

**BOTANICAL TERMS IN THE READING TEXTS OF VIETNAMESE TEXTBOOKS
FOR GRADES 2, 3, AND 4 (THROUGH THE CONNECTING KNOWLEDGE WITH
LIFE SERIES)**

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the analysis and evaluation of botanical terms found in reading texts from the Vietnamese Language textbooks for Grades 2, 3, and 4, which are part of the "Connecting Knowledge with Life" textbook series. The aim is to gain deeper insights into the richness and significance of these terms. This research not only helps expand vocabulary and knowledge about the natural world for primary school students but also plays an important role in developing language skills, cultural awareness, and appreciation of traditional values. Botanical terms in these texts reflect the diversity of the plant world, enabling students to recognize and distinguish between plant species and flowers while exploring their biological characteristics. Moreover, these terms carry deep cultural meanings, closely associated with beliefs, traditions, and the cultural identity of the Vietnamese people, thereby helping students better understand Vietnamese culture. Additionally, the use of botanical vocabulary also reflects each author's unique style and intent, contributing to the creation of distinctive and emotionally impactful literary works. Therefore, the study of botanical terms in reading texts from the Vietnamese Language textbooks for Grades 2, 3, and 4 plays an essential role in enriching students' understanding of nature, fostering cultural education, and enhancing their linguistic development at the primary level.

Keywords: Botanical Terms, Reading Texts, Vietnamese, Textbook.

1. INTRODUCTION

Words are the fundamental building blocks of language. They appear frequently in everyday life and are used across various fields such as education, science, and communication. Written texts are composed of paragraphs, which in turn are made up of sentences, words, and syllables. Words serve as the “bricks” that form the structure of language, playing a central role in both learning and cognitive development. Within the Vietnamese vocabulary system, botanical terms form an essential subset, used to categorize, name, and identify elements in nature.

Under the new General Education Curriculum for primary schools, Vietnamese is defined as a foundational subject aimed at fostering students’ character, language competence, and literary appreciation [2]. The design of reading texts and vocabulary selection-especially plant vocabulary-in Grades 2 to 4 of the *Connecting Knowledge with Life* series exemplifies a language education approach rooted in real-life experiences. Studying this lexical field not only contributes to linguistic theory but also improves vocabulary instruction and the practical language skills of students. This article explores the value of plant-related vocabulary in the reading texts of Grades

2–4 Vietnamese textbooks from the *Connecting Knowledge with Life* series through four dimensions: biodiversity, cultural significance, literary style and authorial intent, and educational value.

1.1. Botanical Terms in Reading Texts Reflects the Diversity of the Natural World

Botanical terms in reading texts are not merely simple terms describing nature—they serve as powerful means to express the richness and diversity of the plant world. The word “trees” evokes images of lush green forests, “flowers” transport us to a land of colors and fragrance, and “leaves” symbolize vitality and the resilience of nature. These words are not just objects of description but represent symbols of life and biological diversity.

Each botanical term opens a window into a unique world of morphology, color, and biological traits—from the towering strength of hardwood trees to the delicate fragility of small blossoms. These words offer students a rich tapestry of natural imagery and experience.

[2] *Ever since I could remember, the small garden had orange, plum, lemon, and pomelo trees. Chinaberry and starfruit trees grew at the far end, near the gate. The garden also contained piper lolot, apricot leaves, artemisia, taro, and more.*

Entering the garden, I thought of my grandfather and imagined how he once planted and tended the trees so diligently. Though entirely a figment of my imagination, his presence lingered as long as the garden remained lush and green.

When Tet came, the plum trees blossomed white. Then in spring, there were pomelo, lemon, and longan flowers. The peony bloomed year-round. Every New Year's Eve, my grandmother prepared an offering by the water tank to invite my grandfather to celebrate with the family-and to keep the garden from feeling lonely.

[*My Grandfather's Garden*, p.55]

In this passage, the plants mentioned are not only common species but also hold deep sentimental, emotional, and traditional significance. Orange, plum, lemon, and pomelo trees often symbolize prosperity and abundance. The chinaberry and starfruit trees near the gate represent patience and diligence. Piper lolot, apricot leaves, artemisia, taro are commonly used in cooking and medicine, symbolizing sustainability and self-reliance. Plum, pomelo, lemon, and longan blossoms beautify the garden while symbolizing freshness, happiness, and prosperity. The peony carries traditional and spiritual significance, standing for enduring love and familial bonds. Collectively, these plants create a vibrant garden space tied to family unity through the shared act of cultivation and care.

The diversity of plant life has been captured for thousands of years in texts, paintings, legends, and cultural traditions from every civilization.

[3] *Every morning when I wake up,
The bamboo hedges rustle in the wind.
The bent bamboo tips, like fishing poles,
Pull the sun higher into the sky.*

[*The Bamboo Hedge*, p.34]

The bamboo hedge is a type of plant known for its ability to withstand strong winds and heavy rains, symbolizing resilience and patience. In Vietnamese culture, the image of bamboo is frequently used to describe the steadfast and enduring spirit of the people, especially in rural life. Although it may bend in storms, bamboo rarely breaks. Thus, it also symbolizes flexibility and

strength - an ability to adapt in the face of challenges. It further represents humility, simplicity, and gentleness - virtues highly valued in Vietnamese society.

Bamboo is an inseparable part of Vietnamese daily life, used in everything from house construction and household items to art and folklore. Therefore, the image of the bamboo hedge is often regarded as a cultural emblem and a symbol of national tradition.

In reading texts, botanical terms are not merely descriptions of the natural world but also carry profound cultural significance. These terms are not just technical language; they are symbols of knowledge, spirit, and the values of a specific culture.

Botanical terms are rich and diverse, ranging from grasses to flowers and leaves, from shade-loving plants to sun-loving crops - each word carries a unique cultural fragment and a deep reflection of life and nature. Rice, for example, a symbol of life and growth in agricultural culture, is often described in poems and folk songs as a representation of the labor and perseverance of farmers. In literary texts, botanical terms not only describe the natural world but also express deep cultural meanings, helping us better understand the values and wisdom of a community or a nation. At the same time, they evoke a profound emotional connection with nature, allowing for a more complete and sensitive view of the surrounding world.

- Botanical terms as symbols of life and growth: Plants, especially trees, are often seen as symbols of life and development. Their robust and persistent growth is viewed in many cultures as a metaphor for strength and resilience. Words such as "*plants*", "*flowers and leaves*", "*rice plant*", "*forest trees*", and "*prairie*" often carry deep meanings related to the vitality and development of nature and humanity. Plants are commonly regarded as a symbol of enduring life and patience - despite harsh conditions, it still manages to grow and reproduce, creating lush, green landscapes. Flowers and leaves are often seen as symbols of freshness and youth.

[4] *Apricot blossoms and peach blossoms are two flowers symbolic of Tet (Lunar New Year) in southern and northern Vietnam. Apricot blossoms glow with bright yellow, while peach blossoms are a vibrant pink, mixed with green leaves and tightly closed buds.*

[*Tet Is Here*, , p.19]

In the passage, the images of *apricot blossoms* and *peach blossoms* are distinctive and meaningful cultural symbols in Vietnamese traditions, particularly during Tet. *Apricot blossoms* are described as bright yellow—a color often associated with wealth, prosperity, and happiness. *Peach blossoms*, in their fresh pink hue with green leaves and budding flowers, paint a charming and romantic picture. The pink color of peach blossoms is linked to renewal, vitality, and romance. They are often seen as symbols of freshness and new beginnings in the new year. These two flowers not only decorate traditional Tet scenes but also convey deeper meanings of prosperity and renewal, reflecting hope and wishes for a successful, lucky new year.

- Forest trees as symbols of natural abundance and diversity: Forests, home to countless species of plants and animals, represent a complex and vibrant ecosystem, showcasing the richness and vitality of nature.

[5] "Seeking the Sun" conveys a profound message about the importance of forests and natural ecosystems. Through the image of a rooster searching for the sun, the author illustrates that the forest is the origin of life and growth. Initially depicted as mysterious and dark, the forest shelters countless life forms, each with its own role. Only the rooster - a symbol of strength and hope - dares to accept the mission of seeking light. Despite difficulties and challenges, the rooster remains steadfast, and when the sun finally appears, it becomes the source of light for all living things in the forest. The final image, where the forest glows like a painted landscape, powerfully illustrates

the vitality and growth that light brings. This demonstrates the crucial role forests play not only for the species living within them but also for the balance and development of the entire planet.

- Botanical terms as symbols of wealth and prosperity: Rice plants are commonly viewed as symbols of development and prosperity. Harvesting rice brings abundance and advancement to communities and reflects human success in harnessing and utilizing natural resources.

[6] At the turn of autumn to winter, white clouds float over the mountaintop like a thin scarf. In summer, under the dazzling sunlight, the whole mountain turns lush green. Tree leaves flutter like the hair of a fairy facing the sea. And she herself is hidden beneath the golden rice fields.

[My Hometown Mountain, p.83]

In this passage, the imagery of golden rice fields evokes a sense of abundance, vitality, and life. The color gold is often associated with wealth, prosperity, and happiness, creating a sense of fullness and excitement. These fields are also the result of human labor and effort. This combination highlights the harmony and interaction between people and nature. The vast, golden rice fields present a vibrant and lively scene, evoking feelings of joy and optimism. Thus, the image of golden rice fields symbolizes richness, fertility, and life, and reflects the union between nature and humanity.

- Botanical terms as symbols of sacredness and spirituality: The banyan tree is seen as a symbol of permanence and the connection between generations. It is often planted in sacred locations such as temples, communal houses, or along rivers and coasts to honor ancestral spirits and protect the community from disasters.

[7] The reading "The Banyan Tree of My Homeland" presents a beautiful and profound image of the connection between people and the banyan tree, as well as its significant role in Vietnamese spiritual and cultural life. The banyan tree is not merely an ornamental tree but a symbol of permanence and intergenerational linkage. Through the depiction of the character's childhood, the tree becomes an indispensable part of memory and experience. With branches like temple pillars and its top reaching into the sky, the tree appears majestic and sacred, embodying its spiritual importance in the character's mind. The description of the tree's roots forming strange shapes, coupled with the music of the wind in its canopy, creates a magical and imaginative space. Experiences beneath the banyan tree are not only part of everyday life but also a connection to ancestors and to the cultural fabric of the countryside.

1.3. Botanical Terms in Reading Texts as Reflections of the Writer's Style and Intentions

In reading texts, botanical terms are not merely descriptive elements of the natural world - they are also powerful tools through which writers express their unique style and authorial intentions. Through the careful and deliberate use of these terms, writers can create profound, sharp, and impactful works.

– Expressing Character Traits and Emotions: Botanical terms are often employed to reveal the personalities and emotions of characters within a story. The sharpness and coherence of the language can highlight specific traits and emotional nuances, thereby enriching character development and emotional depth.

[9] The poem "Paddy Grain" uses botanical imagery to portray the personality and inner state of a paddy grain. The deliberate choice of words accentuates the traits and emotions of the character, crafting a vivid picture of the grain's life and role in the natural world.

The paddy grain is depicted as resilient and enduring. Expressions such as *"a life of storms"*, *"survived floods"*, and *"endured many natural disasters"* underline the paddy grain's

perseverance and strength. Despite hardships and challenges, the character remains steadfast. By referring to itself as “*a small paddy grain*” and admitting it “*can’t sing or laugh*”, the character shows humility and simplicity. Though modest and seemingly limited in ability, it embraces its role with quiet confidence. The phrase “*always useful because it feeds people*” highlights the character’s indispensable value in sustaining human life. In essence, the author uses the grain’s point of view to reflect its personality and emotional state, thereby crafting a vivid and multifaceted image that deepens the narrative and emotional resonance of the poem.

– Conveying Social, Cultural, and Environmental Commentary: Botanical terms are also used to express opinions or perspectives on societal, cultural, or natural issues. A writer’s thoughtful word choices can effectively emphasize ideas and messages.

[10] In the story “The Shameplant”, the author employs natural elements such as wind, dry leaves, plants, and a bird to explore social, cultural, and environmental themes. The shameplant is portrayed as a symbol of shyness and emotional vulnerability. When the brightly colored bluebird arrives and is admired by the surrounding plants, it reveals the plant’s yearning for recognition and acceptance-reflecting the human desire for validation. The admiration shown by the plants towards the bluebird conveys a message of respect for diversity in both nature and society. The author uses vivid and emotive language to paint a touching picture of confidence, sensitivity, beauty, and diversity in nature. Ultimately, through the symbolic use of natural imagery and carefully chosen words, the author effectively communicates themes of sensitivity, self-esteem, diversity, and admiration in both the natural world and human society.

1.4. Botanical Terms in Reading Texts as Educational Tool

In reading texts, botanical terms are not only used to describe the natural world but also serve as powerful educational tools. When skillfully applied, they allow writers to convey knowledge and values about plants, nature, and life - especially to children.

– Botanical terms can be used to introduce readers to various plant species, their biological characteristics, natural behaviors, and habitats. Detailed and vivid descriptions help children understand their surroundings and cultivate curiosity and appreciation for the natural world.

[11] The story “The Legend of the Miniature Roses” tells the tale of Net and Na - two orphaned sisters living together - but more than that, it is a narrative about love, care, and responsibility. Through the use of botanical terms, the story conveys important lessons about life and sibling bonds. In the story, flowers symbolize the love between the sisters. Net and Na are compared to two rose blossoms, with Net as the larger and Na the smaller one. Despite harsh circumstances, Net always looks after Na. Even when her feet are hurt, she carries Na on her back to escape danger. This touching image embodies unconditional love and care in a family. When the Buddha heals Net’s feet, a miracle occurs: crimson rose bushes bloom. This image not only represents healing but also becomes a symbol of life and hope in difficult times. Thus, the roses in this story are not just part of the scenery—they embody sisterhood, love, and vitality. The story teaches children about compassion, responsibility, and the value of friendship and family.

- Botanical descriptions in texts can create a positive learning environment for children, helping them develop reading comprehension, vocabulary, and critical thinking skills. The combination of storytelling and scientific content offers a multidimensional and engaging approach to learning.

[13] The poem “Fields of My Homeland” paints a vivid picture of expansive rice fields. With images such as “rice paddies, rice fragrance, grasses and flowers”, the poem not only illustrates

natural scenery but also delivers educational value to children. It describes lush green fields and sparkling golden flowers under the morning sun, helping children imagine the beauty of nature and sparking curiosity about the environment. Vivid plant imagery expands children's vocabulary and improves comprehension. Phrases like "*countless golden diamonds*", *fields like paintings*" and "*endless rice fragrance*" ignite wonder and exploration. The poem is more than a literary piece - it's a means of teaching scientific knowledge about plants. Through depictions of birds, grasshoppers, and green rice fields, children can understand complex relationships between plants and animals in natural ecosystems.

Botanical stories and descriptions can inspire children's creativity. They can invent new stories, draw pictures, or engage in hands-on activities related to plant life, fostering creative thinking and logical reasoning.

[14] In the excerpt "The Road to Sa Pa," the author vividly and delicately describes the natural scenery and plant life of Sa Pa, creating a rich and vibrant image of nature. The white clouds and cascading waterfalls evoke a mystical atmosphere that fuels imagination. Dark forests and bright red banana flowers blazing like flames create powerful, dynamic visuals. The colorful traditional clothing of Hmong, Tu Di, and Phu La children invites an understanding of ethnic cultures. Autumn in Sa Pa—with falling golden leaves, snowy rains, and gentle spring winds—depicts seasonal changes and encourages children to creatively explore how nature transforms. These plant images help children develop creative and logical thinking through storytelling, drawing, and activities that engage with the natural world and cultural heritage.

- Finally, botanical terms in texts can foster a love for and awareness of plants. Understanding and empathizing with the plant world encourages children to develop ethical thinking and responsible behavior toward the environment.

[15] The image of the guava tree in the passage "I Want to Be a Tree" is more than a simple plant - it embodies the protagonist Bum's memories and dreams. The guava tree symbolizes his hometown and childhood, planted by his grandfather when his mother was pregnant with him. The scent of ripe guavas recalls joyful moments with family and friends under its shade. Bum remembers caring for the tree with his grandfather, symbolizing familial love and learning through experience. The guava tree becomes a symbol of dreams and longing for home. It represents not just the natural world but also emotion, memory, and love for plant life -encouraging empathy and responsibility toward the environment.

2. CONCLUSION

The study of botanical terms in reading texts reveals the richness and profound symbolic value of this category of vocabulary. These terms not only reflect the diversity of the natural world, but also express the deep connection between humans and nature, while conveying messages about environmental awareness and protection.

Through the description of plants, flowers, and their characteristics, readers can vividly visualize the beauty of nature. Additionally, botanical terms carry strong cultural imprints, closely tied to the beliefs, traditions, and characteristic ways of thinking of different ethnic communities. Furthermore, the use of botanical terms also reflects each author's unique artistic style and personal intent.

As such, botanical terms contribute to raising awareness, fostering a love for nature, and nurturing a sense of environmental responsibility within the community.

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