



LANGUAGE AND ECOLOGY: AN ECOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF UZMA ASLAM KHAN'S THINNER THAN SKIN

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to undertake an ecolinguistic analysis of "Thinner than Skin," a literary work by Uzma Aslam Khan, in order to determine whether or not the author successfully generates and conveys an ecological worldview and ethical principles via her writing. The research makes use of Arran Stubbe's ecolinguistic framework, which identifies metaphors, symbols, narratives, and assessments as four linguistic systems with the ability to express ecological meanings and values. This analysis applies this theory to the text at hand, delving into how the author makes use of various literary devices to portray humankind's dependency on the natural world. It also explores the difficulties that arise from having divergent views and priorities on the environment. This research delves at the ways in which language influences ecological identities and interconnections. The research presented in this book provides a thorough examination of the historical and cultural elements that have shaped ecological worldviews and ethics from a postcolonial perspective. It also provides a rich lexical toolkit for conveying ecological ideas and values clearly and effectively. The study's results are used to guide the author's exploration of the aesthetic and ethical components of language in connection to ecology, as well as its power to drive and change environmental actions and viewpoints.

Keywords: *Ecological Concerns, Eco Linguistic, Thinner Than Skin, Uzma Aslam Khan*

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1. Introduction

Ecolinguistic discourse analysis is basically the study of language to find out the representation of ecology in any particular language and particular culture. This is relatively a fresh area of study. Ecolinguistics analysis of any work is meant to gauge the positive or negative depiction of ecology in any work of literature either written or spoken as discourse is created and propagated through these two mediums. Ecolinguistics gained its roots in 1990s. This branch of study is designed to study the societies which are parent forces behind the development of different languages and it also studies ecological contexts in different societies.

Although Ecolinguistics emerged as a branch of study in 1990s but its roots lie in 1970s as can be observed in Haugen's (1972) work he states that language ecology is defined as the study of interaction in any particular language and its environment. He further mentions that society is the basic environment in which a language not only emerges but also represents it. He establishes that language exists in the minds of its users therefore language creates a connection between humans and the natural world around them.

Ecolinguistics today is a discipline which has completed its fifty years of evolution as it has taken roots in 1972 through the work of an American linguist Einar Haugen titled as *The Ecology of Language*. Since then there is a new approach to analyze the ideas of language, linguistics and eventually to Ecolinguistics. All the disciplines of study get emergence in response to some factors those factors range from social to academic factors. Same is the case with Ecolinguistics. It emerged as a response to ecological crises and also it was a reaction to anthropocentric approaches of modern industrialized world.

Ecolinguistics brings to light the enormous danger done to the ecology of any area in the pursuit of economic, industrial and cultural development. It takes into account the role of language in supporting the ecological damage. It also shows the ways to use language to create positive discourse regarding the preservation of ecology. It focuses on discourses created through language as faulty and disastrous for ecology. The discourses are created through the mediums of stories. Humans are made to believe through different stories, ideologies and metaphors that they are the best creation. Those discourses made humans believe that whatever they do for their development was justified and right. Kortzen (2006) that stories can be used as a forceful tool to bring change in our daily course of life.

Kingsnorth and Hine (2009) view the present social, economic and ecological disasters as a result of the stories fabricated through language.

Berry (1988) opines that the basic reason of all crises prevalent in this world is the falsified stories relating to the beginning of this world and the stories about the adaptation of humans to this world. He views those stories are no longer effective we need new stories to cater new crises. Okri (1996) suggests changing the values induced in humans through changed stories to change the nations and individuals. Stories, ideologies and metaphors are of different kinds. The most admired story is that of prosperity which leads man to gain material benefits on any account. There are other stories of security and secularism. The most misleading and dangerous story is that the humans are centre of all creatures and all other creatures are here to serve them.

Other than stories there is another tool to subjugate all the weaker ones including ecology that is the tool of ideology. Different nations hold different ideologies and all the ideologies are human centred. Ideologies are again constructed through the medium of language. The ideology of consumerism turned al the world into a commercial entity. Commercialism damaged the ecology as consumers are never happy with the available goods they always demand more and more goods which are directly or indirectly taken and usurped from the natural world. The ideology of industrial prosperity damaged the ecological world a lot as it polluted the air, soil and water. It caused an irreparable loss to natural world.

Humans are framed through different constructed theories to structure targets. Language can be used to frame structures to deal the climate change as an overwhelming and worldwide threat posed to the whole human species to bring global preservation of ecology (Lucas, 2006). There is a need to re-frame the stories and theories to preserve and protect our ecology. Global frames should be designed to construct positive and eco friendly discourses in present and coming generation of humans.

A sub field of Ecolinguistics studies is eco criticism. Eco criticism is the study of any genre of written or spoken discourse which views the presentation of natural world in any work. It studies the negative discourses which brought about large scale damage to climate and ecology. Eco criticism also focuses on the use of language in different genres to create positive discourses related to the depiction of nature. Positive discourse regarding ecology presents nature as an active agent that is capable of asserting influence on all species harboring it. It also views humans as all other creatures. It negates all the anthropocentric approaches and considers humans an animalic entity.

Eco-criticism is a postmodern literary approach this term was originally proposed by Joseph Meeker as an idea of 'Literary Ecology' in his *Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology* (1972). The term Eco-criticism was given by William Rueckert in 1978 in his essay *Literature and Ecology: an Experiment in Ecocriticism*. Eco criticism is a

relatively new research area and although the term was coined in the 70s yet its ground work begin to emerge in 90s now it is the most opted area as our planet is facing a grave ecological destruction. The literature that deals with landscape is called ecological literature. The theories that are applied to investigate the presence of ecological factors in any literary work are called eco critical theories.

Pakistani fiction, poetry, drama and other life writings by Pakistani based writers have not only gained prominence worldwide but have also earned many prestigious awards as Orange, Booker and Noble etc. In ‘poetry’ *Pakistani Idiom in English, and the groupies* it has been stated that “the proponents of the idea of Pakistani idiom are not only interested in certain literary techniques but also try to assume an active role in the politics of culture [...] to decide who is a Pakistani writer. The matter thus makes one raise questions not only about a Pakistani but also about *Pakistaniness*” (Hashmi, 1994, p. 271).

It is the concern towards physical world that has given rise to a new branch of literary theory of Eco-criticism. This is postmodern literary approach. It has given novel dimensions to place, setting and environment. Loretta (2011) explains this post-modern epoch in this way, ‘eco’ is from the Greek root word ‘oikos’ means ‘house’.... just as economy is the management and law of the house, ‘ecology’ is the study of the house. Therefore, eco criticism is the criticism of house that is the environment as is represented in literature.

This work investigates the Ecolinguistics critical discourse representation in Pakistani fiction. Today’s world is facing ecological crises. We need ecological based literature so that we may be able to build a discourse in favor of ecology. This work will also study that how ecology shapes the culture of any particular land. This study is significant as it is least discussed matter in Pakistani fiction. The appeal of this work is the most pleaded stance of present day world. This work will be helpful to raise awareness among masses regarding representation of ecology in literature and protection of ecology.

1.1. Research Objectives

Following were the objectives of the study:

1. To shed light on ecological depiction in *Thinner than Skin* by Uzma Aslam Khan
2. To explore the association of culture and environment in *Thinner than Skin* by Uzma Aslam Khan.
3. To propound elements of ecological and cultural allusiveness in *Thinner than Skin* by Uzma Aslam Khan.

1.2. Research Questions

Following were the research questions;

1. How is the text of *Thinner than Skin* by Uzma Aslam Khana depiction of Eco- Linguistics Discourse?
2. How is explored association of culture and ecology in the text of *Thinner than Skin* by Uzma Aslam Khan?
3. How are elements of ecological allusiveness propounded in *Thinner than Skin* by Uzma Aslam Khan?

2.Literature Review

The following chapter is meant to describe review of literature related to Ecocriticism and the development of discourse in response to Ecocriticism in addition with the depiction of Ecocriticism in Pakistani Anglophone writings.

2.1. Eco-linguistics

It was in 1996 that a collection of ecocritical essays appeared under the title of *The Ecocriticism Reader: landmarks in Literary Ecology* that gave vent to the most grave disaster looming on this planet since then this era gained attention of a large number of scholastic works. Those works published in the last decade of 20th century brought to light that the world was not in a position to bear the ecological devastation that was hitting the world. After those flourishing decades there was a bloom of critical works in the era of ecological criticism and representation of Ecological Discourse in literary cannon all over the world as was seen in the collection of essays titled as *Reading the Earth: New Directions in the Study of Literature and Environment* by Branch et al., (1998). This phenomenon was also observed in collections of Tallmadge & Harrington's *Reading under the Sign of Nature: New Essays in Ecocriticism* (2000).

These critical and scholastic works turned the modern writers and critics towards this emerging disaster of present day world. *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996) was among the most early critical work that provided the first apt definition of ecocriticism in Glotfelty words it was defined as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (p.18). The aim of those approaches was to establish an earth centred approach to utilize all the literary genres to propagate the ecological destruction on the hand of human beings and to raise steps to cater that devastation.

Ecocriticism rose as a discipline of literary theory with the development of environmental movement in the late 1960s and 1970s although there was no proper date and year for this theory yet it gained its due legitimate acknowledgement in universities in 1980s. It began to be considered as an important and most needed critical theory in 1990s, the last decade of 20th century. Murphy wrote in *Literature, Nature and Other: Ecofeminist Critiques* (1995): “ Unlike new historicist, Postcolonial and Cultural Studies, which have evolved from a theoretically informed rethinking of the discipline that has produced new

scholarship programs and departments, and new courses, ecological criticism finds itself in a different evolution at this point in time” (p.164).

2.2. Discourse Analysis

Discourse was mainly related with creation and depiction of different ideologies in different genres of literature in order to form and inform views of people regarding different life based matters. Ideologies were the basic frameworks which were responsible for organizing cognition of different societies. Dijk (1993) explained discourse analysis as triangle that connected the entities namely society, discourse and social cognition.

Social cognition was taken as something that was related to mental representation and processes of larger group members involved in that mental cognition and representations. Those representations exhibited particular societies or communities within those societies. Those representations thus became identity of particular society. Foucault (1972) adopted the term *discourse* to denote a historically contingent social system that was meant to produce *knowledge and meaning*. He found that discourse was actually those practices which formed the objects for which they were designed.

Discourse analysis was relatively a fresh approach to examine systematic bodies of knowledge which arose from critical analysis of traditions of a society along with linguistic analysis. Lupton (1992) defined discourse as “a group of ideas or patterned way of thinking which can be identified in textual and verbal communications, and can also be located in wider social structures” (p. 145). Discourse analysis provided insight into the functioning of bodies of knowledge according to the context which showed the effects of discourse on people.

Martin (1999) said that “ If discourse analysts are serious about wanting to use their work to enact social change, then they will have to broaden their coverage to include... discourse that inspires, encourages, heartens; discourse we like, that cheers us along” (p.51). Ecolinguistics primarily focused on a critique to expose the most acknowledged discourses in our industrial civilization which were designed to propagate ecologically destructive behavior. There were examples of different discourses as promoting unnecessary economic hike likewise there were seen examples of agricultural discourses which treated the natural world mechanistically as a resource of mere exploitation.

Exposition of negative ecological discourse was just the primary step of Ecolinguistics. Their next step would be to provide alternative forms of language to promote positive ecological discourse. They further aimed at to find out new positive discourses to provide ecologically supportive discourse to societies. It would be a discourse to promote well being and respect of nature. The basic work which gave a serious stance to positive ecological discourse was a speech made by Halliday in 1990 that was

reprinted in 2011 and was titled as speech to AILA, in that speech he mentioned that “there is a syndrome of grammatical features which conspire... to construe reality in a certain way; and it is a way that is no longer good for our health as a species” (p. 193).

Halliday’s (1990) main focus was on *grammar* of any native language how people saw the world was basically based on Sapir and Whorf’s (1949) hypothesis of linguistic relativity. Sapir (1949) stated that “Human beings do not live in the objective world alone... but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society” (p. 162). The Whorfian approach to Ecolinguistics was further explored by Goatly (1996) and Chawla (2001). They argued that grammatical features of English language which operated by the separation of agents and participants and the presentation of three ages did not allow positive presentation of ecological issues.

Ecolinguistics mentioned that a deep change in the grammatical patterns was essential to bring change in worldwide ecological view. Eco linguists drew on the assertion that the prevalent discourse excluded human beings from the word *animal* that created a misleading notion that humans were not animals. Kemmerer (2006) mentioned that the word *animal* in expressions like *the way people treated animals* was creating a misconception that human beings did not rely on physical environment like all other animals. He proposed the new term *anymal* which would be used to refer to all animals with all their diversity and their interdependence. Therefore the proposed word *anymal* by Kemmerer (2006) conveyed an inclusive notion of “biologically and socially correct” (p. 11).

2.3. Research Gap

This study aims to fill the gap that is present in past Anglophone Pakistani literature especially in the genre of novel. It focuses on highlighting the urgency of ecological discourse in Pakistani fiction. This dire need of the hour is aptly focused in the chosen work *Thinner than Skin* by Uzma Aslam Khan. This study serves the purpose of rising awareness among students of literature about the ecological disaster that is looming on this planet and its deathly impact on our present and future so that they are able to ponder on and take steps regarding its protection. Given the book's use of a variety of language approaches to explain the interdependence of people and their environment and the conflicts and tensions that arise from differing ecological beliefs and values, filling this knowledge gap is crucial. In addition, the book delves at how words may form or break ecological bonds. Especially in modern novels that convey an ecological viewpoint and ethical position, the ecolinguistic examination of language methods utilised in Pakistani literature has received less attention. Given the paucity of ecolinguistic studies on the linguistic strategies used in Pakistani literature, the presence of this research gap is

surprising. Pakistani literature has a wealth of original and distinct linguistic depictions of ecological ideas and emotions, whereas the focus of ecolinguistics research is on the investigation of cognitive or pragmatic components of language. Understanding the aesthetic and moral dimensions of language in connection to ecology, as well as the power of language to influence and modify ecological behaviour and outlook, makes filling this knowledge gap crucial.

3. Methodology

3.1. Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework for this study was Ecolinguistics Discourse analysis. The selected theoretical framework was used to analyze the text for finding out discourse for ecology. It was further meant to find out the discourse as negative and positive discourse. The second tenet was to study the formation of culture under ecology and cultural effects on ecology.

The second element was to use the theoretical framework the effect of ecology on culture and the culture shaping the language. It was about the reciprocal relation of culture and ecology. Signs and words in language were formed by the ecological elements.

The second figure was drawn to show the cultural ecology. It presented the elements involved in formation of culture and in the same way shaping of ecology under the influence of culture. In the next parts of this section all the above mentioned points of the theoretical framework were discussed in detail. Culture was the basic requirement for the establishment of the human civilization on the planet. Culture was always determined by the ecological characteristics of any area. Ecology was responsible for the structure of buildings. Festivals of different cultures were celebrated according to the change of seasons.

Halliday's paper on *New Ways of Meaning: The Challenge to Applied Linguistics* (1990) was the first step towards Eco- Linguistics. Ecolinguistics appeared as a new paradigm of study in the last decade of 20th century. It was designed to study the contexts both social and ecological in which any specific language was embedded. Halliday was considered to be the first pioneer who had tried to take into consideration language related problems of real world. He focused on the large scale destruction of different ecosystems on account of economic growth of present day world. He argued that in present day world there were uncountable texts which propagated that growth was a good phenomenon and measureless things were better than measured ones in that age of commercialism.

The ecological analysis of any language proceeded with a number of linguistic tools which were critical discourse analysis, framing theory, identity theory and cognitive linguistics etc. Ecolinguistics drew on the assumptions that humans lived their lives

according to the stories in which their selves were constructed. Ecolinguistics worked through establishing positive discourses regarding ecology and by negating the negative discourses which depicted ecological destruction as a normalized phenomenon without any negative impacts.

Eco critical discourse analysis was a linguistic tool to analyze any discourse either written or oral to find out the positive depiction of environment. It also propagated to achieve environmental aims through any text. Language diversity was also one of the parts of Ecolinguistics which studied the relationship between biodiversity and many of the local languages. In the era of globalization many local languages were being replaced by international languages like English. Change in any culture as a result of discarding a local language was also an area of study under Ecolinguistics. As a languages had lost its speakers it had also lost specific ecological knowledge of any area and community.

3.2. Eco-Linguistic Discourse Analysis

Stibbe (2015) explained that Ecolinguistics was the study of relationship between language and environment. Ecolinguistics had two major approaches. The first approach was concerned with the effect of environment on language. That approach began with Haugen's (1972). This approach was also known as language ecology or Haugenian approach. The other approach studied the effect of language on the environment. This approach was marked by Halliday's (1990) seminal work *New Ways of Meaning: The Challenge to Applied Linguistics*. That approach was also known as ecological linguistics or Hallidean approach.

In the beginning ecological linguistics propounded to unveil the unecological property of lexico grammar of a language. It was mainly responsible for pointing out the negative ecological discourse. At the second stage ecological linguistics focused on the protection of ecology along with positive depiction of ecology in discourse through the medium of language. Ecological linguistics had adopted the tools of critical discourse analysis CDA and positive discourse analysis that was PDA to study a text for the perspective of ecology.

Lei Wei and her team (2018) had defined ecological linguistics as an independent paradigm of study by linking it with the perspective of ecosophy. She and her team asserted that ecological linguistics was designed to expose the effects of language on the environment. He & Wei (2018) and He & Lieu (2020) forwarded the concept of ecosophy while proposing that it should consider ecological theories and different categories of the ecosystem for study of ecology. Ecosophy was taken as the criterion for the judgment of the properties of ecology and their orientation in any discourse.

Ecosophy was responsible *for diversity, harmony, interaction and coexistence of different biotic and a biotic element of ecosystem*. It had the maxims of *quality, quantity,*

diversity and interaction. In ecosophy the physical world was comprehended according to four categories. Those four categories were *doing, happening, creating and behaving*. Ecological discourse included the interpersonal Meta function. The framework of SFL further proceeded through mood, modality and appraisal system. Ecological discourse EDA had three main motives while studying a work of literature. These motives were to create eco beneficial discourse, to locate eco ambivalent discourse and to criticize eco destructive discourse.

Halliday & Mathesian (2014) explained that interpersonal meta function was a system to maintain and establish social and personal links within a society. Mood type system and mood force system were included in interpersonal Meta function of mood system. This system was composed of internal and external moods in an environment. Martin & White (2005) maintained that appraisal system included elements of engagement, attitude and graduation system. For eco linguists the interpersonal Meta function was responsible for the factors of *identity, relationship, status, judgment and attitude of a speech community*. That speech could be representative of life bearing and lifeless entities which were respectively humans, animals and other physical elements of an ecosystem.

3.3. Cultural Ecology

Cultural ecology was the study of formation of culture under ecological factors. It was mainly about the effect of ecology upon culture. It also asserted on the changes in ecology under the influence of culture and technological development of the modern industrial era.

Ecology was the study of interaction between living things and their environment. Human ecology was the study of the relationships and interactions among humans, their biology, cultures and their physical environments. Bates (2005) explained that different strategies of human adaptation had integrated the concepts of adaptation and culture formation. Humans had colonized the physical world for the sake of their development. Humans everywhere at the planet shared the same biological form, but they had adapted themselves according to their physical environments at different parts of the planet. Humans were considered to be the most successful species over the Earth because they had adapted themselves very effectively as compared to other species present in different ecosystems.

In the process of this adaptation humans had impacted their ecosystems in a number of ways varying from the simplest changes to the most destructive ones for the natural ecology. The present era had turned the environment into a non healthy and destructive one for both humans and non humans as a result of different dangerous activities of humans. Under the Western influence the humans considered nature as an

entity to conquer and exploit rather than considering themselves as a part of natural ecosystems. This attitude got prevailed the human behavior at large despite the fact that many traditional societies did not consider themselves as separate from the natural world.

Ecology comprised of all environmental elements which were biological, physiological, demo-graphical, sociological and evolutionary. It was a combination of different interactions from individuals to within species or it was an interaction between two different species. Cultural ecology emerged from North American anthropology during mid twentieth century. It was basically linked with the work of Julian Steward (1902-1972) who propounded theory of culture change. He studied the relationship between symbolic culture of values, religious beliefs, traditions and the material ecological basis. He had emphasized the two way nature of culture which was environmental relationship and the concept of Adaptation according to the changing ecology.

4.Data Analysis

Uzma Aslam Khan's book *Thinner Than Skin* was published in 2012. Set in the vast deserts of northern Pakistan, this novel explores how the existence of man and nature are intertwined. She represents people whose relationships and livelihood are inseparable from the natural environment and demonstrates an ecological conscience in many ways.

The main characters in the novels often have intense and personal interactions with nature. The environment, plants and animals are vividly depicted and the characters' interactions with these elements emphasize their relationship with nature. To see a better awareness of the intricacies of ecology and the impact of human actions on the environment. The characters' livelihood is often tied to the land, that they depend on agriculture, animal husbandry or other traditional occupations. Because they depend on the land for their sustenance, they become very aware of changes in climatic conditions, ecosystems and the state's general environment.

Throughout the novel, the main character faces problems such as deforestation, scarcity of water and land degradation. These problems affect your daily life, your relationships and your goals. This image highlights the need for knowledge _ ecological solutions to meet and overcome such problems. Conflicts caused by resource exploitation and environmental degradation can also be depicted in fiction. These disputes highlight the need for sustainable practices and collaborative strategies for resource management that can result in competitive interest if resources are limited. There is a complex relationship between the stories, individuals and nature. The ebb and flow of the seasons and the surrounding landscape often reflect their feelings and their experiences. That emphasizes the idea that humans are an integral part of the environment and that the health of the ecosystems in which they live has a direct impact on their well-being.

Cultural and spiritual issues are often linked to environmental awareness. The novel has the potential to show how the characters learn and be inspired by nature, considering it as more than just a resource, but a source of coherence and meaning. In *Thinner Than Skin*, the ecological awareness of the protagonists East subtly woven into their interactions, conversations and struggles. This book examines the complexity of human relationships with the environment and shows how ecological knowledge affects human decisions and lifestyles. In depicting the characters and their relationship with nature, this novel serves as a reflection on the importance of understanding and protecting the environment for generations present and future.

4.1. Eco-linguistic Discourse Analysis of the Novel

Thinner than Skin by Uzma Aslam Khan may be studied from an ecolinguistic angle. The study of language and the environment is known as ecolinguistics which focuses on how language can affect our understanding and perceptions toward the natural world.

4.2. Ecological discourse

Ecological discourses are the ways in which language is employed to describe environmental challenges, resource disputes, and diverse viewpoints on nature and sustainability in the book *Thinner than Skin*. These discourses can show the characters' views toward the environment as well as the contradictions between traditional and modern ways of living. Here are some instances of ecological discourses in the novel, with textual support:

The story depicts conflicts stemming from opposing interests in the region's natural resources. These disagreements show conflicting perspectives on how resources should be handled and exploited.

"As the glaciers melt, the rivers swell with water, and the people of Hunza gather with nets and buckets at the entrance to the tunnels that control the water's flow." (p, 21)

This statement emphasizes the people's reliance on glacier meltwater and the possibility for conflict over its distribution. The novel's fundamental topic is the conflict between transformation and traditional ways of living. This conflict may be found in the debate about the influence of contemporary activities on the environment and traditional knowledge.

"Most things change overnight, I reasoned, but mountains, mountains that stretch toward the heavens, move more slowly." Except that these have also become fluid." (p, 3)

This text emphasizes the difference between the slow changes brought about by nature and the quick changes brought about by industrialization. The characters examine

the changing environment, including changes in temperature patterns, glacier loss, and changed ecosystems. These talks demonstrate the characters' knowledge of environmental changes.

"The seasons are being pulled apart, and I can see it even in my own time, even as I'm living it." (p, 4)

This particular sentence illustrates the main characters' knowledge of how environmental changes have disrupted customary seasonal cycles. The novel's environmental imagination relates to the ways that language and story foster a sense of interconnectedness between humans and the natural world, encouraging readers to feel compassion for other living things and fostering a greater understanding of ecological relationships. This concept implies using language to inspire readers to view their surroundings as a dynamic, living system.

The author vividly describes the sights, sounds, smells, and sensations of the natural world using sensory details. These descriptions help readers connect with the characters viscerally by enabling them to see themselves in their circumstances.

"The babble of birds filled the air, a never-ending conversation between forest and field, mountain and sky." (p, 5)

This statement gives the reader a comprehensive experience by evoking a natural soundtrack. The novel may have an animistic tone since it gives non-human elements of the world thoughts, feelings, and agency. This encourages readers to view the world from a non-human perspective.

"The trees conversed, their whispers carried by the wind, their leaves the writing of ancient scripts." (p, 6)

The trees are personified and presented as participants in a conversation in this text, leading readers to believe that the environment is sentient. Symbolism and allegory can help readers understand deeper ecological topics. Symbolic components may link human experiences to environmental processes, pushing readers to contemplate the larger ecological ramifications.

"When the river rises, the bridges must bear the weight." When someone goes, someone else must step in." (p, 7)

This metaphorical connection between natural phenomena and human endeavors invites readers to reflect on the interconnection of all life. Readers may experience emotional responses as a result of the author's use of descriptive language, which might promote empathy and an appreciation for the surroundings. An ecological imagination that is more in-depth is encouraged through emotional engagement.

4.3. Environmental language

Environmental language such as motifs, metaphors, comparisons, and terminology are used throughout Uzma Aslam Khan's book *Thinner than Skin* to relate human experiences, emotions, and relationships with the natural world. This language strategy emphasizes how the characters interact with their surroundings. Analogies and metaphors create a stronger link between the characters' emotions and their surroundings by drawing comparisons between human experiences and the natural world. Following are some instances of ecological grammar from the book along with textual examples to support them:

“Their love was like the Indus with its glacier waters, its sudden bursts, its catchments in your heart.” (p, 99)

This metaphor compares the protagonists' love to the Indus River by utilizing natural imagery to depict the depth and complexity of their sentiments. Nature-inspired imagery may be used to depict individuals and events, indicating the characters' ecocognitive awareness and emphasizing how human lives and the environment interact.

"His laughter was a river that flowed over the rocks, carrying away with it the daily debris of their lives." (p, 150)

The description uses river imagery to convey the character's spirit of laughing and how it affects everyone around him. The language of the book may be a reflection of the cyclical rhythms of the natural world, emphasizing the characters' integration into their surroundings and the passing of time.

"They moved like the seasons, changing from one stage to the next, the earth's rotation marking their lives." (p, 190)

This work uses the seasonal theme to highlight the characters' changes and the passage of time. The characters' familiarity with and attachment to their setting may be represented in the use of specialized terminology that relates to the environment, landscape, and customs.

"The Balti farmers engaged in terracing, an agricultural dance involving hillsides and mountains while harmonizing stones and roots." (p, 79)

This line supports the notion of terracing as an agricultural dance, with an emphasis on the harmony between human activity and the natural environment. Anthropomorphic language may be used in the novel to give non-human components human features or sentiments, emphasizing the interconnection of all life forms.

“The wind sighed across the valleys, as if lamenting the changes it had witnessed.” (p, 50)

This statement humanizes the wind by claiming that it sees events and has emotions. Ecological grammar may be included into the characters' cultural and spiritual language by linking their actions and beliefs to the natural environment.

"The forest is our teacher and protector," states the text. We go there to observe and absorb the wisdom contained in its leaves.

This dialogue highlights the people's spiritual links to the forest and portrays it as a knowledge store. By examining these examples of ecological grammar in "Thinner than Skin," we can see how the novel's linguistic choices and language use establish a link between human experiences and the natural world. The story may show the protagonists' intimate connection to and ecocognitive awareness of their environment thanks to these linguistic patterns.

Environmental consciousness in *Thinner than Skin* makes mention of how characters' perspectives, perceptions, and interactions with nature influence how they see and interpret their environment. The descriptions of the environment and landscapes in the novel are critical in assisting the characters in becoming more ecocognitively sensitive. Here are some examples of ecocognition from the book.

4.4. Ecological Concerns of the characters

Deforestation is a major theme in the novel, which investigates the social and environmental consequences of logging, mining, and industrial initiatives in Pakistan's northern areas. The narrative contrasts the area's natural richness and beauty with the exploitation and damage caused by human activities. The book also shows how deforestation affects indigenous peoples' way of life and culture, notably the Gujjars, who rely on the woods for their identity and means of livelihood.

Irfan, one of the main characters, works for an NGO that tries to protect forests from illegal mining and logging. Irfan is a supporter of the environment. He is sincerely devoted to protecting the rights and dignity of the local community, as well as the biodiversity and ecosystem of the area. He routinely clashes with the government and companies who engage in deforestation. He also wishes to empower the Gujjars with the information and skills they require to combat environmental injustices.

Nadir, another significant character, is a photographer who joins Irfan on his journey to document and uncover deforestation. He is first uninterested and ignorant about environmental issues, but as he witnesses nature's magnificence and fragility, as well as human suffering and resilience, he eventually acquires understanding and sympathy. Along with learning about her culture and traditions, he falls in love with Maryam, a Gujjar lady. The story also demonstrates how deforestation affects the surrounding animals, vegetation, temperature, and weather. Landslides are becoming more common, rivers are drying up, glaciers are melting, and forest fires are raging, according to the narrative. The

story also demonstrates how deforestation threatens or causes the extinction of several animals and plants. Irfan, for example, adds that there were once snow leopards, brown bears, markhors, ibex, musk deer, red pandas, and many more species in the forests, but many are no longer abundant or have disappeared totally.

Deforestation is also used in the novel as a metaphor for how people who live in harmony with nature are losing their identity and culture. According to the novel, deforestation not only destroys the natural environment but also erases the local population's history, memories, and spirituality. According to the novel, deforestation is a type of violence and tyranny that threatens the life and dignity of both environment and humanity. The book depicts the environment of northern Pakistan as one of amazing beauty, diversity, and complexity, as well as vulnerability, fragility, and hazard. The story depicts how numerous human behaviors, such as deforestation, pollution, climate change, and violence, imperil the natural world. Some of these actions are as follows:

The book depicts how greedy miners and loggers ruin mountains and cut forests. These acts upset the ecosystem's equilibrium, aboriginal peoples' way of life, and wild animals' natural habitat. Because the loggers and miners are involved in smuggling, extortion, and support for militant organizations, the tale shows how these activities are typically linked to corruption, crime, and terrorism. The narrative depicts how multiple development projects mandated by the government or foreign businessmen modify and exploit the landscape. Dams, roads, pipelines, hotels, and resorts are among the projects aimed at boosting the local economy. However, the social and environmental repercussions of these initiatives on the local people and the environment are largely ignored. These actions disrupt the ecosystem's balance, indigenous peoples' way of life, and wild creatures' natural habitat. Because the loggers and miners are involved in smuggling, extortion, and support for militant organizations, the story demonstrates how these activities are frequently associated with corruption, criminality, and terrorism. The story portrays how the environment is altered and exploited by many development projects ordered by the government or foreign corporations. Among the initiatives aimed at bolstering the local economy are dams, roads, pipelines, hotels, and resorts. The social and environmental consequences of these projects on the local people and the environment, however, are usually neglected.

The narrative illustrates the many ways in which people see and interact with the world. Others view it as a resource to be exploited, controlled, or even destroyed, but others consider it as a source of life, beauty, and spirituality. The story argues that in order to conserve and enjoy the landscape, people's perspectives and values must change. The story depicts the diverse responses of humans to the ecological and environmental concerns afflicting Pakistan's northern areas. Irfan is an environmentalist who works for a non-profit group that fights illegal mining and logging in the forests. He is dedicated to protecting

local people's rights as well as the area's biodiversity and ecosystem. He routinely clashes with the government and companies who engage in deforestation. He also wishes to empower the Gujjars with the information and skills they require to combat environmental injustices. He has a deep feeling of duty and commitment to the landscape and its beauty.

In his effort to document and highlight deforestation, Irfan is joined by photographer Nadir. He is first uninterested and ignorant about environmental issues, but as he witnesses nature's magnificence and fragility, as well as human suffering and resilience, he eventually acquires understanding and sympathy. Maryam, a Gujjar lady with whom he falls in love, becomes a significant other for him as well as learning about her culture and values. Realizing his own responsibility for either destroying or preserving the ecosystem, he begins to appreciate and cherish the environment and its inhabitants.

Maryam is a Gujjar woman who values nature and follows her ancestors' traditions. She values her culture and identity and does not want modernization or globalization to undermine them. She participates in anti-deforestation initiatives because she is aware of the threats it poses to society and her way of life. Although she adores Nadir, she is conflicted by his aspirations and background. She speaks up for indigenous people who are disadvantaged and oppressed by socially dominant forces. Wes is a geologist from the United States who works for a mining company that exploits the region's natural resources. He is avaricious, pompous, and oblivious to the consequences of his actions on the environment and society. He sees the terrain as a resource to be utilized and harvested, regardless of its beauty or diversity. He also disrespects and exploits the people, particularly the females. As an adversary, he represents the worst aspects of capitalism, colonialism, and consumerism.

4.5. Degradation of Environment

The author of *Thinner than Skin*, Uzma Aslam Khan, has addressed the issue of pollution in a variety of different ways throughout her book. The author has examined the ways in which pollution impacts several aspects of the natural world, including glaciers, rivers, and forests, amongst other things. For instance, she mentions that the glacier was melting at a faster rate than it had in the past. The water had taken on a murky appearance as a result of the presence of oil and soot. The trees were succumbing to the effects of the acid rain. The air was filled with a significant amount of smoke and dust. These narratives illustrate the ways in which human activities have disrupted the natural beauty and ecological balance of the world.

The author has also shown how pollution has a negative impact on people's health and happiness, notably the nomadic Gujjars who are entirely dependent on nature for their way of life. She mentions, for example, that the Gujjars suffered from cancers, skin diseases, eye problems, and respiratory disorders. They were deprived of opportunities to

obtain hygienic conditions, medical care, and clean water. They were going to lose their farms, harvests, cattle, and legal rights in the process. These explanations show how pollution has endangered the lives of indigenous people as well as their cultural practises.

The author compares and contrasts the stances taken against pollution by the main characters as well as the activities they take. She gives the following passage as an illustration: "Nadir was worried about the pollution. He was used to living in a crowded and noisy city, so it didn't bother him. He did not care about the people living there or the surrounding environment. Only his work and his photography occupied his thoughts at all times. Nevertheless, she continues by saying, "Farhana was appalled by the filth." She was raised in an area where everything was untouched and luscious when she was a child. She was worried about the people living there as well as the surrounding environment. She wanted to take action in order to put a stop to the injustice and the hurt. These descriptions bring to light the gap between the two couples' perceptions of identity and belonging, as well as their perspectives on pollution.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Analysis of the text had shown discourse regarding destruction of landscape of the Northern regions of Pakistan. The novel had built discourse of the effects of ecological destruction on living beings including humans, landscapes, trees and all-natural worlds. The analysis of the collection had determined the deforestation occurred as a result of different humans' objectives. The analysis showed the points which were exponents of elements depicting language signs, ecological elements and cultural elements. Those elements would show the positive description of ecology, concerns related with environmental degradation.

Drawing upon the conclusion of the selected texts of the collection following findings could be made. Uzma Aslam Khan had constructed the discourse around the natural world. She had employed the natural imagery to portray the natural world as something alive. She had presented the colors, the landscape which was mountainous, comprising of melting ice, Monsoon and severe heat' and Seismic messages of elephants. Uzma Aslam Khan had progressively created the colors of Pakistani culture. She had created a world in pages through words where brides were found in cultural dresses and cultural meals were served for the guests of the weddings. The text had exhibited many points which were cultural and ecological specific as the chilling cold of the Northern Areas of Pakistan.

There was description of natural elements like frozen lake, fire, ice copper mist, the Indus, elephants and butterflies. There were a number of descriptions about cultural signs specific with Pakistani culture. There was description of seasons as the winter, monsoon, rains and the summer heat. Those elements vary from most local to the global

level. The novel had a number of elements in the form of metals and chemicals. There are found a number of instances about the degradation of natural world. There are many references to the wars which devastated both natural and cultural worlds. Some of those instances are the diluting Indus, cutting down of the oak and the teak, tar and smoke in the air and kerosene musk around trees. There are found many elements exhibiting degradation as a result of wars as: changing a whole city into cement and dust.

This figurative connection between natural occurrences and human activities encourages readers to focus on the interdependence of all forms of life. Because of the author's use of descriptive language, the audience may find themselves going through a range of feelings. This, in turn, may foster feelings of empathy and an appreciation for the setting. Emotional involvement fosters a richer and more nuanced ecological imagination in the individual who participates.

The principal focus of the story is on the trip that two people of Pakistani-American descent, Nadir and Farhana, take to Northern Pakistan with the intention of learning more about their family history and appreciating the breathtaking scenery of the area. This travel serves as the primary focus of the narrative because it is the primary focus of the story. In spite of this, people are forced to deal with the harsh reality of environmental degradation, which includes processes such as deforestation, pollution, mining activities, and the construction of dams. The story demonstrates, in addition, how local environments and communities are affected by national and international challenges.

The events of the novel take place after the terrorist strikes that occurred on September 11. These acts have increased tensions and produced widespread dread in the region. The literary work makes allusions to significant migrations and historical events that have occurred throughout time and have had an impact on people's understanding of who they are and where they come from. Included in this category is the schism that occurred between India and Pakistan, the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, and the growth of the middle class in China. This book looks deeper into the impact that the media and technology have in influencing how the general public views issues related to the environment.

Environmental awareness is addressed in the novel *Thinner than Skin* through discussions of how the viewpoints, perceptions, and experiences of the characters, as well as their interactions with nature, shape how they see and understand their surroundings. It is essential for the characters in the book to become more ecocognitively sensitive, and the novel's descriptions of the environment and the landscapes are essential to this process. This book provides a wealth of information regarding the local topography, including mountains, valleys, rivers, and plants. The reader is transported to the scene and the surroundings of the characters as a result of these detailed descriptions of those settings and those surroundings. For instance, the author's description of the mountains as

"looming," "majestic," and "imposing" helps the protagonists create their ecocognitive awareness of the beauty and worth of the landscape surrounding them. In most cases, the natural world functions as a metaphor or symbol for the characters' emotions, experiences, and the difficulties they face. By fusing the protagonists' internal experiences with those of the wider world, the symbolism in the story broadens the characters' understanding of their surroundings.

The fifth and the last chapter of this study is about conclusion and findings of the research. The novel *Thinner than Skin* by Uzma Aslam Khan had exhibited that signs of any language were established through ecological aspects and were capable of becoming meaningful units only in any cultural setting. It had been found out that the novel had constructed cultural and ecological images through written signs in a progressive manner. The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the work of Uzma Aslam Khan titled *Thinner than Skin* from the perspective of ecolinguistics. More specifically, the focus was on the manner in which the narrative makes use of language to establish and communicate an ecological worldview and ethics. Arran Stubbe's ecolinguistic framework was employed in the thesis.

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