



Representation of Animals in Urdu proverbs: An Ecolinguistic study of Grade 9th Urdu Grammar book Punjab Curriculum 2025 Edition

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: Ecolinguistics; Urdu proverbs; Animal representation; Punjab textbook (Class 9); Anthropocentrism; Speciesism; Environmental ethics; Ecocentric education</p>	<p>This paper explores how animals are represented in Urdu proverbs that are taught in the Class 9 Urdu Grammar Book (2025 edition) of the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board by applying the theoretical model of ecolinguistics. The study will be based on the framework of the stories we live by of Arran Stibbe (2015) because it will focus on how the animal-related proverbs in an official educational text create cultural, moral, and ecological meanings to learners in their secondary level in Pakistan. The systematical identification and analysis of twelve animal-related proverbs based on patterns of ideology, framing, identity construction, evaluation, and erasure were carried out under the qualitative descriptive research design. The results can be summarized as the fact that animals are portrayed anthropocentrically, primarily as metaphorical ways of moralizing human behaviour and rarely as living creatures with their own value and ecological functions. Unfavourable representations are also prevalent with domestic, culturally unpopular animals such as the donkey, owl, jackal and sheep whereas positive qualities are mainly applied to strong predators such as the lion. These images strengthen racist and speciesist world views and hide the ecological roles and agency of animals. The analysis also shows that the proverbs are passing along culturally determined stereotypes and not ecologically informed views, thus harshly restricting the possibilities of cultivating empathy, interdependence and ecological responsibility in the minds of the learners. The paper draws the conclusion that although Urdu proverbs are an important resource in terms of cultural and pedagogical importance, their unquestioning use in the textbooks can lead to the continuation of the ecologically destructive narratives. It claims that to have an ecologically conscious curriculum design, either a critical contextualization of traditional proverbs or an ecocentric representation to complement them is</p>
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necessary to suit language education with the more broad objectives of environmental ethics and environmental sustainability.

Introduction

Language can be considered as one of the most effective and convincing tools with the help of which communities describe traditional practices, social beliefs, cultural practices and human relations with nature. Specifically, proverbs can be viewed as compact versions of wisdom as a whole, influencing the ways of thinking and supporting cultural standards (Mieder, 2004). Despite this, although, animals are more commonly used as symbolic characters in proverbs, and tend to portray human characteristics of being brave, cunning, loyal, or stupid in cultural diversity. Such symbolic relations do not only emphasize human perception of animals but also embody more general ecological worldviews (Fill and Penz, 2018). Proverbs is an important part of daily conversation in Pakistan, where Urdu is lingua franca and used as a medium of instruction, and still continue to influence the ways of conceptualizing the surrounding world.

Although Ecolinguistics is an emerging interdisciplinary discipline that investigates the relationship between the human language and the natural surrounding and the ways in which it affects, reflects and may change the human relations. It doubts and frustrates anthropocentric beliefs that assume humans as the center of the meaning-making and rather emphasize on the interdependence of all living beings. In this context, language is not a neutral tool but an ecological force that may enhance or kill environmental harmony. Therefore, analyzing the proverbial language using ecolinguistic approach can enable scholars to find the way in which the linguistic expressions form some social, moral and ecological decisions in the community where they are said.

The research examine the ecolinguistic manifestations of animals in the Urdu proverbs in the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board Class 9 Urdu Grammar book, (2025 edition. The paper focuses on the linguistic construction of animals in educational sphere and what kind of values these constructions incorporate, using the ecolinguistic framework of the stories we live by, created by Arran Stibbe (Stibbe, 2015). Textbooks are important in passing the language, culture, and morals to the younger generations. Furthermore, the emergence of animal related proverbs in them is also an important prism with which the meeting point of language, ecology and pedagogy can be examined. This will preempt the symbolic use of animals in cultural discourse and at the same time assess whether such depiction promote ecological stewardship or propagate anthropocentric and destructive attitudes to the non-human world.

The Pakistani educational environment does not focus on textbooks as a means of instructional effectiveness but cultural dissemination and moral education. This is because the proverbs taught in Urdu textbooks are able to enable the students to revisit the firmly held cultural ideologies and inherited wisdom which helps them to form their worldview. Through the study of the representation of animals in these proverbs, researchers can be able to tell a lot about ethical orientations being imparted on students as regards to animals and the environment. The 2025 version of the Punjab Curriculum Class 9 Urdu textbook is both important and worthy of attention as it is in line with the new curricular changes that emphasizes on moral, environmental and civic education therefore, it can be a valuable source of ecolinguistic investigation.

The primary goal of the research is to find, retrieve, and interpret all the animal-related proverbs that were published in the Class 9 Urdu grammar book published by the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board in 2025. Specifically, the research objectives are to identify, extract, and analyze

the animal-related proverbs that were used in the book and evaluate whether they are positive, negative, or neutral representations of the cultural values and human attitudes toward the animals. In turn, the paper explores the mediation of the traditional ecological views through formal educational text.

Specifically to the Urdu speaking region, the culture of animals in South Asia has been used as a carrier of semiotic messages of moral and social teachings. Courage, authority and bravery is represented by the lion, cunning and deception by the fox, ignorance or stubbornness is commonly represented by the donkey. These patterns-symbolism are not accidental, rather, the result of the centuries of experience, religious and folkloric impact and oral narratives which molded the consciousness of society. By identifying these recurring animal metaphors in discourse in education, the study aims to point out the cultural logic that underpins the way the natural world is taught to students in Pakistan, as a community of coexisting entities or as a hierarchical context of human dominance.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How animals are represented in the Urdu proverbs included in the Class 9 Urdu textbook (2025 edition)?
2. Are these representations inclined to be positive, negative, or neutral?
3. What cultural values and human attitudes toward animals do these proverbs indicate, particularly with regards to ecological relationships?

Although the field of ecolinguistics has come to serve various contemporary discourses, including media, advertisement, and literature, more traditional varieties of language are underresearched, particularly in South Asia (Ansari, 2021). The majority of current works on Urdu proverbs consider them as linguistic or folkloric phenomena (Chitrali, 2018), without paying much attention to their ecological consequences. In addition, school curriculums and how they influence ecological and cultural attitudes have not been thoroughly studied in the context of representing animals. The gap this research addresses is the analysis of the proverbs offered in one of the most popular educational books, the Punjab Curriculum Class 9 Urdu textbook (2025 edition). In this way, it is possible to emphasize the role of institutionalized language resources that contribute to the formation of cultural perceptions of animals and the environment in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Research on language as a cultural, social, and ideological system has become increasingly popular over the last couple of decades, especially as the study of ecolinguistics has become popular and the study of how linguistic actions produce human relations with nature has gained prominence. The proverbs which are mostly looked upon as repositories of collective wisdom condensed in brief, provide a unique platform through which one can study the manner in which ecological orientations and cultural ideologies take root in the realm of ordinary discourse. Their allegorical and allegorical use of animals gives us an understanding of the underlying cultural accounts that inform human beliefs about the non-human species. This review of the literature covers key scholarly interests that are pertinent to the current research, such as the study of proverbs as cultural productions, the symbolic presence of animals in language use, the ecolinguistic theory and the second article by Arran Stibbe discussing the stories we live by, the ideology of textbook speech in ecological and cultural world construction. The compilation of these strands of scholarship would form the basis of discussing how the animal-proverbs in the 2025 Punjab Curriculum Class 9 book covering the Urdu grammar area bring about ecological and cultural meaning-making in Pakistan.

Proverbs have been well known as the examples of persuasive communicative resources that summarize common experiences and social knowledge. This powerful definition advanced by Meidler (2004) highlights that the proverbs are the heritage of a culture, and represent the communal values in a way that is catchy and metaphorical. Since they are common to all generations, proverbs retain their power in the discourse and keep on dictating the moral reasoning, behaviour expectations and social meanings. Honeck (2013) and Sherzer (1998) claim that proverbs have a cognitive and ideological influence, using figurative imagery, and build how people perceive social roles, construct identities, and judge events. They are not just applicable in normal communication, but also in more formal sectors like the role of teaching comprehension, cultural literacy, and moral reasoning in education.

The use of animals in proverbs is the symbol of the ancient culture and the relations of observation of the connections between the ecology. The conceptual metaphor theory by Lakoff and Turner (1989) states that the metaphorical parallels between the animal world and human behaviour are based on culturally shared cognitive model that is based on the environmental experience. Through these mappings communities can project perceived attributes of animals into human social categories thus making abstract moral lessons understandable. Animals like lions, foxes, donkeys, crows, and snakes have been given symbolic interpretations across different cultures that reveal biological attributes as well as the imaginative story telling. These associations in South Asia are heavily entrenched in the folklore, literature, religious narratives and oral traditions. The lion was traditionally represented as a symbol of power, control, and royalty; the fox as cunning, or deceptive; and the donkey as obstinate, ignorant or heavy-handed. Such associations are caused by the centuries of ecological interaction and by the culture of value systems projected on non-human species.

Animal symbolism in scholarly literature proves that these metaphorical formulas are not accidental, but they signify deep ecological and cultural logic. Rizvi (2015) considers the South Asian metaphorical traditions of animals to reflect the history of the region in terms of its relationships with domesticated and wild animals, agriculture, and socio-religious stories. This kind of symbolism, once encoded into proverbs, strengthens group understanding of animals which can affect the language behaviour as well as the ecological mindset. Burgess (2019) points out that negative animal metaphors may promote speciesism, by making disrespect to certain species seem natural, but Goatly (2006) points out that metaphorical language is an important source of symbolic domination of nature. Such recurrent negative depiction of specific animals in proverbs can therefore support undesirable ecological discourses which promote hierarchical human animal interactions.

Ecolinguistics offers a methodological system to analyze how these forms of linguistic animalizations alter the ecological perceptions of the world. It began as an ecological metaphor by Haugen (1972), but has since evolved to form a multidisciplinary field that is interested in the interaction of language, the environment, and the society. Subsequent scholarship further developed an ecolinguistic orientation toward critical orientation, exploring how linguistic structures contribute to ecological wellbeing or reinforce the pernicious ideologies. One of the modern concepts, such as the stories we live by framework developed by Stibbe (2015), has been the focus of attention of discourse in connection to the transmission of ecological values and the predisposition of human behaviour towards nature.

Stibbe argues that cultures are based on unofficial narrative frameworks of stories that shape perceptions and behavior. These tales are realized by the use of different linguistic features, which include framing, metaphor, identity building, judgments, ideologies, salience and erasure.

Framing also defines the nature of features of animals that will be brought out or concealed and this also affects the way speakers will value or regard the animals as having agency. Anthropocentrism can be normalized, and it is embedded in ideologies inherent in language and it places humans in a superior position over other species and normalizes exploitative behaviors. Metaphors may create empathies with non-human beings or continue to espouse stereotypical dehumanizing metaphors that alienate humanity to the ecological accountability. Erasure happens when language hides ecological facts or devalues the intrinsic value of animals, and only shows them as a symbol or a metaphor, and does not recognize them as living beings. The framework of Stibbe has been extensively used in contemporary discourses, though, the old forms like proverbs, have not been researched much, especially in South Asian linguistic context. The fact that there is very little use of ecolinguistics in relation to the South Asian cultural expressions is a gap in scholarship. According to Ansari (2021), indigenous ecological knowledge contained in the forms of traditional language, such as proverbs, riddles, and folk narratives, need to be studied systematically by the ecolinguistic method. These representations carry the ecological wisdom of the community over time, but might also continue to reproduce old-fashioned or anthropocentric ways of representing nature. As proverbs of the Urdu language, due to their cultural dominance and the rate of use in educational settings, provide useful information about Pakistani ecological worldviews that have not been researched enough.

The pedagogical topicality of the proverbs analysis is even stronger once one refers to the power of educational textbooks to form social and ecological consciousness. Professionals like Apple (1992) and Fairclough (2001) have argued that textbooks are ideological tools that create cultural norms, moral values and national identities. They are not objective collections of knowledge but rather selective collections that represent the interests of curriculum writers and the state institutions. The representations that are contained in textbooks as the students engage with them on a regular basis contribute a lot to their development of attitudes, beliefs and even the worldviews.

The textbook enjoys a rather authoritative role in the education of Pakistan, as it is the major or sometimes the only teaching resource in state-funded schools. The research on Pakistani textbooks, such as Naseem and Sturrs (2015), shows that the concepts of cultural values, moral, and ideological content are often integrated into narratives, poetry, and proverbs. Environmental worldviews, though being represented in the curricula more and more, are usually presented in an informal manner as opposed to being taught in a direct ecological way. Proverbs which are part of the passages of comprehension or moral lessons play an important role in the passing of the cultural texts about the nature and animals.

The interdependence of the animal representation, cultural ideology and educational discourse implies that the representation of animals in Urdu proverbs is not only a language issue but an environmental as well as an ethical issue. Critical animal studies focus on the fact that language plays a major role in the ways in which societies rationalize exploitation, non-attachment, or stewardship of non-human species. DeMello (2012) points out the fact that animals in language are depicted in hierarchies that support human superiority and legitimization of unequal relations. The arguments presented by Taylor and Twine (2014) are also based on the fact that negative animal metaphors can justify violence or neglect by presenting some species as being foolish, dangerous, or inferior. These trends are particularly strong in South Asian situations because of the lengthy cultural customs whereby animals receive different moral and symbolic value. The Urdu proverbs offer a peephole into such cultural value systems and how they can affect ecological orientations of learners.

The summary of the available literature indicates that proverbs are effective carriers of cultural knowledge and animal symbolism is firmly embedded in the South Asian cultural specifics, but the ecological aspects of these images are not well-researched. Ecolinguistics offers a solid space to determine the appropriateness of cultural narratives encoded in proverbs to promote ecological harmony or strengthen anthropocentric cultures. Nonetheless, there is a dearth of research using ecolinguistic analysis to apply to traditional forms of linguistics in Pakistan and less literature has been conducted on textbook discourse using this approach. This gap in the research indicates that the role of educational resources, in particular, Urdu proverbs in textbooks, in forming the attitudes of students towards animals and ecological relationships should be investigated.

The current research would fill these gaps by looking at how animals are represented in the Urdu proverbs of the Punjab Curriculum Class 9 Urdu grammar (2025 edition) using the Stibbe-style framework of stories we live by. The study will determine the ecological narratives behind the official educational discourse by finding out the animals shown, the analysis of whether they are shown to be positive, negative, or neutral, and the interpretation of the cultural values underpinning the depictions. This kind of inquiry helps in revealing the role of language resources that are culturally passed on in helping the learners in conceptualizing the natural world and also in identifying the bigger purpose of the educational institutions in the development of ecological consciousness in Pakistan.

Research Methodology

The methodological design of the study is informed by the aim of studying what the Urdu proverbs that feature animals in the Punjab Curriculum Textbook Board (PCTB) Class 9 Urdu grammar (2025 edition) represent. The methodology of the study is a qualitative descriptive research with a discourse-analytical paradigm based on the ecolinguistic theory. This will enable a perspective of the symbolic and ideological constructions within the chosen proverbs to be considered in a more detailed and contextually justified way and corresponds to the theoretical directive of the stories we live by frame introduced by Stibbe (2015).

3.1 Research Design

The qualitative descriptive research design was embraced since it was effective in close examination of linguistic forms, cultural symbolism and ecological ideologies as they manifest in data of naturally occurring data. Since the objective of the study is to define and analyze the images, depictions of animals in Urdu proverbs, the qualitative analysis will give the density to analyze the processes of making meanings, contextual associations, and cultural interpretations. The design does not provide unyielding classification other than the analytical provisions of the framework adopted thus it was applicable in order to identify emergent patterns and subtle meanings in the data.

3.2 Data Source and Selection

This study draws its main and only source of data on the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board Class 9 Urdu grammar (2025 edition). This textbook has been chosen due to its officiality, distribution throughout the country, and its impact in pedagogy. Since grammar books in Pakistan are more often commonly used as primary sources of knowledge and cultural education, linguistic representations implied in them also directly influence the worldview of students and their moral orientations.

The grammar book was read systematically with the aim of establishing all the proverbs that make reference to animals either directly or indirectly. Only things known in the Urdu cultural tradition as proverbs (zarbul amsal) were taken into consideration. The non-proverbial allusions

to animals (e.g. descriptive narrative material) were excluded to keep the analytical attention and guarantee the coherence of the dataset.

The proverbs that passed the inclusion criteria were put together in a set of data and categorized based on the type of animal mentioned. The immediate text of each proverb like the location in a lesson or a commentary on the proverb was observed as contributing to a more fruitful interpretative discussion.

3.3 Analytical Procedure

This was analyzed using the principles of the ecolinguistic framework of Stibbe (2015) which offers a systematic means of revealing the ecological narratives in the discourse. The analysis process was carried out in a number of steps.

The initial phase was to analyze the ideologies that were inherent in the proverbs. This move aimed at uncovering the cultural belief systems behind the linguistic constructions like anthropocentric assumptions or ecocentric orientations. Religions of repeated images were found to establish the cultural placement of specific animals.

The second phase was devoted to framing where the manner in which every animal is depicted in the proverb was analyzed. This involved the evaluation of which attributes are being emphasized on, the construction of metaphors and the roles of animals in the cultural story. The framing analysis assists in establishing the way in which the learners can construct the meaning of the animals depicted.

The third step utilized the theory of identity construction where proverbs discursively make animals up in terms of symbolic roles of wise, cunning, stubborn, loyal, or foolish. These created identities present larger cultural narratives that condition the conceptualization of the natural world. The fourth phase focused on analysis, as the moral or the affective position was determined in the proverbs. Because the functions of the proverbs are educative, the evaluative orientations are vital when gauging how representations of animals can provide respectful, dismissive or ambivalent ecological attitudes.

The last analytical step was concerned with the erasure, whether proverbs hide the ecological and biological truth of animals, whether they are reduced to metaphorical tools only. The application of erasure helps to recognize some cases of the neglect of inherent value or ecological agency of animals and thus denotes possible support of anthropocentric notions. These phases systematically examined how animal-related proverbs form ecological narratives and how the formations can transform the views of students towards the natural world. The data was read and re-read so that the interpretation should be consistent and cross-reference was made with available literature on Urdu proverbial traditions. The transcription, categorization and interpretation were all done with accuracy. Though there are no human subjects in the research, the academic integrity of the research was observed by ensuring that the textbook material and the theoretical framework used to conduct the analysis has been accurately represented.

The methodology reflects a qualitative descriptive analysis that combines with the ecolinguistic theory to discuss how the animal-related proverbs in a popular Urdu textbook create ecological and cultural meanings. The methodology offers a stringent yet theoretically knowledgeable means to answer questions of the research in the study and contribute to the overall literature in the field of ecolinguistics and English discourse analysis by selecting, arranging and scrutinizing the proverbs systematically using Stibbe and stories we live by framework.

Theoretical Framework: His recent research is supported by the theoretical orientation of the ecolinguistics with the specific focus on the framework of the stories we live by developed by

Arran Stibbe (2015). Ecolinguistics as an interdisciplinary approach is the study of language not as a purely social system but as somewhat of an ecological force which determines and expresses the human relationship with the natural world. The discipline developed out of an ecological metaphor of language-in-environment developed by Haugen (1972) has developed into a critical field that challenges the way linguistic practices produce ecological identities, ideologies, and relationships. It is against this wider theoretical background that Stibbe has made his own contribution in theorizing discourse as a site of implicit narratives, that is, stories, which shape human cognition of non-human species and inform ecological behaviour.

Stibbe claims that cultures reproduce themselves by sending repetitive linguistic patterns that encultivate common values, moral orientations and ecological assumptions. These narratives can either promote ecological stewardship or, on the other hand, justify the attitude of destructionism and anthropocentrism, subjugation and apathy. The fact that proverbs are culturally authoritative forms of traditional wisdom means that they are major contributors to the reproduction of such stories. Their symbolic representations are based on the culturally accepted symbolic associations and help in the ideological framing of the non-human world. Proverbs, which use statements to ascribe negative traits to specific animals or turn them into metaphors to describe negative human behaviours, reinforce negative ecological orientations. On the other hand, the positive images can also propagate the tales of respect, kinship, and coexistence.

This is especially relevant to the application of the theoretical framework of Stibbe to the Urdu proverbs because in the Pakistani context, the convergence of cultural values, religious traditions and ecological knowledge is complex. Urdu proverbs tend to rely heavily on the strongly held cultural associations which have been influenced over centuries through ecological contact, oral tradition and moral education. The study of these proverbs considering the perspective of ecolinguistics enables the analysis to question the concept of whether the cultural tales contained within these proverbs foster ecological harmony or the reproduction of anthropocentric values. This theoretical foundation is what allows one to understand the symbolic constructions that animals have in the educational field and how such constructions can help form ecological perceptions about the world as understood by the learners.

Data Analysis

This chapter is an in-depth ecolinguistic analysis of the proverbs in the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (Class 9 Urdu Grammar Book 2025 Edition) relating to animal as identified in ecolinguistics. Based on the stories we live by framework suggested by Arran Stibbe (2015), the review evaluates the framing, judgment, and positioning of animal in discourse, and how these discursive renditions add to culture and ecological worldviews passed on to Grade 9 learners.

Twelve proverbs that involve animals that were common to all were examined, which included the lion, fox, donkey, wolf, owl, sheep, dog and cat. Such proverbs contain ancient traditions of symbolic proverbs that have long been a part of the Urdu linguistic culture, and many can be found in textbooks, exercises, examples or commentaries to the grammar unit. All the proverbs were examined in terms of ideology, framing, identity construction, evaluation, and erasure.

4.1 Patterns of Animal Representation in the Dataset

The proverbs collected fall into three major representational patterns:

1. Positive Representations

Mostly associated with powerful or admired animals (e.g., lion, horse).

Example proverbs:

”شیر کی ایک دن کی زندگی گیڑ کی سو سالہ زندگی سے بہتر ہے“
(One day of a lion's life is better than a jackal's hundred years.)

2. Negative Representations

Most frequently attributed to weaker or culturally disfavoured animals (donkey, fox, owl, jackal, wolf).

Examples:

”ہا پٹ کا اللو“ (Foolish person)
”بے رہنا گھا بی گھا“ (A donkey remains a donkey)
”لومڑی الک“ (The cunning fox)

3. Neutral Contextual Representations

Used to describe collective social behaviour.

Examples:

”ال بیڑ“ (Sheep-like herd mentality)
”تیڑھی کی تیڑھی ندم کی کتے“ (The dog's tail remains crooked)

4.2 Ideologies Embedded in the Proverbs

4.2.1 Anthropocentric Ideology

Most proverbs project animal identities only to comment on human behaviour. Animals serve merely as metaphoric tools for human moralizing.

For example:

- The donkey is equated with stupidity (“گھا” used pejoratively).
- The owl symbolizes misfortune or foolishness (“لو”), contradicting ecological reality where owls are crucial predators.

This reinforces what Stibbe calls ideologies of domination, where humans assign hierarchical worth to species and use language to justify symbolic degradation.

4.2.2 Heroic-Predator Ideology

The lion (“شیر”) is consistently glorified:

- bravery
- masculinity
- leadership
- honour

This ideological trend glorifies predators and diminishes smaller or weaker species, which makes the culture of egotism the norm in the natural world.

4.2.3 Social-Moral Ideology

There are numerous communal anticipations in the many proverbs:

- avoiding deception (fox)
- avoiding cowardice (jackal)
- avoiding blind imitation (sheep)

These sayings invoke animals to cement the moral order of human society- once more animals are symbolic moral objects and not ecological creatures.

4.3 Framing of Animals

4.3.1 The Lion (Shér) – Framed as Noble and Superior

Example:

شیر کی ایک دن کی زندگی ...

The lion is enclosed in heroic characteristic like bravery and respect. This frame triggers admiration and also strengthens an anthropocentric hierarchy, with one species, as being morally superior.

4.3.2 The Fox (Lomri) – Framed as Deceptive

Example:

لومڑی کی الکی

This frame previews trickery, and wipes out ecological qualities such as adaptation and intelligence to survive.

4.3.3 The Donkey (Gadha) – Framed as Foolish or Worthless

Examples:

گھا بی گھا ربتا بے

گھے سے بائیں

The donkey is constantly positioned as stupid, which decreases a household working creature to stupidity.

4.3.4 The Owl (Ullu) – Framed as Bad Omen

Example:

الو کا پٹا

Owls are predators that are ecologically positive, however, they are positioned negatively because of the cultural superstitions. It is an effective demonstration of an ecologically damaging discourse.

4.3.5 Sheep (Bhed) – Framed as Passive Followers

Example:

بیڑ ال

The sheep is framed as lacking agency, reinforcing the story that conformity is negative. Ecologically, sheep are grazing animals with complex social structures—yet such realities are erased.

4.4 Identity Construction: How Animals Are “Made” in Proverbs

Stibbe's identity construction examines how language creates what animals represent.

Animal	Constructed Identity in Proverbs	Ecological Accuracy
Lion	Brave, honourable, superior	Partially symbolic; real lions are social apex predators
Jackal	Coward, weak	Jackals are strategic, cooperative hunters
Donkey	Foolish, ignorant	Donkeys are intelligent, patient animals
Owl	Foolish, cursed	Ecologically valuable pest controllers

Animal	Constructed Identity in Proverbs	Ecological Accuracy
Fox	Deceptive	Foxes show adaptive intelligence
Sheep	Mindless followers	Real sheep demonstrate group intelligence

Conclusion:

Most constructed identities are culturally fixed, not ecologically informed.

4.5 Evaluation: Moral Judgements Embedded in the Proverbs

4.5.1 Negative Evaluations Dominate

Many animals are evaluated pejoratively:

- donkey = stupidity
- owl = misfortune
- jackal = cowardice
- dog = crooked, unreliable (“دم کی کھٹکی...”)

Such evaluations naturalize disrespect toward certain species.

4.5.2 Positive Evaluations Are Reserved for “Powerful” Animals

Only predator species, lion and sometimes the horse, receive positive evaluation, reinforcing a hierarchical view of nature.

4.5.3 Mixed Evaluations

Certain proverbs show neutral social observations:

- sheep = conformity
 - cat = opportunism (“بلی دیکھ کر اوپرے کی دوڑ”) (”بُلی دیکھ کر اوپرے کی دوڑ“)

These evaluations still treat animals instrumentally rather than ecologically.

4.6 Erasure: What Is Omitted?

This is the strongest ecological finding.

4.6.1 Erasure of Ecological Roles

None of the proverbs acknowledge:

- animals' intrinsic worth
- their ecological functions
- biological characteristics
- environmental interdependence

For example:

- Owls are crucial rodent controllers but are linguistically constructed as foolish.
- Donkeys are essential working animals yet erased to a symbol of stupidity.
- Jackals maintain ecological balance by scavenging but are reduced to cowards.
-

4.6.2 Erasure of Animal Agency

Animals do not appear as living beings with needs, roles, or value.

They appear solely as tools for human moral lessons.

4.6.3 Erasure of Compassion and Environmental Ethics

None of the textbook examples promote:

- empathy for animals
- biodiversity awareness
- conservation values

This contradicts the ecological goals of the new curriculum reforms mentioned in your introduction.

4.7 Summary of Key Analytical Findings

1. Animal representation is predominantly negative, especially for domestic or smaller animals.
2. Anthropocentric ideology dominates, using animals as metaphors for human morality.
3. Framing reinforces cultural stereotypes rather than ecological truths.
4. Identity construction is symbolic, not biological or ecological.
5. Evaluations contribute to species hierarchy to a great extent, making predators more glorious and others less glorious.
6. The most evident of patterns is erasure, which suppresses actual ecological functions and ethical aspects of animals.
7. The textbook imparts upon students indirectly to perceive animals in the cultural stereotype rather than in ecological knowledge.

4.8 Overall Interpretation

The results show that the animal related proverbs contained in the Class 9 Urdu Grammar Book are also reproduction of deeply rooted cultural anecdotes as opposed to facilitating ecological awareness. These stories emphasize:

- human superiority
- moralizing metaphors
- species hierarchy
- symbolic stereotypes

Although these proverbs are rich in culture, there is a danger that they spread ecologically negative stories to young students. Based on the ecolinguistic principles, these stories do not promote environmental wellbeing (Stibbe). In lieu of this, they promote the use of animals as objects that can be compared by humans and not as sentient creatures that are part of the ecosystem.

Therefore, despite the pedagogical and cultural role of proverbs, the ecolinguistic analysis is pointing to the possibility of more ecocentric, empathetic and scientifically informed illustrations of animals in future textbooks to sustain the wider Pakistan environmental education aims.

CONCLUSION

This paper reviewed how animals are represented in Urdu proverbs in the 2025 edition of Class 9 Urdu Grammar Book of the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board with reference to the theoretical framework of ecolinguistics provided by Arran Stibbe (2015) in his books titled *The stories we live by*. Through the proverb of animals in one of the official books, the study aimed

to identify cultural, ideological, and ecological discourse that was passed on to the secondary-level students in Pakistan.

The results are that the representations of animals in the chosen textbook are mostly anthropocentric in character. Animals are majorly used as symbolic tools to criticize human morality, behaviour and social norm instead of being recognized as living beings with ecological functions and intrinsic worth. Negative images especially occur in domesticated or culturally unpopular animals like the donkey, owl, jackal and sheep whereas positive characteristics are mostly attributed to mighty predators like the lion. This trend supports a hierarchical perception of nature where value is accorded based on perceived utility, power or symbolic status.

The study has shown using the analytical categories of ideology, framing, identity construction, evaluation and erasure of the Stibbe analysis that such proverbs propagate the culturally entrenched stereotypes instead of ecologically informed interpretations. Framing is selective to bring out some features and override the realities of biology to erase the ecological roles, agency and sentience of animals. The constant pejorative metaphors make the disrespect to certain species natural, and they may lead to a normalization of the attitude towards speciesism among the learners. Notably, all examined proverbs do not encourage empathy, interdependence, or environmental responsibility, which are the key principles of the modern ecological education.

The paper also demonstrates that educational textbooks are effective as instruments of ideology. The institutionalization of culturally inherited proverbs, which are not put into perspective in context, further supports anthropocentric worldviews, which do not align with the said objectives of moral, civic, and environmental education reforms. Although proverbs have a cultural and pedagogical worth that cannot be disputed, their blind acceptance can continue the ecologically damaging narratives that can ingrain students with the knowledge about the natural world in constraining manner.

This study is relevant to the existing expansion of ecolinguistic studies because it extends the study to traditional linguistic practices in a South Asian educational setting- a region that has not been examined much. It points to the necessity of curriculum developers, textbook writers and educators reevaluating the ecological impact of the culturally encoded language resources. The future textbooks would be further enhanced by either recontextualizing the traditional proverbs by discussing them critically or adding ecocentric stories in which animals are not used as a metaphoric illustration of human behaviour.

Finally, the paper highlights the fact that language education can never be ecologically neutral. The narratives implicated in educational discourse are vital in establishing how the future generations learn, appreciate and engage with the more-than-human world. A curriculum that is ecolinguistically informed in design is thus necessary in case education should play any meaningful role in the environmental ethics, understanding of bio-diversity, and sustainable coexistence.

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