Daniela Francesca Virdis

University of Cagliari

[dfvirdis@unica.it](mailto:dfvirdis@unica.it)

**Towards a beneficial definition of sustainability: An ecostylistic scrutiny of sources and texts**

Temporal concepts and dimensions are closely blended with the basic structure of ecological discourse. The past is connected with the future; the present is depicted, on the one hand, as the sum of the outcomes of the past and, on the other hand, as the required springboard to the events of the future. For this reason, as contended by Stibbe, the time range of a beneficial ecosophy is unlimited: it embraces the ability to live well in the present as well as in the future, i.e. it incorporates both present and future generations. The mainstream definitions of the noun “sustainability” provided by the Oxford English Dictionary and by recent ecology and environment dictionaries and textbooks mainly focus on the state of affairs in the decades to come; nevertheless, ecological problems are with us now, and drastic action and measures to save the planet must be taken immediately.

In this lecture, I will explore the mainstream definitions of the term “sustainability” and its connections with temporality by applying the theoretical frameworks and the methodologies of ecostylistics and of ecolinguistics. Firstly, I will identify the beneficial and destructive features of these definitions; secondly, I will compare these definitions and features with the linguistic data and the value-system of a beneficial text from the environet focusing on ecological and social sustainability. My main aim is to rephrase these definitions of “sustainability” and to create a working one by leaving out their destructive notions and by adding the concepts in the beneficial text.

**References**

Allaby, M. 2015 [1994]. A Dictionary of Ecology, 5th edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Douthwaite, J., D.F. Virdis, and E. Zurru, eds. 2017. The Stylistics of Landscapes, the Landscapes of Stylistics. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Editors of Salem Press, eds. 2004. Ecology Basics. Pasadena, CA, and Hackensack, NJ: Salem Press.

Fill, A.F., and H. Penz, eds. 2018. The Routledge Handbook of Ecolinguistics. London and New York: Routledge.

Fill, A.F., and P. Mühlhäusler, eds. 2001. The Ecolinguistics Reader: Language, Ecology, and Environment. London and New York: Continuum.

Harré, R., J. Brockmeier, and P. Mühlhäuser. 1999. Greenspeak: A Study of Environmental Discourse. London: Sage.

Kemp, D.D. 2002 [1998]. The Environment Dictionary, 2nd edition. London and New York: Routledge [electronic edition].

Myerson, G., and Y. Rydin. 1996. The Language of Environment: A New Rhetoric. London and New York: Routledge.

Stibbe, A. 2012. Animals Erased: Discourse, Ecology, and Reconnection with the Natural World. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Stibbe, A. 2021 [2015]. Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By, 2nd edition. London and New York: Routledge.

Virdis, D.F. 2022. Ecological Stylistics: Ecostylistic Approaches to Discourses of Nature, the Environment and Sustainability. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Virdis, D.F., E. Zurru, and E. Lahey, eds. 2021. Language in Place: Stylistic Perspectives on Landscape, Place and Environment. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.