

An Ecolinguistic Analysis of Advertising Discourse: How Framing Techniques Replace Natural Products With Marketed Narratives in Saudi Arabia

Aisha Bhatti*

Department of English, College of Science and Humanities, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia

Abstract—This study investigates the phenomenon of *erasure* in the commercial discourse of dairy product advertisements by multinational companies in Saudi Arabia. This research focuses on the packaging and promotional language of 25 dairy products from five major supermarkets in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The research employs Stibbe’s (2021) ecolinguistic framework to examine key discursive strategies, including *metaphor*, *trace*, *facticity*, *greenwashing*, and *erasure*. While erasure remains the central analytical focus, the study also considers related narrative strategies such as metaphor and conviction, which support the ideological framing of dairy products as natural, pure, and wholesome. The analysis reveals that nature is often either partially or entirely erased through the use of vague and idealized expressions such as ‘farm-fresh’ and ‘pure love,’ which distance consumers from the environmental and ethical realities of dairy production. Animals are either rendered invisible or referenced only through abstract phrases like ‘dairy goodness.’ This language not only promotes consumer appeal but also performs ideological work by constructing narratives of ecological harmony and ethical production, even in conditions where such ideals may not exist. The findings contribute to the expanding field of ecolinguistics and critical discourse studies by highlighting the urgent need for ecological accountability in corporate communication.

Index Terms—Ecolinguistics, erasure, commercial discourse, dairy advertisements, greenwashing

I. INTRODUCTION

Language plays a crucial role in shaping our understanding of the environment and the relationship with the world around us (Ashraf et al., 2025; Berio & Musholt, 2023). As a powerful ideological tool, it influences the way ecological issues are perceived and addressed. Ecolinguistics, an emerging interdisciplinary field, explores how language influences ecological thinking, behavior, and sustainability (Prodanovska-Poposka, 2024; Stibbe, 2024). In simple terms, Ecolinguistics involves a varying degree of terminological complexity, as it borrows the concept of ‘ecology’ from the natural sciences and applies it to the study of language (Penz & Fill, 2022). It provides critical tools for analyzing how discourse, particularly in commercial and consumer contexts, either reinforces or undermines sustainable ideologies (Das & Albinsson, 2023; Laurie, 2023). In an age marked by climate change, resource scarcity, and ecological degradation, understanding the linguistic strategies that normalize or obscure environmental harm is more urgent than ever.

In the food industry, especially in dairy marketing, products are often portrayed as natural, wholesome, and environmentally friendly. Labels like ‘fresh from nature,’ ‘pure milk,’ or ‘farm fresh’ are frequently employed to evoke idyllic images of untouched rural landscapes and traditional farming practices. However, these portrayals often conceal the industrial reality of mass dairy production, which is associated with greenhouse gas emissions, excessive water use, and land degradation (UNICEF, 2023). This creates a tension between the discourse presented to consumers and the ecological truths behind food systems, a phenomenon that ecolinguists refer to as *the erasure of nature* (Ain et al., 2023). In Saudi Arabia, the expansion of global retail chains has introduced a wide array of dairy products from both local and multinational brands. Advertising in this sector often blends global sustainability rhetoric with regional themes of purity, tradition, and nature. While phrases like ‘farm-fresh’ and ‘nature’s gift’ suggest authenticity and natural origins, they often mask the industrialized methods of production. Despite a growing awareness of environmental issues in the region, little research has explored whether this commercial discourse aligns with ecolinguistic principles or fosters ecological awareness, thereby reinforcing ecological disconnection.

This study investigates how dairy products in Saudi Arabian supermarkets use language to construct nature-based narratives. Specifically, it aims to determine whether these narratives foster environmental awareness or contribute to the symbolic erasure of nature. Drawing on the theoretical framework of ecolinguistics and critical discourse analysis,

* Corresponding Author. Email: a.bhatti@psau.edu.sa

this research analyzes product packaging, slogans, and marketing language across a selection of local and international dairy brands. By identifying patterns in metaphor, ideology, and framing, the study seeks to reveal how commercial discourse influences public attitudes toward the environment and consumption. This work contributes to the broader field of ecolinguistics by focusing on the largely overlooked cultural and commercial context of the Gulf region. Ultimately, it also serves as a call to action for marketers, policymakers, and ecolinguists to recognize the influential role language plays in either promoting or undermining ecological values.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Ecolinguistics and Environmental Discourse*

Ecolinguistics is a critical and interdisciplinary field that examines how language influences the shaping of ideology and reflects the relationships between humans, non-human species, and the environment. As Ghorbanpour and Davari (2024) describe ecolinguistics as a branch of linguistic inquiry that not only investigates language use in environmental contexts but also evaluates the ecological impacts of discourse itself. Rooted in both critical discourse analysis and ecological philosophy, ecolinguistics examines whether our language practices support or undermine environmental well-being. Shah and Shah (2025) emphasize that one of the ecolinguistic core goals is to identify how daily communication narratives perpetuate environmental degradation or promote sustainability. A foundational concept in this field is what Stibbe (2015) calls ‘the stories we live by’, cultural narratives embedded in language that influence human behaviors, values, and environmental ethics. These stories often reflect in linguistic choices and shape how individuals conceptualize nature, frequently reinforcing anthropocentrism and consumerism. Burroughs (2022) further argues that such narratives play a vital role in framing consumption patterns, industrial activities, and how societies frame the human-nature relationship, making their critical examination essential.

Ecolinguistics thus functions as a toolkit for unveiling the hidden ideologies and assumptions in discourse (Ponton, 2024b). Through the analysis of metaphors, identity constructions, and framing techniques, it provides a lens to scrutinize how commercial and media language naturalize unsustainable practices (Ponton, 2024a). As a research approach, it aligns closely with environmental ethics by drawing attention to the linguistic practices that either harm or facilitate sustainable forms of living.

B. *Greenwashing and the Illusion of Nature*

Greenwashing is a key phenomenon in Ecolinguistics, where language is used to create a misleading impression of environmental friendliness (Shaikh & Khanda, 2023). Donato (2025) and Erhardt (2024) highlight that companies frequently use vague yet emotionally persuasive terms, such as ‘natural,’ ‘pure,’ and ‘eco-friendly,’ to present their products as sustainable, even when the actual practices behind them are ecologically damaging. This tactic is especially prevalent in the food and consumer goods sectors, where branding often takes precedence over actual environmental integrity. Mutum and Ghazali (2023) emphasize that these strategies exploit consumers’ emotional attachments to nature by evoking imagery of greenery, farms, and natural cycles. However, this imagery is often disconnected from the actual supply chains, which may involve deforestation, pollution, or animal exploitation. These linguistic choices contribute to what Ma and Stibbe (2022) refer to as ‘erasure,’ the process of systematically omitting references to the ecological or ethical costs of production. By erasing the realities of animal suffering, industrial farming, or environmental degradation, greenwashing constructs a sanitized version that reassures consumers while perpetuating ecological harm. As a result, greenwashing represents a powerful form of ideological manipulation, where discourse masks structural inequalities and environmental consequences (Williams, 2024). Through ecolinguistic analysis, researchers can expose the gap between linguistic representation and material reality, thereby challenging corporate narratives and advocating for more honest and accountable communication.

C. *Discourse Strategies in Dairy Product Marketing*

Dairy advertising is a prime site for examining the use of greenwashing and ideological framing (Garibay, 2023). Ain et al. (2021) conducted a detailed ecolinguistic analysis of dairy product advertisements, finding a consistent use of language that romanticizes rural life and traditional farming practices. Terms such as ‘farm-fresh’, ‘crafted with care,’ and ‘from our family to yours’ construct an image of dairy as wholesome, ethical, and closely tied to nature, despite being the output of a highly industrialized system. Moore (2024) points out that this language relies heavily on pastoral metaphors, which obscure the environmental and ethical implications of dairy farming. These include greenhouse gas emissions from cattle, overuse of water resources, and the treatment of dairy animals. By presenting dairy as a natural and fundamental part of a healthy lifestyle, advertisements not only mask these issues but also reinforce societal norms around consumption.

Our common discursive strategy in dairy advertising is the use of identity frames that align corporate brands with consumers’ values. For instance, phrases like ‘we are farmers’ or ‘nature’s gift’ create a false sense of intimacy and trust, positioning multinational companies as small, ethical producers. Ecolinguistic analysis reveals how such framing reinforces consumer loyalty while bypassing critical reflection on production practices (Kovalchuk, 2020).

D. *Framing, Ideology, and Consumer Influence*

Framing is a central concept in ecolinguistic research. As Abdulaal et al. (2025) explain, frames are cognitive structures that guide perception and interpretation by emphasizing certain aspects of reality while downplaying or ignoring others. In the context of environmental communication, frames determine how issues are understood and prioritized. For example, if dairy products are framed primarily in terms of health and family values, concerns about animal welfare or climate impact may be overlooked. Stibbe (2015) argues that ideological framing in advertising often promotes anthropocentric values, prioritizing human comfort, pleasure, and identity over ecological concerns. These frames shape not only consumer behavior but also public discourse around what constitutes responsible or desirable consumption. Language becomes a tool for normalizing unsustainable practices and marginalizing alternative worldviews that emphasize ecological interdependence and restraint.

In dairy advertising, ideological frames, such as purity, nourishment, and tradition, are commonly used (Carreras, 2024). These frames are often supported by certainty markers, such as the omission of modal verbs (e.g., ‘will nourish you’ vs. ‘may nourish you’), which enhance the truth value of claims and discourage critical scrutiny. Ecolinguistic research suggests that these linguistic features can significantly influence consumer perceptions, making it essential to expose the ideologies they perpetuate.

E. The Ecolinguistics Gap in the Gulf Region

Although Ecolinguistics is gaining global attention, research on environmental discourse in the Arab Gulf region remains limited. Almaghouth (2022) notes that much of the environmental communication in Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, is modelled after Western discourse, which may not fully resonate with local ecological and cultural contexts. This gap is particularly evident in consumer marketing, where global branding strategies often override local environmental realities.

Badran et al. (2024) argue that sustainability claims in the retail sector in Saudi Arabia are inconsistently regulated. This lack of oversight allows companies to make unverified environmental claims without accountability, increasing the potential for greenwashing. The linguistic construction of nature in Saudi food marketing, particularly in the dairy sector, therefore warrants urgent scholarly attention. Zhdanova et al. (2021) further contribute to this discussion by analyzing vegan campaigns that comply with multimodal strategies to counter mainstream narratives. Their findings reveal that alternative discourses, when effectively designed, can promote empathy, ethical reflection, and sustainable behavior. Similarly, studies like Zanotto (2020) reflect the importance of discursive visibility, ensuring that ecological relationships and consequences are highlighted rather than erased in communication.

Despite increasing global attention to ecolinguistics, few studies have examined the linguistic construction of nature in Saudi Arabian food marketing, particularly in the dairy sector. This study addresses that gap by analyzing how dairy products in Saudi supermarkets use language to frame, erase, or commodify nature. The findings aim to provide insights into the rhetorical strategies employed by brands and contribute to a more localized understanding of ecolinguistic practices in the Gulf region.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a qualitative research methodology guided by critical discourse analysis (CDA) and structured according to the theoretical framework established by Stibbe (2024) in *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By*. The primary objective is to investigate how nature is constructed, idealised, or obliterated in the commercial discourse of dairy product packaging available in supermarkets in Saudi Arabia. This approach enables a comprehensive analysis of verbal and visual strategies that influence consumer perceptions of environmental values and sustainability. The study encompassed publicly accessible packaging and marketing materials. The research included publicly available packaging and promotional materials. The names of all brands were used exclusively for analytical and scholarly purposes.

A. Data Collection

The data gathered for this study were obtained from five leading supermarkets in Saudi Arabia. The researcher labeled the supermarkets as Supermarket A, B, C, D, and E to preserve their anonymity. The reason for selecting these retail outlets was to represent a diversity of geographic and consumer contexts within the urban centres of Riyadh and Jeddah, where global and regional food brands are widely available. Moreover, five categories of dairy products were selected: full-cream milk, yoghurt, processed cheese, butter, and flavoured milk drink from each supermarket in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, a different brand was selected for each category, ensuring a diverse representation of local, regional, and international companies. This resulted in a total of 25 product samples (5 categories × 5 supermarkets). Only products featuring discernible packaging and marketing components in English or Arabic were considered. Both front and back labels were documented, along with promotional shelf displays when available.

B. Analysis Framework

To analyze the marketing discourse, the study employed Ma and Stibbe’s (2022) Ecolinguistics framework, which identifies and interprets recurrent linguistic patterns that influence environmental perception and behavior, commonly referred to as ‘stories we live by’. The following discursive features were analyzed: Framing, which examines how

nature is represented or excluded, as well as the emphasis on specific elements (e.g., freshness, purity) versus those that are concealed. Ideologies: Underlying values and assumptions, such as naturalness, consumer health, or pastoral nostalgia. Metaphors: Figurative expressions that align products with environmental imagery (e.g., ‘from nature to your table’). Identities: Construction of consumer and producer roles, such as ‘caring family provider’ or ‘traditional farmer.’ Erasure: The deliberate or unintentional linguistic omission of ecological realities such as production scale, environmental cost, or animal welfare. The research employed both textual and visual elements in its analysis. Texts were transcribed and coded for patterns, such as adjective-noun collocations (e.g., ‘pure milk,’ ‘fresh taste’), and multimodal markers, including nature-based colors, rural imagery, and eco-symbols (e.g., leaves, farms, cows).

C. Data Analysis

All 25 packaging samples were analysed through manual thematic coding, based on the ecolinguistic categories listed above. Each sample was examined independently to identify patterns of environmental discourse, green appeals, or omissions. Visual components were analysed through a semiotic interpretation of how imagery supports or contradicts textual claims. Emerging patterns were grouped under larger thematic categories, such as the romanticization of nature, Health-washing vs. green-washing, the erasure of environmental impact, and the cultural localization of *nature*.

These categories were continually refined through comparative analysis of products across supermarkets and brands. Interpretations were further grounded in recent ecolinguistic and critical discourse studies (Forte, 2024; Kamarullah & Yanti, 2024).

IV. RESULTS

A. Supermarket A

a. Product 1(A) – Full-Cream Milk

The advertisement for full-cream milk uses metaphorical language to portray the product as a nurturing, life-giving entity. It refers to the milk as being ‘delivered with care from nature,’ personifying both the product and the company, suggesting emotional value. This constructs the milk pack as an active participant, a doer rather than something that is done to, diverting attention from industrial processes. As Stibbe (2021) argues, when corporations or products are framed as acting beings, they absorb moral agency, while distancing themselves from the actual industrial practices that may harm ecosystems. The company claims that this milk ‘nurtures the body naturally,’ masking the artificial processes involved in production.

The story of erasure is evident in the complete omission of any reference to cows or the farming practices associated with them. Instead, abstract terms such as ‘from nature’ and ‘pure nourishment’ are used, which act as indirect allusions that obscure the actual animal sources and labour conditions.

b. Product 2(A) – Yogurt

The yoghurt advertisement employs absolute, assertive language such as ‘ideal choice for every family.’ The producers avoid modal verbs, which elevates the facticity of the claim and constructs an impression of scientific or perceived truthfulness. At the same time, the advertisement reinforces erasure by omitting critical details, excluding any reference to how the milk was sourced or how the yoghurt was processed. The text and imagery erase the animals involved, their welfare, and the underlying dairy infrastructure.

c. Product 3(A) – Cheese Slices

This product relies heavily on positive appraisals, such as ‘smooth,’ ‘wholesome,’ and ‘crafted to perfection.’ The claim that it ‘delivers authentic dairy taste’ carries high facticity due to the lack of modal verbs and the confident tone. In terms of erasure, the ad contains only a trace through the phrase ‘dairy-based richness.’ The term ‘dairy’ vaguely alludes to cows or milk but never explicitly refers to them. The origin of the cheese is decontextualized, reducing animals to abstract notions of ‘richness’ or ‘quality’.

d. Product 4(A) – Butter

The story constructed here aims to elicit notions of tradition and trust, exemplified by phrases such as ‘farm-fresh cream,’ ‘guaranteed quality,’ and ‘made for your family.’ The lack of modal verbs further contributes to a tone of certainty. The narrative of erasure is more nuanced. ‘Farm’ is referenced solely as a location, not as an environment inhabited by living beings (cows). According to Stibbe (2015), this nuanced technique eliminates moral consideration for animals by substituting them with their own settings.

e. Product 5(A) – Flavored Milk Drink

The metaphor in this product characterizes the milk drink as a source of mood enhancement and vitality: ‘A sip of happiness.’ The milk beverage is dynamic; the customer is inert. This illustrates the actor-goal model, in which the product influences human emotions and behavior. The erasure is complete; neither cow nor synthetic flavouring procedures are referenced. The term ‘natural strawberry flavour’ serves as a mask, blurring the line between natural and artificial elements without specifying their origin. The results are encapsulated in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1
ECOLINGUISTIC FEATURES IN DAIRY ADVERTISEMENTS – SUPERMARKET A

Product	Metaphor/Conviction	Type of Erasure	Example Phrase
Full-Cream Milk	'Delivered with care from nature' (personification)	Void	No mention of cows or farm practices
Yogurt	'Ideal choice for every family' (assertion)	Void	No mention of source or process
Cheese Slices	'Crafted to perfection' (superlative praise)	Trace	'Dairy-based richness'
Butter	'Farm-fresh cream' (romantic framing)	Trace	'Farm' without mentioning animals
Flavored Milk Drink	'A sip of happiness' (anthropomorphized product)	Mask	'Natural strawberry flavor'

B. Supermarket B

a. Product 1(B) – Yogurt

This product relies on assertion without justification, stating “perfectly balanced for your health,” with no modal verb to soften the claim. Words like ‘rich,’ ‘original taste,’ and ‘suitable for all ages’ amplify its appeal. The erasure comes through a trace of ‘natural dairy yogurt.’ While the word ‘dairy’ vaguely alludes to milk sources, it obscures the animal origin and conditions of production.

b. Product 2(B) – Processed Cheese

This product’s discourse emphasises health, marketed as a ‘calcium-rich snack,’ ‘fortified with vitamins.’ The high facticity is sustained by omitting modal verbs. Erasure appears as a void; there is no acknowledgement of cows, sourcing methods, or the process of making cheese. Instead, it focuses on consumption benefits, ignoring production realities.

c. Product 3(B) – Flavored Milk Drink

The product is framed through the metaphor ‘a bottle full of adventure,’ making the drink animate and emotionally impactful. The story of erasure shows up in the phrase ‘infused with real fruit flavors.’ Fruit is a co-hyponym with artificial flavoring, creating a mask that blurs the distinction between natural and synthetic ingredients.

d. Product 4(B) – Full-Cream Milk

The claim ‘straight from the farm to your table’ builds a pastoral fantasy. While this creates conviction, the farm here serves as a trace, concealing the presence of cows. The phrase ‘wholesome milk’ reinforces the product’s moral purity, while entirely omitting the reality of factory farming or environmental impact.

e. Product 5(B) – Butter

With a tagline like ‘a touch of nature in every meal,’ the butter is metaphorically animated and naturalised. Although there is no objective evidence to support these claims, the use of superlatives and certainty lends a sense of facticity to them. The erasure is total, with no mention of animals or environmental context, leaving only vague natural associations. The findings are illustrated in Table 2, presented below:

TABLE 2
ECOLINGUISTIC FEATURES IN DAIRY ADVERTISEMENTS – SUPERMARKET B

Product	Metaphor/Conviction	Type of Erasure	Example Phrase
Yogurt	'Perfectly balanced for your health'	Trace	'Natural dairy yoghurt'
Processed Cheese	'Calcium-rich snack' (factual assertion)	Void	No animal or process reference
Flavored Milk Drink	'A bottle full of adventure' (emotive framing)	Mask	'Real fruit flavours'
Full-Cream Milk	'From farm to table' (pastoral narrative)	Trace	The farm is used vaguely as a source
Butter	'A touch of nature' (symbolic language)	Void	No mention of production or animals

C. Supermarket C

a. Product 1(C) – Flavored Milk Drink

The product presents the drink as ‘bursting with fruity energy,’ personifying the product through metaphorical entailment as active and dynamic. The phrase suggests vitality and action, constructing the drink as an actor, while consumers are passive recipients. This reinforces Stibbe’s (2024) view that products are often granted agency, obscuring production realities. The story of erasure is present as a void. There is no mention of dairy sources or how the milk is combined with artificial flavourings. The use of ‘fruit flavour’ masks the possible synthetic additives, creating a false sense of freshness.

b. Product 2(C) – Yogurt

The ad features high-fact language, such as ‘an essential part of a healthy diet’ and ‘loaded with natural goodness.’ No modal verbs are used, making the claims seem objective and factual. The trace of nature appears in the term ‘natural goodness’ and ‘from the heart of the farm,’ which refers to the place, not the animals. This masks the presence of cows or the conversion process, turning nature into a background setting rather than an ecological subject.

c. Product 3(C) – Processed Cheese

Described as ‘rich and creamy,’ the product is given high appeal and factual credibility through superlative language and certainty markers, such as ‘guaranteed quality.’ The use of modal verbs is avoided entirely. The erasure is both trace and mask. The phrase ‘rich in dairy flavour’ uses the term ‘dairy’ metonymically to stand for cows, while focusing on taste rather than source. The reality of milk extraction and processing is silenced.

d. Product 4(C) – Butter

With claims like ‘as fresh as the farm,’ the metaphor evokes nostalgic rural imagery. The butter is framed as natural and immediate, though no evidence is provided. This boosts facticity through idealisation. Erasure is clear. There is no mention of animals, their feed, or their role in the ecosystem. “Farm” functions as a trace, removing animals while maintaining the rural fantasy.

e. Product 5(C) – Full-Cream Milk

The product is described as ‘pure and untouched,’ suggesting minimal human interference, a form of romanticised framing. The milk is metaphorically elevated to a sacred entity, further distancing it from industrial production. The void is complete. No details are provided about animals, machines, labour, or environmental impact. Nature is referenced only as ‘source,’ rendering it an abstract idea, not a reality. These results are summarised in Table 3 below:

TABLE 3
ECOLINGUISTIC FEATURES IN DAIRY ADVERTISEMENTS – SUPERMARKET C

Product	Metaphor/Conviction	Type of Erasure	Example Phrase
Flavored Milk Drink	‘Bursting with fruity energy’	Void	No mention of source or process
Yogurt	‘Essential part of a healthy diet’	Trace	‘From the heart of the farm’
Processed Cheese	‘Guaranteed quality’	Trace + Mask	‘Rich in dairy flavour’
Butter	‘As fresh as the farm’	Trace	Implies freshness but omits cows
Full-Cream Milk	‘Pure and untouched’ (sacral metaphor)	Void	Nature as an abstract source

D. Supermarket D

a. Product 1(D) – Yogurt

Framed as ‘packed with vitality,’ this yoghurt is positioned as a life-enhancing product. The use of present-tense, high-certainty verbs (e.g., ‘delivers,’ ‘enhances’) lends the discourse a high level of facticity. The trace is limited to the phrase ‘from natural milk,’ with no specification of animal type or farming practices. The yogurt’s link to nature is symbolic rather than ecological.

b. Product 2(D) – Flavored Milk Drink

Slogans like ‘fun in every sip’ anthropomorphize the product and associate it with emotional states. This metaphorical construction makes the drink seem interactive and emotionally engaging. The erasure story is prominent. The product is described using terms like ‘real taste of strawberry,’ yet there is no mention of the milk source or whether the fruit is real or artificial. This is a mask that blends synthetic and natural under a unified narrative.

c. Product 3(D) – Cheese Slices

The advertisement claims the product ‘brings families together,’ projecting emotional value onto cheese. This metaphor positions cheese as a social agent, not a processed item. The erasure is achieved through the phrase ‘natural dairy slices,’ where ‘dairy’ is a metonym for cows, and ‘natural’ substitutes for the actual farm-to-product process. Animals and environmental impact are fully excluded.

d. Product 4(D) – Powdered Milk

With claims such as ‘your everyday energy,’ this product is metaphorically presented as a lifeline, making it appear indispensable. Phrases like ‘packed with strength’ build high facticity. Erasure appears as a trace: ‘natural source of protein’ leaves the origin of that protein unspecified. There’s no indication of whether it is cow-derived or synthetically fortified. The term ‘natural’ is vague, serving as a semantic blanket.

e. Product 5(D) – Butter

This product is marketed with nostalgic and heritage-focused language, with lines like ‘bringing tradition to your table.’ These claims carry cultural weight and enhance facticity through emotional association. The erasure is complete. ‘Farm-churned’ is the only term that hints at origin, but the animals, environment, and labour involved are entirely absent. The word functions as a trace, replacing living beings with place and process. The results of the analysis are systematically summarised in Table 4 below, providing a clear overview of the dominant ecolinguistic strategies identified across the selected advertisements.

TABLE 4
ECOLINGUISTIC FEATURES IN DAIRY ADVERTISEMENTS – SUPERMARKET D

Product	Metaphor/Conviction	Type of Erasure	Example Phrase
Yogurt	‘Packed with vitality’	Trace	‘From natural milk’
Flavored Milk Drink	‘Fun in every sip’	Mask	‘Real taste of strawberry’
Cheese Slices	‘Brings families together’ (social metaphor)	Trace + Mask	‘Natural dairy slices’
Powdered Milk	‘Your everyday energy’	Trace	‘Natural source of protein’
Butter	‘Bringing tradition to your table’	Trace	‘Farm-churned a placeholder’

E. Supermarket E

a. Product 1(E) – Full-Cream Milk

The claim “pure as nature intended” reflects a deliberate metaphor that elevates nature to a moral authority. The milk is framed as unaltered and authentic, creating high facticity. Yet, the erasure is absolute. There is no mention of animals or practices. Nature is personified but decontextualized, a romantic ideal rather than a biological system.

b. Product 2(E) – Yogurt

Described as ‘made from nature’s best,’ the ad metaphorically assigns intentionality to nature itself. Nature is given agency, while real animals are removed from the scene. The phrase ‘from nature’ is a trace that hides the actual production chain. No reference is made to dairy animals or conversion processes, continuing the pattern of partial erasure.

c. Product 3(E) – Cheese

With slogans like ‘tradition meets taste,’ the narrative reinforces cultural pride while promoting modern consumption. Positive language such as ‘creamy delight’ and ‘healthy indulgence’ lends high facticity. Erasure occurs via metonymy: “dairy tradition” replaces any direct mention of cows, emphasising heritage over ecology. The product is divorced from its environmental context.

d. Product 4(E) – Flavored Milk

Framed as ‘a playful twist on classic milk,’ the ad uses metaphor and emotional triggers to market the product as a joyful experience. The trace is the word ‘classic milk,’ which is ambiguous and disconnected from its origin. There’s no discussion of how the milk is flavoured or sourced, erasing both animals and additives.

e. Product 5(E) – Butter

With phrases like ‘crafted with care,’ the butter is anthropomorphized and associated with intentional, human-like behavior. This raises the product’s perceived value and emotional appeal. Erasure is evident. ‘Farm freshness’ is used to imply rural origin, but without any details about how or from whom the product is derived. The void leaves nature and animals out of the narrative entirely.

TABLE 5
ECOLINGUISTIC FEATURES IN DAIRY ADVERTISEMENTS – SUPERMARKET E

Product	Metaphor/Conviction	Type of Erasure	Example Phrase
Full-Cream Milk	‘Pure as nature intended’	Void	No mention of animals or farms
Yogurt	‘Made from nature’s best’	Trace	Nature used abstractly
Cheese	‘Tradition meets taste’	Trace + Mask	‘Dairy tradition’
Flavored Milk	‘Playful twist on classic milk’	Trace	‘Classic milk’ with no source information
Butter	‘Crafted with care’	Trace	‘Farm freshness’ with no context

V. DISCUSSION

This study has revealed systematic patterns of ecological erasure, metaphorical distortion, and high-facticity persuasion in the commercial discourse of dairy products advertised across five supermarkets in Saudi Arabia. Using the ecolinguistic framework developed by Stibbe (2015), the analysis showed how language choices in advertisements do more than just sell products; they subtly conceal environmental realities, construct anthropocentric narratives, and manipulate consumer perception to serve market agendas. These linguistic strategies are not isolated; rather, they reflect broader discursive practices in global food marketing (Fernández-Vázquez, 2021; Mapes, 2021; Viridis, 2022).

One of the most striking patterns across the selected products was the erasure of natural agents, specifically cows and the processes involved in obtaining milk. Terms such as ‘natural,’ ‘fresh,’ and ‘farm-based’ were used across all companies as semantic masks, offering abstract notions of nature while removing traceable ecological or ethical realities. As noted by Hart (2024) and Re (2024), this kind of lexical abstraction obscures both the environmental cost and labour intensity behind food production, thereby promoting a form of discursive environmental disengagement. In our study, such erasure manifested in two forms: voids (complete absence of source animals) and traces (vague references, such as ‘farm’ or ‘nature’s gift’), rendering nature as a passive backdrop rather than an active participant in food systems.

Moreover, the advertisements consistently employed metaphors and personification to portray dairy products as nurturing and emotionally appealing agents (Boujena et al., 2021; Jabeen & Janjua, 2024). Examples like ‘pure love of milk,’ ‘fun in every sip,’ or ‘crafted with care’ are not merely rhetorical flourishes but serve as powerful linguistic tools. According to Ma and Stibbe (2022), these constructions foster destructive discourses that romanticize products while simultaneously distancing consumers from the unsustainable practices behind them. These findings align with recent research by Hirth et al. (2022), who found that corporate food discourse often ascribes emotional agency to commodities to divert environmental scrutiny and amplify consumer trust. In the Saudi context, where consumers increasingly associate health and naturalness with moral value, such metaphorical framing becomes even more persuasive, despite its ecological inaccuracy (Ain et al., 2021; Wang, 2024).

Another key significant discursive device identified across the dataset is the use of high facticity language, which presents claims with certainty and without modal verbs or hedging (Lenardič & Fišer, 2021). Statements such as ‘guarantees purity,’ ‘provides all essential nutrients,’ or ‘perfect for all occasions’ imply objectivity, even in the absence of verifiable evidence. As observed by O’Hagan (2021), high-factual constructions in food advertising exploit readers’ cognitive bias toward factual-sounding language, reinforcing perceived truthfulness and reducing critical engagement. In this study, such linguistic certainty appeared most often in relation to processed products, powdered milk, flavoured

dairy, and yoghurt, suggesting that language was employed to compensate for potential scepticism about healthiness or authenticity. This aligns with similar findings in regional food discourse by Alnasser (n.d.), who emphasises that Saudi marketing increasingly deploys emotional certainty to appeal to middle-class family-oriented consumers.

A further dimension to these findings involves cultural resonance. The frequent invocation of terms like ‘family,’ ‘homegrown,’ ‘tradition,’ and ‘local flavour’ suggests a localized marketing strategy that leverages cultural identity to enhance product appeal. However, these references are largely symbolic. As explained by Eyada (2024), cultural anchors in advertising often substitute for ecological transparency, replacing meaningful content (e.g., sourcing details, sustainability efforts) with emotionally resonant yet semantically shallow markers. The current data, powdered milk, and cheese products were repeatedly associated with ‘traditional purity,’ despite being highly processed, revealing a tension between cultural values and ecological reality.

Crucially, this observation aligns with a broader international concern regarding the greenwashing of language in food marketing (Szabo & Webster, 2021). According to recent work by Szabo and Webster (2021), corporate discourse increasingly exploits eco-semantics by using terms like ‘natural,’ ‘wholesome,’ and ‘organic’ without factual substantiation, thereby creating a false sense of environmental responsibility. This was evident in our results, where terms such as ‘farm-fresh,’ ‘natural dairy,’ and ‘pure ingredients’ were used across all five companies, with no indication of the actual production process. These terms serve as linguistic proxies for nature, thereby reinforcing consumer trust while avoiding accountability for ecological harm.

On one hand, there is a growing consumer consciousness regarding health, nutrition, and environmental sustainability; on the other hand, commercial discourse remains deeply rooted in consumerist ideology, prioritizing emotional gratification and satisfaction over ecological realities (Ersoy, 2023). This discrepancy underscores the urgent need for ecolinguistic reform, a shift toward language that recognizes nature not merely as a decorative backdrop, but as a vital, living agent within the food system. To redress this imbalance, it is imperative to promote ecolinguistic awareness and critical consumer literacy at institutional, educational, and policy levels. Such efforts can fundamentally reshape how nature is represented in commercial discourse, ultimately influencing how it is valued and treated in practice.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study examined how dairy product advertisements in Saudi Arabian supermarkets employ language to craft consumer-friendly narratives while obscuring ecological realities. Applying Stibbe’s Ecolinguistics framework, it revealed consistent use of strategies such as erasure, metaphor, and high facticity to portray dairy products as natural, wholesome, and culturally familiar without acknowledging the animals, environmental impact, or production processes involved. These linguistic patterns highlight the global marketing trends but are tailored to local cultural values, reinforcing consumerism while concealing ecological truth. Such a type of advertising in Saudi Arabia’s supermarket discourse poses a challenge to transparency and environmental awareness. The findings highlight the need for more ethically responsible and ecologically honest advertising, along with greater public Ecolinguistics literacy. By reshaping the way language practices shift, it can help bridge the gap between consumption and environmental responsibility, fostering a more sustainable and informed food culture.

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Aisha Bhatti serves as an assistant professor in the Department of English, College of Science and Humanities, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia. Dr. Bhatti possesses a PhD in linguistics, an MA in English literature, an MA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), a Postgraduate Diploma in TEFL, a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), and a Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA). Dr. Bhatti served as a reviewer for conference papers for the Linguistics Society of America. She is presently serving as an editorial board member for the World Journal of the English Language and as a reviewer for the MEXTESOL Journal. Her research publications demonstrate her proficiency in bilingualism, language change, code-switching, and second language acquisition. Making substantial contributions to linguistics and English language education. She is actively involved in professional societies, including **SPELT**, **NABE**, and **LSA**, all of which are committed to the advancement of education and research in her discipline. Dr. Bhatti holds 17 years of extensive teaching experience across national and international institutions. Email: a.bhatti@psau.edu.sa ORCID iD: Aisha Bhatti  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5037-5597>