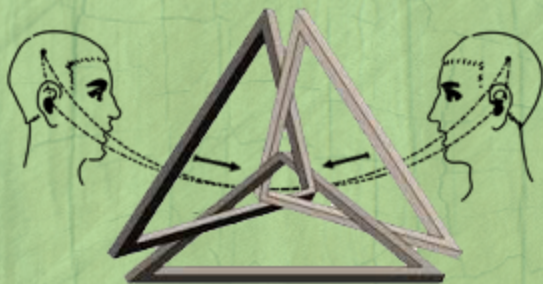


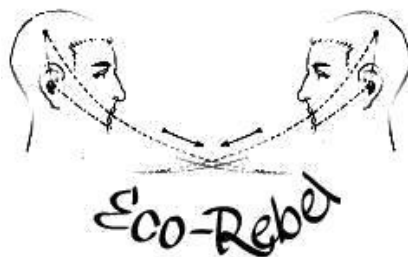
# **Ecolingüística**

**Revista Brasileira de Ecologia e Linguagem  
(ECO-REBEL)**

**Volume 6, número 4, 2020**



**Programa de Pós-Graduação em Linguística  
Departamento de Linguística  
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## **Editorial**

The Editors

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Dear readers,

This volume of *ECO-REBEL* is the second supplement dedicated to discourses on coronavirus, this time in English – the previous one (v. 6, n. 3, 2020) is entirely in Portuguese. The essay that opens the present number is Peter Finke’s “Go for the Gaiacene! Knowledge, culture and corona”. It serves as a kind of introduction to the volume. In the Appendix to the article, Finke states that he founded the School of Ecosystemic Linguistics at the University of Bielefeld, Germany. As is well known, Peter Finke’s ideas are one of the main sources of influences of Ecosystemic Linguistics. He wrote the article as a kind of preparation for his upcoming book *The Corona Crisis*, which he started writing in March 2020. He talks about the anthropocene's mistakes, similar to the damages caused by covid-19. According him, in addition to not being a source of certainty, science does not exist only in rich Western cultures. Diversity requires one to see contributions to it even from traditional ethnic groups. In this sense, Finke proposes the replacement of the Anthropocene by the Gaiacene.

The next article is “Newspeak as Coronaspeak 2020”, by Alwin Fill. He shows that the advent of coronavirus provoked a situation similar to that of the 2nd World War, although now people are afraid not of being bombed but of being affected by the virus. The presence of the virus was the cause of the emergence of several new words and “the use of phrases which described the danger and the measures taken against it”. An Austrian “journalist called the language used by the government *Newspeak* – echoing George Orwell’s novel *1984*”. In his article, Fill discusses some word-creations” “as well as the various ways in which an unexpected situation (in the whole world) has an effect on the use of language”.

Richard Alexander’s “An ecolinguistic perspective on the discourse of the corona virus” looks at corona virus discourses as part of the interface between humans, other living beings and the natural world. Humans have no autonomy, no integrity as a species separate from the other species. Taking an ecolinguistic approach the paper analyzes how the corona virus pandemic has changed our lives and how politicians, governments and the media are talking and discoursing about it around the globe. The pronouncements of politicians and governments changed very quickly to accommodate to the new state of affairs. Medical talk of illness and death entered the public domain, frequently using

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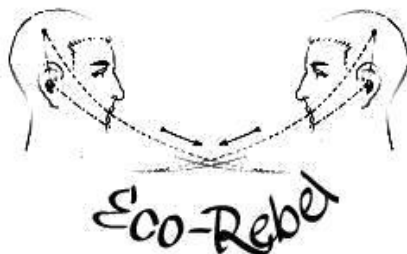
dramatic metaphors, as war metaphors. Discourses were packed with medical and epidemiological terms and phrases which filled the media and TV. Such a crisis is a favourable time for ‘good’ journalism, especially investigative work.

The article by Diego Forte “Pandemics and nonhuman animals in the Argentine press: extended carnism and industrial fatalism” uses Arran Stibee’s theory in discussing the construction of the carnist identity of Argentina in general by seeing nonhuman animals as simple resources for humans.

The article “Pandemic possibilities for Applied Linguists’ actions” by George M. Jacobs and Chau Meng Huat challenges applied linguists and other academics to get out of the box and help society confront COVID-19, other pandemics and other crises caused by humans. Nine examples of what to do are discussed.

Next comes Ubirajara Moreira Fernandes’ article “‘But he is not corrupt’: Not being corrupt justifies any delinquency and crime”. The author discusses the catchphrase “But he is not corrupt” used by President Bolsonaro and followers whenever somebody reminds them of Bolsonaro’s inappropriate behavior. However, at the end of the article the author drops a hint that this is not the case because Bolsonaro connives in his son Flávio Bolsonaro’s alleged acts of corruption.

Rajendra Kumar Dash’s article “Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and the Canadian environment week: Case studies in sustainable development campaigns” is the only one that does not deal directly with corona virus discourse. The author argues about the integration of the new media in environmental campaigns. The article studies two strategic sustainable development campaigns: India’s Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and the Canadian Environment Week. In both the new media has created public awareness about sustainability to motivate people to be participants as well as to change agents of sustainable development in the collective interest of personal, national, and global sustainability. Serious Indian problems such as men urinating and sometimes defecating openly are tackled by the construction of latrines and two-pit compost toilet, for instance. In Canada the Clean Air Day, on Wednesday in the Environment Week, is celebrated every year in the first week of June. In general the program recommends simple measures to avoid pollution and degradation of the environment as, for example, alternatives to motorized transportation. Finally there is a minireview of the first book in the Bloomsbury Advances in Ecolinguistics Series (Bloomsbury publisher). The book is *TESOL and Sustainability: English Language Teaching in the Anthropocene Era* (2020), edited by Jay Goulah and John Katunich. It is a short presentation but it includes the Table of Contents so that the reader can have a general idea of the book’s content.



## **GO FOR THE GAIACENE! KNOWLEDGE, CULTURE AND CORONA**

Peter L. W. Finke

**Abstract:** The author of a book on the errors of the Anthropocene – a leading German ecolinguist – sees parallels between the illness caused by the new Covid 19-virus and the illness of the earth caused by the Anthropocene. We have to learn that science does not mean certainty but organizing uncertainty according to rational arguments. And rationality is culture-dependent as well as universal at the same time. The ecolinguistic view on language is pioneering this understanding by including the environments of languages into its scientific scope and widening its horizon towards learning from different cultures. One of the stupidities of the present age is neglecting cognition in favour of communication and simplifying that by the English-only-fashion. That is an example for the superficiality of the Anthropocene and its pursuit of convenience. We should aim at its replacement by a Gaiacene as soon as possible.

**Key-words:** Anthropocene; Rationality; Transforming science; Needs of the future; Ecolinguistics; Uncertainty

**Resumo:** Os autores de um livro sobre os erros do antropoceno – um conhecido ecolinguista alemão – vê paralelos entre o mal causado pelo novo vírus covid-19 e o mal levado à terra pelo antropoceno. É preciso entender que a ciência não traz certeza, mas organiza a incerteza de acordo com argumentos racionais, sendo que a racionalidade depende da cultura e, ao mesmo tempo, é universal. A visão da ecolinguística sobre a língua está entre as primeiras nesse sentido, uma vez que inclui os meios ambientes das línguas em seu objeto de estudo, ampliando o horizonte no sentido de aprender com diferentes culturas. Uma das estupidezes da nossa época é negligenciar a cognição em prol da comunicação, simplificando o processo com a moda do só-o-inglês. Isso é uma exemplo da superficialidade do antropoceno e suas consequências. Por isso, é preciso substituí-lo por um gaiaceno o mais rápido possível.

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**Palavras-chave:** Antropoceno; racionalidade; ciência transformadora; necessidades do futuro; Ecolinguística; incerteza.

*Many things are currently failing. Not only our naivety, which we have dealt with in a carefree manner up to now because of not too bad economic forecasts and reassuringly beautiful ideas: enlightenment, knowledge-based society, sustainability, growth, the future, genetics, artificial intelligence, etc. Certainly, the earth is in a bad condition, but we have still been able to rely on our creativity. If needs be, escape into space is now also a viable option.*

*But Corona has foiled our plans. Our knowledge has suddenly proven to be quite limited. We do not really know the new virus, we are tapping in the dark, even the otherwise always omniscient politicians suddenly look disenchanted. In these circumstances I started to write a new book about the necessary end of the Anthropocene and the transition to a Gaiacene. In the beginning there is a reflection on this situation.*

### **My new book and I**

Many books by scientists read as if they wanted to solve all problems once and for all and were written for eternity. I am also writing a new book, but with a different perspective. I am writing about knowledge and science with focus on our present day. My book does not contain any predictions about what the future will look like, but it contains warnings against dragging past mistakes further and a few glimpses of sensible paths into the uncharted territory of a new knowledge culture. In doing so I occasionally allow myself a few emotions. They are more than just subjective wishes of the author, rather a selection of experiences of many who think that the Anthropocene has served its purpose. What we need is a Gaiacene. This will be the conclusion of my new book.

But at a time when it is undeniably important to strengthen people's trust in science, can a book which strongly criticises science be written? I think that this is exactly the right time to write it. Because only a serious science that is open to the problems of the present can claim to be trusted for the future. Precisely because it is no longer the undoubted hope of the past, we must ask ourselves whether and how it can become that again. And so I started to write in March 2020 amidst an exceptional situation. It has a name: *The Corona Crisis*. In the following weeks, it has become more and more acute.

Only a short time ago, it was occasionally reported in the world news that a new type of virus was killing more and more people in Wuhan in the Chinese province of Hubei. That was – seen from almost everywhere – far away. Now this virus has also arrived in this country, and even more: within a short period of time it has spread across the whole earth. The situation is new for everyone. Nobody knows exactly what to do. In Germany a widespread ban on contact was put in place.

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After the "black zero" had ruled here for years – the principle of not taking on any new national debt – a programme of aid worth hundreds of billions was now decided by all the democratic parties together in a single day. In the meantime, almost the entire world economy, this machine which feeds on production and consumption, has come to a standstill. Economists are outbidding each other with negative forecasts; they are obviously allowed to do so. People are worse off than they were yesterday, but apparently not necessarily the earth. The birds that still exist are singing again after the end of winter. Spring seems to be coming as always. But something is wrong here. Normality is gone, and that is good. It has gone in other countries, too, the United States of America, for instance. There is much difference in politics, however. The presidents of the United States and Brazil especially (to name the two states only that are leading the Corona death-list) seem to have no insight into the necessary principles of political conduct at today's time.

### **Anthropocene at its end**

This situation is almost ideal for writing books. The world pauses, its bustle pauses. I want to write critically about knowledge and science, a difficult topic. Is there even a connection to this new crisis? Oh yes, there is. It is science that is supposed to save us. But what do I mean by "us"? Just people or the earth, too? The two are related, but not the same. While some of us may have hope, earth's future is still uncertain. Gaia is sick, she is seriously injured. That is why I simply write about both, about us and about earth. Because if earth could press charges, now would be the time. The doctor's perspective has almost become normality.

The present general condition of the earth is not good. We, the human beings – a relatively late development of evolution – have taken over the rule on it and have become dictators; "Anthropocene" is the name given to this. But it has not become an entirely successful age. Reality is full of conflicts and crises. There is great strife over almost everything: over supremacy, over power and money, over war and peace, religion and ideology, possible paths to the desired truth, now also over health and illness and also about the divide between faith and knowledge.

We have realized that knowledge is an important resource. At least we pretend to have done so because we very much imagine ourselves to have become a knowledge-based society. But then this new virus appears – an unknown, tiny, but almost omnipresent opponent – and paralyses almost the whole of our habitual Anthropocene everyday life. Now "science" rules, even if it is mainly in the form of virologists and epidemiologists. They seem to have a clear perspective, although they are only specialists. They are the current autocrats. They set the beat now, a very slow blues. Where there was techno noise just a moment ago, it has become quiet for now: life on the back burner. But there is a lot to be said for the fact that many are just waiting for the end of this pause of the fast loud Anthropocene and are eagerly awaiting that it starts again with the usual hunt for noise, money, power and knowledge.

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Let us use the break to think and return to our problems of yesterday, which have not been solved, only suppressed by others, which now – temporarily – seem to be more important. They will also be the problems of tomorrow.

### **The terrible record of the Anthropocene**

We have made ourselves at home in the Anthropocene. Not without reason everyone has been talking about climate change, which is most likely man-made, not even as a mere fashionable topic, but as a serious problem. A sixteen-year-old Swedish girl, Greta Thunberg, has become a heroine. If children have to call adults to order, it is surely time to take notice. Many have also rightly been concerned about a negative biodiversity development, or about the amount of waste we produce and – out of sight, out of mind – dump in landfills in faraway countries, in the seas, in the air we breathe, according to the convenient equation "invisible = gone". Much fewer people have been concerned about the very similar developments in our cultural diversity, where our European-born world view – "western civilization" – has prevailed. The seemingly unstoppable processes of today's globalisation have by no means only served to expand awareness for knowledge and the movement of goods across the globe, but have also destroyed regional markets and traditional cultures, in addition to irretrievable achievements of natural evolution. And all for the benefit of one-sided profiteers.

Even fewer contemporaries have been concerned about our dwindling linguistic diversity, but it has also been a reality. English has become the common language of the world. For the media, the economy, politics and even for science, it has become a common language on the back of current world powers – the United States of America and the Internet – a lingua franca, one that apparently unites the main players of the most diverse nations in a common basis of communication. Much like Latin in the past. Nevertheless, many people have been worried – rightly so – about the destruction of nature, the famine, poverty, violence, wars, flight and forced migration. These are all bad legacies from the past, which we had actually fought against and wanted to end but these plagues were and have by no means been overcome. Not a good testimony for the present age of *Homo sapiens*.

Now suddenly, due to the virus, a break has been forced on us. It opens up an opportunity: we suddenly have time to think. One question in particular interests me: *Is science perhaps also among the perpetrators of this fiasco of our beautiful ideas of enlightenment, progress and more happiness in a better world?* Just asking this question sounds almost like a sacrilege: science! Is it not currently proving once again that it is a source of hope? Where would we be if we did not have modern medicine? Is it not undeniable that we definitely need it to get out of crises like the present ones? How could science have contributed to the great earth crisis when it has advocated the opposite?

And indeed, if you consider the usual suspects science is usually missing from this negative list. After all, science did not cause the corona crisis either. Some say it was our egoism, greed,

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stinginess, irrationality and our human striving for influence, power, possession, fame, megalomania: unfortunately very stable character traits throughout all generations. Others blame institutions: the economy, industry and politics – especially in the relation of states. An irresponsible national, foreign, security, agricultural and forestry policy, also a wrong domestic and health policy, a frequently inadequate social, environmental and educational policy: all of these are certainly justified suspects in this specific case.

One must undoubtedly also add the paralyzing power of once established administrative routines. The juggernaut of administration is often overlooked as an effective obstacle to our desire for progress, because in the long run we cannot live without its routine processes. Bureaucracy, which quickly becomes independent and hinders necessary changes, is also without doubt one of the causes of the earthly misery. All of these things are our weaknesses, which we still carry around with us, which one might have hoped to get rid of in the course of time or that they would at least have less and less influence.

### **The tale of the good and the bad**

But thankfully a tranquilliser pill is reliably at hand: our rationality still exists. It is supposedly one of our strengths, and its pinnacle is – science. It seems to be exempt from the driving forces of decline. It even allows optimism, a positive emotion.

I know a science journalist who I hold in high regard. He works for a renowned journal of popular science and also publishes remarkable articles in other journals. He is a trained biologist and has a passion for the world of birds and the problems they face today. In his accounts, the undeniable main causes appear again and again: agricultural and forestry economical policies, the creeping and often even rapid poisoning of soil, water and air by modern industrial products – and thus the contamination of the food of birds – the voracious consumption of unspoiled landscapes due to the expansion of cities and traffic, or the multiple old and new dangers on the traditional and sometimes long migratory routes of many species and also the hardly controllable dangers in their wintering grounds in distant countries. But it never occurs to him to lay the blame at the feet of one thing: science. In his texts it always plays one of the good guys, the enlightener, the chance to understand everything better and to actually change it for the better.

In fact, science is rarely mentioned among the causes of the earthly crisis; in most cases it is even missing altogether and we hardly notice this. The beautiful old characteristic role of the bearer of hope, that has set out to free us from the discomfort of natural disasters, disease, physical hardship and other daily worries of all kinds, is still very much alive. Even in the current virus crisis, it is rearing its head again as if nothing had changed, along the lines of: *Science, how good that we have it! It solves our problems, or at least tries to, and is often very successful in solving the one or other question.* Again an emotion: relief, almost pride. But that is why we hardly notice that an extinct ideal from bygone times has been etched into our brains; the paragon of the bearer of all our hopes that we have superimposed onto our rationality.



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Science? Rationality? Is this singularity, which was once commonplace, still justified today? What is the present reality?

### **Realism instead of nostalgia**

I have a goal with my book. I want to expose this ideal as what it is: not a description of today's reality, but a piece of nostalgia. Our nostalgic view goes like this: *There are the good and the bad. We have science to defeat the bad guys. It is, of course, one of the good guys.* And yet now, during the corona break, we should stop and ask ourselves: Is it really that simple? No, it is not. This categorisation of the world is oversimplified. The mistake is not that science was unfortunately and entirely one of the bad guys, but that we forget an important factor: history, the fact that everything changes over time. Science has also changed greatly. There are many people who still put their trust in it. Of course, they believe that it has only changed for good. I do not believe that.

That is why I make a distinction between science and knowledge culture. Science, as such, is not the eternally unchanging struggle to assert only one absolute rationality, but rather what we understand by it according to our historically changing views and how we constantly adapt to this change. And neither is absolute rationality just what we call it. In Antiquity there was a different understanding of it than today. In the Middle Ages it had already changed again, but when the Modern Age began it changed even more. Also in other parts of the earth it looks slightly or grossly different. At present, the Anthropocene is also getting on in years and something is changing again before our very eyes; and this is what my new book will be about. Today's culture of knowledge is no longer what it was, should have been, nor what we could make of it. The reality of science has changed according to that lines. We must finally realize this.

The cultural change, that our history traces, is also reflected in the change of the understanding of knowledge. Our science today is no longer uniform at all, but extremely pluralistic at one and the same time. For today's physicist, his understanding of science is certainly different from that of the father of natural science, Newton. Just as it already looked different for him than for Aristotle. But it certainly looks again very much different to today's literary scholar, and different again for today's economist, for the mathematician, the linguist, the epidemiologist or the researcher of artificial intelligence.

However, it is not only the respective subject and the respective time that produce such differences. It is also the different places where we try to acquire knowledge that cause great differences. Many Americans have a different understanding of science than many Europeans, even if some simplifiers would have us believe otherwise. The Chinese adopt much of both, but they also hold on to some of their own traditions of knowledge. Other parts of the world even seem to be inappropriately scientifically underdeveloped for the times. Or is our perspective on this just distorted? I believe that our image with the fixed categories of good and evil has long been wrong. The pretence of pure objectivity is just as wrong as the suppression of all negative emotions in favour of the positive ones. That is the topic of my new book.

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### **An example: About language and culture**

Let me give an example based on our concept of language. There is actually no such thing as *the language*. There are only well about six and a half thousands different natural languages on earth; if we include all dialects even many more. One language is spoken by more and more people today: English. But it is no better than others, which may only have twenty or a hundred active speakers and may soon die out. It is just convenient to be able to communicate with each other in this way. But we have to understand that we cannot express everything that is perhaps important in this way. For every language also has its own cognitive dimension and an environment to which it refers. Languages always are only parts of language-world-pairs. Depending on the culture, such language-world-pairs are different and they are not arbitrary. We are able to access rationality through all of them but each one does not open it up to us completely. It is like the windows in a big house: they show us different sections of the surrounding reality, we do not see everything from everyone.

There is a modern concept of linguistics that has made such observations its basis: ecosystemic linguistics. From this we can learn that the science of the Anthropocene allows only a limited view of universal rationality: exclusively that which corresponds to the one-sided hierarchical concept of those who consider only their own civilisation to be rational, highly developed, in line with the market, efficient and progressive. This is the anthropocentric culture of knowledge which sees itself as a teacher of other cultures and these as developing countries that still need to be taught the right way of thinking. No: it is the many, usually neglected and ignored languages and cultures, the many indigenous peoples on earth, that can also teach us rational lessons, for instance how to deal with the earth. We urgently need to learn from them how we can better understand reason for the sake of earth and all of its life than we do in the Anthropocene.

It is the cognitive function of language not the communicative which is fundamental. Before opening up our relations to other fellow humans languages establish our own relation to reality. Ecosystemic linguistics is the most actual form of cognitive linguistics and opens up a path to this understanding. It is not the only one we should go down. Today's professional sciences do not listen enough to women and the surrounding civil societies either which can also show us ways to a better, more universal understanding of rationality. But the main approach is one which is scattered across cultural diversity and allows us access to the wisdom and wealth of experience of those who have preserved our home planet over long periods of time without endangering it. If the present state of the earth is the result of us having mistreated it badly over the past centuries then we have been doing something wrong. Flawless, completely emotionless objectivity is not only impossible; it is also harmful an understanding. Let us use the virus to finally realize this.

### **Let's go for the Gaiacene!**

My book will mainly deal with the fate of Gaia, the earth. She is a victim of modern science, too. Will we perhaps even have to say goodbye to her soon? She is becoming increasingly inhospitable,

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littered and poisoned. Are some extinct birds just flying ahead of us, once and for all? Will the new virus even help us to say goodbye? According to the motto: *Death is part of life, this is where we were born, this is where life was difficult for a long time but then it improved more and more. But now that's it. Earth's glory days are simply coming to an end.* At least for most people. Perhaps some of the chosen ones will only have to look as far as outer space for a new place for the future of their genes, because it does not seem that we can continue to live here on earth as we have been doing for much longer. Even for this, a Cosmocene, there have been pleas from people who were considered reasonable, for example the late exceptional physicist and cosmologist Stephen Hawking.

I beg to differ. The end of the Anthropocene is necessary, but it does not have to mean the end of the habitat earth nor that of humans.

What is to come after the Anthropocene is not simply something new, a "Novacene" with possible human successors as new sole rulers (such as James Lovelock's or Yuval Hariri's "Cyborgs", who no longer make mistakes), but a Gaiacene (as I call it) for normal human people, though not as the sovereign rulers of today. An age of real globalization, not what we simply call this wrong name today: an imperialism of the market rulers, who feel themselves to be highly developed, which is only roughly masquerading as globalization. To imagine the future only in such a way that the actors become ever wiser and eventually do everything right is, in my opinion, grossly negligent. Humans would be the first organisms that hyperintelligent cyborgs must get rid of.

Lovelock, in earlier years, was a serious scientist; the Gaia-hypothesis that he formulated and got accompanied by microbiologist Lynn Margulies was a creative theory for saving our home planet. Now, aged 100, his newest book praising an age of hyperintelligence is science fiction of the horror-type only. I want humans survive and they must still be allowed to make mistakes. But due to a better understanding of rationality these mistakes will no longer be as life-threatening and earth-endangering as those that mark the final days of the Anthropocene. In this respect, error-friendliness is one of the last few important achievements of the old philosophy of science that we must certainly carry over into the Gaiacene.

I think of it as an age of more cooperative and less competing science that we have today. As an era of coherent research in the difficult and concealed interconnections of reality, not of their continued fragmentation into the increasingly isolated intellectual principalities of specialists. Human beings must and can bring about and survive the end of the Baconic Age called the Anthropocene and develop the beginning of a Gaiaceous period, for the benefit of themselves and all life beside them. But: Whether they will really do it and succeed, I do not know. There will be no prognosis in my book. It will describe the Gaiacene as a worthwhile goal only. It is up to us to strive for it seriously or not. If we do, we don't need to give up science or rationality, but we shall have to change what we understand by it and many of its forms of organization. Likewise, we have to quit our cherished fiction of pure objectivity and completely emotionless assessment in science.

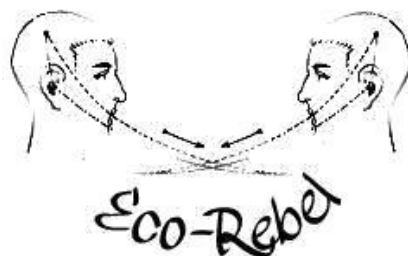
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No more, but also no less. Let us use the general corona break to start in earnest. I am using it to get started on my new book.

*Translated from German by Ruth Krug.*

Accepted on November 1, 2020.

ECOLINGUÍSTICA: REVISTA BRASILEIRA DE  
ECOLOGIA E LINGUAGEM (ECO-REBEL), V. 6, N. 4, 2020.



## NEWSPEAK AS CORONASPEAK 2020

Alwin F. Fill (Dept. of English, Graz University, Austria)

**Abstract:** A virus called Corona, in 2020, created a situation which had not existed since the 2nd World War. Everybody was in danger (this time of being infected), and people had to stay at home to avoid being ‘bombed’ (this time by a virus). This situation brought about the creation of several new words and the use of phrases which described the danger and the measures taken against it in a clear, but some of them also in a metaphorical way. News papers used the situation by making fun of the language used, but also by describing the linguistic phenomena which the situation originated. In one Austrian newspaper, a journalist (George Renne in the *Kleine Zeitung*) called the language used by the government “Newspeak” – echoing George Orwell’s novel *1984*. In this article, the most interesting word-creations will be discussed, as well as the various ways in which an unexpected situation (in the whole world) has an effect on the use of language.

**Key-words:** Coronaspeak; Metaphoric newspeak; Conspiracy theories; Home-office; Covidiot.

**Resumo:** Em 2020 um vírus chamado corona criou uma situação que não se via desde a Segunda Guerra Mundial. Todo mundo estava em perigo (agora de ser infectado); as pessoas tinham que ficar em casa a fim de evitar ser atingidas pelos bombardeios (agora por um vírus). Essa situação deu lugar ao surgimento de diversas palavras novas e ao uso de frases que descrevem o perigo e as medidas tomadas contra ele de modo direto e às vezes de forma metafórica. Os jornais se valeram da situação considerando a linguagem usada, mas também descrevendo os fenômenos linguísticos originados na situação. Em um jornal austríaco (*Kleine Zeitung* ‘pequeno jornal’), o jornalista George Renne chamou a linguagem usada pelo governo de “novilíngua” (*newspeak*), ecoando o romance *1984* de George Orwell. No presente artigo, as criações verbais mais interessantes serão discutidas, além dos vários modos pelos quais uma situação inesperada (em todo o mundo) tem afetado o uso da língua.

**Palavras-chave:** Coronalíngua; novilíngua metafórica; teorias da conspiração; covidiotas de *home-office*.

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### Introduction

In the novel *1984* by George Orwell, which was written in 1948, the government decides that the normal language should be adapted so that everyone could use it. The purpose of introducing such a language, however, was to restrict people's freedom of thought and to make them faithful subjects of the government of Oceania. For instance, the word 'thought crime' was introduced to prevent people from having thoughts different from those imposed by the government. Every kind of rebellion was to be made impossible by forbidding any words connected with rebellion. Orwell's idea was obviously that forbidding a word has the result of making the thing or action meant by it impossible. Speech planning was the most important measure introduced by the totalitarian state of 'Big Brother' (see Young, 1991).

For instance, instead of English Socialism 'Ingsoc' should be used, and instead of "Ministry of Truth" simply "mini-truth" – a word which ironically fits very well, since in Newspeak, as the new language was called, 2 + 2 would equal 5. This Newspeak had a continually diminishing vocabulary with many contractions (like the ones just discussed).

In the situation of Covid-19 in 2020, the governments of the different states had the task to prevent the 'pandemic' as it began to be called, from having more and more victims. In this situation, the governments also used a specific language; this language – one could call it 'Coronaspeak' – of course did not serve to distort truth, but rather (1) to make the measures of the government plausible to the population, and (2) to make them appear as mild as possible. One could even speak of euphemisms which were used to make people see that the measures were not as strict as they seemed to be at first sight. Thus, the idea was not to have a diminishing vocabulary, but rather to increase the vocabulary, so that the different restrictions could be named appropriately.

### New 'household phrases'

One of the first words which became 'household phrases' was 'home-office', which meant that people were not allowed to work in their normal office, but had to work at home – connected with their firms by skype or other digital devices. Schools were closed, and pupils were subjected to 'home-teaching' in order to attain 'home-learning'. The fact that the pupils did not 'have to go to school' was called 'Corona-holidays'. 'Social distancing' was one of the next favourites, meaning keeping adequate distance from people not living in the same flat; the adequate distance was said to be one meter, or the size of a baby elephant. Many jokes and caricatures were made concerning

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this baby elephant. It was also a bit curious how the evaluations ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ were used – of course quite in keeping with medical jargon: ‘positive’ was used for people who carry the virus and have thus fallen ill – whereas ‘negative’ meant people who did not carry it and were therefore healthy. In other words, ‘negative’ is the POSITIVE term and being negative is desirable, while being positive is ‘negative’.

At the end of April, 2020, the word ‘contact tracing’ began to be used, meaning a method of finding out where someone had been infected with the virus. ‘Screening’ began to be used for investigating whether someone was already infected. When entering a shop, everyone had to wear a mask, which was briefly called MNP-mask (for: mouth and nose protection mask). The word ‘flipped classroom’ described the fact that pupils no longer did their ‘homework’ at home, but were taught at home and sent their homework to the teacher by the computer. The word ‘cluster’ was used to describe a group of people who were together too closely, i.e. without keeping the prescribed distance of one or two meters. At roughly the same time, the phrase ‘factor of replication’ found its way into the corona vocabulary. This factor described the number of people that were infected by one infected person. The number was originally two to three, and when it sank to lower than one, this was welcomed very much and led to a lowering of the restrictions ‘pace by pace’. However, everyone was afraid that the lowering of the ‘shutdown’ would lead to a ‘second wave’, i.e. a sudden rise of the number of infections, or even to ‘exponential growth’, which would mean that infecting three people would soon lead to those three also infecting three, and the nine infected people would in their turn infect 27 etc. This exponential growth was to be avoided at all cost.

### **Metaphoric Newspeak**

Some of the Coronaspeak phrases were metaphors, in which the corona-situation was compared to the time of the year in which the crisis was at its peak. This was the case around Easter, which in 2020 was in the middle of April. The 12th of April was Easter Sunday – a day on which no visits of relatives were allowed, but (in Austria) it was already possible to make trips into the surrounding landscape. Thus people were talking about the Resurrection not only of Jesus Christ, but metaphorically also of public and private life.

Another metaphor had to do with the speed with which everyday life would return to normality. This, it was claimed, would take a marathon, not a sprint, meaning a long time with everybody being very tired at the end.

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Originally it was assumed that the virus had been introduced into human bodies from people in a part of China (Wuhan) by eating animals, particularly bats. From May, 2020, onwards, more and more so-called ‘conspiracy theories’ arose, meaning theories assuming that a group of people or even a certain person had created the virus for some selfish reason. One such theory said that a group of scientists had created the virus by trying to find a medicine to be used against influenza (or against AIDS). Another conspiracy theory said that a certain very rich tycoon had distributed the virus in order to diminish the population of certain countries.

The word ‘quarantine’ also became one of the most frequently used words. It was used for the isolation of endangered and endangering people. Although etymologically the word means 40 days (ital: quaranta), the quarantine imposed on people in danger of infection was usually two weeks, i.e. 14 days.

### **The reaction of the press**

In several newspapers, Coronaspeak was discussed, in one of them (*Kleine Zeitung*, Graz) even with the title ‘Neusprech’ (borrowed from George Orwell). It was also striking that several newspapers took the opportunity to make fun of the language used by politicians. Words like ‘covidiot’ and ‘home-officers’ were created to make fun of this language. The word ‘covidiot’ was intended to describe people who did not accept the measures introduced and celebrated so-called ‘corona-parties’. ‘Home-officers’ were people who had to work at home, who, however, saw this as a possibility to have more power over their colleagues. Other words introduced by journalists were, for instance, ‘balconists’ for people who spent most of their time on the balcony, and ‘crowd immunity’ for the possibility to make the whole population immune against the infection. So-called ‘hoarding purchases’ were carried out by people who were afraid that the shops would be closed for a long time. The media very ironically reported again and again that the hoarding of toilet paper was one of the most frequent actions of this kind. Some papers also listed the words which were used in certain dialects, for instance for the masks everyone was obliged to carry. These words were different in the various German dialects, ranging from the dialect word for ‘curtain’ to *mouthbag* and even *mugbag*.

“Nothing will be as it was before” – a phrase which was used again and again. The phrase was actually a quotation, or rather the repetition of what was said during previous crises, e.g. the



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terrorist attack on New York's World Trade Center on September 11th, 2001, or the nuclear catastrophe of Tchernobyl in April, 1986.

### **Topics shoved into the background (e.g. climate change)**

Because of the Corona-crisis other important societal topics were shoved into the background, particularly the topic of the climate change, which for the previous years had been in all the media and had led to several international meetings - in which for instance the young Swedish activist Greta Thunberg had taken part. However, this topic was not totally forgotten, and it also led to new word creations. One of them was 'bioneers', which was used to name the agricultural 'pioneers' who had chosen to do biological agriculture. Another topic which had been pushed into the background was the situation of the many refugees who had come from Syria, Afghanistan and other countries to Greece. The question which was now in the centre of attention was whether these refugees were in danger of being infected with the Corona virus. Many of them probably were, but since there was no way of testing them, the number of those infected remained unknown.

A situation which was very frequently compared with the Corona-crisis was the situation in Europe during (or at the end of) the Second World War, when many people did not have anything to eat, when many cities were in ruins and everyone was afraid of bombing attacks. The comparison, however, was not valid, because the dangers in the World War were human made, whereas the pandemic was very probably (see above!) nature-made. It was a curious coincidence that the corona-crisis occurred almost exactly 75 years after the end of the Second World War, a 'jubilee' which was intended to be celebrated – a celebration which, however, had to take place in a very restricted way. Some politicians were sorry that this topic could not be put into the front row of political activity.

### **Conclusion**

Coronaspeak is a use of language, which was introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic for various reasons. First, the measures taken had to be named somehow, and this occurred frequently with new words or with old ones used metaphorically. The second reason was to make people aware of the danger of being infected, but also to prevent them from falling into a state of panic. Some of the expressions were also euphemisms which made the measures appear less strict than they really were. Interestingly, the language used was made fun of by the media, and a certain linguistic creativity arose as a consequence of the measures taken by the government. On the whole, it can

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be said that the language used contributed to keeping the cases of infection and the mortality rate comparatively low – at least in Austria.

The term ‘Newspeak’ used in a newspaper for the Corona-language does not fit very well, because in George Orwell’s novel *1984* Newspeak is used by the government to hold the citizens in check and to prevent any kind of rebellion against Big Brother. In spite of this, I have used the term in my title in order to show that Covid-19 had brought about a new situation which made it necessary to use some specific words and phrases for the reasons given above.

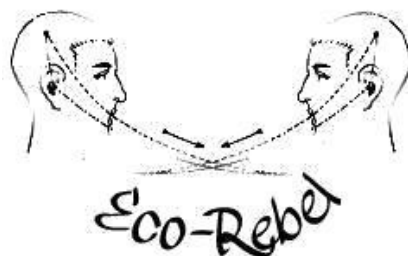
It is to be hoped that Coronaspeak will not have to continue for a longer period, but that it will be something to be looked upon as historical, which people may remember but will not need until the end of their lives.

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Accepted on November 10, 2020.

ECOLINGUÍSTICA: REVISTA BRASILEIRA DE  
ECOLOGIA E LINGUAGEM (ECO-REBEL), V. 6, N. 4, 2020.



## AN ECOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE ON THE DISCOURSE OF THE CORONA VIRUS

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**Abstract:** Taking an ecolinguistic approach the paper analyzes how the corona virus pandemic has changed our lives and how people are talking and discoursing around the globe. The pronouncements of politicians and governments changed very quickly to accommodate to the new state of affairs. Employing strong language governments made their populations stay at home, to keep ‘social distance’, to prevent the spread of the disease. Very rapidly ‘medical’ talk of illness and death entered the public domain and was used by politicians. Medical experts like virologists and epidemiologists accompanied politicians on the media showing graphs and curves to explain what was happening.

Speakers used dramatic metaphors. There were war metaphors, and also disaster metaphors, like floods and tides, a house on fire to characterize how observers viewed what was happening. People constantly mentioned numbers and figures. Everyday discourse patterns were packed with medical and epidemiological terms and phrases. The pandemic discourse resembles Gramsci’s idea of ‘hegemony’. The dominating power of the pandemic has made us all party to this new hegemony. Daily news conferences about the pandemic filled the media and TV. Such a crisis is a favourable time for ‘good’ journalism, especially investigative work. Governments justify their actions by claiming to follow the advice of scientific experts. The tendency for academics to put themselves at the service of government is a well-known phenomenon, a form of linguistic co-opting.

Governments everywhere pitched economic orthodoxy to the winds. With talk about easing the lockdown the discourse began to change. German Chancellor Angela Merkel warned that Germany risked damaging its recent achievements in subduing the spread of Covid-19. The pandemic is an idea that exists in our social discourse and we talk about a phenomenon that actually exists as an external physical reality. The texture of everyday life and society feels unstable. So does the human position in the world. With the advance of globalization the risk of infectious diseases spreads. Some people see pandemics as blips rather than an integral part of history. They like to believe that humans are no longer part of the natural world and can create an autonomous ecosystem, separate from the rest of the biosphere. Engels’ comment on humanity’s hubris and expecting humans can conquer nature can serve as a cautionary tale. In ecological terms we need a non-

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hierarchical acceptance of all species, including humans as co-inhabitants of the natural world. This will not be easy.

**Keywords:** Discours; pandemic; government; lockdown; people; metaphors.

**Resumo:** Partindo de uma abordagem ecolinguística o artigo analisa as mudanças em nossas vidas causadas pela pandemia do coronavírus e como as pessoas estão falando do assunto pelo mundo afora. As falas dos políticos e do governo mudaram muito rapidamente para se acomodarem à nova situação. Usando uma linguagem forte, os governos mandaram seus governados ficarem em casa e manter ‘distância social’, para prevenir a disseminação da doença. Com muita rapidez, falas ‘médicas’ sobre o mal e a doença passaram a fazer parte do domínio público e foram usadas por políticos. Especialistas médicos como virologistas e epidemiologistas acompanharam políticos nos meios de comunicação mostrando gráficos e curvas para explicar o que estava se passando.

As falas incluíam metáforas dramáticas, como metáforas de guerra e de desastres, tais como inundações, vagalhões e casas em chamas para caracterizar o modo como observadores viam o que estava acontecendo. Frequentemente mencionavam-se números e imagens. A todo dia os discursos eram recheados de frases e termos médicos e epidemiológicos. O discurso da pandemia parece com a ‘hegemonia’ de Gramsci. A força dominadora da pandemia fez de todos nós parte dessa nova hegemonia. Encontros diários sobre a pandemia enchem a mídia e a TV. Uma crise como esta representa um tempo favorável para o ‘bom’ jornalismo, especialmente de natureza investigativa. Os governos justificam suas ações alegando que estavam seguindo os conselhos de especialistas científicos. A tendência dos acadêmicos de se colocarem à disposição do governo é um fenômeno bem conhecido, uma forma de cooptação linguística.

Governos de todos os matizes deixaram a ortodoxia de lado. Falando de modo a favorecer o *lockdown* começaram a mudar de discurso. A chanceler alemã Angela Merkel advertiu que a Alemanha corria o risco prejudicar os ganhos obtidos para domar a proliferação da covid-19. A pandemia é uma ideia que existe em nosso discurso social e no que dizemos sobre um fenômeno realmente existente como realidade física externa. A tessitura da vida quotidiana e da sociedade parece instável, como acontece com a posição dos humanos no mundo. Com os avanços da globalização o risco de doenças infecciosas se espalha. Algumas pessoas veem a pandemia como um pontinho na tela, não como uma parte integrante da história. Elas gostam de acreditar que os humanos não são mais parte do mundo natural e podem criar um ecossistema autônomo, separado do resto da biosfera. O comentário de Engels sobre a arrogância humana de achar que pode conquistar a natureza pode servir como uma exemplo de advertência. Em termos ecológicos precisamos aceitar de modo não hierárquico todas as espécies, inclusive os humanos como co-habitantes do mundo natural. Isso não será fácil.

**Palavras-chave:** Discours; pandemia; governo; *lockdown*; povo; metáforas.

### Introduction

The coronavirus pandemic is an unprecedented event in modern history. I shall be looking at the discourse it is generating from the point of view of an ecolinguist. Alexander and Stibbe (2014) defined ecolinguistics “as the study of the impact of language on the life-sustaining relationships among humans, other organisms and the physical environment”.\*

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So we can consider the talk about the corona virus and the viral disease it causes, covid-19, as part of the interface between humans, other living beings and the natural world in general. It is a specific virus that has become the focus of the interface. Viruses are living organisms like polar bears, manatees, butterflies or frogs. They are part of the natural order just trying to survive and replicate, according to Darwinian principles as all other living beings do. Ebola, SARS, and HIV/AIDS, and now the covid-19 virus, are the results of microbes jumping from animals to humans, zoonotic spillovers. Viruses are embedded in the same systems of ecology and evolutionary biology that humans are. Some commentators claim that it is through disruption in diverse ecosystems by humans that the corona virus pandemic (see Quammen 2013) has been initiated. Our relationship with the natural world needs to be seen more holistically.

It has not taken long for what the historian William H. McNeill wrote in his (1976) book *Plagues and Peoples* to happen: “It is always possible that some hitherto obscure parasitic organism may escape its accustomed ecological niche and expose the dense human populations that have become so conspicuous a feature of the Earth to some fresh and perchance devastating mortality.” McNeill here adopts an anthropocentric point of view; for to the rest of the world this isn’t devastating.

As the British journalist George Monbiot has written: “This coronavirus reminds us that we belong to the material world.” Some observers have referred to how birdsong has become so noticeable in cities that have been shut down while people stay at home. Others see it as a chance to embrace a new intimacy with the natural world we are after all a part of, with the fox and woodpeckers and oak trees. Wild boars were roaming in the towns of northern Italy, while wild goats were out on the empty and quiet streets of Llandudno in Wales. We humans have no autonomy, no integrity as a species separate from the other species of this world, no collective existence as a creature apart from the animate Earth.

So for a scholar interested in ecology and the ways language is involved in constituting the discourse around ecological issues it is evident that there is a pivotal role for critical language analysis in the current pandemic discourse flooding the globe in many countries and languages.

There are many angles to view this discourse from. We can note how quickly scientific and medical discourse has become hegemonic and is perhaps in part taking over other orders of discourse, including political and government discourse. Then there is political discourse itself. The pandemic decrees in most states foresee the implementation of force and policing to impose the required behavioural change now being demanded of citizens. In democracies the creeping police state appears to be slowly but surely establishing itself. Orwellian language patterns are being employed and spreading as fast as the coronavirus itself. For example on 16<sup>th</sup> March Boris Johnson claimed in double speak terms that “risks of transmission of the disease at mass gatherings such as sporting events are relatively low”.

Data from multimodal sources such as TV, radio, news, talks shows, interviews, news conferences and websites in several countries and languages was extracted and made into a corpus that formed the basis of the analysis to follow.

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The World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11 declared COVID-19 a pandemic, pointing to the over 118,000 cases of the coronavirus illness in over 110 countries and territories around the world and the sustained risk of further global spread. “This is not just a public health crisis, it is a crisis that will touch every sector,” said Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO director-general, at a media briefing. “So every sector and every individual must be involved in the fights.”

What the pandemic has succeeded in achieving is to put the spotlight on ‘medical’ talk of illness and death in the public domain. This medical discourse can also manifest additionally through the use of metaphors and analogies from the military domain.

### **Government and political discourse**

For some commentators we are living in a corona war. And President Macron of France actually declared war on the virus. There is a state of emergency and above all catchphrases rule. The media are full of appeals to holding out, half-truths and speculations and conjectures. Words and phrases about behaviour like ‘social distance’ are stated publicly, as if such a paradox does not shatter the very essence of things social, namely togetherness. (It was the WHO that first employed this term, making one wonder why their advisors didn’t come up with ‘physical distance’, which has since more aptly entered the discourse.) Death, man’s best friend after his dog, kept embarrassingly secret in day-to-day life has become the killer application in statistics and the declarations of politicians. PR general staffs and task forces are being used to formulate propaganda slogans. Politicians emit military directives. In the early stages of such events contradiction appears pointless.

So against this background, once the World Health Organization (WHO) declared there to be a pandemic everyone suddenly seemed to be participating in a conversation about public health. Governments declared an emergency and parliaments passed laws that changed people’s lives practically overnight.

For several weeks in March and April 2020 on the TV news in several European countries everyone appeared to be talking about the corona virus. It was the same in many European countries to which the author had access by satellite television. Governments were advising their citizens to change their behaviour on the electronic media, radio and TV, in the newspapers and on the Internet.

General phrases or catchwords were constantly repeated in many countries. In Austria ‘Schau auf dich, Schau auf mich’ (look out for yourself, look out for me) was an early slogan accompanying Government pronouncements. In Cuba I saw on the Cubavision Internacional TV station that “Mi casa es mi plaza” is the key slogan being employed. Italians received and largely obeyed an order to stay at home. “I’m staying home” became a hashtag, then the name of a national ordinance and then a motto hung from balconies and windows.

Politicians were forced to take decisions on the basis of inadequate information, in an emotional context. They were individuals working 20 hours a day who were fully aware they were dealing with matters of life and death. Politics is a brutal game. It’s not for the faint-hearted and in a democracy at some point every politician and official knows that they will have to provide an account of each and every decision they made.

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On 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at a press conference the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was asked if he was concerned about getting the virus. He answered: “I am washing my hands”. Johnson’s advice was: “We should all basically just go about our normal daily lives.” These glib and superficial statements ring hollow, knowing as we do that weeks later Johnson himself was infected with covid-19 and had to be treated in an intensive care unit in a National Health Service (NHS) hospital.

But we knew very little about this virus at the outset. The scientific uncertainty is a feature that has fed into the discourse of politicians. There remains considerable doubt and disagreement regarding how best to respond to curbing the spread of the infection and to how best to prepare society to continue. Then came the lockdown even in the UK, though much later than in other countries.

In democratic societies there are clearly ‘backroom boys and girls’ whose job it is to propose both what critical linguists call ‘relexicalizations’ or word choices, discursive semantic patterns and rhetorical ploys in order to structure arguments and thus persuade listeners to engage in certain actions short of giving orders. The British government published guidance on the Coronavirus outbreak in the format of frequently asked questions (FAQ): what you can and can’t do. This advice had the force of law: “[The Health Protection \(Coronavirus\) Regulations 2020](#) have been put in place to reduce the risk of further human-to-human transmission in this country by keeping individuals in isolation where public health professionals believe there is a reasonable risk an individual may have the virus.”

The appeals are now backed up with the threat of legal punishment if not adhered to. These can take the form of arrest and fines.

So the government utterances are not just on the level of appealing to citizens’ common sense, although this is how the ministers initially tried to act before the legislation was passed in parliament. An element of manipulating the public is to be found by calling the statements ‘guidance’. This is a form of what Wilhelm Trampe (2018: 327) calls ‘euphemization’.

What underlying ideological structures can be found in such announcements? How do speakers and writers position either their listeners or readers or viewers, thus getting (bringing) them to understand or see the ‘facts’ or the events they relate in a particular fashion. In answer to the question: “What will happen to me if I break the rules?” The text prevaricates stating: “We appreciate all the effort people are putting into containing the spread of coronavirus which will help protect our NHS and save lives”. That ‘appreciate’ sounds reasonable and grown up, only to be followed by six potentially punitive outcomes that underline what ‘the police may’ do. Again the text mollifies the punishment with the modal ‘may’ instead of a clear ‘will’. We here see discourse engineering at work on the part of the government. It took several weeks for the persuasive tone to then shift to calling the guidance ‘an order’ and making room for more clear announcements that people openly infringing social distancing would be punished.

In the face of such ubiquitous pandemic discourse it is not surprising that many people express feelings of helplessness and being inextricably caught up in structures too big for them.

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What do we know? Is the government telling us what it knows or only what it wants us to know? Before we can discuss such issues we have to clarify a number of concepts and issues.

All discussions of the virus have as the starting point reports of ‘information’. This general notion covers a variety of phenomena that feed into how people talk about the situation. What scientists and we as members of the public require above all are the ‘facts’ about the virus. It is on the basis of the ascertainable ‘facts’ about this novel virus that scientists learn how it functions and thus they can then build up the scientific and medical ‘knowledge’ which is gradually leading to ‘understanding’ how it is caused and how it is transmitted and so on.

So a very simplified ‘information’ pathway can start with ‘facts’ which lead to ‘knowledge’ which hopefully, we might argue, result in ‘understanding’ of what is going on.

We can of course employ this configuration to view how governments or organizations like the WHO can be seen to be operating. There is then a further dimension which comes into play; for it is on the basis of the ‘understanding’ gathered from multiple sources that governments then proceed to ‘actions’ based on the complex ‘information’ pathway we have laid out.

In most government cases the ‘actions’ engaged in involved efforts to contain the spread of coronavirus. These so-called ‘measures’ were very similar in most European countries; they were however differently articulated or mediated. Over the period of study for this research the variations noted resulted from different degrees of preparedness for such a pandemic and also varying political traditions and philosophies.

How the measures were decided on and then presented to the citizens of different countries is of interest. In the section on experts below we will look at how the measures were justified in the United Kingdom.

Here we will bring in evidence about the Austrian Corona-taskforce. Minutes of a meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> March have been put in the public domain. The North of Italy had been in quarantine for 3 days, people were dying on the corridors of Lombardian hospitals and Scandinavian governments were ringing up the government to say that Austria had a corona hotspot in the Tyrol. Kurz, the Austrian Chancellor, is quoted as saying he saw no sign of the population waking up. Now as the Austrian lockdown is being lifted, Kurz is presented as the conqueror of corona, a leader of the smart countries who ‘have the virus under control’.

For the six weeks of the corona emergency transparency, evidence, checking, public debates and doubts about the measures the government introduced were not desired and they still are not. Uninterrupted marketing and communication was the key to the government’s success or even ‘awareness’, as Kurz put it using the English word. The question the taskforce addressed was how could the population be made to take the corona danger seriously. The doctor for tropical medicine, Herwig Kollaritsch, referred to what happened in Great Britain during an epidemic of measles in the 1990s. The government had successfully played with the ‘fear of the population’ and corona also ought to be presented as a fatal disease. This was taken up by the Chancellor who is quoted in the minutes as saying “people should fear an infection, they should be fearful that their parents and grandparents would die”. Kurz intensified this theme of fear and anxiety in a famous quote two weeks later: “Soon each of us will know someone who has died of corona”. Kurz’s crisis management did not reckon with grown-up citizens, preferring compliant subjects or ‘obedience through fear’ (according to the magazine “Trend”) rather than with voluntary personal



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responsibility, as we now know from the minutes. All the press conferences in which there was talk of ‘life endangerers’ and ‘life savers’ and ‘100,000’ deaths stoked fear and anxiety in people.

We will note below how quickly scientific and medical discourse has become hegemonic and is perhaps in part taking over other orders of discourse, including political and government discourse. In particular we will give some examples of experts’ discourse.

### **Much discourse has become medicalized**

The pandemic almost by definition succeeded in bringing ‘medical’ talk of illness and death into the public domain. Everyone was soon talking about infectious diseases and how to avoid spreading them. On an almost daily basis the news in many countries opened with reports on the number of people infected with covid-19, the numbers of patients hospitalized and the number of deaths. Suddenly the existential issue or the human dimension of people’s lives was prominent. The epidemiologists are the experts who provided advice on what to do. But even the politicians employed medicalized or scientifically coloured discourse patterns, emphasizing how ‘we all’ can help to ‘save lives’ by staying at home and engaging in ‘social distancing’.

Political scientists Matthew Flinders and Gergana Dimova (2020) wrote about the UK government: “[O]ne of the defining performative elements of the coronavirus crisis is the daily reports of the Prime Minister or senior ministers at which they are flanked both figuratively and literally by ‘the experts’. No message, statement or utterance can be made by a representative of the government without being foreshadowed and subsequently enmeshed within the golden phrase that is *‘following the expert advice we are receiving’*.”

There was talk of needing to protect the frail and vulnerable. The UK medical officer said: ‘the progress of the illness may be moderate.’ Bringing in the experts and hugging them close is a politicized form of self-preservation strategy that *might* (and it is a rather dubious ‘might’) afford politicians some distance from direct culpability when things go wrong.

In Germany too for several weeks in March and April 2020 on the German TV news everyone appeared to be talking about the corona virus. Certain individuals have become scientific celebrities. A virologist, Christian Drosten, appeared and explained in simple terms the nature of the pandemic to the government and citizens. People in the Federal Government say they’re “glad we have someone like him around”. His words have credibility, he weighs up his judgments carefully. Drosten makes disturbing predictions, but there is never anything alarmist about his statements.

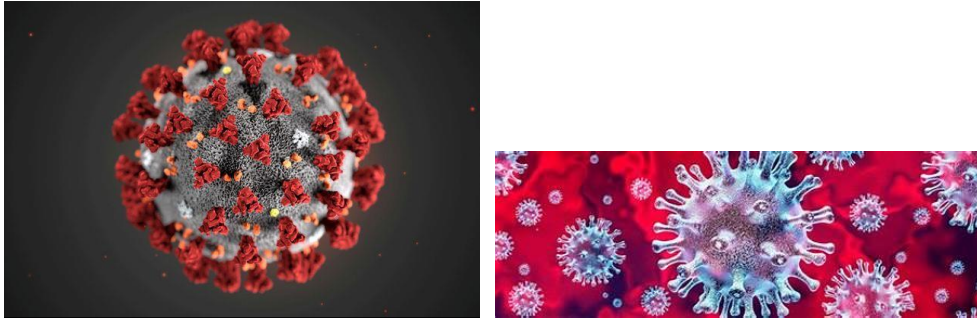
In some ways, declaring a pandemic is more art than science. “Pandemics mean different things to different people,” said in February Dr. Anthony Fauci, the Director of the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. And he added “It really is borderline semantics, to be honest with you.”

We find discourse engineering at work here.

The medicalization of discourse was supported visually in online articles and newspapers by means of images and visualizations. So the image or the photograph of the corona virus often in colour

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as seen through an electron microscope was being used in the media as an accompaniment to TV and newspaper coverage. These crown-like pictures which gave the medical name to the corona virus are now practically media fixtures if not icons.



Dorling noted (2020) that: “Almost as soon as the COVID-19 pandemic began, graphs and many other visualisations charting the rise of the virus started to multiply. Many show the cumulative number of deaths attributed to the virus.” Hence notion of a curve has become a similar fixture in both the verbal and visual sense. Experts show and discuss charts on which they mark mathematically quantitative data in relation to time. The number of infections, of deaths and other items are plotted in this way. This is used to underline the dynamic nature of the spread of the pandemic since its outbreak. Terms like ‘exponential growth’, ‘peak’ and ‘flattening the curve’, from epidemic modelling have become part of the discourse of politicians.

Bringing order to a chaotic world has always been the driving force of human progress and it can be argued that this is simply its latest manifestation: The ‘Numerati’ with modelling and data science skills making sense of the world around them. One is reminded of the joke: Question: Do you know what the 10 scariest words in the social sciences are? Answer: “I’m from the physics department and I’m here to help.”

Not all experts are as open or frank as the German virologist Christian Drosten who said: “I just sort of slipped into it. It’s also becoming a bit overwhelming, all the media inquiries, advising politicians. I’m not a politician, I’m a scientist. I’m happy to explain what I know. Scientific findings must be communicated to everyone transparently, so that we all can get an idea of the situation. But I’m also honest about what I don’t know. I always have been.”

In the UK government daily news conferences or briefings on TV the experts show graphs representing various reified items. The openly and systematically propagandistic and manipulative use of language is seldom encountered without a subtle mix of specific grammatical and lexical features such as ‘nominalization’ or grammatical metaphor implicating highly abstract nouns (Halliday, 1990) and permitting processes to be represented as ‘things’.

The briefings were carefully managed and set up almost theatrically with the politicians and the experts standing before the wooden panels of a Downing Street hall in front of podiums adorned with the slogans ‘Stay at home’, ‘Protect the NHS’, ‘Save Lives’. These three phrases have been repeated relentlessly. The British newspaper, The Telegraph, claims that a PR communications group working for Boris Johnson thought up this perfect slogan and it has worked so well.

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Alongside the explicit announcements news and films on TV programmes were showing horrific pictures and scenes from Northern Italian hospitals. At least one film showed a reporter dressed in protective clothing accompanying and talking to medical doctors and nurses as they attend to patients in intensive care units; one saw the intensive care equipment, with pipes and wires surrounding beds on which very sick patients are being shown. This makes the filming of the catastrophe into a visualization of the law of entropy in operation in Lombardy. (See Appendix A for a transcript of the voice over.)

Metaphors correspond verbally to the visual elements like images we have found in pandemic discourse. Ecolinguists often focus on metaphors in their analysis of different discourses. Take phrases like ‘on the front line’. The newspapers and politicians keep repeating it. It clearly alludes to war. We are living in a corona war. Indeed President Macron of France declared war on the virus.

For Brigitte Nerlich (2020) metaphors in the time of coronavirus are worth looking at because they create meaning. Thinking and talking about health, illness and medicine and how people act are shaped by metaphors. In a quick overview of metaphors we find war metaphors, and also a lot of disaster metaphors, like floods and tides, tsunami (of cases), storm or a house on fire. There are also some explanatory metaphors, likening the corona virus to an evil trickster or using the domino effect to clarify what is happening. An asymptomatic spread is viewed as a firecracker with an invisible fuse.

There are many metaphors to explain what to do about the virus. The ‘flattening the curve’ metaphor has become big and has many variations, offshoots and cousins, such as: ‘take the heat out transmission’, ‘breaking chains of infection’, ‘starving the virus of fuel’; while Boris Johnson said on 19<sup>th</sup> March: ‘send the coronavirus packing’. More creative versions of the flattening the curve metaphor include ‘squash the sombrero’, ‘skate not to where the puck is but to where the puck is going to be’ and ‘the hammer and the dance’. Many languages in Europe have used metaphors of imprisonment, such as lockdown, confinement, barriers and so on.

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Kenan Malik (2020) used the virus itself as a metaphor and said: “The coronavirus is both a physical threat and a metaphor for everything from the failures of globalisation to the menace of foreigners.”

### **Epidemiology – the new hegemony**

Politicians in many countries are constantly mentioning numbers and figures.

The effective reproduction number, the reproduction curve was said to be an important epidemiological marker. But the method of calculation is unclear, say journalists. Things are not very transparent for the public. And yet, it is these numbers that justify the measures the politicians are proposing and why they are ‘ramping up’ something, whether it is personal protective equipment (PPE) or testing.

We see that what is happening currently with the pandemic discourse is reminiscent of Raymond Williams’s discussion of Antonio Gramsci’s idea (1971: 12-13) of ‘hegemony’ (WILLIAMS, 1980).

The evidence for this is found in the ways in which even everyday discourse patterns informed and peppered by medical and epidemiological terms and phrases, are heard on radio phone-in programmes in the UK. Hegemony refers to something which is truly total and which is experienced at such intensity, saturating the whole of society to such an extent that, as Gramsci put it, it even constitutes the substance and limit of common sense for most people during the lockdown. The UK daily press conferences in March and April 2020 are full of this struggle to maintain hegemony.

Identifying the processes of wording the world, ‘lexicalization’, can give insight into how speakers operate. For alternative wordings can carry political and ideological significance in their application. Particular structurings of the meanings of a word are forms of hegemony.

Speakers and organizations are echoing slogan-like phrases from scientific and medical usage. Many have found their way into wider media and political settings. The input from epidemiology can be seen. Metaphors and analogies and vocabularies associated with public health advance into parallel domains. One journalist on a German talk show joked: “We have all become virologists, all 82 million of us”. (The population of Germany is 82 million.)

In the UK we heard ‘we have to flatten the curve’ ... ‘Yes, the coronavirus curves are plateauing’. The Health Secretary on 21<sup>st</sup> April talked of ‘having squashed down the sombrero’. This is a take-up Boris Johnson’s use of the metaphor in early March 2020 at the second press conference about the virus which actually used a representation of the flatten the curve graph in the background in order to make it more understandable.

The WHO said early on in the pandemic that ‘Testing, testing, testing’ should be the order of the day. New York State Governor Cuomo made some clear statements about the problems of organizing testing in his state.

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Governor Cuomo uses the lexis of the field in his briefings – ‘test-kit’, ‘reagents’, ‘swabs’, ‘phials’, etc. He describes how there are a number of manufacturers in New York State of the testing machines; these are in certain hospitals; the testers report that they cannot get hold of the only reagents, which work with these machines.

Recently ‘Test, trace and track’ has become a repetitive alliterative phrase to emphasize what governments are proposing in order to keep control and suppress the spread of the infection. This is an area of applied epidemiology that has achieved prominence in many countries as they look to ease the shutdowns. Employing these epidemiologic and surveillance activities efficiently helps governments and public health authorities to choose the most efficient ways of controlling the epidemic.

The pandemic has progressed and doctors and researchers have been confronted with the workings of a hitherto entirely unknown virus. Some fascinating and troubling observations are slowly filling out the epidemiological picture of the covid-19 disease. Consider, for example, the incidence of patients who have symptoms for months. Following a series of such cases is a legitimate aspect of epidemiological research. A doctor, who himself contracted covid-19, describes his situation: “The symptoms were weird as hell,” he says. They included loss of smell, heaviness, malaise, tight chest and racing heart (HARDING, 2020).

A scientist in a research group at King’s College London estimated that a small but significant number of people are suffering from what he calls the “long tail” form of the virus. The same research group has developed a Covid-19 tracker app as a technological provision to supplement testing and tracing for the UK. By means of case studies and by obtaining more information the researchers are discovering that the symptoms associated with the covid model seem more and more complex. In other words the epidemiology picture is constantly changing. One researcher notes that he has studied 100 diseases. And he claims covid is the strangest one he has encountered in his medical career. He added: “We are the country that invented epidemiology. We haven’t produced any epidemiological studies other than the app. It’s kind of embarrassing” (HARDING, 2020). This extremely sobering insight demonstrates just how much the world and all of us along with it need to learn before the pandemic has been possibly mastered. And it seems we will all be forced to live with it. The hegemonic power of the pandemic has made us all party to this new hegemony.

### **The news – journalistic discourse**

Orthodox politicians need the journalists at such a time to put their message across. The newspapers and electronic media simply reported what they were told at the start. So factually sounding messages were to be found at the outset like this one: “The Department of Health and Social Care announced the death toll in the UK had increased by 18 to 71 people on Tuesday. The latest to die were aged between 45 and 93 years and all had underlying health conditions, the government added.”

Almost daily briefings or news conferences were being carried on some TV stations. The Sky News station with its breaking news TV coverage has been very comprehensive.

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The Sky News website dated 24<sup>th</sup> Apr 2020 carries dispassionate reporting by Beth Rigby. Here is a brief excerpt:

“The transmission rate (the R number) is now below one, which means a person with the disease is causing less than one new infection.

That means the epidemic is currently in decline – for now.

The epidemic is moving to a new phase and decisions will soon have to be made about how we come out of the lockdown and when.”

Stephen Bush (2020) maintains “journalists are fighting a war on two fronts. On the one hand, they are trying to cover the government’s day-to-day handling of the battle against Covid-19. On the other, they are trying to conduct an inquiry into the initial response to the pandemic.”

In a time of fear and anxiety, truth telling is even more important, as George Orwell understood. The focus should be on ‘good’ journalism. Indeed one can say that such a crisis is a propitious time for ‘good’ journalism, especially investigative work.

### **Scientists in the service of government**

Researchers were working on characterizing this novel virus and comparing it with viruses from recent outbreaks. As the virus began to proliferate in the UK, what approach to tackling its spread should be adopted was a matter for the government to decide. In discussing these events, it will help to summarize the time line of when some European countries imposed the lockdowns that happened in 2020. As mentioned above it was on 11<sup>th</sup> March, the WHO formally declared Covid-19 a pandemic. Italy imposed a lockdown (they called it a national quarantine) on 9<sup>th</sup> March; Spain on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March followed Italy and imposed a near total nationwide lockdown; France imposed a lockdown on the evening of Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> March, to last for 15 days initially. Austria closed schools and restaurants and other institutions on 16<sup>th</sup> March; on 20<sup>th</sup> March a number of states in Germany imposed quarantine measures that called on people to stay home with Bavaria, Saarland, Rhineland-Palatinate, Hamburg, Lower Saxony and Hesse going into partial lockdown. It was not until 23<sup>rd</sup> March that a lockdown was imposed in Britain.

So it was the moment for the ‘experts’. Their advice is presented as ‘scientific’ and neutral. Their early advice was clear. We are not powerless if we act now, collectively and decisively. We can significantly reduce the threat of the virus by enhancing ‘social distancing’ and so on. Here we can see events being linguistically constructed by the speakers.

Incorporating experts into government discourse resembles what I refer to as linguistic co-opting or discourse engineering (ALEXANDER, 2009, p. 21-2 and *passim*).

There is nothing new about the role that academia and scientists have been playing in controlling and limiting democracy. Their tendency to put themselves at the service of government is a well-known phenomenon. Arguably this Faustian pact has been around for a long time, as Chomsky (1991) has analyzed in detail.

Countries had plans for how to deal with pandemics. But many governments appear to have ignored their existence or what they implied by way of making preparations. According to the UK 2011 plan, 50 per cent of deaths were expected over a three-week period. When Professor Chris

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Whitty, the chief medical officer for England, appeared before the Commons health committee on 5<sup>th</sup> March, he repeated this probability. The comments of the experts show that they were not attempting to suppress the outbreak, to reduce the rate of transmission,  $R$ , below 1.

On 25<sup>th</sup> April it was announced that more than 20,000 people had died in UK hospitals after testing positive for coronavirus, making the country the fifth in the world to pass that grim milestone. This came almost six weeks after the chief scientific adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance, said on 17<sup>th</sup> March that keeping the toll under 20,000 would be “a good outcome in terms of where we would hope to get”.

The government lockdown, which then came, was not a continuation of its strategy, as Vallance implied, but a reversal of it. The UK economy, the government finances and freedom of movement were all sacrificed in order to avoid the potential mortality rate that the initial approach accepted. Yet in the government plans a lockdown was not contemplated. And the inevitable shortage of ventilators in any pandemic is unmentioned. The 2011 documents did not anticipate what then happened: an attempt to save as many lives as possible.

The government downplayed the sudden and axiomatic change in its approach, with Vallance telling MPs on 16<sup>th</sup> March that there was only a “semantic difference” between mitigation and suppression. This was a direct contradiction of modelling released by Imperial College the day before. In the years before coronavirus, Britain’s health infrastructure and the wider public realm were degraded by austerity and preparations for a no-deal Brexit. The NHS, which Mr Johnson now describes as “our greatest national asset”, endured the tightest spending settlement in its history. Stockpiles of personal protective equipment were allowed to dwindle. (New Statesman leader 24-30 April 2020.)

At the beginning there was no space and time for these actions to be subject to thorough and open public debate. It is only after a few weeks of lockdown in Germany and Austria that the opposition and critical commentators began to air their views on government policy. The call for more transparency in how government’s policies and measures were being developed became louder.

How have governments operated? As they always tend to, we could say. They work to win approval without providing evidence by means of what Agre (2000) termed ‘simulated rationality’. Agre states: “This procedure – decision first, then arguments – is utterly routinized throughout the public and private bureaucracies of the world, and a whole industry of public relations.” The lack of knowledge about what the virus does, how it spreads and is transmitted and the accompanying medicalized discourse patterns that have colonized the media has allowed governments to engage in this ‘simulated rationality’.

Arguments need only be plausibly rational to an uninformed listener. ‘Perception’ is primary; only a tiny percentage of people will notice that they are being misled. In a time of uncertainty and fear which may well have been enhanced by certain governmental utterances even what Agre has analyzed can operate with a vengeance and governments can “adopt the surface forms of rational argument – arranging words in logical-seeming ways, using scientific vocabulary, adducing (carefully selected) facts, providing impressive-sounding statistics, citing the opinions of authorities (that is, people who will be perceived as authorities), and so forth” (AGRE, 2000). That is sufficient to manage public opinion alongside a few other control tactics.

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Summarizing what we saw happening as governments spoke to citizens about the virus it is helpful to recall certain insights that George Orwell expounded in his writings on language and fiction (see ALEXANDER, 2009, p. 163-188). We have been discussing asymmetrical announcements and declarations. For society is organized upon a principle of unequal power even in a so-called democratic system. For many a division between ‘them’, the government and ‘us’, the citizens have appeared, despite the appeal to the inclusive ‘we’ and ‘us’ to be found in politicians’ speech. Given this inequality in the distribution of power between two groups it is in the material interests of the group in power to maintain their authority over the other group (and to persuade them that it really is in their best interests not to challenge this authority). Governments cannot risk telling the truth because doing so might give others access to their power base (HODGE; FOWLER, 1979, p. 24).

In the case of governments speaking to citizens or subjects this asymmetry is found in daily pronouncements that could be perceived as ‘talking down’, ‘us’ and ‘them’. The UK government tried early on to hide this in its daily briefings, appealing to the notion of consent. For excellent concrete examples of Orwellian ‘doublespeak’ see Catherine Bennett’s May 2 Observer commentary ‘No 10’s coronavirus briefings: stick to the script and hope no one sees your nose growing’.

### **Changes in political discourse as the pandemic continued**

Acting with emergency powers authorized by parliament, governments tossed economic orthodoxy to the winds. Governments everywhere were soon struggling through the narrow passage between suppressing the virus and crashing the economy. As talk about easing the lockdown started the discourse began to change.

Some smaller, non-essential stores reopened their doors in Germany at the end of April 2020 as state authorities started to ease physical distancing measures introduced a month earlier. Commentators see Germany’s devolved state governments as helping it win the coronavirus race. Interestingly the German Chancellor Angela Merkel warned that Germany risked damaging its recent achievements in subduing the spread of Covid-19. “The implementation [of the exit strategy] gives me cause for concern,” Merkel said while addressing parliamentarians in the Bundestag.

Merkel described the pandemic as “an imposition on our democracy, because it restricts precisely the things that make up our existential rights and needs”. Nonetheless, she said, the continued distancing measures were necessary.

Does it help having a scientist running the country in a pandemic like this? And having a woman running the country may well be advantageous too says a Guardian article. With a doctorate in quantum chemistry, Merkel’s clear, calm expositions – a clip of her explaining the scientific basis behind the government’s lockdown exit strategy was shared thousands of times online – have also helped propel public approval of the fourth-term chancellor’s handling of the crisis above 70%. See Appendix B for the translation published by The Guardian on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2020.



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In sounding a warning about speeding up the exit strategy, however, Merkel has the support of a number of leading scientists in Germany. Christian Drosten, the director of the Institute for Virology at the Charité hospital in Berlin and a leading expert on coronaviruses, said in his daily podcast that reopening shopping centres and larger stores could trigger a second wave of the pandemic in May and June. Unlike the initial outbreak, such a second wave could have several starting points and would be more difficult to trace and contain.

“With great regret I am noticing that we are in the process of completely gambling away the head start that we had,” Drosten said.

Melanie Brinkmann, a virologist, from the Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, also criticized the German government’s communication of its exit strategy. “A large part of the population has not realized the extent of the situation,” Brinkmann told Der Spiegel. “At the moment people see that some measures are being relaxed, conveying the impression that the entire lockdown will be lifted step by step and we can soon return to living as normal.” “We are still at the beginning of the pandemic.”

### **The corona virus has provided a point to stop and consider where we are going**

As economic activity all around the world has ground to a halt some commentators are calling for the need to reconsider whether this is not a turning point to stop and consider where we are going, whereas other business oriented groups (led by President Trump) are calling for work, industry and business to be opened up as soon as possible.

Is fighting covid-19 an idea that we invent and talk about or is it a physical and social phenomenon that we observe and quantify? It is of course both: an idea that exists in our social discourse and a phenomenon that exists in an external physical reality. It is this hybrid character of waging war on covid-19 that constitutes its fascination and also its intractability for us. The shutdowns and social distancing activities have changed the way people have lived so far.

Puncturing an imaginary equilibrium, the virus has hastened a process of disintegration that has been under way for many years. Saving lives has become paramount; making profits through economic activity has become secondary. The texture of everyday life is already altered. A sense of fragility is everywhere. It is not only society that feels shaky. So does the human position in the world.

Reflecting on what this means for human societal actions will now perhaps force us to explore our values, our relationships and our view of ourselves. Is our purpose on Earth to secure greater affluence, to seek justice, or is it merely to survive? This is a question that needs posing. With Gramsci we can see that “The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born” (GRAMSCI, 1971, p. 276). Some writers are optimistically formulating what this might entail.

As globalization has advanced, so has the risk of infectious diseases spreading. Yet the notion persists that pandemics are blips rather than an integral part of history. Lying behind this is the belief that humans are no longer part of the natural world and can create an autonomous ecosystem, separate from the rest of the biosphere. Covid-19 is telling them they cannot. It is only by using science that we can defend ourselves against this pestilence.

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In many ways this is an appealing vision, but it is also unreal. There is no world authority to enforce an end to growth, just as there is none to fight the virus.

### Is nature striking back?

Now it would be a mistake to call Covid-19 nature's revenge, except as a metaphor. As Susan Sontag argued, illness has no 'meaning', and interpreting it runs the risk of stigmatizing its carriers – particularly if they can be depicted as in some way 'other': foreign, sexually 'deviant', non-white.

Adam Schatz (2020) argues that “there is [a]... dimension of Marx's thought that helps illuminate the Covid-19 crisis: his awareness of capitalism's environmental hazards. ‘Man lives from nature,’ he wrote, ‘and he must maintain a continuing dialogue with it if he is not to die. To say that man's physical and mental life is linked to nature simply means that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature.’”

In addition, writes Schatz, Friedrich Engels uttered a dire warning in *Dialectics of Nature*: ‘Let us not flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human conquest of nature.’ ‘For each such conquest takes its revenge on us.’

In the context of the current global pandemic and the increased likelihood of microorganisms such as viruses jumping from species to species this comment of Engels on humanity's hubris can serve as a cautionary tale. In ecological terms we need a non-hierarchical acceptance of all species, including humans as co-inhabitants of the natural world (STIBBE, 2012, p. 65). This will not be easy. Many things militate against it happening. The metaphorical reification of animals like cows, pigs or chickens as money-making machines in industrialized agriculture or factory farming is part of what makes it difficult to overcome the anthropocentric viewpoint that colours much discourse about animals. News stories about illnesses and epidemics involving new virus infections among such animal populations have littered the media for decades.

The work of the British wild animal epidemiologist, Andrew Cunningham demonstrates that it is not simply factory farms that generate new viruses, but also the broader disruption of ecosystems and the expansion of commodity production (CUNNINGHAM, 2020). This has the consequence of pushing different animal species together as well as bringing humans and other animals into contact – drawing new pathogens into circulation. He argued that wildlife markets are hotspots for animal diseases to find new hosts. “Mixing large numbers of species under poor hygienic and welfare conditions, and species that wouldn't normally come close together gives opportunities for pathogens to jump species to species”. Covid-19 may well have emerged as a serious public health threat from wildlife.

If many animals are kept under stress with other animals, this affects their immune system; this is the case of wet markets, where wild animals are sold. It is where viruses can cross from one species to another. The only solution is not to hunt, sell or eat such animals. The natural sciences, like zoology, will require significant investment in preventative wildlife health research, Cunningham argues. This is necessary to come to understand more of the risk factors for zoonotic virus spillover.

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It will doubtless be hard for people to treat microorganisms as part of nature in the same way as cute and furry animals like koala bears.

### Note

\* **Acknowledgement:** the author would like to thank Mira Lieberman for reading an early draft of the article and giving him helpful advice on parts of the text.

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Accepted on October 20, 2020.

### Appendix A

The voice over of the reporter underlined verbally what the camera was showing:

Staff frantically wave us out of the way, pushing gurneys carrying men and women on mobile respirators – it's not chaos, but it is hectic.

They rush past wards already rammed with beds all filled with people in terrible distress - gasping for air, clutching at their chests and at tubes pumping oxygen into their oxygen-starved lungs.

I'm in the main hospital in Bergamo, the hardest-hit hospital in Italy in the hardest-hit town in the hardest-hit province, Lombardy - and it's just plain scary.

Masked, gloved and in a hazmat suit, my team and I are led through corridors full of gasping people who look terribly ill.

I ask what ward I am in.

"This isn't really a ward, it's a waiting room, we just have to use every bit of space," my guide, Vanna Toninelli, head of the hospital press office tells me.

The medical teams are fighting a war here and they are losing.

The sheer numbers of people succumbing to the coronavirus is overwhelming every hospital in northern Italy - and it could easily overwhelm the rest of the country as well.

The staff are working flat out trying to keep their patients from deteriorating further. They are trying to stop them from dying.

In groups they crowd around the latest patients. Attaching monitors, drips and most importantly respirators. Without them the patients will simply go downhill fast.

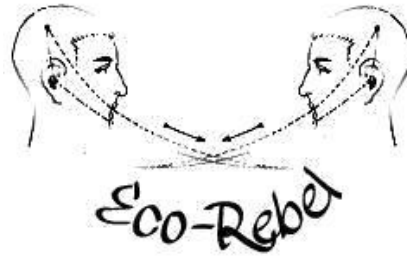
Really fast. Deadly fast.

**Appendix B**

**‘Angela Merkel uses science background in coronavirus backgrounder.’**

The curve has become flatter. It needs to be like this (moves her hand flatly), so it doesn't overtax our health system. We have made model observations. We're now at about reproduction factor 1; so one person is infecting another one. I can only say that for one chain of infection, if one person will infect another person. That is an average of one person infecting another one. If we get to the point where everybody infects 1.1 people, then by October we will reach the capacity level of our health system with the assumed number of intensive care beds. If we get to 1.2 people, so everyone is infecting 20% more. Out of five people, one infests two and the rest one, and then we will reach the limit of our health care system on July. And if it's up to 1.3 people then in June we will reach the limits of our health system. So that's where we can see how little the margin is. And the whole evolution is based on the fact that we assume that we have an infection figure that we can monitor, that we can track. And that we have more protection concepts and that thanks to them we can loosen restrictions. But it is thin ice, as Mr. Tschentscher (Hamburg's mayor) said, or a fragile situation or really a situation where caution is the order of the day and not overconfidence.

ECOLINGUÍSTICA: REVISTA BRASILEIRA DE  
ECOLOGIA E LINGUAGEM (ECO-REBEL), V. 6, N. 4, 2020.



## **PANDEMICS AND NON-HUMAN ANIMALS IN THE ARGENTINE PRESS: EXTENDED CARNISM AND INDUSTRIAL FATALISM**

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**Abstract:** The present work is part of a research dedicated to the construction of the carnist discursive identity in Argentina. Our aim in this paper is to analyse the way in which Argentine press constructs non-human animals during COVID-19 pandemic in the news. We will analyse three different news taken from two major newspapers from Buenos Aires with national editions. We'll adopt as main theoretical framework Ecolinguistics as proposed by STIBBE (2012, 2014). From this perspective, neoclassical economics discourse builds a destructive relationship between humans and non-humans through language. We will apply theoretical tools provided by HODGE & KRESS (1993) for verbal analysis, and KRESS & VAN LEEUWEN (2006) and HART (2014) for image analysis.

Our working hypothesis is that just three positions are allowed to non-human animals in these papers: suppression, backgrounding and ornamental presence (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008), granting non-human animals places of subalternity (SPIVAK, 1988).

**Keywords:** COVID-19; Non-human animals; Discourse; Ecolinguistics.

**Resumo:** O presente trabalho faz parte de uma pesquisa dedicada à construção da identidade discursiva carnista na Argentina. Nosso objetivo neste artigo é analisar como a imprensa argentina constrói animais não humanos durante a pandemia de COVID-19 nas notícias. Analisaremos três notícias diferentes tiradas de dois grandes jornais de Buenos Aires com edições nacionais.

## ECO-REBEL

Adotaremos como principal referencial teórico Ecolinguística, conforme proposto por STIBBE (2012, 2014). Nessa perspectiva, o discurso da economia neoclássica constrói uma relação destrutiva entre humanos e não humanos através da linguagem. Aplicaremos as ferramentas teóricas fornecidas por HODGE & KRESS (1993) para análise verbal e KRESS & VAN LEEUWEN (2006) e HART (2014) para análise de imagem.

Nossa hipótese de trabalho é que apenas três posições são permitidas a animais não humanos nesses trabalhos: supressão, fundo e presença ornamental (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008), concedendo lugares de subalternidade a animais não humanos (SPIVAK, 1988).

**Palavras-chave:** COVID-19; Animais não humanos, Discurso, Ecolinguística.

### 1. Introduction: discourses and environment

Since the decade of 1990, discourses about climate change have adopted many forms. Anshelm & Hultman (2015) classify them in four: Industrial Fatalism, Green Keynesian discourse, Eco-socialism and the discourse of Climate Skeptics (2015: 15). The discourse of Industrial Fatalism is presented as some kind of “capitalist official discourse”, in which climate change is considered as a modern problem for actors that propose marginal changes to save the old structures. What this discourse proposes, according to Ulrich Beck, is that the same industry that provoked the crisis must be used to control it. Large-scale technological development and more efficient innovations can solve environmental issues. This is traditionally the dominant view in most countries in the Western world and it is embraced mostly by right wingers everywhere (ANSHELM; HULTMAN, 2015: 19).

As a dominant climate change discourse, Industrial Fatalism has become the most widespread view for natural sciences, and therefore, also for governments and the media. Once this view reaches any government level it becomes the law and, thus, the social behaviour it establishes gets harder to change, even in emergency times such as the current pandemic (WHORF, 1956; RAITER, 2003; LAKOFF, 2004). Discourses of the leftish populisms in Latin American countries tend to be more kind to people, including references to subaltern groups like aboriginal people, women, African origin people, immigrants, non-human animals and environmental issues, even though when they keep many destructive representations towards all of these groups and topics.

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In Argentina, the dominant discourse about climate change is, as in the rest of the Western world, Industrial Fatalism. This discourse has been supported by governments of different ideologies. They all tried to reconcile the concepts of *environment*, *job positions* and *economy*. But in this equation, environment always lose. In the context of the current outbreak of COVID-19, a huge development in the mass media coverage has been generated and, since a wild animal has been blamed in the news for the disease, non-human animals were in the front page of every newspaper.

### 2. Carnism and the Story Argentines Live by

According to Lakoff, our minds store meanings in a certain way: creating frames of related meanings that set cognitive patterns. When one of the meanings in the frame is brought to attention, all the meanings in the frame are activated.

One of the best results in the cognitive and brain sciences is that we think in terms of typically unconscious structures called "frames" (sometimes "schemas"). Frames include semantic roles, relations between roles, and relations to other frames. A hospital frame, for example, includes the roles: Doctor, Nurse, Attaint, Visitor, Receptionist, Operating Room, Recovery Room, Scalpel, etc. Among the relations are specifications of what happens in a hospital, e.g., Doctors operate on Patients in Operating Rooms with Scalpels. These structures are physically realized in neural circuits in the brain. All of our knowledge makes use of frames, and every word is defined through the frames it neurally activates. All thinking and talking involves "framing". And since frames come in systems, a single word typically activates not only its defining frame, but also much of the system its defining frame is in (2010: 71-72).

We give the dominant discourse in Argentina the name of *The Story of Meat* (FORTE, 2019). This dominant discourse constitutes the main frame in the Argentine common sense and includes meanings every citizen of Argentina must know to consider themselves as such. This story of meat is based in speciesist representations that place animals in a subaltern place, below all human categories. This speciesist common sense is called by JOY *carnism*:

We don't see meat eating as we do vegetarianism – as a choice, based on a set of assumptions about animals, our world, and ourselves. Rather, we see it as a given, the "natural" thing to do, the way things have always been and the way things will always be. We eat animals without thinking about what we are doing and why, because the belief system that underlies this behavior is invisible. This invisible belief system is what I call *carnism* (JOY, 2011: 9).



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The Story of Meat constitutes the frame that in Argentina activates and links to each other carnist meanings such as *asado*, *tradition*, *friendship*, *relaxation*, *gathering*, *party* and *strong masculinity* but also *national wealth*, *animal husbandry*, *national development* and *the best meat in the world* (FORTE, 2019: 5). This frame was built through the history of the Nation along with its identity and manifests itself in National discourses: literature, political and government discourse, newspapers and media, music, etc.; this is, where social meanings reside (NAVARRO, 2016: 126). It creates speciesist interpretation frameworks, assigning non-human animals specific referents, converting them into food, entertainment, clothing or research material. We follow ADAMS to name this framework "the Story of Meat".

The story of meat follows the narrative structure of storytelling. Alice B. Toklas implies this in her cookbook when, in a chapter entitled "Murder in the Kitchen," she uses the style of a detective story to describe killing and cooking animals. Through recipes she provides the appropriate conclusion to the animals' death according to the texts of meat; the animal becomes delectable, edible... Meat eating is story applied to animals, it gives meaning to animals' existence...The story of meat follows a sacred typology: the birth of a god, the dismemberment of the god's body, and the god's resurrection. This sacred story paves the way for a mundane enactment of the meaning of dismemberment and resurrection—achieved through consumption of meat (ADAMS, 2017: 76).

Livestock farming industry is the most developed in the country and in its discourse non-human animals become resources and wealth (DIETZ; YORK, 2015: 36). Whether intended for food or as a pet, they are considered as marketable objects and, in this sense, within this discourse and in a quarantine, anything that does not generate income is useless. From a Neoliberal discourse perspective, Argentine newspapers grant three places to non-human animals: suppression, for the excluded; backgrounding for those who don't even have an identity; and ornamental presence for those who have an aesthetic value.

### 3. COVID-19 Quarantine implications for animals

The 2019–20 coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has been defined as caused by a coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). Its outbreak was identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. The World Health Organization declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January, and a pandemic on 11 March. Until May 1, 2020, more than 3.27 million cases of COVID-19 had been reported in 187 countries and territories, resulting in more than 233,000 deaths. More than 1.02 million people have recovered (CSSE, 2020: 1).

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COVID-19 Quarantine deepens the carnist discourse including new harmful meanings for non-human animals. TV news show wild animals entering empty cities, due to quarantine, around the globe. Newspapers and magazines also talk about cats not feeling well with their human families at home all day and how pets can transmit the virus, and they also talk about “eastern wet markets” and wild animals as food, specially bats. According to this, the three discursive possibilities for non-human animals we mention in 2. present the following characteristics:

- Suppression: animals are completely erased from the discourse or they are just a circumstance surrounding human action.
- Backgrounding: animals are the cause or the effect for a human related process. Their importance in the texts is linked to human will.
- Ornamental presence: this is the place of the object, granted to non-human animals in most of the western discursive tradition. Animals are present in discourse due to the importance they hold as food, clothing, entertainment, or some benefit they can bring to humans.

We claim that in Argentine newspapers non-human animals are a symbol of the different status humans can achieve.

### 4. Corpus and theoretical framework

In this opportunity we will analyse three news related to the COVID-19 outbreak. They were taken from two national newspapers: *Página 12* and *Clarín*.

- Text 1. March 31, 2020. Demoras, falta de entrega e insuficiencia de alimentos en las comunidades<sup>i</sup>. *Página 12*.
- Text 2. March 29, 2020. Coronavirus: un diario inglés asegura que los mercados chinos siguen vendiendo murciélagos y carne de animales domésticos<sup>ii</sup>. *Clarín*
- Text 3. April 16, 2020. El “coronavirus canino”, una enfermedad que inquieta a los dueños de mascotas<sup>iii</sup>. *Clarín*

Considering that our main interest is to exhibit the three types of strategies used to erase, mask or hide non-human animals, we will proceed through strategy order instead of chronologically.

We adopt as main framework STIBBE’s postulates (2014) regarding language and non-human animals. Since all the analysed texts present images, we will take a multimodal approach. We will analyse verbal material following HODGE & KRESS (1993) to describe processes and participants and KRESS & VAN LEEUWEN (2006) and HART (2014) for image analysis.

## 5. COVID-19 and the speciesist discourse

According to VAN LEEUWEN, discursive exclusion works in several ways:

Some exclusions leave no traces in the representation, excluding both the social actors and their activities. Such radical exclusion can play a role in a critical comparison of different representations of the same social practice, but not in an analysis of a single text, for the simple reason that it leaves no traces behind. (2008: 29).

He distinguishes between *suppression y backgrounding*:

In the case of suppression, there is no reference to the social actor(s) in question anywhere in the text... someone or some institution surveyed the opinions of the public, but we do not find out which individual or company or other institution did this, which takes away one possible avenue of contesting the result of these “surveys.” In the case of backgrounding, the exclusion is less radical: the excluded social actors may not be mentioned in relation to a given action, but they are mentioned elsewhere in the text, and we can infer with reasonable (though never total) certainty who they are (2008: 29).

As we have mentioned before, Argentine press grant animals three discursive places: suppression, backgrounding and ornamental presence. We will see now how this three strategies are articulated in each text.

### 5.1. Text 1: Demoras, falta de entrega e insuficiencia de alimentos en las comunidades

This text, published on March 31, 2020 in both the digital version and the paper edition of the Buenos Aires newspaper *Página 12*, constitutes an Editorial Note, often called Leading Article. It is an unsigned story that represents the editorial line of the newspaper (SILK, 2009: 1).

This Editorial is dedicated to the situation of the Wichí aboriginal people, a Nation that lives in the north of the country, on the border between Argentina, Bolivia and small areas bordering on Paraguay and, on the Argentine side of the border, the province of Salta. The note refers to the general situation of the Wichí people, prior to the declaration of the pandemic, but extends its scope until the moment of the crisis.

Analysing the actional model (HODGE & KRESS, 1993: 9) we find first that the main actors involved in actional transactive processes are provincial and national officers, such as provincial Secretary of Public Relief, officer from National Ministry of Social Development, National Representatives for Salta Province and Salta’s Provincial Ministry of Social Development. And they all are involved in transactive processes:

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<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Afected</b>	<b>Type of process</b>
Secretario de obras públicas de Santa Victoria, Pedro Lozano	visitó	Padres de un niño de un año y tres meses que falleció	Transactive - Material
Lozano	filmó	A la hermanita de esa criatura	Transactive - Material
nutricionistas del Ministerio de Desarrollo Social de la Nación	Dispusieron	X	Transactive - Mental
El diputado nacional Lucas Godoy	indicó	X	Transactive - verbal
la ministra de Desarrollo Social de Salta, Verónica Figueroa	Había adjudicado el problema de las demoras	A una situación particular de los proveedores	Transactive - Mental
Verónica Caliva y Juan Ameri	Presentarán un proyecto	En el congreso	Transactive - Material
Godoy	solicitará	se enmarque en las acciones paliativas	Transactive - verbal
X	Se tomaron	Medidas ante la pandemia del COVID 19 en el país	Transactive - Material

Table 1

The only aboriginal participant in the text is the Chief Agapito Ceballos, who declares the current situation of his people at the moment of the publication. Official figures give legitimacy to the discussion. The entire text constitutes an argument between officials and the opinion of the Chief, who acts as the social legitimizer for Wichí people: it is the official word of the Wichí community. In this context, the discourse of the economy and the place of the Estate prevail.

<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Afected</b>	<b>Type of Process</b>
Agapito Ceballos, cacique de la comunidad de Rancho El Ñato	confirmó	X	Transactive - Verbal

Table 2

The problematic situation arises when National government disputes with the provincial government of Salta the way in which emergency food is distributed. On the one hand, the Secretary of Public Relief of Santa Victoria, Salta, Pedro Lozano, is involved in two material

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processes: visiting and filming the situation of the family that lost a child because of malnutrition. In contrast, the National Government Officials (nutritionists from the National Ministry of Social Development, National Representatives Lucas Godoy, Verónica Caliva and Juan Ameri, are involved as actors in mental and verbal processes. As a third part, Wichí people appear in two cases: the parents of a little boy of one year and three months and the sister of the dead child. They are trapped inside nominal constructions that include them: particular situation of the providers, palliative actions, etc.

Actor	Process	Afected	Type of Process
La nena	Falleció		No transactive - Material
Lozano	filmó	A la hermanita de esa criatura	Transactive - Material
Las comunidades wichí	viven	Una situación	No transactive - Existencial

Table 3

This presents a situation in which the provincial government, represented here by Pedro Lozano, visited the community, filmed the malnourished child who died, and continued without delivering food. In contrast, National Officers took action on the matter and protested, presenting bills to Congress.

The wichís are also actors in non-transactional processes (*the child died*). Only the Chief is an actor in verbal processes. They only appear in two instances: when talking about them and their situation, as in the case of the girl filmed by Lozano and later deceased, and when the Chief Agapito Ceballos confirms the situation, without being taken by direct speech. In this sense, indigenous people have almost no place in the discussion. It is an issue between the Provincial and National Government.

The whole discussion is described in terms of an argument between National and Provincial governments. The Wichí people appears but in a very limited part of the text. Non-human animals are not mentioned in the verbal text at all. Nevertheless, they have an important role in the image, as we will see.

### 5.1.1. Image analysis

The editorial is illustrated by a picture that and, as any image, it presents particularities in itself. These are amplified when considered together with the verbal text.



Image 1

As we have mentioned in 4., we adopt Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) multimodal analysis model as main framework. These authors, following the categories defined by Halliday (1978), analyze the three metafunctions of language in the images: 1. Ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions.

#### 5.1.1.1. Ideational function

In the picture can be identified a material transactional process in which an adult person serves food to two children. In the background, but in the center of the image, there are two malnourished dogs and part of an adult person, presumably a sitting man. The vector of the transactional process comes from the faceless person who is serving food and goes to the children. The indigenous origin of this person can also be inferred by the color of its skin. Therefore, we

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can see one actor that serves food to two affected participants. Here we can say that the place assigned to the dogs depends on the type of interpretation we chose for the image:

- Speciesist: dogs are a companion circumstance that builds the idea of poverty (the poor are always accompanied by skinny dogs).
- Inclusive interpretation: dogs are poor too (and not a symbol of poverty) and are waiting for their turn to eat. They are also affected participants and are going to be fed.

If we consider the verbal text that accompanies the image, the interpretation becomes clear: it is the speciesist one. In addition, there is no plate or food remains on the floor, and the text establishes the idea of human hegemony. The location of the malnourished dogs in the image, together with the null space they have within the verbal part of the Editorial reinforces the metaphorical interpretation of non-human animals as a representation of poverty. This interpretation is possible through the metaphoric function of the dogs constructed by visual documentation (HART, 2014: 96), that is to say, it calls for previous knowledge of the viewer that allows to grant them a particular place in the image.

### 5.1.1.2. Interpersonal function

The analysis of the Interpersonal metafunction allows us to say that the image constitutes an offer act. No participant is looking at the camera. Everything we see is information offered to the viewer and there is no intention for the participants to establish a direct connection with the public. Camera is at a steep angle, focusing from above diagonally and taking a close shot. The situation is shown from the gaze of an adult who is very close to the boys. The observer is involved in the scene because of the close position the scene is taken.

### 5.1.1.3. Textual function

We have two elements at the center of the image: food and dogs. Everything else is peripheral. Color and modulation present a “naturalistic” representation of what they show.

While the actors are officials in the verbal text, the image shows a faceless participant with indigenous skin and austere clothing, clearly not a government official, feeding aboriginal children.

The photograph represents the counterpart of the verbal text: while the government officials fight each other, the image presents the concrete impact on people. In this context, the verbal text leaves

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indigenous people in the background and photography fills that void. In it, dogs are just a metaphor for poverty, as the text does not mention them. Only their image is used to show the situation of extreme poverty.

Animals are erased. Skinny dogs, as social actors, are erased from the verbal narrative, appearing only in the visual reference as an emblem of poverty. As the Spanish saying says: *a perro flaco todo son pulgas*<sup>iv</sup>. According to the definition of the Instituto Cervantes, *this saying is applied when misfortune is fed on the helpless, the poor, the weak, those who are downcast* (2020: 1). Bottom line, dogs are suppressed and Wichís backgrounded.

### 5.2. Text 2: Coronavirus: un diario inglés asegura que los mercados chinos siguen vendiendo murciélagos y carne de animales domésticos

This article appeared on march 29, 2020, in the digital version of the Buenos Aires newspaper *Clarín*. It is an Editorial, no journalist nor editor signed it, and its main concern is the story about the animal origin of the pandemic and its consequences in the opening of the so-called *wet markets*.

Although the text refers to animals, they are not involved as actors in any processes, they are affected in impersonalized processes, included in nominalizations or participants in relational clauses, which means they don't *do*, they *are*. When they are affected, they are sold, terrorized and staked. They are also included in constructions such as Chinese *markets*, *Market of Guilin*, etc. Finally, *they are* considered the main cause of the outbreak of coronavirus.

Actor	Process	Afected	Type of Process	Transformation
Los mercados chinos	Siguen vendiendo	Murciélagos Carne de animales domésticos / A humanos	Transactive	
X	Aterroriza	Perros y gatos	Transactive	Elision y nominalizatio
X	Apiló	Jaulas de diferentes especies	Transactive	Impersonalization/erasure
X	Cree	Los muerciélagos son la principal causa del brote	Transactive	
China	Impulsa	La economía	Transactive	
El mercado de Guilin	Estaba	Abarrotado de compradores	Relacional	

Table 4



## ECO-REBEL

An interesting case is provided by the following clause:

Actor	Process	Affected	Type of Process
Los mercados chinos	Siguen vendiendo	Murciélagos Carne de animales domésticos / A humanos	Transactive

Table 5

In this case we can see a clear transactive process, *keep selling*, with an actor, *Chinese Markets*. But the verb asks for two arguments and the affected participant depends, once again, on the perspective we adopt:

- Speciesist interpretation: Markets sell something to someone. Bats and domestic animals' meat are the product the costumers buy.
- Inclusive interpretation: Markets sell non-human persons that suffer the consequences of the process like in human trafficking.

The main actor involved in major processes in the article is China and Chinese officials. They appear in clauses celebrating the end of the quarantine and reopening its markets but also promoting conspiracy theories against the US and silencing people from talking about what, according to the paper, is really happening there.

Actor	Process	Afected	Type of Process
Un diario inglés	Asegura	A X	Transactive
China	Celebró		No transactive
China	Reabrió	Sus mercados de carne	Transactive
China	No elevó	Sus estándares de higiene	Transactive
Miles de clientes	Acudían	A un mercado	Transactive
X	Cree	Los murciélagos son la principal causa del brote	Transactive
China	Impulsa	La economía	Transactive
Los mercados	Han vuelto a operar		NO transactive
Los funcionarios	Mantuvieron en silencio	El brote	Transactive
X	Silenció	A los denunciantes	Transactive
El gobierno de Beijing	Promueve	Teorías de conspiración	Transactive

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Teorías de conspiración	Son	Una historia desacreditada	Relacional
El ejército de EEUU	Llevó el virus	A china	Transactive

**Table 6**

The verbal text develops a story in which animals are the excuse to describe a negative perspective about China.

### 5.2.1. Image analysis

The article contains four pictures, named here as Image 2, 3, 4 and 5, with no identification nor epigraph. We will analyse the three metafunctions for each one of them.

#### 5.2.1.1. First image



Image 2

##### 5.2.1.1.1. Ideational function

The first picture presents a conceptual process. Dogs are shown as prisoners about to become food. In the photo we can see them in a place where they would not be in the Western World, like war prisoners in cages. This case refers us back to the case in image 1, where the process builds a metaphor based on visual documentation (HART, 2020: 96), invoking previous knowledge of the viewer to decode a particular meaning: animals as captives.

### 5.2.1.1.2. Interpersonal function

The close-up of caged dog's face looking at camera states a demand act. The dog is a domestic animal that in the west is not to be eaten, as we mentioned before. As a captive, a prisoner, a role close to humans is granted. They are asking for help, their gazes are asking for an involvement from the viewer to take part and do something about what she or he is seeing.

### 5.2.1.1.3. Textual function

Animal gaze is in the center of the image and, therefore, is the main element in importance to consider. It codifies a naturalistic image with no distortion or visual effects. Its dark atmosphere evokes sadness and a horrifying scene, that of a subject about to die.

### 5.2.1.2. Second image

The second image presents a scene close to the first one, but in this case involves cats and not dogs:



Image 3

### 5.2.1.2.1. Ideational function

The first picture presents a conceptual process: the participants mean for what they are. Their look grants a particular meaning (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006: 80). Cats are shown in this picture as prisoners. And if we have read the article we know they are about to become food.

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The picture shows them in a place that can be considered not suitable in the Western World. We do not eat cats. They are not food for western cuisine. Therefore, the image allows to associate them with prisoners. This metaphor is based on visual documentation (HART, 2020: 96), invoking previous knowledge of the viewer to decode a particular meaning: animals as captives.

### 5.2.1.2.2. Interpersonal function

A close-up of caged cats' face looking at camera constitutes, in terms of Kress; van Leeuwen a “demand”. When a represented participant looks at the camera he is looking at the viewer, asking her or him to involve with what is happening (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006: 118). As a prisoner, a role close to humans, is granted to the cats. They are asking for help, their gazes are calling for an involvement from the viewer to take part and do something about what she or he is seeing. In this picture, the cage is more crowded than in the previous image, what gives to the call a more desperate feeling.

### 5.2.1.2.3. Textual function

As in the previous picture, animal gaze is in the center of the image and, therefore, is the main element in importance to consider. It codifies a naturalistic image with no distortion or visual effects. Its dark atmosphere evokes sadness and a horrifying scene, that of a subject about to die.

### 5.2.1.3. Third image



Image 4

## ECO-REBEL

### 5.2.1.3.1. Ideational function

Once again, we find a conceptual process involved. An animal taken out of its traditional western place. Bull skulls are not to be found in a doctor's place in the Western World, and even when they can be found in other western places they are not often seen with their fur. Therefore, this bull skull can be associated in western culture with barbaric practices or, at least with very strange foreign traditions.

### 5.2.1.3.2. Interpersonal function

The picture presents an offer act. The skull is not looking at the viewer, it is not asking for direct involvement. Nevertheless, the image has been taken from above, in a high angle shoot. The viewers see the bull as something inferior to themselves.

### 5.2.1.3.3. Textual function

The skull is not in the center of the image, it constitutes, along with the remaining elements, a strange whole that do not allow sympathy for a western public. It constitutes a naturalistic image with no effects involved. In this case, the metaphor is completed invoking the unknown for the western viewer.

### 5.2.1.4. Fourth Image



Image 5

### 5.2.1.4.1. Ideational function

The last image is the only one that presents a narrative process with human participants: two actors take a salamander and put it in a bag while other actors behind look and applaud. This represent human material action over a non-human participant affected by the process. Considering the fact that the actors are wearing safety suits, they can be thought as some kind of health officials and, due to that, holding some kind of social prestige.

### 5.2.1.4.2. Interpersonal function

The image presents an act of offer, no participant is looking at the camera, asking for involvement. The image is shown close but not as close to the viewer to be directly involved in the action. He/she is just a witness. It keeps the observer at a safe distance.

### 5.2.1.4.3. Textual function

The action develops in the center of the image, presenting a naturalistic view, without effects or modal modifications of any kind.

## 5.3. Text 3. El “coronavirus canino”, una enfermedad que inquieta a los dueños de mascotas

This article was published on April 16, 2020 in the Clarín Newspaper website, in *Zonales* section. *Zonales* is a section that is usually dedicated to news from specific parts of the city, nevertheless, this article is not. It was signed by Florencia Saglio. Here we can find a full discursive animal presence: that of the object. non-human animals are, according to this, accessories, food, clothing, entertainment or some type of element that brings benefits to humans. They are human ornaments and accessories that can be affected by the disease.

Dogs and cats appear in the position of the affected. They are not actors in any processes. The verbal text in this article builds humans as actors., as we can see in table 7:

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Actor	Process	Afected	Type of Process
El coronavirus canino	inquieta	A los dueños de mascotas	Transactive - mental
La gente	consulta	Por la vacuna	Transactive - verbal
Las veterinarias	aclaran	que	Transactive - verbal
Es un virus	No se contagia	A los humanos	Transactive - material
El coronavirus	Que ataca	A perros y gatos	Transactive - material
El coronavirus	No es	El mismo	Relacional atributivo
coronavirus	ataca	A humanos	Transactive material
Vacuna	existe	Para perros	Relacional identificativos
El coronavirus canino	Solo puede afectar	A cachorros o perros con el sistema inmune muy débil	Transactive material
El coronavirus canino	No genera	Un cuadro riesgoso	Transactive material
Nosotros	recibimos	Muchos llamados	Transactive material
Nadie	Se acercó	desesperado	Transactive material
Los síntomas	Pueden ser	Más graves en los gatos	Relacional atributivo

Table 7

We find two kinds of actors:

- Disease related: coronavirus canino, coronavirus, virus, vacuna.
- Humane: la gente, las veterinarias, nosotros, nadie

Main actors in the article are disease-related. The narrative unfolds as if the virus acts by itself without being spread, developed, etc. Human actors just act once the virus is on the move.

### 5.3.1. Image analysis

The article is illustrated by the following picture (image 6). The image is not illustrating what is narrated through the verbal text. It is a picture taken professionally and seems intended to arise emotions in the viewer:



Image 6

### **5.3.1.1. Ideational function**

From the analysis of the ideational metafunction we find a conceptual process with one participant. The background is blurry and all the attention is focused in the dog. There is nothing more to look at. The dog is attentive, her/his ears are wide open, so we can think she or he is listening or paying attention to someone or something, and he or she is looking at camera. The dog appears to be submissive and expecting an order from his/her master or human companion. In any case the picture seems to represent the look of “our sweet and submissive dog”, being us the viewers. Following Hart, the anchorage in this picture forces us to see the look on the face of the dog as a main element (HART, 2014: 85), and this has implications for both the ideational content, because it reinforces the meaning of the conceptual process of the submissive dog; and the interpersonal content, as we now see.

### **5.3.1.2. Interpersonal function**

The picture presents a clear act of demand. The dog is looking at the camera asking for involvement. She/he looks as if we are part of the family and wants something from us. The body posture is also important. Face and body appeal to the emotions of the viewer, complementing the verbal construction: animals are an object and that object has to appear attractive in some way to humans and in this case, the dog is appealing to us because he or she could be our dog.



### 5.3.1.3. Textual function

The only element in the picture is the dog. The background has been blurred to focus the attention on the dog, that is at the centre of the image.

## 6. Conclusions

As we mentioned in 3. newspapers allow three places to non-human animals: suppression, backgrounding and ornamental presence. This three positions share elements to say that they all are the place of the subaltern (SPIVAK, 1988). They are a symbol of something that occurs to humans (text 1), they are responsible for things that happen to humans (text 2), or they can be affected by diseases similar to those that affect humans and make those last worry about them (text 3).

Agency in their own lives has been denied to non-human animals in human contexts in the last century. They are represented as holding some kind of agency only when they are in their natural habitats or when they do something humans want them to do. But animals in captivity and exploitation conditions fought for their lives and their conditions.

Yet animals did not just labor. They also resisted this labor and fought against their exploitation. During the 1850s, the United States government introduced 75 camels into military service. Their primary duties were to provide transportation for equipment and human personnel. This was, however, a short-lived experiment. For the camels resisted. They refused to cooperate and obey orders. They were loudly vocal in their complaints. They spat upon their fellow soldiers. They bit their fellow soldiers. Their fellow soldiers learned to both hate and fear them (ESSIN, 1997, 59-60). The U.S. army stopped employing camels, and the horse and mule returned to full service in these units. The camels, in truth, were the ones who made their labor an experiment. In other words, this was no experiment. The U.S. Army actively sought to turn camels into soldiers. They failed. Hence, what was to be a permanent program became, after the fact, a trial period, an audition, an experiment (HRIBAL, 2007: 105).

But this narratives are not what the media usually show. According to Hribal (2003) non-human animals were the true working class behind industrialization. Considering that it was oxen and horses that pulled the machinery in various industries, cows, chickens and pigs that provided food and materials for different products, these have been the main protagonists and have been erased from the equation eliminating their agency. In terms of Stibbe, they were deleted and only one

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representation remains that does not correspond to the work carried out at the time (2012: 20). Today we can find stuffed cows, cartoons of smiling horses and pigs dressed in tuxedos, but never representations of horses or oxen pulling spinning wheels and heavy machinery to operate ferries, mills, cotton farms, etc., nor cows, chickens and pigs being dismembered to become manufactured products.

In this same way it can be said that those who built Argentina were, in fact, animals, more precisely cows. They were the workforce in the development of the new nation and the recognition they received was to become an emblem from the representation of their mutilated and cooked body.

Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, the place granted to non-human animals has not been modified in a good way. Actually, as we can see in the analysis of text 2, new problems have arisen from it. Animals (and not human use of them) are considered responsible for the pandemic. As we have detailed in 1. Industrial Fatalism is almost the environmental discourse of Neoclassical economics: let's save the planet without reducing the profit. This is the main discourse that contains the idea of *animals as resources*. But even though this idea is generalized, at least in the western world, the different types of resource each animal constitutes are defined locally. This way, all animals serve a purpose for humans but each animal serves a particular purpose in a particular place. Being this the case cultural crosses arise xenophobic reactions and not antispeciesist ones.

COVID-19 pandemic blamed bats, animals not usually consumed as food in western countries. And that was the news: in China bats are food. This leads to a crack in dominant discourse.

Every year in Yulin, China, thousands of dogs—and even a few cats—are barbarically slaughtered for a summer solstice gathering, and their flesh is sold as food. Commonly called the Yulin dog-eating festival, this event is vehemently condemned by the international community—and by many Chinese people, too. It's easy to see why: The thought of killing, dismembering, cooking, and eating our animal companions is enough to make most of us lose our lunch. But there's no rational reason why the thought of eating any other animal shouldn't elicit the same revulsion—especially when animals raised and slaughtered in the United States often face horrors akin to those endured by the dogs in Yulin (HURST, 2019: 1).

According to western media, the barbaric practice is to eat bats, dogs and cats, the same way cows, pigs, ducks, goose, deer, horses, chicken, rabbits, fish, etc. are consumed in our countries. As a

pandemic, COVID-19 has, at some point reinforced the neoclassical economics discourse towards non-human animals, and its links to xenophobic, racist, misogynistic discourses. Aboriginals, homeless and poor people, women, they all share a subaltern place with animals. But animals are at the bottom of the well, they are ultimate subaltern because they are not human.

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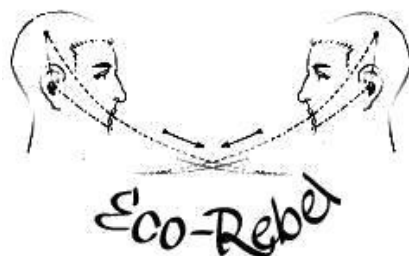
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Accepted on December 12, 2020.

ECOLINGÜÍSTICA: REVISTA BRASILEIRA DE  
ECOLOGIA E LINGUAGEM (ECO-REBEL), V. 6, N. 4, 2020.

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- i Delays, lack of delivery and insufficient food in the communities. Author’s translation.
  - ii Coronavirus: English newspaper says Chinese markets continue to sell bats and meat of domestic animals. Author’s translation.
  - iii Canine coronavirus, a disease that worries pet owners. Author’s translation.
  - iv the poor skinny dog gets all the fleas.. Author’s translation.



## PANDEMIC POSSIBILITIES FOR APPLIED LINGUISTS' ACTIONS

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### Abstract

This article challenges applied linguists and other academics to think and act outside of the box to help society confront COVID-19, future pandemics, and other crises that humans and other earthling currently face and that lie on the horizon. These outside-the-box actions by applied linguists can involve not only the research we do but also the ways we share our work and how we teach our students. Nine examples of such actions are provided, and readers are urged to collaborate in this crucial work.

**Keywords:** Pandemic; applied linguists; collaboration; Sustainable Development Goals; Anthropocene; environmental education

**Resumo:** Este artigo desafia linguistas aplicados e outros acadêmicos a pensar e agir fora de sua torre de marfim para ajudar a sociedade a enfrentar a COVID-19, pandemias futuras e outras crises que os humanos e outros terráqueos enfrentam atualmente e que já estão no horizonte. Essas ações podem envolver não apenas a pesquisa que fazemos mas também as maneiras pelas quais compartilhamos nosso trabalho e como ensinamos aos nossos estudantes. Nove exemplos de tais situações são apresentados e os leitores são convidados a colaborar nesse importante trabalho.

**Palavras-chave:** Pandemia; linguista aplicado; colaboração; objetivos do desenvolvimento sustentável; antropoceno; educação ambiental.

### 1. Introduction

Academics have many matters to consider as they go about their work. In normal times, these matters include the flow of ideas in their field of study and related fields, their students' learning, how to assess their students and how their students will assess them, their relations with colleagues at their own and other institutions, and their career progression and salaries. As if these matters

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were not enough, another matter increasingly on the minds of academics in these times involves their role in addressing the many crises facing the human race, crises that seemingly increase in severity as we proceed into the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Might the pandemic and other crises, such as the climate crisis, lead to pushed changes, that is, changes that we might or might not want to make but that are forced upon us by the exigencies of circumstance.

This article explores possible actions academics can take and asks questions about the role of a specific set of academics in humanity's response to these crises: academics who study how language influences human understanding and behavior. These academics include linguists, applied linguists, communication scholars, sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists. For convenience, the term *applied linguists* will be used for all academics who consider and seek to harness the power of language.

The authors of this article are not urging applied linguists to stop everything and focus solely on these crises. Applied linguists still need to attend to teaching, assessments, and their own personal needs, now and in the future. What we are suggesting is that applied linguists and other academics might want to more consciously articulate for themselves and other stakeholders (and, isn't everyone a stakeholder?) how what they do helps make the world a better place at a time when some people believe humanity may be heading off a cliff, or perhaps multiple cliffs. Of course, we appreciate that what some see as paths to improvement others view as routes off the same or other cliffs.

In writing this article, the authors hope to encourage brainstorming, sharing of work, division of labor, and other forms of collaboration. We also appreciate that our message is not an original one: making the world a better place has long preoccupied academia and much has been done and is being done. This article serves merely as two academics' effort to generate even more thought, discussion, and action. Furthermore, we trust that it goes without saying that applied linguists' efforts need not be limited in either of the following two ways. First, what applied linguists do can go beyond what we teach and research. It can also include such matters as how we teach and how we share our research with others. Second, while yes, academics are very busy with our duties at our institutions, our skills and energy can also be channeled into making a positive impact beyond academia.

### **2. Applied Linguistics examples**

The bulk of this article is taken up with examples of how the authors have employed their applied linguistic and other skills to address some of the crises faced by humanity and our fellow earthlings. We list these in order to share our experience in hopes of inspiring and learning from others. We are painfully aware that we can increase both the quantity and especially the quality of our research and publications. Furthermore, we have a great deal to learn about how to use our work to involve, inform, and motivate others, not only in academia but also among the public, government, and various institutions.

### 1) **Relative quantity of media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic vs coverage of people dying from lack of basic needs**

In the second quarter of 2020, when international awareness of the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic was sinking in, Chau et al. (under review) wondered about media attention to the new pandemic threat compared to media attention to the longstanding problems of lack of food, clean water, and sanitation. They used corpus and computational tools and techniques to examine coverage in four leading print newspapers: the New Straits Times (Malaysia), the Straits Times (Singapore), The Guardian (United Kingdom), and the New York Times (United States).

As of 1 November 2020, approximately 1.2 million people have died from COVID-19 (WORLDOMETRE, 2020). In comparison, Mercy Corp estimates that nine million people die annually from hunger (NPR, 2020), not to mention deaths from lack of clean drinking water and sanitation. Yet, Chau et al. found that coverage in the four newspapers was overwhelmingly dominated by the lesser cause of death: COVID-19. Future researchers might want to investigate the relative coverage of other media, including social media, as well as asking media leaders for their explanations for the researchers' findings. Furthermore, in addition to food, clean water, and sanitation, the United Nations promotes other Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2020). These too may be worthy of applied linguists' attention.

### 2) **The use of the relative pronoun *who* with nonhuman animals**

Many scientists believe that the Earth is experiencing a new geologic age, moving from the Holocene to the Anthropocene (National Geographic, 2020). The name Anthropocene derives from the fact that in this current age, humans are the dominant factor determining what happens on the planet, as the human population approaches eight billion, and the power of our technology to impact the Earth's other creatures multiplies. For instance, some scientists believe that due to human intervention, the Earth is experiencing a Sixth Mass Extinction (CARRINGTON, 2017).

Is it fair that humans dominate our fellow animals? Some people's answer to this question is based on the view that these other animals have more in common with objects, such as smart phones and staplers. Language may play a role here. The use of the relative pronouns *which* and *that* to refer to other animals could encourage people to equate them with things; whereas using *who* acknowledges what the science increasingly tells us: nonhuman animals are sentient beings with a right to life (GILQUIN; JACOBS, 2006). Gilquin and Jacobs used corpus analysis to look for instances of the use of *who* with nonhuman animals. They also looked at the advice given in publication guides and grammar analyses.

More recently, Chau and Jacobs (under review) submitted a commentary to an applied linguistics journal to disagree with the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, which in its latest edition, the 7<sup>th</sup> edition, counsels that the use of *who* should be restricted to humans. The commentary looks at progressive changes championed by this manual in an effort to reduce bias in language in areas such as sex and disability, and calls on the American Psychological Association to revise its advice in regard to the selection of relative pronouns for use with nonhuman animals. Future research might like to explore similar issues in other languages, as well as the practices of language teachers and other gatekeepers.



### 3) Perspectives on a tiger-human interaction incident

One particular example of potential human-caused species extinction involves Malayan tigers whose population has dwindled to about 200 individuals. In 2019, two tigers entered a village in rural Malaysia. Although no humans were injured, the incident generated attention in Malaysia and nearby Singapore. Jacobs and Fong (2020) conducted an ecolinguistic study of 10 online articles on the incident from established media sources. The researchers noted a strong human-centric perspective in the articles. They contrasted this with a humans-as-fellow-animals view which sees nonhuman animals as thinking, feeling beings. As humans further encroach on the habitats of other animals, more such incidents are certain to occur. Applied linguists might like to examine the perspectives used in media reports of these incidents. Are the perspectives human-centric or do they show humans as fellow animals. Klöckner (2015) offered many ideas for such examinations. Additionally, Stibbe (2015) provided a detailed scheme for doing ecolinguistic analysis, as well as a free online course for mastering that scheme.

### 4) Instructional materials

**a.** The United Nations provided guidance on how to do environmental education (UNESCO/UNEP, 1997), with six elements which can also be applied to education in many other areas. Those six elements are awareness, understanding, an attitude of concern, skills needed to address the areas of concern, ability to evaluate proposed solutions, and participation in efforts to implement those solutions. Jacobs and Goatly (2000) examined 17 language coursebooks both for the presence of environmental issues as well as for whether the participation element was included. They found a good deal about the environment in the coursebooks but very little that involved students in participation on behalf of environmental protection.

**b.** In another study of instructional materials, Jacobs, Teh, and Joyce (2016) looked at the presence of animals in 22 language coursebooks and then categorized the types of animals found, that is, wild animals, animals for human consumption, animals used in research, companion animals, work animals, animals viewed as pests, animals in entertainment, and extinct animals. The two largest categories were wild animals and animals used for human consumption. However, if all the animals used by humans, e.g., also the animals used in research and the work animals, had been combined into a single category, that would have been the largest.

**c.** The food we nearly eight billion humans consume accounts for a major part of our impact on the planet and its other inhabitants. Jacobs, Joyce, and Subramaniam (2018) looked at ten English language coursebooks for the inclusion of food and found that 17% of the books' activities had at least one mention of food, and that seven of the ten book had an entire unit on food. Next, the researchers attempted to categorize the foods into animal-based (e.g., meat, eggs, and dairy) and plant-based. Evidence suggests that consumption of plant-based foods correlates with improvements in human health, environment protection, and animal welfare (Carrington, 2020).

**d.** Rather than studying about instructional materials, Lie, Jacobs, and Amy (2002) worked with university lecturers in Indonesia to create a book of environment-focused lesson plans for non-

English majors. The lessons were based in Indonesian contexts and included the UN's participation element, mentioned in Jacobs and Goatly (2000).

e. Many issues lie within the topic of materials. In addition to instructional materials, there are promotional materials. One area under applied linguistics that has examined promotional materials is critical linguistics, also known as critical discourse analysis (FAIRCLOUGH, 2013). For instance, Stibbe's (2015) analysis framework has been used to find evidence of greenwashing (i.e., falsely claiming to be environmentally friendly) in many companies' promotional materials. Jacobs and Dillon (2019) attempted a critical discourse analysis of the promotional materials for two types of burgers, those made from traditional meat from animals and plant-based burgers. Food offers many research possibilities, e.g., given the significant increases in the availability of alternatives to animal-based foods, e.g., clean meat (meat made from animal cells, not involving the killing of animals (SHAPIRO, 2018).

### 5) Sharing about resources

Publications by applied linguists and other academics can take many forms. In addition to the usual books, book chapters, and journal articles, commentaries were previously mentioned in this article. Reviews of books and other works constitute another form of publication. Book reviews provide a means of supporting other academics' work, of introducing important ideas to new audiences, and sometimes bringing possible errors to the attention of book authors and others. One example of using book reviews to highlight important ideas was Jacobs' (2017b) review of the book *Even Vegans Die* which sought to pushback against a feeling of superiority projected by some vegans - (full disclosure – Jacobs is a long-time vegan). This kind of contrarianism can be essential in change efforts. Another example of highlighting crucial ideas was Jacobs' (2017a) review of *Are We Smart Enough To Know How Smart Animals Are?* (de Waal, 2016). This book challenged the speciesist view that humans are far superior to all other species of animals and may therefore use them for human benefit without regard to the suffering inflicted.

### 3. Other examples

#### 6) Academic conferences

Attending conferences can be a highlight of academic life, providing opportunities to visit attractive locations, socialize and share ideas with colleagues, meet with publishers, and burnish one's resume. Conferences can also provide an important source of funds for professional organizations. On the negative side, not only can conferences be expensive for academics whose institutions do not finance their participation; international conference travel results in release of greenhouse gases. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic led to the cancelation of many academic conferences or their conversion to online events, there was some movement toward use of online tools at academic conferences, e.g., allowing online presentations. However, when Jacobs, Tan, and Teh (2018) contacted the organizers of 77 academic conferences to ask about online presentations, the response was not very positive. Of the 52 who replied, only 14 permitted virtual presentations. The article also made suggestions for how to do such presentations. Of course, 2020

has seen major growth in the use of the technology for online presentations and academics' familiarity with that technology. Nonetheless, more needs to be done to achieve academic communication that is both green and effective.

### **7) Cooperation and collaboration**

Cooperation will be essential to addressing the many urgent crises confronting humanity and our fellow earthlings. Unfortunately, the authors' experience suggests that students, not to mention their teachers, often have neither the level of cooperative skills needed for successful cooperation nor the motivation to deploy those skills. (The two authors sometimes also fall short in those regards.) This dearth of cooperation is especially unfortunate, as a great deal of research supports the view that students and others benefit both cognitively and affectively from collaborating with peers (Ibáñez, García Rueda, Maroto, & Kloos, 2013; Johnson, Johnson, & Stanne, 2000; Slavin, 1991; Van Ryzin, Roseth, & Biglan, 2020).

**a.** Therefore, part of academics' task in attempting to solve the various crises we face must be to confront attitudes that militate against cooperation, e.g., the views that much of life is a zero sum game and that people only take assistance, but do not provide assistance in return. Jacobs and Greliche (2017) provided statistical and research support for overcoming anti-cooperation attitudes. For instance, they explained the benefits of cooperation in three contexts in which norm referencing is employed: standardised exams, class grades, and class rank. A key support for their explanation was research suggesting that teaching others using elaboration, rather than merely sharing answers, helps everyone, not just those receiving the teaching.

**b.** In a related study, Jacobs, Kimura, and Greliche (2016) looked at incivilities among students at a Japanese women's college. To a surprising degree, incivilities occurred even among these students, further highlighting the need to spend curricular time enhancing student inclination and ability to cooperate. One means toward achieving that goal involves academics cooperating with their own peers and letting their students know about the value of that cooperation.

**c.** Another recent example involves the second author who was part of an international collaborative project on journalism and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) mentioned earlier. It is a three-year (2019 – 2022) multinational Erasmus+ project that involves nine research teams from Europe and Asia. Guided by the team from Universidade de Santiago de Compostela of Spain, the teams from Romania, Luxembourg, Cambodia, China, and Malaysia are now developing courses that focus on the SGDs for journalism training in their countries. All the representative team members attended a kick-off meeting, which included talks on issues from gender and town planning to animal welfare and environment conservation in relation to journalism, media reporting, and the SDGs. The final goal of the project is to equip students and journalists-in-the-making with the necessary skills and mindset to contribute to sustainable development through bias-free and independent media reporting (see Figure 1 for a reporting of the meeting in the local newspaper).



**Figure 1:** The kick-off meeting of the Erasmus+ project on journalism and SDGs in Spain

### 8) **Reaching out to the public**

Sharing with other applied linguists is important, finding ways to share our knowledge with the general public may be even more important. This partly underlines the approach by the Erasmus+ project noted earlier, in which student journalists who attend the courses to be developed contribute to more responsible and helpful media reporting in the future. Of course, there are many other ways of accomplishing this goal of reaching out to the public. These include joining community organizations, working with governments, using social media channels, and linking with traditional media. Jacobs and Lewis (2018) did this by authoring a commentary for a regional online publication. Their commentary brought a research-based perspective to the debate over how to slow global warming. Furthermore, the piece attempted a conciliatory tone: rather than the authors presenting vegan diets as all or nothing, they presented options such as reducitarianism (eating less animal-based foods) and flexitarianism (usually, but not always eating plant-based).

### 9) **Changing from within**

If you want to change the world, start with yourself first. This saying particularly holds true when it comes to the central argument of this article. Changing from within involves self-reflection, becoming conscious about our beliefs, and taking action. It involves knowing what matters and what deserves our attention and energy. We have suggested earlier that what applied linguists do can go beyond what we usually teach and research, and that we can contribute our little effort to making the world beyond academia a slightly better place for all of us. But this necessarily starts with a conscious change within ourselves. Are we ready to embrace change from within, then to apply our skills and energy to positive change beyond our offices and institutions? The COVID-19 pandemic and the other crises we face may provide ideal opportunities for such reflection. The two authors of this article have been collaborating among the two of us and with others to utilize some of these opportunities.

## 4. **Conclusion**

Applied linguists and other academics are busy, and the pandemic has only made matters worse, bringing untold uncertainties to our professional and private lives. Yet, the pandemic and the

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likelihood of future zoonotic pandemics (GREGER, 2020) escalates the necessity of applied linguists focusing on this and other crises discussed in this article, not to mention those not included here. In other words, we need to bring some of our attention outside our ivory tower comfort zones (JACOBS, 2019). Nothing less than the future of humanity depends on it. We, the authors of this article, are confident that we applied linguists are up to the task of seizing the possibilities presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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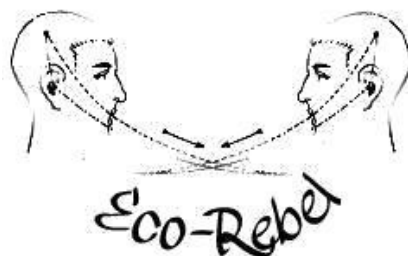
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Accepted on December 5, 2020.

ECOLINGUÍSTICA: REVISTA BRASILEIRA DE  
ECOLOGIA E LINGUAGEM (ECO-REBEL), V. 6, N. 4, 2020.





**“BUT HE IS NOT CORRUPT”:  
NOT BEING CORRUPT JUSTIFIES ANY DELINQUENCY AND CRIME**

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**Resumo:** O objetivo deste pequeno artigo é discutir o bordão dos seguidores de Jair Messias Bolsonaro de que ele não é corrupto sempre que alguém lhes fala dos absurdos perpetrados pelo ex-capitão. Ele ofende pessoas, a mídia, países e instituições, em termos grosseiros. Porém, seus seguidores afirmam: “mas ele não é corrupto”. O artigo termina mostrando que ele não aceita corrupção nos outros, mas na sua família ela pode grassar.

**Palavras-chave:** Bolsonaro; ADE; corrupção; falácia; delinquência.

**Abstract:**

The purpose of this short article is to discuss the catchphrase of Jair Messias Bolsonaro's followers that he is not corrupt whenever someone talks to them about the absurdities perpetrated by the former captain. He offends people, the media, countries and institutions, in general. However, his followers say: "but he is not corrupt". The article ends by showing that he does not accept corruption in others, but in his family it is permitted.

**Key-words:** Bolsonaro; EDA; corruption; fallacy; delinquency.

I will start off from the assertion of the first part of the title as a catchphrase that will work as a refrain of what follows in the present essay, which comments and criticizes the actions and discourses of President Jair Messias Bolsonaro as well as of his fanatic followers. These actions and discourses point in the opposite direction of all the main principles and categories not only of Ecosystemic Discourse Analysis (EDA), but also of those of Ecosystem Linguistics (EL) in general, of which EDA is a part. According to *Webster's Encyclopedic unabridged dictionary*, catchphrase is “a phrase that attracts attention” whereas refrain “is a phrase or verse recurring at intervals in a song or poem, especially at the end of each stanza”. In the present essay, the catchphrase “But he is not corrupt” is the refrain occurring at the end of all paragraphs presenting some of Bolsonaro's absurdities.

Whenever someone questions any of the innumerable absurdities, delinquencies and crimes of the runaway President, some of his minions always have the refrain “but he is not corrupt”, blindly following the President's own refrain, “but I am not corrupt”. Their intelligence is not enough to

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make them understand that not being corrupt is not a quality, but an obligation, as the historian and political commentator Marco Antonio Villa once said, in an attempt at debating with Jair Bolsonaro. I said attempt because it is impossible to dialogue with him. He does not hear what his interlocutor says and, instead of answering his questions he speaks at the same time expressing what he thinks about everything.

EDA provides us with as a theoretical framework for the study of any text-discourse. Among its main principles the following stand out: (a) unconditional defense of life, which comprises (b) a fight against avoidable suffering. Because it is part of EL, it presupposes an attitude of (c) communion, of solidarity with humans and non-humans so that the relationships between people take place in a cooperative, non-competitive way, by general coordination of the wills, not by subordinating the will of the whole community to that of a minority or a single person. Category (c), for example, implies several others, such as (d) diversity, whose recognition requires an attitude of (e) humility, (f) tolerance and (g) compassion for the suffering of any sentient being, not only of humans. We will see that none of these principles, characteristics and categories of EL/EDA is present in the President's actions and discourse. On the contrary, he and those who collude with him practice hate speech, with everything that it implies.

When the President was reminded of the large number of people infected with the coronavirus and the many cases of death from this infection, he replied: “So what? I am Messiah, but I do not work miracles” – the “Messias” of his name is the Portuguese equivalent of “Messiah”. On the death toll, he replied on another occasion that he was not a grave digger. That is to say, category (a) above does not exist for him. Not only does he not fight against the suffering of patients, but he also thinks that those who die are the elders, who are disposable, as they only give expenses to the state. Or, “everyone is going to die someday”, so what difference does it make whether people die now or later!

*- But he is not corrupt.*

Category (g) does not exist for the former captain. He shows no compassion for the suffering of the infected or for the dead and their loved ones. However, when a military parachutist had an accident in a jump in Rio de Janeiro and died, he took the presidential plane, flew there with his whole gang, all financed by us, of course, and made an emotional speech at the funeral. For him, only the life of the militaries and of those who support him is important and deserves condolences.

*- But he is not corrupt.*

Disrespect to (d) is shown by Bolsonaro in several situations. So on many occasions he turned out to be sexist, offending women, homosexuals and other minorities, such as indigenous people. Before being President he said to a woman that she was too ugly to be raped; of one of Amerindian who was demanding respect for the rights of his people in Brasília he said that the Indian should go back to his village and eat grass. Afro-Brazilians are also frequently disrespected. The director of Palmares Foundation once said that there is no racial discrimination in Brazil – “we are importing it from the United States” – and that slavery was beneficial to the blacks. The irony is that the Foundation is dedicated to the defense of the African heritage in Brazil. But, the most astonishing irony is the fact that this Foundation’s director is himself black.

*- But he is not corrupt.*

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Category (e), humility, is light years away from the President. On the contrary, he has an inflated, authoritarian and even fascist ego. As soon as he assumed the presidency of the country, he said that he would move the Brazilian embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, an action that would provoke a just anger in the Muslim peoples. He offended the great economic power that is China, the wife of the President of France, started to verbally attack Venezuela's President Maduro, who is no saint. He created a case with the Federal Supreme Court, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, in short, he created enemies everywhere, but then he started to complain that he was not allowed to rule.

*- But he is not corrupt.*

I could align Bolsonaro's nonsense, misdeeds, delinquencies and crimes (again in the words of Marco Antonio Villa) ad infinitum.

I would like to resume what Marco Antonio Villa said to Bolsonaro – before he became President – in the attempted dialogue mentioned above (recall that he does not dialogue, but imposes his opinion, speaks on the question of the interlocutor, etc.): “being corrupt is not a merit, it is an obligation”. It is from an unblemished past conduct that we can see if someone has the necessary posture and composure for the post he or she claims. The unbalanced President has none of these qualities.

*- But he is not corrupt.*

Unfortunately, the paranoid President does not need enemies from outside: he creates them all the time. Instead of proposing a big project for the country, thinking holistically as recommended by Ecosystem Linguistics, he sticks to spells like golden shower, use of chloroquine against coronavirus (a subject for scientists), gay kit and others of minor importance. He is unable to think big.

*- But he is not corrupt.*

I would like to emphasize that this chant of “I am not corrupt” and “he is not corrupt” only applies to others. So much so that the President tries to avoid investigations against alleged acts of corruption of his son Flávio Bolsonaro, while he was a state deputy in Rio de Janeiro. He is entirely silent on the accusations against his son's former adviser, Fabrício Queiroz, on the doubts in the discourse and behavior of his lawyer Frederick Wassef and his wife, involved in corruption up to the neck, but a frequent visitor to the Bolsonaros. As the Brazilian saying says, “Tell me with whom you walk and I will tell you who you are” (diga-me com quem andas e eu te direi quem és).

*- But he is not corrupt.*

Since he is the President of the Republic, Bolsonaro should be an example for everyone, coordinating the actions of state and municipal health authorities, showing the danger that coronavirus represents, protecting himself with mask when in public, in short, having the behavior that Brazilians should mirror. These attitudes would be acts of solidarity, cooperation, coordination, in short, linguistic-ecosystemically, of communion with his fellow citizens. But he does just the opposite: he criticizes the governors and mayors for being concerned with the spread of covid-19, he goes to public demonstrations of the devotees of saint bolsonaro against

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democracy, he provokes agglomerations without a mask, he embraces people, all that in an unprecedented irresponsibility. Bolsonaro is like Donald Trump, of whom Democratic presidential hopeful Joe Biden asserted that he “must be part of the solution, not the problem”, regarding the killing of George Floyd. Regarding Trump and Bolsonaro we could mention another Brazilian saying that: a bad vase does not break (vaso ruim não quebra).

- *But he is not corrupt.*

In the entry “Jair Bolsonaro” of *Wikipedia* in Portuguese, we can see that Bolsonaro came to plan acts of terrorism (something that today he says is the prerogative of the left) during his barracks time: How the extreme left and extreme right fundamentalisms became seen! Let's see an excerpt of *Wikipedia*'s article on Bolsonaro:

*On October 27, 1987, Jair Bolsonaro informed reporter Cássia Maria, from **Veja** magazine, about the ‘Dead End Operation’ (Operação Beco Sem Saída). At that time, Bolsonaro supported improving pay and was against the arrest of Captain Saldon Pereira Filho. The operation was intended to explode low-powered bombs in toilets in Vila Militar, in the Military Academy of Agulhas Negras, in Resende, and in some other military barracks in order to protest against the low salary that the military received at the time.*

*Bolsonaro is said to have drawn the sketch of where the bomb would be placed on the water adductor Guandu, which supplies water to the municipality of Rio de Janeiro. The magazine handed the material over to the then Minister of the Army who, after four months of investigation, concluded that the report was correct [...]. The Military Justification Council (CJM) unanimously considered, on April 19, 1988, that Bolsonaro was guilty and that his behavior was ‘incompatible with the status of an Army official and consequently he should lose the rank, under the terms of article 16, item I of law nº 5836/72.*

As a matter of fact, his insolence, his effrontery and disrespect for democratic institutions and the suffering of those affected by the coronavirus is not much different from acts of terrorism.

- *But he is not corrupt.*

Bolsonaro was incompatible with the military position he had, but managed to sit in the chair of the Presidency of the Republic due to three negative facts: 1) the rejection of the previous President Lula, who was in prison for corruption, 2) Bolsonaro was stabbed during the campaign for the Presidency, what turned him into a victim, 3) not having participated in the debates on TV among candidates. As pointed out above he does not know how to debate, but only to impose his opinion, he does not know how to live with anyone who thinks differently from him. His will must always prevail.

- *But he is not corrupt.*

Against his own words mentioned above, Bolsonaro considers himself a Messiah – fortunately it is not the “bessias” that the former President Dilma Rousseff said she had for Lula not to be arrested – who came to save Brazil from communism and leftists. Therefore, he thinks he is above good and evil. It doesn't matter what he did or did not do or what he does or does not do. What matters is the divine task that he thinks he has to carry out to make Brazil right. So much so that

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his motto, which appears even in government advertisements, is: “Brazil above everyone, God above all”. Respect for those who do not pray his catechism – recognition of diversity, communion and so on – is beside the point. After all, in Bolsonaro’s own words:

*- I am not corrupt*

Really? Poor country whose President is a Jair Messias Bolsonaro!

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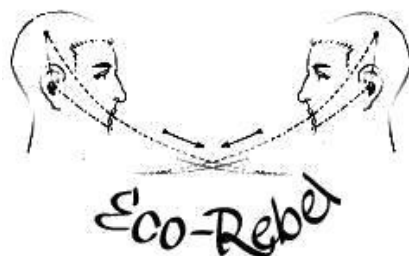
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Accepted on September 15, 2020.

ECOLINGÜÍSTICA: REVISTA BRASILEIRA DE  
ECOLOGIA E LINGUAGEM (ECO-REBEL), V. 6, N. 4, 2020.



## **SWACHH BHARAT ABHIYAN AND THE CANADIAN ENVIRONMENT WEEK: CASE STUDIES IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CAMPAIGNS**

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**Abstract:** With the increasing realization of the importance of communication for sustainable development, the integration of the new media in environmental campaigns has emerged as an indispensable tool for changing people's behaviour *en masse*. This paper studies two strategic sustainable development campaigns: India's Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and the Canadian Environment Week. In both the pursuits, the new media has been used extensively to create public awareness about sustainability to motivate people to be participants as well as change agents of sustainable development in the collective interest of personal, national, and global sustainability. In this article, the agenda and the action of both the campaigns as well as their key narratives have been analysed to highlight the emerging trends in sustainable development communication.

**Keywords:** Swachh Bharat Abhiyan; Canadian Environment Week; Sustainable development campaign; new media; waste management; 3R principle.

**Resumo:** Diante da crescente constatação da importância da comunicação para o desenvolvimento sustentável, o envolvimento da nova mídia em campanhas ambientais tem emergido como um instrumento indispensável para mudar o comportamento das pessoas em grande escala. Este ensaio estuda duas campanhas estratégicas de desenvolvimento sustentável: Swachh Bharat Abhiyan da Índia e a Semana Canadense do Meio Ambiente. Em ambos programas a mídia tem sido bastante usada com a finalidade de suscitar a consciência coletiva para motivar as pessoas a serem partícipes bem como agentes na mudança para um desenvolvimento sustentável em prol de uma sustentabilidade pessoal, nacional e global. No artigo, a agenda e a ação de ambas campanhas bem como suas narrativas básicas são analisadas a fim de pontuar as tendências emergentes na comunicação sustentável.

**Palavras-chave:** Swachh Bharat Abhiyan; Semana Canadense do Meio Ambiente; campanha de desenvolvimento sustentável; tratamento de lixo; princípio 3R.

## Introduction

A vast array of scientific pursuits and philosophical inquiries post-globalization has been dedicated to the idea of sustainable development. Sustainable development demands an informed and responsible society that can make balanced decisions based on economic, social, and environmental bottom lines of development (ELKINGTON, 2004), fulfilling the wants of the present without compromising the needs of the future generations.

Colossal environmental issues such as global warming, climate change, pollution, and toxic wastes and effluents are not only a threat to the quality of life on earth but a fundamental threat to human welfare (GOUGH, 2016; STERN, 2007). Even our small and thought-to-be trivial acts of production and consumption as a whole have been steadily escalating extreme ecological imbalances. Consequently, there is a global outcry for preventing the exploding environmental catastrophe. One of the best ways to preserve the integrity of the ecosystem is to create awareness among the public in general and among the educated stakeholders like students, political and economic leaders, designers and planners, policy-makers, thought leaders, and educationists in particular (UN Environment Annual Report 2018).

An environmentally aware population can make informed decisions and can exercise better choices on complex environmental issues (SÖRQVIST; LANGEORG, 2019). Simple environmental awareness may not necessarily lead to environmentally responsible behaviour. Therefore, pro-environmental values must be deep-rooted as serious ethical codes and scripts in the collective unconscious of the people. This demands formal environmental education and training and must be reinforced in terms of people's exposure to a series of events, activities, incubations, prompts or triggers, and many other stimulants.

The development of responsible societies is the driving force of all reconstructive discourses these days (DASH; DASH, 2019). Environmental campaigns are designed to induce the responsibility into society and individuals to respect, protect, and preserve the natural ecosystem from manmade afflictions (CHEN; HUA, 2015). In addition to enhancing people's experiences of nature in terms of aesthetic beauty, campaigns elevate and enlighten the minds of people to understand and appreciate the organic man-nature relationship (VINCENZI et al., 2018). Environmental campaigns serve as non-formal and unconscious education for the masses. Therefore, they act as the engine room in creating awareness of what is *right* and what is *wrong* in their approach to nature, and hence, provide or at least propose a better world for a living (KIL; HOLLAND; STEIN, 2014). Environmental campaigns are the off-the-classroom learning stimulants heightening the imagination and the enthusiasm of people and thus, enabling them to create innovative, eco-friendly solutions to environmental issues. They also serve as the PR tools for making people aware of government policies and corporate agendas about sustainability (GRUNIG, 1977).

In the 1970s, the United Nation's Decade of Environmental Education emphasized the mass environmental education programmes. The Stockholm Conference organized by the United Nations in 1972 recommended the organization of *formal* and *mass* environmental education programmes. At the core of this new movement was the belief that environmental education can truly empower humans with the insight into human-nature interactions and interdependence and can develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills in them – all contributing to the overall quality of life on earth. The United Nations Climate Change summit 2009 pledged for the dissemination of environmental information leading to environmental awareness and change of attitude, behaviour, and action regarding climate change. Subsequently, NGOs and other private

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players have devised various communicative strategies like environmental campaigns, environmental workshops, environmental education, newsletters, and mass demonstrations to draw the attention of the media and the public. The Rio Earth Summit 2012 focused on global consensus on an eco-friendly system of production to regulate the release of toxic components and radioactive waste. It laid stress upon the generation of alternative sources of energy to replace the fossil fuel regime. It advocated for eco-sensitive public transport system to manage harmful vehicle emissions. It also looked forward to reverse the issue of climate change by combating deforestation, desertification, and water crisis. A majority of nations agreed to support the UN to create public awareness on the vagaries of climate change by reaching out to the citizens and consumers.

Geographically vast and culturally diverse, India and Canada are Commonwealth member nations following parliamentary democracy. The constitutions of these countries safeguard freedom of press and speech and are proud of their independent judiciary. Both nations are committed to the protection of the natural environment as a part of their economic growth and, therefore, they are willing and able partners in climate change actions. The reduction of harmful greenhouse emissions occupies significant space in their public policy. They have been continuously working to increase the eco-efficiency of their public transport and, of late, have been providing incentives to stimulate the sale of electric vehicles.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech at the third anniversary of Swachha Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) (NARENDRA MODI, 2017) reflects the stark reality of the lack of an attitude towards cleanliness in India. He laments that a majority of Indian men urinate openly anywhere without guilt or shame. They must learn from Indian women who find the right place to relieve themselves. He went on to say that "Little kids are the real brand ambassadors of this mission. They don't let people from their family litter. They have become aware and are trying to make Bapu's dream of clean India, come true." The onus of keeping the surroundings clean and hygienic should not be thrown at the government only. Citizens must have their share in it. He concluded that "There are challenges but we can't let things remain in the status quo".

The slogan for the Canadian Environment Week (CEW), 4-10 June 2018, was founded on the idea of beating plastic pollution. With an improved shift in vision, the major theme for the Canadian Environment Week, 2019 was "Encounter, Protect and Celebrate Our Nature!" with a focus on "Beat Plastic Pollution!" This was proclaimed in the Canadian Environment Week official website as well as in the climate change news. While launching the Environment Week 2019, Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change espoused:

From coast to coast to coast, Canadians feel connected to nature and take pride in their natural heritage. Doubling the amount of nature we protect will help preserve our biodiversity, our health, and our communities. Every day, Canadians are working together to protect our beautiful nature for us, for our kids and for our grandkids. (BUSINESS INSIDER, 2019)

Against this backdrop, this study aims to analyze the key strategies and actions of the world's two major sustainable development campaigns: India's Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) and the Canadian Environment Week (CEW). In both the pursuits, the new media has been used extensively to create public awareness about sustainability to motivate people to be the participants as well as the change agents of sustainable development in the collective interest of personal, national, and global sustainability. The twin important research questions are:

1. What are the key public outreach strategies adopted in SBA and CEW?
2. What are the leading sustainability discourses propagated in SBA and CEW?



**2. Methods**

This paper consists of two case studies on environmental sustainability campaigns: The SBA and the CEW. Each case is elaborated in two stages. First, the agenda and the action of the respective governments about sustainability and the key stakeholders of development have been discussed. This is done about research question 01. Second, one ad-film from each of the campaigns has been analyzed adopting Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) Grammar of Visual Design framework. This part corresponds to the research question 02.

The multimodal discourse analytic framework adopted is tripartite: information value, salience, and framing. Within this framework, the images, symbols, metaphors, dialogues, paralanguage, and music, intertextuality, and discourse markers are discussed to highlight the key discursive engagements.

Table 1: Multimodal discourse analysis framework Source: Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)	
<b>Information value</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The left/right, center/margin position of visual elements on-screen imparts a certain understanding of those elements upon the viewer in terms of given/new or more important/less important information.</li> <li>▪ In this study the same tools are applied to the study of aural texts as per their harmony/contrast vis-à-vis the visual; given/new, explicit/implicit information in dialogues; and cultural information salient in the rhythm of music and songs.</li> </ul>
<b>Salience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It is the degree of prominence to which an audio/visual element stands out or maintains the viewer’s attention. Salience is enhanced through a visual’s background/foreground position, size, brightness, or through a multitude of other techniques such as aural resonance (in figures like alliteration, onomatopoeia, etc.), aural intensity (rise and fall in intonation and unique word stress highlighting sustainability principles and modes of living</li> </ul>
<b>Framing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In a multimodal composition, framing is manifest in the rhythm which can be perceived through specific time-ordered patterns and can be realized by elements which create dividing lines through two perceptual orders: Disconnection (discontinuities) and Connection (continuities)</li> </ul>

In the ad-films of a campaign, sustainability appeals emerge from the integration of cultural texts or signifiers in a dynamic inter-semiosis of the verbal, audio, and visual modes of discourse. In this study, the strategies and the key narratives of both campaigns have been analyzed to highlight the emerging trends in sustainable development communication.

**3. Case 1: SBA**

*Vision and mission*

The Government of India launched its mission towards a clean India, coined as SBA, on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014. Popularly conceived as the Clean India Campaign, SBA happens to be an integral part of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 6 that envisions universal sanitation, hygiene, freedom from open defecation, waste management, and availability of safe drinking water. In this

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direction, the Government of India took unprecedented initiatives to clean the streets, educational institutes, railway stations, office premises, bus stops, and public places. SBA also aims to achieve a 100 percent open defecation free (ODF) India. SBA was a national campaign inclusive of the provision for sanitation facilities and safe drinking water to every family and the development of infrastructure for village cleanliness such as toilets and disposal systems for solid and liquid waste by 2nd October 2019.

The mission had two fronts: SBA Rural and BBA Urban. The former operated under the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation whereas the latter was vested with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. Such an ambitious and inclusive growth agenda of building a clean, hygienic, and healthy India could not be possible without the active contribution of the public. Therefore, it was ensured that the campaign was the collective responsibility of the Government as well as the citizens. Today, the mission has turned into a mass movement, which could not have been successful without the strategic as well as involvement of print, electronic and social media.

SBA Rural is committed to promoting cleanliness and personal hygiene in rural areas by eliminating open defecation. When the SBA was launched in 2014, as many as 550 million were reported to be in the habit of open defecation due to lack of latrines or lack of sanitary awareness, or both. The government aimed at constructing 90 million toilets in rural India at an estimated cost of INR 1.96 lakh crore, equivalent to US\$28 billion (Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin Reports, 2019). While both the central and the state governments work in tandem to construct latrines for the poor, the World Bank has been involved to achieve universal sanitation coverage in India.

According to the Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation (2019), a major success of the mission is that 617 districts of the nation have been declared as open defecation-free (ODF). The National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey (NARSS) 2018-19, conducted by an Independent Verification Agency (IVA) under the World Bank, has found that 96.5% of the households in rural India have access to a toilet. The survey was conducted between November 2018 and February 2019 and covered 92040 households in 6136 villages across States and Union Territories of India.

Cleanliness in rural India under the SBA has mainly focussed on making India open defecation free, followed by a focus on clean drinking water and solid waste disposal. Claimed to be the largest behavioural change campaign, as revealed in the Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin Reports (2019), government and non-government sectors, educational institutes, local self-government, corporate sector, and, above all, the media have collectively contributed to the promotion of the sustainable campaign.

India's National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) is an integral part of the SBA. NMCG is currently working under the National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection, and Management of River Ganga (referred to as the National Ganga Council) and is popularly known as Namami Gange Programme. With a planned budget of Rs. 20,000 crores (as of June 2014) and dedicated to "effective abatement of pollution, conservation, and rejuvenation of India's most sacred and revered river" (Press Information Bureau India, n.d.), it was regarded as a flagship programme of the Government of India. The aim was to accomplish a *swachh* (clean) Ganga marked by *Aviral Dhara* (Continuous Flow) and *Nirmal Dhara* (Unpolluted Flow) by 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019 and to provide "comprehensive and sustainable solutions for major pollution hotspots along the stretch of 97 towns and 4,465 villages on the Ganga stem" (*India Today*, 2019).

### ***Communication and media planning***

The permanent official slogan of SBA as coined by the Government of India is "*Ek Kadam Swachhatake Aur* (One step towards cleanliness)" (MHRD, n.d.). In 2017, the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Government of India, unleashed its slogan "*Swachh Sankalp Se*

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*Swachh Sidhhi* (Clear determination leads to Cleanliness)”. To ingrain this value deep into the students, the government conducted essay competition on this theme (Government of India, n.d.). In 2018, the Ministry came out with another slogan “*Swachhata Hi Sewa* (Cleanliness is service)”. The Rail Safety Research and Development Forum emphasized on “*Clean and Green India*”. In 2019, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Govt. of India “*Swachhata Ki Bani Adat, Swachh Ho Raha Bharat* (Cleanliness has become a habit, India is becoming clean)” (Swachh Bharat Mission - Urban, 2019). In these slogans, the stress on “*Swachhata*” finds an alliterative association with several other words beginning with sound //s//, i.e. “*Sankalpa*” and “*Sewa*”. Cleanliness was projected as “one step forward” in 2014 whereas, in 2019, it is claimed to have become a “habit” (*The Times of India*, 2019).

The mission of the Government is carried forward by international organisations active in India. For example, UNICEF India (2014) came out with the slogan “*Swachh Bharat, Swachh Vidyalaya* (Clean India -- Clean Schools). All these slogans focussed on cleanliness as the new national attribute. Beyond slogans, the government initiatives included floating a Swachh Bharat Ringtone and Swachh Bharat Mission mobile app, and various advertisements. A *Swachh Bharat Run*, which was attended by 1,500 runners, was organized at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on 2 October 2014.

*Swachh Survekshana* (Clean Survey), commissioned by the Ministry of Urban Development and carried out by the Quality Council of India was designed to encourage a spirit of competition for cleanliness among the cities as well as to gauge the progress and impact of SBA. The surveys provided extensive annual reports on the cleanliness, hygiene, and sanitation across hundreds of cities in India. These surveys were conducted to rank cities on various sanitation and cleanliness parameters aimed at creating public awareness, changing the attitude toward cleanliness, and improving sustainable behaviour. The *Swachh Survekshana* reports were made public through various media.

SBA ensured the involvement of both news media (print and electronic) and the new media (internet). The print media campaign included activities such as promoting news, advertorials, articles, editorials, Op-Eds, and letters to the editor. The electronic was endowed with the audio-visual presentation of in the form of TV programmes including live and recorded documentary on cleanliness and related activities. Real-time activities by individuals, groups, social and political leaders were followed up by internet-based sharing of activities and the exchange information and ideas among virtual citizens on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, Tumblr, and so on. User-generated contents such as blogs and vlogs were regular features of the campaigns. When the participation of the news media and social media was a *fait accompli*, it was inevitable that the media created public awareness, shaped public opinion, aired public grievances, generated public debates, appreciated governmental and non-governmental successful initiatives, found gaps, and chastised wrong practices (*The Statesman*, 2017). Whether by creating public awareness, reporting community participation, or critiquing the government for the perceived successes and failures, the media has never let the mission of Swachh Bharat go off the track.

### ***Discursive strategies: The Two-pit Compost Toilet Ad***

The Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen launched the popular *Darwaza Band* (Shut the door) advertisement campaign video in May 2018 featuring two popular Hindi movie stars Bhumi Pednekar and Akshay Kumar. The aim was to remove the notion of untouchability about human faeces or excreta and promote the use of toilets. One of the films of this campaign is analyzed in 04 sequences (see Appendix 1).

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*Sequence 1.* This ad-film opens with Mr. Mishra, a visiting guest of Akshay Kumar and his wife Bhumi Pednekar, exclaiming about the abundance of fruit and flower bearing trees. To his guest’s astonishment, Akshay Kumar reveals the secret as “*Sab souchalaya ka ashirbad*” (“All are the blessings of the toilet”). The shocked guest wonders loudly: “Souchalaya?!” Akshaya’s wife reinforces saying, “*Souchalayanehinsochalaya, oh bhi do gadhewala,*” and clarifies that it’s the wonderful outcome of their innovative way of thinking (‘soch’ in Hindi means thinking), that is, of the two-pit toilet (“*do gadhawala*”). She hastens to add, “I told him (i.e., her husband) seven years ago rather clearly, ‘No toilet, no marriage’. Akshaya reminds them what his response was: “If there’ll be a toilet, it can’t be anything but a two-pit toilet.” The guest is seen amused at Akshay’s emphasis on the two-pit toilet and asks him about the significance of a two-pit toilet.

*Sequence 2.* Akshay Kumar explains the benefits of a two-pit toilet. He shows his indigenous-technology used, locally-made two-pit toilet, which is easy to construct with locally available materials and therefore quite affordable as well. While explaining the advantages of the two-pit toilet, the host explains that both pits are to be used alternately. Anyone can be used first. When the first pit is filled with human excreta, the lever or regulator, already fit into the system and available at the surface, should be turned in a specific manner so that the next incoming excreta will go to the empty second pit. At this juncture, the guest looks at the filled pit in disgust and asks why Akshay should not throw away the dirt and clean it. To his guest’s utter surprise, Akshay disapproves of the word “dirt” and corrects him saying “It’s not dirt, dear; it’s gold!” The guest’s body language (reaction of disapproval) creates humour. A matter of fact Akshay, however, goes on to enlighten the guest by saying that if the waste will remain deposited for a year, the water will disappear gradually and the “*miti*” or earth will become as valuable as “*sona*” or gold. The waste has become compost. The dry, pathogen-free, odour-less compost should be used for agriculture and gardening. Bhumi complements her husband smilingly now, saying: “It’s a goldmine now!” The guest looks amused, relaxed, and more or less enlightened.

Akshay picks some compost and throws around the field while saying: “Mix this in your land, and enjoy the blessings of the toilet!” During this time two children of the hosts, one daughter, and one boy, are seen entering the house frolicking. Their joy, the entire family’s joy, is thus presented as the benefits coming from the two-pit toilet that has shown the way how not to waste your waste, for waste should be treated as valuable as gold.

*Sequence 03.* Now, the inquisitive guest has become overwhelmed with the revelation. He declares enthusiastically: “Now, I’m also going to build a two-pit toilet!” And all smile happily. Amidst a variety of fruits and flowers, some people are found taking care of the plants. At the end of the film, as Akshay and the lady of the house come to the gate to see their educated guest off, the hostess offers a basket full of fruits to the guest and tells him to present it to his wife on behalf of her: “Here’s a gift for Bhabiji.” A beaming guest and his contented hosts have now one idea: *Waste is wealth.*

*Sequence 04:* Akshay and Bumi pose as a happy farmer couple: sitting close to each other, against the safety toilet, and with the safety tank in front of them, with a lot of contentment and the Swachh Bharat emblem follows.

**Table 2: Multimodal discourse analysis of the SBA Tow Pit Toilet Ad**

<b>Information value</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The core message of the ad film is that having a toilet is not only good for the hygiene and dignity of the family, but also for the agricultural benefits of one’s garden. Having a two-pit compost toilet is an advantage.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It promotes the new outlook that human faeces are not dirty. Rather through a two-pit system, they can be converted to compost which can work like agricultural gold.</li> </ul>
<b>Salience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Bollywood two celebrities acting as the peasant couple provide the audio-visual salience. The garden with plenty of vegetables and flower beds alongside the gardener and the happy-go-lucky children add to the visual salience. The bleating of goat from the background evokes the agrarian aura. The occasional, soft music up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> sequence turns to be more continuous and prominent in the 4<sup>th</sup> sequence sustain the climax.</li> <li>▪ <i>Cultural resonance</i>: The perception of the guest that human faeces are shabby; memorable dialogues such as “<i>SauchalayakaAshirvad</i>” (blessings of the toilet” and “<i>dharti ka uphar</i>” (gift of the mother earth), and the visual allusion to the national flag of India and the Gandhian reading glass offer a cultural context to the message.</li> </ul>
<b>Framing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Connection: The connection is achieved through the storyline and the dialogues.</li> <li>▪ Disconnection: This is achieved through the four stages leading to the transformation of the guest: inquisition-inhibition-understating-commitment.</li> </ul>

### 4. Case 2: CEW

#### *Vision and mission*

Canada, a North American country that is contiguous to the USA, with its ten provinces and three territories, is the world’s second-largest country by total area. Considered to be the world’s tenth biggest economy, Canada is a highly urbanized and developed country, even as 80% of its inhabitants are found concentrated in large and medium-sized cities. Like any other industrialized, developed country, Canada’s atmospheric air is marred by industrial and vehicular emissions, construction activities, and energy production. Air pollution has become the greatest human health hazard in Canada and a headache of the Canadian government for decades. Confronted by the vagaries of lopsided development and growing environmental degradation, Canada brought into force the Department of the Environment Act, 1971. The Department of Environment of Canada, popularly known as “Environment Canada”, was established to preserve and enhance the quality of the natural environment, to provide meteorological services, and to coordinate policies and programs to achieve environmental objectives.

Since its inception, Environment Canada has been instrumental in enacting laws aimed at enhancing the environment in Canada by organizing, implementing, coordinating, and promoting rules and regulations, plans and policies, events, and occasions. A signatory to the United Nation’s *Agenda for Sustainable Development* that comprises of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets to be achieved by all the nations of the world by 2030, Canada has shown a consistent commitment to improving sanitation, hygiene, green energy, and sustainable development. This paper aims to establish Canada’s sustainable campaign ‘Environment Week’ and its upshot ‘Clean Air Day’ as a milestone in the history of its sustainable development campaign.

Globally, June 5 is celebrated as the World Environment Day. The Canadian Environment Week Act (R.S.C., 1985, c. E-11) mandates that the week that includes June 5 shall be observed

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as the Canadian Environment Week. The aim is to implement the values and ethics of Canada's commitment to environment and climate change. The prominent values include 1) the preservation and enhancement the quality of the natural environment manifested in water, air, soil, flora, and fauna; 2) conservation of Canada's renewable resources; 3) conservation and protection of Canada's water resources; 4) forecasting of daily weather conditions and warnings, and the communication of the related information to the people of Canada; 5) enforcement of rules relating to boundary waters; and 6) coordination of environmental policies and programs for the federal government (Environment Canada, 2018, p.5).

### *Communication and media planning*

Canada's Environment Week features several events, out of which special mention must be made of the Clean Air Day (CAD) and Commuter Challenge.

#### *The Clean Air Day*

In 1999, Canada woke up to the hard reality that governmental action on curbing air pollution was not enough; action needed to be taken by all sectors and beginning from the grassroots level, and that out of box measures were badly needed. It had become imperative that all the stakeholders understand the importance of good air quality to health, environment, and the economy. Every year, the government-facilitated Clean Air Day is observed to celebrate a healthy environment by recognizing the importance of clean air. This is done by promoting individual and collective responsibility to change lifestyles that support the emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. The objective of the CAD has been to increase public awareness about clean air and climate change and thereby promote personal lifestyle and action suitable for the purpose. The CAD campaign is facilitated by the federal government, provincial and regional governments, encompassing all sectors, and all sections of the people to combat environmental pollution and climate change. The action-oriented campaign has involved governmental and non-governmental organizations fostering huge citizen partnerships to make the Clean Air Day, which falls on Wednesday in the Environment Week (celebrated every year in the first week of June), a grand success.

The Clean Air Day intends to promote awareness about clean air, sustainable living, health issues, and climate change, and what a Canadian can do to preserve and protect their environment by personal lifestyle choices and community development work. The CAD is observed by different organizations and communities, local groups, and associations, and Environment Canada facilitates as well as coordinates all such activities. The ministry of Environment Canada works as per the provisions of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999.

The Clean Air Day was instituted as well as implemented in 1999 to ensure that good air quality is not only a right to enjoy but a duty to enjoin by every Canadian. It envisions turning every Canadian into an ambassador of clean and pollution-free Canada in terms of evidential action. The Clean Air Day is operated by the New Brunswick Lung Association (NBLA) that hosts a national website that provides information about general clean air and climate change, a list of *do's and don'ts* for personal action, and how to ensure clean air to avoid lung disease in the present as well as in the future.

The NBLA (2018) offers a list of tips to each resident of Canada for personal activities such as 1) Walking, biking, carpooling, or taking public transit; 2) Avoidance of burning wood or trash. Instead of burning debris, people are encouraged to start a compost pile at their backyard for organic materials; 3) Use of hand-powered garden tools. Avoidance of the use of gasoline or diesel-powered equipment such as lawnmowers and leaf-blowers; 4) Selecting the most fuel-efficient

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route using a free online tool such as Google maps, taking notice of areas of construction and high traffic.; 5) Checking of tire pressure to avoid loss of fuel; 6) turn off the car's engine while waiting for someone and try to avoid drive-through lines. The NBLA also provides a link to Environment Canada's Air Pollutants Emissions Inventory Online Search, a query tool that provides national, provincial, and local data regarding emission summaries from key air pollutants, heavy metals, and other atmospheric emissions sources since 1990 till date.

### *Commuter Challenge*

One of the fun-riden events of the CEW is the Commuter Challenge which is observed by a series of events promoting friendly competition between workplaces and Canadian municipalities. As a part of the programme, institutions promote in-house events to encourage their employees in leaving their cars at home and to use more sustainable commuting modes such as walking, jogging, cycling, in-line skating, public transit, carpooling and tele-working. This competition is currently being coordinated nationally by the Sustainable Alberta Association. The Canadian Commuter Challenge is an inter-city challenge for adopting eco-friendly transport services for travelling to and from the workplace during the CEW. The benefits are tangible - saving fuel, reducing carbon emissions, and preserving air quality.

The Commuter Challenge website provides all relevant information to workplaces, individual employees, and city coordinators to register online on this site. It involves Canadians of driving age, with or without workplace affiliation. Even as the challenge is fully free (very rarely a very small amount is charged by some local organizers), all the information for the participants is available online for registration. Social media is abuzz as this competition is treated more with enthusiasm and less as a burden. Interested participants need to register on their respective city center/chapter online (e.g. the Commuter Challenge (British Columbia Chapter). The Google Map comes handy for the commuters undertaking the challenge to trace the route, measure the distance, and avoid long routes, and thus reduce carbon emissions. Internet is the challenger's friend from the beginning to the end – from registration to calculation of impact made, encouraging friends and relatives by informing them about the sustainable competition, and by uploading videos on Facebook, YouTube, etc. which in turn helps in sharing and expanding the sustainable campaign.

The Commuter Challenge is an internet-based friendly competition even as thousands of workplaces and individuals take pride in cutting harmful emissions. The interactive database provides the facility to register and record the distance travelled in addition to the emissions saved by sustainable modes of transport like walking, cycling, carpooling or car sharing, taking transit, and telecommuting. Sustainable transport includes non-motorized transport like biking, rolling, walking, telecommuting, and sustainable motorized transport such as public transit, carpooling. Any alternative to motorized transportation is usually deemed better. The registered competitor can gain access to the tracking tool on the website of Commuter Challenge and can measure their impact during Commuter Challenge week.

Social media outlets like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. are used by the city coordinators, organizations, and individual participants to announce their involvement in the Commuter Challenge and subsequently, for mentioning the impact created and the awards/recognitions received by them. Commuter Challenge postings on social media have made the competition more popular and impressive. Thanks to the agenda-setting role of the media, the Commuter Challenge competition has become fashionable and fascinating for the youth especially.

The growing popularity of this environment-friendly competition has now become a trend called Campus Commuter Challenge as individual universities and colleges declare a week for the competition. Campus Commuter Challenge is a nation-wide campaign to encourage both students

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and faculty to commute to institutions and return to the place of living in a sustainable and environmentally-friendly manner. Campus Commuter Challenges are organized by universities and colleges and promoted by university/college websites and social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and so on.

### ***Discursive engagement: The film “Environment Canada”***

Focused on “water, waste, and wildlife”, the Canadian Environment Week 2019 was observed in Canada from June 2 to 8 (Environment and Climate Change Canada, n.d.). It was an action-oriented, pan-Canada environmental campaign based on the theme of “Encounter, Protect and Celebrate #OurNature!” and “#BeatPlasticPollution!” The campaign advancing the theme “Our Nature” aimed at making every Canadian undertake efforts to “keep our nature clean and pollution-free”. One of the underlying themes of the campaign was “waste reduction” which is indispensable to keep nature clean and pollution-free. The 1.41-minute short film “Environment Canada” talks about Canada’s long-term obligations to environmental conservation. The film consists of four sequences (see, Appendix 2).

Table 3: Multimodal discourse analysis of the film “ Environment Canada”	
<b>Information value</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sequence 1 consists of the early 3 shots and offers a brief exposition of Environment Canada and its website.</li> <li>▪ Sequence 2 offers a series of activities that Environment Canada is committed to which includes: 1) protection of the healthy environment, 2) reduction of gas emissions, 3) keeping Canadians ready, 4) looking to the future, 5) keeping water clean, 6) studying air quality, 7) conserving Canadian wildlife, and 8) learning about the environment.</li> <li>▪ Sequence 3 of the film offers a series of visual displays of environmental research and development.</li> <li>▪ Sequence 4 speaks of Canada’s commitment to the learning of new sciences about environmental sustainability: 1) leading new science, 2) holding people accountable, 3) building smart technologies, and 4) taking on new challenges. The film ends with the display of renewable wind energy systems.</li> </ul>
<b>Salience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The visual is accompanied by background music. Further, the visual display of diverse pro-environmental activities is simultaneously explained by the textual information in English as well as in French.</li> <li>▪ The activities are zoomed in and out to explain the focus area as well as the wider view.</li> <li>▪ Space-time resonance is achieved by presenting activities in different periods of day and night, indoor as well as outdoor.</li> </ul>
<b>Framing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Connection:</i> The connection is achieved by the sequence of pro-environmental activities and their textual explanations.</li> <li>▪ <i>Disconnection:</i> The cuts and breaks and improvisations in the pitch, volume, and tone of the background music provide the discontinuity in four stages. This is also observed by the addition of new musical instruments into the orchestra.</li> <li>▪ Sequence 1 ends with an outburst of the sound of the wind. Sequence 2 starts with slow string beats to be followed by occasional drumbeats</li> </ul>



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	from the distance. In Sequence 3, the string music takes a high pitch and gradually, the drumbeats become more frequent. Steadily, the music reaches the climax. Sequence 4 marks the return to the slow and the soft music once again, with the drumbeat becoming occasional. This marks the resolution and the closure of the music “celebrating 40 years of environmental leadership”.
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### 5. Conclusion

In an age of rapid economic transformations and related anxieties, the pursuit of sustainable development has been the foremost discursive engagement. Sustainability can be conceptualized as a socio-ecological process in quest of a common ideal. Embarked upon our common future, sustainable development is founded upon three interconnected principles: 1) environmental efficiency, 2) inter and intra-generational social justice, and 3) participatory decision making. Both SBA and CED adhere to these core values.

Research question 01 of this study probed into the major media engagement strategies adopted in SBA and CEW. Both the campaigns employed a 360-degree promotional strategy that included print, electronic, and social media. Many events and activities were given live coverage in the interactive media platforms. Motivational figures including film stars were roped in to forward the message of cleanliness and sustainability. Research question 02 probed into the leading sustainability discourses propagated in both the campaigns. As discussed above, the modes of promoting the sustainability goals in both SBA and CED are divergent. However, in spirit, both the campaigns adhere to the basic ‘3R’ principles of the United Nation’s Sustainability Goals: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. Both the campaigns recognize the organic inter-dependence of humans and the rest of the species on the Earth and advocate for the inter-generational equity of needs and natural resources.

Two ad-films, one from each of SBA and CED were analyzed to demonstrate the convergences in the basic philosophy of the campaigns. Both SBA and CEW involve educational institutions and students in their core mission and are, to a great extent, inspired by the UN-SDGs. However, whether long-term environmental goals can be achieved or not, largely depend upon intermediating factors such as the presence or absence of accountability, corporate social responsibility, and public participation.

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Accepted on November 1, 2020.

### Appendix 1

#### Storyboard: The 60-second Two-pit Compost Toilet Ad of SBA

Source: Press information Bureau India (2018)



Sequence 1: Akshaya and Bumi are trying to explain to the visitor that the prosperity of their farm is thanks to the toilet.

## ECO-REBEL



Sequence 2: Akshaya and Bumi are trying to explain the visitor the importance of the two-pit toilet.



Sequence 3: The guest overcomes his doubts and inhibitions and returns with a basket full of fruits and vegetables.

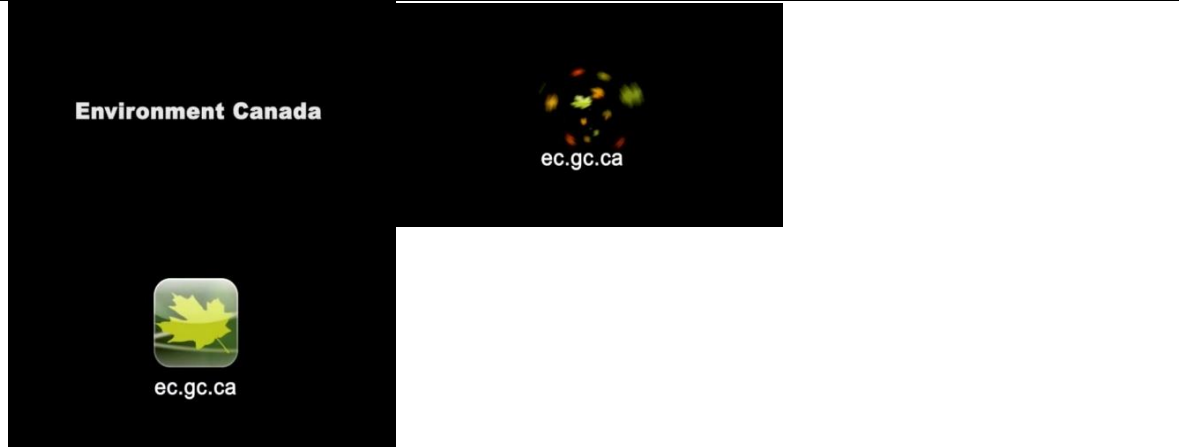


Sequence 4: Akshaya and Bumi pose as happy farmers. The Swachh Bharat emblem follows.

# ECO-REBEL

## Appendix 2

Story Board: 40 Years of Canadian Environment  
Source: Environment and Climate Change Canada (2011)



Sequence 1: Brief exposition of Environment Canada and its website



Sequence 2: A series of activities Environment Canada is committed to



## ECO-REBEL

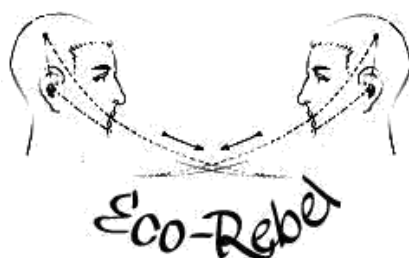


Sequence 3: Visual display of environmental research and development



Sequence 4: The learning of new sciences about environmental sustainability

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ECOLOGIA E LINGUAGEM (ECO-REBEL), V. 6, N. 4, 2020.



## MINIREVIEW

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The Editors

Jay Goulah and John Katunich (orgs.). *TESOL and Sustainability: English Language Teaching in the Anthropocene Era*. London: Bloomsbury, 2020.

This is the first book in the new Bloomsbury Advances in Ecolinguistics Series of Bloomsbury publisher. In the publisher's website we can read that "In the burgeoning field of ecolinguistics, little attention has been given to the ways in which English language teaching is and has become implicated in global ecological crises. This book begins a dialogue about the opportunities and responsibilities presented to the TESOL field to re-orient professional practice in ways that drive cultural change and engender alternate language practices and metaphors.

Covering a diverse range of topics, including anthropogenic climate change, habitat loss, food insecurity and mass migration, chapters argue that such crises require not only technological innovation, but also cultural changes in how human beings relate to each other and their environment. Arguing that it is incumbent upon the field of English language teaching to reckon with such cultural changes in how and what we teach, *TESOL and Sustainability* addresses the ways in which discourses such as eco-pedagogy, the critique of neo-liberalism, non-Western philosophy and post-humanist thought can and must inform how and what is taught in ESL and EFL classrooms".

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**Forthcoming titles in the series:**

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Anthony Nanson (Feb 2021).

2) *Corpus-Aided Ecolinguistics*

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**Publisher's webpage:**

<https://www.bloomsburycollections.com/book/tesol-and-sustainability-english-language-teaching-in-the-anthropocene-era/?clearSearch>

ECOLINGUÍSTICA: REVISTA BRASILEIRA DE  
ECOLOGIA E LINGUAGEM (ECO-REBEL), v. 6, n. 4, 2020.