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OF DISCOURSE: A CROSSROADS OF PERSPECTIVES

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SIGNALING NON-ENDORSEMENT IN PERSUASIVE DISCOURSE: THE CASE OF GREENWASHING²

The paper examines texts on greenwashing, a relatively recent phenomenon, focusing on linguistic expressions that signal dissociative or non-endorsing attitude towards propositional constituents or entire propositions. Following the idea that all content words potentially encode procedural information, the study explores whether expressions whose conventional meaning is primarily conceptual may give rise to procedural effects in the specific context of persuasive discourse. The corpus consists of English-language texts on greenwashing drawn from journalistic, consumer-oriented, and popular academic sources. Lexical expressions potentially signaling non-endorsement were manually extracted, and a representative set of the most frequent items (*so-called*, *allegedly*, *supposedly*, and *claim*) was selected for qualitative pragmatic analysis. The analysis shows that while these expressions primarily contribute conceptual content, in persuasive discourse they may additionally constrain the inferential route by triggering a non-endorsing interpretation.

Keywords: discourse analysis, pragmatics, relevance theory, echoic concept, persuasive discourse, greenwashing

1. INTRODUCTION

Climate change discourse is a well-established topic in linguistics, especially in corpus linguistics, critical discourse studies, narrative analysis, and ecolinguistics (Gjerstad and Flottum 2021, Naz et al. 2022, Curry 2024). The literature spans corporate reporting, newspapers, UN discourse, public surveys, political tweets, activist texts, and multilingual comparisons (Jaworska 2018, Wang and Huan 2023, Huang and Che 2024). Since the climate change has become important topic numerous companies have tried to present themselves as *green* and environmentally responsible. This has sometimes led to *greenwashing* – using false, misleading, unsubstantiated, or selective environmental claims to create an overly positive impression

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of an organization's environmental performance, practices, products, or services (Delmans and Burbano 2011, Nemes et al. 2022, Williams 2024).

The core idea is a mismatch between what is communicated and what is actually done. Many definitions describe greenwashing as selective disclosure: highlighting positive environmental information while withholding negative information (De Freitas Neto et al. 2020). Another common framing is decoupling: symbolic "green talk" or promises without substantive environmental action or follow-through (De Freitas Neto et al. 2020: 1828). Greenwashing is usually understood as a way to gain or protect legitimacy and competitive advantage without making equivalent environmental improvements which is important since it can distort consumer and investor decisions, weaken trust in sustainability reporting, and blur the line between real environmental progress and image management (Sneideriene and Legenzova 2024).

Rather than examining the discourse produced by organizations engaged in greenwashing, this paper focuses on the discourse about greenwashing. More specifically, it investigates the linguistic devices used in texts that critically discuss greenwashing in order to signal various degrees of speaker distance from the environmental claims being reported. The analysis focuses on expressions such as *so-called*, *alleged(ly)*, *supposedly*, and the verb *claim*, which frequently accompany references to environmental practices, products, or corporate statements. While the first three typically encode a more explicit form of distancing, *claim* often conveys a weaker or more context-dependent dissociative effect. The study is situated within the relevance-theoretic distinction between conceptual and procedural meaning. The expressions analyzed are conventionally regarded as conceptual. The aim is to examine whether, in the persuasive discourse surrounding greenwashing, they systematically contribute to non-endorsement interpretations by constraining the hearer's inferential route, thereby giving rise to procedural effects. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which these expressions guide the interpretation of environmental claims by signaling speaker dissociation, reduced commitment, skepticism, and implicit evaluative stance.

2. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. GREENWASHING AS PERSUASIVE DISCOURSE

Discourse is commonly understood as a socially situated communicative practice that extends beyond linguistic realization of texts to encompass the ideological, cultural and institutional conditions under which meaning is produced and interpreted (Fairclough 2001; Schiffrin et al. 2008; Wodak and Meyer 2009; Wodak 2012). Rather than representing language in isolation, discourse reflects socially

shared systems of knowledge, beliefs and values through which reality is constructed, negotiated and legitimized. Consequently, discourse is not merely descriptive but constitutive: it shapes social identities, establishes relations of power and influences the interpretation of events and narratives, institutions and social actors (van Dijk 1998, Fairclough 2001).

Within this broader understanding, persuasive discourse occupies a particularly important position because its primary function is not only to transmit information but also to influence recipient's attitudes, evaluations and subsequent behavior (Wodak 2009). Persuasive communication therefore operates by carefully selecting linguistic and rhetorical devices that guide interpretation towards preferred conclusions while maintaining the appearance of objectivity and credibility. Such guidance frequently relies not on explicit argumentation alone but also on subtle pragmatic cues that affect how particular concepts and propositions are interpreted.

As stated in the introduction of this paper, one of the contemporary domains in which persuasive discourse has attracted considerable scholarly attention is environmental communication (see De Freitas Neto et al. 2020, Curry 2024). Growing public awareness of climate change has transformed environmental responsibility into an important economic and communicative resource. Consequently, environmental values have increasingly become integrated into corporate branding and marketing strategies, giving rise to a communicative environment in which companies actively construct identities associated with sustainability, ecological responsibility and ethical business practices. While genuine sustainability initiatives undoubtedly exist, environmental discourse has simultaneously become susceptible to communicative practices that exaggerate, distort or selectively present environmental achievements in order to create a favorable public image. These practices are commonly referred to as *greenwashing*, generally understood as communication that presents organizations, products or services as environmentally responsible to a greater extent than is justified by their actual environmental performance (Delmas and Burbano 2011). Rather than involving outright falsehoods in every instance, greenwashing often relies on strategically ambiguous formulations, selective presentation of information, vague environmental terminology and lexical choices that encourage favorable interpretations while avoiding direct factual commitments (Lyon and Montgomery 2015; Seele and Gatti 2017). The persuasive force of greenwashing therefore derives not only from what is explicitly communicated but also from how environmental claims are linguistically framed.

Interestingly, the discourse surrounding greenwashing extends beyond corporate communication itself. Journalists, consumer organizations, environmental activists and public institutions increasingly produce texts whose purpose is to evaluate, question or expose environmental claims made by corporations. Such texts constitute a distinct form of persuasive discourse. Rather than promoting products,

they attempt to persuade readers to adopt a critical stance towards corporate environmental communication. Consequently, they frequently employ linguistic resources that encourage skepticism, distance readers from particular lexical labels and invite them to reconsider the legitimacy of expressions such as *green*, *sustainable*, *carbon neutral* or *eco-friendly* when these are used in corporate self-presentation. It is precisely these linguistic resources that constitute the focus of the present study. More specifically, the analysis examines a set of lexical expressions (*so-called*, *alleged(ly)*, *supposedly* and *claim*) that regularly occur in critical discourse about greenwashing. Although these expressions differ formally and retain their conceptual meanings, they appear to share an important pragmatic property – they guide readers toward an interpretation in which the environmental designation is attributed to another source while the writer simultaneously signals a degree of distance from, or reservation towards, its validity. It is expected that precisely persuasive discourse will shed some light on potential procedural contribution, since procedural meaning is more closely related to evidentiality and argumentation than to pragmatics proper (Wilson 2011). Explaining how these interpretative effects arise requires a theoretical framework capable of modelling communication as a cognitive-inferential process provided by Relevance Theory.

2.2. PRAGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

The present study adopts Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986, Carston 2002, Wilson and Sperber 2004, 2012). Developed within the cognitive pragmatics tradition, Relevance Theory approaches communication not as a process of decoding linguistic messages but as an inferential process in which interlocutors construct interpretations on the basis of linguistic evidence and contextual assumptions. In this view, linguistic expressions do not directly determine meaning; rather, they provide evidence from which hearers infer the communicator's intended meaning. A central assumption of Relevance Theory is that human cognition is fundamentally oriented towards the maximization of relevance. According to the Cognitive Principle of Relevance, human cognitive systems tend to allocate attention and processing resources towards information that is expected to produce the greatest cognitive effects with the least processing effort (Sperber and Wilson 1986). The Communicative Principle of Relevance extends this assumption to ostensive communication, claiming that every act of overt communication carries an expectation of optimal relevance. In other words, by producing an utterance or any other communicative stimulus, a communicator implicitly indicates that the stimulus is worth processing and that it will provide sufficient cognitive effects to justify the effort required for its interpretation. Within this framework, relevance is defined in terms of the relationship between cognitive effects and processing effort. An

interpretation is relevant when it produces contextual effects, such as strengthening existing assumptions, contradicting previously held assumptions, or combining with contextual information to generate new conclusions, while requiring an acceptable amount of processing effort (Sperber and Wilson 1986/1995). Consequently, comprehension involves a search for an interpretation that satisfies the hearer's expectations of relevance. Rather than considering all possible meanings of an utterance, hearers follow a relevance-guided comprehension procedure in line with the least-effort strategy: they construct interpretive hypotheses in order of accessibility and stop processing when an interpretation that adequately meets their expectations of relevance has been reached (Wilson and Sperber 2004; Wilson and Sperber 2012).

This inferential view of communication is particularly relevant for the analysis of persuasive discourse, where interpretation often depends not only on the explicit content of a message but also on the contextual assumptions activated by particular linguistic choices. In persuasive contexts, communicators frequently rely on expressions that guide recipients towards particular interpretations without explicitly stating the intended evaluation. Such expressions may influence the inferential process by making certain contextual assumptions more accessible and by directing attention towards particular aspects of the communicated content.

2.2.1. Conceptual and procedural meaning

Apart from the key distinction between explicit and implicit levels of communication³, one of important distinctions concerns the difference between conceptual and procedural meaning (Blakemore 1987; Wilson 2011). This distinction concerns two different ways in which linguistic expressions contribute to communication. Conceptual expressions encode representations that contribute to the propositional content of an utterance, whereas procedural expressions encode instructions concerning the inferential processes involved in deriving the intended interpretation. In other words, while conceptual meaning provides the hearer with information about the world being represented, procedural meaning provides guidance on how that information should be processed in context. In other words, while conceptual expressions are linked to concepts that are constituents of language of thought, procedural expressions are linked to states of language users (Wilson 2011: 11).

3 The explicit content of an utterance, or its explicature, is not simply the decoded linguistic meaning but the result of pragmatic enrichment involving processes such as disambiguation, reference assignment, saturation, free enrichment and ad hoc concept construction. Beyond explicatures, communicators also convey implicatures, which are conclusions derived through interaction between the explicit content of an utterance and contextual assumptions. Both levels of interpretation involve inferential processes constrained by the hearer's expectations of relevance.

However, the conceptual/procedural distinction should not be understood as an absolute opposition. As Wilson (2011) argues, majority of linguistic expressions may simultaneously involve conceptual and procedural aspects. An expression may contribute to the representational content of an utterance while also providing instructions about how that content should be interpreted. Consequently, the fact that an expression has a conceptual contribution does not exclude the possibility that it also constrains inferential processing. This observation is particularly relevant for the present study, as the expressions analyzed here do not function merely as neutral descriptive elements but appear to influence how readers evaluate the environmental claims under their scope. Expressions such as *so-called*, *alleged(ly)*, *supposedly* and *claim(ed)* all encode identifiable conceptual meanings. They refer to acts of naming, attribution, presentation or description and therefore contribute to the semantic content of the utterance. Nevertheless, their contribution to interpretation extends beyond this conceptual level. Through their association with attribution and source identification, these expressions may influence the inferential evaluation of the linguistic material under their scope by signaling that the writer does not necessarily adopt or fully endorse the description being attributed.

Accordingly, the present study adopts the view that expressions signaling non-endorsement represent cases in which conceptual and procedural meaning interact. Their conceptual contribution identifies the relevant action of naming or attributing, while their procedural contribution guides the reader towards an interpretation involving echoic concepts⁴, evaluation and possible skepticism. Furthermore, as Wilson (2011) argues, logical and discourse connectives (proper procedural expressions) have more to do with a capacity for argumentation and persuasion than with inferential comprehension itself. As the main function of discourse connectives would be triggering argumentative procedures which yield intuitions about evidential relations (Wilson 2011), the expressions analysed in this paper fall neatly under this qualification. The analysis therefore investigates not only what these expressions mean but also how they shape the inferential processes within a persuasive discourse about greenwashing.

2.3. METHODOLOGY

The corpus consists of twenty English-language online texts published between 2015 and 2025. The texts were selected through purposive sampling from four types of public discourse in which

4 In Relevance Theory, attributive use involves the representation of another person's (or the speaker's but at another time) thought or utterance without necessarily expressing the communicator's own commitment to its content. An echoic use is a subtype of interpretive use in which a communicator reproduces or echoes a previous representation while simultaneously expressing an attitude towards it, such as approval, rejection, irony or dissociation.

environmental claims are critically examined: (i) journalistic discourse (*The Guardian*), (ii) consumer advocacy discourse (*Which?* and *Consumer Reports*), (iii) academic public communication (*The Conversation*), and (iv) institutional discourse where applicable. The selected texts explicitly address greenwashing, environmental marketing, sustainability claims, or misleading environmental communication.

The corpus was compiled with the aim of identifying recurrent linguistic expressions that signal the communicator's lack of commitment to environmental labels or claims. Rather than attempting to establish the frequency of individual lexical items, the analysis focuses on the communicative functions of expressions that attribute environmental descriptions to another source while potentially distancing the current communicator from their validity. Examples were identified through close reading of the corpus. All occurrences of lexical constructions potentially signalling non-endorsement were manually extracted, including expressions such as *so-called*, *claim(ed) to*, *market(ed) as*, *label(ed) as*, *describe(d) as*, *advertise(d) as*, *present(ed) as*, *portray(ed) as*, *promote(d) as*, *alleged*, and related attributional constructions. The inventory was compiled on semantic grounds, that is, by identifying lexical expressions whose encoded meaning involves naming, attributing, reporting, or presenting information originating from another source, and which therefore may, in particular discourse contexts, contribute to a non-endorsing interpretation. The qualitative analysis focuses on the most frequent and representative expressions identified in the corpus.

The analysis proceeds in two stages. First, the conceptual contribution of each expression is identified by determining the lexical concept encoded by the construction. Second, the analysis examines whether the expression gives rise to procedural effects that constrain the inferential interpretation of the environmental claim. Particular attention is paid to whether the expression guides readers towards an interpretive representation in which the environmental designation is attributed to another source while simultaneously reducing the current communicator's commitment to its validity. The analytical framework is grounded in Relevance Theory, particularly the distinction between conceptual and procedural meaning (Blakemore 1987; Wilson 2011) and the relevance-theoretic account of interpretive use of language (Sperber and Wilson 1986/1995; Wilson and Sperber 2012). Since the objective of the study is explanatory rather than quantitative, no statistical analysis was performed. Instead, representative examples were selected to illustrate the different ways in which expressions signaling non-endorsement contribute to the interpretation of environmental claims.

3. ANALYSIS

This section represents a qualitative analysis of the lexical expressions identified in the corpus as those signaling non-endorsement in critical discourse on greenwashing. The examples are grouped according to the lexical expression under examination. For each expression the analysis first considers its conceptual contribution and subsequently examines the procedural meaning, with particular attention to how these expressions guide the interpretation of environmental claims.

Examples with *so-called* were the most frequent in the observed corpus:

- 1) In fact, these days many companies are getting caught out for *so-called* 'greenwashing', where they make environmental claims about their products or services that are misleading or false. (W2)
- 2) Like the 2016 Olympic golf course in Rio de Janeiro that have these Brazilian protesters mourning the "death of nature," *so-called* green consumer products may not be beneficial to the environment after all. (G2)
- 3) The dirty secret of *so-called* 'fossil-fuel free' buildings. (G3)

In example 1) the expression *so-called* scopes the compound noun *greenwashing*. Here, the writer does not reject the existence of the phenomenon itself, but rather informs the reader that the said label is attributed to it, without fully endorsing it as an established category. Its conceptual contribution consists in introducing the label as one attributed within public discourse rather than one fully endorsed by the writer. The existence of the underlying practice is not questioned; rather, the writer distances themselves from the lexical categorization itself, presenting it as an externally established designation. On the other hand, in examples 2) and 3), apart from the same conceptual meaning, a procedural contribution can be observed. Namely, in these examples the expression *so-called* additionally encodes a procedure that guides the inferential process by instructing the reader to construct an echoic representation of the attributed label. Rather than introducing the concepts as descriptive categories endorsed by the writer, it directs the reader to access a representation attributed to others and to derive the writer's dissociative attitude towards that representation. The addressee is to interpret the concept under the scope of *so-called* as echoically used with the writer expressing dissociative attitude. The attributive concepts that are the part of the proposition expressed would be 'green consumer products [as one would unaptly refer to them]' and 'fossil-fuel-free buildings [as one would unaptly refer to them]'. Furthermore, as can be seen from the examples above, the non-endorsing stance is frequently amplified by the use of quotation marks.

Another recurrent group of expressions in the corpus comprises evidential markers that distance the writer from the truth of the proposition, most notably *alleged(ly)* and *supposedly*. While both expressions attribute the communicated content to another source, they also signal that the writer withholds commitment to its truth. Their procedural contribution consists in instructing the reader to treat the proposition as attributed rather than endorsed, thereby encouraging a cautious or skeptical interpretation.

- 4) Some sustainability experts say that Keurig's *alleged failure to disclose the limited recyclability of its pods* is a classic example of what is known as "greenwashing," presenting a product or a company as more sustainable than it actually is to appeal to eco-conscious consumers. (CR1)
- 5) But Keurig is far from alone in facing legal challenges for *allegedly painting its sustainability efforts a deeper shade of green than it might deserve*. (CR1)
- 6) Many companies claim to "offset" a portion of the greenhouse gases they generate, or even to have achieved "carbon neutrality," meaning they *supposedly used offsets to eliminate all emissions related to the production of their products or the delivery of services*. (CR1)

In example 4), the expression *alleged* scopes the nominal constituent *failure to disclose the limited recyclability of its pods*. Conceptually, it indicates that the failure is presented as an accusation or claim rather than an established fact. Procedurally, it instructs the reader not to treat the attributed description as endorsed by the writer, but rather as information originating from another source that the writer is at least somewhat skeptical about. Unlike the previous example, *allegedly* in example 5) has scope over the proposition expressed by the clause *painting its sustainability efforts a deeper shade of green than it might deserve*. The expression is a hearsay adverbial that linguistically encodes a higher-level description that the speaker is not the source of the proposition expressed. The level of conveying additional distancing from the proposition under its scope will heavily depend on the context. For example, in this particular case, due to the context of greenwashing criticism, the reader may be encouraged to infer a further higher-level description of dissociative attitude towards the proposition expressed. This is even more present in example 6) where *supposedly* also takes propositional scope, modifying the proposition *they used offsets to eliminate all emissions related to the production of their products or the delivery of services*. Similar to *allegedly*, it signals that the proposition should not be interpreted as one the writer is the source of. However, *supposedly* additionally conveys a stronger implication of doubt toward the reported claim. Rather than merely attributing the information to another source, it procedurally guides the reader to entertain the proposition with caution and to question its validity.

Finally, another recurrent construction in the corpus involves the verb *claim*. Conceptually, *claim* encodes the act of asserting that a proposition

is true, without implying that its truth has been established. Procedurally, it attributes the proposition to another source while distancing the writer from commitment to its truth. In critical discourse on greenwashing, this distancing frequently carries an overt dissociative attitude, inviting the reader to question the credibility of the reported environmental claim.

- 7) There are lots of suppliers running around, slapping a bit of green paint on their logo and trading bits of paper to *claim* they're green. (G1)
- 8) They also used wild-caught fish to produce feed and for parasite control, with unknown environmental impacts, she *claimed*. (G4)
- 9) An Apple iPhone 15 Pro Max listing on Argos, *claimed* to use "more recycled materials" without stating what the comparison was based on (e.g. with a previous model or other smartphones) or providing any evidence. (W5)

In example 7), the verb *claim* takes scope over the proposition *they are green*. Conceptually, it presents the proposition as an assertion made by the suppliers themselves. Its potential procedural contribution lies in instructing the reader to treat this proposition as attributed rather than endorsed by the writer. Given the surrounding evaluative context ("slapping a bit of green paint on their logo" and "trading bits of paper"), the attributed claim is interpreted echoically, with the writer expressing a dissociative attitude towards its credibility. In example 8), *claimed* scopes the preceding proposition describing the production practices. Unlike the previous example, the verb functions primarily as a quotative evidential marker by explicitly attributing the information to an identified source. Although the construction withholds the writer's commitment to the truth of the proposition, the surrounding context does not invite a skeptical interpretation. Instead, it merely signals that responsibility for the proposition rests with the reported speaker rather than with the writer. In example 9), *claimed* signals that the proposition under its scope is presented as originating from the advertiser rather than the writer. However, unlike 8) but similar to 7), the immediately following qualification (*without stating what the comparison was based on or providing any evidence*) strengthens the effect of non-endorsement. The writer not only attributes the environmental claim to the advertiser but also guides the reader to infer that the claim lacks adequate substantiation. Consequently, the construction encourages a skeptical interpretation of the environmental message rather than its acceptance.

3.1. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The analysis demonstrates that the lexical expressions examined differ in the extent to which they encode potential procedural meaning, or what Sperber and Wilson (2008, cited by Wilson 2011) call *procedural orientation*. Namely, in their analysis of gradable adjectives, Sperber and Wilson suggest that adjectives such as *tall* and *short* encode the same

rather minimal conceptual content (certain value on the height scale) but differ in procedural orientation. Similarly, expressions analyzed in this paper encode similar conceptual content of naming and/or attributing, but also similar procedural information regarding the speaker's stance toward the proposition or the propositional constituent under their scope. This suggests that argumentation and persuasion may give rise (or trigger) to higher-level descriptions of endorsing or dissociative attitude. Main starting point of the present analysis is found in the concluding remarks in Wilson's paper (Wilson 2011: 25):

In developing these suggestions, I have made two main points. The first is that conceptual and procedural meaning should not be seen as mutually exclusive, and that there may be some advantages to the idea that most or all 'content' words also carry procedural meaning. The second is that although procedural expressions do indeed guide the comprehension process in one direction or another, this is not always their *raison d'être*. Some procedural expressions appear to be linked to capacities which are not intrinsically linked to comprehension, including mindreading, emotion reading, social cognition, parsing and epistemic vigilance. On this account, what all procedural expressions have in common is not necessarily their cognitive function, but only their triggering role.

The expression *so-called* exhibits the strongest procedural character, systematically guiding the addressee towards an echoic interpretation and signaling the writer's dissociative attitude towards the expression within its scope. This is in line with the proposed qualification that when a conceptual content is encoded, so is an instruction to inferentially construct an ad hoc concept using the encoded conceptual content as a starting point (Wilson 2011: 16). However, even *so-called* does not invariably trigger non-endorsement interpretation. In example 1) the expression merely indicates that a particular label has been assigned to a phenomenon, without inviting the reader to reject the designation itself. Its interpretation therefore remains context-sensitive, with the potential procedural contribution emerging only when the discourse provides sufficient evidence for a dissociative reading. This fits with the proposed qualification that "the function of procedural expressions is to activate procedures whose main function is to help the hearer understand an utterance by finding the intended combination of context, explicit content and cognitive effects" (Wilson 2011: 13)

A similar observation applies to hearsay adverbials such as *allegedly*. These expressions encode a higher-level description indicating that the speaker is not the source of the proposition expressed. Their primary contribution is therefore evidential, instructing the addressee to represent the proposition as attributed to another source. In the present corpus, however, these adverbials regularly occur within a persuasive discourse whose communicative goal is to expose misleading environmental

claims. Consequently, the encoded evidential meaning is systematically enriched by contextual inference, yielding an interpretation in which the writer not only attributes the proposition to another source but also withholds commitment to its truth. In the case of *supposedly*, this skeptical interpretation is particularly salient.

The verb *claim* occupies a different position on the conceptual-procedural continuum, since it primarily contributes conceptual meaning by describing the speech act of asserting a proposition. Nevertheless, in the analyzed corpus its repeated use in contexts of criticism and evaluation gives rise to a potential additional layer of meaning that signals non-endorsement. Rather than simply reporting what companies or other actors assert, the construction frequently encourages the reader to interpret the reported proposition as non-endorsed by the writer. Importantly, this effect is not necessarily inherent to the lexical meaning of *claim*. In example where *claimed* merely attributes information to an identified source without evaluative context, the expression functions predominantly as an evidential device. Only when combined with surrounding cues that challenge the credibility of the reported proposition does it contribute to the interpretation of non-endorsement.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The paper examined lexical expressions signaling non-endorsement in contemporary persuasive discourse on greenwashing from the perspective of Relevance Theory. Rather than assuming that the analyzed expressions uniformly encode conceptual meaning, the study took as its starting point Wilson's (2011) proposal that conceptual and procedural meaning form a continuum, with linguistic expressions differing in the extent to which they constrain the inferential process and that all expressions encode at least some procedure. The analysis therefore explored whether lexical expressions traditionally regarded as conceptual display systematic procedural effects when used in a context whose communicative purpose is to challenge the credibility of environmental claims.

The findings suggest that the persuasive discourse of greenwashing provides favorable conditions for such effects to emerge. While *so-called* exhibits the clearest procedural contribution by consistently guiding the reader towards an echoic, dissociative interpretation, hearsay adverbials such as *allegedly* and *supposedly* similarly encourage the reader to interpret propositions as not endorsed by the speaker. The evidence is more tentative in the case of *claim*. Although the verb repeatedly contributes to interpretations involving evidential distancing and skepticism, these effects appear to depend more heavily on contextual information than is the case with the proper procedural expressions. Consequently, the present findings should not be taken as evidence that *claim* itself encodes

procedural meaning. Rather, they suggest that persuasive discourse may systematically strengthen procedural effects associated with lexical items whose encoded meaning is predominantly conceptual. At the same time, the analysis also identified examples in which these expressions function primarily as markers of naming or evidential attribution, demonstrating that non-endorsement is not an invariant consequence of their use but arises through interaction with the surrounding discourse context.

The findings do not warrant the conclusion that the analyzed expressions encode procedural meaning to the same extent as canonical procedural expressions. Rather, they suggest that, in persuasive discourse, contextual and rhetorical pressures may promote interpretations in which primarily conceptual expressions come to perform a potentially procedural function by constraining the range of acceptable interpretations. The non-endorsement interpretation that arises in persuasive context might therefore be viewed as a procedural contribution of the analyzed expressions. Future research based on larger datasets and different discourse types is needed to determine whether the observed patterns extend beyond environmental communication and to establish more precisely the relationship between encoded meaning, contextual inference and the emergence of non-endorsement.

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Нина Ж. Манојловић / СИГНАЛИЗИРАЊЕ НЕОДОБРАВАЊА У ПЕРСУАЗИВНОМ ДИСКУРСУ: СЛУЧАЈ ЕКОМАНИПУЛАЦИЈЕ

Резиме / Рад анализира текстове о екоманипулацији (енг. *greenwashing*), релативно новом феномену, са посебним освртом на језичке изразе који сигнализирају дисоцијативан или неафирмативан став према пропозиционим конституентима или целим пропозицијама. Полазећи од становишта да све пунозначне речи потенцијално кодирају процедуралне информације, у раду се испитује да ли изрази чије је конвенционално значење превасходно концептуално могу остварити процедуралне ефекте у специфичном контексту персуазивног дискурса. Корпус чине текстови на енглеском језику о екоманипулацији, преузети из новинских, потрошачки оријентисаних и популарнонаучних извора. Лексички изрази који потенцијално сигнализирају неодобравање ручно су ексцерпирани, а за квалитативну прагматичку анализу одабран је репрезентативан скуп најфреквентнијих јединица (*so-called*, *allegedly*, *supposedly* и *claim*). Анализа показује да, иако ови изрази првенствено доприносе концептуалном садржају, у персуазивном дискурсу могу додатно ограничавати инференцијални пут тако што подстичу неафирмативно тумачење.

Кључне речи: анализа дискурса, прагматика, теорија релевантности, ехоички концепт, персуазивни дискурс, екоманипулација

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