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Appeal to the "Rational Consumer" in Advertising: A Destructive Discourse

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Ecolinguistic Perspectives on Our Surroundings

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Introduction

By Katarina Ghdaye

As a collective group of post-graduate students, having read Stibbe's *Ecolinguistics: Language, ecology and the stories we live by* (2015), we have written our own critiques concerning narratives in our everyday lives. After a semester of studying issues concerning ecolinguistics, many of us were able to draw upon present-day examples and address discourses which, at a closer analysis, reveal themselves as problematic for nature and humankind as part of nature.

Relationships create discourse. Whether they create positive or negative discourses, it is important to recognize the junction and blending of the two when brought together. Presented in this collective work will be many examples of relationships, including and not restricted to: relationships between media and consumers; relationships of the writers and the products/services being presented; and relationships between people and the environment.

How the population of the world and the environment coexist is the main theme presented in the following essays. Each author in regards to the stories she/he lives by has provided a personal, critical analysis found in the following collection of short text. The attention towards the correlation of linguistic elements to environmental aspects transforms these separate texts into different and complementary tesserae of the same mosaic composition.

Nature and its relationship to us is the main theme to all the following texts, demonstrating that no matter the discourse, our source of life is always present.

Reference

Arran Stibbe. *Ecolinguistics: Language, ecology and the stories we live by*. London: Routledge (2015).

“The Beast is Hungry”

By Valentina Boschian Bailo



In this article I take a multimodal and ecolinguistic perspective in order to examine a print advertisement. My aim is to show how texts we are continuously exposed to can encourage us to act in either a more or less environmentally sustainable way. Specifically, I will focus on a car advertisement and analyse its environmentally damaging framing.

Central to this examination of discursive and visual data is the fact that car advertisements tend to represent cars in relationship with nature: they either show a symbiotic relationship between car and nature, or a dominator-dominated relationship. This latter case applies to the advertisement I am analysing.

The whole text is framed as a metaphor. The most prominent part of the text is a hamburger that occupies a central position and is made of soil, grass and asphalt. Below the image a very short slogan contributes to the main metaphor: “The beast is hungry”.

The most relevant among the three elements chosen to reproduce the image of a hamburger is asphalt, which represents meat. Interestingly enough, as shown in (Stibbe, 2015), meat-eating and fast-food consumption are often associated with manliness.

Therefore, this text works on at least two different levels of interpretation: on the one hand, we may assume the beast is the pick-up truck advertised, thus representing the car as powerful and having the characteristics to drive fast on and off the road. While on the other hand, the metaphor of ‘the beast longing for food’ can be read as ‘man longing for meat’, or at a different plane of interpretation as ‘man exerting his power, or manifesting his powerful nature’. Thus, the text implies a stereotyped idea of man.

This very idea is deeply rooted into the relationship displayed in the advertisement, where there is evidently something wrong: the asphalt is in pieces; the soil is dry and stony and the grass is yellowish. Assuming this to be the result of the beast's action, the environment ends up being spoiled and reduced to an object, fodder for the beast in a metaphorical way. So, the advertisement does not encourage at all the respect and the preservation of the ecosystem.

The whole text is framed as a metaphor of 'eating up the Earth', 'the Earth as a product to be consumed', where the target domain is driving and the source domain is basically hunting. As far as the written text is concerned, "beast" and "hungry" are trigger words that evoke the animal kingdom in both powerful and negative terms, since "beast" is a term that has negative connotations. We may assume the metaphorical participants are a predator and its prey. Moreover, the beast is the only active participant; nature is implicitly the object of the action (the affected, in multimodal terms); it is completely passive and devoid of life. It is also excluded from the verbal text: it is not even mentioned. Though central, it has paradoxically been erased through distortion.

To conclude, I think that this text can be classified as environmentally damaging and reinforcing negative stereotypes about the relationship between human beings and nature.

Reference

The Beast is Hungry. Last accessed: 9 March 2016.

<http://www.coloribus.com/adsarchive/prints/isuzu-d-max-hamburger-19703205/>

Phone Shame and Influential Publicity Language

By Eliana Fortunato

The television commercial “JUMP! On Demand: The Cure for #PhoneShame” was first broadcast in August 2015. It was made by The Garrigan Lyman Group for T-Mobile, a mobile communication company that operates mobile networks mainly in Europe and in the United States.

The commercial is based on an evident metaphor: the service the company provides is the cure for a new disease, or better, a social evil, called #phoneshame. The advertising agency framed a prototypical phone service commercial as a pharmaceutical commercial, by establishing the dichotomy problem-solution as disease-cure. Trigger words used to express this metaphorical frame are: suffer, afraid, suffering from, cure, doctor, side effects, living with, visit. The source domain belongs to medical terminology and the medical field; and the target domain is advertising a new T-Mobile service.

The commercial constructs the viewers’ perspective referring to their own background: society is becoming increasingly more afraid of diseases, poverty and isolation. Raising this point, T-Mobile tries to give a solution by conveying a clear message and offering its public a new aspirational identity. With this new service, people can heal, become rich (or apparently rich) and admired.

But what has been erased from this commercial?

First of all, T-Mobile is taking for granted that owning the latest smartphone, and constantly being up-to-date, is a primary need. Consequently, the viewer is inclined to think that s/he has a problem, or worse, it is an illness not to have the latest technology. The company itself deviously creates the disease and the cure. In this way, when people feel sick and look for a cure, the company has it readily available.

Secondly, this commercial strongly relies on a technological development law called Moore’s law. It states that every eighteen months an electronic device develops to improve its performance. T-Mobile implicitly supports this law relying on its negative perspective. If something improves, it means that the previous model has been outperformed; nevertheless, this does not mean that the former device no longer functions. In fact, Moore’s law does not imply that evolution means short-term change, but T-Mobile wants people to consider that their smartphone cannot accomplish its functions anymore.

The word “carrier” has a double meaning: it can be “a telecommunication company” or “a person or animal that shows no symptoms of a disease but harbours the infections of that disease and is capable of transmitting it to others”. Since T-Mobile assumes that #phoneshame is due to carriers, their slogan is “The Un-Carrier”, because it cures phoneshame. T-Mobile wants to prove to potential customers that they will not risk #phoneshame because they do not have to use their service longer than necessary. This apparently differs from what common carriers require, because in this case customers can “Jump on Demand”. Ironically, T-Mobile is a carrier. Acting in this way, T-Mobile has created an oxymoron through its own definition.

In conclusion, the story-we-live-by expressed in this commercial is: get what you want when you want. This goes against ecosophy. Ecosophy is a set of principles meant for humans to live in harmony with our natural resources by not overexploiting them. The company actually gives no real solution to our society's real problem: planned obsolescence of products constantly contributes to wasting natural resources. The message of T-Mobile's advertisement encourages the waste of resources by presenting it as necessary and inevitable.

References

Gordon E. Moore. Last accessed 24 March 2016:

<http://www.britannica.com/biography/Gordon-E-Moore>

Dictionary.com. Last accessed 24 March 2016:

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/carrier?s=t>

JUMP! On Demand: The Cure for #PhoneShame. Last accessed 9 march 2016:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDNeYIffl6A>

WWF, Imagery and Metaphors

By Sidonia Gadiant



This advertisement was published by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). This fund works in the field of biodiversity conservation and aims to reduce the carbon footprint of humans on the environment. One of the fund's missions is to live in harmony with nature, and it has more than 5 million supporters worldwide.

At first glance, I thought the advertisement represented just a deer standing on a hill. The situation reminded me of one of the famous scenes of the movie *Bambi*. When I looked closer, I realised that this deer and the environment that surrounds it are made of rubbish, which actually quite shocked me. Funnily, I immediately had another scene of a children's movie before my eyes: the movie *WALL-E*: "The last one cleans the earth". The rubbish deer reminded me of how the movie represented our future. All of us who have seen the movie probably agree: we do not want that future.

In the WWF image, we see the shape of an animal trying to live in a landfill. The story is framed dramatically so that we, as the audience, can understand the metaphor of consumerism destroying nature. We see all the rubbish we produce daily and how it actually swallows wildlife and nature until nothing other than rubbish, produced by our consumerism, is left.

In society nowadays, not much shocks people any longer; we have become too accustomed to terms like climate change, global warming, pollution of the planet, etc. We have also seen many horrible pictures about how our planet will look in the future. These images have become so frequent in our daily lives that many do not see a problem anymore, and we deal with them as with something that does not interest us. Therefore, to catch the attention of the audience, the advertisement has to be framed so dramatically to engage the viewer and make him/her believe that there really is a problem. By creating the metaphor of the animal out of

trash, we as the audience see the situation we are in more clearly than just by reading a text. It gets our attention and gets us thinking.

When we look closer at the slogan, “Rubbish can be recycled. Nature cannot.”, we can see that it does not need many words to get its message across. Its simplicity, immediacy and clarity makes it very impressive. The slogan establishes a connection to the viewer’s background.

Recycling is a part of everyday life; almost every one of us recycles the waste he/she produces. Many people think that recycling will solve all climate change problems and that we do not have to make any more compromises than just recycle all the rubbish we produce, no matter how much rubbish it is. Actually, the slogan proves us wrong. It reframes the target domain nature with the source domain rubbish recycling, to show that recycling alone cannot solve all problems. The threat of rubbish is in opposition with nature, especially in the amount we are producing right now.

The metaphor used in the slogan makes the message much more vivid: We have to act and take care of nature now; otherwise it is just too late.

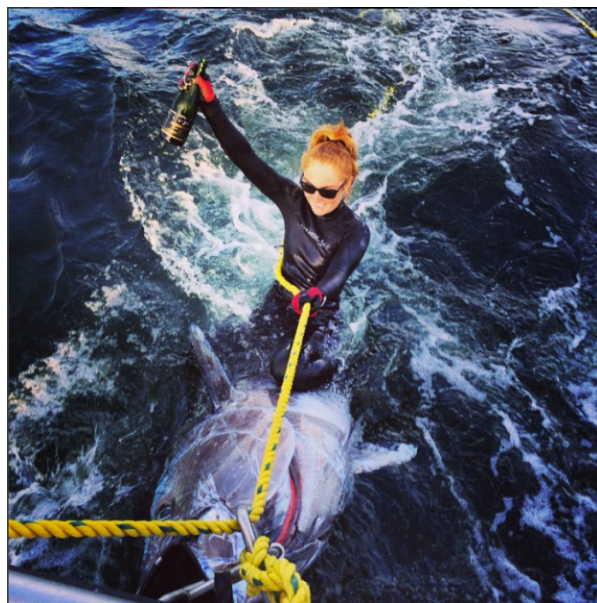
Reference

Rubbish can be recycled. Nature cannot. Accessed on 9 March 2016:
<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/122371314845122164/>

The Publication of a Story to a Different Target Domain

By Katarina Ghdaye

CBCNews – Nova Scotia has covered the controversial story of a photo found on Instagram of a young woman riding a larger than average fish with a bottle of alcohol in her hand. This photo intended to create the metaphor of victory, but local ecologists and scientists in Halifax, Canada are not impressed. With a caption from the woman pictured stating her profound love for the fish, why does the reader have a hard time believing the personal declaration? The problematic discourse presented here is the contrast between the original publisher's words and the story interpreted by the image's presentation in the news article.



Stephanie Choate is an internationally known angler. To be an angler by definition is to catch a fish for sport by hook and line, normally releasing it after recording the catch. Choate has uploaded a photo of herself, which indicates the frame of a wild animal being tamed by a human; this frame is triggered by images we often see on land with poachers and hunters. Initially the reader is stunned or at least curious to know why Choate would be sitting on a tuna of this size, especially if her sport requires treating the catch with caution. Bluefin tuna are declining in numbers and it is very important to tag the catch as soon as possible in order to release the fish without harm.

Choate pictured in the above photo has framed herself as a victor; her story is one of accomplishment. Treating the fish as a sort of trophy is an erasure to the story of the endangered species.

The convictions that come along with this story are from the audience. At first glance the reader must believe the truth to this story, the photo of a woman going out of her way to pose on the back of a fish being dragged behind a boat. Then after a few more moments of observation the reader is certain that the woman is gloating the fact that this animal is helpless and captured. But when reading the caption provided by Choate, the facticity pattern contradicts the photo. The linguistic elements presented are those of love and adoration for the fish living in the heart of Choate, as she wrote. When we hold something close to our hearts, normally we treat it with respect, equal to or greater than ourselves. Here Choate is on top of the fish demonstrating her hierarchy.

The reader's background contains the not so old image of Cecil the Lion that parallels Choate. Choate originally published this photo to her target domain of loyal Instagram followers. Now that the journalist has taken the photo and presented it to different addressees, the frame has changed from one of glory to one of animal abuse. The language used in the original post was meant to target a specific domain; now out of that original context a different domain reframes the story into one of disrespect towards an animal. Choate, in conclusion to all the recent media

attention has now privatized her account in order to keep her future photos being presented to an audience outside of her personal one.

Reference

Ward, Rachel. 2015. "Halifax Scientists Concerned over Tuna-riding Photos - Nova Scotia - CBC News." *CBCnews*. CBC/Radio Canada, 18 Nov. 2015. Last accessed 02 Dec. 2015:
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/halifax-scientists-concerned-with-tuna-riding-photos-1.3324307>

BHP Billiton's Crisis Communication After the Environmental Disaster in Minas Gerais (Brazil) 5th November 2015

By Ilenia Gosgnach

BHP Billiton is the Anglo-Australian mining company which owns Samarco Mineração, the Brazilian firm responsible for the mining dam which, on 5th November 2015, collapsed and caused the worst environmental catastrophe in Brazil's history.

My work will be focused on BHP Billiton's 'crisis communication': how they exploited language in communication to deal with the management of the crisis, trying to restore the image of the company. To investigate this topic, I will pay particular attention to the speech given on November 19th by Jac Nasser (BHP Billiton Chairman) and Andrew Mackenzie (Chief Executive Officer) and addressed to their shareholders and public.

Their speech can be summarised into three main points: they feel really "shaken by this terrible tragedy"; they will offer their full support to the victims; they will put in place measures to strengthen their safety standards.

The basic theoretical premise behind this work is that the main feature of crisis communication is, of course, terminological control. In this case, simply making an account of the five most recurring words (commit: 11 times; tragedy: 9 times, support: 8 times; provide: 6 times; effort: 5 times), it is possible to notice that there is a repetition of positive sounding words which express the company's engagement with the solving of the 'problem'. However, it is important to highlight that they do not mention responsibility or what has happened, which is defined as "an incident", but just of a future commitment that they feel as an important duty, in this way acting like 'benefactors'. This can be recognised even better if we consider the emotional involvement they express: "We are deeply sorry", "overwhelmed with sadness and concern", "truly heart-breaking", just to quote some examples. Therefore, I argue that, through a careful use of language, they quite obviously aim to appeal to people's emotions rather than their reasoning, thus trying to induce a positive response. Furthermore, it is worth considering that both speakers express the same ideas, in some cases even using exactly the same words. The result is, hence, high redundancy, which seems to be a strategy to deviate the attention of the viewers/listeners.

Examining the "background" Nasser depicts about the work of the company in Minas Gerais, the first information he reports are about the length of their presence there, about the number of local people they have employed and about the company's record on safety. When he refers to the 'main event' we notice that he erases human agency: he speaks about it as a "dam failure", which is a clear instance of nominalisation, and then takes the failing dams as the subject of following sentences. The purpose is, rather clearly, obscuring the real actor(s). Moreover, he totally avoided mentioning the real environmental impact this catastrophe caused.

To conclude, I reckon that the implicit message of their speech is evident: beyond expressing their grief, they wanted to underline the professionalism and reliability of the company, thus trying to manipulate public opinion in such a way that people will consider the disaster as an accident.

Reference

BHP Billiton. Last accessed 9 March 2016: <http://www.bhpbilliton.com/investors/samarco-updates>

Identity and Erasure

By Mattia Mantellato



This is an identity campaign sponsored by the American agrochemical corporation Monsanto. The multinational focuses on the promotion of genetically modified (GM) crops that can resist extreme temperatures, drought, floods, viruses, fungi, and insects. Monsanto aims at expanding its “innovative cultivation” to countries all over the world.

The target for this specific advertisement seems to be farmers in poor countries in which millions of people suffer from starvation. It is through this seemingly socially helpful perspective that the corporation tries to bolster its pretence of beneficial discourse.

The text is multimodal: the image and the written content share the semiotic space and are linked together in the promotion of a new type of framing: an innovative conception of “technological food”. In the slogan there is a

double erasure: no traditional crop is mentioned, and what might be even more surprising is that also the identity of the replacement is not clear, *i.e.* GM seeds. In particular, “better crops” is a more interestingly disguised erasure because it is a distorted expression that doesn’t clarify what it actually refers to. The musicality of the headline makes it sound like a nursery rhyme: it obfuscates its real meaning and connects the first word to the unforgettable lyrics of “Imagine”, written by John Lennon.

The corporation builds a positive appraisal pattern for GM crops using expressions such as “better/help/life/live” and describing biotechnology in positive terms. Nevertheless, Monsanto’s effort in enhancing a constructive evaluation of its products is not that effective if we acknowledge that in today’s society GM seeds are still regarded as something dangerous and unhealthy.

The layout of the advertisement is emblematic: a black farmer is foregrounded in order to underline personalisation and individualisation. The image is salient: the man’s gaze is hypnotic and he looks straight at the reader who can feel as an in-group participant. The man can be perceived as a visual metaphor, representing in general people from Southern world nations. He is also holding an instant picture representing a flourishing and plentiful cotton field: in this way he’s showing the viewer what will happen if he uses Monsanto’s seeds. Working on an empathic level, the corporation is able to portray today’s technological society through the use of a “selfie”. In the background we can observe “rough soil”, which is difficult to farm, and most importantly

scarce quantity of crops implying the company's belief on the necessity of overconsumption of goods.

In conclusion this is a highly destructive discourse according to ecosophy, as it does not take into account the environmental limits of our planet and the damages these kinds of seed could bring to the topsoil, nor people's wellbeing, as we still do not know the long term side-effects these new technological crops could bring to our health and body.

Reference

Monsanto Imagine. Last accessed 9 March 2016:

<http://www.condonandroot.com/work/view/monsanto-print>

Appeal to the “Rational Consumer” in Advertising: A Destructive Discourse

By Martina Napolitano

BRING THE GREAT OUTDOORS, IN.
Introducing scents inspired by nature.

Yosemite, California

CLEAN SCENTSATIONS™
NEW!

**Powerfully Clean.
Vibrantly Fresh.**

Discover scents as beautiful as the national parks that inspired them. Our newest laundry detergents give your clothes the pristine freshness of the great outdoors. All three vibrant options with ARM & HAMMER™ Baking Soda help power out even tough dirt and odors—at a fraction of the cost compared to the leading brand per load. Try all three for laundry that smells as good as it looks.

Love It Or Your Money Back™

PURIFYING WATERS
Glacier Bay, Alaska
Dive in to the fresh, crisp scent of America's most pristine waters.

SUN-KISSED FLOWERS
Yosemite, California
Revitalize your senses with the scent of rolling fields of flowers on a warm summer day.

TWILIGHT SKY
Acadia, Maine
Envelop yourself in the relaxing, calm scent of dusk on the shores of Maine.

The maker of ARM & HAMMER™ is proud to contribute to the National Park Foundation in helping to preserve America's National parks.

*Valid for purchases between 3/17/14 and 6/30/14. Refund for purchase price up to \$9.99. Limit one refund per family, address or household.

In economic discourse, the personal satisfaction of people – individual and rational creatures, whose identity as social being is secondary (Fairclough 2003) – can be achieved only through the consumption of commodities. Nature’s appealing effect in ads can bring about chances for companies to reach their goal – that is, selling more – without promoting more conscious, sustainable, ecological approaches. This analysis focuses on an Arm & Hammer detergents advertisement.

The gaze of the reader is immediately captured by the appealing front image: the “testimonial” on the top of the page of Yosemite National Park, California. It comes along with the capitalized invitation “BRING THE GREAT OUTDOORS, IN. Introducing scents inspired by nature.” The first sentence has a strong communicative impact, achieved mainly through the marked order of the sentence (a rhematic focus), where the preposition/adverb “IN” is postponed visually too, through the employment of the comma, thereby gaining importance and conveying the significance of “inside your [the consumer’s] home”; the adjective “GREAT”, which

has a positive connotation in language, thereby creating an incontestable positive appraisal pattern; the word “OUTDOORS”, whose prefix *out-* is combined in a clear lexical opposition with the following “IN”. The metaphorical meaning of the whole sentence is, of course, the product will not bring an entire national park inside our house, but, as it becomes clear reading below, the term “OUTDOORS” stands as a metonymy for the scents that are imagined to be spread around these natural areas, and which the brand assures us to have enclosed inside their detergents. The subtext explains what the product is about: the company is presenting (“introducing”) some essences (“scents”) that nature itself silently suggested (“inspired”) them to create.

On the left of the page, we find the name of the product (“CLEAN SCENTSATIONS”) and its slogan (“Powerfully Clean.” “Vibrantly Fresh.”), followed by longer bodycopy. “CLEAN SCENTSATIONS” captures immediately the reader’s eye; the noun is a clear pun, a blended word that again uses the term “scent (-s)” and links it to the evocative (and evoked) term “sensations”; the adjective “CLEAN” – just like “GREAT” above – leaves no doubt on the connotation and appraisal pattern aroused. Semantically, the use of this adjective is ambivalent. These scents may be considered “clean”, that is to say, produced respecting ecology, or the product can make our clothes smell clean, just like an untouched, unpolluted natural park. It may be easily argued that any washing detergent is purposely created to make clothes smell good and clean, and that a natural park does not only smell good, fresh and clean, but it rather smells “natural”, with all its vital odours, both nice and offensive to our noses.

The bodycopy invites the reader to “discover” their new three detergents (pictures and brief description on the right of the page) which are said to be able to give clothes the “pristine freshness of the great outdoors”, and that are about to cost “a fraction” of the amount “compared to the leading brand per load”. This final emphasis reminds the reader of his “identity” (Stibbe 2015) as “rational consumer”, always looking forward to “getting more for less”.

Reference

Bring the great outdoors, in. Accessed on 9 March 2016:
http://static-myosemitepark.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/clean_scentsations_ad_armhammer.jpg

How Can We Power The Planet... Without Making Things Worse?

By Federica Rinaldi



This is an advertising campaign issued in *National Geographic Magazine* (November 2015). The main theme is how our desire to enhance human well-being is destroying the planet. It is realized through two connected stories we live by and intends to attract the reader, focusing his/her attention on the two clashing images and statements. This has the aims of increasing collective awareness about environmental damages caused by humans. The visual representation of the two stories, mirror images and parallels, shows the salience of the aspect relating to the “double reality”.

In the first story, a glittering night vision of New York gives the idea of the exorbitant quantity of energy needed to light up the city, but the superimposed text seems to convey that we can exceedingly enhance our energetic resources, thus encouraging a destructive behaviour.

The use of LED lights (mentioned in the text below) in some areas of the city, though, seems to be an attempt to minimize environmental damage. Therefore, the message is ambivalent. The glittering city is a visual metaphor of ourselves, our planet and our well-being, which nevertheless implies consumerism, waste, pollution, environmental risk and social injustice.

The story foregrounds our anthropocentric vision of the world. Focusing on linguistic patterns, the personal deictic “we” links all of us to the evaluation that “progress is good” and that we are all part of the same “in-group” (industrialized countries). The pronoun “we” covers the erasure of populations lacking the minimum and Nature itself. The word “how” makes us think that there is a way to achieve the highest level of well-being, it is only a matter of choosing the right way. The patterns of transitivity underline the material processes and set up the goal of “efficiency”: people are actors, actively involved in “physical actions” in the world. The modal verb “can” (deontic modality), associated to “power”, almost gives the idea of our almightiness and great confidence in the inexhaustibility of the planet’s resources. On one hand, the first text seems to promote intrinsic values (altruistic goals), since everybody takes advantage of the same benefit, but on the other hand, it reveals extrinsic values because we are egoistically indifferent to the risks involved for environmental limits and social justice.

The second connected story, reminds viewers of the first one: same perspective, same high camera angle but the glittering skyscrapers give way to forest trees which we can hardly distinguish, as if the city disappeared, destroyed in the smoke. The smoke is that of the annihilation of the Amazon rain forest through endless fires releasing millions of tons of carbon dioxide into the air. Sunlight cannot break through the smoke curtain which prevents us from breathing -- a powerful metaphor of the price that humanity has to pay for their comfortable life. The visual impact is a shift from dream to reality. We feel guilty of and hit by our sense of omnipotence. The second statement brings a message of hope, a warning to be responsible, and reveals a beneficial discourse in terms of ecosophy.

Reference

“Cool it. The Climate Issue” November 2015. *National Geographic Magazine*, pp. 10-13.

Ecolinguistic Dynamics

By Gemma Roman



**Our Children Turn to Us
for a Brighter Energy Future**

Too many of the world's children have no modern energy in their lives... no lights to read by, no computers for school work, no digital devices to bring their communities into the 21st Century.

Advanced coal is changing all of that. Coal has been the world's fastest growing major fuel of the 21st Century. And coal is expected to pass oil as the world's largest energy source in coming years. Coal-fueled electricity enables laptops for students, cell phones for villagers, safe lights for cities and modern appliances for families.

All over the world, advanced coal is creating electricity that is abundant, inexpensive and clean. Coal has driven the world's best economies, raising hundreds of millions out of energy poverty in recent years.

But there is much more to be done. Some 3.6 billion people in the world have little or no access to electricity. Another 2 billion people will join the global population over the next two decades. Energy poverty is the number one issue facing the world today. Advanced coal is the best energy source to provide abundant, low-cost electricity at the scale needed to solve this challenge.

Let's work together to bring energy access to all by 2050.

Find out more at PeabodyEnergy.com

Peabody
ENERGY

In this advertisement, image and text communicate in a symbolic connection, which gradually reveals itself in the succession of words. Attention is initially captured by the Indian man and child who are looking towards the framed text. The title “Our Children Turn to Us for a Brighter Energy Future”, written in a bigger typeface, clearly presents and summarizes the Peabody Company’s aim. They want readers to reflect on it, and through the use of “our” and “us” pronouns, the message reaches and involves readers completely.

In general, the entire text is written in a simple and concise style, in order to be as clear as possible. From the first paragraph, children’s impossibility to own modern energy is underlined by the word “no”. The simple repetition appears stronger than the use of the negative form and reveals a more negative connotation.

The advertisement stresses the fact that too many children of the world cannot have light, computers or digital devices for school and to learn. So then, the solution the Peabody Company promotes consists of opening new coal plants in order to provide these children a so-called “modern” and “clean” energy. These adjectives, together with “advanced”, “safe”, “abundant”, “inexpensive” and “low-cost” can be defined appraisal patterns; through the evaluation “MODERN/ADVANCED IS GOOD/BETTER” coal plants energy production is presented through positive connotation.

The Peabody discourse is promoting modern energy, but aiming at education. The concept of helping the poorest children of the world hides the destructive aspect against ecology.

In this context, providing modern energy means opening several coal plants, which are extremely polluting.

It is interesting to notice how coal is an active protagonist in the text. Through personification, coal “is changing the situation”, “enables laptops”, “is creating” electricity. These are all positive actions that erase coal’s destructive and dangerous power.

The company’s aim is clear: coal “has been” a major fuel in the past and “is expected” to become the largest energy source in the future. Peabody Company asks us to support them (notice the expression “let’s work together”), so that in the text an interaction between us/ readers and the mentioned children emerges: a feeling of empathy makes us think of these unfortunate people’s conditions and, as long as we take for granted our access to modern energy, we should help the planet’s poorest populations.

The whole discourse is represented by the image: the Indian man on the bicycle and the child who is carrying a laptop, symbolize the poorest populations of the world. The landscape and the bicycle are symbolic metaphors for the poverty of the countries these populations belong to. The laptop, instead, is a symbolic metaphor for modern energy: the man and the child are actually going towards the modern world. Finally, we can identify ourselves with the man who is leading the child, the new generation, to the brighter future.

Reference

Peabody Energy. 2014. Accessed on 9 March 2016:

<http://www.peabodyenergy.com/content/491/advocating-coals-role-alleviating-energy-poverty-to-the-worlds-energy-ministers>