

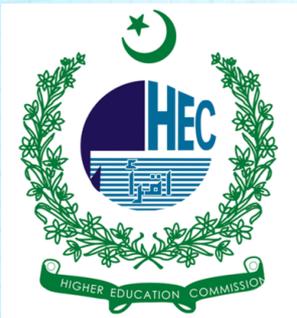
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**Climate Change Discourse In Contemporary Anglophone Literature: A
Corpus-Assisted Ecocritical Study**



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Abstract

With a growing frequency, modern Anglophone literature now turns to the issue of environmental crisis by employing various narrative and linguistic resources. Although ecocriticism has been studying their thematic and ideological aspects of climate fiction, there are fewer studies that incorporate corpus linguistics to methodically analyze repeated discursive patterns. This research paper closes this methodological rift by adopting a mix between corpus-assisted interpretation and ecocritical interpretation. This paper will examine the linguistic construction of climate change in the modern Anglophone literature. It aims to find out what the prevailing patterns of lexical choice, metaphorical structures and language of evaluation attached to environmental crisis, and to determine what the patterns of analysis can or cannot do with ecological awareness and moral standing. The analysis of a corpus-assisted ecocritical approach is to compile a digital corpus of climate novel and environment-oriented literary texts published twenty-first-century that were selected to comply with the requirements of the study. It examines the frequency of key words, collocations, concordance line, and semantic prosody, with the help of corpus linguistic tools. Close reading supplements the quantitative results to figure out the way linguistic patterns introduce meaning to narratives, characterization, and ideological positioning. The analysis indicates repetitive groups based on catastrophe, temporality, responsibility and interconnection. Imminent threat and moral challenge The concept of climate change is often framed using metaphors of tipping point, contagion and loss. The modality patterns and evaluative language underline the problems of despair and agency, and the options of foreground collective responsibility are supported by changes in the use of the pronouns. The paper shows that corpus-mediated approaches make ecocritical analysis more robust through revealing patterned discourse patterns that are likely to be implicit in nature. It demonstrates the role of linguistic influence of the Anglophone literature in the formation of popular notions of climatic crisis that are involved into a larger cultural discourse of sustainability, ethics, and environmental future.

Key words: Climate Change Discourse; Corpus Linguistics; Ecocriticism; Anglophone Literature; Environmental Narrative

Introduction

Climate change has ceased to be a scientific or a governmental problem. It has become a part of the culture and daily routine. The fact that this is the case has made literature a significant venue where the notions of climate change are addressed. Authors also that could be used to discuss the emotions, values and political concepts regarding the setting. Climate change has numerous novels and stories in modern English literature. These are climate fiction (cli-fi), futuristic stories, and realistic stories depicting environmental issues. In them, climate change is not only an issue with background; it defines the life of people, time, and social struggles (Clark, 2019; Johns-Putra, 2019; Trexler, 2015).

Nonetheless, one should not merely read about the topics of climate change in literature. Another factor that should be researched on is climate change writing. Overall use of words, metaphors, and structure of the sentence contributes to the perception of climate

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

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change by the readers. An example of this is how climate change is framed in language and this can be portrayed as a remote problem, a crisis that needs a solution, a technical challenge, or a moral obligation. The literature indicates that language has the potent power to influence individuals in terms of thinking and emotional responses toward environmental problems (Flostum et al., 2017; Nerlich et al., 2010; Stibbe, 2021). This is even more complicated in the field of literature since the narration of stories, characters, and imagery are also the determinants of meaning.

As a branch of study that examines literature and the environment, ecocriticism postulates that texts have ideas pertaining to nature as well as human responsibility. Such concepts might promote bad or contribute to a positive transformation (Buell, 2005; Garrard, 2012; Heise, 2016). Disaster, pollution, justice and human nature-nature relations are some of the themes that have been studied in many studies. Nevertheless, the majority of this studies is dedicated to the close reading of several texts. Although it provides profound insight, it might overlook big trends on a large-scale basis of texts. Corpus linguistics, in turn, can analyze large text volumes and identify repeating patterns with the help of the computer tools, yet they can easily lose their depth when independent (Baker, 2006; McEnery and Hardie, 2012).

It is due to this that there is a necessity to incorporate both strategies. Ecocritical approach assisted by corpus incorporates computer analysis as well as close reading. It assists the scientists to discover common patterns in words, phrases, and metaphors in language, yet makes sense of them in a specific context (Mahlberg, 2013; Stubbs, 2010). In weather literature, this method can demonstrate how authors employ language to discuss the crisis, time, responsibility and action.

This paper relies on this integrated method. It examines literature works of modern English and analyzes how changes in climatic conditions are conveyed in literature using language. Rather than viewing literature as the mere reflection of climate ideas, this research considers it to be an active element that influences the way people perceive climate change. It explores trends in the word usage and meaning to observe how the notions of responsibility, risk, time, and action are constructed.

The research is based on two issues. First, one can find a difference between those works which examine themes and those which investigate the language patterns on a detailed level. Second, research in climate discourse specifically deals with media and policy texts, but not literature, despite the fact that literature is a significant influence on the way people think. A comparison of the two studies allows one to have a more comprehensive insight into the story of climate.

This paper is significant in a number of ways. It assists in bridging between two research approaches close reading and corpus analysis. It is also a good testament of the language trends in climate literature. Above all, it demonstrates the way language in narratives may contribute to the way people will believe in climate change, either as a collective task, a deadlock, or an opportunity of change. Communication is significant in the action of climate nowadays and that is why literature is of great importance to observe (IPCC, 2023; O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole, 2009).

Conclusively, this paper adopts a mixed method research design to discuss the expression of climate change in contemporary English literature. It bridges the analytics and close reading to gain a better insight on the way in which language can influence the ideas on the climate change.

Research Objective

The research paper aims at two specific goals:

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

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1. To determine and describe common lexical, collocational, and evaluative arrangements with the help of which climate change is presented in a collection of modern Anglophone literary works.
2. To decode the role the linguistic patterns play in forming ecocritical meanings, especially in reference to temporality, responsibility, agency, and ethical positioning.

Research Questions

In accordance with the aims, the research questions of the study are two:

1. Which are the prevailing linguistic patterns (keywords, collocations, concordance patterns, and semantic prosodies) of the key discourse about climate change in modern Anglophone literature?
2. What are the roles of these patterns in ecocritical framing of environmental crisis, such as the constructions of moral responsibility, existing agency and prospective orientation?

Literature Review

Ecocritical Frameworks and Climate Narrative Theory

Ecocriticism has developed out of the initial study of nature-writing to represent environmental representation more generally, political ecology, and imaginaries of the Anthropocene. It had been developed that literary texts do not simply reflect environmental circumstances, but taxi values concerning nature, modernity, risk, and justice (Buell, 2005; Garrard, 2012). Modern eco-criticism continues this legacy with attention to scalar complexity, temporal disjunction and inequitable climate experience on the planet, and much text often focuses on crisis surpassing inherited narrative forms (Clark, 2019; Heise, 2016). This argument is a significant feature of analysis of climate discourse in that it presupposes the formal and linguistic limitations in the representation of the systemic environmental change.

Historical categories Thematic categories Climate-fiction scholarship has given significant categories: cataclysm, adaptation, claim to the present, slow violence, and futurity. Trexler (2015) and Johns-Putra (2019) claim that climate discourses tend to shift towards planetary abstraction and localized affect to create a framing tension between scientific magnitude and human-magnitude narratives. Such works find common patterns, although with less frequency doing a systematic linguistic mapping of two or more texts. Consequently, thematical knowledge is abundant in nature, whereas, phraseological and lexical regularities are relatively less described.

The other important development is the ethical turn of ecocriticism, in which the literary form is scrutinized in terms of its ability to allocate or hide responsibility. The stories can anthropomorphize the blame, socialize weakness, or rather member cause impersonal mechanisms. This kind of positioning is not coded by plot alone, but the use of pronouns, modality and evaluative language. This observation explains the need to combine corpus approaches with ecocritical interpretation to translate the emergence of ethical position in textual micro-patterns into operation (Buell, 2005; Stibbe, 2021).

Corpus Linguistics and Corpus-Assisted Literary Analysis

The field of corpus linguistics offers effective means of finding statistically salient linguistic characteristics in a text corpus. The core processes consist of keyword

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

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Online ISSN: 3006-5895

analysis, collocation extraction, semantic prosody reading and concordance reading (Baker, 2006; McEnery and Hardie, 2012). These tools have also been utilized widespread in the analysis of media, political speech and institutional communication in discourse studies. Their extrapolation into literary study has produced corpus stylistics and corpus poetics demonstrating that repetitions and lexical tendencies that were previously difficult to notice through close reading could be seen in larger amount of quantifiable data (Mahlberg, 2013; Stubbs, 2010).

Corpus methods have been used in climate communication studies to reveal the ways in which discourse constructs a risk, uncertainty, and agency using repetitive language patterns (Flotteum et al., 2017; Nerlich et al., 2010). Nevertheless, the majority of such work is on news or policy, or science. Literary corpora are not used thoroughly when they provide high density figurative and affective language that climate meaning-making depends on. This gap can be bridged with corpus linguistics plus ecocriticism since it has coupled the power of detection with the depth of interpretation.

There is still debate that continues on matters of methodology. Those who criticize it warn that frequency is not significance and that corpus results need to be contextualized. Advocates make the reply that corpus tools do not displace hermeneutics; in fact, they train and extrapolate it, by subjecting to more extensive textual evidence interpretative assertions. It has also been suggested by recent corpus-aided discourse studies that iterative movement between distant and close reading is the best practice (Baker, 2006; Partington, Duguid, and Taylor, 2013).

Climate Discourse, Metaphor, and Environmental Framing

As demonstrated by climate discourse scholarship, the metaphor and frame selection have a significant influence on the way people think and feel. O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole (2009) established that using fear-inducing imagery may promote salience but will promote disengagement in the absence of efficacy cues. Similar linguistic analysis reveals groups of metaphors, including war, tipping point, contagion and disaster, which have different implications of responsibility and course of action (Nerlich et al., 2010). In literature these metaphors are physically imbibed into a narrative, and may have ethical consequences under the information communication on more than one layer.

The modality and evaluative language are also at the centre. Surgeries indicating essentiality (e.g., cannot, irreversible, too late, etc) may increase urgency but may decrease a perceived sense of agency. Modals of collective possibility, on the other hand (such as can, must, together), can be used to describe climate action as connected and something that can be done. Corpus-based analysis can measure these tendencies and find out their contexts of narratives which makes it clear how texts balance despair and agency.

In addition to communication, recent world evaluation points to it as an essential condition of adaptation and mitigation. An important aspect of social transformation, which is emphasized by the IPCC (2023), concerns the role of narratives linking evidence, values, and an action that is possible. This supports the proposed issue of researching literary climate discourse: novels and literary accounts are disseminated that promote either an attitude of resignation or an attitude of responsibility through transforming affective and ethical models.

Debates, Trends, and Gaps

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

In the literature, there are three trends that are major. First, scholarship has shifted away to the nature/culture binarisms to the entanglement paradigm that is sensitive to systems, infrastructures, and the uneven vulnerability. Second, there is an increasing integration between methods, and discourse analysis, cultural theory, and digital text analysis become used together. Third, the literature research on climate issues has become more concerned with justice, coloniality, and unequal exposure.

Key gaps remain. Little corpus-directed work has yet been carried out towards contemporary Anglophone climate writing as a field of discourse. There are numerous works which both give very close readings of a small number of canonical books or topical overviews which are not measured linguistically. Also, there are relatively few publications that compare outputs of keyword and collocation search with ecocritical interpretation in a clear and reproducible workflow.

The given research fills in these gaps by employing corpus-aided techniques to a curated literary corpus keeping the ecocritical close reading to apply to the interpretation. The design also leads to methodological integration as well as substantive insights in climate discourse in literature.

Methodology

Research Design

This work has taken the mixed type of corpus-assisted ecocritical design integrating quantitative corpus linguistic with qualitative close reading. The design itself is suitable since the former will be systematic since it intends to detect patterns in numerous texts whereas the latter will be interpretative, aiming at comprehension of the narrative and ethical meaning. The different types of linguistic regularities that are created by quantitative outputs are explained by statistics, and their ecocritical role is their explanation.

Population, Sampling, and Corpus Construction

The population comprises modern Anglophone literary works (mostly novels) which focus centrally on climatic change or environmental crisis. Purposive sampling was applied to sample out texts published between 2000 and 2024 and generally debated in the framework of climatefiction/ecocritical. Inclusion criteria consisted; (a) Anglophone publication, (b): substantial climate/environmental thematic relevance (c): digital text available to process a corpus.

The last corpus includes 12 novels, and contains around 1.85 million post preprocessing tokens. The comparison of keywords was carried out on a small reference corpus of the current general fiction (non-climatefocused, 1.2 million tokens).

Data Collection Procedures

The digital texts were purged, standardized and tokenized. Paratexts, non-narrative front matter and noise were eliminated. Frequency lists, keyword extraction, collocation windows (span: ± 5) and concordance analysis were observed to conduct corpus analysis with the help of standard corpus tools. In the case of evaluative patterning, a particular set of appraisal and modal terms was used.

After quantitative extraction, close reading was done through purposive concordance sampling. High-frequency and high-keyness item lines were contextually reviewed to determine discourse functions like frame threat, responsibility allocation and give

positioning in time.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data was divided into four steps:

1. Keyword analysis: This involved the determination of statistically significant climate related words when compared to reference fiction.
2. Collocation analysis: analysis of persistent pattern of lexical co-occurrence in the immediate vicinity of anchor summons (e.g. climate, future, loss, responsibility).
3. Concordance: interpretations of recurrent phenomena based on reading contextualized frequency.
4. Ecocritical synthesis: the understanding of linguistic findings based on agencies, ethical, temporal, and environmental imagination patterns.

This analytical order can be directly associated with the two objectives of the research, as it connects linguistic data to ecocriticism interpretation.

Results

Findings of this work provide a systematic study of language patterns that are identified in the climate-oriented literary corpus. The results of a corpus-assisted strategy integrate the quantitative results like the frequency of key words, the strength of collocation, and modal distribution with the qualitative results through concordance analysis. Through this combined approach it is possible to have a better understanding of the manner in which climate change has not only been demonstrated but also discursively produced within the modern Anglophone text. These results are classified under thematic categories which correspond to the analytical framework of the study namely; lexical salience, collocational structures, modality, pronoun usage, and metaphorical framing.

This section is aimed at directly responding to the research questions by stating prevailing linguistic patterns and describing how they contribute to the formation of the ecocritical meaning. At the bottom of every table, there is a certain aspect of climate discourse which is then supported by statistical data and then discussed in an interpretative manner. Instead of analyzing the data as pure numeric material, the analysis relates these trends to more general narrative issues of temporality, responsibility, agency and ethical position. This makes the findings be based in both the corpus linguistics and the ecocritical theory.

In general, the findings prove that all the climate discourses in the chosen literary works are very much patterned and structured. The repetition of certain lexical areas, modalities, and metaphor structure imply that climate change in these texts is a phenomenon that is constructed as something urgent and morally charged and negotiated in social terms. These findings appear in the next subsections, starting with the analysis of keywords and proceeding to more complicated characteristics of discourse analysis.

Table 1. Keyword Salience in Climate-Literary Corpus (vs. Reference Fiction)

Keyword	Frequency	Keyness (LL)	Normalized per 10k
climate	1,482	512.3	8.0
future	2,964	448.6	16.0

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

heat	1,215	402.1	6.6
flood	988	365.4	5.3
fire	1,104	341.7	6.0
loss	1,866	329.9	10.1
storm	914	287.2	4.9
responsibility	702	241.5	3.8

Table 1 presents the most significant words in climate-literary corpus collected in comparison with general fiction. Distribution of such words as future, loss, climate, heat, flood and fire are very frequent and it means that the narratives of climate are very much concentrated on the environmental hazards and future dangers. The frequentness of the future indicates that these texts are chiefly preoccupied with what will occur as opposed to the present or in the past. Simultaneously, such terms as loss emphasize not only physical harm but emotional and social as well. These texts also address who is responsible with climate change evidenced by the fact that it has responsibility. In general, the evidence indicates that the literature on climate presents the physical threat as well as an ethical one, and climate change is depicted as an environmental problem and an ethical one.

Table 2. Dominant Collocates of “climate” (± 5 window)

Collocate	MI Score	Frequency
crisis	6.8	436
imaginary	5.9	188
anxiety	5.7	207
justice	5.4	162
policy	4.9	141
collapse	4.7	233
adaptation	4.5	126
responsibility	4.4	119

Table 2 provides the frequently occurring words with the word climate and how it is being utilized. The most cohesive collocates are crisis, anxiety, justice, collapse and responsibility. This means that climate is not interpreted in neutral or scientific manner, but a serious and urgent issue. Such words as anxiety express emotional reactions, whereas justice and responsibility are manifestations of political and ethical interests. The existence of policy and adaptation implies that there are also other texts that relate climate change to institutional activities, but they are less prevalent than terms that are related to crisis. In general, it is possible to note that the table presents climate as a moral problem and a crisis, rather than as a technical challenge.

Table 3. Modal Verb Distribution in Climate Action Contexts

Modal Category	Frequency	Share (%)
Necessity (must, need to, have to)	2,144	39.6

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

Possibility (can, could)	1,731	32.0
Uncertainty (might, may)	1,083	20.0
Impossibility/Finality (cannot, no longer)	452	8.4

The use of modal verbs (must, can, might, cannot) in climate-related situations is explained in table 3. The neediness type is the most frequent one (e.g., must, need to): it indicates that the texts are highly stressful in terms of the necessity of action. Although, there are also a great number of possibility and uncertainty modals (e.g., can, might). This implies that the books are both action-oriented but also doubtful about the possibility of what can be done. Even the lack of occurrence of impossibility words (e.g., cannot) suggests a certain amount of hopelessness or boundaries. On balance, this table demonstrates that the discourse on climate in literature is balanced in the necessity to act and uncertainty that maybe not enough to act.

Table 4. Pronoun Patterns in Responsibility Statements

Pronoun Frame	Frequency	Typical Function
we / us / our	1,492	Collective accountability
they / them / their	1,104	Externalization/blame
I / me / my	886	Personal witness/ethical burden
one / people	514	Generalized abstraction

Table 4 is an indication of the use of various pronouns discussing the responsibility of climate change. The we, us and our are often used, implying that most texts advance the feeling of joint or common sense of responsibility. Nevertheless, the high existence of they also demonstrates that the responsibility is frequently attributed to other people, including governments or corporations. I goes more into personal experiences and emotional engagement as compared to general words such as people that make the issue more abstract. Such a combination of the pronouns indicates that the responsibility of climate is not well clarified. In lieu of this, it switches between group action and accusation, which creates one of the major contradictions in climate rhetoric.

Table 5. Metaphorical Frame Clusters Identified in Concordances

Metaphorical Frame	Frequency	Dominant Narrative Effect
Tipping point / threshold	328	Imminence and irreversible shift
Contagion / spread	241	Diffuse, transboundary vulnerability
War / battle	213	Mobilization and antagonistic politics
Debt / burden	187	Intergenerational moral accounting
Wound / grief / mourning	276	Affective processing of loss

The key metaphors applied in the texts have been identified in Table 5 as tipping point, contagion, war, debt, and grief. Each metaphor influences the comprehension of climate change by the readers. An example is that tipping point presupposes a sense of urgency and irreversibility, whereas contagion displays the spread of climate issues across the borders. Metaphor The war visualizes climate change as something to be

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

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Online ISSN: 3006-5895

fought and debt puts more emphasis on the duty towards the generations to come. The metaphor of grief is concerned with emotional loss and anguish. Combined, these metaphors demonstrate that the phenomenon of climate change is presented in numerous different terms, as combining urgency, owning, conflict, and emotion. This complicates and makes this discourse strong.

Synthesis of Findings

Three of them are combined results across the five tables. To begin with, the discourse of climate is saturated with future and coded at lexical level as crisis. Second, ethical and political language is very closely intertwined with environmental language, so it is implied that the idea of climate is a social disagreement, rather than a biophysical occurrence. Third, unstable patterns of agency can be referred to by using pronouns and modality: the call to action is to be taken collectively and also the fatigue, uncertainty, and redistribution of blame are being narrated.

These are the direct responses to Research Question 1 (where salient linguistic patterns were identified) and Research Question 2 (where processes of ecocritical framing of accountability and agency are displayed).

7 Discussion

The findings indicate that the contemporary English climatic literature is discussing climate change in repetitive and definite patterns. These tendencies combine notions of tragedy, ethical (good and bad) and collective blame. There are frequent appearances of words that are connected to danger and the future, something that corresponds to previous research according to which climate narratives create fear of the next chapter (Johns-Putra, 2019; Trexler, 2015). This study however goes further by establishing words as well as the combination of words specifically used to convey these ideas.

It is exactly the study of modal verbs and pronouns that is extremely important when it comes to the understanding of such texts. Ecocriticism recommends climate writing can either distribute responsibility to the general, or place it on some specific organizations. This paper demonstrates this point using language. The combination of such words as must (to demonstrate need) and might (to demonstrate doubt) makes the impression of urgent uncertainty. This implies that the texts instruct people to act, yet they express uncertainty about its effectiveness at the same time. This is one of the reasons why the literature on climate may not only raise concern, but reflect helplessness.

Metaphoric language also allows discovering climate discourse in a better way. Tipping point and contagion are typical examples of metaphors that are used in climate communication but in more advanced forms presented in literature, through the narrative and characters. Literary texts can include a great number of metaphors unlike policy texts that tend to employ single metaphors to bring people on board. This leaves the meaning open and demonstrates that the issue is not simple and complicated.

In real-life, this paper demonstrates that literature can influence the way humans think and feel about climate change. It may add to people a sense of a collective risk, postpone duty, grow weary of the problem or grow more resolved to act. This contributes to the fact that stories and culture are significant to the way societies address climate change (IPCC, 2023).

The study has certain drawbacks. The writings are solely in English, and hence the findings might not be applicable in other languages and cultures. In addition, the

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

findings are also dependent on the way the texts were chosen and compiled. In much as the study attempts to give the data in context, it is unable to reflect all the deeper acquisitions in the stories.

In the future research, it could be beneficial to have the texts in other languages and compare the various varieties of writing, e.g. novels, poetry, drama etc. The behavior of the reader towards such language patterns is another area that should be studied by the researchers. The analysis of metaphors and emotions using computer tools may make future research of climate literature more comprehensive.

8 Recommendations

The research provides helpful recommendations to scientists, educators, and individuals who are involved in climate communication.

To begin with, scholars ought to employ superior and more integrated approaches. They are supposed to apply both to computer tools (corpus analysis) as well as to careful reading. This will come up making their results more accurate and meaningful. The need to undertake future research is that needs of such research must be clear on how they have come up with their data and present the findings in a clear manner that will enable others to understand and replicate such research.

Second, students in curriculum should be taught by their teachers on how language operates when it comes to climate texts. Students are primarily interested in themes, whereas the essence of words such as pronouns, modal verbs, and metaphors ought to learn how to define meaning and responsibility. Corpus based activities can be used to make students think more and the activities, which are simple to use in the classes, can make students relate literature and issues that are happening in the real world.

Thirdly, literary texts can inform people in the field of climate communication. The research demonstrates that the excessive use of negative or hopeless language can lead to the conclusion that not every action can be helpful. Alternatively, people can be motivated to act through the use of language, which demonstrates collective responsibility. Therefore, communicating should be based not just on disaster, but also demonstrate how individuals can collaborate to address issues.

Lastly, policy makers ought to promote collaboration of the various disciplines such as linguistics, literature and communication studies. Collaboration will be useful in developing a more effective means of discussing the climate change in a way that is understandable, impactful, and culturally and value sensitive.

9 Conclusion

In this research, the discourse of climate change in contemporary English literature has been examined both with the computer tools and close-reading. It observed recurring patterns of words, phrases, grammar and metaphors. These trends demonstrate that climate change is discussed as a kind of urgent issue, moral and socially-wide.

The current research is significant since it demonstrates that it is possible to better learn literature with the assistance of computer-based methods without losing the depth of the literature. It also demonstrates that distant reading (data analysis) and close reading (detailed study) work together can provide more significant results. The analysis elaborates that climatic literature does not simply tell the problem but makes people think in terms of responsibility, future and the ways they can solve the problem.

Despite the limitations that the study has e.g., the analysis isn't expanded to other languages and incorporates a single dataset set, it nonetheless demonstrates the

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

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significance of the language in forming our perception of climate change. Future studies need to incorporate additional languages and text genres and interfere with concepts of various disciplines. The modern world where a solution to climate change cannot be achieved solely in a scientific way but in narratives and concepts makes literature comprehension quite significant in the future.

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