



Book of abstracts

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International Conference
Enhancing Sustainability:
Bridging Corporate Practices with
Academic and Popular Discourse

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Preface

A complex, “contentious concept” (Catenaccio, 2019: 208), sustainability is the subject of interdisciplinary interest, spanning several research areas and occupying a central role in recent international literature (see Krieg and Toivanen, 2021) in its attempt to contribute to “th[e] ecological transformation founded on shared democratic values [...]” (Brüggemann *et al.*, 2023: 5039). Due to its multifaceted nature, sustainability has largely entered popular discourse, opening to several theoretical and methodological approaches for the analysis of different genres and text types. On the one hand, language and discourse studies have explored the persuasive nature of sustainability communication – “how emotions are triggered by language and performance and then channelled within the minds of the people in an audience” (Burke, 2023: 22). On the other hand, they have underlined how dialogue between the various stakeholders is crucial to creating mutual understanding and “introduc[ing] new discourses that may open up new directions in how companies contribute to sustainability” (Higgins and Coffey, 2016: 18).

Based on these premises, the conference aims to promote an in-depth understanding of sustainability communication while providing innovative insights and practical solutions to current sustainability challenges. The event is intended as a meeting place for local companies, academia, and other subjects (e.g. from media, film and television) to exchange knowledge and practices, improve communication, and expand theoretical, methodological, and practical approaches to the study of sustainability.



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Keynote lectures

Towards a more in-depth understanding of sustainability communication through interdisciplinarity - *Michael Burke, University College Roosevelt, Utrecht University*

Abstract

In this talk, I will explore what interdisciplinarity could mean in terms of achieving a more in-depth understanding of sustainability communication. I will begin by explaining how interdisciplinary study works. Here, I will be drawing on the theories of some of the leading interdisciplinarity scholars of the day. Thereafter, I will show how several fields of study might indeed be combined in specific contexts in interdisciplinary scholarship to produce a more in-depth understanding of sustainability communication. I will conclude by briefly exploring how communication scholars and business leaders might collaborate in impactful ways to enhance corporate communication around sustainability and climate change

Bio

Michael Burke is Professor of Rhetoric at University College Roosevelt, Utrecht University in the Netherlands, where he is the Head of the Arts & Humanities Department. He has been a Full Professor since 2012. He has also been a former Honours Dean of Utrecht University (2016-2021) and a former President of the International Poetics and Linguistics Association (2009-2012). He is the author of *Literary Reading, Cognition and Emotion: An Exploration of the Oceanic Mind* (2011), and *Picturing Fiction Through Embodied Cognition: Drawn Representations and Viewpoint in Literary Texts* (2022, with Bien Klomberg & Theresa Schillhab). He is the editor of *The Routledge Handbook of Stylistics* (2023, 2nd ed.), and co-editor of numerous books including *Cognitive Literary Science: Dialogues Between Literature and Cognition* (OUP, 2017, with Emily Trosicanko), and *Scientific Approaches to Literature in Learning Environments*. (2016, John Benjamins Press with Olivia Fialho & Sonia Zyngier). His research has been published in numerous journals in the fields of language, rhetoric and communication.

Conceptualizing shifts in energy regimes: a linguistic analysis of “net-zero” rhetoric - *Paola Catenaccio, University of Milan*

Abstract



Over the last few decades, as the effects of climate change have become more evident and awareness of the need for more sustainable ways of energy production and consumption more widespread, talks of decarbonization, net-zero goals and much needed shifts in energy regimes have become ubiquitous in both specialised and popular discourses, including those produced and maintained by large energy corporations. While the role of narrative in fostering socio-technical change such as the one required by energy regime shifts has received a fair degree of attention (Hermville 2015; Mitra et al. 2017), the framing potential of single lexical items has not – with few, remarkable exceptions (Sage et al. 2021) – been yet extensively explored. This lecture focuses on lexical choices and their implications, in an attempt to offer novel insights into sustainability and climate change discourses.

A recurrent lexical item in these discourses is *transition*, which occurs – amongst others – in such expressions as *energy transition* and *transition fuels*. The term, which is conventionally used to describe the shift from reliance on fossil fuels to more sustainable energy systems, such as renewable energy sources, and the intermediate steps that facilitate this shift, carries with it ideas of linear progress and movement toward a more sustainable future which – critics argue – belies the complexities of the process, potentially trivialising it. Transitions can be messy, non-linear, and require significant effort across multiple dimensions – an aspect that is captured by the emerging use of the expression *transition pathways* (Rosenbloom 2017), which attempts to shift the focus from the goal (a carbon-neutral future) to the process (how such goal can be achieved).

While taking stock more realistically of the challenges involved in creating the conditions for change, these transition-related expressions (and the cognate ‘bridge’ metaphors which are used in a similar manner) continue to conceptualise change as gradual, smooth, and free of disruption. In this lecture I will explore the implications of linguistic choices in the framing both of the problem and of the (possible) solution, and will argue that lexical choices may in fact inhibit action by fostering reassuring framings that conceptually enable a ‘business-as-usual’ approach. This clashes with the increasing urgency of climate change action, which – it is increasingly argued – requires a much more radical approach, starting from communication (Szeman and Boyer 2017). To make this point, I will use concepts from frame semantics (Fillmore 1982), which I will apply to the analysis of both policy and corporate texts within the framework of a broader discourse-analytical approach.

Bio

Paola Catenaccio is Full Professor of English Linguistics and Translation at the University of Milan. Her research interests lie primarily in the field of discourse analysis, which she applies to a variety of domains (legal discourse, business communication, professional discourse) in combination with other methodological perspectives, adopting a multi-method approach to linguistic research. She has authored numerous articles which have appeared in international journals and edited collections. She has also coedited several volumes on various aspects and domain-specific discourse and authored two volumes on the interface between corporate communication and the media and on emerging paradigms in business discourse.



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Political imaginaries of young climate activists: visibility and (de)legitimization in news media - *Anabela Carvalho, University of Minho*

AVAILABLE SOON



Bio

Anabela Carvalho (PhD, University College London) is Associate Professor and Director of the Master's Programme in Science Communication at the Department of Communication Sciences of the University of Minho, Portugal. She has an extensive experience of research on climate change communication and has authored analyses of the discourses of various social actors and the media in the United Kingdom, Portugal and other countries. Citizens' engagement with climate change, and especially the conditions for political engagement, have been her main research interest in the last few years. Her publications include *Citizen Voices: Enacting Public Participation in Science and Environment Communication* (with L. Phillips and J. Doyle; 2012), *Climate Change Politics: Communication and Public Engagement* (with T.R. Peterson; 2012), *Critical Approaches to Climate Change and Civic Action* (with J. Doyle and C. Russill, 2021) and *Environmental Communication* (handbook with T. R. Peterson, 2024). Currently, she is the Principal Investigator and Coordinator of the research project JUSTFUTURES - Climate Futures and Just Transformations: Young People's Narratives and Political Imaginaries and a member of the COST Action SHIFT – Social Sciences and Humanities for Transformation and Climate Resilience. She is also leading the external assessment of projects on Public Participation and Climate Action funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Anabela Carvalho has had leading roles at the International Environmental Communication Association (IECA) and the Science and Environment Communication Section of the European Communication and Education Association (ECREA). She was Associate Editor of the journal *Environmental Communication* (2010-2012) and has been Associate Editor of *Frontiers in Communication: Science and Environmental Communication* since 2016.



Panels

PANEL 1 - REPRESENTING SUSTAINABILITY AND NATURAL EVENTS IN MEDIA NARRATIVES

The erasure of nature: A corpus-based analysis of nomination of nature and transitivity in the UK news reports (2019-2024) - Xuan Cao, University of Glasgow

Abstract

As human civilization has expanded, animals, plants, and the environment, three fundamental components of nature, drifted away from human society, and a new epoch “Anthropocene” has come (Steffen et al 2011, 842). Meanwhile, nature has been mediated by various artificial manufactures, such as videos, cartoons, zoos, aquariums, arboretums, goods, recordings, and languages (Berger 2009, 22). These artificial forms of nature vary in the different degrees of vividness and concreteness to depict real nature. In this sense, this tendency shows the marginalization of nature, which is considered as “erasure” (Stibbe 2015, 148). In language, erasure is “a form of exclusion and marginalization, particularly in relation to identity categories” (Baker and Ellece 2011, 40), which encompasses not just the complete erasure, but also different degrees of erasure, ranging from the most explicit to the most implicit. The hierarchy of erasure reflects a systemic absence of certain groups of social actors in the discourse (Stibbe 2015, 149).

Therefore, this paper will adopt a quantitative approach to explore how nature is represented and erased in the UK news reports, comparing with two types of discourse – environmental and business. In specific, this paper employs a self-developed model – the nomination of nature model, which is referred to Stibbe’s erasure types (2015, 149) and Van Leeuwen’s social actor network (2008, 52), and transitivity theory (Halliday 1994, 166) to analyze the expressions about nature in different UK news reports (2019-2024) and the two contrastive texts. Then it explains these features the UK media with different political tendencies and formalities use to describe nature compared with the environmental and business texts. It aims to reveal the connections between these textual representations of nature and how they change human behaviours and social practices.

Keywords

erasure of nature, nomination of nature, textual representations of nature, transitivity theory

Bio

Xuan Cao is a postgraduate researcher in English Language and Linguistics at the University of Glasgow. Her current research project uses Systemic Functional Grammar and corpus tools to examine certain aspects of nature as a social actor in the news discourse. The primary research goal



is to identify the textual representations of nature as different degrees of erasure. Inspired by her previous studies in ecolinguistics and transitivity analysis of an IPCC report Global Warming of 1.5°C for her master's degree (China University of Mining and Technology, Beijing), she keens on exploring how animals, plants, and the environment are represented in the discourse and their underestimated impacts on human behaviours and social practices.

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The Pakistani Media Response towards the Floods in Pakistan: An Under-reported Catastrophe in 2022 - Ahsan Chandio, University of Bologna

Abstract

Pakistan is the 8th most vulnerable country on the global index of countries bearing the brunt of the global climate crisis. The country had not fully recovered from the floods of 2010, when yet another spell of the deadliest floods in its history hit in August 2022, taking 1700 lives and leaving 33 million people homeless, including 16 million children. During the floods, the debate in the mainstream national media channels like DAWN and Express Tribune surrounded the country's crippling economy and political instability, while the role of the media and its reportage towards the floods went unnoticed in public. This study applies an ecolinguistic framework to analyse the media representation of floods in Pakistan (2022) and Italy (2023), focusing on how news narratives shape perceptions of human and ecological crises. The current research uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to highlight the language used in over 180 news articles from major media outlets such as BBC, The Guardian, ANSA, DAWN, and Al Jazeera. The aim is to uncover dominant metaphors, patterns of passivization, and the prioritization of economic infrastructure over human lives in flood coverage. The study also presents a comparative portrayal of flood victims and environmental degradation in both countries. It explores how media discourse can promote an anthropocentric view of a natural disaster. The findings of this study reveal the dominance of mainstream discourse,



alongside the systematic erasure of animals and marginalized and less-privileged communities, in media coverage of floods.

Keywords

media, floods, climate change, climate communication

Bio

Ahsan Chandio is a research scholar at the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at the University of Bologna. He holds a master's degree in English literature from the University of Sindh. Before coming to the University of Bologna, Mr. Chandio had been associated with reputed national and international organizations in Pakistan as a teacher for the last five years. His research interests include ecolinguistics, discourse analysis, positive discourse analysis and news analysis. He has also presented abstracts at different national and international conferences on the latest trends and issues in language. Mr. Chandio aspires to become an active researcher in the future.

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A destination, a pillar, or a weapon? Metaphorical representations of sustainability in the media - Laura Narisano, Free University of Bozen

Abstract

Though increasingly relevant in the current public discourse, the concept of sustainability, or sustainable development, remains difficult to delineate clearly and thus often interpreted in different manners (Purvis, Mao, and Robinson 2018). When complex and relatively unfamiliar concepts such as this one are discussed and communicated, metaphorical mappings are often used as access points facilitating their comprehension by proposing the lens of a more familiar domain,



the source, to frame the new topic, the target (Flusberg and Thibodeau 2023). Considering the multifaceted nature of sustainability, different source domains, and scenarios within them (Musolff 2006), can be used to highlight different aspects of this issue and offer specific perspectives on it. Since newspapers are an important channel through which readers familiarise themselves with and form opinions about current topics (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery 2013), this study aims to investigate the metaphors they use to frame the topic of sustainability, and which conceptualisations this suggests. Consequently, a comparable corpus of articles mentioning sustainability from Italian and British newspapers was created, and concordances for *sustainability* and *sustainable*, and their Italian equivalents, were analysed applying the Metaphor Identification Procedure (Pragglejaz Group 2007).

The findings reveal a diversified representation of sustainability, with both conventional and creative metaphors; among the various source domains used, the JOURNEY domain, and its scenarios, feature prominently. This offers new insights into the cross-cultural representation of sustainability within media discourse, and its influence on how the public might conceive this multifaceted issue.

Keywords

sustainability, sustainable development, metaphor, corpus linguistics

Bio

Laura Narisano is a PhD student in Linguistics in the joint programme of the Free University of Bozen and the University of Verona. Her research interests include conceptual metaphor theory, corpus linguistics, and discourse analysis. Her current research project investigates the role of metaphors in news discourse on the topic of sustainability.

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Framing Sustainability, Development, and Growth: Corpus-Based Discourse Analysis of Narratives in ‘The Conversation’ - Lorenzo Zannini, University School for Advanced Studies IUSS Pavia/University of Naples “L’Orientale”; Martina Russo, University of Bologna “Alma Mater Studiorum”

Abstract

The concept of sustainability and its discursive construction across social and institutional domains has evolved significantly over the past few decades, becoming a central theme in global policy and public consciousness (Krieg and Toivanen 2021). Scholarly work within (Critical) Discourse Studies in recent years has tried to trace this evolution, analysing the discourse on sustainability across domains – with a particular focus on corporate reporting practices (e.g. Fuoli and Beelitz 2023; Catenaccio 2019). However, more attention should be paid to how experts frame sustainability and its related concepts of development and growth when delivering scientific knowledge to the general public. A focus on expert discourse might enrich the understanding of how knowledge about sustainability gets recontextualised across domains and communities to reproduce mainstream business-as-usual discourse or challenge them (Stibbe 2022). For this reason, this paper investigates how sustainability and its related concepts of development and growth are framed (Entman 1993) within a specialised corpus of 234 research-based articles covering the 2012-2024 time span from ‘The Conversation’ – an independent, nonprofit news organisation that provides news and analysis jointly written by academics and journalists. To do so, we take a corpus-assisted approach to frame analysis in order to investigate how experts’ narratives on sustainability, development and growth feature within climate discourse in research-based news. In conclusion, the analysis reveals how the framing of sustainability discursively reflects societal norms and ideologies and, in turn, constructs social realities.

Keywords

sustainability discourse, The Conversation, framing, corpus-assisted discourse analysis

Bios

Lorenzo Zannini is a PhD student in Sustainable Development and Climate Change at IUSS Pavia and is currently hosted by the University of Naples “L’Orientale”. He graduated with a MA degree in English and Anglo-American Studies from the University of Rome “La Sapienza” with a thesis titled “Discourse, Protests, Representation: a comparative discourse analysis of the English-language media coverage of the anti-extradition movement in Hong Kong”. His current research draws on corpus-assisted discourse studies to analyse competing climate adaptation discourses in research-based news and expert discourse.

Martina Russo is a PhD student in English Linguistics (PhD programme in Translation, Interpreting and Intercultural Studies), Department of Interpreting and Translation, University of Bologna “Alma



Mater Studiorum”, Italy. She is teaching assistant of English at “G. D’Annunzio” University of Chieti-Pescara, Department of Foreign Languages, Literature and Modern Cultures. Her research is mainly focused on Environmental Humanities, Ecolinguistics, Critical Discourse Studies and Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies. Her interests cover also the search for new and alternative discourses to be used as a more conscious way to approach the more-than-human world.

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PANEL 2 - DISSEMINATING ECO-DISCOURSES IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Experiencing nature: An investigation of ecotourism discourse - *Lorenzo Buonvivere, Roma Tre University*

Abstract

The aim of the present paper is to reflect on the meaning of sustainability in the specialised field of ecotourism communication. Understood as a type of responsible travel to natural areas, ecotourism is centred around the principles of conservation, local participation, and interpretation of the more-than-human world. Taking into account previous research on fallacious framings of the natural world as a place or object (Andrews 2018), this investigation seeks to assess whether ecotourism discourse may foster alternative and more favourable conceptualisations that appreciate nature's intrinsic worth and role in supporting the well-being of our ecosystems. The study resorts to corpus-assisted ecolinguistics (Poole 2022) – combining the theoretical framework of ecolinguistics (Stibbe 2021) with the methods of corpus-assisted discourse studies (Friginal and Hardy 2020) – to look at meanings of the verb *experience* in the transitive structure '(to) *experience* + natural entity' (e.g., "experience the reef"; "experience the birds"). The analysis focusses on a small specialised corpus (86,341 tokens) of online promotional texts collected from the websites of ecotourism operators. Results are ultimately interpreted with reference to frame semantics and FrameNet's categorisation of lexical units (Ruppenhofer et al. 2006). Findings point to a semantic and conceptual inconsistency, as *experience* may refer either to the performance of activities in natural contexts, such as hiking and kayaking, or to the enjoyment of nature's aesthetic qualities. Overall, the ecotourist's involvement with the ecosystems visited appears to remain superficial, since the natural world is mainly construed as a 'setting' where to engage in recreational pursuits.

Keywords

corpus-assisted discourse studies, ecolinguistics, ecotourism, experience, frame semantics, nature representation

Bio

Lorenzo Buonvivere is completing a Ph.D. in Foreign Languages, Literatures and Cultures at Roma Tre University, where he has worked on a doctoral dissertation titled: "The language of ecotourism: An ecolinguistic approach". His main research interests include ecolinguistics, critical discourse studies, and cognitive linguistics. He has published articles in journals such as *Textus*, *The Journal of World Languages*, and *The International Journal of English Linguistics*, and contributed chapters on framings and metaphors in nature representation, Positive Discourse Analysis, ecolxicography, and space tourism.

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Disseminating misleading environmentally-friendly campaigns: 'Greenwashing' in corporate discourse - Stefania D'Avanzo, University of Campania 'L. Vanvitelli'

Abstract

Over the years, some companies have been accused of 'greenwashing'. The term was coined first in 1986 by Jay Westervelt - an environmentalist who published an essay on the hospitality industry about their practices to promote towel reuse. 'Greenwashing' deals with disinformation disseminated by organizations concerning the promotion of an environmentally responsible public image. For instance, in 2015, Volkswagen was found to have cheated emission tests by making its diesel cars appear far less polluting than they are while promoting environmentally friendly and low-emission features of its cars, like inserting a nitrogen oxide trap in the engine and a strengthened particulate filter, in its marketing campaigns (<https://www.capitalmonitor.ai/analysis/explainer-household-brands-accused-of-greenwashing/?cf-view>). Starting from these premises, the study aims to investigate the strategies involved in the construction of 'greenwashing' campaigns promoted by popular household brands, accused of being able to win over customers who wanted to support environmentally-friendly businesses. Methodology is based on multimodal discourse analysis (Wignell et al. 2018; Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran 2016; O'Toole 2011; Machin 2011; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). In short, the study will try to answer to two main research questions: 1) What kind of multimodal strategies are involved in the construction of 'greenwashing' in corporate discourse? 2) Is it possible to infer any similarities among the promotional 'greenwashing' campaigns under scrutiny from a multimodal perspective?

Keywords

greenwashing, promotional discourse, multimodal strategies

Bio



Stefania D'Avanzo is Associate Professor of English Language, Translation and Linguistics at University of Campania 'L. Vanvitelli'- Department of Economics. Her main research interests and publications focus on Corporate, Legal, Medical, Environmental, Institutional and Popularization Discourse. Methodology and theoretical approaches include, among others, Multimodality, Corpus Based Approach, Critical Discourse Analysis, Cognitive Linguistics. She has recently published a paper on environmental discourse (D'Avanzo, S. 2023. "Europe 'Wears' Green: Investigating Legal Implementation of 'Green Economy' Policies". In Tessuto, G., Ashcroft, R. and Bhatia, Vijay K. In *Professional Discourse across Medicine, Law, and Other Disciplines: Issues and Perspectives*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing) and a paper on well-being in higher education (D'Avanzo, S. 2024. "Promoting students' mental health in academia: an investigation of counselling services sections on British and American university websites". In *Mediazioni*, 29-43)

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Environmental sustainability for social wellbeing: framing sustainability in discourses about urban regeneration projects in Milan - Giulia Meroni, University of Milan

Abstract

The public communication of urban regeneration projects has interested scholars of discourse analysis for its employment of framing strategies in their promotion to the population (Jones, 2018). As "structures of expectation" (R.N. Ross, 1975), frames both provide the cognitive tools to interpret topics and can be used to shape people's perceptions and evaluations of them (Tannen, 1993). Since the 90s, discourses around urban regeneration have increasingly foregrounded sustainability – understood both as environmental and social – as one of the main challenges that modern cities have to face in urban planning (Roberts & Sykes, 2000). While urban development policies frame urban regeneration mainly as a tool for increasing economic wealth, a change of perspective towards a new kind of sustainability taking into account the health and wellbeing of city residents appears to be emerging in public communication. Indeed, the presence of well-kept natural environments in urban areas has been proved to be beneficial for residents (Carrus et al., 2015).



This focus seems to be particularly prominent in the discursive construction of the Milan Innovation District (MIND), a multi-purpose area on the outskirts of Milan which previously hosted the 2015 World Exposition and is now being renovated to become the new scientific and innovation hub of the city, as well as in that of one of its main partners, Lendlease. Using the theoretical framework of frames, this study proposes a qualitative analysis of MIND and Lendlease's websites to investigate a possible shift in paradigm towards a heightened focus on sustainability as a means for current and future urban regeneration projects to achieve health and wellbeing in citizens.

Keywords

sustainability, wellbeing, framing, urban regeneration.

Bio

Giulia Meroni is a PhD student at the University of Milan attending the doctoral course Intersectoral Innovation: Dottorato Intersettoriale per l'Innovazione. Last year, Meroni graduated with honors in Languages and Cultures for International Communication and Cooperation (University of Milan). She is now pursuing her doctoral research in linguistics applying the frameworks of critical discourse analysis to discourses concerning urban regeneration projects, particularly focusing on the comparison between international discourse practices on the subject with practices concerning present-day projects in the city of Milan.

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PANEL 3 - REPORTING ON SUSTAINABILITY GOALS AND VALUES 1

From Green Hype to Green Action: An Integrated Discourse Analysis of Sustainability Reports - *Fabio Cangero, University of Naples Federico II*

Abstract

On the strength of the ever-increasing discourses surrounding environmental crises and the growing collective awareness of the climate challenges faced by individuals across the board, corporations are reshaping and readjusting their identities accordingly, with corporate environmental policies becoming a benchmark for gauging business efficiency, viability and sustainability. This shift has resulted in the rise of a new genre, in some respects similar to the financial report, namely, the sustainability report, which illustrates the strategies and moves devised by companies not to fall short of required environmental standards. Though potentially addressing a wider and less specialised audience than that of financial reports, sustainability reports still employ hard-to-read language and patterns not entirely digestible to lay readers (Smeuninx *et al.*, 2020; Kang & Kim, 2022). In light of this, and building on the theoretical frameworks of Ecolinguistics (Stibbe, 2015), Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1989; Van Dijk, 2017) and Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005), my study aims to combine a quantitative and qualitative research approach to the investigation of a 455.269-word Corpus of Sustainability Reports (SRC) produced between 2022 and 2023 by 9 multinational corporations including Coca Cola and Johnson & Johnson, among others. The results show interesting common linguistic patterns across the corpus investigated: (i) a disproportionate use of first-person pronouns, analysed from the perspective of *engagement* (Martin & White, 2005); (ii) the occurrence of verbs and structures carrying a positive semantic prosody (i.e., support, advance, enhance, among others) to outline the environmental policies implemented by the companies; (iii) the self-construction of the company as a 'leading example' in inspiring ecologically-minded behaviour; (iv) the emergence of *destructive frames* (Stibbe, 2015); (v) the use of *quantitative verbs* (i.e., increase, reduce, among others) and *evaluation verbs* (i.e., assess, prioritise, among others); (vi) the occasional reference to 'science' as an abstract entity; (vii) the development of company-specific narratives to project an environmentally friendly image. The ultimate goal of this research is to provide a better understanding of the linguistic devices employed in sustainability reporting, including the construction of solidarity with the putative reader and genre-specific features.

Keywords

sustainability reports, ecolinguistics, critical discourse analysis, appraisal framework, corpus linguistics

Bio



Fabio Cangero is a PhD student in English Language and Linguistics in the *Mind, Gender, and Language* programme at the University of Naples Federico II, where he also works as an EFL tutor at the University Language Centre. His research focuses on Foreign Language Anxiety, examining it through a corpus-based approach, as well as the psychosocial variables that predict and correlate with it, and Critical Discourse Studies.

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The Evaluation of Climate Change in Corporate Environmental Reporting: Exploring Attitude in Corporate Discourse - Arianna Del Gaudio, University of Naples L'Orientale

Abstract

Climate change has become a pivotal concern for corporations, leading to a proliferation of corporate communication showcasing efforts and initiatives that benefit the environment. In this context, emotions are crucial in promoting pro-environmental corporate behaviours (Brosch 2021). Accordingly, corporations have been described as *emotional arenas* in which emotions are “deeply woven into the way power is exercised, trust is held, commitment formed, and decisions made” (Fineman 2000, 2). Furthermore, a growing body of evidence suggests that emotions have a significant impact on how individuals respond to climate change (Pihkala 2022). However, the role of emotions is often underestimated in corporate discourse (Wright and Nyberg 2015). Based on such premises, the present study examines the use of attitudinal language in corporate climate change discourse, elucidating its role in fostering climate actions conducive to achieving environmental sustainability. To this end, the present study analyses a small specialised corpus (85,475 words) of selected corporate genres addressing climate change and environmental sustainability, which was manually annotated using the UAM Corpus Tool. The study employs the Appraisal Framework to scrutinise the use of attitudinal resources in the CRCLim annotated corpus.



The Appraisal Framework facilitates the investigation of intersubjectivity in discourse through the systems of ATTITUDE, ENGAGEMENT and APPRECIATION. The present study looks at the ATTITUDE system, with a particular focus on AFFECT (Martin and White 2005, 35).

Findings will concentrate on attitudinal linguistic resources employed by corporations to convey their commitment to climate change in order to respond to the impact of the phenomenon on corporate productivity. Therefore, the investigation of the attitudinal dimension within corporate discourse aims to shed new light on the multi-layered nature of climate change for corporations.

Keywords

climate change, corporate discourse, emotions, appraisal framework, attitude

Bio

Arianna Del Gaudio is a PhD candidate in English Language, Translation and Linguistics at the University of Naples L'Orientale. She is a member of the Interuniversity Research Centre Dis-4Change: Studies on Climate Change and Environmental Discourse. She is also part of the UniOr research unit involved in the research project funded by Erasmus+ "FOM@PLAY: - Freedom of movement at play: EU citizens' identity and transnational discourses".

Her research interests include climate change discourse, environmental sustainability discourse, corporate discourse, Postcolonial varieties of English, Translation Studies, Corpus Linguistics and Critical Discourse Studies.

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Sustainability in CEO Letters. A Systematic Textual Analysis¹ - Walter Giordano, Univeristà degli Studi di Napoli Federico II

Abstract

Annual reports provide a detailed overview of corporate activities, strategies, and financial performance (Belfiore et al., 2022; Giordano et al., 2018). CEO Letters, as a part of the Annual Report set of documents, are the most effective, in terms of identity and corporate strategy. (Ruiz-Garrido et al., 2005; Giordano 2019). Yet, their aim has changed over time, as they have become a showcase of the CEO's strategic view: their audience has changed as well, as they seem to be implicitly addressed to a wider, less specialized readership (Giordano et al. 2018).

This investigation aims to explore sustainability-related topics in companies' strategic communication. I carried out a textual analysis of 1,038 CEO Letters extracted from the annual reports of companies listed in the major global stock indexes, such as Standard & Poor's 500, Nikkei and Euro Stoxx, in the 2018-2021 period. The analysis uses the dynamic topic modeling, processed by TALL (Textual Analysis for ALL) (Aria et al. 2024), which generated topics like *energy-gas-renewable*, *water-sustainability-business* and *oil-halliburton-gas*. The analysis showed that, in the period considered, companies are committed to sustainability issues. Furthermore, via the concurrence of other analytical tools in TALL, like similarity matrix and intertopic distance map, results can be interpreted as interconnected to other topics in strategic communication.

Keywords

topic modeling, accounting narrative, CEO Letters, textual analysis, TALL

Bio

Walter Giordano has held the chair of Business English at the dept. of Economics and Statistics of the University of Naples Federico II since 2007. His main research interests are business communication, accounting discourse and advertising. He is also a business consultant for SME internationalization and specialized in training business professionals and corporate personnel.

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PANEL 4 - REPORTING ON SUSTAINABILITY GOALS AND VALUES 2

“Don’t throw your future away. Recycle!”: assessing the effectiveness of corporate communication on recycling and circularity. A corpus-based, multi-level investigation of discourse practices - *Gaetano Falco, Università degli Studi di Bari “Aldo Moro”; Francesco Meledandri, Università degli Studi di Bari “Aldo Moro”; Elisabetta Ostuni, Università degli Studi di Bari “Aldo Moro”*

Abstract

Every year, billions of tons of waste are generated, much of which ends up in landfills, oceans, and natural environments. The phenomenon is a pressing concern for the international community and a salient topic of investigation in various research areas, including the field of sustainable corporate communication (Rajesh 2019). Drawing upon a combination of analytical methodologies, including discourse studies, communication theory and semiotics, researchers in this area focus on the role of language in the construction of communicative strategies and tools that are used with environmental issues. A considerable contribution in this regard has come from Grant’s “Green Marketing Manifesto” (2012) who illustrates how strategic corporate communication can actually affect the spread and perception of sustainable culture: “Green issues and marketing can work against each other. One wants you to consume less, the other more. One rejects consumerism, the other fuels it. But they aren’t always opposed. Marketing can help ‘sell’ new lifestyle ideas”. In this presentation we adopt a methodology based on Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (Gillings et al. 2023), Discourse of Climate Delay, Impression Management, and Visual Semiotics in corporate-related contexts (Koller 2009; Garcia-Sánchez 2020) to verify the effectiveness of discourse practices, both verbal and non-verbal, with a focus on speech acts, modality and hedging, images, word patterns and neo-semantic formations, employed by companies from the most diverse sectors to cope with the issue of waste and pollution. Are these practices purely rhetorical? Or, do they really contribute to and support the environmental cause in terms of ethics (Hawkins 2006) and/or call to action to spur stakeholders towards the implementation of ‘new’, sustainable practices and policies? The study is carried out on a corpus consisting of CSRs, Sustainability Reports, and advertising published by major companies, in the wake of the publication of relevant regulatory frameworks, such as the Global Reporting Initiative guidelines and the Directive No. 98 of 2008 (2008/98/EC).

Bios

Gaetano Falco is Associate Professor in English Linguistics and Translation at the University of Bari. His main research interests include Translation of LSPs, CDA, Pragmatics and Corpus Linguistics. He is Co-Editor of the journal *Translation and Translanguaging in Multilingual Contexts* (John Benjamins). In 2014, he published his monograph, *Metodi e strumenti per l’analisi linguistica dei testi economici. Dalla SFG al Web 2.0*. He has also published journal articles and book chapters on



translation teaching, translation of economics and CDA-based studies on corporate discourse. He is member of AIA.

Francesco Meledandri holds a PhD in Translation Theory and Praxis: European Intercultural Studies awarded by University of Bari (2011). After a Research fellowship (2013), he has been a lecturer (English language and translation, 2013-2021) at University of Bari, Dept. of Humanities, along with ICT solutions for Translation (2016-2021), and IT (advanced course, 2108-2021) at the same University. Since January 2022, he has been appointed Research Fellow at University of Bari (Department of Humanities). His research interests focus on both language and translation issues covering different topics; furthermore, he has been analysing the growing interest towards communication via social networking platforms in order to retrieve real-time, aggregated bulk of data aimed at investigation of micro- and macro-features of language. Other research areas include Translation Studies, CAT Tools, Machine Translation, and Human-Machine forms of interaction, especially in communication- and language-based terms.

Elisabetta Ostuni is a PhD student in “AI and Translation in Corporate Communication” at the University of Bari Aldo Moro, Italy. She received her M.A. degree cum laude in Specialised Translation with a thesis titled "The Persistence of Ambiguity: Sense, Otherness and Translation" and previously a B.A. in Modern Cultures and Languages, with a dissertation in Semiotics titled "The Art of Fugue in Art: Language, Writing, Image. A Semioethical Approach". She studied at Leiden University in the Netherlands, taking courses in Artificial Intelligence and Non-human Cognition. Her main interests include semiotics, linguistics, and technology. She has work experience in communication management for tech startups.

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Sustainability Disclosure in the Cruise Industry: An Ecolinguistic Approach - *Elena Intorcia, Università degli Studi del Sannio*

Abstract

Due to increasing societal attention to the environment and to the disruptive effects brought about by climate change, businesses and corporations operating in diverse sectors of human activity are more and more bound to meet stakeholders' demands to adapt to sustainability goals (Vanvik 2024).

Sustainability reporting has become paramount for companies in their attempt to legitimize their operations and actions in order to discursively reframe the commonly shared belief that profit and social commitment are mutually exclusive (Catenaccio 2012: 131).

With a constant size growth, the cruise industry is considered to be among the sectors of human activity with the biggest environmental impact. Although some studies focusing on sustainability in the cruise industry have been published over the last years (e.g. Hillestad & Larsen 2020), what still remains scarcely explored is strictly linguistic research on the subject of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reports and sustainability.

This study aims to give a contribution in this direction by examining the strategic communication adopted by two major cruise companies in their annual Sustainability Reports. A corpus-assisted, ecolinguistically-informed Critical Discourse Analysis framework is used to identify the legitimacy strategies employed and to shed light on the discursive conceptualization of the ethic approach followed to allegedly achieve greater sustainability. Drawing from Ecolinguistics (Stibbe 2015), the investigation further hopes to help understand how linguistic analysis can lead to an increased societal awareness on the environmental impact of human actions, considering the profound influence of language on our perceptions of nature and modern societies (Ponton 2024).

Keywords

cruise companies; corporate sustainability reporting; Critical Discourse Analysis; framing; Ecolinguistics

Bio

Elena Intorcia is Adjunct Professor of English Language and Translation at the Department of Engineering, University of Sannio. Her research interests lie primarily in the fields of English for Specific Purposes, English language teaching and learning, Critical Discourse Analysis and Ecolinguistics. She holds a PhD in Cultural and Postcolonial Studies of the Anglophone World from the University of Naples "L'Orientale" and was granted a Fulbright scholarship at the UIC (University of Illinois, Chicago). She has taught English as an FL in a variety of educational environments and Italian as a foreign language in academic settings abroad within the LLP-Erasmus programme.

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The Sustainable Development Goals in the Light of Global Mining Activities. Smooth and/or Radical? - Anna Meyer, Montanuniversität Leoben / Graz University

Abstract

The Sustainable Development Goals are a milestone in sustainable development. The 17 goals have an impact on the way humanity sees and measures sustainable development. They are to be achieved radically and smooth; Radical to include all actors. Smooth to leave no one behind.

All-encompassing as they are they also have an influence on the global mining companies and their reporting practices. Mining is a major industrial sector is responsible for emissions driving the climate change as 4% to 7% of the global greenhouse gas emissions can be attributed to the major metal and mining companies worldwide.

The present paper investigates how three major mining companies have adapted to the targets of the SDGs. Looking at how the SDGs have impacted the mining companies sustainability reports the paper focused on "reference to the SDGs" and "faming of sustainability before and after the SDGs". For this purpose, the sustainability reports of the mining companies are investigated bearing in mind the timeframe before and after the ratification of the SDGs. A corpus of reports from each company is created and searched. Collocations of the lexeme sustain allow an assessment of the language used to frame sustainability and the goals in the reports. The paper draws on critical discourse analysis of the identified collocation lines to analyse at detailed level and create an ecolinguistic as well as a sociolinguistic critique.



Keywords

critical discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, sustainability reporting, mining sector, sustainable development goals

Bio

Anna Meyer is a researcher and project manager at the Resources Innovation Center Leoben at Montanuniversität Leoben and a PhD candidate at Graz University. Her research focuses on critical discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, climate communication and sustainability reporting in the raw materials sector. Furthermore, she is the sustainability manager at Montanuniversität Leoben and her work includes CO₂ accounting, reporting and measures for sustainable development at the university. Her field of activity lies in projects in the context of sustainable transformation. Anna Meyer is a longstanding representative in the Alliance of Sustainable Universities Austria and the Climate Change Centre Austria. Her role in these networks is to further sustainable research and to foster transformation in the higher education sector.

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Assessing the dynamics of addressee-management in Corporate Sustainability Reports: A corpus-assisted meaning analysis - Donna R. Miller, University of Bologna; Cinzia Bevitori, University of Bologna

Abstract

This paper examines addressee-management in corporate reporting, problematising the dynamics of speaker engagement with their stakeholders in a purpose-built diachronic corpus of Corporate Sustainability Reports (CSRs). By combining the theoretical, analytical and methodological tools of Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics (SFL), and especially appraisal theory (Martin and White



2005), with those of Corpus Linguistics (CL) (e.g. Miller et al. 2014), the study investigates these socially-contextualized discourses (pro)claiming an agenda of desirable social good. In particular, this research brings together the analysis of experiential and interpersonal meaning by exploiting: 1) Hasan's cline of dynamism (1989: 46), which locates active/passive participant roles in transitivity on a continuum; 2) White's recent work on the 'putative addressee' and the role of the resources of Bakhtinian dialogistic positioning in, as Martin and White put it (2005: 95), 'writing the reader into the text' (2021) and, 3) to better probe the indirect mechanisms by which speakers project values/beliefs onto their addressees, also Don's investigations into both invoked appraisal and addressee alignment (e.g., 2016). Our findings indicate that these texts demonstrably assume alignment with the putative addressee via the construal of a markedly asymmetrical speaker-addressee power hierarchy, coupled with substantial interpersonal projection of speaker's values/beliefs onto their addressees by means of monoglosses, 'warrants', invoked evaluation and its widespread intra-and inter-textual propagation.

Keywords

Corporate Sustainability Reports (CSRs), stakeholder, addressee positioning, invoked evaluation, intra-/inter-textuality

Bios

Donna R. Miller is Alma Mater Professor at the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the University of Bologna. Grounded in Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics, her corpus-assisted investigations have regularly explored the grammar of evaluation in terms of APPRAISAL SYSTEMS in institutional text types. Another key domain of her research is verbal art. She energetically champions Hasan's model of Systemic Socio-Semantic Stylistics (SSS), innovatively fine-tuned with Jakobson's Grammatical Parallelism. The case is most recently argued in the 2021 volume *Verbal Art and Systemic Functional Linguistics*, Equinox.

Cinzia Bevitori is Associate Professor of English Language and Linguistics at the Department of Interpreting and Translation, University of Bologna. Her main research interests include corpus-assisted discourse studies, critical discourse studies, SFL and Appraisal, as well as ecolinguistics, mostly focusing on the analysis of institutional, news media and political discourse. Recent publications include "Risk and resilience in a changing climate" (*Text and Text* 2022 with J.H. Johnson); "Environment, Climate and Health at the Crossroads. A Critical Analysis of Public Policy and Political Communication Discourse in the EU" (Edward Elgar 2023, with K.E. Russo).

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PANEL 5 - IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABILITY FOR INCLUSITIVITY

Empowering Learners: A Tool for Sustainable Language Acquisition - *Pasquale Esposito, Università degli Studi di Salerno*

Abstract

This paper explores the potential of open-source educational platforms in promoting inclusive second language acquisition while supporting global educational objectives, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Focusing on SDG 4.7, which emphasizes quality education empowering learners with skills for sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, and global citizenship (UN, 2015), this research integrates frameworks of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED). As Krieg and Toivanen (2021) highlight, sustainability requires engagement with diverse perspectives and contexts.

ESD cultivates awareness and knowledge about sustainable practices and social equity, equipping learners to address global challenges (UNESCO, 2014). By integrating ESD principles into language education, learners acquire linguistic competencies and a critical understanding of their roles in fostering sustainability. GCED aims to empower learners to engage in informed action promoting peace, tolerance, and social justice. This dual approach is essential in today's interconnected world, where language education transcends communication to include cultural awareness and ethical responsibility.

Preliminary findings indicate open-source platforms significantly enhance learner engagement and involvement, fostering a dynamic environment motivating students to participate actively in their educational journeys. The integration of Open Educational Resources (OER) is pivotal in engagement by providing customizable, high-quality materials tailored to diverse contexts (Wiley, Bliss, & McEwen, 2014; Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013).

Through these frameworks, this paper posits that open-source platforms facilitate language acquisition and cultivate active global citizens prepared to address pressing social and environmental issues, ensuring high engagement and deep involvement in the learning process.

Keywords

sustainability in education, inclusive learning models, language acquisition, education for sustainable development, global citizenship

Bio

Pasquale Esposito is a PhD student in English linguistics at the University of Salerno. His research focuses on the development of learning environments through IT tools to enhance lexical skills in language learners, emphasizing accessible tools that support self-regulated learning outside formal settings. Pasquale has presented and published on topics such as Linguistic Linked Open Data and language variation, including his recent presentation "The Linguistic Linked Open Data through the



Linguists' Lens" at the DQMLKG Workshop at ESWC 2024. He is also a co-author of the forthcoming chapter "Lexical Frequency Effects on Language Variation" in *Lexical Variation and Knowledge Construction across Historical, Methodological, and Cultural Ecologies*, edited by Calabrese R., Latorraca R., Aiello, J., & Geeraert, D., to be published by John Benjamins.

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Examining Diversity Reporting on Disability, Religion and Sexual Orientation: A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis across languages - *Bernadette Hofer-Bonfim, Vienna University of Economics and Business*

Abstract

Diversity reporting as part of sustainability disclosures remains an underexplored research area. Despite the regulatory frameworks that influence this field (e.g. GRI 405), diversity reporting is quantitatively less developed compared to environmental reporting and is primarily narrative in nature. Holton (2005) notes in her study of European companies' diversity reporting that there are no clear guidelines on whether, where, or how diversity should be reported in sustainability disclosures. Moreover, significant variability exists in terms of the content and extent of diversity reporting across companies. Drawing on global and critical diversity management studies (e.g. Özbilgin, Bartels-Ellis, and Gibbs 2019), which call for more country-specific insights into diversity management discourses to better understand varying (re)interpretations of the term "diversity," and based on DE&I communication research that highlights the national context's influence on the frequency of referencing dimensions of the Big 6 (e.g. Jonsen et al. 2019; Point and Singh 2003), this paper explores how three institutionally distinct countries—Brazil, Italy, and the United States—



report on three diversity categories (sexual orientation, religion, and disability) that are part of the commonly cited Big 6. Methodologically, the study applies Partington's (2013) cross-linguistic corpus-assisted discourse studies (CL-CADS) approach, supplemented by a quantitative visual content analysis to examine the representation of diversity dimensions in the images used in these reports. The findings reveal diverging patterns in reporting on disability, which can be attributed to the differing regulatory contexts. Additionally, there is a strong heteronormative bias in both text and imagery across all analyzed reports, and references to sexual orientation and religion are almost absent.

Keywords

diversity reporting, Big 6, diversity management discourse, CADS, Brazil, Italy

Bio

Bernadette Hofer-Bonfim has a background in Romance Languages (B.A.) and Social and Cultural Anthropology (B.A.) and holds a M.A. (2018) in Language and Communication Studies from the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia. Currently, she works as a teaching and research associate at the Department for Business Communication at the Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU). Her interests include language-comparative research on cross-cultural aspects in corporate communication, particularly in non-financial disclosure. In her PhD project, she investigates corporate communication on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in the banking sector.

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Rethinking Sustainability Practices: A Critical Examination of How Eco-Ableism marginalizes People with Disabilities - *Annalisa Raffone, Pegaso Digital University*

Abstract

Despite being regarded as ‘the world’s largest minority’ (UN 2010), People with Disabilities (PWDs) still face discrimination in multiple aspects of society, including the workplace, healthcare, education, and the community’s social life, often accused of being privileged because of their conditions (Raffone 2022). However, the ‘social model’ of disability shows that multidimensional barriers (i.e., physical and attitudinal) contribute to the ‘creation’ of disability as they limit PWDs’ involvement in everyday activities, preventing them from leading a proper life like their non-disabled counterpart. Among these obstacles, environmental changes and sustainability initiatives have been found to significantly impact the lives of PWDs (Kosanac et al. 2022). Indeed, despite ongoing efforts to achieve and balance environmental justice, sustainable development, and equity while at the same time defending the rights of PWDs (UN 2019), environmental policies often overlook them, both hindering their everyday life and ability to live sustainably and contribute to protecting the planet. Against this backdrop, this investigation, informed by the principles of Corpus Linguistics and Eco- and Social Media Critical Discourse Studies, addresses a specific form of discrimination against PWDs known as *eco-ableism*, namely “ableism arising in environmental policy, planning, and activism” (Schleck and Ben-Alon 2024, 236). In particular, the study will analyze PWDs’ viewpoints on sustainable environmental actions as shared and spread on prominent social media platforms. Since no research has been previously conducted on eco-ableism from a discourse-based perspective, this investigation aims to achieve two primary goals. Firstly, it seeks to identify and uncover the discourses surrounding environmentally based (discriminatory) practices that create barriers for PWDs. Secondly, it aims to possibly provide forms of intervention that effectively incorporate PWDs’ needs in sustainable decision-making, thus also highlighting the pivotal role of linguistically-informed critical research in advocating for social change.

Keywords

critical discourse studies, disability, eco-ableism, social media, sustainability

Bio

Annalisa Raffone (PhD) is a Tenure-Track Research Fellow (RTT) in English Language, Translation, and Linguistics (ANGL-01/C) at Pegaso Digital University.

Her research focuses on the discursive construction of identity and diversity in social media through the tenets of (Social Media) Critical Discourse Studies and Corpus Linguistics.

She has presented her work at national and international conferences and published in edited volumes and leading journals, particularly on the discursive construction of disability and hate speech online against minorities. Additionally, she explores digital learning environments,



specifically focusing on Digital Storytelling (and its intersection with Discourse analysis) and Digital Game-based Learning in EFL settings.

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Communicating sustainability and climate emotions through young adult Anglophone dystopian fiction - Chiara Xausa, University of Bologna

Abstract

This presentation will investigate how emotions (personal experiences) and affects (the forces that precede, produce, and inform such experiences) function in a range of environmentally oriented Anglophone texts for young adults. It will use affective ecocriticism and econarratology to evaluate the literary structures and devices through which such narratives convey sustainability and environmental understanding, and become engines of affect, stressing that emotional responses are evoked as readers empathize with characters, while also inhabiting emotionally the storyworlds that surround such characters. A particular attention will be devoted to the entanglement between negative/painful/traumatic emotions (e.g. ecogrief, climate anxiety, solastalgia) and positive emotions (empathy towards victims of environmental injustice and towards the nonhuman, hope that can emerge from grassroots activism, the spontaneous collectives and moments of solidarity that can arise out of disasters, and altruistic emotions that can activate trajectories of change). Contending that pedagogy does not have to follow an arc of hope in order to prevent despair, I will consider the genre of YA dystopia as a privileged site of investigation to explore the importance of cultivating both positive and negative emotions, as it deals with dark times but maintains the



potential to inspire the 'social dreaming' that is central to utopia, challenging and disturbing young readers

Keywords

affective ecocriticism, econarratology, young adult fiction, climate anxiety, literary studies

Bio

Chiara Xausa is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Fellow at the University of Bologna, with a project on climate fiction, econarratology, and empirical and affective ecocriticism. Previously, she has been a postdoctoral fellow in Anglophone literature and an adjunct professor of gender studies at the University of Bologna (2022-2024). She completed her PhD in 2022 with a thesis on feminist environmental humanities and dystopian Anthropocene narratives. Her publications include articles on Alexis Wright, Cherie Dimaline, Jesmyn Ward, Sacy Lloyd, Imbolo Mbue, Wanuri Kahiu, climate fiction, and feminist environmental humanities. Her first monograph, titled *Intersectional World-Making in Climate Fiction: Undoing the Anthropocene Master Narrative*, will be published by Peter Lang in 2024.

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PANEL 6 - DISCUSSING SUSTAINABILITY IN (COUNTER-)INSTITUTIONAL DISCOURSE

An Institutional Approach to the Critical Analysis of Sustainability Discourse: Advocating for Work with Small Organizations and Comparable Corpora - *Romuald Dalodiere, University of Mons*

Abstract

In discourse analysis, sustainability and CSR communication are well represented. Among the many approaches to these works, those that employ critical discourse analysis (CDA – see, for instance, Stibbe, 2015) are numerous. In addressing power abuse and inequality in discursive contexts (Van Dijk, 2015), CDA seems particularly appropriate for analyzing phenomena that rely so heavily on social expectations, such as CSR and sustainability (Pesqueux, 2009). Institutional theory, which primarily focuses on why organizations tend to become similar (Greenwood *et al.*, 2014), has been presented as a relevant complement to CDA (Phillips, 2003) and is frequently found in studies of CSR communication, including some that use CDA.

To the best of our knowledge, however, the analysis of CSR or sustainability discourse does not appear to focus on SMEs, nor does it use comparable corpora (multilingual corpora). Yet, incorporating these two dimensions into the analysis would deepen and strengthen the examination of sustainability and CSR communication. At the institutional level, this would shed light on the circulation of relevant communication strategies and concepts internationally. From a critical discourse analysis perspective, it would highlight how power is both exercised and endured by smaller companies, which may be subject to larger institutional forces but also have the potential to drive these forces further in the discursive realm.

In this presentation, we outline several methodological choices and key findings to date, as well as current directions for future research.

Keywords

discourse analysis, environmental discourse, corporate social responsibility communication, institutional theory.

Bio

Romuald Dalodiere earned his Ph.D. from the University of Mons. His research interests centre on discourse analysis and environmental communication.

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The state of the European Green Deal: Analysing sustainability communication across the EU's multi-level governance system

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Abstract

The energy crisis escalated with Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. In addition to rising energy prices, energy security came into focus, potentially displacing other challenges. Against this background, the paper analyses to what extent the EU continues with the implementation of the European Green Deal (EGD). To do so, the paper points to a dilemma: while we see ambitious policies and targets at the EU level, implementation remains primarily in the hands of member states. However, the EU does not have 'hard' governance tools to force reluctant member states into compliance. Instead, the EU has to rely on 'soft' governance tools, such as monitoring member states based on their National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs). Besides this functional monitoring usage, NECPs constitute a key communication tool enabling dialogue among governments, stakeholders and EU institutions (Zwaan & Schoenefeld, 2024). In this paper, we focus on the discursive functions of NECPs, addressing for instance the following questions: How are problems framed? How are (non) actions legitimised? Who participates in the drafting and implementing of NECPs? To what extent do NECPs align with EU sustainability discourses, policies and targets? To answer these questions, we conduct a discourse analysis of EU documents and the NECPs of two climate laggards, namely Hungary and Romania. In this regard, we also look at instances of 'creative compliance' (Bàtory,



2016) and their respective approach to negotiations with the EU. In sum, the paper provides a timely analysis of the state of the EGD and the key role of sustainability communication in the implementation process.

Keywords

European Green Deal, sustainability, NECPs, hard and soft governance, implementation

Bios

Dr. Simona Davidescu is a Senior Lecturer in Public Policy, interested in environmental and energy policy, with a focus on the European Union and Central and East European countries. Before moving to York in September 2011, she has been a Lecturer in European Politics at the University of Aberystwyth (2008-2010) and Teaching Fellow in Environmental Politics at the University of Southampton (2010-2011). She is an Honorary Research Associate with the EU-Asia Institute at ESSCA, Angers, France and part of several research networks on energy policy, sustainability and the green economy with UACES CRN and ECPR.

Dr. Kristina Kurze is Senior Lecturer in Political Science at the University of Göttingen & Research Fellow at Andrásy University Budapest. She has studied in London, Roskilde, Bonn and Berlin. She holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Osnabrück. Her main research interests are: energy, climate and sustainability policy, European integration and EU external relations. Kristina Kurze has published widely on these subjects, including two monographs. She is also co-editor, with Helene Dyrhaug, of the edited volume "Making the European Green Deal work: EU sustainability policies at home and abroad" (Routledge, 2024).

Constraining Sustainability Issues to the Elite: A Cognitive-Pragmatic Analysis of Online Counter-Institutional Discourse on Food Choices and Sustainability - *Elise Hutchinson, Freedom Food Alliance*

Abstract

The growing influence of social media is posing challenges for effective sustainability communication. Misinformation and disinformation were ranked as the leading global threat of the next two years by the World Economic Forum (2024), ahead of extreme weather events. Policies related to reducing meat and dairy consumption seem to be particularly contentious and prone to driving polarization around sustainability issues online (Wang et al. 2020). The impact of misinformation about the sustainability of our food choices is not limited to the sharing of inaccurate facts; it creates and deepens gulfs between the public, experts, governments and corporations. This analysis will focus on online counter-institutional discourse, drawing from the frameworks of Critical Discourse Analysis and Cognitive Pragmatics. By taking into account



language's cognitive nature, the aim will be to demonstrate the real impact of the discursive construction of polarization around sustainability issues, specifically within discussions on agriculture and food choices on two main platforms: X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram. While a lot of research has shown how strong emotions might promote or hinder persuasive effects from sustainability communications, I argue that positive emotional effects (as defined by de Saussure, Louis and Wharton 2019) might play a pivotal role in generating feelings of coherence, and in constraining the interpretation of sustainability issues to 'the Elite', making them seem irrelevant to a portion of the public. By understanding the discursive and cognitive mechanisms which tie these narratives together, we can start to effectively fight misinformation online and thus enhance sustainability communications.

Keywords

Misinformation, Food systems, Polarization, Cognitive Pragmatics

Bio

I obtained a PhD in Linguistics from the University of Neuchâtel in 2023. My PhD thesis integrated Relevance Theory and Cognitive Linguistics to study the mechanisms of persuasive language in the long term, in the context of American War Rhetoric. I have a special interest in the effects of language use on the polarization of society, and on the persuasive effects of communications spreading misinformation, particularly related to the climate crisis. I became a co-founder of a non-profit called The Freedom Food Alliance, with the aim to bridge the gap between academic research and the public. Our mission is to form a team of experts from a variety of backgrounds to fight misinformation within the food system, through a series of initiatives. These include our fact-checking website (foodfacts.org), awareness campaigns and the development of media literacy programs.

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PANEL 7 - MOBILIZING FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN DIGITAL SPACES

Unsustainable discourses: Rhetorical strategies fueling right-wing opposition to climate change policies

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Robin Donadio
Independent Scholar

This talk examines social media's role in shaping and reinforcing anti-environmental narratives within right-wing political agendas in the United States and Italy. Using a corpus of tweets, Instagram descriptions, and YouTube comments, the present contribution explores how digital platforms amplify discursive strategies that challenge progressive environmental policies.

Through an analysis of feedback loops in comments and interactions, the investigation identifies common rhetorical approaches employed by right-wing figures in both countries. These include framing sustainability as an economic threat, appealing to cultural identity to resist global environmental mandates, downplaying scientific consensus, and invoking moral panic through populist claims of elite agendas. Additional strategies such as nationalist exceptionalism and strategic ignorance highlight a shared resistance to climate action while reflecting localized political priorities.

The talk further investigates parallels between the US and Italian contexts, exploring how these shared discursive strategies adapt to distinct socio-political environments. By drawing these connections, the discussion sheds light on the transnational influence and impact of right-wing digital discourse on global climate policy, offering insights into the intersection between online rhetoric and policy inaction.

Bios

Giuseppe Balirano, PhD in English Linguistics, is Professor of English Linguistics and Translation at the University of Naples L'Orientale, where he is also the current Director of the University Language Centre (CLAOR) and Rector's Delegate for Lifelong Learning, E-learning and Multimedia Enhancement. He is the President of the Italian Association for the Study of English (AIA). He is also the Director of the monitoring group on hate speech online at the University of Naples L'Orientale and Principal Investigator (PI) of the PRIN 2022 Project admitted for national funding titled "ECHOES. English studies to Contrast Hate Online and Enhance Solidarity". He is the BeTwiXt series director, publishing original monographs in the field of linguistics and communication studies. His research interests and publications lie in the fields of multimodal critical discourse studies, humour,



masculinity and queer studies, the discursive representation of organised crime and audio-visual translation. His most recent publications include: *The Rainbow Conspiracy: A Corpus-Based Social Media Analysis of Anti-LGBTIQ+ Rhetoric in Digital Landscapes* (2024, with B. Hughes); *Re-Defining Gender, Sexuality, and Discourse in the Global Rise of Right-Wing Extremism* (2021, co-edited with R. Borba); *Homing in on Hate: Critical Discourse Studies of Hate Speech, Discrimination and Inequality in the Digital Age* (2020, co-edited with B. Hughes); *Food Across Cultures: Linguistic Insights in Transcultural Tastes* (2019, co-edited with S. Guzzo); *Queering Masculinities in Language and Culture* (2018, co-edited with P. Baker); *Gardaí & Badfellas: The Discursive Construction of Organised Crime in the Irish Media* (2017); *Humosexually Speaking: Laughter and the Intersections of Gender* (2016, co-edited with D. Chiaro); *Languaging Diversity* (2015, co-edited with M.C. Nisco); and *Masculinity and Representation: A Multimodal Critical Approach to Male Identity Constructions* (2014).

Robin Donadio is a communication manager and sustainability advocate with experience in multicultural and cooperative social contexts. He is an Italo-British independent scholar who worked across Europe, contributing to initiatives aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including gender equality, climate action and life on land and below water.

Robin has graduated with honours from a minor in Sociology in Naples and a masters in intercultural relations with a focus on climate in Bologna, while also studying and working in Bath, Bristol and Cardiff.

When sustainability is not enough: activating citizens through multimodal communication modelling on Instagram - *Stefania M. Maci, University of Bergamo; Elena Mattei, Ca' Foscari University of Venice*

Abstract

This paper addresses the urgent challenges faced by the post-pandemic tourism industry and the unsustainability of its growth-driven model by introducing a fresh perspective on tourism discourse. The conventional tourism narrative often presents natural and cultural heritage as commodities for mass consumption and profit maximization, which has had a detrimental effect on local economies and communities, contributing to the loss of biodiversity and cultural authenticity (Stibbe 2014). Management scholars are currently advocating for a regenerative tourism model that emphasizes environmental, cultural preservation, and community well-being through equitable development; however, research on how to implement regenerative principles at the communication level is still lacking (Sharma and Tham 2023).

Grounded in Systemic Functional and Corpus Linguistics as well as social semiotics, this project compares the discourses of conventional, sustainable and regenerative tourism, focusing on how conscious tourism narratives may be constructed and communicated on digital platforms (Mattei



2024; Maci 2020; Isti'anah 2021). To this aim, the annotation process of a small sample of *Playa Viva*'s Instagram posts is discussed, along with its theoretical and methodological implications. The ultimate goal is to reshape perceptions of travel in the Anthropocene by developing a taxonomy of frequently used and statistically significant linguistic and visual resources that promote a regenerative tourism mindset. Through mixed methods, including multimodal software annotation and statistical analysis, this study wishes to offer an actionable tool to assist tourism specialists in designing compelling and inclusive travel experiences that shape an equal relationship between stakeholders, including visitors, host communities, and environments.

Keywords

regenerative travel, systemic functional linguistics, corpus-driven discourse studies, multimodality, Instagram marketing

Bio

Stefania Maci (PhD, Lancaster University, UK) is Full Professor of English Language, Translation, Linguistics at the University of Bergamo, where she is Coordinator of the MA in Digital Humanities, Director of the Research Centre on Specialised Languages, and Scientific Coordinator of the Research Group on Digital Humanities. She serves on the executive board of CADAAD (Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines). Her research is focussed on the study of the English language in academic and professional contexts, with particular regard to the analysis of tourism and medical discourses (ORCID: orcid.org/0000-0003-1654-5665).

Elena Mattei is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at *Ca' Foscari* University of Venice, where she is working on the National Research Project *DIETALY* (Destination Italy in English Translation and language over the Years) in collaboration with the Italian National Tourist Board.

Shortlisted for the *Paul Fortier Prize*, she is publishing a Routledge monograph on Instagram tourism discourse and collaborates with John Bateman. Her research interests include the annotation and statistical analysis of tourism multimodal corpora through Systemic Functional Linguistics frameworks. The objective is to promote regenerative travel, a topic discussed also in interviews with *Randstad Research* and *La Repubblica*.

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Tourism Discourse in Sustainable Destination Branding: Examining Social Media User-Generated Content on Spring Break in Miami Beach - *Walter Spezzano, Department of Economics, Business, and Statistics, University of Palermo*

Abstract

The rapid growth of tourism supply and demand has contributed to overtourism, imposing environmental, social, and economic pressures on many destinations (Mihalic 2020). In recent years, Miami Beach has been notably impacted during spring break, prompting efforts to address overcrowding, increased crime and violence, and strain on local resources. In response to these challenges, the destination developed a rebranding strategy for the 2024 spring break season, which included a targeted marketing campaign designed to discourage disorderly behavior and promote sustainable-responsible tourism. Central to this campaign is a public service announcement (PSA) video featuring residents metaphorically "breaking up" with spring breakers. The PSA, which was widely disseminated across social media, sparked extensive online discussion and engagement. Digital technologies, particularly social media, have transformed tourists from passive consumers into active *prosumers*, who both produce and consume content online (Maci 2020). Consequently, social media discourse (Zappavigna, 2012) must be considered in the development of destination rebranding strategies, as it plays a crucial role in brand co-creation (Confetto et al. 2020). Therefore, this study examines user-generated content (UGC) posted across social media in response to the PSA, utilizing Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (Baker 2023) to assess how UGC potentially influences the destination image of Miami Beach. The findings aim to assist destination marketing by providing insights into online users' perceptions and concerns, thereby supporting the long-term refinement of the destination rebranding strategy. The study also offers valuable guidance on targeted strategic communication for other destinations facing similar challenges.

Keywords

sustainable tourism, destination marketing, tourist behavior, digital communication, corpus-assisted discourse studies



Bio

Walter Spezzano is a PhD Candidate in Business and an Adjunct Professor of English Language and Linguistics at the University of Palermo (Italy). He is also a Visiting Scholar at Florida International University (USA), where he collaborates with the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau. His research lies at the intersection of Business Studies and Applied Linguistics, exploring strategic communication in both its internal and external dimensions, with a particular focus on the hospitality and tourism industry and the digital landscape. His PhD project specifically investigates digital branding as a discursive marketing tool in hospitality and tourism, analyzing ideological and power dynamics within brand strategy through the lens of Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies.

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PANEL 8 - ADDRESSING SUSTAINABILITY IN SPECIALISED DISCOURSE

Sustainable development lexicon and sustainability lexicon - *Pierre Beccaria, INRAe-ACT-Territoires*

Abstract

The dictionary can provide a socio-diffusion that balances onomasiology and semasiology and helps to build a community of interpretation.

The political lexicon of sustainable development can be compiled in 500 articles (Beccaria, 2025a) from a multi-level institutional corpus (UN declarations and reports, speeches by heads of state, national strategies and local initiatives) and calls from large groups of (children and youth, NGOs...) in context (summits, institutions). Discourse analysis can then identify command words and their appropriation into ideas, interests and institutions (Beccaria, 2024).

The scope of sustainability is broader and less hierarchical. A glossary of 500 scientific articles can be mastered (Beccaria, 2025b) in four headings: theoretical concepts by discipline; notions integrating at least two of the four dimensions of sustainable development; scientific monitoring of major concerns (climate, biodiversity, desertification); sectoral initiatives (e.g. sustainable mobility, sustainable agriculture). An epistemological triptych avoids the simple review and provides the means to ensure its own approach: an interdisciplinary palette, milestones of scientific knowledge production and a transdisciplinary posture with four idealtypes (Beccaria, 2022).

Keywords

socio-diffusion, political corpus, watchword, scientific corpus, epistemological triptych

Bio

Pierre Beccaria holds a Doctorate in Engineering from the National School of Agronomy in Montpellier and a master's degree in Innovation Economics from Paris 9 Dauphine. His profession leads him to study research methods on sustainable agriculture and territory. He is interested in agronomic thought, lexicography, and the philosophy of rationalities.

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Investigating the complexity of sustainability through corpus analysis in specialised discourse - *Maria Ivana Lorenzetti, University of Verona*

Abstract

Sustainability is a buzzword of our times. It can be classified as a boundary term (Gieryn 1999) set to build heterogeneous epistemic communities around a shared commitment to environmental, social and political-economic concerns (Godeman and Michelsen 2011). However, despite its aggregating potential, due to its polyfunctional nature, *sustainability* behaves like a floating signifier (Laclau 2005), which can be interpreted and used differently depending on the specific epistemic community or specialised discourse.

While the term is currently preferentially used in its more recently emerging sense (dating around 1980, according to the OED) related to climate change discourse, a great deal of greenwashing takes place under the sustainability banner, and the meaning of the term is often taken for granted and left unclarified.

Arguing that integrating text and corpus analysis (Baker 2006) with a detailed examination of collocations and co-occurrence patterns may offer valid instruments to disentangle the complexity of lexemes, this contribution proposes a corpus-based investigation of noun *sustainability* (and the adjective *sustainable*) in discourse-specific English, starting from the isolation of its defining features in the various fields (James and Magee 2017). Results of our study, which investigates the term in a set of corpora related to environmental (EcoLexicon English Corpus), scientific (Elsevier OA CC-BY Corpus) and sociopolitical discourse (United Nations Parallel Corpus), show that while overlaps exist in its usage in different domains, some senses display stronger connections. Economic and environmental sustainability represent a case in point, while purported general-currency sustainability remains vague and poorly defined (Goodland 1995).

Keywords

Sustainability, lexical semantics, lexical complexity, corpus analysis, discourse-specific English

Bio

Maria Ivana Lorenzetti is Associate Professor in English Linguistics at the University of Verona. She holds a PhD in English Linguistics from the University of Pisa (2006). Her main research interests are in political discourse, with a focus on populist rhetoric also from a contrastive perspective, and on the topics of immigration and sexism in discourse. Moreover, she is interested in the syntax-semantics interface, textual analysis, and cognitive linguistics. She has published widely in these areas and contributed to national and international conferences. She is part of the editorial boards of *Bibliography of Metaphor and Metonymy* (John Benjamins), the interdisciplinary journal *Iperstoria*, and the new journal *Interdisciplinary Journal of Populism*.

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