التمثيلات الأيديولوجية للبيئة العراقية في وسائل الاعلام المحلية: دراسة في علم اللغة البيئي

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Ideological Representations of Iraqi Ecology in National Media: An Ecolingusitic Study

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المستلخص:

تبحث الدراسة الحالية في التمثيلات الأيديولوجية للبيئة العراقية في وسائل الإعلام المحلية من خلال منظور علم اللغة البيئي. وذلك باستخدام الاطار التحليلي لآران ستيبي (2015/2021) علم اللغة البيئي، اللغة والبيئة و "القصص التي نعيش بها"، يركز التحليل على كيفية بناء السرديات الإعلامية للمعنى البيئي في فيلمين وثائقيين: الأهوار: أسطورة الجنوب (قناة العراقية، 2016) وآخر إنذار للأرض (قناة روداو الإنجليزية، 2023). تصنف الدراسة الأيديولوجيات المفيدة (beneficial) والمتناقضة (ambivalent) والمدمرة (destructive) في تصوير أهوار بلاد ما بين النهرين. تُظهر النتائج وجود توتر بين الايدولوجيات ذات التوجه البيئي (Ecocentric) التي تبرز احترام البيئة اعتبارها الملجأ والحث على استعادتها و الايدولجيات البشرية (Anthropocentric) التي تُعطي الأولوية لبقاء الناس والنزوح والصراع

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الجيوسياسي. تُسلط النتائج الضوء على دور الخطاب الإعلامي في تشكيل الفكر والهوية البيئية في العراق، حيث تعمل النظم البيئية الطبيعية في آن واحد كتراث ثقافي ومساحة اختلاف سياسية لبيئـات هشـة معرضـة للخطـر. يلعـب الخطـاب الإعلامـي دورًا حاسـمًا فـي بنـاء وترسـيخ الأيديولوجيات البيئية التي تؤثر على تصورات المجتمع وسلوكياته تجاه البيئة. يمكن للتحليل اللغوي البيئي أن يكون وسيلةً فعّالة لتحديد ونقد القصص البيئية العراقية التي نعيشها، مما يُسهم في رفع مستوى الوعي بأهمية اللغة في تشكيل السياسات والسلوكيات البيئية.

Abstract:

This paper examines the ideological representations of Iraqi ecology in national media through an ecolingusitic perspective. By means of Arran Stibbe's (2015/2021) framework of "Stories We Live By," the analysis focuses on how media narratives construct ecological meaning in two documentaries: Marshes: Legend of the South (Al-Iraqia, 2016) and Last Alert of Earth (Rudaw English, 2023). The study categorizes beneficial, ambivalent, and destructive ideologies in the representation of the Mesopotamian Marshes. Results demonstrate a tension between ecocentric framings that accentuate respect, refuge, and restoration, and anthropocentric framings that prioritize people survival, displacement, and geopolitical conflict. The results stress the role of media discourse in shaping environmental thought and identity in Iraq, where natural ecosystems function simultaneously as cultural heritage, political battlegrounds, and fragile environments under threat. Media discourse plays a crucial role in constructing and perpetuating ecological ideologies that influence societal perceptions and behaviors toward the environment. **Ecolinguistic analysis** can serve as a significant means for identifying and critiquing the Iraqi ecology stories we live by , helping to raise awareness about the power of language in shaping environmental policy and behavior.

1. Introduction

According to Bang and Trampe (2014: 77), ECOLINGUISTICS is "a discipline that explores the connections between language, ideology and environmental concerns, asking how language can either sustain or harm ecological balance" . In the same vein, Stibbe (2015: 9) defines Ecolinguistics as "the study of how the patterns of language, and particularly the patterns of language that encourage sustainability and social justice, influence how we think about the environment".

In in line with Hauganin approach, Maffi (2005: 600) argues, "ECOLINGUISTICS is a field that explores how language reflects and

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sustains biocultyral diversity, revealing interconnections between linguistic, cultural and ecological systems." While Skutnabb-Kangas and Harmon (2018: 203) define ECOLINGUISTICS as "a field that explores how language policies and discourses impact ecological and linguistic sustainability, emphasizing the need to preserve both biodiversity and linguistic diversity".

ECOLINGUISTICS is the discipline of linguistics that studies the relations of language with the environment and natural world in their biological or ecological contexts. It examines the function of language in the interactions between people, animals, plants, and the environment, viewing language and society as intricately linked to the wider ecological frameworks that include and support them, as well as life on Earth in its whole (Virdis, 2022: 29) .

Fill (2018, p.1) in his introduction to Routledge Handbook of ECOLINGUISTICS comments on the following extracts the first from Fill & Penz (2007) "Sustaining Language" and Stibbe's (2015) book respectively:

1. Can language diversity be sustained on this earth? Can the resource language be used in a sustainable way? ECOLINGUISTICS addresses language loss and language maintenance in the age of globalization and the question of how language construes our view of nature and environment.

2. ECOLINGUISTICS, then, is about critiquing forms of language that contribute to ecological destruction and aid to search for new forms of language that inspire people to protect the natural world.

2. Literature Review

Ecolinguistics is a multidisciplinary arena at the connection of linguistics, ecology, and ideology. The development of the field is rooted in the recognition that language not only reflects societal perceptions of the environment but also shapes these perceptions and behaviors. Researchers have examined how language constructs ideologies about nature, identity, and environmental care (Stibbe, 2015; Fill, 2018).

Stibbe's (2015) seminal work on "stories we live by" highlights the importance of narrative in shaping environmental attitudes. He categorizes ideologies into three main types: destructive, ambivalent, and beneficial. Destructive ideologies typically prioritize human-centered exploitation of nature, while beneficial ideologies promote sustainability and ecological balance. Ambivalent ideologies reflect a tension between ecological care and human-centered concerns like economic growth and cultural continuity.

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The concept of ecocentrism—emphasizing the intrinsic value of nature—is a recurring theme in ecolinguistic discourse (Martin, 2004). Many works explore how language can either advocate for or resist the exploitation of the environment. For example, in the case of mainstream economic discourses, language is often used to legitimize unsustainable practices under the guise of progress and development (Halliday, 2001). Similarly, factory farming discourses have been critiqued for dehumanizing animals and obscuring the environmental damage they cause (Glenn, 2004).

Ecolinguistics also examines language loss in relation to ecological degradation. According to Maffi (2005), linguistic diversity loss equals the loss of biodiversity, as both are shaped by broader socio-cultural systems that prioritize economic growth over sustainability. This view is echoed in the works of Skutnabb-Kangas and Harmon (2018), who stress the importance of preserving both languages and ecosystems as part of a broader strategy for achieving sustainability.

Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) has emerged as a key method within ecolinguistics to promote beneficial environmental ideologies (Bartlett, 2012; Macgilchrist, 2007). PDA focuses on identifying and encouraging the adoption of positive environmental discourses rather than simply critiquing harmful ones. The concept of "stories we live by" is central to this approach, as it emphasizes the role of narratives in shaping collective behavior towards nature. Scholars have also explored indigenous ecological discourses that emphasize the relationship between humans and the environment as interconnected and mutually beneficial (Dewi & Perangin-Angin, 2020; Bringhurst, 2008).

Trampe (2018) emphasizes the animal industry's frequent use of euphemisms, which frequently omit the ecologically detrimental aspects of the industry. 'Waste product', 'pest management', and 'treatment' are among the alternatives. By depicting animals as objects, these discourses can substantiate harmful farming practices, including factory farming (Stibbe, 2021, p. 23).

Goatly (2000) conducts a pioneering ecolinguistic study comparing damaging and positive discourses. A comparison between newspaper discourse (The Times) and romantic poetry (Wordsworth's The Prelude) was conducted. According to Goatly (2000, p. 301), The Times discourse is chiefly domesticated, processed, and passive, focuses on climate, disease, and hounds and horses, and occasionally subordinated to economic interests as brand names or commodities. In contrast, Wordsworth depicts nature as active and alive, featuring rivers as Sayers,

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animals and landscapes as Actors, and nature as phenomenon (e.g., 'I spied a glow-worm'). (Stibbe, 2021, p. 27).

Traditional Indonesian Pagu tales emphasize environmental care and ecosystems as morality tales, according to Dewi and Perangin-Angin (2020). Knight (2010) explores satoyama, a Japanese discourse on environment and culture. Haiku environmental poetry promotes a peaceful, respectful relationship with nature. Indigenous cinema seeks to restore colonized ways of being and create a positive future, according to Machiorlatti (2010). Bringhurst (2008) uses ecological linguistics to examine the literature of Native American as a beneficial discourse (Stibbe, 2021, p. 28).

3- Analytical Framework

Arran Stibbe's framework, as articulated in his work "Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By" (2015, with a second edition in 2021), is a foundational approach in the field of ecolinguistics. This framework provides tools for analyzing how language influences human interactions with the environment and how it shapes ecological thought and behavior. The framework is centered on the concept of *"stories we live by,"* which refers to the dominant narratives or discourses that guide societal actions and perceptions about the environment.

The second edition of Stibbe's book (2021) builds on the original framework by incorporating new research, expanding on the analysis of climate change discourses, and providing more contemporary examples of both harmful and beneficial narratives. It also deepens the exploration of the role that different genres and media play in shaping ecological thought.

Stibbe's framework is a comprehensive tool for understanding and transforming the ways in which language influences ecological thinking and behavior. It offers a path for ecolinguists to engage in both critique and constructive change towards more sustainable ways of living.

For Stibbe (2015/2021), Stories We Live By underlies narratives that shape how societies understand and interact with the natural world. They can be found in everyday language, media, literature, education, and various cultural practices. Stibbe categorizes these stories into *destructive, ambivalent* and *beneficial* for the environment.

The framework includes specific analytical techniques like critical discourse analysis, metaphor analysis, and narrative analysis to uncover the ecological implications of language use. Stibbe's framework is applied to various texts and contexts, including media, literature, everyday conversation, education, and policy discourse. The goal is not just to critique harmful language but to actively contribute to the creation

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of a more sustainable and ecologically aware society through conscious use of language.

For Stibbe (2015/2021), ECOLINGUISTICSis about ecology, and it is about language, but these two initially appear to be entirely separate areas of life. A cursory explanation is that language influences how we think about the world. The language of advertising can encourage us to desire unnecessary and environmentally damaging products, while nature writing can inspire respect for the natural world. How we think has an influence on how we act, so language can inspire us to destroy or protect the ecosystems that life depends on. Ecolinguistics, then, is about critiquing forms of language that contribute to ecological destruction, and aiding in the search for new forms of language that inspire people to protect the natural world.

ECOLINGUISTICS is very much more than this though. First, there are a number of different approaches with very different aims, goals and methodologies. Second, the analysis goes far deeper than commenting on individual texts such as advertisements or nature books. ECOLINGUISTICS can explore the more general patterns of language that influence how people both think about, and treat, the world. It can investigate the stories we live by – mental models that influence behaviour and lie at the heart of the ecological challenges we are facing (Stibbe, 2015: p. 2).

The link between ecology and language is that how humans treat each other and the natural world is influenced by our thoughts, concepts, ideas, ideologies and worldviews, and these in turn are shaped through language. It is through language that economic systems are built, and when those systems are seen to lead to immense suffering and ecological destruction, it is through language that they are resisted and new forms of economy brought into being. It is through language that consumerist identities are built and lives orientated towards accumulation, and it is through language that consumerism is resisted and people are inspired to 'be more rather than have more'(Stibbe, 2015: p. 2).

Linguistics provides tools for analysing the texts that surround us in everyday life and shape the kind of society we belong to. These tools can help reveal the hidden stories that exist between the lines of the texts. Once revealed, the stories can be questioned from an ecological perspective: do they encourage people to destroy or protect the ecosystems that life depends on? If they are destructive then they need to be resisted, and if beneficial they need to be promoted (Stibbe, 2015: p. 2).

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Stibbe (2015/ 2021) brings together a range of theories from linguistics and cognitive science into a linguistic framework to reveal the stories we live by; to develop an ecological framework for judging those stories against; and to put the linguistic and ecological frameworks into action in analysing a wide range of texts from different areas of life.

According to van Dijk (1998: 8), "ideologies allow people, as group members, to organize the multitude of social beliefs about what is the case, what is good or bad, right or wrong, *for them*, and act accordingly" . As per Stibbe's framework, ideology is the first of nine cognitive stories. In CDA, ideology is a prevalent idea that underlies belief systems or worldviews that are collectively shared by a specific group in society. It is occasionally employed in a derogatory manner to describe racist, regressive ideologies that are held by influential blocs within society. Nevertheless, other theorists employ it in a more neutral context, allowing it to refer to the belief systems of any group in society, regardless of whether they are positive or negative. Ideologies are cognitive in nature, meaning that they exist in the minds of group members. However, they also have a linguistic manifestation in the distinctive methods of speaking and writing that these members employ (Stibbe, 2021:19).

Stibbe (2021: 19) explains that a group of individuals who share a common ideology or worldview that is expressed through specific forms of language is an example of a nationalist. The language choices made by the British National Party in the following examples divide individuals into an ingroup (British; English; indigenous; native) and an outgroup (immigrant; alien; foreigner; African):

-MASS IMMIGRATION CRISIS: Immigrant **hordes** heading for Soft-Touch Britain … We will put British people first.

-… to hold back **the hordes** of Third World migrants clamouring to **invade** the British Isles ….

-Multiculturalism is the eradication of the indigenous culture and being replaced by a **hotchpotch** of foreign and alien groups …

In these examples, the outgroup is depicted in a negative light by employing terms with negative connotations, including "hordes," "invade," "alien," and "hotchpotch." The notion that an identifiable group of native or indigenous British individuals is in danger from an undifferentiated mass of immigrants is a narrative, specifically a version of the world that is one of many possible versions. Stories have an impact on the way in which individuals think, speak, and act (Stibbe, 2021: 20).

Accordingly, discourse is defined within Stibbe's framework as "are standardised ways that particular groups in society use language, images

and other forms of representation". Regardless of whether they are economists, magazine journalists, agriculturalists, environmentalists, or nature writers, members of a given group possess distinctive speaking, writing, or visual material design styles that are characteristic of the group. These consist of vocabulary selections, grammatical choices, patterns of presupposition, and other linguistic features that, crucially, combine to convey a specific "story" about the world. The stories that underlie discourses are referred to as ideology where he defines ideologies as " belief systems about how the world was, is, will be or should be which are shared by members of particular groups in society" (Stibbe, 2021: 20).

The focus of discourse analysis lies not just on individual texts, but on the recurring patterns of language qualities that express the same ideology consistently throughout several texts. When doing an ecolinguistic analysis of an ideology, the focus lies not on its truthfulness, but rather on its influence in motivating individuals to either conserve or harm the ecosystems that sustain life. There is no definitive algorithm for assessing if ideologies are "destructive or beneficial". Therefore, ecolinguists evaluate whether an ideology aligns with their ECOSOPHY or contradicts it. For instance, the ecosophy advocates a worldwide to decrease consumption and a redistribution of resources from wealthy to impoverished nations. Stories that are perceived to be causing harm because they oppose the ECOSOPHY of the analyst are called *destructive discourses* (Stibbe, 2021, p. 22).

Stibbe (2015) employs a comprehensive linguistic analysis to show patterns in the method that language is manipulated trough transcripts. The focus is on linguistic features which combine together to tell stories about the world. A great deal of work in Critical Discourse Analysis has shown which features are useful to focus on when revealing the stories told between the lines of texts. He uses (Fairclough 2003), Martin and Rose (2003); van Dijk (2011); Machin and Mayr (2012). In his analysis, he focuses on a set if linguistic features comprise the following:

1)Vocabulary items (connotations of words, pronoun use, modals such as 'might' or 'must')
2)Semantic relations (synonymy, antonymy or hyponymy)
3)Sentence Structure (active vs passive, nominalization)
4)Transitivity Patterns (the arrangement of processes and participants in a clause)
5)Pragmatic Assumptions and presuppositions embedded in clauses
6)Clauses Relationships (reason, consequence, purpose)
7)Representation of Events (abstractly or concretely)

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8)Participants' Representation (as individuals or an aggregated mass)

9)Intertextuality (patterns of borrowing from other texts)

10)Texts Genres (conventional formats of texts which serve a social function)

11) Figurative Language (irony, metaphor, metonymy)."

Destructive discourses:

Mainstream economics discourses are perhaps the most influential of the numerous discourses that can be deemed destructive. Despite the fact that dominant economics discourses may not explicitly reference nature, they still establish relationships between humans and the environment, even if these relationships are alienated and destructive. ECOLINGUISTICS has been plagued by economic discourses since its inception. Halliday (2001) examines the manner in which language is frequently employed to depict "economic growth" as the primary objective of society. He critisizes these representations because the exhaustion of resources and the devastation of the ecosystems that sustain life are the inevitable consequences of unlimited growth on a finite planet (Stibbe, 2021, p. 22). Another example given by Stibbe (2021) of destructive discourses is that of intensive production of agriculture. Factory farming is known to harbor pathogens that have the potential to cause a pandemic (McCarron 2017), consume an inordinate amount of resources, generate significant pollution, and negatively impact the welfare of animals (Henning 2011; Poore and Nemecek 2018). This evidence is extensive. Glenn (2004, p. 65) provides a critical analysis of the ways in which "Specific overlapping discursive strategies constructed by the factory farming industry help create, sustain, and perpetuate a practice that is cruel and environmentally dangerous." Genn's analysis demonstrates the manner in which a variety of linguistic devices construct animals as commodities, such as the phrase "grain-and-roughage-consuming animal units." She investigates "double speak," in which cages that are overcrowded are referred to as "individual accommodation" and partitions that prevent animals from moving their bodies for their entire lifetimes are described as "for privacy." (Stibbe, 2021, p. 23).

In order to increase awareness of the potentially detrimental ecological consequences of the underlying ideologies, ECOLINGUISTICS can examine the discourse of groups such as veterinarians, agribusiness executives, economists, lifestyle magazine journalists, politicians, and advertisers. The act of resisting a dominant destructive discourse involves advocating for a reduction in its use, which is justified by a compelling

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account of the damage it inflicts. This action creates a space for alternative, potentially more beneficial discourses (Stibbe, 2021, p. 24).

Ambivalent discourses

Most discourse analysis in ECOLINGUISTICS focuses on positive, albeit problematic, discourses such as environmentalism, ecology, conservation, sustainability, and green advertising. Although these discourses try to address ecological issues produced by destructive discourses, they tend to originate from the same culture and may be affected by political or commercial objectives. A discourse advocating for reducing consumption is unlikely to be financed by a government focused on economic growth or published in a publication that relies on creating a 'buying mood' for advertisers. Ecocentric discourses promoting caring for other species may be overlooked by governments prioritizing short-term outcomes for human   voters.

Many mainstreams 'green' discourses are equivocal, with some features supporting and others opposing the analyst's ECOSOPHY (Stibbe, 2021, p. 25).

Ecolinguists have examined a range of contradictory discussions, such as environmentalism, corporate greenwashing, natural resources, zoos, and sustainability. These discourses face criticism for depicting plants, animals, rivers, and forests solely as resources, portraying small-scale activities as solutions to environmental issues, and concealing responsibility to avoid accountability for ecological devastation. The zoos discourse can be seen as ambivalent due to its dual character. On one hand, it highlights the importance of connecting with nature and promoting conservation efforts. However, on the other hand, it involves the removal of animals from their natural habitats and presenting them in confined spaces, isolating them as objects of observation. Typically, when ambivalent discourses align with the goals of ecosophy, it is often more effective to engage in a constructive collaboration with individuals responsible for the discourse rather than directly resisting it (Stibbe, 2021, p. 25).

Beneficial discourses

ECOLINGUISTICS has an underdeveloped role in identifying new discourses that promote life-sustaining systems, rather than just criticizing destructive or ambivalent discourses. These conversations are helpful. While harmful and ambivalent discourses are chosen based on their prevalence, beneficial discourses are chosen based on distinct criteria. In an unsustainable society, discourses promoting eco-friendly behavior are unlikely to prevail. Analyzing helpful discourses aims to promote them as alternative storytelling methods and promote their

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general adoption, even if they are currently unknown. The most crucial aspect is aligning ideology with the analyst's ECOSOPHY, such as valuing human and animal lives, promoting consumption reduction, social justice, and resilience (Stibbe, 2021, p. 26).

According to Martin (2004), Positive Discourse Analysis aims to encourage helpful discourses rather than reject them. This notion was further refined by Macgilchrist (2007) and Bartlett (2012, 2018). However, the phrase is contentious. According to Wodak (Kendall 2007, p. 17), being critical does not necessarily mean being negative, and providing alternatives is also part of being critical. However, most Critical Discourse Analysis research focuses on highlighting how discourses can cause oppression and exploitation. Its main goal is to empower individuals to challenge oppressive ideologies. The term 'Positive Discourse Analysis' highlights the need for finding good discourses to envision and create new social structures (Stibbe, 2021, p. 26).

4. Methodology

The present paper applies Stibbe's (2015/2021) framework to two Iraqi Ecodocumantry media transcripts:

1.Marshes: Legend of the South (Al-Iraqia, 2016)

2.Last Alert of Earth (Rudaw English, 2023)

The study focuses on ideological framings of the Mesopotamian Marshes, mapping discourses into destructive, ambivalent, and beneficial categories. A qualitative discourse analysis is carried out, analyzing ideology as a cognitive story manifested by linguistic clusters such as transitivity patterns, lexical choices, metaphors, presuppositions, and narrative trajectories.

5. Analysis & Results Discussion

This part examines how the documentaries constructs, legitimates, and challenges "Stories We Live By" about the Mesopotamian Marshes. The analysis follows Stibbe's (2015/2021) ecolinguistics framework, focusing on ideologies. The Iraqi marshes are represented through competing ideologies that shape ecological, cultural, and political meaning. These ideologies reveal the marshes as symbolic terrains where identity, ecology, and power converge.

5. 1. Ideology in Al-Iraqia's (2016) "Marshes: Legend of the South" Excerpt (1): Divine Gift Ideology[1]

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[1] See appendix A - Translated Transcript "Marshes: Legend of the South" – Documentary – Directed by Fares Taameh Al-Tamimi :https://docs.google.com/document/d/1RXvvAK4pfjsCU12WAbPr9szu0wVckp8m/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109243249813765449339&rtpof=true&sd=true

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1."The gods have given us a great gift in these abundant waters and plentiful fish.
2.Hold the reed, man, and go far away.
3.Wherever you settle, we are the sons of water and reeds."

(Al-Iraqia, 2016)

In this excerpt constructs the marshes as a divine endowment. Through metaphor, the waters and fish are framed as a "gift," creating a story of reverence and gratitude. Agency is assigned to "the gods" while humans are positioned as beneficiaries. This produces an ideology that naturalizes obligation: if the marshes are gifts, they must be honored and preserved. According to Stibbe, such beneficial stories align with ecological care because they cultivate respect rather than exploitation. The invocation of kinship by the use of metaphor "sons of water and reeds"—strengthens belonging by fusing human identity with ecological elements, reinforcing the ideology of inseparability between people and place.

Excerpt (2): Civilizational Continuity Ideology

9." It has passed and developed through many civilizational stages, including the historical eras that began with the invention of cuneiform writing, the rise of cities, government, and arts at the dawn of the third millennium BC, continuing to flourish at the beginning of the Christian era.
10.The marshes are among the ancient historical regions.
11.Historical sources indicate they belong to the era of authentic ancient Iraqi civilizations, including the Sumerian civilization and the Akkadian civilization."
(Al-Iraqia, 2016)

Here, the marshes are situated within a civilizational narrative of invention, governance, and artistry. Nominalizations such as "invention of writing" and "rise of cities" abstract achievements into collective cultural milestones, emphasizing continuity. The ideology is one of historical authenticity and originality: the marshes are positioned not as derivative but as the source of innovation. Stibbe's (2015/2021) Ecolinguistics highlights how ideologies serve identity and legitimacy; this extract constructs cultural legitimacy for present-day marsh dwellers through linkage with the Sumerians. The story naturalizes belonging through deep time, providing authority to contemporary claims of identity, yet risks erasing hybridity and cross-cultural exchanges that also shaped Mesopotamian history.

Excerpt (3): Refuge and Resistance Ideology

41. "Some sources mention that Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf al-Thaqafi… pursued those who evaded taxes and tributes into the marshes.
42. This shows that the marshes had long been a refuge for fugitives, since the time of Sennacherib and the Persians."

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49. "After the 1991 uprising, people fled to the marshes to resist the regime.
50. The marshes became their natural refuge, just as the northern mountains sheltered opponents."

(Al-Iraqia, 2016)

This segment frames the marshes as sanctuary spaces throughout history. They function as protective landscapes, offering concealment and survival in times of political repression. Transitivity assigns agency to people ("fled") and to the marshes themselves, which act as refuge by virtue of their ecological density. The ideology emerging here is one of ecological protection against tyranny. In Stibbe's terms, this is a beneficial story of place-as-sanctuary, though it also implicitly constructs the state as antagonistic, producing a resistance narrative. The marshes are more than physical terrain; they are storied as active participants in safeguarding freedom.

Excerpt (4): Displacement and Duality Ideology

57. "After the war, the marsh people were subjected to forced migration and displacement from their lands.
58. This exile lasted more than 15–20 years.
59. The generations who grew up during this time lived in a transitional environment—neither fully urban nor truly marsh dwellers.
60. They existed between two worlds, and this duality changed their values and behavior."
(Al-Iraqia, 2016)

This passage develops an ideology of cultural loss through displacement. Forced migration is foregrounded as cause, while its effects are framed as liminality—"between two worlds." The metaphor captures hybridity but evaluates it negatively, implying weakened heritage and identity. Stibbe's framework shows that ideologies can delegitimize certain ways of life; here, urban influence is coded as dilution of ecological authenticity. The story contrasts tradition and modernity, marking continuity as preferable. It shapes a narrative of harm not only to environment but also to cultural fabric, positioning displacement as destructive to ecological identity.

Excerpt (5): Fragility Ideology

68. "The return of migratory birds and fish was not in the same numbers or varieties as before 1992 and until 2003 after the fall of the regime.
69. Fish need time to reproduce after such a long break.
70. Birds also have memory and instinct for the places they visit.
71. After staying away from the marshes for so many years, their numbers

upon return were much lower."
 (Al-Iraqia, 2016)

Here, the marsh ecosystem is storied as fragile and sensitive. Anthropomorphism ("birds have memory") humanizes wildlife, fostering empathy and moral concern. The temporal structure ("after staying away… their numbers… much lower") emphasizes irreversible consequences. This ideology warns of ecological vulnerability: recovery is slow, incomplete, and precarious. According to Stibbe, such stories encourage care and caution, reinforcing beneficial ideologies of ecological stewardship, while implicitly critiquing human disruption as a cause of fragility.

Excerpt (6): Harmony and Restoration Ideology

102. "It is clear to everyone that the revival and development of the marshes in southern Iraq demonstrate the natural and healthy interaction between human beings and nature.

106. For this reason, scientists, researchers, and environmental protection organizations worked to restore the marshes after the devastation that struck them."

(Al-Iraqia, 2016)

This closing segment frames the marshes as an emblem of balance. Evaluation ("natural and healthy interaction") presents human–nature relations as cooperative and desirable. Explicit agency is given to "scientists, researchers, and organizations" who "worked to restore," constructing stewardship as collective duty. In Stibbe's ecolinguistics, this is a beneficial ideology: it promotes restoration, highlights positive interaction, and valorizes ecological care. The ideology counters destructive stories of exploitation by emphasizing possibility and renewal, closing the narrative on a hopeful note.

The ideological representations of the Iraqi marshes reveal a contested symbolic terrain where ecology, history, and identity intersect. Beneficial ecocentric ideologies dominate, emphasizing reverence, sanctuary, vulnerability, and renewal. The Divine Gift narrative frames the marshes as sacred, demanding respect and preservation, while the Refuge and Resistance story presents them as protective landscapes enabling survival against oppression. Similarly, the Fragility and Harmony and Restoration ideologies highlight ecological vulnerability and cooperative stewardship,

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grounding ecological care in both scientific and moral discourse. The following table summarizes the all occurrences of ideology as a cognitive story in the documentary:

Table (1): Comparative Framework of Ideologies Used in "Marshes: Legend of the South"

No.	Excerpt	Ideology Type	Orientation	Temporal Focus
1.	Divine Gift (Sent. 1-3)	Beneficial	Ecocentric	Future (obligation to preserve)
2.	Civilizational Continuity (Sent. 09-11)	Ambivalent	Anthropocentric	Past (historical legitimacy)
3.	Refuge & Resistance (Sent. 41-42)	Beneficial	Ecocentric	Past (refuge, resistance)
4.	Displacement & Duality (sentences 57-60)	Destructive	Ecocentric	Present (displacement, loss)
5.	Fragility Ideology Sentences (68-71)	Beneficial	Ecocentric	Present (fragility, vulnerability)
6.	(Harmony and Restoration) Sentences 102-106	Beneficial	Ecocentric (with anthropocentric undertone)	Future (restoration, renewal)

In contrast, Civilizational Continuity offers an ambivalent anthropocentric framing. By linking the marshes to Sumerian and Akkadian legacies, it provides cultural legitimacy but risks essentializing identity and excluding intercultural hybridity. The Displacement and Duality ideology is destructive, portraying forced migration as eroding authentic ecological identity and stigmatizing hybridity as cultural loss. Comparative mapping shows temporal shifts: the past is constructed through civilizational depth and resistance, the present through displacement and fragility, and the future through sacred duty and restoration. Ideologies vary in strength, with sacred, resistant, and traumatic framings exerting the most cultural force. Together, these narratives reveal the marshes as more than ecosystems—they are storied spaces of identity, conflict, and hope. The following figure displays the mapping of ideologies in the documentary:
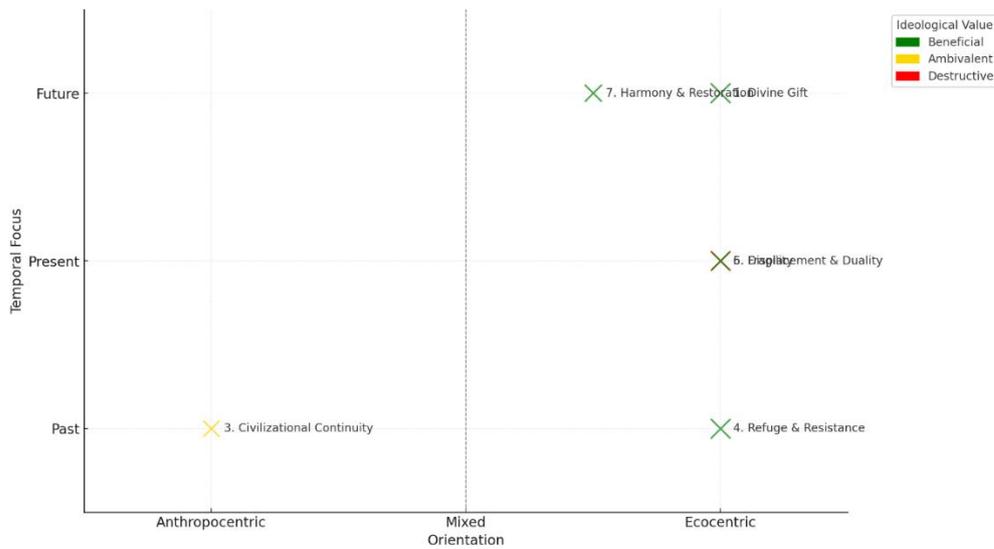
Figure (1): Integrated Mapping of Ideologies "Marshes: Legend of the South"

5.2. Ideology in Rudaw English's (2023) "Last Alert of Earth"

Excerpt (7): [1]

1. "This is the mother of Iraqi marshes a unique nature full of animals and birds.
2. The birds have returned and are looking closely into the water diving from time to time and hunting for fish.

3. The buffalos on the other hand line up and eat the reeds in the marshes."

(Rudaw English, 2023)

The excerpt uses personification ("mother of Iraqi marshes") and lexical cohesion around biodiversity ("animals", "birds", "fish", "buffalos") to foreground the marshes as a living, nurturing entity. The present continuous tense ("are looking", "are diving") creates an immediacy and concreteness, portraying active non-human agency. The use of definite articles ("the birds", "the buffalos") presupposes familiarity and

[1] **See Appendix-B: Transcript of "The Last Alert of Earth- Drought Iraqi marshes uninhabitable"**
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-MEanD1tUPINkn74JCWcD9Tf54DDfmhs/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109243249813765449339&rtpof=true&sd=true

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importance. The relational process "is" links the marshes to a nurturing identity, reinforcing an intrinsic value frame.

Excerpt (8):

5. "This is the marsh of *Chibaish* once a popular tourist destination but now its own population is frustrated by water scarcity with hundreds of parched and hungry families fleeing their historic homeland each year."

(Rudaw English, 2023)

The clause structure uses a contrastive conjunction ("but now") to shift from positive past to negative present, framing change as loss. Nominalisation ("water scarcity") abstracts the process, obscuring specific human or institutional causes. The verbs "fleeing" and "frustrated" foreground human suffering over ecological change. The temporal adjunct ("each year") normalises repetition and inevitability. The marsh is now positioned indirectly through its human inhabitants, shifting focus from the ecosystem to its social consequences the ideology here is ambivalent. While it recognizes environmental decline, the primary frame is human hardship. Also, the orientation is mixed ecocentric and anthropocentric.

Excerpt (9):

6. "Summer has not even arrived yet but residents are terrified they claim that coming events cast their shadows before.
7. This spring the water level has plummeted by nearly a meter compared to previous years.
8. The drought brings back painful memories of the former regime's policies in the 1990s when river water was diverted from the marshlands as punishment for tribal uprisings."

(Rudaw English, 2023)

The above statements complexly link current climate impacts to political history through temporal and causal relations. The metaphor "cast their shadows" frames the drought as inevitable and foreboding. The verb "plummeted" dramatises decline, while "painful memories" evokes emotional alignment with affected communities. Historical intertextuality connects environmental degradation with state oppression, embedding the story in a broader political narrative. This aligns environmental harm with human injustice. The story of ideology here is destructive where drought

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is constructed as both ecological collapse and a result of human political violence. Hence, it has an anthropocentric orientation using a framing that centers on human fear, memory, and injustice rather than ecological processes.

Excerpt (10):

1. "This is the mother of Iraqi marshes a unique nature full of animals and birds.
2. The birds have returned and are looking closely into the water diving from time to time and hunting for fish.

3. The buffalos on the other hand line up and eat the reeds in the marshes."

(Rudaw English, 2023)

The extract uses personification ("mother of Iraqi marshes") and lexical cohesion around biodiversity ("animals", "birds", "fish", "buffalos") to foreground the marshes as a living, nurturing entity. The present continuous tense ("are looking", "are diving") creates an immediacy and concreteness, portraying active non-human agency. The use of definite articles ("the birds", "the buffalos") presupposes familiarity and importance. The relational process "is" links the marshes to a nurturing identity, reinforcing an intrinsic value frame.

Excerpt (11):

6. "Summer has not even arrived yet but residents are terrified they claim that coming events cast their shadows before.
7. This spring the water level has plummeted by nearly a meter compared to previous years.
8. The drought brings back painful memories of the former regime's policies in the 1990s when river water was diverted from the marshlands as punishment for tribal uprisings."

(Rudaw English, 2023)

The above statements complexly links current climate impacts to political history through temporal and causal relations. The metaphor "cast their shadows" frames the drought as inevitable and foreboding. The verb "plummeted" dramatises decline, while "painful memories" evokes

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emotional alignment with affected communities. Historical intertextuality connects environmental degradation with state oppression, embedding the story in a broader political narrative. This aligns environmental harm with human injustice. The story of ideology here is destructive where drought is constructed as both ecological collapse and a result of human political violence. Hence, it has an anthropocentric orientation using a framing that centers on human fear, memory, and injustice rather than ecological processes.

The following table shows a clear ideological trajectory in the transcript. Beneficial–ecocentric framings appear mainly at the beginning and in isolated observational moments. These sections foreground biodiversity, natural processes, and ecological interdependence without subordinating nature to human utility. Ambivalent–mixed framings occur where ecological value is acknowledged but ultimately tied to economic or tourism benefits.

Table (2): mapping the ideological trajectory and orientations in Last Alert to Earth

No.	Excerpts	Core Thematic Focus	Ideology Classification	Orientation Classification
7.	(Sent. 1-3)	Biodiversity and ecological vitality	Beneficial	Ecocentric
8.	(Sent. 5)	Loss of water and population displacement	Ambivalent	Mixed
9.	(Sent. 6-8)	Linking drought to historical political oppression	Destructive	Anthropocentric
10.	(Sent. 09-12)	Severe scarcity and livelihood collapse	Destructive	Anthropocentric
11.	(Sent. 14-20)	Religious framing of water dependency	Destructive	Anthropocentric
12.	(Sent. 21-22)	Biodiversity and tourism	Ambivalent	Mixed
13.	(Sent. 28-35)	Spatial gradient of marsh drying	Beneficial	Ecocentric
14.	(Sent. 54-56)	Livelihood collapse and religious dependence	Destructive	Anthropocentric

15.	(Sent. 60-64)	Birds' reliance on wetlands + tourism	Ambivalent	Mixed
16.	(Sent. 67-78)	Observational account of marsh drying	Beneficial	Ecocentric
17.	(Sent. 84-86)	Elderly resident resisting displacement	Destructive	Anthropocentric
18.	(Sent. 93-94)	Agricultural decline and migration	Destructive	Anthropocentric
19.	(Sent. 102-105)	Marsh drying linked to tourism decline	Ambivalent	Mixed
20.	(Sent. 107-108)	Geopolitical water policies	Destructive	Ecocentric
21.	(Sent. 109-111)	Personification of marshes alongside human hunger	Ambivalent	Mixed
22.	(Sent. 120-124)	Ecological degradation (dead fish, reeds loss)	Beneficial	Ecocentric
23.	(Sent. 126-127)	Economic decline in fishing	Destructive	Anthropocentric
24.	(Sent. 128-132)	Harmful fishing practices causing biodiversity loss	Beneficial	Ecocentric
25.	(Sent. 141-142)	Buffalo as livestock assets	Destructive	Anthropocentric
26.	(Sent. 146-153)	Religious framing of past abundance	Destructive	Anthropocentric
27.	(Sent. 155)	Migration due to water scarcity	Destructive	Anthropocentric
28.	(158-160)	Economic desperation linked to water loss	Destructive	Anthropocentric

Destructive–anthropocentric ideologies dominate the discourse focusing on livelihoods, displacement, economic loss, and geopolitical conflict. In these sections, nature's worth is primarily instrumental — a resource to sustain human survival, income, or cultural continuity. Even when ecological harm is acknowledged, it is framed through its consequences for people rather than the intrinsic value of ecosystems.

The ideological pattern aligns with Stibbe's (2015/2021) observation that destructive stories often reinforce anthropocentrism by embedding

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environmental issues in human-centred crisis narratives. The sporadic ecocentric moments demonstrate that alternative ideologies are possible, but they are overshadowed by dominant anthropocentric stories that position the marshes as a resource rather than a living community of which humans are part**.** Thus, the overall ideological story curve is as the following:

➤**Start:** Strong beneficial, ecocentric story of a living marsh ecosystem with human and nonhuman co-dependence.

➤**Middle:** Alternation between destructive anthropocentric frames (livelihood, displacement) and ambivalent mixes (ecocentric concern tied to economic/touristic value).

➤**End:** Consolidation into destructive anthropocentric narrative — climate change and transboundary water politics framed as existential human crises.

➤**Result:** The viewer is moved from seeing the marsh as a living entity worth protecting in itself, to accepting a story where its value is mainly in sustaining human survival — a cognitive shift Stibbe would classify as the dominance of human-centred destructive stories over ecocentric beneficial stories.

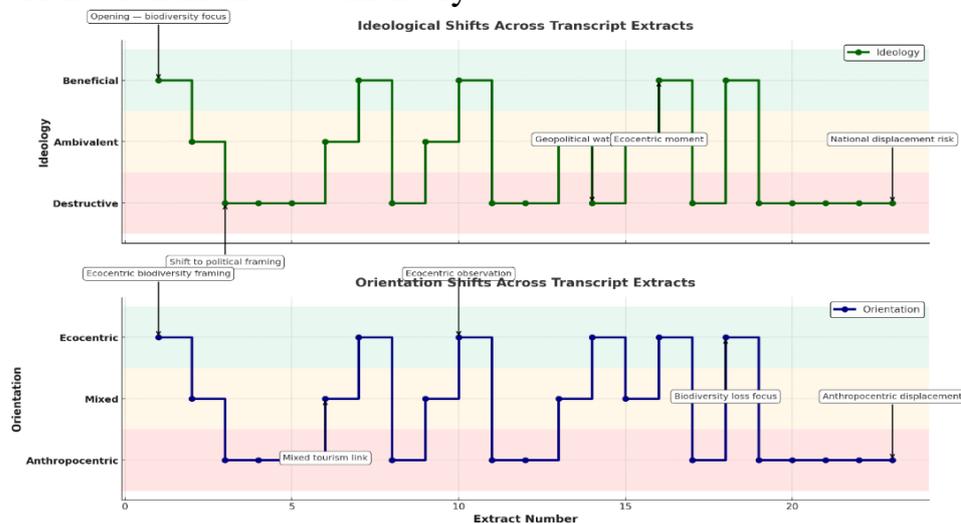The following figure shows the timeline of ideological shift and orientation in the documentary :

Figure (2): Timeline of Ideological and Orientation Shifts Across Transcript Extracts

The plotted data shows how the transcript progresses from ecocentric beginnings toward anthropocentric dominance, with intermittent returns to mixed or ecocentric framings. The first extracts are ideologically beneficial and ecocentric. Language choices foreground biodiversity

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("birds", "buffalos", "reeds") with concrete imagery, creating mental frames of nature's vitality. This framing aligns with Stibbe's *beneficial stories to live by*, where ecosystems are central actors rather than resources. The first extracts are ideologically beneficial and ecocentric. Language choices foreground biodiversity ("birds", "buffalos", "reeds") with concrete imagery, creating mental frames of nature's vitality. This framing aligns with Stibbe's *beneficial stories to live by*, where ecosystems are central actors rather than resources.

The dominant ideology becomes destructive and anthropocentric. Drought is constructed as a human livelihood crisis, with reduced focus on ecological integrity. Grammatical structures shift toward human-centred transitivity ("people…flee", "families…relocated") and away from agency of nonhuman actors. This aligns with Stibbe's *destructive stories*, where nonhuman systems become background conditions.

Temporary returns to ecocentric orientation emerge when biodiversity loss and migratory bird patterns are discussed. However, the ideological framing remains ambivalent: environmental health is valued primarily for its human benefits (e.g., tourism, fishing). This creates a mixed orientation—recognising ecological processes while subordinating them to human economy.

The narrative intensifies anthropocentric framing. Displacement statistics, migration, and state-level geopolitical water disputes dominate. Lexical choices ("efforts with Turkey", "Euphrates sole source") represent rivers as national assets rather than ecosystems. This corresponds to *destructive stories*, as the ecological whole is subjugated to political-economic logic. Linguistic relationships organise around antonymy and scalar contrast: wet/dry, before/now, abundance/scarcity, visitors/no visitors, today/tomorrow. These antonymies underpin a master story of loss and decline. Hyponymy narrows livelihoods to emblematic species (buffalo, fish, reeds), which operate as metonyms for the marsh ecosystem.

Grammatical structures oscillate between active clauses that attribute agency to local practices ("put electricity in the water," "we used to bring back") and passives or nominalisations that background political agents ("water was diverted," "water policy," "constructed dams"), a pattern that distributes blame across naturalised processes and institutions. Recurrent conditional constructions ("if there is water…") encode hydrological determinism, while deontic modals ("must migrate," "ask the government to step up") foreground obligations.

Transitivity patterns bring nonhuman actors into the clause as Agents or Sensers ("birds have returned," "buffalo… graze"), resisting erasure and aligning with Stibbe's call to make ecosystems visible. Where erasure

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does occur it is agentive: upstream policy actors are often backgrounded by nominalisation and passive voice in the same passages that quantify infrastructure.

Presuppositions are triggered by temporal adverbs and iterative aspect ("each year," "used to"), naturalising drought recurrence and normalising tourism decline. Clause relations strongly favour cause–consequence chains linking water level to livelihoods to migration, which stabilises a structural explanation over individual blame.

Events are consistently represented concretely through place deixis, measurements, and prices, producing an evidential narrative that mixes witnessing with statistics. Participants alternate between individuals with names or biographies and aggregated masses ("families," "residents"), enabling empathetic identification while scaling up to policy relevance.

Intertextuality draws on hydropolitical discourse, conservation science, humanitarian reporting, and religious language ("boon from God"). Genre mixing—documentary travelogue, interview, and news brief—supports authority and engagement.

Figures of speech include kinship metaphors ("mother of Iraqi marshes"), war metaphors ("battlefield"), physiological metaphors for ecosystems ("marshes are thirsty"), and personification of seasons. These figures carry ideological weight by moralising care, framing struggle, and naturalising urgency.

Overall ideological story. The transcript constructs a destructive story about hydrological collapse and forced migration driven by climate change and transboundary damming, tempered by beneficial stories that attribute agency and value to nonhuman life. It advocates a responsibility ideology: local harmful practices should cease, state and regional actors should negotiate flows, and water access is the decisive lever for safeguarding cultures and ecosystems. In Stibbe's (2015/2021) terms, it challenges stories that erase ecosystems or treat them as mere resources, while risking new erasures by abstracting upstream agency through nominalisation.

6. Conclusions

This paper shows that media discourse plays a crucial role in constructing and perpetuating ecological ideologies that influence societal perceptions and behaviors toward the environment.

It is found that beneficial ecocentric ideologies those that emphasize the intrinsic value of nature, ecological protection, and ecological balance— are prominent in the representation of the Mesopotamian Marshes, especially in the *Marshes: Legend of the South* documentary. These stories, such as the Divine Gift, Refuge and Resistance, and Fragility,

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frame the marshes as sacred, protective, and vulnerable. The ideologies invoke a sense of responsibility and respect toward the environment, which aligns with Stibbe's (2015/2021) call for stories that inspire ecological care.

However, the ambivalent ideologies present in both documentaries—such as Civilizational Continuity and the mixed representations in *Last Alert of Earth*—highlight the complexities of ecological discourse. While these discourses acknowledge the ecological importance of the marshes, they often tie environmental health to human-centered concerns like cultural identity, tourism, and economic survival. This leads to a tension between acknowledging environmental problems while simultaneously promoting human development goals, a characteristic of greenwashing or sustainable development rhetoric, as Stibbe (2021) discusses.

The most prominent and alarming finding is the presence of destructive ideologies in the eco-documentaries, mostly in *Last Alert of Earth*. Here, environmental degradation is framed principally through anthropocentric stories that prioritize human survival and geopolitical struggles over ecological health. The framing of climate change and water scarcity as direct human crises, as seen in Displacement and Duality or Geopolitical Water Policies, underscores a human-centric view that reduces the marshes to mere resources for human survival rather than valuing them as active, dynamic ecosystems. This destructive ideology reproduces broader patterns of anthropocentrism prevalent in global environmental discourses (Stibbe, 2021), which often focus on human problems rather than addressing the ecological systems themselves.

In general, these findings illustrate the ideological battle that plays out in media representations of Iraqi ecology, where competing discourses reflect conflicting views about the value and role of the environment. The study suggests that ecolinguistic analysis can serve as an important tool for identifying and critiquing these narratives, helping to raise awareness about the power of language in shaping environmental policy and behavior. The dominance of destructive, anthropocentric ideologies in mainstream media discourse reveals the challenges in shifting societal attitudes toward more ecocentric, life-sustaining worldviews.

Moreover, the study advocates for the promotion of beneficial ecocentric ideologies in media and policy discourse. Encouraging the portrayal of ecosystems as interconnected with human identity and survival, as seen in the Divine Gift and Refuge and Resistance narratives, may foster a greater sense of ecological responsibility. These stories not only recognize the worth of nature but also the profound relationship between

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humans and the environment, which is vital for developing sustainable ecological practices and policies.

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