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Ecolinguistics and Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Product Packaging: Constructing Sustainability Narratives in Consumer Goods

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explain how environmental discourses are constructed in the discourse of eco-friendly consumer products by integrating linguistic and multimodal discourse analysis. The paper combines concepts from ecolinguistic theory with multimodal discourse analysis to critically examine how both language and visual design socially reflect sustainability. With its emphasis on the discovery of ecological narratives embedded in language, ecolinguistics assumes that these narratives have a profound impact on human perception and on how people interact with the environment (Stibbe 2015). Meanwhile, multimodal discourse analysis provides an organized method for understanding discourse as a practice that creates meanings, ideologies, and cultural values through the use of colors, images, and symbols (Fairclough 1995). The study takes the qualitative research design and examines five products, including fabric conditioner, reusable face cloth, bamboo nappies, reusable tumbler, and plantable seed bags, relying on the packaging artifacts and promotional artifacts through which it forwards environmental claims, including biodegradability, reuse, and plastic-free packaging. Results show that the discourse of environmentally friendly products/resources raises recurring concerns about sustainability through the use of environmental words, natural images, and recyclable resources. The use of visual symbols, such as plant icons, natural color palettes, and eco-labels, reinforces the plausibility of environmental claims and eases the communication of ecological values to consumers. The research concludes that green product packaging is not only an instrument of marketing but also an environmental communication model that promotes sustainable lifestyles and environmental awareness.

Keywords: Ecolinguistics, Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Environmental Sustainability, Product Packaging

INTRODUCTION

The field of environmental communication has become a focus of research in linguistics, with scholars posing more questions on the nature of language in framing human interactions with nature. The discourse originated with Halliday (1990), who emphasized the complexity of the nexus between language patterns and environmental issues and argued that patterns shape how scientists in society perceive ecological problems. An example of this is the repetitive phrases in politicians' speeches, such as 'economic growth is good,' which are purported to propagate ideologies that support excessive consumption



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and environmental destruction (Halliday 1990). Such questioning led to an ecocentric inquiry into linguistic studies conducted thereafter to identify how discourse shapes environmental attitudes and behaviors. As a result, ecolinguistics, as such, became a discipline studying the role of language in the interaction between humans and other species, as well as the ecological implications of language decisions.

Later in the 1990s, ecolinguistics came to the fore as an interdisciplinary project combining the perspectives of linguistics, ecology, and environmental studies. The practitioners study the creation of environmental meanings in language and how this shapes ecological consciousness. Stibbe (2015) presents the work as a study of the tales we live by, and which determine human interactions with nature. These tales include ideologies, metaphors, and judgments embedded in discourse; they either support ecological sustainability or trigger ecologically destructive behavior. In this regard, ecolinguistic examination aims at uncovering negative ecological assumptions and suggesting alternative discourses that promote environmental conservation and sustainable lifestyles. Alexander and Stibbe (2014) contributed to the idea of environmental discourse analysis, as they believe that the focus needs to be on studying not just the textual analysis of the environmental issues, but also to examine all types of communication, such as advertisement, corporate communication, and everyday speech and discourse, and their ecological implications. Their standpoint highlights a methodological need to examine the construction of environmental meanings through linguistic and visual artifacts within diverse forms of communicative action, in order to shed further light on the possibilities of discourse analysis to reveal the role language plays in ecological thinking and policy-making.

Recent research has highlighted the importance of applying both ecolinguistic analysis and multimodal discourse strategies to the study of environmental narratives. Agbeleoba et al. (2025) have used both ecolinguistic discourse analysis and multimodal discourse analysis to analyze the sustainability communication imposed on the global environmental policy. Their findings show that language may promote ecological values when it precedes ecological responsibility and sustainable development, but it will blindly reproduce environmental crises when economic interests prevail in the discourse. These studies underscore the importance of questioning environmental discourses across all communication media to understand the role of language in shaping people's perceptions of sustainability. However, based on these theoretical insights, the present research questions examine the environmental discourse of such consumer products through an environmentally friendly lens. The combination of ecolinguistic analysis and multimodal discourse analysis provides the research with an opportunity to explore how linguistic expression, visual design, and packaging are integrated to popularise environmental responsibility and sustainable consumption. By analyzing eco-friendly product packaging, the study aims to clarify the effects of communicating environmental meaning to consumers and how discourse promotes ecological consciousness in everyday consumption practices. Accordingly, the study is guided by follow research questions:

RQ1. How does a language on the environment-friendly packaging of products create environmental discourses that lead to sustainable consumer behavior?

RQ2. What is the multimodal discourse analysis of eco-friendly products, and how do they contribute to ecological responsibility, can encourage consumers to adopt shrewd consumption habits?

Significance of the Study

The current research is important as it questions how products that convey environmental



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responsibility are conveyed through language and visual images in eco-products. Ecolinguistic studies highlight the centrality of discourse in inequitably defining the relations between humans and nature, thereby determining ecological awareness. By studying the linguistic and multimodal qualities of eco-friendly product wrappings, the study offers new insights into how environmental narratives are constructed and transmitted in the context of daily consumption. Further, it complements the multimodal discourse analysis by breaking down the intrusion of sustainability messages in the marketing discourse and product design. According to previous studies, ecological discourses are often used in advertising and marketing communication to shape audience perceptions and promote ecologically responsible products. An analytic understanding of these strategies reveals how meanings are constructed in consumer culture. Moreover, the study sheds light on how the discourse of environmentally friendly products generates sustainable consumption behavior. Sustainable consumer behavior is associated with the choices, use, and disposal behaviors of individuals that are least harmful to the environment. The study examines biodegradable packaging, reusable materials, and plan table seed bags to show how discourse can foster environmentally responsible lifestyle choices, thereby advancing broader sustainability goals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The connection between language and environmental concern was crafted by Halliday (1990), who argued that the patterns of language guide perceptions and relationships of the society with nature. He argued that certain terms have been spreading ideologies of unrestrained economic growth and consumption, thus worsening ecological issues. It was based on this that ecolinguistics developed, with its focus on the direct impact of language on environmental consciousness and responsibility. The sphere was diverse when Fill and Muhlhausler (2001) analyzed the linguistic reflections of the interactions between humanity and the environment, conceptualizing ecolinguistics as an interdisciplinary field of study that questions ecological implications of linguistic decisions. The concepts of cultural narratives presented in the language, which determine human relationships to nature, were popularised by Stibbe (2015), who introduced the notion of narratives we live by. These narratives can contribute to the sustainability of the environment or support the ideologies that harm the environment. Alexander and Stibbe (2014) also focused on the ecological discourse analysis and urged researchers to look not only directly at the ecological cognition and behavior, but also at ordinary language, which, as the authors argue, indirectly affects environmental cognition and behavior. To build on the appropriate ecological meaning, Hayat (2024) conducted an ecolinguistic analysis of advertising, noting the extensive use of environmental vocabulary. Similar findings were made by Gill (2021), who uncovered those ecological metaphors in advertising influence consumer construal of environmental messages, often prominently making products appear naturally inherent or eco-friendly.

Aizaz (2025) studied the salience and erasure in environmental advertising, in which advertisers tend to emphasize positive environmental factors and downplay negative effects. As Stibbe (2023) disclosed, visual storytelling and multinomial components (images, narratives, symbols, and so on) are critical factors in the construction of environmental messages and consumer perceptions. Motreniuc (2024) also singled out the use of persuasive appeals, including slogans, emotional appeal, and language grounded in values, as a highly prevalent means of ecological advertising to advertise responsible consumption. Yuniawan (2023) examined eco-lexicons in conservation news reports and established that the ideological, sociological, and ecological aspects of green vocabulary



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are manifested through environmental vocabulary. Javed (2025) analyzed ideologies in media discourse, finding that language plays a significant role in shaping the system of ideological beliefs in advertising. Sari et al. (2024) found that social media messages on sustainability and persuasion in language are most often incorporated into brand strategy to promote environmentally friendly behavior. The importance of ecolinguistics and discourse analysis of evaluating environmental communication in media and marketing has also been discussed by Javed (2025). There is general agreement among scholars that language plays a significant role in fostering environmental awareness and shaping popular perceptions of environmental issues.

Although the body of research has continued to grow, there are still gaps. The majority of the literature dwells on environmental discourse in advertisements, media texts, and corporate marketing, but not on assessing eco-friendly product packaging and consumer products. Ain et al. (2021) examined the use of ecolinguistic discourses in food ads and clarified linguistic practices that gauge consumer attitudes, but the analysis was limited to the advertising messages. Accordingly, Hayat (2024) also studied ecological vocabulary in television advertisements, but it ignores multimodal discourse as a feature of environmentally friendly products. Another weakness is that it is easy to interpret linguistic and visual elements separately, yielding partially disjointed results for communication in the environment. According to Ishaq (2025), a one-sided focus on language or imagery would impair a holistic understanding of the construction of environmental claims through various semiotic means. Despite current studies on multimodal eco-branding, few explicitly examine the interactions among language, visual images, packaging materials, and environmental symbols in the discourse on environmentally friendly products.

METHODOLOGY

The study uses the interpretive research paradigm, which seeks to understand how language creates meanings and ideologies within societies. A qualitative descriptive approach is considered suitable, as the research goal is to identify the meanings embedded in the linguistic and visual features of eco-friendly products rather than quantifying them. Five environmentally friendly consumer products were used as primary data, including fabric conditioner, reusable face cloth, bamboo nappies, reusable tumbler, and plan table seed bags. These products were chosen because they are advertised as eco-friendly alternatives to traditional products. Purposive sampling was used to select products that make manifest environmental promises, such as biodegradable materials, plastic-free packaging, or sustainable production processes. The information included packaging, brand names, slogans, environmental labels, images, and other additional relatively visual information on the products. Sources were gathered through the official brand websites. Ecolinguistic and multimodal discourse analysis methods were applied to the data analysis. The ecolinguistic analysis is concerned with identifying ecological discourses and linguistic structures that outline human-environment relations. Complicating the conventional discourse studies with an ecological lens, ecolinguistics seeks to investigate how discourse shapes ecological values and behaviors (Stibbe 2013). The combination analysis framework allows for exploring the co-construction of environmental discourse and a sense of environmental awareness in consumers through the use of both linguistic and visual elements in eco-friendly product packaging.

DATA ANALYSIS

The five ecologically friendly consumer products are analyzed to examine how environmental discourses are created through both words and graphics on packaging.

Product 1: Fresh Juniper Eco-Mate Fabric Conditioner.



The packaging of Eco-Mate fabric conditioner proclaims an ecological discourse between household cleaning and environmental responsibility. Terms like eco-mate, zero plastic alternative, and bottle made of natural materials put the product in the position of a consciously sustainable retailer of traditional formula fabric conditioners that were packed in plastics. The eco- prefix positions the brand within the environmental debate, with a design implication of ensuring that the cleaning effect is environmentally friendly. In addition, the name of the fragrance Fresh Juniper suggests natural themes and vegetable components, which also support the perception of nature. The discourse encourages consumers to reconsider their daily practices and replace them with environmentally friendly alternatives, which is an ecolinguistic element. The product foregrounds sustainable packaging, biodegradable contents, and plant-based ingredients as solutions to the environmental atrocities caused by plastic trash and chemical pollutants. Eco-Mate explores a new direction in biodegradable paper bottles made from paper and sugarcane waste, helping reduce single-use plastic consumption and mitigate environmental degradation. In this ecological narrative, the product posits that healthy drinking can be achieved through a simple change in everyday cleaning habits.

The eco-friendly identity has a significant contribution from visual design. The seemingly natural paper material of the bottle indicates sustainability and biodegradability. A subdued color palette of predominant green and white supports the theme of the environment, and green, as a color, is closely associated with nature, environmental consciousness, and environmental preservation. The presence of the leaf-glyph in the brand name also increases the visual representation of nature. Viewed multimodally, meaning is formed as a result of interaction between text, images, color, and material design. The product Fabric Conditioner uses harsh text to convey its purpose, whereas eco-icons, such as biodegradable contents, home-compostable packaging, and eco-friendly materials used to create the bottle, visually support the environmental statement. These visual signals serve as credibility sources that demonstrate the product's ecological identity. Together, the natural bottle material, replacement color scheme, green motifs, and environmental terms create the impression of a compelling discourse that positions the product as a more responsible, sustainable contender to the standard plastic-packaged cleaners.

Product 2: Beauty Kit Dual-Sided Reusable Face Cloth.



The language used in the outer packaging emphasizes sustainability and waste minimization. The words plastic-free, waste-zero alternative, and sustainable are used to describe the product as an eco-friendly alternative to disposable wipes and synthetic cleansing products. The focus on natural fabric, 70 percent hemp, 30 percent cotton, emboldens the narratives of renewable acquisition. This discourse compels consumers to



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associate their personal skincare habits with environmental responsibility. The ecolinguistic narratives also put daily beauty habits in the context of environmental safety and present reusable fabrics as cleaner and greener than single-use ones. This emphasis on natural fibers and compostable materials supports an ecological argument, emphasizing a strong belief in renewable resources and minimizing waste.

The eco-friendly identity is strengthened through visual design. Visual descriptors, such as brown kraft paper packaging, natural materials, and recyclability, are among the visual cues that represent environmentally friendly products. Goods and services are designed with a natural feel, created by minimalist design and a natural color palette, which form the foundation of sustainability. A round window featuring the reusable cloth conveys transparency and credibility. The use of visuals, including vegan, natural, recyclable, and plastic-free icons, can be a convenient tool for conveying the idea of sustainability quickly. A combination of the natural packaging concept, eco-labels, and sustainability-focused messaging creates a strong environmental narrative, positioning the product as a responsible choice over disposable skincare wipes.

Product number 3: Organic Bamboo Nappies.



The language of packaging advances an ecological and health-oriented narrative. The words organic bamboo, eco-friendly, the absence of harsh chemicals, and the healthiest start to life make the product sound like a safe, environmentally friendly option to ordinary disposables. The word organic emphasizes the use of natural, chemical-free materials. The expression 'eco-friendly disposable nappy on the planet' positions the product at the same position as a sustainable choice for environmentally conscious parents. This rhetoric associates infant care with environmental awareness, leading consumers to believe that choosing natural materials protects both the infant and the environment. Eco linguistically, the narratives assume that parents' everyday choices in parenting can move toward environmental sustainability.

The elements that support environmental messages in the visuals include kraft-paper background, green text, and images of leaves, which, in turn, are associated with nature, development, and responsibility. Such graphics have given the image a positive, homegrown aesthetic that supports the product's environmental claims. Green color is a sign of freshness, health, and sustainability, and environmental perks like the use of eco-labels, such as biodegradable, visually endorse the stated benefits. Phrases such as "no harsh chemicals" and a "100 percent happiness guarantee" are used to build consumer confidence. The combination of the visual and textual elements creates a convincing discourse of bamboo nappies as something safe, environmentally friendly, and responsible.

Product 4: Green Upshot Green Tumbler.



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The use of language creates a clear narrative of environmentalism, with a message of sustainable consumption and reduced plastic use. Expressions such as the idea of an eco-friendly tumbler, the idea of an anti-plastic movement, and the mention of reusable items suggest that everyday objects can help protect the environment. The phrase ‘eco-friendly’ situates the item within a responsible lifestyle and implies positive consumer involvement in curbing plastic waste. The focus on materials such as borosilicate glass, a bamboo lid, and a reusable stainless-steel straw emphasizes durability and long-term reusability. The ecolinguistics message, therefore, advances the tenet of lifestyle in which common practices, such as drinking, are turned green.

A natural style is initiated with cylindrical cardboard packaging, with descriptions of natural materials, and the ability to recycle the packaging and boxes. The natural connection is visually reinforced by the logo, which is shaped like leaves directly above the brand name. The use of minimalist typography, layout, and brown kraft paper helps create an atmosphere of authenticity and eco-friendly branding. The reusable glass tumbler, bamboo lid, and steel straw are physically present as a reminder of sustainability, evoking the anti-plastic storyline. Together, natural packaging, green imagery, and sustainability communication create a compelling argument that habitual products should be replaced with reusable options.

Product 5: ReLife Seed Bag



The language of seed-bag packaging continues to spread a strong ecological discourse of environmental protection and sustainability. The Buy Green to Save Green Slogan encourages people to adopt green behavior. Seed Bag, as a concept, is an ecological notion in which packaging becomes a donation to nature, thereby enabling a circular ecological system. The discussion positions consumer decisions as tools for environmental care, suggesting that environmentally friendly product purchases strengthen environmental protection and the greening of the planet. Post-use conversion is achieved through embedded seeds, where the bag is planted and biodegrades. This ecolinguistics architecture prompts consumers to view the consumption process as regenerative.

The visual design enhances the message about the environment. The natural beige paper is recycled; the green rope handle appeals to the nature of plants; the logo in the form of a



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tree reflects growth and renewal. Eco icons on the back will illustrate planting procedures to help one understand the ecological role. The fusion of environmental language, innate colors, and informative visuals creates a convincingly plausible discourse that teaches one to participate in environmental conservation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The current findings indicate that the discourse of eco-friendly products is continually performed in such an environment, through both linguistic and visual practices, in the creation of environmental narratives. Fabric conditioner underscores the use of biodegradable materials and packaging without plastics to present domestic cleaning as a clean and green practice. The reusable face cloth promotes sustainable consumption through natural fibers such as hemp and cotton. Bamboo nappies are organic and therefore highlight bamboo's renewable and biodegradable qualities, thereby achieving a convergence between environmental stability and infant health. The sustainable tumbler will replace disposable plastic drinking containers with strong glass and bamboo, promoting the reuse of the product. The seed bag embodies a circular ecological idea: seeds are introduced into a bag, which then becomes a plant after use. Together, these products create an image of sustainability and promote responsible consumption.

The findings are supported by ecolinguistics and discourse studies conducted so far, which note that eco-friendly marketing tends to use positive environmental vocabulary and natural images to create environmental significance. Hayat (2024) clarifies that ecolinguistics analysis reveals how linguistic strategies construct products as responsible and foster a sense of sustainable consumption. Additional study indicates that environmental awareness and purchase intentions towards sustainability are significantly influenced by environmental vocabulary and environmental-centric narratives. Such observations support the conclusion of the current paper that the discourse on eco-friendly products combines linguistic and multimodal methods to foster ecological responsibility and sustainable consumer behavior.

CONCLUSION

The exploration shedding light on how environmental narratives are made in eco-friendly consumer product discourse, the ecolinguistic and multimodal discourse methods were utilized. Results indicate that sustainability is expressed by the use of environmental vocabulary, symbolic imagery, and material design that highlights ecological stewardship. Language movements that predict or announce the use of renewable resources, reusable consumption, and waste minimization seem critical for selling these products as alternatives to traditional products that can be considered environmentally friendly. Ecolinguistics studies argue that language shapes how humans conceptualize environmental problems, thereby influencing ecological attitudes and behaviors (Halliday 1990; Stibbe 2015). The multimodal analysis additionally indicated that environmental messages are reinforced by visual elements, including natural hues, recycled paper, plants, and sustainability icons, thereby increasing persuasiveness. Through a three-dimensional discourse model (Fairclough, 1993), the paper revealed that product packaging is a discourse practice that conveys broader environmental ideals within its consumer culture. These results indicate the importance of revising the discourse on airtight products, where eco-friendly communication does not merely advertise commercial products but also predisposes people to ideas of sustainability and responsible buying. Finally, the study confirms that the eco-friendly product discourse is a critical pedagogical discourse, as it



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motivates people to adopt environmentally conscious habits and participate in expanded ecological sustainability initiatives.

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