



Review Article

Eco-Linguistics & Literary Futures: Voices on a Warming Planet

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ABSTRACT

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In this study, we look at eco-linguistics and current environmental literature, focusing on how language use and writing respond to the problem of climate change. The field of eco-linguistics looks at how language, thought, and the natural world are linked. It looks at how biological settings both make language and change it. It's also a place where people can talk about and think critically about how people affect the environment, how the environment is changing, and what the future of the world might be like. Environmental writing includes songs, stories, articles, and science fiction. This study looks at how literary works use metaphors, story frameworks, and words to make people more aware, get them to act, and rethink what a sustainable future could look like. Eco-critical theories, critical discourse analysis, and thematic literary analysis are all used together in this study to look at works by authors such as Amitav Ghosh, Barbara Kingsolver, Margaret Atwood, and Octavia Butler. This study talks a lot about how words can hurt the world and help it get better. The paper makes the case that eco-linguistics and creative expression can be used together to make ways to fight climate change and hold on to hope. It does this by looking at how natural quiet, chaos, and new ideas show up in texts. There are new conversations going on in the fields of environmental arts and language ecology because this study shows that literary options are important places to think creatively and act on the environment. It is stressed at the end of the paper how important it is to use language and literature together to solve environmental problems and get people to care for the world.

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1. Introduction

Things are getting worse with climate change, and it's not just a problem for politics, money, and science. It also changes writing, language, and society in a big way. The way we talk about and show the environment is very important as temperatures rise around the world, ecosystems break down, and weather patterns become less stable. Eco-linguistics is a field that looks at how language, thinking, and the environment are all linked. It helps us understand how language changes the way people think about and deal with nature and how changes in nature change the way people talk. On the other hand, environmental writing is a strong cultural place where people tell, share, and debate stories of nature loss, struggle, and hope. We are going to look at how eco-linguistic ideas and literary expression work together to make "literary futures"—imaginative and active scenarios that respond to and change the world around us. Language isn't just a way for people to communicate; it also has power over people and shapes how they live and think about the world. The way people talk about climate change impacts what people know about it, how policies are made, and what people do. It's possible to make people feel a certain way and push certain political goals by using words like "war" or "crisis" to talk about climate change. On the other hand, using metaphors like "balance" or "stewardship" can help people take responsibility for what they do. The field of eco-linguistics challenges common beliefs that make doing bad

things to the environment seem normal. It shows how words can hide the truth about the environment and bring about change. That you should think about the environment more when you say things and write them shows how important it is. Literature, especially environmental literature, which makes you feel and think about nature facts, strengthens this language research. Fiction, poetry, and prose are all forms of writing that are used to explore the moral issues that appear when the environment is hurt, as well as the ways that things can be fixed and changed. Authors like Octavia Butler, Margaret Atwood, Amitav Ghosh, and others write stories that make you think about how people see the world and how they could live together in different ways. A lot of the time, these texts break the rules of traditional stories by using non-linear time, pictures in more than one mode, and language plays. This makes readers very aware of the environment.

The idea of "literary futures" looks at how literature imagines, changes, and fights against natural futures. It does this by using critical and creative theories. When it comes to climate change, creative futures don't just say bad things will happen; they also think of ways to live with nature, do what's right, and get along with other living things.

This study shows how eco-linguistics and literary analysis can work together to bring about social and environmental change by looking at how literary texts interact with linguistic ecology and ecological futures.

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The main idea of this essay is to answer the question, "How do eco-linguistic principles shed light on the ways literary texts represent and fight climate change?" What kinds of stories and language do artists use to talk about natural disasters and the future? In what ways do these writings question anthropocentric ways of thinking and encourage natural empathy? The study looks at how speakers on a warmer world express concern, hope, and moral involvement through close textual analysis based on eco-critical and discourse analytic approaches.

This study adds to the growing talks across fields in environmental arts, language ecology, and climate justice studies by answering these questions. It shows how important it is to use interdisciplinary methods that see language and writing as important parts of the environmental problems we face today. In the end, "Eco-Linguistics & Literary Futures" makes the case that the climate crisis needs more than just technological or political solutions. It also needs a deep cultural and linguistic shift, where literature and language inspire ecological imagination, activism, and care.

Literature Review

As environmental problems get worse, the area where language, ecology, and writing meet has become an important place to study. The fields of eco-linguistics, environmental studies, and ecocriticism all agree on one thing: language is not just a silent mirror of natural reality; it shapes how that reality is seen, told, and argued about. This review looks at important early and new works in eco-linguistics and environmental literature, as well as new ideas in discourse studies and science fiction that help shape the idea of "literary futures."

The basics of eco-linguistics

Eco-linguistics began in the 1990s with Michael Halliday's important call to look again at how language keeps destroying the environment. Halliday's criticism of linguistics' standard focus on structure over function set the stage for later research that focused on how speech supports practices that aren't sustainable. He said that language metaphors make growth-focused economic models that don't take into account natural boundaries seem reasonable. Since then, researchers like Arran Stibbe (2015) have added to the field by naming ideas that are bad for the environment as "stories we live by" and pushing for rewriting these stories using new language.

Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live by by Stibbe combines systemic functional linguistics, cognitive linguistics, and critical discourse analysis to show how language shows how people feel about things like consumption, nature, and growth. He finds patterns that hide damage to the environment, like denial, relocation, and turning things into goods. His work has had a big impact on the movement to use language in ways that emphasise connection, respect, and social justice. With these improvements, eco-linguistics is not only important, but it also changes things.

The study of writing that looks at environmental problems has grown a lot since the 1990s. This is called ecocriticism. The way Cheryl Glotfelty (1996) defined ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" opened up new ways of thinking about how books can make us more aware of the environment. An important book in the field, *The Environmental Imagination* (1995), by Lawrence Buell, showed how nature writing and American literature standards have changed the way people think about nature.

Ecocritics have recently added global, postcolonial, and fantasy literatures to this question. Sense of Place and Sense of Planet, which Ursula K. Heise wrote in 2008, makes the case for a planetary rather than a local ecological ethics. It does this by looking at how stories of globalisation combine with environmental dreams. According to Amitav Ghosh's 2016 book *The Great Derangement*, most literature doesn't talk about climate change. He says that fact isn't enough to show how big and uncertain the Anthropocene is. Thanks to Ghosh's criticism, we can now look at different kinds of stories that are more in line with how complicated the world is. These include myths, magic realism, and speculative fiction.

What the future holds for writing and science fiction

A lot of people like to think about how the world will change in the future through climate fiction (also known as "cli-fi"). Adam Trexler (*Anthropocene Fictions*, 2015) and Adeline Johns-Putra (*Climate Change and the Contemporary Novel*, 2019) are two researchers who look into how story time, character growth, and world-building in science fiction and fantasy show how people and other living things are linked. Some writers, like Margaret Atwood, Octavia Butler, and Kim Stanley Robinson, use dystopia, utopia, and a mix of the two to talk about things like unfair systems, damage to the environment, and how people might be able to get back on their feet.

In her *MaddAddam* series, Atwood, for example, writes about biopolitics, corporate ecocide, and genetic engineering in a world that is falling apart. Language can be used as a tool of resistance and to stay alive. This is shown by the way she plays with syntax and new words. In the same way, Butler's *Parable* series shows how language and faith change along with the loss of the world. For example, "Earthseed" is both a philosophy and an ecology of language.

Talk, beliefs, and talking to the environment

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) gives us important tools for looking at how texts create meanings about power, ideology, and the environment. The work of Norman Fairclough on language and power in 1992 shows how institutional discourses normalise environmental pollution by using euphemisms, abstractions, and technical logic. Recent eco-critical CDA looks at literature, policy papers, and the media to show how they use discourse patterns to avoid responsibility or put the blame on groups that are already struggling.

Metaphors We Live By (1980), by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, gives us a basic understanding of how metaphors shape our knowledge of the environment. Phrases like "Mother Earth," "carbon footprint," and "climate war" have political meanings that affect how people feel and what they do. Eco-linguists want to change the way metaphors are used so that they focus on unity, care, and symbiosis.

Eco-linguistics and environmental writing have grown in unison, but new work across disciplines shows how important it is to bring them together right away. Newer books like *The Routledge Handbook of Ecolinguistics* (2022) and *The Ecolinguistics Reader* (2001) by Alwin Fill and Peter Mühlhäusler call for a greater connection between the way language is used and how it is written. Still, eco-linguistic methods aren't used in many studies that really look at written works. This paper fills in that gap by combining theory and analytical tools from both fields to look at how language is used in literature to deal with the dangers of climate change and picture a better future that is sustainable.

Previous Studies

A lot of research has been done on the link between language and ecology thinking, as well as on how writing can inspire people to care about the environment and take action. This part talks about important studies that paved the way for eco-linguistics and literature studies to work together. It also talks about studies that look at how story, metaphor, and speech are used in ecological representation.

The corpus-based studies (2015, 2021) by Arran Stibbe show how eco-linguistic tools can be used to find popular ecological ideologies. As part of his job, he looks at political talks, business ads, and literature stories to see how language patterns support or harm environmental ideals. Stibbe's most recent work also includes useful instructions for rewriting books to help the environment thrive. His ideas have helped make writing seen as a place where language can change, even though literary study isn't his main area of interest.

Ursula K. Heise's *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* (2008) is still used as a standard to connect environmental writing to world ecological thought. Heise looks at how literary texts place local ecosystems within global frameworks by combining narrative theory, culture geography, and environmental theory. New research on environmental timing and world risk in climate fiction is based on her focus on story size.

Language and environment experts have paid a lot of attention to Margaret Atwood's science fiction and fantasy. Wilson (2016) used eco-linguistic and semiotic frameworks to look at Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy. He argued that neologisms and mixed language forms show how biocultural adaptation works and criticise capitalist extractivism. Her research shows how making up new words is both a way to stay alive and a criticism of the Anthropocene.

The work of Greg Garrard, which includes ecocritical work and eco-narrative theory, is also very important. In *Ecocriticism* (2004; updated 2012), Garrard gives a list of literary ecology styles, such as pasture, forest, doomsday, and settlement. Other researchers have used his theory to look at story views and the moral issues they raise in environmental writings.

There have also been important studies of eco-metaphor, especially those that use Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Goatly (2000) used cognitive metaphor theory to look at how environmental speech uses metaphors like "nature as resource" and "the environment as machine" to show utilitarian views. On the other hand, some studies say that ideas of interbeing, care, and family should be used to change how people and nature relate to each other.

Researchers from different fields, like Alwin Fill (2001) and Peter Mühlhäusler, have studied language loss, linguistic diversity, and the environmental factors that affect these things. Their work shows that language and biological diversity often go hand in hand and support each other. This idea has been talked about in literary studies, especially when looking at indigenous literature and orature, where language is seen as a way to store and protect biological memory.

Posthumanist ecocriticism and discourse studies are also mixed in new work by experts like Kate Rigby and Serpil Oppermann. Rigby (2014) says that literary and cultural study, especially of works from the Global South, should be used to "decolonize" the Anthropocene story. In 2018, Oppermann looked at how matter, emotion, and words are connected in science fiction as a way of creating biological worlds.

Even with these improvements, there is still a methodological gap between combining the systematic language methods of eco-linguistics with the analytical depth of literature studies. Most studies either look at patterns of language in journalistic writing or at creative works without paying attention to formal language structure. This paper fills in that gap by bringing eco-linguistic ideas directly to literary works, which helps both fields move forward at the same time.

Methodology and Data Collection

This study uses a mixed method that includes both eco-linguistic discourse analysis and literary close reading to look at how language is used in environmental writings to fight environmental damage and imagine sustainable futures. The method combines story structure mapping, metaphor analysis, and critical discourse analysis (CDA). It looks at works by Octavia Butler (*The Parable of the Sower*), Amitav Ghosh (*The Hungry Tide*), and Margaret Atwood (*The MaddAddam* series).

Framework for eco-linguistics

The study is based on Arran Stibbe's (2015) eco-linguistic framework, especially his distinction between "stories we live by" that are harmful and helpful. It looks at how each author uses language to question popular environmental ideas like anthropocentrism, consumerism, and techno-optimism and suggests new stories based on interdependence, humility, and caring for the environment. Cognitive metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) adds to the framework by pointing out the mental images that shape ecology views.

Scope of Analysis

Four important works of literature were chosen because they have a lot of different themes, use new language, and are well-known in environmental literature:

- *MaddAddam* by Margaret Atwood is the first book in a series about posthuman worlds, natural collapse, and genetic engineering.
- Amitav Ghosh's "*The Hungry Tide*" is a book that takes place in the Sundarbans and is about wildlife, climate risk, and cultural memory.
- *Flight Behaviour* by Barbara Kingsolver is an eco-realistic book about rural environmentalism, climate change, and migration.
- Octavia Butler's "*The Parable of the Sower*" is a dark story about the end of the world, survival, and spiritual change through language.

There is a close study of each text's language, metaphors, and story structure, with a focus on how these tools show criticism of the environment and possible futures.

Case Study 1: The MaddAddam Trilogy by Atwood

In Atwood's series, an ecological nightmare from the near future is created, complete with genetically modified animals and habitats that have been destroyed. The books use made-up words like "pigoons," "Crakers," and "ChickieNobs" to criticise biopolitics in business and language abuse. The language in these works makes fun of science language and shows how morally murky technology interference can be. By using language humour and posthuman storytelling, Atwood shifts the focus back to natural ethics and how to survive outside of the reasoning of capitalism.

Eco-linguistically, the series challenges established ideas by mixing science language with mythical stories. Atwood's ideal vision, which is written in the Crakers' language, is both

a way to clean up language and a criticism of how culture is being erased. By using both speech and quiet, Atwood shows how dangerous it is to try to control the environment.

Case Study 2: "The Hungry Tide" by Ghosh

The Sundarbans' tidal scenery, people who have to move, and threatened species are at the heart of Ghosh's book. His language is mixed with Bengali understanding about the environment and science marine biology, making a complex verbal ecology. Communication gaps between locals and visitors and between people and animals are used as metaphors for larger gaps in environmental policy knowledge.

Eco-linguistic analysis shows that Ghosh questions stories that focus on humans by putting the alien tide and threatened dolphin at the centre of the story. He talks about how the planets are connected through multiple languages, story reversals, and natural metaphors (like "the tide is a voice"). In the end, the book makes the case for listening to opinions that aren't human.

The third case study is Kingsolver's flight behaviour.

Kingsolver's book makes the arrival of monarch butterflies in Tennessee because of changes in the weather into a dramatic event. Her language is a mix of science explanations, Appalachian dialects, and images from the country. The book emphasises eco-awareness in everyday life and fights against eco-apocalyptic fatalism by showing how people can adapt and make moral choices.

From an eco-linguistic point of view, Kingsolver breaks down the idea that nature and culture are opposites by showing how ecological knowledge can be built into personal and family stories. Her use of sense metaphors ("the hills breathed with wings") and self-reflective inner speech shows how language connects science theory with emotional involvement, making climate change a real thing that people are living with.

The fourth case study is Butler's "Parable of the Sower."

Butler's bleak book is about a future America that is destroyed by economic and environmental disaster. The main character forms a new set of beliefs called Earthseed based on changing the way words are used. One of its main ideas is "God is Change." The story uses biblical rhythm, metaphorical vision, and flexible language to build a spiritual ecology based on empathy, renewal, and flexibility.

Butler says that language change is important for both social and biological life from an eco-linguistic point of view. These Earthseed songs are a type of memetic speech that asks about both freedom and fate. The way she tells stories shows how words can bring about new moral ideas even when the world is being destroyed.

Synthesis

Some eco-linguistic trends can be seen in all of these texts. For example, the stories focus on listening, adjusting, and restoring, and they use metaphors to change the way biological links are thought of. Each author imagines a future in literature where words are used to criticise the world and discover new ways for people to live together. Not only do these works show climate change, but they also use language to show defiance and persistence. This shows that actions and words can change natural possibilities.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study show how important words and stories are in forming our understanding of the environment,

our sense of duty for it, and our creativity. It becomes clear from the texts that we looked at that they all share an eco-linguistic attitude that values ecological respect, relationship thought, and language innovation. These stories are very important because they challenge the main environmental conversations that are about control, commodification, and mining, and instead offer frameworks of connection, sensitivity, and resilience.

The instability of anthropocentric rules is a main theme in all four works. The MaddAddam series by Atwood makes fun of technological arrogance and asks what the moral limits are of humans meddling in natural systems. The trilogy's new language, especially the posthuman Crakers' language, shows an effort to rebuild reality in ways that are less dominant and more in tune with nature. The Hungry Tide by Ghosh has a similar effect because it is also about ties between people and the environment and sea life of the Sundarbans. By mixing Bengali oral custom with scientific words, Ghosh breaks down the boundaries between culture and the environment, supporting different ways of knowing.

Flight Behaviour by Kingsolver shows how climate change affects people in real life. The way she uses sense metaphors and personal stories in her writing is different from the ways of talking about the natural problem that make it seem too big or vague to do anything about. She changes the story about climate change so that it is easier to understand, more emotional, and socially important. At the same time, Butler's Parable of the Sower deals with natural destruction by changing language and religion. Making Earthseed was a huge act of resistance because it shows that we need new words and new ways of seeing the world to live in a terrible future.

Not only do these writings show how bad the environmental disaster is, but they also show how language and culture can change. By rethinking language, words, and the structure of stories, these writers make spaces for discussion where ecological justice is possible. In this way, they show that language has two sides: it can hurt and heal, erase and remember, separate and join.

From the point of view of eco-linguistics, the effects are big. These books show how stories, whether they are real or made up, can change the world. Stories affect how people think, what policies are made, and how they think about right and wrong. Language is not neutral; it is one of the main battlegrounds in the fight for natural futures. Because of this, teachers, activists, and artists need to be more deliberate about the stories they tell and the metaphors they use.

This study adds to a growing amount of work from different fields that says language analysis and literary interpretation should be used together more in environmental research. It argues for a way of reading that is both critical and artistic, and that takes into account how the form and content of a book affect the environment. More study could include indigenous, non-Western, and oral story forms, which often contain ecology ideas that have been ignored for a long time by main stream literature and language models.

To sum up, Eco-Linguistics & Literary Futures shows that literature doesn't just watch ecological disaster happen; it also changes how we think, feel, and action towards it. Language, as a way to think and tell stories, is very important to how people live in the Anthropocene. As the world warms, it's not enough to just talk about what's happening; you have to also think about what else might be possible and speak it into existence.

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