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LINGUOPRAGMATIC FEATURES OF ECO-NEOLOGISMS IN ITALIAN MEDIA DISCOURSE

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The article examines the influence of cultural and social factors on the perception of ecological neologisms in contemporary Italian, with a particular focus on their use in mass media discourse. The aim of the study is to clarify the pragmatic features of the functioning of eco-neologisms and to identify their role in reflecting and shaping current trends in social development. The research material consists of Italian media publications from 2019 to 2025, which reveal a significant number of lexical innovations, among which a distinct group is represented by eco-neologisms (e-fuel, emissioni climalteranti, politiche intersettoriali, etc.). The methodological framework combines discourse analysis, cognitive and pragmatic approaches, which makes it possible to trace both the semantic evolution of new terms and their communicative potential in different contexts. The results of the study demonstrate that eco-neologisms not only reflect sociocultural realities but also actively shape public perceptions of new values in contemporary European society, in particular environmental awareness, innovation, and international cooperation. These findings highlight the growing role of language in promoting ecological thinking and contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay between linguistic creativity and social change.

Keywords: eco-neologism, eco-neological collocation, sociocultural realities, ecological discourse, semantic calque.

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ЛІНГВОПРАГМАТИЧНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ЕКО-НЕОЛОГІЗМІВ В ІТАЛІЙСЬКОМУ МЕДІА-ДИСКУРСІ

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*У статті досліджується вплив культурних і соціальних чинників на сприйняття неологізмів у сучасній італійській мові, зокрема у сфері мас-медійного дискурсу. Метою роботи є з'ясування прагматичних особливостей функціонування новотворів, а також виявлення їхньої ролі у відображенні актуальних тенденцій суспільного розвитку. Матеріалом для аналізу стали публікації в італійських ЗМІ за 2019–2025 рр., де зафіксовано низку лексичних інновацій, серед яких особливу групу становлять екологічні неологізми (*e-fuel*, *emissioni climalteranti*, *politiche intersettoriali* тощо). Результати дослідження демонструють, що еко-неологізми не лише віддзеркалюють соціокультурні реалії, але й активно формують уявлення про нові цінності сучасного європейського суспільства, зокрема, екологічну свідомість, інноваційність та інтернаціональну кооперацію.*

Ключові слова: еко-неологізм, еко-неологічна колокація, соціокультурні реалії, екологічний дискурс, семантична калька.

Relevance of the research topic. In the modern world, ecology has long ceased to be a narrowly specialized science that studies the relationships between living organisms and the environment. Today, it is one of the key areas of interdisciplinary knowledge, covering social, political, economic, legal, and cultural dimensions. The growth of “green” initiatives, the spread of global environmental protection measures, the development of international environmental law, climate diplomacy, and the transition to a sustainable economy all testify to the inevitability of “ecologization” of modern thinking. Such transformations are accompanied by the active formation of new concepts that reflect both scientific realities and social challenges. Accordingly, the language system responds to the need to name new ecological phenomena, processes, and concepts, which leads to the emergence of eco-neologisms – new words or phrases designed to denote complex and

sometimes fundamentally new definitions in the field of human interaction with the environment. Studying these phenomena could contribute to understanding human interaction in the sphere of ecology and daily life better, which describes the **scientific novelty** of the research.

Talking about the **perspectives** of the article, it is worth noting that this research can involve different disciplines, including linguistics, sociology, psychology and media studies, opening up a broader understanding of the phenomenon.

Presenting the main material. Neologisms are traditionally considered to be new linguistic units that arise in language for the purpose of naming new concepts, objects, phenomena, or events. The reason for the emergence of neologisms, in general, is social and scientific-technical progress: the emergence of new socio-economic realities, discoveries in science and technology, and achievements in the field of culture [2, p. 21]. However, among all types of neologisms, eco-neologisms have recently gained particular attention. These are lexical units that are formed under the influence of and within the framework of ecological discourse. They are the result of the active influence of ecological thinking on the language system and can be both terminological and commonly used words that function in the public sphere and the media. Their emergence is associated with the growing role of environmental issues in the socio-cultural and political life of modern society.

The media use eco-neologisms not only to convey new information, but also to elicit the desired response from the audience – alarm, solidarity, protest, or support.

It is known that linguopragmatics, as a branch of linguistics, studies linguistic means in the context of their functioning in a specific communicative situation. As S. Shabat-Savka notes, the basis of linguistic pragmatics "is the use and functioning of linguistic signs in the process of communication in connection with the addresser-addressee continuum, the relationship between communicants, in the context of a holistic speech situation – the ratio of verbal and nonverbal means of communication" [3, p. 20].

When analyzing eco-neologisms, it is important to consider not only their semantic content, but also speech acts, the speaker's intentions, the context of use, and the audience's reaction. Eco-neologisms are formed at the intersection of science, journalism, politics, and psychology, and therefore have not only a nominative but also a powerful pragmatic function. They not only appear to denote new phenomena, but also actualize certain values, emotions, and strategies for influencing consciousness. Below we will analyze several notable examples from Italian-language journalism using newspapers as examples.

1) Ecocidio

The lexeme ecocidio comes from the combination of “eco-” and “-cidio” (Latin caedere – to kill). Historically, the word had a narrow terminological status in the legal

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field, where it was used to refer to large-scale destruction of the environment. However, in contemporary Italian media, the word is used in a broader sense, as a metaphor to describe environmental crimes in the context of war or political conflicts:

*“Anche in Sudan il rischio di **ecocidio** è presente”;*

*“Il territorio ucraino non è esente da casi di presunti **ecocidi**, questa volta a opera dei russi”* (Il Sole 24 Ore, 30 dicembre 2024).

From a pragmatic point of view, this eco-neologism has a strong emotional charge: it equates damage to the environment with a crime against humanity, forming a legal and moral framework for perception.

2) Bias

Borrowed from English, the lexeme *bias*, which entered Italian discourse from psychology and cognitive sciences, has been actively used in journalism since 2019. In the text on climate change, it takes on a metaphorical dimension:

*“Concretizza il cambiamento climatico, spiazzando i nostri **bias**”* [5], fulfilling, among other things, a pragmatic explanatory function: the author of the article demonstrates how cognitive biases interfere with the perception of the climate crisis. Such integration of a specialized term into media discourse indicates its neologization and semantic expansion.

3) Eco-ansia

The term *eco-ansia* (Italian calque from English *eco-anxiety*) refers to a psychological state of anxiety associated with the global climate crisis. The eco-neologism first came into widespread use after 2020, and by 2023 it was already being actively used in the media and reports by international organizations:

*“Se dunque in questi giorni state convivendo con quella che ormai è conosciuta come **eco-ansia**, sappiate che non siete soli”* [5].

Considering the pragmatic meaning of the lexeme, it is worth noting that the word appeals to the experience of an individual, emphasizing that the climate crisis affects not only nature but also mental health. In essence, this calqued eco-neologism serves the function of emotional identification with the reader (*“non siete soli”*).

4) Eco-paralisi

A neologic unit that appeared in public discourse after 2021, denoting a state of psychological inaction when an individual feels powerless in the face of the scale of climate problems. In a pragmatic sense, the term is used as an explanatory model for social passivity. It removes individual guilt and transfers it to the category of shared psychological experience, legitimizing talk of ecological inaction:

*“A livello individuale, questo meccanismo può essere spiegato da quella che viene definita **eco-paralisi**” [5].*

5) Crisi silenziosa / crisi invisibile

Eco-neologism, which appeared and gained traction in journalism in 2020. UN and WHO reports used the term silent crisis, but the Italian-language press decided to create a calque of the anglicism for better understanding and perception of the information. Today, this neologism is often found in the mass media, as well as in socio-ecological discourse in general. For its part, the pragmatic aspect plays an important role, as the lexeme is used to refer to “slow disasters,” such as soil degradation or loss of biodiversity, which are not immediately perceived by society:

*“La desertificazione, il degrado del suolo e la siccità, rappresentano una **crisi silenziosa e invisibile** che colpisce le persone e il Pianeta” [6].*

6) Siccità agricola / siccità ecologica

This is yet another example of eco-neologisms that began to actively enter into use in the 2020s. Speaking about the origin of the eco-phrase, it is worth noting that, in fact, the basic term *siccità* is being refined under the influence of English-language concepts (agricultural drought, ecological drought). It is frequently used in journalism, especially in the context of environmental protection. A distinctive feature of these neologisms is their terminological detail, which quickly entered into widespread use through reports by international organizations. Although the word was initially used only in a highly specialized context, over time it entered the media and became widespread.

From a pragmatic point of view, the new terms make it possible to distinguish between spheres of influence: *siccità agricola* emphasizes the consequences for agriculture (crops, food security), while *siccità ecologica* emphasizes the consequences for natural ecosystems (rivers, forests, biodiversity). This strengthens the argument in the environmental discourse, as it demonstrates that the crisis affects not only the economy but also natural systems that are vital to humans:

*“Il Panel scientifico intergovernativo sul cambiamento climatico (IPCC) ritiene che la **siccità agricola ed ecologica** sia aumentata in diverse regioni di tutti i continenti” [6].*

7) Emissioni climalteranti

This eco-neologism can be called a generalizing neologism, as it is a relatively new collocation that became widespread in 2019-2025 in the fields of science, politics, and journalism. Globally, it is a calque of the English phrase *emissions altering the climate*, which is used in Italy as an alternative to the narrower *emissioni di CO₂*.

From a pragmatic point of view, the eco-neologism should be defined as an “umbrella term” because it covers all greenhouse gases, not just carbon dioxide. This is

where its communicative power lies: generalization creates an effect of scientific accuracy and, at the same time, political convenience.

In addition, the phrase serves as a conceptual marker of “green” discourse: it is used in IPCC reports, in the European legal field (in particular within the framework of the European Green Deal), in speeches by environmental organizations, and in the media. Its choice has a pragmatic effect – to avoid excessive “technicality,” make the topic accessible to a wider audience, and at the same time strengthen the argument for the urgency of climate action: *“Oltre che abbattere le emissioni climalteranti e il degrado del suolo, servono investimenti per favorire l’adattamento”* [6].

8) Politiche intersettoriali

The eco-neological expression is not entirely new, as it used to exist in sociological discourse, but its meaning acquired an “ecological” connotation after 2019, especially in the context of *transizione ecologica* (green transition) and the European Green Deal. It can be seen as a neologism-combination, formed by transferring sociological terminology (*intersettoriale*) into the sphere of ecological discourse.

From a pragmatic point of view, the collocation performs a coordinating and integrating function: it emphasizes the need to view climate and environmental issues not in isolation, but in the context of interrelationships between sectors (agriculture, industry, energy, urban planning, water resources). The use of this term in the media and political documents gives the discourse a nuance of “systematicity” and creates the impression of a scientifically sound, comprehensive strategy that goes beyond narrow sectoral solutions. The above example is an excellent example of semantic renewal, when an old phrase acquires a new context:

“La complessità del rischio di siccità richiede invece politiche intersettoriali che tengano conto innanzitutto del bilancio idrico almeno a livello di bacino idrografico, che deve essere aggiornato secondo i dati più recenti” [6].

9) Consumo di suolo

This term has been known since the 2000s in technical documents, but it was in 2019–2025 that it became a key buzzword in ecological discourse in Italy. It is actively used in the media, political debates, and reports by environmental organizations. It is a calque from the English *land take* / *land consumption*.

From a pragmatic point of view, this is a neologism that politicizes the environmental problem: it is not about “development” or “urbanization” (more neutral words), but specifically about “consumption” (*consumo*), which has a negative connotation. This allows the phenomenon to be presented as a process of resource loss, emphasizing its irreversibility and harm to future generations:

“Il consumo del suolo aggrava anche l’impatto della crisi climatica, favorendo l’espandersi delle “isole di calore” e le conseguenze negative di siccità e piogge estreme. Per non parlare dei danni immensi in termini di perdita di servizi ecosistemici e di biodiversità” [6].

10) Servizi ecosistemici

A scientific concept from the 2000s, but it only gained popularity in Italian public discourse in 2019–2020, thanks to reports by ISPRA, WWF, and Legambiente. This is a typical example of an eco-neologism – a scientific concept that is gradually entering journalism.

From a pragmatic point of view, the expression performs an instrumental function: it presents ecosystems as “service providers” that humans receive (clean water, air, climate regulation). Such a neologized metaphor helps to include environmental issues in political and economic discussions, appealing to the logic of benefits and losses.

11) Bilancio zero del consumo di suolo

A calque from English, no net land take, which entered Italian discourse in the 2020s. This is an example of a new ecological collocation that quickly acquired normative status and is used in EU documents and national strategies.

From a pragmatic point of view, the expression performs a normative-target function: it presents the problem in the form of a measurable task (*bilancio zero*), which makes it more concrete for politicians and planners. The expression itself combines the “language of ecology” and the “language of management,” creating a sense of technical feasibility of the environmental goal:

“La ricetta è semplice e conosciuta da anni: agire in una logica di “Bilancio zero del consumo di suolo” evitando di occupare nuove aree e promuovendo il recupero – anche ai fini dell’adattamento climatico – delle aree degradate e/o sottoutilizzate” [6].

Conclusions. An analysis of the examples given shows that the ecological discourse of contemporary Italian is highly dynamic and open to new nominations. Several key trends can be identified among the main ones.

First, there is an active assimilation of anglicisms and calques (*bias*, *e-fuel*, *bilancio zero del consumo di suolo*), which can be explained by the globalized nature of environmental debates and the close connection between the Italian media space and international documents and English-language sources. Such lexemes function not only in the professional sphere, but also in journalism, politics, and social networks, which accelerates their popularization.

Second, so-called “umbrella terms” have become widespread, covering a whole range of related phenomena (*emissioni climalteranti*, *servizi ecosistemici*). Their pragmatic

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function is to create convenient generalizing categories for media and political use, while maintaining scientific accuracy.

Thirdly, there is a noticeable process of metaphorization and journalistic adaptation of scientific concepts (*crisi silenziosa, isole di calore*). Such units serve to evoke emotional responses and facilitate more effective communication with a wide audience by translating technical concepts into understandable images.

Separately, it is worth noting the trend toward terminological detail (*siccità agricola, siccità ecologica*), which reflects the growing need for precision in scientific description. The gradual entry of such terms into media discourse indicates their adaptation to a non-scientific context and the desire to explain complex phenomena to society in accessible language.

In general, linguopragmatic analysis makes it possible to see how language (namely, new lexemes) is used to influence environmental awareness, manipulate images, and create new concepts in society.

Thus, eco-neologisms in modern Italian are not only the result of scientific and technological progress, but also an indicator of social sensitivity to environmental challenges. They reflect the process of “ecologization” of public thinking and also function as linguistic markers of transformations in the cultural, political, and media environment.

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