



ECO-CRITICAL DISCOURSE IN GHANI KHAN'S POETRY: A LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The paper titled 'Eco-critical Discourse in Ghani Khans Poetry: A Linguistic Perspective' highlights the strengths of language in creating ecological consciousness in the poetry of Ghani Khan, one of the greatest poets of the twentieth century in the Pashto language. The study applies the paradigm of Eco-critical Discourse Analysis (EDA) to the linguistic expressions and expressions of ecological awareness like metaphor, personification, lexical contrast, and imagery used in texts to criticize anthropocentric ideologies and encourage human-nature coexistence with nature. According to the qualitative textual analysis of the several poems such as A Poppy Flower, Hell, Prayer, Heaven and Earth, and Music, the study depicts that poetic discourse of Ghani Khan makes nature alive, moral, as well as, spiritual. His diction praises quality of simplicity, intertwining, and admiration of the nature and nature is reformulated as a teacher and a friend instead of a subject of human exploitation. The results show that the eco-spiritual vision of Ghani Khan is based on Pashtun Sufi-humanist thinking, which puts more emphasis on humility, gratitude, and coexistence- ideas that are very necessary in ecological balance and sustainability. This work is part of the Pashto literary criticism, as it presents the idea of an eco-linguistic approach in which indigenous poetic traditions are linked with the worldwide environmental discourse and provides insights on how language and literature may be used to promote environmental ethics, cultural preservation, and environmental consciousness.

Key Words: Ecolinguistics, poetry, language and nature, eco-spirituality, ecological consciousness,

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

The increasing environmental crisis of recent decades has triggered the scholarly interest in the relation of language to the conceptualization of nature, sustainability, or an environmental ecological responsibility. Ecocriticism, as a phenomenon that has emerged in literary studies, has developed into an interdisciplinary paradigm that studies the interrelations between language, culture, and the environment (Glotfelty, and Fromm, 1996). Continuing this tradition, eco-critical discourse analysis (EDA) or eco-discourse analysis is an endeavor to combine the knowledge of critical discourse analysis (CDA) with that of ecolinguistics to examine how discourse constitutes environmental ideologies, values, and power relations



(Stibbe, 2015). This method accepts the fact that linguistic decisions not only describe but also support social attitudes toward the natural world and ecological systems.

The idea of language as ecological practice points out the fact that communication is located in more general settings of the environment (Fill and Muelhauser, 2001). Ecolinguistic positions hold that discourses may or may not be supportive of the sustainable worldviews but instead be the carriers of unsustainable ideologies that justify the exploitation of nature (Stibbe, 2021). As an example the prevailing industrial and political discourse tends to represent nature as a resource to be controlled or absorbed, a discursive trend that justifies environmental destruction (Harré, Brockmeier, and Muehlhauser, 1999). On the other hand, other discourses like those in environmental activism, eco-literature aim to confront anthropocentrism and promote ecological harmony and sustainability (Goatly, 2002).

Eco-critical discourse analysis builds on the interest of CDA in ideology and power (Fairclough, 2013; van Dijk, 2008) by putting them in the ecological context. It questions the ways in which human-nature relationship is linguistically designed by media, politics, and literature and shows implicit premises of progress, consumption, and environmental justice (Alexander and Stibbe, 2014). With the increased pressure on climate change, loss of biodiversity, and environmental crisis, the analysis of the discursive construction of ecological problems is becoming more crucial to comprehending how the language sets the political agenda of mass consciousness.

Furthermore, the current ecolinguistic studies focus on the transformational nature of a discourse in creating ecological awareness and greener futures (Huang and Zhao, 2019). Through examining repetitive narratives like: the narratives of growth, development, or green economy, eco-critical scholars can find out how these narratives construct shared values and justify some types of human-nature interactions (Stibbe, 2015). These stories have the potential to recycle anthropocentric premises which place the benefit of the human over the balance of the ecological. Nevertheless, other discourses that have developed out of the grassroots movements, the indigenous views, and the eco-literature are questioning the prevalent ideology through the promotion of the biocentric or ecocentric worldview (Buell, 2005). Thus, the analysis of dominant and resistant ecological discourses will be a good opportunity to understand how linguistic practices have been involved in the creation of sustainability and environmental justice in the twenty first century culture.

1.2.Statement of the Research Problem

Even though the concept of ecology has become increasingly more relevant in the literary research, the eco-critical aspects of the poetry by Ghani Khan have not been discussed extensively yet. His poetic vision with its strong element of nature, spirituality, and human emotion displays a certain ecological awareness that appeals to modern environmental issues. Nevertheless, the extant literature has been mainly concerned with the philosophical, mystical, and humanistic views expressed by Ghani Khan, but without paying much attention to the linguistic processes in which his poetry builds connections between man and the natural environment. The issue is that there is no systematic eco-critical discourse analysis of his poetry that would reveal how linguistic and metaphoric or rhetoric devices express ecological consciousness, criticize anthropocentric visions of the world, and promulgate the unity with nature. In addition to the need to expand the focus of Pashto literary criticism, it is necessary to close this gap in order to emphasize the role of indigenous poetic traditions in the global debates about ecology and environmental sustainability.

1.3.Objectives of the study

1. To identify the linguistic features that show ecological ideas in Ghani Khan's poetry.
2. To examine how Ghani Khan uses language and imagery to express care for nature.



1.4. Research Questions

1. How does Ghani Khan's poetry use language to show the relationship between humans and nature?
2. How does his poetry promote ecological awareness through words and images?

1.5. Significance of the study

The study is significant since it analyses the poetry of Ghani Khan through an eco-critical and linguistic approach, which was not researched thoroughly. It emphasises the fact that his poetic language is a sign of his love to nature and his worries to the environment. The study contributes to the Pashto literature criticism because it brings in an ecological approach of understanding the work of Ghani Khan. It is also useful in the way it allows the reader to understand the effect that language has on human attitudes to nature and environmental responsibility. Connecting local poetic practices to the world on the ecological thinking, the study facilitates the idea on the importance of local literature in stimulating the concern of taking care of nature and enhanced the concept of sustainable living.

2. Literature Review

In the recent past, the field of language and environmental studies have stressed that linguistic decisions have a close relationship with ecological consciousness and sustainability. The emergence of ecolinguistics as part of applied linguistics is the evidence of the increasing concerns about the role of language in forming environmental thinking and behavior (Rasheed, 2023). According to scholars, linguistic patterns may be used to support, combat or uphold unsustainable ideologies. Ecolinguistics, understood as the investigation into the way language shapes the connection between humans and nature, is about looking for narratives that would foster environmental ethics and undermine exploitative worldviews. This approach rests on two interrelated suppositions: one is that discourse is at the heart of the manner in which societies think about environmental issues; the other is related to how individuals internalize ecological responsibility.

There has been an increasing amount of studies in education, media, and literature with regard to environmental discourse. For instance, Ekasiwi and Bram (2022) have investigated Indonesian textbooks in English and found that ecology awareness usually remains implicit and needs linguistic education to be more explicit. Similarly, Widanti (2022), while examining the usage of eco-lexicons in Bali cultural texts, finds out that local terms reflect a respect for the environment and eco-ecological knowledge. These studies highlight the fact that language is not only a description of ecological reality but also actively participates in creating meanings about the environment at both social and cultural levels.

The next important one is the rise of eco-stylistics, or the examination of the ecological attitudes expressed through stylistic elements metaphor, imagery, and tone in literary and non-literary writing (Mukaromah, 2022). In this light, it is possible to analyze the environmental discourse in terms of its thematic elements and linguistic artistic creativity and aestheticity. Acha (2023) also applied this method to the Cameroonian newspaper discourse and demonstrated how the media language can either pre-empt or obscure ecological issues based on the priorities of the ideological agenda. These results highlight the importance of linguistic framing in the creation of environmental awareness and people involvement.

Besides that, a number of scholars have recently begun to combine ecolinguistics with critical discourse analysis in order to reveal power relations in environmental communication. Al-Zubeiry (2022) pointed out that the ecological discourse is largely pre-determined by political, economic, and cultural ideologies in accordance with which the environmental problems are framed within the popular discourse. An ecological politics intertwined with a critical one can



help the scholars better comprehend the process through which environmental discourses justify and or criticize prevailing socio-political realms. Therefore, the eco-critical discourse analysis not only examines the ecological issues, but also raises some questions of justice, power and sustainability in the framework of the use of language.

The interrelation between language and ecology has become a more popular area of study with scholars aiming to establish how discourse informs the way people feel about the environment. According to recent research findings, metaphor, narrative, and evaluation are essential components of linguistic structure that can be used to affect ecological consciousness and action. According to Bang and Doe (2020), ecolinguistics needs to be perceived as an ecosophy of language, in which linguistic practices expose more profound cultural orientations to the biosphere. This method situates language as an indication and conditioner of ecological values, which leads to linking linguistic patterns and morality and philosophies of the world.

In her seminal essay, *New Ways of Meaning*, Halliday (2001) introduced a pioneer contribution to the field of ecolinguistics, including that systemic functional linguistics can be used to find unsustainable linguistic formations, i.e. linguistic formations that focus on growth, consumption and human domination. This perception has also led researchers to criticize the grammar of consumerism ingrained into the media and political language (Harré, 2002; Goatly, 2017). In his subsequent work, Goatly emphasizes the way environmental communication hides the ecological violence through metaphorical and lexical decisions in a way that makes the industrial and exploitative processes appear natural.

Within the eco-critical discourse studies, the literature has been the growing concern in which scholars have been investigating as the locations where ecological values are negotiated. Garrard (2014) describes the development of eco-criticism as a transdisciplinary method of approaching the environmental representation in linguistic, cultural, and ideological aspects. Likewise, Slovic, Rangarajan, and Sarveswaran (2015) state that global eco-literature results in a sense of planetary consciousness, which is a language that provides a way of relating local experience with a global environmental problem. This growth of environmental awareness implying thought highlights the use of poetry and narrative in expressing ecological ethics and attacking the problem of anthropocentrism.

It has also been represented in linguistic studies that environmental ideologies are recreated in the discourse of everyday life. Harré, Brockmeier, and Muehlhauser (1999) examined the use of metaphors such as fighting climate change to position environmental problems within the framework of a battle, and not the framework of an interdependence system, which strengthen adversarial relations between nature and people. Mycologically, in the same way, Carbaugh (2019) proposed the idea of ecocultural discourse where communication practices in cultural situations display various relations with nature, devoid of domination to awe. Through his ethnographic work, it is shown that indigenous languages tend to code ecological knowledge systems that do not uphold Western dualisms between humanity and the environment.

The concept of literature as a kind of cultural ecology was introduced by Zapf (2016) in the field of literary linguistics, and the author states that the literary texts are ecosystems of language, which reproduce cultural and ethical views. Literary works can demonstrate linguistic patterns that can create ecological awareness through the use of stylistic analysis. Continuing on the topic, Ghosh (2019) highlights that the South Asian literatures (and especially postcolonial ones) tend to intertwine environmental awareness with cultural/spiritual narratives, which implies that indigenous ecological discourse is different than Western eco-criticism.

Further, in environmental communication, Hansen and Cox (2018) note that media discourse has the power to either amplify or obscure environmental crises depending on linguistic



framing. Their findings also support the contention of Larson (2011) that the ideological weight of metaphorical representations-things like “Mother Earth” or “carbon footprint”-shapes policy and public opinion about the environment. Such analyses extend EDA beyond literature into the realms of environmental journalism and advocacy.

Scholars like Naqvi (2020) and Karim (2022) have documented the possibility of eco-critical and linguistic frameworks to reinterpret Urdu and Pashto poetry in the South Asian context. Naqvi (2020) considers that ecological ethics are often represented through the imagery of the spirit in South Asian poetic traditions, while Karim (2022) points out how poets like Rahman Baba and Ghani Khan deploy nature as a moral teacher to build an eco-spiritual discourse resistant to colonial and capitalist ideologies. These are examples of how indigenous poetic voices articulate ecological wisdom long before the emergence of modern environmentalism.

3. Methodology

This paper employs a qualitative research design in the form of eco-critical discourse analysis of EDA in Ghani Khan's works, exploring how his poetry has manifested ecological awareness through language. Such a qualitative analysis is fitting because it centers on the meaning, symbolism, and linguistic patterns of expression rather than the measurement of numerical data. It combines ideas from ecolinguistics (Stibbe 2015) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2013) in looking at how the poet's language, metaphors, and imagery speak to human-nature relationships and offer critiques against anthropocentric worldviews.

A purposive sampling method was followed, choosing around 5–10 poems from Ghani Khan's published collections. The selection contained poems rich in natural imagery and environmental themes which represented a range of ecological perspectives. Both the original Pashto versions and reliable English translations were consulted for the purpose of accuracy. Analysis has focused on the linguistic elements at the level of word choice, transitivity patterns, and metaphorical expressions that construct the ecological meanings.

Analysis involved a close reading and thematic categorization of the selected poems. Linguistic features were coded and grouped under such ecological themes as harmony with nature, human exploitation, and interconnectedness. Accordingly, the analysis has been developed in three stages: textual description, interpretation, and critical explanation. While the textual stage identified the language features, the interpretive stage analyzed the ecological significance of the findings, and the explanatory stage related the findings to broader socio-cultural and environmental ideologies reflected in Ghani Khan's work. To assure reliability, interpretations have been cross-checked through various translations and existing critical studies about his poetry.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1.OVERVIEW

This paper discusses how language and imagery create ecological meaning and convey concern for the natural world through the poetry of Ghani Khan under the framework of ecocritical discourse analysis. Based on the theories of Ecolinguistics - Stibbe (2015) - and Critical Discourse Analysis - Fairclough (2013) - the discussion will focus on how the poet's use of personification, metaphor, lexical contrast, and vivid imagery, among other linguistic and stylistic elements, reflects profound ecological consciousness. The first part deals with the linguistic elements which express the ecological perspective and shows the ways in which Ghani Khan personifies nature and uses symbolic contrasts, like in "A Poppy Flower" and "Hell," in order to challenge anthropocentrism and push forward a biocentric worldview. The second part looks at how in the poems "Prayer" and "Music," the use of language and sensory imagery conveys love, respect, and thankfulness for the natural world, revealing a spiritual linkage based upon peace and cohabitation. As a whole, this chapter will demonstrate how



Ghani Khan's poetic language transforms environmental consciousness into a moral and emotional engagement with the depiction of nature as a living, sacred presence that is essentially constitutive of human existence rather than just a backdrop.

4.2. Analysis of Objective 1 According to the Methodology

1. Textual Description (Micro-level linguistic analysis)

To understand how language creates ecological meanings, EDA integrates critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2013) and ecolinguistics (Stibbe, 2015). The poet expresses ecological self-awareness in "A Poppy Flower" through personification and metaphor:

"With a radiant smile, a flower so fair... / With a silent smile the flower replied, 'Don't lose heart! / This desert I wouldn't give up for the gardens of Iran.'" The flower speaks here, representing ecological balance and resiliency. Linguistically, the flower's personification ("the flower replied") and juxtaposition of imagery ("desert" vs. "gardens of Iran") represent ecocentric ideology, which prioritises natural surroundings over human comfort.

2. Interpretation (Meso-level: meanings and themes)

Lexical choices that prioritise the natural over the human are used to construct the ecological idea. In an ecolinguistic reversal of anthropocentric norms, Ghani Khan turns the word "desert," which is normally used negatively, into a spiritual and self-sustaining landscape that reflects harmony with nature.

The poet also expresses disapproval of religious hypocrisy that diminishes nature in "Hell," saying,

"How can I curse and tyrannise / The spring and crimson flowers?"

The natural nouns "spring" and "flowers" contrasted with the lexical verbs "curse" and "tyrannise" demonstrate a rejection of human-imposed moral hierarchy over the beauty of nature, confirming an eco-ethical position.

3. Critical Explanation (Macro-level: ideology and worldview)

Ghani Khan creates a biocentric discourse that challenges human conceit and encourages interconnectedness through these linguistic patterns. Lexical parallelism in "Heaven and Earth" reveals ecological wisdom: "I'd far prefer this gain because no colour is at rest; / Each moment, each hue of life, is your time's helpless slave." Colour metaphors ("no colour," "each hue of life") and temporal imagery are used repeatedly to evoke natural dynamism and emphasise the ecological principle of constant transformation, which views life as cyclical rather than static.

4.2.1. Summary of Identified Linguistic Features

Linguistic Feature	Example	Ecological Meaning
Personification	"The flower replied..." (<i>A Poppy Flower</i>)	Nature given agency and voice
Metaphor	"A flamboyant flame of divine light am I"	Nature as sacred illumination
Lexical contrast	"Desert vs gardens of Iran"	Valuing natural simplicity over cultivated excess
Parallelism & imagery	"Each hue of life" (<i>Heaven and Earth</i>)	Continuous cycles of life
Modal verbs & questioning	"How can I curse and tyrannize..." (<i>Hell</i>)	Ethical reflection on human-nature relations



4.3. Language and Imagery Expressing Care for Nature

4.3.1. Textual Description (Micro-Level Linguistic Analysis)

EDA looks at rhetorical and lexical decisions that produce an ecological perspective (Stibbe, 2015; Fairclough, 2013). Ghani Khan's use of language and imagery reveals a profound ecological empathy and humanises nature.

a. Metaphor and Personification

Nature is given moral authority and a voice in "A Poppy Flower": " "With a silent smile the flower replied, 'Don't lose heart! / This desert I wouldn't give up for the gardens of Iran.'" The personified voice of the flower presents nature as a sentient entity with the capacity for self-satisfaction and wisdom. By implying that even arid regions have divine vitality and self-worth, the lexical contrast between "desert" and "gardens of Iran" subverts human expectations. Regardless of what people consider to be beautiful, this imagery conveys concern for the inherent worth of all ecosystems.

b. Lexical Imagery of Nurture and Light

Ghani Khan uses spring, laughter, and light imagery in "Prayer" to show nature as a beloved and healing force:

"O river of beauty and radiance! Grant me a scintilla of light; / Grant me eyes full of laughter and lips full of delight."

The river is apostrophised here as a spiritual being that has the capacity to renew and bless. The repeated imperative "Grant me" implies care, thankfulness, and humility in the face of nature's generosity, as well as dependence and respect for natural forces.

c. Auditory and Sensory Imagery

Natural sounds, such as the "pitter-patter of rain," "coo-coo of a pigeon," and "whispering whistle of wind," create an ecologically harmonious soundscape in "Music." By listing sensory verbs like "crack-a-crackle," "swish," and "whiz," Ghani Khan combines poetic rhythm with the rhythm of life, transforming sound into a tool for appreciating the surroundings.

4.3.2. Interpretation (Meso-Level: Themes and Meanings)

The imagery demonstrates how nature is a part of human consciousness rather than existing outside of it. Light is used in "Prayer" to represent spiritual clarity derived from nature. In "A Poppy Flower," human tenacity is reflected in the desert's resilience. The ecological concept of interconnectedness—that creativity and vitality arise from coexistence with nature—is expressed by the poet in "Music," who transforms natural movements into art.

The semantic fields of light, laughter, colour, and music proposed by Ghani Khan allude to biophilia, or the innate love of life (Wilson, 1984). His use of the verbs "grant," "laugh," "smile," and "sing" illustrates the emotional reciprocity between humans and nature, portraying care as a form of communion rather than dominance.

4.3.3. Critical Explanation (Macro-Level: Ideology and Ecological Vision)

Ghani Khan's language resists anthropocentrism. His ecological care is rooted in Pashtun Sufi-humanist traditions, hence nature is a divine reflection. The personified flower, the river of radiance, and the polyphonic soundscape in "Music" enact an eco-spiritual discourse wherein language tends to heal the rift between man and the environment.

Through these linguistic strategies, he promotes an ethic of respect and gratitude. His poems re-educate readers toward eco-conscious living, echoing Stibbe's 2015 call for stories that celebrate rather than exploit the living world.



4.3.4. Summary of Identified Linguistic and Imagistic Features

Linguistic / Imagistic Feature	Poem & Excerpt	Expression of Care for Nature
Personification	<i>A Poppy Flower</i> : “the flower replied ‘Don’t lose heart!’”	Nature speaks, offering wisdom and companionship
Imagery of light and laughter	<i>Prayer</i> : “O river of beauty and radiance! Grant me a scintilla of light”	Reverence and dependence on natural vitality
Auditory imagery & onomatopoeia	<i>Music</i> : “pitter-patter of rain, whispering whistle of wind”	Nature’s voice becomes music—symbol of life and harmony
Color and vitality metaphors	<i>Heaven and Earth</i> : “Each moment, each hue of life”	Life’s diversity equated with divine ecological energy
Verbs of emotion	“Grant, smile, laugh, sing”	Language of affection and gratitude toward nature

4.3.5. Interpretive Conclusion

Ghani Khan's language turns ecological awareness into an affair of emotional intimacy. Metaphor, personification, and multisensory imagery turn nature into teacher and beloved. His poetry rejects domination; instead, it expresses care, coexistence, and sacred reciprocity-human discourses reunited with the living environment-as the poems work out the eco-critical task.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1.CONCLUSION

The current research aimed to investigate Eco-critical Discourse in Ghani Khan's Poetry through the lens of Ecolinguistic Discourse Analysis (EDA), which draws from theories in Ecolinguistics (Stibbe 2015) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2013). Analysis of the selected texts demonstrates that Ghani Khan's language achieves a compelling medium through which to articulate ecological consciousness and an ethical reflexivity on the relations of humanity to the natural world. In doing so, his poetic discourse moves beyond the aesthetic appreciation of nature to highlight a biocentric worldview, which stresses the importance of interconnectedness, respect, and spiritual harmony that exists between humans and the environment. The linguistic features used in the composition of the poems that were examined in the current research included metaphors, personification, contrasting lexical choices, sensory imagery, and parallelism, all of which Kahn employs to develop ecological meaning and critique anthropocentric attitudes.

Poems such as "A Poppy Flower," "Hell," and "Heaven and Earth" demonstrate personification and metaphor to enliven nature with agency and moral voice, and as a result, Ghani Khan endows common sceneries with meanings of steadfastness and divinity. His vocabulary utilizes the voice of the natural over the material, as Ghani Khan rewrites his deserts, rivers, and flowers as metaphors of inner purity and insight. In addition, in "Prayer" and "Music," his multisensory images-light, laughter, and sound-demonstrate a profound emotional empathy for nature. Here too, the linguistic and imagistic choices inflect care, gratitude, and coexistence and evoke ecological awareness as moral-spiritual intimacy. Likewise, Ghani Khan's eco-spirituality, which is profoundly shaped by Pashtun humanism and Sufism, sees nature not as an object's objectification but a travel companion across the span of human life.

This research provides, from a wider view, Pashto literary criticism with an eco-linguistic perspective that connects Pashto literary traditions of local poetics with global environmental thought. It confirms that indigenous literary voices such as Ghani Khan suggest deeper understandings of sustainable practices, moral ecology, and the ethics of care. His poetry



provides vivid demonstrations of how language can contest dominant anthropocentric discourses and recast a more inclusive and harmonic relationship between human and non-human nature.

5.2.SUGGESTIONS

In future research, this eco-critical discourse analysis could be expanded through the analysis of additional Pashto poets including, but not limited to, Hamza Baba, Rehman Baba, or contemporary eco-poets in assessing the evolution of ecological thinking in regional literature. The ecological vision of Ghani Khan could also be compared to that of world poets, including Wordsworth, Tagore, or Whitman in illustrating the universal dimensions of cross-cultural similarities in eco-spiritual discourses. The findings of this research could also have a role in informing curriculum development in linguistics and literature to increase eco-ethical engagement through the use of local poets and linguistic analysis for students. Other scholars can be encouraged to produce proper and comprehensible translations of the work of Ghani Khan in order to publicize his ecological philosophy into wider circulation for environmental philosophy and the preservation of indigenous environmental knowledge. Finally, other future directions of eco-critical studies are to draw together a linguistic analysis with environmental philosophy and sustainability studies in education toward a more complex understanding of how language can expand ecological awareness and incite social change. In conclusion, Ghani Khan's poetry reminds the world there is great power in language to catalyze the reconnection of humankind with nature. It is through his poetic voice that he speaks of humility, reverence, and harmony-everything so dear for nurturing both the planet and the human spirit.

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