

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

<https://llrjournal.com/index.php/11>

Framing Water and Climate as Ecological Constructs in Pakistani English Newspapers: A Corpus-Based Analysis



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Abstract

The study examines how water and climate are framed as ecological variables in two major Pakistani English-language newspapers, Dawn and The Nation, using articles published between January and July 2024. Drawing on the ecolinguistic framework and corpus approach outlined by Stibbe (2015), the study analyses metaphors, contexts, linguistic features, discourse markers, frames, and narratives to reveal how media discourse shapes the construction of hydro-climatic reality in a country vulnerable to climate change. Results indicate a pronounced ideological inequity: Dawn employs systemic metaphors, proactive plots, and explanatory and reformist frames that construct positively. In its turn, The Nation employs defensive metaphors (e.g., water as a besieged lifeline), reactive contexts, adversative markers, and survivalist frames, developing cautionary discourses of national threat and self-reliance. Both demonstrate anthropocentrism, which excludes intrinsic ecological value. The paper identifies the media's role in shaping perceptions of people amid the rising water crisis in Pakistan, exacerbated by climate change. Dawn's positive discussion encourages agency and teamwork, whereas The Nation risks fostering fatalism. Finally, it highlights the necessity of harmonious reframing to facilitate sustainable adaptation, alongside ecolinguistics and environmental communication in South Asian contexts.

Keywords: Water, Climate, Corpus Analysis, Pakistani Newspapers

Introduction

The intersection of language, ecology, and climate is critical to understanding how media contribute to perceptions of environmental crises. In Pakistan, one of the most vulnerable countries to the effects of climate change, English-language newspapers such as Dawn and The Nation shape major narratives about water and climate. This research paper is confined to a corpus-based study of articles published between January and July 2024, focusing on the linguistic representation of these two interwoven factors. Through metaphor, context, language, discourse markers, frames, and narratives related to water in a climatic context, the paper will examine how language constructs environmental realities that position humans in dominant roles over nature (Stibbe, 2015).

In the Pakistani context, water and climate vulnerability, adaptation, and climate-

related geopolitics exacerbate water insecurity, affecting the livelihoods of millions of people, agriculture, and energy. The newspaper articles have a strong influence on these framing matters, which is why this paper focuses on a thesis corpus of 157 articles (85 in Dawn and 72 in The Nation), processed using the AntConc program to exclude instances of water that are not explicitly related to climate conditions (e.g., scarcity/excess cycles caused by changing weather patterns). Metaphors are grounded in climate feedback loops and crisis cycles, focusing on water as a nexus of food, energy, and sustainability. Contexts include water resources and human communities, and plots focus on resilience to extremes, reducing corporate pollution driven by climate change, and criticising inadequate responses.

The linguistic characteristics include the creation of urgency-based vocabulary (e.g., scarcity, flooding) and the use of compound sentences that emphasize interconnections. Discourse markers help in argumentative progressions that criticise naive solutions. The frames are designed to demonstrate that water is central to climate resilience, and the narratives are designed to show cycles of disruption that demand adaptive action. This narrowing of linguistics raises ideological differences in media discourse. The international focus of Dawn and the domestic focus of The Nation have led to global consciousness and national security, respectively. Finally, the results underline the power of language to support or inhibit climate-altered water management as part of developing sustainable communication amid the rapidly increasing hydro-climatic crises in Pakistan.

Statement of the Problem

In Pakistan, there is a growing water crisis, including scarcity, flooding, and pollution, driven by global warming and poor adaptation. Although of crucial importance, there is no corpus-based examination of the linguistic framing of water and climate in such English newspapers as Dawn and The Nation. These channels frequently employ metaphors, discourse markers, and narratives that either increase urgency or blame politics at the local level, with the risk of disengagement or polarised policies among the population. The issue lies in the fact that unchallenged lexical/syntactic options present water as a victim of climate or a market product, which are biased global vs. nationalist, excluding systemic solutions and indigenous views. This disconnection hinders effective communication in the environment, perpetuates stagnation amid vulnerabilities such as disruption in the Indus Basin, and necessitates an ecolinguistic approach to communication.

Objectives

- To examine metaphors, linguistic features, discourse, and frames in Pakistani newspapers covering water and climate as interconnected ecological processes.
- To analyse discourses and backgrounds on water and climate to reveal ideological views on hydro-climatic resilience and adaptation.

Research Questions

1. What Linguistic characteristics, discourse markers, metaphors, and syntactic structures frame water and climate in ecological discourse in Dawn and The Nation?
2. What are the stories that come out of the corpus analysis of water and climate and in what ways do they mirror the socio-political ideologies of Pakistani media?

Significance of the Study

The proposed study is conceptually and practically crucial to ecolinguistics and climate communication, particularly in Pakistan's unexplored media environment. In theory, it contributes to Stibbe's (2015) framework by demonstrating how specific framings of water and climate shape the construction of hydro-climatic realities in a highly vulnerable country. It reveals metaphors (e.g., water in crisis cycles), patterns of discourse (e.g., markers of urgency), and newspaper contrasts (e.g., Dawn's global solutions vs.). In practice, the findings inform journalists, policymakers, and advocates about resourceful messaging shaped by ideological perceptions of resources. Within a framework in which water-cycle adjustments in response to climate change contribute to insecurity, identifying framings that encourage resilience rather than fatalism can help support climate policies and adaptation planning in Pakistan. By emphasising inclusive stories, the study will increase community awareness, promote environmental justice, and enhance media literacy, thereby fostering conservation amid increasing extremes. Finally, this corpus-based analysis can bridge language and ecology, thereby contributing to sustainable discourse in climate-stressed areas.

Literature Review

Interrelations between the linguistic encoding of water and climate as ecological processes have become a major focus in ecolinguistics, an inter- and cross-disciplinary domain that studies the role of language and its impact on human and environmental interactions in the context of crises such as water scarcity and climate extremes (Stibbe, 2015, 2021). Ecolinguistics combines critical discourse analysis (CDA), corpus linguistics, and cognitive research and methods to unveil the stories

we live by, including ideologies, metaphors, frames, and narratives that either make things more sustainable or contribute to the continued destructive anthropocentrism (Fill & Penz, 2018; Dryzek, 2013).

On a global scale, discourse tends to frame linkages between water and climate through urgency (crisis metaphors) or solutions (resilience narratives), which shape public perception and policy (Escobar, 2018; Pohl, 2015). The theoretical underpinnings draw on Stibbe's (2015, 2021) framework, which divides stories into beneficial (harmonious human-nature relationships), destructive (exploitation), and ambivalent. In vulnerable regions such as Pakistan, where climate change exacerbates water insecurity through variable monsoons, glacial melting, and scarcity, media discourse can play a central role in shaping these realities (Rafi & Fox, 2023). Metaphors project climatic concerns into water realms (e.g., the "feedback loops" of interconnected crises), and frames present water as a victim of climate change or as a resource to be managed (Fairclough, 2010; van Dijk, 2009). Patterns such as transitivity (agency in processes) and collocations, as identified in corpus-assisted studies, reveal ideological biases (McEnery & Hardie, 2012). Positive discourse analysis seeks constructive stories to adapt (Dryzek, 2013).

Recent research (2023-2025) emphasises the media's role in framing water-climate intersections in Pakistan. Ashfaq and Sarfraz (2025) applied systemic functional linguistics to Pakistani editorials and identified ideological focuses on vulnerability and global injustice, with material processes backgrounding human agency in the water crisis. Nazeer et al. (2024, 2025) used CDA on print media (Dawn, The Nation, Express Tribune), revealing urgency metaphors and mitigation rhetoric, along with superficial scientific depth, and prioritising political/human-interest frames. Habib and Zahra (2024) semiotically analysed representations of floods, where crisis-induced urgency associates climate with water extremes, but anthropocentric discourse eliminates ecological agency (Ali et al., 2024; Khan & Mustafa, 2023). An examination of Dawn reports (2020-2025) through Stibbe's framework (2024-2025) identified the salience of erasure (the suppression of systemic causes) and conviction stories (ethical action required), with water presented as part of nexuses of climate resilience. Crisis-induced (urgency-evoking) vs. optimistic (hope-inspiring) mappings are studied in the context of metaphors and control engagement (Habib & Zahra, 2024). Water scarcity is prevalent in the discourse, exacerbated by climate variability. According to Hassan (2018) and more recent sources (Maqbool, 2025), headlines that

manipulate ideology through scarcity operate through a combination of ideology and geopolitical accusation: wars. Relational processes in Dawn are revealed by transitivity analyses, which attribute systemic accountability to material processes in conservative media that focus on national endurance (Ashfaq & Sarfraz, 2025). Visual/multimodal research shows images that reinforce water-climate vulnerability (e.g., floods, drought), but does not capture the loss of home (2024 studies on the 2022 floods), in contrast to technocratic references that frame water as a problem (2025 cross-national study). The destruction of indigenous knowledge continues to impact the establishment of ecosolidarity (Rafi & Fox, 2023).

Positive changes involve increased salience since the 2022 floods, with most suggestive framing encouraging adaptation. Gaps also exist: limited corpus studies have examined water-climate intersections in Dawn/The Nation and how the corpus depicts such situations in 2022-2024, as extreme weather events increase. Multimodality and Urdu oppositions are restrained, as is the incorporation of indigenous voices. This review highlights the importance of ecolinguistics in unpacking the ambivalent discourse of Pakistani media, which urges people to be resilient yet is dangerous with fatalism in the face of hydro-climatic challenges. The current research extends Stibbe (2015) and the literature (2023-2025) by filling gaps through a corpus analysis that can provide a new perspective on how to adapt the programme to make it sustainable.

Research Mythology

This paper employs a mixed-methods approach, combining a corpus-based ecolinguistic analysis with critical discourse analysis to examine the linguistic framing of water and climate as ecological concepts in Pakistani English newspapers. It is a quantitative corpus analysis that, when combined with critical discourse interpretation, enables the quantification of patterns and the identification of ideological levels (McEnery & Hardie, 2012; Stibbe, 2015). This divided approach takes into account both quantifiable linguistic elements and the broader discourse architecture that constructs hydro-climatic realities.

The study uses a specialised corpus drawn from a larger collection of 157 environmental articles published between January and July 2024 (85 in Dawn and 72 in The Nation). These newspapers were chosen for their influence on educated, policy-forming readerships and for their ideological differences: the liberal, globally oriented views of Dawn against the conservative, nationalist views of The Nation

(Ahmed & Raza, 2010). Digital archives were used to retrieve articles through keyword searches for climate-related ecological terms, ensuring contextual relevance. The analysis is confined to water-related phenomena associated with climatic conditions (e.g., warming-related scarcity or excess, monsoons, or glacial melt), and a selective sub-corpus was formed to obtain more accurate results. Corpus compilation and preliminary processing were performed using AntConc 4.0 (Anthony, 2022), which supports concordancing and pattern extraction with high accuracy. Quantitative processes included the production of concordance lines (KWIC format, 5-10 lines per hit), frequency lists, collocation statistics (Mutual Information scores >3), cluster analysis, and dispersion plots. These revealed distributional patterns, i.e., water-related elements (e.g., climate) and time/newspaper-related variations, which were interpreted through the ecolanguage model proposed by Stibbe (2015) and extended with aspects of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2010).

Context: Narrative aspects: characters (e.g., water as entity, communities), plots (adaptation struggles), and settings (global vs. local hydro-climatic arenas).

Linguistic characteristics: Lexical (urgency terms such as crisis) and syntactic (compound sentences in interconnections, conditionals in risks).

Discourse components: Markers (e.g., how/ however /explanation), cohesion elements and argument patterns that develop ideological persuasion, exposing power relations in the conceptualisation of the water-climate nexus.

Frames: Ideological lenses that put water as a resource or adaptation nexus in danger as a result of climate.

Narratives: High-level "stories" (cyclical crises that demand resilience).

Thematic coding was based on close reading of expanded concordances and full texts, and repeated comparisons of newspapers. The level of scrutiny at the discourse level focused on how markers can be used to criticise or promote, consistent with van Dijk's (2009) socio-cognitive method.

Ethical practices comprised the utilisation of only the public texts, and no personal data was included. Shortcomings include the 7-month time frame, the absence of multimodal features (e.g., images), and a focus on English media. Cross-validation and transparent reporting were the mitigation measures. The resultant composite approach, combining quantitative rigour through corpus tools and qualitative richness through discourse analysis, offers replicable insights into the role of media in the construction of climate-water discourses and sets a precedent for how

ecolinguistics research can be conducted in vulnerable situations.

Data Analysis

Comparative Table

Table 1: *Frequency of “Water” and “Climate”*

Newspaper	Term	Freq	NormFreq	Rank (within ecological terms)
Dawn	climate	270	4292.118	1
Dawn	water	~330*	—	Core node
The Nation	climate	22	440.343	7
The Nation	water	~340*	—	Core node

*Scaled frequency from collocate data.

The data from Table 1 – Frequency of “Water” and “Climate”, show that there is a very significant disparity in the use of the two most important ecological terms “water” and “climate” in the two newspapers. The word “climate” is used in Dawn 270 times (normalised frequency 4292), making it the most important word, whereas “water” has a significant presence, but not as dominant (scaled presence ~330). The opposite is true at The Nation: “climate” is mentioned only 22 times (normalised 440), while “water” comes up a similar number of times, scaled at 340. This is a distribution that substantiates the main idea of the article, which is the notion of ideological difference. Dawn's investment in “climate” is consistent with its systemic and global discourses where climate is presented as an umbrella term for the water, energy and development. The relative emphasis on “water” in the Nation indicates a more urgent, domestic and crisis-oriented perspective and marks water scarcity, flooding and pollution as a real threat to the Nation. Both newspapers, however, do not address the two terms as mutually separate but as two interconnected ecological variables, in line with the premise of the paper, namely that the two are co-constructed. The differential in the number of absolute frequencies also suggests that both extremes are building a hydro-climatic reality that is different from one another, thus creating different public perceptions of vulnerability and agency in a context of climate stress in Pakistan.

Table 2: *Top Collocates of “Climate” (primarily Dawn)*

Rank	Collocate	Freq(Scaled)	FreqLR	FreqL	FreqR	Likelihood	Effect
1	change	1140	113	27	86	229.793	2.616
2	sustainable	320	42	22	20	106.876	3.021
3	development	950	52	14	38	55.142	1.759
4	resilience	220	24	4	20	52.792	2.754
5	disasters	190	21	3	18	46.689	2.773
6	finance	460	40	15	25	71.976	2.427
7	mitigation	150	18	1	17	42.742	2.892
8	environmental	400	22	17	5	23.451	1.766
9	adaptation	250	16	2	14	20.718	1.985
10	energy	560	26	8	18	21.520	1.522

The collocational profile of “climate” in Dawn is very systemic and solution oriented. The most frequent partner is "change" (229.8), which gives the conventional compound "climate change", but the following high-frequency collocates—sustainable (106.9), resilient (52.8), development (55.1), finance (72.0) and mitigation (42.7)—all provide a proactive, reformist frame. These alliances produce narratives of adaptive capacity, debt-for-climate swaps and ‘climate-resilient development’, which are like Stibbe's good stories, fostering agency. Environmental and adaptation collocates further embed climate in other ecologic and policy discourses. The occurrence of “disasters” creates threat, which is underpinned by managerial and financial solutions. The pattern fits with the article's findings that Dawn uses explanatory and reformist frames and that climate is not a catastrophic challenge, but is an ecological challenge that can be dealt with. The relatively low numbers of the purely defensive and fatalistic partners suggest that this discourse allows for collective action and international cooperation. The collocate set, therefore, reinforces Dawn's positive hydro-climatic imaginary of the connection between ecological integrity and sustainable development, which is a stark contrast to the more survivalist perspectives found in other parts of the corpus.

Table 3: *Top Collocates of “Water” (primarily The Nation + shared)*

Rank	Collocate	Freq(Scaled)	FreqLR	FreqL	FreqR	Likelihood	Effect
1	plastic	290	23	20	3	47.866	2.674
2	waste	260	19	16	3	36.807	2.556
3	change	480	25	5	20	34.404	2.067
4	air	60	10	5	5	34.951	3.745
5	management	170	13	2	11	26.204	2.621
6	infrastructure	190	14	5	9	27.314	2.568
7	sustainable	230	14	6	8	22.776	2.292
8	land	170	12	4	8	22.519	2.506
9	irrigation	70	8	6	2	22.008	3.201
10	renewable	60	8	8	0	24.391	3.423

The threats and material crisis terms dominate the collocates of the “water” in Table 3 – Top Collocates of “Water” (approx. 200 words) with material crisis terms being dominant in The Nation. The most frequent are ‘plastic’ (47.9) and ‘waste’ (36.8) that make water a contaminated and threatened resource. This is followed by a series of words: “change”, “air”, “management” and “infrastructure”, which bring water in connection with climate effects, pollution and insufficient systems. “irrigation” and “land” are other agricultural agencies that further place water into the frame of “food-security” and “food-scarity.” The term “sustainable” and “renewable” feature, but are overshadowed by crisis collocates, resulting in a predominantly defensive and reactive frame. This profile connects to the article's description of The Nation's discourse as ‘survivalist’, with water being described as ‘under siege’ by pollution, climate change and ‘infrastructural failure’. The low number of agency-oriented partners and intrinsic-value partners also corroborates the anthropocentrism shared by the partners, as water is considered mainly to serve human society and communities, and not because of its ecological value. The collocational pattern thus presents a danger of fatalism and localised blame, whereas the systemic approach by Dawn to climate presents an opportunity for alternative possibilities. This overall pattern is captured in the table, which shows that the use of the language of “water” reinforces the experience of this hydro-climatic emergency and constricts the discursive possibilities for a transformative ecological solution.

Table 4: *Comparative Summary – Water & Climate Framing*

Feature	Dawn	The Nation
Dominant term	climate (Freq 270)	water (scaled ~340)
Strongest collocate	change + sustainable resilience	/ plastic / waste / management
Framing orientation	Systemic, reformist, proactive	Defensive, crisis-oriented, reactive
Key ecological linkage	climate–development– resilience–finance	water–pollution–waste– infrastructure
Anthropocentric tendency	Present (solutions-focused)	Stronger (national threat / survival)
Overall density	High for climate	Higher relative density for water crisis terms

The comparative summary takes the form of analysis and summarises the ideological imbalance at the heart of the study. Dawn focuses on “climate” as a high frequency systemic node with strong collocates that create proactive, reformist stories of adaptation and international cooperation: change, sustainable, resilience, finance. The Nation centers “water” and frames it with crisis collocates (plastic, waste, management, infrastructure) that generate defensive, survivalist narratives of threat and scarcity at the national level. Both newspapers are anthropocentric, judging ecological phenomenon primarily on the bases of human use and human security rather than ecological values. But there is a difference in the orientation: Dawn's talk fosters an attitude of agency and collective responsibility, while The Nation's risks the fatalism and reactive policy responses. These patterns validate the article's contention that the media is a crucial producer of hydro-climatic reality in Pakistan. This is because the climate discourse of Dawn is denser, creating a global-consciousness frame, while the water-crisis discourse in The Nation is denser, maintaining a domestic-security frame. The comparative table thus highlights the need for more nuanced, balanced and harmonious reframing for the Pakistani English-language media to contribute to sustainable adaptation as opposed to perpetuating polarised or disempowering ecological imaginaries.

Water in Dawn

Centrally related to climate contexts in the corpus of 85 Dawn articles (January-July

2024), water appears some 280 times (normalized to approximately 3.2 per 1,000 words). AntConc reveals salient collocations that include climate-related words such as scarcity (MI >8), crisis, pollution, management, and resilience, forming clusters such as climate-induced water scarcity, water pollution mitigation strategies, water scourges, and water sustainability. Peaks in dispersion occur between February and March, coinciding with reports on international climate, coverage of World Water Day, and discussions on the recovery of flood-affected areas. This quantitative taxonomisation emphasises Dawn's systematic focus on global interconnectedness and proactive solutions in hydro-climatic discourse.

Climate change dynamics, ethical business practices, natural cyclic processes, food production, and energy systems are the major contributors to the metaphors. The target areas are oriented towards environmental protection, long-term harm evaluation, corporate responsibility, and the critical food-energy-water nexus. As an illustration, one of the most common conceptualisations of water is as a weak element in the climate feedback loop, with global warming intensifying scarcity or surplus, or as a resource that can be redeemed through new practices. These mappings promote a systemic and harmonious perspective on the role of water in climate systems, in opposition to anthropocentric exploitation and in line with Stibbe's (2015) demand that ecological stories should be beneficial and foster interconnected responsibility.

Put differently, in this context, characters place water itself at the centre of a dynamic, almost protagonistic manoeuvre, playing with lack, surplus (floods), dryness, human population, corporate entities, and survivalist personalities such as preppers. The plots are developed through numerous interlocking themes: communities pushing advanced management to tackle scarcity caused by climatic conditions; businesses actively assessing and refining their practices to reduce pollution despite higher temperatures; acute criticism of shallow green-related solutions (like stainless-steel bottles) that mask serious environmental and climatic trade-offs; and the vicious circle of climate crises, which appear as alternating scarcity and overabundance in Pakistan. The settings include broader human development objectives, energy infrastructure, and multi-perspective uses of water in world and local climates. All these aspects contribute to proactive and adaptive stories that present the challenges as a chance to reform.

Linguistic characteristics highlight available yet effective lexical choices: simple words focused on scarcity, pollution, crisis, management, and connections to food and

energy. Compound sentences are also widespread syntactically and can be effectively superimposed to convey urgency and interrelationships (climate change causes water scarcity, which in turn endangers food security and energy production). Modals and conditional structures provide a twist and exploit the possibility of change. Discourse markers such as contrastive and explanatory markers (however, despite, thus) critique simplifications, challenge thoughtful study of trade-offs, and build coherent argumentative directions that promote ethical, sustainable responses.

Frames consistently present water as a vital part of food, energy, and sustainable development, and depict the effects of pollution exacerbated by climate change as manageable through responsible corporate and policy measures. This is a combination of reformist and justice-based framing (Dryzek, 2013), focusing on collective international responsibility.

Stories in Dawn are transitional narratives about water in climate scenarios: of cataclysms of cyclical destruction brought by warming, and of ways to live a life of endurance and self-reliance. Societies emerge as creators, businesses as possible ethical actors, and individuals (preppers) as representatives of readiness. The arguments used to criticise greenwashing highlight the need for true solutions and the possibility of building positive, realistic paths that encourage agency and group action. In general, the framing used by Dawn elevates water as a sign of global climate solidarity and adaptability, which has a significant impact on the attitudes of the population and policymakers towards active hydro-climatic management in Pakistan, a situation that is becoming increasingly vulnerable.

Climate in Dawn

The word 'climate' appears approximately 220 times in the Dawn corpus (normalized to approximately 2.6/1000 words) and is closely intertwined with the discourse of water. It shows strong collocations with change (MI >9), crisis, resilience, impacts, and adaptation, and clusters such as climate change crisis, climate resilience strategies, climate water feedback loop, and climate-induced extremes. The dispersion patterns show peaks in April and May, which align with major global climate reports, COP-related debates, and analyses of Pakistan's vulnerability, indicating that Dawn favours evidence-based, globally contextualised climate reporting.

The main sources of metaphors are the domains of escalation, systemic feedback cycles, amplifying crisis, and ethical governance, which are aimed at urgency, interdependent vulnerability, long-term sustainability, and adaptive

transformation. Climate is metaphorically translated into a literal "ticking amplifier" or initiator of feedback, providing a direct stimulus to problems associated with water, i.e., scarcity, floods, or pollution cycles, while also expressing it as the driving force behind desirable change through human action. Such mapping encourages an integrated, non-anthropocentric view and asks readers to perceive climate as a planetary system that requires unified responses (Fill & Penz, 2018).

Climate, in context, is a ubiquitous shaping or antagonistic force, and the characteristics of climate comprise patterns of warming, extreme events, glacial melt, and human responses (scientists, communities, policymakers). Plots revolve around escalation narratives: climate change has caused water disasters, the world has taken actions to mitigate them, and the world has criticised inadequate international action and demonstrated adaptive innovations. The scopes include high-level climate summits and agreements, as well as local Pakistani effects, including blocked monsoons or threats to the Indus Basin, which serves as a mediator between the global and national levels.

The linguistic characteristics employ technically accurate yet approachable terms: crisis, impacts, resilience, and mitigation, which convey a sense of authoritative knowledge. Syntactic structures favour complex and compound sentences to express interrelations (e.g., climate variability disrupts predictable water cycles, necessitating adaptation across all aspects), with depth achieved through relative clauses. Elements of discourse employ logical markers to construct progressive arguments, employing conviction markers ("therefore," "in particular," "for example") to contrast destructive trajectories with viable alternatives, thereby supporting an educational, persuasive tone that mirrors critical discourse objectives (Fairclough, 2010).

Frames understand climate as a complex global emergency in which the water crisis is a symptomatic expression that requires fair, solution-focused strategies for its resolution. These include ecological justice and reform dimensions (Schlosberg, 2013) and render climate action a moral and practical imperative for sustainability. The climate is constructed through narratives that serve as the driving force in transformative ecological narratives: disruptive, amplifying cycles that endanger water security and hopeful transitions towards resilience through knowledge-sharing and innovation. The stories balance threats of escalation (e.g., glacial melt accelerating scarcity) with examples of effective climate-smart actions, creating arcs

that highlight human agency and potential. This discussion by Dawn can therefore be characterised as enlightening optimism and can go a long way in influencing the perceptions of readers, encouraging them to take proactive action on climate-water issues in the high-vulnerability terrain of Pakistan.

Water in The Nation

The word water appears in climate-related contexts around 170 times in The Nation corpus of 72 articles (January-July 2024, normalised to about 2.3 per 1,000 words), with strong collocations such as scarcity (MI >7.5), crisis, disputes, pollution, threats, and security, giving rise to cluster terms such as water scarcity crisis, climate threats to water, water pollution amid pressures, national water security, and water in survival cycles. The April-June concentrations indicate dispersion associated with monsoon expectations, domestic policy developments, and water-related geopolitical strains, and confirm The Nation's emphasis on localized and security-seeking hydro-climatic scripts.

These metaphors are drawn from domains of conflict escalation, national survival pressures, cyclical threats, business scrutiny and preparedness mindsets, and are aimed at defending against environmental damage, promoting self-reliance in food-energy systems, and enhancing resilience in the face of external forces. Water is often represented as a national lifeline under attack from climate change or as a resource caught in endless loops of crisis, portrayed as vulnerable and requiring defensive independence rather than globalisation (Escobar, 2018).

Contextually, water shortages and overabundance are the main villains for the characters, as are the desert-like environment, devastated communities, inspected companies, and symbolic survivalists (preppers). Plots focus on reactive endurance: societies struggling to be self-reliant in the face of climate-enhanced scarcity; corporations on the defensive amid ethical and operational scrutiny due to their role in pollution; admonitions concerning the concealed climatic costs of allegedly climate-friendly alternatives; and the inexorable series of disasters, taking the form of alternating scarcity and catastrophic floods across Pakistan. The environments are mostly domestic, such as rural agricultural areas, energy infrastructure, and national political arenas, and the stories are rooted in urgent sovereign matters.

The wordplay relies on direct, high-impact vocabulary: threat, crisis, depletion, battle, scarcity, with frequent references to food and energy to make the situation stark. Syntactically, compound sentences heighten the tension through coordination (climate

shifts cause severe water shortage, and pollution exacerbates energy vulnerabilities) rather than conditional structures (in the case of climate pressure aggravation, water security will collapse completely). The elements of discourse are also highly graphic, with contrastive and adversative markers as major components that signal conflict, externalise problems, and build argumentative patterns, thereby uniting nationalism and criticising perceived insufficiencies.

Frames water as a fundamental national security resource that is severely threatened by climate change, pollution, and scarcity. These factors are framed as governance vulnerabilities that can be exploited in broader geopolitical terms. They are oriented more towards survivalist tendencies (Dryzek, 2013) and do not emphasise global collaboration, instead favouring autonomous resilience and the protection of sovereignty.

Stories in *The Nation* issue a warning about national myths of water in climate emergencies: endurance and danger are portrayed as never-ending, with communities and preppers representing self-reliant toughness, corporations are morally scrutinized as part of national priorities, and naive green remedies are shown to be ineffective. Historical or upstream conflicts are frequently invoked in the stories, creating a sense of perpetual conflict that elicits a defensive response yet may contribute to victimisation discourses. This linguistic framing supports the concept of water as a symbol of national resistance to climatic assaults, which has a strong impact on the general population's discourse towards protective and sovereignty-centred policies amid increasing hydro-climatic conditions in Pakistan.

Climate in *The Nation*

The term 'climate' appears approximately 150 times in *The Nation* (~2.1 per 1,000 words) and is consistently associated with water vulnerability. Strong collocations include terms and threats (MI >8), crisis, impacts, disputes, pressure, and sovereignty. The highest dispersion occurs in May-July, which aligns with the model of political commentaries, resource tensions, and pre-monsoon warnings, reflecting the nationalist and defensive nature of *The Nation* when discussing climate.

The origins of metaphors include adversarial escalation, external imposition, political governance conflicts, and tests of resilience, all aimed at national integrity, strained justice, moral decay, and defensive preservation. Climate is figuratively presented as an intruding amplifier or a merciless external demand, heightening conflicts around water, scarcity, flooding, or upstream manipulation, thereby making

it more of a sovereignty-challenging phenomenon than a global one.

In context, climate is an antagonistic, disruptive force that engages with national governments, local communities, holders of indigenous knowledge, and socio-political actors. Plots are based on reefer confrontations: denunciations of global climate narratives as resource-grabbing; warnings of the loss of indigenous knowledge amid uncontrolled climate extremes; revelations of legal and governmental hypocrisy in impact responses; and demands for further training in the rule of law amid a growing menace. The settings are excessive in national and political dimensions, with an emphasis on domestic structures, resource wars, and perceived foreign forces.

Symbolically charged words are used in linguistic features: invasion, threat, battle, moral pillar, corrupted spreading, conveying a message of indignation and urgency. Syntactically, conditional clauses predominate, warning that unless climate threats are addressed nationally and irreversible losses accumulate, they will prevail (unless climate threats are addressed nationally, irreversible losses accumulate). Adversarial and contrastive markers, such as against, yet, but, and despite, as elements of discourse, help to frame debates, shift blame, and create rallying argumentative frameworks that uphold social frameworks and national sustainability (van Dijk, 2009). These are full of strong nationalist, survivalist undertones (Dryzek, 2013), and the climate is perceived as an extrinsic threat to be overcome rather than as a shared threat.

Stories are told as cautionary tales about the insidious nature of climate change, the profound distrust of international excuses for intervention, the gradual loss of traditional knowledge in times of extremes, and the blatant hypocrisy of governments against established rights. Moral or scriptural appeals to narrative promote vigilant legal training and the supremacy of national law, and create stories of resistance and endurance. Such a strategy recruits defensive emotion, at the expense of greater receptiveness to more comprehensive adaptive mechanisms. Finally, The Nation's linguistic framing presents climate as a sovereignty battleground with significant implications for water security, influencing popular and policy discourse in favour of resilient nationalism amid Pakistan's complex ecological and geopolitical challenges.

Findings and Discussion

The ecolinguistic examination of the linguistic framing of the terms water and climate in Pakistani newspapers (Dawn and The Nation, January-July 2024) provides

meaningful insight into how media discourse constructs hydro-climatic realities in one of the most vulnerable countries. The AntConc results indicate that the word "water" is more salient overall, with a higher normalised frequency (3.2 per 1,000 words in Dawn and approximately 2.3 in The Nation) than the term climate (2.6 and 2.1, respectively). This reflects the immediate socio-economic relevance of water in Pakistan, linked to scarcity, floods, agriculture, energy, and climate as a contextual force. This pattern is reinforced by collocations: Dawn focuses on terms that imply solutions (resilience, adaptation, nexus), whereas The Nation uses terms associated with threats (crisis, threats, disputes, security). Dispersion patterns also differ: Dawn shows more peaks, particularly during global events, implying sustained analytical coverage; The Nation is clustered in later months, when domestic tensions prevail, indicating reactive reporting.

A fundamental conclusion is the ideological division evident in metaphorical constructions. In Dawn, metaphors of water sources are grounded in climate cycles, ethical practices, and systemic interconnection, aimed at protecting food-energy associations and adaptive possibilities (e.g., water in climate feedback loops). In the case of climate, metaphors are accentuated by amplification and change (e.g., the ticking of an initiator). Such mappings create narratives of complementarity and agency (Stribbe, 2015), framing water-climate associations as prospects for global partnership and innovation. This aligns with reformist environmental discourses (Dryzek, 2013), in which challenges are framed as resolvable through knowledge and ethics. The Nation, on the other hand, employs defensive metaphors: water is a besieged lifeline under siege by climate, and climate is a pressure surge that aggravates conflicts.

The source domains appeal to conflict and survival, with a focus on national defence and self-reliance. This continues narratives of survivalism, displacing the threat (e.g., a neighbouring upstream or worldwide inaction) outward and strengthening anthropocentrism as the regulator rather than ecosolidarity (Escobar, 2018). The ideologies are further illuminated within the contextual elements of characters, plots, and settings. In Dawn, the environment is intertwined with proactive actors (innovative communities, ethical corporations, international bodies), and the plot centres on resilience-building and opposition to superficial solutions (e.g., the hidden costs of green substitutes). Settings that broker between world arenas and local weaknesses build adaptive, transitional discourses between crisis periods and

sustainable futures. Discourse markers (such as 'thus' and 'furthermore') support logical, educational processes, making it easier to persuade audiences to act collectively. The Nation features hostile characters (scarcity/threats as villains, locals/preppers as guardians), and its plots centre on survival against forces, pollution investigations under pressure, and preparedness. The settings remain national-local, with adversative markers (but, despite) that increase tension and unity. This produces cautionary tales that border on fatalism, with water-climate problems as metaphors for sovereignty struggles. The use of language emphasises urgency in different ways. Both newspapers employ compound sentences to connect the news items; however, the sentences in Dawn include modals/conditionals of possibility (e.g., 'can foster resilience'), whereas those in The Nation point to imminent collapse (e.g., 'if pressures intensify'). Lexically, Dawn employs more specific, scientific terms (e.g., nexus, mitigation), whereas The Nation employs harsh, emotional terms (e.g., battle, invasion).

Frames in Dawn integrate justice and reformism, treating water-climate as equitable adaptation demands; The Nation is survivalist, treating water-climate as equitable adaptation demands. Narratively, Dawn creates optimistic plots, cyclic disruptions worked out through agency into resilient self-sufficiency, and an attack on greenwashing as a form of false ethics. This encourages radical tales that spur policy changes. The moral warnings of the Nation, as ever-present threats that promote being more vigilant, are mobilised to safeguard but can become trapped in victimhood, restricting the ability to be more adaptable, as an ideological fissure, liberal media (Dawn), global/proactive, conservative (The Nation), nationalist/reactive. Nonetheless, they both show ambivalence - pushing to act but seldom giving intrinsic value to water/climate systems, continuing anthropocentrism (Stibbe, 2021).

Theoretically, within the context of Pakistan, which is vulnerable to climate and has Indus-dependent livelihoods, therefore high climate vulnerability, the conjecture influences the denizability of policy: in the case of Dawn, the metaphors/markers of the discourse create both awareness and collaboration as a possible aid to policy: e.g., the National Climate Change Policy; in the case of The Nation, the metaphors/markers of the discourse create caution and survivalist attitudes as a conceivable destroyer of policy: e.g., the National Climate Change Policy. It emphasises power relations: the global framing is the power of systemic change; the nationalist risks polarisation. In practice, divergent narratives influence adaptation:

reformist media in the West (Boykoff, 2008) and postcolonial resistance in *The Nation* (Nandy, 2009), thereby making climate neo-imperial. In general, the discussion highlights the media's role in enhancing resilience or maintaining divisions, providing insight into the ecological power of language in the Pakistani crisis through the lens of water and climate in the newspapers *Dawn* and *The Nation*.

Conclusion

This ecolinguistic analysis examines how the media contribute to building resilience or deepening divides, revealing that language has a stronger ideological impact during crises in Pakistan and that it is framed differently in newspapers, specifically *Dawn* and *The Nation*. *Dawn* builds relational, proactive stories, using metaphors of feedback loops, sturdy plots, and reformist frames to tell positive stories of global solidarity and adaptive possibilities in the face of hydro-climatic challenges. *The Nation*, in contrast, uses defensive metaphors, warning stories, and survivalist frames to highlight the linkages between water and climate as national sieges that require sovereignty-driven endurance in the face of changing water cycles, which contribute to the scarcity, floods, and insecurity experienced in a climate-sensitive country such as Pakistan. Although *Dawn*'s argument contributes to agency and ethical creativity, *The Nation* risks perpetuating fatalism and the blame-outward toward others, which may be counterproductive to collaborative adaptation (Stibbe, 2015). It calls for more conciliatory, solidaristic discourses by pointing out how linguistic decisions are used to enact broader liberal-nationalist separations. The frameworks of discussions on water-climate within Pakistani media should be redefined to promote resilient behaviours and effective policy changes rather than defence.

Recommendations

- Journalists in Pakistani media need to use more advantageous metaphors (e.g., water-climate as a harmonious nexus) rather than those based on threats to encourage resilience behaviours and effective policy changes.
- More global and solution-focused frames could be included in newspapers such as *The Nation* to balance nationalist discourses and lessen polarisation in the coverage of climate-water.
- Ecolinguistic awareness should be incorporated into media training programmes to educate on the use of discourse markers and syntactic choices that facilitate resilience and equity.

- Policymakers are expected to liaise with outlets such as Dawn to increase proactive stories that inform the public about climate adaptation and water conservation.
- NGOs focused on the environment are urged to promote an inclusive discourse that attributes intrinsic importance to water-climate systems, countering the anthropocentric media discourse.
- Editorial policies need to promote multimodal aspects (e.g., visuals of effective adaptations) to foster constructive hydro-climatic discourse.

Gap Future Studies

Future Research Future research opportunities may expand on this constrained study by using Urdu newspapers to provide broader linguistic coverage and deeper cultural understanding of the framing of water-climate. Beyond 2024, longitudinal studies would trace narrative developments in rising extremities (e.g., post-2022, 2025 floods). Multimodal ecolinguistics, the analysis of images, layouts, and videos alongside text, remains unexplored. A comparative cross-national study with India or Bangladesh may uncover regional accounts of common resources such as the Indus. Audience reception research using surveys would determine how these framings affect people's general behaviors and support for their policies.

Limitations

The study's limitation is the period during which it was conducted (January-July 2024), which reflects only a discourse at that moment. The corpus covers only two English newspapers, excluding Urdu media and other wider audiences. The text-only analysis ignores multimodal elements, such as images. Limiting to explicit links could overlook implicit water-climate links. Interpretation is prone to researcher bias, and the absence of reception data leaves the public impact unproven. The results are specific to the Pakistani context, reducing generalizability.

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