

**Interdependence of Language and Ecocriticism in Literature****Dr. N. Lakshmi**

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**Article Received:** 12/09/2025**Article Accepted:** 10/10/2025**Published Online:** 12/10/2025**DOI:**10.47311/IJOES.2025.7.10.260**Abstract:**

Language and literature are closely interdependent since the ancient times. Literature is based on language where language brings in the suitable structure to showcase contemporary and socially realistic themes. Ecocriticism in literature uses language with its powerful metaphors and allusions to shape ecological awareness and thereby elicit a critique of nature-human relationships. Ecocriticism relies heavily on the medium of language to convey and criticize the dynamics involved in the portrayal of the natural world and its relationship to culture. The use of language as a tool and mechanism for environmental representation and to highlight environmental crises is explored in this study. Language is analysed to reflect upon the historical and political constructs laid down in ecocritical study. Linguistic constructs act as a medium to portray the intricacies involved in ecocritical exploration. The role of language always stands unique mediating cultural world views. The deep ingrained values relating to ecosystem evolution of diverse narratives is briefly showcased through the connotative aspect of language representation in ecocritical texts and its valuable utility to create awareness.

**Key words:** Language, Literature, Eco criticism, Linguistic constructs, Exploration, Texts**Introduction:**

Language and literature are closely interdependent since the ancient times. Literature is based on language where language brings in the suitable structure to showcase contemporary and socially realistic themes. Ecocriticism in literature uses language with its powerful metaphors and allusions to shape ecological awareness and thereby elicit a critique of nature-human relationships. Ecocriticism relies heavily on the medium of language to convey and criticize the dynamics involved in the portrayal of the natural world and its relationship to culture.

**Language – A Mechanism for Environmental Representation**

All languages have the power to bring to life any aspect of Nature through imagery, metaphor, allusions, and symbols. Words of evocative nature allow readers to reimagine ecosystems through empathy and connectivity to Nature. Language also portrays how nature is valued over generations in societies through ages. Deep rooted relations with land are established in almost all indigenous languages through intricate vocabularies spoken by

natives and tribes all over the world. Such cultural framing allows the promotion of ecological interdependence and involvement of non-human agencies supporting the creation of anthropocentric and ecocentric narratives. The natural world is understood easily by environmental representation in literature and language upholds the mechanism to deliver it. Language bridges the gap between human thinking and the environment that surrounds us.

Writers have used and still use vivid imagery, metaphors, similes, alliteration, consonance, and various other pictures of landscapes enabling readers to connect emotionally and visualize the environmental impact. For example, all Romantic poets have used pastoral settings to evoke feelings of beauty and romance. Such descriptive and sensory engagement through sensory language appeals to all readers creating a corporeal and concrete experience of Nature. Language allows writers to use natural elements to symbolize human emotions, social realism and philosophical themes like dystopia. Victorian poets use rivers to symbolize continuity and change while Gothic fiction writers used forests to represent mystery or danger. Further, environmental issues like climate change, environmental concerns in relation to politics or society is crafted in an effective manner through use of allegory in language. As Grimshaw's (1971) talks of the diagrammatic representation of the relationship between language and reality, one can understand how reality creates language and language creates reality; reality creates culture and culture creates reality; and language creates culture and culture creates language and literature reflects culture.

Anthropomorphism in contemporary cli-fi novels allows language to deal with non-human entities like trees, rivers, animals or landscape to speak as an entity delivering empathy and intrinsic values. Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* portrays that Nature too has a voice of its own. Literature critiques human domination over ecology and challenges anthropocentrism.

#### **Language – A Mechanism for Historical and Political constructs**

Linguistic ecology represents unique relations with landscape through language used in different cultures. Indigenous storytelling tradition always allows for local ecologies through language use reflecting deep rooted nature knowledge and systems via spiritual connections. The destructive impact of modern technology and science on nature is evoked by writers through the use of language which seeks to reestablish the endangered habitats and fauna. Literature serves as the tool to reflect on the environmental crises of the present age. The documentation of environmental destruction from deforestation to pollution; from endangerment to species extinction is done through language. The language of loss creates a sense of awareness towards the ecological crises in the present age. Language in climate fiction portrays the apocalyptic scenario caused by neglect of the human and the indifference of the human toward the non-human prompting them to revise their ecological choices through dystopian imagery.

#### **Language – A Mechanism for Call for Action**

Language seizes the milieu, such as the geological epochs, seasonal changes to earth in human subsistence to larger ecological footprint. Seasonal and temporal shifts over

expansive landscapes is explored through descriptive language. Temporal and spatial representation is covered with an exploration of the complex ecosystems. Literary works of ecology use persuasive and emotive language to inspire social activism. Such works hanker readers to rethink their role in the world and urge to inculcate the habit of preservation. Language helps envision for safer and sustainable futures, infusing a pipedream for restoration of environment through call for collective action. For instance, Rachel Carson in his novel *Silent Spring* uses evocative language to showcase the dangers of pesticide use blending facts with fiction to bring in environmental awareness. However, Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* brings in reflective and philosophical language to reconnoitre the symmetry between humans and nature.

Language is used to address vivid, immersive worlds reflecting man's relationship with Nature through different narrative devices and figurative techniques which evoke the beauty and complexity of the environment. Language functions as a key mechanism in speculative genres like science fiction and fantasy novels/ films to mirror realistic dynamics of the ecology as in Frank Herbert's *Dune* or *Avatar* which build in biodiverse worlds. Readers feel the lushness of a rainforest, the aridity of a desert only through the rich, sensory depictions of nature in language which brings natural settings to life. Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* is an example of ecological allegory which remits exploitation of natural resources through linguistic exceptions denoting genetic engineering and ecological destruction. Personification of nature is achieved by giving it agency through the use of language. Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour* illustrates the migration patterns of butterflies by imbibing them as characters. Emotional resonance occurs through language eliciting empathy, making readers to feel the happiness of the wild or the grief assorted to environmental destruction. Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* captures through nostalgic language landscapes lost to urbanization and climate change. Abbey moans and emotionally portrays through symbolism "If my decomposing carcass helps nourish the roots of a juniper tree or the wings of a vulture—that is immortality enough for me" (Abbey 210).

#### **Language – A Mechanism for Representation of Environmental Crises**

Language also serves to warn people of the future of our planet. Dystopian environmental fiction employs language to portray ecological disasters, bringing in a focus on resource depletion as in Kim Stanley Robinson's novel *The Ministry for the Future*. Cli-fi novels use language to explore human impact of climate change to imagine and reimagine possible futures. Richard Adam's *Watership Down* is a novel where nature is anthropomorphised in the guise of rabbits which are given distinct voices and cultures. Language uses shift perspectives in fiction to challenge human centric world view encouraging people to recognize ecological interdependence. The stark and desolate language in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* reflects a post-apocalyptic world devastated by environmental collapse. Sometimes, in native languages as in African eco fiction writers like Resoketswe Manenzhe and Nnedi Okorafor address issues of environment using culturally resonant language blending folklore and contemporary environmental issues. Language is a powerful medium to purge the interest of the readers towards reimagined worlds.

#### **Language – A Mechanism for Linguistic constructs in Ecocriticism**

Ecocriticism embarks upon the journey of how language can reinforce dominance such as naming and ownership practices that define man's control over nature. Language phrases like "taming the wilderness" indicate the exploitative ideology of man and ecocriticism strives to find alternative naming and framing that respect Nature's unique identity. Ecocriticism through linguistic constructs examines how language configures human insights of nature effects eco-friendly behaviour. This includes questioning the dialectical practices and designs like metaphors, similes, and narratives of culture and tradition which in turn mirror, preserve or confront anthropocentric dogmas. The only danger to the ecology is human oversight. A detailed understanding of the human value system is absolutely necessary in order to change it in order to safeguard the environment because human behaviours and the ecosystem are interrelated as Tait and Wang have expressed. One key aspect is the Naming practices which commonly infer human control over environment by turning Nature into an object that can be possessed or capitalized upon. For example, naming mountains or forests after colonial figures blanks out primordial relationships of indigenous people of the land. Further, scientific naming systems can also bring down complex species to mono labelling, curtailing all embracing ecological interpretation or emotional interrelatedness.

Language depicts Nature as the 'Other' something that can be subdued, annihilated, or dreaded resorting to a dissociation between man and the environment. Exploitative ideologies are voiced out in phrases like 'taming the wilderness,' 'battling nature;' even economic framing terminology like 'natural resources', 'ecosystem services' etc., deduce nature as a commodity sharing its utility value rather than its innate value. Nature is also categorised subordinate to human needs owing to anthropocentric bias by use of language calling animals 'beasts', 'the wild animals' etc., Dualistic constructs and dichotomies also suggest ingrained discord like 'Man vs Nature' which shrouds the connection between human beings and the ecosystem. The silencing of non-human voices is evident in the linguistic exclusion by the use of instrumental language as in words like 'pollinators or 'lumber' etc depriving the natural entities their ecological importance. Terms like 'catastrophes', 'natural disaster' are used to reflect on nature's faults changing human involvement in climate change.

The effacement of many indigenous languages which are tied to reverence to Nature leads to a loss in the old sustainable practices. Commodification is tied to colonial constructs rather than cultural native constructs. Language raises awareness about ecological destruction and climate change. However, the rhetoric of environmental crisis may induce despair and hinder constructive imposition of measures. Ecocriticism reframes nature's role and advocates linguistic patterns that recognises the importance of the non-human by describing forests as 'homes for diverse species' rather than 'timber reserves.' Rivers are now recognised as 'living beings' with rights promoting the shift towards ecocentric narratives rather than non-anthropocentric narratives. Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass* critiques English language for its lack of animacy and advocates native language constructs which honour the agency of Nature. He states in his novel, "Sweetgrass belongs

to Mother Earth. Sweetgrass pickers collect properly and respectfully, for their own use and the needs of their community. They return a gift to the earth and tend to the wellbeing of the wiingashk.” (44) Similar views can be observed in works by writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong’o.

### **Multi-lingual Ecocriticism**

Multilingual ecocriticism offers distinctive knowledge and standpoints supplementing ecocritical discourse and insight. Language plays a key role in mediating cultural worldviews. Cultural specificity is central to language which encapsulates distinct ingrained values relating to landscapes and ecosystems. The erosion of ecological knowledge and environmental attachment to Nature has gradually been lost due to the loss of many indigenous languages which are essential to sustain environmental balance. Exploitative paradigms are quite evident in new vocabulary of language suppressing and diluting the very meaning of life sustenance. Diverse narratives evolved in the contemporary milieu suggesting global ecological understanding as possible to bridge multiple perspectives of environment crises. Linguistic constructs should also emerge and evolve from regional and indigenous languages all over the world so that the symbolism and imagery existent in those languages can support the overall cause of environmental crisis and honour ecocriticism awareness multiculturally and multilingually reaching out to the unexplored corners of the world. Authors like Amitav Ghosh in his novel *The Hungry Tide* and Nnedi Okora for in his novel *Lagoon* provide exposure to multiple language interactions in their narratives reflecting upon diverse ecological insights and cultural plurality.

### **Conclusion**

Literature uses linguistic constructs/language to advocate environmental protection and conserve Nature and the Non-human by bringing in topics like deforestation, climate change and discussion on endangered species and extinct species. Language is used as an activist to reimagine future and modern literary works like Richard Powers *The Overstory* employs fancy and predictive language to visualize renewable futures, moulding readers’ perspective and reminding them of their ecological responsibility. Language, as both a medium and a subject, allowing for cross cultural dialogues challenging dominant existent paradigms but at the same time remains central to uncovering the interconnectedness of cultural and ecological sustainability in the era of urban and environmental decay.

Language through literature has allowed readers to interpret ecology and environment in their own ways promoting critical thinking over environmental issues. Literature has created empathy in the minds of human beings to consider their innate value by giving voice to the non-human in Nature through language. Language became a medium for ecological expressibility and a site for critique towards transformation. Language can be considered a cornerstone of ecocritical studies in literature which relentlessly inspires individuals and societies to perceive and work towards rejuvenating the environment by feeling, understanding, and engaging as one with Nature.

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