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Opposition in ecological discourse: An ecostylistic scrutiny of speakGreen ecological posts

Abstract: This article explores the posts with ecological concerns published by the community organization speakGreen on its website and Facebook page. The analysis falls within the aims and scope of ecostylistics, and is undertaken by applying Lesley Jeffries' stylistic model of opposition. The main research purpose of this article is to identify the stylistic strategies promoting beneficial stories and those controverting destructive stories, in Arran Stibbe's terminology. A broader research purpose is to assess whether the stylistic model of opposition can fruitfully be utilized to examine ecologically-oriented short texts and the non-literary text type of the speakGreen post. This ecostylistic study firstly demonstrates that unconventional opposites are more effective than conventional opposites in conveying beneficial stories, since their unexpected contrasts surprise the speakGreen website and Facebook users. Secondly, the study proves that two structural triggers of opposition, namely negation and especially parallel structure, are the most frequent in the sample of posts under investigation, due to the stylistic and discursive characteristics of the speakGreen post text type. The sample was also found to feature: (1) The visual trigger of green and red color-coding, which indicates contrast between beneficial stories and destructive stories; (2) Such stylistic devices as foregrounded end-focus and phonological parallelism. All these stylistic traits contribute to making the posts articulate texts relaying refined ecological messages in very few words.

Keywords: beneficial stories; destructive stories; ecological discourse; opposition; speakGreen

1 Introduction

The community organization speakGreen (homepage: http://speak-green.com/; Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/speakgreenmovement) was created in

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January 2014 by the psychologist and international process facilitator Claudia Gross with the intention of raising awareness of linguistic preferences. The speakGreen website (https://speak-green.com/about-speakgreen/) states that the organization promotes a fairer type of language use by providing an alternative vocabulary for a fairer and alternative social system (the so-called "speakGreen transitionary"); this is summarized by its motto "Words create worlds – choose the green ones". Words (and phrases, clauses, and sentences) are visually categorized into terms colored in red and their counterparts colored in green. To quote just a few recent examples, the red adjective "busy" opposes the green adjective "balanced" (Facebook, 13 September 2022), the red phrase "hyper connected" contrasts with the green phrase "deeply connected" (Facebook, 29 September 2022), and the red clause "I don't want to fail" opposes the green clause "I want to succeed" (Facebook, 21 September 2022). The red terms persist in narratives preserving the status quo and causing separation; the green terms help to change these narratives by forming an all-embracing inspirational language typified by assertiveness and inclusiveness and encouraging unity and physical and psychological wellbeing. Therefore, according to speakGreen, we must not utilize the red terms and must prefer the green terms instead, in order to shift human mainstream paradigms and worldviews in all areas of life.

The speakGreen project is animated primarily by three notions and approaches: (1) Appreciative inquiry, a practice involving individuals and organizations in self-determined change (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005); (2) Nonviolent communication, an attitude to a nonviolent, compassionate, and collaborative lifestyle elaborated by Marshall Rosenberg starting in the 1960s (Rosenberg 2015); (3) Positive psychology, the systematic examination of positive human activities and pursuits and of humans thriving in their diverse dimensions (cultural, relational, biological, etc.) (Seligman 2002) (http://speak-green.com/about-speakgreen/). In addition to these notions and approaches, the language use advocated by speakGreen has close and explicit associations with the ecologically and socially equitable language championed by the discipline of ecolinguistics; the speakGreen website, on its webpage "sG EcoLingo" (http://speak-green.com/sg-ecolingo/; see Note 3), also references Arran Stibbe's (2015) *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By* and its online course *The Stories We Live By: A Free Online Course in Ecolinguistics* (see http://storieMSweliveby.org.uk/).

More precisely, against this theoretical background, the speakGreen posts comprise words, pairs of green and red antonyms, proverbs, and quotations treating topics like everyday interaction, work life, and ecology. As a result, the adjective "green" is consistently employed with the main connotation of "just, unbiased, equitable, impartial" (a connotation not recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary [OED Online 2022]). Consequently, the posts can be considered to be a case of applied ecolinguistics in its second strand of research as recognized by Fill (2018: 3–5; see

Section 2.2): the posts support green grammar and criticize *parole* in Saussurean terms, i.e. discourse and language use; to be more specific, what they criticize is lexical and semantic selections. A number of posts deal with ecological subjects; hence, the following denotation of "green", dating back to the late twentieth century, also emerges from the texts: "Of, relating to, or supporting environmentalism, esp. as a political issue; (also with capital initial) belonging to or supporting an environmentalist political party" (OED Online 2022, sense 13.a).

As illustrated by the examples quoted above, speakGreen not only contains pairs of opposites, but is founded on them. Accordingly, in this article, I explore a selection of speakGreen posts considering ecological questions through the stylistic model of opposition developed by Jeffries (2010; see also Davies 2014). This scholar defined the strategy of opposition as the particular semantic relation between an opposite pair of lexemes, phrases, or clauses which can be either context-free or context-specific. Underlying this article are also the notions of "beneficial story" and "destructive story", which derive from the field of ecolinguistics and were elaborated by Stibbe (2021: 222). Based on the stylistic device of opposition and on these two ecolinguistic notions, the main research purpose of this article is to identify the stylistic practices deployed in the speakGreen posts to advertise beneficial stories and to resist destructive stories. The stylistic model of opposition has mainly been employed to study relatively long literary and non-literary texts (Jeffries 2010) and news discourse (Davies 2014); however, it has not been employed to investigate shorter texts and ecological issues so far. Therefore, the wider research purpose of this article is to test whether this model of opposition can effectively be applied to a selection of extremely concise texts with ecological priorities. Given these topics, research purposes, and methods, this article falls within the realm of ecostylistics (Douthwaite et al. 2017; Virdis 2022; Virdis et al. 2021; see also this Special Issue); as such, it is directly linked to the theme, aims and scope of this Special Issue, which includes articles analyzing various environmental discourses in literary and non-literary texts by adopting the discipline of stylistics and its diverse frameworks and methods.

The article is organized into three further sections. Section 2 reviews the most relevant literature to this research, with Section 2.1 defining the stylistic mechanism of opposition, and Section 2.2 outlining the Hallidayan tradition of ecolinguistics and the concepts of beneficial story and destructive story. Section 3 presents the data and methodology of this study and the data analysis. To be more precise, Section 3.1 introduces the speakGreen posts investigated here and the methodology complied with to choose them; the analytical Sections 3.2–3.5 scrutinize these linguistic data by adhering to the stylistic strategy of opposition and to the theoretical framework outlined in Section 2; Section 3.6 provides further remarks about opposition in the speakGreen posts. Section 3 is followed by a discussion and concluding remarks in Section 4.

2 Literature review

2.1 Opposition in discourse: Structural and lexical triggers

In Jeffries' (2010: 2) definition, the phenomenon of the opposite semantic relation between a pair of lexemes which is context-free, not textually constructed, and which is underpinned by the capacity of the two lexemes to be associated by oppositeness (e.g. "hot" vs. "cold") is known as conventional opposition or antonymy. This reflects the fact that members of speech communities implicitly agree that given words are semantically opposite to each other and are codified as such in dictionaries and thesauruses. Conversely, and more interestingly from an ideological perspective, constructed, created, or unconventional opposition defines the semantic relation between a pair of lexemes, phrases, or clauses not conventionally recognized as opposites in everyday discourse, but resulting from their specific lexical and syntactic context and their being placed in a position of opposition by lexical and syntactic triggers. Therefore, this type of opposite semantic relation is a textually and discursively constructed phenomenon, and depends on its context of production and reception and on the ideology of that context (Jeffries 2010: 1). According to this researcher, the contextual creation of opposition is "an example of what Grice (1975) calls a conventional implicature and Simpson (1993: 127–128) calls pragmatic presupposition. This, they claim, is the creation of a presupposition or implicature not through the context-free text, but through the text in combination with its context of use" (Jeffries 2010: 3).

For instance, in the speakGreen examples quoted in the introductory Section 1, the green adjective "balanced" is an unconventional opposite of the red adjective "busy", and the green adverb "deeply" (in the adjective phrase "deeply connected") is an unconventional opposite of the red adverb "hyper" (in the adjective phrase "hyper connected"). What makes their semantic relation opposite in an unconventional way is their use in the social and ecological context of the speakGreen project and on its website and Facebook page. In this ideological context, being "busy" with a large number of (presumably unpleasant) activities is textually and discursively constructed as a negative behavior; this conventionally implies and pragmatically presupposes contrast with the positive behavior of being "balanced" and finding equilibrium in one's occupations. In the same context, being "hyper connected" to electronic devices is textually and discursively outlined as a negative habit implying and presupposing opposition to the positive habit of being "deeply connected" to other people.

Why is it fruitful to scrutinize the stylistic device of opposition construction in discourse and opposites in texts? Firstly, this device is extremely frequent in both

literary and non-literary text types discussing an extensive range of topics. Secondly, Jeffries (2010: 26–27) notes that "Opposites are, I would claim, one of the most important of the linguistic-cognitive structures by which we categorize and organize our world, and thus also our world-view". This is demonstrated by the fact that a large number of conventional opposites are taught to children from a young age and appear in picture books or early books; children thereby learn to conceptualize human existence and experience in binary terms. Thirdly, in Davies' (2014: 1) words, "Binary oppositions are part of the standard discourse toolkit for rhetoricians attempting to influence opinion"; hence, both scholars of linguistics and the general public should examine and get to know oppositions in order to identify and resist the ecologically and socially destructive opinions they may relay.

The concept of opposition is profoundly ingrained in many social and ecological aspects of Western cultures; as a result, exploring this linguistic-cognitive phenomenon and its manifestations in text and discourse helps to study ideologically positioned texts, and can contribute to unmasking values and value systems. Investigating this phenomenon proves to be especially useful when opposition is naturalized or barely perceptible, and employed in such an articulate manner that the addressee may not be able to distinguish it; and when it is utilized to present positively certain individuals, groups, and tenets while concurrently stereotyping, stigmatizing and marginalizing other individuals, groups and tenets (Davies 2014).

With a view to analyzing opposites and the phenomenon of antonymy, Jones (2002) initially proposed a typology of syntactic frames for housing co-occurring conventional antonyms (for instance, "We want peace, not war"). Jeffries (2010) and Davies (2012, 2014) adopted a new approach to opposition in discourse accounting for a broader definition of this phenomenon: they developed flexible typologies of syntactic frames and their related functions, and posited that syntactic frames could also act as triggers for unconventional opposites co-occurring in those frames. These authors refined Jones' typology on this theoretical basis, so that, for example, Jones' very frequent syntactic frame category of "coordinated antonymy" was found to be redundant, and new syntactic frame categories were introduced, such as "transitional", "replacive" and "concessive" oppositions (for a table presenting all the new syntactic frame categories and their functions as triggers, see Davies 2012: 49–51, 2014: 60–62). In this article, I apply Jeffries' (2010: 32–52) detailed stylistic model of opposition, namely the four structural triggers and two lexical triggers of this phenomenon she pinpointed, which are outlined below.

Structural trigger 1a: Negation (conventional opposites)

Among structural triggers, negation is generally realized by an *X not Y* frame, where *X* and *Y* are semantically contrastive lexemes (Jeffries 2010: 33–39). On the one hand, when the two constituents are conventional opposites, the *not Y* constituent is redundant and makes the statement tautological, given that the *X* constituent would

be enough to communicate the intended message. Consequently, conventional opposites can be found as the two constituents of the *X not Y* frame when there is a reason to name them both, for instance, to underscore the message of contrast expressed by the frame, as in Example (1) (all the examples below are taken from Jeffries [2010: 34–51]):

(1)   *I'm not a coward, I'm very brave!*

Structural trigger 1b: Negation (unconventional opposites)

On the other hand, when the two constituents of the *X not Y* frame are unconventional opposites, both of them must be stated, because one cannot be derived from the other. This is the case with Example (2):

(2)   *We are not a colony, we are an equal and valued part of this nation.*
         (*Daily Telegraph*, 23 September 2002)

When exploring unconventional opposites, it is important to explain how they work at the conceptual level. In this example, taken from Davies (2008: 108–109; see also Davies 2014: 63–64) and cited in Jeffries (2010: 34–35), it is useful to clarify how the addressee understands or processes the idea of "a colony" as being an unconventional opposite of "an equal and valued part of this nation". Davies (2008: 108–109) claims that, after being activated by syntactic triggers, unconventional opposites can be understood in terms of conventional opposites by mental reference to canonical conceptual oppositions, which are often layered as various higher level superordinate concepts – at the most general level, GOOD/BAD or POSITIVE/NEGATIVE (in accordance with the typographical conventions utilized in Davies [2014], canonical conceptual oppositions are in SMALL CAPITALS; furthermore, in the pair of opposites, the positively value-laden term precedes the negatively value-laden term). Jeffries (2010) and Davies (2008, 2014) argue that there are often more than one canonical conceptual oppositions overlapping in the understanding of a pair of unconventional opposites, and operating at any one time to make the unconventional opposites more powerful.[1] Therefore, underpinning the unconventional opposites in Example (2) are the superordinate concepts FREEDOM/OPPRESSION and EQUALITY/INEQUALITY. It follows that the notion of "a colony" reminds the addressee of both the superordinate notions of OPPRESSION and INEQUALITY, and its unconventional opposite "an equal and valued part of this nation" reminds them of the superordinate notions of FREEDOM and EQUALITY alike.

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1 Jeffries (2010: 122) adds: "Given the apparent importance of some basic sets of opposites in helping us to interpret novel opposites, we may even hypothesize that there are socially constructed and over-arching conceptual opposites (GOOD/BAD) that will rank alongside the [conceptual] metaphor set (TIME IS MONEY etc.)". For further discussion of the relation of opposition with conceptual metaphors and with mental spaces and text worlds, see Jeffries (2010: 122–125); for the role of conceptual relations in opposition triggering, see Davies (2014: 33–35, 93–122).

Structural trigger 2: Parallel structure

Drawing on Leech (1969: 67), Jeffries (2010: 39–42) observes that a parallel structure establishes a semantic relationship between two or more items. Hence, explaining the parallel structure entails realizing that a link between these items exists, and that this link can be one of similarity or dissimilarity. When a parallel structure functions as a structural trigger of opposition, it is normally composed of a reiterated pattern, one positive and the other negative, usually in a complementary or mutually exclusive association, as in Example (3) (positive pattern "We have/the language of X" versus negative pattern "We don't have/the language of Y", with the negation "don't"):

(3)   *We have*
         the language of stuffed birds, of teacups. We don't have
         the language of bodies.
         (Carol Ann Duffy, *Selected Poems*)

In a parallel pattern, the opposition is not necessarily limited to a meaning connection between two individual lexemes, but may associate two notions requiring full phrases or clauses to be described. Moreover, when interpreting an unconventional pair of opposites, the addressee does so in relation to an underlying conventional pair: they commonly reword the constructed pair in terms of a conventional pair they are more acquainted with. For instance, in the context of Example (3), "stuffed birds, […] teacups" can be rephrased as "awkwardness", and "bodies" as "naturalness".

Structural trigger 3: Coordination

Coordination and all coordinating conjunctions can act as structural triggers of opposition in specific contexts (Jeffries 2010: 42–45). Contrary to copulative "and", disjunctive "but", "or" and "yet" are predictable signs of opposition, given that they activate conventional implicatures of contrast. As pointed out by Jeffries (2010: 43–44), Davies (2008: 140–143) introduced the category of contrastive opposition to refer to the use of disjunctive "but", and the category of concessive opposition elicited by such concessive conjuncts as "while", "despite", "(al)though" and "however". A sentence with a concessive clause signals that the state of affairs depicted in the main clause is unexpected, considering the state of affairs depicted in the concessive secondary clause.

However, copulative "and" can also prompt oppositeness, particularly when other triggers, contrastive lexical selections, or a contrastive semantic context are also present. This is the case with Example (4):

(4)   *I find this difficult, and then again easy,*
       as I watch him push his bike off in the rain.
       (Carol Ann Duffy, *Selected Poems*)

In this example, copulative "and" produces the same conventional implicature or pragmatic presupposition of oppositeness as disjunctive "but"; this is confirmed by the pair of conventional opposites "difficult" in the first clause and "easy" in the second contrastive clause. Consequently, the two clauses can be rewritten as "I find this difficult, but then again easy": here, the use of disjunctive "but" makes more explicit the contrast between the two clauses and the opposite situations they portray.

Structural trigger 4: Comparative structures

The fourth and last structural trigger of opposition is the use of comparative structures. The constructions "more … than" and "less … than" generally indicate gradable conventional oppositeness (Jeffries 2010: 45–47), as in Example (5):

(5)   *What they ask of women is less their bed,*
       Or an hour between two trains, than to be almost gone,
       Like the moon that turns her pages day by day.
       (Medbh McGuckian, *Venus and the Rain*)

This example features the comparative structure "less their bed, /Or an hour between two trains, than to be almost gone". The structure sets up a pair of conventional opposites describing two gradable characteristics of women: being absent ("to be almost gone") and being present (sexually, as conveyed by the noun phrase "their bed", and cursorily, as relayed by the noun phrase "an hour between two trains").

Lexical trigger 1a: Explicit mention of oppositional relation

The first lexical trigger of opposition listed in Jeffries' stylistic model of opposition is explicit mention of oppositional relation (Jeffries 2010: 47–50). This consists of a lexical verb or a phrase whose semantics openly establishes contrast between two ideas or situations, like "X contrast(ed) with Y" and "X opposite/opposed to Y". Jeffries (2010: 48) argues that this category of lexical triggers resembles the one Davies (2008: 129; see also Davies 2014: 76–80) called "explicit opposition" and Jones (2002: 81–85) called "distinguished antonymy". In Jeffries' (2010) model, the category of explicit mention of oppositional relation also comprises such lexical verbs as "compare", "change" and "transform", which Davies (2014: 76–77) labels as lexical triggers of transitional opposition. The lexical verb "turned" in Example (6) is a prototypical case of Davies' (2014) transitional opposition:

(6)   *A rare flash of emotion from a man who has turned cynicism into an art form.*
       (*Express*, 1 May 1997)

The verb phrase "has turned" activates the contrast in the clause constituents following it. To be more specific, the clause denotes that the negatively connoted past state of "cynicism" has been changed, transformed, and even elevated into the positively connoted present state of "an art form". The use of the verb phrase "has

turned" thus implies that the concept of "cynicism" has been changed into its unconventional – and sarcastic – opposite "an art form".

Lexical trigger 1b: Metalinguistic mention of oppositional relation

Analogous to explicit mention of oppositional relation is the use of meta-linguistic or self-aware practices explicitly suggesting that opposite concepts are being conveyed, such as the nouns "oxymoron" and "contrast", and the non-finite clause "treading that fine line" in Example (7):

(7)   *This game of mirrors makes campaigning difficult for Ashdown, treading that fine line between aspiration and realism.*
        (*Guardian*, 1 May 1997)

Like the verb phrase "has turned" in Example (6), the non-finite clause "treading that fine line" prompts opposition between the phrase constituents it introduces, namely between the two contrasting notions of "aspiration" and "realism". These notions realize conventional opposites in this context, so much so that they are linguistically conceptualized as physical entities divided by "that fine line".

Lexical trigger 2: Auto-evocation of oppositional relation

At the other end of the spectrum from explicit mention of oppositional relation is auto-evocation, the second and last lexical trigger of opposition (Jeffries 2010: 50–52). This consists of deploying one term only which alone evokes an oppositional association with another unstated term. This trigger mostly applies to conventional opposition, since it relies on the addressee knowing the implicit counterpart. This technique is founded on Grice's (1975) cooperative principle and on the flouting of the maxim of Quantity, because the natural meaning of the message supplies fewer details than required, but its non-natural meaning relays a conventional opposition. This is the case with Example (8):

(8)   *It is called the suburbs now, but when black people lived there it was called the Bottom.*
        (Tony Morrison, *Sula*)

Here, explicit "black people" conventionally contrasts with implicit "white people". The pragmatically implicated term is elicited by the wider context provided by the semantic loading of two further opposites: conventional "now" versus "when + past tense", and unconventional "suburbs" versus "the Bottom".

Based on this stylistic model and on these structural and lexical triggers, the construction of opposition in the communicative experience of the speakGreen posts mirrors the ideological conflicts between an ecological mindset and an unecological one, and eventually sets up the motives, ideals, and practical matters of an ecological agenda. Before examining the speakGreen posts via this model, their relationship to the discipline of ecolinguistics will be dealt with in Section 2.2 below.

2.2 Ecolinguistics: The Hallidayan tradition, beneficial stories, and destructive stories

As anticipated in Section 1, the speakGreen project and the social and ecological messages relayed by its posts are linked to the area of ecolinguistics. Fill (2018: 1–3) states that this area treats the role of language in relation to the environment, regarded in its biological or ecological meaning. To be more precise, ecolinguistics discusses how language and discourse influence the depiction of ecological challenges, but also how they can be a factor in relieving or exacerbating them. Two of the primary aims and preoccupations of ecolinguistics are to scrutinize and criticize language use concurring in ecological devastation, and to support the search for a new language use urging humans to rescue the planet and all life phenomena.

Of the three complementary strands of ecolinguistic research detected by Fill (2018: 3–5), the second is the most relevant to this article. Referred to as the Hallidayan tradition, it was initiated by M. A. K. Halliday with his keynote speech "New Ways of Meaning: The Challenge to Applied Linguistics", delivered at the 9th Congress of the International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA) in Thessaloniki, Greece, and published as Halliday (1990). In his paper, this scholar adhered to linguistic constructionism and advocated Benjamin Lee Whorf's view that language does not merely reproduce the world: language construes the world by playing an active part in shaping reality and by impacting human thought. As a result, the goal of applied linguistics, therefore of ecolinguistics, is to explore and explain how lexis, grammar, and the language system as a whole structure the world and human experience. Halliday (1990) also argued that language is the cause of the divide between humans and other animal and vegetable species. Moreover, language also sustains and propagates several ideologies: sexism, classism, speciesism, and growthism all manifest themselves in the lexicogrammar of languages. The last ideology is particularly remarkable from an ecological viewpoint: it implies that economic growth is the primary goal of human society, and that humans make all their artefacts, actions and occupations grow indefinitely to the detriment of more-than-human organisms (Abram 1996) and of their ecological space.

Since Halliday's (1990) paper, the Hallidayan strand of ecolinguistic research has analyzed the idea that language partly causes the threats humans pose to nature, rather than creating closeness between themselves, the earth, and the other animals and plants. Furthermore, language, as utilized in modern and contemporary humanities, social sciences, and hard sciences, is devoted to perpetuating and praising the human oppression of the natural world, as well as to countering the ecological embedding of humans and human social systems in this world. In other words, in Fill and Mühlhäusler's (2001b: 5) view, on the one hand, anthropocentric language

structures make users liable and inclined to ecologically questionable beliefs and, consequently, environmentally exploitative behaviors; on the other hand, such beliefs and behaviors are also spurred by anthropocentric discursive selections made by given users in the language community. The researchers whose articles were reprinted in *The Ecolinguistics Reader: Language, Ecology and Environment* (Fill and Mühlhäusler 2001a) pinpointed a number of measures to face these challenges; among them are "creating an environmentally more correct biocentric language, a solution which is problematic in the absence of any clear idea of what such a language would look like; educating speakers by creating greater awareness that languages are not neutral descriptive tools; or promoting better law-informed discourses (combined with small amounts of lexical enrichment)" (Fill and Mühlhäusler 2001b: 5).

As contended by Fill and Mühlhäusler (2001b: 6), the linguistic discipline of critical discourse analysis also blames language use. Nevertheless, there is a substantial dissimilarity between ecolinguistics and this discipline. On the one hand, critical discourse analysis mostly considers discourse, or Saussure's *parole*; hence, it examines spoken and written texts and their lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic selections. On the other hand, in addition to *parole*, ecolinguistics critically studies the language system, or Saussure's *langue*, and how it incites users to conceive fragmentation in the natural world and an unecological disconnection between humans and the biotic and abiotic components of this world. Therefore, according to Fill and Mühlhäusler (2001b: 6), the Hallidayan tradition, or critical ecolinguistics, features two lines of research: a system-critical part investigating *langue*, and a text-critical part investigating *parole*.[2]

The system-critical line champions and circulates green grammar and accuses the established structures of language; it is the line most directly influenced by Halliday's paper and by the work carried out by academics like Andrew Goatly, who scrutinized grammatical metaphor and the fragmentation of reality evoked by Western languages (Goatly 1996). The text-critical line more explicitly relies on critical discourse analysis, and is now a flourishing research area. It explores language use and (non-)green alternatives in an extensive variety of text types embracing diverse (un)ecological interests, ideologies, and value systems, such as newspaper, magazine, and web articles on ecological matters, (seemingly) eco-friendly advertisements, and political speeches (to name just a few articles falling

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2 It should be emphasized that "[p]oststructuralism […] rejects structuralism's view of language as a stable, unchangeable and totalising structure and it dissolves the sharp distinction between *langue* and *parole*" (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 10). However, within the ecolinguistic framework of the Hallidayan tradition, this distinction remains helpful.

within the text-critical line, see those reprinted in Fill and Mühlhäusler [2001a: Part 4], and most of those collected in Fill and Penz [2018: Part II]).

Both the system-critical line and the text-critical line have converged with and are contributing to the current ecological turn in the arts, humanities and social sciences. The objects of study in these fields, ranging, among others, from the human mind, society and culture to human religion, literature, and communication, are not thought of as separate or unconnected entities any longer, but are conceived of as integral and interrelated components of the larger ecosystem and physical environment they originate from. In Stibbe's (2021: 7–8) view, moving from these premises, it follows that the key thrust and the normative goal of the ecological humanities is to concur in conserving and replenishing the planet, and to support the health and wellbeing of all life, human and more-than-human alike. Within the ecological humanities, the discipline of ecolinguistics plays a prominent part: in Stibbe's (2021: 9) words, it "considers the role of language in the life-sustaining interactions of humans with other humans, other organisms and the physical environment".

Ecolinguistics was recently evolved by Stibbe in the two editions of his *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By* (Stibbe 2015, 2021). In this book, two of the major terms are "story" and "story-we-live-by". A story is "A cognitive structure in the minds of individuals which influences how they think, talk and act" (Stibbe 2021: 228); a story-we-live-by is "[a] story in the minds of multiple individuals across a culture" (Stibbe 2021: 228). These cognitive structures store and supply human principles and tenets; as such, they underpin human societies and have substantial ecological and social consequences. Stories are not narratives or plots, like those told in novels or films; they are mental models indirectly, but pervasively, communicated by everyday spoken and written texts and discourses and, above all, shaping those texts and discourses. Stibbe (2021: 22–30) categorized stories and the discourses evoking them into beneficial, ambivalent, and destructive; the types of stories most pertinent to the speakGreen project and to its posts are beneficial and destructive; consequently, they will be accurately defined.

In Stibbe's (2021: 222) words, a destructive story is "[a] story which opposes or contradicts the ecosophy [ecological philosophy] of the analyst (e.g. it is seen as encouraging people to destroy the ecosystems that life depends on)". Destructive stories are ecologically dangerous and damaging, because they maintain inequality and result in human alienation from other animal and vegetable organisms and in environmental ruin. Highly destructive stories identified by authors in ecolinguistics and the ecological humanities are the story of human separation, the story of human uniqueness or exceptionalism, and the story of human centrality. That is to say, humans are held to be a species radically different, detached from and superior to nonhuman species, with nothing in common with them; as a result, humans are

allegedly fated to subjugate them and to control the entire earth. Of the many destructive stories industrial and imperial nations, civilizations, and social systems are founded on, the most dominant and persuasive are possibly those promoted by the discourses of economics (mainly unlimited economic growth), advertising (mainly consumerism), and intensive industrial agriculture (mainly animals as commodities). These stories set out and justify the unbalanced human interactions with one another, with society, and with the natural world; accordingly, they are increasingly being disputed and doubt is being cast on them by the ecological problems the planet is facing (Stibbe 2021: 3–4, 22–24).

With a view to surmounting ecological problems, destructive stories should be resisted: those which human experience is based on should be exposed, analyzed and rewritten. More precisely, the principal objective of ecolinguistics is to oppose destructive stories, look for beneficial stories in Western societies or in other more ecological societies worldwide (especially traditional and indigenous societies from the Global South), and disseminate them in the unecological Global North. This is also the principal objective of the speakGreen project and of its posts: the red terms in the posts express destructive stories, the green terms reword them so as to signal beneficial stories.

As asserted by Stibbe (2021: 222), a beneficial story is "[a] story which accords with the ecosophy [ecological philosophy] of the analyst (e.g. it is seen as encouraging people to protect the ecosystems that life depends on)". A beneficial story conveys a mindset inspiring ecological behaviors in humans; it urges them to safeguard the environmental structures sustaining human life and more-than-human life, and contributing to the bodily and mental wellbeing of all humans, animals and plants. Beneficial stories also advocate values and actions like resilience, social equality and reduction in consumption and waste. Instances of beneficial stories are "that the goal of life is to be more not have more; that the aim of society is wellbeing rather than economic growth; that humans are dependent on nature" (Stibbe 2021: 29).

Beneficial stories are not commonly hegemonic or widespread in unecological societies. Hence, following positive discourse analysis (Martin 2004, 2006), beneficial stories must be recognized and examined in order for them to be popularized and championed as alternative ways of representing reality and building social systems. Popularizing and championing beneficial stories does not mean popularizing and championing certain beneficial texts; it means popularizing and championing certain spoken and written stylistic devices suggesting ecological stories, particularly clusters of stylistic devices (for example, specific uses of personal pronouns, syntactic structures, presuppositions, positioning of participants in discourse). These stylistic devices and clusters cross different text types and can be adjusted and encompassed in new text types treating a broad array of human interests. When stylistic devices and clusters relaying beneficial stories are embraced by the consolidated discourses

around us, they can positively affect ecological and social ideologies and agendas (Stibbe 2021: 29–30). The speakGreen project and its posts have this very purpose: to alter destructive conventional discourses by means of beneficial unconventional uses of language, thereby triggering new worldviews and value systems. More information about speakGreen and its posts is offered in Section 3 below.

3 Data, methodology, and data analysis

3.1 Data and methodology

The speakGreen website shows a homepage with its posts in reverse chronological order, plus ten webpages. The webpage which is both most suitable for and most useful to this ecostylistic study is "Daily post finder" (http://speak-green.com/archive/): it groups the posts together according to author (speakGreen only), month (since January 2014), year (since 2014) and ten categories, ranging from "Books" and "Opposites attract" to "Signs" and "speakGreen philosophy". The posts can also be found by typing keywords or key-phrases into a search box, which appears on the right-hand side of the webpage when clicking on any author, month, year, or category. Although the project is proceeding, the last posts published on the speakGreen website date back to March 2019; however, those on the speakGreen Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/speakgreenmovement) are updated on a regular basis, but are not classified into categories. Accordingly, recent Facebook posts not appearing on the speakGreen website are also analyzed in this article for the sake of completeness and topicality. In sum, the linguistic data examined here are the following: (1) The website posts pertinent to ecological subjects published until March 2019; (2) The Facebook posts pertinent to ecological subjects appearing from March 2019 onwards.[3]

In preparation for this scrutiny, I wanted to make sure to select the posts from the speakGreen website and Facebook page most relevant to ecological concerns. In addition, I did not want to select too many posts, because this investigation is less quantitative than qualitative, and a qualitative investigation requires a representative but comparatively limited sample. Therefore, I retrieved my sample as follows.

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3 Further research on the speakGreen website and project could discuss the "sG EcoLingo" webpage (http://speak-green.com/sg-ecolingo/). The webpage catalogues words and phrases which should be substituted for their misleading alternatives; for instance, "climate change" should be replaced by "global overheating", "climate breakdown" or "climate crisis"; and "environment" should be replaced by "nature", "habitat" or "Mother Earth". The webpage also sets down expressions, quotes and proverbs concerning animals and the area of ecolinguistics. The contents of the webpage could hence be utilized to round off the ecostylistic scrutiny of the posts and to further specify the speakGreen value system and ecological tenets.

The speakGreen website posts to be studied in this article were collected in July 2022 by accessing the search box and entering one of the three key strings "ecolog", "environment" and "natur" at a time. Searching for these specific strings allowed me to identify the most appropriate data among a considerable amount of posts on a broad variety of issues, whose exact number is not given (the "Daily post finder" webpage states that the posts authored by speakGreen are 1808). The "ecolog" search did not return any search results among the posts, and returned one result only among the webpages (not considered here). The "environment" search returned nine search results among the posts (four of which were given twice) and one result among the webpages (not treated here). The "natur" search returned six search results among the posts (three of which were given twice) and one result among the webpages (not covered here). With regard to the speakGreen Facebook posts scrutinized in this article, they were gathered manually, also in July 2022: I read those from July 2022 to March 2019 as they appear on the Facebook page, viz. in reverse chronological order, and chose seven of them, those which more explicitly deal with ecological questions. In short, the sample explored here is constituted by nine "environment" website posts, six "natur" website posts and seven ecology-related Facebook posts, which add up to twenty-two total posts. After retrieving the posts, I transcribed their texts, included their sources (website or Facebook) and their posting dates, and retained all their typographical features (for example, capitalizations and punctuation marks). The green parts and the red parts were written on distinct lines; the green words, phrases, and clauses were transcribed with no typographical effect, the red ones with a strikethrough effect.

The twenty-two selected posts composing the sample are presented and analyzed in the following Sections 3.2–3.5. Firstly, the posts were divided into four groups on the basis of Jeffries' (2010) stylistic model of opposition and the structural and lexical triggers figuring in them. Secondly, the posts in the four groups were organized by syntactic complexity, namely from the least complex, realized by single words and phrases, to the most complex, consisting of clauses and full sentences. Of the four structural triggers and two lexical triggers of opposition, three were found in the sample: negation structural trigger (see Section 3.3), parallel structure structural trigger (alone and in combination with negation; see Sections 3.4 and 3.5), and coordination structural trigger (one case only, in combination with negation and parallel structure; see Section 3.5). In the posts, the three linguistic structural triggers are complemented by the visual mechanism of green and red color-coding (see Section 1). This mechanism is so perceptually salient, consequently effective, that it appears as the only trigger of opposition in two posts from the sample; aligning with Jeffries' (2010) terminology, it can be defined as visual negation or visual mention of oppositional relation, and is examined separately in Section 3.2 below.

3.2 Visual trigger: Visual negation or visual mention of oppositional relation

As anticipated in Sections 1 and 3.1, the visual device of green and red color-coding can be found in all the speakGreen posts to unequivocally distinguish beneficial stories, signaled in green, from destructive stories, signaled in red (Stibbe 2021: 22–24, 26–30). Furthermore, in two posts out of a sample of twenty-two (Examples (1) and (2)), this visual device is the only opposition trigger, and does not co-occur with structural or lexical triggers. As a result, it was termed visual negation or visual mention of oppositional relation, and is studied in this section.

(1)   *natural*
        ~~artificial~~
        (Website, 22 May 2014)

The post in Example (1) contrasts the beneficial story expressed by the green adjective "natural" with the destructive story indicated by the red adjective "artificial". In Jeffries' (2010: 2) model, the two adjectives are conventional opposites or antonyms, i.e. their oppositional relation is not textually built but context-free. Their use in the post suggests that, in an ecological ideology, entities existing in or derived from nature, not made or caused by humans, should be preferred to entities made or produced by humans and not occurring naturally, also given that the latter can be contrived or false (particularly a concept or a situation) and insincere or affected (particularly a person or behavior). Evoked by conventional opposites, this notion is not especially surprising; nevertheless, it is explicitly mentioned on the website, as it conveys a basic ecological tenet.

(2)   *reduce reuse recycle*
        ~~throw away~~
        (Website, 5 June 2014)

In Example (2), the three green imperative verbs "reduce reuse recycle" are opposed to the red imperative verb "throw away". The green verbs and their meanings are highlighted by the alliteration of the /rɪ/ sounds and by the rhythm created by the first two of them being disyllabic words. The green verbs "reduce reuse recycle" are unconventional opposites (Jeffries 2010: 1) of the red verb "throw away", viz. their oppositional relation is textually and discursively built and context-dependent. It follows that the green terms would not be considered to be opposites of the red term in a non-ecologically or non-socially oriented context of production and reception. Green "reuse recycle" and red "throw away" can be understood as opposites by drawing on canonical conceptual oppositions (Davies 2014: xiii). That is to say, the

fact that the two ideas of "reuse recycle" contrast the idea of "throw away" is based on the canonical conceptual oppositions CONSERVE/WASTE and CREATE/DESTROY: underpinning "reuse recycle" are CONSERVE and CREATE, and underlying "throw away" are WASTE and DESTROY. To sum up, Example (2) offers their addressee three beneficial alternatives to destructively wasting goods and commodities, namely three beneficial stories as options to choose from so as to controvert the destructive story of consumerism.

3.3 Structural trigger: Negation

Underpinning two posts out of the twenty-two in the sample (Examples (3) and (4)) is the structural trigger of negation, namely an *X not Y* frame.

(3)   *Keep your community clean!*
        ~~Please don't litter.~~
        (Facebook, 23 November 2021)

In Example (3), the negation frame is composed of the adjective "clean" (in the green imperative sentence "Keep your community clean!") and the negative imperative verb "don't litter" (in the red imperative sentence "Please don't litter"). The two words belong to different grammatical categories; however, they can be classified as conventional opposites, as they are founded on the canonical conceptual opposition CLEAN/DIRTY: the idea of being free from dirt, pollutants, or unpleasant substances ("clean") semantically contrasts with that of leaving rubbish lying untidily in a place ("litter"). The two green and red sentences seemingly have the same grammatical structure, propositional content, and communicative function. However, in the green one the beneficial story relayed by the notion of "clean" has foregrounded end-focus, whereas in the red one it is the destructive story communicated by the idea of "litter" that has foregrounded end-focus. Moreover, in the green sentence the direct object of the predicator "keep (clean)" is present, i.e. the noun phrase "your community", whilst in the red sentence the direct object of the predicator "don't litter" is omitted. Accordingly, in the former the possessive determiner "your" and the noun "community" directly involve the addressee of the post in its beneficial story and make its ecological message more personal than that of a standard imperative sentence.

(4)   *When a flower doesn't bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows,*
        ~~not the flower.~~
        (Website, 29 April 2016)

The negation frame in Example (4) consists of the noun phrase "the environment in which it grows" (in the green finite clauses "When a flower doesn't bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows,") and the noun phrase "(not) the flower" (realizing a red elliptical clause). The two noun phrases constitute a pair of unconventional opposites, since there is no semantic contrast between the concept of environment and that of flower, and since the textual contrast between the plant and its physical surroundings is discursively constructed by the text of the post. Hence, the "not" negator triggers the unconventional opposition between "environment" and "flower" which, at the conceptual level, is based on the canonical conceptual oppositions LARGE/SMALL, WHOLE/PART, and CAUSE/EFFECT. This text is metaphorical, because it is founded on the root analogy (Goatly 1997) DEVELOP IS GROW (in accordance with common typographical conventions, root analogies, like metaphors, are in SMALL CAPITALS). Goatly and other conceptual metaphor theorists (e.g. Gibbs 2008; Kövecses 2020; Steen et al. 2010) draw a distinction between conceptual metaphors (and root analogies) and their specific textual realizations; in other words, conceptual metaphors are expressed via many different combinations of lexical items. As recorded in the metaphor database Metalude (Goatly and LLE Project 2002–2005),[4] in the specific expression provided by Example 4, the root analogy DEVELOP IS GROW is activated by the lexical items "flower", "grows" and especially the intransitive verb "bloom", which has the literal meaning "produce flowers" and the metaphorical meaning "develop to the best point". Underlying the metaphorical meaning of the post is its literal meaning: this expresses the beneficial story that the environment necessarily requires adequate work and continuous care to thrive, along with the human, animal, and vegetable species it hosts.

3.4 Structural trigger: Parallel structure

Eleven posts out of a sample of twenty-two (Examples (5)–(15), half of the sample) are based on the structural trigger of parallel structure. Therefore, this is the most recurrent trigger and stylistic trait in the sample, characterizing half of the posts.

(5)   *the environment*
        ~~*our environment*~~
        (Website, 6 November 2017)

(6)   *system change*
        ~~*climate change*~~
        (Facebook, 4 November 2021)

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4 See http://www.ln.edu.hk/lle/cwd/project01/web/home.html (accessed 10 July 2022).

(7)   *Mother nature*
       ~~*human nature*~~
       (Website, 4 December 2018)

(8)   *compassion-full products*
       ~~*cruelty-free products*~~
       (Facebook, 18 November 2021)

Examples (5)–(8) are realized by noun phrases underpinned by the parallel structure *determiner + nominal head* (Example (5)) and *premodifier + nominal head* (Examples (6)–(8)); the phrase constituent which is varied from the red version to the green version is the determiner or the premodifier. In Example (5), the green definite article "the", the determiner of the nominal head "environment", unconventionally opposes and is substituted for the red possessive determiner "our"; this unconventional opposition is activated by the canonical conceptual oppositions COLLECTIVE/INDIVIDUAL and PUBLIC/PRIVATE. This stylistic choice denies the destructive anthropocentric story that our physical surroundings in particular and the planet in general belong to humans, and signals the beneficial ecocentric story that preserving nature and the earth is a universal tenet and responsibility all humans are accountable for.[5] The nominal head "change" in Example (6) is premodified by the green noun "system", which replaces the red noun "climate". This unconventional contrast is underpinned by the canonical conceptual opposition WHOLE/PART, which is in turn underpinned by the HOLONYM/MERONYM contrast: these oppositions frame "climate" as a part of a broader "system". The contrast between "system" and "climate" indicates that the destructive story of climate change can be contradicted by beneficially modifying human social, economic, and cultural systems as a whole. In Example (7), the green noun "Mother", the premodifier of the nominal head "nature", is an unconventional opposite of the red noun "human", which it is substituted for; the canonical conceptual opposition ALTRUISTIC/SELFISH prompts this unconventional opposition. As suggested by this substitution, destructive psychological characteristics, feelings, and behavioral traits, as well as the stories they produce, should be resisted; the emphasis should be shifted to the beneficial story conceptualizing nature as a creative and controlling force affecting the world and humans. The nominal head "products" in Example (8) is premodified by the green compound adjective "compassion-full", replacing the red compound adjective "cruelty-free". Here, the

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5 To some addressees, impersonal "the environment" may seem to be a red term, and personal "our environment" a green term instead. One could argue that, contrary to the definite article "the", the possessive determiner "our" imposes some responsibility for humans to look after the environment, and does not create an US/THEM opposition between people and their physical surroundings. This reading is apparently confirmed by such other posts in the sample as those in Examples (9) and (13).

message of the post is underlined by further parallel structures occurring at the phonological level and at the syntactic level. The nouns "compassion" and "cruelty" are conventional opposites linked by the repetition of the /k/ sound in word-initial position; they premodify the adjectives "full" and "free" respectively, which are also conventional opposites connected by the repetition of the /f/ sound in word-initial position. As is the case with Example (3), the two green and red noun phrases appear to have the same syntactic structure and propositional content. Nevertheless, these stylistic practices evoke that the post message should not center on the destructive story conveyed by the noun "cruelty", but on the beneficial story relayed by the noun "compassion" and by the adjective "full".

(9)   *one with nature*
         ~~*separate from nature*~~
         (Website, 4 March 2018)

(10)   *Minister for Environment and Climate Change*
         ~~*Minister of Environment*~~
         (Website, 5 June 2017)

Examples (9) and (10) have similar parallel structures: Example (9) consists of two adjective phrases whose syntactic configuration is *adjectival head + postmodifier-prepositional phrase*, and Example (10) is constituted by two noun phrases with the syntactic configuration *nominal head + postmodifier-prepositional phrase*. In Example (9), the adjectival head and the preposition are the phrase constituents changing from the red text to its green counterpart: the red adjective and preposition "separate from (nature)" become the green adjective and preposition "one with (nature)". With "one" meaning "the same or identical" in this context, and with the idiom "one with" meaning "forming part of a whole with" (OED Online 2022, sense 8), "one" is a conventional opposite of "separate". This stylistic change controverts the destructive story that humans are viewed as a unit apart from the other animal and vegetable species on the planet, and communicates the beneficial story that humans are a part of a wider ecosystem which should live in agreement and harmony with the other parts.

In Example (10), the phrase constituent in the red text altered in the green text is the preposition: it is modified from red "(Minister) of (Environment)" to its green unconventional opposite "(Minister) for (Environment)". Here, the red preposition "of" expresses the destructive story that the Minister of Environment simply has responsibility for and is in charge of nature; conversely, the green preposition "for" signals the beneficial story that the holder of that office is not merely responsible for the natural world, but also sides with, defends and supports it. Therefore, the unconventional opposition between "for" and "of" is elicited by the canonical

conceptual opposition (ᴇᴍᴏᴛɪᴏɴᴀʟʟʏ) ɪɴᴠᴏʟᴠᴇᴅ/(ᴇᴍᴏᴛɪᴏɴᴀʟʟʏ) ᴜɴɪɴᴠᴏʟᴠᴇᴅ. Furthermore, the green text also contains the addition of the noun phrase "Climate Change". Consequently, this indicates another beneficial story: that Ministers for Environment in particular and governments in general should also be officially in charge of plans and courses of action to fight the ecological crisis.[6]

(11)   *preserve life*
         ~~*preserve the environment*~~
         (Website, 6 November 2018)

(12)   *working with nature*
         ~~*working against nature*~~
         (Website, 4 February 2018)

Examples (11) and (12) also have similar parallel structures. Example (11) is realized by the predicator "preserve" (twice) followed by the two direct objects "life" and "the environment". In Example (12), the predicator "working" (twice) is not followed by direct objects, but by the two adjuncts "with nature" and "against nature". In the former example, the red direct object "the environment" turns into the green direct object "life". Not only are they unconventional opposites, but they are also unpredictable opposites, given that red "the environment" has positive connotations in our culture and society, as well as green "life". However, the unconventional opposition between "life" and "the environment" is founded on the canonical conceptual opposition ᴡʜᴏʟᴇ/ᴘᴀʀᴛ. The fact that the direct object "the environment" is labeled as red denies the destructive story that the environment is simply scenery or the setting for human activities and pursuits. The substitution of green "life" for it suggests the beneficial story that this "scenery" is composed of numberless human, animal, and vegetable living beings, all of which deserve protection.

In Example (12), the red preposition "against (nature)" becomes the green preposition "with (nature)". In this context, they are conventional opposites, as "against" means "counter to, in opposition to", while "with" means "accompanied by". Hence, the former preposition evokes the destructive story that humans are active agents struggling with the passive entity of the natural world. This is contradicted by the beneficial story conveyed by the latter preposition, viz. that both the

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6 The addition of the noun phrase "Climate Change" in Example (10) does not seemingly accord with the use of "climate change" as a red term in Example (6) and its negation in favor of the green term "system change" in the same example. However, Example (10) dates back to 2017, and Example (6) to 2021. Therefore, the former example is less recent than the latter, which might imply that the speakGreen authors have meanwhile found different stylistic strategies to convey their beneficial messages.

natural world and humans are active agents jointly engaged in the same activities and striving for the same ecological aims.

(13)   *hu/men are part of nature*
         ~~*man is above nature*~~
         (Website, 7 February 2016)

(14)   *Nature is real,*
         ~~*money is an illusion.*~~
         (Website, 14 November 2014)

Both Examples (13) and (14) consist of two simple sentences founded on the parallel structure *subject + predicator + subject complement*. In Example (13), the most notable sentence constituent reworded from the red version to the green version is the subject complement: the red prepositional phrase "above nature" (a synonym of "separate from nature" in this context) is replaced by the green noun phrase "part of nature", which is a conventional opposite. The red sentence relays at least two destructive stories: humans are superior in status and rank to the natural world, accordingly they are separate from it. Both destructive stories are resisted by the beneficial story communicated by the green sentence: since humans pertain to the natural world, they cannot be superior to the other animals and plants on the earth.

The subject and the subject complement alike are rewritten in Example (14). The green subject "Nature" is substituted for red "money", and the green subject complement "real" for red "an illusion". The two subject complements are conventional opposites, whereas the two subjects seem to be unconventional opposites. However, the parallel structure of the two sentences in the example expresses that, because "real" conventionally contrasts with "an illusion", "Nature" should be regarded as an unconventional opposite of "money", so much so that the two entities are mutually exclusive. This opposition is triggered by the canonical conceptual oppositions NATURAL/ARTIFICIAL, REALITY/ILLUSION, and AUTHENTIC/FAKE. Therefore, these stylistic choices counter the destructive story that humans should base their lives and civilizations on money; on the other hand, these choices signal the beneficial story that human existence and experience should be founded on the actual, non-imaginary values and on the non-deceiving pleasures offered by nature.

(15)   *I'll start listening to your thoughts on global warming as soon as*
         ~~*you stop taking your private jets to global warming summits*~~
         (Facebook, 3 November 2021)

Example (15) develops the unconventional opposition between "Nature" and "money" by criticizing materialism and consumerism. The example is constituted by

a complex sentence, with a green main clause and a red secondary clause. A number of constituents make the structure of the two clauses parallel: (1) Green subject "I" versus red subject "you" (unconventional opposites); (2) Green lexical verb "start" versus red lexical verb "stop" (conventional opposites); (3) *-ing* form in both the green lexical verb "listening (to your thoughts on global warming)" and the red lexical verb "taking (your private jets to global warming summits)" (unconventional opposites); (4) Noun phrase "global warming" employed as a modifier in two noun phrases, to be more precise as a postmodifier in green "your thoughts on global warming" and as a premodifier in red "global warming summits" (unconventional opposites). Another unconventional opposite does not emerge from the syntax of the sentence, but from its semantics, its use in discourse and the canonical conceptual oppositions ALTRUISTIC/SELFISH, PUBLIC/PRIVATE, and COLLECTIVE/INDIVIDUAL: the contrast between "global warming summits", fighting global warming, and "your private jets", warming the planet. Through these stylistic techniques, the text beneficially denounces the destructive story of consumerism (owning private jets) and, most of all, that of the hypocrisy of politicians and policy-makers falsely professing ecological beliefs ("your thoughts on global warming") their own conduct does not conform to ("taking your private jets to global warming summits").

3.5 Structural triggers combined: Negation, parallel structure, and coordination

Underlying seven posts out of the twenty-two in the sample (Examples (16)–(22), one-third of the sample) is the combination of the two structural triggers of negation and parallel structure; in Example (22), they co-occur with a third structural trigger, namely coordination.

(16)   *Flies as guests,*
         ~~*not as pest.*~~
         (Facebook, 7 April 2022)

In Example (16), the structural trigger of negation contrasts the green noun "guests" with the red noun "pest", which is an unconventional opposite. Moreover, the two nouns are related by two additional structural triggers: the syntactic parallel structure *preposition "as" + noun,* and the phonological parallel structure in their sounds /ɛst/, which appears in foregrounded end-focus. Based on the canonical conceptual oppositions INSECT/PEST and GUEST/ENEMY, the text controverts the destructive anthropocentric story that given animals and plants, here "Flies", are thought to be a troublesome and annoying adversary seeking to harm humans and causing destruction by human standards; in a word, they are a "pest" and an "enemy". In the

contrasting beneficial story, "Flies" are reframed as "guests" and "insects", i.e. as living beings staying in human houses at humans' invitation, keeping them company, and sharing houses and the entire earth with them.

(17)   *preserve the environment*
         ~~*don't harm the environment*~~
         (Website, 22 August 2015)

(18)   *We will only save the planet when transforming the economy.*
         ~~*We won't save the planet without transforming the economy.*~~
         (Facebook, 14 November 2021)

The structural trigger of negation in Example (17) contrasts the green predicator "preserve" with its conventional opposite, the red predicator "don't harm". The two predicators are constituents in the parallel structure *predicator + direct object*, whose second constituent is realized by the noun phrase "the environment" in both the green sentence and its red counterpart. Example (18) is composed of two sentences showing syntactic and lexical parallel structures, with only two variations prompted by negation ("won't" and "without"). Indeed, negation contrasts the green predicator "will only save" with the red predicator "won't save"; the red preposition "without (transforming)" can also be investigated as an instance of negation, unconventionally contrasting with the green conjunction "when (transforming)".

As in Examples (3) and (8), the green and red sentences in Examples (17) and (18) have the same grammatical structure, propositional content, and communicative function. Nevertheless, three dissimilarities are of great importance: (1) The red sentences are negative, whilst the green sentences are positive; (2) The red sentences incorporate destructive terms suggesting destructive stories: the lexical verb "harm" in Example (17) and the negative preposition "without" in Example (18); (3) The green sentences include beneficial terms evoking beneficial stories: the lexical verb "preserve" in Example (17) and the non-negative conjunction "when" in Example (18), which becomes positive in combination with the non-finite clause "transforming the economy". Deploying positive syntactic structures giving the addressee positive directions and information, and concentrating on green notions rather than red notions are two primary qualities of the ecological language utilized and advertised by the speakGreen project.

(19)   ~~*It's not Climate Change,*~~
         It's Everything Change.
         – Margaret Atwood
         (Website, 5 June 2018)

(20)   *The savage is not the one who lives in the forest.*
         ~~*The savage is the one who destroys it.*~~
         (Facebook, 12 November 2021)

Examples (19) and (20) are based on the same parallel structure: the syntactic configuration *subject + predicator + subject complement*. The parallel structure co-occurs with negation: in Example (19) it can be found in the red sentence ("It's not Climate Change"), while in Example (20) it is present in the green sentence ("The savage is not the one […]"). In both examples, the constituent of the parallel structure varying from the green version to the red version is the subject complement, realized by a noun phrase.

      More precisely, in Example (19), the red premodifier "Climate" is replaced by the green premodifier "Everything". In addition, the two premodifiers are made un-conventional opposites by the mechanism of negation, and their contrast is activated by the canonical conceptual opposition WHOLE/PART. By means of these stylistic stra-tegies, the red sentence denies the destructive story that it is exclusively the climate on the planet that is changing; the green sentence beneficially glosses that it is all the necessary and relevant things in everyday reality that are inevitably changing with the climate (see Example (6) for similar stylistic devices based on the noun phrase "Climate Change" relaying an analogous beneficial message).

      In Example (20), the green postmodifier "who lives in the forest" is substituted for the red postmodifier "who destroys it". Apparently, the ideas of living in the forest and of destroying it are unconventional opposites; however, during a more careful reading, it comes to light that living in the forest entails preserving it from destruction; as a result, the two ideas of living and destroying can be scrutinized as conventional opposites in this context, underpinned by the canonical conceptual oppositions CREATE/DESTROY, CONSERVE/WASTE, LIFE/DEATH and INSIDE/OUTSIDE. The red sentence conveys the destructive story that humans from the Global North devastate the forests in the Global South to turn a profit on them; because of this unecological behavior, humans from the Global North are primitive and uncivilized. This message is reinforced by the beneficial story relayed in the green sentence. Indigenous peo-ples and nations living in the forest rescue it by maintaining an ecological way of life; consequently, they are anything but coarse and uncouth.

(21)   ~~*I don't want to protect the environment.*~~
         I want to create a world where the environment doesn't need protection.
         (Website, 5 June 2016)

Example (21) consists of two sentences, the first of which is red and the second green. The structure of the two sentences is made parallel by several constituents: (1) Green subject + predicator "I want to" versus red subject + predicator "I don't want to"

(conventional opposites via negation); (2) Green predicator "to create" versus red predicator "to protect" (unconventional opposites); (3) Repetition of the noun phrase "the environment", which realizes a subject in the green sentence and a direct object in the red sentence; (4) Green predicator + direct object "doesn't need protection" versus red predicator "to protect" (conventional opposites via negation). The combination of these constituents and contrasts results in the green direct object "to create a world where the environment doesn't need protection", which is an unconventional opposite of the red direct object "to protect the environment"; their contrast is prompted by the canonical conceptual opposition ECOLOGICAL (CIVILIZATION)/ UNECOLOGICAL (CIVILIZATION). Underpinned by these stylistic devices, the red sentence contradicts the destructive story that humans should merely conserve nature. As communicated by the green sentence, the corresponding beneficial story tells us that this is not sufficient: humans should build new types of social, economic, and cultural systems founded on ecological principles.

(22)   *Earth provides enough to satisfy every hu/man's needs,*
         ~~*but not every hu/man greed.*~~
         – Mahatma Gandhi
         (Website, 6 November 2015)

As anticipated above, Example (22) is the most articulate in the sample, given that it features three structural triggers of opposition: negation, parallel structure, and coordination. The sentence in the example is constituted by a green finite clause ("Earth provides enough to satisfy every hu/man's needs,") and a red elliptical clause ("but not every hu/man greed") connected by the disjunctive coordinating conjunction "but". The conjunction implies an adversative relation between the two clauses; it can be labeled as a concessive opposition trigger, as it signals contrast between the two clauses, but also the unexpectedness of the second in relation to the information in the first. The adversative relation between the clauses is strengthened by the co-occurrence of the adverb "not", expressing negation. These stylistic practices introduce the parallel structure in the noun phrase *every + hu/man*['*s*] *+ noun.* In the green clause the noun slot is filled by "needs", and in the red clause by "greed"; the two nouns are further linked and given prominence by the phonological parallelism in their sounds /iːd/, which has foregrounded end-focus. Although green "needs" and red "greed" share the core meaning of longing for something, the two terms can be categorized as unconventional opposites elicited by the canonical conceptual oppositions NECESSARY/UNNECESSARY, MODERATION/GREED, and ALTRUISTIC/SELFISH. Actually, the green term is value-neutral and denotes necessity or demand for the presence or possession of something, whereas the red term is negatively value-laden and designates intense and inordinate longing, avarice and covetous desire. Hence, the red clause resists the destructive story that humans are allowed to exploit the

planet for unessential goods and commodities. At the same time, the green sentence signals the beneficial story that humans should only employ the planet's natural materials to supply their bare necessities, with a view to not depleting those materials and to not depriving other humans, animals, and plants of them.

3.6 Opposition in the speakGreen posts: Further remarks

The data analysis undertaken in Sections 3.2–3.5 demonstrated that a distinction is required with regard to the semantics of the posts in the sample and the meaning relations of their green and red parts. One of the aims of the speakGreen project and posts is to create more positive discursive formulations about protecting the environment, namely to rewrite formulations which still have the same intentions and argue the same points, but are more negative or have different emphases (to name just a few cases, see Examples (3) and (8)). Accordingly, although the formulations in a number of posts rely on conventional and unconventional opposites for their effectiveness, these formulations are broadly synonymic. This accords with the Hallidayan tradition, Whorf's view of language and linguistic constructionism as outlined in Section 2.2: discourse and the mental representations of the world, hence ideologies, are intricately linked; therefore, ways of thinking about the world are influenced by the discourses we consume.

On the contrary, several of the speakGreen posts are composed of green and red parts conveying opposite concepts, behaviors, and lifestyles, so that the addressee is being offered a beneficial choice over a destructive one, rather than just a choice of two discursively different formulations (see, among others, Examples (1) and (9)). Furthermore, in such syntactically complex cases as Examples (19), (20), and (22), the two green and red clauses are not synonymic propositions communicating the same idea via two different formulations, but the two clauses express two opposite ideas. In other words, these examples consist of a whole standalone formulation in which the green part negates the red part. As a result, the green clause cannot be cited alone, nor can the two clauses be used independently of each other, so that the green clause can be substituted for the red clause; it is only when cited in pairs that the two clauses become stylistically and rhetorically effective.

4 Discussion and conclusion

This article explored a sample of twenty-two ecological posts from the speakGreen project and its website and Facebook page from the disciplinary standpoint of ecostylistics. Underlying the analysis were the stylistic model of opposition, as

elaborated by Jeffries (2010; see also Davies 2014), and the two ecolinguistic concepts of beneficial story and destructive story, as evolved by Stibbe (2021: 22–24, 26–30). The article managed to achieve its main research purpose, viz. to pinpoint the opposition mechanisms utilized in the sample to propagate beneficial stories whilst countering destructive stories. In particular, this ecostylistic study confirmed what is maintained in Jeffries' (2010) stylistic model of opposition, namely that unconventional opposites and their use in discourse are more ideologically loaded, accordingly more stylistically noteworthy, than conventional opposites. That is to say, in an ecological discourse, it is always fruitful, but occasionally redundant, to assert that the green adjective "natural" relays a beneficial story, that the red adjective "artificial" communicates a destructive story, and that the two are conventional opposites (Example (1)). On the contrary, it is more productive to surprise the addressee by signaling stylistically creative, sometimes unexpected, messages through unconventional opposites, as most of the posts in the sample do.

To name just a few cases, the noun phrase "c/Climate c/Change" is a red term in Examples (6) and (19); in the former, it unconventionally contrasts with the green noun phrase "system change" in order to indicate the beneficial story that humans should alter their social, economic and cultural systems; in the latter example, "Climate Change" unconventionally contrasts with the green noun phrase "Everything Change", which suggests that the ecological crisis is modifying the entire human existence and experience. In Examples (11) and (21), the red part comprises the noun phrase "the environment"; this is an unconventional opposite of the noun phrase "life" in the former example, evoking that humans should safeguard all the human and more-than-human life on the earth; "(to protect) the environment" is also an unconventional opposite of the noun phrase "(to create) a world where the environment doesn't need protection" in the latter example, which conveys that ecological tenets should underpin the novel civilizations humans should form. Examples (14) and (22) discuss and criticize materialism and consumerism. In the former, the green noun "Nature" unconventionally contrasts with the red noun "money" so as to relay that underlying human reality should be natural principles, not economic principles; in the latter example, the green noun phrase "every hu/man's needs" unconventionally contrasts with the red noun phrase "every hu/man greed", communicating that the planet's natural materials should be deployed to supply the necessities of life only, not unnecessary goods and commodities.

As mentioned in the theoretical Section 2.1 and as demonstrated in the analytical Sections 3.2–3.5, unconventional opposites are activated by canonical conceptual oppositions; several of them underpin more than one post in the sample. For instance, WHOLE/PART prompts the unconventional opposites in Examples (4), (6), (11), and (19): the use of this canonical conceptual opposition in the speakGreen ecological discourse signals that humans only pay attention to certain parts of their world and

reality, and criticizes them for being unaware that, in nature, all parts are interconnected and form organized wholes which are more than the mere sum of their component parts. The positively value-laden terms in further canonical conceptual oppositions indicate the speakGreen environmental and social ideology and principles: see, among others, ALTRUISTIC/SELFISH (Examples (7), (15), and (22)), CONSERVE/WASTE and CREATE/DESTROY (Examples (2) and (20)), COLLECTIVE/INDIVIDUAL and PUBLIC/PRIVATE (Examples (5) and (15)).

As noted in the introductory Section 1, this article also had a broader research purpose, i.e. to evaluate whether Jeffries' (2010) stylistic model of opposition can successfully be employed to investigate a sample of very brief posts with ecological concerns. This ecostylistic examination revealed that, of the four structural triggers and two lexical triggers of opposition identified by this author (Jeffries 2010: 32–52), three structural triggers appear in the sample, viz. negation, parallel structure, and coordination. While coordination occurs in one post only, parallel structure is the most recurrent trigger: it underpins half of the twenty-two posts in the sample alone, and one-third of the posts in combination with negation. The reason for this high frequency can be that, owing to their syntactic and semantic patterns typified by the repetition of words and phrases and by relatively little variation, the posts and their messages are made cognitively conspicuous, easy to memorize and, as a result, easy to promote among the speakGreen website and Facebook users.

The remaining structural trigger (comparative structures) and lexical triggers (explicit mention, metalinguistic mention, and auto-evocation of oppositional relation) from the stylistic model of opposition were not found in the sample. It can be hypothesized that the only case of coordination and the lack of comparative structures are due to the text type of the speakGreen post: all the texts published on the website and on the Facebook page are normally short and syntactically essential, as shown by several posts constituted by single phrases and even single words. With regard to the explicit mention and the metalinguistic mention of oppositional relation, their absence from the sample may be attributable to the fact that their linguistic contrastive role is played in the posts by the visual contrastive strategy of green and red color-coding. Finally, not only is auto-evocation of oppositional relation not present in the sample, but it can also be presumed that it is not present in any posts. In fact, of the two terms realizing an opposite pair, this lexical trigger states one only and leaves the other unstated; instead, the posts specify both terms openly, in order to communicate their ecologically and socially beneficial messages as unambiguously as possible, as demonstrated in the analytical Sections 3.2–3.5.

This ecostylistic scrutiny also proved that the sample contains a number of stylistic devices which may compensate for the structural and lexical triggers of opposition missing from the posts. Firstly, the three linguistic structural triggers in the sample are complemented by the visual practice of green and red color-coding:

words evoking beneficial stories are colored in green, words conveying destructive stories are in red. Not only does this visual practice complement the linguistic triggers in all the posts, but it is also the only opposition trigger in two posts out of twenty-two. Therefore, with a view to exploring the sample and all its discursive techniques thoroughly, this visual trigger should be added to the stylistic model of opposition with the name of visual negation or visual mention of oppositional relation. Secondly, this ecostylistic analysis showed that, in certain posts, the messages expressed by these linguistic and visual mechanisms are underscored by the stylistic strategies of foregrounded end-focus and phonological parallelism, which is realized by alliteration and by the repetition of one or more sounds. As a result, although the speakGreen posts are succinct and seemingly unrefined texts, the co-occurrence and interaction of several stylistic devices at various linguistic and visual levels in comparatively few words testify to the fact that the posts consist of complex and multi-layered texts able to effectively express sophisticated ecological and social messages.

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