

Green Stories: An Eco-linguistic Investigation of Political Manifestos for Election, 2024 in Pakistan

Dr. Mehreen Zafar

Lecturer, Department of English, Ghazi University, D. G. Khan.

Imsa Mujahid

MPhil Scholar, Department of English, Ghazi University, D.G. Khan.

Sadia Naseer

Visiting Lecturer, Department of English, Ghazi University, D.G. Khan.

Received on: 18-10-2024

Accepted on: 20-11-2024

Abstract

Political manifesto is indispensable in political world to provide the outline of any political party's vision, policies and actions; the clear and loud political manifestos are the source to hold the public support for bringing them in power (Eder et al., 2016). The importance of political manifestos triggered the researcher to investigate the genre through language and ecology lens. The current study aims to investigate the political manifestos for election, 2024 in Pakistan by employing Stibbe's theory of language, ecology and the stories we live by (2015). The study focuses to identify the political ideology covering ecological elements, economy and human behavior. The political manifestos of four political parties of Pakistan were observed and analyzed under framing, metaphor, salience, erasure and ideology. In depth qualitative analysis using Eco-linguistics perspectives decoded the linguistic information and provided the insights for the study. The results of the analysis revealed that leading political parties of the country are aware of the value of environment and ecology in human life and they are quoting climate changes and promising for agricultural, industrial and green energy revolutions. The manifestos are framed positively; salient claims, thematic convictions and specific metaphors of manifestos uncovered the hidden ideologies of political parties. Furthermore, the presence of erasure as 'the void, the mask and the trace' in the claims and promises of the political discourse establishes challenges for elected parties. The study is unique to investigate the political manifestos drawing on ecological elements and can be used to understand the political discourse in context of ecology which is the topic of conversation current days. The valued insights of the study are helpful for policy makers, media, political parties and educators to discuss the green stories in political discourse.

Keywords: Ecological linguistics, Erasure, Framing, Manifesto, Political discourse and Salience

Introduction:

The current study aims to investigate the political manifestos for election, 2024 in Pakistan by employing Stibbe's theory of language, ecology and the stories we live by (2015). Political

manifestos as an instrument in political discourses and communication. It is an important document and public narrative of political parties to bring their vision, policies, actions, strategies and targets for governing time-period. A political manifesto is just like a blue-print of any landscape which serves multiple functions; first, it is a future plan of political party, second is to attract voters on the basis of their political promises, next is to reflect their actions in case of being elected. However, political manifestos evoke public reaction and understanding before or during election and guide voters to select the political party for considerate and thoughtful decision. Through manifestos, the common man or voter understands the political policies clearly and decides wisely, not only on the propagandas or claims (Stafford et al., 2025).

Political manifestos are the way to bring political accountability; being in power, political parties are responsible for fulfilling their promises, which strengthens the democratic process and enhances their trust for public. Thus, political parties present their political manifestos carefully and calculatedly (Ali et al., 2020). Meticulous political manifestos can affect public opinion, form media narratives, and guide policy debates.

Previously, much research has been done on political discourses, ideologies and manifestos. However, the debate about climate change and environmental sustainability demanded to observe how ecological perspectives are represented in political discourse particularly political manifestos. Ecolinguistic framework by Arran Stibbe (2015) offers detailed theoretical perspective for analyzing the reality of language and environment critically. The theory instructs that language is not merely a source of communication but it constructs the environmental narrative and ideology. Political manifestos are the powerful text either to develop the ecological awareness or destruct the sustainable measures. In the light of growing number of climate related research, it becomes vital to explore how political discourse frames ecological issues. Through eco-linguistic research approach towards political manifestos, the researcher can explore the ecological narrative thoroughly; concept of greenwashing, dominant or marginalized ecological concerns, climatic justice or injustice, ecological measures, and environmental sustainability can be discussed in detail under the theoretical framework of eco-linguistics. Applying eco-linguistic theoretical features, the implied meanings, ideologies and narratives of political discourse can be uncovered and one can identify the contribution of political parties for promoting or contributing to the ecological sustainability and nature awareness.

The study focuses to identify the political ideology covering ecological elements, economy and human behavior. Before carrying the said study, the research objectives and questions were considered first.

Objectives:

The following research objectives were focused;

1. To analyze the linguistic features and discursive strategies used in political manifestos that shape public understanding of environmental issues.
 2. To identify and evaluate the presence of ecological ideologies, metaphors, framing, and erasure using Stibbe's ecolinguistic framework.
-

Research Questions:

On the basis of the objectives, the following research questions were set to explore the political manifestos of Pakistani political parties for election, 2024;

1. How do political manifestos use language to construct narratives about the environment and sustainability?
2. What eco-linguistic features (e.g., framing, salience, erasure, metaphor) are present in political manifestos, and how do they reflect or distort ecological values?

Theoretical Framework:

Arran Stubbe's theory of eco-linguistics, as *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By* (2015), is an extensive framework for analyzing how linguistic information shapes human relationship with the nature. Stubbe discusses that language does not only reflect reality but also develops and reflects specific worldviews which play their role to understand the ecological appreciation or degradation. The theory is based on the concept that environment issue are not technological and physical but are periphrastic, presented in a narrative that we share and reflect the ideologies of human about environment and nature. The concept of '*stories we live by*' refers to the narratives and ideologies wrapped with cultural covers to reflect human attitude and behavior towards environment. At the heart of Stubbe's ecolinguistics is the concept of "**stories we live by**," which refers to culturally embedded narratives, metaphors, and ideologies that guide human behavior. These stories are implied in daily communication, media, discourse, and policy documents. The theory of eco-linguistics unfolds these stories and explore the implicit use of them; whether they contribute to environment positively or negatively. The theory carries eight linguistic and cognitive perspectives to analyze the narratives of human. **Ideology** is the representation of cognitive understanding of specific power pattern and worldviews through linguistic information. The theory of eco-linguistics prefers to identify the prioritized ideologies either to economic or ecological growth. **Framing** is to explore how language frames the environment issues and their understanding by the humans. Considering Nature as home leads towards protection (positive image) whereas taking it as resource brings exploitation (negative image) **Metaphors** are to represent conceptual understanding of the human. As per eco-linguistics, relating economy with the machines is metaphorically unsustainable practice. The narratives which are to approve or disapprove the environmental and economic regulation and expansion are considered under **Evaluation**. Labelling the product or action is actually to carry **Identity** which in turn constructs human face as positive or negative. Eco-linguistic theory puts question mark for identity creating harm to environment. **Conviction** refers to the extent of certainty in any discourse; linguistic information reflecting exaggerated human behavior over nature can bring hazardous and unsafe actions. **Salience** is accentuated and stressed narrative in any discourse. Oftentimes, environmental values are hidden while economic measures are loud and salient. The reverse of salience is **Erasure** which is to reflect the discreet and unnoticed features; it refers to what is omitted or rendered invisible. For instance, Air flying addresses comfort in travel but avoids addressing climate change. Likewise, no one talks about environmental cost of plastic disposable stuff. Erasure is of, further, three types; the void, the mask and the trace. Each type reflects the intensity of avoidance and omission integrity. Stubbe's theory of Eco-linguistics is critical constructive

approach towards nature and environment through social discourses. In a nutshell, the theory of eco-linguistics as interdisciplinary perspective representing ecology, linguistics and discourse critically. The theory helps to decode the human narratives and discourses for critiquing the ecological understanding and its social representation. Applying the current theory on the Political manifestos of Pakistani Political parties opens up the discussion for the relevance of manifestos for climate change and environment sustainability and highlights the hidden and salient aspects towards nature.

Methodology:

For the current study, the political manifestos of four Pakistani political parties were collected from their official websites. PML-N, PPP, PTI, MQM-P were the selected political parties; the reason to select four Pakistani political parties was of their popularity among Pakistani nationals. Their political manifestos for election, 2024 were downloaded and deconstructed qualitatively under Stibbe's theory eco-linguistics.

Analysis and Discussion: For detailed analysis, the perspectives like framing, metaphor, salience, erasure and ideology were highlighted and discussed separately. However, conviction, identity and evaluation were noticed under the discussion of the mentioned perspectives.

1. Framing: Framing reflects the way how language is being used to refer the reality and influence its interpretation (Flusberg et al., 2024).

- **PML-N** considers technological aspects towards environment issues; the political party frames ecological issues (smog and floods) to be resolved through technological measures and economic upgradation. The terms like "*air quality emergency*", "*technological upgrade of brick kilns*" reflected how PML-N actually frames the environmental aspects. However, PML-N through linguistic use frames nature as a system to be fixed rather than a living entity to relate to.

- **PPP** represents climate change as *existential threat* and *human rights concern*. Through such terms, the party frames the environmental issues. PPP tried to evoke people-centered change framing the term "*Green New Deal*" which links climate resilience to betterment and justice.

- **PTI** used the term "*silent killer*" for climate change; such framing aspects reflect their impersonal style to present climate change and environmental issues. Framing ecology as personified presented their reactive strategies towards nature.

- **MQM-P** perceives climate strategy as urban issue. Therefore, the party used the terms "*restoring the coast*", "*100% electrification of Karachi*" linking ecology with localized civic well-being and economic development.

2. Metaphor: Metaphors reveal how language shapes our perceptions of nature and the environment (Xianyin & Jun, 2025).

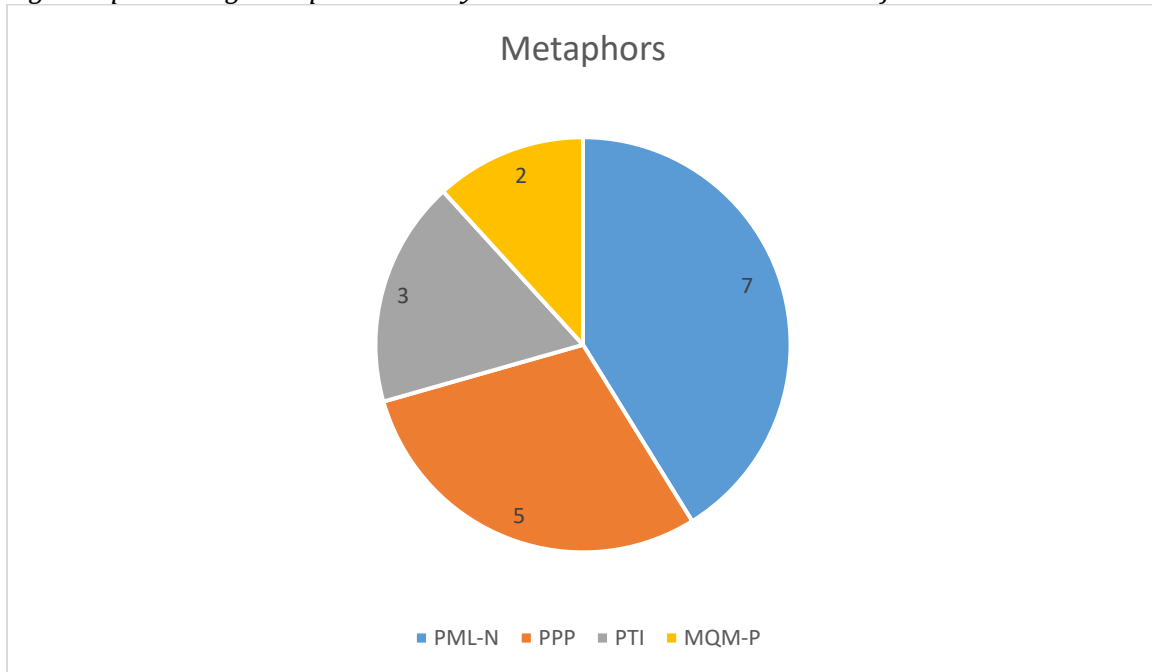
- **PML-N's** metaphors like "*Building a climate-resilient Pakistan*" present nation as an object under construction. They used structural metaphor for positioning nature and society considering aspects of infrastructure and presenting technical input rather than care or concerns.

- **PPP's** "*melting glaciers, forest fires, existential threat*" metaphorically represents nature under climatic emergency.

- **PTI's** metaphor of *"Ten Billion Tree Tsunami"* is amalgam of destruction (tsunami) and renewal (trees); that is a paradox of massive intervention and catastrophe.
- **MQM-P** uses the metaphor of the *Indus River as a "Living Being"*, aligning with ecological narratives that personify natural elements and advocate for river rights. This is the lens of Stibbe's positive story about nature.

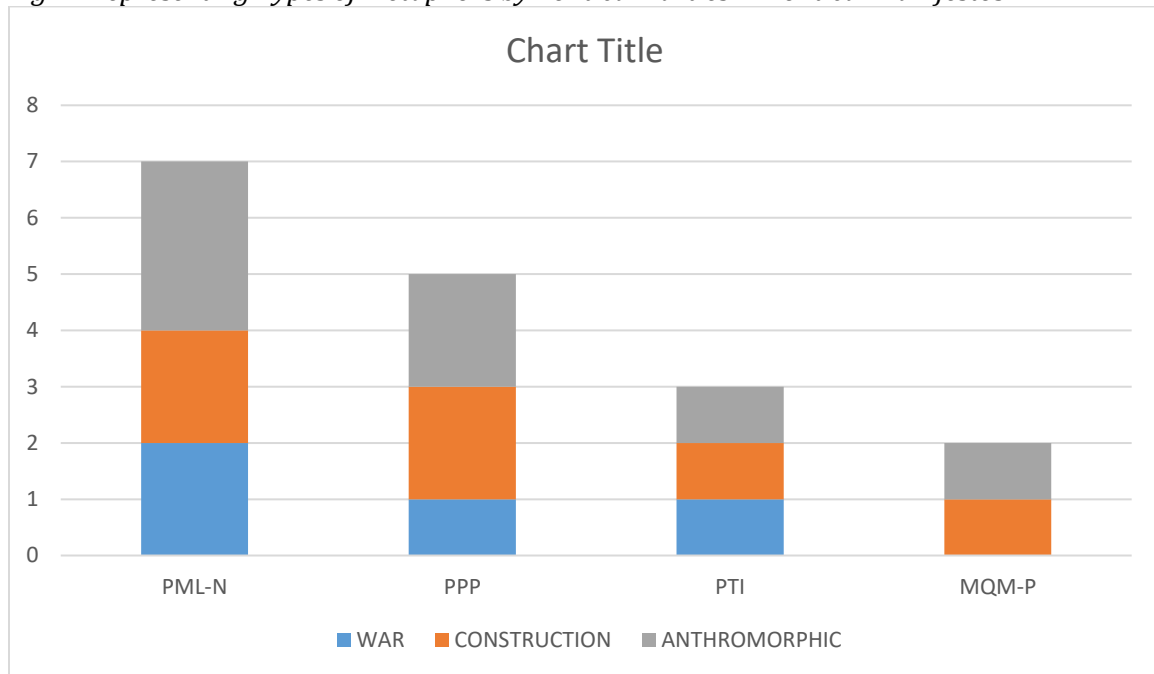
The use of metaphors not only represents the perspectives of the users but also identifies their verbosity. During qualitative analysis of political manifestos, the manual counting of metaphors was made which is given in the following chart;

Fig.1: Representing Metaphors used by Political Parties in Political Manifestos



PML-N used seven, PPP used five, PTI used three and MQM-P used 2 metaphors respectively. Further the division of metaphorical expressions found in political manifestos in different types of metaphors was carried so that the ideology, evaluation and conviction of each political party can be interpreted. The metaphorical expressions were divided in the categories of war metaphors, construction metaphors and anthropomorphic metaphors on the basis of their thematic values.

Fig. 2: Representing Types of Metaphors by Political Parties in Political Manifestos



PML-N, PPP and PTI, three political parties portrayed urgency and emergency for climate change through war metaphors while MQM-P did not use war metaphors. PPP is the only political part which talks about for ideal climatic measures by using maximum constructive metaphoric expressions.

3. Salience:

What is made prominent or foregrounded in the discourse is salience (Cardo & Celle, 2024)

- **PML-N** presents air quality, smog and floods as highly salient, particularly in urban contexts. However, its debate on *agriculture, poverty and economy* was very restrictive to bring selective salience.
- **PPP** talks about multiple domains like *health, rights, poverty, infrastructure* relating climate to achieve broad salience which is a strength in ecological narrative.
- **PTI** emphasizes its past achievement (tree plantation) and renewables in vague terms environment is *present but shallow*, and not deeply integrated into its current policy vision.
- **MQM-P** makes environmental protection central to the future of Karachi only and connects ecology with urban rights and development. Their policy is to bring localised salience.

4. Erasure:

Fredrikzon and Haffenden (2023) discussed erasure what is ignored, hidden, or omitted in the given discourse.

- **PML-N** discussed regional importance of Indus River did not open up its transboundary concerns. In short, the party missed the *rural-ecological nexus* which is failure

to connect agriculture and poverty policies with climate or environment.

- **PPP's** erasure perspective is less; it includes *climate justice, international partnerships, and gendered impacts*. This projects an ideologically broad view of climate and minimizes erasures.
- **PTI's** *retrospective* and *non-detailed* claims leave hidden and ignored aspects of the ecology. The political party did not talk about fresh plans for adaptation, conservation, or biodiversity rather it erases the heat.
- **MQM-P** omitted national-level integration; it focuses on Karachi and its coastline. The party ignored climate change nationally and presented its manifesto as local political party rather than a national political representation.

Stibbe's Erasure Framework (2015) is of three types; the void (Complete absence of an ecological issue or perspective), the mask (The issue is mentioned by concealing or distorting the ecological harm or reality) and the trace (A subtle hint or residue of an erased issue mentioning it once in the discourse but is no longer central).

Table 1: Erasure Typology in Political Manifesto of Political Parties

Party	The Void	The Mask	The Trace
PML-N	Climate-poverty disconnected	Thar-coal as green	International water dispute
PPP	Indigenous information	Foreign funds for environmental justice	Limited local Stance
PTI	Modernize ecological plans	Climate as "silent killer"	Projection of past actions
MQM-P	Non-Karachi ecology	maritime nationalism	Random plan for River

5. Ideology:

It is to represent underlying systems of belief revealed through language choices (Hassan, 2018).

- **PML-N** portrays its ideology as *technocratic and growth-oriented*; It considers nature as a challenge to have growth in policy matters, engineering and economics. The ideology of the political party is to legitimize the previous actions and bring technological control rather to be close to nature.
- **PPP** embodies a *social-democratic and ecological justice ideology*. Apparently, its discourse as *life-affirming discourse* focused on equity, gender, justice and rights. The ideology of PPP matches with the eco-linguistic concepts of Stibbe.
- **PTI** presents nature as instrumental for political campaign and depicts *performance-based ideology relating* previous performances with future aspirations through quoting green credentials.
- **MQM-P** owns *urban ecological ideology*, based on localism and adaptive control.

However, the discussion of Indus river as living object is a *positive ideological perspective* in eco-linguistics.

To summarize the findings through qualitative analysis of political manifestos of political parties, the thematic narrative of every political party, its evaluation and major silent areas were placed separately in a table so that the differences in their perspectives, narratives and actions can be highlighted. The identified results are presented in the given table;

Table 2: Comparative Representation of Political Manifestos and Ecological Evaluation

Political Party	Dominant Story	Ecological Evaluation	Notable Silences or Issues
PML-N	Technocratic ecosystem	Piecemeal and practical; partially beneficial	Excluded agricultural and class-ecology
PPP	Climate Equity and Human Rights	Socio-ecologically integrated; strongly beneficial	Idealistic approach, execution is at risk.
PTI	Green Growth and Legacy	Superficially integrated; moderately beneficial	Risk at greenwashing; no focus on biodiversity
MQM-P	Natural Justice and Urban Ecology	Eco-centric and Novel; highly beneficial	Narrow View (loudly urban); needs broader national framing

Discussion: The analysis on the theoretical basis of eco-linguistics put the light on the narrative of each political party through their political manifestos; the linguistic information in their manifestos reflected their ideologies towards nature and environmental sustainability. The Climate change and environmental sustainability are the concerned social problems after human rights. The political party PPP related human rights with climate and so far, the narrative of PPP was very much related to the climate justice of eco-linguistics where as MQM-P restricts its policies to the Urban environmental. Considering its political strength inside Sindh province, the political party focused on urban and local public to address. Fine & Love-Nichols (2021) discussed the relation of climate and socio position in the society. Limited to the one particular province, the strategy of MQM-P was latest and updated towards ecological measures. On the contrary, they were failed to represent the holistic view of environmental sustainability. The linguistic choices like tree plantation, brick kilns upgradation, eco-friendly, clean and green, and indigenous welfare highlighted the eco-linguistic reflections in political manifestos; such language reflects the Sibbbe (2015)'s eco-centric ideology.

PML-N and PTI framed maximum eco-oriented terms and used prominent metaphors to bring their promises towards ecology related to economy and technology. However, the vagueness in their action plans and restricted agricultural and economic measures led

towards uncertainty of their climate policies in future. Further, the terms *green revolution*, *war against pollution*, *melting glaciers*, Ten Billion Tree Tsunami, metaphorically represent the eco-centric message of political manifestos of Pakistani Political parties. Interpreting such language usage, the voters understand the value of environmental sustainability and relate the urgency of voting right towards the political party on the basis of ecological promises. The detailed eco-linguistic analysis of the political narratives of political parties provided the evaluation and conviction of the political manifestos. Fairclough & Fairclough (2018) identified the role of conviction for credibility, interpretation of the message and persuasive attitude during social understanding. Evaluation, overall, helps to position public for positive or negative judgements (Martin, J.R., & White, P.R.R., 2005). Therefore, the political manifestos reflect the ideological perspective of all parties towards environment and human rights and as a narrative-discourse shape the opinions of the voter, provoke the action and frame the social reality.

Van Dijk (2006) represents the same under critical discourse analysis. Critically, eco-linguistic analysis balances the impression of critical discourse analysis in terms of political discourse representation. Unfortunately, the linguistic use in political manifestos did not represent the animal welfare, agricultural changes, holistic version of climate policies, and economic growth; rather the political parties presented unrealistic approach, localized measures, river transboundary in political discourse. The linguistic choices as metaphors, discourse tools and framed in a specific way in political manifestos construct the narratives about the environment and its sustainability. The eco-linguistic features like framing, salience, erasure, metaphor, ideology, conviction and evaluation were found in political manifestos. Lakoff (2010) discussed the importance of framing style of environment. The framing patterns in political manifestos presented nature as strong resource either with the support of technology or upgradation of previous successes. Political parties framed better ecosystem to build up rather than built-in; which unfolded humanistic and capitalist ideology of political parties.

The study relates the results with theoretical features presented by Van Dijk, T. A. (2006) that Political discourse presents environmental themes which are actually fit for sale. Representing ecological values as planting trees, banning plastic and avoiding smoke reflected their care towards nature whereas ignoring corporate pollution and deforestation because of economic and technological measures distorted their claims to turn in actions. The political manifestos represented the selective and fragmented perspectives towards ecosystem of Pakistan; therefore, the selected four political parties failed to narrate climate justice and ecological integrity in detail. The focus of political parties was to attract the voters on the basis of the climate and environment vulnerability. They used war related and urgency demanded metaphors to trigger the voters in their favor. Nerlich, B., & Koteyko, N. (2009) highlighted the linguistic use for climate change mitigation process. The current study identified that the metaphors like *fight against pollution*, *investment in green energy*, *path toward sustainability* ignored the reality of environment and free state of nature; they considered to control the nature by mentioning unrealistic environmental action- plan, unsystematic solutions towards ecological problems and selective fragmented strategy. Irvine, J., & Gal, S. (2000) mentioned how linguistic choices represented ideology through language. Under the mask of Green narrative or green policy discourse, the political

manifestos brought harmful ideologies and discursive silence by avoiding indigenous ecological knowledge, agricultural and animal welfare and true climate justice. The linguistic patterns exposed their ideology and measures towards nature and environment.

Conclusion:

Political parties through their political manifestos develop ecological narrative; through using metaphors, framing linguistic choices, presenting selective salience and implying conviction strategies, they reflected their environmental ideology. With the help of eco-linguistic theoretical framework, the researcher examined the political manifestos in detail, explored ecological stories and identified the inclusive ecological discourse under political discourse. The political manifestos targeted Pakistani voters to trigger towards ecological integrity and values and in turn, the political parties reflected their ideology to preserve the nature. Basically, the political parties reflected such promises through their political manifestos so that they can attract the voters. Consequently, they used dominant exploitative narrative by utilizing eco-linguistic aspects; they framed nature as economic asset, highlighted promising future actions, tried to erase the dangerousness of climatic injustice, reflected their ideologies through metaphors and presented their services towards nature through the platform of conviction and evaluation. Furthermore, a detailed eco-linguistic analysis of political manifestos revealed how linguistic choices develop ecological realities and provoke urgency for holistic measures towards environmental sustainability and climatic justice. The current research is a pathway for exploring more political discourses critically other than political debates and speeches.

Reference:

1. Ali, A., Rashid, A., & Sultan, A. (2020). Exploring Identities and Ideologies in Political Parties' election Manifestos: a corpus Assisted Critical Discourse analysis. *Global Political Review*, *V(III)*, 44–58. [https://doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2020\(v-iii\).05](https://doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2020(v-iii).05)
 2. *Review*, *V(III)*, 44–58. [https://doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2020\(v-iii\).05](https://doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2020(v-iii).05)
 3. Cardo, M., & Celle, A. (2024). Question sequences and salience in TED talks. *Anglophonia*, *37*. <https://doi.org/10.4000/12poe>
 4. Eder, N., Jenny, M., & Müller, W. C. (2016). Manifesto functions: How party candidates view and use their party's central policy document. *Electoral Studies*, *45*, 75–87. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2016.11.011>
 5. Fairclough, N., & Fairclough, I. (2018). A procedural approach to ethical critique in CDA. *Critical Discourse Studies*, *15(2)*, 169–185. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2018.1427121>
 6. Fine, J. C., & Love-Nichols, J. (2021). Language and climate justice: A research agenda. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, *25(3)*, 453–473. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12469>
 7. Flusberg, S. J., Holmes, K. J., Thibodeau, P. H., Nabi, R. L., & Matlock, T. (2024). The Psychology of framing: how everyday language shapes the way we think, feel, and act. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, *25(3)*, 105–161. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15291006241246966>
 8. Fredrikzon, J., & Haffenden, C. (2023). Towards erasure studies: Excavating the material conditions of memory and forgetting. *Memory Mind & Media*, *2*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/mem.2023.2>
 9. Hassan, A. (2018). Language, Media, and Ideology: Critical Discourse analysis of Pakistani news bulletin headlines and its impact on viewers. *SAGE Open*, *8(3)*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018792612>
 10. Irvine, J., & Gal, S. (2000). *Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation*. In P. Kroskrity
-

-
11. (Ed.), *Regimes of Language* (pp. 35–84). Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.
 12. Lakoff, G. (2010). Why it Matters How We Frame the Environment. *Environmental Communication*, 4(1), 70–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17524030903529749>
 13. Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. R. (2005). The language of evaluation. In *Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230511910>
 14. Nerlich, B., & Koteyko, N. (2009). *Carbon reduction and CO2 sequestration: The linguistic construction of climate change mitigation*. *Discourse Studies*, 11(6), 699–712. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445609347338>
 16. Stafford, R., Alexander, J., Axon, S., Boakes, Z., Cantarello, E., Croker, A. R., Cvitanović, M., Almela, V. D., Ginige, T., Harris, N., Jones, E., Kountouris, Y., Lilleker, D., Russell, F., Sokolnicki, J. R., Upson, S. J., & Vincent, E. (2025). Evaluating post 2024 election scenarios for the UK based on political party manifestos. *PLoS ONE*, 20(5), e0324942. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0324942>
 17. Stibbe, A. (2015). Ecolinguistics. In *Routledge eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315718071>
 18. van Dijk, T. A. (2006). *Politics, Ideology and Discourse*. In *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics* (2nd ed.), Vol. 9, 728–740. Elsevier.
 20. Xianyin, N. W., & Jun, N. G. (2025). Metaphors in the Vegetarian: An Ecolinguistic analysis. *Sino-US English Teaching*, 22(5). <https://doi.org/10.17265/1539-8072/2025.05.004>
-