems in Thailand. Her focus on ecofeminism and autobiography implies her traditional Thai worldview of Mother Nature and her indirect criticism of patriarchal ideologies in Thai society. Moreover, the teacher's lesson on the narrator learning to comprehend the dynamic natural settings and acquiring a sense of peace suggests a Buddhist influence. My endeavour to identify the similarities between values, beliefs and culture in Williams's text and in Thai culture is to exemplify 'third place'. A student's 'third place' is characterised by their own interests and they possibly choose to analyse *Refuge* according to their sociocultural and gender differences. Kramsch's concept of 'third place' helps us to understand teaching ecocriticism in a Thai context. The teacher and her students make sense of the text according to its relevance to their own backgrounds, experiences and problems in their own country.

Chapter 5

'Transnational Paradigm' in Teaching Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*

> Communal storytelling was a self-correcting process in which listeners were encouraged to speak up if they noted an important fact or detail omitted. […] Implicit in the Pueblo oral tradition was the awareness that loyalties, grudges, and kinship must always influence the narrator's choices. (Silko 1996: 269)

In this statement, which is derived from her article 'Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination' (1996), Leslie Marmon Silko describes how the Pueblo, a Native American tribe, transmit their stories orally to the next generation. The Pueblo consider storytelling as a sacred ceremony which enhances their sense of identity and their connection with the past, the homeland and their ancestors (Silko 1996: 268). Silko explains that the Pueblo accept a variety of versions of traditional stories and also their reinterpretation by the younger generation. The re-telling process is based on the selection and adjustment of certain events in order to maintain the relationship between community members and the world. The passage quoted above is significant for my analysis because it reflects the intertextuality and complexity of Native American cultures, particularly that of the Pueblo. More specifically, it reveals the process of Silko's writing of *Ceremony* (1977). Silko perceives herself as being in between the past and present generations of the Pueblo. She listens to the tribal tales from the elders while she is also the 'narrator' who re-tells the stories exercising her own 'choices'. In my view, the Thai teacher and her students are in a similar situation when reading *Ceremony*. They take a place between what is presented as Native American in the text and their own Thai context and culture. In her explanation, the teacher selected issues depicted in the novel and presented them to her students. This chapter examines the process in which the Thai teacher and her students make sense of Native American cultures in *Ceremony*.

Silko's first novel *Ceremony* presents the life-story of Tayo, a young Laguna Pueblo and Mexican American military veteran who struggles to cope with the memory of his experiences. He is held as a prisoner by the Japanese during World War II and the horror of imprisonment drives him to desperation. After his release he returns to the Laguna Pueblo reservation but finds himself estranged and alienated from his family, friends and community. The death of his Native American cousin in the war and the horror of killing Japanese soldiers haunt him and make him feel guilty. While the other returning Native American soldiers seek relief in alcohol and violence, Tayo attempts to search for a resolution in a different way. His 'spiritual quest' and his contact with the medicine man lead him 'back to the Indian past, its tradition' and ceremony (Silko 1977: 264). He develops an understanding of the American-Indian beliefs about witchcraft, evil and the ancient stories of the Laguna people. Tayo's realisation of his own cultural roots through the traditional stories re-told by a contemporary Native American medicine man helps him to gain a sense of ethnic identity and eventually heals him. Silko symbolically portrays the character of Tayo and his story as representative of an American-Indian healing ceremony, the belief in the sacred power of storytelling and the necessity of adapting tradition to modern crises. As Silko writes, Tayo's 'search itself [his healing] becomes a ritual, a curative ceremony that defeats the most virulent of afflictions, despair' (Silko 1977: 264). Because *Ceremony* tells a contemporary story of America's indigenous people, the novel is one of the most widely recognised Native American novels (Nelson 2005: 245).

Silko's Biography

According to *The Cambridge Companion to Native American Literature* (Nelson 2005), Silko is a Native American novelist, poet, essayist, photographer, storyteller and cinematographer. She was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1948 and raised in the village of Old Laguna, an indigenous reservation in America. Her family background is a mixture of Laguna Pueblo, Anglo-American and Mexican American. Silko's Marmon

family was prominent in the Laguna's history of contact with 'Euro-American social, political, economic, and educational forces' (Nelson 2005: 246). Her great-grandfather was an Anglo-American surveyor who in the 1880s came from Ohio and became part of the Laguna community following his marriage to a Laguna woman. Silko's white paternal relatives were traders, school teachers and one was a governor of the Pueblo. She grew up with stories told by the elders and with books from a variety of cultures and stories that included Laguna, Euro-American tales, as well as Laguna stories about their relationships with the Euro-Americans. In 1969, she obtained a BA in English from the University of New Mexico and an MA in creative writing. Silko's stories are mostly about 'cultural transformations and the artful merging of Laguna and Anglo [European] influence' (Nelson 2005: 246). A frequent theme in her books is the 'cultural mediation' between the Laguna Pueblo and the 'Anglo mainstream' (Nelson 2005: 246-7). Silko is regarded as the most familiar and most frequently anthologised Native American author today (Nelson 2005: 245).

Risager's 'Transnational Paradigm'

To analyse the Thai teacher's presentation of *Ceremony* and her students' responses, I primarily rely on Karen Risager's concept of 'transnational paradigm' (2007, 2011). This is because the theory deals with the teaching of foreign literature with an emphasis on culture. Risager describes a 'transnational paradigm' as a characteristic of foreign literature teaching that is concerned with 'cultural complexity' (2007: 193). She explains that in the 1980s, a 'transnational paradigm' in the teaching of foreign literature and culture began to replace the 'national paradigm' (2007: 190). This was because of the limitations of the 'national paradigm' in presenting 'homogeneity' and a standard norm of 'the majority culture' (Risager 2007: 191). In a 'national paradigm', teachers select and teach canonical texts written by authors belonging to the dominant culture in a particular language and nation. The drawback of a 'national paradigm' is its blindness to multiculturalism and its

ignorance of the complexity of cultures (Risager 2007: 193). The more recent 'transnational paradigm' builds on the 'national paradigm' and combines 'more inclusive language norms' and a variety of cultures (Risager 2007: 219). The teaching incorporates texts that are produced by writers who are not part of the majority culture. The subjects and discourses in the texts are contextualised using the complexity of dominant and marginalised cultures (Risager 2007: 194). The 'transnational paradigm' is useful to my study because it helps to aid understanding of the teaching of a Native American text, *Ceremony*, in the Thai higher education context.

More importantly, Risager's concept of a 'transnational paradigm' highlights the interaction between the text, the teacher and students of other cultures. Risager explains that teaching connects the representation of society and culture in the text to students' local context (2007: 194). In her words, 'texts and themes have begun to be taken up that relate to the students' own society and the target language has been used in relation to these themes' (2007: 201). Risager suggests that the intercultural relationship between text, teacher and students is dynamic and complex, and goes beyond national boundaries. She also identifies the 'transnational flows' as processes in which the teacher makes a connection between the complexities of cultures represented in the text and students' learning context (2007: 194). I employ Risager's 'transnational paradigm' as the primary theory in this chapter while other related concepts developed by critics including Claire Kramsch (2011), Alison Phipps (2004), Karin Zotzmann (2015), Will Baker (2009), Angela Scarino (2010), Gilberte Furstenberg (2010) and Erin Kearney (2010) are also used to make sense of the Thai teacher's and her students' ways of reading and interpreting *Ceremony*.

My analysis of the teaching of *Ceremony* suggests that the teacher presents the complexity of American cultures through her analysis of an integration of white and indigenous cultures. I will demonstrate how the teacher's interpretation relies on Western literary study to interpret the text first. This basis allows the Thai teacher and her students to

engage with what is presented as Native American culture in the text and with the Thai context. I will exemplify how the teacher encourages Thai students to explore their beliefs and values through learning about the struggle between indigenous people and white colonisers in the 18th century. The teacher's reading is based on her attempt to make the issues raised in the text relevant to Thai students. In turn, the students' responses to the text are influenced by their teacher's explanation, by Western literary criticism and by their own personal experiences. With regard to the students' responses, I will examine their understanding of the complexity of culture as presented by their teacher and by the text. The next section outlines some of the ways in which American and British scholars have analysed *Ceremony*. My review of Western literary analysis will serve as a foil for the specific nature of the Eastern way of thinking about and interpreting the Native American story.

Overview of Literary Criticism

Literary scholars have studied Silko's *Ceremony* by applying a variety of approaches. The analyses that I have selected are from American and British critics because they are representative of some of the Western ways of reading a Native American text. These analyses do not demonstrate any specific standpoint but are multi-faceted. However, we can attempt to categorise criticism of *Ceremony* into four distinguishable trends: 'minority studies with ecofeminism', 'environmental justice', 'history and myth', and 'writer's biography'. I have selected examples from each of these trends in order to provide an overview of Western literary criticism. The selected literary criticism will help me to identify the teacher's presentation of *Ceremony* in the Thai context. In her presentation of the novel, the teacher employed the following critical analyses that I will outline in my overview: Rachel Stein's work on 'minority studies with ecofeminism', T.V. Reed's essay on 'environmental justice', and Joy Porter's article about 'history and myth' and her brief mention of 'writer's biography'.

An example of the first category is American scholar Stein's 'Contested Ground: Nature, Narrative, and Native American Identity in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* and *Almanac of the Dead*' (1997). Stein identifies the 'contested' worldviews of Native Americans and Europeans when the latter first came to America. Whilst the narratives of the former draw images of a benevolent Mother Earth and intimacy with the natural world, the latter depict the American landscape as a virgin. The European metaphor of the land as a woman and her submissiveness to men's aggression justifies their right to conquer the land and its native inhabitants (Stein 1997: 120). Stein argues that Silko's *Ceremony* challenges the white European narrative of the land as inferior and female. Silko depicts Native American female characters as strong and powerful (1997: 119). For example, according to Stein, Silko portrays the Native American character 'Night Swan', a wife of Tayo's uncle, as a capable and intelligent person. Night Swan contributes to the healing of Tayo's melancholy following his battle experience. Silko depicts another Native American character 'Ts'eh', Tayo's wife, by using the positive images of rain, cattle and a bear. Stein concludes that the representation of these two female characters denies the 'hierarchical division between human and nature' found in the worldview of those from Western male-dominated societies (1997: 119).

Secondly, in 'Toward an Environmental Justice Ecocriticism' (2002), American critic Reed studies *Ceremony* with reference to the effect of ecological problems in America on the Indian reservations and on their people. Reed focuses on issues of race and class in his reading of *Ceremony* and describes it as an 'environmental justice ecocritical work' (2002: 153). According to Reed, Silko presents the problems of the Native Americans whose areas of residence are close to the Jackpile Uranium Mine site, which puts them at risk of falling ill from contamination. Silko's reference to this particular site on the Laguna Pueblo 'can be of real political usefulness in that the environmental justice movement' has been able to use this as an example in its protests (2002: 153). Reed suggests that *Ceremony* exemplifies ecological issues from the perspective of a marginalised group of people in

America. His view of the text as containing crucial evidence and factual information for political protests points to the application of literature in social struggles.

Thirdly, in 'Historical and Cultural Contexts to Native American Literature' (2005), British scholar Joy Porter analyses Native American history and myth in *Ceremony*. Porter explains that the understanding of history in the American-Indian worldview is confined by the myth of creation and the origin of humans and their relationship to the universe. The narrator in the text adopts the third-person perspective of a Native American goddess to tell their story and their history. This mythical figure is the 'Thought-Woman, the spider' who 'creates the world through thought' (Porter 2005: 42). This primary Laguna deity suggests a maternal relationship between humans and the earth in Native American history and in their worldview. Porter explains that America's indigenous people treat myth and history as equal, and hence regard Mother Earth as their life-giver and as the creator of all beings. Porter's focus is on how Silko re-tells this story of creation and relies on the Laguna oral tradition that integrates the remembered ancient past with the present (Porter 2005: 42).

Lastly, American critic Robert Nelson's 'Leslie Mormon Silko: Storyteller' (2005) focuses on the importance of Silko's biography for her representation of the Laguna stories and landscape in *Ceremony*. Nelson points out that the text re-tells the Laguna oral traditional stories that Silko had been told and read since her childhood. Some examples of tales are 'the story of the gambler Kaup'a'ta, who once imprisoned the rainclouds', 'the story of Arrow boy, who disarms the Gunnadeyah witches' and 'the coming of Pa'caya'nyi and Ck'o'yo medicine to the village'. Nelson explains that these stories about the Laguna are embedded in the text together with Silko's personal experiences of her birthplace. According to Nelson, the land is portrayed as a wasteland by others whom he does not specify. Silko, however, depicts it as a source of power and regenerative energy (2005: 247). Nelson argues that Silko's engagement with traditional stories and Laguna culture play a crucial role in her vision of Native-American existence in the modern world.

According to him, *Ceremony* preserves 'the complex strategies of resistance and assimilation' that help Native-American people to 'survive and adjust to myriad external pressures' (Nelson 2005: 245).

These four approaches to *Ceremony* present critical views of America's indigenous narrative, political struggle and ethnic identities. The four critics attempt to recognise the Laguna Pueblo people and understand their tribal cultures. The three American critics Stein, Reed and Nelson analyse the text as an artefact that lies in-between their own American and the indigenous cultures. The British scholar Porter approaches the novel from a shared understanding of the history of immigration to America. These four examples deal with the text in the context of the West. In my opinion, critics' attention to the representation of Native-American people and culture in *Ceremony* corresponds with what ecocritic Glotfelty suggests in a study of literature and the environment. According to Glotfelty, 'ecocriticism has been predominantly a white movement' and it can become more 'interdisciplinary, multicultural and international' by engaging with 'issues of social justice', for example, ecofeminism and ethnic minority studies and by diversity of voices (1996: xxv). Glotfelty's claim is useful for me to comprehend the reasons why the four critics pay attention to *Ceremony* in their recognition of Native-American history and culture. Moreover, Glotfelty's observation indirectly points to the reason why the Thai teacher uses *Ceremony* in her ecocriticism module in the English curriculum. She does so because Native-American people, ecological thinking and marginalised cultures widen the perspectives of a study of literature.

My study integrates Glotfelty's ecocriticism with Risager's contribution to foreign language and literature pedagogy. They share the inclusion of non-Western ways of thinking in the analysis of the text. Glotfelty calls for a study of literature and the environment in an international context (1996: xxv). Risager extends language and literature pedagogy beyond 'the majority culture' (2007: 191) to incorporate 'ethnic complexity'

(2007: 198). The ideas of both critics fit with the context of teaching Silko's *Ceremony* at a Thai university. According to Risager, in the 'transnational paradigm', the teacher does not have to be a native speaker. Subjects and discourses are taught in the 'target language' whereas analysis is 'contextualised transnationally'. This means that lessons can deal with the complexity of cultures in the text as well as with the local context of the learners. Teaching 'can take place anywhere in the world' (2007: 198). In the module I observed, the Thai teacher delivered her lessons about the Native-American culture presented in the text in the English language. Her approach to the novel, as I am going to demonstrate, is based on American cultural complexity and its relevance to the complex Thai society and culture.

My analysis of the 'transnational paradigm' in the teaching of *Ceremony* pertains to the way in which the Thai teacher makes sense of American cultural complexity to make students aware of their own culture. The teacher appears to follow Western literary criticism to interpret a Native-American text in relation to Thai context and culture. According to my interview with the teacher and my observation of her lecture, she chose *Ceremony* for her class because the text is contemporary and well-known. Her fundamental purpose was to introduce students to the Native-American text as an example of American literature. The teacher's reason for doing this is expressed in one of the learning objectives in the course syllabus, which aims 'to acquaint students with literary texts dealing with a wide range of issues related to the environment'. In the next section I discuss the teacher's use of literary criticism by Stein, Reed and Porter and of other secondary literature in conjunction with her own analysis of the text.

The Teacher's Presentation of *Ceremony*

My discussion of the 'transnational paradigm' in the teaching of *Ceremony* suggests that the teacher brings together Western literary criticism with an interpretation relating to Thai culture, its values and beliefs. *Ceremony* was taught in five lectures covering a total of

nine hours. The teacher started her first lecture on the text by outlining the environmental justice movement in 1999 in America and explained how contemporary writers and critics responded to the movement. She then moved on to the history of America's indigenous people followed by presenting selected critics' attempts to categorise Native-American literature. Before the teacher turned to the text, she presented Silko's essay on the Laguna Pueblo's history, memory and landscape. Generally speaking, her approach to teaching *Ceremony* was characterised by identifying Native-American problems as a consequence of an interaction with white culture.

In the lecture, the teacher noted that Native-Americans and white people have different views of nature, of education and of healing, all of which result in white people's feelings of frustration towards and oppression of Native-American people. The teacher's view is that Silko proposes resolutions to the clashes between the opposing cultures. She pointed out that the conflicts between white people and Native-Americans are mediated through the learning process of the protagonist in adapting American-Indian traditional customs for the modern world as defined by the white mainstream. I have selected some of the aspects that she highlights to provide an understanding of her interpretation and her own views of the natural world. I note that the teacher's response to the text is the product of a combination of Western literary criticism and Eastern ways of thinking. The teacher's reading of the text also reflects her attempt to make certain issues relevant to her students.

In the first lecture on *Ceremony*, the teacher started with 'Environmental Justice Politics, Poetics, and Pedagogy' (2002) by Joni Adamson et al. in order to introduce her students to the context of the text. According to the teacher, this article indicates the impact of environmental activism in the US on writers and critics and explains their focus on environmental justice in relation to race and class (2002: 3). The activists protested against the American government because of the poor and contaminated living areas of the Native and African-Americans. Their residences became sites of toxic disposal, garbage dumps and

nuclear power plants (Adamson et.al. 2002: 3). The activists were, in the main, indigenous people and Buddhist monks. They struggled to claim their right to live in a safe environment and to negotiate their problems with the American government (2002: 3). The teacher noted that the activists asked for a better living environment. Native and contemporary American authors and scholars present the devastating effects of ecological crises on the culture of ethnic minorities and marginalised groups of people. The teacher spent a considerable amount of time identifying the connection between the environmental movement and ecocriticism in America in her introduction to the text. She shared with me in our interview that because Thai students are from a different society and culture, it is necessary to provide them with sufficient background information about the text.

The teacher subsequently relied on Porter's 'Historical and Cultural Contexts to Native American Literature' (2005) in her lecture to briefly outline the history of Native-Americans. These are summaries of her explanations: in the 17th and 18th century, American Indians lost a large section of their population fighting for their land against the European colonisers. In the early 19th century, they were forced by the American government to move away from their homeland and live in Indian reservations. Their removal and the diseases brought by the Europeans contributed to a decrease in America's indigenous population. The teacher explained:

> In late 18th century and early 19th century, after the beginning of America as the new nation, you could see that some of the reformers wanted to educate Native Americans, children and adults, in an attempt to civilise them. They used the word: civilisation, they came up with the fund that was called 'The Civilisation Fund Act of 1819'. So they wanted to assimilate Native Americans to the larger society. So, I think, this could be seen as an excuse; we had to civilise these people to make them part of the mainstream American society. So what would they do: they tried to school, to teach Native Americans into white's ways. For example, they would promote, I mean, the government officials would promote agriculture on reservations, so teaching the Native Americans about how to do agriculture, or to convert the Natives into Christianity, or to remove the children from home

> communities to be educated in boarding schools. They tried to provide the fund to civilise the Native Americans and to assimilate them into mainstream American society. (Lecture 1, Hour 01:22:14)

In her lecture, the teacher used this particular historical event as a link to Silko's presentation of the impact of white education on the American-Indians in *Ceremony*. The teacher's main argument was that Silko suggests that the education system brought to America by white Europeans had devastating effects on Native-American values and beliefs. She explained that the way in which white Europeans employed education as a tool to include indigenous people in American society and culture resulted in the loss of Native-American culture and identity. She indicated that Native-Americans became alienated from their family's teaching and upbringing at home but at the same time were unable to integrate into the white mainstream.

The teacher then pointed out in the lecture that the history and hardship of Native-Americans have become major themes in contemporary American-Indian literature. She used Silko's 'Landscape, History and the Pueblo Imagination' (1996) as a secondary source to give students background information about the values and beliefs of the Native-American people represented in *Ceremony*. In the lecture, the teacher identified the following key points in Silko's essay: Native-American literature demonstrates a sense of place different from that of white Americans. White Americans perceive landscape in its physical dimension and consider humans as being separated from the environment. By contrast, Native-Americans believe in the spirituality of nature and regard people as an integral part of the natural world (Silko 1996: 265). According to Silko, the teacher explained, Native-American spirituality is embedded in their orally transmitted stories. In particular, the ancient Pueblo people depend upon stories to transmit collective memory from one generation to the next. Through the oral tradition they maintain the belief in the sacredness of the Indian past, their land and their ancestors (Silko 1996: 268). Understanding their own stories helps American-Indians to make sense of the world (Silko

1996: 269). Their stories encompass deities and characters who fight against villains in order to regain a sense of harmony with the land. They also believe in the healing power of storytelling performed by medicine men or women in ritual and ceremony, understanding it as a way to diminish a sense of loss and to regain a sense of balance (Silko 1996: 269). The teacher concluded that Silko uses the ancient Laguna stories as a means to preserve tribal culture and to restore a sense of dignity to indigenous people. The practice of re-telling the stories constitutes an imaginary way of returning home when Native-Americans are unable to physically return.

In my view, the way in which the teacher introduced the concept of environmental justice, the history of Native-Americans and their traditional stories plays a substantial role in directing her interpretation of the text in the following lectures. My observation is that the teacher was inclined to present the background to Silko's novel from the perspective of American-Indians rather than from the perspective of white people. The teacher explained to me in our interview that because of the Native-American's 'cultural disintegration', she chose to present their plight to explore American history from the perspective of marginalised indigenous people rather than from white people's stories about them. Her selection of text and of criticism follows Reed's recommendation to include Native-American texts in the teaching of ecocritical literature in the university classroom. Reed insists that history and stories exemplifying the marginalised worldview are important for widening the discussion of environmental issues in a study of literature (2002: 149). This is because literary texts enable underprivileged groups to directly voice their own problems. Students are encouraged to learn more from criticism about the reasons why these writers present their stories (Reed 2002: 149).

In addition, the historical and cultural overview provided by the teacher corresponds with Risager's suggestion of 'transnational direction' and 'cultural reflexivity' in language and culture pedagogy (2007: 189). Risager explains that 'the transnational paradigm grew

out of various pedagogical tendencies, including wishes to connect language teaching with social movements', for example, 'peace, environmental and human rights movements' (2007: 195). In particular, the teacher's references to environmental justice and to Native-American history and cultures are directly connected to environmental and social activism in America. This suggests that the teacher's introduction was based on the 'transnational paradigm'; that is, the shift of the focus from American majority to indigenous culture and in Risager's words, the 'departure' from the 'standard norm' of national culture to local cultures (2007: 193). *Ceremony* offers students lessons about ethnic minority culture in America. That is to say, the Thai teacher's pedagogy is intended to help students comprehend 'cultural complexity' as a basis from which to interpret the text in the American context and then in the Thai local context.

In her interpretation of *Ceremony* in the lecture, the teacher emphasised the clash between white and Native-American cultures and beliefs as a source of conflict. She pointed out the opposite views towards nature in the scene when Tayo returns to the Laguna Pueblo reservation after his release by the Japanese. Tayo recalls his childhood memory of killing 'greenbottle flies' in his home kitchen and the horror of his war experience. In her lecture, the teacher referred to the conversation between Tayo and his Native-American uncle Josiah as an example:

> Josiah looked at them [dead flies] and shook his head.
>
> 'But our [white] teacher said so. She said they [flies] are bad and carry sickness.'
>
> 'Well, I [Josiah] didn't go to school much, so I don't know about that but you see, long time ago, way back in the time immemorial, the mother of the people got angry at them for the way they were behaving. For all she cared, they could go to hell - starve to death. The animals disappeared, the plants disappeared, and no rain came for a long time. It was the greenbottle fly who went to her, asking forgiveness for the people. Since that time the people have been grateful for what the fly did for us'. […]

> But in the jungle he [Tayo] had not been able to endure the flies that had crawled over Rocky [his cousin]; they had enraged him. He had cursed their sticky feet and wet mouths, and when he could reach them he had smashed them between his hands. (Silko 101)

My understanding is that the teacher highlighted this scene to identify the problems of the Native-Americans because it incorporates the tension between white and Native-American cultures. Their opposing views towards the 'greenbottle flies' lead to Tayo's confused memory. The flies transmit disease according to his white educator whereas they are saviours of people in the story told by his indigenous uncle. In contrast to his uncle's understanding, Tayo is disgusted by the flies that crawl over the rotting corpse of his cousin. I am analysing the teacher's response to this scene because, as I am going to demonstrate, it shows the prioritisation of the Native-American worldview over the view of the white teacher.

The Thai teacher interpreted this scene by highlighting the positive attitude towards animals in the Native-American culture, values and beliefs. Reminding students of Silko's 'Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination' (1996) she emphasised the focus on the ecological thinking in the Pueblo's worldview and their sense of spirituality and intimacy with nature (265). The teacher's presentation comprised of Silko's explanation combined with her own interpretation:

> It [Josiah's teaching] bases on the stories that have been sharing the community, fly, especially the greenbottle fly would be considered also as a convenor, you know, a person, people who have played the significant role in the history of humankind. So again that sense of gratitude for all beings. And again, you have the story, you have myth of story that would help support this belief as well. […] That sense of reliance, that sense of interdependence between human beings and the natural beings. Now the flies are considered as law, a kind of preacher. But again, fly is like another character in human history, and he [Josiah] said the flies are understanding, the flies are very forgiving and the reason why that particular greenbottle fly comes to the story is to help human being who makes mistake. (Lecture 2, Minute 30:45)

Although Silko does not state the Native-American attitude towards nature directly in *Ceremony*, the teacher's interpretation picks out the sense of 'gratitude and interdependence'. In my opinion, this is an example of how to make sense of the American-Indian teaching from the perspective of the Native-Americans themselves. Their meaning of 'history', for instance, the teacher stresses, is different from that of Westerners. While the Western tradition tends to rely upon factual information and scientifically proven events, American-Indians incline to treat myths and stories alike as historical truth. In this respect, the teacher uses the concept of history in the American-Indian sense to interpret *Ceremony*. This illustrates how the teacher asserts the 'intended meanings' (Kramsch 2011: 354). That is, when reading the Native-American text, the teacher adopts the American-Indian worldview in order to interpret and present their culture.

My opinion of the teacher's responses to Josiah's story of the 'greenbottle flies' is that her way of thinking represents the traditional Thai perception of nature. This particular Native-American story is similar to the Thai creation myth about the 'goddess of rice' and the 'mother fish'. In the Thai myth, the rice goddess, who sacrifices part of her body to feed humans, flees from the rice field because of the people's harsh behaviour. Because of the rice goddess's absence, humans suffer from severe droughts and famine for a long period of time. This makes the 'mother fish' feel sorry for the doomed people and she decides to ask for the rice goddess's forgiveness. Due to the mother fish's empathy, the rice goddess returns to the field, and this is why the people have survived until the present (Thailand Department of Agriculture 1998: 93-99). This myth is included in a collection of various local stories about rice across different regions in Thailand. The version I cite here is from the central provinces of the country while the other parts have their own slightly different stories. Because the majority of Thai people are farmers, this book aims to present Thai cultural roots and agrarian ways of life. This myth reflects the significance of rice as a major source of food for the people. The story teaches the necessity of showing respect and gratitude for the natural world. In my view, there is an intertextual relationship between the

teacher's emphasis on the Native-American values and beliefs through the 'greenbottle flies' and the figure of the 'mother fish' in the Thai myth. To put this in Kramsch's words, this process of interpretation demonstrates the 'circulation of values and identities across cultures' (2011: 354). The importance of myth as a foundation for the values and beliefs that are shared between American-Indian and Thai stories may shape the teacher's understanding of the text. In this respect, the teacher's interpretation suggests a 'sphere of interculturality' (Kramsch 2011: 359) in the interaction between the Native-American text and the Thai context.

In my pilot interview with the teacher, she indicated her reasons for choosing the American-Indian literary text in the teaching of ecocriticism. The teacher pointed out the similarity between Native-Americans' ecological awareness and the Asian Buddhist tradition in Thailand. She is aware of the similarity between Thai culture and the culture represented in the story. She chose the text because she expected that because of this similarity students would be able to relate to it. The teacher said:

> I think about this kind of Asian Buddhist tradition that the students are familiar with. We may talk about, for example, Native Americans' ecological awareness. […] Sometimes we've read like creation stories written by Native Americans. But I think it will also be interesting if we would use the text that comes from their own cultural traditions. But again, since this is a course that is offered in English Department, most of the time, the texts that I have to choose or I have to focus on are the texts written in English by Westerners. (Pilot Interview, Hour 1:44:35)

The teacher's explanation suggests a sense of 'third place' in which she occupies a symbolic place that is in-between Western and Thai cultures. Kramsch explains the notion of 'self' in the symbolic dimension of the intercultural as a process of positioning oneself when engaging with other cultures (2011: 354). In my opinion, the teacher's choice of text is mediated through this symbolic sense of self. That is, she positions herself in the English curriculum in the Thai university. However, while she realises the necessity to encourage Thai students to learn from American literature and culture, she presents ethnic minority

culture in America. In this respect, the teaching of ecocriticism in the Thai context includes the Native-American ecological view as it corresponds with the learners' own cultural backgrounds.

In her presentation of *Ceremony*, the teacher also highlighted the issue of Native-American cultural loss due to the disintegration of tradition amongst the younger generation of Natives. She pointed out that even though Native-American myth and storytelling serve to cure sickness in the healing ceremony, it is difficult for the new generation to trust this tradition. The teacher interpreted the traditional healing ceremony and its failure to cure the Native war veterans' battle fatigue as the incompatibility between healing ritual and modern sickness. In the novel, Tayo and his friends remain ill after the treatment by white doctors. These young veterans actually try both the Western method of psychological therapy and the ancient Native way of curing illness. Silko only mentions that the veterans have seen a white doctor but she does not provide any detail of this doctor's method of healing them. Silko describes the traditional Native-American healing ritual in great detail. In her novel, Silko depicts the Laguna Pueblo's traditional medicine man, Old Ku'oosh, who tells 'the story of the white shell beads' in the 'Scalp Ceremony' in order to heal the indigenous veterans. Old Ku'oosh hopes that the sacred power of telling a story can cure the sickness of the young veterans but the old man fails to help them.

The teacher particularly referred to 'the Scalp Ceremony' and 'the story of the white shell beads' to point out that the healing power of this traditional story was not effective in terms of curing the young indigenous veterans. The story is about one man who is bewitched by the magic spell of 'the white shell beads'. The man steals the beads from an unknown tomb and hangs them in the forest. This deed makes the man sick from nightmares about the beads. However, according to Silko, telling this ancient story is not effective in curing young veterans. This is because the traditional medicine man does not understand the

true cause of the illness and complexity of their psychological problems. In the text, Silko identifies the root cause and the teacher referred to this excerpt in the lecture:

> It [the cause of sickness] was everything they [Tayo and his friends] had seen – the cities, the tall buildings, the noise and the lights, the power of their weapons and machines. They were never the same after that: they had seen what the white people had made from the stolen land. It was the story of the white shell beads all over again, the white shell beads, stolen from a grave and found by a man as he walked along a trail one day. He carried the beautiful white shell beads on the end of a stick because he suspected where they came from; he left them hanging in the branches of a piñon tree. And although he had never touched them, they haunted him; all he could think of, all he dreamed of, were these white shell beads hanging in the tree. He could not eat, and he could not work. He lost touch with the life he had lived before the day he found those beads. (Silko 169)

The teacher explained that Native-Americans interpret this story symbolically as the feeling of frustration caused by unfamiliar experiences. The excerpt, according to the teacher, shows the reasons for the failure of 'the Scalp Ceremony' and the lack of sacred power in 'the story of the white shell beads'. She suggested to her students that the ancient story of a stranger who picks up the beads in the forest does not make sense to the war veterans. The teacher further pointed out that the young Natives do not understand the symbolic meaning of the story. Specifically, the magic spell of 'the white shell beads' does not explain Native-American interaction with white culture and with the American war. The teacher emphasised Silko's identification of the cause of post-traumatic stress disorder as primarily caused by the Native-American feeling of estrangement from the white world. The teacher explained the above excerpt in the following way:

> They [the narratives] are talking about something that these young Indians experience during the war, not just the warfare itself but the city, the tall building, everything that is the white civilisation. And that is, kind of compared to the story of the intimacy of white shell beads on a character in the story. So, in this sense, by embedding like a particular story from the Native American tradition in this narrative about how the Scalp Ceremony no longer works, so again, this text is trying to point out that actually this problem is problem of how the Indian is exposed

> to something alien and being so much haunted by it. This thing is not new. It happens before in the past. So again they are relying, I mean the narrative voice is relying upon traditional story as a way to make sense of what is going on with these young war Laguna veterans during the war. (Lecture 3, 31:44)

The teacher interpreted the failure of ancient storytelling as a result of the young Native-Americans' lack of understanding of their own culture and their sense of frustration with white culture. She stressed that the traditional healing ceremony does not correspond with the complexity of modern American society and of warfare in which the young Natives are caught up. The teacher considers this failure to be a result of the Native-Americans' cultural disintegration caused by white culture and their own inability to understand the indigenous tradition. The problem for Native-Americans is that the old tradition does not speak to the new generation which is also frightened by the unfamiliar culture of the white mainstream. The sense of cultural loss, as the teacher indicated, is not simply critical at an individual level but also for Native-American communities as a whole.

My opinion is that the teacher's focus on the disconnection of the new generation of Natives from the old tradition indirectly suggests similar problems in Thailand. Prawase Wasi points out that young Thai adults are unable to understand traditional local wisdom well enough because of modern education. Whereas the current university curricula prioritise scientific knowledge and advanced technological skills, they marginalise Thai traditional culture, values and beliefs. This results in the risk of cultural loss in Thai society (Wasi 2014: 1). In my view, the teacher's presentation of the cultural disintegration threatened by modern cultures in *Ceremony* is not dissimilar from Thai society's experience with Western cultures. This is to suggest that the teacher's response to the text again points to Risager's 'transnational paradigm' in the teaching of foreign literature. The transnational pedagogy does not deal with specific national cultures represented in the text (2007: 194). This teaching approach provides an opportunity for teachers to guide students on an aspect related to their educational needs (2007: 201). In this sense, the teacher emphasises the

threat of cultural loss in *Ceremony* possibly because of its relevance to the Thai students. That is, her interpretation implies that it is beneficial for young adults in Thailand to be aware of the relevance of both traditional and modern cultures. This is important because they live in-between the old and new worlds, and a lack of understanding of either potentially limits their ability to mediate different cultures and to succeed in their own lives.

After her identification of the Native-American cultural disintegration, the teacher referred students to Silko's suggestion for solving this problem through the protagonist's learning process to realise his American-Indian culture and identity. According to the teacher, Tayo represents a transition and transformation from ancient Native culture to a new awareness of the Native-American past and present combined. That is, in order to heal his post-traumatic stress disorder, the teacher suggests, it is necessary for Tayo to understand both the traditional Native and white worldviews. In the novel, Tayo learns from several characters the differences between white and indigenous cultures, values and beliefs. For instance, Betonie, a Native and Mexican-American medicine man, helps Tayo to distinguish the two paradigms of thought. The teacher referred to the scene in which Betonie explains to Tayo the different perceptions of white people and of Natives through the image of 'Mount Taylor':

> 'Look', Betonie said, pointing east to Mount Taylor towering dark blue with the last twilight. 'They [the whites] only fool themselves when they think it is theirs. The deeds and papers don't mean anything. It is the people who belong to the mountain.' (Silko 128)

The teacher explained Betonie's remark saying that it is the white misperception of nature which causes them to steal the land from the indigenous people. To help Tayo see the complexity of this dispossession of the Natives' land, the teacher noted, Betonie re-tells a story of 'witchcraft' that tricks the white people into viewing the land in terms of property. She pointed out that both white people and Natives are victims of witchcraft. The magic spell of witches tricks white people into viewing the land as a possession whilst at the same

time it tricks Natives into feeling anguish at the deeds of the white people. In the novel, Betonie relies on the ancient indigenous villain in the story of 'witchcraft' to explain white colonisation as well as the Native-American's torture:

> 'That [the whites' stolen land] is the trickery of the witchcraft', he [Betonie] said. 'They [the witches] want us to believe all evil resides with white people. Then we will look no further to see what is really happening. They [the witches] want us to separate ourselves from white people, to be ignorant and helpless as we watch our own destruction. But white people are only tools that the witchery manipulates.' (Silko 132)

According to the teacher, this scene serves as a new story that helps Tayo to understand the complicated relationship between white people and Native-Americans. She suggested that Silko proposes an alternative storytelling method which incorporates ancient indigenous beliefs in witchcraft playing an evil role in the modern world. This new story, the teacher explained, serves to help young Natives to make sense of their traditional culture and of their contact with white culture. The main lesson that the teacher identified in this story is that the ancient storytelling and traditional ceremony are in need of adaptation in order to continue to be relevant. In the teacher's own words:

> This is the place where Betonie is offering the new explanation, an alternative way of looking at the relationship between whites and the Indians. Usually people would perceptualise whites as being opposed to the Indians, the whites are superior, the whites are dominating the Indians. But here you could see that Betonie is offering the different alternative version, a revisionist way of the thinking about the relationship between whites and the Indians. He is talking about how the trickery of the witchery is creating the whites. How the witchery uses the whites as the tools and how they invented the whites. (Lecture 3, Minute 1:29)

The teacher further pointed out that this new version of the story helps Tayo to gradually comprehend his view of white people as villains as a construction. According to her, traditional Native-Americans believe that 'witchcraft' is a destructive force in the ancient myths which threatens the whole world. The teacher indicated that Silko re-tells the

representation of white people as the victims of witches in order to make sense of the modern world for young Native-Americans. In the teacher's view, this is to diminish the power of the white people and to heal the minds of the Natives. The teacher claimed that this understanding helps Tayo to see the similarity between white people and American-Indians. That is, they share the same destiny because the magic spell of witches makes them both equally wicked and distressed.

The way in which the teacher interprets Silko's depiction of white people and of Natives through the story of witchcraft clearly stresses the positive effect of negotiation. Kramsch's concept of cultural 'mediation' in the teaching of foreign literature is useful in understanding the teacher's response to this specific scene. Kramsch calls for an identification of the 'symbolic location' where the teacher 'mediates' other cultures to examine to what extent the teacher's 'interpretation is culturally determined' (2011: 355). In my opinion, the teacher's prerogative of a negotiation between cultures can be seen in her response to Silko's story of witchcraft. First, her interpretation suggests the integration of Native-American culture through combining past and present. That is, the mythical witches reappear in Silko's *Ceremony* to help the young Natives to understand their tradition and white culture. This ability to comprehend both the old and new culture is important for the Thai students too. Secondly, the teacher's response stresses a reconciliation of political conflicts between white people and Natives in the context of colonisation in America. Instead of stressing the antagonistic relationship, the teacher focuses on Silko's shift of villain from the white colonisers to the mythical witches. This reflects a sense of 'cultural determinism' (Kramsch 2011: 355) in which the teacher suggests the possibility of mediation between the opposing cultures of white people and Natives and thereby a resolution to conflict.

Furthermore, the teacher's emphasis on reconciliation in *Ceremony* serves to help the students to understand political conflicts in the Thai context. During the period of my

class observation between November 2013 and February 2014, Thailand went through severe political turmoils, and large groups of people took part in radical political protests. The country came to a near stand-still with schools and businesses closing in Bangkok and elsewhere. The whole country suffered from this disruption caused by the fight between government supporters and anti-government groups. The teacher identified the root cause of Thailand's political conflicts as people's inability to recognise unity within diversity. She shared this opinion with her students at the end of the semester:

> We are living in the world of diversity, people have different ideas, people have different ideas towards different issues, in here, more particularly in the context of Thailand, people have totally different political ideologies, and I think it is important to learn to respect other people's ideologies and stances as well. They could be different, you could be angry, you could disagree with them, but you also have to respect their humanities. And I think that it is very important in this society to move on. We need that kind of understanding. (Presentation, Minute 2:03:25)

This response is an example of the teacher's application of *Ceremony* in order to enhance students' understanding of Thai society. Her explanation points to the necessity of retaining a sense of humanity in conflicts among different groups of people. My opinion is that the teacher's guidance corresponds with Henry Giroux's 'pedagogy of responsibility' (qtd. in Alison Phipps 2004: 4). Phipps describes this pedagogical approach as 'a relevant dimension to be included in the teaching about language and intercultural communication' (2004: 4). 'Pedagogy of responsibility' educates young people to acquire 'intercultural awareness' 'on a critical basis within a global/local scope' (Phipps 2004: 4). To elucidate this point, the teacher's interpretation of Silko's story of 'witches' serves as a lesson to exemplify profound similarities rather than differences in antagonistic groups of people on both a local and a global level. That is, the teacher highlights in *Ceremony* a negotiation between white people and Natives in the US to suggest a possible solution to local conflicts in Thailand. Her teaching practice goes beyond identifying issues of intercultural relationships in the text to deal with current political affairs.

In her interpretation of the text, the teacher highlighted scenes in which the main character gradually learns to comprehend the story of witches as the symbolic explanation of the devastation of the modern world. She interpreted Tayo's quest for his lost cattle in order for him to understand the fatal power of witches. In the novel, Tayo learns from his journey into the forest and it helps him to see the complexity of the problems in modern cultures. One of the most significant scenes in which Tayo comes to a full realisation of his Native-American way of thinking is when he sees the impact of the atomic bomb which kills indiscriminately. This is when he is in 'Trinity Site', a place close to the Laguna reservation where the American government produces the atomic bomb. The teacher referred students to Tayo's contemplation of the place:

> Trinity Site, where they exploded the first atomic bomb, was only three hundred miles to the southeast, at White Sands. […] There was no end to it; it knew no boundaries; and he [Tayo] had arrived at the point of convergence where the fate of all living things, and even the earth, had been laid. From the jungles of his dreaming he recognised why the Japanese voices had merged with Laguna voices, with Josiah's voice and Rocky's voice; the lines of cultures and worlds were drawn in flat dark lines on fine light sand, converging in the middle of witchery's final ceremonial sand painting. From that time on, human beings were one clan again, united by the fate the destroyers planned for all of them, for all living things; united by a circle of death that devoured people in cities twelve thousand miles away, victims who had never known these mesas, who had never seen the delicate colours of the rocks which boiled up their slaughter. (Silko 245-246)

The teacher pointed out that the story of ancient witches as adapted and retold by Betonie enhances Tayo's understanding of the Native-American's worldview and the destruction of the modern world. She explained the above excerpt in the following way:

> In this place [Trinity Site] where people are digging up minerals from the natural world transforming them into weapons of mass destruction. And the weapons of the mass destruction are used to destroy not only whites, the Japanese but also the Native Americans, the land, the whole earth itself, the whole planet. So he [Tayo] said here this is the point of convergence where the fate of all things can be let. At this point, you could see that all human beings and all things and the planet itself are

> considered as being related to each other. At this point that all these beings, the natural, humans are seen as similarly victimised by this type of witchery, by the atomic bomb, by the nuclear weapons. And at the same time they are united by the fate of the destroyers' plan for them all. They are united by the circle of death. (Lecture 5, Minute 23:00)

This explanation stresses the interconnectedness of the animate and inanimate world as a key lesson from reading *Ceremony*. Her selection of this scene is closely connected to her sympathy for the American-Indian worldview and her concern about contemporary ecological crises. According to the teacher, Native-Americans believe that all things are interconnected in a web of relations and the destruction of war therefore happens on a global scale. She interpreted Tayo's realisation of the complexity of modern cultures as the completion of the healing ceremony in a non-traditional Native-American sense. She explained that the role of Betonie's retold witches' story is to help Tayo to comprehend both the white and Native-American worlds. Tayo becomes aware of the fact that all problems, nuclear weapons, the exploitation of natural resources and world war are actually related. Tayo's ability to acquire this new insight enables him to overcome the feeling of frustration that had paralysed him.

The teacher's focus on the picture of world destruction and the unity of people in Tayo's understanding reflects her 'transnational paradigm' in delivering the literature curriculum. According to Risager, 'insight into the whole world' in a literary work provides an important discourse that can 'contribute to the development of students' identity as world citizens' (2007: 205). The transnational pedagogy includes 'the image of the world as a whole' in that it 'cuts across national boundaries and catches sight of transnational connections' (Risager 2007: 205). My observation is that the teacher's interpretation of Tayo's view of the world is what Risager identifies as 'utopias and dystopia about this planet' in literature pedagogy (2007: 209). That is, the teacher's explanation of this specific scene comprises of negative and positive images of the world. On the one hand, the teacher

points out a sense of ‘dystopia’ which lies in the potential devastation of the whole planet by the atomic bomb. This destruction, on the other hand, unites people of all nations, Americans, Native-Americans and Japanese, in particular. A focus on the ‘planetary perspective’, according to Risager, helps students to link geography, politics, society and culture across different nations (2007: 213).

To conclude my analysis of the teacher’s perspective on *Ceremony*, I suggest how her teaching approach reflects the ‘transnational paradigm’ in her interpretation and presentation of the text. Native-American culture, value and beliefs suggest the transnational feature from the American majority. Moreover, the teacher’s explanation does not deal only with the American context, but she also transfers the issues represented in the novel to the Thai context. That is to say, the teacher selects literary criticism, topics and interpretation according to their relevance to Thai students. Her approach to the text is designed to help students understand Native-American cultures and at the same time Thai society and culture. Moreover, as Glotfelty suggests, a study of Native-American literature serves to provide students with the intercultural dimension of white and ethnic minorities in America. This is possible, as Risager points out, because the reading of such texts allows students to depart from the ‘national paradigm’ of the white mainstream to the ‘transnational paradigm’ of America’s indigenous groups. When the text is used in the foreign language and literature classroom, the selection of the topic for discussion and interpretation by teachers make for a different reading approach. Factors that differentiate responses include the teacher’s personal interest, background knowledge and reading context.

Additionally, the teacher’s presentation of *Ceremony* elucidates that the teaching of ecocriticism in the Thai context deals with environmental, social and cultural problems as closely related. This characteristic corresponds with Risager’s ‘cultural complexity’ in language and literature pedagogy (2007: 189). The teacher’s interpretation demonstrates the complexity of contemporary ecological crises and the need for careful consideration of

these. Because the problems are complex, the symbolic story of witches to represent them is also complicated. The teacher's presentation of the text suggests that Native-American cultural disintegration and ecological problems are not simple issues to understand. They contribute to the considerable effort needed to make sense of the novel as a whole. The teacher's explanation of *Ceremony* references the challenge that this text poses to the Thai students. The following section will therefore discuss students' responses to their teacher's interpretation and their personal engagement with the text. It will examine to what extent the teacher's attempt to present the issues speaks to the Thai students.

Students' Responses

My analysis of Thai students' responses to *Ceremony* uses the concept of 'intercultural education' in teaching literature in the foreign language classroom. Zotzmann suggests a study of students' 'intercultural competence' from a 'non-essentialist' perspective. She explains that it is important to avoid the 'taken-for-granted' or the 'known' assumptions when defining learning output. She argues that a student's process of making sense of the text is dynamic and is influenced by his or her intention and socio-economic and cultural background (2015: 168). A student's reflection is a 'discourse' that contains the reasons for each individual response (Zotzmann 2015: 168). Her conclusion is that 'intercultural education' 'needs to take the first person subjective relationship to the world seriously if it aims at fostering self-reflectivity, empathy, criticality and the transformation of meaning perspectives' (Zotzmann 2015: 168). Zotzmann regards the difficulty in measuring students' 'intercultural competency' as rooted in its 'contradictory' quality. That is, a non-essentialist view avoids over-generalisation of opinion which can lead to cultural stereotyping. Instead it promotes an emergent view of culture embedded in students' reflections and includes change as a basis to capture 'intercultural competence' (Zotzmann 2015: 169).

Zotzmann's suggestion is useful for my study because it focuses on the identification of the causes of students' opinions rather than scaling levels of their competencies. My aim is to study students' ways of thinking and analysing the text and rather than judging their ability. Therefore, their sense of self and their 'relationship to the world' will be the primary sources of my observation in this section. However, I also realise the necessity to illustrate learning outcomes. In the syllabus of the module that I observed one objective is 'to provide students with the opportunity to read these [selected] texts analytically and critically'. While, on the one hand, the teacher does not appear to suggest any fixed criteria for the assessment of students' intercultural competence, on the other, she expects her students to develop 'analytical and critical skills' through reading practices. Regarding this module objective, I will examine the process in which students improve their critical thinking skills through the development of a 'sense of self' as this became apparent in class presentations, term papers and in my interviews with them.

Students' responses to *Ceremony* vary according to their background experience and personal interest. I will demonstrate each of the three students' opinions in order of their presentations to identify the reasons for each specific response. My analysis of individual reflections will be followed by an analysis of class interaction to examine students' ways of thinking. I will point out that the presentation helped students to increase their 'sense of self in relationship to the world' by presenting themselves and by listening to their peers' presentations. The teacher's interaction with her students will be discussed where relevant.

Student A, who gave the first presentation in class, shared his opinion about the benefit of the reading of *Ceremony*. He presented his idea that Thailand's environmental crisis had been caused by a lack of ecological awareness and could be solved by engaging with literature. Student A said in the class presentation:

> I think they [Thai people] still think that about this and environmental problems are something far away from their lives. So they don't give importance to this issue. I would like them to read some kind of what we have read, more or less raise their awareness or their realisation about environmental problems. Before I choose this course, I don't think that it is not just like that human and nature live in harmony but we study in many aspects. I think this kind of ideas in each text can be applicable more or less to the real world in the cities. If anyone has this kind of feeling, it's ok. I think we can solve the problem in the big cities like people who don't have the opportunities to do what we do here. (Presentation, Minute 23: 21)

My opinion is that this reflection suggests student A's attempt to associate ecological problems and solutions represented in *Ceremony* with the Thai context. I learnt more about this student's background in my interview with him and this is helpful for understanding his opinion. He lives in and was born in the city of Bangkok, and thus his personal response possibly reflects his view of 'the real world in the cities'. My own experience of living in Bangkok is that there are different social groups of people with huge economic, financial and educational variance between them. This is probably why student A raises the issue of different social groups. His use of the pronoun 'I' to criticise 'they' or the Thai people suggests his declared separation from those who do not read. He seems to position himself as educated and fully aware of the problems and thinks that they have been caused by less educated Thai people. This evidence suggests student A's sense of 'self in the real world'. My further interpretation of this student's view is that his reference to underprivileged groups possibly points to discourses of environmental responsibility in Thai society. The 'environmental campaign' belongs to the upper or middle classes who are better educated and in secure economic positions. This more secure economic basis allows them to care for the environment. Therefore, student A thinks that because the poor struggle to survive economically, they tend to ignore environmental responsibility because it is not the first priority in their lives.

According to the teacher's reaction, student A's view of reading the text in order to deal with actual crises is unrealistic. The teacher challenged him and the entire class:

> Be frank with me, do not try to answer the question that please me. Reading literature, reading environmental literature, does it add the thinking about environmental issues? Does it help? Does it really help stir or arouse ecological awareness? Or is it just the exercise of how we learn to use the language? Does it change your lifestyle, change the way you consume the use of energy? I ask everybody. (Presentation, Minute 24)

The teacher's statement used powerful language and her tone of voice was serious. Kramsch recommends that teachers should include a 'symbolic dimension' in their teaching by engaging with 'the students' emotions, not just their cognition' (2011: 364). This is exactly the teacher's practice in this specific case. The teacher aimed to create tension in order to stimulate students' emotions and to make them re-examine the way they thought about the text. To be more precise, the teacher's challenging questions served to help students reconsider the complexity of social and ecological problems in a more critical way. She implied that the crises had actually been caused by everybody, including them, rather than any specific group of Thai people. She also encouraged students to think about the possibilities for changing the perceptions and habits of individuals rather than of society as a whole. The teacher's response to the student's opinion also indicates that through her presentation of this literary text she aims to help students develop their critical thinking skills. She does so by making individuals and the class as a whole recognise the position of 'self in relationship to the world'. The teaching of ecocriticism in the Thai context is to help students think about environmental issues in their own context.

The students' personal reflections in the class presentations suggest a 'transnational flow' from the text to the Thai context. However, the written assignment deals with literary criticism specifically in the context of the US. Baker points out that 'intercultural awareness' is conceived as an extension of 'cultural awareness' (2009: 87). This means that

before students can understand specific issues in the text within their own context, they require an understanding of the representation of culture in the text. My analysis of student B, who gave the second presentation, comprises of her response to *Ceremony* in her term paper, and her personal engagement in the presentation. In their written assignments, students were free to write their critical essay on any of texts studied in class. They could either focus on a single text or produce a comparative study of two texts. They were encouraged to consult the teacher about their chosen texts, their topic and to give her a rough outline before writing. I have one example of each student's term papers because the three students chose to write on three different texts.

Student B's analysis of *Ceremony* in her term paper reflects the influence of the teacher's interpretation. The teacher's focus on the learning process of the protagonist to acquire his Native-American identity and culture is central to student B's work. The title of student B's essay is 'Comparative Studies of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*: The Return to the Roots and Identity Discovery of "Tayo" and "Piya" '. The analysis of the two texts taught in the module encompasses the teacher's theme of cultural mediation between ethnic minority traditions and modern cultures. The student's thesis is as follows:

> It is arguably that the return to the root in search for the identity of "Tayo" in Silko's *Ceremony* and Piya in Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* enable these characters to learn through their native wisdom in collaboration with the western ideology in order to re-establish a positive relationship with their origins and overcome their alienation and psychological conflicts. (Term paper, page 1)

Generally speaking, student B's approach to *Ceremony* suggests that she closely follows the explanation and model interpretation given by her teacher. This demonstrates the impact that the teacher's presentation of the text had on transferring ideas to student B. According to Angela Scarino, literature and culture pedagogy that considers the representation of culture in the text as 'a body of knowledge' or as 'learning outcome' is traditional (2010:

326). My opinion is that student B's term paper may suggest a tendency to consider culture in the text according to Zotzmann's words, i.e. as 'taken-for-granted', 'ready-made' or 'known' (2015: 168). That is to say, the teacher's guidance can potentially limit the student's creativity and can disallow other plausible interpretations.

However, my second thought is that student B actually does try to write her essay in her own way. She compares the protagonists in the two stories by adding analysis of different scenes, and generates further arguments from her teacher's lectures. In her writing, after she presents the main characters' similar problems in their identity crises, she compares the two texts in this complex manner:

> From the comparative point of view of both Silko's *Ceremony* and Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*, it is clear that the harder the protagonists struggle to fit in the Western society by solely conforming to the imperialist norms and ideology, the more pathetic and alienated they become from themselves, their local communities and American society. This hopeless reliance on the Western tradition is vividly uncovered in both novels in different social contexts such as in Laguna reservation and the wilderness in Silko's *Ceremony* and in the tide country of Sundarbans in Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*. (Term paper, page 6)

The comparative study is the feature that makes her interpretation different from her teacher's explanation of *Ceremony*. It is important to note that student B is able to make sense of the teacher's lesson about the protagonists' learning process according to the 'transnational paradigm'. She realises that 'by solely conforming to the imperialist norms and ideology', the two protagonists are unable to belong to either a white or an ethnic group. Student B is aware of the mediation between Western and non-Western worldviews that is key to the characters' discovery of their empowered identities and self-esteem. This is to point out that student B's 'transnational paradigm' is implicit in her focus on the integration of white and indigenous cultures. From the analysis of student B's work, it is evident that she pays attention to the 'complexity of culture' in the text rather than her personal engagement with the text.

Although student B does not talk about herself in the paper, my interview with her indicated that her personal background was a major reason for her choice of text and topic. In her class presentation, she explained that she chose to analyse Tayo because she is interested in Native-American cultures, in the protagonist's learning from his Native uncle and in his identity as part-Native, part-Mexican American. I asked more about her opinion about the text in our interview. She told me that she was born and raised in Phrae, a province in the Northern part of Thailand where people believe in the spirituality of nature. Her 'Lanna' cultural tradition helped her to understand the Native-American cultures in *Ceremony*. She described Lanna people as believing in gods and goddesses who take care of every aspect of their lives, including food. They have narrative songs in which people sing and play the Sor, a traditional musical instrument in order to tell their own stories in community ceremonies. This, according to student B, is not dissimilar to the oral tradition and ritual represented in the text. She explained this by referring to the scene in which Tayo pays respect to nature in order to return fertility to the Laguna land. The shared worldviews between Lanna and Laguna made her sympathise with the Native-Americans; she particularly identified with the sense of gratitude and intimacy with the natural world. This is to confirm that, apart from teacher's model interpretation, her background knowledge was also a significant factor in her reading of the text. She did not follow her teacher's reading of the text as blindly as it first appeared.

In order to better understand student B's socio-cultural background, I am consulting the study of Lanna values and beliefs by the Thai ecocritic Thanya Sangkhaphanthanon. Lanna is the traditional name for the Northern region of Thailand, its population and local cultures. The majority of Northern Thais follow this cultural tradition. Sangkhaphanthanon explains that Lanna people believe that humans and the natural environment share the same origin (2013: 98). Lanna creation myths, which come in different versions, depict animals and plants as people's life givers and carers (Sangkhaphanthanon 2013: 97). One myth, for example, tells a story of a doe who gives birth to the first human couple. Another myth

presents a lotus flower as the creator of the people. These creation myths express the idea of kinship among people and their interdependence with the natural world (Sangkhaphanthanon 2013: 99). The mountainous terrain and the Lanna agrarian lifestyle have helped shape this worldview. My reference to Lanna values and beliefs is to highlight the variation of Thai cultures in different parts of the country. As critic demonstrates it, this variety of cultures is not unique in Thailand, but similar myths can be found in other Asian countries, such as in India, China, Japan and throughout Southeast Asia (Sangkhaphanthanon 2013: 112). The teaching of *Ceremony* takes place in Bangkok in the central part, but Student B who comes from the Lanna culture in the North uses her knowledge of these traditions to make sense of Native-American cultures. This is possible because, as I have suggested, Lanna and Native-American cultures are similar in terms of ecological thinking and people's relationship with nature. Although student B's term paper seems to be guided by her teacher's explanation, our interview reveals that her Lanna background has enriched her reading of Silko's text.

Student B's response to Native American cultures based on her Lanna cultural knowledge suggests a constructivist learning approach. According to Dunlap and Grabinger, constructivist view of learning focuses on students' use of prior knowledge as a foundation from which to formulate new knowledge (1996: 74). When students attempt to make sense of their lessons, they feel comfortable to use what is familiar to them in order to interpret the situation (Dunlap and Grabinger 1996: 74). In Jonassen et al's view, 'constructivist processes are more evident when students collaborate to produce and share representations of their understandings of the world' (1996: 94). Student B's reading approach is constructive in this sense. She associates her Lanna with Laguna cultures by negotiating the one she already knows with another ecological worldview that is new to her. The student is thereby able to make Native American cultures become familiar to her. Her learning strategy is what Jonassen et al. consider as creating a 'negotiated sense of reality' through constructivist learning (1996: 95). That is, the student interprets the situations by referring back and forth between old and new knowledge, according to her own past experiences and

beliefs. This learning process according to Jonassen et al. is best supported by a teaching approach that encourages students to come up with their own interpretation rather than expecting students to adopt the teacher's view (Jonassen et al. 1996: 95).

Having said this, the influence of the teacher's interpretation on the student's thinking was very noticeable in the module I observed. In our pilot interview, I discovered that the teacher was aware of this issue. She pointed out the need for a balance between the teacher-centred and the student-centred teaching style.

> If you are gearing towards the student-centred, you might miss the opportunity to give them background information to help them understand the texts. The focus would be more on the students' reflection and their discussion of texts. And again if you think about this classroom, you have Thai students who have studied English as a foreign language, they would have to overcome the language obstacles. First of all, they need to understand the texts well enough to be critical about these texts. So, I think it's important to balance the lecture part and the discussion part; the teacher's voice and the students' voices activities. (Pilot Interview, Hour 02:07:26)

What is significant here is that the teacher justifies the need for her intervention by pointing to the language barrier that her students have to overcome before they can engage with the text's content. Jonassen et al. have therefore to be adapted when we are dealing with the teaching of foreign language literature. While the teacher's explanation can potentially limit students' ability to become independent learners, Thai students are dependent on getting English language support. I will therefore discuss the students' linguistic background in relation to the intercultural dimensions of teaching and learning ecocritical texts in the final chapter.

Whereas the teachers of foreign literature need to provide students with sufficient explanation, it is also important for them to allow students to engage with the texts in their own ways. Michael Breen has suggested to look at 'the classroom as coral garden' to enhance an understanding of the role of language teachers in increasing learners' personal

engagement and motivation (1985: 142). Breen compares the class as coral gardens, and refers to life under the corals as students' learning activities. The teacher needs to encourage students to learn according to their individual interests like a coral reef supports different species of marine life. Breen's metaphor of the classroom as a coral reef describes sea life in the ocean, but the Thai classroom as a coral garden seems to suggest a picture of life in an aquarium. Feeding marine life in an aquarium tends to decrease species' ability to survive outside the controlled environment. In a similar way, the Thai teacher's interpretations and English language support might disrupt the students' discovery of their own interpretations and their development of language skills. However, Breen's metaphor seems to idealise the situation in the foreign language classroom that students should learn independently with a brief guidance from teachers. As I have observed, the Thai teacher's presentation of the text serves to help students to understand the complexity of literature and its criticism rather than restrict their ideas. A side effect of the teacher's interpretation, of course, is that the teacher is able to guide students' ecocritical thinking. As long as she is aware of this, she can thus encourage students to develop their own views.

My next example of a response by student B will demonstrate what the teacher means by 'reflection' and 'students' voices'. I am analysing student B's personal reflection in the class presentation because it represents her 'intercultural awareness'. Student B pointed out a change in her perception of and attitude towards Native-Americans following her reading of this text. This student visited Colorado for one year as part of the Rotary Youth Exchange Programme in 2005. At that time she was 17 years old and was a senior high school student. She said that:

> And also this [*Ceremony*] is in a way an eye opening for me. Actually I got to visit when I was an exchange student in America, I spent a year in Colorado and frustrated kind of mystery with the Native Americans. I got to visit one in the reservation in the four quarter, a part of the Indian reservation. When I was in the US, I learnt about Native Americans from movie, and at that time my perspectives

> towards the Native Americans were like pessimistic, they were portrayal, presented at that time, they were like villain in cowboy movie. And the whites were always the heroes. And I visited the reservation and they have like the exhibition zone that would bring the Native people and they showed how to do the craft. They did not look at me and I thought at that time, they were unfriendly and intimidating people. But then, after this class, and I learnt, and I change the whole perspective. I did not know before and I did not get informed before the real cause. After I learnt from *Ceremony*, I get to see the real Indian, to see the world from different perspectives that the Native Americans, they had been through a lot. And also what maybe we perceive the reality of their lives is not always true unless we really pay attention to it, deep down to it. (Presentation, Hour 1:11:16)

The class presentation gave student B the opportunity to associate her reading experience with her 'sense of self to the real world'. According to Gilberte Furstenberg, students' 'development of intercultural competence' is 'about importance of context in understanding people's attitudes and behaviours; and they [students] share their views about current topics' (2010: 331). In this specific case, Native-Americans presented in different contexts and cultures played a significant role in developing student B's 'intercultural awareness'. That is, the misrepresentation of America's indigenous people in Westerns films made student B dislike them. This cultural stereotype then corrupted her view of the Natives in the exhibition centre in America. Thereafter, the Native-Americans presented in *Ceremony* and in the teacher's background history helped student B to revise her previous views. It is important to note that the student's first-hand experience of Native-Americans in the exhibition centre made them less 'real' than the characters in the novel. Erin Kearney's concept of 'cultural immersion' in the foreign literature classroom is useful for understanding student B's change of attitude towards Native-Americans. Kearney has identified 'cultural immersion' as a process in which the student is able to 'come into contact with a web of meanings that address, echo, and contradict each other and are prompted to recognise the complexity inherent in cultures' (2010: 334). Student B's experiences of America's indigenous people from different perspectives helped her to identify the

conflicting images, and eventually to decide which one was the most reliable source for her. Kearney considers this ability to be 'intercultural awareness'.

Student C, who gave the last presentation, seemed to have developed his ecocritical thinking. His opinion reflects the complexity of social and ecological crises and his 'sense of self in the real world'. He demonstrated that everyone has responsibility for problems including him. Student C said that:

> *Ceremony* is one of my favourite books. The scale of the book is larger than all the books that we have read. It proposes that actually the problem that we are facing in our world is interconnectedness. If we do something, it affects the world, you know. How tradition should be changed in order to be survived or in order to be applicable to the context in the contemporary world and how we should adapt ourselves also. (Presentation, Hour 1:55:20)

Student C's opinion echoes the teacher's lectures down to her stress on 'interconnectedness', 'tradition and adaptation'. While his reflection seemed to please his teacher, my perception is that he did not intend to do so because he said this just after he had objected to ecofeminism in *Refuge*. Rather, he may have wished to balance his positive and negative views of the different texts that he had read in class. I also noticed that student C used the pronoun differently to student A and student B. That is, student A used 'I' to criticise 'they' or the Thai people, and to present his reading activity as a way of addressing the ecological crises in the social sphere. Student B also employed 'I' to demonstrate her direct experience and to indicate the change in her individual perception of Native-Americans. Student C used 'we' to indicate that his reflection was shared by others and to identify himself with people of his generation. What distinguishes their reactions is that each has their own 'sense of self to the real world'. I am going to explain this as the result of the class presentation.

My interpretation is that the three students learned from one another to expand their sense of self in their relationships to the world. Through the use of the first person pronoun, student A situated himself in a privileged position and demonstrated his ambition to solve

social and environmental problems on a national level. The teacher challenged this view because of student A's inability to recognise the complexity of the problems. That is to say, the teacher implied that the fact that student A was educated did not mean that he could not cause ecological problems, and she expected him to think about himself first before trying to change others. Student B's use of 'I' reconciled her past experience with her new realisation about Native-Americans. She presented her private sense of self to the real world at an individual level. This is perhaps because she learned from student A although, in my view, all students prepared their presentations before the class. Student C's use of 'we' presented his sense of identity as part of the young generation and he appeared to speak on behalf of his classmates. Student C's reflection appeared to be the most similar to the teacher's presentation of the text. His sense of self within the real world was negotiated through listening to the opinions of student A and student B. My point is that all students seemed to learn from one another in the class presentations and from the teacher's challenge to exercise their ecocritical thinking. This was achieved through the development of a sense of self in the real world. Even though it might be true that the later students may have benefitted from the earlier students' presentations, their learning process may be considered from my comparative approach to all members of the class. However, the teacher's assessment and the specific level of each student's critical development are beyond the objectives of my study.

Conclusion

The interpretations of Silko's *Ceremony* by the Thai teacher and her students brings together Western methods of analysis, Eastern ways of thinking and the text's relevance to the Thai learning context. This approach corresponds with Risager's 'transnational paradigm' in literature and culture pedagogy. That is, the teacher's presentation of the text is designed to raise her students' awareness of the complexity of American culture. She identifies the problem of the America's indigenous people and their 'cultural disintegration'

as a consequence of their cultural assimilation with the American majority and of the young Natives' inability to understand their own traditions. The teacher focused on the protagonist's learning process to develop his understanding of Native-American cultures, values and beliefs. She pointed out that the Natives' comprehension of their own culture could be a potential solution to their cultural loss. The teacher also suggested that the new generation of Natives needs to comprehend not only their own customs but also those of white people in order to preserve their past and understand their present. The teacher's way of reading the text exemplifies American culture from a multi-dimensional perspective. That is, the complexity of American culture is delivered in the English curriculum to promote the marginalised culture of Natives and its relation to the culture of the white majority.

Moreover, I should point out that the teacher's interpretation raised students' awareness of the similarities between the experiences of young Native-Americans and Thai students. The teacher used the text as a way to help her students recognise the necessity of understanding white and ethnic cultures which are mixed in both the American cultures and in Thai society and cultures. This pertains to the direction of the 'transnational paradigm' that aims to elucidate the complexity of culture and to avoid cultural stereotyping (Risager 2011: 194). The teacher suggested a reconciliation between the Native-American and the colonisers' perspectives rather than stressing their antagonistic relationship. The lesson about negotiation served as a solution to the political conflicts in Thailand. This teaching exemplifies the 'transnational flows' between the text and the Thai context. The teacher's response to the novel helps to distinguish the ways in which Western critics and Thai readers interpret *Ceremony* using their unique methods. That is, while British and American scholars interpret the text as a direct criticism of American society, history and culture, the Thai teacher used the issues in the text combined with Western criticism to open her students' eyes to their own culture.

Zotzmann's concept of 'intercultural education' helps us to comprehend the learning pattern in the students' responses, particularly the concept of self in relationship to the world. The writing assignment and the class presentation allowed the students to engage with the text differently. The students were expected to write a paper informed by Western literary criticism. This task, exemplified by student B's term paper, encouraged the students to analyse the text from an objective point of view. Student B attempted to interpret the text in depth and from a critical perspective. I noticed that there was no use of first person pronoun and no implicit personal engagement with the text in her writing. However, the class presentation enabled all students to interact with the text from their individual perspectives. Students had the opportunity to present their sense of self in relation to the real world. In this activity, I suggest that the three students developed their sense of self when they learned from their teacher and classmates in class presentations.

The students' responses to *Ceremony* reflect the reciprocal relationship between them and the text. That is to say, America's indigenous literature makes students sensitive to their local environment whereas their socio-cultural background helps them understand the issues represented in the text. In particular, the students' reflections in the class presentation show the interconnectedness of Native-American and Thai cultures. The complexity of American culture makes students think about ecological issues in Thailand. This learning process is not linear, as my interviewees have demonstrated, because students' identities and experiences also contribute to their comprehension of the Native-American literature and culture, to which they are introduced by the module that they are studying.

Chapter 6

'Intercultural Citizenship' in Teaching Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*

> A lot of the [socio-political] conflicts that we see, even within South Asia, are significantly related to climate change. […] The problem in the case of Asia, or specifically in India, is that people do not seem to be even looking at these issues through the prism of global change and its destructive effects. (Ghosh 2012: 16)

In this statement, which is from 'Between the Walls of Archives and Horizons of Imagination: An Interview with Amitav Ghosh' (Mahmood Kooria 2012), Ghosh explains his view of the connection between socio-political and environmental problems in the contemporary world. In the interview, Ghosh asserts that there is an important link between terrorism, nature conservation and displacement, particularly in South Asia (2012: 16). He argues for an awareness of socio-political and ecological issues from a global perspective because the problems are associated with each other on an international level. The passage is important to my study for two reasons: first, it demonstrates Ghosh's perception of the socio-political and ecological problems which are central to his novel *The Hungry Tide* (2004) and second, it elucidates his recognition of the necessity of paying attention to the problems in a global context. This chapter examines the Thai teacher's and her students' responses to Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* to comprehend how they engage with the socio-political and ecological issues represented in the text from the perspective of Thai readers.

The Hungry Tide, Ghosh's fifth novel, tells the story of Piyali Roy (Piya), an Indian biologist who grew up in Seattle, and Kanai Dutt, a translator from Delhi. They meet in the Sundarbans in Eastern India where Piya is conducting scientific research on the conservation of endangered river dolphins. Kanai is visiting his widowed aunt in Lusibari to collect the diary of his uncle who recently passed away. Kanai and Piya meet on the train and he later helps her to communicate with the locals in the Sundarbans as she does not speak their

language, Bengali. With the assistance of Fokir, an illiterate fisherman, Piya and Kanai take the river journey to the Sundarbans to collect data on the dolphin habitats. Piya's and Kanai's frequent interaction with the indigenous people in the Sundarbans help them to understand the natives' way of living and their plight as refugees. Kanai learns from his uncle's notebook that they were made refugees following a massacre perpetrated by the Indian government. The novel ends with Kanai's intention to publish his uncle's story of the refugees, and with Piya's resolution to make her future research benefit the Sundarbans and its people.

Ghosh's Biography

Ghosh is a Bengali Indian novelist, journalist and university professor (Kooria 2012). He was born in Calcutta in 1956. His father worked for the government embassy services. Ghosh grew up and studied in three different countries: Bangladesh, which was then called East Pakistan, Sri Lanka, then called Ceylon, and North India respectively. His experiences of living in these countries are reflected in his novels. Ghosh obtained his BA in History from St. Stephen's College, Delhi and an MA in Anthropology from the Delhi School of Economics. In 1978, he received his doctoral degree in Social Anthropology from Oxford University. His Western education had a significant impact on his understanding of Indian history, society and culture. Ghosh deals with history from a Western perspective and combines this in his novels with his interest in the history of India (Kooria 2012: 4). In Rollason's view, history is a recurring theme in Ghosh's work; he traces past events to understand the troubling present (2010: 1). Ghosh has pointed out that social upheavals and the ongoing state of emergency declared by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975 influenced his thinking and writing (Teeman 2011: 1). At that time, India was gripped by socio-political and environmental disorder and violence. *The Hungry Tide* is shaped by his feeling of distress about this historical turmoil. According to Divya Anand, the novel presents 'terrorism, religious fundamentalism, displacement, and the many postcolonial

realities of the Third World' (2008: 22). Kooria points out that in *The Hungry Tide*, historical events are portrayed through multi-dimensional views of characters from different socio-economic backgrounds.

Byram's 'Intercultural Citizenship'

To gain an insight into the Thai teacher's and her students' responses to *The Hungry Tide*, I will use Michael Byram's concept of 'intercultural citizenship' (2008, 2012) because it explains the characteristics of teaching foreign language and literature. Byram develops his education in 'intercultural citizenship' from 'political' and 'foreign language' education. In political education, 'Peace Education or World Studies' seek to develop students' specific skill of 'conflict resolution' (Byram 2008: 162). He suggests that in order to comprehend contemporary socio-political issues, students need to engage with root causes. To him, 'conflicting values' are often the source of socio-political tensions and therefore need to be taken into consideration (2008: 190). Pertaining to foreign language education, Byram points out that teaching is concerned with 'values' and this gives language teaching the opportunity to enhance students' socio-political awareness. In order to take advantage of both strands of education, Byram calls for the teaching of foreign language and literature to incorporate socio-political aspects as well as lessons on conflict resolution. He further recommends that the 'green environmental movement is a perspective which the foreign language classroom can bring to citizenship education' (2009: 130). Because of this feature, my analysis of teaching *The Hungry Tide* uses the concept of 'intercultural citizenship'.

Byram theorises education in 'intercultural citizenship' as 'a response to ubiquitous intercultural experience within and beyond societal boundaries, and to the political opportunities for co-operation and the pursuit of agreed goals' (2008: 188). The teaching approach he suggests is based on teachers' and students' responses to socio-political issues in different contexts and cultures. The education aims at developing students' 'critical

cultural awareness' pertaining to 'an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspective, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries' (Byram 2008: 233). 'Intercultural citizenship' is useful to my analysis of the teaching and learning of *The Hungry Tide* because it integrates socio-political issues with an emphasis on crisis resolution.

Byram remarks that training in 'intercultural citizenship' has remained limited because the majority of language teachers do not recognise the potential of their subjects to address socio-political issues (2008: 2). I partially agree with this observation. In my study, the Thai teacher did not implement 'intercultural citizenship' consciously, but her teaching approach to *The Hungry Tide* pursued similar aims. The teacher presented the text with an extensive focus on socio-political conflicts in relation to the problems of nature conservation projects in India and in Thailand. I therefore use 'intercultural citizenship' as an analytical framework. I am aware that Byram's education in 'intercultural citizenship' deals with students' construction of socio-political meaning in the classroom and in actual contact with foreigners. According to Byram, the lesson in class should be turned into practice through students' overseas professional training experiences or through cultural exchange programmes abroad. Byram suggests that teachers should train students in socio-politics and help them to learn from direct experiences. However, I also realise that an interaction between Thai students and foreigners that can possibly produce an intercultural dialogue between them is an ideal situation. My observation is that the Thai teacher highlighted the characters' learning about other cultures, about conflicting views of nature, and about socio-political reconciliation in her lessons. The teacher relied on postcolonial theories to analyse the novel, but her teaching characteristics correspond with Byram's recommendation. In this chapter, I argue that the education in 'intercultural citizenship' was implicit in the teacher's presentation of the *The Hungry Tide* and in the students' responses. In other words, the students were trained in 'intercultural citizenship' through engaging with the text, rather than through contact with foreigners.

According to Byram, education in 'intercultural citizenship' comprises of six interdependent characteristics (2008: 188). I will outline each feature and I will use these features to structure my own analysis of the teacher's lesson: first, 'a comparative orientation' is achieved through the 'juxtaposition' of political contexts both familiar and unfamiliar to learners; second, the 'emphasis on becoming conscious of working with others' aims to make students aware of co-operation with people who speak different languages and have multiple social identities; third, 'creating a community of action and communication' acknowledges the variety of beliefs, values and behaviours; fourth, 'having a focus and range of action' makes the learners aware of alternative ways to search for common goals and to collaborate with different members of society; fifth, an 'emphasis on becoming aware of one's existing identities' facilitates students' realisation of shared attitudes and knowledge in their own community and their ability to adjust themselves to other contexts; last, 'all of the above with a conscious commitment to values' helps teachers to make students aware of potentially conflicting values and difficulties of interpretation and negotiation (ibid 190). I will use these characteristics to examine the teacher's presentation of *The Hungry Tide*. Apart from Byram's concept of 'intercultural citizenship', I will also draw on some related ideas by Karen Risager (2007), Mike Fleming (2006) and Karin Zotzmann (2015). Because education in 'intercultural citizenship' which aims at enhancing students' 'critical cultural awareness' shares its goals with postcolonial studies, the next section will give examples of postcolonial approaches to the text by other critics. These sources compliment the ones that the teacher used in her presentation of the text.

Overview of Literary Criticism

Scholars have incorporated postcolonial theory in a variety of approaches to interpret *The Hungry Tide*. They have analysed the text according to history, society, politics and culture in postcolonial India. Because they have integrated Postcolonialism with

multi-dimensional approaches, criticism of the novel is not easy to categorise. However, we can try to classify literary criticism into four interrelated approaches according to the critics' main focus: 'ecocriticism', 'Marxism,' 'psychoanalysis' and 'indigenous culture'. Postcolonial theory plays a fundamental role in each of these different approaches. The review of literary criticism serves to introduce my analysis of the teaching and learning of *The Hungry Tide* in light of 'intercultural citizenship'. I suggest that postcolonial literary criticism of *The Hungry Tide* is based on features that are similar to those found in education in 'intercultural citizenship'. Both identify the root causes of socio-political and environmental problems in the postcolonial context as well as potential solutions.

An example of the first approach is Alexa Weik's 'The Home, the Tide, and the World: Eco-Cosmopolitan Encounters in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*' (2006) that highlights the problems of nature conservation projects in postcolonial India. Weik points out that the refugees' misery is a result of British colonialism and the partition of India following independence from Britain in 1947 (2006: 131). The breakaway of the eastern part of India and the foundation of the independent state of Pakistan caused thousands of Bengalis and Hindus to move away from the territory and to resettle in other parts of India. At that time, the 'upper-caste Bengalis' had good living conditions in West Bengal whereas the 'lower-caste Hindus' were scattered throughout India. The lower castes were unfamiliar with their new living environment and faced discrimination at the hands of local residents (ibid 131). For more than thirty years, these poor migrants sought a place to live, thereby becoming internal refugees in India. Eventually, they found the Morichjhapi, an island part of the Sundarbans where they tried to resettle in 1979 (ibid 133). However, the regional government of Bengal exercised the state's right to get rid of these refugees in order to preserve the forest and the tigers living on the Sundarbans. In order to drive the migrants away, they were deprived of food and fresh water and they were also attacked with tear-gas. Their huts and fisheries were destroyed by soldiers (ibid 133). Weik points out that Ghosh retells the story of the Morichjhapi refugees in his novel. She suggests that Ghosh criticises

the ‘dichotomous thinking’ that underlines the partition and preservation of nature that denies people their right to live. The novel, according to Weik, presents the migrants’ suffering and calls for a relationship of coexistence between people and nature (ibid 135).

The second approach to Ghosh’s novel, Marxist criticism, is expressed by Terri Tomsky in ‘Amitav Ghosh’s Anxious Witnessing and the Ethics of Action in *The Hungry Tide*’ (2009). Tomsky reads the text in terms of a class struggle, social injustice and an ethical dilemma. His view of postcolonial India corresponds with that of Weik in saying that the novel is based on ‘the Morichjhapi massacre’ in 1979. At that time, Tomsky explains, the government of Bengal sent troops to force the migrants to move on. In the process, the refugees attempted to fight back (ibid 57). Tomsky points out that Ghosh criticises the violence of the ruling Indians in their treatment of the migrants (ibid 56). The local hospital run by the upper-caste group also failed to help the migrants because they were afraid that they might be seen as opposing the government. Tomsky views this incident as an ‘ethical dilemma’ faced by the upper-caste Indians, particularly those working in the local hospital. Although it was the moral obligation and responsibility of the hospital staff to help the injured refugees, they were unable to help (ibid 56). According to Tomsky, hospitals should be committed to treating people of all social groups equally.

The third approach, psychoanalysis, is proposed by Pramod Nayar in ‘The Postcolonial Uncanny: The Politics of Dispossession in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*’ (2010). Nayar points out that the text offers a critique of land dispossession which has a psychological impact on the displaced Indians (Nayar 2010: 89). Nayar relies on Sigmund Freud’s theory of the ‘uncanny’ (1919) to analyse the search for home through the characters’ different attitudes towards the Sundarbans (ibid 89). According to Nayar, the ‘uncanny’ is the experience of double perceptions which are ‘familiar and safe’, while at the same time ‘threatening’ (ibid 89). Nayar identifies these contradictory feelings in two social groups. One group consists of the metropolitan outsiders who are intimidated by the tigers

and the cyclone in the Sundarbans. They only eventually manage to acquire a sense of home in the Sundarbans through developing intimate associations with the place and with the local people (ibid 91). For the other group, the Morichjhapi refugees, the Sundarbans is a 'canny' place because they belong there. Although they moved there, the Sundarbans give them a sense of home. Nonetheless, the refugees also experience the 'uncanny' because they are viewed by the government as invaders of the Sundarbans (ibid 104).

The fourth approach foregrounds indigenous culture in Ghosh's novel. My example of this is '"In Our Translated World": Transcultural Communication in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*' (2010) by Christopher Rollason. Rollason analyses the transforming features of Indian myth and indigenous beliefs from the ancient period to the postcolonial present. He points out that Ghosh's reference to 'Bon Bibi' suggests the transition from oral to literate cultures (2010: 6). Bon Bibi is the forest goddess who, the indigenous people believe, protects them from harm and guides their fishing. Rollason explains that Ghosh demonstrates how the legend of 'Bon Bibi' is orally passed down from one generation to the next in a variety of languages and cultures. The indigenous characters' praying and chanting at Bon Bibi's shrine on the island suggests to Rollason the integration of Hinduism and Islam (ibid 6). The tale's languages are a mixture of Bengali, Arabic, Hindi, Arakanese and others. In the novel, the story of Bon Bibi is recorded as a dramatic play, performed in a theatre and then translated into English. This cultural element suggests, according to Rollason, the 'transcultural communication' in postcolonial India (ibid 6).

This brief overview of literary criticism outlines the impact of colonisation and decolonisation in India; Weik's ecocriticism points out that nature conservation campaigns prevent the Morichjhapi refugees from settling in the Sundarbans; Tomsky's Marxism deals with the refugees' struggle to fight against the government of Bengal for their right to live; Nayar's psychoanalysis presents the characters' different attitudes towards the Sundarbans and their search for home; Rollason's indigenous culture pertains to the transformation of

the myths of the indigenous people from oral to literate culture and to English language. These four critics approach the text from a postcolonial perspective whereas I use 'intercultural citizenship' to examine the novel from an educational dimension. I suggest that the Thai teacher relies on postcolonial theories to present the text in class and highlights relevant issues for students in the context of Thailand. The teacher's presentation of the novel, I argue, is concerned with 'intercultural citizenship' because it addresses social and political issues according to the following features. The teacher focused on conflicting values as the root cause of socio-political and environmental problems in postcolonial India. She compared the social and political contexts in the novel with the context of Thailand. Her lesson also emphasised the identities of characters belonging to various social groups, who learn to recognise the values and beliefs of others. The teaching topic suggests conflict resolution and social collaboration between characters from different socio-economic backgrounds. I will demonstrate in the next section these implicit features of 'intercultural citizenship' through the teacher's interpretation of the text.

The Teacher's Presentation of *The Hungry Tide*

The characteristics of 'intercultural citizenship' in the teaching of *The Hungry Tide* are the conflicting values between different views of nature and a suggestion of harmonious co-existence. In her presentation of the novel, the teacher identified the clashes between the Western and native versions of environmentalism as the root causes of crises between the Indian government and the migrants in India. Whereas the Indian government regard the wilderness as a habitat only for wildlife, to the Morichjhapi refugees, the forest is a sacred place to live. According to the teacher, these conflicting perceptions bring about political tension and violence. The teacher compared socio-political conflicts between the ruling class and the impoverished in postcolonial India with the problems between the Thai government and the northern hill tribes in Thailand. She highlighted the problems of environmental conservation projects in the Third World countries that ignore the right of

indigenous people to live. She pointed out that the conflicts presented in the novel are negotiated through the interactions between characters from different social groups: the cosmopolitan and the native who learn to accommodate each other's interests. The teacher concluded by suggesting that the text presents a 'model of postcoloniality' that involves mutual respect and co-operation between the two groups: the privileged and the marginalised. That is, the protagonists who are influenced by 'Western environmental ideologies' learn from the indigenous characters' lives and their displacement from their land.

I will demonstrate that this outline of the teacher's presentation of *The Hungry Tide* corresponds with the six categories of education in 'intercultural citizenship': 'comparative orientation', 'multiple identities', 'variety in beliefs', 'social collaboration', 'shared attitude and knowledge' and 'commitment to values' (Byram 2008: 188-9). *The Hungry Tide* was taught in six lessons comprising a total of nine hours and it was the last text discussed in the module. The teacher began her lecture with an overview of ecocriticism and Postcolonialism. She then provided students with the historical background of postcolonial India and of the novel's setting in the Sundarbans. This was followed by a detailed analysis of the text.

The teacher started her first lecture with Rob Nixon's 'Environmentalism and Postcolonialism' (2005) to identify the connection between 'environmental and postcolonial literary studies'. This article served as an introduction to the two critical approaches to *The Hungry Tide* for the students in class. According to the teacher, Nixon examines the intersection of these two domains and points out how they can be combined to enhance each other. Postcolonial ecocriticism deals with issues of hybridity, the memory of native displacement, transnational identity and the history of migration (Nixon 2005: 239). Postcolonial literature, the teacher noted, offers ecocritical readings of the concepts of 'ethics of place' and 'reimagining of the marginalised past' (ibid 235). The teacher's

introduction to the novel, in my view, corresponds with Risager's suggestion of the use of the postcolonial text to present global and intercultural perspectives in class (2007: 208). Risager points out that the postcolonial text is one of the learning materials that can demonstrate 'cross cultural and transnational issues' (2007: 208). The potential global scope, in Byram's view, is important for 'intercultural citizenship' because it provides lessons about foreign cultures as well as politics in other nations (2008: 157).

The teacher then drew her students' attention to Mark Dowie's 'Conservation Refugees' (2008) to provide them with background information on the problems of nature conservation in the novel and in Thailand. According to her, Dowie criticises the Western campaign for wildlife protection in Third World countries because it fails to consider the natives' way of life and how this corresponds with nature preservation. She explained that indigenous people are often forced to move away from conservation areas which are reserved for endangered species, as is the case with the Royal Bengal tigers in *The Hungry Tide*. What is significant to me is that the teacher compared Dowie's observations about nature conservation in India with similar problems in Thailand. She referred to the struggle of ethnic minorities: the Paganyaw, one of the hill tribe groups called the Keren, in Northern Thailand. The Paganyaw were required by the Thai government to depart from the national forest because it was thought that they were destroying the area. The teacher explained:

> People like Paganyaw [one of the indigenous groups in Thailand], the hill tribe, argue that their agricultural style that they call the 'crop rotation' would work very well with the conservation efforts. However, the government would like them to move away what they call the 'community forest' – you might have heard. These natives and some organisations in the North are trying to argue for the existence of the community forest meaning that this is the forest, you can conserve it, you can keep it as the preservation area. But, at the same time, you should allow the natives to coexist with the natural world. (Lecture 2, Minute 6:19)

My point is that the teacher's focus on the indigenous people's issues and debates in India and in Thailand suggest the 'comparative' feature that Byram identifies in 'intercultural

citizenship' (2008: 188). This teaching approach accords with Byram's category one, in which the teacher compares events in other countries to those in the students' environment. The teacher suggested that there are similar conflicts between the government and indigenous groups in India and Thailand. This reading of the text uses 'juxtaposition' to raise students' awareness of their familiar context 'whilst making the unfamiliar' context of India comprehensible for them (ibid 188).

To make the teacher's point about the similarities between indigenous people in the novel and in Thailand clear, I will explain in more detail the conflict between the Thai government and the hill tribes in Northern Thailand. Booranaprasertsook's *Stories from the Thai-Burmese Border* (2012) is useful for understanding the teacher's comparative approach because his research examines the plight of ethnic minorities in Thailand. Their displacement as a result of the partition of Thailand and Burma (now Myanmar), in my view, is not dissimilar from the separation of India and Pakistan in Ghosh's novel. Booranaprasertsook indicates that the ethnic minorities of the Keren used to live in-between the East of Burma and the North of Thailand (2012: 3). In the Colonial period, the Keren's territory was divided by the border between Thailand and Burma, and they migrated, resettling in Thailand in 1885. This is because they did not want to be under British rule in Burma (ibid 3). The Keren were discriminated against both by the Thai people and the state. For instance, 'the Keren's lack of individual land ownership resulted in them being considered as migrants who earned their living by migratory farming' (ibid 54). This agricultural style, which was called 'slash-and-burn', was condemned as deforestation (ibid). The teacher explained this particular issue and based her analysis on Dowie's study of the Keren in Thailand (2008). She explained:

> 'Slash-and-burn' is a long-term misunderstanding. In reality, what they [Keren] are doing is that they are doing crop rotation. They would farm a particular area for a year or two, and after that they would move to the next land so that they would give some times for the previous land to restore itself. However, from the point of view

> of the government, that is 'slash-and-burn' that will destroy the environment. (Lecture 2, Minute 6:35)

It is important to note that the teacher mentioned the tension between the Keren and the Thai government before she dealt with Ghosh's text. To facilitate a better understanding of the teacher's point, let us consult Thai anthropologist, Sunthorn Suksaranchit, who has studied the representation of the Thai hill tribes in Thai school textbooks. Suksaranchit has discovered that the national learning materials used between 1978 and 1990 portrayed the Keren as planters and sellers of 'drugs which is a threat [to] national security, and slash-and-burn agriculture which leads to natural disasters' (2008: vii). These textbooks depicted the tribal people as antagonists to the nation, 'drawing on metaphoric symbolism of the "enemies" who destroyed Ayuddhaya Kingdom in the ancient time' (ibid viii). These images of the Keren resulted in them being discriminated against by the Thai people and provided the state with justification for violence against them to prevent their settling in the national forest (ibid ix). In this respect, the teacher's choice of Ghosh's text was a result of the necessity of pointing out the misrepresentation of indigenous people. The teacher provided students with information about environmental problems in Thailand not only to help them understand the issues in the text but also to make them aware of the constructed images of indigenous people.

The teacher's analysis of the representation of the Sundarbans, the setting of *The Hungry Tide* also suggests 'intercultural citizenship' in her critique of national boundaries. The teacher used Pablo Mukherjee's 'Water/Land: Amitav Ghosh' (2010) to analyse the concept of a border from a postcolonial perspective. In the lecture, she displayed an online map of the Sundarbans or 'the tide country'. The region is comprised of thousands of islands and forms a border between India and Bangladesh. After she identified the partitions on the map, she referred to the novel's description of the Sundarbans:

> There are no borders here to divide fresh water from salt, river from sea. The tides reach as far as three hundred kilometres inland and every day thousands of acres of

> forest disappear underwater, only to re-emerge hours later. The currents are so powerful as to reshape the islands almost daily – some days the water tears away entire promontories and peninsulas; at other times it throws up new shelves and sandbanks where there were none before. (Ghosh 7)

This description of the Sundarban region is offered as a third person narrative. It frames the scene of Piya's and Kanai's first meeting on their train journey to the tide country. This passage is important, according to the teacher, because it indirectly encourages readers to pay attention to geography and to political boundaries. That is, her lesson highlighted the contradiction between human attempts to identify national borders and the natural dynamics of islands. In the teacher's own words, the depiction of the tide country means the following:

> You could see here that the physical reality of the Sundarbans is changing all the time. It is fluxional changing. Now that is the indeterminate, uncertain, unpredictable nature of the Sundarbans. […] It could be read figuratively how the nature of the Sundarbans itself is inviting us to question certain ways in which we tend to look for stable meaning, right? We, as human beings, we tend to look to a stable meaning. We come up with fixed idea of borders. (Lecture 2, Minute 57: 45)

The teacher had previously pointed out that this interpretation of the partitions between India and its neighbours resulted in large numbers of homeless migrants. My observation is that her explanation corresponds with Risager's suggested lesson about 'border regions and the border concept' in culture and politics pedagogy (2007: 207). Risager relies on Barth's (1969) and Byram's (1989) critique of the 'setting of boundaries' that undermines the construction of national borders. Risager recommends that it is useful for the teacher to visualise the geography by using a map because it can raise questions about the constructed meaning of borders and the socio-political issues behind them (2007: 208). In this respect, the teacher's presentation of a map of the Sundarban region was important for students' understanding because it linked the novel's critique of the territory of islands with the struggle of migrants. Moreover, discussing the concept of a border makes students aware of the complexity of the boundaries between different cultures and identities (ibid). As Zarate

notes, a teacher of foreign culture is viewed as a 'geopolitical player' who is in 'a border position' (ibid). This means that the Thai teacher is in-between national borders and makes sense of foreign affairs from a third person point of view. That is to say, the teacher analysed the concept of a border in postcolonial India from the perspective of an outsider who is neither Indian nor a person from one of its neighbouring countries. Her interpretation of the tide country provided students with a lesson about socio-political issues in other nations before she drew their attention to its cultural and intercultural complexity.

The teacher's critique of borders was followed by a focus on the conflicting values of the indigenous people's view of nature and Western environmental thinking. My view is that her emphasis on values and beliefs corresponds with Byram's 'intercultural citizenship'. The teacher identified the natives' perception of the natural world first and then the Western worldview. She pointed out that the myth of 'Bon Bibi', the forest goddess in the Sundarban region, suggests the indigenous people's own ecological awareness and wilderness preservation. The teacher referred to the scene in which the narrator describes Bon Bibi's glory after she gains triumph over 'Dokkhin Rai', the devil. This is expressed through Kanai's childhood memory of a theatrical performance of the tale:

> Bon Bibi was merciful in victory and she decided that one half of the tide country would remain a wilderness; this part of the forest she left to Dokkhin Rai and his demon hordes. The rest she claimed for herself, and under her rule this once-forested domain was soon made safe for human settlement. This order was brought to the land of eighteen tides, with its two halves, the wild and the sown, being held in careful balance. (Ghosh 103)

According to the teacher, this myth explains the history of settlement on the Sundarbans. The story, she explained, suggests that the natives perceive the natural world as divine and that it is important for them to keep a balance between human habitat and wilderness. In the teacher's own words, the tale of 'Bon Bibi' means the following:

> The story gives some kinds of the law of social order for those who are living here. This is the significance of the myth of Bon Bibi. People who are living here would be aware of the order or the mercy of Bon Bibi. This is pretty much more like land management. How the half would have been preserved as wilderness. The other half would be safe for human settlement. And that has to be kept in careful balance – human use of the land and also the preservation of the wilderness. (Lecture 2, Hour 01:46:40)

According to the indigenous cultures, she suggested, myth conveys social regulations that serve to maintain harmony in nature. In my opinion, the teacher's interpretation of the myth of 'Bon Bibi' regarding it as 'the law of social order' aligns with the characteristics of Byram's 'intercultural citizenship', particularly categories three and six. Byram stresses the significance of the variety of values and beliefs in literature and politics pedagogy because they make students 'more conscious of their multiple social identities' (2008: 189). This awareness is necessary, Byram clarifies, for the learning process in preparing students to seek potential negotiation where conflicting cultures occur (ibid). In this lesson, the teacher familiarised students with native values and beliefs before she contrasted them with Western ecological thinking. Students were encouraged to learn from the interpretation of the indigenous myths, which contain the natives' ecological values and beliefs.

In acknowledging ethnic cultures, the teacher's explanation of the latter part of the tale of Bon Bibi reflects a feature of 'intercultural citizenship'. In particular, she referred to the incident where Bon Bibi saves the life of 'Dukhey', the boy who fights against the demon that invades the islands and the forest:

> Bon Bibi was far away, but she crossed the waters in an instant. She revived the boy, taking him into her lap while her brother, Shah Jangoli, dealt a terrible chastisement to the demon. Then, transporting Dukhey to her home, she nursed him back to health. When it was time for him to return, she sent him back to his mother with a treasure trove of honey and wax. Thus did Bon Bibi show the world the law of the forest, which was that the rich and greedy would be punished while the poor and righteous were rewarded. (Ghosh 105)

According to the teacher, this is an example of the violation of the law set down by Bon Bibi. That is, people living in the tide country are supposed to be responsible for the protection of the forest against greed and invasion. This incident suggests the indigenous people's sense of morality. She interpreted this event as follows:

> This is pretty much more like the native version of environmentalism. We cannot say that people living in the countryside are stupid anymore, right? We could talk about how these people have their own ideologies. The ideologies that may be constructed in the different form from the Western ideologies. Now that environmental ideologies are embedded in the story, the myth of Bon Bibi. […] It would be more like the codes that people would respect. That would serve to regulate people's treatment of the natural world. (Lecture 2, Hour 01:49:24)

The teacher's interpretation could be seen as a Western attempt to understand non-Western cultures, values and beliefs. She relied on Western concepts, such as 'environmentalism', 'ideologies' and 'codes' to make sense of the tale of Bon Bibi. On the one hand, the teacher may realise that these concepts are possibly more familiar to students. Her explanation implied that Thai students' background knowledge is often shaped by Western thought. On the other hand, her use of Western terminologies to describe ethnic cultures was designed to raise their awareness of the similarity between the two worldviews. The combination of these paradigms of thought means that they are equally embedded with ecological concerns. In this respect, the teacher's response reflected her recognition of ethnic cultures, values and beliefs according to Byram's fifth category of 'intercultural citizenship'. Her lesson could be considered as culture and politics pedagogy that promotes an 'understanding and respect for all peoples, their cultures, civilisations, values and ways of life, including domestic ethnic cultures and cultures of other nations' (Risager 2007: 208). The teacher's making sense of the Indian myth aimed to promote students' realisation of indigenous culture, which is mutually important to modern Western ecological thinking.

The reasons behind the teacher's emphasis on indigenous cultures are possibly that some Thai people discriminate against ethnic minorities in the North. Her saying that 'We cannot say that people living in the countryside are stupid anymore, right?' implies an attitude of people living in the city towards those in the country. The teacher's use of the pronoun 'We' suggests that she perceives herself and her students as urbanised people living in Bangkok whereas those 'living in the countryside' of Thailand may be typically viewed by them as 'stupid' and uneducated. To analyse this teacher's reference to the country people, I again consult Booranaprasertsook's study. His views of the ethnic minorities, the Keren, in Northern Thailand corresponds with the teacher's perception of the native Indians in Ghosh's novel. While the teacher referred to the Keren through an American journalist Dowie's study (2008), the Thai researcher Booranaprasertsook offers a different perspective (2012). As I stated earlier, the Thai government viewed the Keren, one of the hill tribe groups in the North, as destroyers of the national forest (ibid 53). Booranaprasertsook argues that the Keren's way of thinking and living strictly follows the idea of environmental conservation. I have also found that the tale of 'Bon Bibi' is similar to the teaching of the spiritual leader 'Richi' in which 'Le Tong Khu', one of the Keren tribes, believes. Booranaprasertsook outlines the belief of these tribal people as follows:

> Richi has forbidden the consumption of all kinds of meat to make this land clean of blood in preparation for the arrival of "Phra Sriariya Mettrai," the next Lord Buddha who will come to preach human beings. Anyone who violates the teaching of the Richi is banished from the village; however, if he feels remorse, he might be permitted to return. (2012: 31)

Booranaprasertsook points out that the Keren are the 'forest protectors' rather than 'destroyers' (ibid 53). He recognises the ethnic culture of the Keren in a similar way to the way in which the teacher identifies the 'native version of environmentalism' through the myth of Bon Bibi. That is, the indigenous people in the Sundarbans, according to the teacher, believe in the forest goddess who teaches them to value harmony between living areas and wilderness. The Keren, in Booranaprasertsook's view, believe in Richi who warns

them not to kill animals and teaches them to preserve the forest as a sacred place for Lord Buddha. This intertextual relationship between the legends of Bon Bibi and Richi, in my opinion, points out that India and Thailand are cultures with similar indigenous values and beliefs which are enshrined in similar myths. The teacher took advantage of this in her lessons in order to enhance her students' realisation of the natives' ecological thinking. This teaching approach was therefore designed to create a reciprocal effect on the Thai students and to make them reconsider their views about the indigenous Keren. My comparison between the teacher's response to Bon Bibi and the Thai critic's view of the Keren's Richi is for the purpose of demonstrating Byram's characteristic of 'intercultural citizenship' in promoting 'multiple identities of people'. This is according to Byram's second category of the teaching approach. The teacher's lesson implied that India and Thailand comprise indigenous and modern cultures. She was inclined to place herself and students in the modern paradigm of thought whereas she also encouraged them to learn about ethnic cultures in the text and in the context of Thailand.

The teacher then identified views of nature in Western environmental thinking. She gave an example of this through the scene in which Piya sees the Irrawaddy dolphin on the Sundarbans for the first time. This is in the scene when Piya's chance meeting with an indigenous fisherman Fokir saves her from drowning in the river. Piya is on Fokir's boat trying to use her GPS monitor to record the geographical position of the river area where she finds the dolphin. Ghosh does not say whether the dolphin is fitted with a device that Piya's machine can locate. He just describes Piya's attempt to collect her data:

> The animal [dolphin] had surfaced so close to the boat that she had only to extend her arm to get a reading on the GPS monitor. She recorded the figures with a sense of triumph: even if the dolphins took flight this very minute, this little scrap of data would have made the encounter credible and worthwhile. (Ghosh 114)

The teacher explained that Piya received her university education in Marine Biology in the US. Her research aims to understand the rare Irrawaddy dolphin and its patterns of

behaviour. Piya, according to the teacher, represents Western environmental thinking that is concerned with the use of science and technology to understand and to protect the environment. The teacher pointed out Piya's good intentions to preserve the species, however, she also noted that her approach to the natural world is based on an attempt to achieve victory over nature. The teacher interpreted the excerpt as follows:

> She is influenced by the scientific methodology, the Western way to use sciences to reveal the mystery of nature. When she gets to see the dolphins for the first time, she describes her feeling in the sense of triumph, be able to use her equipment to find out about nature. In this sense, to take control in the sense that she is able to know about nature. (Lecture 4, Minute 06:49)

This explanation suggests that the teacher's analysis of the character's view of nature reflects Byram's fifth characteristic in 'intercultural citizenship' that focuses on attitude, knowledge and the identity of people from other cultures. The teacher identified Piya's background as an American scientist, her tendency to 'take control' of nature and her desire to gain mastery over the natural world. Byram points out that this teaching approach helps to prepare students to be aware of potentially conflicting values and incompatible paradigms of thought (ibid 180). In this case, the teacher highlighted Piya's environmental thinking which implies a sense of triumph in contrast with her former lesson about the myth of Bon Bibi, while demonstrating the indigenous people's humility vis-à-vis the goddess of the forest. My next section will exemplify how the teacher presented the clashes between the Western and indigenous worldviews.

The teacher further identified Western views of the natural world through Piya's interaction with the indigenous people in the Sundarbans. Piya witnesses the killing of a tiger in the local community and she tries to protest against this activity and seeks to stop the killers and the crowd. She shouts angrily at the villagers: 'You can't take revenge on an animal' (Ghosh 294). According to the teacher, Piya sees herself as a wildlife protector and her views of nature focus mainly on the non-human world. In order to explain that there is

also a different view, the teacher referred to the scene in which Kanai explains to Piya the reasons for the killing:

> 'That tiger had killed two people, Piya,' Kanai said. 'And that was just one village. It happens every week that people are killed by tigers. How about the horror of that? If there were killings on that scale anywhere else on earth it would be called a genocide, and yet here it goes almost unremarked: these killings are never reported, never written about in the papers. And the reason is just that these people are too poor to matter. We all know it, but we choose not to see it. Isn't that a horror too – that we can feel the suffering of an animal, but not of human beings?' (Ghosh 300-1)

This extract, the teacher explained, suggests a critique of Western environmental thinking in which the non-human world takes priority over human beings. The teacher indicated that Kanai's statement is important because it considers the tiger scene from the perspectives of both the marginalised and the privileged Indian. The teacher argued:

> Actually, if you would be fair, you will get to see the suffering of human beings. Again from her [Piya's] background as an environmentalist, scientist, that [the killing of tiger] is anthropocentric. So far we are talking about Western environmental movement, we tend to blame anything that would focus or centre in human beings. Human beings are selfish and focus so much on centredness of human beings. We are bad. But here, it is the different environment where people would have to struggle. This is pretty much more like – the tide country is the jungle where only the fittest survive. And if human beings are not strong enough, are not fierce enough to defend themselves, they are going to be killed.
>
> And the other point that he [Kanai] is making here is that these [indigenous] people, these human-beings who are killed are the underprivileged. They are poor and nobody would want to pay attention to them. So again this is also about the economic struggle in India. It is also about the discrepancy between the rich and poor, people in different caste in India. And what if a tiger would roam around, kill and devour human beings alike in New Delhi, that tiger would be killed. And people would not say anything about this. But in here, these are the locals and the government would not pay attention to that. (Lecture 4, Minute 21: 34)

My understanding is that the teacher's focus on the tiger scene and her explanation of Kanai's view point to the 'moral complexity' in 'citizenship and interculturalism' suggested

by Mike Fleming (2006: 140). According to Fleming, 'an intercultural conception of citizenship will seek to promote a high degree of meta-awareness of identity' (ibid 141). He advocates that it is 'appropriate to use the study of literature when teaching citizenship because easy and formulaic solutions are avoided and moral questions are identified and posed' (ibid). The teacher's approach, in my opinion, presents the indigenous people and the Western individuals as having contrasting identities. They have different identities, values, and attitudes because they are from different living environments and live in unequal economic conditions. Moreover, the teacher's response suggests 'moral complexity'; that means, the privileged Indians are complicit in the plight of the indigenous people. Her lesson corresponded with the focus on ecocriticism found in Weik's critical analysis and with the Marxism found in Tomsky's approach to the text. That is, socio-political and ecological problems in postcolonial society are closely related. They are consequences of the conflicting views of nature and the ignorance of the complex relationships between different social groups, and between humans and the environment.

The impact of Western environmental thinking on postcolonial India is directly identified in the teacher's focus on Kanai's critique of Piya's studies. She pointed out that Kanai learns from his uncle's diary about the Morichjhapi refugee massacre. In the novel, Kanai's family and his uncle Nirmal are privileged Indians in the tide country. The teacher explained that Nirmal, a school headmaster, is influenced by Western knowledge that tends to idealise the indigenous people living in harmony with nature. Nirmal's interaction with the Morichjhapi refugees makes him realise the reality of the poor. Nirmal feels guilty because he is unable to help the refugees after the government's act of removing them from the tiger conservation area. He then secretly writes the story in his journals hoping that his nephew Kanai will discover it after his passing away. The teacher remarked that Kanai represents the upper-caste Indian in the new generation who addresses the politics behind animal and nature conservation projects. Kanai derives his feeling of complicity in social

and environmental problems from his uncle. He criticises Piya's rebellion against the villagers' killing of the tiger:

> 'Because it [the killing of the tiger] was people like you,' said Kanai, 'who made a push to protect the wildlife here, without regard for the human costs. And I'm complicit because people like me – Indians of my class, that is – have chosen to hide these costs, basically in order to curry [enhance] favour with their Western patrons. It's not hard to ignore people who're dying – after all, they are the poorest of the poor.' (Ghosh 301)

The teacher pointed out that Kanai has gradually changed his perception of the indigenous people from being indifferent to caring. This is not only because of his uncle's notebook but also because of his direct experiences of the natives in the tide country. Kanai's statement is important, according to the teacher, because it is produced from the privileged character's point of view. She used Mark Dowie's 'Conservation Refugees' (2008) that she also referred to in her introduction for an explanation of the complexity of politics in postcolonial India. The teacher described:

> He [Kanai] is talking about how actually people like Piya, the environmentalist coming from the West, they are complicit in this cruel act. And again if you could remember, we have talked about the Indian project of tiger. How the project was launched by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in the late 1970s. This project was initiated and supported by the World Wild Life Fund, the American organisations that are committed to protecting the natural world. Now this project aims to creating tiger reserve in India including the Sundarbans. And you could see that in this sense this tiger project is the part of politics between the postcolonial India and the West. In this sense, to be able to create tiger reserve in India, especially in the Sundarbans, the locals, the underprivileged, the impoverished, the poor would have to suffer from that.
>
> However, you will see the irresponsibility of the neo-colonial government in India during that time. Indira Gandhi and the government chose to satisfy the Western authority trying to support this tiger project, the preservation of the tiger, the creation of the tiger research, at the expense of a lot of poor India, a lot of the underprivileged, marginalised living in the Sundarbans or the remote area. In this sense, you could see that Piya is not aware of all of this politics. She is just so

> simple-mindedly thinking about the preservation of the non-human world whereas Kanai is trying to tell her that it is her false. She is complicit to this, and at the same time, he is blaming himself. He is coming from like a higher class interacting with the government, with influential people in India. And he himself is aware of the danger of this kind of project, of the tiger project. However, he did not say anything, people in his class did not say anything to argue against, to object to this project because they want to get along with the Westerners who are very powerful in India. (Lecture 4, Minute 25:22)

I have quoted the teacher's explanation in full here because the issues that she raises are sophisticated and based on primary and secondary sources as well as on her own attempt to explicate politics in India. In doing so, she clearly demonstrates the fundamental features of 'intercultural citizenship' through combining literature study and political education. She thereby, albeit without intentionally implementing the concept, seems to follow Byram's suggestion that educators should 'identify areas of misunderstanding' in the interaction between people from different societies and cultures (2008: 239). In the lesson, the teacher revealed how privileged Indians are indirectly involved in making the natives homeless. Byram also notes that the lesson should aim at a 'change in self-perception and understanding of one's relationships to others in other social groups' (ibid 187). In her lesson, the teacher pointed to the upper-caste Indian characters in the book and to how they learn to correct their misperception of the indigenous people, their culture and their way of living. Her lesson presented how the issue of colonisation has shifted from the Western colonisers to internal colonisation and the power struggle between the privileged and the marginalised groups.

In our pilot interview, the teacher pointed out that she had chosen to place emphasis on socio-political and environmental issues from the point of view of the upper-class characters because of her students' socio-economic backgrounds. The students in her classes belong to the privileged groups in Thai society and culture. The reason for her interpretation was to make her students aware of their 'complicity' in the problems:

> These texts that I have selected aim to make them [the students] create the connection seeing their roles as they are being complicit of the environmental problems even though they may think that they have nothing to do with that. They are living in a careful life. They save energy and they live eco-friendly life. But if we think very carefully, everybody of us, every one of us here is responsible for environmental crises. It is not somebody else problem, it is created by us. (Pilot Interview, Hour 01:18:35)

Through her analysis of the privileged characters, such as Piya and Kanai, the teacher wanted to make students reconsider ecological problems and their relationships with people who are in a less privileged position. This teaching approach further implies 'intercultural citizenship' in enhancing students' understanding of themselves in relation to others (Byram 2008: 238). That is, a teacher should provide knowledge of 'historical and contemporary relationships between' his/her students' own cultures and the cultures presented in the text (ibid). By describing the history of India which has brought about the country's ecological and social problems in connection with the relationships among characters in different social classes, the teacher encouraged students to think about the link between themselves living in Bangkok and the hill-tribe groups in the north of Thailand.

The teacher also referred to Kusum, one of the Morichjhapi refugees, to identify Ghosh's critique of Western environmental discourse. She analysed this character to exemplify social and environmental issues from the point of view of the marginalised. She pointed to the scene in which Kanai reads his uncle Nirmal's diary that records the historical events of the refugees' removal from the tiger conservation area. Kusum is one of the indigenous migrants who attempts to resettle on Morichjhapi Island which is a part of the Sundarban region. Kusum shares her sufferings with Nirmal:

> the worst part was not the hunger or the thirst. It was to sit here, helpless, and listen to the policemen making their announcement, hearing them say that our lives, our existence, were worth less than dirt or dust. "This island has to be saved for its trees, it has to be saved for its animals, it is a part of a reserve forest, it belongs to a

> project to save tigers, which is paid for by people from all around the world." Every day, sitting here, with hunger gnawing at out bellies, we would listen to these words, over and over again. Who are these people, I wondered, who love animals so much that they are willing to kill us for them? Do they know what is being done in their names? Where do they live, these people? Do they have children, do they have mothers, fathers? As I thought of these things, it seemed to me that this whole world had become a place of animals, and our fault, our crime, was that we were just human beings, trying to live as human beings always have, from the water and the soil. No one could think this a crime unless they have forgotten that this is how humans have always lived – by fishing, by clearing land and by planting the soil. (Ghosh 261-2)

The teacher pointed out that the oppression of the indigenous people is caused by the tiger and wilderness preservation projects that originate in the West. She interpreted Kusum's story as follows:

> We have been exposed to a lot of Western environmental discourses. This kind of statement would make us start to think. I am not saying that one is better than the other. I am not saying that Kusum's situation can be used to dismantle all the Western environmental ideologies. But I think the two sides of the issue should be taken into consideration. I have been getting to read a lot about environmental literature from the Western perspective. In Bangkok, when I am looking around, when I am taking the subway, there are so many human beings, and I have a feeling that here we have too many human beings. I feel like we have colonised the planet. Actually when you think about Bangkok hundred years ago, it was like a wilderness. And if you remember that certain areas in Bangkok, there were still like reptiles back to the past wondering around. Things would be here. We cleared the land so that we could have our human settlement. And in this sense for me again, being influenced by Western ideologies, I would feel that human beings are ambivalent.
>
> But again listening to Kusum's voice, I have got to think, yes, is there something that human beings are supposed to do. We have got to live. We have got to survive. And in order to do that, we have got to fish, we have got to use natural resources. But again, we have got to take a lot of things into perspective. We look into the deep ecologist principles and you see that one of the ideas that put forth by deep ecologist is the idea of human population. Now we have an increasing number of human population. Maybe this is the reason that we have to deplete the number of

> human population so that we will not have to intrude the area of the natural world. And I think that this is important, too.
>
> And it is also important about Kusum's statement here that most of the time, we are talking about environmental ideologies, the focus seems to be, especially in the Western world, they tend to be coming from the well-to-do educated people who have no idea what it is like to live in the remote areas. Now Kusum's case helps us a lot about the hunger, the suffering of these displaced, the dispossessed. Remember that Kusum and the Morichjhapi refugees have no place to live. They have been forced to leave their homeland. They are put in concentration camp. They could not live there. They struggle to find a new place in the tide country area where the landscape and climate they are familiar with. However, they are not allowed to live here. And again what is very shocking is that the government is willing to massacre, killing people here in order to save this area as a tiger reserve. And it is ironic that why the government comes with this idea. How come they do not understand the point of these marginalised people? (Lecture 4, Minute 35:37)

I refer to the teacher's response in full here because in it she explains the complexity of socio-political and ecological issues in Third-World countries in a reflective way. First, her use of the pronoun 'we' includes herself, students and other Thai people who belong to privileged social groups. They have been influenced by Western environmental thinking that seems to ignore the struggle of the underprivileged groups like the Indian migrants in Ghosh's novel. Second, her shift to the pronoun 'I' shows her own experience of reading Western literature which has had an impact on her thoughts. She has discovered that reading a postcolonial text undermines her Western ecological background knowledge. In my view, the teacher's self-reflective analysis corresponds with what Karin Zotzmann argues in her study of intercultural education. Zotzmann calls for the development of individuals in terms of their social responsibility and 'moral imagination'. She suggests that it is important for intercultural education 'to engage with individuals, the reality they experience and their concrete ethical commitments and concerns' (2015: 188). In this lesson, the teacher provided an example of her own experience of living in Bangkok and her reading experience to make students aware of Western ideologies that may cause trouble for the marginalised

people in the Third World. Additionally, it is significant to note that the teacher used herself as an example to make her students reconsider their way of thinking. She had thought in a Western non-anthropocentric way but now had more empathy with the poor.

Additionally, the teacher's interpretation of Kusum's statement reflects the teaching approach proposed by Fleming as a 'discussion of ethics and aesthetics relat[ing] to the theme of citizenship' (2006: 140). Fleming views narrative fiction as a powerful resource in intercultural citizenship education because it not only deals with topics that are relevant but it also 'engages us emotionally and confronts life in all its moral complexity' (ibid). The teacher's concern with making her students think about the root causes of the plight of the indigenous people, namely the Western environmental discourse, seeks to kindle in them a sense of empathy with the poor. Fleming also remarks that the teaching of intercultural citizenship involves a 'sympathetic understanding of others and recognition of common human values but also towards a recognition of particular differences' (ibid 141). In this lesson, the teacher's contemplation aimed to make the students aware of shared human values and people's right to live, although their ways of living may differ.

The teacher offered in her last lesson a 'model of postcoloniality' pertaining to a sense of harmonious coexistence between 'Western and native versions of environmentalism'. She focused on the scene in which scientist Piya and fisherman Fokir are pursuing their duties on the boat in the tide country. This is after Piya is saved by Fokir from drowning and she is on his boat for several days with him and his son. While they are in the river, Piya learns that dolphins and crabs gather in the same underwater pool. The two marine species represent Piya's and Fokir's different interests. The teacher referred to Piya's mapping of the river-bed to collect data on the dolphins' habitat and Fokir's crab fishing:

> It was surprising enough that their jobs had not proved to be utterly incompatible – especially considering that one of the tasks required the input of geostationary

> satellites while the other depends on bits of shark-bone and broken tile. But that it had proved possible for two such different people to pursue their own ends simultaneously – people who could not exchange a word with each other and had no idea of what was going on in one another's heads – was far more than surprising: it seemed almost miraculous. Nor was she [Piya] the only one to remark on this: once, when her glance happened accidentally to cross Fokir's she saw something in his expression that told her that he too was amazed by the seamless intertwining of their pleasure and their purposes. (Ghosh 141)

Piya and Fokir are unable to communicate with each other through language. Piya knows only English while Bengali is the sole language that Fokir understands. Despite this barrier, they are able to co-operate in their jobs and can get along well. Fokir helps Piya to discover dolphin habitats and he in turn benefits from this activity through finding a lot of crabs. The teacher interpreted this scene as follows:

> Now we have talked about how Amitav Ghosh is looking for like alternative model of postcoloniality. It is possible that he is imagining the utopian place or some kinds of utopian existence where you will get to see not only the coming together of Piya – the elite, the scientist, but Fokir – the subaltern, the native how they could work together. How they use their expertise in order to enhance each other's works. And then here you could see how he is presenting in this particular scene as a miracle, a miraculous thing that is surprising to both of them. You would see the intertwining of their pleasure and their purposes. (Lecture 6, Minute 06:51)

It seems to me that the teacher's 'model of postcoloniality' reflects a sense of negotiation and peaceful solutions to the conflicting values, cultures and identities represented by Western and non-Western worldviews. The teacher's analysis includes features of 'intercultural citizenship' in 'political option for the future'. Byram describes the mediation between them as:

> an alternative to the current political options of assimilation and multiculturalism. It joins parties in a constructive exchange of expressions and views, allowing them to learn from each other realising the common good they will co-create and inhabit together. (2009: 124)

This definition is implicit in the teacher's interpretation. To illustrate the teacher's emphasis, scientist Piya and fisherman Fokir are able to share their knowledge in a relationship of mutual respect and to a reciprocal advantage. They realise that they can learn from each other's activities and respective interests. This leads them to accepting co-existence and co-operation. In her analysis of this particular scene, the teacher suggested a fundamental agreement between Western and Eastern concerns about the environment. That is, a conflict-free relationship between the Western interest in wildlife preservation projects and indigenous living in harmony with nature. At this point, her teaching approach implied Byram's fourth category in 'intercultural citizenship'. She highlighted 'collaboration' between characters from different socio-cultural backgrounds.

The teacher's interpretation of the novel's ending clearly demonstrates her implicit goal of teaching 'intercultural citizenship'. She identified the change in Piya's Western-style environmentalism from her initial sole focus on the non-human world to her later inclusion of the marginalised refugees. In the final chapter, Piya and Fokir are overwhelmed by a cyclone during their boat trip, which only Piya survives. Fokir ties Piya between himself and the tree on the island to prevent them from being blown away, only for him to be hit and killed by a heavy object. Piya realises that she has been saved by Fokir, and decides to settle down in the Sundarbans and to support his family. She initiates a foundation dedicated to him, and wishes to continue her research projects to preserve nature there. The teacher referred to Piya's conversation with Nilima, the founder of the local hospital in the tide country, in which Piya says the following:

> I don't want to do the kind of work that places the burden of conservation on those who can least afford it. If I was to take on a project here, I'd want it to be under the sponsorship of the Badabon Trust, so the local fishermen would be involved. And the Trust would benefit too. We'd share the funding. (Ghosh 397)

The teacher views Piya's plan as a development in her ecological thinking. Piya proceeds to raise funding from around the world for the campaign to preserve the dolphins in the

Sundarbans. She does this by telling the story of Fokir to her online network. The teacher explained Piya's change of heart as follows:

> Now she has learnt the lesson, right? She comes back with the new idea. She wants the involvement of the local fishermen. She wants to make sure that the Trust would benefit from it. At this point she is trying to involve the locals, the human beings. So now she gets to see the importance of human beings and human feelings that there should be some kinds of relationship between humans and the animals. The animals' project should benefit the local people. She gets the information for the locals. (Lecture 4, Minute 48:19)

In her interpretation, the teacher seems to take up Byram's suggestion that 'intercultural citizenship' is trained through developing students' 'attitude and willingness and openness to others' (2009: 123). Byram derives this approach from the Council of Europe's White Paper definition of 'intercultural dialogue' as:

> a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. (qtd. in Byram 2009: 123)

The teacher's description of Piya's development of her ecological view reflects the process in which Piya has learnt to listen to the local people in the tide country as part of her work. Moreover, the teacher's emphasis is on ethnicity, cultures and the beliefs of people of different backgrounds and the possibility of them getting involved with each other. In our interview, the teacher confirmed that the novel's 'model of postcoloniality' was one of the main reasons for her selection of the text. She explained that Ghosh portrays an exceptional representation of Postcolonialism, namely a non-antagonistic relationship between Western and postcolonial countries. She viewed this as important because she thought that students were more likely to learn from characters who did not conform to any specific stereotypes.

To summarise the teacher's presentation of *The Hungry Tide*, Byram's and other critics' characteristics of 'intercultural citizenship' were implicit in her teaching approach.

The teacher first noted the similarities between the indigenous people in the Sundarbans, India and Northern Thailand. The marginalised groups in both countries struggle against their governments' nature preservation campaigns that ignore the right of the native people to live in the forest. Secondly, the teacher dealt with 'multiple identities' through the identification of her students as part of a privileged group shaped by Western paradigms of thought. In her interpretation of the Indian myth, she encouraged them to learn from the non-Western cultures and ethnic identities. Thirdly, the teacher presented a 'variety of values and beliefs' through her contrast between 'Western and native versions of environmentalism'. She demonstrated indigenous ecological thinking, which underlies the belief in the forest goddess, and scientists' tendency to attempt to triumph over nature. Fourthly, the lesson on 'social collaboration' was shown in her analysis of a 'model of postcoloniality'. She suggested a sense of harmonious coexistence between Western interest in nature conservation and the non-Western way of living. Fifth, the lesson on 'shared attitude and knowledge' was in her interpretation of the protagonists' development of their ecological views. The teacher remarked that the protagonist's nature conservation plan evolves to include the local people. Sixth, all the lessons revolved around conflicting 'values' and the negotiation between people of different cultures, societies and beliefs. In the next section, I will examine the students' personal responses to the book and to the way in which *The Hungry Tide* was presented to them.

Students' Responses

My analysis of students' responses to *The Hungry Tide* is based on the discussions that followed each student's class presentation, their term paper and my interview with them. My focus is on class presentations and written assignments because discussions in class mostly dealt with events in the novel whereas students' presentations and writing reveal their personal engagement with the text. The term papers and class presentations can signify to me students' ways of thinking and of analysing the text. For the term paper, students were

able to choose to interpret any of the texts that they had studied in class according to their interest. For the class presentation, students were allowed to present their personal responses to the texts that they had studied in class. The teacher explained to them that since the module was about social and ecological issues, students should think about their relationships with others and the non-human world. She informed them of the criteria for assessment pertaining to connections between lessons about the text and students' own experiences. This relatively open activity allows me to gain a sense of how students engage with the text from their specific subjective points of view.

I will analyse students' responses on the basis of education in 'intercultural citizenship' according to their perspectives on *The Hungry Tide* and on their teacher's lectures. Byram identifies the development of students' 'critical cultural awareness' as central to education for 'intercultural citizenship'. To him, 'critical cultural awareness' means students' ability 1) to 'identify and interpret' values in 'documents and events' in their own and in other cultures, 2) to 'make an evaluative analysis' that refers to explicit perspective, and 3) to 'mediate in intercultural exchanges' and 'negotiate where necessary' (Byram 2008: 163). Byram characterises a student's ability to become 'an intercultural citizen' as involving 'psychological and behavioural change, including change in self-perception and understanding of one's relationships to others in other social groups' (2008: 187). In the module that I observed, the education in 'intercultural citizenship' was not only implicit in the teaching approach, but critical thinking was also fundamental to the learning objectives. The teacher clarified in the course syllabus that she intended 1) 'to provide students with opportunity to read these texts analytically and critically', and 2) 'to train students to write critical and analytical essays in a coherent and well-substantiated fashion'. Because of her teaching approach and the stated learning objectives, I feel justified in applying Byram's 'intercultural citizenship' and 'critical cultural awareness' to interpret students' learning experiences while reading and analysing Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*.

I have chosen examples from each student's response to reflect the different dimensions of the novel. My reference to the three students is in the order of their class presentations. The first example is from student A's response and reflects his opinion about projects to conserve nature in the Third World. He points out that the level of ecological concern is related to socio-economic factors. He suggests a reason why Ghosh addresses the limitations of wildlife and nature conservation projects:

> In *The Hungry Tide*, the author tries to present that the subaltern – they don't have like the opportunity to, just to take care of themselves is hard enough. So you can see that these environmental issues are made not applicable for the poor people because they have to just live to survive – it's hard enough. So I think that this is pretty much like for those people who are like middle class to stand for the environment. I think it is very hard to impose this kind of belief to other people who think that environmental issues are something far away from them. But actually, it will affect later to everyone. (Presentation, Minute 19:10)

Student A attempts to make sense of the text to identify the root causes of social and ecological issues in India and in Thailand. He thinks that the failure of the campaign to preserve nature is a result of the lack of ability of the 'subaltern' to care for the environment. At this point, he does not seem to appreciate the teacher's lesson on 'the native version of environmentalism' meaning that the marginalised groups encompass ecological thinking differently. His claim betrays the ideology of the middle class that they are more capable of protecting nature than other social groups. Byram defines the characteristic of not 'being intercultural' as 'individuals who either do not apprehend or refuse to acknowledge the particular nature of an encounter with another from a group with different values, beliefs and behaviours' (2008: 186). This student seems to lack empathy for the position of others and cannot distance himself from his own perspective. He does not recognise indigenous cultures, values and beliefs that are based on a different ecological view. His reflection seems to confirm the teacher's perception of students in Bangkok as part of privileged social groups who lack insight into rural cultures. The teacher's assumption is correct because student A, who was born and has always lived in Bangkok, seems to have no knowledge of

how people in remote areas live. This means that background experience is one of the factors that may influence a student's level of understanding of social and ecological problems.

In contrast, student A's response also reveals the limitations of teaching ecocriticism in this particular context. In the introduction to the thesis, I refer to the teacher's intention to rely on literary criticism to create students' ecological awareness. Her teaching approach relies on detailed interpretations and critical views of *The Hungry Tide* that focuses on the problems of nature conservation projects in the remote areas in Thailand. On the one hand, this teaching approach corresponds with Kramsh's suggestion that the teacher of foreign culture is responsible for identifying the relevance of this culture to the learning context (2009: 200). On the other hand, the teacher's attempt to makes the issues represented in the text relevant to her student's own experience may not work in every case. With reference to Ghosh's text, the teacher's comparison between native and modern environmentalism in India and Thailand can be seen as beyond the student's experience. This points to the challenge that teaching of post-colonial texts pose when they are not directly related to the environment students live. It may just be too difficult for the student to make sense of the issues depicted in *The Hungry Tide*. While the teaching based on literary criticism tends to draw on the complexity of ecological problems, the teacher needs to be aware of student A's background knowledge. If the student had not shared his opinion with the class, the teacher would have never guessed that her explanation of the text is not sufficient to make him truly comprehend it.

Student A's view is contradictory to the teacher's opinion, however, my impression is that the teacher encourages all students to re-examine the issues. She responded to student A's opinion in a sceptical way and then encouraged the class to reconsider their self-perception and behaviour. She reminded students of the difference between 'Western and native versions of environmentalism', which means that nature conservation projects need to

take into consideration the native people's right to live. The teacher repeated her points first and then added examples that were more familiar to students:

> I am questioning that [student A's] assertion. Is it possible for, I wouldn't use the word the poor, but the farmers, the grassroots of the society to have that kind of environmental concern. I think in many ways their lifestyle, if they are doing like self-sufficient kind of agriculture – sustainable agriculture. Would you think that their lifestyle then corresponds more with what the environmentalists call for?
>
> In contrast, people like us, the privileged born living in the city seems to be so far away from the actual act – environmentalism. We have talked a lot about that, we have all kinds of campaigns in the big cities. But our lifestyle, our actions, I think, are opposite to the project – the environmental projects that we have been talking about. What do you think? I mean, yes, people would be concerned, they would be talking about environmentalism, deep ecology, but I think the electricity that they [the grassroots] would consume each day is much less than what we consume. We, here, I am going to shopping mall, we would say like, oh, eco-friendly shopping – what does it mean by that? All kinds of campaigns that discourses have been appropriated in the business world.
>
> And I thought that this is very strange. And I feel that how deep critical we are living in the big city? But we are talking about the opposite. We talk about recycling. And I see university that has different garbage cans – garbage recycle. But anytime I look into that bin for recycling garbage, I don't see, I feel like, university students don't know how to recycle. That should be hopeless, right? I don't see the real attempt among people who have been the middle class, the privileged, the educated. (Presentation, Minute 20:25)

The teacher's explanation reinforces her lesson on the 'native version of environmentalism'. It is important to note that the teacher's explanation of 'the migrants in India and the hill tribes in Northern Thailand' includes the students' own geographical context in the city. The teacher seems to realise that living in the Sundarbans and in remote areas in Thailand are equally difficult for students in Bangkok to imagine. Therefore, she contrasts the agrarian ways of living in the countryside with the students' urban lifestyle. Through this, she provides more examples, such as the consumption of electricity, shopping bags and

recycling garbage, in order to help them to comprehend the issues in a more concrete way. The teacher encourages students to see the intercultural relationship between themselves and those living in the country. She reminds them of the 'clashes of values' between the consumerist, urban and traditional rural cultures. Literary analysis may not be sufficient for students to understand environmental and social issues because it does not seem to be relevant to them. Therefore, electricity use in the metropolis, plastic shopping bags and the university's policy on recycling are provided to enhance student's ecocritical thinking ability in this learning context.

In response to the teacher's challenging questions, students tried to re-examine the points in a more critical way. For example, student B shared with the class some insight she gained from reading and analysing the text. Student B pointed out that reading ecocritical literature made her aware of her habit of using plastic bags. She said:

> Actually, I think I am a kind of a little bit of more critical. I have to confess because before, yeah, it was hard to say like I'm living in eco-friendly way in Bangkok – it's so hard. But then, since I've learned, it's not just I am using kind of canvas told oh! I love the world already. But in a way, it's like learning literature in this class I get to learn more about the real environmental problems. It also changes me that I always question things like before I go to Seven-Eleven [convenient store], I should stop using plastic bag. […] And also I try to change from myself a little bit. But I mean, I am not using multi-model canvas. So I mean, at least something I can do, maybe the use of rubbish and not to throw. I don't know, I cannot change the world, but I can change myself. If I have maybe like children in the future, I will teach them also. (Presentation, Minute 26: 51)

On the one hand, student B's answer may have been influenced by her attempt to please the teacher and by student A's opinion. Zotzmann has argued that 'situational factors', for example, 'power relations' between teacher and students can shape the dialogue in the language classroom (2015: 178). In this case, earning points could have been the reason for student B's response. On the other hand, her endeavour to think about the change within herself suggests her ability to evaluate and apply the lesson. The teacher had informed all

students at the beginning of the semester that self-reflection and connection with their lifestyle were important points that they needed to address in the class presentations at the end of the semester. This means that all students were made aware of the teacher's marking criteria and issues to ponder. That is to say, student A did not reflect on his relationship with others or with the environment, whereas student B followed the teacher's instructions. Student B tried to identify connections between ecocritical literature and her own lifestyle. Student B's answer can thus be considered as more appropriate than student A's because she pointed out issues which were relevant to her. In this respect, student B's response suggests her 'critical cultural awareness' as she uses an insight gained through reading the text to achieve a better understanding of ecological problems in her own context. She is aware of 'the real environmental problems' and associates the lessons with her daily activity, such as buying things from the grocery store. Moreover, her realisation of the impact of throwing plastic bags into the river could signify potential 'behavioural change' (Byram 2008: 187).

Student C's reflection seemed to be neutral in my view. He referred back to postcolonial ecocriticism in the lecture that made him want to know more about a non-governmental organization (NGO). He responded to the teacher's historical background derived from Dowie's 'Conservation Refugees' (2008) that discusses the tiger conservation project in the Sundarbans in the 1970s. According to this article, the campaign was funded by global organisations, such as the World Wildlife Fund, one of the international NGOs. In contrast with student B's hint at changing her lifestyle, student C said that:

> For me it [*The Hungry Tide*] doesn't change me that much. At least it draws my attention to environmental issues. For example, I go on google and search for the website of NGO that is working for the environment or working for the people. For me, it draws my attention to the issues but it's very hard to change my lifestyle. (Presentation, Minute 31:25)

Although student C accepted that his way of living would remain the same, his sense of enquiry into social activity, such as that of NGOs, suggests that the teacher's presentation of

the text had an impact on him. That is, the teacher's approach to social and political issues in the novel made him curious about global problems. Student C searched for more information from sources available to him such as the internet, because he wanted to learn more about the reasons why a social organisation that claims to work for the environment and for the people, has such a negative impact on refugees. At this point, both the postcolonial text and the teacher's use of critical essays could be said to be the causes of the student's awareness of the issues. In other words, this response demonstrates that education in 'intercultural citizenship' can help students to pay attention to the social and political aspects of a text and to place them in an international context.

Students' written assignments allowed them to take a closer look at the novel's themes. Students B and C chose to analyse *The Hungry Tide* while student A selected another text. Student B takes a comparative approach to *Ceremony* and *The Hungry Tide*. Her topic is 'Comparative Studies of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*: The Return to the Roots and Identity Discovery of "Tayo" and "Piya".' I discussed student B's approach to the texts according to Risager's 'transnational paradigm' in the previous chapter. I will therefore focus on student C's term paper in this chapter. Student C interprets the representation of geography and the main characters' change in their self-perception. The title of his essay is 'Encountering the Multiplicity of Truths: Towards a Deeper Understanding of Life in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*'. Student C initiates his argument by responding to critic Terri Tomsky's question cited in Murphy's work as follows:

> Terri Tomsky remarks that *The Hungry Tide* "engages the overwhelming question: how should we, as readers and writers, position ourselves in relation to today's geopolitical inequalities in spaces that are both conceptually and geographically distant?" (qtd. in Murphy 153). In this paper I, in a way, seek to response to Tomsky's challenging question. I argue in this paper that through their interactions with the local subaltern, the cosmopolitans, especially Kanai and Piya, undergo the greatest transformation. My analysis concludes that by acknowledging the

> multiplicities of truths and perspectives, these cosmopolitan elites can finally find "home" and arrive at the moment of ethical epiphany that leads to a better understanding of life. (Term paper: page 1-2)

Student C points out that Tomsky encourages 'readers and writers' from other cultures to pay attention to 'geopolitical inequalities' in *The Hungry Tide*. The critic's invitation to 'readers and writers' includes the student himself, who reads and writes about the text in this assignment. This implies that the student is aware of 'intercultural citizenship' in his analysis of foreign literature and cultures. His way of interpreting the text is based on a variety of values from different cultures. Student C focuses on the cosmopolitan characters' interactions with the natives. This reading of the text corresponds with the teacher's lesson on the conflicting values of Western and non-Western environmental thinking. He follows this teaching approach which suggests that the protagonists from the upper class learn from the indigenous people about their values and beliefs. The student acknowledges local cultures as factors that help the characters to discover new insights into the meaning of life.

Although student C takes the teacher's approach that deals with a critique of borders and the protagonists' learning experiences, he also analyses the novel in his own way. This student addresses other critics' observations, such as Tomsky's, and provides additional interpretations. He draws attention to the novel's theme of translation that was not emphasised in the lectures. In particular, he examines further than the teacher the scene in which the two protagonists, Kanai and Piya, experience the killing of the tiger in the indigenous community. The excerpt that he interprets is different from the one that the teacher chose. This is when Kanai explains to Piya that her view of animals is different from that of the natives. Kanai warns Piya that she romanticises the fisherman Fokir because of her love for nature:

> You shouldn't deceive yourself, Piya: there wasn't anything in common between you then and there isn't now. Nothing. He's [Fokir] a fisherman and you're a scientist. What you see as fauna he sees as food. (Ghosh 268)

In this passage, student C points out that Kanai is able to distinguish the Western from the indigenous view of nature. This distinction is important, according to the student, because it helps the two characters to realise the 'native version of environmentalism'. The indigenous view of the natural world is based on living and survival. Student C reasons that Kanai's knowledge derives from his uncle's diary and his background as a translator. The student argues:

> Through his skills of translation and interpretation, Kanai animates the hope to concretize and immortalize Nirmal's [his uncle's] revolutionary spirits. Moreover, it can be stated that Nirmal's journal is the mouthpiece of justice, giving voice to the subaltern who is politically, socially, and geographically outside the hegemonic power structure and who, to borrow Spivak's words, want "a piece of pie, and not being allowed". Kanai's translation helps to rectify the cultural and linguistic misreading that divides the elite and the impoverished. (Term paper: page 13)

This interpretation emphasises the fact that student C followed the teacher's lessons on borders, the struggle of the indigenous people and the transformation of the protagonists. He presents the issues from the perspective of the privileged characters who learn from the differences between Western science-oriented and non-Western ecological worldviews. Student C's 'critical cultural awareness' can be seen from this analysis of the characters' experiences and their transformations. He 'identifies and interprets' the clashes between the upper class and the indigenous values as sources of socio-political problems in postcolonial India. His analysis is based on the characters' process of learning to 'interact and negotiate' between different views. This student also realises that the privileged eventually adjust their ecological thinking from a focus on the limited natural environment to a realisation of the suffering of the natives.

Student C's conclusion in his term paper further demonstrates his 'critical cultural awareness'. He argues that the cosmopolitan characters attain a sense of home in the Sundarbans. He concludes that all their experiences in the tide country help the protagonists to comprehend the natives' ways of living and thinking. He argues:

> Home, thus, is not a place where we were born and bred, but its definition is extended into anywhere in which all kinds of variety can harmoniously coexist. The act of returning home also figuratively highlights the hope that there are always ways that competing concepts can converge to create a coexistent lifestyle befitting of all human beings and non-human subjects. Most importantly, the novel suggests that it is when one relinquishes one's attachment to certain beliefs and ideologies and recognizes and respects human diversity that one is able to feel "at home" and thus arrive at a more meaningful understanding of life. (Term paper: page 15)

This student's definition is significant because it represents his ability to come up with his own concept of home based on harmony and coexistence between different cultures, values and beliefs. The process in which student C generates this idea is that he 'evaluates critically' the characters' privileged cultures and learning experiences to understand the indigenous cultures. Moreover, the student's written statement indirectly suggests the concept of 'cosmopolitan citizenship' as described by Osler and Starkey (quoted in Byram 2008: 157). Osler and Starkey indicate that 'in the contemporary world, the singularity of identity is or should be no longer the norm, that people have multiple identities related to different layers of political entities' (Byram 2008: 157). Student C's definition points to a 'cosmopolitan' meaning of home because it is no longer tied to a specific birthplace or restricted to a single identity. In other words, he realises that home can be anywhere in the world where one recognises a sense of unity within a diversity of cultures. Student C exemplifies this concept through the characters' process of learning to 'relinquish' a sense of identity which had formerly been defined by Western 'ideologies' and integrating non-Western environmental thinking. This combination eventually enables the characters to feel at home and psychologically return to their Indian roots in the Sundarbans.

Students B and C probably wrote about the characters' search for 'home' and return to their 'roots' due to their family backgrounds in the country. In our interview, I learned that student B came from the North whereas student C came from the Northeast. Both received their previous education, including their Bachelor of Arts in English, from public

schools and universities close to their hometowns. Thereafter they moved to their current institution in the capital city to study for their postgraduate degrees. It seems that the two students' past experiences may have helped them to understand ecocritical texts better than student A who was born, studied and lived in Bangkok. In a previous chapter, I discussed student B's engagement with Native-American cultures as a result of her admiration for the ethnic cultures in her Northern Province. Student C's reason for choosing to analyse *The Hungry Tide* was because the novel is composed from a non-Western perspective. He shared with me in our interview that the story is different from others written by Western white writers, such as Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*. He said that the environmental issues that Thoreau presents are far from his own experiences. That is to say, since *The Hungry Tide* deals with the contrast in social and environmental justice experienced by the privileged in the city and the marginalised in the remote areas, student B's and student C's experiences in the country and the city make the text speak to them. Moreover, student B's and student C's focus on the characters' discovery of their new identities as comprising of a combination of Western and non-Western worldviews suggests the students' self-realisation of their living in-between the two different cultures which can co-exist.

Student C's essay reflects the novel's explicit themes and his individual identity, whereas the opinion that he shared in the class presentation demonstrates his personal engagement with ecocritical texts. I am therefore referring to his opinion following his presentation to better understand his 'intercultural citizenship'. Student C identified some insights that he obtained from reading the text. He said:

> I have to admit that by reading this book, Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*, and some novels from contemporary novels, it makes me know myself which kind of field or the field of study that I want to gear my education towards if I have the chance to study in the future. We see how people in the Third World country think about some issues that also raised by White writers, but they think differently, right? So, by emerging ourselves with the texts form different cultures, we see that, actually I tend to question myself, my concept or my ideas about things around me,

> whether it is real or it's just a social construct. It challenges me to question about my prejudice against other people.
>
> And what I got from this course, and I think it is very important is that when I look at person, I try to step back and think before I pass judgement on them. It makes me to realise the differences in many aspects of human being that, actually my thinking maybe not right. I try to question myself before I think – is it me that is right or that person. It's kind of shatter my thinking in binary opposition.
>
> And I don't know whether I can say this or not but I think this course has some sorts of cultivate my compassion. I don't want to say the word sympathy or compassion because it looks like so pride to talk about this idea. But, OK, I have some understandings towards other people more – more than before. Because we read texts from different cultures from people from different parts of the world, right? We see many, many beliefs and every different people have different beliefs. And that is what I think it is important about literature course – should be able to change us students in some way, should be able to make students to appreciate or to have some sorts of understanding towards other human beings. (Presentation, Hour 01:57:06)

I am quoting student C's opinion here at length because it demonstrates his quality of being an 'intercultural citizen'. Student C's response reflects his desire to create a change within himself that chimes with what Byram says about cognition, attitude, behaviour, self-perception, and relationships with others (Byram 2008: 187). The student's cognitive change can be seen from his realisation of culture as a 'social construct'. This recognition then enables him to undermine and to modify his 'attitude' of 'prejudice' against other people. His behavioural change pertains to being more careful when 'making judgement' of others. Moreover, his change in 'self-perception' is the process in which he 'shatters' his sense of the 'binary opposition' between himself and others. The change in 'relationships with others' is his 'sympathy' and 'compassion' for other people who may be in a less privileged position than him. Student C's response presents his new perception of other people rather than his attitude towards ecological issues. His class presentation made no reference to environmental problems and he thereby differs from students A and B. Student

C's approach delineates the characteristics of teaching ecocriticism in this context that not only deals with the relationship with the environment but also with people from different cultures.

In order to gain a better understanding of student C's response, it is useful to refer to Heise's term 'eco-cosmopolitanism' in environmental literary and cultural studies. The concept of 'eco-cosmopolitanism' offers a perception that views local, national and global ecological visions interlinked across different cultures (Heise 2008: 251). Heise advocates that awareness of the local environment is equally important to international and global perspectives. The interconnectedness between these different perspectives is independent of cultural, political and national borders (Heise 2008: 251). Heise contextualises this complex relationship in her literary and cultural analyses, however, the idea can also explain the understanding that student C gains from his reading of the postcolonial text. The student learns from *The Hungry Tide* about the contrasting views of nature across different cultures. He recognises the postcolonial critique of Western environmentalism, but, at the same time, he is aware that Western environmentalism helps him to understand environmental issue in his own country.

From student's C reaction, it is evident that having confronted with the competing views of nature as exemplified in *The Hungry Tide* makes him think about his own position as a cosmopolitan individual. That is, his awareness of the conflicts caused by different worldviews promotes the student's realisation that he needs to adjust his judgements towards people from different cultures. Through engaging with the postcolonial text, the student becomes aware of the differences between the postcolonial and the Western worlds, and that they have different cultures, values and beliefs. It is therefore necessary for him to think about these differences before making a judgment about either group. His intercultural position between the two worlds suggests a sense of eco-cosmopolitanism that combines the

local and the global level. The student makes a connection between the different worlds by an awareness of the necessity to take their contexts and cultures into equal consideration.

The teacher's responses at the end of class presentation suggested that she tended to agree with student B's and student C's opinions. At that time, the class had overrun, and the teacher was unable to observe and assess student A's criticality in this particular activity. She offered some comments on student B's decision not use a plastic bag, and on student C's new perception of others as follows:

> As you [student B] said, a gradual change might be a nice way to integrate the way of thinking, do not be too harsh to yourself. […] And as you [student C] said, I don't want to use the word sympathy, at least an ability to listen or a curiosity to understand or to really know something very deeply. That would be important to create tolerance, to study things. (Presentation, Hour 02:04:45)

In their class presentations, the three students' responses suggested different levels of 'critical cultural awareness' and of 'intercultural citizenship'. In relation to this particular novel, Student A seemed to be less able to develop his ability than student B and student C. In our interview, student A pointed out that he had learnt about social and ecological issues from his classmates' presentations, however, he did not provide any specific examples. Student A will probably demonstrate his understanding of this text in his final exam papers. This makes me aware of the limitations of my research as I could not exactly quantify the development of each student's insight into 'intercultural citizenship' from all the module's activities. My analysis of students' reflection can only identify their ways of thinking, rather than assessing the development of their critical thinking. Moreover, since I had the opportunity to interview all the students before I had developed a clear theoretical framework, my questions and discussions with them did not actually focus on 'intercultural citizenship'.

To conclude this section, my analysis of students' 'critical cultural awareness' and 'intercultural citizenship' suggests that their ways of analysing *The Hungry Tide* depend on according to their background experiences and personal interests. Student A's perception of people in the country originates from his limited knowledge of the countryside. He claims that the middle class in the city are able to protect nature better than other groups. Student B attempts to accommodate the lesson that she has obtained from the novel within her own lifestyle. She demonstrates her sense of ecological responsibility in her use of plastic bags. Student B's and student C's experiences of living in other regions have probably helped them to make better sense of issues of social and environmental justice in the text. Student C is able to identify the lessons according to the teacher's presentation of the text. He is interested in NGOs and follows the teacher's theme of conflicting values and negotiation between 'Western and native versions of environmentalism' in his term paper. His reflection in the class presentation suggests that he is likely to change his attitude, self-perception and relationships with others. Student C's deeper insight into the issues is possibly owing to his extensive reading which is evident from his written assignment.

My interpretation of the teacher's presentation of the *The Hungry Tide* and her students' responses points out that 'intercultural citizenship' is implicit in what they have learnt. The teacher used the postcolonial text and critical essays to provide examples of socio-political and environmental issues in Third World countries. Her interpretation was based on postcolonial theories, however, she also highlighted the similarities between problems in India and Thailand. Her teaching approach suggests that she is aware of the necessity of addressing social and environmental justice in her teaching of Thai students who are part of a privileged urban society. Class presentations and term papers served as exercises for students to develop their 'critical cultural awareness' and 'intercultural citizenship'. In particular, the presentations encouraged them to think about the connection between the text and themselves.

Chapter 7

Teaching Environmental Literature in Other Contexts

Before I offer a conclusion to my analysis of the teaching and learning of environmental literature in Thai higher education, I thought it would be useful to provide a wider picture of teaching and learning literary texts about nature in Thai higher education. I will give an overview of current teaching and learning practices in diverse educational contexts. The information is taken from my individual interviews with eight Thai teachers about their professional experiences of teaching literary texts that involve the theme of nature. These teachers are from various universities across different parts of Thailand: the centre, the north and the north-east. Their modules include English and American Literature, General Education and Thai Literature. The interview topics cover teaching materials and techniques, students' socio-cultural backgrounds, university locations, curricula, as well as problems and suggestions. I will include students' opinions from some of the universities that I visited during my fieldwork. I hope that some of the examples of teaching materials and approaches may be useful for teachers who are interested in teaching environmental literature in Thailand and elsewhere. My overview of teaching and learning in diverse contexts may suggest possible topics for future research.

Environmental Literature

This undergraduate module is part of the English curriculum in the Faculty of Arts at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. The course is taught by the same teacher who taught the texts in my analysis chapters, but it was not offered during the semester when I collected my data. I interviewed the teacher in my pilot study before I observed her postgraduate classroom during my main fieldwork. The teacher shared with me in our pilot interview that for the work with her undergraduate students she selects literary texts that

offer less complicated issues than at postgraduate level. Some examples of her selection of teaching materials for this level include Daniel Quinn's *Ishmael: An Adventure of Mind and Spirit* (1992), Susanne Antonetta's *Body Toxic: An Environmental Memoir* (2001), Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Dreams* (1990), Aldo Leopold's excerpt from *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (1949), Jack London's 'To Build a Fire' (1908), Denise Levertov's 'Come into Animal Presence' (1961), Stanley Kunitz's 'The Snakes of September' (1985) and Donella Meadows's 'Living Lightly and Inconsistently on the Land' (1991).

While the teacher uses a text-based approach at postgraduate level, she applies a student-centred approach at undergraduate level. She integrates the activities that are related to the themes of literary texts such as *Ishmael* and *Animal Dreams* that students read in the class. For instance, she uses role-play activities that require each student to speak for a particular species. Students represent their chosen animals, plants or other organisms that are under threat from human activities or even face extinction. Students are asked to prepare their speech on behalf of the animals or plants, and deliver the speech in front of the class at the end of the semester. The teacher pointed out that this activity usually receives students' good attention and students are keen to do their research. Students search for information to support their argument for the species, such as panda, tiger, lion, sea fish, dugong and passenger pigeon. They discover for themselves the causes of extinction, ecological information, biological limitations and the reason why it is difficult for the species to survive. The teacher also explained that this activity makes students engage with the position of the natural world.

In this module, the teacher's use of supplementary documentary texts is another teaching method that aims to enhance students' ecological awareness. In our pilot interview, she explained that the idea of interrelatedness that students learn from *Body Toxic* is enhanced by the article from *National Geographic* entitled 'The Secret Ingredients of

Everything' (2011). This article is about how the production of cell phones or electronic gadgets depends on rare elements found in Africa. The teacher uses this article to make students realise that the mining of the rare material causes the massive depletion of natural resources. The teacher makes connections between the contamination issues in *Body Toxic,* mining in the *National Geographic* article and the commodities that students use in their everyday lives. According to her, young people living in the cities get to know the new versions of electronic gadgets all the time. When they have money, they are able to purchase whatever they want. She hopes that these texts make students think more critically about the impact of their lives on the natural environment.

My pilot interview with the two undergraduate students studying *Environmental Literature* suggests the possibility of examining the intercultural dimensions at work in their readings of the texts. Students explained the reason for their selection of this elective module. One student shared with me that she chose the course because she had read a Thai novel that criticised the environmental preservation trend. According to the student, the novel, the name of which she did not specify, presents how people in the present generation tend to love nature, but they hate each other. The student wanted to find out whether this criticism was correct or not, and thus she took the course. I did not ask her about her findings after taking the module, however, this student's motivation seems to suggest her intercultural learning though Thai and foreign literary texts. Moreover, the role-play activity can reflect intercultural learning as suggested by a story from the perspective of an animal. One student explained how she prepared her speech on behalf of fireflies. She talked about fireflies based on her personal experience of observing them at a hotel in a suburb. During her visit, she felt guilty about disturbing fireflies because it seemed to her that tourists made a lot of noise. In her speech, the student explained the nature and life-cycle of fireflies and how electricity and noise pollution at night negatively affect their reproduction. She shared with me that imagining the insects' minds has made her aware of how human activities can be harmful for animals.

The teacher and students in the *Environmental Literature* module pointed out some problems and made some suggestions regarding teaching and learning in my pilot interviews. For instance, the teacher observed that arts students are more interested in queer or film studies than in the environment. This factor influences students' selection of elective modules. A lot of arts students, according to the teacher, think that environmental issues belong to the sciences. They do not understand the relationship between literature and the environment, and feel that nature themes are boring. The teacher therefore perceives the necessity of integrating environmental education into the curricula at all levels of education. In her view, continuity of environmental education will make students become more receptive to the issues when they study literature at higher education level. From the students' point of view, there are some problems with their learning experiences. For instance, one student revealed that she had limited background knowledge about the environment and that it was quite new for her. Another student thought that the module was about environmental activism, but she then found out that it deals with marginalised people, animals and living together in peace. The student further pointed out that literature is like a bitter pill for Thai students, but she herself enjoys reading.

Romantic Poetry

This undergraduate module is also part of the English curriculum in the Faculty of Arts at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. I interviewed the teacher during my main fieldwork. The teacher uses teaching materials like John Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale' and Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'To a Skylark'. She explained that Romantic poetry helps students to identify views of nature according to the socio-political context in Britain in the early 19th century rather than environmental destruction. The teacher structures the module based on the history of the Romantic Movement: gothic, romantic hero, anti-hero, industrial revolution and political revolution. The teacher has more than thirty years of experience in

teaching Romantic poetry. She pointed out that although her selection of texts has remained the same throughout her teaching career, it is important for her to adjust and adapt teaching approaches to suit social contexts in the present time. For instance, Romantic poetry can help students to take an anthropocentric view of nature in contrast to ecocentric ways of thinking based on the modern environmental movement. The teacher advocated the representations of nature from all perspectives which can contribute to the development of students' critical skills. Classical and canonical texts can enhance students' understanding of contemporary texts produced by African, Native-American and post-colonial writers. She elucidated that while students in the USA and Britain read literature from a young age, Thai students only study English literature at university. The teacher pointed out that canonical texts provide Thai students with background knowledge that enables them to understand the reasons for gender, race and class struggles in Western society.

Additionally, the teacher shared with me the implications of teaching materials in different teaching and learning contexts. She pointed out that teaching materials/approaches in urban universities may emphasise aesthetic elements and issues represented in the texts. Universities outside Bangkok, she observed, are within local cultures that seem to share a worldview with ethnic groups like Native-Americans. In her opinion, students' continuing employability after graduation is another reason for having a selection of teaching materials/approaches. The teacher pointed out that most of her students need to acquire a high level of language proficiency and a sufficient literary background in order to continue their higher education. In this respect, it is important for students to learn about not only the relevant aspects of their daily lives but also global issues. This includes aesthetic literary elements which are at the core of Western cultures.

Literature and Environment

This module is one of the general education elective courses offered by the Faculty of Arts for the undergraduate students of all faculties at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. The teacher belongs to the Department of Comparative Literature and I interviewed her during my main fieldwork. The aim of this module is to create students' environmental awareness, and to make them explore ecological issues across different contexts and cultures. The teacher pointed out that it is important for her to select a variety of teaching materials and teaching approaches because her students have very diverse background knowledge. She uses teaching materials from a variety of sources, both fiction and non-fiction. Some examples of her choices of literary texts are Prayudh Payutto's *Thai People and the Forest* (1993), a Thai translation of American Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854), and other Thai translations of Japanese Haiku. Her selection of non-fiction includes news reports about local and global ecological issues, environmental law and reports about the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster in Japan in 2011. Other learning materials the teacher uses include the science fiction film *Avatar* (2009), Al Gore's documentary film *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) and Robert Kenner's *Food, Inc.* (2008). Some examples of topics include food industrial processes and agribusiness. The discussion extends to the work of environmental conservation foundations like WWF, Ozone and the Thai forest preservation organisation Seub Nakhasathien.

The teacher pointed out that she includes an excursion to the national forest in this general education module to make her students learn from their direct experiences. She arranges a fieldtrip for students to visit rural areas in other provinces. Her selection of fieldtrip is based on contemporary ecological issues such as the construction of power plants or dams in the remote provinces. The teacher suggested that it is helpful for students to examine current debates in their country in relation to those in other countries. Her students are encouraged to explore topics such as conflicts over the siting of a reservoir between

Thailand and neighbouring countries from multi-dimensional perspectives. According to the teacher, because students are from various faculties that include Arts, Social Sciences, Political Sciences, Engineering, Law and Accounting, they approach the issues differently. For example, Engineering students pay attention to the construction of the dam and its geographical location while Political Sciences students raise human rights issues. She admitted that the module cannot change the problems, but she expected that students would be encouraged to question what is going on in their society.

Issues in Contemporary Literature

This undergraduate elective module is part of the English curriculum in the Faculty of Humanities at Chiang Mai University in the northern part of Thailand. I observed the class during my main study and interviewed the teacher at the end of the semester. The course is organised into four themes: 1) living between worlds, 2) terrorism, wars and their impacts, 3) science and technology, and 4) nature writing and eco-fiction. In the last theme, examples of the teacher's selection of literary texts are James Lovelock's 'The Gaia Hypothesis' (1979), Susan Griffin's 'Prologue' (1978), Opal Whiteley's 'The Joy-Song of Nature' (1986), Linda Hogan's 'Walking' (1990), Sarah Jewett's 'A White Heron' (1886), and Pam Houston's 'A Blizzard Under Blue Sky' (1992). The teacher's introduction of these texts dealt with current issues about global warming and climate change. She began with the representation of the earth from a scientist's perspective before she moved on to female characters' stories about their relationship with the natural world. Her introduction drew students' attention to the connection between local and global problems, the threat of environmental destruction and humanities. For example, the teacher explained 'The Gaia Hypothesis' and used Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) from YouTube to give factual and scientific information. Then, she related the issues from these sources to problems from the students' own contexts, such as drought, the use of DDT and smoke pollution in Chiang Mai.

Although the teacher began her class with a lot of problems, the representations of nature in her choices of literary texts offer positive stories about the relationship between female characters and the natural world. In my interview with the teacher she pointed out that she prefers texts that contain hopeful messages. The teacher observed that her students are well aware of the problems, but the link between literature and nature is a new topic for them. Moreover, her use of eco-fiction and poetry arises from her personal interest and her own teaching of ecotourism to diplomats. My observation is that the teacher's research interest in feminism may contribute to her recent teaching approach to ecofeminist literary texts. Additionally, because Chiang Mai University is situated in a rural environment, her chosen teaching technique is nature writing. The students were assigned to visit places surrounded by the natural environment. Thereafter, they reflected their thoughts and feelings about the visit in their writing. The teacher pointed out that this activity enables them to learn about nature from their first-hand experiences.

The students confirmed what the teacher thought about their background knowledge. They favour literary texts that offer positive stories because they are confronted with a lot of ecological problems in their daily lives, such as frequent news reports about natural disasters and the direct impact of climate change in their hometowns. Texts that offer a healing tone, they explained, can calm their minds and suggest some solutions. Other students shared with me their comparative responses between literary study and other subjects. For instance, one student took International Relationships as her minor and found that issues in the texts helped her to understand more about people in other cultures. Another student took a Biology module as an elective general education course and found that there was a different approach to nature in science and literature. The student observed that while science uses warnings about the impact of environmental destruction, literary texts convey the message through stories and empathy with other beings.

Views of Modern Society

This undergraduate elective module is also part of the English curriculum in the Faculty of Humanities at Chiang Mai University. I interviewed the teacher during my main study. The module aims to develop students' understanding of modernity in the globalised world in relation to Thai society and culture. It comprises the following themes: 1) our place in the universe, 2) moral and spiritual crises in modern society, 3) the cultural revolution of the sixties, and 4) ecological views: a new paradigm. The teacher designed this course due to the changes in Thai society and culture as a result of the influence of foreign cultures. She chooses teaching materials such as Chief Seattle's 'Interconnectedness' (1854) in order to represent Native-American ecological thinking which is similar to the traditional Thai worldview. The teacher also uses excerpts from Fritjof Capra's *Paradigm Shift* (1996) to represent the 21st century shift from a Western to an Eastern paradigm of thought. She shared with me in our interview that she hopes to encourage her students who belong to the younger generation to try to understand some causes of the issues that surround them.

The teacher pointed out in our interview that the nature theme can be integrated into various literature courses in the English curriculum, as both the *Issues in Contemporary Literature* and *Views of Modern Society* modules in this educational context show. In her view, it is important that the general education programme familiarises students with ecological issues through reading literary texts. Some examples of the general education modules that the Faculty of Humanities arrange for the first year humanities students are *Reading and Literary World* and *Localism and Globalisation.* The teacher is one of the staff members who designs and teaches these modules. She uses teaching materials from various sources, for example, contemporary Thai short stories about nature such as *The Zoo* by Suwanni Sukhontha. According to the teacher, the general education modules serve to give junior students background knowledge of their local cultures before they study major subjects about foreign languages and cultures in the ensuing years. The teacher suggested

that students are thus likely to understand foreign cultures based on their own cultural background.

Mythological and Biblical Background to Literature

This undergraduate module is part of the English curriculum in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Payap University in Chiang Mai in the northern part of Thailand. The teacher pointed out that she includes the nature theme in this module, and encourages her students to make links between mythological and biblical stories and popular culture, such as novels and films. Some examples of her teaching materials are taken from the Roman Myth: 'Baucis and Philemon' and 'Noah and the Great Flood' in The Old Testament. The teacher's presentation of the texts is based on how myths and biblical stories are used to explain natural phenomena and to warn people to respect nature. Her lesson focuses on God's use of a great flood to evaporate evils and sins. My observation is that the teaching approach may be based on the university's missionary organisation. Payap University was founded by the Church of Christ in Thailand and is a member of the Association of Christian Universities and Colleges in Asia. This university is the only private institution in which I collected my data while all the others are public universities.

The teacher explained that she teaches various literature modules and always includes teaching materials that include a nature theme in her courses. For example, in the *Selected Topic* (Film Analysis) module, she selects Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* (2001) and Terrence Malick's film *The Tree of Life* (2011) to present topics about nature based on the beliefs in God and in nature. The teacher pointed out that students are encouraged to interpret films from various perspectives, but her emphasis is on the relationship between God, characters and the natural world. Other examples of teaching materials that she usually integrates into her literature modules are Ursula K. Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968) and *The Farthest Shore* (1972). Her teaching approach is based on bildungsroman and the

development of the protagonist's relationship with the natural world. The teacher observed that it is important for her to select teaching materials that are on trend to gain students' attention. She found that the use of literary texts enhanced by films, video clips, music and photographs that contain ecological issues can make students interested in the topic.

Independent Study in Literature

This undergraduate module is part of the English curriculum in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Mahasarakarm University in the north-eastern part of Thailand. The teacher explained that the module is designed to help students learn folktales from around the world and storytelling activities. Some examples of the teaching materials include Margaret Read MacDonald's *Cerebrate The World: Twenty Multicultural Folktales* (1994) and *Earth Care: World Folktales to Talk About* (1999), Pamela Cooper and Rives Collins's *Look What Happened to Frog: Storytelling in Education* (1992), *Phadaeng Nang Ai: A Translation Of A Thai-Isan Folk Epic In Verse* (1990) and *Phya Khankhaak: A Translation Of An Isan Fertility Myth In Verse* (1996) translated from Thai into English and edited by Wajuppa Tossa. The teacher chooses folktales from different cultures in order to develop students' environmental awareness. She explained that because most folktales are concerned with animal stories and rural cultures, these tales can enhance students' ecological thinking. The teacher also encourages them to learn Thai-Isan tales because the stories belong to the students' local cultures within the north-east of the country.

The teacher integrates storytelling in this module to foster students' understanding of foreign cultures in relation to their own cultures. Following her explanation of folktales in the class, students are assigned to collect tales, stories and songs from the elderly or relatives in their local communities. Students are requested to conduct interviews, record, select, analyse and adapt the collected tales to make their own versions. Thereafter, they perform in primary or secondary schools located in their own communities. The teacher

pointed out that this active learning activity can help to preserve local cultures, values and beliefs based on people's kinship with the natural world. She found that reinterpreting the tales can make students recognise the similarity between the folktales that they study in class and their rural cultures. Moreover, writing and translating the local tales into the English language can help students learn how to communicate their stories and cultures to the wider world in future.

Thai Literary Criticism

This undergraduate module belongs to the Thai curriculum in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Mahasarakarm University in the north-eastern part of Thailand. The course does not deal with foreign literary texts, but I interviewed the teacher because of his book *Ecocriticism in Thai Literature* (2013), the earliest secondary source in the field. The teacher pointed out that he uses diverse literary texts including ones that contain a nature theme in this module. Thai classical texts, such as the epic poem Sunthorn Phu's *Phra Aphai Mani* from the Rattanakosin period in the 18th century, serve as an example of literary texts that represent nature based on the male-dominated paradigm of thought. His use of a contemporary Thai novel like Malai Chupinit's *Tung Maharaj* (1964) is to help students understand issues of environmental protection by the local community. The teacher teaches various Thai literature modules and his selection of environmental texts depends on whether the students are at undergraduate or postgraduate level.

The teacher observed that because students are within a rural environment, they are sometimes unaware of ecological issues. Problem causes and solutions suggested in literary texts can make the issues explicit to them, and can help students understand their own society and culture. The teacher explained that it is important for him to encourage students to link the aspects studied in the texts to their own local environment. Following the *Thai Literary Criticism* module, students take the teacher's *Documentary Writing* course in their

senior year. The teacher assigns them to look for ecological problems in their own context as subject matters for documentary writing. This module is designed as fieldwork where students seek environmental issues in their local community. The teacher shared with me that his students come up with various topics and debates, such as deforestation, conflicts between NGOs and community forests, and shrimp farming that causes water pollution. According to the teacher, students' insights into these problems contribute to the development of their socio-political and environmental awareness.

This outline of literature modules shows that there is a connection between the teaching materials and approaches, students' socio-cultural backgrounds and environmental issues based on the different geographical locations of Thai universities. Teachers in the urban setting of central Bangkok take socio-political and environmental issues and students' consumerist habits into consideration. Teachers in more rural settings in the north and north-east select stories about positive relationships with nature and folktales for students who live in their local cultures. This variety suggests a correlation between the teachers' selection of literary texts, teaching techniques and students' backgrounds. The teachers' and students' perspectives contribute to my analysis of the teaching and learning of the three texts in my main study. In particular, the distinction between local and urban Thai cultures makes their choices of teaching materials and learning approaches different. The teachers' interviews also reveal that they are aware of Thai students' linguistic background when dealing with environment texts in the foreign language classroom. The following conclusion will therefore discuss difficulties in the module I observed and limitations of intercultural theories. I will also identify the relationship between the intercultural theories I relied on and the data I collected.

Conclusion

My three analysis chapters suggest the value of intercultural approaches to teaching and learning ecocritical texts in the English curriculum at a Thai university. Even though the teacher has not herself theorised the intercultural nature of her approach, the intercultural features are implicit in her explanations of the texts. Her interpretations are based on how the representation of socio-political and ecological issues in the texts relate to the Thai context. Her endeavour to make her students think about the problems seems to correspond with what Buell suggests as using 'environmental imagination' as a long-term solution to solve environmental crises. Buell calls for 'better ways of imagining nature and humanity's relation to it' (1995: 2) and for a careful consideration of the relationship with the environment. The teacher puts this into practice by engaging her students who belong to a privileged social group with the stories of characters who are victims of socio-political and environmental injustice. She encourages her students to use their imagination beyond their own experience in the urban city to think about the more remote environments in the countryside: in both the texts and in Thailand. In this respect, the teacher does not promote dominant cultures or the interests of privileged social groups, but foregrounds the struggle between genders, races and classes inside as well as outside the texts.

My analysis chapters also indicate that the intercultural theories of foreign language education are useful for interpreting the teacher's and students' responses to ecocritical texts at a Thai university. My analysis is underpinned by literary criticism, cultural analysis and a classroom case study. The integration of these research methodologies and data collection methods contributes to an insight into the intercultural dimensions of teaching and learning foreign language texts in the Thai higher education context. I have tried to demonstrate that, first, together ecocriticism and cultural analysis can help us to understand the characteristics of selected teaching materials produced by women, ethnic minorities and postcolonial writers. Second, the intercultural theories can help us to develop an understanding of the

teaching approaches that incorporate the history, geography and culture of marginalised groups. The concept of intercultural learning also provides us with a useful method for interpreting students' engagement with the texts. Moreover, intercultural theories combined with textual criticism can enhance our understanding of socio-political and environmental problems across different cultures: in the text and in the context of Thailand. It can thus be concluded that the analysis of the intercultural dimensions of teaching and learning can highlight contemporary Thai values and beliefs about nature in association with foreign cultures. My study points out that environmental problems are closely related to perceptions of nature, ways of thinking, and interactions with nature and with other people. Our understanding of the problems requires an insight into society, cultures, economics, politics and education at both a local and a global level.

To summarise my answer to research question 1) 'How is nature represented in ecocritical literary texts in the English curriculum at a Thai university?, the representation of nature in *Refuge*, *Ceremony* and *The Hungry Tide* deals with the conflicting views of nature held by the privileged and the marginalised groups. These literary texts present socio-political and ecological issues arising in different cultures, through values, beliefs and the relationship with the natural environment. In *Refuge*, the portrayal of nature as female is used to protest against the American government's nuclear bomb testing at the Nevada Test Site. The narrator makes a connection between environmental contamination and breast cancer to suggest a profound similarity between nature and women who are victims of the patriarchal systems of ruling. The depiction of nature as an unpredictable and challenging woman in *Refuge* goes against the male-dominated perception of the natural world as a passive, submissive and obedient female.

In *Ceremony*, the representation of Native-American cultures, values and beliefs based on kinship with nature is used to critique the white colonisers' view of nature as property. The narrator presents the threat to Native-American cultural loss as a consequence

of the assimilation of indigenous people to white culture and the pressure to adapt traditional cultures to suit the modern world. The reinterpretation of Native-American myth in *Ceremony* suggests an attempt to mediate and reconcile the conflicts between white people and Native-American people. *The Hungry Tide* presents the clashes between modern Western environmental conservation and indigenous ways of living in postcolonial India. While the Indian government regards the wilderness as a habitat only for wildlife, the forest is a sacred place for the indigenous people who live there. The conflicting views bring about displacement and the struggle of indigenous groups to settle on the island. The novel focuses on the negotiation of the conflicts through the co-operation between ecological conservation and the indigenous way of living.

To conclude my answer to research question 2) 'What features make these texts suitable or challenging for intercultural teaching and learning?, the characteristics that make the three texts suitable for intercultural teaching and learning pertain to the representations of contemporary socio-political and environmental issues in these texts. They not only reflect problems but also provide some suggestions to deal with the crises. More importantly, the problem causes and their long-term solutions offered by the texts can be used to understand current issues in Thailand. The texts' representation of struggle of the marginalised, women, ethnic minorities and other underprivileged groups in Third World countries, enables the teacher to discuss similar situations in the context of Thailand. The stories presented from the perspective of the marginalised make these texts suitable for the teacher to make her students aware of their privileged social position. In this regard, the stories allow the teacher to draw students' attention to the link between socio-political and environmental problems as well as to the connection between the city and the country. Moreover, students can be made aware of similarities in the cultural representations of nature in the texts they are studying and in the context of Thailand. This, in turn, makes the texts suitable for intercultural teaching and learning.

To summarise my answer to research question 2.a) Why and how does the teacher present these literary texts in the classroom?, in my analysis of the teacher's responses to *Refuge*, I found that her presentation of the text reflects Kramsch's concept of 'third place' in the following three respects. First, the teacher compares the problems of ecological contamination in remote areas in the US and in Thailand. She emphasises the consequences of nuclear fallout on people's health to identify similar impacts of industrialisation in Thailand. Second, the teacher's explanation of ecofeminism and autobiography indicates value and identity issues across different cultures. The symbolic representation of nature as a mother is mediated between her interpretation of the image of nature as female in *Refuge* and in the Thai literary texts. Third, her concern about the limitations of ecofeminist thinking suggests that she offers students themselves their 'third place'. The teacher does not force students to adopt her feminist literary criticism but encourages them to think about gender issues for themselves.

My discussion of the teacher's responses to *Ceremony* highlights the fact that her teaching approach is based on the 'transnational paradigm'. This concept deals with the teaching of foreign-language texts with an emphasis on the multiplicity of cultures. The teacher's explanation aims at developing students' understanding of the complexity of American society and culture. She highlights the problems of Native-Americans and the concern about their cultural loss as a result of the assimilation of the white majority and of the new generation of Native-Americans who are unable to understand their own roots. The teacher's interpretation of Native-American myth and traditional values and beliefs highlights an intertextual relationship with Thai myths, values and beliefs in kinship with the natural world. The teacher also makes students aware of the need to ancient stories and tradition to be adjusted to make them relevant for the younger generations both among Native-Americans and Thai students. This approach to the text is designed to help Thai students make sense of the indigenous cultures in *Ceremony* and at the same time their own society and culture.

My investigation of the teacher's responses to *The Hungry Tide* suggests that her teaching approach is based on the concept of 'intercultural citizenship'. Her explanation addresses socio-political and ecological issues across different contexts and cultures, and suggestions to resolve the conflicts. The teacher makes a comparison between the struggle of indigenous people against the governments' nature conservation projects in India and in Thailand, which causes displacement. Her emphasis on the multiple identities of people in different social groups; the scientist and the indigenous characters, aims to make students understand the diversity of cultures. She suggests a co-operation between Western environmental preservation and non-Western ways of living. In her explanation she focuses on the conflict between the young scientist's and the indigenous people's views of nature and points out the possibility that they can learn from each other. Her lessons demonstrate the development of the privileged characters' environmental thinking that has an impact on both the natural environment and local people.

To conclude my answer to research question 2.b) How do the students respond to the texts and to the teacher's explanation?, my analysis of the students' engagement with the texts suggests that their responses are based on the teacher's interpretation, their socio-cultural background and individual interests. My investigation of students' 'third place' in their reading of *Refuge* suggests that they possibly interpret the text based on their gender identity and previous experience. The male students' omission of the ecofeminist struggle and critiques of feminism from their work suggests that gender can probably influence ways of thinking about and analysing texts. However, the student's exclusion of gender issues from his term paper might be because he simply aims to avoid repeating the teacher's way of interpretation. Another student's interest in 'toxic discourse' reflects her attempt to make the issues she has learned from *Refuge* relate to her own environment. My discussion of students' responses to *Ceremony* points out that their interpretations are shaped by their socio-cultural backgrounds. Students who have lived only in the city seem to understand the issue of ethnicity less than students who have experience of living in the countryside.

Native-American cultures, values and beliefs represented in the text make all students aware of their local environment while their background knowledge either helps or makes their understanding of the text different.

My interpretation of the students' responses to *The Hungry Tide* points out that their ways of thinking are influenced by their background experiences and personal interests. It seems to be difficult for the students who live in the city to imagine the lives of the ethnic minorities in the remote regions. The students' background experiences of the rural environment can enhance their understanding of socio-political and environmental injustice. My analysis of the students' intercultural learning pays attention to their responses in the classes and in term papers. Of course, it is hard for me to judge whether and how students' ecological thinking was enhanced by this module and whether it increased their ability to think about the environment in a more reflective way. The fact that one of the students now works for the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations in Bangkok may suggest that the module had the effect the teacher derived it to her. The other students teach English at Thai universities. One can only hope that they utilise the intercultural and ecological awareness they themselves gained in these teaching practices.

Difficulties in Classroom and Limitations of Intercultural Theories

As I hope to have demonstrated, the concepts of 'third place,' 'transnational paradigm' and 'intercultural citizenship' are helpful tools to understand the intercultural dimension of teaching and learning ecocritical texts. However, my observation also suggests that the Thai teacher and her students were confronted with some difficulties. One of them is the fact that the texts are not written in the students' native language. The theories which I have drawn on do not sufficiently consider the differences between teaching texts in students' first and their second language. My interviews with the teacher and her students made me realise that language difficulty is a crucial factor to bear in mind when

teaching ecocritical texts. Because Thai students study English as a foreign language, they need to first overcome the language barrier in order to comprehend the text sufficiently to follow its analysis. These linguistic issues were evident in my interview with them. The students informed me that language was sometimes a problem for them. One student pointed out this issue in the following way:

> It usually takes me quite a long time to understand English literary texts. It is even more difficult for me to make sense of English literary criticism that the teacher gave us along with primary texts. For example, although *Refuge* was not very difficult for me to read, I found that Buell's 'Toxic Discourse' is very complicated. This article contains a lot of jargons, difficult vocabularies and highly critical view of toxicity. Buell refers to many literary and secondary sources that I haven't read before. The teacher tried to explain the article for us, but when I wanted to refer to Buell's work in my writing, I was afraid that I would oversimplify his ideas. (Student's interview, my translation, Hour 01:26)

This opinion reveals that both the English language and literary criticism pose a challenge for Thai students. The teacher and her students use English as a medium of teaching and learning in this module, and they all speak standard Thai outside the class. However, my interview with the students reveals that some of them are bilingual in a different respect: student B who comes from the North speaks her local Lanna dialect in her hometown, and student C who is from the Northeast uses his local Isan dialect in his hometown. These dialects are the two students' first languages at home. They started to learn standard Thai at the age of five at schools, and then began to study English at the age of ten. The variety of languages the students speak highlights the multiple linguistic textures across different parts of Thailand. The students' native languages differ from both the standard Thai language and English. They need to make a considerable effort and invest time to deal with both the English language and complexity of content of the texts they study. In our interview, however, the students did not mention any relationship between their local dialects, their English language learning, and their approaches to the texts.

The Thai teacher is aware of her students' linguistic background and their different English language abilities. Thai educational policy encourages English language teachers and students to use English in classroom. The policy is guided by the use of English as a Lingual Franca. Thai students learn English as a foreign language mostly with Thai teachers of English. They use standard Thai as a common language, but some students also speak local dialects with classmates who are from the same background. In the module I observed, the Thai teacher pointed out to me her concern about her students' level of English. She is aware that good English is crucial if her students are to develop ecocritical thinking skills. She shared with me in our pilot interview that

> You have got to think about a variety of students in terms of their language ability, their critical ability and also their personality as well. How you could make the students express themselves. How you could create a safe environment for them to speak, to express their ideas. Because here again they've got to use the English as a language discussion, some students are very fluent, they would be more comfortable expressing their ideas. But there are numbers of students in class who are struggling themselves in expressing themselves and they will feel somewhat intimidated most of the time by those who are fluent in English. So there are numbers of those factors you have got to take them into consideration when you are teaching English as a foreign language trying to incorporate this whole issue of environmental literature and ecocritical thinking. (Pilot Interview: Hour 02:09:36)

The teacher's opinion emphasises that students' language ability is fundamental to the teaching and learning of ecocritical texts in the foreign language classroom. This is due to the fact that it is prerequisite to students' reading comprehension, class discussion and ecocritical thinking. It is clear that students who have high language competency are likely to understand the texts better than those who have lower language ability. The greater fluency and ability to participate in the class of some students can also have a negative impact on those whose linguistic competence is less developed. This observation highlights that the intercultural dimensions of teaching ecocritical texts in the Thai context not only depend on the cultural negotiation of meanings first, and promote students' ability to gain

comprehension of the text's meaning. In the next section I will therefore discuss some differences between the intercultural theories I used and the data I collected.

Relationship between Intercultural Theories and my Data

My analysis chapters exemplify the compatibility between the intercultural theories and the teaching practices. This section summarises the conflicting points between them, and suggests possibilities to adapt the theories. The Thai teacher's use of English does not correspond with the 'transnational paradigm' in teaching foreign language. The concept advocates foreign language teacher's use of students' first language to help them understand lessons. 'Transnational paradigm' aims to promote a variety of languages including both the students' first and the target languages. While foreign language teachers primarily use the target language in classroom, they occasionally use the students' first language in order to aid students' understanding of the complexity of cultures (Risager 2007: 194). As I have pointed out in the previous section, the Thai teacher is aware of her students' different language abilities, but she still exclusively uses English as a medium of instruction. On the one hand, I understand that the Thai teacher uses English in delivering the lessons, because teaching English literature in the Thai language can have the effect of limiting students' language learning, in terms of enhancing vocabulary and grammar. As the module belongs to the advanced level of education in the MA programme in English, students can be expected to be taught in the target language. On the other hand, by conducting her tuition exclusively in English, she seems to have rejected this important characteristic of the 'transnational paradigm' in foreign language teaching. Without offering explanations in Thai, she might miss the opportunity to create a better understanding of the texts for her students. In this respect, her teaching approach does not exactly follow the 'transnational paradigm' in foreign language education.

The Thai teacher's use of English in teaching ecocritical texts corresponds more with the concept of 'English-Medium Instruction (EMI)' than 'transnational paradigm'. According to Jennifer Jenkins, EMI is content teaching by either native or non-native English speaker teachers who use English as a medium of instruction (2015: 159). EMI aims at enhancing students' comprehension of the subject rather than developing students' basic English skills; listening, speaking, reading or writing. The EMI classroom requires that students have sufficient English language abilities to enable them to achieve module requirements (Jenkins 2015: 159). In the class I observed, the Thai teacher uses English as a medium of her instruction. She draws her students' attention to various interpretations of the texts rather than focusing on improving students' basic English skills. The Thai teacher simply expects that her students already possess sufficient English language abilities which allow them to understand and discuss the English language texts.

According to researches into teaching and learning English in European Higher Education (Slobodanka Dimova et al. 2015), EMI classroom is challenging to teachers and students who are not native speakers of English. John Airey reveals that the class participation of students in EMI classroom in Sweden is very low (2015: 157). He found that students in the EMI classroom ask and answer fewer questions in class discussions than in foreign language classrooms where teachers occasionally use students' first language. Some students in EMI classrooms also have difficulties with following the lectures (Airey 2015: 157). Erkan Arkin and Necdet Osam identify the same problems in EMI classroom in Turkey where the students are struggling with catching up and understanding the lectures (2015: 177). Arkin and Osam point out that the use of English in content teaching can only deal with surface meaning of the lessons, and only develop the students' limited comprehension (2015: 177). The problems found in Sweden and Turkey are both different and similar to the situation in the ecocriticism module that I observed. The Thai teacher's lessons deal with complex issues, and the students' participation is low.

In my class observation, the Thai teacher had problems with encouraging the students to answer her questions. For example, before she gave the third lecture on *The Hungry Tide* she asked questions as the quote below but none of the students replied. The teacher ended up giving the response herself:

> I would like you to think about the issue of the local sense of environmentalism. We are talking about how the character of Fokir has the sense of what Westerners might call environmentalism. There are versions of environmentalism that may not be presented in the similar discourse as in Western environmentalism. How would you characterise Fokir's notion of environmentalism?
>
> [*The teacher waited for answer for 15 seconds, but her students remained silent*]
>
> So, you see, so far we are talking about a lot of environmental, ecological senses, or ethical senses of environmental issues. We are talking about these senses in terms of Western perspective. One thing that I think that the novel is trying to point out is that actually the Western environmental discourse is not an adequate way of enhancing people's harmonious existence with the natural world. We get to see in Fokir and other fishermen in the tide country. They have their own set of belief, their own wisdom, or myth that enable them to use the natural resources with the sense of respect, with the sense of humility. However, the way in which this kind of idea, this set of belief may not be presented in the same way as the environmental discourses put forth by Westerners. (Lecture 3, Minute 00:05)

In my understanding, the teacher asks her students this question in order to check whether they comprehend the current topic. Even though she explains the lesson in detail before, she patiently describes everything again. This suggests to me that the teacher is aware of the complex issues of nature conservation project in postcolonial India in *The Hungry Tide*. The teacher's explanation demonstrates that she tries to use clear English to clarify this point. She repeats words, such as 'environmentalism,' 'ecological senses, or ethical senses' as a way to guide her students to catch the key ideas. Her paraphrase, such as 'with the sense of respect, with the sense of humility,' and her re-emphasis on the distinction between 'local and Western environmentalism' suggest that she attempts to help students follow the lesson.

However, her students' lack of reaction and the teacher's self-answer can signify problem in teaching and learning ecocritical texts in the Thai context. My class observations reveal that when the teacher asks for volunteer participants to give answer, the students tend to keep quiet. Sometimes they remain silent until the teacher provides them with answers. Sometimes, after they spend time to think, they can give the teacher answers. The students' low responses suggest that they may have difficulties with understanding the texts or with expressing their own opinions. One of the student deals with the English language barrier by asking the teacher in the Thai language at the end of lecture three. The student asked the teacher about the context of *The Hungry Tide*: 'Could you please explain to me again the conflict between the colonised and the colonisers after the Indian Independence?' (My translation, Lecture 3, Minute 58:40). The teacher then replied to this question in the Thai language about the history of separation between India and Pakistan, and its consequences on the refugees again. The student's switch into the Thai language suggests that he might have a problem with asking the question in English. The lecture on the history of postcolonial India explained in the English language is also hard for him to understand.

It is obvious that the Thai students encounter the same problems found by the EMI researches. Because students are struggling with comprehending the lessons delivered in English, their class participation can hardly occur (Airey 2015: 157, Arkin and Osam 2015: 177). The Thai teacher in the module I observed explained to me in our pilot interview the students' reaction in the classes that she usually confronts in the following way:

> When I'm explaining the idea, they would be sitting quietly, and I asked whether they understand the discussion or not. They said; 'well, I am processing what you are lecturing or what you are talking about.' So that way, since they've got to struggle so much with philosophical context, you don't get a lot of responses from them. Because they are trying to write down, they are jotting down the notes, and thinking about what we have in discussion class. So, it would help if I know this kind of students' background–their language abilities, their background in philosophy or literary theoretical concepts. That way, I could choose the texts that

> they find accessible. Because if the texts seems to be far beyond their ability, they would have to struggle with the comprehension with the text, and that ecocritical thinking would be somewhat beyond them. (Pilot Interview: Hour 01:38:22)

The teacher's opinion highlights that both the English language and complexity of texts are major concerns that she and her students have to confront. These factors make the classes become more teacher than the student-centred. From this evidence I found in the classroom and interview, it can be concluded that linguistic barrier is integral to intercultural dimension of teaching ecocriticism. The intercultural theories I used may therefore need to include linguistic differences to better explain the situation in the foreign language classroom. This is to point out that the intercultural dimension of teaching ecocritical texts in the foreign language classroom comprises cultural negotiations of meaning and linguistic differences.

In addition to language issue, the Thai teacher's choices of ecocritical texts and her comparative teaching approaches make it challenging for her students to understand. According to the concepts of 'third place' and 'intercultural citizenship', teachers make issues in foreign language texts relevant to students' context and culture. This teaching approach refers to cultural mediations between the one represented in the texts and in teaching context as a way to facilitate students' intercultural learning. My analysis of the Thai teacher's comparative approach suggests that she attempts to relate ecological problems offered by the novels to similar situations in Thailand. Her comparison between the issues occurring in different context aims at making the lessons relevant to her students. The teacher recognises this complex lesson because in my observation of the teaching of *The Hungry Tide*, she spends time to point out the similarities between problems of nature conservation projects in India and in Thailand. The remote environment she referred to in Ghosh's novel and in the Thai context is to challenge her students who are from a privileged social background in the city.

However, I also found that her selection of teaching materials and approaches make students' intercultural learning difficult to achieve. The teaching materials, which include both primary and secondary texts, are very remote for a student with an urban background and therefore hard to understand. *Refuge*, *Ceremony* and *The Hungry Tide* not only deal with the issues of remote environments but also with the struggle of women, ethnic minorities and postcolonial countries. The remoteness of the environment depicted in the text makes it hard for the student, who is only familiar with urban life, to have an easy understanding of the texts. As shown in my analysis of one student's response to *The Hungry Tide*, his lack of experience in the country makes postcolonial ecocriticism difficult for him to understand. The teacher's comparative approach tends to speak only to the students who have knowledge of their own about similar environments. Where these complex issues are not directly related to the students' own experience, they need to make a considerable effort to relate the lessons to their own lives. At this point, the Thai teacher seems to ignore her student's background experiences in urban context. She overlooks what the concept of constructivist learning suggests, namely to include students' direct experience as a potential source to enhance their self-learning. From this observation, it can thus be advantageous if teaching ecocriticism in foreign language classroom tries to relate students' own geographical background with the lesson offered by the text. The teaching materials and approaches that have connection with learners' can better facilitate their intercultural learning.

Because of the language difficulties and complexity of the texts' content, the Thai teacher's interpretation is dominant in this ecocriticism module. My analysis chapters point out that the teacher's explanation has an impact on the students' way of reading to texts. As we can see from the students' term papers that suggest how they attempt to mediate between the teacher's explanation and their own way of thinking. The teacher's influence on students' thoughts seems to be contradictory to the concept of 'critical cultural awareness' according to 'intercultural citizenship'. 'Critical cultural awareness' aims to develop

students' critical thinking ability and to train them to be independent learners. The Thai teacher is mindful of what the students think about the texts and about her way of presenting the texts. In the middle of the semester, I observed that she requested her students to reflect their opinions about the texts and learning difficulties they encountered. She allowed her students 30 minutes at the end of the lecture to write their opinions. My interview with the students at the end of the semester allowed me to discover that one student requested the teacher in this reflection activity to give them more chance to share their opinions in the class than the first half of the semester. This student's reflection suggests that he is willing to be more engaged with the teacher's presentation of the texts in the class and in favour of the student-centred approach.

However, it is still difficult for the Thai students in this ecocriticism module to be independent learners. My classroom observation suggests that they tended to rely on the teacher's guidance to read the novels and criticism. In the second half of the semester, I noticed that the teacher asked the students more questions. Her guiding questions usually dealt with situations and characters in the stories. For example, 'What are some experiences and some lessons that Piya has learned while she is travelling, while she is interacting with the locals in the Sundarbans?' (Lecture 4: *The Hungry Tide*, Minute 03:40) 'Tell me about Kanai, what do we know about him? How would you characterise this person? Who is he? What is he doing here? Give me the information about Kanai' (Lecture 4: *The Hungry Tide*, Hour 01:28:40). The students tended to answer the teacher quite well when her questions were about the story itself. However, when the lesson dealt with critical views of the texts, the students sometimes had problems with reading the articles. After enquiring about what happens in the stories, the teacher usually requested students to read criticism of the novels together in the class. For example, she used critical essay: Rachel Stein's 'Contested Ground: Nature, Narrative, and Native American Identity in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* and *Almanac of the Dead*' (1997). In this lesson, some students were unable to identify the main arguments and the teacher had to explain them.

Both the complex issues depicted in the novels and criticism make this class depend on the teacher's explanations although the students are encouraged to think about the issues themselves. Once a student asked the teacher about a critique of the concept of 'cosmopolitanism' in *The Hungry Tide*. The student only asked his teacher in Thai at the end of the class; 'Is it possible to read this novel as a critique of "cosmopolitanism"? This is because the novel suggests that "cosmopolitanism" benefits only the privileged groups like Piya and Kanai who are able to access Western education and are in superior social position. In contrast, the refugees or the underprivileged groups suffer from the displacement. The fisherman character like Fokir even sacrifices his life to protect the life of the elite' (My translation: Lecture 4, Hour 02:02:30). While the teacher used the English medium to present texts and criticism, she responded to a Thai question in Thai at the end of her lecture. The teacher pointed out that the word 'cosmopolitanism' may not be suitable to represent this idea. She explained that 'The novel suggests the concept of eco-cosmopolitanism which refers to the necessity to consider ecological issues not only at the local level but also its impact on the globalised world. I understand your point but the word "social inequality" in India might better describe your idea rather than the word "cosmopolitanism" ' (My translation: Lecture 4, Hour 02:03:02). In the following lecture, the teacher spends time to explain how the novel suggests 'the model of postcoloniality' that benefits both the privileged and the poor people in the tide country. From this evidence, the teacher guided her student to see the possibility to reconcile the conflicts between people in different social groups rather than a critique of postcoloniality about which the student asked.

The teacher's explanations based on a series of textual analyses potentially disallows the students' ability to come up with fresh ideas. My interview with the students at the end of the semester reveals that they have to deal with the teacher's full accounts of explanation in the final exam. I did not focus on the exam questions and how the students performed in the exam, but my interest was the students' response to the teacher's lectures. One student said that

> We had three hours to write in the exam paper. The questions were complex and related to what the teacher discussed with us in the classes. However, I had to manage with a lot of information that the teacher explained to us, and be selective in order to answer the questions. I had to get the ideas organised rather than thinking about new ideas. Comparing this to the other module taught by the other teacher in this semester, I spent time to think in the exam about how to explain some concepts that the other teacher referred to in the class only once in a single sentence. (My translation: Student interview, Hour 01:24:09)

The student's opinion suggests that the teacher's interpretation in this module is extensive and dominant. While the teacher encourages her students to be critical about what the texts suggest, her guided explanation shapes students' ideas. At this point, it can be possible to say that teaching ecocritical texts in this context promotes students' critical thinking skills. But at the same time, the ecocritical view is guided by the teacher's interpretation rather than the creation of student's independent view. What I observed in this module seems to conflict with 'critical cultural awareness' in terms of the Thai teacher's dominant views about the texts. Teaching ecocriticism in this context depends on the teacher's explanation because ecocritical issues represented in the texts are challenging for the Thai students to discover themselves.

The last conflicting point that I found in this ecocriticism module is the relationship between teaching practices and students' interaction with the real world. According to the concept of 'intercultural citizenship,' foreign language teachers encourage students to turn intercultural lessons into practices. Students are expected to apply knowledge they receive from the class in their professional training experiences in overseas countries. 'Intercultural citizenship' recommends that students' interaction with foreigners enables them to learn how to negotiate with different cultures. In my analysis chapters, I suggest that the intercultural lessons are implicit in the Thai teacher's presentation of ecocritical texts and in the students' learning patterns. However, it is difficult for the Thai teacher and her students to interact

with context outside the classroom, in this case the natural environment. As my classroom observation suggests, there is limited time to cover all the lessons. The teaching approach focuses on textual analysis rather than on interaction with the environment. The Thai teacher is aware of this lack of engagement with nature. She said that; 'My teaching approach is very conventional. I use kind of text-based approach. We are analysing the texts together, we are discussing the texts. I am using the reader-responses in that the students will be writing their responses to the texts and sometimes we have the discussion. Most of the time, it's very text-based, focus on literary texts' (Pilot Interview, Hour 01:46:26). This teaching practice corresponds with what the teacher states in her book, that she hopes to use environmental literature and literary criticism to develop students' ecological awareness. This teaching approach allows the students to learn complex lessons, but it offers them no real engagement with the natural environment.

The urban geographical location of this university is another factor that makes it hard for the students to turn lessons into practices. The Thai teacher points out this limitation of teaching environmental literature in Bangkok;

> Once I take the students outside of the classroom building, it's very noisy. If you're walking around on campus, you will see green area everywhere now but it's very noisy. So we are somewhat locked up in the classroom. You can see now it's very hot and the students wouldn't want to be outdoor and they are also familiar with the air condition, with their lifestyle. They have no tolerance, no heat tolerance. They really don't like that. So, with the different geographical context the kind of activity that will take them out of the classroom would be very useful too. They will have to hand on experience, they will get to see things in relation to what they need. If you look around here we have got all the shopping complexes they've got familiar with. It's not their fault but this is their environment. (Pilot Interview, Hour 01:50)

The teacher's opinion reveals the restriction of teaching ecocritical texts in the urban context that makes it difficult for the students to learn from the natural environment. This means that teaching ecocriticism in this particular classroom only deals with students'

understanding of the issues without turning the lessons into practice. In the students' opinion, they are aware of the necessity to understand ecological problems and put them into practice in their everyday lives. However, one student contends that because only a small number of students take the module, the change or the solution to the problems can hardly occur at a large social scale (Student interview: Hour 01:38). This is to conclude that while 'intercultural citizenship' promotes the combination of intercultural learning and experience, teaching ecocritical texts does not make it easy to include practical experience.

Limitations of my Research

Although this thesis attempts to forge a better understanding of the intercultural dimensions of teaching and learning based on the study of ecocritical texts, it is not without limitations: first, the analysis is based on only one case study of one curriculum at one university in Bangkok. I have therefore refrained from generalising my findings. Second, I realised that intercultural theories were the most appropriate research method only after I had finished my data collection. The interview questions were not directly related to the indicators guided by intercultural theories. Third, because I completed my data collection before the module's final assessment, I was not able to include the teacher's grading or students' final exam papers in my analysis. They might have suggested how students' ecocritical thinking developed through engaging with the texts. Fourth, the teacher's and students' socio-cultural backgrounds are multi-dimensional, but my analysis could only capture some of their responses in the classroom discussions and in our interviews. Fifth, although teaching environmental literature may ultimately hope to turn students' learning into actual practices, students' long-term behaviour is beyond my ability to observe. The impact of intercultural learning on students' lifestyle is therefore not mentioned in the analysis. Last, socio-political and ecological problems in Thailand are diverse and complex and my analysis can only consider certain aspects of some recent crises.

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