An Ecolinguistic Discourse Analysis of the BBC's Nature Documentary Series *Planet Earth* and *Planet Earth II*

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The aim of this thesis is to study the language that is used in the narration of the BBC's television nature documentary series *Planet Earth* (2006) and *Planet Earth II* (2016). The narration is analysed from a critical ecolinguistic point of view, and the focus is on the language elements that either implicitly or explicitly make it positive, destructive or – in the case that it entails both positive and destructive qualities – ambivalent discourse. The data of this research consists of instances that discuss human-made environmental issues or use features of language that portray different animal species and natural areas either positively or negatively and therefore might affect the ecological philosophy of the audience. Additionally, the narration of the two series is compared with each other to determine whether the more recent series includes more instances of positive discourse, as environmental issues are increasingly topical in today's world.

The results show that both series include more positive than destructive discourse. The main ways in which the narration is positive include stating that human influence on nature is detrimental, using language features that evoke a sense of solidarity, using positively connoted lexical words, referring to animals using the personal pronouns *she* and *he*, and personification of natural areas. The results also indicate that the newer series has more instances of positive discourse per episode, but it also includes more instances of ambivalent discourse; the environmental issues are discussed more extensively, yet the human part in these issues is often disregarded.

Key words: ecolinguistics, discourse analysis, positive discourse analysis, critical discourse studies, television documentary.

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CDS = Critical Discourse Studies

PDA = Positive Discourse Analysis

BBC = British Broadcasting Corporation

1 Introduction

Today, the effects of climate change and other environmental issues are more visible than ever; this is progressively apparent everywhere in the world, from extreme weather and arctic warming to habitat destruction. Therefore, these environmental issues and the discussion on them are increasingly prevalent in the media. There is a general consensus that these problems are largely caused by the actions of humankind in forms of excessive fossil fuel use, deforestation, urbanisation, waste, and extinction of animal species due to poaching, to name a few. Nonetheless, humans are also the only species who can collectively choose to act to mitigate the effects of climate change and other environmental issues. For instance, nature conservation is becoming more and more common in forms of different green movements and product advertising. Furthermore, media consumption is more and more common, and people watch television or have access to different streaming services on their devices to an increasing extent. As these statements are combined, it can be deduced that an effective way of reaching a great number of people and thus affect their stance on the environmental problems that our planet is facing is by having this information available in television series.

The main aim of this study is to discover what kind of language is used when human-made environmental issues are being addressed in nature documentaries; this is done through close critical reading of the narration of the series. Additionally, the analysis focuses on the diachroneity of the different materials – i.e., it is concerned with how this use of language has changed through time, comparing an older and a more recent series with each other. The BBC's productions *Planet Earth* (2006) and *Planet Earth II* (2016) are among the most expensive and most widely known nature documentary series ever made. This makes them relevant primary material for the present study; they reach a large audience and therefore have a significant amount of influence on the general public's environmental views. But how can these nature documentaries and their use of language affect their viewer? What linguistic features are relevant foci of attention as the narration is constructed for the series? Additionally, is it essential to make changes to the language if it is deemed unecological, or is it more important for the viewer to be aware of how language can subtly affect their way of thinking and ethical values? The secondary material of this study discusses these aspects, and it includes research literature mainly on Critical Discourse Studies, ecolinguistics, and Positive Discourse Analysis. Critical Discourse Studies is an interdisciplinary approach that is well-established within mainstream linguistics, as is ecolinguistics to an increasing extent

(Fill 2017, 2). However, Positive Discourse Analysis is still a relatively recent and minor approach. One of its main goals is to deconstruct the analysed material to discover ideologies that subtly promote either ecologically beneficial or negative worldviews (Stibbe 2017, 169–170). Furthermore, from the perspective of this branch of linguistics, "[t]here is a need for alternatives to dominant discourses which represent nature mechanistically as inert matter that exists solely to be exploited by humans" (Stibbe 2017, 171). Some aspects that are focused on are the hidden implications of different word choices and the employment of personal pronouns, such as *we* vs *them*, *our* planet, *their* habitat. Additionally, the passive voice and the omission of the agent of the sentence in a way that hides the human responsibility of the event. These are examples of anthropocentric language use, as they often consider human beings as the most important species in the universe; the human role is often not emphasised in environmental issues, omitting the operating actor of the event, and thus obscuring the reasons behind the issues. This use of language is contrasted with the *ecosophy* of the present study – i.e., the instances are compared with a specified set of ecological values and then deemed either ecologically positive or negative depending on how consistent they are with these values (Stibbe 2017, 175).

There are four different research questions in this study. They are as follows:

1. What are the either explicit or implicit instances of language features in the data that can be considered either *positive* or *destructive* when contrasted to this study's ecosophy?
2. How do these linguistic features encourage the viewer towards a more ecological way of thinking, or how do they do the opposite – i.e., hide the actor behind the environmental issues by adopting an anthropocentric stance or by diminishing the said issues in any way?
3. Could these linguistic features be different in order to promote a more ecological attitude, and if so, what alternative ways of phrasing are there available within the bounds of English grammar?
4. The analysed series were released in 2006 and 2016 – i.e., ten years apart. Is there any discernible diachronic variation in the linguistic features that are used when human-made environmental issues and other problems concerning the natural world are being discussed between the two nature documentary series – either in the amount or in the characteristics of the language?

It can be hypothesised that both analysed nature documentary series aim to promote ecological thinking in their content. However, it is arguable that their medium and genre affect the way in which they can achieve this goal. The language that is used in the documentaries must be concise and easily understood. These series were made for television, and therefore they are a form of entertainment that aims to keep the constant interest of the

viewer. Hence, it is entirely possible that the linguistic features of the narration include occurrences of destructive language, albeit most likely unintentionally. However, it is arguable that even though the series are made for television entertainment purposes, and their general focus is on filming animals and plants in their natural habitat for the viewer to learn more about them, there is also a certain expectation that nature documentaries should encourage people to think and act more ecologically. Furthermore, it can be presumed that since the more recent series was released in 2016, the environmental issues are discussed more extensively in that series as compared to the one released ten years prior. However, it is possible that the 2006 series discusses these issues as well, since at the time it was released, the issues were already widely acknowledged. This study is generally qualitative; in other words, the excerpts of the documentaries that mention environmental issues are analysed in detail, and therefore the quantitative aspects receive less attention. Nevertheless, some amount of attention must be given to the possible variation in the quantity of the instances, but it is more important in terms of this study to focus on the characteristics of the language that is used in the documentaries.

The background literature is examined in the following section, after which the materials and methods are explicated. Subsequently, the results of the study are illustrated, and their meanings and implications are discussed in further detail. The paper ends with a conclusion in which the main points are summarised; additionally, it remarks on how the utilised methods and procedures worked for the purposes and the scope of the present study. Finally, the possibilities for future research on this subject are explored.

2 Background

In this section, the research literature that this study draws its influence from is explored; the most relevant linguistic concepts here include *Critical Discourse Studies*, *ecolinguistics*, and *Positive Discourse Analysis*. The first of the following subsections examines climate change as an environmental issue, after which the relevant linguistic approaches are explained. Finally, documentaries as a television genre are discussed.

2.1 Climate change

Even though the aim of the present study is to analyse discourse in relation to several distinct environmental problems instead of focusing on merely one of the many, it is essential to explain why climate change is arguably the most relevant one of these problems. Climate change is an issue that is now more prominent than ever; the reasons for its existence and the threats that it poses for the future of our planet have already been acknowledged for decades, but today it is the dominant subject of environmental discourse. For instance, the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) include a constantly growing number of climate science reviews (Penz 2017, 277). Furthermore, weather extremes are increasing at an alarming rate in different areas of our planet, resulting in growing awareness of the disastrous consequences of climate change amongst people (ibid.). It has been noted that the greenhouse effect as a phenomenon was initially described in the first half of the 19th century "in physics and the atmospheric sciences" (ibid.). The metaphor *greenhouse effect* became widely recognised in the 1980s; it illustrates the phenomenon so that it becomes more straightforward to the public, comparing the effect of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases on the atmosphere to a more general example: "the glass of a greenhouse which increases the temperature inside it" (Penz 2017, 278).

The dictionary definition for *climate change* is the following: "[a]n alteration in the regional or global climate; *esp.* the change in global climate patterns increasingly apparent from the mid to late 20th century onwards and linked largely with increased emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases caused by human activity" (*OED*, s.v. "climate change," n.) – its earliest use is dated to be from 1854. *Global warming*, on the other hand, is a much more recent term; it was first used in 1957, and its description is as follows: "[a] long-term gradual increase in the average temperature of the earth's atmosphere, waters, and land surface, *spec.* that occurring in the wake of the Industrial Revolution […] and linked to

increased emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases caused by human activity" (*OED*, s.v. "global warming," n.). Furthermore, the term *global heating* is sometimes preferred, as it conveys "more emphatically the seriousness of climate change caused by human activity and the urgent need to address it" (*OED*, s.v. "global heating," n.). According to Lakoff (2010, 71), *global warming* as a term was superseded by *climate change* in 2003 because the latter term suggests that the issue is less menacing and does not convey the idea that human actions are contributing to the issue. However, in academic research, the terms are generally used interchangeably with each other, *climate change* being the more common variant (Penz 2017, 279). The present study refers to the subject using the term *climate change* since it is not only academically but also in everyday language the more commonly used version of the two terms.

2.2 Critical Discourse Studies

Now that the concept of climate change is established, it is feasible to begin to apply linguistic concepts to the issue and see how environmental discourse can be analysed. It is essential to begin with simply explaining what the term *Critical Discourse Studies* (henceforth CDS) means in essence, and to explain the origins of the term. To begin with, CDS is still often used interchangeably with its previous version *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA), but CDS is nowadays the preferred term (Flowerdew and Richardson 2018, 1). This is because "CDA was increasingly not restricted to applied analysis, but also included philosophical, methodological and practical developments" (van Dijk 2009, 62). The present study opts for the acronym CDS as well. It must be clarified that CDS is a discipline of study – it is discourse analysis from a critical point of view rather than a method of analysis – and it is possible to include several different methods while doing CDS research, both qualitative and quantitative (van Dijk 2018, 28). The specific procedures that are utilised in this study are presented in a later section that discusses materials and methods.

Bloor and Bloor explain that the most comprehensive interpretation of the term *discourse* is simply that it "refers to all the phenomena of symbolic interaction and communication between people, usually through spoken or written language or visual representation" (2007, 6). In other words, both spoken and written text are discourse in an equal manner, even though a much earlier use of the word referred only to "[t]he action or process of communicating thought by means of the spoken word" (*OED*, s.v. "discourse," n.). Naturally, it is possible to specify whether one refers to *spoken discourse* or *written discourse* so as not

to cause confusion (Bloor and Bloor 2007, 7). Additionally, discourse analysts' data usually consists of *texts* (Bloor and Bloor 2007, 29) – to be specific, the word *text* is used here to refer to both spoken and written data which discourse analysts work with. This data is generally either in electronically recorded, filmed, or written form (ibid.); in the present study, both the picture and the narration of the television documentaries can be considered separate texts, even though together they form a whole. In the context of CDS, any "connected discourse whose function is communicative and which forms the object of analysis and description" can be considered text (*OED*, s.v. "text," n.). Therefore, even photos and silent television programmes are considered forms of text in CDS despite not including any actual writing nor speech. In order to analyse a discourse event, it is essential for the analyst to first recognise what type of text they are working with – that is, they should discern the event's setting, time, mode and medium (e.g., face to face, one speaker to many listeners, television), participants and their roles, topics and themes, purpose, attitudes of the participants, and genre (Bloor and Bloor 2007, 29). In the present study, the data is obtained from nature documentaries, so it is to be assumed that the speech of the narrator is well prepared. Additionally, it is impossible to know who the script was originally written by since only the identity of the narrator is made public. However, the text has been constructed for a specific purpose and therefore has its own unique traits.

Even though the word *critical* usually has somewhat negative *connotations* – implications that a particular word invokes in addition to its main meaning – but that is not what its use in critical discourse necessarily conveys. Instead, "it is used more with the sense of *critique*, meaning that analysis may, on occasion, be directed towards a positive outcome" (Bloor and Bloor 2007, 4–5); for instance, an analysis may have the goal of evaluating successful resistance texts such as anti-racial discrimination movements or LGBTQ+ rights movements. The objective of CDS is not merely critique, but change for the better (Fairclough 2018, 13); while it is doubtful that academic critique alone is capable of mitigating inequality, what it does is help people understand the existing problems better (ibid.). This is also what the present study aims to do. However, sometimes it is simply not possible to offer any straightforward solutions to social problems. Consequently, CDS may be "just 'negative' critique of existing states of affairs, but possible solutions are usually implicit" (Fairclough 2018, 18–19). Originally, CDS expanded from *Critical Linguistics* (CL), which attempts to highlight the interrelation between ideology and power relations in language use, such as the use of persuasive language in forms of passive voice and nominalisation (Flowerdew and

Richardson 2018, 1). After such connections are exposed, the goal is to raise awareness of any issues.

Flowerdew and Richardson state that CDS is an inter-disciplinary approach, explaining that its focus is to analyse how social processes, social structures, and social change are apparent in discourse – it especially aims to identify issues of power and inequality (2018, 1). Moreover, Bloor and Bloor (2007, 3) claim that persuasive language can often be used to mislead people or otherwise influence them by subtly manipulating the truth. This can be either explicit or implicit; CDS aims to "uncover hidden features of language use and debunk their claims to authority" (Flowerdew and Richardson 2018, 1). That is, it seeks to analyse a text thoroughly to find signs of implicit ideologies in its use of language and then make them explicit for the reader (ibid.). These ideologies often include "an *us* versus *them* situation, positive *in-group* and negative *out-group* representations" of particular social groups (Flowerdew and Richardson 2018, 3).

Framing is another common term in CDS research, and it is commonly utilised in environmental discourse analysis; it means to make certain characteristics in a text more noticeable than others, therefore even altering the ideas that the text attempts to convey (Entman 1993, 52). Consequently, only certain aspects are reported so that the reader does not have access to all essential context, and some parts that could be of great relevance are somewhat or even completely ignored (Penz 2017, 281). Metaphors or lexical items and their *collocations* – i.e., the words that they tend to appear with – are examples of framing devices (ibid.). It has been extensively studied how media discourse has framed climate change – for example, its certainty or uncertainty, the risks that it poses on our planet, its effect on business and economics, climate security, and its mitigation are amongst the most common frames in this type of research (Penz 2017, 282).

Finally, CDS focuses on solidarity with others, equality, and considering their problems as serious, such as those of oppressed groups of people – however, nowadays these problems are progressively more and more ecological (Stibbe 2018, 497). For instance, climate change leads to extreme change in global climate patterns, biodiversity loss leads to animal and plant species disappearing forever, and resource depletion leads to a lack of necessary resources due to their unsustainable use; these are serious problems that threaten the well-being or even the lives of some people (ibid.). The concept of ecolinguistics, which is a central term in this study, is discussed next.

2.3 Ecolinguistics

This study relies on several secondary sources that revolve around ecolinguistics – the most prominent ones being *The Routledge Handbook of Ecolinguistics* and *The Ecolinguistics Reader: Language, Ecology and Environment*, which include texts by many different authors who write about both the history of this branch of linguistics and the ways in which it can be utilised in CDS research. It must be noted that as a research area, ecolinguistics is still relatively recent; many consider Einar Haugen's 1971 seminar work and 1972 article titled *The Ecology of Language* as its beginning (Fill and Penz 2017, 437). In the article, Haugen "was referring to a new ecological study of interrelations between languages in both human mind and in multilingual communities" (Fill and Mühlhäusler 2001, 1). The concept of ecolinguistics has evolved significantly since then, and it is often divided into two different subsections; while the term is now generally used in research to address how language affects and interprets the human perspective of the environment, it can also be used to refer to language loss in today's world where English and other major languages supplant others (Fill 2017, 1). These different points of view are not mutually exclusive, but for clarity they must be explained individually.

The latter meaning refers to language diversity and language endangerment – this is the first known meaning of the term *ecolinguistics*. In 1964, C. Voegelin and F. Voegelin were the first ones to use the term *ecology* in relation to languages, when they coined the term *linguistic ecology* (Fill 2017, 3). They argue that every single language in a particular area needs equal attention instead of selectively focusing on merely one or few different languages (ibid.). Moreover, language diversity and today's sudden changes in the ecology of languages are common issues that researchers attempt to tackle, and some also question "whether the preservation of linguistic species should be regarded as on a par with the preservation of endangered natural kinds" (Fill and Mühlhäusler 2001, 4). Looking at an area in West Africa, ranging from Senegal to Cameroon, which is a smaller region than the United States, there can be found at least 700 languages; some of these languages are as distinct from each another as English and Chinese, for instance (Glausiusz 2001, 165). However, it is improbable that this linguistic diversity will last for long since English and other major languages are becoming more and more appealing due to their significance to the industrial economy (Glausiusz 2001, 166).

The first of the aforementioned meanings for ecolinguistics is arguably the more commonly used one nowadays, and definitely the more relevant one considering this study; Fill states that in this case, ecolinguistics "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" (Fill 2017, 1). In other words, ecolinguists are concerned about the role that grammatical features and lexical items have in the deterioration of the natural world, and they strive to find new ways in which language use can have a positive impact on environmental problems (ibid.). This definition of *ecolinguistics* is the one that is used by the majority of linguists that are concerned about and study language use in relation to the natural world (Fill 2007, 3). Among the first researchers in the field of ecolinguistics were Bang and Døør; in 1993, they described the term as follows: "[e]colinguistics is the part of critical, applied linguistics concerned with the ways in which language and linguistics are involved in the ecological crisis" (Skutnabb-Kangas and Harmon 2017, 11). It must be noted that any research that concerns the environment in any manner can be considered ecolinguistics, but the most relevant research from the perspective of CDS is that "which takes ecology literally, as the life-sustaining interactions of organisms (including humans) with other organisms and the natural environment" (Stibbe 2014, 118). The focus is on texts that influence how humans treat all organisms, including each other, other animals, and their physical surroundings (ibid.). This makes the present study's source of data – nature documentaries – a relevant choice as they reach a large audience and seek to be informative.

The term *ecolinguistics* has its origin in the word *ecology*, which was coined in the mid-19th century. First, Charles Darwin studied the evolution of organisms and how this affected humans, and subsequently, based on Darwin's work, Ernst Haeckel was the first to use the term *ecology* (Fill 2017, 1). Haeckel defined the term followingly: "the study of interrelations between organisms and their living and nonliving surroundings – including organisms of the same and of other species" (ibid.). Eventually, in the 1960s, the term acquired the meanings of *biological*, *natural*, and *sustainable* or *environmentally friendly* (Fill 2017, 2). Furthermore, granted that humankind has been aware of Earth's plants and animals for thousands of years, there had not been much organised conservation of this natural diversity until the 1970s (Skutnabb-Kangas and Harmon 2017, 14); this led to the coining of the term *biodiversity*, or *biological diversity*, which became a key term in the 1980s concerning the protection and preservation of the environment (ibid.).

There have been increasingly many green movements and environmental campaigns over the last few decades, and it is by now well-documented how the environment is deteriorating because of industrialisation, urbanisation, and the search and overconsumption of minerals, energy, and other resources (Alexander 2017, 197). It can be argued that it is a thoroughly well-known fact these environmental problems exist, and even though there evidently are people who choose to deny that these issues are caused by human activities, it is nevertheless presumable that these people do know that the issues exist. Zhang (2022, 141) states that while ecolinguistics celebrated its 50th birthday, at the same time humanity struggled with yet another worldwide issue: Covid-19. She continues that the pandemic showed "how poorly prepared humanity is to cope with global disasters and how necessary and urgent it is to change our priorities towards ecological integrity and well-being" (ibid.). In other words, the fact that humanity was not prepared for an unforeseen worldwide pandemic can be contrasted with the fact that even though the climate crisis has been a globally known issue for a long period of time, humanity has still struggled to prevent or even mitigate it.

Mühlhäusler argues that "in times of rapid societal and technological upheaval, language changes tend to lag behind other developments" (2001, 31). He continues to claim that this fact is often dismissed "by mainstream linguists who continue to believe that speakers of any language can express whatever they want to" (ibid.). However, it is apparent why language does not seem to be capable of the swift change that is required of it to adapt to the current state of our world; environmental problems such as climate change have not been an acknowledged issue for a long period of time yet – at least not long enough for our language to adapt without deliberate endeavour. In the English-speaking world, public recognition of the tremendous requirements of industrial and agricultural interests on the finite resources of our natural world was not awoken until in the early 1960s (Mühlhäusler 2001, 32).

It is arguable that the environment in which people live affect their use of language, and their use of language can affect – or even limit – the way in which they see the world. Sapir claims that the language that speakers of a particular group uses is considerably affected by their environmental background ([1912] 2001, 14). He continues to elaborate that the physical environment that people live in is influenced by social factors and is then reflected in language use. For instance, it is not sufficient for a specific type of animal to exist in the physical surroundings of a people; it is essential that the members of the group acknowledge the existence of the animal or a plant and have interest in them – only then there is need to refer to this particular type of species by using a word that is assigned to it (ibid.). Moreover,

since different cultures develop in countless ways, it is inevitable that the vocabularies of distinct peoples differ from each other considerably (Sapir [1912] 2001, 17). According to Sapir, human beings "are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society" (1949, 162). This approach is relevant to ecolinguistics, as some grammatical features of the English language affect the way in which we perceive environmental problems; the disconnection between "agents and affected participants, or the perception of time in terms of past, present and future, are barriers to the holistic worldview necessary to deal with ecological issues" (Stibbe 2017, 166). For instance, the separation of agents implies that an action does not have an effect on its doer, which makes it seem that one could purchase an ecologically harmful product without being "affected by the pollution, climate change or biodiversity loss they are contributing to through their action" (ibid.). However, it is arguable that the most efficient method that could facilitate the existence of a more ecological worldview would be a thorough change in the inner nature of grammar (ibid.).

There are cases of *superficial greening* which are prevalent especially in advertising – this means that products are made to seem greener by utilising linguistic strategies, even if the products are not really environmentally friendly (Stibbe 2017, 166). For example, the term *greenwash* is used by many corporations and politicians as an empty environmental spin in which the public is persuaded that something is more ecological than it really is (ibid.). To be more precise, its goal is to purposely convey misleading information to customers so that a product is presented in a more environmentally responsible manner (Stöckl and Molnar 2017, 264). Nevertheless, it is beyond the bounds of possibility to suddenly alter the inner levels of grammar in a way that would let us view the world more ecologically; for instance, "it would be impossible to change English so that it no longer separates out the subjects and the objects of sentences" (Stibbe 2017, 167). Although grammar is a deeply rooted linguistic system that is evidently impossible to change over a short period of time even with a deliberate effort, some parts of language do change continually; new words are constantly coined, derived from existing words, and some words even become obsolete.

Lexicogrammar is a term that is used to describe the interrelationship between lexis – i.e., the words in a language – and grammar. Goatly has studied the relationship between ecolinguistics and lexicogrammar, and argues that:

> (1) the lexicogrammar of a particular language affects our perception of and action on the environment; (2) our natural environment affects lexicogrammar; (3) lexicogrammar and the environment are in a dynamic relationship mutually affecting each other as interdependent systems which change over time as part of a culture. (Goatly 2017, 227)

Moreover, Goatly states that the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is relevant to research on lexicogrammar and ecology (2017, 228); in both CDS and ecolinguistics, the analysed text's choice of what lexical word is used in a particular context is a relevant aspect for the analyst to focus on. Goatly illustrates that "lexis may sometimes give us a choice between three terms, one negative in affect, one positive, and one neutral as in the trio *invasive*, *exotic*, *introduced species*" (2017, 230). For instance, words such as *waste ground* and *pest* are usually evaluated negatively, even though it is possible that these pests are ecologically indispensable species that should be referred to in a more positive manner. The word choices in certain situations are not necessarily always deliberate or well-thought, and despite the fact that "speakers of a language have a metalanguage for lexis, *words*, *vocabulary*, they often have only a rudimentary understanding of grammar and lack a metalanguage for grammatical categories" (Goatly 2017, 231) – therefore the connection between grammar and ideology continues to be uncertain. For instance, Schultz illustrates that the verb *clear* is commonly "used to describe total removal of native vegetation, essential of course for 'improving' land" (2001, 111) – this is an established term that people probably use without giving it a second thought. The word *clear* has mostly positive connotations, such as "light, bright, open, [and] serene" (ibid.); however, *clearing* native vegetation is not a positive act in terms of its environmental impact, and hence Schultz proposes an alternative phrase *native vegetation removal* (ibid.). Another example that she gives is the term *greenhouse effect*, which has agreeable connotations of plants that are greatly cared for (Schultz 2001, 112); she compares this to referring to war as a *game* as the greenhouse effect should remind people of the catastrophic climatic threat instead of something benign – she proposes *climatic dislocation* as an alternative expression (ibid.). While the English language is becoming an increasingly important lingua franca – i.e., a world language – the habits that come with the grammar of English become more ubiquitous, and therefore people should be mindful of what kind of language they use and encourage others to use (Schultz 2001, 113). However, Schultz claims that this is not a simple issue, since the expressions that encourage the exploitation of the environment are already ingrained in the language (ibid.). Nevertheless, it can be perceived in some everyday expressions that even well-established terms such as fireman, policeman, and

chairman can be changed through deliberate effort when there is a need for change and more appropriate alternatives are made available.

Fill explains that even though humankind has hesitantly realised that "the world is not the centre of the universe, we have been slow to accept that humans may not be central either" (2001, 49). The features of the languages that we speak show evident features of *anthropocentrism* – which means regarding human beings as the most important and central beings in existence – and thus maintain the idea that humans and other living beings are separate and not of equal importance. Fill states that anthropocentrism in languages is apparent "in the way languages 'name' all natural phenomena from the point of view of their usefulness for humans" (ibid.). However, Jung (2001, 275) reminds that essentially all language is, and always will be, anthropocentric; he reasons that the notion of *ecological renaming* – labelling everything from the perspective of the animals and plants – would still be a projection of the human perspective, since it is not possible to reproduce the consciousness of other species (ibid.).

The notion that different grammatical features and lexical items make the discourse more positive or negative – and thus may prevent people from thinking ecologically – is a common theme in the field of ecolinguistics. Halliday states that human beings are generally "represented in transitivity structures as the most animate beings" (2001, 194), or in other words, they are the ones who do the thinking, doing, and acting, whereas beings such as non-human animals and plants are passive objects which do not actively do anything on their own. In reality, natural areas such as forests are living ecosystems, as they actively provide oxygen to others, stabilise the soil in which other plants grow, and provide shelter for wildlife (ibid.). Discourses that describe environment as an active participant, do not attempt to hide environmental problems and their causes, and encourage people to think more ecologically are considered environmentally beneficial – i.e., positive discourse in the present study. This approach relates to the concept of Positive Discourse Analysis, which is discussed next.

2.4 Positive Discourse Analysis

In 1999, Martin developed the concept of *Positive Discourse Analysis* (henceforth PDA) in his analysis of Nelson Mandela's autobiography; the analysis exemplified "a positive style of discourse analysis that focuses on hope and change, by way of complementing the deconstructive exposé" that is associated with CDS (Martin 1999, 29). In other words, PDA is

a useful accompaniment to CDS instead of a replacement for it (Stibbe 2017, 168). PDA encourages analysts to search for positive features of language use that could be used instead of the destructive dominant discourse, and this might inspire people to act in order to preserve the ecosystems that are essential for life (Stibbe 2017, 169–170). For instance, Stibbe explains that the word *sustainable* is positive, as "it is the unmarked term of the pair sustainable/unsustainable" (2017, 171) – in other words, it has a more general meaning and use than its marked counterpart, which is derived from *sustainable* by adding the prefix *-un*. Stibbe states that instead of promoting specific texts, the aim of analysing discourse from PDA's point of view is "to assemble clusters of linguistic features that can be useful in conveying new and beneficial stories" (ibid.). As an example, the term *uneconomic growth* could be transferred to mainstream discourses, such as news reporting, instead of considering any economic growth as a favourable goal of our society by referring to any increase in growth as positive (ibid.).

Stibbe (2017, 165) states that the focal point of ecolinguistics is usually exposing dominant discourses of our industrial civilisation that are unsustainable, and additionally explicating the ways in which these discourses promote behaviour that is deemed ecologically destructive. Therefore, he claims that ecolinguistics has generally had an emphasis on negative critique – i.e., it has focused on the negative language features that motivate ecologically destructive behaviour such as consumerist, economic, or agricultural discourses that "encourage unnecessary consumption, […] represent the main goals of society as unending economic growth" or "treat the natural world mechanistically as a resource to be exploited" (ibid.). Exposing these dominant discourses as environmentally destructive is important; however, it is only the first phase in the process where one wants to make an impact on these unsustainable discourses. Stibbe argues that the goal is not only to expose the issues in the ways in which language is currently used "unless there are beneficial alternative forms of language available to move towards" (ibid.). Thus, the natural next phase in this process would be to search for new sustainable discourses to replace the unsustainable, or negative, ones – to search for positive discourses "which promote *being more* rather than *having more*, well-being rather than growth and respecting rather than conquering nature" (ibid.).

Sapir and Whorf's linguistic relativity, which was discussed earlier, is positive in the sense that it praises those languages that are able to convey an ecological worldview with their grammatical systems as opposed to those that are not (Stibbe 2017, 167). For example, Äiwoo is a language that has a deep grammatical system that could not be possibly transferred to

English; it features the nominal classifier *nu* that "signals nouns which are dependent on something else for their existence" (ibid.). It would arguably encourage ecological thinking if "humans, other animals, plants and the physical environment were all classified as 'nu'" in the English language as well (ibid.). Of course, Stibbe does not suggest that we simply start spontaneously saying *nu-environment* or *nu-people* to be more ecological; however, it is beneficial to be aware of such possibility and acknowledge what other languages do differently. Incorporating PDA into ecolinguistics often results in a search for more appropriate lexical items to replace the detrimental ones; for instance, using the word *animal* in an expression *the way people treat animals* implies that humans are not animals (ibid.). It is not desirable to exclude humans from the noun *animal* since "it draws attention away from the fact that, like all other animals, humans depend on a physical environment for our survival" (ibid.). Some researchers propose new words or expressions to replace old ones; for instance, the previously mentioned suggestion that *clearing* forests be changed to *native vegetation removal* and the term *free-living nonhumans* instead of *wildlife* (ibid.). However, these attempts have been contradicted by claiming that they are hard to take seriously; even though these researchers advocate more appropriate alternatives, some suggestions may seem arrogant and excessively prescriptive by insisting "that people who use ordinary words like *animal* or *farm* are incorrect" (ibid.). Stibbe comments on the issue as follows:

> Fortunately, it is not necessary to invent artificial new expressions to create positive ways of speaking and writing about the world that inspire people to protect the ecosystems that support life. Neither is it necessary to impose new forms of grammar on the English language. There have been speakers and writers who have managed to take up the English language, with all its imperfections, and put ordinary words together using standard grammar to inspire and make a real difference in the world. (Stibbe 2017, 168)

As stated before, bringing attention to agency as a linguistic feature is one way that is used to construct positive ecolinguistic discourse. For instance, in clauses, nature can act as the participant so as to be represented in the role of an active force that deserves respect – e.g., "[*t*]*he eagle soars*; *the rain beat hard* […] *a river murmuring*; *wild brooks prattling*" (ibid.). On the other hand, discourse can be negative if the agent is omitted through nominalisation. For instance, by saying *the actions* instead of *someone acted*, or by using the passive *were believed to* instead of *someone believed that* (Stibbe 2017, 174). These are subtle ways to make the reader believe that the original agent is not responsible for the harmful actions. Additionally, *climate change* can be turned into the phrase *the climate changes*, implying "that this is spontaneous, and humans may not be involved in causing it" (Goatly 2017, 231).

Moreover, in the example *the degradation of our shared environment*, one can observe that a phrase that might initially be easily overlooked as perfectly normal might also be perceived as manipulative upon a closer look – nominalisation results in the omission of the actor, resulting in a subtle method of evading assigning responsibility for destructive ecological consequences (Halliday 2001; Schleppegrell 2001). For instance, "environmental problems are often presented as nominalizations such as *habitat loss*, *extinction of species*, and *destruction of the rainforests*" (Schleppegrell 2001, 226) – here it is noticeable that every one of these phrases lack the agent. Furthermore, Penz argues that whether intentionally or not, "language may be employed in apparently neutral ways, yet still downplay or hide environmental exploitation by seemingly appearing neutral" (2017, 278).

The concept of anthropocentrism is relevant to the grammatical patterns discussed here; Goatly illustrates that "[a]nalysis of these grammatical patterns […] reveals a view of nature as predominantly centered on humans, i.e., anthropocentric" (2017, 239). According to Heuberger, anthropocentrism views "nature primarily or even exclusively in terms of its usefulness to human beings" (2017, 342) and that it "regards nature merely as a means, an instrument, rather than ascribing any intrinsic value to it" (ibid.), thus being unethical and problematic concerning its effects on the environment. For instance, referring to animals as *livestock* or *game* can be considered a manifestation of anthropocentrism from a utilitarianistic perspective (Heuberger 2017, 343). Furthermore, by emphasising the dissimilarities between humans and other species, an emotional distance between the two is constructed, which implies that human beings are in a more important position and therefore indirectly justifies any exploitative behaviour (ibid.). Another example of this is that "[h]umans 'live' in a certain area, whereas animals 'are found' in that region" (Heuberger 2017, 344), which diminishes animals' need for a space to live in and might make it more difficult to empathise with them. Additionally, some terms "acquire a derogatory meaning if used for humans, e.g., 'to mate' and 'in heat'" (ibid.); this anthropocentric way of thinking makes humans seem superior to and more important than other animals, and from an ecolinguistic perspective it would be more ideal if there was "more transparency on the lexical level […] as it would allow for a greater awareness on the part of speakers" (ibid.). Referring to animals with the neuter pronoun *it* implies that they are not male nor female – or even living beings – and thus destructively classifies them to inanimate beings; this results in "a distancing effect which separates humans from other living beings" (Dunayer 2001, 150) as well. On the other hand, using the same personal pronouns that are used for humans when

referring to other animals is one way to make a discourse more positive by increasing the personhood of these animals. Additionally, making animal species other than humans the grammatical agents in processes like *work* and *swim* represents them as active participants (ibid.). Expressing that animals *communicate* in different *dialects* further equates them to humans by making them *sayers* in the verbal processes and contrasting their language to human language in a positive manner (ibid.). These are all linguistic features that are considered positive discourse as they emphasise the intellectual and communicative capacity of animals (ibid.). Heuberger questions whether it is enough to spread awareness on how these anthropocentric features are used in language, or should people simply stop using certain destructive terms at all (2017, 347). He explains that within the field of ecolinguistics there have been many different proposals, yet there has not been clear agreement on any of them (ibid.). Even though it might take a lot of time for language reforms to happen, they "have mainly been successful in those areas where attitudes within society have also changed" as speakers "are far more likely to accept alternative linguistic usage if their views have changed as well" (ibid.). Naturally, for language to change, it is vital to begin with explaining why it is beneficial for it to change. It is evident that there has been a major shift in public attitudes towards the environment and their awareness of environmental problems in the last decade alone. Heuberger claims that "[w]ith these sociocultural changes, it could be argued, the ground for linguistic change seems more fertile than ever before" (ibid.).

In both PDA and CDS, the analyst is required to closely read and examine texts in order "to reveal hidden ideologies that are subtly conveyed by use of particular linguistic features" (Stibbe 2017, 174). It is necessary that a particular discourse is regarded as positive only after it has been thoroughly analysed in a way that makes it intelligible why it is positive in practice (Stibbe 2017, 174–175). Therefore, it is essential to clearly state what makes a discourse positive for the researcher themself – this depends on their ecological philosophy, or *ecosophy* (Stibbe 2017, 175). For example, the ecosophy of the analyst might be different depending on their stance on whether plants and non-human animals are equal to human beings (*ecocentric*) or whether they are only important in the scenarios where they are useful for human purposes (*anthropocentric*) – or anything in between. Furthermore, an ecosophy might be optimistic if one believes that environmental issues can be solved without compromise, or pessimistic in the case that one thinks "that the current civilisation is on an irredeemable trajectory towards collapse" (Stibbe 2018, 503). It is also important to depend on statements that have scientific evidence, such as the scope of change that the industrial

civilisation must go through "to bring carbon dioxide levels down to a level which can mitigate climate change" (Stibbe 2017, 175). In the case that the ideologies found in a discourse and the analyst's ecosophy contradict each other, the discourse is *destructive* (Stibbe 2018, 703). For example, this usually happens if the analysed text is promoting behaviour that will lead to people destroying systems that are essential for life itself (Stibbe 2018, 503). However, the qualities that make discourse destructive might also be subtle and implicit – and not done on purpose. If the hidden ideologies that are found in a text are in line with the researcher's own ecosophy, then the discourse can be considered *positive* or *beneficial* (ibid.; 2017, 175). Consequently, the next step towards the goal is to promote the discourse and its clusters of linguistic features that make it a positive discourse; therefore, these linguistic features are made available to the dominant discourses of our industrial society so that everyone has the option to use them (Stibbe 2017, 176–177). Furthermore, "the aim of the analysis is not just to come to a binary conclusion 'good' or 'bad' but also to reveal the specific ways that clusters of linguistic features come together to express a particular worldview" (Stibbe 2014, 124). Additionally, "even the most 'positive' discourses are always treated critically since they may be internally contradictory or have unintended side effects which can be revealed through analysis" (ibid). It is to be expected that the nature documentaries that are analysed in the present study strive to be positive discourses since one of their aims is arguably to encourage people to think more ecologically, yet they were chosen for this study partly because they may include contradictions or unintended instances of destructive discourse due to their medium and genre. This research uses the terms *positive* discourse and *destructive* discourse, even though previous research has also used the term *beneficial* discourse; additionally, another alternative for the term *destructive* would also be *negative*, but that does not convey the same tone as *destructive* does when it comes to the idea that discourse can have destructive effects on the natural world.

It is also worth reminding that even though most discourses can be deemed straightforwardly either *destructive* or *positive*, some discourses might not be as clear-cut; it is possible to categorise a text into an in-between group of *ambivalent* discourses. In the case that an instance of discourse includes both positive and destructive elements, the overall discourse is ambivalent. Despite the fact that PDA and CDS overlap with each other in many ways, one may focus on different kinds of texts than the other; in CDS, the focus is usually "on typical patterns of language which are present across large numbers of texts" rather than a detailed analysis of small number of individual texts like in PDA (Stibbe 2017, 176). Moreover, from

PDA's point of view, it is not that relevant to prove how widespread the positive features that are embedded in the text are; rather, the aim is to reveal these features' existence in the text – or the lack of them (ibid.). To put it simply, PDA differs from many CDS studies in that its point is not to simply be critical, but rather offer constructive criticism; instead of purely illustrating why the analysed text is negative or destructive, PDA also attempts to find alternative ways of reconstructing the text that are more beneficial. Furthermore, it is beneficial to analyse texts that are positive and do not either explicitly or implicitly attempt to do harm; in these cases, PDA highlights the ways that make these positive discourses *positive*.

As stated before, *critical* analysis does not equal being negative. For instance, ecolinguistics and PDA are critical in that they question the worldview that considers endless economic growth as an appealing goal, while also being *positive* in that their aim is to

> seek out and promote discourses which could potentially help protect and preserve the conditions that support life […] through raising awareness of the role of language in ecological destruction or protection, informing policy, informing educational development or providing ideas that can be drawn on in redesigning existing texts or producing new texts in the future. (Stibbe 2014, 119)

Again, many ecological studies focus not only on discourses that are either clearly destructive or beneficial; they can also focus on the in-between (Stibbe 2018, 500). One illustrative example of these *ambivalent discourses* is greenwashing in advertising, which "is negative because it deceives customers into thinking that products are more ecologically beneficial than they actually are, but also positive in the sense that it conveys the story that the environmental performance of products matters" (ibid.). In this study, the nature documentary series that the primary sources consist of are hypothesised to be relatively ambivalent in that they arguably aim to affect their viewers' stance on ecological thinking positively, yet they need to be concise, straightforward, and entertaining due to the nature of their genre and medium; the next subsection discusses this topic and elaborates on this notion.

2.5 Nature documentaries as a genre

It is probable that a great amount of the information that people have on environmental problems comes from mainstream media, and a significant amount of that media is visual in one way or another (Hansen 2017, 179). Television, streaming services, and social media are ubiquitous in today's world, and they all consist of copious amounts of visual media; nonetheless, it is arguable that visual communication research has historically been neglected

as compared to text focused communication research (ibid.). However, Hansen (2017, 179–180) argues that in the 2010s there has been a "much-needed growth in studies […] focusing on the visual" as there have been increasingly more scholarly publications, and much of the communication research on the environment and nature has been specifically about climate change. Hansen (2017, 181) states that the three media forms that are the general focus of current research on visual representation of the environment include *news and factual representation*, *advertising and promotional communication*, and *film and entertainment content*.

The present study focuses on the genre of documentary, which can arguably be categorised into both film and entertainment content and news and factual representation. The nature documentaries in question are not considered films, but rather episodes of television series; nevertheless, there are also full-length nature documentary films that share the exact same characteristics as the ones that are being analysed here – in other words, the main difference is the length of the documentary and the number of distinct episodes that each have their own themes, such as forests, oceans, or mountains. The documentaries are considered entertainment, even though it can be argued that their primary function is to inform their audience. It should also be noted that certain problems might emerge in visual environmental communication analysis; Hansen mentions "accounting for the relationship between visual and textual representation" and "accounting for narrative development in visual representation" (2017, 190). The concept of combining visual and textual communication along with other kinds is relevant to acknowledge here; in the case that a particular discourse utilises several different modes of communication, it is known as *multi-modal*. For instance, a film or a television programme generally uses picture, speech, music, and other sounds to convey its messages (Bloor and Bloor 2007, 7). The present study is only interested in the narration of the analysed series, even though the image is also of significant importance in all television documentaries. However, because of the chosen approach for this study, there is no need to account for the relationship between visual and textual representation nor the narrative development in visual representation. These are aspects of the entity that might affect the commentary – the spoken text – of the documentaries in one way or another, and in certain instances it is relevant to be aware of this two-way communication of what is spoken and what is shown on the screen and how they influence each other. Ledin and Machin say that multi-modal research in CDS is a field that is still very recent, yet it "is becoming more common […] as scholars begin to introduce visual, sound and material design alongside their

analyses of texts" (2018, 60). Some scholars even argue "that all modes of representation are, in principle, of equal significance in representation and communication, as all modes have potential for meaning, though differently with different modes" (Kress 2010, 104).

Flowerdew and Richardson state that in the field of CDS, the analysed data is generally "political discourse of various genres, […] mass-media texts (including newspapers, **television and film**), historical and official documents, various types of internet data, and ethnographic data" (2018, 2, emphasis added). Therefore, it can be claimed that nature documentaries are a valid source from which to elicit data for the purposes of this study. However, it is essential to note that this genre has its own caveats. Television documentary as a genre has the main purpose of informing its audiences; however, it is possible that these documentaries prioritise the entertainment value in order to leave their audiences satisfied, even if this has a negative effect on the information value of the documentaries (Bloor and Bloor 2007, 152).

Penz argues that "the media can turn people's attention to the topic of climate change" (2017, 281), and continues to say that it plays "a role in influencing people's attitudes towards issues" (ibid.). Generally, environmental scientific findings are eventually conveyed to nature documentaries, from which they are translated to viewers in both in form of picture and narration; it is far more likely that the general public encounter these findings in form of television or streaming entertainment than in an academic research article. Furthermore, people do not necessarily face the effects of climate change in their immediate surroundings all the time, but even if they do occasionally experience natural disasters, it is perhaps not until the media associates the events to global climate change that the scientific connection is realised (ibid.). Climate change is obviously a topic that is relevant everywhere in the world, but a significant amount of research on it "is based on U.S. and UK media reporting and thus on English language media" (ibid.). The present study solely focuses on UK media reporting since the analysed nature documentaries series are produced by the *British Broadcasting Corporation* (henceforth BBC). Therefore, all primary source material is in English. It is worth noting that even though "[t]he representation of and discourse on climate change has attracted the interest of researchers from various disciplines" (Penz 2017, 288) and that research on climate change in mass media has become more and more common, there are barely any previous studies that focus on nature documentaries. Bateman (2018, 613) states that most of the previous critical analyses of film are conducted in the field of media studies and visual communication, and most of it predates CDS. This gap in research motivates the

present study as the narration of these documentaries has not received much attention from this ecolinguistic point of view.

Research on documentaries has generally focused on the character of audiovisual representations and how they can potentially mislead people; this is because documentaries include several different truth claims "even though the precise scope of such claims may not always be clear" (Bateman 2018, 613). There is also an issue of documentaries re-creating events instead of simply documenting them, in which case they take "the position that 'real events' need to be appropriately 'arranged' in order to function effectively as documentary" (Bateman 2018, 617). Therefore, even presentations that are supposed to be strictly factual tend to turn their material into a spectacle through dramatic storytelling (ibid.). It can be argued that this is the case with nature documentaries as well; they are informative and factual, yet some sequences are possibly heavily edited and rearranged to create a more engaging, entertaining, and dramatic story for the viewer. However, despite the aim for high entertainment value, especially the BBC's documentary series reach such a massive audience that it is of great importance that their use of language encourages the viewers to think and act ecologically and sustainably. It is to be expected that these documentaries are generally considered positive discourse that respects nature – or even ambivalent since there is no room or motivation to use language that might confuse the viewer, and this might result in some destructive qualities. Nevertheless, even in the case that the discourse is positive, the goal is not to simply promote these texts but rather their specific linguistic features that exemplify ecological worldview.

Finally, the present study draws its data from two separate nature documentary television series which were released ten years apart from each other; one of the main goals is to investigate whether there is any diachronic variation between the two series. Therefore, it draws inspiration from *Discourse-Historical Approach*, where "[a] diachronic series or sequence of thematically or/and functionally connected discourse fragments or utterances is taken as a starting point, and their historical interrelationships are reconstructed within a specific period" (Reisigl 2018, 53). The documentary series are connected in that they share the same producer, the same narrator, and even the same name – the latter being considered a direct continuation of the series. The next section discusses the materials of the study in further detail and explains the research methods that are utilised.

3 Materials and Methods

In this section, the primary materials from which the analysed data are elicited – i.e., *Planet Earth* and *Planet Earth II* – are presented in a thorough manner. Moreover, additional information on the production and background of these nature documentaries is discussed. For instance, since the analysed series are both produced by the BBC, it is relevant to elaborate on its history. Additionally, since the BBC has so many different divisions, there is a need to clarify who it is that is responsible for the production of these documentaries. Moreover, since the narration of the documentaries is the focal point of this study, it is applicable to discuss the narrator as well so that more context becomes available before the analytical methods are discussed. Subsequently, these methods and the way in which they are utilised in the analysis are explained in the methods subsection; there, the process of this research is elaborated on. For instance, where the primary material – i.e., the nature documentary series – were accessed, how and why the analysed utterances were chosen from the material and transcribed for this study, and how the methodology was utilised in the analysis.

3.1 BBC and their nature documentary series

The BBC, or the British Broadcasting Corporation, is a British public broadcasting corporation that was established in 1927 and it operates under a royal charter – i.e., a formal grant issued by a monarch (BBC 2016). It was originally established five years earlier, in 1922, as the *British Broadcasting Company* (BBC 2023a). Until 1954, when the first commercial television channel was introduced in Britain, the BBC had the exclusive control of the supply both in radio and television broadcasting. It is funded predominantly by an annual television licence fee rather than by advertising revenue (BBC 2023b). Moreover, the BBC has the second highest broadcasting budget in the United Kingdom as it is behind only *Sky UK Limited*. Generally, the BBC is highly esteemed, and it is regarded as a reliable source of information. Furthermore, the BBC is obligated to remain impartial in all its reporting (BBC 2018). These facts make the works produced by the BBC a valid choice for the primary material for this study as they are likely to contain information that is factual and not biased towards any direction.

Since 2017, a subsidiary of BBC called *BBC Studios* – formerly known as *BBC Worldwide* – has been responsible for the international distribution of the content (BBC 2023c). To be

precise, the *BBC Studios Natural History Unit* is the division responsible for the production of the documentary series examined in this study. It is a separate department of BBC Studios that was founded in 1957; its main purpose is to produce television content about natural history and wildlife. The BBC Studios Natural History Unit is the single largest nature documentary producer in the world (BBC n.d.). This is another fact that makes the documentaries a relevant source of data in the present study; as stated before, these documentaries reach a large audience, and they have high production value. The nature documentary series, films, and other content produced by the BBC Studios Natural History department are generally marketed and distributed under the brand name of *BBC Earth* for commercial purposes.

On their website, the BBC ensures that all their content is sustainable in a way that reflects the changes our society must move towards in order to live more sustainably (BBC 2023d). Furthermore, they admit that they have a responsibility to aid their "audiences understand the impact of climate change" (ibid.). In 2021, the BBC signed the Climate Content Pledge along with other broadcasters and streamers, and in doing so they committed to reaching "the widest possible audience with climate and environmental themes" (ibid.) In their environmental-themed content, the BBC reached two thirds of the UK population that is over 16 years old in 2022. The BBC states that over a billion people have watched at least one of their *BBC Planet* series since 2016; these include *The Green Planet*, *The Blue Planet*, *Frozen Planet*, and *Planet Earth* (ibid). Furthermore, the BBC commits to being a planet positive organisation which does more good than harm to the planet (ibid.). This claim is relevant in terms of this study as it explicitly proves the intention that the analysed discourse aims to be ecologically positive discourse.

In terms of the present study, only two series were chosen to be analysed due to the limitations of the scope; naturally, it would be more informative to analyse every single available documentary series, but that would evidently require far more extensive research. *Planet Earth* and *Planet Earth II* are the most marketed, most extensive, and most expensive – and therefore also arguably of the highest quality in terms of production and informative value – of the series produced by the BBC Studios Natural History Unit. Furthermore, they have the widest focus in terms of the themes that are included in the narrative of the series. For example, *The Blue Planet* series discusses mainly the natural history of the oceans and the marine wildlife on our planet, whereas the *Frozen Planet* series focuses on the polar regions of the world in the same manner. However, the *Planet Earth* series includes the

aforementioned topics as well as covers topics such as jungles, deserts, and urban cities. Therefore, *Planet Earth* and *Planet Earth II* were deemed an applicable pairing for this study. The fact that the two analysed series are separate parts of the same long-running series – i.e., they share the same title, the only difference being the numbered ending in the name of the second series – is relevant for this study; in this way, it is possible to study whether there is any discernible diachronic variation in the separate parts of the same series, as it is entirely possible that 10 years is enough time for the latter series to include more environmentally beneficial language elements. Naturally, doing research that focuses on either the pairing *The Blue Planet* (2001) and *Blue Planet II* (2017) or on the pairing *Frozen Planet* (2011) and *Frozen Planet II* (2022) would have been a viable choice as well, but in that case the themes would be far more limited instead having a wider focus on all parts of our planet. The third part of the *Planet Earth* series, titled *Planet Earth III*, was released in October 2023 in the United Kingdom; however, it was not possible to include this latest part of the series in this study as it has not yet been released physically neither made available for streaming elsewhere in the world. Furthermore, including this third part of the series in this research could potentially mean that either the analysis would have to be expanded – which is not possible due to the scope of the study – or that fewer instances could be addressed for each documentary, which would negatively affect the analysis. Additionally, another feasible starting point for the study would also have been to include one nature documentary series that is produced by the BBC and then compare that with another series that does not share the same producer. However, in the present study, one of the goals is to discover how the two series that share the same producer differ from each other.

3.2 David Attenborough as the narrator

The narrator and presenter of *Planet Earth* and *Planet Earth II* is David Attenborough. There are no other voices nor commentators in any of the episodes – he is the sole narrator. Attenborough is a British broadcaster and biologist who has a long history with natural history documentary series, and he has been an active advocate for environmental causes such as mitigating climate change. Attenborough has been involved in making and writing natural history films and series since the 1950s; in other words, “he has worked throughout most of the medium’s development” (Bonner 2020, 877). Therefore, for the purposes of the present study, it can be claimed that having such a well-known and respected figure narrating the television series adds to the credibility of the documentaries and their informative value. Although Attenborough is often associated with the BBC, he has not officially been a part of

the corporation since the early 1970s, thus having been a freelancer for the most of his career (ibid.). Nevertheless, even today, he is generally known as the voice of every major natural history production produced by the BBC.

Attenborough is generally credited either "as presenter and writer, just presenter, or solely narrator" (Bonner 2020, 886). In other words, the extent to which he is involved in the discourse of the natural history series varies significantly from series to series. In the marketing of the *Planet Earth* series, it was explicitly stated that Attenborough is a prominent part of the series. In general, it can be stated that presenters "are the intermediaries between programme content and the audience" (Bonner 2020, 887). Even though narrators are typically not visible to the viewer at any point, there are some scenes in the *Planet Earth* series where Attenborough is filmed on location, and consequently his presence and involvement in making of the series is reinforced even more. Furthermore, even in the scenes where Attenborough is not filmed, it is evident to most of the viewers that he is the narrator as his voice is easily identifiable. In 2020, a documentary film titled *David Attenborough: A Life on Our Planet* was released, its main goal being to express concern for the future of nature and our planet due to the impact of global warming and harmful human actions. This film acts as Attenborough's first-hand witness statement, focusing solely on environmental problems. In the contexts of the present study, it is important to acknowledge the existence of such works whose main goal is to spread awareness of the environmental issues that are at hand, but also to stress that the primary material that was chosen for this study is not directly comparable to such productions. The first series, *Planet Earth*, and its successor, *Planet Earth II*, are both more general natural history productions in that they explore the environment, animals, and plants in their natural habitats without explicitly claiming to discuss environmental issues such as climate change. It is quite clear what Attenborough's own stance is when it comes to environmental issues, and it is probable that even if he is not credited as the writer of the narration of the series, he would not record something that he does not agree with. In his book that accompanied the release of the witness statement film, he directly disapproves of anthropocentrism: "[w]e regard the Earth as *our* planet, run by humankind for humankind" (Attenborough 2020, 100). Furthermore, he contemplates how the humankind could "encourage a return of the wild and bring back some stability to Earth", offering different solutions to environmental issues (Attenborough 2020, 125). Both the book and the film are explicitly stated to discuss these issues and the possible solutions, unlike the nature documentaries that this study discusses; this is why it is relevant to analyse the extent to

which these television shows discuss the same issues – especially because they do not forthrightly claim to do so.

3.3 Planet Earth

Planet Earth was released in 2006, and at the time it was marketed as the biggest nature documentary series ever made. As stated before, the series is produced by the BBC and narrated by David Attenborough. On the BBC Earth website, the series has the following description:

> A world beyond expectation… Four years in the making, this is the earth celebrated as never before. (BBC Earth n.d.a)

This description highlights the fact that the making of the series consumed a lot of time, thus emphasising the fact that it was meticulously crafted as this is likely to convey to the potential viewer that watching the series is worth their time. Additionally, the phrase *earth celebrated* adopts a tone that is pro-Earth – i.e., environmentally friendly. Since 2007, the BBC has offered a video streaming service called iPlayer for their UK-based viewers. This, alongside the public broadcast television channel BBC One, is the primary means of communication in which the series are distributed on release. On the iPlayer section of the BBC website, the series has the following description:

> David Attenborough celebrates the amazing variety of the natural world in this epic documentary series, filmed over four years across 64 different countries. (BBC 2024a)

This description emphasises the fact that David Attenborough is the presenter of the series, which shows how highly he is esteemed in this field; even his name alone can potentially make someone want to watch the series. Additionally, stating that the show was filmed in *over four years* and *across 64 different countries* highlights the large scope of the series in a positive manner. *Planet Earth* consists of a total of 11 episodes; below is a list of the episodes, and their respective running times can be seen in parentheses after the title of each individual episode.

1. From Pole to Pole (49 minutes)
2. Mountains (48 minutes)
3. Fresh Water (49 minutes)
4. Caves (49 minutes)
5. Deserts (49 minutes)
6. Ice Worlds (49 minutes)
7. Great Plains (49 minutes)

8. Jungles (49 minutes)
9. Shallow Seas (49 minutes)
10. Seasonal Forests (49 minutes)
11. Ocean Deep (49 minutes)

As the list above suggests, the length of the episodes is nearly identical – the only exception being episode 2, which is one minute shorter than the rest of the episodes. Nevertheless, the average length of the episodes is 49 minutes. Each episode has their own theme, e.g. episode 2 discusses mountain areas, whereas episodes 3, 9, and 11 all discuss different kinds of waters. At the end of each episode, there is a roughly 10-minute behind the scenes clip that shows the filming crew working in a particular location. These clips are not analysed in this research, as they are not part of the actual episodes, nor is the narration prominent in their discourse. Every episode follows a similar structure; during an episode, there are several different filming locations that focus on different parts of the world and their unique ecosystems. The scenes generally involve different animal species that live in their natural habitats, and either look for food, mating partners, protect their young, or try to survive while facing other challenges. The narrator is constantly explaining what species are being filmed, and what their goals are, while providing further information about their abilities and struggles.

Planet Earth has won numerous awards, and it has been included in multiple lists of best television shows of all time, such as placing 72nd in The Guardian's *The 100 best TV shows of the 21st century* (The Guardian 2019) and third in IMDb's *Top 250 TV Shows* as rated by IMDb users (IMDb 2024). These accolades further prove that research on the language that this series utilises is important as it has reached a large audience and has also received praise for its quality as a television show.

3.4 Planet Earth II

Planet Earth II was released in 2016, which is ten years after the release of the first series. The producers and the narrator remain the same; however, there are fewer episodes in *Planet Earth II* as compared to the first series. The series has the following description on the BBC Earth website:

> Experience the world from the viewpoint of animals themselves. From spellbinding wildlife spectacle to intimate encounters, Planet Earth II takes you closer than ever before. (BBC Earth n.d.b)

This description emphasises the fact that the series shows the viewer *the world from the viewpoint of animals themselves*, clearly stressing the role of animals in the series, arguably implying that they are not only subjects, but also experiencers. On the iPlayer website, the series has the following description:

> David Attenborough presents a documentary series exploring how animals meet the challenges of surviving in the most iconic habitats on earth. (BBC 2024b)

Again, while this description is not the same as the one on the BBC Earth website, it is thematically similar; the role of animals is clearly emphasised. Furthermore, it is once more stated explicitly that David Attenborough is the presenter. *Planet Earth II* consists of a total of six episodes. The episode titles and their corresponding running times are listed below.

1. Islands (51 minutes)
2. Mountains (49 minutes)
3. Jungles (50 minutes)
4. Deserts (49 minutes)
5. Grasslands (49 minutes)
6. Cities (49 minutes)

The length of the episodes is very similar to those of the original *Planet Earth* series: the average length is 49 minutes yet again. Only episodes 1 and 3 are two and one minutes longer than the other episodes, respectively. Furthermore, each episode has its own theme, akin to the first series. Of these six themes, three correspond directly to an episode from the original series; episodes 2, 3, and 4 in *Planet Earth II* – titled *Mountains*, *Jungles*, and *Deserts* – share the same titles as episodes 2, 8, and 5 in the original *Planet Earth*, respectively. This research involves analysis of every single episode of both series; another option that was considered was to include only three episodes from both series, those three being the ones that share the same titles – and therefore the same themes. This would have led to a consistent study in terms of the two separate materials that are being compared with each other. However, in order to eliminate arbitrariness and to analyse the series comprehensively, every single episode was included. Similar to *Planet Earth*, after every episode, there is a short behind-the-scenes clip that gives the audience a broader understanding of what it is like to film these nature documentaries in a specific location; this behind-the-scenes material was excluded from this research. The structure of the episodes is the same as those of *Planet Earth*; an episode consists of several different locations that all share the same theme – e.g., jungle areas or islands – and multiple different species of animals are discussed within one episode. Like the original *Planet Earth*, its successor also received widespread critical acclaim, such as

being named the best television show of 2016 by The Guardian (The Guardian 2016) and placing second in IMDb's *Top 250 TV Shows* (IMDb 2024).

3.5 Methods

Since the primary material consists of television series, the nature of the discourse that is studied is, for the most part, scripted. Therefore, the language is crafted for a specific purpose, and has its own goals that it tries to achieve. In this case, the script is made for a nature documentary series, which means that its most important objective is arguably to be informative and reliable. However, since the series are still a form of television entertainment, they need to achieve a certain level of entertainment value in order to keep the interest of the viewer. Furthermore, the discourse needs to provide new information for the audience, yet it is also necessary to remain straightforward and use language that is easily accessible to the general audience.

The nature documentary series that are analysed in this study – like fundamentally every television documentary show – are a form of multimodal media. Despite this, this study does not focus on the multimodality of the discourse, and only the narration is analysed. The definition of narration in this context includes the commentary that is delivered to accompany the picture, i.e. what is spoken aloud. The nature documentaries in this study do not include any interviews or additional commentary made by someone else than the presenter of the series, David Attenborough, but even if they did, it would not be considered in this study. Several transcriptions of the episodes can be found online, yet there are no official ones. These transcriptions include some errors such as spelling mistakes and certain words or phrases are omitted altogether; hence, these unofficial transcriptions are too unreliable to be utilised in this research.

The theoretical framework from which the methods of this research draw their inspiration from includes CDS, ecolinguistics, and PDA. These concepts were elaborated on in the background section. The research questions were previously mentioned in the introduction, but it is worth reminding what they are: the aim of this research is to discover whether there are any explicit or implicit instances of language in *Planet Earth* and *Planet Earth II* that can be considered either *positive* or *destructive* when contrasted to the ecosophy of this study. In the case that an instance has both positive and destructive qualities, it is *ambivalent*. Additionally, the way in which these linguistic features are either ecologically positive or

destructive is examined – that is to say, it is analysed and explained why they are categorised as positive or destructive. Furthermore, the positive instances are highlighted and the way in which their language encourages ecologically beneficial thinking is promoted, whereas more positive alternatives are offered to the instances that this study deems ecologically destructive. Finally, the analysed material – *Planet Earth* and *Planet Earth II* – are compared with each other in terms of their diachronic variation; is the discourse between these two series that share the same producers but were made ten years apart similar to each other or are there any notable differences in terms of the linguistic features that are either ecologically positive or destructive?

First, the documentaries were watched without any specific categories in mind; the overall discourse was inspected from a critical and ecological point of view. Afterwards, four different main categories that include different types of instances from the data were devised to help illustrate the results more clearly. This is because some instances might have equally positive or destructive language features, but of very different nature. Separating the instances into four distinct categories depending on the type keeps the analysis more coherent. Furthermore, it highlights what elements of the discourse were deemed most salient from an ecolinguistic perspective; in other words, it illustrates the main ways in which the narration includes linguistic features that are either positive or destructive.

Since the analysed material is audiovisual content, the discourse was not only read via subtitles but also watched closely – despite its multimodality not being relevant as such in the present study. This was done to help understand the context of the narration better. Every utterance that was considered relevant for this study was manually transcribed after careful deliberation. Afterwards, the transcribed instances were deconstructed in order to clarify in which of the four categories each of the utterances belonged to. Next, the utterances were contrasted with the ecosophy of this study – that is to say, it was assessed how consistent they were with my personal set of ecological values. To illustrate, it is possible that the ecosophy of an individual person could be entirely different from mine; someone might not think of one species as equal to others or consider natural areas as worth preserving. From those perspectives, a piece of discourse that encourages deforestation could be considered beneficial – i.e., positive discourse. The ecological values that the present research bases its analysis on are described as follows:

> An ecologically beneficial discourse should promote an ecological way of thinking by considering all biological species – i.e., humans, animal species other than humans, plants, and other organisms – as worth conserving and worth respect. Moreover, the importance of the different geographical areas of our planet and all its ecosystems should not be understated, nor should the destruction of any part of the natural world be encouraged whatsoever. If a discourse promotes equality between distinct species and areas by giving agency to animals, plants, or nature or by personifying natural areas, it is positive; however, it is not necessary to coin new words or phrases to substitute everyday expressions in order to encourage environmental thinking as it is already possible to reach this goal by utilising existing everyday vocabulary.

In addition to the four main categories into which the instances were classified, they were also deemed *beneficial*, *destructive*, or *ambivalent*. Firstly, in the case that an instance matched the ecosophy, it was considered positive discourse – i.e., narration that used positive linguistic features to produce a potential ecologically beneficial impact on the audience. Secondly, if an instance directly contradicted the ecosophy in any manner, it was regarded as destructive discourse – i.e., narration that either explicitly or implicitly disregarded the importance of the natural world. Finally, it is possible that there is no straightforward way to interpret the utterance, and therefore the only choice was to categorise it as ambivalent discourse, meaning that it has traits of both positive and destructive discourse. Those neutral utterances which did not have the qualities of any of these categories were not analysed in any manner, as that discourse was not considered relevant to this research. The exact text that was focused on was the scripted narration of the series, excluding phonetic features of the speech – i.e., prosodic features such as stress and intonation were not analysed to any extent.

In addition to simply categorising the instances into destructive discourse, some alternative ways of phrasing those sentences were proposed. However, these alternatives are purely my personal suggestions and opinions; the goal of these suggestions was not to offer objectively better choices, completely rebuking the original phrases, but to express the possibility of using even more ecologically beneficial discourse without it reducing the entertainment and informative value of the documentaries. In the case that an utterance was regarded as positive discourse, its linguistic features were promoted – i.e., it was made clear what it actually was that made the instance positive discourse. It is important to highlight these positive patterns so that future discourse has more information on not only what linguistic features to avoid, but also what features are encouraged to be used.

The focus is mainly on all excerpts where human-caused environmental issues, such as climate change and extinction of animal species, are addressed. However, the text is examined

thoroughly, and even a single mention of any animals, plants, or areas of nature can entail relevant information in terms of this research. Considering that the documentary series are a form of television entertainment, it is likely that they involve some sort of built-in narrative, the actions of the different species and the events they experience may be either explicitly or implicitly exaggerated. This, however, does not affect the research methods here. As was stated before, the data of this study was categorised into four different main groups. Firstly, instances that discussed climate change or any other environmental problems that are influenced by human actions, especially those which either explicitly stated that humans are responsible for the issues and those which hid the human influence behind the issue – e.g. by either using passive voice or omitting information. Secondly, the use of lexical words that have either positive or negative connotations in contexts where any animal species, plants, or natural areas were discussed – these connotations might be either subtle or clear. Thirdly, any instances in which an animal species other than humans were referred to using personal pronouns. In addition to being used to refer to inanimate things, using the third person singular neuter pronoun *it* for animal species other than humans is relatively established in the English language. However, from a critical and ecolinguistic point of view, it can be considered destructive discourse as it can distance humans from other species in an anthropocentric way. The ecosophy of this study emphasises that treating all species equally is crucial as the language that a television nature documentary uses can shape the ecological conception of its audience. Finally, the instances in which a natural area was personified by using language that is not generally used to describe those areas. The main focus of this research is on the instances that mention human-made environmental issues, and therefore it is the first category; however, the study is extended from this sole point of view to cover the other topics around this theme. The use of lexical words to either praise or diminish the power of natural areas such as forests and deserts, and the language that is used to describe any animal activities and whether they are illustrated as equal or inferior to human beings is also crucial in this type of ecolinguistic analysis.

Additionally, one of the main goals of this study is to compare the discourse of the older nature documentary series to the more recent one; by doing this, it is possible to deduce from the similarity (or dissimilarity) of the amount of positive and destructive discourse between the two series whether there has been any significant change in the span of 10 years that has elapsed between the original series and its sequel series. Therefore, the qualitative analysis of

Planet Earth was first separated from that of *Planet Earth II*, and later they were compared with each other in a mainly quantitative manner.

A drawback to the methods utilised in this study includes the fact that even if the ecosophy is as clearly communicated as possible and the criteria for the different categories are clearly stated, there is no escape from the fact that some of the instances are – to a certain extent – subjective to the researcher. Naturally, the aim of the analysis is to be as objective as possible, attempting to eliminate any ambiguity by elaborating on the exact sets of rules by which the analysis is conducted. The reliability and validity of the study are of high importance so that the results correlate with the research questions; additionally, in the case that someone else performed this exact study again, they would ideally find the same results – assuming that their ecosophy matches the ecosophy of the present study. The purpose of the analysis is not to be overly prescriptive; as stated before, it is acceptable to use common vocabulary, especially when the primary material is television entertainment aimed at a mass audience. However, the point of this study is to examine the data from a certain linguistic point of view, and thus to pinpoint the language features that are important in this context. Moreover, the goal is to offer alternative expressions that could arguably have been better from an ecolinguistic point of view – not necessarily from the perspective of a nature documentary filmmaker.

The series were obtained on physical media, since at the time of this research neither of the series could be accessed online nor on any streaming service in Finland. Therefore, the most convenient alternative was to access the physical copies of the series; both shows were acquired separately in the form of Blu-ray discs. Since the series are publicly released material, there were no ethical issues in the process of conducting this research; both the producer and the narrator are publicly known, and therefore there was no need to anonymise the source of the featured utterances. In fact, it would be unethical to do so; even though the narration is critically evaluated from an ecolinguistic point of view, both the narrator and the producers must be credited for their work.

4 Results

In this section, instances from the data are presented and analysed as individual pieces of discourse from an ecolinguistic point of view; the instances are categorised as either positive, destructive, or ambivalent according to the rules that were explicated in the methods subsection above. In this context, an *instance* of discourse means one or more – mostly consecutive – lines of monologue uttered by the narrator of the series. Due to the scope of the study, not every single instance of data can be illustrated in a qualitative manner – only the most relevant and typical instances of discourse in terms of this study are displayed and analysed in the results section. There is no need to discuss every instance if there is no variation – i.e., a same occurrence of the same phenomenon happens multiple times. However, in the case that some instances involve language features that were found to be significantly more typical than others, it is mentioned in the analysis. In total, the data consists of 192 instances, of which 110 are from *Planet Earth*, and 82 are from *Planet Earth II*. In this section, a total of 92 of them are discussed qualitatively – i.e., approximately half of the total data. As was stated above, including every single instance from the data would require far more space, and the overall quality of the analysis would be reduced. Furthermore, including a specific round number such as 50 instances from each series – i.e., a total of 100 instances – would be redundant as the goal is not to discuss a fixed number of instances for the sake of having that specific number; in that case, some instances would not bring any new insights to the analysis. Similarly, limiting the instances to a specific number per category would be harmful to the analysis as that would require omitting some instances from the analysis to keep the separate sections at the same length as each other.

The first 52 instances in this section are taken from the data of *Planet Earth*, while the latter 40 instances are from the data of *Planet Earth II*. The instances are analysed in four separate subsections according to their type, and the two series are analysed separately at this point. Therefore, there is a total of eight subsections – four for each series. The different subsections consist of instances of discourse that a) mention climate change or other human-made environmental issues, b) include lexical word choices that have either subtle or explicit positive or destructive connotations regarding animals, plants, and natural areas, c) refer to animals using any personal pronouns, and d) include personification of natural areas. Within each of these subsections, the instances are ordered chronologically – i.e., from the beginning of the first episode to the end of the last episode of the series. It must be noted that some of

the instances might overlap with more than one of the categories, but in that case, the instance is sorted into that category in which it is analysed thematically. Of course, if the instance has linguistic features of several different categories, it is relevant to mention these features in the analysis regardless of the chosen category. Finally, in the discussion section, the overall discourse of the series is discussed comprehensively, and comparisons between the two series are drawn. Furthermore, every single instance of data that was elicited from the material is displayed quantitatively in that section.

4.1 Climate change and other human-made environmental issues in *Planet Earth*

The opening of the first episode of *Planet Earth* indirectly references climate change and overpopulation, which is also an environmental issue of today. The noun *planet* appears multiple times in the narration, and it is often collocated with the possessive determiner *our*:

(1) A hundred years ago there were one and a half billion people on Earth. Now, over six billion crowd our fragile planet. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 1)

Here, the phrasing *our fragile planet* has many implications. The use of the possessive determiner *our* highlights the fact that as human beings, we all share the same planet. It is improbable that the intention is just to claim shared ownership of the planet – instead, the word *our* evokes togetherness and solidarity in that it makes the viewer see the responsibility of conserving Earth as equally shared between everyone. However, the use of the adjective *fragile* – which is used to describe what our planet is like – is equivocal; arguably, the planet is not fragile, but humanity is. In the scenario that Earth becomes unlivable for humankind and most of the other species that inhabit it, the planet itself will not perish. Only the conditions in which the humankind can survive are fragile in this sense of the word. Finally, the verb *crowd* has negative connotations, and this highlights the fact that the planet suffers from overpopulation of humans. Overall, this instance is an example of positive discourse, as it creates a feeling of solidarity for the viewers, even if it arguably diminishes the endurance of the Earth; this still has an emotional effect on the audience, so thinking of the planet as *fragile* does more good than harm concerning ecologically beneficial thinking. Human influence on nature is also referenced to in the following instance:

(2) But even so, there are still places barely touched by humanity. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 1)

The phrasing *there are still places* implies that most – if not nearly all – of the other places are *touched by humanity*, which is accurate: this emphasises the importance of nature that is untouched by humanity, suggesting that this *touch* of human beings will likely destroy or harm the place. This instance is positive as it highlights the fact that human contact is usually detrimental for nature.

(3) This series will take to the last wildernesses and show you the planet and its wildlife as you have never seen them before. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 1)

This phrase highlights the fact that there are not many wildernesses left in the world – most of them are gone, and this is mostly due to the industrial revolution and urbanisation. While the phrasing explicitly states that these natural areas are almost gone, it fails to give any elaboration as to why this is a fact – thus shifting the blame away from humans, making this destructive discourse. However, it is suggested that the existence of wildernesses is beneficial, which is positive. Thus, this is an ambivalent instance. It is likely that the environmental matter was not discussed in more detail since it is not the most important detail to include in the narration in terms of the entertainment value of the documentary, but it would have been relatively easy to include a sentence that provided more information on the subject, such as *due to the human activity of making more and more areas urban, there are not many wildernesses left in the world*. However, it must be noted that in instance 2 above, human touch was deemed negative – it is possible that some viewers able to connect these two notions even if it is not explicit. Otherwise, the narration does not discuss the topic any further here.

(4) There are only forty Amur leopards left in the wild and that number is falling. Like so many creatures, the cats have been pushed to the very edge of extinction by hunting and the destruction of their habitat. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 1)

Here, it is merely mentioned that there are not many Amur leopards left, and that the situation of the species is worsening. Stating this fact is informative and can evoke different feelings from the viewer, such as empathy and sadness towards the issue. However, the use of the passive in *the cats have been pushed* is problematic; it is positive to mention the fact that the species is facing extinction, yet the use of the passive shifts the blame away from humans, making it sound as if this is a natural phenomenon that has happened on its own. Additionally, the narration states that many different species share the tragic fates of these cats, stressing that this is not a rare issue. The narration does add that this is because of *hunting* and *the destruction of their habitat*. The word *hunting* suggests that this is a human-made issue, but

this word does not necessarily have negative connotations; hunting is often legal or even necessary, but that is not the case here. Another word that could have been used in this context is *poaching*, which has more negative connotations due to its illegality and immorality. This word is also used by World Wildlife Fund, which states that the reason behind the high extinction risk of the species is that the Amur leopards are *poached* for their fur (WWF 2024a). Finally, the fact that it is mentioned that *their* habitat is being destroyed is positive, yet once again, the actor is omitted altogether – i.e., it is simply stated that their habitat is being destroyed without mentioning who is responsible or how it is done. This instance is ambivalent, as it both brings awareness to the issue but also fails to mention human activity by using the passive voice.

(5) Deserts cover one third of the land's surface and they're growing bigger every year. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 1)

While this utterance might seem merely descriptive at first, it also implies that the fact that the deserts are *growing bigger every year* is straightforwardly harmful and bad; deserts are areas of land in the same sense as other areas, such as rainforests and glaciers, are – they all have their own distinctive ecosystems. While it is true that the areas that deserts are replacing as they grow bigger are also important, it is not outright the case that the existence of larger deserts is detrimental. Therefore, this instance is a case of destructive discourse as it does not elaborate on the importance of deserts and depicts them as purely negative.

(6) Today less than a thousand of these desert specialists remain in the wild. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 5)

Here, a camel species is discussed; this utterance states the fact that the number of the camels is shrinking from what it used to be. However, it is not elaborated on why this is the case, and therefore this instance is destructive discourse; the declining number of camels is likely due to climate change or some other human-caused activity such as poaching. This fact is completely omitted in this instance, likely because the narration of the show does not wish to discuss the matter at this point – not because it wishes to hide the reasons behind this phenomenon. One alternative way to phrase this would be to simply add *because of human activities* to the end of the sentence; this is informative enough at this point, even if the reasons are not explained in more detail, but the flow of the scene would arguably not be disturbed by this addition in any way.

(7) Each year, as the climate warms, the Arctic holds less ice. This is a disaster for polar bears. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 6)

Here, it is stated that the climate warms continuously every year, and this causes the ice to melt in regions around the North Pole. This, in turn, is harmful for the fauna of this area – including polar bears. Of course, it is positive that this problem is being discussed, but the phrasing here avoids saying that humans are responsible for this issue. Although spreading information about climate change is positive, this instance is ambivalent discourse in terms of this study; it would be more impactful for the viewer to hear why the climate warms before the problems that the polar bears are facing are discussed, even if it is one simple sentence stating why this is happening.

(8) The prairies of North America. The rich pasture once supported the greatest herds ever seen on our planet. There were once 60 million bison, but no animal is immune to intensive hunting by man or destruction of its habitat. And a century ago, the bison were reduced to barely a thousand. Now, thanks to rigorous protection, the species is recovering. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 7)

In this instance, there are multiple things that are worth mentioning. Firstly, it is explicitly stated that the *intensive hunting* is done by human beings, which is positive discourse. The word poaching could also be valid here, but even without it, the sentence still conveys the idea that this hunting is exhaustive and damaging – i.e., there is no need for it. Additionally, the phrases *destruction of its habitat* and *were reduced to* are in passive voice, which is not desirable here. However, in this context, it is relatively clear that these issues are also caused by human actions. Secondly, the adjectives *rich* and *greatest*, along with the possessive pronoun *our* in *our planet* all have positive connotations. Finally, the last sentence of the instance mentions that the bison species is recovering due to the *rigorous protection*; this comment is beneficial as it spreads ecological awareness to the viewers that the actions of human beings matter as species can be saved from extinction when the required effort is made. Overall, this instance is positive discourse, although it could still be more ecological considering its use of passive voice.

(9) This co-operation between snakes and fish, spectacular though it is, has only recently been observed, for it only happens on the most remote reefs in Indonesia. Perhaps such hunting alliances were once a common sight, but today no more than six per cent of Indonesia's reefs are in their pristine state. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 9)

It is stated that six per cent or less of the reefs are in perfect condition today, and that in the past they were all thriving, therefore being ideal for this *co-operation between snakes and fish*

then. This instance fails to mention any reason behind the poor state of the reefs, which is destructive discourse. However, the instance does bring awareness to the issue, highlighting that this is a recent problem, which is positive. Additionally, emphasising that this *hunting alliance* is spectacular is positive discourse, as the viewer is explicitly told that the present situation is environmentally unfriendly as compared to before. Therefore, this instance is an example of ambivalent discourse.

(10) Once and not so long ago, 300,000 blue whales roamed the oceans. Now, less than three per cent of that number remains. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 11)

This is destructive discourse, as it is stated that the number of blue whales is diminishing, yet there is no reason given behind the issue. One solution for this would be for the narration to explicitly state that this is because of climate change and therefore because of human activity. Instead, the narration merely highlights the issue to spread awareness, but fails to elaborate further. Blue whales are endangered due to habitat loss and toxics, in addition to ship strikes and entangling in fishing gear (WWF 2024b). Furthermore, climate change has a major impact on krill, which is an important prey of blue whales (ibid.). All these environmental issues are caused by humankind. This instance brings awareness of the problem, and the overtone of the instance is regrettable towards the declining number of blue whales, yet nothing is said explicitly about the reasons behind this.

(11) It's not just the future of the whale that today lies in our hands, it's the survival of the natural world in all parts of the living planet. We can now destroy, or we can cherish. The choice is ours. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 11)

This utterance ends the last episode of the series on a hopeful note. The language in this instance encourages the viewer to act, as it emphasises the sense of solidarity that humankind must have to mitigate the environmental issues that the planet is facing. The repeated use of *our* and *we* highlights the fact that this is a shared responsibility. Additionally, using the adjective *living* in the phrase *living planet* further emphasises the fact that the planet is full of living organisms that the human species does not necessarily treat as such. Therefore, this is positive discourse.

4.2 Lexical word choices and their connotations regarding animals, plants, and natural areas in *Planet Earth*

The following instance discusses a relatively dark area whose ground-level areas are obscured by trees and other vegetation:

(12) Less than two per cent of the sunlight reaches the floor, but even here there is extraordinary variety. In the great island of New Guinea there are 42 different species of birds of paradise. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 1)

The word *extraordinary* is used here to refer to the diversity of the fauna of the area. There are many different adjectives available that can be used to describe a significant variety, but *extraordinary* has many positive connotations, thus making the fact that there are many species vastly more optimistic. This is positive discourse.

(13) For all monkeys, morning is grooming time – a chance to catch up with friends. But unlike other monkeys, geladas chatter constantly while they do it. It's a great way to network while your hands are busy. But these socials can't go on for too long; geladas have a busy daily schedule and there's work to be done. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 2)

This instance describes the daily life of gelada monkeys. This species is given personality in many ways; they have *friends*, they *chatter* with each other instead of merely communicating, they are *networking* and *socialising*, and they have their own *busy schedules* and *work*. The language used by this monkey species and their daily routines are contrasted with human language and actions in a positive way, and their communicative abilities and intelligence are emphasised as well. This narration makes the viewer empathise with the monkeys as their lives are described the same way as human lives would be – therefore, this is positive discourse.

(14) Yet these precious waters are rich with surprise. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 3)

Using the adjective *precious* to describe an area of water adds emotional value to them, as their importance is highlighted. Furthermore, saying that the waters are *rich* with surprise is also positive, as the adjective has mostly positive connotations as well. It must be noted that the adjective *rich* appears fairly often in these documentaries, and it is arguably common vocabulary in most nature documentaries; however, this does not diminish its role in making the discourse positive whatsoever.

(15) We need lights to see what's going on, but in the pitch black the swiftlets manage unerringly to locate their individual nesting sites, which are only a few centimetres across. It's a remarkable skill and one we still do not fully understand. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 4)

This instance demonstrates a notion that the cave swiftlets possess unique skills that are *remarkable* and not only something that human beings cannot imitate, but something that is

not even *fully understood* in theory. This instance describes this species positively, praising their attributes, as *remarkable* has positive connotations and human beings are contrasted with the species in this way instead of saying that humans possess a skill that these swiftlets do not.

(16) The discovery of life that exists without drawing any of its energy from the sun shows us once again how complex and surprising the underground world can be. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 4)

This is positive discourse, as the whole instance shows appreciation for life that exists undergrounds; especially the adjectives *complex* and *surprising* add value and positive intricacy to this phenomenon. Additionally, *once again* implies that there are many other things that are positive about this specific form of life.

(17) A third of our planet is desert. These great scars on the face of the Earth appear to be lifeless, but surprisingly none are. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 5)

In this utterance, the possessive determiner *our* is once again collocated with the word *planet* – this is a recurring phenomenon in the data. Additionally, the deserts are called *scars*; this word has negative connotations, making the existence of deserts seem like a negative or harmful occurrence. However, the last phrase in this utterance states that deserts have life in them despite preconceptions – this makes the utterance an instance of ambivalent discourse, as it both credits and discredits these areas of land.

(18) In the distant reaches of outer Mongolia, one of the planet's great migrations is underway. Few people ever see this extraordinary annual event. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 7)

Here, Mongolian gazelles are being discussed. This instance uses positive adjectives such as *great* and *extraordinary*; additionally, it is emphasised that not many people have seen this natural phenomenon. This instance is positive discourse as the narration not only describes the event in an informative manner but also adds these two sentences that further increase the value of the phenomenon.

(19) Trees. Surely among the most magnificent of all living things. Some are the largest organisms on Earth, dwarfing all others, and these are the tallest of them all. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 10)

In this instance, trees are described as *the most magnificent of all living things*; this is positive discourse, as the adjective *magnificent* has positive connotations. Furthermore, this instance emphasises the fact that trees are living organisms, which is positive. A neutral version of this whole instance would have been simply *these are the tallest trees on Earth*, yet that would not

have had nearly the same emotional impact on the viewer – despite having the same information in a more concise form.

4.3 The usage of personal pronouns regarding animals in *Planet Earth*

(20) She has been in her den the whole winter. Her emergence marks the beginning of spring. After months of confinement underground, she toboggans down the slope. Perhaps to clean her fur, perhaps for sheer joy. Her cubs gaze out of their bright new world for the very first time. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 1)

Here, a female polar bear is referred to using the personal pronouns *she*/*her*. This is consistent in every sentence, and there are no utterances where the bear is referred to with the pronoun *it* instead. This is positive discourse, as it would be degrading to use *it* when discussing an animal, especially if the sex is known. Polar bears are mammals, and this specific polar bear is also a mother – these are some facts that might make this animal more likeable in eyes of the viewer. These facts might also explain why she is referred to with the *she* and *her* in the narration.

(21) In the chaos, a calf is separated from its mother. The calf is young, but it can outrun the wolf if only it manages to keep its footing. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 1)

In this instance, a caribou is referred to using the pronoun *it* instead of *she* or *him*. This is probably because neither the filming crew nor the narrator can tell the sex of the calf. However, even if this was the case, this is still an example of destructive discourse as *it* is not preferred for animals. Even in the case that the sex is not known, it would be preferable to use the pronoun *they* from an ecolinguistic point of view or use the pronouns *she* or *he* to refer to the animal in a respectful way.

(22) The superb bird of paradise calls to attract a female. And he has more luck. But what does he have to do to really impress her? She retires to consider her verdict. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 1)

This instance involves to birds – a male and a female. They are referred to with the personal pronouns *he* and *she*, which is positive. As there are two birds, it would not have been possible to simply use *it* for both, and the fact that the animals are looking for mating partners might further encourage the narration to use *she*/*he*. Additionally, it is not necessary for the narrator to do so, but adding the adjective *superb* gives positive connotations to the bird.

(23) The shark is faster on a straight course, but it can't turn as sharply as the seal. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 1)

Here the shark is referred to using *it*. It is possible that the sex of the shark is simply not known, but from a strict ecolinguistic point of view, it would also have been possible to use the pronoun *they* to give the shark equal importance in comparison with the other species. The shark, being depicted as a predator rather than a mother that protects its offspring, is not as easily empathised with by the viewer; this can affect the way the animal is referred to and avoiding *she*/*he* for a species that the viewer is less likely to admire might be what has happened in this instance. This destructive discourse is a way of adding more emotional distance between the species and the viewer.

(24) She has just one brief summer in which to teach them their mountain survival techniques. Rearing four cubs to this age is an exceptional feat, but she does have an excellent territory, rich in food and water. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 2)

In this instance, a puma – a large wild cat – is discussed. The puma is referred to with the positive personal pronoun *she*, and in the same context it is explicitly stated that she is a mother to *four cubs*. A plausible reason as to why the puma is referred to using *her*, whereas the previous instance uses *it* when discussing the shark, is that the puma is a mammal and a mother; in the narrative of the documentary, the puma is protecting her cubs, and the viewer is more likely to empathise with her as compared to the shark.

(25) A snow leopard – the rarest of Himalayan animals. […] She greets her one-year-old cub. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 2)

Once again, a mother animal – and a mammal – is referred to with the personal pronoun *her*. In the same context, it is clearly stated that she is a mother, and therefore *her* is used – this is positive discourse. However, in the following instance, another mammal is treated differently, in a destructive manner:

(26) Most other bears would be sleeping underground by now, but the giant panda can't fatten up enough to hibernate. Its food – bamboo – on which it totally relies has so little nutritional value that it can't build up a store of fat like other bears. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 2)

Here, the giant panda – a mammal – is referred to using *it* twice. Therefore, this instance is destructive discourse. This panda is not said to be a mother – at least not in narrative of the documentary in this scene; this might contribute to the fact that positive personal pronouns are not used. However, the following instance suggests that the pronouns might be used rather arbitrarily:

(27) The red panda – rarely glimpsed in the wild. It was once considered a kind of raccoon but is now believed to be a small mountain bear. By midsummer its larger, more famous relative, has retreated into a cave. A giant panda nurses a tiny week-old baby. Her tender cleaning wards off infection. She won't leave this cave for three weeks – not while her cub is so utterly helpless. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 2)

The same giant panda is now revealed to be a mother, and suddenly she is referred to with *her*. This implies that the sex of the animal is not relevant to the script except if they are a mother or a father to another animal on-screen. Additionally, a red panda is discussed at the beginning of this instance, and *it* is used when referring to this specific animal, who is not a parent in this narrative. Overall, this instance is ambivalent, as it mixes *it* and *she*/*her* in consecutive utterances.

(28) The eagles work in pairs to separate a young crane from the flock. It escapes the touches of one and is caught by another. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 2)

In this instance, a crane is referred to using *it*, making this destructive discourse. Because the crane is young, it is possible that the sex is not known. Additionally, cranes are a species of birds, and *she*/*he* has been used mainly for mammals in the earlier instances. In this scene, the young crane is being hunted by eagles, and it is possible that some viewers might be on the side of the predator in this scene or are not attached to anyone in particular – and therefore no emotional bonds are being made by using the pronouns *she* or *he*.

(29) The hellgrammite, its body flattened to reduce drag, has bushy gills to extract oxygen from the current. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 3)

In this instance, the hellgrammite, being a larva, is referred to with *it.* Insects and larvae are not discussed in as much amount and variety as other species, and they are not as likely to be empathised with by the viewer due to their appearance and unfamiliarity – this explains why *she*/*he* is not used. However, this also results in the instance being a form of destructive discourse.

(30) They're called flat lizards for obvious reasons, and they flaunt their multi-coloured bellies in territorial disputes. He's made his point, and now it's time to find some food. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 5)

Here, the personal pronoun *he* is used for a lizard – a reptile. In this scene, there are no female lizards present; the male lizard is contesting with another male of the same species, and he is looking for nourishment. It is evident that not only mammals or those species that are stereotypically considered endearing by the general audience are called *she*/*he*, as this lizard

species is given the same positive treatment even though there are no lizards of the opposite sex present in the scene.

(31) The arctic fox finally has enough food to raise her large family. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 6)

In this instance, *her* is used for an arctic fox, making this positive discourse; foxes are mammals, and this specific fox is a mother, which is clear as the narration also mentions her family. The most likely reason for this choice of personal pronoun is that she is a mother – if the fox did not have any family present in the scene, it is possible that *it* might have been used instead.

(32) She's keen to start parenting, but the father needs persuading to surrender the chick he has been caring for all winter. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 6)

Here, two penguins and their newborn chick are discussed. Interestingly, the same penguins were discussed at the start of this episode, and in that scene, they were referred to collectively using the pronoun *they*. At the end of the same episode, in this instance, the chick has been born and therefore the mother and father are referred to using *she* and *he* – therefore, this is positive discourse.

(33) Pika – a relative of the rabbit. It, too, feeds on grass. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 7)

In this instance, *it* is used for a pika. This rabbit-like mammal does not have family present in the scene, nor is it hunting or being hunted. It is possible that the sex is not known, but this instance is nevertheless categorised as destructive discourse.

(34) These bullet ants are showing some worrying symptoms. Spores from a parasitic fungus called cordyceps have infiltrated their bodies and their minds. Its infected brain directs this ant upwards. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 8)

Here, the pronoun *it* is used about a bullet ant in the phrase *its infected brain*, making this instance destructive discourse. The ant has been attacked by a parasite and is now merely a host for the parasite; this might contribute to the reason why *it* is used, even though this occurrence does not affect the sex of the ant in any way.

(35) It's a colugo, or a flying lemur, though this is something of a misnomer as it doesn't actually fly, and it certainly isn't a lemur. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 8)

In this instance, *it* is repeatedly used for a colugo. When a species is discussed – as opposed to an individual animal of that species – it is naturally appropriate to use *it*. However, an

individual colugo is discussed at this point of the narration. Therefore, this is destructive discourse.

(36) The red crab spider spends its entire life in the pitchers, hanging on with threads of silk. Instead of building a web, it relies on the water-filled pitcher to trap its food. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 8)

Here, the pronoun *it* is repeatedly used for a red crab spider, making this destructive discourse. Again, the most ideal solution in this situation would have been for either the filming crew or the writers to identify the sex of the animal in question. If this cannot be done for some reason, the script could use language that avoids using *it*, for example: *the red crab spider is used to living in the pitchers* and *relying on the water-filled pitcher to trap the food*.

(37) The calf is no more than a few weeks old. Despite being three metres long and weighing nearly a tonne, he is nonetheless vulnerable. But his mother watches over him and, as he begins to tire, she supports him close to the surface so that he can breathe more easily. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 9)

Humpback whales are discussed in this example of positive discourse. *She* is used for the mother, as is expected. Although calves are also referred to using *it* in the data, here *he* is used. Humpback whales are mammals, and this specific calf is *no more than a few weeks old*; clearly, his sex is known for certain at this point as the pronoun *he* is used.

(38) The crossbill's extraordinary beak can prise apart the scales, so that its tongue can extract the seeds. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 10)

This crossbill, which is a kind of finch, is referred to using *it*. The plumage of a crossbill is different on a female as compared to that of a male; it is likely that the sex of the bird was known, but nonetheless *it* was used in the narration – this is destructive discourse. Additionally, this instance can be compared with instance 22, in which two birds of paradise were referred to with *he* and *she* as they were looking for mating partners. In this instance, the crossbill is by itself, and looking for sustenance.

(39) It's a huge weasel. Its bulk helps to conserve body heat, and also broadens its menu. It's so big and powerful it can even bring down an adult caribou. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 10)

A weasel, which is a mammal that is related to a stoat, is repeatedly referred to using the pronoun *it*. It is mentioned that it is capable of hunting for large prey, even if this is not shown in the scene; however, from the audience's point of view, the weasel is in the role of the predator. Additionally, while the word *weasel* might have negative connotations as it is also

used figuratively to call someone a scoundrel, it is unlikely that this is the reason for not using *she*/*he* for the animal in the documentary. Nonetheless, this is destructive discourse.

(40) Another miniature – the kodkod cat. It's the smallest cat in all the Americas, and a young pudu [a small deer] would be a feast for it. But with the male on guard, the kodkod must lower his sights. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 10)

Interestingly, a kodkod cat – a mammal – is referred to using both *it* and *he* in consecutive sentences. It is possible that this inconsistency is a mistake, as it is not sensible to change the pronoun for no apparent reason. This arbitrary occurrence suggests that the narration of the series does not deliberately seek to use specific pronouns for animal species, and in all probability the personal pronouns are not given enough thought in the script. In terms of this research, this is ambivalent discourse. This instance can be contrasted with instances 24 and 25, in which a puma and a snow leopard were referred to using the positive personal pronoun *she*. However, both of those individuals of different cat species were mothers, unlike this one, who is hunting for food.

(41) A nautilus. It spends its days hiding four hundred metres down. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 11)

A nautilus – i.e., a cephalopod mollusc – is discussed here. This is destructive discourse as the nautilus is referred to using *it*. This instance is from the episode titled *Ocean Deep*, in which oceanic species are the focus of attention. During this episode, every single species except for one is referred to with the pronoun *it* instead of *she*/*he*. In addition to the nautilus, the episode mentions a whale shark, a baby sailfish, a sea spider, a sawtooth eel, a dumbo octopus, a vampire squid, a monkfish, a sperm whale, and a Mola mola – all referred to using *it*. However, the single exception is a green turtle:

(42) Swimmers also come to Ascension to breed. A female green turtle approaches the coast. She's not eaten one in two months. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 11)

This female green turtle, which is an oceanic reptile, is traveling a long distance to breed – i.e., to produce offspring. This is the most logical explanation as to why the green turtle is referred to using the positive personal pronoun *she*, yet in the instance 41, every single other species was referred to using *it*. Obviously, the instance also states that she is *a female* turtle, and so it is reasoned to use *she* in the following sentence. However, the list of species under instance 41 does not feature a single species that was called *female* or *male* in the narration, as none of them were either parents or looking for a mate.

4.4 Personification of natural areas in *Planet Earth*

In the following instance, a jungle is discussed:

(43) That is why the jungle grows so vigorously and supports to much life. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 1)

This sentence gives agency to the jungle by making it the actor who does the *vigorous growing* and *supporting life*. This is a good example of how language can subtly be used to address areas of nature in a positive way. The next instance personifies a forest by attributing human characteristics to it:

(44) The character of the forest changes as we descend, becoming ever darker and damper, favouring different kinds of animals and plants. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 1)

Here, the forest has a *character* – i.e., a personality. Moreover, the verb *favouring* implies that the forest has a personal preference for certain animals and plants; this positive use of language makes the forest feel more alive, which it is, instead of treating it like a lifeless area that is not worth respect and preserving.

(45) Its richest parts are those where waves and currents bring fertilising nutrients to surface waters that are bathed in sunlight. The seas off the Cape in South Africa have this magic recipe and are hugely productive. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 1)

The fact that the seas are called *hugely productive* personifies them in a positive light, highlighting the positive consequences of their actions since areas of nature are seldom called *productive*. Additionally, the seas are said to have a *magic recipe*, and this phrase adds a supernatural element to them – this is positive discourse as well. The following instance discusses Okavango, a river in south-western Africa:

(46) The Okavango becomes criss-crossed with trails as animals move into its heart. The new arrivals open up paths like arteries along which water flows, extending the reach of the flood. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 1)

The river is personified as its specific part is described using the word *heart*. This idea is reinforced in the latter utterance with the use of the word *arteries*, which means both an important road and a tube that carries blood from the heart to other parts of the body. In this case, the blood is water that is carried elsewhere from its source; this instance is positive discourse as it illustrates the river with human-like attributes, thus giving it more life simply using everyday words that are not normally expected in this situation.

(47) In the American Rockies 100,000 avalanches devastate the slopes every winter. This huge mountain chain continues the great spine that runs from Patagonia to Alaska. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 2)

Here, the verb *devastate* connotes that the slopes have emotions, thus personifying them positively. In addition, the word *spine* that is used to refer to the mountain chain also gives it character and life since – in the sense of *a series of vertebrae* – living creatures have physical spines whereas mountains do not. The following pair of instances personify another mountain chain, which is located on the border between Pakistan and China:

(48) These loose boulders are the mountain's crumbling bones. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 2)
(49) They're the most dangerous mountains of all. K2 and her sister peaks have claimed more lives than any others. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 2)

The use of the word *bones* in this sentence is positive discourse as this is not a typical description of a mountain; the landform is given characteristics of a living creature, which emphasises its importance. Additionally, the mountain is referred to using the personal pronoun *her* instead of *it* – this is rare for natural areas. As mountains are elevations on the surface of the earth instead of living creatures, using *she* or *him* is not expected. This is positive discourse, and a demonstration of how natural landforms are given more value simply by using a different pronoun than what is normally used.

(50) For the past five million years, Arizona's Colorado river has eaten away at the desert's sandstone to create a gigantic canyon. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 3)

The phrasal verb *eat away* is used here, which means *to gradually erode*. However, the verb *eat* is usually used in the context where an animate being consumes nourishment, whereas here it is chosen to describe the actions of a river. This structure is positive since it makes the area of water feel more alive, as the narrator could have simply said that *the river has eroded the desert's sandstone* instead – although this would not have attributed conscious action to the river in the same manner.

(51) In their final stages rivers broaden and flow wearily across their flat flood plains. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 3)

The adjective *wearily*, meaning *with extreme tiredness*, is assigned to the rivers – this personifies these areas of water as they are described to be in a state of exhaustion and sleepiness; these conditions are not generally attributed to areas, but rather to species of animals. Therefore, this is positive discourse.

(52) The ferocious wind, armed with grains of sand, is the agent that shapes all deserts. (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 5)

In this utterance, it is implied that *the wind* is a conscious being that is of *ferocious* nature, the sand being its weapon as it shapes the landscape around it. This is a personified description of the natural phenomenon, and is thus positive discourse; within one sentence, both the nature of the wind and its physical appearance are represented as more living and sentient in a positive way.

This concludes the instances from the *Planet Earth* data, and the following subsections cover the instances from the *Planet Earth II* data. It must be noted that *Planet Earth II* is referenced to as the first season (Season 1) as well; this is because even though it is practically considered a sequel series, it is officially its own series that consists of a single season instead of being a season two of the same series as the original *Planet Earth*.

4.5 Climate change and other human-made environmental issues in *Planet Earth II*

(53) There are only a few hundred pygmy sloths in existence. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 1)

Here, it is merely implied that the species is critically endangered. This is destructive discourse as there is no agent who is responsible for this issue, and therefore the viewer is not given enough information to know why there are not many pygmy sloths anymore. The species is endangered because they are dependent on tropical rainforests, and deforestation has caused the rainforests to be at risk of disappearing; this, in turn, leaves the sloths without shelter and food as they are forced to descend to the forest floor (WWF 2024c).

(54) But in recent years, millions of red crabs haven't managed to reach to sea. An invader has occupied this island. Yellow crazy ants. They escaped from visiting ships and with no predators to control them, they have now created vast super colonies in the forest. […] Humans brought these ant invaders here, and now humans are having to control them. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 1)

This instance is ambivalent, as it both positively spreads information about the issue while also acknowledging that *humans brought* the ants to the island, but also destructively refers to the ant species as *invaders* twice; this word has negative connotations, which makes it unecological to use it in this context. The fact is that the ants did not invade the island as it was humans who brought the ants there.

(55) Today in the Alps, human encroachment is changing even the highest summits. In the Rockies, rising temperatures are shortening winter hibernation and stifling the growth of valuable food plants. And in the Andes, some glaciers have shrunk by 50 per cent in just 30 years. Even the Himalayas are now vulnerable. With most of the world's tallest peaks and covering a third of a million square miles, this is the greatest mountain range of all. And here, temperatures are now rising faster than the global average. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 2)

The phrasing *human encroachment* is positive discourse, as the word *encroachment* has negative connotations and therefore humans are explicitly said to be the reason for these issues; *encroachment* has the meanings of *intrusion* and *trespassing*, which are both appropriate in this context as humans are responsible for the rising temperatures in these areas. This instance informs the audience well about the issue, as it mentions that climate change affects the duration of the *winter hibernation* of certain species and affects plants in addition to animals. It is stressed how significant the change has been *in just 30 years*, which emphasises the human role in the issue.

(56) For them and the billions of animals with whom they share their home, the jungle is a sanctuary. But this is changing. Even in the ten years since the head of this family was born, one million hectares of the rainforest have been destroyed in Madagascar alone, and, with it, half the indri families that once lived here. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 3)

Here, an indri family is discussed – they are a lemur species in Madagascar. The jungle in which they live in is called *a sanctuary*, which has positive connotations of safety, refuge, and even holiness. This is positive discourse, as is the fact that the narration spreads awareness of the struggles that the species are facing. However, it is stated that the ideal living conditions of the species in the jungle are deteriorating since *one million hectares of the rainforest have been destroyed* on the island; the narration uses passive voice, and human impact on the issue is not discussed at all. One alternative way of phrasing this is the following example: *deforestation caused by humans has destroyed one million hectares of the rainforest*. Overall, this instance is ambivalent discourse.

(57) The diversity of life that thrives in a world almost totally devoid of water is truly remarkable. Success in the desert depends on an extraordinary variety of survival strategies that have evolved over millions of years. But our planet is changing. The world's deserts are growing bigger, hotter, and drier, and they're doing so faster than ever before. How life will cope here in the future remains to be seen. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 4)

The adjectives *remarkable* and *extraordinary* have positive connotations, and this instance praises the species that manage to live in desert areas – this is positive discourse. However,

the narration also states that the planet *is changing*, failing to mention actor who is responsible of the process; this sentence implies that the change that our planet is experiencing is natural, and not caused by anyone else but the planet itself. Similarly, the deserts are said to *grow bigger, hotter, and drier* at an alarming rate, yet the audience is not informed about why this is happening. Therefore, this is an ambivalent instance.

(58) This turtle is one of the countless species that have been unable to adapt to the change brought about by the urban environment. Only a small number of animals have managed to find ways of living alongside us. And every ten years, and area the size of Britain disappears under a jungle of concrete. But it doesn't have to be like this. Could it not be possible to build cities more in harmony with nature? How, and whether, we decide to invite the wildlife back is up to us. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 6)

This instance is from the final episode, in which the narrator reflects on the future of cities and whether humans could make the urban environments more adaptable to other species. It is stated that some species *have been unable to adapt to the change* that the number and size of cities is posing as they are growing constantly. Moreover, the narration states that *it doesn't have to be like this*, questioning whether cities should be built *more in harmony with nature*. These sentences are positive discourse, as they convey ecologically beneficial ideas to the audience effectively. The viewer is addressed as the narration shifts to using the pronouns *we* and *us* – this creates a sense of solidarity. The same idea is present in the following instance:

(59) Looking down on this great metropolis, the ingenuity with which we continue to reshape the surface of our planet is very striking. But it's also sobering. It reminds me of just how easy it is for us to lose our connection with the natural world. Yet it's on this connection that the future of both humanity and the natural world will depend. It's surely our responsibility to do everything within our power to create a planet that provides a home not just for us, but for all life on Earth. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 6)

In this scene, the narrator – David Attenborough – is on location in London. As this is the last scene of the series, he is filmed instead of being solely on the background as a narrator. The narration just described how Singapore is richer in species than any other city since millions of trees have been planted there in the process of greening the city. London is contrasted with Singapore, as it is called a *great metropolis* that has lost *connection with the natural world*. The importance of this connection is emphasised, and the narration again uses the pronouns *our* and *us*; additionally, the message that *all life on Earth* deserves a home instead of just humans is also positive discourse.

4.6 Lexical word choices and their connotations regarding animals, plants, and natural areas in *Planet Earth II*

(60) Looking down from two miles above the surface of the Earth, it's impossible not to be impressed by the sheer grandeur and splendour and power of the natural world. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 1)

Here, the phrasing in the statement *it's impossible not to be impressed* creates a feeling of wonder, as well as the use of nouns *grandeur*, *splendour*, and *power*, all three of which have positive connotations. This sentence in the opening of the first episode immediately grasps the attention of the audience by using this language that praises the natural world by using positive words to describe it. Overall, this is positive discourse.

(61) Our planet has changed, too. Never have those wildernesses been as fragile and as precious as they are today. At this crucial time for the natural world, we will journey to every corner of the globe to explore the greatest treasures of our living planet and reveal the extreme lengths animals go to to survive. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 1)

This instance is an example of positive discourse as it highlights how the natural world is at great risk today and uses words that convey the idea to the viewer that these facts are adverse for the planet. Wildernesses are referred to as *fragile* and *precious* – i.e., they are easily destroyed, yet of substantial value and not to be wasted. Moreover, it is highlighted that this is *crucial time for the natural world*, as the state of the environment is more irredeemable as time passes. Additionally, the animal and plant species – along with the natural areas – filmed on the series are referred to as *treasures*, a word which has positive connotations as well.

(62) Islands may seem remote and insignificant, but they are home to some of the most precious wildlife on Earth. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 1)

Instead of calling islands *insignificant*, it is claimed that that is what one could falsely think islands are. However, the narration implies islands are very significant, as the flora and fauna found on islands are *precious*. This adjective has positive connotations, thus being positive discourse.

(63) To survive a winter in these mountains takes tenacity, and bobcats have that in abundance. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 2)

Here, bobcats are said to have a large quantity of *tenacity* – i.e., persistence and determination – and this allows them to live in the cold surroundings. This is positive discourse, as it

portrays the species in a positive light despite the struggles that they are facing in their everyday lives. This instance can be contrasted with the following one:

(64) Only the toughest can survive among the savage beauty of the world's highest mountains. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 2)

This is positive discourse because the use of the phrases *only the toughest can survive* and *savage beauty* convey the idea that the species that live on these mountains are resilient and powerful, and the mountains themselves are beautiful in a fierce and uncontrollable way. Humans cannot tame the mountains and would not be able to live in these conditions as well as these *tough* animal species do.

(65) Fungi, unlike plants, thrive in the darkness of the forest floor. They're hidden until they begin to develop the incredible structures with which they reproduce. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 3)

The use of the adjective *incredible* is positive discourse here, as it adds a tone of wonder to the utterance; the narrator could have simply said that *the fungi begin to develop the structures*, which would have been more neutral language, so *incredible* and its positive connotations add positive value to these fungi.

(66) This Eden is still a place of wonder and magic. Something, surely, worth protecting. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 3)

Here, the narrator discusses a jungle in Madagascar in the closing scene of episode 3. The jungle is referred to as *this Eden* – a paradise in which its inhabitants can live in perfect happiness. Additionally, the jungle is said to be *a place of wonder and magic*, which adds a supernatural element to the natural area in a positive way. The instance ends on a notion that the jungle is *worth protecting*, which is stated explicitly so that the audience is left with this final thought. Overall, this instance is positive discourse, and it includes several linguistic features that promote ecological thinking despite its short length.

(67) One quarter of all land on Earth is covered by a single, remarkable type of plant. Almost indestructible, it can grow two feet in a day and be tall enough to hide a giant. That plant is grass, and the world it creates is truly unique. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 5)

The use of the adjectives *remarkable* and *unique* is positive discourse, as they have positive connotations, thus creating a positive description of grass.

(68) As daylight fades, the sky fills with a staggering one million starlings. And then follows one of nature's great spectaculars. How, or indeed why, they perform these marvellous aerobatics, we still do not fully understand. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 6)

Here, the narrator calls the gathering of these songbirds a *nature's great spectacular*, which is a positive way of illustrating the phenomenon. Additionally, the latter sentence emphasises that it is not known *how* or *why* this phenomenon is happening, admitting that it is beyond human knowledge; this is positive discourse.

4.7 The usage of personal pronouns regarding animals in *Planet Earth II*

(69) Home to the pygmy three-toed sloth. This is a male and life here suits him well. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 1)

The sloth is said to be a male, and therefore the pronoun *him* is used. Later in the same scene, this specific sloth is attempting to find a mate; this further motivates the narration to refer to this sloth as a *he* from the beginning as he is later seeking a female sloth – a *she*. This is positive discourse.

(70) This giant, however, isn't looking for food – he's looking for a mate. Female dragons come into season only once a year. She's receptive. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 1)

This instance discusses Komodo dragons, which are the largest surviving lizards on Earth. In this scene, there are both a male and a female Komodo dragon present, and the male is trying to find a mate for itself. They are referred to with the personal pronouns *he* and *she*, which is positive discourse.

(71) This baby sifaka has a hard life ahead of it. He's been born in the most arid and hostile corner of Madagascar's vast landscape. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 1)

Here, the narrator discusses the life of a baby sifaka – a kind of lemur. Interestingly, the sifaka is referred to using both *it* and *he* in consecutive sentences. Lemurs are primates, and therefore mammals. Additionally, this lemur is a baby, and not looking for a mate. The narration is also confident enough to refer to the lemur as *he* – hence, his sex is known – but still does not do it on both occasions. This is ambivalent discourse, as both the positive and the destructive use of personal pronouns are present in the instance. This can be contrasted with the instance 40, in which a kodkod cat was referred to with both *it* and *he* in consecutive sentences.

(72) Another hatchling has its first glimpse of a dangerous world. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 1)

In this instance, a marine iguana – i.e., a lizard found in the sea – hatchling is referred to using *it*. As the iguana has just been born, it is entirely possible that the sex is not known based on the appearance of the lizard; nevertheless, this is destructive discourse.

(73) A male Buller's albatross waits for his mate. Each year they spend six months apart, travelling the ocean. They reunite here to breed. But this year she's late. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 1)

Here, a male Buller's albatross – an oceanic bird – is waiting for his partner. As these albatrosses are mates whose sex is known without doubt, they are referred to using the positive personal pronouns *he* and *she*.

(74) This is what ibex were born to do. Scattering makes it hard for the fox to pick a target. And it certainly can't follow them up here. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 2)
(75) It's a dead fox, and it could sustain her [the golden eagle] for days. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 2)

In both instances, the fox is referred to using *it*. In instance 74, the fox is hunting for ibexes, whereas in instance 75, fox is the prey. Fox is a mammal species that is related to dogs, so it is more familiar to most people than ibex and golden eagle are. Therefore, it is unexpected that *it* is used for the fox, but the golden eagle is referred to with the positive pronoun *her*. Additionally, in the first instance, the predator is referred to with *it*, but in the latter instance, the predator is referred to using *her*; this is also inconsistent assuming that the audience is supposed to sympathise stronger with either the prey or the predator, but not with both equally. Finally, it is worth noting that even though the fox is already called *it* in the first instance, the fact that the fox is dead in the latter instance might have been a potential reason to avoid using *she*/*he* in the narration in that case. To summarise, instance 74 is destructive discourse, whereas instance 75 is ambivalent.

(76) Here, steam from the river warms the surrounding trees, so up in the branches there could be prey. If only he could get to it. It's 20 feet up. At last – a squirrel. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 2)

Here, a bobcat – a lynx, which is a mammal – is hunting for food. The bobcat is referred to with the pronoun *he*, whereas his prey – a squirrel, which is a rodent – is referred to with *it.* The reason behind this choice is possibly the fact that the squirrel is not a mammal and is also the prey of a mammal; therefore, the audience is far more likely to sympathise with the bobcat. This dichotomous use of personal pronouns is ambivalent discourse.

(77) An adult female and her daughter. She has devoted the last two years to raising her cub and very soon it will be weaned. For now, the cub is still entirely dependent on its mother. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 2)

In this instance, a snow leopard mother is referred to using the personal pronouns *she*/*her*. However, her cub is referred to using *it* despite being two years old, and the sex is most likely known. Despite this, the narration still chooses to use *it* instead of *her*/*his*, making this instance ambivalent discourse as it includes both positive and destructive features. This example can be compared with the instance 25, in which another snow leopard mother was referred to with *she*; however, in that instance, the narration avoided using any pronouns for the cub – from the point of view of this research, avoiding using any pronouns is better than using the destructive *it*.

(78) This is an indri. It's a primate, like us. And these forests in Madagascar are its home. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 3)

Here, an indri is contrasted directly with humans as both are primates. However, immediately after this, the indri is still called *it* – even though the narration would not call a human individual *it*. This is destructive discourse. The following two instances are also from a scene that focuses on primates – in this case, spider monkeys:

(79) This youngster is only a few months old. Her future depends on her ability to climb. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 3)
(80) Father, however, was watching. He's big and strong enough to form a bridge with his body so that she can climb to safety. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 3)

Despite being related to the indri in the instance 78 above, this spider monkey is referred to with the personal pronoun *her*. It is possible that if the scene ended here, the personal pronoun might have been *it* in the narration. However, as the scene continues, her father is present in the scene. Instance 80 uses *he* for the father spider monkey and continues to use *she* for the young spider monkey again, since their relationship is now evident to the viewer; they are a family instead of two individual spider monkeys, and this is likely to increase the tendency to use personal pronouns rather than using *it* or referring to them as a collective group. These instances are both examples of positive discourse.

(81) A jaguar – the supreme jungle predator. The river marks the edge of his territory, but here he has competition. He's now in the territory of a female. She has ruled this stretch of river for five years. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 3)

Here, a male jaguar – a mammal – is referred to using *he*. In the following sentence, it becomes evident that a female jaguar is also present. Therefore, both jaguars are referred to using the positive pronouns *he* and *she*, respectively.

(82) Some animals take camouflage a stage further still, and these streams in Costa Rica are home to one of the most remarkable. A glass frog. A male, and tiny. No bigger than your fingernail and almost entirely transparent – as he needs to be. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 3)

In this instance, a glass frog – an amphibian – is discussed. It is stated to be a male, and the positive personal pronoun *he* is used. Additionally, the adjective *remarkable* is used here, and the frog is therefore described using a word that has positive connotations before it can even be seen on the screen. This might further increase the tendency to use the positive personal pronoun instead of *it*.

(83) This wasp is a specialist hunter of frogs' eggs. It's noticed the wriggling tadpoles at the bottom of the leaf. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 3)

Here, a wasp is referred to using *it*. In this scene, this insect is the predator as it is attempting to eat the eggs that the frog has hidden. Additionally, the frog was previously referred to using *he*, and the wasp is now portrayed as his adversary in the narrative. These are plausible reasons for why the wasp is destructively referred to using *it*.

(84) To this click beetle, a bright light means only one thing: a female click beetle. So, he flashes in reply. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 3)

In this instance, click beetles are discussed. They are insects, like the wasp in the instance 83 above. However, in this scene, both a male and a female individual from the same species are present and looking for mating partners; consequently, the beetle is referred to using the positive personal pronoun *he*.

(85) A male red bird of paradise, competing to attract a female by dancing. […] She is an independent lady, and she will select whichever male takes her fancy. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 3)

Here, two birds of paradise are discussed – a male and a female. Again, as they are looking for mates and both sexes of the same species are present, the positive personal pronouns *she*/*her* are used.

(86) Each animal must find its own way of surviving the competition of the jungle. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 3)

In this instance, no specific species is mentioned. However, the narration states that *each animal must find its own way*, collectively referring to all animals in the jungle. This is destructive, as the more beneficial way of phrasing this would have been *each animal must find their own way* from this study's point of view.

(87) The giraffe has the speed and stamina to outrun the pride, but it's being chased intro a trap. Up ahead, the lead female waits. It's now up to her. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 4)

In this scene, a giraffe is escaping from a pack of lions. The giraffe, which is a mammal, like the lions, is referred to with *it*. However, the female lion is referred to using *her*. The difference in their roles here is that the lion is the predator, and the giraffe is the prey. This is ambivalent discourse.

(88) It's a butcherbird. This little songbird uses the spines as a butcher uses his hook – to hold its prey as it dismembers it. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 4)

In this instance, a butcherbird is referred to using *it* several times. However, the positive pronoun *his* is used once here in the phrase *a butcher uses his hook*, in which the butcherbird is compared with a butcher – i.e., a meat seller or a slaughterer. This further emphasises how destructive this specific instance is, as the hypothetical human is referred to using a positive personal pronoun, whereas the butcherbird is not. Additionally, in the instance 85, two birds of paradise were referred to using the positive personal pronouns, as there were both a male and female individual present. Moreover, those individuals were looking for mating partners. In this scene, only one bird is discussed. Here, the bird is in the role of a predator, rather than looking for a mate.

(89) It's no bigger than a ping-pong ball. A golden mole. It's totally blind, but there's nothing to see underground anyway. Instead, it has superb hearing. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 4)

A mole, which is a mammal, is referred to using *it* twice, which is destructive discourse. It is specified that the mole is extremely small, but the size of the animal is unlikely to contribute to the choice of pronouns. In the instance 82, a glass frog was said to be the size of a fingernail at most, yet the positive personal pronoun was used in that case.

(90) A baby saiga antelope – just three hours old. His only company – his twin. Until they can stand, their mother has left them hidden in the grass. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 5)

Here, two baby saiga antelopes are referred to positively using the pronoun *his*. Antelopes are mammals, and even though these two individuals were born just a few hours ago, their sex is known confidently enough the be stated in the narrative. This is positive discourse.

(91) And where the bison have dug, the fox now spots an opportunity. Every footstep counts. But he mustn't break through… yet. He listens carefully to pinpoint his target. It's moving. A vole. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 5)

In this scene, a fox is hunting by using his superb hearing ability. The fox is referred to using *he*, while the vole is referred to using *it*. Here, the fox is a predator, while the vole is his prey. This can be contrasted with the instance 74, in which the fox was referred to using *it* despite being in the role of a predator as well. However, even though the role of the fox is the same, this individual is referred to using a positive personal pronoun unlike the one in instance 74. Overall, this an example of ambivalent discourse.

4.8 Personification of natural areas in *Planet Earth II*

(92) Jungles are the richest places on Earth because of one remarkable fact: they make their own weather. (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 3)

In this instance, jungles are said to *make their own weather*. This is a positive way of phrasing the phenomenon, since this natural area is the actor participant of the clause and is therefore represented as an active force. Additionally, the adjectives *rich* and *remarkable* are also examples of positive discourse in that these words have positive connotations, thus describing the jungle in a positive light.

Interestingly, there were no other instances in *Planet Earth II* that personified natural areas in the same way as the narration of *Planet Earth* did. Some utterances in the narration, such as the following example, entail somewhat similar discourse: "Lethally cold, scoured by gales and blizzards, these mountains are among the most hostile places on Earth" (Planet Earth II, 2016. Season 1, episode 2). In this utterance, the mountains are called *hostile*, referring to their unfriendly or aggressive nature. Additionally, the gales and blizzards are said to *scour* the mountains – a verb that has the meanings of *to scrub* or *to search*. However, the use of these words is not particularly uncommon when discussing natural areas and phenomena and does not personify nature in either positive or destructive manner. Therefore, except for this example, there is no discourse in the narration of *Planet Earth II* that fits into this category;

the narration does not generally focus on the setting of the scenes as much as it does focus on the animal species that are discussed.

5 Discussion

In this section, a summary of the main points that can be deduced from the results is presented. This section attempts to answer what conclusions can be drawn from the data regarding what features of language are considered positive or destructive in the narration of the series. The way in which these language features might influence the ecological thinking of the audience is also considered. Additionally, the reasons for both the positive and destructive language use are explored, and any connecting factors between them are examined. Finally, *Planet Earth* and *Planet Earth II* are compared with each other in terms of the data to discover whether there are any discernible differences or similarities between the narration of the two series. Both the amount and characteristics of the language are discussed, and the data is presented quantitatively as well.

5.1 A summary of the narration from an ecolinguistic perspective

There were several utterances in the documentary that were not included in the data of this research, even though they seemed fitting for the study at first. For example, the following utterance was considered: “The fish they hunt are scarce and salamanders have poor eyesight” (Planet Earth, 2006. Season 1, episode 3). The adjectives *scarce* and *poor* have negative connotations; the instance says that there are not many fish in the waters and the salamanders cannot see well due to the lack of their vision. However, these are facts that describe the species in question, and this utterance does not contain any destructive use of language that could be altered in order to make the discourse more ecological. Basic commentary like this do not include any linguistic features that are either positive or destructive, and therefore there is nothing subjective or unordinary in the discourse that illustrates the species in either more positive or negative light than what is expected. Hence, this type of neutral nature documentary discourse was not categorised into any of the groups of language use that this research focused on.

The opening and ending scenes were more focused on climate change and other environmental issues than the other parts of the episodes. In general, in the beginning of an episode, the narrator described the theme of that episode – i.e., an episode about desert areas and their ecosystems opened with a brief description of what deserts are. At the end of the episode, the narration often offered some topical insights about the environmental issues of the thematic area. Climate change was not explicitly discussed much in either series; there

were some scenes where the narration discussed the warming climate and the problems that it causes, yet few solutions were offered, and humans were rarely mentioned as a reason for these problems. The environmental issues that were discussed in the narration included climate change, overpopulation, deforestation, poaching, and habitat loss due to toxics and urbanisation. These topics were not discussed neither extensively nor explicitly; they were implied by stating a fact – e.g., a species is endangered, and their living conditions continue to worsen – yet the human influence on these issues was rarely mentioned. When it is mentioned, the use of words could have been even more ecological, such as using the more appropriate word *poaching* instead of *hunting*. Positive discourse regarding environmental issues included addressing the audience directly, such as the narrator using the pronouns *we* and *us* to produce a sense of solidarity in the audience. Additionally, *our planet* was an often-occurring collocation – this, too has the same positive effect, as the more neutral alternative would have been simply saying *the planet*. The narration was overall hopeful when it comes to the future of the natural world; it was stated several times that it is the responsibility of the human species to help other species and the environment survive. Some instances illustrated that nature thrives better without human presence, which is positive; some stated that even if humans tried to populate certain natural areas, the living conditions would be too harsh for human beings, which implies that humans are not superior to the species that do live there. The narration also stated several times that the discussed natural areas were in their prime condition before humans came in touch with the areas. The only piece of narration that devoted itself to discussing solutions to the environmental issues caused by the humankind was in the final episode of *Planet Earth II*, titled *Cities*; there, it was shown how certain cities have implemented city greening in order to achieve a form of urbanisation that is environmentally friendly, and the language in that section had several positive features.

Regarding the scenes where environmental issues were discussed, the narration included also destructive discourse. For example, it was characteristic for the narration to mention that a species that was discussed is endangered. It was not done by saying that they are endangered explicitly, nor was the cause explained sufficiently. Instead, it was said that only a certain amount of the discussed species remains in the wild, which is a neutral way to phrase this. The information was provided in a concise manner without mentioning human influence on it – most likely because the documentary aims to entertain its audience rather than create a negative atmosphere. Another way of avoiding criticising humans was to use the passive voice – i.e., saying that a species has been pushed to extinction. Overall, the discourse was

nevertheless more positive than destructive. Even if the narration could have discussed the human responsibility even more, it still achieved to inform the viewer about the issues while implying that they are not merely natural occurrences.

When discussing animals, plants, and natural areas, the narration included many positive lexical word choices. The adjective *extraordinary* was the most frequently used, but other adjectives were also used in contexts where they were not needed to be used in order to add informative value. Nevertheless, they were still used to praise the natural world and the species that were discussed. These adjectives included *remarkable*, *precious*, *wonderful*, *spectacular*, *surprising*, *magnificent*, *impressive*, *incredible*, and *marvellous*. Additionally, nouns such as *spectacle* and *magic* were also used to produce the same effect. On the other hand, words with negative connotations were not used in the narration; the single exception was the word *scar* that was used to describe deserts.

The narration of the documentaries used both the personal pronouns *she*/*he*, that are considered positive discourse from the point of view of this research, and the destructive pronoun *it*. In most cases, the animal species were referred to as a group. For example, the words *herd*, *pack*, and *flock* were often used. In the scenes where the animals were filmed among others of their own species, the narration simply used the pronoun *they* to refer to the entire group – thus, there was no need to discuss a single animal and to choose between *she*/*he* and *it*. This is likely not because the narration deliberately sought not to use these pronouns, but because it is logical to use words that mean *a large group of animals* for species that travel in a herd and are not seen on the screen without the others. It must be noted that from some less prescriptive ecolinguistic points of view, using *it* when referring to an animal species other than humans is not as negative; this research specifically differentiated the use of the positive she/*he* and the destructive *it*, even though the latter can be considered neutral language by many researchers.

The use of personal pronouns was somewhat inconsistent and sometimes arbitrary. In general, *she*/*he* and *it* were used in similar amounts – the positive *she*/*he* was used slightly more than the destructive *it*. The animal species that were most commonly referred to using *she* or *he* were all mammals – e.g., different kinds of bears, such as polar bears, and different kinds of cats, such as leopards. However, the overall results indicate that the most important factor to what pronoun was used was whether or not the animals were parents. There was not a single occurrence in which an animal, regardless of whether their partner was in the scene or not,

was a parent and referred to using *it*. Additionally, in those cases where the animals were not yet parents, but were looking for mating partners, positive personal pronouns were also used.

On the other hand, young animals were generally referred to using *it*. In terms of this study, it is not possible to clarify if the crew behind the documentaries were able to tell the sex of these young animals or not. It is probable that in some cases, the reason for not using *she* or *he* was that the sex was not known, but these instances were categorised as destructive regardless. Nonetheless, there were also several instances in which calves or cubs were referred to using *she* or *he* in the narration. The results also indicate that certain kinds of species are more likely to be referred to with the destructive personal pronoun; fish and other marine species were generally referred to with *it*, whales and turtles being the only exceptions. Additionally, insects and invertebrate were also more likely to be referred to with *it*. Interestingly, there were some ambivalent instances in this category as well; in other words, some instances referred to animals using both *she*/*he* and *it* in the same or in consecutive sentences. For example, two different bears were discussed, but only one of them was a parent – in that case, the parent was referred to using *she*, whereas the other bear was referred to with *it*. Some instances were inconsistent in their use of pronouns for no apparent reason, and the same animal was referred to using both the positive and destructive pronouns in consecutive sentences. This indicates that the choice of pronouns was not deemed particularly important in the narration.

Finally, natural areas were personified in the narration by using phrases that are usually used when discussing living creatures instead of areas. For example, saying that a forest has character, or using words like heart, artery, bones, or spine when discussing the appearance of a river or a mountain. Moreover, some sentences had phrases that implied that the natural areas act consciously and have a mind of their own, which makes them more alive from the audience's point of view. As was stated in the results section, the narration differed the most between the two series in personifying natural areas when it comes to the number of instances. The next subsection discusses these numerical differences in more detail.

5.2 A diachronic comparison between the narration of *Planet Earth* and *Planet Earth II*

The table below illustrates every single occurrence of positive and destructive discourse that was found in the narration of *Planet Earth* (2006) quantitatively. Additionally, the rightmost

column shows the number of ambivalent instances – i.e., those instances which mixed both positive and destructive discourse.

Table 1. Planet Earth data

Every instance of discourse from Planet Earth that has either positive or destructive language features.

	Positive	Destructive	Ambivalent
Category 1	7	4	5
Category 2	19	0	1
Category 3	27	31	2
Category 4	14	0	0
In total	**67**	**35**	**8**
Per episode	**6,1**	**3,2**	**0,7**

The leftmost column displays the four groups into which the instances of discourse were categorised. Category 1 refers to the instances that mentioned climate change or other human-made environmental issues. Category 2 refers to the word choices and phrases that included positive or destructive linguistic features. Category 3 refers to the instances that used any personal pronouns when discussing animal species. Finally, category 4 refers to the instances that personified natural areas in some way. Firstly, the *positive* column displays the instances of positive discourse in each category. Secondly, the *destructive* column displays the instances of destructive discourse in each category. Finally, the *ambivalent* column displays the instances that included both positive and destructive language features, as was explained above. The results section already discussed a total of 92 instances from the data, which consists of a total of 192 instances. The data of *Planet Earth* includes 110 of those 192 instances. Table 1 illustrates that of those 110 instances, 67 were positive, 35 were destructive, and eight were ambivalent. Therefore, most of the instances – 64,2 per cent – were positive discourse. *Planet Earth* comprises a total of 11 episodes. At the bottom row of Table 1, it can be seen how many positive, destructive, and ambivalent instances were perceived per episode on average. This information is relevant as the episode count is very different between the two analysed series; *Planet Earth II* has only six episodes – that is five less than the original *Planet Earth*. However, the episode lengths are similar between the two series. Therefore, the bottom row of Table 1 illustrates the frequency of the instances effectively.

Category 1 has a total of 16 instances. Seven instances are positive, four are destructive, and five are ambivalent. Thus, the narration included all three different types when it comes to human-made environmental issues, but positive discourse has the most instances overall. Category 2 has a total of 20 instances, of which 19 are positive, and none are destructive. However, there is one ambivalent instance, in which deserts areas were referred to in a demeaning manner. Otherwise, no occurrences of destructive word choices in the narration were perceived; whenever the narration deviated from its neutral nature documentary discourse, the narration was positive, praising the environment with positively connoted expressions. Category 3 has the most instances of all the categories, with a total of 60 instances. This is more than half – 55,6 per cent – of the total data of *Planet Earth*. This is because the narration referred to animals using pronouns frequently as the main focus of the documentary was on filming different animal species. Of these 60 instances, 27 are positive, 31 are destructive, and 2 are ambivalent. This means that the animals in *Planet Earth* were referred to using the pronoun *it* more than using the pronouns *she* or *he*. The neutral instances in which the animals were referred to collectively using *they* or different words meaning *a group of animals*, such as *herd*, were not included in this research. This result implies that there are some characteristics and situations that increase the tendency to use the positive personal pronouns for animals other than humans, but in the end, this use of personal pronouns is also somewhat arbitrary and inconsistent. Category 4 has a total of 14 instances, all of which are positive; the personifying of natural areas was positive in all cases, as this was never done in an anthropocentric way that would have degraded the natural areas. Instead, they were often contrasted with humans in a manner that can produce an ecologically positive effect in the audience.

Correspondingly, the table below presents the results of *Planet Earth II*:

Table 2. Planet Earth II data

Every instance of discourse from Planet Earth II that has either positive or destructive language features.

	Positive	Destructive	Ambivalent
Category 1	6	1	6
Category 2	14	0	0
Category 3	27	18	9
Category 4	1	0	0

	Positive	Destructive	Ambivalent
In total	**48**	**19**	**15**
Per episode	**8**	**3,2**	**2,5**

The data of *Planet Earth II* includes 82 instances of the total of 192. The table above illustrates that in category 1, there are six instances of positive discourse, one instance of destructive discourse, and six instances of ambivalent discourse. Therefore, the discourse was more positive regarding human-made environmental issues as compared to that of *Planet Earth*. Even though there are more positive instances per episode, and only one destructive instance overall – *Planet Earth* has a total of four destructive instances in this category – there are also more ambivalent instances in *Planet Earth II*. This is because the narration of *Planet Earth II* actively informed its audience more about the human-made environmental issues, sometimes mentioning the human part in the issue, yet regularly omitted the real reasons behind the issues. In category 2, there are 14 positive instances, and no destructive nor any ambivalent instances. Consequently, it can be stated that the narration of *Planet Earth II* is more ecologically beneficial in this category as well; there were more positive instances in which positively connoted words or phrases were used when discussing animals, plants, and natural areas per episode. In category 3, it can be seen that the discourse of *Planet Earth II* is significantly more positive; there are 27 positive instances, which is the same as *Planet Earth*, but within five fewer episodes. Additionally, there are only 18 instances in which animals were destructively referred to using *it* instead of *she* or he; in *Planet Earth*, there was a total of 31 instances – i.e., a total of 13 more. From these numbers, it can be deduced that at least some amount of either subconscious or intentional effort was made in the process of constructing the narration for *Planet Earth II* regarding personal pronouns. However, it is surprising that *Planet Earth II* has a total of nine ambivalent instances in this category as compared to two in the data of *Planet Earth*; in these instances, the same animal was referred to using *she*/*he* and *it* consecutively, or two different individuals were referred to using both the positive and the destructive pronouns in the same sentence. This inconsistency means that either the personal pronouns were not deemed that important in the narration, or it was emphasised that some species do deserve to be referred to using the positive pronouns. However, this conclusion also unavoidably includes the destructive implication that other species do not deserve the same treatment. Finally, in the fourth category, there is only one instance of positive discourse in which natural areas were personified using linguistic features. However, there are no destructive nor any ambivalent instances either. As compared

to *Planet Earth*, which had 14 instances in which natural areas were personified, this is significantly less. This indicates both that natural areas were not discussed in *Planet Earth II* as extensively as in the original series, and the focus was more on the animal species. Additionally, whenever an area was discussed, the description of that area was more concise and neutral, omitting any playful wordplay and human metaphors.

6 Conclusion

In this thesis, the discourse of the BBC's television nature documentary series *Planet Earth* (2006) and its successor series *Planet Earth II* (2016) was studied. The research questions focused on what kind of language is used in the documentaries when the narration discusses environmental problems – especially those that are human-made. One of the main goals was to discover what it is that makes the language either environmentally positive or destructive discourse – for example, whether the narration uses the passive voice or hides the agent of the sentence in a way that hides the human responsibility. In these cases, more positive alternative expressions were suggested to replace the destructive ones; on the other hand, the positive instances that explicitly stated the humans are responsible for the issues or used positively connoted lexical words to describe all animal species, plants, or natural areas such as forests or deserts, were highlighted and it was further elaborated on what made them positive discourse. Additionally, one of the main goals of the study was to compare the two series diachronically; does the more recent series include more instances of positive discourse as compared to the older series, since environmental issues such as climate change are more and more prevalent as time passes? It was hypothesised that since the BBC commits to being a pro-Earth company in all of its productions – and since it can be presumed that one of the main goals of nature documentaries is to spread awareness of ecological issues so that the audience could think in a more environmentally beneficial way – that both of the series include mostly positive discourse. However, due to the fact that the primary material are forms of television entertainment, it was also hypothesised that they would possibly include some instances of destructive discourse as well, even if it was implicit and not done on purpose.

The results proved that most of the instances in the data were positive discourse. The narration did not discuss the environmental issues extensively – at least not explicitly – but when it did, it often used the pronouns *our*, *we* and *us* to produce a uniting effect from audience's point of view; this highlighted that human beings are the only species that can mitigate the effects of the environmental issues that humans are also responsible for. Additionally, lexical words that have either explicit or implicit positive connotations were frequently used in the narration when it discussed different animal species and natural areas. Furthermore, natural areas were personified several times; they were contrasted with humans in a way that treats them as powerful authorities or equal to humans, rather than something

that only exists for humans to exploit it. However, there were some instances of destructive discourse as well. The most typical examples of destructive discourse included stating that a species is endangered, but omitting the fact that it is solely because of harmful human activities. Moreover, the animal species that were filmed individually were often referred to using the pronoun *it* instead of the positive personal pronouns *she* or *he*. This arbitrary use of language implied that not all animals that were discussed in the documentaries were deemed equal in the narration. The most prominent finding regarding the personal pronouns was that those animals who were stated to be parents or looking for mates in the narration were generally referred to using *she* and *he*, whereas individuals without partners and younger animals were more often referred to using *it*. The roles of being the predator or the prey did not seem to influence the choice of pronouns much. Additionally, some instances were also ambivalent as they included both positive and destructive language elements. The narration often spread awareness of several different environmental issues, but it was mostly implicit; additionally, as was stated above, the narration often implied that human influence on these issues was obscured. As for the diachronic variation between the series, the more recent series did include more positive discourse, as was hypothesised. However, the number of destructive instances was similar, and the number of ambivalent instances was higher in the latter series as well. These results implied that the narration focused more on the environmental issues, but especially the number of ambivalent instances suggests that this was done mostly in a superficial way that did not elaborate on the reasons behind the issues. Regarding the use of personal pronouns, the first series opted for the pronoun *it* more, whereas the second series used the positive pronouns *she* and *he* more. However, the results also prove that this use of personal pronouns in the narration was sometimes inconsistent, as the same animal species was often referred to using both the positive and the destructive pronouns consecutively. The first series included one type of positive discourse more than the latter series: in *Planet Earth*, natural areas were personified more using phrases that are not typically used for natural areas, thus making them feel even more alive to the audience. The final episode of *Planet Earth II* included the most instances in which the possible solutions for mitigating environmental issues were discussed, and the series ended on a hopeful note that emphasised human solidarity as a solution for the issues.

The utilised methods worked well for the purposes of the research. As the series did not discuss climate change as extensively as would have been ideal, it was essential to not only study this one specific environmental issue but also to include other discourse in the analysis.

For example, the way in which the narration refers to different animal species and areas of land from an ecolinguistic perspective. As for the scope of the study, it would have also been possible to limit the primary material to one single series to discuss the instances more comprehensively. However, that would not have rendered possible the diachronic analysis. There are many possibilities for future research on this subject; the BBC has produced multiple different nature documentary series which could be analysed using the same methods, and it would also be fruitful to compare a nature documentary by a different producer to one of those that is produced by the BBC. Furthermore, it would be constructive to assess a clearly commercial production instead of a non-profit one; the more commercial production might have more instances of destructive or ambivalent discourse as it arguably seeks to entertain its audience more. Finally, as the most recent part of the series, *Planet Earth III* (2023), has now been released, it would be relevant to study its narration from an ecolinguistic perspective to discover whether these environmental issues are discussed even more extensively in that series.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Instances of ecologically positive and destructive discourse in *Planet Earth*

1. “A hundred years ago there were one and a half billion people on Earth. Now, over six billion crowd our fragile planet.”

2. “But even so, there are still places barely touched by humanity.”

3. “This series will take to the last wildernesses and show you the planet and its wildlife as you have never seen them before.”

4. “A polar bear stirs. She has been in her den the whole winter. Her emergence marks the beginning of spring. After months of confinement underground she toboggans down the slope. Perhaps to clean her fur, perhaps for sheer joy. Her cubs gaze out of their bright new world for the very first time.”

5. “In the chaos, a calf is separated from its mother. The calf is young, but it can outrun the wolf if only it manages to keep its footing.”

6. “There are only forty Amur leopards left in the wild and that number is falling. Like so many creatures, the cats have been pushed to the very edge of extinction by hunting and the destruction of their habitat.”

7. “That is why the jungle grows so vigorously and supports so much life.”

8. “The character of the forest changes as we descend, becoming ever darker and damper, favouring different kinds of animals and plants.”

9. “Less than two per cent of the sunlight reaches the floor, but even here there is extraordinary variety. In the great island of New Guinea there are 42 different species of birds of paradise.”

10. “The superb bird of paradise calls to attract a female. And he has more luck. But what does he have to do to really impress her? She retires to consider her verdict.”

11. “Its richest parts are those where waves and currents bring fertilising nutrients to surface waters that are bathed in sunlight. The seas off the Cape in South Africa have this magic recipe and are hugely productive.”

12. “The shark is faster on a straight course, but it can’t turn as sharply as the seal.”

13. “Deserts cover one third of the land’s surface and they’re growing bigger every year.”

14. “The Okavango becomes criss-crossed with trails as animals move into its heart. The new arrivals open up paths like arteries along which water flows, extending the reach of the flood.”

15. “Human beings venture into the highest parts of our planet at their peril. Some might think that by climbing a great mountain they have somehow conquered it, but we can only be visitors here.”

16. “These summits, nearly three miles up, are home to some very remarkable mountaineers – Gelada baboons.”

17. “For all monkeys morning is grooming time – a chance to catch up with friends. But unlike other monkeys, geladas chatter constantly while they do it. It’s a great way to network while your hands are busy. But these socials can’t go on for too long; geladas have a busy daily schedule and there’s work to be done.”

18. “She has just one brief summer in which to teach them their mountain survival techniques. Rearing four cubs to this age is an exceptional feat, but she does have an excellent territory, rich in food and water.”

19. “In the American Rockies 100,000 avalanches devastate the slopes every winter. This huge mountain chain continues the great spine that runs from Patagonia to Alaska.”

20. “A mother grizzly emerges from her den after six months’ dozing underground.”

21. “These loose boulders are the mountain’s crumbling bones.”

22. “They’re the most dangerous mountains of all. K2 and her sister peaks have claimed more lives than any others.”

23. “A snow leopard – the rarest of Himalayan animals. […] She greets her one-year-old cub.”

24. “Most other bears would be sleeping underground by now, but the giant panda can’t fatten up enough to hibernate. Its food – bamboo – on which it totally relies has so little nutritional value that it can’t build up a store of fat like other bears.”

25. “The red panda – rarely glimpsed in the wild. It was once considered a kind of raccoon but is now believed to be a small mountain bear. By midsummer its larger, more famous relative, has retreated into a cave. A giant panda nurses a tiny week-old baby. Her tender cleaning wards off infection. She won’t leave this cave for three weeks – not while her cub is so utterly helpless.”

26. “The eagles work in pairs to separate a young crane from the flock. It escapes the touches of one and is caught by another.”

27. “Yet these precious waters are rich with surprise.”

28. “The hellgrammite, its body flattened to reduce drag, has bushy gills to extract oxygen from the current.”

29. “A grizzly bear. From famine to feast – he’s spoilt for choice. This Canadian bear is very special – he has learnt to dive for his dinner.”

30. “For the past five million years, Arizona’s Colorado river has eaten away at the desert’s sandstone to create a gigantic canyon.”

31. “The planet’s indisputable super-river is the Amazon. […] Rising in the Peruvian Andes, its main trunk flows eastwards across Brazil.”

32. “Sediment clearly visible at the mixing of the waters where one massive tributary, the Rio Negro, flows into the main river. Its waters are wonderfully rich.”

33. “Botos are highly social and in the breeding season there is stiff competition for mates. […] Maybe each male is trying to show how strong and dexterous he is and that he therefore is the best father a female could have for her young.”

34. “In their final stages rivers broaden and flow wearily across their flat flood plains.”

35. “At the delta's mouth: the largest mangrove forest in the world – the Sundarbans. These extraordinary forests spring up throughout the tropics in these tidal zones where rivers meet the sea.”

36. “This is a cave glow worm. To trap its prey, it goes fishing with a line of silk.”

37. “We need lights to see what’s going on, but in the pitch black the swiftlets manage unerringly to locate their individual nesting sites, which are only a few centimetres across. It’s a remarkable skill and one we still do not fully understand.”

38. “Each drop leaves behind only a minuscule amount of calcite, but over time the process can produce some spectacular results. If the water seeps through the ceiling quickly, then the calcite is deposited on the floor of the cave and that creates stalagmites.”

39. “As soon as its nest is removed, a bird will immediately build another.”

40. “But in the darkness of the cave tunnels, roots of giant tropical trees have pushed their way through cracks in the limestone to reach the flooded caverns.”

41. “The salamander might not encounter food for several months, so when something does come along, it can’t afford to miss it.”

42. “It's astonishing that these extraordinary cave dwellers [salamanders] manage to survive at all.”

43. “Water is the creator of most caves.”

44. “The discovery of life that exists without drawing any of its energy from the sun shows us once again how complex and surprising the underground world can be.”

45. “A third of our planet is desert. These great scars on the face of the Earth appear to be lifeless, but surprisingly none are.”

46. “Today less than a thousand of these desert specialists remain in the wild.”

47. “The ferocious wind, armed with grains of sand, is the agent that shapes all deserts.”

48. “The extraordinary ears of the fennec foxes of Africa radiate heat, but the animals have another way of keeping cool. They spend their days underground and only emerge at sunset.”

49. “His [the dominant male ibex] rank earns him the loyalty of a harem of females, and they follow him closely as he travels across this desert searching for food and water.”

50. “They’re called flat lizards for obvious reasons, and they flaunt their multi-coloured bellies in territorial disputes. He’s made his point, and now it’s time to find some food.”

51. “As they [locusts] fly, swarms join up with other swarms to form gigantic plagues several billions strong and as much as 40 miles wide. They will consume every edible thing in their path. This is one of planet Earth's greatest spectacles. It's rarely seen on this scale, and it won't last long.”

52. “The calf must stay close to its mother to avoid getting lost in the sudden blizzard.”

53. “The polar bear cubs emerge from the den in which they were born. Their mother stretches her legs after five months under the snow.”

54. “Each year, as the climate warms, the Arctic holds less ice. This is a disaster for polar bears.”

55. “With no bare rock to nest on, the male tucks the egg into a special pouch, where he can keep it warm. It requires an extraordinary piece of teamwork.”

56. “This may be a glimpse of the unstable future faced by this magnificent creature.”

57. “The arctic fox finally has enough food to raise her large family.”

58. “The male polar bear’s ice world has finally vanished beneath him.”

59. “This female walrus is shielding her pup. […] The bear’s claws and teeth can’t penetrate her thick hide.”

60. “If the global climate continues to warm, and the Arctic ice melts sooner each year, it is certain that more bears will share this fate.”

61. “She’s keen to start parenting, but the father needs persuading to surrender the chick he has been caring for all winter.”

62. “Those [penguin chicks] that survive their first year have the best possible start in life thanks to the extraordinary hardships endured by their parents.”

63. “In the distant reaches of outer Mongolia, one of the planet's great migrations is underway. Few people ever see this extraordinary annual event.”

64. “But for a short time each year, the long, dark winter releases its grip.”

65. “Here, geese can nest on the ground in relative safety. Nonetheless, this female must incubate her eggs for three weeks and throughout this time she will be very vulnerable.”

66. “She [an arctic fox] has seven hungry cubs to feed. As their appetites grow, the mother must work tirelessly to raise her family.”

67. “A calf is separated from its mother.”

68. “The prairies of North America. The rich pasture once supported the greatest herds ever seen on our planet. There were once 60 million bison, but no animal is immune to intensive hunting by man or destruction of its habitat. And a century ago, the bison were reduced to barely a thousand. Now, thanks to rigorous protection, the species is recovering.”

69. “Now the grass produces its flowers. New colours also come to the plains. The northern flowering is mirrored by the grasslands of the southern hemisphere, and nowhere is more impressive than on the veldt of South Africa.”

70. “Pika – a relative of the rabbit. It, too, feeds on grass.”

71. “Pygmy hogs are no bigger than rabbits. […] The female is busy collecting grass, but not for eating. She’s building a nest.”

72. “A male blue bird of paradise is advertising for a mate. It’s quite a performance, but he’s not the only bird of paradise here keen to make an impression. […] His female is modestly dressed. The male has a good set of lungs, but he’ll have to do more than flutter his eyelids if he wants to impress her.”

73. “Capuchin monkeys are the bully boys in these forests, and they want the ripe figs for themselves.”

74. “Now it's time for the females to make their move. There's no shortage of suitors, but this female has already made her choice. She's heading toward the loudest call because loud calls come from big frogs, and big is best. But to reach him she must run the gauntlet of a gang of smaller suitors.”

75. “These bullet ants are showing some worrying symptoms. Spores from a parasitic fungus called cordyceps have infiltrated their bodies and their minds. Its infected brain directs this ant upwards.”

76. “It’s a colugo, or a flying lemur, though this is something of a misnomer as it doesn’t actually fly, and it certainly isn’t a lemur.”

77. “The red crab spider spends its entire life in the pitchers, hanging on with threads of silk. Instead of building a web, it relies on the water-filled pitcher to trap its food.”

78. “Several [chimp] males corner an enemy female. It's a ferocious attack and she's lucky to escape with her life.”

79. “The calf is no more than a few weeks old. Despite being three metres long and weighing nearly a tonne, he is nonetheless vulnerable. But his mother watches over him and, as he begins to tire, she supports him close to the surface so that he can breathe more easily.”

80. “This co-operation between snakes and fish, spectacular though it is, has only recently been observed, for it only happens on the most remote reefs in Indonesia. Perhaps such hunting alliances were once a common sight, but today no more than six per cent of Indonesia's reefs are in their pristine state.”

81. “A gurnard. Its huge pectoral fins disguise its shape, and they can also help in clearing away sand when searching for food.”

82. “Millions of invertebrates invade the seabed. The most fearsome predator here is a giant. The sunflower starfish is a metre across with an appetite for brittle stars. It uses its feet to taste for prey.”

83. “Each dawn, Cape fur seals leave their colony to go fishing. To reach the open sea, they must cross a narrow strip of water, and that is patrolled by great whites. Each seal is indeed swimming for its life.”

84. “Trees. Surely among the most magnificent of all living things. Some are the largest organisms on Earth, dwarfing all others, and these are the tallest of them all.”

85. “The prints of an Arctic fox, and the hare it might have been stalking.”

86. “The crossbill's extraordinary beak can prise apart the scales, so that its tongue can extract the seeds.”

87. “It's a huge weasel. Its bulk helps to conserve body heat, and also broadens its menu. It's so big and powerful it can even bring down an adult caribou.”

88. “The capercaillie can also digest conifer needles, but feeding is not its priority at the moment.”

89. “The inhabitants of this great wilderness may live and die without ever having contact with humanity. Long may it be that way.”

90. “These forests were growing here long before humans walked the Earth. They were in their prime 20 million years ago.”

91. “The ground is no place for an owl. If he's to climb to the top of his class, he'll need to persevere.”

92. “The American conifer forests may not be the richest in animal life, but their trees are extraordinary.”

93. “The pudu, the world's smallest deer, feeds on the giant leaves of the gunnera plant. The female is just 30 centimetres high at the shoulder, and her infants are hardly bigger than kittens. The male must stay alert. There are hunters here who would snatch his young.”

94. “Another miniature – the kodkod cat. It’s the smallest cat in all the Americas, and a young pudu [a small deer] would be a feast for it. But with the male on guard, the kodkod must lower his sights.”

95. “The mandarin ducks are courting. The female mandarin nests in a tree hole, and when it's time for everyone to leave, she leads the way.”

96. “This female [Amur leopard] has the added pressure of having to provide for her one-year-old cub. It will be another 12 months before he will be able to fend for himself.”

97. “There are only 40 Amur leopards left in the wild, and that number is still falling.”

98. “The whale shark has timed its arrival exactly right. […] It would eat one, given the chance, but the rainbow runners are swift and agile and not easily caught so it bides its time.”

99. “A baby sailfish, fifteen centimetres long, snaps up everything in its path. In three years’ time, it’ll be one of the ocean’s most formidable hunters.”

100. “Those strange leg-like appendages are feathered to stop it [a sea spider] from shrinking.”

101. “Gazing ever upwards, it [a sawtooth eel] watches for prey.”

102. “A dumbo octopus simply flaps a fin – no need for the jet propulsion used by its shallow water relatives above.”

103. “The weirdest, in this world of the strange – vampyroteuthis – the vampire squid from hell. Disturb it and it only retreats a little distance.”

104. “A monkfish – almost indistinguishable from the sand on which it lies.”

105. “The remains of a sperm whale. It died five months or so ago.”

106. “A nautilus. It spends its days hiding four hundred metres down.”

107. “An oceanic wanderer – a Mola mola – stops by to be cleaned by reef fish at the sea mount edge. Butterfly-fish pluck string-like parasites from its flanks.”

108. “Swimmers also come to Ascension to breed. A female green turtle approaches the coast. She’s not eaten once in two months.”

109. “Once and not so long ago, 300,000 blue whales roamed the oceans. Now, less than three per cent of that number remains.”

110. “It’s not just the future of the whale that today lies in our hands, it’s the survival of the natural world in all parts of the living planet. We can now destroy, or we can cherish. The choice is ours.”

Appendix 2: Instances of ecologically positive and destructive discourse in *Planet Earth II*

1. “Looking down from two miles above the surface of the Earth, it's impossible not to be impressed by the sheer grandeur and splendour and power of the natural world.”

2. “Our planet has changed, too. Never have those wildernesses been as fragile and as precious as they are today. At this crucial time for the natural world, we will journey to every corner of the globe to explore the greatest treasures of our living planet and reveal the extreme lengths animals go to to survive.”

3. “Home to the pygmy three-toed sloth. This is a male and life here suits him well.”

4. “There are only a few hundred pygmy sloths in existence.”

5. “That’s an enticing call – from a female. […] Could this be her? […] She already has a baby, and she won’t mate again until it leaves her in about six months’ time.”

6. “The island of Komodo in Indonesia. Home to dragons. Ten feet long and weighing an impressive 150 pounds, these are the largest living lizards on the planet.”

7. “This giant, however, isn't looking for food – he's looking for a mate. Female dragons come into season only once a year. She's receptive.”

8. “This baby sifaka has a hard life ahead of it. He's been born in the most arid and hostile corner of Madagascar's vast landscape.”

9. “A big male [iguana] like this one can dive to 30 metres and hold his breath for half an hour.”

10. “Another hatchling has its first glimpse of a dangerous world.”

11. “A male Buller's albatross waits for his mate. Each year they spend six months apart, travelling the ocean. They reunite here to breed. But this year she's late.”

12. “The Seychelles fody makes quick work of an unattended egg. She [a fairy tern] knows something's not quite right, but her drive to incubate is strong.”

13. “If a fledging, testing out its wings, drops to the ground, it can get covered with the seeds. Entangled and weighed down, if it can't free itself, the youngster will starve.”

14. “This chick is lucky. By the time it fledges, the Pisonia seeds will have dispersed, and the danger they brought will be gone.”

15. “But in recent years, millions of red crabs haven't managed to reach to sea. An invader has occupied this island. Yellow crazy ants. They escaped from visiting ships and with no predators to control them, they have now created vast super colonies in the forest. […] Humans brought these ant invaders here, and now humans are having to control them.”

16. “This mother's [chinstrap penguin] chicks are hungry, but she has no food left to give them.”

17. “Islands may seem remote and insignificant, but they are home to some of the most precious wildlife on Earth.”

18. “This is what ibex were born to do. Scattering makes it hard for the fox to pick a target. And it certainly can't follow them up here.”

19. “A golden eagle has to spend every daylight hour scanning the slopes for something – somewhere – to eat. Her seven-foot wingspan allows her to glide effortlessly for 100 miles in a single day. Her extraordinary eyes enable her to spot prey from two miles away.”

20. “It's a dead fox, and it could sustain her [the golden eagle] for days.”

21. “This mother [grizzly bear] is leading her three youngsters to a place where they can find food.”

22. “This bobcat is one of the few hunters to remain active in winter. Most of his prey is now hidden beneath the snow that covers his entire territory.”

23. “Here, even the coyotes have become fishermen. But hunting is hard for a cat that's not used to getting its feet wet. So, he must choose his target with care.”

24. “Here, steam from the river warms the surrounding trees, so up in the branches, there could be prey. If only he could get to it. It's 20 feet up. At last – a squirrel.”

25. “To survive a winter in these mountains takes tenacity, and bobcats have that in abundance.”

26. “Today in the Alps, human encroachment is changing even the highest summits. In the Rockies, rising temperatures are shortening winter hibernation and stifling the growth of valuable food plants. And in the Andes, some glaciers have shrunk by 50% in just 30 years. Even the Himalayas are now vulnerable. With most of the world's tallest peaks and covering a third of a million square miles, this is the greatest mountain range of all. And here, temperatures are now rising faster than the global average.”

27. “An adult female and her daughter. She has devoted the last two years to raising her cub and very soon, it will be weaned. For now, the cub is still entirely dependent on its mother.”

28. “Only the toughest can survive among the savage beauty of the world's highest mountains.”

29. “This is an indri. It's a primate, like us. And these forests in Madagascar are its home.”

30. “This youngster is only a few months old. Her future depends on her ability to climb.”

31. “Father, however, was watching. He's big and strong enough to form a bridge with his body so that she can climb to safety.”

32. “He's a Draco lizard. He's only the size of a pencil and he eats ants.”

33. “A swordbill's extraordinary beak, however, enables it to reach the places that others can't: the top of this flower, where the sweet nectar is produced.”

34. “Jungles are the richest places on Earth because of one remarkable fact: they make their own weather.”

35. “A jaguar – the supreme jungle predator. The river marks the edge of his territory, but here he has competition. He's now in the territory of a female. She has ruled this stretch of river for five years.”

36. “Some animals take camouflage a stage further still, and these streams in Costa Rica are home to one of the most remarkable. A glass frog. A male, and tiny. No bigger than your fingernail and almost entirely transparent – as he needs to be.”

37. “Danger passed – and that's just as well – because he is a father, and he's guarding some very precious eggs.”

38. “This wasp is a specialist hunter of frogs' eggs. It's noticed the wriggling tadpoles at the bottom of the leaf.”

39. “Fungi, unlike plants, thrive in the darkness of the forest floor. They're hidden until they begin to develop the incredible structures with which they reproduce.”

40. “To this click beetle, a bright light means only one thing: a female click beetle. So, he flashes in reply.”

41. “These are the multicoloured lights of a railroad worm. It's not really a worm, but a poisonous, caterpillar-like beetle.”

42. “A male red bird-of-paradise, competing to attract a female by dancing. [...] She is an independent lady, and she will select whichever male takes her fancy.”

43. “Each animal must find its own way of surviving the competition of the jungle.”

44. “For them and the billions of animals with whom they share their home, the jungle is a sanctuary. But this is changing. Even in the ten years since the head of this family was born, one million hectares of the rainforest have been destroyed in Madagascar alone, and, with it, half the indri families that once lived here.”

45. “This Eden is still a place of wonder and magic. Something, surely, worth protecting.”

46. “The giraffe has the speed and stamina to outrun the pride, but it's being chased into a trap. Up ahead, the lead female waits. It's now up to her.”

47. “A Harris hawk. It has developed special techniques for hunting amongst the cacti.”

48. “It's a butcherbird. This little songbird uses the spines as a butcher uses his hook -- to hold its prey as it dismembers it.”

49. “With only their [sandgrouse chicks'] mother to shield them from the sun, if they get nothing to drink, they will be dead within hours. Their only hope is their father. Every morning, he makes the 120-mile round trip to get water for the family.”

50. “A stranger. He's travelled ten miles to be here because the pools where he's from have already dried up. With him come his females. If he can't provide them with water, they will leave him for the white stallion who already dominates this pool. So, he will have to fight.”

51. “The highest temperatures on Earth have been recorded in its deserts. Changes in the climate mean temperature here are rising more than the global average and, as deserts heat up, they are also expanding.”

52. “But not for this shovel-snouted lizard. Raising its feet off the ground in turn enables each to briefly cool.”

53. “It's no bigger than a ping-pong ball. A golden mole. It's totally blind, but there's nothing to see underground anyway. Instead, it has superb hearing.”

54. “Otonycteris, the desert long-eared bat, is on the hunt. Most bats catch flying insects on the wing, but there are so few of these in the desert that this bat must do things differently. It has to hunt on the ground.”

55. “Darkling beetles race to the top of the dunes to reach the fog before it vanishes. [...] But even more impressive is what it does next. Standing perfectly still, facing into the wind, the beetle does a handstand. Fog begins to condense on its body.”

56. “The diversity of life that thrives in a world almost totally devoid of water is truly remarkable. Success in the desert depends on an extraordinary variety of survival strategies that have evolved over millions of years. But our planet is changing. The world's deserts are growing bigger, hotter, and drier, and they're doing so faster than ever before. How life will cope here in the future remains to be seen.”

57. “One quarter of all the land on Earth is covered by a single, remarkable type of plant. Almost indestructible, it can grow two feet in a day and be tall enough to hide a giant. That plant is grass, and the world it creates is truly unique.”

58. “The grass in northern India is the tallest on the planet, home to some of the most impressive creatures to tread the Earth.”

59. “A baby saiga antelope – just three hours old. His only company – his twin. Until they can stand, their mother has left them hidden in the grass.”

60. “Here in southern Africa, water transforms one of the most remarkable grasslands on Earth. The Okavango.”

61. “The biggest bulls don't run. They're simply too huge to be scared of lions. At 900 kilos, he weighs more than all five lionesses combined. The pride do have numbers on their side, but one sweep of his horns could be deadly. One distracts the bull up front, while her sisters attack from behind.”

62. “In the right conditions, grasses have the extraordinary ability to frow from first shoots to flower in a matter of only days.”

63. “Climbing grass is harder than climbing trees, not least because their stems just won't stay still. A [harvest mouse’s] prehensile tail acts like a fifth limb, so she's agile as a monkey clambering around in a tree.”

64. “A kori bustard. It's the world's heaviest flying bird, so it should be bulky enough to kick up some insects.”

65. “What about an ostrich? The heaviest bird of all. This time, there’s more than enough transport to go around. Soon, almost every ostrich has its own passenger.”

66. “She may be spotted like a cheetah, but this cat is no sprinter. Instead, she has extra-long legs, which give her a high vantage point. But a serval cat's main weapon are enormous radar ears. They help her pinpoint prey hiding in the grass.”

67. “Arriving on the wing, Jackson's widowbirds also seek fresh grass. Although, it's not just food that they're after. This male wants a mate. He's grown elaborate breeding plumage for this moment. [...] His bachelor pad is sufficiently neat and tidy to attract a female. The problem is – can she see it?”

68. “And where the bison have dug, the fox now spots an opportunity. Every footstep counts. But he mustn't break through... yet. He listens carefully to pinpoint his target. It’s moving. A vole.”

69. “This is the newest habitat on Earth. It's here that animals have to contend with the greatest change that is happening to the face of our planet. In this decade, the urban environment is predicted to grow by nearly 30 per cent. It may appear hostile to animal life, but for the bold, this is a world of surprising opportunity.”

70. “Female langurs in this city give birth to twice as many young as their forest counterparts. This mother is so well fed that her rick milk can support something rarely seen in the wild – twins.”

71. “As daylight fades, the sky fills with a staggering one million starlings. And then follows one of nature's great spectaculars. How, or indeed why, they perform these marvellous aerobatics, we still do not fully understand.”

72. “Out on a golf course in Townsville, Australia, he's [great bowerbird] putting the final touches to his enormous bower that he hopes will impress a visiting female.”

73. “It's springtime in Toronto, and this mother raccoon has exchanged her native treetops for rooftops.”

74. “This is the last of her litter to be brought down. Its siblings are already busy exploring the area.”

75. “Our cities are always changing, sometimes very swiftly. And animals must cope with the changes – or disappear.”

76. “But this young [hawksbill turtle] hatchling is confused. It's going in the wrong direction.”

77. “This turtle is one of the countless species that have been unable to adapt to the change brought about by the urban environment. Only a small number of animals have managed to find ways of living alongside us. And every ten years, an area the size of Britain disappears under a jungle of concrete. But it doesn't have to be like this. Could it not be possible to build cities more in harmony with nature? How, and whether, we decide to invite the wildlife back is up to us.”

78. “Greening the walls and roofs of our buildings could create a rich and extensive habitat if we wanted it to do so.”

79. “Two million trees have been planted here in the last 45 years. The city is now richer in species than any other in the world.”

80. “But perhaps the most spectacular example of city greening is this grove of super trees.”

81. “This is a new urban world that we have now designed and built with others in mind. Create the space and the animals will come. Is this a vision of our cities of the future? It could be possible to see wildlife thriving within our cities across the planet. We, after all, are the architects of the urban world. Now, over half of us live in an urban environment.”

82. “Looking down on this great metropolis, the ingenuity with which we continue to reshape the surface of our planet is very striking. But it's also sobering. It reminds me of just how easy it is for us to lose our connection with the natural world. Yet it's on this connection that the future of both humanity and the natural world will depend. It's surely our responsibility to do everything within our power to create a planet that provides a home not just for us, but for all life on Earth.”

Appendix 3: The Finnish summary

Ilmastonmuutoksen ja muiden ympäristöongelmien aiheuttamat haitat ovat nykypäivänä yhä enemmän näkyviä. On todistettu, että valtaosa kyseisistä ongelmista on ihmiskunnan toiminnan seurausta, ja vain ihmiset voivat tietoisella toiminnallaan vaikuttaa myös näiden ongelmien ja niiden aiheuttamien haittojen ehkäisemiseen. Ympäristönsuojelu on kasvavassa määrin yleistä, ja sillä suuri osa nykypäivän ihmisistä viettävät aikaansa sosiaalisessa mediassa sekä katsovat elokuvia ja sarjoja televisiosta sekä erilaisten suoratoistopalveluiden kautta, he altistuvat suurelle osalle ympäristönsuojeluun keskittyvästä keskustelusta juuri näillä tavoilla. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, millaista ympäristöongelmiin liittyvää kielenkäyttöä hyödynnetään *Planet Earth* sekä *Planet Earth II* -nimisissä luontodokumenttisarjoissa, jotka ovat molemmat BBC:n (*British Broadcasting Corporation*) tuottamia. Tutkimuskysymykset ovat seuraavat:

1. Millaista suoraa tai epäsuoraa kielenkäyttöä luontodokumenteissa käytetään, jotka voidaan tämän tutkimuksen menetelmien mukaan määritellä positiiviseksi tai haitalliseksi kielenkäytöksi ekologisesta näkökulmasta?
2. Miten nämä kielenkäytön tapaukset saattavat vaikuttaa katsojan ekologiseen ajatusmaailmaan, esimerkiksi jättämällä tietoa kertomatta saadakseen ihmisten osuuden ympäristöongelmissa kuulostamaan vähemmän vakavalta, kuin se oikeasti on?
3. Mikäli kielenkäyttö on haitallista, mikä olisi englannin kielen puitteissa oleva vaihtoehtoinen sanamuoto, joka toisi esille saman informaation olemalla kuitenkin ekologisesta näkökulmasta positiivisempi?
4. Tutkittavat sarjat, *Planet Earth* ja *Planet Earth II*, ovat julkaistu vuosina 2006 ja 2016. Miten näiden kahden eri sarjan kerronnan diskurssi eroaa toisistaan varsinkin, kun puhutaan ihmisten aiheuttamista ympäristöongelmista? Päteekö hypoteesi siitä, onko uudemmassa sarjassa määrällisesti enemmän positiivista kielenkäyttöä, sillä nykypäivänä ympäristöongelmat ovat yhä enemmän pinnalla?

BBC on Britannian julkinen yleisradio- sekä tuotantoyhtiö, jonka tytäryhtiö *BBC Studios Natural History Unit* on maailman suurin luontodokumenttisarjojen tuottaja. Ottaen huomioon näiden kahden luontodokumenttisarjan tärkeyden sekä niiden tavoittaman suuren yleisön, on olennaista tutkia ohjelmien selostuksen kielenkäyttöä, kun siinä keskitytään ympäristöongelmiin. Erityistä huomiota tässä tutkimuksessa saavat ne selostuksen otteet, joissa mainitaan ihmisten aiheuttamia ympäristöongelmia, kuten ilmastonmuutos ja erilaisten eläinlajien uhanalaisuus. *Planet Earth* julkaistiin alun perin vuonna 2006, ja sen jatko-osa *Planet Earth II* julkaistiin vuonna 2016 – tasan kymmenen vuotta myöhemmin. Yksi tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteista on myös saada selville, onko tämä ympäristöongelmiin liittyvä kielenkäyttö muuttunut näiden kymmenen vuoden aikana; tämän takia on olennaista tutkia kahta saman sarjan eri osaa, joilla on sama tuotantoyhtiö.

Tutkimuksen taustakirjallisuus keskittyy enimmäkseen ekolingvistiikkaan, jonka lisäksi suurta huomiota saavat kriittinen diskurssitutkimus (*Critical Discourse Studies*) sekä positiivinen diskurssianalyysi (*Positive Discourse Analysis*). Aikaisemmat aiheeseen liittyvät tutkimukset ovat keskittyneet kriittisen diskurssianalyysin menetelmin analysoimaan erilaisia tekstejä, selvittäen mitkä joko yksitulkintaiset tai epäsuorat kielelliset seikat näissä teksteissä ovat ekologisesta näkökulmasta katsottuna positiivisia tai haitallisia. Esimerkiksi tietyt sananvalinnat, joilla on negatiivisia sivumerkityksiä, voivat olla ihmiskeskeisiä ja näin ollen viittaavat luontoon asenteella, joka on haitallinen – vaikkakin tämä usein on tahatonta. Myös esimerkiksi eläinten uhanalaisuudesta puhuttaessa saatetaan levittää tietoa kyseisestä ongelmasta, mutta ihmisten osuus on kokonaan jätetty sanomatta, vaikka eläinlaji olisikin kuolemassa sukupuuttoon vain ja ainoastaan ihmistoiminnan seurauksena.

Kriittinen diskurssintutkimus ei välttämättä ole aina kriittistä ainoastaan sanan negatiivisessa mielessä, vaan sen tavoite on usein tuoda esille, mikä asia tekee tietystä tekstistä positiivisen (Bloor and Bloor 2007, 4–5). Pelkkä akateeminen kritiikki ei riitä epätasa-arvon tai muiden sosiaalisten ongelmien ehkäisemiseen – ja sama pätee myös ympäristöongelmiin – mutta ensimmäinen askel ihmisten asenteiden muuttamisessa on uuden tiedon levittäminen (Fairclough 2018, 13). Kun puhutaan ympäristöongelmista, monet asiat voivat tehdä tekstistä ekologisesta näkökulmasta positiivisen tai haitallisen. Tärkeää tietoa voidaan jättää sanomatta tai toissijaiseen asemaan lauseessa, jolloin sitä ei pidetä yhtä olennaisena. Tämän lisäksi erilaisten kielikuvien käyttäminen sekä sellaisten sanojen käyttäminen, joilla on erilaisia merkitysvivahteita, ovat tehokkaita kielenkäytön menetelmiä. Myös erilaisilla pronomineilla voidaan tehdä merkityseroja; jos selostus puhuttelee suoraan yleisölle, käyttäen rakenteita

kuten *me voimme*, tämä luo mahdollisesti yhteenkuuluvuuden tunnetta katsojissa. Eläimistä voidaan myös käyttää esimerkiksi yksikön kolmannen persoonan *it*-pronominia, jota yleensä käytetään viitattaessa elottomiin asioihin. Vaikka *it*-pronominin käyttö on jo vakiintunutta englannin kielessä, olisi silti ekolingvistisesta näkökulmasta positiivisempaa käyttää samoja *she* ja *he* -pronomineja niin eläimistä kuin ihmisistä puhuttaessa. Luonnosta ja erilaisista alueista kuten sademetsistä, aavikoista tai jäätiköistä puhuttaessa voidaan käyttää kieltä, joka pitää näitä alueita aktiivisina toimijoina, jotka ansaitsevat arvostusta sen sijaan että ne olisivat olemassa vain ihmisten hyödyntämiseksi.

Ekolingvistiikka tieteenmuotona pyrkii kritisoimaan kielenkäyttöä, joka myötävaikuttaa ympäristötuhoon (Fill 2017, 1). Tämän lisäksi yksi ekolingvistiikan tavoitteista on löytää uusia tapoja ilmaista asioita siten, että ihmiset inspiroituisivat suojelemaan luontoa (ibid.). Vaikka yhteiskunnallinen maailma on alati muuttuva – ja nämä muutokset saattavat tapahtua usein nopealla aikavälillä – on valitettava tosiasia, että kieli muuttuu usein tätä hitaampaa tahtia (Mühlhäusler 2001, 31). Kielen nopeampi muuttuminen vaatii tietoista vaivannäköä, mutta todistetusti on mahdollista keksiä uusia vaihtoehtoisia ilmaisuja, kun niille syntyy tarve. Ihmisten käyttämä kieli on aina vaikuttanut heidän ajatusmaailmaansa, ja samoin ihmisille tärkeät asiat vaikuttavat heidän käyttämään kieleensä (Sapir [1912] 2001; Goatly 2017). On kuitenkin tärkeää huomioida, ettei aina ole tarve keksiä väkisin uusia ilmaisutapoja, jotta ympäristöongelmista – tai luonnosta ja eläinlajeista ylipäätään – voitaisiin puhua tavoin, jotka eivät olisi ihmiskeskeisiä vaan kunnioittaisivat kaikkea elämää samalla tavalla (Stibbe 2017, 168). Välillä tärkeintä on tiedostaa, että jotkin ilmaisut eivät ole suotavia, vaikka ne olisivatkin jo vakiintuneet käyttöön kymmeniä tai satoja vuosia sitten.

Vaikka nykypäivänä ilmastonmuutokseen liittyviä ekolingvistisia tutkimuksia on yhä enemmän, televisiota varten tuotettuja luontodokumenttisarjoja ei kuitenkaan ole aikaisemmin tutkittu paljoa. Näin ollen tämän tutkimuksen aihe on tärkeä, sillä molemmat tutkittavat sarjat ovat tunnettuja ja saavuttaneet suuren katsojamäärän. Luontodokumenttien yksi päämääristä on levittää tietoa ympäristöstä ja erilaisista luonnossa elävistä lajeista; on siis tärkeää, että dokumentit myös kertovat yleisölle kyseisten lajien kokemista ongelmista sekä niiden syistä ja mahdollisista ratkaisuista erilaisiin ympäristöongelmiin. Jos televisiosarjalla on tilaisuus vaikuttaa monien ihmisten ekologiseen ajattelutapaan positiivisesti, tulisi sen hyödyntää tämä tilaisuus.

Tämän tutkimuksen alussa molemmat analysoitavat sarjat, eli *Planet Earth* ja *Planet Earth II* katsotaan kriittisestä näkökulmasta; vaikka televisiodokumentit kuuluvat multimodaalisiin ilmaisukeinoihin, sillä niissä hyödynnetään sekä kuvaa että ääntä, niin tässä tutkimuksessa keskitytään vain sarjojen kerrontaan. Kummankin sarjan kertojana toimii David Attenborough, joka on tunnettu brittiläinen televisiokasvo, radioääni sekä biologi. *Planet Earth* on yksitoistaosainen sarja, joka julkaistiin vuonna 2006. Jaksot kestävät keskimäärin 49 minuuttia, ja jokaisella jaksolla on oma teemansa – esimerkiksi vuorialueet, viidakot tai valtameret. *Planet Earth II* sen sijaan koostuu yhteensä kuudesta jaksosta, eli jaksoja on viisi vähemmän. Jaksojen keskimääräinen pituus on tässäkin sarjassa 49 minuuttia. Molempien sarjojen jaksojen lopussa on lyhyt kulissientakainen kohtaus, jossa keskitytään kuvausryhmän menetelmiin; näitä kohtauksia ei sisällytetty tähän tutkimukseen, sillä niissä ei ole samantyylistä selostusta kuin varsinaisissa jaksoissa. Eettisestä näkökulmasta tutkimuksessa ei ole esteitä, sillä molemmat sarjat ovat julkisesti saatavilla – myös kertojan nimi on mainittu julkisesti.

Tämän tutkimuksen analyysissä niitä selostuksen otteita, joissa on piirteitä positiivisesta tai haitallisesta kielenkäytöstä, verrataan omiin ekologisiin arvoihini, eli *ekosofiaani* (engl. *ecosophy*). Toisin sanoen, otteet määritellään joko positiivisiksi tai haitallisiksi – tai vaihtoehtoisesti ristiriitaisiksi, mikäli niissä on piirteitä sekä positiivisesta että haitallisesta kielenkäytöstä – sillä perusteella, miten ne täsmäävät ennalta määrätyn ekosofian kanssa. Kyseinen ekosofia on seuraavanlainen:

> Ekologisesti positiivinen diskurssi rohkaisee ympäristöä säästävään ja ekologiseen ajattelutapaan pitäen kaikkia elollisia olentoja ja organismeja tärkeinä. Ihmiskeskeistä ajattelua, jonka mukaan muut eläinlajit kuin ihmiset ovat alempiarvoisia tai ympäristö on olemassa vain ihmisten hyödyntämistä varten, sisältävät kielelliset piirteet ovat haitallisia. Kaikki kielenkäyttö, joka levittää tietoa tavoin, joka edistää ihmisten, eläinten ja ympäristön olemassaoloa mitään vähättelemättä tai tuhoamatta, on positiivista; tätä varten ei ole tarpeen keksiä uusia sanoja tai muita ilmaisukeinoja, vaan tämän tavoitteen saavuttaminen on mahdollista englannin kielen sääntöjen puitteissa.

Kerronnan otteet luokitellaan myös neljään eri ryhmään sen perusteella, minkälaista ympäristöasiaa se koskee. Nämä ryhmät ovat seuraavanlaiset: a) ilmastonmuutoksen ja muiden ihmisten aiheuttamien ympäristöongelmien mainitseminen, b) leksikaalisten sanojen käyttäminen eläimistä, kasveista tai ympäristöstä puhuttaessa, joilla on joko hienovaraisia tai selviä merkitysvivahteita, c) eläimiin viittaaminen persoonapronomineja käyttäen ja d) ympäristön elollistaminen tai personointi.

Yhteensä 192 esimerkkiä kielenkäytöstä, joissa oli joko positiivisia, haitallisia tai ristiriitaisia piirteitä, löydettiin aineistosta. Näistä 110 olivat *Planet Earth* -sarjasta, ja 82 olivat *Planet Earth II* -sarjasta. Tutkimuksessa analysoitiin laadullisesti yhteensä 92 kaikista esimerkeistä. Eniten otteita positiivisesta diskurssista löytyi jaksojen aluista ja lopuista – kaikkein eniten *Planet Earth II* -sarjan viimeisestä jaksosta, joka keskittyi kaupunkialueisiin. Jaksot alkoivat pääsääntöisesti niin, että kertoja kuvaili jakson teemaa, ja saattoi mainita jonkin siihen liittyvän ympäristöongelman. Jaksojen lopuissa kerronta oli usein toiveikasta, ja käytti sanoja, jotka loivat yhteenkuuluvuuden tunnetta; ihmiset ovat ainoita olentoja, jotka voivat tietoisella toiminnallaan vielä vaikuttaa ympäristöongelmiin, jotka he itse ovat luoneet. Ilmastonmuutokseen liittyvää diskurssia ei esiintynyt merkittävästi kerronnassa, ja silloin kun sitä esiintyi, niin se oli mainittu epäsuorasti. Esimerkkejä positiivisesta diskurssista oli esimerkiksi yleisöön vetoaminen suoraan käyttämällä monikon ensimmäisen persoonan pronominia *we*, käyttämällä pronominia *our* usein planeetta-sanan kanssa (*our planet*), painottamalla ihmisten haitallista vaikutusta luontoon ja luonnon merkitystä sekä voimaa. Edellä mainittujen ilmiöiden lisäksi positiivista oli sellaisten sanojen hyödyntäminen, joilla on positiivisia sivumerkityksiä, kuten eläimiä ja luontoja ylistävien adjektiivien käyttö myös niissä konteksteissa, joissa tätä ei yleensä tehdä. Eläinlajeihin myös viitatiin hieman useammin positiivisilla persoonapronomineilla verrattuna haitalliseen *it*-pronominiin, vaikkakin tämä oli erittäin epäjohdonmukaista. Useimmiten positiivisia persoonapronomineja käytettiin vain silloin, kun kuvattavat eläinlajit olivat vanhempia ja heidän jälkeläisensä oli nähtävissä kohtauksessa, tai kun eläimet etsivät paria itselleen. Oli myös havaittavissa, että nisäkkäitä kutsuttiin useammin positiivisilla persoonapronomineilla verrattuna moniin muihin lajeihin, kuten hyönteisiin tai vesieläimiin – tämäkin oli tosin useimmiten sattumanvaraista. Joissakin tapauksissa samaan yksilöön viitattiin peräkkäisissä lauseissa sekä positiivisella että haitallisella persoonapronominilla, mikä viitaa siihen, ettei kerrontaa kirjoittaessa tähän yksityiskohtaan ole välttämättä kiinnitetty tarpeeksi huomiota.

Haitallista diskurssia esiintyi vähemmän kuin positiivista. Tyypillinen esimerkki haitallisesta kielenkäytöstä oli ihmisten ympäristölle haitallisen toiminnan piilottaminen lauseissa vähemmän näkyvälle paikalle, kuten esimerkiksi käyttämällä passiivirakennetta: eläinlajin sanottiin ajautuneen sukupuuton partaalle, mutta ei mainittu ihmisten salametsästystä ja muuta haitallista toimintaa, jonka seurauksena kyseinen eläinlaji on oikeasti ajautunut uhanalaiseksi. Myös jotkut sananvalinnat olivat haitallisia, kuten sanomalla *metsästys* sen sijaan, että käyttäisi sopivampaa termiä *salametsästys*.

Alkuperäisessä *Planet Earth* -sarjassa oli yhteensä 110 esimerkkiä, joista 67 olivat positiivisia, 35 olivat haitallisia, ja kahdeksan olivat ristiriitaisia. Sarjassa on yhteensä 11 jaksoa; tämä tarkoittaa, että positiivisia esimerkkejä esiintyi keskimäärin 6,1 jaksoa kohti, haitallisia esimerkkejä esiintyi 3,2 jaksoa kohti, sekä ristiriitaisia esimerkkejä oli 0,7 jaksoa kohti.

Kymmenen vuotta myöhemmin julkaistussa *Planet Earth II* -sarjassa oli yhteensä 82 esimerkkiä, joista 48 olivat positiivisia, 19 olivat haitallisia, sekä 15 olivat ristiriitaisia. Sarja koostuu yhteensä kuudesta jaksosta, joten positiivisia esimerkkejä oli keskimäärin kahdeksan yhtä jaksoa kohti, haitallisia esimerkkejä esiintyi 3,2 jaksoa kohti, sekä ristiriitaisia esimerkkejä esiintyi 2,5 jaksoa kohti.

Nämä tulokset viittaavat siihen, että uudemmassa sarjassa esiintyi enemmän positiivista diskurssia jaksoa kohti, kuten tutkimuksen alussa oletettiin. Haitallisia esimerkkejä sarjoissa on tismalleen yhtä paljon jaksoa kohti, ja ristiriitaisia esimerkkejä uudessa sarjassa on yli kolme kertaa enemmän jaksoa kohti. Tämä johtuu siitä, että *Planet Earth II* käsittelee ympäristöongelmia useammin kuin ensimmäinen sarja, vaikkakin tämä tapahtuu useimmiten epäsuoraan. Ympäristöongelmiin liittyvää tietoa levitetään enemmän, mutta myös suuri osa tästä tiedosta on epäselvää sen suhteen, mistä ongelmat johtuvat tai mitä ratkaisuja niihin on olemassa. Ihmisten näkyvyys ei ole tarpeeksi esillä esimerkiksi eläinlajien elinympäristöjen häviämisessä, ja eläinlajeihin viitataan useammin positiivisilla pronomineilla, mutta joukossa on myös enemmän epäjohdonmukaisia otteita tästä ilmiöstä.

Tutkimuksessa käytetyt menetelmät toimivat hyvin tutkimuskysymysten selvittämistä varten, mutta jatkotutkimusmahdollisuuksia on useita. BBC:n tuottaman luontodokumenttisarjan kolmas osa, *Planet Earth III*, julkaistiin vuonna 2023. Olisi havainnollistavaa nähdä, miten kielenkäyttö on muuttunut vuosien 2016 ja 2023 välisenä aikana, kun sitä tutkitaan tästä ekolingvistisesta näkökulmasta. BBC on julkaissut myös useita muita luontodokumenttisarjoja, jotka keskittyvät esimerkiksi arktisiin ja antarktisiin alueisiin ja eläinlajeihin sekä merielämään. Yksi mahdollinen tutkimusaihe olisi myös toisen tuotantoyhtiön luontodokumentin vertaaminen BBC:n tuottamaan luontodokumenttiin.