Meaning and Mattering: Framing Climate Change in the Documentary "A Life on our Planet" by David Attenborough

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Article Info	Abstract
	The climate crisis is a debatable issue among academics from various disciplines. The framing strategies of presenting climate change in either beneficial or destructive way play a vital role in forming the opinion of people regarding it. The present study investigates the discursive straregies of climate change framing in the genre of documentary from the perspective of ecolinguistics. For the said purpose, the climate change documentary (A Life on our planet released on 2020) is chosen to analyse the framing techniques employed by the narrator David Attenborough for the portrayal of climate change. In order to analyse frames, the mixed methods approach is used to identify the trigger words used as frames. The findings show that climate change is significantly portrayed in three important eco centric frames: nuclear fatalism as an environmental catastrophe, diversity into decline and nature as a buried treasure.

Introduction

Climate change is one of the most significant problems of our day which is heavily dependent on governmental and public action.For the sake of political and public understanding regarding the issue of climate crisis , the quality of cinematic representations of climate change is crucial. An expanding literature in the social sciences, cultural studies, media and communication studies is driven by the important goal of examining the media's current practices in the communication of climate change and helping to improve them (Schäfer & Schlichting 2014).

Ecolinguistics has developed to look at human objectives from an "anthropocentric" perspective, where people are seen as the center of the universe. They have thereby used, abused, and improperly managed nature and natural resources. The goal of ecolinguistics is to adopt an "eco-centric" viewpoint in relation to how language use affects on the development of ecological identities, worldviews, and meaning.

Keeping in view the previous perspective, the current study seeks to assess how the discourse of documentary film depicts climate change with a special emphasis on trigger words. There have been few studies that have already analysed the ways climate change is presented i.e. climatic justice approach (Dreher & Voyer 2015, Vihersalo 2008). However, the present study employs framing to conceptualize the discourse of netflix documentary "A life on our planet" by David Attenborough from ecological perspective. It investigates the story of climate crisis through the perception and interpretation of the trigger words used as frames. The documentary's subtitles serve as the source text for the analysis, which is carried out in the context of the framing strategy. The goals of the study are to explore the framing techniques utilized for the climate crisis with reference to the ecolinguistic framework(Stibbe,2021) and to analyze how the abstract notion of climate change is presented in David Attenborough's netflix documentary "A life on our planet."

The study is important for the understanding of the construction of meanings through target frames in the context of climate change. It underlines the need to address the climate crisis as a major ecological problem. Additionally, it seeks to contribute to the field of linguistics in general and Eco linguistics in particular.

Review of the Related Literature

This section provides a thorough explanation of all key words, concepts, and theoretical frameworks. Recent decades have seen a rise in scholarly interest in the communication of the climate change in media (Boykoff and Roberts 2007; Schäfer and Schlichting 2014), as researchers emphasize upon the public awareness regarding the issue. Previous studies on climate change has mostly concentrated on two scholarly theories. One is to do study in the areas of journalism and communication with a focus on how climate information is disseminated to the media. The second, which is linguistic in nature, examines how language helps to map out climate reality, strengthen climate discourse, and advance the process of climate governance for instance, critical discourse analysis and ecological discourse analysis.

By utilizing images, narrative storytelling, and celebrity communicators in both cognitive and emotional appeals, documentaries have a unique potential to promote both individual and collective climate action (Manzo, 2017). Reframing climate change to emphasize benefits, solutions, and development rather than just impacts has been suggested in studies of climate change films like An Inconvenient Truth, Gasland, and The Age of the Stupid (Beattie et al. 2011; Cooper and Nisbet 2016; Howell 2011, 2014; Jacobsen 2011; Manzo 2017; Nolan 2010).

Ecolinguistics inculcates variety of approaches with various techniques and objectives to promote ecological identities (Steffensen and Fill, 2014). Ecolinguistics is concerned with the use of language from and for ecological perspective. Ecolinguistics is described by Bang and Trampe (2014) as a term that encompasses two distinct research strands: on the one hand traditional linguistic methods applied on texts and discourse of ecological importance and on the other hand deeper reflections on the theories of language inspired by the holistic paradigm of ecology. Ecolinguistics, according to Stibbe (2014), focuses on the greater ecological system, which includes how people interact with their surroundings. It highlights the beneficial and detrimental effects that people have on the natural environment. He goes on to say that ecolinguistics makes a distinction between discourses that protect the environment and those that harm it (p. 117).

In particular, metaphors and framing in media representations, as well as narratives and stories (Stibbe 2015), have been explored by ecolinguists (Kuha 2018; Penz 2022). Whether a frame invokes extrinsic or intrinsic values is the primary criterion for evaluation that are linked to ecologically destructive behavior or pro-environmental behavior. Hansen (2018) investigated visual representations of the climate change using a multimodal approach. The expert who has written the most about climate change is Brigitte Nerlich. She examined media representations of climate change, notably of news discourse, as well as the study of the vocabulary forms of the UK's debate on carbon reduction (Nerlich et al. 2012). Penz (2022) has discussed the issue of varied interpretations of climate change uncertainties and the challenges in communicating them to the general public.

Stibbe (2021) suggested an ecolinguistic framework that blends the idea of "stories we live by" from human ecology with critical discourse analysis, cognitive science, social psychology, identity theory, and appraisal theory. The main aim of the current study is to evaluate how the discourse of documentary employs framing with a particular focus on climate change.

Theoretical Framework

The present study focuses on the Ecolinguistic framework of Stibbe's (2021) in terms of framing. Stibbe (2021) claims that framing employs a packet of information about the world (a source frame) to create a story about a certain aspect of life (a target domain). The framing strategy is based on the concept of frames, often referred to as cognitive schemata, which are the frameworks that the brain employs to retain and comprehend information. Nijland, Aarts, and Woerkum (2018) consider frames as a product of semiotic activity that aids in the construction of reality. These frames provide inspiration for the understanding the context of our world. This study utilizes the theoretical framework of framing as cognitive building blocks to understand the perceptions and interpretations of the climate crisis.

Research Method

This study employs the mixed-methods approach which focuses on the identification of trigger words associated with frames. The data to be analysed is comprised of the subtitles of the selected documentary " A life on our planet" which investigates how climate change affects humanity through frames. Framing techniques engage the

audience along with the story to conceptualize the world we live by through frames. David Attenborough narrates the story of climate change from various perspectives in the selected documentary such as nuclear fatalism, biodiversity and value of nature as a resource. The netflix documentary A life on our planet was chosen as the case study because it focuses on the broader perspective of the climate change including its impacts and solutions.

Data Analysis

The following frames utilized to portray climate change are revealed by the analysis of the subtitles of the selected documentary. The objective of this study is to analyze the conceptualization of the abstract notion of climate change through frames. George Lakoff (2006) stated that "Frames are the mental structures that allow human beings to understand reality and sometimes create what we take to be reality" (p. 25). A conceptual narrative structure from one context or story is used in framing to apply it to another situation. In ecolinguistic practice, the first step in analyzing framing from an ecolinguistic perspective is to identify the source and the target domain. The target domain is the general subject being discussed, but the source frame is a different aspect of life that is brought to mind through trigger words (Stibbe, 2021).

Climate change can be viewed from a variety of different perspectives. The identified first source frame in the establishing shots of the selected documentary is nuclear fatalism as an environmental catastrophe in which climate change is portrayed as a result of the race of nuclear weapons. According to David Attenborough human error is a cause of environmental catastrophe(Attenborough,2020,2:03) which is presented with a variety of sub-frames like environmental catastrophe (Attenborough,2020,2:11), Our planet, vulnerable and isolated (Attenborough,2020, 19:53). The trigger words/phrases for the identified frame include "nuclear power station of Chernobyl exploded." (Attenborough,2020, 1:34), loss of the wild areas of our earth (Attenborough,2020,p. 2:37) A place in which we cannot live (Attenborough,2020,p. 04), burned fossil fuels, the natural world is fading (Attenborough,2020, 4:12), a mass extinction (Attenborough,2020, p. 8:29), released carbon dioxide (Attenborough,2020,p. 40-46) ,Our planet is losing its ice (Attenborough, 2020, 44:16) and the rate of global warming is accelerating. (Attenborough, 2020, 50:03). The identified frame nuclear fatalism as an environmental catastrophe embodies nature as an external nonhuman world of plants and animals while stating a belief that human interest is superior to other species.

The second frame biodiversity into decline focuses on biodiversity and sustainability of wild species. This frame is built on the loss of planet's wild places and species. Mechanistic framing is used by narrator David Attenborough to describe interconnection of human with non-human. This second frame focuses on the role of biodiversity in creating balance and harmony among species.The trigger words/phrases for the second frame include "working together to benefit from the energy of the sun" (Attenborough, 2020, 3:06), It needs its biodiversity to function properly (Attenborough,2020, 3: 29), great numbers of species disappear (Attenborough, 2020, 8:29), a profound, rapid, global change (Attenborough,2020, 8:51), 75% of all species were wiped out (Attenborough, 2020, 9:31), empty of animals(Attenborough,2020, 17:26), ecosystem would come crashing down (Attenborough, 2020, 18:53), reliant upon the finite natural world (Attenborough,2020,21:00), whales were being slaughtered(Attenborough, 2020, 24:59), stop killing the whales (Attenborough,2020,26:43), the whole system collapses(Attenborough, 2020, 35:18), an explosion of life(Attenborough,2020, 36:53) we have completely... well, destroyed that world(Attenborough,2020, 47:35), story of global decline (Attenborough,2020,48:33), catastrophic species loss (Attenborough,2020,49:33), the arctic becomes ice-free in the summer(Attenborough,2020, 49:47), pollinating insects disappear(Attenborough,2020,51:13) and we must restore its biodiversity (Attenborough,2020,54:51).

Nature is a buried treasure is a third frame in the concluding shots of the selected documentary which foregrounds the instrumental value of nature as a resource to be exploited for human ends and privileging financial interests. This third frame stresses upon the need of preserving ecological system by focusing on nature as treasure. This frame is identified through various trigger words/ phrases, like: the minerals of the earth (Attenborough,2020,3:11), for buried treasure (Attenborough,2020, p. 15), story of slow, steady change (Attenborough,2020,p. 7:56), The holocene's richness contributed to stability. (Attenborough,2020,12:00), enormous area of healthy grassland(Attenborough,2020,18:42), saving individual species(Attenborough,2020, p. 29:53), rainforests are particularly precious habitats (Attenborough,2020,p. 30:53), several tree species' would be at danger. (Attenborough,2020,32:32), tree diversity is the key to a rainforest (Attenborough,2020, p.32:37), cut down three trillion trees across the world (Attenborough,2020,34:15), the ocean is largely empty(Attenborough,2020, p. 36:43), removed 90% of the large fish in the sea (Attenborough,2020,36:43),the ocean starts to die(Attenborough,2020,

39:05),skeletons of dead creatures (Attenborough,2020,40:04),cut down over 15 billion trees each year(Attenborough,2020,45:19), damming, polluting, and over-extracting rivers and lakes(Attenborough,2020,45:26),run by humankind for humankind(Attenborough,2020, 46:37),non-human world is gone(Attenborough,2020, 47:39),human beings have overrun the world (Attenborough,2020,47:43) and fish populations crash (Attenborough,2020,50:06) .The analyzed frames highlights the anthropocentric role of human beings towards climate crisis.
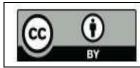
Findings

The goal of the current study was to examine how the ecological perspective of climate change was expressed linguistically in the netflix documentary A life on our planet through framing. The present study by employing ecolinguistic framework of Stibbe's (2021) highlighted some significant frames. i.e., nuclear fatalism as an environmental catastrophe, biodiversity into decline and nature as a buried treasure based on identified trigger words/phrases. The identified frames stressed upon the need of the change of anthropocentric attitude of men towards nature and highlighted the significance of the ecological responsibilities of men. Frames play a significant role in how people perceive the world and how they construct reality. According to Stibbe (2021), discourses are beneficial when they spread knowledge about the value of various species in sustainable living. The findings revealed three main frames based on various sub-frames which represent climate change as survival, concerns security, bad planning and human error. All of these frames can also be interpreted to consider the role of wilderness and biodiversity to maintain and sustain the ecological balance of our planet. The analyzed frames also highlighted the significance of nature as a buried treasure which plays an active role in order to prevent flooding, stabilize the soil and harbour wildlife. Overall, the identified frames are eco-centric and beneficial as they focused on ecology, conservation and sustainability with the goal of resolving the climate crisis. The analyzed source frames stressed climate change as a matter of environmental limits,right or wrong choices and ecological identities.

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