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Climate Crisis or Climate Opportunity? An Ecolinguistics Analysis of Competing Narratives in Global Political Discourse

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Abstract

Through practical analysis, the study demonstrates two primary arguments: first, that crisis framing in political speeches generates a sense of urgency and moral responsibility; and second, that opportunity framing is often used to reinforce neoliberal ideologies prioritizing economic growth while minimizing the need for significant ecological transformation. The findings also reveal that these narrative strategies are rooted in ideology and reflect power dynamics between the Global North and the Global South, as well as between industrial capitalism and ecological sustainability.

Keywords: ecolinguistics, critical discourse analysis, climate crisis, climate opportunity, political discourse, ideological framing, COP speeches, narratives, neoliberalism, ecological modernization

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Language is a powerful tool that constructs realities, legitimizes ideologies, and shapes power relations. This is especially clear in climate change discourse. Competing narratives about environmental disruption influence policy, collective action, and ecosystem survival. Issues such as the global climate crisis, global warming, extreme weather, sea-level rise, and mass extinctions define the twenty-first century. The terms used for these challenges differ widely across political, media, and institutional contexts. This reflects deep ideological divisions that block coordinated global responses. In the past 20 years, linguists and communication scholars have focused on how language represents climate change. Ecolinguistics, which studies the links between discourse and ecology, enables researchers to analyze how environmental talk promotes or impedes sustainable practices. Arran Stibbe (2015; 2021), a leading theorist, says that language contains the stories we live by, shaping how people and communities see nature. Language can help teach responsibility and stewardship, or harm by normalizing exploitation and denying responsibility.

Two main narratives shape global climate politics. The climate crisis narrative emphasizes urgency, danger, and a moral call for swift action by governments, corporations, and citizens. The climate opportunity narrative presents climate change as an opportunity for economic growth, technological advancement, and geopolitical advantage. It sees the shift to green economies as fitting with ongoing capitalist development. This study explores how these narratives clash and serve different ideological interests.

Despite more scholarly attention, the literature on climate change discourse has key gaps. Few studies use both critical and ideological ecolinguistics to analyze crisis-and-opportunity narratives, especially

at United Nations COP meetings. Many existing works examine metaphor, framing, or ideology in isolation. There is a need for integrated analyses that place these linguistic choices in larger global governance contexts. This study fills that gap by exploring how crisis and opportunity narratives are formed, challenged, and used as ideological tools in global politics.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study:

1. **What does the language of global political discourse reveal about the rival discourse on the crisis of climate and the opportunity of climate?**
2. **Which targeted ecolinguistic resources are used to develop these narratives - framing, metaphor, salience, and erasure?**
3. **What are the ideological purposes of such narratives, and to which interests do they serve first and foremost?**
4. **What is the overall focus of these stories in terms of inequalities between the Global North and Global South in geopolitics?**

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives are: (1) identify and describe key linguistic patterns in building climate crisis and opportunity narratives in selected political speeches; (2) examine the ideological aspects of these narratives using ecolinguistic and critical discourse tools; (3) assess the ecological impacts of competing discourse; and (4) aid the theoretical development of critical ecolinguistics.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is valuable on several levels. Theoretically, it advances research in ecolinguistics and critical discourse analysis in political communication. Practically, it highlights language as a vehicle for ideology in climate governance, shaping climate policy, relevance, and ecological justice. By exposing ideological underpinnings in political discourse, the study fosters more transparent and ecologically responsible climate discussions.

This paper uses qualitative analysis of selected political speeches from COP27 (Sharm el-Sheik, 2022) and COP28 (Dubai, 2023). It also reviews speeches by key national leaders, including those from the United States, the European Union, and the Global South. While the study covers a lot of ground, it is not statistically representative. Focusing on English-language discourse may overlook narratives in other languages. Future studies should address this gap. This paper asserts that competing ideological discourses—climate crisis and climate opportunity—in global politics are not just rhetorical choices. They are ideologically loaded practices that uphold and reproduce power relations, specifically neoliberal capitalism and geopolitical hierarchies. A critical ecolinguistic analysis is necessary to reveal the ecological and social effects of such discourse.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Ecolinguistics and Environmental Discourse

Ecolinguistics is a new discipline that emerged in the early 1990s, growing out of work on language ecology and environmental communication. Stibbe (2015; 2021) helped define modern ecolinguistics. He created a framework on the stories we live by, the ideological narratives in speech that shape how people relate to nature. The field uses many methods. Steffensen (2024) lists eleven subfields, such as discourse, corpus, cognitive, and decolonial approaches. In ecolinguistics, the core idea is ecosophy: judging discourses based on their care for ecological and life-supporting systems. Stibbe (2021) describes three discourse types: beneficial (promoting ecological behavior), ambivalent, and destructive (condoning harm). This framework is useful when analyzing political talk on climate change.

Critical ecolinguistics combines ecolinguistics with critical discourse analysis to study the power and ideology in environmental talk. Yuniawan et al. (2017) describe it as studying the ideology of green

discourse, based on the idea that positive green talk promotes responsibility while negative talk fosters exploitation. This is vital for climate change language, which often serves political and economic goals.

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis and Climate Change

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers an effective set of methodological means for analyzing the links between language, ideology, and power. The three-dimensional model of discourse proposed by Fairclough (1992) (that is, the text (linguistic characteristics), discursive practice (text production and consumption), and social practice (the socio-cultural context in general) has also found extensive use in studies of climate change discourse. According to Koteyko and Atanasova (2016), CDA is particularly well-suited to studies of climate change communication, as it can reveal the ideological dimensions of stakeholders' beliefs and how information about climate change is disseminated in the media. In their introduction to a Special Issue on negotiating climate change in public discourse, Wang and Huan (2024) note that various social and linguistic constructs have been mobilized in critical discourse studies to examine how different actors use language to discuss climate change across platforms and genres. Huang and Che (2024) use the framework by Fairclough and contrast the Chinese and American approaches to climate change coverage, noticing that, in both countries, people use discursive resources enabling them to create the image of a responsible nation; however, their position on the areas of cooperation and global leadership leans significantly in opposite directions.

Studies investigating the ideological aspects of climate change discourse have shown that political and media representations of climate change are not neutral. Maeseele and Pepermans (2016) discuss five ideological filters that operate in mediated climate discourse: economic aspects, newspaper conventions, political setting, ideological cultures, and citizens' decoding. They argue that understanding these ideological filters is necessary to explain why climate change remains a political issue despite all scientific evidence. Moernaut and Mast (2018) are especially concerned with the ideological framing of the relationship between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism, stating that most ideological frames, such as the Cycles of Nature frame and the Environmental Justice frame, still reproduce the hegemonic, anthropocentric ideology, while their truly transformative frames are still in development. Dryzek (2017) also identifies four significant conversationally based environmental discourses of problem-solving, limits and survival, sustainability, and green radicalism, each with distinct ideological undertones in the perception and address of environmental issues.

2.3 Competing Narratives of Crisis and Opportunity

The discarding of the old paradigm of climate policy, which has been a matter of deep concern, in favor of the new paradigm of climate health policy is one of the biggest discursive shifts in modern climate politics. In her coverage of the political parties in South Africa, Laurie (2023) shows that portraying climate change as an economic challenge and an opportunity to innovate, adopt technology, and foster entrepreneurship is a successful strategy to tame the transition and avoid real responsibility. In their analysis of competing climate governance discourses at successive COP conferences, Bäckstrand and Lövbrand (2016) articulate the mainstream ecological modernization discourse, which seeks to harmonize environmental protection with ongoing economic development. This discourse has been gaining momentum and is being operationalized as the "opportunity" discourse. The European Green Deal has been of particular scholarly interest because it is a paradigmatic example of this discursive hybridity. Molek-Kozakowska (2023) examines the EGD as a policy document that conditions sustainability, becoming the smooth merging of ecological and capitalist orders of discourse, and uses strategies of nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivisation, and mitigation to smooth over the tensions between environmental and capitalist interests inherent to it.

Another fruitful place to analyze the competing stories is in the comparative rhetoric of Trump and Biden. Pandey (2025) concludes that Trump used negative frames centered on economic damage and job losses to oppose action on climate change. In contrast, Biden used positive frames emphasizing economic prosperity and environmental equity. Nevertheless, this binary cannot be overly simplistic:

both framings ultimately reduce ecological issues to anthropocentric, often economistic logic. Comparing the speeches of COP28 using the metaphor analysis by Wang and Habil (2024), it can be seen that the political leaders most commonly use war, journey and commodity metaphors to construct the climate change, climate goals and carbon, an observation which holds critical implications in the ideological analysis of crisis and opportunity frames which the authors suggest are predominantly found in the ideology of the crisis and commodity frame respectively.

2.4 Identified Research Gaps

Although the literature reviewed above is extensive, there are gaps. To begin with, the majority of current ecolinguistic research is conducted independently on either metaphor or framing, rather than combining a range of ecolinguistic instruments and working systematically with them. Second, there is little research that specifically examines the conflict between the crisis and opportunity meta-narratives as ideological projects within the same discursive field. Third, the geopolitical aspect of this narrative competition - especially the differences it implies between the Global North and Global South - has been under-recognized in ecolinguistic research. This research paper addresses all three gaps through an integrative critical-ideological ecolinguistic analysis of a multi-source political corpus.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Stibbe's Ecolinguistic Framework: Stories We Live By

The main theoretical approach of the proposed study concerns the ecolinguistic model of Stibbe (2021), which describes eight kinds of stories we live by that are cognitively functional in their influence on how people make sense of ecological reality: ideology, framing, metaphor, evaluation, identity, salience, erasure, and narrative. All these forms of stories are unique processes (mechanisms) by which language either stimulates or inhibits ecological consciousness and behavior. The most significant point that Ma and Stibbe (2022) highlight is that such story types are cognitively oriented to persuade people to construct reality in a certain way, hoping that they will use words that inspire them to save the planet rather than ruin it. In this study, they are of primary analytical interest: there are four types of stories:

- Framing: The mental patterns by which climate change is framed, whether in crisis as something requiring radical and immediate action, or as a market opportunity in the form of an innovation.
- Metaphor: Ways of conceptualizing climate change: CLIMATE CHANGE IS WAR, CLIMATE CHANGE IS A JOURNEY, CARBON IS A COMMODITY.
- Salience and Erasure: What is foregrounded (made features) or backgrounded (obscured) in climate discourse? What is made prominent or obscured in economic opportunity narratives of non-human nature is called the erasure of non-human nature.
- Ideology: Belief systems regarding the human-nature relationship - anthropocentrism or ecocentrism, neoliberalism or ecological socialism.

3.2 Fairclough's Three-Dimensional CDA Model

This study complements the ecolinguistic framework proposed by Stibbe by using Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis. This model focuses on everything in the text at the same time as: (1) the textual level - the particular linguistic decisions of texts, lexis, grammar, and rhetorical strategies; (2) the discursive practice level - how texts get produced, disseminated, and consumed under particular institutional conditions; and (3) the social practice level - the wider ideological and power formations within which texts get embedded and of which texts are productive Kramar and Levko describe linguistics as an effective study of the environment suggests the following ecolinguistics classifications of discourses as destructive, ambivalent, or beneficial discourses; and CDA is most suitable in the analysis of destructive discourses - a distinction CDA description has made of much political climate discourse (2023). The combination of the Stibbe ecolinguistic tools

and the Fairclough CDA model therefore forms an efficient analytical framework for studying both the outward appearance of linguistic surface features and the underlying ideological frameworks of language in climate political discourse.

3.3 Key Concepts

Ecosophy: The system of normative ecological values upon which ecolinguistic analysis is based, choosing to evaluate whether discourses are eco-beneficial, ambivalent, or even ecologically destructive. Anthropocentrism: This is an ideological standpoint that places humans at the center of value, treating the natural world primarily as an object to be exploited. Ecocentrism: The opposite pole that attributes the inherent worth to all living and ecosystems. Ecological Modernization: The political-economic ideology that argues that it is possible to resolve environmental issues by technologically enhancing the environment and through market forces, without directly questioning the necessity to propel capitalist development. Neoliberalism: The prevailing ideology of the economy, favoring market deregulation, privatization, and economic growth, and which more and more aims to absorb environmental issues under the complex of its commodification.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The research design chosen for this study is qualitative and aligns with the interpretive and critical traditions of ecolinguistics and CDA. The qualitative inquiry is suitable in this case, since one does not intend to measure linguistic aspects but to provide interpretive information about their connotations in certain sociopolitical situations. As Koteyko and Atanasova (2016) note, discourse analysis emphasizes the so-called situated study of various stakeholders, focusing on the content of communication while also paying attention to the linguistic forms and contexts in which language and interaction occur. The analytical methodology is a mix of in-depth textual analysis and broad contextual analysis, informed by an ecolinguistic story-type model and Fairclough's three-dimensional model.

4.2 Data Sources

This corpus will include three types of texts:

1. COP Speeches: Selected speeches by high-level segments at COP27 (Sharm el-Sheik, Egypt, November 2022) and COP28 (Dubai, UAE, November-December 2023) found on the official UNFCCC site. They comprise speeches by the heads of state and government of Egypt, Kenya, the United States, France, Brazil, India, and the island states of Tonga and Seychelles - selected to skew towards a geopolitically diverse set of views.
2. National Political Addresses: A collection of climate-related language and policy pronouncements by major political actors, such as speeches by President Biden about the Inflation Reduction Act (2022-2023), speeches by President Trump about quitting the Paris Agreement, and the communications of the European Commission on the European Green Deal.
3. Climate Activism Discourse: Selected quotes of Greta Thunberg's speeches (2019-2023) as an opposing discursive gesture of a non-government organization.

4.3 Analytical Tools

The main analytical methods used in this work include: (1) frame analysis - determining the most common mental frameworks to present climate change; (2) conceptual metaphor analysis - following the Critical Metaphor Analysis methodology of Charteris-Black (2018), which combines the conceptual metaphor theory with CDA; (3) salience and erasure analysis - what is foregrounded or omitted in the speech; and (

4.4 Justification of Method

The qualitative, interpretive approach to the research questions discussed here is best suited to those concerned with meaning, ideology, and power, rather than frequency or statistical correlation. The combination of ecolinguistic and CDA perspectives is explained by the complementary view they offer: ecolinguistics can provide an ecological normative framework for discourse analysis, and CDA can provide the critical apparatus for attributing linguistic options to social power formations. The combined features of the two treatises enable researchers to simultaneously traverse the micro-level of individual lexical decisions and the macro-level of ideological discourses, as Agbeleoba et al. (2025) do in their focus on SDG communications.

5. Analysis and Discussion

5.1 The "Climate Crisis" Narrative: Constructing Urgency, Accountability, and Moral Obligation

5.1.1 Framing and Salience in Crisis Discourse

The climate crisis discourse functions mostly at the level of what Stibbe (2021) describes as salience - the strategic foregrounding of ecological danger and human suffering to develop an affective and moral sense of urgency to act. This framing is widespread in the speeches of representatives of climate-vulnerable countries at COP27. COP28 was referred to as a call to action that will help build climate resilience before the final grain of sand is washed away, a poetic metaphor that portrays the existential danger to island states and uses the journey-building metaphorical complex to present resilience as a sudden architectural undertaking by the president of the Seychelles, for her part. Continuing on that note, at COP27, many speeches by African leaders incorporate the language of loss and damage, climate injustice, and existential threat, placing the voices and experiences of those most harmed by climate change, as well as the responsibility for it, on the shoulders of industrialized countries. According to Chukwuemeka (2025), the most predominant themes in COP27 speeches are vulnerability, justice, accountability, power struggle, and dependency, and states that these speeches demonstrate that these themes characterize the global north and global south geopolitical division. In this regard, the crisis narrative serves a crucial ideological purpose, distributing the moral responsibility and holding historically high-emitting countries responsible.

5.1.2 Metaphorical Construction of Crisis

The metaphorical structure of crisis discourse is largely shaped by the set of metaphorical frames proposed by Wang and Habil (2024), namely the so-called war metaphor complex, which is the most common among the 32 COP28 speeches they considered. Among the examples based on these speeches are: "We are confronted with the pressing necessity to bolster the international campaign against climate change (Mongolia), and we do not surrender on our goals, neither on the economy nor on fighting climate change (Turkiye). In this metaphor, climate change is being portrayed as a foe that humanity should fight together. Wang and Habil (2024) categorize war metaphors as ecolinguistically destructive, as they pit innocent nature against humanity, whilst concealing the outcomes of human activity and actions that contribute to climate change. This is an essential ecolinguistic point: the war metaphor, while creating urgency, has also naturalized a human-ecological relationship of antagonism and shifted the burden of the ecological crisis that human economic systems are complicit in onto a reified and threatening climate. In this construction, climate change is attributed to humans rather than being human-caused, a discursive gesture that avoids systemic responsibility.

Greta Thunberg's discourse offers an example of refuting the crisis narrative and illustrating a more ecolinguistically informed narrative. In their analysis of Thunberg, Naz, Atta, and Hassan (2022), the authors found that the latter employs direct, dominant language, uses many metaphors and ironic phrases, and avoids euphemism. Moral responsibility is directly inserted by her reminder that it is upon political leaders, in the form of her 2019 UN Climate Action Summit quote, How dare you!, and her repeated phrase that our house is on fire, sets a sense of urgency by the domestic/fire metaphor

predicting how non-abstract and actual the threat is. The construction is more environmentally friendly than the war metaphor in that it uses human agency to effect causation but fails to portray nature as a rival.

5.1.3 Ideological Analysis: Crisis Discourse and Ecological Accountability

At the ideological level, the crisis narrative, especially that expressed by climate justice movements and Global South leaders, questions the hegemonic anthropocentric ideology of neoliberal capitalism by demanding the prioritization of ecocentric values and structural responsibility. The terminology of climate justice, loss and damage, and historical responsibility are elements of what Dryzek (2017) would term a language of limits and survival or green radicalism - models that refute ecological assumptions of infinite economic growth and disproportional distribution of environmental costs. As Cunningham, Foxcroft, and Sauntson (2022) show, the activists' discourse on climate change is inextricably intertwined with discourses of ecological and social justice. It carries a semantic frame of urgency and factuality about climate change that is strikingly absent from the political corpus. Nevertheless, even in crisis discourses, ecocentric values tend to be deployed instrumentally; ecological systems are described as serving human communities, while their ecologically oriented aspects remain anthropocentric, reflecting what Moernaut and Mast (2018) call the proliferation of anthropocentric subframes, even in seemingly pro-environment discourses.

5.2 The "Climate Opportunity" Narrative: Constructing Growth, Innovation, and Market Solutions

5.2.1 Framing and the Logic of Ecological Modernization

The climate opportunity narrative is, perhaps, the ideologically harvesting and, in any case, the most ambivalent of the two meta-narratives. Its key argument, that dealing with climate change is not a liability but a source of economic gain, has taken over as the preferred framing among industrialized countries and international economic agencies. The European Green Deal, as discussed by Molek-Kozakowska (2023), best exemplifies this hybrid discourse, presenting the normative of sustainability as a contingency between environmental and economic orders of discourse through the application of so-called interdiscursive crossovers. The terms green growth, competitive markets, investment, and jobs are always placed at the front throughout the EGD's language. In contrast, the vocabulary of ecological constraints, the loss of biodiversity, and non-human nature is systematically backgrounded - what Stibbe (2021) describes as erasure. One of the most ideologically important lexical decisions in modern climate politics is the word "opportunity" itself. Guenther (2024) criticizes language such as innovation, resilience, growth, and opportunity as fossil-fueled vernacular, so normalized that even left-progressive politicians have employed it, and argues that it creates the image of a centrist consensus that promotes the status quo. In this discussion, the ecolinguistic argument that the opportunity narrative, despite its intentions, systematically subordinates ecological transformation to economic continuity is substantiated.

5.2.2 Metaphorical Construction of Opportunity

Metaphorical structure of opportunity discourse is arranged mainly in terms of the metaphors which Wang and Habil (2024) categorized into “journey metaphor (better), building metaphor (better), vehicle metaphor (better), and commodity metaphor (better). Climate ambitions in COP28 speeches are always framed as journeys towards achievable destinations: We are moving towards climate neutrality by 2050 (Latvia); We plan to achieve the net-zero emissions target by 2053 (Turkiye). The journey metaphor, according to Wang and Habil (2024), is considered ecolinguistically advantageous because it focuses on the shared objective humans are supposed to have and attributes significance to collective action. But such a favorable evaluation needs a qualifier: the journey metaphor also equips climate neutrality as a far-off, smooth end-of-the-road - a figure that can produce, indeed, a justification of unlimited lateness and "safe fall" instead of immediate change. The path necessarily followed in the journey metaphor is linear and progressive, and implicitly compatible with ongoing

economic growth, but it fails to recognize the need for disruptive structural change. More ideologically important is the metaphor of a commodity used in COP28 speeches to refer to carbon. The repetitive use of the terms carbon market, carbon prices, carbon credits, and carbon trade shapes the construct of carbon emissions as commodities and makes the financialization of ecology an established part of the reasoning behind the exchange of capitalist type. This same reasoning is evident in Laurie (2023) in the South African political debate, where climate change is endlessly presented as a means of expanding markets and privatizing the commons, with nature becoming a resource for the economy. Wang and Habil (2024) categorize commodity metaphors as possessing an ecolinguistic quality of ambivalence; they render carbon trading transparent to the masses. However, they have no intrinsic ecological value and produce the ideological effect of subjecting climate regulation to the laws of market rationality rather than ecological ethics.

5.2.3 Biden's Climate Opportunity Discourse: A Case Study

A prime example of the sustained and politically influential use of the rhetoric of climate opportunity is President Biden's role in the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022. Biden consistently framed climate action in opposition to economic renewal: "When I consider climate change, I think of jobs." This rhetorical frame, studied by Pandey (2025), uses positive framing to reinforce arguments centered on economic opportunity and casts clean energy as an economic and manufacturing opportunity, rather than an ecological necessity. This framing serves a serious ideological purpose in CDA terms: by framing the climate transition as a nationalist economic endeavor rather than a tectonic ecological necessity, it neutralizes opposition from fossil-fuel interests by appealing to American industrial and working-class constituencies rather than environmental ones. Although there are real political merits to this strategy's ability to mobilize support, its ecolinguistic consequences are, at best, ambivalent. The recurrent focus on economic growth and job creation, rather than on ecological objectives, is a variant of what Southerlund (2016) calls neoliberalism as a primary ideological filter in COP21 speeches, a filter through which nature is reduced to economic means. The realization of fossil fuel development through vast plans put in place by the IRA, combined with incentives to develop renewable energy, additionally serves as an example of the ecological modernization ideology as Matthieu (2021) defines it, which suggests itself as an environmentally friendly dynamic, yet ultimately traps itself in the forms of capitalist extraction.

5.3 Green Growth Framing at UNFCCC: The Geopolitical Dimension

Perhaps the most telling result of recent ecolinguistic and discourse studies on climate politics is the unequal distribution of the so-called climate opportunity discourse. In their panel-data study of High-Level Segment statements at COP conferences from 2010 to 2019 across 151 countries, Schmidt et al. (2023) find that countries with the highest national clean energy technology capabilities, as measured by the Green Complexity Index, are more likely to advocate for green growth. Global South countries, which are the most susceptible to the effects of global warming yet ill-prepared to capitalize on green technology markets, are less inclined to adopt green growth frameworks. This observation reveals the highly ideological nature of the opportunity narrative: it primarily serves the interests of technologically advanced countries that will benefit from exporting green technologies and entering new markets. It does little for countries whose priority is adaptation funding and climate justice. This discursive quality of asymmetry, of saliency and erasure, adds to the geopolitical asymmetry. The topics of just transition, climate finance, and loss and damage, which have been central concerns for the Global South, are continually pushed to the back burner in high-level segment speeches at COP27 and COP28, which are framed around narratives of green growth, technological breakthroughs, and net-zero trajectories. In their concern with geopolitical positionality, Wang and Huan (2024) call for more international research into global, regional, and local discourses and ideologies that shape what we eventually come to know and recognize as climate change, a concern this paper has earnestly considered.

5.4 Salience, Erasure, and the Disappearance of Non-Human Nature

And possibly the most ecologically significant discovery in the current analysis is the systematic elimination of non-human nature from the notions of crisis and opportunity in mainstream political discussions. In their corpus-based ecolinguistic analysis of the Indonesian government climate discourse, Suryani and Suhandano (2025) demonstrate that the theme of nature, e.g., non-human species, is never mentioned in the discourse. Yet the discourse on climate change is built around human actions and government projects. The same trend is replicated in the world political corpus under consideration here: in the vast majority of COP speeches, the terminology of biodiversity, ecosystems, species extinction, and habitat destruction is marginalized, while the terminology of the economy, growth, jobs, technology, and investment is central. The same anthropocentric orientation of both the crisis narrative (with its focus on human suffering and political responsibility) and the opportunity narrative (with its focus on economic growth and technological innovation) renders the intrinsic value of non-human life virtually undetectable in the discourse on the global political climate. As part of his surveillance of the discourse of environmental incorporation, Fernández-Vazquez (2020) cites the world's most important polluters, who frame themselves as environmentally conscious in their activities and create a narrative of environmental absolution, erasing the ecologies in which their actions have the most devastating effects. Stibbe (2021) highlights that erasure is among the most powerful and ineffective ecolinguistic processes, as it shapes what is possible and what needs to be imagined or requested within a specific discursive scenario. The disappearance of non-human nature from climate discourse effectively takes biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse off the political agenda, limiting the scope of solutions that can be envisaged and authorized.

5.5 Competing Ideologies: Anthropocentrism versus Ecocentrism in the Narrative Struggle

At the most profound ideological level, the conflict between the crisis and opportunity accounts in contemporary global political discussions reflects an ageless and inconclusive conflict between anthropocentric and ecocentric views of the world. Moernaut and Mast (2018) state that the infrastructural transformation of the genuine ideology of climate politics is based on a shift from anthropocentric to biocentric principles, yet note that ecocentric subframes remain unimplemented, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and lack the capacity to inspire. The current analysis aptly illustrates this fact: in the corpus under analysis, explicitly ecocentric language, i.e., language that affirms the inherent significance of nature, the rights of non-human species, or the necessity of living within ecological boundaries, is practically absent from mainstream political speech at both COP27 and COP28. The intrinsic similarity between crisis and opportunity stories is essentially an anthropocentric disposition in which nature is presented as either the origin of human activity, a threat to human well-being, a resource for the human economy, or a service provider to human populations. Even the most ecologically mindful political participants, such as small island states whose existence is immediately threatened by climate change, focus on ecological issues more in anthropocentric terms of human rights, development, and justice than in ecocentric terms of ecological integrity. Such an observation is also made regarding the discourse of climate activists, which is described as anthropocentric, centered on the adverse impacts of climate change attributed to human actors. Anthropocentrism has remained prevalent throughout the discursive range of climate politics, which, ecolinguistically speaking, is one of the most profound barriers to actual ecological change, a story we live by so naturalized that it even limits the most radical environmental political movements.

5.6 Ideological Implications: Who Benefits from Competing Narratives?

The ultimate question in the critical-ideological examination of rival climate stories should be: which interests do these stories serve? The most radical version of the crisis narrative is in the interest of climate-vulnerable communities, environmental justice movement activists, and future generations, since it requires urgent structural change. But when applied to the more mainstream forms of political involvement, especially when expressed by governments that simultaneously sustain high levels of emissions, the narrative of the crisis can serve to enact environmental responsibility without delivering

on it, as Bonnefille (2025) describes with respect to presidential green rhetoric as greenwash. The opportunity narrative is the most direct benefit for green technology companies, financial organizations (new investment opportunities in the green energy and carbon markets), and developed industrialized states, which can leverage this advantage to occupy a dominant position in the green technology market. Schmidt et al. (2023) clearly state that countries with the most advanced capabilities in national clean energy technologies are most likely to adopt green growth framings, rather than those facing the greatest negative effects of climate change. Ritter and Thaler (2022) point to the same discursive cosmetics, closely aligned with the anticipation of climate justice, a discourse that predicts more structural and distributional issues than market-based opportunities do. In a Gramscian way, the dominance of the opportunity narrative in world climate politics embodies the exercise of ideological hegemony: the concerns of powerful economic and geopolitical players are presented as universal interests, and the language of markets and growth is naturalized as the only logical way to address ecological issues.

6. Conclusion

This study has found that, through an integrative, critical-ideological, ecolinguistic study of discourses of climatic crisis and climate opportunity across the world, the opposition between the two competing discourses is not merely a difference in rhetorical styles through which the same message is conveyed. They are ideologically different forms of discursive formation that encode very different assumptions concerning the nature of the relationship between human societies and the ecological system, economic development and environmental constraints, and the roles of the Global North and the Global South. At its strongest, the crisis narrative predicts ecological crisis, human frailty, and structural responsibility; at its weakest, it addresses environmental concerns without acknowledging structural transformation. The opportunity narrative is, at best, the gathering of economic and political support for clean energy transitions; at most, ideologically vexed, it pledges ecological demands within the logic of neoliberal markets, turns the commodification of nature into a matter of course, and systematically annuls the intrinsic value of non-human life. As the analysis revealed, both stories share an anthropocentrism that compromises ecological values and constrains the political imagination's capacity to envision what can truly be sustainable.

The use of the Stibbe (2021) ecolinguistic model, specifically its analytical means such as framing, metaphor, salience, and erasure, has been incredibly fruitful in eliciting the latent ideological aspects of climate politics discourse. The metaphor of war, ubiquitous in crisis discourse, creates a sense of urgency and erases human responsibility. The trip and construction of optimistic storylines of progress in the discourse of opportunity are made through metaphor and indirectly accept gradual timelines that are unacceptable to climate science. The metaphor of commodity-to-carbon makes ecological solutions more financialized, internalizing climate solutions into the financial logic that gave rise to the crisis. Such metaphoric constructs are not merely a matter of fashion; as Fairclough's three-dimensional model (1992) shows, they are textual manifestations of underlying discursive projects and social formations that reproduce specific power relations and preclude alternative imaginings.

It is especially relevant to the geopolitical aspect of this narrative game. The preeminence of the opportunity narrative within the rhetoric of technologically advanced countries - and how these rhetorical strategies are systematically used to make climate governance appear to be about market leadership, innovations, and green growth - is an indication and also serves to exacerbate geopolitical hierarchies in place. Most commonly used green growth framings are those in the best position to benefit, as Schmidt et al. (2023) demonstrate, rather than those of countries most at risk from climate change.

These results have significant implications both to practice and scholarship. In ecolinguistics, current research confirms the usefulness of combining critical discourse analysis with ecolinguistic concepts for analyzing politically relevant environmental talk. The critique of the main messages to climate communicators and policymakers is that the dominant discourses of the crisis and opportunity both should be subject to scrutiny in terms of their discursive practices and enriched in terms of their

ideological commitments: the crisis narrative must cease to be so anthropocentric, and the opportunity narrative must also be questioned in its ideological affinities as well as its tendency to assimilate ecological transformation into The analysis outlined above suggests the following sorts of things that a future research might do, be they cross-linguistic, cross-cultural studies of climate discourse, and be they studies that put the discursively dominant cultures of the Global South and local people in the centre, and which consider the possibilities of ecocentric counter-narratives that can challenge the anthropocentric hegemony of dominant climate politics.

Eventually, the battle of climate languages cannot be separated from the battle of climate futures. The language we use to discuss the climate crisis, the metaphors we use, the saliency we establish, the obscurantism we suppress, the naturalization of an ideology, and the closing off of options are material factors in what sort of world will be created or destroyed over the next few decades. Critical ecolinguistics can be a priceless instrument in rendering these ramifications visible and in reopening the discursive realm to more sincere, more participatory, and even more ecologically fearless discourses on climate change.

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