



RESEARCH PAPER

Exploring the Role of Language and Ecology in Fatima Bhutto's *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon*

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study is to analyze the connectedness of language and ecology in *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* by Fatima Bhutto. Stibbe (2015) theoretical framework provides the basis for content analysis and explores how language serves in forming the sense of place, identity and landscape and how it finally influences the perception of the environment by the reader. It attempts to consider how the language reflects the writer's choice concerning regional dialects and indigenous languages, and choice in view of the close relationship that exists between language, culture and ecology. The findings demonstrate the effects of language and ecological motifs in Fatima Bhutto's *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* and help to understand the author's concept of environmental deterioration and political conflicts as well as the impact of language on the development of ecological awareness.

KEYWORDS Eco-Linguistics, Environment, Fatima Bhutto, Language, Nature

Introduction

Language is an important medium for how perceptions, ideas, and beliefs of humans about the environment are expressed. Thus, it stands in the middle of presenting the environment as a set of disposable objects or sources of utility or, on the contrary, as a set of delicate interconnected systems that deserves respect and care. Ecolinguistics is a branch of study majoring in ecology and linguistics; this branch of study entails the study of the ecological content in discourses of any form –be it in writing, literature, or even in chit chat. Einar Haugen is considered as one of the pioneers for the concept of 'language ecology' or 'ecology of language.' Though the terms seem hostile, they are actually friendly terms, used for the need of observing the ecological effects of language as well as dissecting the ecology with the help of language. The general topic and subject of Haugen's works, particularly, his *The Ecology of Language* published in 1972 is on ecological concepts where he compares the language to an organism and discusses the concepts like contact, conflict, growth, planning and etc. Also, Halliday 1990 reminds the audience and readership of applied linguistic to concern themselves with issues such as classism, species destruction, and pollution not just as biology or physical concerns, but as topics of paramount importance. This interparty approach emphasizes how languages affect human and environmental health, thus demonstrating the pathetic role of language in ecological awareness and practices.

The Shadow of the Crescent Moon was written by Fatima Bhutto, it is a rather sad story which takes place in the troubled region of Waziristan in Pakistan. It explores the nature of people's existence in the context of a society that has been ravaged by war and

focuses on the relationship between the individual, society, and the state. Therefore, the purpose of this work is to analyse the use of the language and ecology in the novel applying the theoretical framework of Stibbe's ecolinguistics.

As defined by Stibbe (2015) ecolinguistics involve the interaction of language regarding the construction of ecological knowledge as well as its impact on the environment and the perception people have towards ecology. This framework is thus quite helpful in the context of texts that connect individual people's lives with ecological issues. This paper argues that such analysis can be done fairly easily in Bhutto's work because her poetry is rich in descriptions of the natural and built world and in socio-political relations that constitute it.

Language is also a very significant factor in *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* that shapes characters' individuality and their relations with the surrounding world. The novel under discussion shows the links between the man and the environment, and the role language plays in the socio-political strife. For example, repetition of the symbol of the crescent moon creates an association between the concept of the moon, which follows schedule, violence, and hope in the area, emotions and actions.

Further, the nature of how these two narratives is presented with a special focus on the linguistic techniques that Bhutto uses, helps to understand the cultural and environmental background of Waziristan. The author uses local patois, refers to cultural events and situations, and uses abounding descriptions of the natural landscapes that help bring out the ecological and cultural differences of the region. This concurs with Stibbe's (2015) classification of language as a tool that can either be destructive on ecological processes or cultivate sustainability and ecological consciousness.

Despite the increasing academic interest in the relationship between literature and ecology, there is a notable lack of future studies exploring how the interplay of language and ecology operates, particularly in contemporary South Asian literature and in works from conflict regions. The research provides the reader with a storyline situated in the context of Waziristan; a territory that suffers from both, environmental and social unrest. However, the ecological aspects of Bhutto's contribution have not been investigated in depth based on ecolinguistics perspective.

Literature Review

Stanlaw (2020) maintains that language and ecology influences "physical and social ecological context in which language operates, and in turn, how language and discourse affect the environment and ecology". Language and ecology are deeply interconnected, with language serving as a powerful tool that influences our perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors towards the natural world (Stibbe, 2013). Moreover, he emphasizes upon the capacity of any language to analyze the narratives that shape our lives, such as those promoting infinite economic expansion, the dominance of nature by humans and consumerism. He has proposed eight different categories or cognitive domains that may take form of a story. These are ideology, framing, metaphor, identity, conviction, erasure and salience (p.17). By exploring these domains, challenging prevailing stories and delving into innovative linguistic frameworks, eco linguistics emerges as a pivotal force in fostering environmental consciousness and encouraging proactive steps towards sustainability. Through the words we use to describe nature, ecosystems, and environmental issues, language shapes how we interpret and appreciate the environment. Moreover, language and ecology are intricately linked with the ecological health of a discourse reflected by the use of concepts and stories in the

discourse, and the direction it points toward in terms of practices necessary to sustain the habitat of humans, animals, and plants. Stories are unique because they not only reflect conditions of the time, but are also co-constructors of cultural, historical, and ecological knowledge with time and repetition. (Chun-ling, 2021).

The interaction between language and ecology in the framework of literary analysis is gradually gaining popularity and is studied, in particular, from the perspective of ecolinguistics. According to Stibbe (2015), ecolinguistics deals with how language perpetuates, images and impacts the ecosystem and human beings. This theoretical framework has proved very useful for the interpretation of literary works, which link individual lives with environmental issues. But its implementation to the South Asian Literature particularly the texts written in conflict areas, still hasn't got the attention it deserves.

Critical discourse analysis interacts with ecolinguistics in the sense offers by Stibbe (2014) by broadening the focus of discourse from interactions of people with each other to people's interaction with the environment that supports all life forms. Nevertheless, ecolinguistics differs from discourse analysis in several ways being critical of discourses that encourage unsustainable practices on the natural environment while endorsing discourses that preserve the integrity of the environment. This broad perception of power relations enriches the concept by including the effects targeting non-human objects and generations to come. Stibbe (2015) expands on these concepts in his widely-read book where he explains that 'the stories we live by' is not referring to actual story-narratives but dominant discursive patterns which proscribe the ways of thinking and speaking and, consequently, a way of being in the world. As these discourses or ecosophies make their appearance through linguistic forms of ideology, framing, metaphor, evaluation and identity, conviction, erasure, and salience, it demonstrates that discourses are at the center of determining environmental attitudes and actions. In Fill (2019) combining Halliday's (1990) Systemic Functional Linguistics, the author explores how language creates a rank individual, and other living things ordering the world in ways where non-human beings are a resource to be used based on human imposed criteria.

As such, Fatima Bhutto's *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* is especially relevant for the current ecolinguistics research because it gives a clear picture of Waziristan's environment. Thus, the novel shows a territory which is destroyed both by the natural catastrophes and socio-political unstable situation, and the language and imagery used by the author contributes to the representation of these concerns. Therefore, the narrative technique and the use of language by Bhutto can only be said to be useful in establishing the ecological and cultural diversity of Waziristan making it a perfect text to apply Stibbe's (2015) framework.

Akin prior studies on Bhutto's work, the structural aspects of her work have elicited emphasis on the socio-political impact within societies of different regions across the globe rather than the ecological ramifications of such paradigms. For example, Lall (2014) illustrates how the novel has political content to describe the insurgency in "The Shadow of the Crescent Moon" which focuses on the issues of resistance. In the same vein, Khan (2016) explores the signaling of conflict and its effects on the lives of characters in Bhutto's novel. The socio-political structure of the narrative is investigated adequately in these studies, yet the ecological horse is left relatively uncovered.

Ecolinguistics, as a relatively new and expanding branch of study, has been used to analyze artefacts of literature that contain the coded messages of language in relation

to the environment. For instance, Fill & Mühlhäusler (2001) have touched on this discourse within literature on how language constructs the environmental impressions and stance. In a similar vein Garrard (2012) has focused on how the literary texts publicize ecological consciousness and environmental ethic. It is thus possible to recognize that ecolinguistics can help to investigate the ecological aspect of literary texts.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge by analyzing how Bhutto's linguistic strategies in *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* reflect and shape the book's ecological and socio-political landscape. This analysis will be based on Stibbe's (2015) framework on ecological and socio-political dimensions. Using Stibbe's (2015) point of view one can conclude that language can perpetuate harm to the environment or it can help in the struggle for preserving the environment and creating ecological consciousness. Therefore, through the analysis of Bhutto's discursive strategies, this study aims to determine how politics of representation influence our perception of the ecological and social concerns in Waziristan.

This research has significance as it focuses on how language is useful in the creation of an understanding of ecological consciousness using available literature. Besides enriching the field of ecolinguistics with research, this work also draws attention to the ecological and cultural characteristics of a region that is not given adequate consideration in comparison to the penal colony's literary aspects. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to support the claim about language as the tool that shapes and mirrors the interactions of the society with the environment, through the lens of ecological approaches applied to *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon*.

Material and Methods

This study is primarily qualitative in nature and focusses on a textual analysis of *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* by Fatima Bhutto. With a focus on language and text from a semiotic standpoint, the main goal is to investigate how Bhutto's language creates and reveals ecological and sociopolitical realities in the text. To explicitly identify the ecological elements hidden in the text, the interpretive research technique makes use of Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistics framework.

Data Collection

The concern data for this study is the textual samples taken from *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon*. Systematic emphasis is placed on sections which present nature, the character's relation to it, or any references to ecology or episodes involving organisms. The extracted pieces are based on the concern which ecolinguistics involves, on how language builds ecological realities and on how it changes the readers' ecological sensibility.

Theoretical Framework

Due to the focus of the study, the theoretical foundation employed is Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistics, which is concerned with the intersections of language and ecology. Stibbe has published an article in the Routledge Companion to Critical Environmental Plant Studies in the year 2015 concentrating on the idea that language is the key determinant of our ecological know how and doing. He defines the so-called 'psychologies', which are in fact 'stories we live by' that shape our view of the world and our roles in the context of such a view. It is possible to use these stories towards ecological sustainability, or work towards ecological degradation. Following this, the ecolinguistics

proposed by Stibbe (2015) is used to make sense of the results. In this case, it entails analyzing how Bhutto writes such a text that represents and produces ecological and socio-political world. The concepts of 'narratives that we inhabit' and 'narratives of the destruction and regeneration of ecology' as laid out by Stibbe are particularly relevant for the analysis.

Data Analysis

This section of research synthesizes the obtained data with the ecological & socio-political issues that have been described in the novel. This involves explaining how Bhutto's story does make readers more conscious of ecological endangerment and how one may conceptualise the function of language in representing ecological and social matters. Analyzing each example, it is necessary to consider Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistic parameters – evaluative discourse, relation discourse, use of the concept of ecology and cultural figures.

Bhutto frequently uses vivid imagery to depict the natural landscape of Waziristan. One such passage reads:

"The mountains, once lush with green, now stood barren, their slopes scarred by the relentless advance of conflict and neglect. The river that used to nourish the valley had turned into a trickle, its waters muddied and polluted."

This description uses the mode of evaluative discourse, to expound on the calamitous state that the environment is in. It transports me to the mountains which it described as being once green but now 'barren; and 'scarred' due to the effects of conflict. The once-sustaining river has turned into a "stream" with "murky and contaminated". In these decision, Bhutto builds another story of the environmental degradation of the country based on the socio-political instability of the region.

Stibbe (2015) also focuses on the use of language to assess ecological factors. In this case, Bhutto uses more pathos and describes the natural environment in terms of grief, which passes through persons and societies. This says can serve as an evaluation to readership hence installing a perception of the implication of conflict and neglect to ecology.

Bhutto's characters often interact with their environment in ways that reflect their inner turmoil and resilience. For instance:

"Sikandar walked through the dusty streets, the air thick with the smell of diesel and burning wood. He paused by the old fig tree, its leaves wilting under the harsh sun. This tree had stood tall during his childhood, offering shade and fruit, but now it seemed to wither with the town."

In this passage, relationship discourse is employed so as to connect the character's mental wellbeing and the state of the natural environment. It is metaphorical for the decay of Sikandar and the town which is underlined by the fact that this tree of prosperity no longer yields fruits but 'wilts under the sun.'

According to Stibbe (2015), relationship discourse is vital in creating relations between man and the environment. Overwhelmed by emotions, Sikandar parallels with a fig tree, which illustrates Bhutto's capability of reflecting interdependence between human and nature. This relationship helps to emphasize the dependence of the environmental situation on the quality of human life and vice versa.

Bhutto employs metaphors to convey deeper ecological and socio-political meanings. A prominent example is:

"The crescent moon hung low in the sky, a sliver of silver in the darkness, symbolizing both the fragile hope and the persistent shadow of conflict over the land."

The crescent moon serves as a metaphor for the region's dual realities: as a symbol for a rather frail hope for peace and the consistent presence of war as its opposite. This assonance between the movement of violence and movement of hope in Waziristan entails the natural world and human experiences.

In the study published by Stibbe (2015), the author focuses on the point that metaphors are significant for the formation of ecological views. In the case of Bhutto, the crescent moon can be seen symbolizing the interrelation between optimism and war. While this metaphor enhances the dreaming voice and enlarges the imaginative horizon of the readers, it also leads those readers to contemplation of ecological and socio-political settings.

Bhutto integrates cultural references and local dialects to enrich the ecological narrative. For instance:

"The villagers spoke of the 'pahar,' the mountains that had always been their protectors and providers. But now, the 'pahar' seemed distant, their peaks shrouded in the haze of war and neglect."

The use of the term "pahar" (mountain) in the local dialect emphasizes the cultural significance of the natural landscape. The mountains, once seen as protectors, now appear "distant" and "shrouded in the haze of war," reflecting the cultural and ecological disruption caused by conflict.

In the same language, according to Stibbe (2015), identity is present, and by analysing it, one can understand how the cultural identities relate with the specified environment. The intervention of the regional tones and numerous cultural items permitting their device, referring to their environment — the proximity of the persons to the ground. It also has the appearance of the ecological deterioration of cultural identity and provides means to demonstrate the consequences of political, social, environmental shifts.

And here, one learns the variety of ways in which language is used as an instrument to sustain and creation ecological and socio-political realities. Examining the Bhutto's discursive approaches it is possible to comprehend how intertwined is human joy with environmental well-being as she combines the evaluative discourse with the relationship discourse, the metaphors and the cultural topics. With regard to the issue examined in this paper, this research provides the understanding of how language either contributes to or hinders the cultivation of ecological self-awareness and thus offers evidentiary support for the ecological approach to the assessment of literature.

Bhutto vividly describes the environmental degradation of Waziristan:

"The mountains, once lush with green, now stood barren, their slopes scarred by the relentless advance of conflict and neglect. The river that used to nourish the valley had turned into a trickle, its waters muddied and polluted."

Bhutto uses discourse of evaluation in order to draw the readers' attention to the sorry state of the natural environment. The shift from 'Once rolling hills of green, this land' to 'Barren, scarred' is used to emphasize the deviousness of war and abandonment on the environmental surroundings. The river is also now a mere "trickle", the water is "muddied and polluted", and therefore represents the environment in its abused state. Thus, through these linguistic matters, the subject position that Bhutto builds up puts an accent on the socio-political consequences of the degradation of the ecology of Waziristan.

Characters in "The Shadow of the Crescent Moon" of the Crescent Moon interact with their environment, reflecting deeper socio-ecological dynamics:

"Sikandar walked through the dusty streets, the air thick with the smell of diesel and burning wood. He paused by the old fig tree, its leaves wilting under the harsh sun. This tree had stood tall during his childhood, offering shade and fruit, but now it seemed to wither with the town."

This particular passage employs the use of relationship discourse to elaborate the correlation between Sikandar's life and the changes in Waziristan environment. The fig tree which once depicted the sign of abundance and food source to the town now is depicted as wilting under the scorching sun, as does Sikandar's feeling of hopelessness and literally the dismal picture of the town. According to Stibbe, this interaction would be translated in his framework as focusing on relationships between feelings and conditions of people and society on the one hand, and the deterioration of the environment on the other. Thus, it demonstrates how language unveils the interdependency between people and contexts as an intrinsic dimension of people's and communities' lives.

Bhutto employs symbolic nature and ecological imagery to convey deeper meanings in the novel:

"The crescent moon hung low in the sky, a sliver of silver in the darkness, symbolizing both the fragile hope and the persistent shadow of conflict over the land."

These elements of the plot that the crescent moon is used as the symbol of the hope and the conflict in Waziristan. Here the political significance of metaphorical use of nature is demonstrated in a very talented way as Bhutto masterly uses the ecological imagery to depict the socio - political subject. According to Stibbe, this metaphor would fall under the ecolinguistic analysis because it changed the way the readers perceived things and at the same time served to create awareness about the ecology. Introducing the moon as both hope and a shadow, Bhutto encourages readers to think of what warfare has left behind in terms of the ongoing consequences on the natural world and communities, proving the power of language's ability for positive change by raising awareness about ecology.

In Fatima Bhutto's *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* of the Crescent Moon, the interplay of language and ecology is intricately woven into the fabric of the narrative, emphasizing their profound influence on the characters and their surroundings. The linguistic diversity portrayed in the novel not only reflects the richness of the region's cultural norms but also shapes the characters' interactions with the natural environment. Bhutto (2013), encapsulate the complexity and the sense of despair, hopelessness and hostile relationship prevail in the very region of Mir Ali and the state of Pakistan.

"Most Pakistanis thought of Mir Ali with the same hostility they reserved for India or Bangladesh; insiders – traitor – who fought their way out of the body and somehow made it on their own without the glory of the crescent moon and the star shining overhead".

The ecological backdrop in the novel acts as a dynamic force that influences the characters' choices and identities. The depiction of the rugged terrain, the war torn valleys, and the harsh climate serves as more than just descriptive imagery; it becomes a pivotal element in shaping the characters' oppression, resilience and survival. Bhutto (2013) writes,

"But that moon never faded over Mir Ali. It hung over its sky night after night, condemning the town to life under its shadow."

Moreover, the characters' intimate knowledge of the local ecology, including the flora and fauna, not only underscores their bond with the natural world but also underscores the ways in which language is embedded in their ecological interactions. This fusion of language and ecology exemplifies how the novel skillfully illustrates the interconnectedness of human culture, language, and the natural environment. Such as at 8:30 a.m., in a white house in Mir Ali, the day of the Eid festival (marking the end of Ramadan) begins. The bazaar is just opening, rain looms on the horizon, and a fog blankets the rooftops. (Bhutto, 2013)

By intertwining language and ecology, Bhutto's novel not only provides a vivid portrayal of the region but also underscores the inseparable relationship between human expression, cultural identity, and the natural world. Analyzing a textual reference through the framing approach allows for uncovering the hidden thoughts and the diversity of perspectives held by those who express them. (Hameed, 2021).

Bhutto's portrayal of the Battle of Mir Ali and the plight of its inhabitants living in a community with troops, battalions, drone attacks and omnipresence of military and considering it "normal" serves as a testament to the author's commitment to giving a voice to those who have been marginalized and oppressed. Bhutto aligns her ideological stance with a deep sense of empathy and advocacy for the marginalized voices of the region.

As the author herself stated in an interview, "This is a country of divided loyalties, and it's also a country of sacrifices. Pakistan is a country that demands a sacrifice from its people" (In Bhutto's "Crescent Moon," Pakistan "Demands a Sacrifice from Its People," 2015). This statement underscores the pervasive sense of alienation and oppression depicted through various forms in the novel, emphasizing the consequences of state failure and oppression.

Ahmed (2010, as cited in Farooq et al., 2021) argues that the path to democracy in Pakistan is consistently obstructed by forces that covertly or overtly seize control. Bhutto's novel illustrates the hegemonic control exerted by religious leaders and the military, which stifles the freedom of the people in Mir Ali. Bhutto articulates the sense of being oppressed and ruled over, particularly for the people of FATA, who are marginalized and coerced into sacrificing their lives. This is evident when Bhutto writes, "He thought they might take him out of Mir Ali and into one of their cadet colleges. Two things happened. First, he was turned down. The army didn't want men from these parts; they didn't even have a recruitment office in Mir Ali" (Bhutto, 2013, p. 19). The state urges individuals to integrate into the national mainstream of Pakistan, but once they do,

the army is tasked with eradicating elements deemed anti-national within the population. (Farhan et al., 2023).

The Shadow of the Crescent Moon presents Pakistan as a repressive state that disregards the rights and needs of its citizens, particularly labeling the people of FATA as traitors when they demand their rights. Ferretter (2006) posits that a state functioning with violence is inherently repressive.

Throughout the story, there is a constant sense of unease and anticipation of something sinister happening at any moment. The crescent moon symbolizes the oppressive state of Pakistan, casting a permanent shadow over the town of Mir Ali. This can be seen in her dialogues *"But 'The Shadow of the Crescent Moon' of that moon never faded over Mir Ali. It hung over its sky night after night, condemning the town to life under its cold shadow"* (Bhutto, 2013, p 19)

The novel highlights that the institutions such as the military, police, and judiciary to exert control and oppress its populace. These repressive strategies foster a detrimental divide between the state and its citizens, resulting in the alienation and marginalization of the masses.

"The army was both an invisible and an omnipresent force in Mir Ali. On the mornings of important religious holidays, you could hear their armored vehicles squeeze through the bazaar, parking themselves at busy intersections, searching the dedicated throngs just in case. Their boots left large footprints outside the houses they entered in the late hours of the night, dragging out suspected militants to be interrogated at General Headquarters" (Bhutto, 2013)

Moreover, Following Balach's disappearance, his father goes to the local police station to report his son's abduction but is refused and instructed to return in a week. *"Nothing to do with us. Go sort out your personal issues on your own. We're not a bloody complaint centre,"* (Bhutto, 2013)

Hence, the narrator implies that the army appears to wage a civil war against its own citizens to suppress their feelings through repressive measures. In doing so, the narrator recounts the state's barbaric actions such as

"Thousands of them, in convoys of armored vehicles, weighed down with garlands of assault weapons and hand grenades, flooded into Mir Ali. They came in conquering battalions and in plain clothes" (Bhutto, 2013)

"Doors were broken down in the dead of night, men were kidnapped from their streets, women were widowed and children were orphaned to teach the town it's most important lesson: there was no match for the ruthlessness of the state. Another generation of male warriors would not grow in Mir Ali" (Bhutto, 2013)

Moreover, the government's inertia, as highlighted through Mina's plea for the country to wake up, signifies its cold and indifferent nature towards the plight of its people. Additionally, political appointees and their arbitrary decisions further contribute to the oppression experienced by the characters.

Conclusion

This research has explored features of ecolinguistics and identified a vastly intricate interdependence between language, ecology, and socio-political complexity within the text. Hate's dialogue skillfully builds up the picture of the deteriorating

ecology of Waziristan that has been marred by conflict and abandonment. Bhutto uses evaluative discourse to characterize the environmental issues through relationship discourse emphasizing the ecological metaphors and culture to relate the political identity of a country to certain environmental conditions. These elements have been a fruitful subject for analysis based on Stibbe's framework as it highlighted the way in which the linguistic choices construct people's attitudes towards ecology and imposed socio-political realities upon them. This research applies ecolinguistics approach to the selected novel as both a mediator and promoter of the ecological consciousness and change.

The future research can be conducted to compare and contrast *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* to other literary texts that Insha's work explores recurrent themes as the relation to ecology and territories in conflict. Such an approach can help to reveal similarities and differences in how the representatives of one or another intellectual tradition describe environmental devastation and socio-political strife. Future research can also be conducted on Authorial Intent and Eco-conscious writing to examine how the authorial intent works in writing the literature that brings out awareness in the degradation of the environment. Study interviews and writings of Fatima Bhutto, in order to discover her intentions and goals to depict the environmental problems in the selected novel.

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