



FRAMING SMOG IN PAKISTANI NEWSPAPERS: AN ECOLINGUISTICS ANALYSIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSES

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Abstract

This study explores the linguistic framing of smog in selected Pakistani English-language newspapers from an ecolinguistics framework, with the aim of demonstrating how media discourse impacts public perception of environmental issues and ecological responsibility. The study employs a qualitative interpretive approach based on Arran Stubbe's ecolinguistics framework, namely the concept of the "stories we live by," and focuses on eight news articles from four major newspapers: Dawn, The News, The Nation, and The Express Tribune. The study examines how smog is portrayed in environmental discourse, highlights prevailing framing techniques, and assesses the ecological consequences of these portrayals on Pakistani public consciousness. The results show that while larger environmental interconnection and long-term sustainability are still generally ignored, smog is primarily defined as a human-focused and crisis-based phenomenon with an emphasis on health hazards, urgent measures, and governmental interventions. Reporting is dominated by institutional and technocratic narratives, which give news coverage credibility but also removing readers from systemic environmental causes and experienced ecological realities. From an ecolinguistics perspective, such discourse perpetuates anthropocentric narratives that, rather than opposing unsustainable activities, tend to legitimate environmental damage. The study emphasizes the need for more environmentally grounded, optimistic narratives within environmental journalism and suggests that Pakistani newspapers have a major but limited role in promoting ecological consciousness.

Keywords: *Anthropocentrism, Ecolinguistics, Ecological Consciousness, Environmental Discourse, Environmental Journalism, Media Framing, Pakistani Newspapers, Smog.*

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

One of the biggest environmental problems of the twenty-first century is air pollution, which has an impact on both urban and rural populations and has complicated socio-ecological effects all over the world. Air pollution causes serious risks to the health of humans, the sustainability of the environment, and socioeconomic stability, making environmental degradation one of the most critical global issues of the twenty-first century. Smog is one of the many types of air pollution that has become a persistent environmental problem in many developing nations, especially Pakistan. Harmful smog occurrences have been common in cities like Lahore, Faisalabad, and Multan in recent years, particularly in the winter. Smog has become a major environmental and public health issue in Pakistani society as a result of these situations which have increased public discourse and media coverage. As the primary information source for the general public, newspapers have a big influence on how society views, analyzes, and responds to environmental challenges.

Smog is very different from other types of air pollution due to its severity, visibility, and direct impact on public health. Incorporating the words "smoke" and "fog," the term "smog" refers to a mixture of environmental contaminants, which are fine particles that are dispersed, and humidity that reduces visibility and decreases the quality of the air. Smog is not only an environmental phenomenon but also a socio-political one that impacts systems of government, infrastructure in cities, economic activity, and public image. Particularly in the Punjab area, where human activities and the environment combine to lead to the ongoing smog problem in winter and fall, smog outbreaks in Pakistan have grown into an increasingly recurrent disaster. Despite some recent improvements, such as a drop in peak pollution intensity compared to previous years, smog is still "very unhealthy" and continuously exceeds Pakistan's Environmental Quality Standards.

Considering the frequency of smog and its harmful impacts on public health, more research is required to understand how it originates in the environment and how society produces it, particularly through media narratives. This study investigates how pollution is framed in Pakistani media's environmental discourse and what these choices in language tell about more general cultural and ecological beliefs. It is crucial to understand the fundamental ideas that form the theoretical basis of this research before beginning such an examination.

According to science, smog is caused by a combination of meteorological circumstances (such as temperature inversion, low wind velocities), geographical factors that trap pollutants close to the ground, and emissions (from cars, factories, crop burning, and homes).

Smog has observable physical characteristics, but language and discourse modify its social value. Public opinion, policy decisions, and even civic behavior are influenced by how communities, authorities, and media sources discuss environmental issues. As a result, smog is both a discursive event and an environmental reality, a construct that acquires meaning from human interactions and representations.

The term "environmental discourse" describes how language spoken, written, and visual represents environmental issues, human-nature relationships, and suggested remedies. By emphasizing certain parts of reality, hiding others, and offering standard evaluations regarding causes and duties, discourse does more than just describe it. The notion of framing is one of the most important notions in media analysis.

Framing is arranging ideas in ways that affect listeners' perceptions and values by highlighting some aspects of a problem while minimizing other aspects. Reactions to a smog report that describes it as a "natural seasonal occurrence" will differ from those that describe it as a "public healthcare crisis" or a "government's failure to regulate pollution." These frames are dangerous because they represent institutional interests, have ideological weight, and have the potential to either undermine or strengthen current power systems.

Media framing studies look at how language choices (news headlines, metaphors, and narratives) affect perceptions of society. They are part of a larger discipline of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Environmental communication scholars claim that media narratives shape people's perceptions of pollution as well as its origins and remedies. Through framing, media sources can draw attention to individual behaviors, climate trends, or international pollution, or they can highlight general problems like pollution from factories and a lack of governmental oversight. Environmental discourse in Pakistan is an object of controversial interpretations and political conflicts since newspaper framing frequently has an impact on national politics, economic forces, and cultural values.

1.2. Media Landscape in Pakistan

Pakistan has a diverse media environment that includes newspapers in both languages, Urdu and English, social networking sites, broadcasting networks, and online platforms. Publications such as Dawn, The News, The Tribune, and local newspapers inform the people and impact public discourse. Because of rising air quality and frequent smog problems, environmental reporting has gained more attention, while historically being underappreciated in comparison to the business and politics.

The importance, framing, and accountability identification of smog news coverage vary from one media outlet to another. Some periodicals emphasize government initiatives, business accountability, or regional collaboration, while others concentrate on healthcare concerns and personal safety precautions. An Eco linguistic examination of these texts reveals value orientations in addition to linguistic patterns, such as whether discourse favors scientific interpretations, community voices, or institutional narratives.

Similar to this, regional data has revealed other sites with alarming measurements, often exceeding AQI 500, and cities like Faisalabad are leading the global pollution indexes. Discourse analysis can benefit greatly from these quantitative facts, which include high pollution levels, frequent smog conditions, health issues, and governmental actions.

1.3. Contributions of Arran Stibbe to Eco linguistics

Arran Stibbe serves as one of the most significant contemporary scholars in the subject of Eco linguistics, who examines how language influences how people interact with the natural environment. In order to transform Eco linguistics from a relatively small interdisciplinary field of research into a rational and ethically sound analytical framework, his efforts have been essential. Stibbe's work goes beyond the more traditional frameworks of environmental philosophy, systemic and functional linguistics (SFL), and critical discourse analysis (CDA) by explicitly evaluating discourse on the basis of its ecological implications. His most significant contribution is the development of a comprehensive Eco linguistic model, commonly referred to as the "Stories We Live By" framework, which provides tools for identifying, assessing, and contesting dominant narratives that impact ecological sustainability. Arran Stibbe has been a British linguist who focuses on linguistics, education, and environmental studies. He has held academic posts at several institutions and has actively supported Eco linguistics through teaching, scholarship, and worldwide partnership.

According to Stibbe, language and cultural discourses that legitimize exploitative behavior, excessive consumerism, and ethnocentrism also contribute to environmental damage, in alongside economic structures and technical practices. This viewpoint places his work in the context of a critical tradition that views language as an object of ideological conflict rather than an objective tool for communication.

1.4. Research Objectives

The study has Following Research Objectives:

1. To investigate the linguistic framing of smog within environmental discourse in Pakistani newspapers.
2. To identify the dominant framing strategies used in newspaper in representations of smog.
3. To evaluate the ecological implications of newspaper discourse on smog in shaping public awareness and environmental responsibility in Pakistan.

1.5. Research Questions

The study focuses on the Following the Research Questions.

1. How is smog framed linguistically in Pakistani newspapers within environmental discourse?
2. What dominant framing strategies are employed in newspapers in representations of smog?

3. How does newspaper discourse on smog influence the construction of public awareness and environmental responsibility in Pakistan?

1.6. Significance of the study

Beyond the empirical evaluation of pollution in the atmosphere, this study has significance because it examines how smog is discursively constructed in Pakistani media and how this affects the public's opinion and environmental responsibility. The study highlights how media language changes environmental issues, assigns blame, and normalizes or resists environmentally damaging behaviors by adopting an Eco linguistic position. The results are expected to further advance ecological communication and Eco linguistic studies by offering contextualize perspectives from Pakistan, a region that was not considered in earlier research. Additionally, the study has useful ramifications for editors, legislators, and environmental activists by emphasizing the need of responsible media discourse in fostering public awareness, accountability, and ecological solutions to environmental crises like pollution.

2. Literature Review

(Frankowski, 2020) argues that Community-based initiatives began the struggle to clean air as a result of the growing socio-ecological crises, a growing consciousness of the common good, and the rise in usage of mobile applications. Smog advisories were issued in all major Polish cities where the air quality was abnormally poor. Due to the informal and spontaneous nature of smog alarms, nothing is known about their impact, size, and perspectives on shortages of fuel. The major goal is to investigate how smog alarms can help with energy shortages and air pollution. A large number of those with functioning smog signals, according to the results, recognized the significance of lack of energy. Additionally, they were crucial in raising national and local authorities' awareness of air pollution.

Similarly according to (Ejaz et al., 2024) the increasing prevalence of smog in Pakistan is highlighted, which traces its causes to industrial pollution, agricultural practices, and vehicle emissions. It promotes increased government actions to control smog's adverse impact on eye health and highlights current national programs. It also highlights the necessity of working together to protect the safety of eyes in light of Pakistan's growing air pollution. Numerous issues affect Pakistan's air quality, such as vehicle exhaust, inappropriate waste disposal, industrial pollutants, and agricultural practices. According to a 2015 the reports published in The Lancet, air pollution killed almost 135,000 people in Pakistan. A major health risk to Pakistani culture is smog, which is a mixture of several particles in the air that mostly affects respiratory and vision conditions. Smog occurs from October to February every year due to the development of large cities, outdated farming methods, and substandard fuel for automobiles and engines. The sources and adverse consequences of smog are covered in this article, which also

emphasizes the urgent need for long-term regulations to lessen its devastating impact on the condition of the eyes.

As (Khan et al., 2025) maintains that One major socio-environmental issue is the declining state of air quality. Air pollution is caused by a variety of causes. Natural and human-induced processes are the two main causes of low quality of air. Smog is a visible form of pollution suspended in humid air that is produced when the oxidants (ozone, nitrates) react with the released primary air pollutants, which consist of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), hydrocarbons, heavy metals, nitrogen oxides, and sulfur oxides. The poisonous and malignant additional smog components that result from the primary core pollutants of smog have a variety of negative effects on living things.

Similarly (Li, 2022) maintains that ecological reporters have been essential in encouraging governments to take responsibility for combating smog. Journalists were able to demonstrate or establish connections between PM2.5 measurements and broader concerns about public health, economic growth, political influence, social injustice, civic engagement, and China's position in the world at various points throughout the smog crisis. They were able to use the smog problem as a starting point for more extensive political and economic criticisms, calling for increased government responsibility and openness in the management of pollution. The public's demand on the authorities to improve air quality and reduce pollution increased as a result of journalistic criticism.

According to (Xiaoyue, et.al.2019) Public interactions with smog are still largely unexplored, despite the fact that smog itself and the government's measures to the pollution in the air crisis have received a great deal of media attention. However, public participation with smog including information, attitudes, behaviors, and practices associated with the surrounding air pollution is a critical component that promotes more efficient environmental administration. The unusual degree of transparency used by the government of China as it welcomes the people to participate in the campaign is one of the most unexpected features of China's campaign against pollution. Additionally, the government makes PM2.5 monitoring data widely available and permits the news media to report on the topic more openly, but this public participation is not without obstacles.

Additionally (Chen, 2016) reports that although research on environmental communication has advanced significantly in the last ten years, there haven't been numerous research investigations on green marketing discourse in non-Western cultures. In the examined advertising, "nature" is consistently presented as either an important resource for consumption by humans or an additional benefit for luxurious car models that, in reality, have low energy consumption. This data analysis demonstrates a persistent ideological divide between nature and human society. Through environmentally conscious spending, such advertisements also implicitly capitalize on the public's growing concern over China's degrading environment. The results mentioned above not only investigate the

ways in which particular advertisements support problematic environmental narratives, but they also place China's escalating ecological crisis within the larger framework of neoliberalism, the pervasive ideology that underpins the modern global economy. In general, this article challenges readers to think about the unsolvable conflict between market-based environmentalism and green capitalism: the advantages of technical advancement are frequently outweighed by the never-ending quest for increased material consumption.

3. Research Methodology

The current study uses a qualitative method to investigate, from an eco-linguistic point of view, how smog is effectively framed in Pakistani newspapers. Qualitative investigation of newspaper discourses can be considered appropriate since the objective of the research is to examine the implications, explanations, and philosophical patterns found in media stories rather than to statistically assess variables. Finding out how language use in newspaper stories represents environmental norms, allocates responsibility, and generates environmental realities is the main goal of the interpretive section of the research. By thoroughly analyzing a select news texts, the study seeks to provide a thorough understanding of environmental conversations and their potential significance in shaping public consciousness and environmental accountability in Pakistan.

By examining meanings, experiences, and viewpoints in their natural settings, qualitative research aims to comprehend social processes. With the goal to accurately represent depth, level of detail, and contextual richness, it emphasizes the analysis of non-numerical information like texts, conversations, and documents. By interpreting trends, concepts, and underlying meanings rather than simply quantifying data, qualitative research enables researchers to get complex insights into how individuals create world using social interaction and language.

4. Theoretical Framework

The study's theoretical foundation is Arran Stibbe's Eco linguistics theory “the stories we live by”, which stresses the critical examination of language to determine if prevailing discourses promote harm to the environment or sustainability. The main goal of Stibbe's framework is to pinpoint the underlying narratives, frames, metaphors, assessments, and narratives that influence how people view and comprehend environmental concerns. This methodology is especially useful for examining newspaper discourse since media texts frequently replicate compelling ecological narratives that shape public perceptions of environmental issues like smog. Using Stibbe's Eco linguistic paradigm, the study investigates whether specific linguistic choices in newspaper portrayals normalize environmentally harmful behaviors or foster ecological consciousness, responsibility, and sustainability.

According to Arran Stibbe, "Stories We Live By" refers to the firmly established narratives, presumptions, and belief structures that influence how people see and engage with the world of nature around them. These narratives are recurrent patterns of meaning generated by language, discourse, and events in culture rather than works of fiction. Stibbe claims that by portraying nature as either an object to be consumed or an ecosystem that is deserving of respect and care, these stories have an impact on how people behave toward the natural world. These narratives are propagated by media coverage, political debate, and institutional language, which frequently normalize ecologically harmful behaviors by portraying them as advantageous, organic, or unavoidable.

4.1. Data Collection Tools and Techniques

The data was collected by eight newspaper stories from four prominent English-language Pakistani newspapers including The Dawn, The News, The Nation, and The Express Tribune through purposive sampling technique. To guarantee fair representation and comparative analysis, two stories are chosen from every newspaper. In order to find recurrent themes, framing techniques, and ecological narratives ingrained in the media discourse, textual data from these stories is examined using qualitative Eco linguistic discourse analysis, which is informed by Stibbe's theoretical categories.

5. Data Analysis

5.1. Analysis according to Arran Stibbes "The Stories We Live By"

According to Arran Stibbe, frequent "narratives in news discourses ideologies, metaphors, elimination, critical framing, and agency, are embedded in language and have a significant influence on environmental discourses. The narratives have an impact on how civilizations view the natural world and environmental issues. The framework for the investigation of eight newspaper articles from Dawn, The News, The Nation, and The Express Tribune is operationalized in the following.

5.1.1. Eco linguistic Representation of Smog in Pakistani Newspapers

The language used by Pakistani news organizations to explain human and natural interactions has a big impact on how the public perceives environmental issues. Certain English-language newspapers, like Dawn, The News, The Nation, and The Express Tribune, are significant producers of public discourse and actively create ecological meanings by framing environmental issues, placing responsibility, and assessing human interactions with the natural world. The main narratives about nature, economic growth, and environmental crises that dominate Pakistani society are shaped by these publications through the selection of words, structure of grammar, metaphors, and narrative patterns.

From an Eco linguistic standpoint, Pakistani media frequently use language that reflects larger political and social and economic priorities, especially the conflict between environmental sustainability and development. Institutional, technological, and anthropocentric discourses that portray nature as a resource to be controlled or as a danger

to human productivity and health are common ways that environmental challenges are portrayed. However, passive frameworks and abstract vocabulary sometimes downplay ecological responsibility by hiding the human activities and power systems that cause environmental deterioration. These linguistic patterns support Arran Stibbe's claim that media discourse can perpetuate "stories we live by" that either support unsustainable habits or, in some situations, contradict them by emphasizing ecological responsibility and interconnection.

However, Pakistani media also show that Eco linguistically beneficial discourse is possible. A growing understanding of ecological ethics in journalism techniques is suggested by periodic reports that highlight ecological responsibility, governmental failures, and the long-term impacts of unsustainable growth. By analyzing these linguistic representations, Eco linguistic analysis shows how newspaper discourse serves as an important forum for the negotiation, contestation, and normalization of environmental meanings, which in turn shapes public ecological consciousness and responses to environmental issues in Pakistan.

5.1.2. Framing of Smog in Pakistani Newspapers

The language used in the reviewed publications is serious and concerning, describing smog mostly as a calamity, danger, or seasonal emergency. Particularly in urban regions like Lahore and Faisalabad, newspapers frequently use evaluative adjectives like "toxic," "deadly," "severe," and "hazardous" to describe the state of the air. Smog is portrayed as an unnatural and detrimental phenomenon by this linguistic choice, which emphasizes the immediate health risks linked to it rather than its long-term ecological foundations. This framing depicts smog as a clear external threat to society rather than as the outcome of constantly occurring interactions among humans and the environment.

In linguistic framing, however, passive elimination and independent removal are commonly employed when smog is represented as "*engulfs*," "*blankets*," or "*chokes*" cities without explicitly naming those responsible for it. Phrases such as "Lahore continues to suffer under dense smog" or "weather conditions deteriorated air quality" emphasize the problem while ignoring the human element. This framing diminishes accountability and progressively normalizes environmental harm from an Eco linguistic perspective by depicting smog as something that simply "happens" rather than something that is produced.

Moreover, newspapers frequently frame smog through technocratic and institutional discourse, emphasizing government notifications, policy measures, and official statistics. While this lends authority to reporting, it also distances readers from the ecological realities by privileging administrative responses over lived environmental experiences or ecological interdependence. "*Air quality continues to deteriorate across Punjab*" *Thick smog blanket and hazardous air quality posing serious health risks for residents.* (Gabol, 2025)

In an effort to improve the dangerous air quality throughout the province, especially in Lahore, the Punjab government declared smog a national emergency on Thursday and announced a number of measures, including vacations for children with disabilities and a ban on all activities "causing or leading to smog formation."

5.1.3. Linguistic Framing of Smog through "The Dawn News"

Dawn articles typically take on a tone that is more analytical and policy-focused, but they nevertheless use language patterns that cover up ecological interaction. As, pollution is characterized as *"continuing to grip the city despite recent government measures"* (The DAWN 2025) in a single sentence about Lahore's declining air quality. While the sentence form avoids addressing particular polluting like transportation sectors or industrial zones, the verb *"grip"* personifies pollution as an external force. This is consistent with Stibbe's elimination theory, which minimizes human responsibility through language.

Another Dawn article claims that (Aslam 2025) *"unchecked development and increased vehicular emissions have worsened winter pollution,"* linking smog to urban growth and inadequate control. Because it clearly links smog to individual economic practices and political failures, this is a rather constructive Eco linguistic approach which challenges conventional explanations of smog.

5.1.4. Framing through Express Tribune

Smog is often framed through health-centered language in The Express Tribune. As (The Express Tribune, 2025) wrote that Hospital admissions and respiratory ailments are the subject of one piece, which highlights *that "children and elderly citizens are the worst affected as toxic air blankets major cities."* The discourse emphasizes human misery over ecological processes, and the metaphor of "blankets" supports the notion of smog as an overpowering natural force.

According to another article on emergency measures like public advisories and school closures. As *"Authorities were forced to act as air quality reached hazardous levels,"* Although the passive framing does not clarify whether preventive environmental regulations were lacking, the statement "were forced to act" portrays government officials as reactive and helpless. Instead of promoting a proactive ecological ethic, this Eco linguistically supports a reactionary crisis narrative.

5.1.5. Smog Framing in The News

The News's articles focus on administrative and institutional viewpoints. One report discusses smog primarily through official remarks, such as *"officials attributed the worsening air quality to adverse weather patterns and cross-border pollution."* (The News 2025) By concealing national financial systems from criticism, this narrative moves accountability out of national industry and urban behaviors and is consistent with what Stibbe refers to as helpful stories for dominating institutions.

As in (The News 2025) asserts that "*Task forces, monitoring units, and policy reviews*" are mentioned in another piece that emphasizes policy responses. Such phrase turns smog into an organizational problem while also signaling governmental activity. An instrumentalist perspective of nature is reflected in the framing of the environment as a commodity to be governed instead of a living system demanding ethical cooperation.

5.1.6. Framing Smog in, the Nation

The debates related to smog constantly focuses on political accountability in The Nation, but accountability is still decentralized. As we see "*Failure to implement environmental laws has left citizens exposed to hazardous air,*" (The Nation 2025) according to one article criticizing the lack of prompt action. This line suggests accountability, yet it remains ambiguous by not naming certain sectors or people.

Another article specifically links pollution to winter weather by framing haze as a "*recurring seasonal challenge.*" (The Nation, 2025) By portraying smog as cyclical and unavoidable, this seasonal framing normalizes it. From an Eco linguistic standpoint, this kind of language weakens public desire for systemic change by normalizing environmental harm.

Table 4.1 Framing of Smog through Linguistic Choices in Pakistani English Newspapers

Linguistic choices	Newspaper Discourses	Eco-linguistic Perspective
Metaphors	" <i>Smog blankets / grips / chokes the city</i> "	Overlooks human agency and portrays smog as the outside threat.
Register Terminology	<i>Consistent implementation of PM2.5 and AQI thresholds</i>	Presents smog as a technical problem rather than a social or environmental one.
Passive Structures	" <i>Air quality has deteriorated</i> "	Eliminates accountability; pollution seems unavoidable or natural process.
Nominalization	" <i>Deterioration of air quality</i> "	Distances human activity and socioeconomic processes from smog
Temporal Representation	" <i>Seasonal winter smog</i> "	Reduces the need for systematic change and promotes smog as a natural process

In Table 4.1 the main linguistic strategies used by the authors of Pakistani Newspapers to frame smog are summarized, along with their Eco linguistic implications. By portraying smog as an external, nearly natural cause of concern, the frequent use of metaphors like "smog blankets," "grips," or "chokes" the city disconnects it from human accountability. By portraying air pollution as a state that simply "happens" rather than as the result of particular industrial, transportation, and administrative practices, grammatical choices like passive voice and nominalization further minimize responsibility.

5.2. How Smog is depicted through Framing Strategies

Many common framing strategies are seen in all four newspapers, although with varying degrees of emphasis, according to the analysis.

5.2.1. Emergency and Crisis Frame

Every newspaper heavily relies on a crisis-oriented narrative, portraying smog as an emergency that calls for quick measures like traffic limits, school closures, and health advisories. Urgency-driven language is frequently employed in headlines to exaggerate the crisis, which draws focus but may also encourage a reactive, short-term understanding of the problem. From an Eco linguistic perspective, this framing reinforces a narrative of transient disturbance rather than long-term ecological imbalance by emphasizing symptomatic care over structural causes

This describes how newspapers construct emergency frames. According to the research, a newspaper headline depicts smog in a terrifying, emergency-centered approach, using headlines to immediately create a sense of danger, like "*SMOG CRISIS: CITY IN CHAOS!*" in bright red. Urgency and challenges are highlighted by visual features such as blurry urban landscapes, masked citizens, and enclosed messages concerning traffic restrictions, school closures, and health advisories. Instead of placing smog inside more profound, long-term environmental and structural reasons, the arrangement, both linguistically and graphically, emphasizes crisis signals and immediate solutions supporting a narrative of abrupt urgency.

5.2.2. Health-Centered Frame

The health-centered report is a common framing technique used in Dawn and The Express Tribune, where smog is mainly mentioned in terms of respiratory conditions, hospital admissions, and threats to youngsters and the elderly. This frame simplifies the problem and increases public awareness, but it also restricts environmental debate to implications that are anthropocentric in nature. Instead of being portrayed as an ecosystem with inherent worth that has to be protected, nature is mostly discussed in reference to how it affects human bodies.

As "*Lahore's toxic air plagues thousands*" Major hospitals reporting spikes in respiratory infections, asthma and other health problems caused by smog. (Lodhi, 2025)

5.2.3. Governmental Responsibility Frame

A governance-oriented framework, emphasizing actions taken by governments, policy issues, and interprovincial coordination, is more commonly used by The Nation and The News. Smog is often linked to delayed regulations, insufficient enforcement, and cross-border environmental damage. However, accountability is often shared among abstract organizations such as "authorities," "departments," or "neighboring countries," rather than being directly connected to specific industrial processes, transportation networks, or consumption habits. This spread is consistent with narratives that are detrimental to ecological accountability but helpful for powerful organizations, according to Stibbe.

As “*Anti-smog measures: Punjab bans public entry to parks, zoos and playgrounds*” (Mustaq, 2024) Reports a government ban on public access to recreational spaces as part of smog control actions. (The News, November 8, 2024)

5.2.4. Naturalization and Seasonal Frame

The seasonal framing of smog, which frequently refers to it as a "winter phenomenon" or a "recurring seasonal issue," is another prevalent strategy. By connecting smog with climatic cycles rather than human-caused environmental mismanagement, this narrative indirectly normalizes haze. From an Eco linguistic perspective, this kind of framing adds to a damaging narrative that establishes pollution and discourages imaginative ecological thinking.

As “*Pakistan escapes ‘suffocating’ record smog season as winter ends*” (Afp, 2025) frames smog as tied to winter, starting early and persisting through the season.

Table 4.2 Representation of Framing Strategies through Pakistan Newspapers

Newspaper Name	Framing Strategies	Discursive Orientation	Eco-Linguistic perspective
The Dawn	Policy analysis Frame	Focuses on Urbanization, regulation, and governmental policies	Moderately beneficial for understanding and constructing meanings of smog
The Express Tribune	Frame of Health-Crisis	Based on Hospitals, advisories, and human suffering representation	Extremely anthropocentric approach where the smog as considered as a threat to health
The Nation	Political or Seasonal frame	Focuses on smog as seasonal process especially related to Winter season as well as	Both reactive and natural process

The News	Institutional Frame	accountability of government and human being Based on Official declarations by Government and task organizations	development of smog Institutionally safeguarding steps and safety measurements focus
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Table 4.2 illustrates that all newspapers emphasize smog as a major problem, but the Ecological depth of their framing techniques varies. As Dawn sometimes questions prevailing myths, others mostly depend on institutional or anthropocentric narratives that restrict ecological change.

5.3. Newspaper Discourses and their Eco-linguistics Implications

From an Eco linguistic standpoint, anthropocentric and organizational narratives predominate in the examined newspaper discourse, with little use of eco-centric or sustainability-focused narratives. The prevailing linguistic patterns frequently fail to question larger ideological presumptions about growth, consumption, and human supremacy over nature, even while smog is portrayed as a major threat.

Newspapers rarely depict smog as an element of a larger ecological disaster, as evidenced by the common lack of ecological metaphors highlighting interconnection, such as ecosystems, their balance, or interdependence. Rather, severe human discomfort, administrative reactions, and crisis management are given priority in speech. Such narratives may increase awareness, but they may not always promote long-term ecological responsibility, according to Stibbe's approach.

However, some articles—especially those from Dawn—point to the emergence of more positive ecological narratives by connecting harmful emissions to unsustainable population expansion, reliance on fossil fuels, especially inadequate environmental management. These examples function as potentially helpful narratives because they enable readers to understand systemic difficulties and the significance of sustainable environmental actions.

In general, newspaper discussions about smog have conflicting ecological effects. The prospects for transforming environmental consciousness is limited by inconsistent ecological framing, despite increased awareness of health risks. This analysis shows that instead of encouraging proactive responsibility for the environment and cooperative environmental ethics, media discourse tends to encourage reactive attitudes.

When Stibbe's Eco linguistic evaluation paradigm is applied, it becomes clear that, despite their external manifestations of environmental concern, the prevailing newspaper narratives frequently reproduce stories that are harmful to the environment. Although the debate increases awareness of health risks and critical threats, it never questions more

fundamental ideological presumptions such uncontrolled urbanization, reliance on fossil fuels, and growth-oriented development paradigms. *Through passive representation, scientific abstraction, and metaphorical language, smog is linguistically portrayed as an external disaster that conceals human responsibility.*

In addition to crisis and seasonal framing, the continuous elimination of individual responsibility prevents readers from acknowledging their own part in environmental destruction. Because of this, smog is seen as an issue that should be tolerated or controlled rather than avoided. This restricts the ability of media discourse to promote ecological action and environmental responsibility. *The gradual acceptance of smog as a seasonal phenomenon, human-centered healthcare narratives, governmental discourse, and emergency framing are examples of dominant framing techniques.*

Contradicting components do, however, occasionally appear, especially in Dawn, where pollution is connected to unsustainable development practices, poor handling of the environment, and systematic failures. Because they promote critical thought and are consistent with Eco linguistic concepts of interconnectivity and accountability, these examples serve as potentially helpful narratives. *In terms of Eco linguistics or environmentalism, these discourses primarily support harmful narratives that minimize environmental responsibility and normalize smog, however irregular examples of crucial ecological framing raise the possibility of different narratives.*

5.4. Application of Arran Stibbs Framework “The Stories We Live By”

According to Arran Stibbe, "Stories We Live By" pertains to the deeply ingrained narratives, presumptions, as well as value systems that influence how people see and engage with the world. These narratives are recurrent patterns of meaning generated by linguistic discourse, and cultural activities rather than works of fiction. Stibbe claims that by portraying nature as either an object to be misused or an ecosystem that is deserving of respect and care, these stories have an impact on how people behave toward the natural world. These narratives are propagated by media coverage, political discussion, and institutional language, which frequently normalize ecologically harmful behaviors by portraying them as advantageous, natural, or inevitable.

5.4.1. Newspaper Discourses according to Stibbe’s Categorization

According to Stibbe's model, narratives such as this function through a number of important linguistic categories, such as frames, metaphors, evaluations, identity elimination, salience, and storylines. While metaphors influence perceptions by equating nature with mechanical or economic things, frames dictate how environmental problems are presented and interpreted. Identities create roles like "responsible citizens" or "contributors to pollution," and evaluations encode assessments of what considers to be good or evil, desirable or unwanted. While sensitivity emphasizes some parts of environmental problems while downplaying others, erasure refers to the exclusion of

ecological effects or supernatural voices from discourse. When taken as a whole, these linguistic mechanisms show how speech can either support detrimental worldviews or advance ecological sustainability.

According to Arran Stibbe, recurrent "stories" embedded in language, such as ideologies, metaphors, elimination, evaluation, and framing, and agency, influence environmental discourse. The narratives have an impact on how people view the natural world and environmental issues. The framework for the investigation of eight newspaper articles from different newspapers including The News, Dawn, The Express Tribune and The Nation, is operationalized in the following table.

Table 4.3 Stibbes Categorization of smog Discourses

Categories	Articles view	Eco linguistic Interpretation
Ideology	In news articles Development often takes priority over the environment	promotes a growth-oriented perspective
Metaphors	Smog as a threat , enemy of Invader	Diverts attention from major causes of smog due to urbanization etc.
Elimination / Erasure	Absence of industrialization and human actions that that cause smog to prevail	Promote powerful conditions behaviors and actions that are a major cause of smog
Evaluation	Smog is presented in terms like " <i>Hazardous</i> ," " <i>toxic</i> ," " <i>severe</i> "	Such Representation creatures emergency rather than showing public responsibility
Agency	Citizens are portrayed as victims and government is presented as reactive in news articles	Limits ecological agency and behavioral changes and control

Table 4.3 Illustrate that the dominant attitude expressed in newspaper discourse prioritizes economic growth over protecting the environment. Although smog is considered harmful, the discourse hardly ever examines the elements that produce it.

5.4.2. Eco-Linguistics and News Discourses according to Stibbes

From an Eco linguistic perspective, the examined newspaper discourse mostly reproduces what Stibbe refers to as "*stories that damage the ecosystems that life depends*

on." Although smog is portrayed as a serious situation, the language construction continuously separates the issue from common human behaviors like transportation, industrialized consumption, and building initiatives.

Ecological interconnectivity is undermined by the human-versus-nature narrative created by the frequent metaphorical depiction of smog as a force that invades. Similarly, the predominance of institutional voices minimizes the importance of broad civic action and lifestyle change by framing environmental conservation as only the state's responsibility.

However, the presence of counter-discourses, particularly in Dawn, suggests that alternative, positive narratives might actually be possible. These include reports that attribute smog to unsustainable development, insufficient legislation, and long-term environmental neglect. Discussions like this are more consistent with Eco linguistic ideas that emphasize sustainability, connectivity, and accountability.

Table 4.4 Newspaper Discourses and Eco-linguistic Implications

Discursive Patterns	Influence on Public Awareness	Eco-linguistic analysis is
Emergency Framing	Provides short-term awareness and raise public concerns	Promotes and encourages reactions of public and government
Seasonal Framing	Evaluates smog as normal seasonal natural process based on intervals	This representation Ignores how smog is produced and who is actually responsible for its production
Institutional focus	Main focus is on trust and the actions taken by higher authorities against smog	Eliminate individual citizen responsibility to take preventive actions before smog
Health –centered Narrative	It is based on human health issues related to the smog	Ecosystems are marginalized

We see in table 4.4 that while raising awareness, such actions do not promote ecological responsibility. Instead of being actively involved in environmental management, people are depicted as passive victims of policy.

6. Discussion

The results of the study demonstrate that Pakistani English-language publications largely depict smog as an environmental problem rather than as the result of disrupted ecological relationships. Throughout the eight publications under review, smog is commonly attributed to public health emergencies, mobility restrictions, and economic disruption. While these representations effectively convey urgency, they also reinforce a

human-centered worldview that aligns with what Stibbe (2021) calls ecologically limited "stories we live by." The prevalence of human impact storylines indicates that when ecological deterioration directly impacts human well-being, concern regarding the environment in the news media is primarily aroused.

This discussion additionally suggests how environmental narratives, especially in Dawn and The News, are heavily influenced by institutional and technical discourse. Although it creates an authoritative tone, the frequent dependence on governmental notifications, AQI figures, and policy announcements detaches readers from ecological reality. From an Eco linguistic standpoint, this institutional framing distorts accountability by portraying environmental preservation as a state-managed matter rather than a collective ecological duty. These discourses, according to Stibbe, have a tendency to uphold prevailing systems while restricting chances for critical analysis of unsustainable development practices.

The Express Tribune's emotionally driven vocabulary, on the other hand, represents a crisis-focused discourse that emphasizes suffering and immediacy. This framing encourages reactionary instead of constructive engagement with environmental challenges, even while it increases public concern. Instead of being a sign of a systemic ecological imbalance, smog is portrayed as an external menace. This result validates Eco linguistic criticisms that, despite their influence, crisis narratives frequently reinforce fear-based awareness rather than long-term responsibility for the environment or behavioral change.

7. Findings

Based on Stibbe's Eco linguistic framework, the research finds that newspaper discourse mostly reproduces social and institution-centered stories that emphasize human discomfort, governance failures, and urgent actions while marginalizing ecological connectivity and long-term environmental responsibility. The results of the current study indicate that Pakistani English-language newspapers play an important role in determining public understanding of smog through particular linguistic and discursive strategies. Smog is consistently framed as a serious environmental problems.

One important finding concerning the first study's objective is that, especially in Dawn and The News, smog is mostly depicted using impersonal and abstract verbal constructions. When nominalization and passive notions like "air quality deterioration," *"policy enforcement issues,"* and *"measures were announced"* are used frequently, individual responsibility is masked and accountability is fragmented." Ecological erasure, as defined by Stibbe, is the process by which this linguistic pattern removes polluting actors and unsustainable activities from the narrative. Because these media rely on institutional terminology, readers are disengaged from their personal ecological roles and

everyday environmental activities, even while they provide trustworthy and fact-based reporting.

The Express Tribune, on the other hand, uses strong adjectives like "toxic," "deadly," and "choking" to highlight the negative health effects of smog in a more critical and emotionally charged manner. The results indicate that while this tactic is successful in drawing public attention and conveying urgency, it perpetuates an anthropocentric and victim-centered discourse. Instead of being a result of deeply ingrained socioeconomic and ecological systems, smog is portrayed as an external problem that targets human beings. Such framing promotes short-term survival narratives that put immediate human safety ahead of sustainable development and systemic change, according to Stibbe's approach.

According to the study, The Nation frequently uses natural and seasonal frames, portraying smog as a recurring winter occurrence. By associating smog with natural cycles, this representation reduces the perceived urgency of environmental damage. According to Eco linguistic theory, this framing is harmful since it presents pollution as inevitable rather than preventable. Even while the newspaper occasionally points out policy shortcomings, its linguistic tendency to normalize pollution hinders ecological accountability and keeps readers from thinking profoundly about the environment.

Regarding the second research objective, the most common framing techniques found in all newspapers were health-centered framing, organizational framing, and crisis framing. The results demonstrate that while such tactics are successful in highlighting the awfulness of smog, they also restrict the scope of environmental discussion. The continuous emphasis on government intervention, emergency measures, and official data, which portray protecting the environment as a top-down responsibility, leaves little conceptual space for citizen engagement, environmental principles, or sustainable lifestyles. This bolsters Stibbe's argument that dominant media narratives often reinforce existing power structures and unsustainable worldviews rather than challenging them.

Lastly, with regard to the third research goal, the broader ecological results of these discourse patterns imply that there is little chance of promoting long-term environmental stewardship in Pakistani newspaper discourse as it currently exists. The lack of ecological metaphors, interrelated species issues, and explicit human-nature interaction limits the growth of ecological consciousness, despite the widespread recognition of smog as a health hazard. But the study also finds discursive gaps, especially in Dawn, where smog is sometimes connected to development policies, urban planning, and regulatory shortcomings. These instances show what Stibbe characterizes as potentially helpful narratives that, if developed further, might support more environmentally friendly storytelling in Pakistani media.

8. Conclusion

Using an Eco linguistic approach based on Arran Stibbe's concept of the "stories we live by," this study investigated the linguistic framing of pollution in a few Pakistani English-language newspapers, Dawn, The News, The Nation, and The Express Tribune. By portraying smog as a human-centered catastrophe characterized by health concerns, transportation disruptions, and administrative remedies, newspapers have a crucial role in molding public perception of the phenomenon, according to an examination of eight news items. Although these portrayals emphasize how urgent the problem is, they frequently restrict ecological awareness by prioritizing immediate human concerns above long-term environmental sustainability.

The results also show that administrative and institutional discourse play a major role in the dominating framing tactics used in the chosen newspapers. Regular allusions to official data, government announcements, and policy initiatives provide reporting credibility while also removing readers from the more comprehensive ecological reality of smog. From an Eco linguistic perspective, these narratives replicate anthropocentric and problem-management narratives that legitimize environmental degradation and regard smog as an administrative or seasonal issue rather than as a result of systemic ecological imbalance.

Furthermore, the analysis shows that non-human actors and eco-centric viewpoints are still mostly ignored in newspaper discourse. The ability of news stories to encourage ecological stewardship is hampered by the lack of understanding of ecosystems, climate processes, and the relationship between humans and nature. As a result, the discussion usually promotes passive public involvement, which reduces opportunities for transformational environmental understanding and collective responsibility. The need for Pakistani reporting on the environment to shift toward tales with a stronger environmental foundation is highlighted in the study's conclusion. By supporting speech that is environmentally friendly and life-affirming, newspapers can influence public opinion and contribute more significantly to environmental stewardship. An environmentally friendly restructuring of media activities should enable greater awareness of the environment and more permanent solutions to Pakistan's ongoing smog problem.

9. Recommendations for Future Researches

By examining an expanded number of sources of information, including Urdu-language newspapers, news programs on television, online news websites, and social networking discourse, future research on the environmentally conscious organization of smog in Pakistani media may expand the scope of analysis on the chosen topic. Given that ecological outreach in Pakistan reaches a range of groups through multilingual and multimodal channels, comparative studies across languages and media formats would provide additional insight into how ecological narratives vary in terms of target audience, ideology, and medium. These investigations could demonstrate whether anthropocentric

or eco-centric frames are more prevalent in popular media and how the public's perception of environmental issues is influenced by these narratives.

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