

Robert Poole, *Corpus-Assisted Ecolinguistics*,
Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2022.

Robert Poole's book *Corpus-Assisted Ecolinguistics* emerges at a critical juncture in both linguistics and environmental thought. Published as part of the Bloomsbury Advances in Ecolinguistics series, this monograph sets out to forge a much-needed synthesis between ecolinguistic theory and the methodological tools of corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS). More than just a technical guide or theoretical treatise, Poole's book is a call for ecolinguists to adopt more empirical methods, and for corpus linguists to engage more directly with the ecological implications of language. In doing so, he delivers a carefully argued, theoretically grounded, and methodologically rich contribution that marks a significant advancement in the study of language and linguistics in general.

Poole positions his work squarely within the "critical-constructivist" tradition of ecolinguistics, tracing its roots from Einar Haugen's seminal concept of the "ecology of language"¹ through to the critical discourse tradition inspired by M. A. K. Halliday and Arran Stubbe (i.e., "cryptogrammic fourth level" and "econarratives").² The book foregrounds the idea that language is not merely descriptive but constitutive – that linguistic practices both reflect and shape human relations with the non-human world (i.e., more-than-human world). This stance aligns Poole with a post-structuralist epistemology that sees discourse as a medium through which ecological ideologies are normalized, contested, or resisted.

Importantly, Poole adopts the increasingly common practice in ecolinguistics of articulating his own "ecosophy" – a normative ethical framework through which discourse is evaluated as either ecologically beneficial, ambivalent, or destructive.³

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- 1 For further discussion, see Einar Haugen (1972/2001), "The Ecology of Language", in: Alwin Fill, Peter Mühlhäusler (eds.), *The Ecolinguistics Reader: Language, Ecology and Environment* (pp. 57–66), Continuum, London, New York. Reprinted from Einar Haugen (1972), *The Ecology of Language: Essays by Einar Haugen* (pp. 325–329), Stanford University Press, Stanford.
 - 2 Cf. Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday (1990/2001), "New Ways of Meaning: The Challenge to Applied Linguistics", in: Alwin Fill, Peter Mühlhäusler (eds.), *The Ecolinguistics Reader: Language, Ecology and Environment* (pp. 175–202, especially p. 193), Continuum, London, New York. Reprinted from "New Ways of Meaning: The Challenge to Applied Linguistics", *Journal of Applied Linguistics* 6 (1990), pp. 7–36; Arran Stubbe (2021), *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By*, Routledge, London.
 - 3 Arne Næss (1975), "The Shallow and the Long-Range, Deep Ecology Movement", in: Alan R. Drengson, Yuichi Inoue (eds.), *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology* (pp. 3–10), North Atlantic Books, Berkeley. For more details on Arne Næss's "Ecosophy T", see Arne Næss (1989), *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; Arne Næss (2008), *Ecology of Wisdom*, Penguin Classics, London; Jan Defrančeski (2024), "Between Beautiful and Moral Action: Immanuel Kant and Arne Næss", *Jahr – European Journal of Bioethics* 15 (2024) 1, pp. 137–157, doi: <https://doi.org/10.21860/J.15.1.6>.

The five pillars of his “ecosophy” – “Well-Being”, “Justice”, “Awakening and Transformation”, “Compassion”, and “Sustainability” – serve as criteria for the critique or promotion of language practices throughout the book. This transparency in positionality is both methodologically and ethically significant, reminding readers that ecolinguistic analysis is not ideologically neutral but deeply value-laden.

Poole’s contribution also involves a subtle redefinition of ecolinguistics. He argues that the field has historically been dominated by analyses of overt environmental discourse (e.g., *greenspeak*), which he analogizes to Arne Næss’s “shallow ecology”.⁴ In contrast, one might say that he advocates for a “deep ecolinguistics” that interrogates broader societal discourses – those not explicitly about the environment – that nonetheless encode unsustainable ideologies. This shift expands the scope of ecolinguistics and situates it within broader social, political, and economic contexts.

The book’s central methodological innovation lies in its systematic integration of CADS techniques with ecolinguistic inquiry. Poole makes a compelling case for the analytical affordances of corpus linguistics in identifying recurring linguistic patterns – such as collocations, semantic prosodies, and keyword distributions – that may otherwise elude manual discourse analysis. The book consists of the following chapters: (1) “An Introduction to Ecolinguistics and Corpus-Assisted Discourse Study”, (2) “Corpus-Assisted Ecolinguistics”, (3) “A Corpus-Assisted Diachronic Analysis of Representations of *Wilderness*”, (4) “Corpus-Assisted Ecolinguistics for Literary Text: A Keyness Analysis of Richard Powers’ *The Overstory*”, (5) “Roving Beasts and Bolting Bovines: Wordplay in the Reporting of Animal Escapes”, (6) “Geographical Text Analysis for Corpus-Assisted Ecolinguistics”, and (7) “Conclusion”. Each chapter showcases different corpus-based methods applied to ecologically relevant texts, including literary fiction, news media, historical archives, and activist communications. As the title suggests, Chapter 1 introduces the readers to the academic fields of ecolinguistics and corpus-assisted discourse studies, with a special focus on their historical development and current state of affairs. Chapter 2 lays the groundwork by introducing key concepts in CADS and corpus linguistics, including the distinction between corpus-based and corpus-driven approaches, the use of semantic tagging and annotation, and the construction of specialized corpora. The remaining chapters then apply these methods in a series of detailed case studies. For example, Chapter 3 uses a diachronic corpus (Google Books) to trace shifts in adjectives modifying “wilderness” over two centuries, revealing a gradual commodification and romanticization of nature. Chapter 4 turns to literary analysis with a corpus-based keyword analysis of Richard Powers’ *The Overstory*, illustrating how narrative fiction can model ecologically sustainable discourses. Chapter 5 analyses journalistic reporting on animal escapes to expose

4 Cf. Arne Næss (1975), “The Shallow and the Long-Range, Deep Ecology Movement”, in: Alan R. Drengson, Yuichi Inoue (eds.), *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology* (pp. 3–10, especially p. 3), North Atlantic Books, Berkeley.

anthropocentric framings and covert linguistic devaluations of non-human animals, while Chapter 6 offers a geographical text analysis that combines corpus linguistics with geographical information systems (GIS) to investigate how ecological discourses represent place(s). And Chapter 7, being the final and concluding chapter in the book, brings together the book's central contributions, emphasizing the significance of its corpus-assisted ecolinguistic approach across the various case studies. It illustrates how corpus linguistic methods were applied to a range of ecological discourses – from diachronic analyses of wilderness representations to innovative integrations of GIS mapping with CADs. A recurring aim throughout these studies was to investigate underexplored discourse terrains while extending the methodological scope of ecolinguistics.

Looking ahead, the author reflects on promising avenues for further research, including diachronic studies of lexicogrammatical features such as ergativity, linking corpus stylistics with spatial analysis, examining narratives in climate fiction and gaming, and drawing connections across different analytical approaches. Extending the framework to corpora in diverse languages and cultural contexts is identified as a key step, with the newly developed EcoLexicon English Corpus highlighted as an especially valuable resource. Apart from synthesizing methodological insights, the chapter advances a compelling argument for ecolinguistics as a transformative field of research and pedagogy. Through a personal account of how ecolinguistic inquiry reshaped his own perspectives and actions, the author underscores the discipline's wider mission of fostering ecological awareness and sustainability through language. The conclusion thus both consolidates the book's main arguments and sets out an inspiring agenda for engaged scholarship, affirming the enduring value of corpus-assisted ecolinguistics.

However, it must be said that the empirical chapters are methodologically rigorous, clearly structured, and pedagogically useful. They demonstrate not only what corpus-assisted ecolinguistic research looks like in practice but also how different kinds of corpora (diachronic, specialized, literary, journalistic) can be tailored to specific research questions. Each study foregrounds the importance of recontextualization: Poole does not simply identify patterns – he interprets them through his “ecosophy” and situates them within their sociopolitical and discursive contexts.

The book's relevance spans several academic fields. For ecolinguistics, it offers a practical roadmap for empirical analysis, moving beyond critique toward methodological pluralism. Poole's work responds directly to earlier critiques of the field's fragmentation and lack of coherence by offering a robust, interdisciplinary model that is both theoretically informed and methodologically explicit. In doing so, it builds on and extends the ecolinguistic frameworks proposed in Stibbe's *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By*,⁵ while adding the computational

5 Arran Stibbe (2021), *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By*, Routledge, London. For further discussion, see also Arran Stibbe (2023), *Econarrative: Ethics, Ecology, and the Search for New Narratives to Live By*, Bloomsbury Academic, London.

power of corpus methods. Also, for corpus linguists, Poole's book represents an "ethical turn". It demonstrates how corpus methods – traditionally associated with neutral description – can be leveraged for social and ecological critique. This is particularly significant in an era of increasing concern about the environmental consequences of human discourse. Poole urges corpus linguists to consider not only what patterns exist in language, but what those patterns do in the world. And finally, for the broader environmental humanities and applied linguistics communities, the book offers a compelling example of how transdisciplinary methodologies can be mobilized to address urgent planetary challenges. Poole's book underscores the need for linguistics to contribute meaningfully to the climate crisis, not by offering technological solutions, but by revealing and reimagining the discourses that shape collective perceptions and behaviours.

One possible critique is that the book's explicit ethical stance, while admirably transparent, may raise questions about researcher bias. However, Poole anticipates this concern by grounding his evaluations in a clearly articulated "ecosophy", and by emphasizing the importance of methodological rigor and transparency. His approach reflects a broader shift in critical research traditions toward positional reflexivity rather than false claims of objectivity. Another critique might be that, while the book is rich in textual analysis, it leaves the social uptake of discourse relatively unexplored. How ecological discourses circulate, how audiences interpret them, and how they translate into action remain largely outside the scope of the book. These are perhaps questions for future work, possibly incorporating multimodal or ethnographic methods. Nevertheless, Poole's ability to bridge theory and application is impressive. His historical framing of ecolinguistics ensures readers understand the discipline's intellectual roots, while his methodological expositions provide tangible tools for research. The emphasis on positionality and "ecosophy" is also crucial, reminding scholars that methodological choices are inseparable from ethical commitments.

In conclusion, Robert Pool's *Corpus-Assisted Ecolinguistics* is an exemplary model of interdisciplinary research that advances both the theory and method of ecolinguistics. By bridging critical discourse theory with empirical corpus methods, Poole has not only expanded the analytical toolkit available to ecolinguists but has also provided an ethical and practical framework for studying language in an age of ecological crisis. The book is well-suited for scholars in discourse studies, applied linguistics, environmental humanities, and beyond, and it will undoubtedly serve as a foundational text for future research at the intersection of language and deep ecology. In that regard, one can certainly say that *Corpus-Assisted Ecolinguistics* is more than a manual for applying corpus methods to environmental discourse; it is a manifesto for expanding the scope of ecolinguistic inquiry. By applying CADS to domains not overtly environmental, Poole invites researchers to uncover hidden ideological patterns that perpetuate unsustainable practices. This expanded focus has significant implications: political rhetoric, advertising, and even casual con-

versation become legitimate sites for ecological critique. The book will be valuable to linguists, discourse analysts, environmental humanists, and communication scholars interested in combining computational tools with critical analysis. Its accessibility also makes it suitable for postgraduate courses in discourse studies and applied linguistics.

In an era when the climate crisis is cultural, economic, and linguistic as well as environmental, Poole's integration of CADS into ecolinguistics is both timely and necessary. His work demonstrates that language analysis is not a peripheral concern but a central tool in understanding – and potentially transforming – the ideologies that shape human relationships with the natural world. Ultimately, Poole's book *Corpus-Assisted Ecolinguistics* reinforces the idea that linguistic scholarship *can* – and *must* – play a role in addressing the most pressing ecological challenges of our time.

Jan Defrančeski