



**ANALYSIS OF THE DOMINANT THEMATIC AND IDEOLOGICAL
REPRESENTATION OF CLIMATE CRISIS DISCOURSES IN SELECTED
SPEECHES OF COP 27**

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ABSTRACT: *This research identifies the following dominant themes and ideologies in the selected climate change speeches: climate change, vulnerability, justice, accountability, power and power struggle, education, dependency, and leadership. The study established that the choice of certain words has some connection with the thematic and ideological beliefs of the speaker. Critical Discourse Analytic (CDA) tools provided a good channel to extract the ecolinguistics treasures in the selected speeches. These themes and ideologies reveal the politics and dynamics of the global north and global south geopolitical divides. The study has also opened the frontiers of knowledge in the field of green linguistics or ecolinguistics, digital humanities, and the need to rethink humanities scholarship which addresses real-world issues such as climate change in linguistic studies.*

KEYWORDS: Climate crisis discourses, COP 27, Dominant thematic themes, Ecolinguistics, Ideologies.



INTRODUCTION

Due to the global challenge posed by the climate crisis, green linguistics has today given birth to some exponents who are using literature to celebrate the environment known as eco-critics. Ecocriticism is the study of literature and the environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to analyse the environment and brainstorm possible solutions for the correction of the contemporary environmental situation (Mambrol, 2016). It lends itself to setting as an essential element in creative writing and investigates the relationship between humans and the natural world in literature. One of the main goals of ecocriticism is to study how individuals in society behave and react to nature and ecological aspects. This form of criticism has gained a lot of attention in recent years due to higher social emphasis on environmental destruction and increased technology. It is hence a fresh way of analysing and interpreting literary texts, which brings new dimensions to the field of literary and theoretical studies.

Ecology is an aspect of language studies that has emerged as a result of the concern for the environment. It deals with how environmental issues, cultural issues concerning the environment, and attitudes towards nature are presented and analysed. The way we choose our language in climate change communication can shift the way people perceive it. The term 'climate change' reflects the scientific consensus in environmental science that rising greenhouse gases will cause diverse climatic changes that are not confined to rising temperatures and rising sea levels.

Climate change is a global phenomenon, and its outcomes affect societies around the world. 'Speeches' used to communicate climate crisis knowledge shape opinions and preferences, and analysing such narratives can help to explain how they are constructed and how they influence citizens on personal and societal scales. The narrative perspective makes it possible to identify the presence or absence of typical components in a 'speech' such as initial situation, complication, reaction(s), resolution, and final situation, and to identify different actors or narrative characters. When different groups in society debate over issues, they choose their words very carefully to support their narratives which underscore the social role of language and how it can define relations in society. This new field of inquiry into the use of language in relation to the environment has permeated into all facets of life.

The UN Climate Change Conference in Berlin in 1995 is the world's most significant summit on climate change in human history. It has grown exponentially in size over the past two decades - from small working sessions into the largest annual conferences currently held under the auspices of the United Nations. They are among the largest international meetings in the world. These conferences are the foremost global forums for multilateral discussion of climate change matters and have an incredibly busy schedule. The conferences, which rotate annually among the five United Nations regional groups, serve as the formal meetings of the Conference of the Parties (COP). The 27th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 27) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2022. It brings together political leaders and decision-makers from 197 countries that signed the UNFCCC. Every year, world leaders and specialists present initiatives and exchange ideas and solutions in an attempt to control climate change.

At the 26th UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, UK in 2021, also known as the Conference of the Parties (COP 26), political leaders presented ambitious plans to control and



reduce the rise in global temperature utilizing various linguistic and persuasive devices to draw the public's attention to the global threat posed by the climate crisis. Amid the current international debate on global warming, it is instructive to note that it has taken the United Nations and the international community some two generations to reach this point. One effective tool deployed is the rhetoric of ecolinguistic resources as a significant linguistic tool, from various life domains to convey their messages.

In COP 27, the centre of discussion was African governments. The speeches of world leaders during the conference were critically analysed and reflected the mood of the global divide between developed and developing countries. This study focused on identifying the thematic climate crisis discourses that dominate the speeches of the selected world leaders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section considers the ecolinguistic resources in terms of vocabularies and metaphors, approaches to discourse analysis, and empirical review of previous studies.

Vocabularies and Metaphors

For this study, however, ecolinguistic resources are restricted to the dominant vocabularies and metaphors used to communicate the themes and ideologies that represent the worldviews of the different interest parties as contained in the speeches of the world leaders at COP 27.

Vocabularies

Vocabulary refers to the body of words used in a particular language or context. It is a sum or stock of words employed by a language, group, individual, or work or in a field of knowledge. It may also signify the body of specialized terms in a field of study or activity ("the vocabulary of linguistics"). Linguistics provides tools, techniques, and methods to study texts, contexts, events or phenomena from a specific approach or perspective. In the context of this research, vocabulary refers to the use of words in the context of the environment. Ecolinguistics is used to describe studies of language interaction and diversity, which happen to be about the environment. It studies how words in a language relate to objects in the local environment. Ecolinguistics studies language, but it does so according to the environment the language is used in (Derni, 2008). Some of the ecolinguistics vocabularies include: Climate, Change, Water, World, Planet, Global, Energy, Drought, Continent, Communities, Carbon, Weather, Warm, Temperature, Seas, River, Populations, Pollutes, Natural, Lives, Industrialized, Humanity, Forest, Environmental, Emission, Drought, Disaster, Deforestation, Biodiversity, Agriculture and so on.

Metaphors

The human experience of interacting with the natural world for thousands of years has resulted in metaphors that not only reflect a wealth of human thinking but also innovative ways of securing a lasting possible future for people. Metaphors can be traced back to the Aristotle era. Metaphors are usually thought of as mental tools, devices that allow us to compress one or several thoughts or concepts into a joint representation. George Lakoff has become famous for showing that to better understand something; a metaphor can be priceless



(Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). However, in addition to providing explanations for, or comforting those who suffer undeservedly from life's vicissitudes, metaphors also carry the unavoidable risk of the metaphor becoming the very thing it is representing. If this happens, the explanation becomes a restriction; one is forced to see things through the metaphoric lens: one is no longer aware that one is dealing with a metaphor. Metaphoric cognition has both positive and negative sides. It is like a shiny two-sided coin with both benefits and cautions. Metaphors are often chosen to assist us in bringing together a variety of divergent approaches to solving the world's (or a country's) problems. Notwithstanding these and other dangers, metaphors are essential tools needed for survival in an environment that is not always user friendly. They constitute repertoires of past (and sometimes forgotten) human understanding and experiences and thus provide a critical understanding of 'new' ideas that, from an ecological point of view, may turn out to be variants of old ones. In general, metaphoric expressions, whether positive or negative concerning their ecological origin and force, are ways of thinking and speaking that not only reflect but also influence the common social praxis. Due to the limitations of human cognitive ability, metaphorical cognition is inevitable. As far as metaphors related to eco-linguistics are concerned, the sky is the limit. They point toward new and endearing metaphors to encourage people to protect life-sustaining ecosystems. Metaphors reflect the ecological language, forming the important role of learning.

Approaches to Discourse Analysis

There are different approaches to discourse analysis based on the perspective from which the analyst views and describes discourse and the linguist's affiliations and convictions (i.e. functionalism, structuralism, and social constructionism, among others). These approaches could be simplified into three clusters:

- a. Formal linguistic discourse analysis involves a structured analysis of text to find general underlying rules of linguistics or communicative functions behind the text.
- b. Empirical discourse analysis looks for broad themes and functions of language in action using approaches called conversation analysis and genre analysis. Researchers using empirical discourse analysis do not use highly structured methods to code individual words and utterances in detail.
- c. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is used by researchers in cultural studies, sociology, and philosophy to encompass an even wider sphere that includes all of the social practices, individuals, and institutions that make it possible or legitimate to understand phenomena in a particular way, and to make certain statements about what is "true".

Review of Empirical Studies

The works of scholars from the fields of ecolinguistics, climate change, linguistics, and critical discourse analysis were briefly highlighted in this subsection.

Elisa (2018) investigated the years-long negotiations on loss and damage (L&D) associated with climate change impacts. This negotiation reached a milestone with the adoption of the Paris Agreement, sanctioning the permanence of the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) created in 2013. The present research benefits a lot from this study since both are



works on climate change particularly on documents from UNFCCCC. However, the present study is interested in ecolinguistic resources, the previous study concentrated on Loss and Damage using the same critical discourse analysis in its approach.

Guofeng et al. (2023) employed quantitative and qualitative methodologies examining how UNFCCC Executive Secretaries used concessive but-constructions and linguistic polyphony to implicitly argue points of view and convey stances in speeches on climate change. This study on the use of linguistic items to communicate meaning offers a linguistic resource to the present research. While the previous study is an analysis of implicit argumentation, the present research focuses on the ecolinguistic resources embedded in the selected speeches.

Adhuze et al. (2018) dwelt on the meaning, history and how of ecolinguistics. The article presented language as a veritable tool in the hands of mankind through which he views and narrates his experience of his world. Thus, it is concerned with the role of language and the nature of language used in ecological discourse. The present research borrowed extensively from this article while articulating the definitions, history, and divisions of ecolinguistics. However, the article did not dwell on particular texts for analysis. It rather used Yoruba metaphorical expressions to express the place of metaphor as a language tool in environmental discourse. It was a general exposition on the discipline of eco-linguistics. The present research is on ecolinguistics. It goes further than history, and concepts to the prospects of environmental studies and the discipline of literature and linguistics as a result of metaphorical expressions.

Mohammed (2017) acknowledged that one of the most crucial humanitarian contemporary concerns is the environment. He further noted that we live nowadays amidst the ecological threats that the industrial revolution has brought about between culture and nature from an ecocritical perspective. Mohammed's work is relevant to the present research since ecolinguistics originated from eco-criticism. This work and present research both used non-electronic texts for their analysis. However, while Mohamed's work is ecocritical, the present research is an ecolinguistic study. While the present study used CDA methods for its analysis, Mohammed's work used the ecocriticism method for analysis.

Egbe (2022) used critical discourse studies and multimodal discourse analysis to emphasize the role of English in the construction and counter-formation of discourses. The study interrogated about 30 purposefully sampled posts from selected WhatsApp platforms during the protests. This present research draws insight from Egbe's research since both use a critical discourse approach that considers the interplay between discourse, power and society and the construction, representation, and reproduction of social structures abundant in the protest in question. However, rather than focusing on identifying discursive strategies and the use of English in the same event - ENDSARS protest—the current study focuses more on ecolinguistic resources prevalent in the climate change discourse.

Ahmed (2022) investigated the conceptual metaphors employed by both African and European political leaders to conceptualize the process of facing climate change and reaching the goal of biodiversity in their speeches during the 26th UN Climate Change Conference, COP 26 that took place at Glasgow in November 2021. This research borrowed comprehensively from this article while articulating the comparison between the global north and south. Like in this article, the central theme of the climate crisis was well developed in the light of the speeches of selected world leaders. Here, like this research, the article did not



dwell on a particular text for its analysis. The materials were drawn from the official website of the United Nations. However, this article used the cognitive theory of metaphor for its analysis, the present study relies more on Critical Discourse Analysis for its analysis. It goes further than history, to explore the linguistic resources used to communicate the climate crisis in the speeches of selected world leaders.

According to Kurz and Prosser (2021), discourse surrounding climate change is a vital, but understudied, area of environmental and social psychology. Discursive and narrative approaches, with roots in other social sciences but increasingly attracting the attention of psychologists, explore how social actions are justified, legitimized, and normalized through talk and text. Such approaches explore language produced by actors at a variety of levels, from the individual (micro) level to the societal and political (macro) level. This research would benefit the current study since both are concerned with the analysis of speeches on climate change.

Elliot (2022) observed that climate justice is a contested issue that is hard to define because of various normative claims that persist through this debate. This study considered how country representatives at the COP26 expressed various discourses of climate justice. In this pursuit, climate justice is defined along issues between countries, as a social dimension and as an intergenerational dimension. This research aligns itself with the scrutiny of the COP as an inclusive and fair instrument for the promotion of climate justice. While this study shares a lot of features with the current research, the current research focuses more on the speeches of selected world leaders, especially in COP27, which was held in Egypt in November 2022.

Ugwumgbo (2022) identified the digital affordances in electronic literature, especially eco digital poetry. He studied the role of language, multimodality, and hypertext semiotics in human-computer communication in selected eco-digital poems, to discover how they are creatively used in meaning-making. This work is very relevant to the present research since both are ecolinguistic studies. While Ugwumgbo's work is on eco-digital linguistics, this present study uses a Critical Discourse Analysis approach. Another difference is that the work on review based its analysis on electronic texts, whereas the present research involves non-electronic texts in its analysis.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research is essentially qualitative using descriptive as well as analytic models. It aims at identifying and classifying linguistic resources used to communicate climate crisis and what thematic climate crisis discourses dominate the selected speeches of the world leaders.

Population and Sampling Procedure

The population of this research is constituted by the speeches delivered during the UN Climate Change Summit, also known as Conference of the Parties (COP 27), held at Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, from 6 - 20 November 2022. Out of the 2,950 participating bodies, only 235 speeches were accessed. 195 speeches were selected from state actors, that is, the



participating countries (states), whereas the remaining 40 speeches were from the non-state actors, that is, the intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations.

Table 1: Participant statistics

	States/Organisations	Participants
Parties	195	11969
Observer state	0	0
Total parties +observer states	195	11969
United Nations Secretariat units and bodies	38	432
Specialised agencies and related organisations	23	567
Intergovernmental organisations	99	1151
Non-governmental organisations	1649	10090
Total observer organisation s	1809	12241
Media	948	21160
Total participation	2950	26370

A total of 12 speeches were randomly selected for analysis using the Excel Data Analysis Toolpak.

Sampling Technique

The researcher adopted Excel's Data Analysis Toolpak for its Random Sampling. Firstly, the participating actors were itemized and assigned codes (unique identifiers) which were numeric values. The codes (unique identifiers) were thereafter imputed into the Data Analysis toolbox. The desired sampling technique in this case (random sampling which was chosen to give every speech the opportunity of being selected) was selected from the options provided and the exact number of speeches required for the analysis from the overall population was inputted in the toolbox. The sampling was carried out for all the speeches. Thus, the following actors were selected through this sampling technique.

Consequently, the following countries were randomly selected for analysis: Angola, Belgium, Ethiopia, Gambia, Holy See, Nigeria, Norway, Romania, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Zimbabwe. It goes beyond this selection to include the speeches of the United Nations Secretary-General and the Executive Secretary of UNFCCC because they made a legitimate presentation of the climate crisis unbiased from counties specific contexts and they served as moderating variables. The list of countries selected is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: List of Selected COP27 Countries for Analysis

S/N	COP 27 Actor	Code
1	UN	COP27-01
2	UNFCCC	COP27-02
3	Angola	COP27-03
4	Belgium	COP27-04
5	Ethiopia	COP27-05
6	Gambia	COP27-06



7	Holy See	COP27-07
8	Nigeria	COP27-08
9	Norway	COP27-09
10	Romania	COP27-10
11	UK	COP27-11
12	Zimbabwe	COP27-12

Source: *Researcher, 2023*

Data Collection Technique

The data of the research are the ecolinguistic items extracted from selected speeches of the world leaders on the climate crisis. Only speeches given by world leaders during the COP 27 were selected. The speeches were extracted from the United Nations for Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC) official website <https://unfccc.int/>. The data were sourced by direct download from the official website of the United Nations. The speeches selected were all presented in the English language.

Data Analysis Technique

This research applies a qualitative approach to identify and interpret the ecolinguistics items and thematic discourse employed by the selected world leaders on climate change which is a currently pressing global issue. The study draws from Fairclough's approach on CDA for the data analysis. This analytical framework modelled by Dryzek (2013) considers discourse across a multi-dimensional framework. Dryzek (2013) departs from the more abstract approach by Fairclough but rather substitutes for a practical toolkit to analyze the role of relations and meaning-making. The checklist of this framework is presented in tabular form. This checklist guided the data analysis, especially the section that deals with key phrases, vocabularies, metaphors, and other rhetorical devices.

Table 3: Adapted Checklist for Discourse Analysis (Dryzek, 2013)

S/N	Components of discourse analysis	Description
1	Basic entities recognized or constructed	Ontology of discourse; storyline; what worldview is adopted by the actor; what is being silenced or left out
2	Assumptions about natural relationships	Social structures assumed between humans, such as hierarchies; cooperation; equality structures; competition; Relationship to nature in the telling of stories
3	Agents and their motives	The incentives of an actor to pursue a particular discourse
4	Key phrases, vocabularies, metaphors, and other rhetorical devices	Metaphors; appeals; vocabulary; figure of speech; other phrases
5	Explicit mentions of climate crisis	Literal references regardless of context
Goal: Climate crisis discourse recognized		Discourses within theoretical framework; any other discourse inductively found

Source: *Dryzek (2013)*



In this study, the major digital tools used are Microsoft Word, Excel Data Analysis Toolpak and Voyant Tool. Furthermore, the collected data were analyzed using Voyant Tools, a digital text analysis tool for scholarly reading and interpretation of the written texts in the dataset. All the selected speeches were downloaded, copied and saved as a TXT file.

RESULTS

The themes of the various speeches are presented in this section. The dominant themes and ideologies according to their various coalitions are highlighted. Table 4 presents a summary of the thematic discourses of major global agencies at the COP27. Table 5 summarizes the thematic discourses of selected leaders of the Global South Actors at COP 27. Table 6 contains a summary of thematic discourses of selected leaders of the Global North Actors at COP 27. Table 7 presents the dominant thematic discourse of selected leaders at COP 27.

Table 4: Thematic Discourses of Major Global Agencies (UN & UNFCCC) at the COP 27

S/N	Global Agencies	Codes	Themes	Dominant themes
1	UN	COP27-01	Climate change; Responsibility; Leadership; Vulnerability; Accountability; Collaboration; Justice; Loss and Damage; Implementation	Climate Change, Vulnerability, Justice,
2	UNFCCC	COP27-02	Climate change; Leadership; Implementation; Appreciation; Determination; Responsibility; Accountability Vulnerability; Loss and Damage	Accountability

Source: *Researcher, 2023*

Table 5: Thematic Discourses of Selected Leaders of the Global South Actors at COP 27

S/N	Actors	Codes	Themes	Dominant themes
1	Angola	COP27-03	Climate change; Appreciation; Collaboration; Vulnerability; Commitment; Responsibility; Discrimination Solidarity; Justice	Climate Change; Vulnerability; Justice; Accountability
2	Ethiopia	COP27-05	Climate Vulnerability; change; Hospitality; Determination; Environment; Africanness; Collaboration; Responsibility; Finance; Food security; Agriculture; Solidarity; Leadership	
3	Gambia	COP27-06	Climate change; Appreciation; Commitment; Collaboration; Finance; Environment; Dependence;	



			Vulnerability; Leadership
4	Nigeria	COP27-08	Climate change; Vulnerability; Loss and Damage; Financial; Commitment; Demand; Collaboration; Leadership; Food security; Solidarity
5	Zimbabwe	COP27-12	Climate change; Vulnerability; Africanness; Solidarity; Responsibility; Commitment; Agriculture; Food security; Justice; Determination; Environment

Source: *Researcher, 2023*

Table 6: Thematic Discourses of Selected Leaders of the Global North Actors at COP 27

S/N	Actors	Codes	Themes	Dominant themes
1	Belgium	COP27-04	Climate change; Vulnerability; Collaboration; Accountability; Responsibility; Determination Creativity; Climate Financing; Optimistic	Climate change: Vulnerability: Accountability Commitment
2	Holy See	COP27-07	Climate change; Accountability; Commitment; Vulnerability; Covid 19; Solidarity; Loss and Damage; Justice; Collaboration	
3	Norway	COP27-09	Climate change; Commitment; Responsibility; Loss and Damage; Finance; Justice; Vulnerability; Collaboration; Innovation; Solidarity; Accountability	
4	Romania	COP27-10	Climate change; Vulnerability; Commitment; Just Transition; Leadership; Future generation; Collaboration; Accountability	
5	UK of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	COP27-11	Climate change; Commitment; Responsibility; Vulnerability; Leadership; Collaboration; Finance; Solidarity; Optimism; Accountability	

Source: *Researcher, 2023*

**Table 7: Summary of Dominant Thematic Discourses of Selected Leaders at COP 27**

S/N	Coalitions	Dominant themes
1	Major Global Agencies	Climate Change, Vulnerability, Accountability; Justice
2	Global South Actors	Climate change; Vulnerability, Accountability; Justice
3	Global North Actors	Climate change: Vulnerability: Accountability; Commitment

Source: Researcher, 2023

DISCUSSION

In Table 4, a summary of the thematic discourses of major global agencies at the COP27 was presented. The major agencies are COP27-01 and COP27-02. The table shows a good number of themes that were extracted from the speeches of the major global agencies. The themes include Climate change; Responsibility; Leadership; Vulnerability; Accountability; Collaboration; Justice; Loss and Damage; Implementation; Appreciation; and Determination. COP27-01 speech has the following themes: Climate change; Responsibility; Leadership; Vulnerability; Determination; Collaboration; Justice; Loss and Damage; and Implementation. These themes reflect the general ideas that dominated the COP 27-01 speech. In the same vein, COP27-02 has the following themes: Climate change; Leadership; Implementation; Appreciation; Determination; Responsibility; Accountability; Vulnerability; and Loss and Damage. However, while both speeches share the majority of the themes, there are a few themes that are found in the COP 27-02 speech, which are lacking in the COP 27-01 speech. Those themes include Appreciation and Determination. The table further shows the dominant themes in the speeches of COP 27-01 and COP27-02 which are, Climate Change, Vulnerability, Accountability and Justice.

The thematic discourses of selected leaders of the Global South Actors at COP 27 were summarised in Table 5. Some of these themes are shared by all the actors, while some are peculiar to a given speech. COP27-03, has the following themes: Climate change; Appreciation; Collaboration; Vulnerability; Commitment; Responsibility; Discrimination Solidarity; and Justice. COP 27-05 is laden with these themes, Climate change; Hospitality; Vulnerability; Determination; Environment; Africanness; Collaboration; Responsibility; Finance; Food security; Agriculture; Solidarity; Justice; and Leadership. COP27-06 has the following themes: Climate change; Appreciation; Commitment; Collaboration; Finance; Environment; Dependence; Vulnerability; and Leadership. Whereas COP27-08, Climate change; Vulnerability; Loss and Damage to finances; Commitment; Demand; Collaboration; Leadership; Food security; and Solidarity. Finally, COP27-12, has these themes, Climate change; Vulnerability; Africanness; Solidarity; Responsibility; Commitment; Agriculture; Food security; Justice; Determination; and Environment. The dominant themes in the selected speeches of the global South are Climate change; Vulnerability, Justice; and Accountability.

A summary of thematic discourses of selected leaders of the Global North Actors at COP 27 were contained in Table 6. These themes are derived from the various speeches, as presented



above. COP27-04 has the following themes: Climate change; Vulnerability; Collaboration; Accountability; Responsibility; Determination; Creativity; Climate Financing; and Optimism. In the same vein, COP27-07: has the following themes: Climate change; Accountability; Commitment; Vulnerability; COVID-19; Solidarity; Loss and Damage; Justice; and Collaboration. Whereas others have the following respectively: COP27-09: Climate change; Commitment; Responsibility; Loss and Damage; Finance; Justice; Collaboration; Innovation; Solidarity and Accountability. COP27-10: Climate change; Vulnerability; Commitment; Just Transition; Leadership; Future generation; and Collaboration. COP27-11: Climate change; Commitment; Responsibility; Leadership; Collaboration; Finance; Solidarity; and Optimism. The dominant themes in the speeches of global North parties include Climate change; Vulnerability; Accountability; and Commitment.

The following dominant themes: climate change, vulnerability, accountability, and climate justice run through the data highlighted in Table 7. Each theme has different values that project them. Climate change is one of the dominant themes identified in the selected speeches of world leaders at COP 27. This theme runs through the entire data presented. It is projected in different ways.

Extract 1

1. *As the Executive Secretary of the UN climate convention, it is an honour to be standing in a room of people dedicated to tackling humanity's greatest challenge (COP27-02).*

Extract 2

2. *But climate change is on a different timeline, and a different scale. It is the central challenge of our century (COP27-01).*

Climate change is a dominant theme in the data. It was both explicitly and implicitly implied throughout the speeches. Considering its tremendous effect, climate change was referred to as the greatest challenge confronting humanity. The direct recipient of the devastating effects of climate change is humanity. It is not the only challenge confronting humanity, but it has the most challenging effect on humanity. This also captures the urgency needed to deploy in confronting this great challenge of global concern. However, in Extract 2, all indices show that the climate crisis is taking a different toll on the universe. The more solutions are delayed the more the situation gets worse. Time and commitment are of the essence in this struggle to remedy the climate. This entails that all must be involved since it has become the central challenge of the century. Everyone is a victim of the climate crisis.

Extract 3

3. *The war in Ukraine, other conflicts, have caused so much bloodshed and violence and have had dramatic impacts all over the world. But we cannot accept that our attention is not focused on climate change. We must of course work together to support peace efforts and end the tremendous suffering (COP27-01).*

Extract 4

4. *Doing everything they possibly can to address the climate crisis (COP27-02).*



The statement in Extract 13, reminds all that, though other challenges confront humanity in different forms, the issue of climate change must remain central in global discourses. This is because the effects of climate change on humanity cannot be compared to that of any other challenge confronting humanity. To deny this fact will be catastrophic for the planet. It went further to link every other conflict today, to the growing climate chaos. Sample 19 further encouraged the collaboration of all in working together towards actualizing a ‘clean’ environment. This is not a time to leave anyone behind. All must do everything they are capable of doing, to confront this common enemy called climate change.

Extract 5

5. We are in the fight of our lives. And we are losing.... And our planet is fast approaching tipping points that will make climate chaos irreversible (COP27-01).

Extract 6

6. The deadly impacts of climate change are here and now.

Loss and damage can no longer be swept under the rug (COP27-01).

Extract 7

7. Ladies and gentlemen, COP 27, the African COP, is an opportune moment for Africa to voice our collective stance. Africa, with less than 5 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, and about 17 percent of the total world population, is the most vulnerable to climate change. Yet, Africa only gets less than 5 percent of the world’s climate fund, mainly in debt (COP27-05).

Extract 8

8. Ladies and Gentlemen, the nexus between climate change and the challenges of peace and security at a global level, especially in Africa, is increasingly evident. Rising temperatures, the seas level rise, prolonged droughts, and other extreme weather effects are affecting the lives and livelihoods of communities around the world, worsening economic, social or political conditions, leaving vulnerable populations very exposed to conflicts and instability (COP27-03).

Extract 9

9. Some people feel the consequences of climate change much harder than others. And some people will feel the consequences of climate policy much harder than others (COP27-04).

The statement in Extract 5, describes the actual situation that climate change has brought on humanity. ‘Fight of our lives’ means that the climate situation has gotten so bad that if nothing urgent is done, climate chaos becomes irreversible. Referring to climate change as a ‘fight’ means that it must be confronted head-on, to avoid escalation of the climate dangers. The situation has become very challenging and the impacts on the environment are very disturbing. There must be quick intervention by all parties to ascertain the collaborative responsibility in seeking a climate solution.



Extracts 16 and 18 re-emphasized that the effects of climate change have come too close to the people. It affirmed that rising temperatures, the sea level rise, prolonged droughts and other extreme weather effects are affecting the lives and livelihoods of communities around the world, worsening economic, social or political conditions, leaving vulnerable populations very exposed to conflicts and instability. The level of damage cannot be taken for granted. It affects both the developed and developing nations irrespective of their level of contribution to the greenhouse gas emission which affects the climate the most. Extract 17, singled out the African continent and referred to COP27 as African COP. It went further to establish that “Africa, with less than 5 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, and about 17 percent of the total world population, is the most vulnerable to climate change. Yet, Africa only gets less than 5 percent of the world’s climate fund, mainly in debt (COP27-05). Extract 19 projects in Africa and other developing countries as those with the highest risk of climate impact. From the onset, the vulnerability discourse is set as a pivotal theme and used to rationalize the need for climate action across the globe. Here vulnerability means respecting human rights. Nevertheless, acknowledging climate change to be a concern of humankind suggests that this social dimension needs to be reiterated. It is a clarion call for all and sundry to get involved in the climate solidarity pact. The accountability discourse is found throughout the speeches. In this context, accountability refers to the ability to take up the challenges posed by the climate crisis. This calls for responsibility and determination in the climate struggles. And it includes taking those concrete actions to reduce the greenhouse gas emission which depletes the ozone layer. The parties are also encouraged to embrace the climate solidarity pact, through a collaborative effort towards a climate solution.

Extract 10

10. How will we answer when “Baby 8 billion” is old enough to ask (COP27-01).

Extract 11

11. I welcome detailed plans on how we deliver what we have promised across finance, adaptation, and mitigation.

Extract 12

12. I found myself in my Accountability-Chief role, last week, when we launched the NDC synthesis report, and I had to report that only 24 countries had come forward with tightened national plans since COP26. 24 is not 194. So here I am now, looking out at 170 countries that are due to be revisiting and strengthening their national pledges this year (COP27-02).

Extract 13

13. Finally, our third line of action: we must enhance the delivery of the principles of transparency and accountability throughout our process (COP27-02).

The theme of accountability is very critical to the climate discourse. From identifying the root cause of climate change to confronting the climate challenge, down to the management of the climate issues are all areas that call for accountability in the climate discourse. When Extract 10, asks the basic question of ‘how we will answer when “baby 8 billion” is old enough to ask’, it implies that the time will come when the demand for the climate question will be posed. What is done now or failed to do now on climate change will have decisive effects on



future generations. The future generation will be demanding the roles of this generation in the depletion of the cosmos and what contributions they were able to make in combating climate change.

Extract 11 went further to state that ‘detailed plans on how we deliver what we have promised across finance, adaptation and mitigation’ will be required for the progress of the climate solution. This is very necessary for the progress of this climate struggle since Paris gave the agreement, Katowice and Glasgow gave the plan and Sharm El-Sheikh shifted the attention to implementation. If people are not accountable for their commitments, then the climate efforts will be counterproductive. For instance, extract 22 observed that his data shows that “only 24 countries had come forward with tightened national plans since COP26”, out of 194 countries. The remaining 170 countries have abandoned their commitment to the common good. That is due to be revisiting and strengthening their national pledges this year”. For substantial results to be achieved in this climate struggle, there must be enhanced delivery of the principles of transparency and accountability throughout the climate process. This guides people to know that all actions count in this climate challenge. This report of the response of some parties indicates the level of commitment and accountability that people commit to in the climate discourse. It encourages all parties to be true to their commitment and responsible for their actions. Other themes that could be implicitly or explicitly deduced from the speeches include Collaboration, Loss and Damage, Leadership, Responsibility and so on.

Generally, as indicated in the data presentation (Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7) on the thematic climate crisis discourses that dominated the selected speeches of world leaders in COP27, the following dominant themes were identified: climate change, vulnerability (impact of climate change on all) and accountability for our actions. Table 7 and Extract 6 show climate change as one of the dominant themes identified in the selected speeches of world leaders at COP27. It was observed in the cause of the study that it has the highest frequency of occurrence of ecolinguistic words in the speeches, as this explicitly indicates its central role in the speeches. This theme runs through the entire data presented. In a similar research, Ahmed (2022) investigated the conceptual metaphors employed by both African and European political leaders to conceptualize the process of facing climate change and reaching the goal of biodiversity during COP26. This present research goes beyond the African/European divide in the previous work to look at the speeches from a global perspective. It is not limited to conceptual metaphors but also considers other ecolinguistic resources that are dominant in the selected speeches. Climate change is the issue at hand. It has taken centre stage in global discourse. Pope Francis (2015; 2023) noted that the climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. At the global level, it is a complex system linked to many of the essential conditions for human life. It is a collective responsibility for all to rise to the challenges confronting our common heritage. He further noted that climate change is one of the most prominent topics associated with *Laudato Si'*, both because the encyclical speaks in detail about the moral imperative to address it and because the threat of the climate crisis has grown only more severe since the encyclical's publication. Considering its tremendous effect, climate change was regarded as the greatest challenge confronting humanity (COP27-02). This is because the effect of the climate crisis has a global consequence on humanity. It is not the only challenge confronting humanity, but it has the most challenging effect on humanity. This also captures the urgency needed to deploy in confronting this great challenge of global concern.



Furthermore, Extract 2 indicates that the climate crisis is taking a huge toll on the universe. Every party is having the heat of the effects of the climate situation. The more the climate situations are neglected, the worse the situation gets. Time and commitment are of essence in this struggle to remedy the climate. This calls for all to be involved since it has become the central challenge of the century. Describing climate change as a “central challenge” indicates its place of prominence in global discourse. Everyone is a victim of the climate crisis. This research concurs with those that believe that the climate situation has become precarious and so needs urgent global attention if there must be hope for the present and future generations. The level of climate effects cannot be taken for granted. It affects both the developed and developing nations irrespective of their level of involvement in greenhouse gas emissions. Going further, it was noted “Africa, with less than 5 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, and about 17 percent of the total world population, is the most vulnerable to climate change. Yet, Africa only gets less than 5 percent of the world’s climate fund, mainly in debt”. (COP27-05). This presents Africa and other developing nations as those with the highest risk of climate impact. The statement affirms that vulnerable countries need extra support. It also suggests that for these countries transitioning efforts are contingent on financing, which is found to be a common claim by developing countries. Again, however, climate vulnerabilities are not specified, which is a precarious set-up since countries are left vulnerable due to climate change itself but could also experience vulnerability when transitioning, even though that is what is urged. In addition to the dominant themes, the theme of accountability was implicitly and explicitly reflected in the speeches. This theme calls for responsibility and collaboration among parties in the climate change discourse. Accordingly, Extracts 7–13, highlight the theme of vulnerability as it concerns actions and inactions that enhance climate change or proffer a lasting solution to the climate crisis. This includes concrete actions to reduce the greenhouse gas emission which depletes the ozone layer. The question of “how will we answer when baby 8 billion is old enough to ask” (COP27-01), demands an explanation of the climate roles the parties played in the climate discourse. This “how” will justify if the present generation did what they were supposed to do or if they contributed more to the climate crisis. Thus, the parties are encouraged to embrace the climate solidarity pact, through a collaborative effort towards a climate solution. The developed nations should be able to take the lead and developing nations should not be isolated because they are critical to bending the global emission curve (COP27 01). Both parties are critical to the climate response. The developed nations should not take advantage of their technological and economic powers to lord it over the developing nations. Most of the industries and factories that pollute the atmosphere are located within the developed nations, but their effects are more on the developing nations. As the developed nations are migrating from fossil fuels to green and pure energy, they are transferring their old technologies that are fossil fuel driven to the developing nations. When financial commitments are made the party should be able to fulfil its promise for the common good. This research aligns with the school of thought that climate change is a result of human actions, and so for a climate solution to be achieved, it requires human cooperation. If people are not accountable for their actions, then the climate efforts will be counterproductive.

For substantial results to be achieved in this climate struggle there must be enhanced delivery of the principles of transparency and accountability throughout the climate process. This guides people to know that all actions count in this climate challenge. It encourages all parties to be true to their commitment and responsible for their actions. Other themes that are found



in the speeches include Justice, Commitment, Collaboration, Loss and Damage, Leadership, Responsibility and so on.

Another linguistic consideration in the selected speeches during COP27 is the ideologies that run through in the climate change discourse. Consequently, the selected speeches on climate crisis discourse represented different ideological perspectives. The parties spoke from their different points of view that represent their ideological convictions. Hence, when one considers the texts as materials to be harnessed, it becomes necessary to consider the ideologies behind such texts. The major global agencies serve as moderating guides to the climate discourse. As such their ideologies are reflected in most of the climate discourse.

Another, compelling ideology prominent in the data is that of climate justice. In this context, justice refers to giving to each according to their roles, contributions, and commitment to the climate challenge. It is only just that those who contribute less to the climate greenhouse gas emissions should not be allowed to carry the burden of climate change impact on themselves alone. The implication of this is that climate justice is considered through the lens of the developed nations, and this will be perpetuated going forward. Power is not only the formation of the text but is amplified as a consequence of the text and the discourses that are included (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Discourses that dominate also have the power to shape reality (Fairclough, 1995). In practice, this means that the current policy outcomes will serve as the basis for future COPs, which already sets the playing field in favour of those that stand to benefit from its current composition.

IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

This research has added needed data to the climate change discourse from an ecolinguistics perspective using critical discourse analysis. A very important implication of this study is the use of CDA in the analysis of the data. Hence, there is a need for synergy between CDA and digital humanities in emerging linguistic analysis. Using digital tools for distant reading and convergence analysis, like the Voyant tools, Excel Toolpak, and so on shows that digital humanities research has a place in the humanities scholarship. Thus, there is a need for more studies in digital humanities, and digital and environmental studies by language and literature students and scholars.

CONCLUSION

The study has established that the choice of certain words has some connection with the thematic and ideological beliefs of the speaker. Critical Discourse Analytic tools provide a good channel to extract the ecolinguistics treasures in the selected speeches. Hence, the study identifies vocabularies and metaphors as ecolinguistic resources used in the speeches. The study also concludes that in the study of climate change, attention should be paid to the motivating ideologies that guide the actions of the different parties and which help to shape and frame climate crisis discourses as evidenced in the language used.



SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- i. The researcher suggests a study on a comparative approach to the climate change discourse from a stylistic perspective.
- ii. Further research on other linguistic resources not covered in the present study on climate change discourses is necessary.
- iii. A critical discourse analysis with emphasis on the global North and global South rhetoric on climate crises will be very revealing.

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