Fictional "Stories to Live By": An Ecolinguistic Perspective

Dr. Mona Naeem Ahmed Ahmed
Lecturer in English Linguistics
Department of English Language
The International Institute for Languages and Translation
(Fifth Settlement), Cairo

Dr. Basma Awad Ahmed Sarhan
Lecturer in English Linguistics
Department of English Language
Faculty of Arts, Mansoura University

Abstract:

This paper aims to introduce the theoretical Ecolingustic concept in the area of studying literary works especially novels as almost all of human's experience and daily situations are always portrayed in this genre. Bahaa Taher's *Sunset Oasis* is selected to be the source of the data as it contains many explicit stories between its characters and the surrounding ecological system. The selected data is analyzed in the context of Appraisal theory to show the stance embedded in each selected extracts. The function of each stance shows the story each character lives by whether it is destructive, ambivalent or beneficial according to the ecolinguistic approach. The result shows two different stories; one is destructive related to Mr. Abd el Zahir's stance as the main character of the novel, and the second is beneficial related to his Irish wife's stance. The study aims to positively appraise the beneficial stories which value nature to create a more equal society according to ecolinguistics as there is no point in creating an equal society without having a positive attitude towards nature and its ecosystem.

Key Words: ecolinguistics, *Sunset Oasis*, Appraisal Theory, stance, ecosystem.

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قصص خيالية نحيا بها: منظور لغوى بيئى

د. منى نعيم أحمد أحمد

مدرس اللغويات ـ قسم اللغة الانجليزية
المعهد العالى الدولى للغات والترجمة الفورية بالتجمع الخامس – القاهرة

د. بسمة عوض أحمد سرحان

مدرس اللغويات ـ قسم اللغة الانجليزية ـ كلية الآداب ـ جامعة المنصورة

ملخص البحث

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة آراء واتجاهات أبطال رواية "واحة الغروب" لبهاء طاهر نحو الطبيعة المحيطة بهم، لما تحتويه الرواية من قصص تمثل حب الطبيعة وبغضها على لسان البطل محمود عبد الظاهر، الظابط فى الجيش المصرى والذى نفى إلى وأحة سيوة بعد اتهامه بالمولاة لأحمد عرابى ضد الانجليز، وزوجته الأيرلندية حيث تدور أحداث الرواية فى الصحراء. ومن ثم فقد تم الدمج بين نظرية التقييم اللغوى وعلم اللغة البيئى للعالم الإنجليزى ستيبى لتقييم القصص التى يحيا بها البطلين لاعلاء شأن وتزكية القصص المحبة للطبيعة وإظهار بشاعة القصص الباغضة لها للمساهمة فى تغيير القصص المدمرة للمنظومة الطبيعية من حولنا كما وصى العالم ستيبى فى كتابه "علم اللغة البيئى: اللغة، علم البيئة والقصص التى نحيا بها". وتدعم الدراسة اعتقاد العالم الإنجليزى ستيبى أن هدف علم اللغويات لابد وأن يكون لإنشاء مجتمع متساو مع الأخذ فى الاعتبار دور اللغة فى الحفاظ على علاقة الحياة المستدامة بين البشر والكائنات الأخرى والبيئة الطبيعة، وإذا كانت القصص المدمرة للبيئة واقع من حولنا فلابد من البحث عن قصص أخرى جديدة تضمن الحفاظ على البيئة التى تضح فى الاتجاهات الإيجابية فى استخدام اللغة. فتلك القصص التى نحيا بها تؤثر على طريقة التفكير والاتصال بالآخرين والأفعال اتجاه العالم من حولنا ولهذا لابد من اختيار القصة الملائمة لواقعنا الحالى.

الكلمات المفتاحية: علم اللغة البيئى، "واحة الغروب"، نظرية التقييم اللغوى، الاتجاهات، النظام البيئى.

Fictional "Stories to Live By": An Ecolinguistic Perspective

1.0 Introducing the Study

The present paper is entitled "Fictional Stories to Live By": An ecolinguistic perspective" in which the expression "fictional" points out the source of data analysis; Bahaa Taher's novel, *Sunset Oasis* whereas "Stories to Live By" refers to Arran Stibbe's concept of "Stories We Live By" in his book *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and Stories We Live By* (2015) in which he introduces a well-organized framework for Ecolinguistics as a newly formed sub-discipline of linguistics. According to the International Ecolinguistic Association (IEA), Ecolinguistics is defined as "a sub-branch of linguistics which explores the role of language in the life-sustaining interactions of humans, other species and the physical environment" (2018). In fact, this approach was firstly introduced by the Norwegian linguist Einar Haugen in 1972 as Language Ecology that studies the interactions between any given language and its environment (Haugen, 2001, 57). Current interpretation of ecolinguistics differs widely as it becomes "an approach of language that takes into consideration the complex network of relations occurring between environment, languages and people speaking these languages" (Wendel, 2005, p.51). The term "environment" here refers to the biological, physical and social environment since studying language in relation to society only is not enough according to the prominent linguists' works such as Fill (1998), Mühlhäusler (2001, 2003), Mühlhäusler & Fill, (2001), Mühlhäusler & Peace (2006) and Halliday (2001). In the same line, Stibbe (2015) defines the "stories we live by" as "stories in the minds of multiple individuals across a culture" in the sense of "cognitive structures in the minds of individuals which influence how they think, talk and act" (p. 6). Moreover, he lists nine stories that form the human's relationship with the surrounding environment: ideology, framing, metaphor (a

type of framing), evaluation, identity, conviction, erasure, salience and narrative. He adds that since the stories are mental models, they cannot be analyzed directly; but we can get clues to them through analyzing common ways that people use language and then decide whether they are beneficial stories or not in terms of the actions they encourage.

 According to Stibbe's systematic framework, three approaches of studying language; structural linguistics, sociolinguistics and language ecology, are merged together as any one of them cannot stand alone. Firstly, Structural linguistics which studies language in isolation from the world. Although this approach explores the basic building blocks of a language, it is not enough. Its focus is on the components of language system and how they work together neglecting other social and ecological factors. The limitations of this approach are investigated and explained in the second approach of language which relates language to society named Sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistics sees language as inseparable part of society. In this line, Critical Discourse analysts point out that language is shaped by society and it also shapes society but it is not enough as well. The third approach is Haugen's Language Ecology which studies language in relation to its environment. The environment here refers to both the society that uses the language and the human mind in which it may be surrounded by other languages. Haugen employed 'ecology' metaphorically from biology to language study, but did not yet link language with biological ecology and ecological or environmental problems.

Ecolinguistics goes deeper than commenting on individual texts, it explores the more general patterns of language that influence how people both think about and treat the world. Tove Skutnabb-kangas and David Harmon confirm that in ecolinguistics:
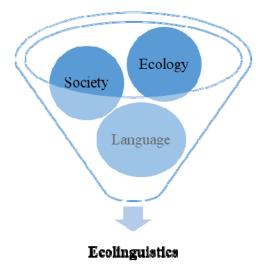
> We use ecology in its sense (i.e., not merely as a metaphor) to refer to the biological relationships of organisms (including human beings) to one another and their physical surroundings. There has a tendency of many sociolinguists

> to pay only lip service to this literal sense of 'ecology' and
> to focus only on social concerns. (2018 p.11)

Ecolinguistic approach sees language as inseparable part of not only society but also the larger ecological system. The three dimensions of studying language as Stibbe confirms are emerged to be studied in ecolinguistics:

Stibbe confirms that any humanity discipline that ignores the larger ecological system embedding of human is an adequate and inaccurate since it is impossible to isolate humans from the larger ecological system enmeshed in. Furthermore, any study ignore the natural world is incapable of addressing some of the key issues of our times. Stibbe says that any branch of linguistics can be ecolinguistics if it considers the role of language in the life-sustaining relationships among humans, other species and the physical environment.

The Objectives of the present Study

This study aims to investigate the different stories the characters' of the *Sunset Oasis* live by concerning their relation with the

physical environment. It focuses on their stance and its conveyance within certain situations based on their valuation to the surrounding nature. The ecolinguistic analysis employs stance, the linguistic feature, to reveal the stories the characters live by appraising positively the beneficial stories and criticizing the destructive ones.

In order to achieve the aim of the study, two questions are answered:

1. How is stance encoded within the selected extracts?
2. What is the function of each stance?

By determining the function of each stance, different attitudes are shown towards the surrounding ecological system creating different stories whether destructive, ambivalent or beneficial.

1.1. Literature Review

In fact, Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) *Metaphors We Live By*, the turning point in the field of cognitive linguistics, has inspired Stibbe for the notion of "Stories We Live By" in the title of his book. According to Lakoff and Johnson, we "live by" our conceptual system that guides our behaviour. It means that what we believe, what we value, and how we understand and perceive the world around us is inseparable from our thoughts, our words, and form our conceptual system. The concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3).

The main principle of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff is embedded in an individual's mind as a cognition to create a metaphor that links one conceptual domain to another. This connection is structured in the metaphorical process to create source domain and target domain. We can understand the target domain through terms of source domain. These terms between the two domains is called "mappings" (Kövesces, 2002, p. 6). In these

relations between the two domains many terms of nature and ecosystem can be employed. However, ecolinguistics does not aim to demonstrate some linguistic determinism related to ecological issues, it aims to empower more people to achieve that capability to resist ecologically destructive discourses (Stibbe, 2021). The primary means of encouraging this criticality is through revealing cognitive discourse structures as they manifest in linguistic texts. In this way, ecolinguistics exemplifies a socio-cognitive approach, or perhaps rather, an eco-cognitive approach. Regarding the former, Teun van Dijk explains that Socio-Cognitive Discourse Studies "not only makes explicit the fundamental role of mental representations, but also shows that many structures of discourse itself can only (completely) be described in terms of various cognitive notions, especially those of information, beliefs or knowledge of participants" (van Dijk, 2018, p. 28). He then lists a number of discourse structures that can be described in cognitive terms such as appraisal, frames, and metaphors. Appraisal is the focus of this analysis in the next section. "Stories" in the way Stibbe uses the term, are discourse structures that exist in the minds of language users. The analyst can problematize underlying stories based on linguistic features in the discourse and argue whether it promotes an ecologically destructive, ambivalent, or beneficial discourse. Thus, the cognitive interface in question from an ecolinguistic point of view is that involving discourse and ecology, rather than solely discourse and society.

1.2. Methodology and data analysis

Overview of the data

The data of the present study were taken from the English translated version of Bahaa Taher's the vivid compelling historical novel *Sunset Oasis*. The novel, which is set in the late of 19ᵗʰ century, is awarded the International Book Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2008. The novel was translated into English by Humphery Davies. The story portrays Mahmoud Abd el Zahir's life, the disgraced Egyptian officer who is posted to the remote desert town

of Siwa with his Irish wife as a punishment for his implication in an abortive rebellion in 1882 with the nationalist leader, Ahmed Urabi. He travels with his wife, Catherine, who tells us that their relation begins "when he found out I was Irish and I hated the British for occupying my country, as they had occupied his". In fact, Taher uses several first-person narrators. Catherine insists to travel with Mahmoud as she is fascinated by the Egyptology and ancient history. She wants to follow the footsteps of Alexander the Great in Siwa. Abd el Zahir's description of the tough journey, harsh environment and miserable memories reflect his terrible confused state of mind towards both environment and the events of his life. He also expresses fear of death whether by nature or by Siwans, who despise Egyptian rule as profoundly – though more murderously – as the Egyptians despise that of the British. On the other side, there is Catherine who love nature adoring desert and its sky with stars. There is also Catherine's sister, Fiona, who comes to them in hope of a cure for her tuberculosis as doctors advised her to live in a warm weather with her positive valuation to the hot weather of the desert which is negatively described by others.

Data Selection Criteria

The main aim of this study is ecolinguistic analysis using certain linguistic features— stance and evaluation – as a tool of this analysis. Hence, the selected extracts from Taher's *Sunset Oasis* are related to environment and the description of different parts of the ecological system to reveal the stories the characters of the novel live by as the main aim of ecolinguistic analysis.

1.3. Theoretical Framework

Any writer especially of novels usually projects himself into his text and engages his/her readers with what he communicates using different linguistic resources and choices to achieve his/her goal based on his/her feelings, judgements, values or interests. The relationship between the writer and the reader is expressed in Halliday's "interpersonal metafunction" of language. Halliday and Matthiessen, (2004) explain that whenever language is used in a communicative interaction to address a subject matter, it serves the

major function of establishing and negotiating relationships between participants, who have different roles to play in that interaction (pp. 106-11). Hence, the term 'interpersonal meaning' is used to refer to "a strand of meaning running throughout the text which expresses the writer's role relationship with the reader, and the writer's attitude towards the subject matter" (Eggins, 2004, p. 11). Novelists belong to this community of expressing *interpersonal meaning* whether by the writer himself or by the tongue of his characters. Hood (2012, p.52) elaborates that whenever we investigate "stance we are primarily locating ourselves in the realm of interpersonal meaning". This interpersonal meaning can be conveyed by different linguistic means such as "stance" (Biber et al., 1999). Stubbs (1986) describes the importance of this aspect of interpersonal meaning:

> Whenever speakers (or writers) say anything, they encode their point of view towards it ... The expression of such speakers' attitudes is pervasive in all uses of language. All sentences encode such a point of view, ... and the description of the markers of such points of view and their meanings should therefore be a central topic for linguistics. (cited in Englebretson 2007, p. 17)

In this line, Munday (2012) asserts that stance is the matter of expressing private opinion or attitude through the choice of genre, the choice of words, the syntactic choices, the intonation in speech, the arrangement of an argument or the form of language or dialect. Hence, stance can be interpreted differently or even evaluated either positively or negatively according to the context within it occurs. It is the sense of the subjective voice of writer/speaker in any piece of written or spoken language. It also functions different roles reflecting the sociocultural values of a writer/speaker.

Following the central notion of interpersonal meaning, Martin (2000) describes the appraisal theory as "the semantic resources used to negotiate emotions, judgements and valuations, alongside amplifying and engaging with these evaluations" (p. 145).

Moreover, it is described as "the systematic analysis of evaluation and stance as they operate in whole texts" (White, 2011, p. 14).

The appraisal framework

According to Martin (2000), the appraisal framework organizes evaluation in three main domains: engagement, attitude and graduation. This multidimensional framework presents a systematic organization of 'the semantic resources used to negotiate emotions, judgements and valuation, alongside resources for amplifying and engaging with these evaluations' (p. 145).

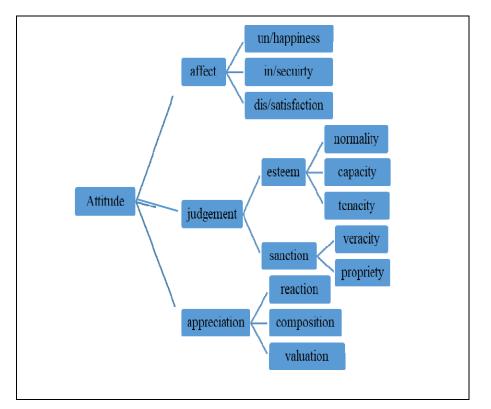| Domain of appraisal	Parameter	Value	Illustrative realization
Attitude	- Affect	-Through feelings and emotional reactions	- Happy, sad
	- Judgement	- Of ethics, behavior, capacity	- Wrong, brave
	- Appreciation	- Of things, phenomena, reaction	- Beautiful, authentic
Graduation	- Force	- Raise	- Extremely unwise
		- Lower	- Slightly corrupt
	- Focus	- Sharpen	- A true father
		- Soften	- apology of sorts
Engagement	- Monogloss	- Contraction	- Demonstrate, show
	- Heterogloss	- Expansion	- Claim, nearly, possibly

An overview of appraisal resources (Munday, 2012, p. 24)

Actually, the framework of appraisal theory is oriented "towards meanings in context and towards rhetorical effects, rather than towards grammatical forms" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 94). It means that the focus in this approach is the meanings or functions of the resources for the expression of evaluation than on the formation of a list of given linguistic indicators of these concepts. Lexico-grammatical devices are treated here only as a means to encode evaluation and stance meanings and not as an end in themselves.

The domain of attitude connects to the ways in which feelings are seen as a system of meanings. This system has three semantic areas: emotions (affect), which deal with the expression of positive and negative feelings; ethics (judgment), which is concerned with attitudes toward behaviour (to admire or to criticise, to praise or to condemn); and aesthetics (appreciation), which involves evaluations of semiotic and natural phenomena according to the ways in which they are valued or not in a given field (Martin and White, 2005, p. 42),. The three systems encode feeling, but affect can be seen as the basic system and the other two as feelings institutionalised as proposals and feelings institutionalised as propositions, respectively. In other words:

> judgement and apreciation might be interpreted as institutionalizations of affect which have evolved to socialize individuals into various uncommon sense communities of feeling – judgement as affect recontextualized to control behaviour (what we should and should not do), appreciation as affect recontextualized to manage taste (what things are worth). (Martin, 2003, pp. 173–4)

affect
- un/happiness
- in/secuirty
- dis/satisfaction

Attitude

judgement
- esteem
  - normality
  - capacity
  - tenacity
- sanction
  - veracity
  - propriety

appreciation
- reaction
- composition
- valuation

The structure of the attitude domain (Martin and White, 2005)

To conclude, the theoretical system of appraisal has become a prominent theoretical concept that cannot be neglected in any area of language study as it focuses on stance and evaluation, the two crucial aspects in language production and interpretation processes. The most notable matter here is that Appraisal theory focuses more on the functions of the expression of stance and evaluation than on the formation of a list of given linguistic indicators of these concepts. The matter that has been asserted by Martin and White (2005) themselves by saying that the framework of appraisal theory is direct "towards meanings in context and towards rhetorical effects, rather than towards grammatical forms" (p. 94). Appraisal deals with lexico-grammatical structures in any text only as a means to encode evaluation and stance meanings not as an end in themselves.

Ecolinguistic framework

Stibbe (2015) shows in his book how ecolinguistics can play a role in the reinvention of society along more ecological lines by revealing and challenging the stories we live by. He lists "The Stories We Live By" showing their linguistic manifestations as follows:

Social Cognition		Linguistic Manifestation
Type	**Explanation**	**What to look for**
Ideology	A story of how the world is and should be which is shared by members of a group.	Discourses, i.e., clusters of linguistic features characteristically used by the group
Framing	A story that uses a frame (a packet of knowledge about an area of life) to structure another area of life	Trigger words which bring frame to mind
Metaphor (a type of framing)	A story that uses a frame to structure a distinct and clearly different area of life	Trigger words which bring a specific and distinct frame to mind
Evaluation	A story about whether an area of life is good or bad	Appraisal patterns, i.e., patterns of language which represent an area of life positively or negatively
Identity	A story about what it means to be a particular kind of person	Forms of language which define the characteristics of certain kinds of people

Conviction	A story about whether a particular description of the world is true, uncertain or false	Facticity patterns, i.e., patterns of linguistic features which represent descriptions of the world as true, uncertain or false
Erasure	A story that an area of life is unimportant or unworthy of consideration	Patterns of language which fail to represent a particular area of life at all, or which background or distort it
Salience	A story that an area of life is important and worthy of consideration	Patterns of language which give prominence to an area of life
Narrative	A structure which involves a sequence of logically connected events	Narrative text, i.e., a specific oral telling, written work, or other expressive form which recounts a series of temporally and logically connected events

According to Stibbe, the term "evaluations" means stories in people's minds about whether a particular area of life is good or bad. Cognitive evaluations do not involve a careful weighing up of evidence about whether something is good or bad, but are associations that we have in memory, e.g. that honesty is good and lying is bad. When these stories are widespread across a culture then they are cultural evaluations – stories about what is good or bad that have become conventional. There are countless cultural evaluations that are built into common ways of talking about areas of social life, such as ECONOMIC GROWTH IS GOOD, RETAIL SALES ARE GOOD, INCREASED PROFITS ARE GOOD, FAST IS GOOD and CONVENIENCE IS GOOD. Once cultural evaluations become established there is a danger that the reason

why certain things are considered positive and others negative is forgotten. It becomes habitual to welcome the 'good news' that Christmas sales are high, without considering the cost to the environment or the problems of burgeoning personal debt; or to welcome the 'good news' that the profits of an ecologically destructive and exploitative corporation have risen.

1.4. Analysis

The analysis focuses on the language of the two main characters of the story; Mr. Abd el Zahir and his wife, to show the conveyance of different patterns of stance and their functions. The function of stance is elaborated in terms of both appraisal and ecolinguistic approaches to show different patterns of evaluation. To begin with the conveyance of stance in the selected extracts, the study follows Du Bois (2007) structure of stance including four key elements: stance maker, stance taker, stance object, stance function. These four elements can be defined as follows:

Stance maker	Stancetaker	Stance object	Stance function
It the lexical and grammatical devices through which stance can be realised at the structural level.	Stancetaker is the social actor who adopts a particular stance and more or less shares with his/her addressee(s) a system of beliefs and sociocultural values	Stance object is the specific object of interest towards which the stance is directed, i.e. what the stance is targeted. T	Stance function refers to the communicative purpose for which stance is taken.

In fact, stance can be realized by different linguistic, non-linguistic and even paralinguistic devices depending on the type of communication. Biber (2006) explains these features as follows:

Written/verbal communication	verbal communication	verbal communication
Linguistic devices: value-laden words and grammatical structures	**paralinguistic devices:** pitch, duration, and intensity	**non-linguistic devices:** body position, gestures, and facial expressions.

For the aim of this study, the focus is only on linguistic devices as the data to be investigated is written text. Biber (2006, p. 89) divides linguistic devices, stance makers, into two types: lexical and grammatical as follows:

Stance makers	
The lexical devices	**Grammatical devices**
Value-laden words (evaluative lexical items): an adjective, main verb, or noun	(1) modals, (2) stance adverbials, (3) stance complement clauses, (4) stance noun plus prepositional phrase constructions, and (5) premodifying stance adverbs

Biber (2006) classified modals into three major semantic groups that are involved in creating stance: (1) modals of possibility, permission, and ability (e.g., can, could, may, and might); (2) modals of necessity and obligation (e.g., must, should, (had) better, have to, got to, and ought to); and (3) those of prediction and volition (e.g., will, would, shall, and be going to) (p. 92). Moreover, he classifies stance adverbials from a semantic perspective into: (1) epistemic adverbials: represent how certain or reliable the author's proposition is. He further classifies these into epistemic adverbials of certainty that signify a high level of certainty of the propositional content of a message and epistemic

adverbials of likelihood that signify moderate or low level of certainty; (2) attitudinal adverbials: report personal attitudes, feelings, or value judgements of entities or propositions; and (3) style of stance adverbials: describe how information is being presented i.e. comment on the communication itself (p. 92). These categories are illustrated as follows:

Epistemic stance adverbials:

Certainty: actually, always, certainly, definitely, indeed, inevitably, in fact, never, of course, obviously, really, undoubtedly, without doubt, no doubt.

Likelihood: apparently, evidently, kind of, in most cases/instances, perhaps, possibly, predictably, probably, roughly, sort of, maybe.

Attitudinal adverbials: amazingly, astonishingly, conveniently, curiously, hopefully, even worse, fortunately, importantly, ironically, rightly, sadly, surprisingly, unfortunately.

Style of stance adverbials: according to, confidentially, frankly, generally, honestly, mainly, technically, truthfully, typically, reportedly, primarily, usually.

Although B. Gray and Biber (2014, p. 220) assert that stance which can be transmitted through the evaluative or value-laden lexis is almost implicit, this study investigates these value-laden as the text under investigation is a translated version in which the grammatical structure of the source sentences is modified in terms of the difference between the two languages systems.

Extract 1:

Come, Mahmoud! We *shall* travel to the desert together. We *shall* reborn there together too, and in that rebirth I *shall* not let you escape. You *will* be mine (p.36)

Stancetaker	Stance maker	Stance object	Stance function
Catherine	- Modals	The journey	Attitude:

(Mr. Abd el Zahir's Irish wife)	(shall, will) - Main verb (rebirth, reborn, escape)	to the desert	(affect-happiness)

Catherine uses "shall" and "will" which belong to modals category of prediction and volition. By repeating these markers with main verbs as "reborn", Catherine shows her attitude towards this journey as "rebirth journey". Although predictions indicate uncertainties because the predicated future actions may not take place, she shows her certainty by saying "I shall not let you escape" and "you will be mine". In this stance taking, she shows her positive attitude towards the journey to the desert where no way for escape from her. The stance in this sense creates a positive story in relation to the desert as part of the surrounding ecosystem.

Extract 2:

Abd el Zahir's following words describe his feelings towards desert:

So this is 'the garden of the spirit', as Saeed called it! His spirit maybe, not mine. It moves nothing in me, this yellow 'garden' except anger, perhaps. (p.37)

Stancetaker	Stance maker	Stance object	Stance function
Mr. Abd el Zahir	- Evaluative noun phrase (yellow garden) - Evaluative main verb (move) - Evaluative clause (nothing except	Desert	Attitude: negative appreciation

	anger) - Epistemic adverb of likelihood (maybe, perhaps)		

The stance is expressed through the choice of the evaluative phrase *yellow garden* and the evaluative main verb *move* which is used transitively followed by the evaluative clause *nothing except anger* to indicate an intense feeling of negative appreciation for the stance object. The epistemic adverb of likelihood *perhaps* makes space for other negative possibilities. For more explanation, According to appraisal theory, the terms "beautiful" and "ugly" can be used here to reflect Abd el Zahir's attitude as DESERT IS UGLY versus Saeed's DESERT IS BEAUTIFUL. One of the principles of ecolinguistics is that these patterns of appraisal underlie thinking of certain areas of life as either positive or negative, which in turn influences how we treat the planet's ecosystems. Ecolinguistically, we have two opposing stories the two characters live by; Abd el Zahir's is destructive and Saeed's is beneficial towards desert as a part of the ecosystem.

Extract 3:

The desert stretches away before my eyes and there is nothing in it but sand, dunes, rocks, and the mirages that shimmers in the distance. Searing heat by day and biting cold by night. From time to time, chains of grey mountains like the remnants of single mountain transformed by a bolt of lightning into splintered rubble. (p. 37)

Stancetaker	Stance maker	Stance object	Stance function
Mr. Abd el Zahir	- stance noun plus prepositional	Desert	Attitude: affect (insecurity)

	phrase constructions (nothing in it but sand) - Evaluative noun phrase (searing heat, biting cold, a bolt of lightning, splintered rubble)		

Abd el Zahir negatively evaluates the stance object. It is the "affect" category of appraisal approach indicating intense feelings of insecurity which is expressed through *a bolt of lightning* and *splintered rubble*; and two other evaluative phrases *searing heat* and *biting cold* which in turn invoking negative valuation about the surrounding environment. The extract shows a strong feeling of insecurity producing a negative image of the stance object.

Extract 4:

As each day passes on the road, a deeper silence reigns over the caravan, and all eyes are directed to the front, gazing into the emptiness. What does each of them think about? I don't know, but the silence floods my mind with cries and images that awaken all the past— all who are alive and all who have passed away (p. 37)

Stancetaker	Stance maker	Stance object	Stance function
Mr. Abd el Zahir	- Evaluative noun phrase (a deeper silence) - Evaluative main verbs (reign, directed)	Emptiness of the Desert	Attitude: affect (dissatisfaction)

	- Evaluative noun (emptiness)		

Abd el Zahir begins the presentation of his stance ambiguously; he talks about silence and emptiness without any judgement neither positive nor negative. The epistemic meaning involved in the sentence "I do not know" adds to this vague feelings as he is confident of his feelings but he is not sure about the others'. He is sure about the past bad image in his mind with passed away persons to indicate bad memories. The emptiness of the desert is compared with the stancetaker's empty life which reflects negative story he lives by.

Extract 5:

I think about many things, especially the end. Am I afraid of death? Of course. Who isn't? I ask myself how it will take me – at the oasis with a bullet? Or as an ordinary death after an illness, long or short? In some passing accidents? By strangulation in the bathhouse or poison put in my food? Will it come without any preamble whatsoever? Hundreds of shapes hide in the dark corners of the road, waiting to pounce on me in a single leap that is itself the end. (p.38)

Stancetaker	Stance maker	Stance object	Stance function
Mr. Abd el Zahir	Evaluation noun phrase (hundreds of shapes, the dark corners, a single leap) Evaluative main verb (hide, pounce)	Night	Affect (insecurity)

In the previous extract, Mr Abd el Zahir expresses his fear of death. The most significant section in this monologue when he expresses his fear of darkness referring to his surrounding environment. The stance is realised at the lexical level through evaluative noun phrases and main verbs to express the speaker negative evaluation of the stance object "the darkness of the night" relating it to his biggest fear of "death". In this context, the story he lives by cannot be described by anything except destructive. He hates both death and the darkness of the night in the surrounding desert. Like this story no human can live by according to ecolinguistics as we have to positively evaluate the nature around us. The story we might hate, it might be lovely for others. However, we cannot live with this story of negative attitude and appreciation.

Extract 6:

In this desert, though, there's nothing in my mind except yesterday, and I do not like it. (p. 38)

Stancetaker	Stance maker	Stance object	Stance function
Mr. Abd el Zahir	stance noun plus prepositional phrase constructions (nothing in my mind except yesterday) Evaluative main verb (do not like)	Desert and the past	Affect (insecutity)

In this stance, Mr. Abd el Zahir relates the desert to his past which he dislikes. By this relation he creates a destructive story also.

Extract 7:

She answered, 'can't see for yourself? These stars, for example. Never in the city have I seen them so many or so bright.' (40) I

raised my eyes to the sky, saying, 'because the moon is still small.' (41)

Stancetaker	Stance maker	Stance object	Stance function
Catherine	So many, so bright	Stars	Appreciation (valuation)

Although Catherine's stance is positive towards environment creating her desirable beneficial story, Abd el Zahir tries to destroy her beneficial story by saying 'because the moon is still small'. In ecolinguistic approach, Catherine's story reflects a positive attitude to environment establishing the wanted kind of relation with ecosystem. For sure this kind of positive relation is reflected in her action towards environment as no one can hurt or destroy the thing he loves and appreciates positively.

Extract 8:

She responded, 'I know. But here the stars seem to me bigger and closer. They twinkle as though they were in constant motion towards me, so that I can almost touch them with my hand, as though they were swimming fast through the sky and will soon fall to earth.' (41)

Stancetaker	Stance maker	Stance object	Stance function
Catherine	Bigger, closer, twinkle, motion	Stars	Appreciation (valuation)

Catherine continues to describe stars positively adding more figurative language likening stars with fish swimming in the sky. The story she lives by is reflected in her way of thinking, way of talking and for sure in her way of dealing with environment.

Extract 9:

Mr. Abd el Zahir :I know a lot of Irish are poets but the desert affects us all differently.

Catherine: 'and how does it affect you?'

Mr. Abd el Zahir: I have another desert stretching inside me, with nothing in it of the silence of this desert we are crossing—a desert full of voices and people and images. (p. 41)

Stancetaker	Stance maker	Stance object	Stance function
Mr. Abd el Zahir	Nothing, silence, full of, voices, people, images	Desert	Affect (insecurity)

Mr. Abd el Zahir continues to describe his own story relating the empty desert to the crowd in his mind in a negative stance showing insecurity category of attitude. This is unwanted destructive story about nature in which he relates desert to his bad memories.

Extract 10:

Catherine: 'That's very beautiful.'

Mr. Abd el Zahir: It would be beautiful if the images weren't also sterile, like the desert. All of them hark to a past that is dead, but they pursue me all the time.

Stancetaker	Stance maker	Stance object	Stance function
Catherine	Very beautiful	Desrt	Appreciation (valuation)

As mentioned before, the story we live is reflected in our way of thinking, talking and acting; Catherine still sees the positive side in Abd el Zahir's story although he expresses his bad psyche. Finally, she says to him it is not nature the cause of his state; it is his own

story that he lives which is reflected in his way of thinking, talking and acting "it may not be the desert's fault. Perhaps you brought these things to it".

Even the hot weather that the characters describe it as an awful weather to be lived in (destructive story), Catherine's sister is advised to live in to get better. Hence, the story that someone sees it bad, is good for others. In the end, we have to deal with environment as our partners in the larger ecological system. We cannot live with our partners with negative attitude and destructive stories in our minds. We share life with animals, plants, forests, deserts, oceans, rain, soil, and other ecological components of nature. Our positive attitude towards all these elements prevents us from destroying them and from living destructive stories about them. As sociolinguistics introduces the framework for linguists to analyze language showing social factors such as power relations, ideologies and identities to create more equal societies, ecolinguistics shares the same goal adding to these social factors ecological elements to be taken in consideration.

1.5. Conclusion

The current study aims to analyze fictional language as formed in the selected novel in the context of appraisal and ecolinguistic perspectives. In line with the previous theoretical discussions, one important insight from the analysis is how "ecolinguistics" as a highly interdisciplinary field can be used to analyze different literary genres that reflect our reality and the stories we live by. These studies may help in bridging the epistemological gap between ecolinguistics and other dependent disciplines such as pragmatic analysis and critical discourse studies and will significantly influence the field's future research directions. The analysis answers the two research questions; firstly, it shows the lexico-grammmatical markers of stance (Biber et al., 1999; Biber, 2006), and then it shows the function of each stance according to

the appraisal framework (Martin and White, 2005) relating these functions to stibbe's stories we live by. The analysis shows Mr. Abd el Zahir's destructive stories about environment opposing Catherine's beneficial ones. As the aim of ecolinguistics, this study aims to criticize Abd el Zahir's negatively helping readers to search new stories as Catherine's to love nature and appraise it positively. We cannot live without positive attitude and appreciation towards the ecosystem around us as we all are involved in this system. In the end, the main contribution of this study is that it combines the concept of evaluation in ecolinguistic approach to the same concept in Appraisal approach by investigating stance in the selected extracts of the novel showing different attitude towards surrounding ecosystem. The study supports Stibbe's belief that a linguist's main role is to create equal society considering the role of language in the life-sustaining relationships among humans, other species and the physical environment. The research hopes to contribute to the progress of this area of study language in the Egyptian linguistic community as it is noticed that very few studies have been conducted within the area of ecoliguistics in Egypt.

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