



Human-Centered or Eco-Centered? Evaluating Anthropocentrism in Dawn's Climate Change Discourse

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Abstract: This paper reports on how climate change is framed in the context of Dawn, popular English-language newspaper in Pakistan through the years 2024 to 2025. Relying on the framework of Stibbe (2021), Stories We Live By, the analysis divides reporting into the anthropocentric and ecocentric types of discourse. A corpus-assisted discourse methodology was utilized; the linguistic construction of climate discourse was investigated through keyword analysis, collocation, and concordance lines using #LancsBox X (v5.5.1). The results indicate that there is an anthropocentric coverage with anthropocentric foregrounding of risks to human societies, adaptation strategies, infrastructure, and policy measures. These frames show pressing economic and social vulnerabilities yet tend to downplay the ecological interdependence by framing the environment as a setting in which human interests are expressed mostly. Less common, ecocentric, viewpoints are applied to the case of glacial melt, degradation of ecosystems and the presence of sustainable infrastructure, in which humans are viewed as components of broader systems. On the whole, the climate reports of Dawn reflect a powerful human-centered orientation with some ecocentric interludes, in general tensions in environmental communication. The promotion of the concept of a middle-ground between anthropocentric and ecocentric framings can contribute to the overall knowledge of climate change as a social and environmental problem.

Key Words: Anthropocentrism, Climate Change Discourse, Ecocentrism, Pakistani Media

Introduction

Climate change has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges for Pakistan, a country repeatedly ranked among the most vulnerable to environmental disasters such as floods, droughts, and extreme heatwaves. As the media plays a central role in shaping public understanding, climate discourse in Pakistan becomes an important site for examining how narratives about vulnerability, resilience, and responsibility are constructed. Existing research has shown that Pakistani media often situates climate change within policy initiatives, national identity, and global responsibility, with significant framing around government projects such as the “Clean Green Pakistan” campaign (Nasir et al., 2022). However, while these narratives bring climate change into public focus, they may also prioritize political image-building over ecological depth, leaving critical aspects of environmental sustainability underrepresented.

Anthropocentrism vs. Ecocentrism in Ecolinguistics

Within ecolinguistics, the tension between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism is a key analytical lens. Anthropocentric discourses place humans at the center of environmental narratives, emphasizing economic development, security, and human survival. Ecocentric discourses, in contrast, extend moral and discursive significance to non-human species, ecosystems, and the intrinsic value of nature (Abuzyarova et al., 2018; Heuberger, 2017; Stibbe, 2021). Scholars such as Heuberger (2003) and Stibbe (2014) argue that much of modern discourse remains anthropocentric, framing

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ecological crises primarily through human concerns while marginalizing broader ecological systems. In the Pakistani media context, Saleem and Khan (2025) demonstrate that climate reporting in Dawn largely highlights human vulnerability, especially in relation to floods and financial injustice, but less often engages with ecocentric perspectives that foreground ecosystems, biodiversity, or indigenous ecological knowledge. This suggests a discursive imbalance that requires further scrutiny.

Despite growing research, there remains limited analysis of how Dawn newspaper frame climate change and whether these framings tend toward anthropocentric or ecocentric orientations. Prior studies have either focused on single campaigns or outlets (Nasir et al., 2022; Saleem & Khan, 2025), leaving unexplored the broader spectrum of Ecocentrism and Anthropocentrism. The present study addresses this gap by examining climate change coverage in leading English-language newspaper—Dawn—between 2020 and 2025. The objective is to assess whether climate narratives are predominantly anthropocentric or ecocentric.

Literature Review

The role of anthropocentrism in environmental communication has been widely debated across ecolinguistics, ecocriticism, and environmental humanities. Anthropocentric narratives frame the environment primarily through human-centered values, often emphasizing economic development, survival, or political interests, while marginalizing the intrinsic worth of non-human life forms. According to Stibbe (2021), “anthropocentric is human-centred and ecocentric is centred on all life, including humans” (p.13). Suawi (2025) provides a comprehensive review of environmental narratives, highlighting that most public communication continues to privilege human agency and human benefits when addressing climate crises. This orientation aligns with Schmitt’s (2023) argument that environmental discourse often operates within an anthropomorphic and human-oriented framework, reproducing a “human-first” logic that prioritizes social, political, and economic concerns over ecological ones. Similarly, Lehtimäki (2019) illustrates how narrative strategies in environmental fiction frequently reinforce cognitive and rhetorical appeals to human experience, even when ostensibly dealing with non-human environments. While such anthropocentric tendencies can make environmental issues more relatable to the public, they also risk reinforcing the same paradigms that have contributed to ecological degradation.

The study of discourse around the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) requires engagement with ecolinguistics, particularly ecosophy, which foregrounds the values and worldviews encoded in language. Stibbe (2010) six stories we live by framework offers a useful taxonomy for examining how narratives of development naturalise particular human–nature relations, presenting growth, extraction, and progress as inevitable or desirable. Related debates on ecocentrism and anthropocentrism (Kortenkamp & Moore, 2001; Thompson & Barton, 1994) provide insight into how discourses prioritise either intrinsic ecological value or human-centered benefit, while Drenthen (2011) cautions that even ecocentric rhetoric may conceal anthropocentric assumptions. Together, these perspectives frame CPEC as a fertile site for investigating how discourses construct ecosophies that justify large-scale infrastructural transformation. Climate issues are linguistically framed in Pakistan’s leading newspapers. Using an ecolinguistic lens, the analysis reveals that Dawn’s reporting frequently employs metaphors of threat, urgency, and responsibility. The study highlights how certain narratives foreground human vulnerability and the need for action, while ecological dimensions are at times overshadowed by political or economic framings (Saleem & Khan, 2025).

Corpus linguistics provides the methodological foundation for uncovering such patterns by enabling systematic analysis of large datasets through frequency counts, collocation studies, and concordance analysis. Prior work in ecolinguistics highlights how economic discourse frames development through recurring metaphors of growth, progress, and modernisation while marginalizing ecological costs. A study on natural disaster narratives (Saleem et al., 2025) shows how identity and conviction stories lend moral force to discourse. Despite substantial political and economic scholarship on CPEC, ecosophical analyses remain limited. Development discourse surrounding the project tends to emphasize nationalism, progress, and economic optimism while downplaying ecological risks, thus reflecting anthropocentric priorities (Faraz et al., 2024).

Discourse places human needs and interests above all else, interpreting the environment mainly through its usefulness, risks, or consequences for human societies. Such narratives often stress economic growth, health implications, or national security, while downplaying ecological interdependence. By contrast, Stibbe (2021) characterizes ecocentrism as “an ecocentric mindset whereby we are grateful to and revere nature, rather than consider ourselves superior to it” (p. 191). Ecocentric discourse recognizes the intrinsic worth of ecosystems, species, and natural processes, positioning humans as interdependent participants within ecological systems rather than dominant overseers.

The current study not only evaluates the prevalence of anthropocentric versus ecocentric framings but also considers their implications for public awareness and policy support. This work contributes to ecolinguistics by showing how media discourse in Pakistan mediates public understanding of climate change and how underlying ecosophies can either encourage sustainable attitudes or reinforce anthropocentric priorities.

Methodology

This study adopts a corpus-assisted analysis approach to examine climate change discourses in Pakistani media. The data consists of 72 climate-related reports published in Dawn between January 2024 and July 2025. This corpus, 95,689 words, represents national media narratives on climate change in Pakistan. Data collection was carried out using #LancsBox X (Brezina & Platt, 2025). LancsBox X (v5.5.1) was employed to generate keywords, identify collocations, and concordance lines. The analytical focus is on distinguishing between anthropocentric and ecocentric discourse patterns (Stibbe, 2021).

Data Analysis

The discourse in Dawn climate reports is predominantly anthropocentric (see table 1), with most articles framing climate change in terms of human risks, adaptation strategies, economic costs, and policy implications. Headlines and reports frequently highlight threats to livelihoods, infrastructure, and national development, positioning people as the central concern in the climate narrative.

At the same time, there are ecocentric moments scattered across the coverage. These appear in discussions of changing monsoon systems, ecosystem resilience, or sustainable agriculture, where the language briefly shifts to acknowledge the intrinsic value of ecological systems. However, such instances are relatively limited, and ecosystems are rarely presented as independent agents with worth beyond their service to human survival.

Table 1

Anthropocentric vs. Ecocentric in Dawn Climate Reports (2024–2025)

Title & Date	Excerpt (paraphrase)	Discourse Lens	Basis
“Climate report card 2024” (Dec 27, 2024)	Highlights glacier melting, human survival threat, but criticizes tech-only solutions and calls for systemic justice.	Mixed—mainly anthropocentric with ecocentric nod	Focus on human risk dominates, yet acknowledges ecosystems and systemic change.
“How climate change-driven displacement is reshaping Pakistan’s cities” (Sep 1, 2025)	Describes climate-induced migration and urban strain on infrastructure.	Anthropocentric	Focus entirely on human hardship and governance.
“Pakistan’s changing climate” (2025)	Describes monsoon system shifts and flooding dynamics.	Ecocentric	Centers ecological processes as changing systems.
“Climate reckoning” (Dec 30, 2024)	Urges climate-smart agriculture and sustainable drainage systems, emphasizing both human and ecological resilience.	Mixed—leaning ecocentric	Human and ecosystem-focused solutions balanced.

Title & Date	Excerpt (paraphrase)	Discourse Lens	Basis
"Warnings of an existential climate threat" (June 10, 2025)	Describes floods, heatwaves, huge economic and social cost, proposes renewable investment.	Anthropocentric	Human vulnerabilities and policy response dominate.
"Climate change impacts grip globe in 2024" (Dec 31, 2024)	Mentions impacts on human health and ecosystems, but focuses on adaptation frameworks.	Mixed	Mentions ecosystems in passing with human urgency.

In table 1, the overall orientation of the reports remains largely human-centered, reflecting a discourse that prioritizes societal impacts while only occasionally nodding toward holistic and ecocentric framings of climate change. This suggests that while ecological perspectives are not absent, they remain overshadowed by the anthropocentric narrative that dominates Pakistani media coverage of climate issues.

Anthropocentric Keywords

predominantly frames environmental issues through the lens of human consequences and needs. Words such as adaptation, vulnerability, policy, and infrastructure emphasize the survival of human populations, protection of cities, and mitigation of risks to communities. Agriculture and public health frequently appear as focal points, showing concern for food security, disease outbreaks, and the well-being of citizens rather than the ecosystems themselves. The presence of economy and energy underlines the tendency to view climate change in terms of financial loss, energy security, and sustainable development, positioning humans at the center of discourse. Even terms like resilience and governance reflect an orientation where nature is seen as a background element, valuable only insofar as it supports human livelihood, policies, and infrastructure. Overall, this keyword pattern demonstrates a strong anthropocentric narrative, where the climate crisis is framed primarily as a challenge to human progress and security.

Table 2

Anthropocentric Keywords in Dawn Climate Reports

Keyword	Discourse Focus
Adaptation	Human survival strategies, migration, coping measures
Infrastructure	Protecting roads, housing, dams, and cities
Vulnerability	Risks to poor communities, displaced people
Governance	Role of governments, institutions, and leadership
Policy	National strategies, agreements, action plans
Economy	Financial losses, investment, development costs
Energy	Renewable energy framed as human/economic necessity
Resilience	Strengthening human and community systems
Public Health	Climate-linked diseases (dengue, heatstroke, etc.)
Agriculture	Food security, crop yield, farmer livelihood

Ecocentric Keywords

In contrast, in table 3, the ecocentric keywords from Dawn's climate change reports shift attention toward the environment as an entity with intrinsic value, not merely as a human resource. Terms such as ecosystems, biodiversity, wildlife, and forests point to recognition of the natural world as an interconnected system requiring protection for its own sake. References to glaciers, rivers, oceans, and monsoon systems highlight the disruption of long-standing ecological patterns, emphasizing the fragility of natural cycles in the face of climate change. Meanwhile, soil and air quality underscore the ecological foundations of life, drawing attention to the balance of earth systems rather than solely human well-being. Although less frequent than anthropocentric terms, these keywords introduce a perspective where nature is framed as an active participant in climate narratives. This ecocentric orientation demonstrates moments in media

discourse where environmental concerns extend beyond human survival, acknowledging the ecological webs that sustain all forms of life.

Table 3

Ecocentric Keywords in Dawn Climate Reports

Keyword	Discourse Focus
Ecosystems	Ecological balance, natural interdependence
Glaciers	Melting ice, long-term environmental change
Rivers	Flow disruption, flooding, ecological systems
Monsoon Systems	Climate disruption of natural cycles
Biodiversity	Species loss, habitat destruction
Soil	Fertility decline, erosion, desertification
Air Quality	Atmospheric changes, ecological health
Oceans	Rising sea levels, marine ecosystem stress
Forests	Deforestation, afforestation, carbon storage
Wildlife	Threats to species survival, habitat decline

Discussion

The implications of this finding are significant on how people understand climate change. As long as human costs continue to be brought out in stories, audiences might eventually perceive the environment narrowly in instrumental terms. The land, rivers, forests and atmosphere are put in a perspective of being resources to be used to the advantage of human beings instead of them being systems that are interconnected with their own inherent values. Such a reporting style promotes urgency and invokes sympathy, yet it also runs the chance of strengthening the stance of human versus nature. The discourse obscures the fact that the same ecological web in which humanity is immersed is being broken, by placing the issue of climate change as something that occurs to people.

At the same time, the analysis shows that Dawn does not entirely exclude ecocentric framings. Within many reports there are moments where the environment itself is described as active and dynamic. Articles that mention changes in rainfall patterns, the retreat of glaciers, or the loss of mangroves begin to shift attention toward ecological systems. In such instances, the environment is not merely a passive stage but a participant in change. These ecocentric glimpses are important because they open discursive space for recognizing climate change as an ecological crisis, not just a human one. They remind readers that rivers, forests, and mountains are not just resources but living systems under strain.

Nevertheless, such ecocentric perspectives remain limited and marginal. They tend to appear briefly within longer human-centered reports and rarely form the main frame of a story. For example, an article may describe the retreat of Himalayan glaciers but only as evidence of future water scarcity for people. Similarly, a report might highlight mangrove degradation, but the focus soon shifts to how this increases vulnerability to storms and reduces fish stocks for local communities. The environment is thus recognized, but almost always in terms of what its degradation means for human well-being. The ecological system is visible, but its independent significance is rarely emphasized.

Conclusion

Dawn's climate discourse reflects both the urgency of human vulnerability and the limitations of a predominantly anthropocentric lens. Recognizing this imbalance opens the possibility of cultivating narratives that place humans and ecosystems within the same frame of concern. Such a shift would strengthen public understanding of the inseparability of human and ecological survival, paving the way for responses that are not only reactive but also transformative and sustainable.

The analysis of Dawn's climate reporting makes clear that discourse orients toward human-centered perspectives. Climate change is framed primarily as a threat to lives, livelihoods, infrastructure, and national stability. While such

framing captures the urgency of human vulnerability, it also reinforces a worldview where nature is valued largely in instrumental terms. Ecosystems are recognized, but most often as resources that support people rather than as living systems with intrinsic significance.

At the same time, the presence of ecocentric moments in the coverage demonstrates that alternative ways of framing climate change are possible. Descriptions of glacial retreat, shifting monsoon patterns, or mangrove degradation provide glimpses of ecological realities that extend beyond human experience. Though rare, these moments suggest a discursive opening where climate change can be understood not only as a human crisis but as a disruption of interconnected ecological systems.

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