

# The Erasure Story in Weather Reports: An Ecolinguistic Analysis

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## Abstract

This analysis examines ‘erasure stories’ in the weather reports of BBC, CNN, DW, Al Jazeera, and GNN. A sample of 500 news reports (total tokens 119,564) on weather-related topic were collected. It employs Arran Stibbe’s (2015) ‘Stories We Live By’ framework. The analysis is based on the concept of the ‘Erasure Story’. For the quantitative analysis, AntConc version 4.3.1 (Anthony, 2024) is used to identify the presence and absence of key ecological terminology, such as ‘climate change’, ‘ecosystem’, ‘biodiversity’, and ‘carbon emissions’. The results indicate prevailing trends of lexical and thematic omission especially in CNN and GNN where ecological factors of climatic event are left out. Though DW and Al Jazeera had higher inclusion of environmental terminologies, even their report was not consistent. The paper classifies the erasure as of typology of void, trace, and mask (Stibbe, 2015) which is justified by presence of concordance evidence, lexical visualization, and instance of erasure. Such patterns represent an anthropocentric approach, which silences an agency of nature and conceals underpinning causes of environmental crises. The study has expanded the use of the ‘Erasure Story’ to one of the commonly used genres i.e. weather reporting. It shows how pressing the need is of ecologically attentive media discourse that is centered about environmental causality.

**Keywords:** mask erasure, trace erasure, void erasure, weather reports

## Introduction

The world faces environmental crisis. It is also embedded on how people communicate, think, tell stories about the world, and within the context of civilization. Ecolinguistics, in this respect proves to be a strong discipline, studies the role of the language in the destruction or sustainability of the ecologic system.

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Based in an early formulation of the ecology of language by Haugen (1972), ecolinguistics has grown to explore not only the languages and their environments, but also discursively constructed environmental realities (Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2001). Erasure is an act of deleting or ‘removing something completely’ (Stibbe, 2021). Erasure, a form of exclusion in discourse (Baker & Ellece, 2011), is central to Stibbe’s (2015) framework. In an environmental context, it can mean the complete removal of nature from a text (void), its marginalization (trace), or its misrepresentation (mask).

#### ❖ Void

A void is an utter gap in a dialogue, where there is nothing that matters to ecological wellbeing absolutely missing. It is not only underrepresented but it is not even mentioned so that there is no linguistic residue of it in the narrative. The absence is the term that can be used when something is absent all too entirely in the discussion. Stibbe (2021) states “...the void, where ‘something important’ is completely excluded from a text...” (p. 144). An example here would be the fact that when flooding is reported with no reference to climatic change, land degradation or ecosystem sensitivity then these important environmental factors become negated.

#### ❖ Trace

A trace happens when the erased concept has a shadow called presence but it is in the background no one talks about it and mention it only incidentally or in a manner that it is made to appear as side or out of relevance. Stibbe (2021) says, “...where it is erased but replaced by a distorted version of itself...” (pp. 144–145). To take just one example of a heatwave article, it mentions briefly, “climate scientists propose that there may be a connection with global warming, but go no further-climate change is a peripheral, not a main power of explanation.

#### ❖ Mask

A mask takes place when ecologically important something is rendered discourse, but in an inverted or divergent manner: it is misrepresented as something it is not, in a manner that avoids or obscures collective meaning or genesis. Stibbe defines, “...where something is partially erased but still present” (p. 145). As one example, media can claim that nature strikes furiously, and in this way the concept of systemic change of climate is hidden behind a punitive act of nature. In every report, the rise or lack of rise of particular themes have been noted: cause attribution (e.g. human-

induced climate change), use of words ecosystem or biodiversity, representation of nature (creating, inert, empty), and having environmental justice discourses.

The media stations have an influence in the manner by which citizens perceive climate change and the environment. Yet, a lot of news stories with many weather-related ones prefer to be secretive or deemphasize ecological causes and consequences. This is achieved in what Stibbe (2015) refers to as “erasure” or making nature invisible in discourse. Erasure may assume the form of a void, a trace and a mask (Stibbe, 2021). Such language choices are not neutral and they suggest a particular attitude to environmental issues and a certain range of available solutions. Quite often instead of mentioning the cause in the headlines (deforestation, greenhouse gas emissions and loss of biodiversity), they tell us about the record floods or historic heatwave (Guenther, 2021).

Recent studies in ecolinguistics have established that this erasure is prevalent in media and government communication. Suryani and Suhandano (2023) examined climate discourse in Indonesia and revealed that the governmental reports did not use the terms ecosystem, animal, or environment justice. Likewise, Younis and Abdulmajeed (2023) discovered that nature usually gets eliminated in environmental advertising without addressing other human interests. This explains why the results support the argument presented by Stibbe that language makes ideology and facilitates the understanding of anthropocentric worldview where the interests of people are primary and nature is subordinate or non-existent. Many scholars have however looked into this environmental discourse in general though it is clearly evident that a lot remains wanting as far as the specific case of weather reports is concerned. These reports are short, repetitive, and can be viewed to be neutral, but the language normalises unsustainable ways of perceiving the world.

This paper addresses this gap by examining ‘Erasure’ in weather-related news articles. We apply the analytical framework of Stibbe (2015). Through the application of this framework, the paper shall demonstrate how weather reporting does affect or refutes ecocentric thinking. The aim is to discover the obscured paths through which the language contributes to the popular understanding of the climate crises and persuade the transition process to more ecologically conscious media reporting.

## **Review of the Literature**

Relationships between language and the environment have received great momentum ever since Haugen (1972) coined the term, the ecology of language. It

addresses how much linguistic practices rely on and are interwoven with ecological systems. This concept evolved to what we now term ecolinguistics, which is a study that critically analyses the role that language either plays in enhancing ecological sustainability or curtailing it altogether (Fill & Muhlaeusler, 2001).

Arran Stibbe (2015) presents a significant input into this field describing a model “Stories We Live By”. He finds nine narrative types including “Erasure” as used in this paper through which we think of nature through discourse. Weather reporting also plays a role in shaping ecological awareness. In a linguistic-ecosophic analysis, Saleem and Rehman (2025) show that forecasting discourse relies on neutral and technocratic language and often obscures ecological realities.

The idea of erasure has been used in connection to general objectification of nature. With text analysis in mind, Fill (2009) used environmental science text to demonstrate the effectiveness of objectifying language in erasing ecological agency and moral responsibility, such as calling animals as specimens or ecosystems as a resource.

Erasures are common in media representations of extreme weather and climate events as they hide the systemic ecological contexts of the extreme weather and climate events. Suryani and Suhandano (2023) revealed that official Indonesian messages about climate did not mention ecosystems, biodiversity, or environmental justice, and such omission corresponded to a trace-based or masked erasure.

Additionally, according to critical discourse analysts, who include Carvalho (2007) and Van Dijk (1998), media framing serves to reinforce the hegemonic ideologies through the strong emphasis that is given to the human and economic impacts to the neglect of the ecological. Economic discourse often frames development in ways that privilege growth over ecological sustainability (Faraz & Saleem, 2024). This study demonstrates that linguistic choices reinforce anthropocentric ideologies and normalize environmental exploitation.

The studies have emphasized more attention on policy language, scientific reporting, and writings (Ain et al., 2023). Daily weather language, which is very popular and has a significant effect on communities, has been largely unexplored. Research on natural disaster discourse shows that media narratives construct identity and conviction around human resilience while they downplay ecological causality. Saleem, Khan, and Faraz (2025) argue that such representations shape public understanding of environmental crises and responsibility.

Although weather news seems to be a common occurrence and as a topic it is widespread in the society, there is a remarkable gap in systematic, corpus-based ecolinguistic research on this particular genre. Corpus-based analyses further confirm the dominance of human-centered perspectives in environmental news. Saleem and Rehman (2025) identify recurring lexical patterns and metaphors that subordinate ecological concerns to human interests.

There are several studies concerned with examining framing in climate policy (Carvalho, 2007), the use of metaphor in environmental activism (Lakoff, 2010), or encrypting and erasing in institutional discourse (Suryani and Suhandano, 2023). Few studies have been conducted on how everyday weather reports particularly those maps that provide updates on natural disaster, heatwave, floods, or cyclones constitute or conceal meanings of ecology. Although the Erasure Story has been worked out on the conceptual level, there is little empirical evidence that it can be applied to the news discourses in various geopolitical areas and media ideologies.

The current research fills the research gap through the mapping of lexical gaps e.g. absence of keywords such as climate, ecosystem, or biodiversity. The literature shows that the problem of erasure in the environmental discourse is an overwhelming tendency, as this has a significant influence on the mass psyche and constrains environmental knowledge. This paper will contribute to these developments by analyzing one of the previously unstudied genres, yet one that plays an important role in constructing ecology reality, namely reporting on weather.

## **Methodology**

This research uses a mixed method corpus-based design with the background of the ecolinguistic framework. This is examining how ecological knowledge is liable to be systematically expelled, ignored or manipulated in the written text of weather reports. The data were collected from five news channels; Al Jazeera (Middle East-based, international audience), BBC (UK, global audience), CNN (USA, international reach), DW – Deutsche Welle (Germany, European focus), and GNN – Geo News Network (Pakistan, regional focus). A total of 500 articles, 100 articles from each of the five news channels, were collected through random sampling technique across two seasons i.e. summer and winter in 2023. The articles selected were weather reports related to disasters that could be found on the official websites. The downloaded reports were obtained in plain text format and stored into five corpora. The data were analyzed through AntConc (Version 4.3.1; Anthony,

2024). The tool was employed to find out, keyword frequency, concordance lines, and lexical bundles. This analysis helped identify the patterns of linguistic erasure, including a lack of terms related to climate and climate change (e.g., climate change; global warming; deforestation; ecosystem).

## Analysis

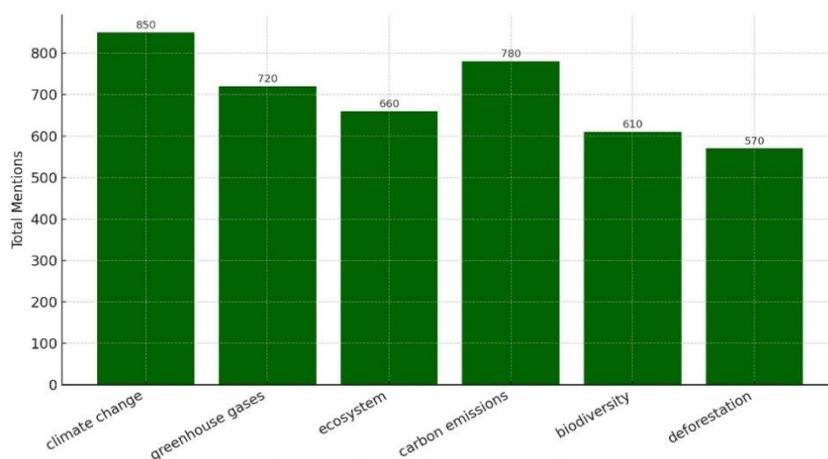
The lexical analysis of the erasure story in the collected data is conducted using Stibbe's (2015, 2021) six stories we live by framework. By tracing key lexical items through AntConc, and drawing on Stibbe's (2015, 2021) typology of erasure—void, trace, and mask—this plausibility-oriented analysis examines how climate-related issues are linguistically constructed as either salient or marginal. The analysis demonstrates how specific lexical choices foreground or background ecological awareness, thereby shaping interesting and uninteresting discourses around climate change and environmental responsibility.

### ❖ Lexical Absence

The bar chart illustrates the overall frequency of selected ecological terms—climate change, ecosystem, biodiversity, deforestation, greenhouse gases, and carbon emissions—across the five media sources (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

### *Mentions of Ecological Terms across Five News Channels*



The bar chart (figure 1) plot represents the distribution of major ecological words in a collection of 500 news stories comprised of 119,564 words. The most commonly

used term is climate change, which was mentioned 850 times, followed by carbon emissions (790) and greenhouse gases (720) which tells more about the broad media attention to the problem of air emissions and their consequences on the global scale. Even such terms as ecosystem (660), biodiversity (610), and deforestation (570) become conspicuous as the issues of ecological degradation and environmental sustainability are increasingly drawn to our attention. This information is notable because it points to how the discussions and prioritization of the environment have been framed in the mainstream media, and it may be affecting people in terms of their awareness levels of the environment, their discussions on climate-related policies, and the mass mobilization of creating awareness and action on climate change. Analysis of these lexical trends can provide an idea of the way ecological stories are founded and retold in general communication.

**Thematic Implications of Erasure**

Across all channels, the analysis reveals that weather reporting is consistently framed around: human, suffering and financial harm (anthropocentric framing), government reaction and institutional control, and visual narration and weather dumps. What is always clobbered down or diminished consists of animal and plant life, causal processes such as land-use change, emissions or industrialization, and the voicelessness or resistance to ecological interdependence of the planet. Stibbe (2021) warns that such discourse patterns naturalize a worldview where nature is voiceless, disaster is normalized, and human dominion remains unquestioned. These erasures hinder the development of an ecosophical mindset, where discourse supports sustainable living and ecological awareness.

This effacement of ecological literacy and action that is possible with news media is problematic. These stories recreate an anthropocentric understanding of the world because they brush aside ecological causality and the voices of the nonhuman other; a worldview that is not fit to deal with the climate crisis. This makes it necessary to move to regenerative stories and to ecosophy-informed journalism (see table 1).

**Table 1**  
*Examples of Erasure Stories in Weather Reports*

News Channel	Erasure Type	Sample Text or Headline	Erased Ecological Element	Explanation
BBC	Trace	“Record-breaking temperatures have disrupted rail networks	Climate change, emissions	Mentions the extreme event but omits any causal reference to global warming or fossil fuel emissions.

		across the UK.” (January 2, 2023)		
CNN	Void	“Thousands evacuated as wildfires rage through California towns.” (January 10, 2023)	Ecosystem, wildlife	No reference to habitat destruction, forest health, or animal impact. Focus remains solely on human evacuation and infrastructure loss.
DW	Mask	“Nature lashes back: Europe hit by freak storms.” (June 5, 2023)	Scientific framing, systemic causes	Uses metaphor suggesting nature’s aggression, but masks the anthropogenic drivers (e.g., warming seas, emissions) behind the storms.
Al Jazeera	Trace	“Heavy floods displace communities in Bangladesh.” (March 18, 2023)	Deforestation, river degradation	Highlights human displacement but background ecological degradation that worsens monsoon flooding.
GNN	Void	“Dozens killed in monsoon rains; rescue efforts underway.” (March 15, 2023)	Climate change, land use	No mention of climate-induced changes to rainfall patterns or loss of wetlands. Entirely anthropocentric and episodic framing.
CNN	Void	“Blistering heat scorches the South: schools close, AC demand surges.” (December 3, 2023)	Urban heat islands, carbon output	Omits causes like carbon emissions or urban sprawl contributing to heat intensification.
BBC	Mask	“Weather chaos: nature turns hostile in 2025.” (October 20, 2023)	Nature’s agency	Depicts nature as an adversary, masking human-caused environmental destabilization.
DW	Trace	“Europe braces for another drought: farmers face tough decisions.” (May, 2023)	Soil degradation, water policies	Hints at systemic pressures but never directly names agricultural practices or policy gaps.
GNN	Void	“Karachi heatwave: death toll rises, power outages worsen crisis.” (June 29, 2023)	Climate justice, urban ecology	Entirely omits why the city is heat-vulnerable (e.g., poor green cover, unplanned urbanization).
Al Jazeera	Trace	“Typhoon hits Philippines; emergency declared in 15 provinces.” (February 5, 2023)	Ocean warming, climate variability	Acknowledges the event but with no ecological background—avoids scientific or systemic causes.

The figure 1 shows how the ecological term is distributed throughout five large news channels BBC, CNN, DW, Al Jazeera, and GNN depending on a corpus of 500 news report with a total word of 119,564 words. The words that were examined are climate change, greenhouse gases, ecosystem, carbon emission, biodiversity, and deforestation. The greatest attention is given to such a phenomenon as climate change, mainly by BBC and CNN, which indicates its central place in the environmental discourse. There are also mentions of the greenhouse gases and deforestation that can be found within each platform, whereas other terms, such as biodiversity and carbon emissions, are less uniformly source- or region-specific. This visualization shows the unbalanced, criteria-based attention of certain ecological

issues in the global media, which throws light onto the process of environmental discourse formation and spilling over to the audience.

## **Conclusion**

This paper aimed to explore how ecological awareness, or its absence, is constructed in the discourse of weather reporting across five leading news channels: BBC, CNN, DW, Al Jazeera, and GNN. The study applied Stibbe's (2015, 2021) erasure story as its theoretical lens and employed AntConc for corpus-based lexical analysis of weather reports related to climate-induced disasters. The findings provide strong evidence of both lexical and thematic erasure in the representation of climate-related events. Quantitative results, shown through bar charts and heatmaps, and qualitative findings, drawn from the categories of void, trace, and mask, demonstrate that despite the growing visibility of climate crises, the natural world remains largely backgrounded or excluded from routine weather reporting.

The analysis also revealed variation across media outlets. DW and Al Jazeera showed comparatively greater inclusion of ecological terminology and causal framing, although this inclusion remained inconsistent. BBC exhibited moderate levels of erasure, with a predominantly technical reporting style and only occasional thematic references to climate values. CNN and GNN demonstrated a high degree of void erasure. They framed natural disasters almost exclusively through human suffering and institutional response and omitted systemic ecological causes such as emissions, deforestation, and biodiversity loss. This pattern reinforces an anthropocentric worldview in which nature functions as a silent background rather than an active element of the narrative.

These findings carry important implications for both media practice and ecolinguistic theory. When weather reporting fails to identify ecological agents and causal processes, it risks normalizing environmental degradation and limiting public understanding of interconnected ecological systems. Stibbe's (2021) *ecosophy* calls for a shift towards regenerative storytelling, a discourse that recognizes moral responsibility, values systemic thinking, and acknowledges the agency of the more-than-human world. This study contributes to that aim by identifying the types and degrees of erasure in everyday media discourse. It emphasizes the need for journalism that foregrounds climate causality, ecosystem interdependence, and nonhuman perspectives.

Finally, the analysis confirms that weather reports do not function as neutral or purely informational texts. Instead, they operate as ideologically shaped narratives that either conceal or reveal underlying ecological realities behind extreme weather events. Future progress requires collaboration among media practitioners, environmental communicators, and ecolinguists to develop ecologically literate discourse. A form of discourse that informs public understanding and promotes transformation by advancing stories that support ecological sustainability rather than silence the Earth.

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