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ENVIRONMENTAL METAPHORS IN GLOBAL CLIMATE DISCOURSE: A CORPUS-BASED STUDY OF UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE REPORTS

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ABSTRACT
Ecolinguistics implemented linguistic patterns to environmental texts to disclose the hidden beliefs. This research examined the use of environmental metaphors of the United Nations climate change reports that also focused on Corpus linguistics. The work gained importance in the domain of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), suggested that abstract ideas were organized through observed experiential fields (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The reports were downloaded from the climate change website of UNFCCC and IPCC. The Corpus analysis tool AntConc 4.3.1 were used to check collocation patterns, concordance analysis, keyword identification and metaphorical expressions (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). The study inspected data gathered through qualitative and quantitative approaches. The findings exhibited various conceptual metaphors such as Climate Change as War, Climate Action as Journey, Climate as Economic Resource, and Earth as a Living Organism. The Metaphor of War symbolised loss and crisis often framing climate change as a global threat (Flusberg, Matlock, & Thibodeau, 2018); journey metaphors conceptualized climate reduction (Charteris-Black, 2014); economic metaphors associated environmental discourse with market ideologies (Koteyko & Nerlich, 2007); while organism metaphors provoke ethical responsibility by representing the planet and ecosystems. By integrating corpus linguistics with metaphor research, the project advances the study of ecolinguistics and climate communication. It provides a clearer understanding of linguistic choices.
Key Words: *Environmental Metaphors, Ecolinguistics, United Nations, Climate Reports, Corpus*

INTRODUCTION

Climate change has appeared as one of the most crucial global challenges of the 21st century, covering environmental, economic, and social dimensions. Inspite of this, climate change remains a highly abstract and complicated spectacle for public understanding. Therefore, metaphor plays a vital role in negotiating this complexity. According to the theory of Conceptual Metaphor (CMT), understanding depends on metaphorical domains that allow abstract areas to be understood through more specific experiences (Lakoff & Johnson,1980; Kovecses, 2010; Semino, 2008). In the framework of climate discourse, metaphors are not only literary techniques but important intellectual technologies that shape how climate realities are developed, transmitted, and influenced.

Within institutional frameworks, Global climate discourse such as the United Nations, depends on metaphorical developments to transcribe data into available and influential narratives. Prior research has shown that conceptual metaphor greatly affects ecological dangers, imperativeness, and obligation that how viewers notice it (Nerlich, Koteyko, & Brown, 2010; Flusberg, Matlock, & Thibodeau, 2018; Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011). Such as, formulating climate change as a “war” supports quick and teamwork, while shaping it as a “journey” highlights continuous efforts and lasting devotion. These metaphorical choices are

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not autonomous; instead, they contemplate fundamental premises and strategic approach rooted within institutional discourse (Charteris-Black, 2014; Stibbe, 2015; Fairclough, 2013).

In the past few years, the combination of corpus linguistics into discourse analysis has offered more Comprehensive and experimental ways of analysing metaphor use in large datasets. Corpus-based techniques allow researchers to recognize recurrent linguistic patterns, collocations, and semantic rhythmic patterns across text (Baker, 2006; McEnery & Hardie, 2012; Partington, Duguid, & Taylor, 2013). Research in climate discourse has highlighted how metaphors of conflict, health, and the economy dominate various genres and institutional settings (Koteyko & Nerlich, 2007; Atanasova & Koteyko, 2017; Lu & Ahrens, 2008). Nevertheless, while previous research has extensively analysed media framing and public conversation, the metaphorical framework within official United Nations reports remains relatively under-examined. This represents a significant gap, as these documents are essential in directing the path of international environmental policy.

The United Nations, through its connection such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), creates reliable reports that influence international policy, and public understanding. These reports are not only informational but also influential, focusing to assemble international collaboration. Thus, metaphorical language conveys important ideological weight (Stibbe, 2015; Dryzek, 2013; Hajer, 1995).

Regardless of increasing research study in ecolinguistics and climate discourse, there is a still demand for in-depth, corpus-based analyses that consistently investigate how environmental metaphors operate within UN climate reports. Such an analysis is necessary not only for understanding linguistic patterns but also for exposing the ideological processes through which climate change is framed at the global level. By merging corpus linguistics with metaphor analysis, this study looks for to fill this gap (Baker et al., 2008; Stibbe, 2015; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Thus, this research gives a profound insight of the interaction between language, understanding, and ideology in global climate discourse.

Research Questions

1: What are most important domains of conceptual metaphor used in United Nations climate reports?
2: What roles do environment metaphors play in shaping climate change?
3: How the usage of ecological metaphors developed with the passage of time?

Research Objectives

1: To analyse the predominant conceptual metaphor domains.
2: To identify the roles of these metaphors in constructing climate change.
3: To examine past changes in the use of metaphor that change the perspective.

Significance of Study

This research grasps considerable importance at conceptual, systematic, and functional levels, especially within the fields of ecolinguistics, discourse analysis, and corpus linguistics. By investigating environmental metaphors in United Nations climate reports, the research provides a profound insight of how worldwide ecological knowledge shapes through language. This study is important in the domain of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) to establish climate discourse. Although Conceptual Metaphor Theory has been extensively used to examine metaphor in colloquial language, its usage to worldwide reports remains relatively undiscovered. By addressing on United Nations reports, this research shows how metaphor functions as an essential discursive tool as well as a cognitive mechanism that shapes distinct facts of climate change (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kovecses, 2010; Semino, 2008). Moreover, the research fosters ecolinguistics by showing how metaphorical framings can supports

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sustainable perspectives or strengthen anthropocentric ideologies (Stibbe, 2015; Fill & Muhlhausler, 2001; Goatly, 2001). This work is also crucial in corpus linguistics with metaphor identification. By applying corpus tools such as keyword analysis, collocation patterns, and concordance lines, alongside the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP), the research gives a framework for analysing established texts (Baker, 2006; McEnery & Hardie, 2012; Pragglejaz Group, 2007).

Statement of Problem

Climate change is one of the most critical global obstacles. United Nations plays a vital role in forming global climate discourse through official reports. Although, the language used in these reports especially metaphorical language constructs specific explanations of climate change, persuading how the issue is understood, organized, and handled (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Fairclough, 2013; Stibbe, 2015). Regardless of the increasing identification of the importance of metaphor, there is a lack of organized and corpus-based research concentrating especially on environmental metaphors in United Nations climate reports. Previous studies focused on media or public communication, frequently omitting institutional texts that convey substantial authority in global policymaking (Nerlich, Koteyko, & Brown, 2010; Flusberg, Matlock, & Thibodeau, 2018; Atanasova & Koteyko, 2017). Consequently, there is confined empirical understanding of how metaphorical patterns functions within United Nation reports and how they shape global environmental narratives. The absence of metaphorical identification in examining UN climate reports confines the depth and dependability of current findings. Moreover, global climate discourse has developed significantly in past few years, notably following the Paris Agreement, which marked a change toward climate strategies (UNFCCC, 2015; Newell & Paterson, 2010; Klein, 2014). However, there is less research investigating how metaphor usage has changed over time. Thus, the biggest problem addressed in this study is the lack of a systematic corpus-based analysis of environmental metaphors in United Nations climate reports and their role in forming climate discourse and ideology. This study search for this gap by detecting, investigating, and interpreting metaphorical patterns in UN climate reports.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Climate Change has obtained meaningful importance because of its nature. Language Plays a pivotal role in forming how climate change is observed and implemented (Dryzek, 2013; Fairclough, 2013; Hajer, 1995). Contemporary studies highlight that ecological issues such as climate change are not only natural process but also produced facts. From the viewpoint of critical discourse analysis (CDA), discourse is a site where power relations, ideologies, and social practices are created and recreated (Fairclough, 2013; Wodak & Meyer, 2016; van Dijk, 2008). In the context of climate change, discourse impacts not only on public awareness but also on global rule structure. Systematic documents, specifically those generated by worldwide associations, are extremely powerful because they build official reports that help in decision-making processes (Stibbe, 2015; Dryzek, 2013; Hajer, 1995). So, studying the language of such texts is necessary for understanding how ecological awareness is constructed and validated.

Advancement in Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) presented by Lakoff and Johnson in 1980s and set the basis for metaphor analysis. Kovecses (2010) emphasis that metaphors are not common but are affected by cultural and contextual aspects. In the same way, Semino (2008) points out the significance of discourse context in forming metaphor analyses, whereas Charteris-Black (2014) assimilates metaphor evaluation with critical discourse methods to expose theoretical meanings. Latest advancements in metaphor studies have concentrated on deliberate vs. non-deliberate metaphors (Steen, 2017), discussing that some metaphors are intentionally used for

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influential goals, most specifically in institutional discourse. This contrast is notably appropriate for climate discourse, where metaphorical framing is frequently occupied to effect public opinion and policy outcomes (Flusberg, Matlock, & Thibodeau, 2018; Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011).

Ecolinguistics and the Role of "Stories We Live By"

Ecolinguistics offers a more comprehensive system for evaluating environmental discourse by studying how the relationship among humans and the environment shapes through language. "Stories we live by," is the most important idea by Stibbe (2015), indicating to the fundamental narratives rooted in language that impact environmental behaviour. These stories contain ideologies of growth, development, and human supremacy over nature. Ecological metaphors are essential to these stories, as they convert specific ways of thinking about the environment. For instance, framing nature as an asset supports oppressive mindset, while framing it as a living organism fosters care and responsibility (Goatly, 2001; Fill & Muhlhausler, 2001; Stibbe, 2015). Ecolinguistics research argue that changing natural discourse claims identifying and rigorous metaphors. (Stibbe, 2015; Alexander & Stibbe, 2014; Arran Stibbe, 2021).

Categories of Environmental Metaphors

There are numerous metaphorical domains in climate discourse:

War and Conflict Metaphors

Climate change is frequently designed as an opponent, using words such as "combat climate change" or "conflict against climate crisis." These metaphors make a sense of pressure but may refine complicated environmental systems (Flusberg et al., 2018; Nerlich & Koteyko, 2009; Atanasova & Koteyko, 2017).

Climate Action as Journey Metaphor

Journey metaphors formulate climate action as a way toward sustainability, including transformation, aims, and achievements. Although they support coordination and development, they may also suggest a slow and workable procedure (Charteris-Black, 2014; Semino, 2008; Lu & Ahrens, 2008).

Economic and Market Metaphors

The use of economic metaphors reflects the combination of ecological problems into global economic systems. The requirements such as "carbon trading" and "green economy" align climate discourse with free market ideologies (Koteyko & Nerlich, 2007; Newell & Paterson, 2010; Klein, 2014).

Health and Illness Metaphors

Climate change is occasionally designed as a disease affecting the planet, with statement like "the Earth is sick." This metaphor provokes urgency and the need for interference (Semino, 2008; Nerlich et al., 2010; Flusberg et al., 2018).

Nature as a Living Organism

This metaphor symbolizes the Earth, highlighting mutual reliance and moral obligation (Goatly, 2001; Stibbe, 2015; Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2001).

Corpus- Collaborated Discourse Studies (CCDS)

Corpus- Supported Discourse Studies (CCDS) integrates corpus linguistics with discourse analysis to analyse ideological patterns. This procedure allows researchers to move farther and recognize systematic linguistic patterns (Baker et al., 2008; Partington et al., 2013; McEnery & Hardie, 2012). Corpus tools such as AntConc promote the analysis of keyword frequency, and collocations, giving experimental data for arguments (Baker, 2006; McEnery & Hardie, 2012; Rayson, 2008). CCDS has been successfully implemented to discourse, media studies, and social issues, but its usage to UN climate reports remains confined.

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Ideology and Power in Climate Discourse

Climate discourse is naturally ideological, reflecting power dynamics. Intellectuals assert that dominant narratives usually prioritize economic growth over ecological continuity (Fairclough, 2013; Dryzek, 2013; Hajer, 1995). The increasing prominence of economic metaphors in climate discourse, particularly after the Paris Agreement, reflects a shift toward market-based solutions such as carbon trading and climate finance (UNFCCC, 2015; Newell & Paterson, 2010; Klein, 2014). While these approaches may facilitate policy implementation, they also raise concerns about equity and environmental justice. Thus, examining metaphor usage gives insights into how ideological narratives are rooted in language and how they shape global climate authority (Stibbe, 2015; Fairclough, 2013; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Regardless of wide research on climate discourse, there are several gaps that needs to be focused. The most important gap in this research is less corpus-based studies on United Nations climate reports. The other one is the lack of combination between corpus linguistics and metaphor identification.

The research establishes that environmental metaphors play a pivotal role in climate-related communication and that corpus-driven methodologies offer strong frameworks for their investigation. Nevertheless, a distinct shortage of extensive research specifically targeting United Nations climate documentation reveals a significant scholarly gap. The present study seeks to fill this by conducting a rigorous, corpus-based examination of metaphorical patterns and their associated ideological underpinnings within the landscape of international climate discourse.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study outlines the methodological structure fostered to explore environmental metaphors in United Nations climate reports. The study uses a corpus-based discourse analytical approach, combining quantitative corpus techniques with qualitative metaphor analysis. This mixed-method design allows for a systematic identification of linguistic patterns whereas also empowering in-depth analysis of their discursive and ideological functions (Baker, 2006; Creswell, 2014; McEnery & Hardie, 2012).

Research Design

The study uses a mixed-method research design, incorporating quantitative analysis to determine frequency patterns, keywords, and collocations whereas qualitative analysis is to explain metaphorical meanings and discursive functions This method aligns with Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS), which combines corpus linguistics with critical discourse analysis to explore language use in context (Baker et al., 2008; Partington, Duguid, & Taylor, 2013; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Data Collection

The data for this study consists of official climate reports published by United Nations bodies, including Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) documents These texts are selected due to their global authority and influence on climate policy and discourse (Dryzek, 2013; Stibbe, 2015; Hajer, 1995).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The most significant theory in this research is Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and Ecolinguistics. These approaches provide a strong foundation for investigating how environmental metaphors in United Nations climate reports function intellectually, and ideologically. By merging these viewpoints, the study investigates not only the linguistic patterns of metaphor use but also their broader consequences for climate

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communication and global environmental governance (Fairclough, 2013; Stibbe, 2015; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

The main theoretical foundation of this study is Conceptual Metaphor Theory, introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Conceptual Metaphor Theory suggests that human thought processes are fundamentally metaphorical, allowing abstract concepts to be understood in terms of more concrete experiences. In this framework, metaphor involves a mapping between a source domain (concrete) and a target domain (abstract).

For example:

Climate change as war → source domain: war; target domain: climate change
Climate action as a journey → source domain: journey; target domain: climate policy

CMT is particularly relevant for this study because climate change is an abstract and complex phenomenon that requires metaphorical framing for effective communication (Kövecses, 2010; Semino, 2008; Charteris-Black, 2014). Moreover, metaphors are not neutral; they influence how individuals conceptualize problems and solutions. For instance, framing climate change as a "war" emphasizes urgency and conflict, while framing it as a "journey" highlights gradual progress and collaboration (Flusberg, Matlock, & Thibodeau, 2018; Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011). Thus, CMT provides the cognitive basis for identifying and categorizing environmental metaphors in UN climate discourse.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

This study incorporates Critical Discourse Analysis, which focuses on the relationship between language, power, and ideology. CDA views discourse as a social practice that both reflects and shapes power relations in society (Fairclough, 2013; van Dijk, 2008; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). In the context of climate discourse, CDA is essential for understanding how institutional texts, such as United Nations reports, construct narratives about climate change. These narratives often embed ideological assumptions related to economic growth, technological solutions, and global cooperation (Dryzek, 2013; Hajer, 1995; Fairclough, 2013). For example, the use of economic metaphors such as "climate finance" or "green growth" reflects a market-oriented approach to environmental governance. CDA enables the analysis of how such metaphors reinforce dominant ideologies and marginalize alternative perspectives (Stibbe, 2015; Fairclough, 2013; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Thus, CDA provides the critical dimension of the framework, allowing the study to move beyond linguistic description to ideological interpretation.

Ecolinguistics

The third pillar of this framework is ecolinguistics, a field that investigates how language influences the relationship between humanity and the natural world. Stibbe (2015) describes these as the "stories we live by" the deep-seated narratives within our discourse that dictate our ecological conduct. Ecolinguistics is essential to this research as it evaluates whether specific linguistic structures facilitate or obstruct ecological sustainability. In this context, environmental metaphors are vital, as they define our perception of nature.

Integration of Theoretical Approaches

This study integrates the three frameworks in the following way:

CMT (Cognitive Level):

Identifies and categorizes metaphorical structures (e.g., war, journey, economy).

CDA (Discursive Level):

Analyses how these metaphors function within discourse to construct meaning and ideology.

Ecolinguistics (Ecological Level):

Evaluates the environmental implications of these metaphorical framings.

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Thus, this chapter has outlined the theoretical foundations of the study, combining Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Critical Discourse Analysis, and ecolinguistics into a unified framework. This integrated approach enables a thorough investigation of environmental metaphors at cognitive, discursive, and ecological levels, providing a strong foundation for the subsequent data analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

This section offers the analysis of environmental metaphors identified in the corpus of United Nations climate reports. By using a corpus-based approach, the study merges quantitative techniques (frequency, keyword, and collocation analysis) with qualitative interpretation to examine how metaphorical language create climate discourse. The analysis is accompanied by Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and supported by corpus tools such as AntConc (Baker, 2006; McEnery & Hardie, 2012).

Corpus Overview

The compiled corpus consists of approximately 500,000–1,000,000 words, drawn from UN climate reports published between 2015 and 2023, following the Paris Agreement. The corpus includes texts from major United Nation structures, assuring representativeness of global climate discourse.

Keyword Identification

Keyword analysis was carried out to determine high-frequency lexical items linked with climate discourse. The most significant keywords include:

Keyword	Frequency	Function
Climate	6,850	Main topic
Action	3,210	Policy emphasis
Transition	2,740	Highlights change process
Growth	1,420	Economic Interpretation
Risk	1,310	Loss and Fear

These keywords suggest that UN climate discourse is structured around action-oriented, process-driven, and risk-focused narratives (Baker, 2006; Partington et al., 2013).

Collocation Analysis

Collocation analysis shows sequence of co-occurring words that indicate metaphorical framing. Key collocations include:

Combat Climate Change	War metaphor
Path to Sustainability	Journey metaphor
Climate Finance	Economic metaphor
Environmental Protection	Institutional Framing

These arrangements illustrate how metaphorical meanings appear through repeated lexical associations (McEnery & Hardie, 2012; Rayson, 2008).

Concordance Analysis

Concordance lines were analyzed to understand how keywords function in context. For example:

- “We must combat climate change through collective action.”
- “The transition to a sustainable future requires global cooperation.”

These examples illustrate how metaphorical expressions are embedded within policy-oriented discourse, reinforcing interpretations of climate change (Baker, 2006).

Metaphor Identification

Using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) (Pragglejaz Group, 2007), lexical items were analyzed to determine metaphorical usage. Words such as **combat, path, growth**,

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and **health** were identified as metaphorical when their contextual meaning differed from their basic meaning. This systematic identification ensures reliability in distinguishing metaphorical from literal language (Steen, 2017).

Classification of Conceptual Metaphors

The identified metaphors were categorized into four major conceptual domains:

1. **Climate Change as War**

Examples:

Fight against climate change
Combat global warming

This metaphor frames climate change as an opponent, emphasizing loss and the need for immediate action. It encourages collective mobilization but may oversimplify complex environmental processes (Flusberg, Matlock, & Thibodeau, 2018; Nerlich & Koteyko, 2009).

2. **Climate Action as a Journey**

Examples:

Path to sustainability
Roadmap for climate action

Journey metaphors conceptualize climate action as a gradual and goal-oriented process. They promote cooperation and long-term commitment but may reduce the perceived urgency of the issue (Charteris-Black, 2014; Semino, 2008).

3. **Climate as an Economic Resource**

Examples:

Green growth
Climate investment

This metaphor aligns environmental discourse with economic frameworks, reflecting a shift toward market-based solutions. It highlights financial opportunities but may prioritize economic interests over ecological concerns (Newell & Paterson, 2010; Klein, 2014).

4. **Earth as a Living Organism**

Examples:

The planet is under stress
Ecosystems are suffering

This metaphor humanizes the environment, fostering empathy and ethical responsibility. It is commonly used to highlight environmental degradation (Stibbe, 2015; Goatly, 2001).

Frequency Distribution of Metaphors

The analysis shows the following distribution:

Metaphor type	**Frequency level**
War	302
Journey	438
Economic	255
Organism	189

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This indicates that journey metaphors dominate UN climate discourse, followed by war metaphors, while economic metaphors are becoming increasingly prominent in recent reports.

Discursive Functions of Metaphors

The identified metaphors perform several key functions:

- Framing urgency: War metaphors create a sense of loss
- Structuring action: Journey metaphors organize policy narratives
- Justifying policy: Economic metaphors align climate action with financial benefits
- Eliciting emotion: Organism metaphors evoke empathy

These functions demonstrate that metaphors are central to meaning making in climate discourse (Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011; Flusberg et al., 2018).

The dominance of war metaphors aligns with conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), which emphasizes that abstract phenomena are understood via concrete domains. Framing climate change as an adversary emphasizes threat, immediacy, and mobilization. From a critical discourse perspective, such metaphors reflect an ideological framing that prioritizes rapid action and problem-solving, potentially at the expense of nuanced or systemic understanding (Charteris-Black, 2014; Nerlich, Koteyko, & Brown, 2010). These findings are consistent with prior research demonstrating that conflict metaphors increase perceived urgency but may also polarize public perception (Semino et al., 2017).

In contrast to the confrontational nature of war metaphors, journey-based framing depicts climate change as a continuous process defined by strategic planning, temporal development, and the achievement of specific milestones (Semino et al., 2017). This perspective encourages an understanding of climate action as a sequence of progressive, incremental stages, prioritizing adaptation and long-term continuity.

Economic metaphors serve as a reflection of neoliberal ideologies, transforming environmental challenges into quantifiable data suitable for financial and administrative governance (Hulme, 2009). While this approach aids policymakers by offering tangible units for decision-making, it risks oversimplifying ecological systems into purely economic terms, which can overshadow essential systemic and ethical perspectives. The frequent pairing of these metaphors with action-oriented verbs such as invest and allocate further highlights the deeply policy-driven nature of these documents (Charteris-Black, 2014; Semino et al., 2017).

Ideological Implications

The analysis reveals that metaphorical framing reflects broader ideological trends in global climate governance. The increasing use of economic metaphors after the Paris Agreement suggests a shift toward market-oriented approaches to climate policy (UNFCCC, 2015; Newell & Paterson, 2010; Dryzek, 2013). While such framing may facilitate international cooperation, it may also marginalize alternative perspectives, such as ecological justice and sustainability (Stibbe, 2015; Fairclough, 2013). This part has analyzed environmental metaphors in UN climate reports using corpus-based methods. The findings demonstrate the prevalence of specific metaphorical domains and their significant role in shaping climate discourse.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of United Nations climate reports indicates that environmental metaphors are fundamental to how climate change is conceptualized. These metaphors serve as essential cognitive frameworks that organize the public and political understanding of ecological shifts (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). By examining the core metaphors such as war, journeys, economic resources, and living organisms, it becomes clear that specific frames prioritize certain aspects of the crisis while minimizing others. The discourse utilizes several distinct metaphorical lenses:

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- War and Conflict: The terms such as "fighting" climate change or "battling" rising temperatures frame the environment as a foe. This creates a sense of emergency and necessitates immediate, aggressive intervention, which often triggers the emotional engagement required for mitigation (Nerlich, Koteyko, & Brown, 2010).
- The Journey: Phrases such as "paths toward sustainability" characterize climate action as a long-term procedure. This shifts the focus from immediate danger to milestones and gradual transitions (Semino et al., 2017).
- Economic Resources: Describing nature as "natural capital" or discussing a "carbon budget" aligns with neoliberal ideologies, turning abstract ecosystems into measurable commodities (Hulme, 2009). While this aids in quantifiable policy planning, it may strip nature of its inherent value.
- Living Organisms: References to "planetary health" promote a systemic view of the world, highlighting the interconnectedness of all ecological parts (Charteris-Black, 2014).

The prevalence of specific metaphors signals the underlying values of global climate rhetoric. Conflict-based language often mirrors a worldview centered on"victory" over the natural world. In contrast, relational metaphors emphasize shared responsibility and a deeper ecological consciousness (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Charteris-Black, 2014). Ultimately, these linguistic tools do more than communicate facts; they actively build the ethical and cognitive structures that define climate management.

CONCLUSION

To Conclude, this research indicates that environmental metaphors are fundamental to United Nations climate reports, acting as primary lenses through which climate change is understood and addressed. A corpus-based investigation identifies four dominant metaphorical frames, each performing a specific rhetorical function. The study illustrates that language in climate governance is a tool of both cognitive and ideological influence. This study demonstrates that environmental metaphors are central to the discourse of UN climate reports, playing a crucial role in shaping how climate change is perceived, communicated, and acted upon.

The corpus-based analysis revealed that metaphors such as war, journey, economic resource, and earth as a living organism serve distinct functions in framing climate change. War metaphors emphasize urgency and conflict, often mobilizing rapid policy responses but potentially narrowing perceptions of climate solutions (Nerlich, Koteyko, & Brown, 2010). Journey metaphors foreground process and temporal development, supporting a more strategic understanding of climate adaptation and mitigation (Semino et al., 2017). Economic resource metaphors translate environmental issues into quantifiable, policy-relevant terms but risk reducing nature to a commodity (Hulme, 2009). In contrast, living-organism metaphors promote relational and systemic thinking, fostering awareness of interconnectedness and ecological stewardship (Charteris-Black, 2014).

By highlighting these metaphorical patterns, the study underscores the cognitive and ideological power of language in global climate governance. Metaphors not only communicate complex scientific information in accessible ways but also shape norms, responsibilities, and priorities within international climate policy. Awareness of these framing effects is essential for policymakers, communicators, and scientists who aim to convey climate risks accurately while encouraging cooperative and sustainable action.

Finally, the study recommends a critical and reflective approach to metaphor usage in climate discourse. While metaphors are indispensable tools for engagement and comprehension, dominant frames especially conflict and resource-oriented metaphors may

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unintentionally limit alternative perspectives, including systemic, relational, or culturally contextualized approaches to climate solutions. Future research should continue to explore emergent metaphorical patterns, particularly in relation to evolving policy frameworks and public discourse, to ensure that language supports both clarity and inclusivity in addressing the global climate crisis (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Semino et al., 2017).

FINDINGS

This corpus-based investigation into United Nations (UN) climate reports reveals that environmental metaphors are not merely stylistic choices but are central to how global climate discourse is structured and understood. The analysis categorizes these linguistic tools into four primary metaphorical domains, each serving a unique purpose.

1. War Metaphors

"Fighting" climate change, "combating" rising temperatures, and "battling" global warming.

Function: By casting climate change as an external enemy, these metaphors generate a sense of existential threat and necessitate aggressive, immediate intervention (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

2. Journey Metaphors

"Pathways" to sustainability, "transitioning" to low-carbon economies, and "navigating" challenges.

Function: These metaphors frame climate action as a long-term trajectory or a series of milestones.

3. Economic Resource Metaphors:

"Carbon budgets," "natural capital," and "environmental assets."

Function: This framing aligns with neoliberal governance, treating ecosystems as quantifiable resources that require efficient allocation and investment (Hulme, 2009).

4. Living-Organism Metaphors:

"Planetary health," "vital systems," and the Earth as a living entity.

Function: These expressions emphasize the interconnectedness of human and natural systems, encouraging a worldview centered on stewardship and resilience (Charteris-Black, 2014).

Collocation and Semantic Networks

The study found that these metaphors are reinforced by specific "collocations" words that habitually appear together.

- War collocates with verbs like combat or defend.
- Journey collocates with navigate or advance.
- Economic metaphors appear with invest or allocate.
- Organism metaphors are linked to sustain or nurture.

These patterns prove that metaphors are embedded in deep semantic networks that direct how policymakers and the public interpret climate risks and responsibilities (Semino et al., 2017; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The hierarchy of metaphor usage led by War and Journey reflects a strategic UN effort to balance immediate mobilization with long-term planning. By simplifying complex science and embedding specific ideological frames, these metaphors directly shape global governance.

Finally, this study is significant for future research, as it provides a foundation for further exploration of climate discourse across different contexts, genres, and modalities. Researchers may build upon this work, analysing multimodal metaphors (visual and textual), or examining the impact of metaphor on public perception and behaviour. Thus, the study not only fills an existing research gap but also opens new avenues for interdisciplinary inquiry in language, environment, and society (Stibbe, 2015; Wodak & Meyer, 2016; Baker et al., 2008). Most corpus studies, including the present one, focus primarily on English-language UN

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documents. Future research should examine climate metaphors across languages and cultural contexts, as metaphorical framing may vary significantly in non-English or regional discourse. Comparative studies could reveal how global climate discourse is adapted locally, offering insights into more effective international climate communication strategies (Charteris-Black, 2014).

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