



# Environmental mainstreaming: facets and theoretical concepts

## La transversalidad del medioambiente: facetas y conceptos teóricos

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### ABSTRACT

The environment assumes a pivotal role in today's world, one that transcends the escalating number of natural disasters and environmental crises featuring in media headlines. Indeed, it embodies a multifaceted domain of knowledge, marked by profound interdisciplinary breadth and flexibility, capable of connecting diverse phenomena. Its influence extends to the cognitive systems of individuals, permeating every arena where they interact and engage. Although environmental studies have traditionally centered on rigorous scientific assertions regarding climate change and physical transformations of our surroundings, humanities disciplines persist in dissecting the individual-environment dynamic through multidimensional lenses. This approach facilitates the exploration of empirical and pragmatic perceptions that can yield systemic insights and solutions. Consequently, this paper aims to present a scholarly analysis of the most influential humanities branches that project a symbiotic viewpoint of the environment. These branches significantly shape our conduct, both on an individual level and as part of a holistic, systemic thought process. Specifically, we have curated the most relevant aspects from a range of disciplines, including ecological anthropology, ecolinguistics, environmental journalism, literary ecocriticism, environmental racism, eco-literacy, and textual genres, for this paper. These facets provide a deeper, enriched perspective on environmental studies, underscoring the integral and interconnected nature of our relationship with the environment.

**Keywords:** ecocriticism, ecolinguistics, environment, environmental journalism.

**JEL classification:** Z15; Y40

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### RESUMEN

El medio ambiente desempeña un papel fundamental en el mundo contemporáneo que va más allá de los cada vez más frecuentes desastres naturales y crisis ambientales que acaparan los titulares de los medios de comunicación. En realidad, se trata de una esfera de conocimiento multifacética, sumamente interdisciplinaria y flexible, capaz de vincular distintos fenómenos. Su influencia se extiende al sistema cognitivo de las personas, permeando todas las áreas en las que los individuos interactúan y se desempeñan. Si bien los estudios medioambientales han tendido a enfocarse en postulados científicos estrictos sobre el cambio climático y las transformaciones físicas del entorno, las disciplinas humanísticas continúan analizando la dualidad individuo-entorno a través de enfoques multidimensionales. Esto permite explorar percepciones empíricas y prácticas que pueden proporcionar soluciones y visiones sistémicas. Por lo tanto, el propósito de este artículo es presentar un análisis teórico de las ramas humanísticas más relevantes que ofrecen una perspectiva simbiótica del medio ambiente y que influyen en nuestra conducta tanto a nivel individual como parte de un pensamiento colectivo y sistémico. Específicamente, se han seleccionado las facetas más pertinentes para este artículo de diversas disciplinas como la antropología ecológica, la ecolingüística, el periodismo ambiental, la ecocrítica literaria, el racismo ambiental, la ecoalfabetización y los géneros textuales. Estas facetas ofrecen una perspectiva enriquecedora de los estudios ambientales, subrayando el carácter integral e interconectado de nuestra relación con el medio ambiente.

**Palabras clave:** ecocrítica, ecolingüística, medio ambiente, periodismo ambiental.

**Clasificación JEL:** Z15; Y40

## INTRODUCTION

Anthropology is a science that studies the human species about other disciplines from a holistic approach and, as such, requires interpretative data to develop theories and produce knowledge (Jiménez, 2016). Analyzing its more environmentalist side, ecological anthropology advocates an interactionist model between humans and nature, moving from



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influencing social and cultural human manifestations to "marking the limits of cultural development" (Milton, 1997, p. 2) from a less energetic optic. Not without reason, given that there has been a paradigm shift in the conception of the environment. Initially, the goods composing it were not economically tangible, so their lack of appropriation and overabundance gave a sense of unlimited supply capacity without the need for plausible management control.

Subsequently, with the advance of globalization and industrialization processes, there has been a deterioration of resources and a saturation of natural systems, establishing the conception that the environment is the pillar for the economic development of human beings, given its function of intervention in multiple processes, such as the reception of waste from productive activities (Sessano, 2002; Pulido, 2004). The transition from this social and environmental awareness to its representation in the curricula of educational systems, through the methodological and didactic creation of materials, constitutes a challenge as the environment is configured as a transdiscipline since it is directly or indirectly included in many fields of knowledge.

Knowledge must know how to contextualize, globalize, and be multidimensional; that is, it must be complex. Only a thought capable of grasping complexity [...] can attempt to establish a diagnosis of the current course of our becoming and define the reforms vitally necessary to change our path. Only a complex thought can give us weapons to prepare for social, individual, and anthropological metamorphosis [El conocimiento debe saber contextualizar, globalizar, multidimensional, es decir, debe ser complejo. Sólo un pensamiento capaz de captar la complejidad [...] puede intentar establecer un diagnóstico del curso actual de nuestro devenir, y definir las reformas vitalmente necesarias para cambiar de vía. Solo un pensamiento complejo puede darnos armas para preparar la metamorfosis social, individual y antropológica] (Morin, 2011, p. 143)

Environmental knowledge is not a closed and static knowledge. It arises from a critical spirit about a specific ecological-cultural environment, which entails an environmental ethic that promotes a change of attitudes from an ideological and political perspective (Leff, 1996; 1998). To this end, many concepts of interest are emerging in the field of ecology and whose uses are taking root with the gradual advance of the discipline in the media, such as ecolinguistics, environmental journalism, the concept of sustainability, literary ecocriticism, environmental racism and eco-literacy.

## METHODS

The article is framed within the typology of reflection, as it found itself before an intricate field of knowledge encompassing a vast array of scientific disciplines. These provided a multidisciplinary approach that favored a holistic view of the problems and thus enabled the development of a more profound and more effective empathy towards positive environmental progress (Smederevac-Lalić et al., 2020). The relevance of this approach was reflected in the growing importance attached by the Humanities to the study of the environment, a field that the natural sciences had traditionally dominated.

The vast and diverse scientific literature related to the environment was explored during the research using the main academic search engines Scopus, Google Scholar, and Scielo. These tools allowed us to explore and carefully select the most relevant documents for the area of interest and thus establish a solid conceptual framework that guided the study. Then, we proceeded to present some of the most relevant theoretical concepts that emerged from the specialized literature on the environment from the field of the Humanities.

The objective was to highlight the predominant trends and approaches in this field of study and to underline how these concepts brought a novel and illuminating perspective to the understanding of the relationship with the environment. The analysis of these theoretical concepts made it possible to provide a richer and more nuanced view of the complex interactions between humans and the environment, highlighting the need to address these problems from an interdisciplinary approach that integrates the valuable contributions of the Humanities.

## RESULTS

The purpose of ecolinguistics is to study the interconnection between the speakers of a territory and its linguistic ecosystem, taking into account the sociocultural context of the environment in which they live and all the endogenous and exogenous elements that are integrated into it (Massa et al., 2017). However, Fill and Mühlhäusler (1993, p. 4) broaden the concept, contributing that this interrelation can occur "between different languages [...] and that it advocates the preservation of the small for the benefit of a diversity of phenomena and relationships". In this context, environmental journalism takes center stage due to the information society in which we are immersed, with immediate character, and the incessant degradation of the environment that is advancing with impetus. This type of journalism aims to inform about nature and environmental phenomena, requiring, thanks to its internationalization,

the translation of its contents<sup>1</sup>.

It is here where the environment reaches the readers through an interlinguistic translation made by the journalist to facilitate the scientific context in which the specialized knowledge is framed. Think of the figure of the journalist, who is not only responsible for the treatment of information but also for the sources that will support the news and the weight given to the actors involved. This means that the training of the journalist and the translator must be forged in the documentary and encyclopedic competence that surrounds them since both have a great responsibility, not to mention that both figures coincide in the treatment of current information. The already-known translator-journalist (Hernández, 2006) is in charge of creating content through the news produced by international agencies, which usually resort to internal translation processes, making the journalist, in the final drafting phase, compile, translate, and fit the relevant information.

While remaining in the sphere of the media, it is inevitable to link the environment to advertising, especially in ecological awareness campaigns, where the text, together with the visual content, fulfills a particular persuasive and conative function that the translator must know how to reflect with the same fullness in the target text (Carrillo & Meinardi, 2013). Likewise, environmental advertising pursues some effects, which are not negligible, in order to achieve its objectives. In this regard, Fernández-Vallejo (2018, p. 141) studies the metaphors found in the tweets of Acciona and Iberdrola, which enjoy a pragmatic identifying status that allows companies to reinforce their presence:

In the case of Iberdrola, the leading source domain is "light" (subdomains: energy, heat, summer), closely linked to the company's mission, related to its vision and values, the color green; remember the color of the logo and its concern for the environment. In the case of Acciona, the source domain "sustainability," present in its mission and values, evokes the target domain of the emotion "pride." Therefore, we can conclude that the concept maps that describe or evoke emotions are based on its mission, vision, and values and serve to reinforce the organizational identity. [En el caso de Iberdrola, se detecta como principal dominio fuente la "luz" (subdominios: energía, calor, verano), estrechamente ligado a la misión de la empresa; relacionado con su visión y valores, el color verde; recuérdese el color del logotipo y su preocupación por el medio ambiente. En el caso de Acciona, el dominio fuente "sostenibilidad", presente en su misión y valores, evoca el dominio destino de la emoción "orgullo". Por tanto, podemos concluir que los mapas conceptuales que describen o evocan las emociones parten de su misión, visión y valores, y sirven para reforzar la identidad organizacional.]

Today, companies and organizations have an environmental niche in their own media and consumer policies, responding to the growing critical awareness about new sustainability debates. Suddenly, to build a positive image of the company in the market through advertising, everything is green due to eco-friendly policies derived from the need for greenwashing. Not without reason, in addition to indicating the qualities of their products through certain hopeful words such as those indicated, they globally illustrate the characteristics that only some products have and make promises that lack immediate feasibility through the famous zero emissions and in complete harmony with nature. Therefore, the reader must have a critical conscience to filter the information received since, with environmental education, information filtering can be done critically (Montero, 1994).

To this end, consumers have to decode advertising and analyze endogenous and exogenous elements, both pragmatic and linguistic, as in the case of the well-known greenwashing disseminated by Kenny Bruno in 1992, since "today's advertising techniques distort reality, selectively amplify what is of interest and hide what is not, and advertising is increasingly based on emotional messages (which are difficult to disprove)" (Hallama et al., 2011, p. 29). Likewise, the added commercial value that the environment provides is evident since it is the hallmark of many companies in the context of competitiveness, and the objectives are aimed at sales, which means that the environment is transformed by advertising into a commercial value (de Andrés del Campo and González, 2010). Not without reason, many companies' greenwashing is of considerable interest. To name one recent example, ironically, two of the companies that emitted the most gases in 2018 were sponsors of the COP25 held in Madrid from December 2 to 13, 2019, i.e., Endesa (30.2 million tons, representing 9.3% over the Spanish territory) and Iberdrola (1 million tons, which translates into 1% of total emissions in Spain). Likewise, the amount contributed by the sponsors reached 20% of the final cost of the event, set at 50 million euros (G. Sevillano, 2020).

On the other hand, following the scheme of intertwined definitions, the concept of literary ecocriticism appears timidly from the university professor Laurence Buell in the volume *The Environmental Imagination*, published in 1995, under the term ecocriticism. Subsequently, it would see the light in *The Ecocriticism Reader* by Cheryll Glotfelty in 1996, considered the cornerstone of the theory that studies the interrelationship between literature and our environment (García, 2017). The aim is to demonstrate a culture that overcomes the anthropocentrism that characterizes our society and transforms our vision to better cope with environmental changes. However, this implies overcoming our dependence on nature and removing the weight that certain human activities have (Bula, 2009).

To this end, one of the most prominent facets of anthropocentrism is constituted by environmental racism (Bonilla, 2017; Rodríguez, 2014; Bullard, 2004), which occurs when environmental problems prevail in the most disadvantaged areas of a territory, thus affecting the quality of life of its inhabitants, generally with little economic power and with physical features different from those of the dominant population. All this is in favor of global groups and interests. Mass production and prevailing economic policies accelerate a process of discrimination in the name of the use of natural resources and to the detriment of the environment of the people concerned, as status, power relations, and area of residence separate them. Not without reason, this cultural vision is configured as the framework of power relations between individuals.

Consequently, Porras (2014) and Pérez and Porras (2005) describe the environmental field as a network of open and dynamic relations between different agents that establish the rules of the game, rules of power based on antagonistic interactions, which are seen as protagonists groups with purchasing power and little cultural knowledge (promoters of the involution of effective policies) and groups with cultural capital and little economic capital. It is a field where numerous fields and actors converge, creating a space that is recognized as flexible and dynamic with the possibility of including tools that reject the participation of other agents.

In this context, Bonilla (2017) analyzes two cases of notable interest: On the one hand, the New Orleans catastrophe produced more significant damage in the most disadvantaged areas, inhabited by African Americans and Central Americans, due to a lack of local planning and leadership; on the other, the construction of a road infrastructure that divided one of the villages of the Dourados Reserve, Mato Grosso do Sul, in Brazil, produced severe damage to the subsistence of the people, forcing its workers to exodus and social discrimination. In this regard, it is essential to highlight that the consequences of environmental degradation determine the existence of the harvesting peoples, producing the disappearance of many indigenous peoples with all the scientific wisdom collected in them, given that they decode the environment and allow a remarkable interpretation of the surrounding ecosystem that has been lost with their disintegration. Likewise, their language has undergone notable modifications because although they have seen the imposition of the languages of invading peoples, globalization is imposing on them the use of language with more urban-technological and less sustainable tendencies (Montenegro, 1992).

For all these reasons, in the educational system, it is convenient to carry out a process of environmental education or eco-literacy, as well as in specialized translation classes at university levels, by which the student becomes aware of and integrates not only environmental disasters but such a broad specialized knowledge base that allows him to develop his critical capacity and understand natural processes (Arias, 2019). The concept was coined in the 1970s by David W. Orr and Fritjof Capra, aiming to instill critical awareness about the precocious concept of sustainability and prepare students to face the ecological challenges human action poses in natural spaces. This methodology coincides with a robust environmental paradigm since it will be at that time when the first concerns about the environment are injected in the Stockholm Earth Summit, which will be followed by numerous summits (26 precisely, with its last celebration in Glasgow) and programs enhanced by the United Nations, such as the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the United Nations Forum on Forests and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, among others (González, 2020).

Currently, the ecocentric and holistic values of the socio-political proposals of the international agendas seek to provide a more complete and non-reductionist vision of the individual-environment duality, and their main axes are to include environmental awareness in the educational curriculum: on the one hand, because the environment influences the cognitive system of the subjects and any alteration can influence them (Zeballos, 2008); on the other hand, because the classroom represents a context for teachers and students of belonging that promotes responsibility in favor of a sustainable and just society (Parra, 2018).

As for its application in higher education, in its objective of adapting to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), it has integrated the demands of a new socio-environmental context by applying them to the educational framework in order to bet on the training of sustainability-conscious professionals and to climb in importance in competitiveness with other universities for its application (Barrón et al., 2010). One example is the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE), which in 2021 approved a document on the commitment of Spanish universities about 2030 as a result of the Guidelines for Curricular Sustainability of 2005 and ratified in 2011, to integrate sustainability at all levels of academia. It is understood that the university has the power to research and accumulate knowledge to develop competencies in this area and to ensure that the entire teaching community develops a critical and sustainable attitude through formal and non-formal education.

Finally, special attention is paid to textual genres, which have yet to be studied in depth in the environmental

field so far, as they help frame the most general characteristics and conventions of the texts to proceed to their detection, study, and translation. On numerous occasions, these genres are not easy to distinguish because of their capacity to converse with others, as in the case of scientific and popularization journals and articles, where, in addition to the expository-descriptive genre, the legal genre is present if the laws that protect a particular patent, questionnaires or glossaries, among others, are presented. An explanation based on microtexts is given by Sevilla and Sevilla (2003) since any text with scientific-technical intent should include information of this nature, but texts that unintentionally include scientific-technical information, such as a literary passage that explains a technical mechanism and have no intention other than mere illustration, do not fully become scientific documents par excellence.

In the case of the environment, it is usual for some genres of written transmission, such as university manuals, instruction manuals, academic papers, or research projects, to be accompanied by images to provide visual support to the explanatory text. In the case of textbooks, they are illustrated "so that the theory makes sense and manages to convince the reader, the book requires transferring the theoretical construction to the real world, from situations and phenomena that can be interpreted with a certain model" (Hernández & Izquierdo, 2017, p. 3882). Below is a table with the textual genres in the environment that are collected in the most representative documents of this transdisciplinary (see table 1).

**Table 1.**  
*Environmental textual genres*

Oral transmission genres		
Newsreels	Interviews	Discussions
Documentaries	Speeches and conferences	Advertising
Written transmission genres		
Patent	Contracts	Laws, orders and resolutions
Monographs	Instruction Manuals	Essays
Textbooks	University manuals	Electronic messages
Proceedings	Research project	Dictionaries and thesauruses
Reports	Academic papers	Opinion articles
Questionnaires	Virtual forums	News and reports
Advertising brochure or commercial catalog	Scientific and popularization journals and articles	Specialized websites (NGOs and associations)

Source: Own elaboration.

Likewise, the examples that could be drawn from the proposed classification of textual genres are varied: instruction manuals grant precise morphosyntactic characteristics by wanting to claim precision and univocal correspondence between their terms so that the environment participates in their accuracy; in research projects, the environment appears granting technicalities to language and scientific writing; in commercial brochures or catalogs, its technical terms are mixed with the standardized and mutilated ones that characterize this genre; or also, among many others, it illustrates its lexicon in more informal discourses, through opinion articles or the pages of specialized associations that mix technical terms with reformulations and explanations to explain the surrounding reality to the uneducated.

## CONCLUSIONS

The environment as a transdisciplinary covers diverse areas that transcend its radius of action, jumping to advertising and giving the consumer a framework of natural balance and environmental recovery, and giving a specific name to concrete situations where human activities have been protagonists, as in the case of ecocriticism or environmental racism, which, passing through environmental journalism, have an essential impact on the process of eco-literacy.

In addition to the above, the importance of the environment in humanistic disciplines is becoming increasingly progressive. Traditionally, the postulates of the pure sciences have highlighted the crisis and the disastrous consequences of an insufficient balance of the society-environment-economy triangle; however, the efforts that unite the different humanistic branches to study the individual-environment duality offer an increasingly powerful

multidimensional vision towards the systemic vision that should characterize us as a society, based on the symbiosis and interrelation of processes, subjects, and natural elements.

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The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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<sup>1</sup>In previous research focused on the scientific treatment of environmental news, the presence of languages in the curriculum of journalism degrees in Spain has been studied, where data worthy of consideration for the lack of conception has been thrown. Specifically, we found in the QEDU search engine of the Ministry of Universities 41 Degrees in Journalism for the academic year 2022/2023, of which 25 offer English as a subject in their curricula (56.09%); 12 do not offer modern languages in their curricula (29.26%); 4 do so as electives, with English as the language offered (9.75%); 2 offer bilingual curricula in English and Spanish (4.87%); and, finally, only 1 offers another language in addition to English (2.43%), i.e., French. As for the curricula offering compulsory, core, or basic training in modern languages, 14 offer only one subject (60.86%); 4 curricula offer two subjects (17.59%); and five curricula offer three or more (21.73%). Finally, about entry-level requirements, only the University of Navarra requires a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism, offered with a Diploma in Global Journalism, a C1 level of English from the Official Language School or equivalent.