



Language, TV, and Ecology: An Ecolinguistic Study of Bob's Burgers TV Show Lect. Tahir Mohammed Tahir

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Abstract:

This research examines how environmental discourse interacts with popular media through its critical ecolinguistic study of Climate Fiction in television. The animated series Bob's Burgers is used to show how linguistic techniques and rhetorical methods create different views of the biosphere. The study uses Arran Stubbe's theoretical frameworks from 2015 to discover which environmental preservation and waste management "stories we live by" both exist and operate within society. The research shows how dialogue and narrative structures use metaphors and agency to either confirm or dispute human-centered beliefs. The research demonstrates that mainstream animation functions as an effective educational tool which teaches environmental issues through their presentation as essential system problems instead of mere aesthetic matters.

Key word : Critical Ecolinguistics , Bob's Burgers, Climate Fiction, Environmental Discourse

اللغة، التلفاز، والبيئة: دراسة لغوية بيئية لمسلسل بوبز برغرز التلفزيوني
ملخص البحث :

يستكشف هذا البحث تقاطع الخطاب البيئي ووسائل الإعلام الشعبية من خلال تحليل لغوي بيئي نقدي لأدب الخيال المناخي في البرامج التلفزيونية. يدرس البحث بالتحديد مسلسل الرسوم المتحركة "بوبز برغرز" للتحقق من كيفية تأثير الاستراتيجيات اللغوية والأساليب البلاغية على تصوراتنا عن المحيط الحيوي. وبالاستناد إلى الأطر النظرية لأران ستيب (2015)، تحدد الدراسة "القصص التي نعيش وفقها" فيما يتعلق بالحفاظ على البيئة وإدارة النفايات. من خلال تحليل أنواع الحوارات و السردية، يكشف البحث كيف تُستخدم الاستعارات والفاعلية إما لتعزيز أو تحدي الأيديولوجيات الأنثروبولوجية. تشير النتائج إلى أن الرسوم المتحركة السائدة يمكن أن تكون وسيلة فعالة للتوعية البيئية، إذ توظف القضايا البيئية ليش فقط كاعتبارات جمالية، بل كتحديات نظامية حاسمة.

الكلمات المفتاحية : علم اللغة البيئي النقدي , بوبز برغرز , أدب المناخ , الخطاب البيئي

1. Introduction

Ecolinguistics studies the interaction between language and environmental elements which represents a crucial part of linguistic research although it remains an underexplored academic field. Ecolinguistics examines how people use language to speak about environmental problems and assesses how linguistic communication affects environmental understanding. The field investigates which environmental attitudes and behaviors people develop through language use whereas it examines how people use language to defend activities that harm the environment. (Stubbe,2015)

Researchers have discovered that language functions as the main factor which determines how people understand and connect with nature. Ecolinguistics studies linguistic choices



and discursive patterns to understand how narratives and terminologies shape environmental thought and action because these elements create a vital link between language use and ecological awareness. (Fill & mühläusler , 2001)

Filmmakers have used comedic methods to tackle this problem through their various films and animated series. Bob's Burgers, an American animated television series created by Loren Bouchard and first released in, presents this theme through Season 12 Episode 6 which carries the title Beach please. The show portrays environmental pollution through a beach cleanup activity that high school students conduct at the beach. The series presents this environmental issue through its comedic content which uses lighthearted humor to create an entertaining show that people of all ages can enjoy. (Bouchard , 2021)

2. Literature Review

films and popular culture. The studies demonstrate that both movies and television shows have a powerful effect on how people perceive environmental issues and climate change. Zahid researched environmental concepts which animated films, analyzing both Finding Nemo and WALL-E. The researchers wanted to investigate how movies combine their verbal and visual elements to show environmental issues to viewers. The researchers employed an ecolinguistic model which Stibbe developed to conduct a qualitative analysis of the movie dialogues. The research established that these movies deliver environmental protection messages while demonstrating how human activities lead to environmental damage. The researchers concluded that films, especially those for children, can help build positive environmental attitudes and should be used as educational tools. (Johns-Putra 2016) reviewed climate change fiction, which people also call climate fiction, as a literary genre. The study demonstrated that climate change has emerged as a central theme in contemporary storytelling across multiple mediums, including novels, theater productions, and visual storytelling. The research establishes that climate fiction works as a tool to educate people about climate change as a critical worldwide issue. The study found that climate fiction uses storytelling methods and specific language choices to create an emotional experience which helps audiences understand climate change better. The research demonstrates that films and television shows have the ability to create environmental awareness among viewers.

Van Wyk (2012) conducted an ecocritical analysis of multiple films including Into the Wild and Grizzly Man. The researchers wanted to investigate which methods films use to show how humans interact with the natural world. The researcher examined the films through their use of language and visual elements and their deployment of metaphors. The results showed that nature is shown as a powerful force which poses threats to people and shows itself as a sacred entity while some elements receive human attributes. The study concluded that films influence how viewers understand nature and their responsibility toward the environment. (Van Wyk, 2012, p. 34)

Kapranov (2024) studied climate change discourse from an ecolinguistic perspective, focusing on how language is used to talk about climate issues. The study examined media discourse yet its findings apply to film and television studies. The research discovered that language determines environmental meanings which include sustainability and responsibility and climate action. The study found that discourse describes climate change



while it also influences how people perceive and respond to climate change. The studies demonstrate that films and media use language and stories to show their perspectives about nature and climate change. The studies demonstrate that ecolinguistics provides an effective method for studying climate fiction in film and television. The current research intends to investigate climate fiction through a critical ecolinguistic framework which will show how movies and shows present human-environment relationships.

(Kapranov, 2024, p. 43)

3. Ecolinguistics

Ecolinguistics studies how languages interact with ecological systems and human social systems. The study investigates how people understand nature through different linguistic elements and their environmental actions. The field emerged from the recognition that environmental problems are not only scientific or technological issues but are also deeply connected to cultural and linguistic practices. Steffensen and Fill define ecolinguistics as a study that examines how humans use language to interact with ecological systems and how their communication methods affect their environmental protection practices. The field of ecolinguistics studies environmental discourse to understand how language use leads to both ecological harm and environmental protection. Ecolinguistics studies how environmental discourse develops through different ideological viewpoints. (Steffensen and Fill, 2014, pp. 7–9).

The social system of a society uses its linguistic system to express ideological values which reflect its cultural values. People demonstrate their ideological beliefs through their daily spoken words and their media shows and their political conversations about environmental matters. The field of ecolinguistic research investigates the hidden beliefs that shape environmental issue presentation and public understanding of these issues. Ecolinguistics studies how people express their understanding of nature through metaphors and their use of language to describe nature. (Bang & Door, 2007, pp. 15–18). Metaphors influence the way people understand environmental issues because they create mental frameworks which determine how people understand ecological systems. The common practice of identifying nature as a resource or commodity leads to anthropocentric worldviews which regard nature as valuable only when it serves human purposes. The use of these specific language patterns results in people viewing nature as an infinite resource which they can exploit without understanding the intricate connections between human existence and natural systems.

Ecolinguistic scholars demonstrate how language functions as a fundamental element which establishes environmental awareness among people while creating their moral obligation towards nature. (Goatly 2001, pp. 3 6)

The way people speak about nature determines their environmental perception which then affects how their communities create environmental protection values. Public opinion about environmental protection and sustainability gets shaped through specific storytelling approaches and communication methods used to present environmental problems. Language study helps researchers discover how cultural elements influence ecological emergency situations. (Mühlhäusler, 2003, pp. 24–27).



The relationship between language and ecology has also been explored through discourse analysis. Environmental discourse creates social meanings that define human contact with nature and environmental dangers and their ethical obligations. Environmental problems create Social narratives through which societies establish policies and develop cultural attitudes and manage their ecological environmental challenges. Language serves as the main method through which people transmit their environmental knowledge and environmental values. Ecolinguistic research now studies how media influences people to communicate about environmental issues. Media platforms such as film television and digital media function as vital locations for creating and distributing environmental stories. (Harré etl. 1999, pp. 4–8). Media discourse establishes the framework for environmental issues because it transforms scientific data into narratives that audiences can comprehend through cultural contexts. These public representations shape how people understand climate change and environmental dangers and the urgent need for ecological action. Cultural narratives about climate change have also become an important focus of environmental humanities research. (Carvalho, 2010, pp. 174 176).

The public develops its understanding of environmental crises and potential future ecological conditions through cultural texts that include films and literature and television shows. The emotional and symbolic elements of environmental change serve as a bridge that enables viewers to comprehend scientific complexities through the environmental change explanations which scientists develop. The film and television industry demonstrates through its climate fiction movies how environmental issues are depicted in their green activism content. Climate fiction narratives depict how humans now face environmental challenges which lead to ecosystem destruction and permanent ecological collapse which forces people to adjust their behavior according to new weather patterns. (LeMenager, 2014, pp. 22–25).

Environmental storytelling shows how ecological destruction delivers gradual and hidden destructive effects which he describes as "slow violence." Environmental injustices and long-lasting ecological effects become evident through media texts that use narrative and visual techniques. Environmental communication research shows that public climate change understanding develops through the essential role which storytelling and narrative elements play. (Nixon, 2011, pp. 2–3).

Through their symbolic processes environmental communication enables societies to form environmental issue meanings while they create solutions for ecological problems. Film and television narratives therefore function as influential cultural platforms where environmental meanings are negotiated and communicated. The study of Ecolinguistics establishes a fundamental theoretical framework which researchers use to investigate climate fiction movies and shows. Ecolinguistic analysis identifies climate fiction's ecological ideologies through its examination of media texts which include language and metaphors and narratives and discursive patterns. Researchers can study media representations because this approach lets them understand how media shows environmental issues and how media creates public knowledge about climate change and human connections to natural environments. (Cox, 2013, pp. 16–20).

4. Climate Fiction:



Climate fiction has developed into a primary storytelling method through which present-day societies understand and address environmental challenges which include climate change. From an ecolinguistic perspective, television and popular programming operate as major semiotic systems which create and distribute the "stories we live by" concept that Stibbe developed to explain how dominant discourses define human-environment interactions. (Stibbe, 2015, pp. 1–12)

Television functions beyond its role as an entertainment medium because it serves as a significant cultural institution which influences how people perceive and value environmental issues while developing their ethical views about nature and ecological duties. The television text process establishes basic environmental beliefs through its representation patterns and narrative structures and its selection of linguistic elements while establishing environmentally sustainable ecological perspectives. Mainstream television culture presents nature as a resource which people can use for their activities or as something which exists without purpose.

Critical ecolinguistics demonstrates how the developed discursive frameworks establish consumerism as an acceptable practice while acknowledging perpetual economic expansion and complete human control over nature. People who encounter stories about well-being should acquire material possessions and technological progress because these stories make environmental destruction disappear or make it seem legitimate. Climate fiction establishes a new reality that challenges existing dominant worldviews through its representation of social and ethical and environmental effects from climate change. Climate fiction on television utilizes its speculative futures and dystopian moments and emotional storytelling to encourage viewers to examine the hidden belief systems which exist within common media dialogues (Stibbe, 2015, pp. 1–12).

Television possesses a distinctive capacity to reach mass audiences and to shape collective imaginaries. The ecolinguistic study of environmental issues on television shows how their linguistic and semiotic elements shape public understanding of climate change and environmental concerns. The use of abstract statistical data together with impersonal language and passive voice in television programs creates a barrier which prevents viewers from understanding the urgent nature of environmental disasters. Climate fiction uses concrete descriptions together with personal stories and moral conflicts to make climate change experienceable and emotionally impactful. Climate fiction establishes environmental disruption as a real human experience because it shows people living with environmental destruction which leads to viewers feeling empathy and moral responsibility to protect the environment (Johns-Putra, 2016, pp. 270–273).

The analysis of television shows that people consider to be popular shows which environmental experts receive public validation while others remain unrecognized. Ecolinguistics research identifies which people and which groups media content will include while excluding all others who exist outside these boundaries (Stibbe, 2015, pp. 1–12). Climate fiction works to extend its boundaries through two main storytelling methods which include showing experiences of people from marginalized backgrounds and people who lost their homes because of climate change and who face climate change-induced displacement and their experience with non-human entities. The narratives



conduct their challenge against extractive and anthropocentric systems which help researchers achieve their goal of establishing ecological interdependence while showing respect to non-human entities. The reader should view climate fiction as a method which fights against the environmental destructive storytelling that exists in television programs which have achieved mainstream success (Stibbe, 2015, pp. 1–12).

Television shows together with their popular content create strong impacts on how people perceive climate change and the connection between humans and nature. Climate fiction when analyzed through a critical ecolinguistic perspective serves as a disruptive force which breaks down harmful "stories we live by" while providing new sustainable ecological narratives. The television climate fiction shows use their power to redefine language and visual elements and fundamental beliefs to create environmental awareness which leads to critical thinking and responsible environmental behavior. The study of climate fiction through ecolinguistics helps researchers understand how television responds to current environmental issues through its cultural and ideological functions (Stibbe, 2015; Johns Putra, 2016, pp. 19/272).

5. Stories We Live By

The ecolinguistics field defines "stories we live by" as cultural narratives which exist within societies and create cognitive structures that determine how people understand and engage with nature. Through language, these stories establish patterns that shape how people in society perceive ecological problems and establish their environmental protection practices. Stibbe describes these stories as existing within common speech patterns and social customs which determine what people consider socially acceptable behavior toward nature (Stibbe, 2001, pp. 4–5). The environmental knowledge presented in these stories functions as unifying frameworks which people use to comprehend environmental phenomena. The stories we live by which people follow in their lives show the fundamental beliefs which exist in their society. These beliefs determine whether people will support ecologically sustainable practices or continue their environmentally harmful habits. Wetherell demonstrates that narratives function as social structures which establish knowledge systems while they determine moral values and ethical standards that govern environmental response efforts within societies (Wetherell, 2012, pp. 85–87).

The concept of discourse shows how power relations and ideological systems operate through language to establish social order. The use of language to tell stories serves as a vital mechanism which helps people either uphold or contest existing social conventions (Fairclough, 2013, pp. 75–77). From an ecological viewpoint, mainstream narratives about nature have historically depicted the natural world as an asset which humans can exploit. Van Dijk demonstrates that these discursive structures create a standard view which positions humans as the central focus who exist independently from nature while they control all aspects of ecological systems (van Dijk, 2015, pp. 102–104).

The alternative ecolinguistic narratives present their different view which shows how humans depend on nature and need to protect it because it proves that people should stop thinking in their current anthropocentric way which leads to less sustainable environmental solutions (Hajer, 1995, pp. 44–46). The concept of stories we live by also includes the use of metaphors, framing, and evaluation in discourse. Environmental issues



become understood through audiences who use metaphors to create their mental frameworks about these matters (Charteris-Black, 2012, pp. 22–24). The framing of climate change as a "war" or "battle" brings people to see its importance but this framing shows human control over nature whereas the "web of interdependence" framing shows how everything exists in a network of ecological connections and human duties (Semino, 2008, pp. 3–5).

The media creates its story through film and television by using narrative elements and character development which express ecological principles and environmental viewpoints. Media environmental narratives create both cognitive and emotional frameworks that shape audience understanding of climate change and environmental crises (O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009, pp. 225–227). Climate fiction presents its main value because it shows future scenarios through realistic or speculative storytelling which makes environmental issues visible to the audience and shapes their understanding of human interactions with nature (Hughes, 2015, pp. 12–14).

visual media uses dialogue and imagery and symbolic representation to support "stories we live by" through its visual components. Environmental media narratives use ecological storytelling which people can easily understand through familiar plots that create emotional connections and moral reasoning (Hansen, 2010, pp. 37–39). The media frames which present climate change information to the public create significant effects on climate change understanding so narrative structures serve as vital elements for public comprehension and active involvement (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004, pp. 128–130). People establish their life stories which connect with social justice and equality issues and the question of who should bear responsibility. Nixon shows how narratives function as a means to reveal "slow violence" which describes environmental damage that occurs over time and remains hidden from view but strikes marginalized groups especially hard (Nixon, 2011, pp. 2–3). Media representations that incorporate such narratives challenge dominant, human-centered ecological stories and highlight the social dimensions of climate crises. Ecolinguistics enables researchers to study these narratives through its method which reveals the ideological and cognitive and moral systems that media texts contain. The practice of critical discourse analysis enables the discovery of hidden power dynamics together with basic beliefs which describe how audiences understand environmental narratives (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 45–48).

Researchers can use this method to study climate fiction in film and television because it helps them determine whether the stories support human-centered worldviews or promote environmental sustainability through ecocentric principles.

The environmental discourse shows its ideological and narrative foundations through the stories that people consume as their guiding beliefs. The climate fiction stories demonstrate their power to shape audience understanding of ecological problems and their perception of climate change and their environmental responsibilities. The research uses critical ecolinguistic analysis to identify narratives which researchers will use to assess their impact on environmental knowledge and cultural perceptions of climate change emergencies. (Corbett & Durfee, 2004, pp. 311–313).

6. Data analysis



6.1 Methodology

The episode "Beach, Please" establishes its main theme through the use of metaphor. The analysis uses Stibbe's ecolinguistic framework from his work *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By* to study all environmental issues. The episode "Beach, Please" from Bob's Burgers animated television series serves as the source material for this research study. The episode centers on students who participate in a school project to clean a polluted beach at Wonder Wharf. The characters use various expressions which create metaphorical frameworks that show how humans interact with the natural world.

6.2 Instance (1)

The school activities received evaluation from Louise who said that ""The beach clean-up serves as a beach day experience for me. (Bob's Burgers, Season 12, Episode 6, 02:15) The statement makes use of a metaphor which depicts environmental work as a form of leisure activity. Stibbe's ecolinguistic framework shows that metaphors function as powerful linguistic mechanisms which determine public understanding of ecological activities. The phrase "a day at the beach" describes something which people find to be both easy and enjoyable. The researchers used this metaphor to describe beach clean-up work because they wanted to show the lightest environmental impact of all environmental work. The characters believe that the task will require no effort because it will bring themeasy fun. The massive waste they found on the beach created an ironic effect because they had expected an easy beach experience. The two groups present different views about how people expect things to be compared to what actually exists in the world. The metaphor functions to emphasize pollution as a serious danger while it urges viewers to discover the environmental effects which remain concealed from their knowledge about human consumption patterns.

6.3 Instance (2)

The students reach the beach where they discover a polluted area which one student describes by saying "There's trash everywhere." (Bob's Burgers, Season 12, Episode 6, 06:40). The sentence creates a simple structure which uses metaphor to show that human waste completely fills the beach area. Stibbe's ecolinguistic framework uses such expressions to develop stories which explain how humans interact with nature. The word "everywhere" in the phrase creates an exaggerated picture of trash presence which shows how waste has taken control of the area. The natural landscape because of its linguistic representation appears to be a contaminated area rather than a pristine ecological territory. The metaphor shows how consumer culture and material waste disposal practices result in environmental damage. The trash creates an overwhelming presence which leads viewers to understand both pollution levels and the urgent need for environmental protection.

6.4 Instance (3)

During the clean-up activity Louise negotiates with Mr Fiscoeder about who should handle the pollution cleanup. The protective work we did for you creates extra work for us according to her statement (Bob's Burgers Season 12 Episode 6 09 10). The term "dirty work" operates as a metaphor to show that environmental clean-up should be performed by those who created the pollution. The environmental problem is presented through this



metaphor as a social problem which requires economic solutions instead of natural solutions. Stibbe observes that environmental communication uses language to show hidden power structures. The statement establishes that businesses which profit from the amusement park need to pay for their environmental damages by calling the clean-up work "dirty work." The metaphor shows that people view environmental issues as neutral occurrences which happen by chance. The presentation shows how economic systems create ecological damage through their operating processes.

6.5 instance (4)

The characters discover animal life which exists in trash-filled areas while they clean the beach because one character states that "This is their home." (Bob's Burgers, Season 12, Episode 6, 13:25). The phrase "their home" establishes the beach ecosystem as a common residence which both animals and humans share. Stibbe's ecolinguistic approach shows that nature-based home metaphors create a more environmentally friendly understanding of the world. The statement identifies the beach as an animal home which demonstrates that environmental pollution harms all living creatures who depend on this natural space. The metaphor creates empathy for animals while it demonstrates the moral obligation people have to protect the environment. The discourse helps people understand beach spaces as natural habitats which support various forms of life instead of treating them as places for human entertainment. Ecolinguistics considers metaphors to be useful because they help people develop respect for nature while they tell stories which promote environmental conservation.

6.6 instance (5)

The characters discover their beach restoration work which has produced better results for the beach. One character expresses optimism when he declares The beach has regained its ability to exist as a living entity. (Bob's Burgers, Season 12, Episode 6, 17:40). Analysis The beach surface area requires protection from human activities because its ecological value needs safeguarding. The beach is not alive but the metaphor presents nature with human attributes which demonstrate its fragile state. The ecolinguistic framework of Stibbe considers metaphors to be important because they establish emotional links between people and their natural surroundings. The language depicts the beach as a living entity which requires breathing because pollution has created a situation that prevents natural ecosystems from existing. The metaphor demonstrates how waste materials cause environmental damage while showing the need for ecological restoration work. The metaphor shows that human activities create both damaging effects and beneficial effects for environmental systems. The characters who clean the beach create a natural recovery process which delivers an environmental responsibility message that supports positive ecological outcomes.

7. Conclusion

The episode analysis of "Beach, Please" uses metaphors to demonstrate how language influences ecological understanding. The episode uses multiple metaphorical expressions to present the beach as a human-influenced location which reveals the detrimental effects of environmental contamination. Stibbe's ecolinguistic framework shows that these metaphors work for two primary purposes which first reveal dangerous environmental



practices that stem from people treating nature as a site for waste disposal. The first purpose of the research is to identify environmental violations which occur when people view nature as a waste disposal site. The second purpose of the research is to establish ecological thinking through empathy towards natural habitats and their resident wildlife. The episode uses emotionally powerful metaphors to present environmental problems which help viewers understand ecological matters that the episode intends to educate them about. The research demonstrates that animated comedy shows use language as a powerful tool for ecological outreach because humor and metaphor help people understand ecological concepts which leads to better environmental education. The episode beach please shows current environmental issues through its metaphorical language which instead creates new ways for people to think about ecological matters. Ecolinguistics demonstrates that language matters because it creates both environmental crises and their solutions through media dialogue which uses better environmental narratives to develop a society that cares about nature.

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