

## ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN J. C. GEORGE'S *THE TALKING EARTH*: AN ECOCRITICAL STUDY

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### Abstract

This research is an ecocritical study that has two objectives; to reveal the kinds of ecological consciousness and to identify the ways of the ecological consciousness portrayed in J. C. George's *The Talking Earth*. The data were analyzed based on ecocriticism theory, ecological consciousness theory proposed by Bannan-Watts (2009) and by Chang (2002), and literary elements of children's literature by Luken, Smith, & Coffel (2013). This research was analyzed qualitatively by using content analysis method to examine the data. The main data of the research were in the form of sentences related to the kinds of ecological consciousness and the ways of the ecological consciousness portrayed in the novel. This research reveals that there are four kinds of ecological consciousness in *The Talking Earth*: (1) understanding the essence of nature, (2) showing concern to the condition of nature, (3) understanding the interdependence between living beings and nature, and (4) knowing the ways nature speak. In addition, there are four literary elements used by the writer to portray ecological consciousness in the novel. Those are character, setting, point of view, and theme. Ecological consciousness can be depicted through the character's action, speech, and the author's comment. Meanwhile, setting as symbol portrays the essence of forest as a home for many living beings. Moreover, omniscient point of view is used by the author to narrate the story and to give additional information. Lastly, explicit theme is revealed in the story to show many significant insights. All in all, this research discovers that ecological consciousness is strongly embodied in *The Talking Earth* into four kinds. The emergence of four literary elements in the novel supports the portrayal of ecological consciousness. As a result, *The Talking Earth* can be one of storybooks in fulfilling the need of children to grow their awareness toward their surroundings in order to know and understand the sustainability of the environment.

**Keywords:** Ecocriticism, ecological consciousness, literary elements of children's literature, J. C. George's *The Talking Earth*

### INTRODUCTION

Humans exploit nature without considering a fact that the resource of nature will be run out and destroyed (Chang, 2002: 92). Humans bring changes to their environment. The way humans consume

nature is the way humans destroy nature. Excusing themselves through the idea of fulfilling their needs, humans continue to decrease the quality of nature by exploiting and polluting it. Many areas cannot be inhabited anymore for flora and fauna that

affect to the loss of species and diversity. What worse is that human population keeps increasing, and every single individual needs natural resources to fulfill his or her needs. A critical question emerges that is whether humans and the Earth are ready to confront tremendous challenges because of the booming population with the ways human thoughtlessly and unwisely use nature.

Indonesia is one of the countries that have felt the challenges through the destructive impacts of the increasing population. The country becomes the world's third largest emitter of greenhouse gases that contributes to global climate change (Measey, 2010: 31). In 1980 to 2006, the Indonesian's population has been increasing for over 220 million, and 65 percent the land covered by the forest has been decreasing to 45 percent from the total land (Measey, 2010: 33). The data shows that the increasing population affect to the increasing human activities. The impacts of greenhouse gases which cause climate change give remarkable influences in many aspect of the country such as Indonesia's economy, population, human health and especially the damage of environment.

The issue above shows that humans still lack of ecological consciousness. Ecological consciousness is needed for humans to prevent their actions from destroying environment, and open their eyes to the real condition of the environment. Chang (2002: 97) gives the same statement that the crises

on the environment depend on humans' ecological consciousness. By having ecological consciousness, humans will understand that keeping the flourish of nature is not only to provide humans' needs but also an attitude to respect the existence of many nonhuman beings that deserve to have a good life in the Earth.

Regarding to the need to have ecological consciousness, children are the right agent to have it. Firstly, children are the future generation that will responsible and maintain the sustainable ways of life (Budiharto, 2016: 352). Secondly, teaching children about sustainability and environmental issues is a right decision as they have open mind and routine rather than adults who have ingrained habit (Medress, 2008: 5). Thirdly, environmentalism is a must to do for every member of society. It means that the changes must be done in collective efforts which include children to participate as well (Gitau in Makwanya & Dick, 2014: 11). From the three points above, children have a position as important as adults in preventing environmental problem.

Literature is an effective way to teach and introduce children to ecological issues. By reading and interpreting books that carry pedagogical values, literature exposes children with numerous phenomena that reflect realistic phenomena. This can be said that children's literature has a great contribution to be one of the disciplines that grow ecological consciousness which

cultivate children's mind with ecocentric values.

Teaching ecological issues through a storybook can save humanity regarding to the power of storybook. Moral values of children's book at first are aimed to save children, and now it is for saving the whole planet's lives (Pollack in Medress, 2008: 5). A storybook, as it is believed, can be a vehicle for children to understand sustainable lifestyle. Moreover, it has a strong capacity in shaping children's attitude since it is regarded as a special site for ideological effect (Stephen, 1992:3).

*The Talking Earth* written by Jean Craighead George published in 1983 is one of children's books that bring ecological consciousness as its topic. Dougherty (1992: 172) in the journal entitled *Reading The Talking Earth with Middle School Student* mentions this novel is a great example for the fulfilment of the need of young people to be aware with the environmental problem. Both *American Library Association* (ALA) and *The New York Times* give their review to *The Talking Earth* as a children's book that successfully brings conservatives message about how precious the Earth as well as the environment are. What most important is that *The Talking Earth* depicts many kinds of ecological consciousness through the author's narration and the characters' understandings in the novel.

As a children book that teaches children about environmental education, the researcher

is motivated to reveal the kinds of ecological consciousness embodied in *The Talking Earth* that the author depicts during the main character's journey in the wilderness of Everglades forest. Moreover, the researcher analyzes literary elements that the author employs in the construction of the story to deliver ecological consciousness in the novel.

The researcher finds the topic as a crucial topic to show that a children's book consists of many kinds of ecological consciousness that can be a medium for children to develop their consciousness toward the condition of their environment. Children's perceptions must be regarded as something serious because the way they think influence their attitude and the Earth's future.

To analyze these two focuses, the researcher employs several theories related to ecological issues and children's literature. The researcher applies ecocriticism theory combined with ecological consciousness theory.

Ecocriticism is a study that emphasizes a relation which occurs between literature and environment especially the relation of the characters in the literary texts with their environment. Golfelty (1996: xvii) in *Literary Study in Age of Environmental Crisis* gives the same idea by defining it as "the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment." Tomic (2006: 44) in *Ecocriticism-Interdisciplinary Study of Literature and Environment* defines ecocriticism as a study that concern "with the

relationships between literature and environment or how man's relationships with his physical environment are reflected in literature." Therefore, from those definitions, 'relationship' is a key word that has a significant role on this study.

Ecocriticism studies the interconnectedness of humans and the place where they live as one unity. The ways of human interconnects to nature and vice versa can be seen through culture that reflects human's ways of life. This can be said that ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between human culture and the physical world where these two affect one another especially in the cultural artifacts of literature and language (Glotfelty, 1996: xix-xx). Literature as a cultural product itself reveals human relationship to natural world, "not only exposing conventional attitudes but also providing alternative models for conceptualizing nature and its relation to human society" (Quick, 2004: 1).

Glotfelty (1996: xvii) positions ecocriticism like other literary theories such as feminism and marxism while in ecocriticism, this literary theory takes an Earth-centered approach that reveals on how nonhuman beings and the natural world are reflected on a text. By applying the concept of ecology in literature, ecocriticism seeks environmental matters by focusing a literary analysis on the representation of nature (Opperman, 1999: 29). The researcher uses ecological consciousness theory proposed by

Bannan-Watts (2009) and Chang (2002). According to Bannan-Watts, ecological consciousness is a basic understanding on the importance of good and service from nature for the life on Earth. At this point, people understand that soil, water, vegetation, forest, animal, and even the Earth are important for all creatures' life to support their life necessity. She also adds that ecological consciousness is "a sense of the interdependence and interconnectedness of all species on the Earth, with an appreciation of the multitude of ecosystems that support all life on the planet". Bannan-Watts further defines that a person who has ecological consciousness tends to consider his taken actions to keep the health of the environment.

Meanwhile, Chang (2002: 97) mentions that "the solution of environmental crises depends on man's ecological consciousness." Basically, as Chang (2002: 3) mentions, there are two attitudes toward nature; human-centeredness and ecocentricism. Humans need to change their human-centeredness to ecocentricism. In conclusion, a person who has ecological consciousness is a person who has attitude based on ecocentricism or, usually called as, ecocentric view.

Ecocentric view encourages people to care and respect nature regardless of their usefulness to humans. It acknowledges equality between humans and nature. Nature which is animals, plants, and lands also have the rights to have welfare like humans. They have right to flourish and blossom just like

humans have opportunity to have a maximum satisfaction on the Earth. They have inherent worth like humans. Ecocentricism sees that humans are not superior. It views humans as one member of a biotic community in ecosystem that has a similar position to other beings (Leopold in Hailu, 2014: 11). In conclusion, ecocentric view denies humans' superiority.

Denying human superiority can be seen from the way humans see nature has ability to speak through its phenomena. Manes explains primal culture or "animistic culture" tends to see nature is able to speak. This is a world of autonomous speaker. Manes (1996: 16) further explains that beside human language, actually "there is also the language of birds, the wind, earthworms, wolves, and waterfall". This is might appear as unscientific and irrational, yet Dahlbacka (2010: 41) claims the fact that there is "an angry lion, a thundering waterfall, or a 50 meter high ocean wave" leads people to understand that nature has its own way to show its signs, and convince that people need listening to nature. By admitting that nature has ability to speak through its own way, humans begin to eliminate their superiority. Furthermore, listening to nature is also part of humans' sensitivity to pay attention more, and be concerned toward their surroundings.

In revealing the second objective, the researcher uses literary elements of children's literature by Luken, Smith, & Coffel (2013). In order to understand children's literature

deeply, readers need to have close attention to the literary elements of children's books. The readers can discover many issues from the story through, for examples, reading the character, experiencing plot, searching for theme or identifying focalizer or the point of view (Nodelman & Reiner, 2003). Therefore, it can be said that literary element can be an author's tool to deliver and depict ecological consciousness in the novel.

## RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the researcher described the issue of ecological consciousness in the form of narrative or textual. She used particular expressions taken from J. C. George's *The Talking Earth* in the form phrases, clauses, and sentences as the data of the research. Therefore, qualitative research was used as the type of this research. The researcher used content analysis technique since it involves the researcher's identification and interpretation.

The novel of J. C. George's *The Talking Earth* was the source of the data. Moreover, the data used were particular expressions of the novel in the form of phrases, clause, and sentence related to the kinds of ecological consciousness and the ways of the ecological consciousness portrayed in the novel.

The researcher played a central role as the primary research instrument to collect, categorize, and interpret the data. The researcher used her capability and knowledge based on the theories of ecocriticism,

ecological consciousness and children's literature to analyze the data. Moreover, the researcher set indicators as presented in the analytical construct for categorizing the data. The researcher provided the data sheet as the secondary instrument. There were two data sheets to help the researcher in categorizing and interpreting the data.

In gaining data trustworthiness, the researcher conducted triangulation to make sure the data were valid and credible. The researcher went to her supervisor regularly as the expert of the study regarding to the content of the research including the theory, method, and data. Moreover, three students of English Literature program studies were chosen to check and re-check the data. The researcher believe they have the knowledge and capability to examine the validity of the data. Through the feedbacks and suggestions of the external investigator and the advisor, the trustworthiness of the data could be attained.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The researcher examines the findings from the data related to the two objectives. The first is the kinds of ecological consciousness depicted in *The Talking Earth*. The second is the ways ecological consciousness portrayed in *The Talking Earth*. On this section, the researcher presents the findings as well as the discussion of the findings.

### **The Kinds of Ecological Consciousness Depicted in *The Talking Earth***

Ecocriticism reveals how human's relationship with the environment is reflected in a literary work (Tosic, 2006: 44). The relationship can be depicted as a good relationship as well as bad relationship since human and the environment affects one another (Glotfelty, 1996: xix-xx). It means that ecocriticism shows how human's awareness is depicted in a literary work as the result of human's behaviour toward the environment. Human's awareness toward the environment can be seen as the manifestation of their ecological consciousness.

Read using the spectacles of ecological consciousness proposed by Bannan-Watts (2009) and Chang (2002), there are four kinds of ecological consciousness depicted in *The Talking Earth*. The researcher finds three kinds of ecological consciousness based on Bannan-Watts's theory. They are understanding the essence of nature, showing concern to the condition of the environment, and understanding the interdependence between living beings and nature. Meanwhile, another kind of ecological consciousness is found based on Chang's theory. It is knowing the ways nature speak.

### **Understanding the Essence of Nature**

*The Talking Earth* reveals a human's understanding to the essence of nature from the ways Billie and her companions use other

beings as a source to survive in the wilderness of Everglades forest.

For two days no fish swam into the net. **“This is bad news, Petang,”** she said, the third morning.

**“I think we’ve caught all the fish there are in this hole, and the Earth is still too hot for us to leave.”** Slowly she walked around the ledge at the water ledge, looking for dead snake or turtles or even beetles to eat (George, 1983: 45).

Billie and Petang hide in the pit to protect themselves from the wildfire. They need to stay in the pit until the wildfire is off. For several days, Billie and Petang catch fish in the pit for their survival. However, after two days, Billie cannot find the fish anymore. Billie understands to the essence of nature, that nature provides food for Billie and Petang in the form of fish. Billie’s ecological consciousness can be seen from *this is bad news* statement which shows how important the fish are for the continuity of their life. The absence of the fish gives the bad news for Billie and Petang since they will lack of sustenance. The fish are the essence of nature that shows nature as a provider of basic needs for the life of living beings.

Knowing how important nature for the life of living beings is one of the manifestations of ecological consciousness. The importance of nature can be seen from the way nature provides goods and services to fulfill life necessities. Nature provides sustenance from the animals that can be the source of the food to other living beings.

## Showing Concern to the Condition of Nature

*The Talking Earth* depicts many problems that happen in the environment. Billie as the main character of the story is a young girl who has sensitivity to the condition of the environment and its crises. For this reason, she always shows her concern by being worry toward her surroundings and the animals. Billie also displays her concern to the bird population as she says in the following.

**“Almost every day a bird dies,”** she said to Cootchobee. **“You might as well have them as the gators.”** (George, 1983: 86).

This datum displays how Billie feels worry to the condition of the birds since she knows that the number of the birds is decreased as the result of the hunting activity done by the white men (George, 1983: 79). This quotation occurs when Billie tires to catch a bird to provide food for the little panther. The need of the gators and the panther to eat the bird worries Billie since it will speed up to the decreasing population of the bird. This worry is the manifestation of ecological consciousness that Billie has in the form of showing concern to the condition of the bird population.

Displaying concern to the condition of nature is a kind of ecological consciousness that a human has. It can be seen from the way the main character shows her care and worry to the condition of the birds.

## **Understanding the Interdependence between Living Beings and Nature**

*The Talking Earth* depicts the interdependence between living beings and nature through Billie's journey in Everglades forest. Billie always pays close attention to natural phenomena that happen during her journey. One of the natural phenomena is the feeding relationship that shows the interdependence of living beings on nature.

Drifting down the river of grass, Billie Wind could see the sun and the water and soils at work. Flowers bloomed before her eyes. **Butterflies drank the nectar of the flowers and re-winged blackbirds ate the butterflies. The snake ate the blackbirds and the alligator ate the snakes. Charlie Wind was right, all life came from the sun and the water and the soil and the air.** (George, 1983: 18)

The datum above shows that Billie proves what her uncle, Charlie Wind, has said is right. She realizes that the life of many living beings deeply depends on sun, water, and soil which are the main element of nature as the beginning of life. While she witnesses the feeding process, she sees that flowers as the producer is drunk by the butterflies as the first consumer, and butterflies are eaten by the re-winged blackbird as the second consumer. In the next process, the re-winged blackbirds are eaten by the snake as the third consumer, and the snake is eaten by the gator as the last consumer which is the predator. The process shows that consumers need producers and other consumers. Through the process above, the flowers which are the

producer are the sustenance of the consumers, and the flowers need nature from water, soil, sun, and air to support its life. The way Billie proves what her uncle has said, and her close observation are the manifestation of her ecological consciousness. She understands that all living beings need one another, and nature is the first party in sustaining the need of producers as the beginning of life.

Humans and nature, which includes environment and animals, have a strong connection since they need one another. Understanding for this kind of need shows the manifestation of ecological consciousness. The relationship for needing one another can be seen from the feeding relationship of consumers and producers. The consumers depend their life on producers and other consumers, and the producers depends its life on the element of nature which the main character notices in her close observation.

## **Knowing the Way Nature Speaks**

*The Talking Earth* depicts nature as an active entity from the signs and movements of the animals that show their intentions based on the main character's interpretation by displaying their peculiar ways of speaking. The journey in Everglades forest brings Billie a new insight that animals actually can speak through its signs and movements. Billie's journey changes her perspectives to admit that animals can speak through its own ways. She realizes that humans need to pay close attentions because speaking is not always in

humans languages, yet speaking can be in many ways as long as it can give meanings and intentions to other beings.

The datum below shows that a human admit animals have ability to speak through their own ways.

**“I think you have something to say to me,” she said. “All the other animals have, but since you are mute and expressionless I guess it will take you a long time to say it. Come along. You can ride with us until I can hear you.”**  
(George, 1983: 110)

After gathering her supplies to continue her journey, Billie finds a turtle which scares Petang while he wanders in an open glade of the midst of the bamboos. She decides to bring the turtle to her journey, and names her Burden since Billie gets inspired by an old legend of Seminole tribe (George, 1983: 110). Billie senses that Burden has something to say that she needs to interpret. She also admits that all animals have ability to speak. Billie’s confession toward the animals depicts her ecological consciousness regarding to the ability of animals to speak. Billie knows that human language is not always the standard of speaking, yet signs and movements can be the ways of animals to shows their intentions and meanings which can be their way to communicate. For this reason, Billie’s character can be the representation of a human in eliminating her superiority by admitting the way a nonhuman being speaks from her capability. It means Billie understands that speaking for animals is different to speaking for humans. Even the

expressionless of the turtle also has ability to speak which she needs to find out how to interpret her.

Knowing the ways nature speaks is a kind of ecological consciousness that a human has in eliminating her superiority by admitting other beings’ capability of speaking. By doing this, humans realize that nature is not merely mute object. It can be seen from the way Billie admits the ability of the animals to speak from their signs and movements showing their intention to her; therefore she can interpret these with her observation and knowledge.

### **The Ways of The Ecological Consciousness Portrayed in *The Talking Earth***

Ecological consciousness in *The Talking Earth* is portrayed through its literary elements. Analyzing the study, the researcher finds that there are four literary elements that have successfully delivered the issues of ecological consciousness embodied in the novel. They are character, setting, point of view, and theme.

#### **Character**

The researcher finds that character is one of literary elements in *The Talking Earth* that contributes in the portrayal of ecological consciousness. The issue is revealed through action, speech, and the author’s comment. **By Action**

Action is one way to reveal the character’s personalities since what the character does or acts can be the revelation of

his or her nature. The researcher found that Billie's actions influence her personality as a young child who has ecological consciousness. The datum shows Billie's action as the manifestation of her ecological consciousness in understanding the interdependence between humans and animals.

But this little animal did not move. He huddled in the darkness. He was badly frightened. **After a long wait Billie Wind tiptoed down the steps and brought back the last piece of venison, which she chewed to soften.** The petang twilled his whiskers and sniffed the food. (George, 1983: 38)

The datum above shows ecological consciousness can be depicted through the character's action. Billie meets a little otter when she hides in a cave from wildfire, and names him Petang. To get along with Petang, Billie feeds the little otter with venison that she chews to soften the meat. Billie understands that every living being needs one another's help in order to live and survive. As a result, her ecological consciousness leads her to act as a nurturer for the little otter. By chewing the venison, Billie knows that the little otter cannot eat tough food since the food is not suitable for his little teeth. The action of chewing the venison shows that Billie understands the little otter needs her help to soften the food. Her action is the portrayal of her consciousness to understand that there is dependency of a little animal on a human.

### **By Speech**

In *The Talking Earth*, Billie is the most dominant character that lead the readers know that the portrayal of ecological consciousness can be depicted through the character's speech. Billie's speech is the reflection of her ecological consciousness. The first datum shows Billie's speech for her wonder in providing food for herself and Petang to survive in the pit.

"How," she said to Petang, "**how do I catch him? Even so small a bite will keep you and me alive for another day. And tomorrow it might rain again and we can leave.**" She looked at the remains of the venison. "**Half a meal for each of us. I'd better catch that frog.**" (George, 1983: 40).

The speech happens when Billie searches sustenance for herself and Petang. Since they are trapped in a cave because of the wildfire, they need to wait the soil until it is cold in the cave. To keep them survive, Billie sees a frog near the water in the pit. Through her speech, she wonders how to catch the frog for her and Petang's survival. She also says that she tries to divide the reminded meats for both of them. The datum shows the readers that there is an interdependence of a human and animals. In this case, Billie's speech implies that she tries to help the little otter to survive in the pit by catching a frog as the source of sustenance. Her speech in wondering to catch a frog and dividing the venison shows her ecological consciousness that an animal also needs a human's help to survive.

### By the Author Comment

George as the author directs *The Talking Earth* through her point of view. For this reason, the researcher finds that ecological consciousness is also portrayed through the author's comment on Billie's personality.

A data is presented in revealing ecological consciousness through George's comment on Billie's personality.

"A petang, a petang," she cried joyfully. "Little otter, what are you doing here?" **Holding out her hand she waited for him to smell her odor of friendship and come to her. Last year a black bear on Panther Paw has smelled her affection and had walked almost up to her before turning away** (George, 1983: 37-38).

Meeting the little otter in her hidden place from wildfire, Billie tries to get along with the otter by holding her hand to let the little animal comes to her. The datum above reveals Billie's personality as someone who always shows affection and care for many animals. George's comment leads the readers know that ecological consciousness that Billie has is formed through her personality by making friend with many animals.

### Setting as Symbol

Luken, Smith & Coffel (2013: 172) mention that setting bring seven functions in the story although not every story brings the similar function. The researcher finds only one function of setting which is setting as symbol related to the revelation of ecological consciousness in *The Talking Earth*. In

identifying the setting as symbol in *The Talking Earth*, the researcher discovers that the setting reveals one kind of ecological consciousness which is understanding the essence of nature. It means a human understands how important nature for many living beings since nature provides life necessities. One of them is a home. Nature provides a home from many living beings as a place for them to settle, to have protection, and to have a habitant. Everglade forest symbolizes a home for many animals and humans after Billie finds out that humans cannot leave the Earth since there are no other planets that have the same forest like Everglade forest where the diversity of natural places and animals exist.

The datum below is presented as the way Billie wonders on the existence of an Earth-like planet which has the same Everglade forest like in the Earth.

When Iron Wind worked at night Billie would wait for him outside the Space Life Lab, **starting up at the stars and wondering which one had a sapphire-blue planet with an Everglades** and a girl like herself looking out toward her (George, 1983: 20).

After hearing her father's statement that in the future humans may need to leave the Earth to find a new planet because of humans' actions in polluting it with chemical and radiation from atomic weapon and nuclear reactor, Billie always wonders on the existence of another planet that can be a new home for humankind (George, 1983, 20). As a young person who has ecological

consciousness, Billie understands the environmental problems and the essence of forest for many living beings. Billie partly believes that what her father say can be true. For this reason, she believes that humans need to find another planet which is similar to the Earth and has a forest like Everglades. From her assumption, the readers can understand that forest is very important for many living beings especially in becoming one of the indicators of a home to be dwelled since forest offers many life necessities that its dwellers can get. It shows that Everglade forest symbolizes a home for humankind in a new planet.

#### **Omniscient Point of View**

In *The Talking Earth*, the author, George, is the one who narrates the story as omniscient point of view. Through the narrator's description and comments on the story, many kinds of ecological consciousness can be constructed, and they help the readers to know and understand the story in *The Talking Earth*. A datum related to George's point of view in portraying ecological consciousness are presented as follows.

**On her way back to camp she came upon a coconut palm and patted it affectionately. This tree was all things to the Indians; it was food, shelter, clothing, rope, fish netting, shade. The Indians planted them all over the glades. (George, 1983: 63).**

The quotation above shows the readers the essence of nature to provide humans' life necessities through the narrator's description. George narrates the story that a coconut palm

can fulfil many benefit for Indian people. While Billie repairs her damaged boat because of wildfire, she searches food in her way back to her camp, and find a coconut palm. From the George's narration, it can be seen that the coconut palm can be sustenance, life utilities, and protection.

#### **Explicit Theme**

The researcher who is as well as the reader discovers many themes related to the portrayal of ecological consciousness which is expressed in explicit ways. Therefore, the readers can find ecological consciousness through explicit themes. An explicit theme is revealed in openly and clearly statement. Usually, an explicit theme is stated in a sentence. *The Talking Earth* shows the readers explicit themes that can be seen from the characters' utterances and the author's narration. There are several quotations that the researcher discovers as the explicit theme in portraying ecological consciousness.

A significant insight of ecological consciousness that the researcher finds in *The Talking Earth* reveals humans' obligation to protect nature.

"I hear the turtle speak today," Billie Wind said.

"The turtle speak?" Oats scratched his head. "What did she say?"

**"That we must love the Earth or it will look like this."**

"What else did she say?"

**"That life can be destroyed unless we work at saving it."** (George, 1983: 149)

At the end of her journey, Billie overcomes her confusions, and brings her

new understanding about the life of humans on the Earth and the talking animals. Billie realizes that the Earth is precious for many living beings to be the home planet. It because the Earth gives shelter and protection for its dwellers, and becomes a place for the existence of many animals and natural places that she can never find in another planet. After Billie and Oats survive from the hurricane, they come out from their hidden place, and witness the aftermath of the hurricane. At this point, Billie is aware that despite humans' action in damaging nature and the occurrence of environmental degradation, humans need to care and protect nature as Billie says "love" toward the Earth. Through her observation and interpretation in the turtle behaviour, and after she is exposed by the aftermath of hurricane, Billie realizes that going out to find another planet is not the solution for environmental problems. Instead, a real action is the solution to save the environment. Billie's speech shows the readers a significant insight that humans need to do a real effort to save the environment. Otherwise, the environment will damage like a place gets hit by a hurricane.

As a storybook which belongs to the genre of realistic fiction, *The Talking Earth* makes the four kinds of ecological consciousness real and believable because the author portrays the story as realistic as possible. With the help of literary elements in constructing the story, *The Talking Earth* can be a way of its readers especially child

readers to grow their ecological consciousness to always look after their surroundings in maintaining the welfare of nature as well as the future of the Earth.

## CONCLUSION

The researcher concludes that ecological consciousness in George's *The Talking Earth* after revealing the kinds of ecological consciousness, and identifying the ways ecological consciousness portrayed in the novel into two points.

Firstly, ecological consciousness is strongly embodied in *The Talking Earth*. The researcher finds four kinds of ecological consciousness which are understanding the essence of nature, showing concern to the condition of nature, understanding the interdependence between living beings and nature, and knowing the way nature speaks.

From the kinds of ecological consciousness depicted, it can be said that the essence of nature from its goods, services, and animals give a remarkable distribution to sustain the life of humans and other living beings. Moreover, Billie's concern shows deep empathy to the occurrence of the environmental problems because of humans' actions and activities as the portrayal of a human's awareness and sensitivity to the environment. Furthermore, the relationship between humans and nature is interrelated, even there is a strong connection among humans and nature which leads Billie to assume that humans and animals are like a

family. At the end, by admitting that nature has ability to speak, the main character views nature as alive, active, and significant on the Earth in order to establish equality.

Secondly, the ways of the ecological consciousness portrayed in *The Talking Earth* are through four literary elements. They are character, setting, point of view, and theme.

The first literary element in portraying ecological consciousness is character through the character's action, speech, and the author's comment toward the character. As the most dominant character in delivering ecological consciousness, Billie's action, speech, and the author's comment toward her give a big influence in creating Billie's personality which contribute to the formation of her ecological consciousness. The second literary element is setting as symbol. The setting becomes a symbol of a home both on the Earth and other planets. Everglades forest as the setting symbolizes as a home for many animals to live, and many natural places exist. Moreover, Billie assumes that the existence of forest like Everglades forest in Earth-like planet can be a new home for humans. The third literary element is Omniscient point of view. Through omniscient point of view, many kinds of ecological consciousness can be depicted. Moreover, George has privilege to give additional information for the readers about condition of the environment and animals. The last literary element explicit theme. The theme gives significant insights for the readers about the equality between

humans and nature and the obligation of humans to protect nature.

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