



## METAPHOR AS AN EXPRESSION OF “ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS” (SYNTACTIC AND STYLISTIC ASPECTS OF ECOLOGICAL SPEECH UNITS)

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### ABSTRACT

In recent decades, environmental issues have become central to global discourse, prompting increased scholarly attention to the linguistic mechanisms that shape ecological awareness. Among these mechanisms, metaphor plays a crucial role in conceptualizing environmental phenomena and influencing public attitudes toward nature. This article explores metaphor as a key expression of ecological consciousness, focusing on the syntactic and stylistic aspects of ecological speech units. Drawing on cognitive linguistics and ecolinguistics, the study analyzes how metaphors structure environmental discourse and reflect cultural perceptions of nature. The research employs descriptive, semantic, and stylistic analysis to examine ecological metaphors in English discourse. The findings demonstrate that metaphors such as “nature as a victim,” “the Earth as a living organism,” and “environmental crisis as war” are deeply embedded in linguistic structures and contribute to shaping ecological thinking. The study concludes that metaphor is not merely a stylistic device but a powerful cognitive and communicative tool that influences environmental awareness and behavior.

**KEYWORDS:** Ecolinguistics, metaphor, ecological consciousness, syntactic structure, stylistic analysis, environmental discourse, cognitive linguistics.

### INTRODUCTION

The growing urgency of environmental problems has led to the emergence of new forms of discourse aimed at raising ecological awareness. Climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation are no longer confined to scientific discussions but have become part of everyday communication. In this context, language plays a fundamental role in shaping how individuals perceive and respond to ecological issues.

One of the most powerful linguistic tools in environmental discourse is metaphor. Metaphor is not only a rhetorical device used for stylistic purposes but also a cognitive mechanism that structures human thought (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Through metaphor, abstract and complex environmental concepts become more accessible and meaningful. For instance, expressions such as “the planet is in danger” or “nature is fighting back” reflect metaphorical thinking that frames ecological processes in human-centered terms.

The concept of ecological consciousness refers to an individual’s awareness of environmental issues and their relationship with nature. This consciousness is shaped not only by scientific knowledge but also by linguistic representations. Ecolinguistics, as an interdisciplinary field, studies how language influences ecological thinking and behavior (Stibbe, 2015). Within this framework, metaphor plays a crucial role in constructing environmental narratives.

Despite the increasing attention to ecological discourse, the syntactic and stylistic dimensions of ecological metaphors remain underexplored. Most studies focus on semantic and cognitive

aspects, while the structural organization of metaphorical expressions is often overlooked. However, syntactic patterns and stylistic choices significantly influence how metaphors function in discourse.

Therefore, this article aims to analyze metaphor as an expression of ecological consciousness, with particular attention to the syntactic and stylistic aspects of ecological speech units.

### Theoretical Background

**Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics** Cognitive linguistics views metaphor as a fundamental mechanism of thought rather than a purely stylistic device. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors allow individuals to understand abstract concepts in terms of more concrete experiences. For example, the conceptual metaphor “NATURE IS A HUMAN BEING” enables people to interpret environmental phenomena in human terms.

Common ecological metaphors include:

- NATURE AS A VICTIM (“nature is suffering”)
- EARTH AS A LIVING ORGANISM (“the Earth is breathing”)
- ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS AS WAR (“fight against climate change”)

These metaphors shape how individuals conceptualize ecological problems and influence their attitudes toward environmental protection.

Ecolinguistics and Ecological Discourse Ecolinguistics examines the relationship between language and the environment, focusing on how linguistic structures reflect ecological values and ideologies (Stibbe, 2015). It emphasizes that language can either support or undermine sustainable practices.

Ecological discourse includes various types of texts:

- scientific reports
- media articles
- political speeches
- literary works

In all these contexts, metaphor plays a key role in framing environmental issues.

**Ecological Consciousness** Ecological consciousness refers to a system of beliefs and attitudes related to environmental responsibility. It is influenced by cultural, social, and linguistic factors. Language shapes ecological consciousness by providing conceptual frameworks through which individuals interpret environmental reality.

Metaphors are particularly important because they simplify complex phenomena and make them emotionally engaging. For example, describing climate change as a “global threat” creates a sense of urgency and responsibility.

### Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach based on linguistic analysis. The research focuses on ecological speech units containing metaphorical expressions in English discourse.

**Data Collection** The data for analysis were collected from:

- environmental articles
- public speeches on climate change
- literary texts with ecological themes

Approximately 50 ecological metaphorical expressions were selected for analysis.



**Analytical Methods** The study uses the following methods:

1. Semantic analysis – to identify metaphorical meanings
2. Syntactic analysis – to examine structural patterns
3. Stylistic analysis – to explore expressive functions

These methods allow for a comprehensive understanding of ecological metaphors.

## Results

**Types of Ecological Metaphors** The analysis revealed several dominant types of ecological metaphors:

1. Anthropomorphic metaphors

Nature is described in human terms:

- o “The Earth is crying for help”
- o “Nature is angry”

2. War metaphors

Environmental issues are framed as conflicts:

- o “Fight climate change”
- o “Battle against pollution”

3. Health metaphors

The environment is presented as a body:

- o “The planet is sick”
- o “Ecosystems are collapsing”

These metaphors reflect different ways of conceptualizing ecological problems.

**Syntactic Features** Ecological metaphors appear in various syntactic structures:

1. Simple sentences
  - o “The Earth is dying.”
2. Complex sentences
  - o “If we do not act, the planet will suffer irreversible damage.”
3. Nominal constructions
  - o “The destruction of nature”
4. Passive constructions
  - o “The environment is being destroyed.”

These structures contribute to the persuasive power of ecological discourse.

**Stylistic Features** Ecological metaphors perform several stylistic functions:

1. Emotional impact

Metaphors evoke feelings of concern and urgency.

2. Persuasion

They influence attitudes and encourage action.

3. Visualization

Metaphors create vivid mental images.

For example, “the planet is on the edge” creates a strong visual impression.

## Discussion

The findings confirm that metaphor plays a central role in expressing ecological consciousness.

Metaphors shape not only how environmental issues are described but also how they are understood.

From a syntactic perspective, the use of simple and emotionally charged sentences enhances the accessibility of ecological discourse. Complex structures allow for detailed explanations, while passive constructions emphasize processes rather than agents.

From a stylistic perspective, metaphors function as powerful persuasive tools. They simplify complex concepts and make them relatable. However, certain metaphors may also be problematic. For instance, war metaphors may create a confrontational view of environmental issues.

The study highlights the importance of carefully selecting metaphors in ecological communication. Language can either promote sustainable thinking or reinforce harmful attitudes.

### Conclusion

This study has examined metaphor as an expression of ecological consciousness, focusing on its syntactic and stylistic aspects. The findings demonstrate that metaphor is a powerful cognitive and communicative tool in ecological discourse.

Ecological metaphors:

- structure environmental thinking
- influence attitudes toward nature
- enhance emotional engagement

The study contributes to ecolinguistics by emphasizing the role of syntax and style in metaphorical expressions. Future research may explore cross-linguistic differences and the role of metaphor in different cultural contexts.

### References

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