



## Analysis of Nature-oriented Couplets in Sa'adi's Sonnets based on Ecological Linguistics

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**Abstract:** In the present era, where environmental issues have become one of the most critical global challenges, analyzing the discourse of classical literature from the perspective of ecolinguistics can open a new window to understanding human-nature interactions and rethinking environmental perspectives. Therefore, this research seeks to answer the following question: What is the frequency of "the stories we live by" in nature-oriented couplets of Sa'adi's sonnets? The answer to this question is based on the eight stories proposed by Stibbe (2021); framing, metaphors, evaluations, identities, convictions, erasure, salience, and narratives. The current research is both quantitative and qualitative and follows a descriptive approach. Out of 6,293 couplets from the sonnets, sourced from complete works of Sa'adi, edited and published by the late Mohammad Ali Foroughi (2004), thirty-five couplets specifically concern nature and its elements. All these thirty-five couplets have been analyzed within the framework of Stibbe's (2021) model. However, due to research limitations, only six samples are presented in this study, while the rest of the data analysis is reported in general terms. The fifth section discusses the percentage of occurrence and statistical analysis of the stories proposed by Stibbe. The findings reveal that the following frequency of the analyzed stories in Sa'adi's nature-oriented couplets in a descending order: salience, evaluation, erasure, framing, narrative, metaphor, conviction, and identity. Among these, the salience story occurs most frequently, with 87 instances (37.35%), while the identity story appears least frequently, with only 2 instances (0.81%). The high frequency of the salience story indicates Sa'adi's profound perspective on the relationship between humans and their environment, wherein nature serves as a reflection of his emotions, experiences, and moral teachings. Conversely, the low frequency of the identity story suggests that Sa'adi predominantly describes nature from his individual perspective rather than from a collective or societal viewpoint. As a result, the pronoun "we" is rarely used in nature descriptions, replaced instead by other pronouns or impersonal descriptions. The depiction of nature in Sa'adi's sonnets is not limited to showcasing the world's beauty; rather, it reflects his deep insight into the philosophy of life, ethics, and wisdom. Thus, in Sa'adi's sonnets, nature is a dynamic and meaningful element that transcends simple imagery, serving as a mirror to worldview, emotions, and life wisdom.

**Keywords** ecolinguistics, metaphor, Salience, Sa'adi's sonnets.

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## 1. Introduction

Persian literature, particularly its classical poetry, has long served as a mirror reflecting humanity's perceptions and experiences of the natural world. Sa'adi, the eminent 13th-century poet, frequently integrates natural imagery into his sonnets, thereby establishing a profound link between aesthetics, morality, and environmental awareness. Examining Sa'adi's *Ghazaliyāt* from the perspective of ecolinguistics provides a new opportunity to understand how nature is represented within the Persian literary tradition. The central aim of this study is to identify linguistic and discursive patterns in Sa'adi's nature-oriented couplets, focusing specifically on the frequency and types of "stories we live by" as proposed by Arran Stibbe (2021). The research hypothesizes that Sa'adi, through employing discursive structures such as frames, metaphors, evaluations, identities, convictions, erasure, salience, and narratives promotes an ecologically constructive worldview. This perspective not only enriches the aesthetic dimensions of Persian lyric poetry but also contributes to fostering environmental consciousness. At a time when ecological crises represent some of humanity's most urgent challenges, revisiting Sa'adi's sonnets through Stibbe's framework reveals valuable insights into the role of language in shaping human attitudes and interactions with the environment. Previous non-Iranian studies, including those by Goatly (2000) and Rashid (2023), have remained largely theoretical or data-limited, while Iranian research such as Veisi (2007), Moshtagh-Mehr & Feizi (2019), Mehrnia (2021), and Razavian & Elahi-Panah (2022) has generally been descriptive, classical, or religious in orientation and has not systematically applied Stibbe's ecolinguistic model.

This study extends the application of Stibbe's "stories we live by" framework to Persian lyrical poetry, moving beyond descriptive analyses toward a critical ecological discourse analysis that situates Persian data within global eco-linguistic discussions.

## 2. Purpose of the Study

The main objective of this research is to analyze the representation of nature in Sa'adi's sonnets through the ecolinguistic framework of Arran Stibbe's "stories we live by." Although previous Persian literary studies have explored Sa'adi's descriptions of nature, most have approached the topic from aesthetic or historical angles. Few have employed an ecolinguistic perspective, and, to the best of our knowledge, none have systematically applied Stibbe's model to Sa'adi's poetry.

This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by:

1. Introducing ecolinguistics into the study of classical Persian poetry, bridging the divide between literary and linguistic research.

2. Identifying and categorizing the frequency and types of ecological stories in Sa'adi's couplets, thereby illustrating how they construct environmental messages and promote positive ecological values.

In doing so, the research demonstrates that rereading classical Persian texts through ecolinguistics can contribute to strengthening constructive ecological discourses in the face of today's global environmental crises.

### **3. Research Method**

Following Stibbe (2021), ecolinguistics is defined as an interdisciplinary field that explores the relationship between language and the environment. Language shapes how people perceive and act toward the natural world—for instance, advertising can encourage environmentally destructive consumerism, while nature writing can cultivate respect for ecosystems. The core concept in ecolinguistics is the “stories we live by”—deeply rooted cognitive and cultural narratives reproduced through language that influence ecological thought and behavior. Drawing upon approaches such as critical discourse analysis, metaphor theory, framing, evaluation, identity, and narrative, Stibbe identifies nine story types: ideologies, frames, metaphors, evaluations, identities, beliefs, erasure, salience, and narratives. The main goal of ecolinguistic analysis is to determine whether these stories contribute to ecological protection or to environmental degradation.

### **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

The ecolinguistic analysis of Sa'adi's sonnets shows that the poet views nature not merely as a subject of aesthetic representation, but as a vehicle for ethical, mystical, and social reflection. Through the use of frames, metaphors, evaluations, narratives, and other eco-linguistic “stories we live by,” Sa'adi transforms nature into an active and influential element in his poetic discourse. The findings reveal that the salience story type is the most frequent, highlighting Sa'adi's tendency to emphasize natural elements and foreground them in meaning-making. Conversely, identity stories appear least often, suggesting that Sa'adi interprets nature primarily from an individual rather than a collective or communal perspective. Moreover, the prominence of positive evaluations reflects Sa'adi's deep affection for and emotional connection to the natural world. In conclusion, Sa'adi's treatment of nature transcends mere description: it functions as a bridge linking human experience with moral and spiritual insight. His sonnets thus offer a timeless model for integrating ecological sensitivity into poetic discourse and can inspire contemporary approaches to promoting sustainable environmental awareness.