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Volum X, ISSUE I WINTER (MARCH-2025)

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Article Title

Employing Ecolinguistics Strategies: Analyzing the Impact of Salience and Erasure in Environmental Advertising

Abstract

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Keywords: Ecolinguistics, Salience, Erasure, Environmental Advertising, Language and Ecology

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Citing this Article

22	Employing Ecolinguistics Strategies: Analyzing the Impact of Salience and Erasure in Environmental Advertising		
Authors	Gul Aizaz Samra Gul	**DOI**	10.31703/gssr.2025(X-I).22
		Pages	254-263
		Year	2025
		Volume	X
		Issue	I
Referencing & Citing Styles			
APA	Aizaz, G., & Gul, S. (2025). Employing Ecolinguistics Strategies: Analyzing the Impact of Salience and Erasure in Environmental Advertising. *Global Social Sciences Review*, *X*(I), 254-263. https://doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2025(X-I).22		
CHICAGO	Aizaz, Gul, and Samra Gul. 2025. "Employing Ecolinguistics Strategies: Analyzing the Impact of Salience and Erasure in Environmental Advertising." *Global Social Sciences Review* X (I):254-263. doi: 10.31703/gssr.2025(X-I).22.		
HARVARD	AIZAZ, G. & GUL, S. 2025. Employing Ecolinguistics Strategies: Analyzing the Impact of Salience and Erasure in Environmental Advertising. *Global Social Sciences Review,* X**,** 254-263.		
MHRA	Aizaz, Gul, and Samra Gul. 2025. 'Employing Ecolinguistics Strategies: Analyzing the Impact of Salience and Erasure in Environmental Advertising', *Global Social Sciences Review*, X: 254-63.		
MLA	Aizaz, Gul, and Samra Gul. "Employing Ecolinguistics Strategies: Analyzing the Impact of Salience and Erasure in Environmental Advertising." *Global Social Sciences Review* X.I (2025): 254-63. Print.		
OXFORD	Aizaz, Gul and Gul, Samra (2025), 'Employing Ecolinguistics Strategies: Analyzing the Impact of Salience and Erasure in Environmental Advertising', *Global Social Sciences Review,* X (I), 254-63.		
TURABIAN	Aizaz, Gul and Samra Gul. "Employing Ecolinguistics Strategies: Analyzing the Impact of Salience and Erasure in Environmental Advertising." *Global Social Sciences Review* X, no. I (2025): 254-63. https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2025(X-I).22.		

Global Social Sciences Review
www.gssrjournal.com
DOI:http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr

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Contents

Abstract

This research explores the field of ecolinguistics, the study of the relationship between language and ecology with a particular emphasis on how language expressions affect how people perceive their surroundings. Using Stibbe's(2015)ecolinguistic paradigm of salience and erasure, six environmental commercials are analyzed and divided into constructive and destructive categories. To investigate how these strategies appear in ads and how well they work to communicate environmental messages, both qualitative and quantitative approaches are used.While the quantitative component evaluates the frequency and impact of the advertising, the qualitative analysis examines how salience and erasure are applied to them. The findings suggest that salience is a strategy that is mostly employed in constructive commercials to draw attention to important environmental issues, whereas, in destructive advertisements, both salience and erasure are equally used. According to the study's findings, salience works especially well for positive ads since it can highlight important facets of environmental campaigning.

Keywords:

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Introduction

A historical perspective is presented by Orr (1992), who points out that for the past 500 years, many academic disciplines have upheld and promoted human dominance over the natural world. This background prepares the reader for a more in-depth examination of the relationship between language and ecology, especially as seen through the ecolinguistics perspective. The level of ecological consciousness among humans has reached a crucial point, indicating increased concerns about possible risks to the global ecology. After Einar Haugen's groundbreaking book "The Ecology of Language" was published in 1970 and offer

ed a novel approach to researching the relationships between languages in multilingual societies and human brains, the term "ecolinguistics" began to acquire popularity. (Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2001). Over the ensuing decades, this novel methodology saw a significant expansion, absorbing elements of stylistics, anthropological linguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and language instruction. By the 1990s, the various approaches linking language studies to ecological issues had come together to establish a cohesive, albeit diverse, field officially known as ecolinguistics (Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2001).

Moreover, these days, ecolinguistics adapts linguistic theories to meet and advance the objectives of ecological studies by critically analyzing texts from an ecological point of view. Among these theories that are noteworthy are the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) frameworks developed by van Dijk (2008) and Fairclough (2003), as well as cognitive-linguistic methods like those put out by Lakoff & Johnson (1980) that investigate how metaphor shapes our perception of the world. This study aims to bridge this gap by analyzing six environmental advertisements to understand how these ecolinguistic techniques are employed in both constructive and destructive contexts.

Research Questions

1. Which technique, erasure or salience, is more commonly utilized in environmental advertisements?
2. In what ways do the techniques of erasure and salience operate differently in constructive versus destructive environmental advertisements?

Research Objectives

- To determine the prevalence of erasure and salience techniques in environmental advertising.
- To analyze the distinct functions and impacts of erasure and salience in advertisements that promote environmental preservation (constructive) and those that may undermine it (destructive).

Literature Review:

Ecolinguistics: An Overview

The new field of ecolinguistics has developed and evolved as a result of interaction with specific social and academic contexts rather than existing in a vacuum. If one considers the causes of the field's founding, ecolinguistics is among these. To a certain degree, "the ecological crisis that is said to characterize the Anthropocene is the historical backdrop to ecolinguistics." (Zhou, 2022) Zhou (2022) maps ecolinguistics onto the ecological catastrophe, which is thought to be a primary cause: Ecolinguistics, traced back to a starting point in reaction to the ecological catastrophe, must inevitably address four primary issues: (1) the emergence of the ecology of language as an ecological metaphor, (2) linguists' contributions to ideological issues such as literal anthropocentrism, (3) the current detachment between linguistics and ecological issues, and (4) some initial implications for how the environmental crisis is represented in linguistic studies as well as how language influences linguistic behaviors and activities that impact environmental issues. (page 464) The name "ecolinguistics" has been used to describe language with a variety of text studies, including text analysis concerning the environment, word relationships to local objects, and many other diverse areas of the environment. According to Milstein et al. (2009), the idea of ecolinguistics is as follows: The field's current emphasis on human interactions with the environment and communication unites theory and research. Environmental communication scholars are especially interested in how people communicate about the natural world.. (p344)

The variety of approaches stems from various interpretations of what constitutes an "ecology," ranging from the extremely broad notion of "the interaction of some things with other things" to more focused ideas like those "related to environmentalism." (Stibbe, 2015) Thus, it can be defined as "a general term encompassing a variety of approaches, each with distinct objectives and goals." (Stibbe, 2015) Linguistics and ecology make up the two sections of ecolinguistics. This study begins with the prefix "eco" and goes into great detail discussing these two sections. The social sciences and humanitarian fields have taken an ecological spin in response to this worry. These science subjects are no longer viewed in isolation.

They seem to be interconnected and integrate into the living world's surroundings. The natural world shapes these fields and becomes a part of it. They begin by addressing the ecological problems and difficulties that humans are currently facing, including contamination, global warming, food security, water scarcity, and other environmental emergencies. Moreover, Steffensen & Fill (2014) mention four distinct methods that offer various interpretations of the word "ecology": They are as follows: According to the first method, languages interact with one another in a certain setting and exist within a symbolic environment. The second viewpoint holds that because language is a component of a sociocultural environment, it shapes communities and civilizations. The third method focuses on cognitive ecology and how an organism's ability to think influences how it adapts to its surroundings. The final field of study is natural ecology, which focuses on how language interacts with its physical and biological surroundings. (page 7) Numerous fields that are closely related to ecology are growing in popularity, including political ecology, ecopsychology, ecofeminism, ecocriticism, ecopoetics, ecofeminism, and environmental communication, which is the focus of this study. (Page 7 of Stibbe, 2015) Linguistics makes up the second component of the term "Ecolinguistics." It speaks of the linguistic examination of texts from an ecological standpoint.

There are far too many linguistic theories that address language from social and cultural perspectives. Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) theory of cognitive linguistics and van Dijk's (2008) and Fairclough's (2014) theories of CDA, which address issues of racism, power, and sexism, are two examples. As in the past, human relations are the only subject of these theories. Nonetheless, it is simple to adapt and apply to ecological studies now that they are visible. The primary issue to be addressed in an ecolinguistics examination of an ideology, say, in an ecology text, is how "it encourages people to preserve or destroy the ecosystems that support life." (Stibbe, 2015) Because there is no method for determining if the ideology in this literature is beneficial or harmful. Furthermore, according to Rasheed (2003), "the term ecology will lose its meaning if something is not seen as falling under the concept of an

organism or a community of organisms as a living system while describing it as ecology.

Constructive and Destructive Aspects of Language

Constructive language, on the one hand, describes discourse that highlights the value of advancing ecological viewpoints by presenting them as helpful substitutes for traditional narratives about the world and assisting in their spread, even though they are still relatively unknown at the moment. (Stibbe, 2015) As a result, the encouraging wording inspires the reader to take action against campaigns that harm the environment and care about the environment. In this context, Schultz (2001) emphasizes that educators should be made aware of the problem so they may discuss it with their students and promote the use of language that is not exploitative. The words used today will determine whether we win or lose in the future. (p113).

Since constructive language seeks to preserve and conserve the planet's ecology, it is an emerging demand for all people. In order to go from the negative to the positive in terms of protecting the environment, a genuine effort must be made to combat language exploitation by educators, businesses, and the like. On the other hand, a discourse that promotes product consumption on behalf of the global environment is referred to as destructive language. According to Gare (1996), By giving people the ideas through which they were able to define and justify their connections with one another, with society, and with nature, economics has emerged as the primary interpreter of society to its members. Using terminology that emphasizes "industrial agriculture, particularly the animal production industry," as Stibbe (2015) puts it, is detrimental. Therefore, there is a tendency to use a lot of environmental resources and to pollute and damage them. (Baroni et. al., 2006)

Erasure

Erasure is, on the one hand, the method employed in ecolinguistics to identify materials that have been excluded or marginalized from a discourse or text. Emphasis is placed on the fact that linguists focus on hidden, minor, and even eliminated "participants" in a text or speech in addition to overtones. However, ecolinguistics plays a crucial

role in "examining what has been erased by texts and discourses, considering whether that erasure is problematic, and if so, how that consciousness can be restored." This is a crucial aspect of ecolinguistics activity. (Stibbe, 2015, p145) According to Fairclough (2003), the purpose of using "abstract language" in an erasing approach is to hide "concrete details," making participants appear "absent" or "background." It is important to note that when erasure is discussed, it alludes to a deliberate removal or exclusion of anything significant from a discourse to make it marginal or unimportant. (Page 146, Stibbe, 2015) As Ferber (2007, p. 265) demonstrates, whiteness studies take into account "race" and "privilege," but they leave out "gender." Technically speaking, "exclusion" is defined as "an aspect of social actor representation where particular social actors do not appear in a text or as part of a discourse," while "erasure technique" is defined as "a form of exclusion or marginalization, particularly about identity categories." (Baker & Ellece, 2011)

Moreover, Stibbe (2015) emphasizes that the erasure procedure plays a useful role in helping analysts identify erased items and put them back under scrutiny. Language Expression of Erasure Stibbe (2015) divides the method into three categories:

The Void

The term "The Void" describes the kind of erasure in which "something important" is completely removed or concealed from a discourse, The total elimination of the "ecological embedding of human economics" from the neoclassical economics spectrum is a notable illustration of the void type of erasure. Human dependence on plants, animals, and other ecological and environmental aspects is one example of the kind of material that is removed from the "Microeconomics" textbook, according to Williams and McNeill (2005), cited by Stibbe (2015).

The Mask

It speaks of the other kind of erasing. When "it is erased but replaced by a distorted version of itself," this type is attained. One example of the second sort of erasure is when the distinctive characteristics of plants, animals, planets, and the like are replaced with abstract aspects.

The Trace

The process of "something being partially erased but still present" is known as this kind of erasure. Stated differently, discourses of this kind are those that portray the natural world in a way that is less authentic than its feeble vision.

Salience

However, according to Stibbe (2015), salience refers to placing a greater priority on a specific life circumstance. Stated differently, salience is that which uses all representational assistance that is, linguistic, visual, and so forth to promote "an area of life." The term salience refers to the extent to which an element attracts attention based on several factors such as its size, placement in the foreground or overlapped parts, color, tonal values, clarity of definition, and other characteristics. (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006) Therefore, when doing salience, visual representations are prioritized.

Linguistic Manifestation of Salience

When language patterns are combined in an image, text, advertisement, or other similar context, they are given prominence to indicate salience and represent certain entities.

Metaphor

One of the characteristics of environmental speech is metaphor. (Page 154, Harris, 2001) Furthermore, metaphor is defined as "work by applying one taken-for-granted field of knowledge and applying it to another" by Chilton & Schäffner (2011). (page 320). Martin (2005) further states that metaphors "imply an identity between otherwise different things" in this sense. Stibbe (2015), on the other hand, views it as "a story that describes something as if it were something else" (p. 78). Page 63 Therefore, "metaphor is a combination of speech that links the real world to the imaginary world and denotes the translation of one expression's meaning into another." (Abdulmajeed and Younus, 2018) Regarding the metaphor of ecolinguistics, Stibbe (2015) states that it is possible to identify many logical conclusions that may arise from the use of the metaphor and assess the advantages and disadvantages of each. In the field of ecolinguistics, the most important question is whether metaphors

are beneficial, neutral, or destructive from an ecological perspective.

Ideologies

"Belief systems about how the world was, is, will be, or should be which are shared by members of particular groups in society" is the definition given for ideologies. Stibbe (2015), page 32. Ideology is defined as "a cognitively determined concept that is manifested via language use" by (Muhammed, 2020). (page 8) It is stated that the group is defined by its "unique ways of speaking, writing, or designing visual materials that are common to the group." By elucidating the "standardized ways that particular groups in society use language, images, and other forms of representation," these traits enable the revelation of vocabulary, grammar, and other linguistic representations in stories. (Stibbe, 2015) Stibbe (2015) states that the "linguistic features" are the main focus of ecolinguistics analysis because they are used to reveal ideologies. According to him, the question in ecolinguistics analysis of an ideology is not whether it is true but rather whether it encourages people to preserve or destroy the ecosystems that support life.

Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical foundations are found in the frameworks of cognitive linguistics as defined by Lakoff & Johnson (1980) and critical discourse analysis as articulated by van Dijk (2008) and Fairclough (2003). These viewpoints offer the means to examine how language, through prominence and erasure, can create or destroy ecological ideologies, endorsing consumerist actions that are harmful to the health of the environment or encouraging sustainable activities. The discipline of Ecolinguistics is a consequence of the coming together of linguistic research and ecological concerns. It is an increased understanding of the way language constructs

ecological knowledge and behavior. According to Fill, this discipline has evolved to encompass various linguistic specializations, such as anthropological linguistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis, which all enable us to understand the ecological features that govern how we engage with the environment.

Research Methodology

This research applies a mixed-methods technique to analyze how salience and erasure are utilized in six environmental commercials by mixing qualitative and quantitative measurements. Using the most variation sample method described by Coyne (1997), this sampling tries to capture a large range of applications for these measures in the commercials obtained from various websites. Employing a qualitative method, the research evaluates the way erasure and salience emerge in advertisements through Stibbe's (2015) paradigm. Quantitative analysis is applied to examine the frequency and percentages of these approaches in order to establish their prevalence and how they shape the way observers perceive and behave regarding the environment.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data reveals whether the advertisements are constructive or destructive depending on the use of erasure and salience in six ads, the research studies advertisements to see how the tactics either highlight environmentally friendly behaviors or cover up those that are harmful. For instance, constructive ads (Ads 1, 3, and 5) utilize salience to promote environmental protection, like the preservation of trees, which is important to maintaining ecological balance. Conversely, the destructive ads (Ads 2, 4, and 6) utilize salience and erasure to advertise harmful environmental products or activities, like the use of leather products or commercial deforestation.

Figure 1

The salience and erasure model by Stibbe (2015) can be applied to examine the image titled "Save Trees," which boldly features hands taking care of a sapling, and understanding the language and pictorial approach utilized.

The photo captioned "Save Trees" effectively utilizes salience and erasure to convey a tangible green message. The primary visual element of the image of a young tree nurtured by human beings and the text "Save Trees," is displayed prominently, both utilize salience to point directly to the activity of planting or conserving trees. A strong appeal to action is generated by this textual and visual emphasis, and it draws attention to the importance of every individual contributing to stopping deforestation and mitigating its harmful consequences on the world's oxygen. On the other hand, the image uses erasure by showing a monotonous background and omitting any reference to the harmful consequences of deforestation. By removing unnecessary details, this omission simplifies the message and maintains it centered on the positive action of planting trees and the single focus.

Figure 2

The "Site Preparation for Your Residential or Commercial Project" commercial intentionally zeroes in on building and development services through the employment of salience and erasure. The enormous yellow excavator that visually occupies most of the space and stands out against the bright blue sky is one illustration of the salience of the image. The text overlays, which emphasize the service further, make it immediately obvious that the advertisement is meant for individuals and companies who are preparing construction projects. This draws the observer's attention to the capabilities of the big machinery and suggests that it is efficient and ready to handle major earthmoving jobs. On the other hand, the method of erasure is discreetly but successfully used to highlight only the building part and leave out any possible environmental issues related to extensive land removal. There is no interrupted wildlife or vegetation in the photograph, and there are no potential residential or commercial structures that could raise concerns about displacement or destruction. Any components that could create unfavorable associations or detract from the main point of construction preparedness and competence are eliminated in this selected presentation. The advertising urges viewers to consider only the practical aspects of site preparation, ignoring any consideration of the ecological or social implications of such actions, by focusing solely on the machinery and cleared ground.

Figure 3

This advertisement features a striking image of a red elephant silhouette on a black background with the words "Cut a Tree, Kill a Life" above it. The use of strong contrasts and the color red which may represent blood help to effectively emphasize the urgency of the situation and highlight the potentially fatal consequences of deforestation. This striking metaphor links the act of felling trees to the poaching of wildlife, especially elephants, which have great cultural and environmental significance. Because of the elephant's size and prominence, the image immediately draws attention to deforestation's detrimental effects on the environment. When it comes to erasure, the commercial leaves out any advantages or explanations that are frequently connected to tree-cutting, including economic benefit or land development. There is no sign of human habitation or any potential advantages to exploiting land that has been removed via deforestation. This omission directs the audience's moral and emotional attention exclusively to the detrimental effects on biodiversity and wildlife, contributing to the creation of a singular narrative about the ethical and environmental ramifications of deforestation. The advertisement increases its persuasive power by reducing the topic to a clear-cut moral option and eliminating any counterarguments or broader context.

Figure 4

Salience and erasure are skillfully used in this Red Chief shoe advertisement to properly target its target group. The huge, tough leather shoe that takes up much of the upper part of the image and the powerful slogan "Real Men Wear Real Leather" work together to effectively express the salience of the image. This tagline, along with the slogan "The Power of Real Leather," asserts that the usage of real leather is connected with authenticity and masculinity, therefore intentionally highlighting the perceived quality and attractiveness of the product. The picture of the handsomely attired male model, positioned in a relaxed manner next to the sneaker, draws the viewer's eye and strengthens the image and way of life linked with the brand.
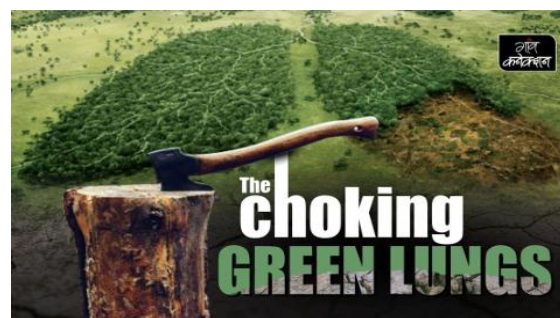
Regarding erasing, the advertising makes no mention of the moral or environmental issues such as animal welfare or the effects of leather production on the environment that are connected to the usage of genuine leather. Because of this deliberate omission, the commercial may concentrate only on the advantages of the product, increasing its allure without posing any ethical questions. By leaving these out, the commercial streamlines the decision-making process for the buyer by focusing solely on the style, luxury, and status that real leather products are supposed to convey, distancing itself from any negative associations.

Figure 5

This environmental commercial uses effective erasure and salience strategies to highlight the devastating effects of deforestation. An axe is visibly stuck in a tree stump, and the image offers a sharp contrast between a desolate, broken terrain and a lush green area shaped like lungs. Just as lungs in a human body, the visual metaphor of the "choking green lungs" is a strong salience that identifies the destruction brought about by cutting down trees to the environment. It depicts how deforestation affects the ability of the Earth to breathe and sustain life. The use of the title "The Choking Green Lungs" emphasizes the importance of the issue and the key point of the argument, drawing attention to how directly and forcefully the connection between forest health and global health can be established. As far as erasure goes, the poster intentionally omits any signs of human existence or advancement, such as urbanization or agriculture, which would typically be employed as a reason for leveling land. By removing any possible defense of the practice, this exclusion helps to focus the viewer's attention solely on the negative impacts of deforestation. The commercial makes an evident environmental appeal without portraying any possible benefits of land-use change, making its emotive and persuasive impact more robust. Through this tactic, the audience is prompted for immediate reflection and action while keeping the message crisp and powerful.

Findings

The study results show how advertisers use erasure and salience in a smart manner to attain their objectives. While salience draws attention to elements that are critical to the message of the advertisement and affects viewer perception and reaction, erasure is effective in keeping crucial elements away from viewers' attention, diverting their attention from features that could be dangerous. They work to different extents depending on whether the aim of the advertisement is harmful, with the promotion of consumerism likely to harm the environment, or constructive, toward activities that aid in preserving the environment. On closer examination, labeled commercials fall into the constructive category.

They display a clear intent to progress sustainability and environmental welfare. Such adverts, for example, encourage people to save trees by emphasizing that they play an important part in the production of oxygen and ecological balance. Others with destructive examinations are deemed dangerous. They are created to drive consumption, often at the cost of environmental wellness, which illustrates the less charitable intentions of the advertisers. The research concludes that, aside from shaping the public perception of environmental issues, advertisers' intentional employment of erasure and salience can also identify their actual reasons, which may either be for resource exploitation or protection.

Conclusion

The research concludes that environmental marketing uses erasure and salience intentionally to promote or counter ecological sustainability. Salience is an effective strategy leveraged by constructive advertisements to elicit environmental sensitivity and practices that are beneficial for ecological well-being. Destructive advertisements prioritize economic interests over ecological ones by embracing both erasure and salience, which endangers environmental sustainability. The current analysis not only illuminates the double use of language strategies in environmental marketing but also highlights the need for increased awareness and regulation regarding the possible effect of such practices on public attitude and behavior towards the environment.

Future Recommendations

The future researcher should also assess if the current findings hold across other cultural contexts, and future research should extend their scope by introducing a larger and more representative sample of ads. Even deeper insights into the impact of these advertising tactics on consumer behavior in the long term and in the laboratory, respectively, can be provided by longitudinal and experimentally based research. It might be possible to gain greater insight into the influence of language on environmental action using multidisciplinary methods that bring together Ecolinguistics with psychological and sociological perspectives. In the outside world, this

would entail more government oversight to ensure that advertisers use beneficial and scientifically supported environmental claims, together with the development of responsible advertising codes of practice promoting the use of positive environmental messages.

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