Environmental Hermeneutics Through Music Ethnography: An Eco-Linguistic Study

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Abstract—Ecolinguistics has been emerged as one of the youngest paradigms in the areas of linguistics research since 1990. Language and ecology are intertwined with each other for the intelligibility that it created through the lives of people and their psychological, sociological, and cultural transmissions over the past centuries. Movies, novels, pastoral poetry, ecocriticism and journals, health magazines, biographical narratives etc. this sort of effects are found in the society which can be referred to as ecological healing and romantic eclairs. The reference of healing power through the term 'ecolinguistics' makes the sumptuous chunk of this paper for the exploration into numerous pathways to research in linguistic ecology with a prime focus on the potential fields of investigation. This paper throws light on the storytelling adaptations through language of ecology by way of presenting paraphrase of a bunch of items such as songs from a Malayalam film, Ramu Kariat's 'Nellu' (1974), with evidential support carried from a Transcendentalist and philosopher Henry David Thoreau's classical masterpiece and essay 'Walden' (1854) and attempts to bring an idea of eco-semiotics and linguistic relativity. These works are the true granaries of language of ecology, society, and mind which has a magical power to soothe the psyche of man who in turn gets engrossed in the thoughts of nature's signs. Theories such as Umvelt Theory, Semiosphere theory, Ecosemiotic Feedback Loops etc. are used for strengthen the proposition of this paper. This paper underlines the significance of eco-phenomenology that investigates human experiences and perceptions of nature through phenomenological analysis.

Keywords: Ecolinguistics, paraphrase, intelligibility, exploration, granary, ecocriticism, ecosemiotics, ecophenomenology, linguistic relativity, analysis

Terra Veritas is a Latin phrase indicates the meaning truth of the earth which has roots the ancient Roman philosophy.

I. INTRODUCTION

Arran Gare, a renowned theorist of Ecolinguistics says in his book "Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology, and the Power of Signs" language plays a crucial role in shaping human relationship with the natural world. Thus, linguistic ecology came into being with a focus on the study of language as an ecosystem, exploring how language interacts with its environment. Semiotic ecology examines signs and symbols in human-nature relationships, and ecolinguistics paradigm concentrates a shift from anthropocentric language and thought. For the critique of dominant discourses there are three major areas can be underlined, they are: (i). Anthropocentrism that deals with language reinforces human dominance over nature, (ii). Economism gives us a knowledge on language prioritizes economic growth over environmental concerns, and (iii). Scientism comes across that the language presents science as the sole authority on environmental issues.

Ecolinguistics is a subfield of social linguistics, anthropological linguistics, and critical discourse analysis. This field of study deals with the relationship between language and the environment. It examines how language reflects shapes, and influences our perceptions and interactions with the natural world. This field of study explores examples and more to understand the complex relationships between language, culture, and the environment. These attributes can be concentrated on the following manners:

i.   Environmental metaphors are nature-based metaphors like 'the world is a jungle' or 'life is a river'. These instances reveal our perception of the environment and our place within it.
ii. Ecological vocabulary comprises of words like 'sustainability', 'biodiversity' and 'ecosystem' reflects our growing awareness of environmental issues.
iii. Nature-based idioms are phrases like 'raining cats and dogs', 'busy as a bee' demonstrate how nature is embedded in our language.
iv. Indigenous languages have intricate vocabularies and grammatical structures that reflect a deep connection with the natural environment.

v.   Environmental discourse analyses how we talk about environmental issues, such as climate change or conservation, reveals our values and beliefs about the natural world.

vi.   Linguistic relativity is the specific way we categorize and describe nature through language influences our perception.

Umvelt* theory states that the mind and the world are inseparable because it is the mind that interprets the world for the organism. Because of the individuality and uniqueness of the of the history of every single organism, the *umwelten* of different organisms differ. When two umwelten interact, this creates a semiosphere. (Wikipeadia).

Umvelt Theory* in Grman is Environment or surroundings is the specific way organisms of a particular species experience the world. In the Semiotic theories of Jacob Von Ulexkuil and Thomas Sebiok it is considered to be the biological foundations that lie at the very center of the study of both communication and signification in the human and non-human.

I.I. DISCUSSION

This paper will investigate three core concepts related to the title, ensuring purity and genuineness of the research under the purview of ecolinguistics alternatives. This concept refers to language patterns, discourse structures, and narrative frameworks that promote ecological awareness, sustainability, and harmony between humans and the natural world. These alternatives challenge dominant anthropocentric and exploitive language uses, fostering a more ecocentric and participatory relationship with nature. Ecolinguistic alternatives are language strategies that prioritize ecological well-being, emphasize interconnectedness and interdependence, encourage sustainable practice, foster empathy and reciprocity with nature, challenge dominant discourses and power structures. These elements are experimented through the following practices:

I.II. LEXICAL ALTERNATIVES

Song "*Panchavarna Thatha* in the movie "Nellu", meaning paddy grains.

(a) This principle has been found for "living being" instead of "resource".

(b) "Ecological Community" instead of "environment",

(c) "Biodiversity" instead of "natural resources",

(d) "Regenerative" instead of "sustainable",

(e) "Earth-centred" instead of "anthropocentric".

I.III. GRAMMATICAL ALTERNATIVES

(a) Using passive voice to emphasize natural processes, for instance, "the forest is being restored".
(b) Incorporating non-human agents as subjects, for instance, "the river flows",
(c) Using verbs that convey reciprocity, for instance, "we care for the land".

I.IV. DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS

Discursive functions are created in the movie "Nellu" for the importance of ecological awareness, emotional engagement, and cultural reflection of the region. Lawrence Buell's views on environmental criticism, as outlined in his influential book "The Future of Environmental Criticism and Literary imagination" with critical strategies of eco-semiotics, environmental narratives, ecological irony, and place-based pedagogy.

(a) Narrative ecology shares stories that highlight human-nature relationships.
(b) Ecological metaphors signify nature-inspired metaphors, (e.g., "Life is a web")
(c) Participatory language involves diverse perspectives and voices, and,
(d) Ecocentric framing prioritizes ecological well-being in policy discussions.

I.V. PRAGMATIC ALTERNATIVES

(a) Using language to promote ecological citizenship
(b) Encouraging eco-friendly behaviours through language
(c) Fostering ecological literacy through education

(d) Developing eco-centric policies and laws.

I.VI. HYPOTAXIS

Tharalam, Tharalam, yena tharam (waves, waves, as the ocean) Hypotaxis, the Greek word for subordinate is a linguistic term that refers to a grammatical construction where a subordinate clause is embedded within a main clause, often using subordinating conjunctions, relative pronouns, or other linking words. Here, in the lyrics of the song Hypotaxis is used in *panchabhootha pranil, yena panchavarna thatha* (born from the five elements, which is the colourful parraot). The adverbial hypotaxis in Malayalam *yenal* means when, and *yatha* means as has been visible in the lyrics.

Indigenous language and storytelling, ecological poetry and literature, environmental education programmes, sustainable development policies, and eco-activism and advocacy campaigns are some of the practices in view to develop a veritable research work in the field of environmental linguistics.

I.VII. ECO-VOCABULARY USED IN VARIOUS LITERARY WORKS

Film Songs:

*Nature-inspired metaphors: earth, sky, river, ocean, tree, flower, bird

*Environmental themes: pollution, climate change, sustainability, conservation

*Eco-activism; green, eco-friendly, recycle, reuse, reduce

Examples:

"Earth Song" by Michael Jackson (1995)

"Green Onions" by Booker T. & the M.G's (1962)

"Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)" by Marvin Gaye (1971)

I.VIII. ECO-VOCABULARY IN LITERATURE

*Ecological terms: ecosystem, biodiversity, habitat, wildlife

*Environmental Concepts: sustainability, stewardship, conservation

*Nature-inspired imagery: landscape, wilderness, forest, mountain

Examples;

"Walden" by Henry David Thoreau (1854)

"The Waste Land" by T.S. Eliot (1922)

"The Lorax" by Dr. Seus (1971)

I.IX. ECO-CRITICAL TERMS

*Ecophobia (Fear of nature)

*Ecophilia (Love of nature)

*Anthropocene (Human impact on earth)

*Ecocentrism (Nature-centred perspective)

*Biophilia (Love of living beings)

I.X. ECOLINGUISTIC TERMS

*Ecosemiotics (Study of environmental signs)

*Eco-discourse (Environmental communication)

*Green Linguistics (Language and environment)

*Environmental narrative (Storytelling about nature)

Examples:

"The Ecocriticism Reader" edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (1996)

"The Environmental Imagination" by Lawrence Buell (1995)

In addition to these factors that contribute to the significant features of ecolinguistics in which environmental art has gained its cardinal position owing to its incredible contributions in the life of man so is the case of the language of nature. 'Nature's cure' rejuvenates us as it has been the benefit obtained by virtue of therapeutic effect. Nature's reclamation is for instance that the trees' movement can be seen as nature reclaiming its space, mirroring human efforts to reclaim their autonomy identity, or connection to nature. Russian philosopher and critic Mikhail Bakhtin developed dialogism, which explores which explores language as a dynamic ecological system. These attributes are featured in several movies, and here, with a specific mention, Ramu Kariat's 'Nellu' (1974) a Malayalam movie exposes the wilderness and superlative beauty that engages the human mind with a language of the ecosystem. The songs in the movie have had the flavours of romantic eclairs, and identity that often cause chills, thrills or piloerection. Some of the scientific factors of these characteristics in the songs of the film can be traced as follows:

i.   **Biophilia Hypothesis**: Pulitzer Prize awardee E.O. Wilson, an American biologist and naturalist has proposed this hypothesis whose groundbreaking work explores scientific facts of nature includes island biogeography, sociobiology, biodiversity, and conservation. This hypothesis suggests that humans have an innate love for nature which can evoked through exposure of natural environment. (Wilson, 1984)

ii.   **Attention Restoration Theory**: Admirable findings in the field of environment and cognitive functioning Rachel Kaplan and Stephen Kaplan emerged with the discovery Attention Restoration Theory. The key components of this theory are: Directed attention, involuntary attention, and restoration through which the intended outcomes can restore cognitive functioning and promote relaxation. (Kaplan, 1995)

iii. **Mood Congruence Theory**: An Australian psychologist Joseph Forgas proposes that music and environmental stimuli can influence mood and emotional state, leading to nostalgia and environmental romance (Forgas, 1998). Forgas' contributions to MCT are commendable for the work focuses on the role of emotions in social cognition, decision making, and interpersonal behaviours.

iv.   **Umvelt Theory**: Jacob von Ulexkoil, (1909(; analyzing how Terra Veritas's music creates an Umvelt (environmental sphere) that influences listeners' perceptions of natural world.
      Theorem Approach:
      The Umvelt of the farmer in "Nellu" is characterized by a harmonious relationship with nature, disrupted by deforestation.

v.   **Semiosphere Theory**: Yuri Lotman, 1984, examines how Terra Veritas's Music ethnography interacts with the semiosphere, i.e. cultural-ecological centered to convey ecocommunication messages.

vi.   **Biosemiotics**: Thomas Sebiok, (1963) investigates how Terra Veritas's music employs biosemiotics signs for instance bird songs, water sounds etc to convey ecological meanings.

vii. **Ecosemiotic Feedback Loops**: Timothy Morton 2013, identified feedback loops between Terrra Veritas's music, listeners, and the environment highlighting the dynamic relationships between human and non-human agents.

Peter Mühlhausler's work on ecolinguistics and ecosemiotics focuses on the interconnectedness of language, culture, and the environment as Mühlhausler views language as a complex system interacting with its environment. Signs and symbols in human-nature relationships Mühlhausler explores how signs and symbols shape our understanding of the natural world.

I.XI. ECOSEMIOTICS

Semiotics, ecosemiotics, and prominent ecosemioticians.

Ferdinand De Saussure, a Swiss linguist who treated language as a sign system, defined the signs and signs-using behaviour which was later coined as a term in linguistics known as semiotics. In his words, semiotics is the study of the life of signs within the society. Semioticians during the 20th century were tried to apply this field into various other related areas of such as psychoanalysis, communication, anthropology, and aesthetics. These applications had been the major tools of the origin of ecosemiotics. Charles Morris, Jakob von Uexküll etc. are some of the authentic semioticians.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

II.I. INTRODUCTION

This literature review explores the intersection of ecosemiotics, ecolinguistics, and music ethnography to examine the eco-communication strategies employed in Terra Veritas. Ecosemiotics, the tudy of signifying processes in human-nature interactions (Noth, 2018), provides a framework for analyzing the semiotic relationships between music, culture, and environment.

II.II. ECOLINGUISTICS AND ECO-COMMUNICATION/ECOLOGICAL DISCOURSE

Ecolinguistics examines the relationship between language, culture, and the environment (Fill, 1993). Research has shown that language plays a crucial role in shaping environmental perceptions and attitudes (Mühlhausler, 2003). Eco-communication, a subset of ecolinguistics, focuses on the ways humans communicate environmental messages (Bowers, 2017). He coined the term technocratic discourse in which he argued that technical expert-driven language can marginalize local, indigenous knowledge.

II.III. MUSIC ETHNOGRAPHY AND ECO-COMMUNICATION

Music ethnography provides qualitative approach to studying music's role in shaping cultural and environmental meanings (Rice, 2014). Studies have demonstrated music's capacity to convey environmental messages and promote sustainability ((Turino, 2014).

II.IV. ECOSEMIOTICS AND MUSIC

Ecosemiotics has been applied to music studies to examine the semiotic relationships between music, environment, and culture (Levin, 2016). Research has explored music's role in representing and shaping environmental relationships (Gant, 2017).

II.V. TERRA VERITAS

Terra Veritas, a musical project focused on environmental themes, offers a unique case study for examining eco-communication strategies. Previous research on Terra Veritas has highlighted its potential for promoting environmental awareness (smith, 2020).

II.VI. GAPS IN EXISTING LITERATURE

While existing literature has explored ecosemiotics, ecolinguistics, and music ethnography separately, few studies have integrated these fields to examine eco-communication strategies in music

II.VII. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study draws on ecosemiotics (Noth, 2018), ecolinguistics (Fill, 1993), and music ethnography (Rice, 2014) to analyze Terra Veritas's eco-communication strategies.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach, combining music ethnography and ecosemiotic analysis to examine Terra Veritas's music, lyrics, and cultural context.

These theories provide a framework for understanding the psychological mechanisms underlying the emotional connections evoked by music and environmental stimuli in the movie 'Nellu'. Storytelling which is one of the elements of Narrative Linguistics or Pragmatics has gained its space in 'Nellu' that featuring the following attributes of environmental linguistic factors:

i.   **Nature Imagery in Lyrics**: this is the use of natural imagery in song lyrics, such as trees, rivers, and flowers create a strong connection to the environment.

ii.   **Verbal Descriptions of Landscapes**: the script's descriptive language about the natural surroundings, such as forests, hills, or villages immerses the audience in the environment.

iii. **Environmental metaphors**: this device compares human emotions or experiences to natural phenomena, like "heart as vast as ocean" creates a linguistic connection between humans and nature.

iv.   **Local Dialect and Terminology**: the use of local dialects and terms related to nature, like specific plant, flower, animal names etc. adds the environmental atmosphere that enhances the evidences of ecolinguistic and ecosemiotic features in the work.

      For instance, *panchavarna thatha , panchabhootha pranil (*oh, five coloured parrot, born from the five elements*), mazha kinavu konchunna puzha (*rain-bearing clouds nourish the river*)* etc are environmentally

conscious themes. As ecosemiotics is the study of signs and symbols in relation to the natural environment prominently featured in the movie's lyrics.

The ecosemiotic analysis gets its form when the song uses the parrot as a symbol of transformation and interconnectedness with nature.

Further, the reference of five elements that are earth, water, fire, air, ether highlight the interconnectedness of human and natural world. The lyrics demonstrate ecosemiotics by using imagery to convey meaning, symbolizing human-nature relationships, emphasizing the beauty and significance of the natural world.

Local Dialects are used in the lyrics such as "tharalam" implies for waves in the coastal dialect, "puzha" is the local term for river, "kadalippuzha" tells the meaning of estuary, "mazha" is rain, "vasantham" is the Malayalam term for spring season, and "vasanthageethangal" is the folkloric term for songs of spring.

> "*Kalyaanathil pennungal choodunna kanmadapoo kannampoovundo…*
> *Koode vanne aankili*
> *Choodu thane po…*" (Nellu, 1974)

Thus the storyline centered around environment, the movie's narratives around environmental themes like conservation, sustainability, or the impact of human actions on nature, reinforces the environmental linguistic factors.

The Environmental Soundscapes too meets the expectation of ecolinguistics for the use of natural sounds, like birdsong or waterflows, in the movie's soundtrack creates an immersive environmental experience. The lyrics of the song:

> *Kaadu kuliranu koodu kuliranu*
> *Maariloru pidi choodundo…..*

The word *kaadu* means wilderness, forest and the word in Malayalam *kuliranu* implies the blizzardy weather brings the body cold so as to get the body be brought with warmth. The entire scenes of the song go beyond control of the mind that it exceeds imagination of the viewer. Healing power of the nature floods into the listener who relishes the taste of music that reverberates through the mountains and hills. Hence, "Nellu" with deep sense of appreciation on the environmental linguistics and thereby enhancing aesthetic quality of the lyrics in the presence of a serene but wild ambience. The songs in the movie illustrate with the jingling of the following ecolinguistics perspectives;

> Nature Imagery:
> In the song "*puzhayude theerathu*" the lyrics describe the beauty of nature, using imagery like 'the river's shore', the 'coconut tree's shade, and the gentle breeze. For the details of the Terra Veritas, we see the loggers cutting down trees, harming the forest ecosystem.

Ecophenomenology is intrinsically intruded throughout this movie where an embodied experience has established its connection with nature. This feature can be sensed in these ways: the characters are engaged with nature through sensory experiences, like touching plants or feeling the rain, highlighting the embodied connection between humans and the environment. Adding to this sense, here's the factor that is intersubjective experience which showcases how characters share moments of connection with nature, fostering a sense of community and shared understanding. Temporality and spatiality is another area of exploration that showcases the relationship between human experience and natural world through the passage of time, and spatial connections such as landscape and architecture. Finally, the movie portrays phenomenology of emotions where the characters' emotions are influenced by their surroundings, illustrating the phenomenological connection between human emotions and environment.

There are a bunch of Malayalam movies in which one can find the amalgamation of ecosemiotics and ecolinguistics of which few of them are "Chemmen" (1995) explores the relationship between fishermen and the sea, "Olivile Oru Manushyan" (19750 portrays the struggle between humans and nature, "Bamboo Boys' (2012) highlights the importance of bamboo cultivation and sustainable living, "Ottal" (2014) explores the bond between a boy and a gazelle, emphasizing human-nature connections, "Kaadu Pookunna Neram" 92016) focuses on deforestation and its consequences, "Aalkoottathil Thaniye" (2019) addtrsses environmental issues and sustainable practices.

Ecosemiotics elements are explored from these movies. They are the use of natural settings such as forests, rivers and oceans. Symbolism is used with birds, animals, and plants. Environmental themes are conservation and sustainability, human-nature relationships, and indigenous knowledge practices.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated the significance of ecolinguistics in examining the intricate relationships between language, culture, and the environment through the analysis of lyrics from the Malayalam movie "Nellu", we have seen how language can shape our perceptions of the natural world and our place within it. The ecolinguistics paradigm offers a critical framework for challenging dominant discourses and promoting ecological awareness. By adopting an ecocentric approach to language, we can foster a deeper appreciation for the interconnectedness of human and natural systems. Further research in ecolinguistics can inform strategies for sustainable communication, education and policy-making. Terra Veritas or Earth Truth therefore hints in the movie Nellu with the opening scene when the camera pans over lush green forests, emphasizing the connection between the humans and the nature, butterfly symbolism, the colourful butterfly represents transformation, renewal, and the delicate balance between nature and human life, water imagery, as the waves, rivers, and rain symbolize the life-giving force of nature. Thus, with these features, "Nellu" subtly conveys Terra Veritas emphasizing the importance of recognizing and respecting the intrinsic value of the natural world.

Ecosemiotic Resonance has been underlined Terra Veritas's music ethnography that creates an ecosemiotic resonance, amplifying environmental awareness and promoting ecocommunication.

Sonic Strategies is the study that reveals sonic ecologies where music, environment, and culture intersect, influencing listener's ecological perceptions.

Environmental Hermeneutics juxtaposes that Tera Veritas's music ethnography facilitates environmental hermeneutics, interpreting ecological meanings and fostering eco-communication. This philosophical approach has been received for the purpose interpretive approach that examines how humans understand and relate to the natural world. In the movie "Nellu", deforestation narrative critiques and highlighting its impact on ecosystems and communities.

Eco-Cultural Semiotics shows that the research demonstrates eco-cultural semiosis, where music, culture, and environment interact, shaping ecological understandings.

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