

Investigating Ecological Identity in Haig's Children's Books : An Ecolinguistic Analysis

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Abstract

An ecological identity is an evocative concept that refers to the various ways in which person may come to link his own identity with some aspect of nature. Prior researches on ecological identity have primarily been carried out in the field of sociopsychology, with a focus on individual's behavior and attitude. Yet, less emphasis has been placed on the discursive development of individual's ecological identity. The present paper intends to investigate the mechanism of discursive techniques in the construction of ecological identity in Haig's best-selling stories. To that goal, this paper categorizes several ecological identities based on their impact on nature in Haig's works. The paper then investigates how lexicogrammatical variables could be strategically exploited in the creation of ecological identity.

Keywords: ecolinguistics, ecological identity, categorizing ecological identity, children's literature, discursive strategies

Introduction

Recognizing ecological identity and its function in shaping behavior toward the natural environment has both interesting research implications and essential actual implications. It can be better grasped the psychological mechanisms capable of supporting beneficial environmental policies and behavior if individuals better comprehend what make individuals passionate about the environment. In comparison to earlier identity research, ecological identity is a novel dimension. A increasing number of research links children's cognitive and emotional development to their exposure to nature. An interest in ecological identity and, more specifically, the function of nature in the formation of children's identities emerges from this body of work. The findings of this research will contribute to the very little body of information that is currently available in the realm of discursive studies of ecological identity that fall under the field children's literature. *The study tries to answer questions concerning the linguistic techniques that associated with the ecological identities in the selected best-selling of Haig's children's books, and the way of identifying them.*

The Theoretical Basis:

Ecolinguistics

Alexander and Stibbe (2014,p. 105) define ecolinguistics as the investigation of the influence of language on the life-sustaining interconnections among humans, other species, and the physical environment. According to Bang & Trampe (2014,p. 83), the term "ecolinguistics" refers to a wide-ranging term that encompasses, on one hand, traditional linguistic methodologies applied to texts and discourses of environmental significance, and, on the other hand, more profound insights on language theories prompted by the ecological paradigm as a whole. According to Steffensen and Fill (2014), ecolinguistics offers the opportunity to reconcile the realm of living nature and human community.

Ecological Identity

An ecological identity is an intuitive idea that refers to the multitude of ways that a person might come to identify his own identity with some component of nature. This concept is explained in Thomashow's book "Ecological Identity," which explains what an ecological identity is. "Perhaps the simplest way to put it is to state that ecological identity defines how we extend our sense of ourselves in relationship to nature, and that the degree of identification as well as the objects of identification must be addressed individually" (Thomashow, 1995,p. 3).

Categorizing Ecological Identity

As ecological identity is regarded as a discursively generated visual, separating beneficial, destructive, and ambivalent discourses aids in the construction of associated identities. The notion of discourse division also applies to the classification of ecological identities, owing to the interdependence of language, species, and nature. Positive ecological identities are prevalent in literature, especially in nature works. It becomes possible to create positive ecological identities among

the general public and combat the negative influence of bad ecological values on their lives through the active pursuit of such beneficial stories. It's clear that both discourse and environmental identities have an impact on ecosystem functioning. These three components create a triangle, and the ecosophy maintained by discourse analysts is the key criterion for judging the property of discourse and ecological identity influence on ecosystems.

Discursive Strategies

According to Wodak (2001:10), discursive strategies are crucial to the formation and maintenance of social identities and inequality. Consequently, the precise selection of discursive strategies is required for the creation of individual's ecological identities. It is worth mentioning that ecological identity developed via and displayed through many social activities. Ecological identity is further defined by the discourse analyst's ecosophy into three categories: positive, destructive, and ambivalent. Positive ecological identity is exemplified by respect for and love of nature; destructive ecological identity is exemplified by excessive investigation of environmental destruction of the ecosystem for commercial benefit; ambivalent ecological identity frequently manifests in disguise, necessitating additional effort to uncover and criticize its detrimental influence on the healthy functioning of ecosystems. Each of the three forms of ecological identities is produced through the use of appropriate discursive strategies and lexicogrammatical patterns.

Concerning the ecological identities, the term "strategies" refers to the deliberate utilize of lexicogrammatical resources to construct identities with positive, ambivalent, or negative traits. To investigate the discursive construction of ecological identities, there are five proposed strategies : rhetoric, evaluation, categorization, justification, and transference, each of which is further subdivided into several subtypes. Grammatical metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, anthropomorphism and format are all used in the rhetorical strategy. The evaluation strategy can be further classified as positive or negative depending on the significance of the evaluation language. Categorization is a technique for establishing alignment with or elimination from a particular ecological identity.

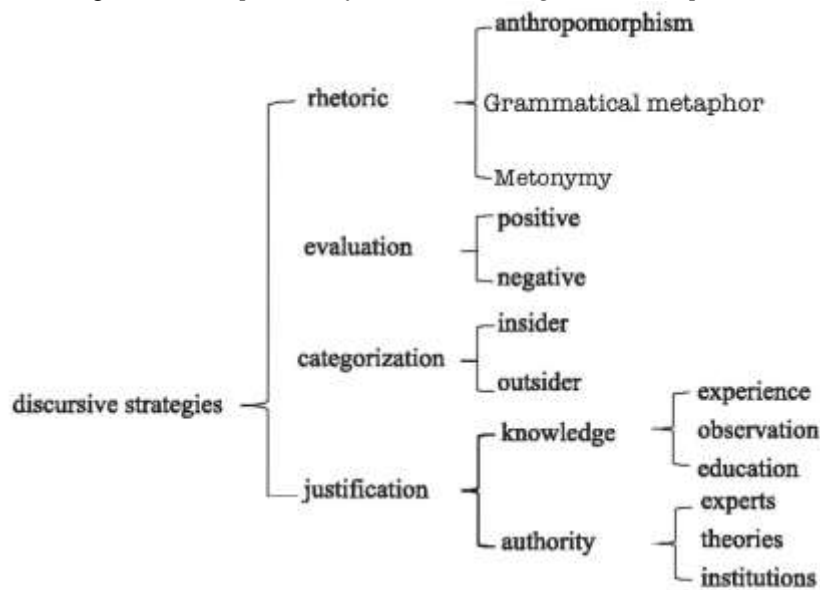
In terms of justification approach, the source can be information gained from personal experience, observation, and education, or authority derived from experts, theories, and institutions. The transference approach is used to offer the idea of a third party while developing one's ecological identity.

Rhetorical strategies are frequently utilized in poetry, narration, news reports, and ads to depict non-human animals and plants from a human perspective. Linguistic investigations of such descriptions are seen necessary for explaining ecological identities and analyzing human-animal connections. The rhetorical style chosen by humans directly reflects their attitude toward animals and hence reveals their ecological identities (Autti, 2017,p.48) .

The evaluation approach refers to Martin and White's systematic description of the purposeful use of appraisal language (2005). The study of appraisal language used by individuals when expressing their attitude and ideas on nature-related topics is necessary for the investigation of individual's ecological identity, since Clayton and Opotow (2003,p.78) discovered that identity is the product of social evaluation. Although many configurations of attitudinal, graduation, and engagement factors can be used to actualize the meaning of evaluation, it is commonly categorized into positive and negative subtypes.

Categorization refers to the differentiation made between one form of ecological identity and others based on common values, beliefs, lifestyles, and outdoor experiences. When it comes to environmental issues, every person is aware of their own membership status as well as the membership status of others. This reflects the role of categorization in building ecological identity. Pronouns such as 'we' are used to denote the link between individuals who are both insiders and outsiders. In this study, the strategy of justification involves the act of justifying a nature-related value, belief, or way of life embodied by a specific ecological identity through one's own knowledge or the authority of others.

Figure (1) *The spectrum of discursive strategies*(Lei,2021,p.13).



Children's Literature and Ecological Identity

A growing amount of research relates the cognitive and emotional development of children to their contact with nature. Emerging within this collection of work is an interest in ecological identity and, more particularly, the role of nature in the formation of children's identities. Growing research reveals that these early experiences have a direct effect on the worldview that we acquire as adults, hence it is crucial to investigate children's identity experiences in nature (Chawla,1986) These early experiences are also linked to the decisions one makes later in life regarding how he interacts with the natural world. Adults who consider themselves to be environmentalists see their early childhood experiences in nature as a major basis of their pro-environment beliefs. The origins of children's inclination to associate with nature are also being investigated in the literature connected to ecological identity. This enthusiasm is matched by a growing concern about how unrestrained environmental damage and depletion may affect children's identity formation. The argument made by Kahn that children have an inextricable bond with nature is a key message in their work and that "nature is not a mere cultural convention , but part of a physical and biological reality that bounds children's cognition" (Kahn ,2003,p. 54). According to Gebhard,etal.(2003,p.91), "The significance of our nonhuman environment has been given very little attention so far Plants, animals, wind and water play at best an insignificant part in most theories of identity formation." the inclination to disregard the role that nature plays in identity creation is particularly prevalent in the literature pertaining to children. This finding was made in the context of identity and the process of identity construction. Anthropomorphic interpretation includes perceiving objects in nature, such as a tree or a bird, as akin to oneself due to their human-like characteristics. Children are able to sympathize with the ability of animals to feel pain because they can compare it to their own pain experience. In this regard, Gebhard et al. (ibid,p.97) state that children's knowledge and awareness of themselves can lead to a greater comprehension of the nonhuman entity they encounter, and that the plant, animal, or environment observed by the kid can be a source of increased self-understanding. Gebhard et al. (ibid.,) proposed that "children view trees as moral objects and that anthropomorphizing nature makes it susceptible to moralization" . Children advocate for the protection of nonhuman life because they understand the concept of life, as revealed by their investigation. Children consider plants, animals, and trees to be living and deserving of life. According to Gebhard et al. (ibid.,p. 98), children believe that "nature wants to live, and trees want to live as well." The authors developed a convincing case that this style of moralizing is quite complex and marks the beginning of a biocentric perspective, which is frequently associated with ecological identity.

Ecological Identity as Embedded in Short Stories

Stories are the building blocks that go into making a narrative. People's lives are filled with stories of the people and events they encounter on a daily basis. "The events in a narrative discourse are always portrayed in the context in which they occurred" (Dunpath, 2000,p.548). The narratives that have played a significant role in an individual's life serve as the foundation for their ecological identity. The past has a storied legacy, and the domain of a storied future is only waiting to be revealed in the present. According to Dunpath (ibid.,p.547), "the study of narrative is therefore the study of how humans see the world" . Ecological identity can only be found by searching for the substance of the object rather than relying on formal measurements.

Data and Methodology

The data that used in this study is made up of 17 texts which are taken from the selected children's books written by Matt Haig. This study uses the descriptive qualitative analysis of data to trace the linguistic and discursive elements that result in the detection of the ecological identities.

Analysis and Discussion

The current analysis is predicated on Lei's (2021) analytical model, which is primarily a cognitive framework that combines ecology with critical discourse analysis(henceforth CDA). The model identifies five strategies and various sub-strategies .

The following texts , which are extracted from two Haig's children's books , serve as representative examples of the ecological identities, as it brings attention to the plight of environment:

(i) Haig,Matt (2019).*Evie and the Animals* .Canongate Books .

1-"*This frog was also brightly coloured. It was bright blue and black. It was the prettiest frog ever. "*

2-"*The dog trotted happily away, enjoying his newly painless paw.. "*

3-"*A book called Rabbit World. It was a book of photographs. All of rabbits. On page ninety-three there was , Evie felt very strongly that the rabbit in the picture was happy. "*

4-"*The easiest animals in the world to understand were dogs..... Dogs were so easy to mind-read and mind-chat with that ... "*

5- "*She told anyone who would listen about how the Amazon rainforest was the 'lungs of the earth' ."*

6- "*According to National Geographic the rate of species extinction happens one thousand times faster because of humans. Two hundred species of plants and animals go extinct every day. And if we're not careful we're going to wipe out the giant panda and the blue whale and the Asian elephant. They're all on the endangered list."*

7- "*Mind you, I doubt animals would say very nice things to us. We're a cruel species."*

8- "*Her mum took her on a walk, telling her about all the beautiful creatures they saw – glass frogs, toucans, scarlet macaws, and so on."*

9- "*A big cat – a beautiful and deadly jaguar, with golden fur and speckled black marking."*

10- "*Elephants always know. We understand the pain of others. Like yours. And the boy's..... Humans can be a terrible species. They sometimes don't care for other animals."*

11- "*Yeah, I get the principle, Evie. It's just that humans have messed up the world so much some animals can't even exist in the wild."*

In Texts 1,2,8 and 9 , the words " brightly", "bright" , "happily" , " beautiful "and prettiest " are used to convey appraisal meanings in a variety of contexts. According to appraisal theory, the evaluative expressions can be further divided into three categories: attitude, engagement, and graduation resources (Martin and White 2005). A positive attitudinal meaning associated with exploratory activities and natural phenomena has been strengthened through the use of pre-modifications such as " brightly", "bright", " and prettiest " which has in turn contributed to the creation of the individual's identity through anthropocentrism.

The writer in Text 3 describes rabbit based on a book which is entitled ' Rabbit World '. He depicts rabbits as happy animals. The writer adopts the strategy of justification in which this strategy aims to explain why the speaker or listener has selected a certain ecological identity. The reason for this is frequently tied to one's knowledge of natural phenomena or authoritative studies on ecological issues. of view or theories advanced by relevant specialists or institutions. This employs the call to the authority of the book "Rabbit World". In the case of expert authority, expertise confers legitimacy rather than position.

The animals, which play the leading role in Extracts 4and 7 , are given cognitive abilities such as thinking and designing by using anthropomorphic language, as shown above. The example's transitivity analysis reveals that animals fulfill the roles of Actor in material processes as well as Affected Goal. The relationship between animals depicted in the examples is well-known to the public, as such scenes occur frequently in people's daily lives. Thus, the use of anthropomorphic language elevated non-human creatures to the level of human beings.

In Texts 5 and 11, the writer uses ecological metaphor to depict Amazon as a the lung of our planet. An essential component of the global biosphere is the Amazon. It is beneficial environmental discourse which leads to construct a positive ecological identity. The ecological identities, in the above extracts, are embed through the ecological metaphor.

In Text 10, Elephants are given cognitive abilities such as thinking and designing by using anthropomorphic language, as shown above. The example's transitivity analysis reveals that animals fulfill the roles of actor in material processes as well as affected goal. The relationship between animals depicted in the example is well-known to the public, as such scenes occur frequently in people's daily lives. Thus, the use of anthropomorphic language elevated non-human creatures to the level of human beings.

(ii) Haig, matt.(2020). *Evie in the jungle* .Canongate Books Ltd,.

12-"*She had been reading most was called Animals of the Amazon . Evie sighed. She knew all about the Amazon. Not just from her dreams but also from books. She knew that one out of ten animals that exist on Earth can be found in the rainforest.*"

13-"*I'd love to be face to face with a jaguar, Evie said. Her dad went pale. 'Maybe we could get a cat when we get home, he said. A nice small cat.'*"

14-"*The jungle was incredible. The vast, wide brown-green river. The rubber trees lining its banks.*"

15-"*Evie concentrated hard to pick up on what the dolphins were thinking and saying to each other.*"

16-"*I am ashamed to say that my species, the humans, have destroyed it.' 'Why?'* *'For money, mainly. And because some humans don't understand the importance of nature. Some of us seem to have forgotten that we are animals too. We need nature as much as you do.'*"

17-"*Is there anything we can do to stop this happening? All this destruction?' Evie asked Ernesto. 'It is very difficult. They keep clearing the land to make roads and farms. To plant soy or graze cattle. Cows! In the jungle! I like cows but the Amazon wasn't made for cows and greedy farmers. There are some laws that should protect the land, but they are broken all the time. The government doesn't care. They just care about money. It is a crime. They don't care about the rainforest animals. They don't care about nature. And they don't care about the planet or the air we need to breathe. It is so sad.'*"

In Text 12, the author uses the justification approach (which tries to justify the choice of an ecological identity made by the speaker or listener. This is typically due to a person's familiarity with natural occurrences or reputable studies on ecological issues. One's first-hand experiences with nature, regular observations of natural events, and education about the environment are usually the sources of knowledge. People also tend to favor authoritative explanations or points of view put forward by relevant professionals or institutions. This makes use of the "appeal to the authority of the book." *Animals of the Amazon*"

An example of animal affection can be found in Text 13, such as: *I'd love to be face to face with a jaguar*" . Text 13, explains how animals, as depicted as the goal positive human perception, in other words, instances of attachment and emotional responses toward the animals, can be demonstrated. As a result, the animals' significance extends beyond their immediate duty as production animals, because the focus of adoration is the animals themselves, rather than the generated things.

As demonstrated in Text 14, the attitudinal lexicogrammatical resources employed to evaluate the jungle is the appraising meaning given by "incredible," which is generally considered as positive. Thus evaluation strategy is used to reveal the ecological identity.

In the preceding extract 15 ,the dolphins are manifested as sensor in which they do a mental cognitive process. They are able to think and to talk with each other. The dolphins are endowed with the cognitive ability of thinking. The "sensor" is a conscious being. In contrast to material processes, which represent actions and events occurring in external reality, that is, outside the participants' minds, mental processes represent sensing. These are internal processes that occur within the participant, i.e., the "sensor." Due to the fact that this "sensor" is the entity that performs the sensing, this participant is constrained in terms of the type of entity that can occupy the role. As a result, the "sensor" role must be filled by a conscious being, which in practice means a person (or an animal higher on the gender scale and having certain human characteristics, i.e. certain mental capabilities)Bloor and Bloor (1995,p.127). The ecological identity can be shown when the writer manifests the interaction among dolphins, which illustrated in the example, shows that they are familiar to the audience because similar scenarios occur in everyday life. Thus, the use of anthropomorphic language elevated non-human creatures to the level of human beings.

Extract 16 shows that there are two groups of people. One of them tries to destroy the environment while the another resists these destructive challenges.

Categorization refers to the act of differentiating one ecological identity from others. It is commonly realized via employing pronouns and nouns which function to convey some unique identities (Helmbrecht 2002,p.42). So , the writer adopts the strategy of Categorization to display the two types

of ecological identity . It is worth referring that Stibbe (2015,p.115) indicates that the pronouns 'we' and 'our' are critical for establishing ecological identity in texts because they identify specific actors as members of the ingroup.

Extract 17,the writer adopt the strategy of justification to reveal his positive ecological identity .He states different facts to encourage people to protect their ecosystems. The necessity of nature is not only concerning with non- human. It is hard to live without wildlife . He uncovers the hidden risk of clearing the forests to make road and streets. It's noteworthy that the justification strategy aims to explain why the speaker or listener has selected a certain ecological identity. The reason for this is frequently tied to one's knowledge of natural phenomena or authoritative studies on ecological issues. The source of knowledge is typically one's firsthand encounters with nature, everyday observations of natural phenomena, and education about the surrounding environment. The above example (17) has effectively established an ecological identity through the use of the justification strategy in which the individual distances himself from the developers that seek to maximize economic profits at the expense of environmental protection.

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study has been identifying the linguistic strategies that are associated with the exposure of ecological identity in the selected Haig's children's books. The author uses several discursive strategies to show the ecological identities in the selected children's books. The ecological identities are depicted in these texts through the heavily use of anthropomorphism strategy. Among the discursive strategies that construct these identities are appraisal, justification and categorization. These linguistic techniques are used to reveal beneficial ecological identity. It would appear that Haig has a superior command of the art of rhetoric.

In Haig's children's books, it is common practice to give human characteristics to nonhuman characters. And despite the fact that virtually any inanimate object may be given a personality, most characters in the targeted stories can speak and engage in human-like actions. Using language to treat nonhumans as humans does three things: it elevates the nonhuman's animacy status, signals its existence as a sentient being, and brings the nonhuman closer to humans.

Conclusion

According to the findings of the ecolinguistic analysis performed in this research project, it is possible to draw the conclusion that the discursive strategies are used to reveal beneficial ecological identity. In accordance to the first question posed by the research, it has been discovered that linguistic techniques such as anthropomorphism ,appraisal, justification and categorization are employed to construct ecological identities in discourse of these children's books. The findings of this research will contribute to the very little body of information that is currently available in the realm of discursive studies of ecology that fall under the field ecolinguistics.

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