




Nature's Metaphorical Tapestry: Unravelling Green Discourse in Pakistani Newspapers in English through an Ecolinguistic Lens

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Abstract

Metaphors wield a profound influence on our cognitive processes and actions. This research investigates the nature metaphors embedded in Pakistani newspapers in English within the context of green discourse. It delves into an analysis of how metaphors shape our conceptualization of the environment by considering their multiplicity, duality, and cultural diversity. By employing Stibbe's stories model as a foundational framework and applying semi-automated corpus methods to achieve the research objectives, this study discerns prevalent metaphorical structures that portray nature as a competitive entity, a personified being, a mechanical construct, a interconnected web, and a valuable resource. This research advocates for adopting a more responsible use of metaphorical language by the media personnel to have a more harmonious relationship with nature.

Key words: Ecolinguistics, environmental issues, green discourse, nature metaphors, Pakistani English Newspapers.

Introduction

The link between human cultures, human existence and other existences has been studied since antiquity and continues unabated

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Published Online: October 15, 2023.

ISSN (Print): 2520-7024; ISSN (Online): 2520-7032.

<https://reviewhumanrights.com>



with ever-emerging natural and cultural phenomena. The mounting environmental challenges like resource depletion, climate change, and biodiversity loss has made this relationship much more critical resulting in production of divergent narratives and discourses. Since all of these divergent narratives and discourses are constructed in language, it was but natural that a distinct field of study should emerge in time. Ecolinguistics is a counter-discursive response that is still in its evolutionary process. It has emerged as a powerful lens through which discourses are examined to know the ways in which humans treat each other, other living organisms and the natural world. It further investigates the influence of individual thoughts and collective worldviews on our socio-cultural processes.¹ The roots of Ecological linguistics can be traced back from the concept of ecology, which underscores interdependencies and various forms of mutual impact (German *wechselwirkungen*). It not only studies the use of language which forces human treatment of other organisms and the environment but also studies the thinking that is prevalent in these discourses.

The current study embarks on a journey that transcends disciplinary boundaries to explore and ecocritically analyse the nature metaphors in Pakistani environmental texts as published in Pakistani newspapers in English in order to expose the stories-we-live-by.

Metaphors are figurative expressions that allow us to convey abstract ideas by drawing on familiar concepts.² They have long played an underappreciated yet pervasive role in environmental communication.³ Metaphors hold a unique power in the realm of language and thought. They summarize complex ideas and emotions. Unlike the earlier understanding, metaphors are not mere linguistic ornaments, but rather influential linguistic tools that construct narratives, frame issues, evoke emotions, and influence decision-making processes. In the context of green discourse, the metaphors we employ play a crucial role in shaping our perceptions, behaviours and attitudes related to the environment. They can simultaneously serve as a mean of understanding and bridges of misunderstanding. In the context of metaphors in the green discourse, 'nature metaphors' have an important place to construct our cognitive landscapes and informing our environmental actions.

Drawing inspiration from the growing body of work in ecolinguistics which is an area of linguistics that recognizes language as a mirror reflecting our cultural and ecological values, the current study aims:

1. To identify and analyze metaphors related to nature in the green texts as published in the selected Pakistani newspapers in English.
2. To unleash the underlying conceptual frameworks that shape our beliefs and thinking towards life and the ecosystems that life depends upon.
3. To uncover the specific ideology(ies) that these nature metaphors reinforce.

In an era defined by the escalating environmental issues, the current study attempts to promote a deeper appreciation for the complex ways in which language intertwines with our perception of nature. By unravelling the metaphorical tapestry that envelops green discourse, it aims to equip individuals, journalists, scholars, environmentalists, and policymakers with the tools necessary to engage in more informed and effective conversations about the environment. Ultimately, the goal of the study is to identify and promote the benevolent stories to have a step further on the path toward a more sustainable and harmonious coexistence with other humans, living beings and the natural world.

Literature Review

The current study occupies a critical niche in the broader field of ecolinguistics specifically the later branch of ecolinguistics as started mainly with the seminal speech of Halliday in 1990 at International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA).⁴ The following review of the relevant literature provides an overview of key terms, themes, methodologies, and findings to lay a foundation for the study.

Green Discourse

The concept of environmental discourse or Greenspeak or green discourse is multifaceted and varies across different studies.⁵ This research takes green discourse as textual material that addresses a wide range of environmental topics including but not limited to environmental issues like climate change and pollution.

Metaphors in Green Discourse

Metaphor is a powerful tool for conveying complex concepts like time, courage, and environmentalism in a language (Lakoff and

Johnson, 1980). Criticizing the old view of metaphors as decorating tool used in literature, Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphors are integral part of the ordinary language and are fundamental to our conceptualization of the world.⁶ According to many ecolinguistics, metaphor is one of the linguistic devices which construct this worldview.⁷

Metaphor is an important component that ecolinguists have analysed in various discourses including the green discourse where they play a pivotal role in framing of environmental issues and shaping public thoughts.⁸ Romaine (1996) analyses metaphors in environmental and scientific discourses with an ecocritical lens and finds these discourses loaded with malevolent ideologies due to the way the environmental issues are framed. She finds the Gia and resource metaphor around nature and concludes that both of these metaphorical representations of nature provide room for the exploitation of nature.⁹ Though an important study in the realm of nature metaphors in green discourse, the study fails to give a sound methodology especially methods for identifying metaphors.

Botkin (1990) and Philippon (2004) also examine nature metaphors in their studies and contend that progress in addressing environmental issues is not possible without reevaluating our fundamental assumptions about nature. To make progress in addressing the environmental issues, we need to discard the existing toxic assumptions about nature which will pave a way for a fresh perspective. The toxic assumptions are furthered through the metaphors hidden in our discourses.^{10 11}

Meisner (1995) highlights some other metaphors about nature i.e., 'nature as economy', 'nature as home', 'nature as a living being', 'nature as music', 'nature as miracle', and 'nature as an agricultural crop' (p. 11-12). Meisner's two-principle framework for assessing the ecological value of nature metaphors is worth noting here. The first principle centers on understanding the metaphor's implications for nature-human relationships and its conceptual impact on the organization of nature. The second principle focuses on examining the emotions that the metaphor evokes towards nature, assessing whether the conveyed sentiments are positive, caring, fearful or indifferent.

Meisner explains this framework by taking the example of the metaphor, 'NATURE IS A HOME'. He critiques it as anthropocentric as it portrays nature as a constructed physical structure intended to be used by humans. Furthermore, he identifies it as dualistic because it separates humans from nature and terms humans and nature as two different entities rather than nature as a part of it.¹² Meisner's work holds significance as it critically examines nature metaphors and lays a valuable foundation for ecocritical analyses of metaphors for the upcoming studies like that of Stibbe (2015) which forms the basis of the current study.

Other important aspects of metaphors are their cultural¹³ and time dependency that have been shed light upon by all such studies like that of Harré et al. (1999). They mention Mill's study in which he proposes the three most important metaphors around 'nature' at different stages of the history of Western societies; that are the Middle Ages, in which nature was considered as a holy book; the Renaissance, where it was taken as a reflection of the human body; and from the Enlightenment onward, in which it was equated with a machine. The machine metaphor evolved alongside the technological advancements in the modern era. Initially, nature likened to a clock, then a steam engine, and, most recently, a computer. Even Harré et al. assert in their study in 1999 that the machine metaphor around nature dominates discourses, portraying nature as something amenable to human manipulation, control, and a repair. The same sentiment is supported by Romaine in her study as well.¹⁴

Further, Yan Ji (2020) and Verhagen (2008) investigate the role of metaphors in nature conservation. They identify many nature metaphors toxic to the environment and proposes to seek nature metaphors in different other cultures to present worldviews. Verhagen argues that metaphors like '*Nature as scala naturae*, *Nature as machine*' propagate anthropocentric ideologies as they cast humans as the master of the world having the authority to manipulate nature for their benefit (5). Verhagen's study is important because it gives a thorough analysis of nature metaphors and classifies metaphors into three categories: destructive, beneficial and ambivalent, a framework retained in the current study. However, the current study utilizes a larger corpus to do the task.

Mey (2018) points out problems with the way discourses employ ecological metaphors. She observes that the ecological issues

depicted in metaphors go beyond simple resource distribution. She appreciates the ecometaphor studies but also emphasizes that, while metaphors may help us perceive the issues more clearly, "every individual and nation must contribute to achieve a change towards a more ecologically oriented system of production, distribution, and consumption" (221).¹⁵

As discussed, metaphor as a persuasive tool has a special place for analysis in the field of critical ecolinguistics. Similarly, some studies have analysed nature metaphors to know how the environmental issues are framed, and the wider effect of the ideologies that these heuristic tools may have upon the life and the ecosystems that life depends upon. However, there is no extensive study discussing nature metaphors in the context of Pakistani texts as appeared in the newspapers in English. The current study attempts to fill this gap by identifying and analysing nature metaphors in the next section.

Methodology: Theoretical Framework

As mentioned, the stories theory put forward by Stibbe (2015) has been deployed in the current study as its framework. The theory explains story as collective thoughts of people that affect and at the same time are shaped by the discourses. Since the thoughts can be traced in the discourses that are expressed through language, analysing linguistic features of texts would reveal the stories/collective thoughts that they have. A developed and well-informed ecosophy is crucial to the analysis of the stories. The ecosophy of the current study is modified version of Stibbe's ecosophy. His ecosophy is a combination of many other ecosophies (for example, Naess, 1995; Alcamo & Bennett, 2003; Stocker, 2014; Crompton, 2010; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010) that can be described in one word as 'living'. It is important for living to have respect towards humans, other living beings and the ecosystems that life depends upon. All these are connected to each other; a slight disturbance in this web of life will bring consequences that would be fatal for life on earth.¹⁶

One of the eight stories that Stibbe outlined in his theory is metaphor. His metaphor theory is heavily inspired by the cognitive metaphor theories of Lakoff and Johnson (1980; 1999; 2003), Johnson (1983), and Lakoff (2010).¹⁷ Metaphor is the mapping of the source domain to the target domain, triggered by specific words.

Simply put, a metaphor is a way of explaining a complicated and abstract aspect of life that we are unfamiliar with by comparing it to another simple to comprehend and familiar physical aspect of existence. The target domain is the complicated abstract notion that has to be explained or comprehended, whereas the source domain is the well-known and simple concept. Stibbe goes on to list three different metaphor types: malevolent, ambivalent, and benevolent. Understanding the metaphors used in other cultures is essential if we are to comprehend the narratives that guide our lives. He points out that various cultures may have different interpretations of the same metaphor.

Materials and Methods

To achieve the objectives of the study, using Stibbe's theory as a framework, the study uses a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative techniques.

Data Collection and Copyrights

First, a specialized corpus is formed by collecting articles from three prominent Pakistani newspapers in English i.e. The News International¹⁸, The Express Tribune¹⁹, and The Dawn²⁰. To ensure a representative sample, environmental texts spanning from January 01, 2011 to December 31, 2020, are gathered from diverse sections, including but not limited to environmental reports, opinion articles, and editorials. The articles of all the three epaper websites are allowed to be printed and copied for personal or academic use. The corpus encompasses a variety of environmental topics such as pollution, climate change, and biodiversity conservation. Corpus techniques are selected because of its suitability to the nature of the study. Environmental discourses can be best analysed through corpus techniques.²¹

Texts Cleaning and Processing

Second, the gathered texts are cleaned by removing any extraneous information like advertisements and images. The text has been transferred to the TXT format in Microsoft Notepad. A separate TXT file is formed for each article. The resultant cleaned text is converted into a corpus through LanCSBox version 6.0. The tool tokenized the text into paragraphs and sentences. The corpus has total 3408 files and 2232161 tokens including punctuation and stop words. Further,

the NLTK package in Python is used to clean data by removing stop-words.

Metaphor Identification, Categorization, and Analysis

Metaphor identification is the next most critical step in the analysis. The study utilizes semi-automated methods for identifying metaphors in the text. First, the KWIC (Key Word in Context) feature of LancsBox is used to get concordance lines of the word 'nature'. Further, the lines are organized and checked for the metaphorical presence of the nature. Help has been taken from GraphColl feature of LancsBox for taking a visual of the collocations of nature.²² The automatic and manual procedures are done back and forth which is a common practice in corpus-based studies (Partington and Marchi, 2015).²³ Other studies on nature metaphors are also consulted for the identification of metaphors.

The identified metaphors then are categorized into thematic groups based on the source domains that they belong to. The thematic categorizes from other studies are also taken into consideration in this step.

The conceptual metaphors are further analysed ecocritically in light of the stories' framework and the ecosophy of the study.

Analysis and Discussion

The Wordlist option of LancsBox shows that the total occurrences of the lexical item 'nature' are 1090 out of which 444 times it occurs metaphorically. A closer look at these instances reveals the presence of 05 conceptual metaphors in the data. These metaphors are triggered by various lexical items/ types (can be termed as linguistic metaphors). Table 1 classifies the linguistic metaphors into conceptual metaphors.

Table 1: Classification of linguistic metaphors into conceptual metaphors

	Source Domain				
Target Domain↓	Competition	Person	Machine	Web	Resource
	Types and Frequency	Types and Frequency	Types and Frequency	Types and Frequency	Types and Frequency
NATURE	Champions (8)	Health (41)	Fix (98)	Web (8)	Conservation (141)
	Fighting (6)	Mother (20)	Repair (13)	Life (5)	Reseerve (15)

	win-win (3)	Save (5)	Tool (10)	Interconnection (5)	Protect (11)
		Treatment (3)	Maintenance (6)	Destroy (4)	Loss (6)
			Management (4)	Weaken (3)	
			Mismanagement (4)	Thicken (3)	
			Toolkit (3)	Disturb (2)	
			Misuse (3)		
			Use (2)		
			Condition (2)		
Total	17	69	145	30	183

A brief analysis and discussion of these metaphors may reveal the different stories that the use of these metaphors prevail and if the stories are malevolent, ambivalent, or benevolent.

NATURE IS A COMPETITION

As a result of its vividness and vibrancy, the conceptual metaphor NATURE IS A COMPETITION might be categorized as a novel metaphor. Table 1 lists the trigger words from the corpus that make up the source frame of 'competition' for the target domain 'nature', such as "fighting" and "win-win."

The context of a few of these words in the corpus is mentioned below:

1. ...the WEF recognised the government's green initiatives and stated that **champions for nature** are a community of leaders who contend to protect the environment, combat climate change, support global economic growth and save the world against any environmental degradation until 2030. (Tribune, 2020: 6).

In Example 1, the word "champion" acts as a hint to the conceptual metaphor NATURE IS A COMPETITION. Typically, competition involves several parties working together to accomplish a single goal (Online Oxford Learners' Dictionary).²⁴ Similar to how there are winners and losers in competitive sports, there are always winners and losers in competition. Competition is a fundamental and essential idea in human cultures. Larson (2011) asserts that humans have a built-in tendency for competition. The urge to get resources for our existence forces us to compete with one another or even other living things.²⁵

These champions/winners should make every effort to further their interests. Therefore, the reasons why the human champions are winners, are because they "protect the environment, combat climate change, support global economic growth, and save the world from any environmental degradation" (Example 1). Humans are competing in this situation to preserve the earth from environmental deterioration and to save the environment against global climate change. So in a way, we are the saviours. Humans compete to be the best, and the winner is the one who saves the world the most or whose activities have the most positive impact on the globe. Because of his "Billion Tree Tsunami" initiative, Imran Khan is the "real champion of nature" (Tribune, 2020: 6). His objective is to protect the environment by planting more trees. However, the same saviours—humans—are also to blame for the environment's first decline. Additionally, Example 1 states, that promoting "global economic growth" as one of the characteristics of a champion for the environment. One of the main sources of ecological problems is economic expansion. Now, the world needs a hero to foster economic development while also protecting the environment from further deterioration, two opposing goals. Ultimately, environmental deterioration will be a cost of economic progress.

On the contrary, Larson (2011) argues in favour of the competition metaphor and asserts that it serves as a 'powerful, ideological metaphor' that influences and justifies our actions towards the natural world and toward one another(75). He suggests that we can achieve a sustainable future 'by balancing corporate liberalism with a more cooperative worldview' (86). This perspective, however, does not align with the ecological balance that is advocated in the present study.

The competition metaphor tends to promote anthropocentric views and economic growth, which are among the root causes of environmental degradation due to their reliance on human superiority and consumerism. Contrary to this, the ecosophy of the current study contends that human-centric attitudes and consumerism as they are not good for the environment (Stibbe, 2015). Therefore, the metaphor may be termed a malevolent one within the context of the current study.

NATURE IS A PERSON

The corpus contains several instances of nature being personified. From an individual organism to the *Gia* hypothesis, multiple levels of personification of nature exist. This metaphorical phrase is conceptually triggered by words like "mother" and "health" (for more information, see table 1).

Some of these terms' corpus contexts are described below:

2. Snow leopard ... is the indicator of **ecosystem health** in the harsh terrain. (Dawn, 2017: 112)
3. Water is the **Soul** of the Earth (Tribune, 2019: 183)

The source frame in this conceptual metaphor is a 'person', while 'nature' is the target domain. A person or creature needs to breathe, eat well, and have access to a few other things in order to live and be healthy. Similarly, this metaphor indicates that nature has to be healthy in order to continue existing. The contexts in which this metaphor has been used show that a balance between species is necessary for a healthy environment. Among these creatures, the presence of birds and snow leopards is a sign of a thriving ecology (Example 2). Similar to this, monoculturalism is harmful to the wellbeing of nature (Dawn, 2016: 20). Hence, the context of the metaphor depicts that health of the nature is dependent upon diversity.

Studies that have examined this metaphor have come to varying findings on this metaphor's nature. This metaphor, according to Lackey (2007), is harmful because scientists rather than policymakers determine the objectives for maintaining health.²⁶ Nerlich and Jaspal (2012) see this metaphor as damaging since it proposes "geo-engineering" and "chemotherapy" as a cure for nature's ailments (139).²⁷ Keulartz (2007), on the other hand, is more complimentary when discussing the metaphor. He contends that this metaphor demands "cooperation between natural, social, and medical scientists," which may lead to some agreement among these individuals regarding what is meant by "ecosystem health."²⁸

On the contrary, geoengineering and technology are not included in the corpus of the current study as being the keys to a healthy environment. As was previously noted, maintaining a balance among species, multiculturalism, and greenery are guidelines for being healthy. According to Stibbe (2015), the ecological balance would be improved by fundamentally altering the present cultural and social

structures and giving all living things and all civilizations the same value. The contextual occurrence of this metaphor supports so.

NATURE IS MOTHER is the corpus' instance of the person metaphor that is more precise. A few of the corpus's instances of this type are:

4. ...please don't call me **mother** if you can't respect and treat me like a **mother** (Dawn, 2012: 61).
5. ...[animals] have cared for mother earth far more than humans... (Dawn, 2019: 230)

James Lovelock, a proponent of the Gaia theory, frequently employed this metaphor (Stibbe, 2015). Gaia or Gaea is the personification of earth in Greek mythology. She is the mother of all life and the goddess of the ground. Mother plays a variety of characters; she nurtures life and looks after the kids, she is a woman full of affection and so on. Earth also provides for life, tends to nourish life there, and feeds her offspring. Though children err, their mothers always show them grace. She never stops praying for them. Similar to how animals make errors, people do too, yet Earth nevertheless provides for them with food, shelter, and other necessities. Animals and other beings are also children of Earth, and as example 5 demonstrates, they are better children since they take better care of their mother than humans do. Children can therefore behave badly as humans do or behave well as animals do.

One of the common metaphors used in various civilizations is "Gaia." Mother Earth is how we refer to the Earth in Pakistani culture. The Gaia metaphor is viewed from several angles. The Gaia metaphor, according to Romaine (1996), is 'anthropocentric' since it places a higher value on people than on other animals. Further, Berman (2001) questions the validity of referring to Earth as a female. The oppression of women by men and that of Earth by humans are comparable. Similar to how women are diminished and given less rights, Earth is also diminished and granted fewer rights. He elaborates and states that the identification of women and femininity with nature in the context of environmental discourse upholds patriarchal norms and dominance. Therefore, it is clear that the rape metaphor and uncritical gendering of nature both recreate the prevailing oppressive paradigm.²⁹

On the other hand, Verhagen (2008) describes the Gaia metaphor as being more positive and claims that the personification of Earth

"implies that it has intrinsic value and that its interests as a whole are worthy of human consideration." It is to be welcomed since it fosters a feeling of regard for life (8).

In Pakistani culture, the standing of the mother is distinct. Islam, the foundation of Pakistani society, accords mothers a very high position. 'Paradise lies beneath the feet of mother,' the Prophet SAWS stated (Nasai, Jihad, 6; Sunan al-Nas', 3104). Such Hadiths are numerous and demand utmost respect for motherhood. The Pakistani society is the same. The Gaia metaphor calls for the same reverence and protection of Earth. This regard is depicted in example 4. According to Mother Earth's message to people, people shouldn't refer to Earth as their mother if they can't treat and respect her like one. Earth should be treated with the same reverence in Pakistani culture as a mother would get.

Because it "gives a reason for the existence of forests, plants, and nature beyond the narrow utilitarian goal of supporting human lives," the Gaia metaphor is anthropomorphic but not anthropocentric (Stibbe, 2015: 71). Other living things, in addition to humans, are referred to as offspring of Earth in example 5, as may be seen. Additionally, as the metaphor calls for a respect for the Earth, we may categorize it as beneficent, at least in the context in which it has been used in the corpus of the current study.

NATURE IS A MACHINE

NATURE IS A MACHINE is yet another significant and powerful metaphor in the corpus. Table 1 lists this conceptual metaphor's cue words. These all fall within the category of machines, as can be seen from the list of terms. Nature serves as the target domain and the machine serves as the source frame in this metaphor. A tangible frame is needed to map and understand the complexity of nature; in this instance, the frame is a machine. Several samples from the corpus providing context for the metaphor, are provided below:

6. **Fixing** this will require massive investment in clean technology (Tribune, 2014: 66).
7. **Fixing** pollution and global warming is not rocket science, it just needs an honest and sincere effort. (Tribune, 2013: 139)
8. Broken bank is a crisis we can **fix**; broken Arctic we cannot. (Dawn, 2015: 66).

9. The only way we can **repair** the damage done by us is by planting more trees... (Dawn, 2012: 27)

10. ...let it [nature] **repair** itself. (Dawn, 2020: 65).

A machine, is a piece of equipment that does a particular job by using electricity, steam, gas etc. (Online Oxford Learner's Dictionary). Machines provide ease by completing a particular task without putting much human effort in it. In the world of equipment, regular maintenance guarantees top performance. When nature is compared to a machine, it functions to assist mankind but also requires careful supervision. Like any machine, when misused, it may malfunction and needs to be repaired. Planting trees, using honest efforts, and funding clean technologies are all part of repairing nature (Examples 6-9). This illustrates the concept that the planet is an entity that may be repaired and is under the care of humans. This corresponds to another metaphor; PLANET IS A REPAIRABLE ENTITY. However, some ecological damages, such as damage to the Arctic and permanent marine erosion, may not be recoverable (example 8). Earth cannot be replaced like a machine, which is why searchers are looking for other planets. Are we planning to discard this machine and search for another one?

While the machine metaphor purports to safeguard nature, it really reduces nature to a servile state and elevates humans to the position of the system's superior operators. According to Stibbe (2015), this metaphor implies that individual problems may be resolved or changed without taking into account the larger ecological system since nature is seen as an assembly of pieces. This may encourage the mistaken notion that discrete concerns, such as those solved by geo-engineering or tree planting, are sufficient to resolve ecological problems without addressing the underlying social and cultural systems that underlie them. Even the admission of irreparable harms (Example 8) does not lead to a fundamental change in these broader institutions; rather, it favours technical remedies to prevent such harm. Consequently, the machine metaphor obscures the fact that human lifestyles and cultures are the root causes of environmental harm, diverting attention from the need for profound changes in these aspects to mitigate further damage.

The metaphor further supports the concept that environmental damages may be repaired just as readily as damages to any other

machine, such as a vehicle or computer. The repair is often carried out by scientists, decision-makers, and engineers, suggesting that other people have no need to bring about social and cultural changes that might help to contribute to restoring the health of bigger systems on which life depends (Nerlich and Jaspal, 2012).

Furthermore, this metaphor excludes other living beings 'who live within and are part of nature' (Stibbe, 2015: 69; Verhagen, 2008).

The current study aligns with the view of the previous research about this metaphor and terms it as malevolent because it promotes a story that positions humans in a controlling and superior role, emphasizes geo-engineering solutions, assigns responsibility for ecological repair predominantly to scientists, politicians, and engineers, and disregards the appreciation of non-human life on Earth.

NATURE IS A WEB

Another crucial metaphor for illustrating how everything in nature is interrelated is NATURE IS A WEB. As can be seen from the list of linguistic cues in Table 1, all of these words fall within the umbrella of the web domain. As was previously mentioned, since nature is a complicated idea, a tangible framework must be used to map it out and make sense of it; in this case, the framework is the web. The web metaphor used to describe nature demonstrates how intricately connected the many ecosystem units are to one another. The World Wide Web or other forms of web can also be referred to as the source frame web. However, in the web metaphor, a spider web is typically used for mapping, as interconnectedness is one of the spider web's characteristics. A web's strings are intricately but methodically linked to one another. However, the strings are not created equally strong or weak. While some may be connected by flimsy or loose strings, some of the spots may be joined by a thicker string. However, even the strongest strings are disrupted if a connection is broken at any point in the web, which has an impact on every point in the web. Similar to this, unseen strings that provide all living things with food and other requirements, form the web of life, or web of food. All of the living beings including humans are dependent upon each other's presence in this complex web of nature. This connection may be stronger among some living beings than the others.

Following are a few instances of this metaphor from the corpus showing the way this web metaphor has been used and explained in the corpus:

11. All living things have their own unique role in **ecosystem**, if we remove one, we disturb the whole system. Imagine it as all living things joined together in a **web of life**, if one string of the web **breaks**, it rocks and weakens the whole web... many species of animals and plants have disappeared, and steps are taking place to preserve those who are endangered and make efforts to prevent loss of further valuable life forms. (Dawn, 2019: 88)
12. ...an estimated 80% of the fish caught in coastal waters depend on the **food web** within the **mangrove ecosystem**. (Tribune, 2019: 98)
13. The decline of environmental **systems** on earth that are all **interconnected** have been **disturbed** by human activity (Dawn, 2017: 77)

Example 11 explains the metaphor NATURE IS A WEB in detail. It explains that any disturbance in the web of life may disturb the whole web of life because in this web the existence of one being is dependent upon that of the other. Examples 12 and 13 also show this interconnectedness. These examples point towards many mini-webs within the larger web of life. The mini web in question is of mangrove in example 12. However, disturbance in these mini-webs will affect the larger web of life. Further, the major culprits behind disturbing the Earth's ecological system are humans (Example 13).

One of the metaphors that includes people as only one aspect of nature is NATURE IS A WEB. According to Stibbe (2015), humanity 'has not woven the web of life' (72). We are only a single thread in it. Any changes we make to the web affect us personally. Everything is interconnected. Therefore, this metaphor implies that, because humans are a component of the web, anything they do will impact not just the other components of the web of life but also themselves (Raymond et al. 2013:).³⁰ However, species are becoming extinct due to human activity which will have a ripple effect on the entire web of life including humans (Examples 11-13). Stibbe (2015) asserts that one way to evaluate metaphors involving nature is to determine whether or not people are regarded as a part of it. Humans are viewed by NATURE IS A MACHINE as an entity apart from nature

and not a component of it. The analogy NATURE IS A PERSON also places human beings outside of nature rather than as a part of it. By Stibbe's standard for evaluating nature metaphors, NATURE IS A WEB is a metaphor that is beneficial for life and larger ecosystems that life depends upon.

However, as Yan Ji (2020) explains, the metaphor NATURE IS A WEB has several drawbacks. The inability of the web of life's nonlinguistic complexity to be "fully expressed in a few words" is one of its limits (371). Furthermore, people could mistake the World Wide Web for the Internet and try to translate the characteristics of the WWW onto the characteristics of the target domain.

In short, in order to make the phenomenon easier to understand, the web metaphor thus maps the complex interconnectedness of natural beings to the characteristics of a spider web, but it does so "at the expense of detail and at the risk of conflating it with the other "web" metaphors" (Yan Ji, 2020: 371). Despite all of its flaws, the metaphor NATURE IS A WEB falls within the category of benevolent metaphors.

NATURE IS A RESOURCE

In NATURE IS A RESOURCE, nature is considered a valuable entity that can be used, abused, protected and conserved. The corpus shows the occurrence of 'conservation' as 141 times indicating the major mapping of this metaphor. 'Protect' is another trigger word.

14. If we don't act soon to **protect and restore** nature and **use** it sustainably, then we will end up destroying the interconnected web of life on Earth (Tribune, 2019: 98)

15. ...work towards the **conservation** of nature and **natural resources** (News, 2018: 72)

The above instances show that the idea of conservation and protection of nature is akin to safeguarding a valuable resource much like saving money for personal benefit. This utilitarian approach focuses upon the idea of responsible management of natural resources for own benefit taking nature as having extrinsic value rather intrinsic one.

Conclusion

The mounting environmental challenges and the apprehension for environmental well-being, as conveyed through language, have

prompted a rigorous examination of discourse with the objective of assessing whether the linguistic features employed therein promote stories that are environmentally conducive/benevolent, ambivalent or detrimental/ malevolent, under the banner of Ecolinguistics. Of particular significance are metaphors, which serve as pivotal instruments through which our perceptions of the world are shaped; these perceptions affect our decision-making and policies and, ultimately, our actions. Consequently, a meticulous investigation was undertaken in this study to ecocritically scrutinize these metaphors in Pakistani newspapers in English, with the aim of unveiling the hidden stories.

The identified several metaphorical occurrences are placed into 05 major groups showing nature as a person to be respected, competition to be champion of, machine to be used, repaired and discarded, web having complex strands, and as a resource to be protected and reserved for the use of the future generation. The recognition of these metaphors highlights the multifaceted nature of how nature is metaphorically represented in the Pakistani print media. The study identifies many of the occurrences of these metaphors constituting malevolent stories.

Nature metaphors have been analyzed by many other studies in different contexts (for example, Nerlich and Jespal, 2012; and Ji, 2020). However, as mentioned in the literature review, metaphors are culturally specific and the same metaphor may be mapped with different features in different cultures (Stibbe, 2015). For instance, the Gia/person metaphor has been termed malevolent by Romaine (1996) due to its anthropocentric nature, and by Berman (2001) due to the sex of the mother. However, the current study terms it as a positive one, as in Pakistani and Islamic cultures mothers are given a high status and we are taught to respect mothers.

Varying ecosophies of studies is also a cause of different interpretations of metaphors. For instance, The competition frame is termed as a benevolent by Larson (2011) stating, 'by balancing corporate liberalism with a more cooperative worldview, we may set ourselves more firmly on the sustainability path' (86). However, the ecosophy of the current study terms it as malevolent as it favours economic growth which is the main cause of environmental destruction.

The ecocritical discourse analysis enriches the understanding of the operation of metaphors in green discourses. It highlights how metaphors are intentionally or unintentionally deployed to construct narratives, evoke emotions, and communicate otherwise complex environmental issues to the audience/ readers. Metaphors are persuasive tools and can influence environmental decision-making and affect our actions towards the environment by shaping general public attitudes. The use of nature metaphors examined in the current study promotes both malevolent and benevolent stories that depict, effect, and promote environmentally destructive and beneficial actions. For instance, metaphors portraying nature as a web show human inclusiveness in the web of life and the interconnectedness of all beings and systems in nature. These stories are benevolent for the environment. On the other hand, metaphors that term nature as a resource promote utilitarian and anthropocentric approaches towards nature which may evoke insensitivity towards nature. So, care is important in the selection of metaphors especially for media reporters for fostering more environmentally friendly communication.

Future research avenues may explore the pragmatic impact of metaphors on readers. Additionally, a comparative analysis of environmental discourse in other countries could offer valuable insights into the unique characteristics of Pakistan's environmental communication. Further, a temporal analysis of the evolution of the metaphorical trends over time may help in tracking changing public sentiments and policy priorities.

Notes:

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