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**THE REMINDING OF ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE  
THROUGH SALIENCE PATTERNS IN *LORAX* (2012) FILM:  
AN ECOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study analyzes the *Lorax* (2012) film through an ecolinguistic lens, focusing on salience patterns as a reminder of environmental degradation. The film portrays the consequences of excessive exploitation of nature using powerful visual and linguistic narratives. Applying Arran Stubbe's framework, the research identifies linguistic elements such as activation, concreteness, metaphor, metonymy, hyponymy, and transitivity patterns that emotionally and ideologically highlight environmental issues. The findings reveal that *Lorax* not only delivers a moral message about the importance of environmental care but also fosters ecological awareness through its language use. This study affirms that ecolinguistics is a potent tool for uncovering hidden ideologies and promoting sustainable behavior through popular media.

**Keywords:** ecolinguistics, salience, environmental damage, *Lorax* film, ecological awareness

**ABSTRAK**

*Penelitian ini menganalisis film Lorax (2012) melalui pendekatan ekolinguistik dengan fokus pada pola salience sebagai pengingat kerusakan lingkungan. Film ini menggambarkan dampak eksploitasi alam yang berlebihan melalui narasi visual dan linguistik yang kuat. Dengan menggunakan kerangka kerja Arran Stubbe, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi elemen linguistik seperti aktivasi, konkretisasi, metafora, metonimi, hiponimi, dan pola transitivitas yang menonjolkan isu lingkungan secara emosional dan ideologis. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa film Lorax tidak hanya menyampaikan pesan moral tentang pentingnya menjaga alam, tetapi juga membentuk kesadaran ekologis melalui bahasa yang digunakan. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa ekolinguistik dapat menjadi alat efektif dalam*

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*mengungkap ideologi tersembunyi dan mendorong perilaku berkelanjutan melalui media populer.*

**Kata kunci:** *ekolinguistik, salience, kerusakan lingkungan, film Lorax, kesadaran ekologis*

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

Environmental damage has been happening for a long time. Environment itself is the combination of external conditions, such as air, moisture, temperature, chemicals, and stress that materials are exposed to, which may lead to degradation or failure (Staelhe, 1991). The environmental damage also begins with human activities that begin to grow rapidly from land clearing, mining activities, and other damage, which can also be divided into several areas: there are damage to the river environment, damage to the forest environment, and damage to the residential environment.

Therefore, this concept can be expressed through various media, one of which is film, a representation of human life. According to Klarer (1999), literature encompasses every form of written expression, though not all written works qualify as literature. In essence, literature serves as a medium for creative expression used by authors to convey meaning. Similarly, film also tells stories and functions as a medium of expression. Both film and literature share the purpose of delivering narratives to their audiences. As Klarer (1999) explains, film operates as a mode of literary presentation through elements such as camera angles, editing, montage, and the use of slow or fast motion, which can all be analyzed using textual structures. By combining moving visuals and editing techniques, film brings literary ideas to life, evoking expression and emotion while remaining a form of literature.

One of the films about the environment is the Lorax film which was published in 2012. The Lorax film depicts a young boy's meeting with the Once-ler, a mysterious entity who lives among the truffula trees. The Once-ler is initially captivated by the attraction of the trees, but his desire of profit leads him to ignore the warnings of the Lorax, who speaks for the environment. Despite the Lorax's protests, the Once-ler's insatiable exploitation of the trees for his Thneed business causes extensive pollution and the displacement of native fauna. As his business grows, the Onceler's disregard for the environmental implications leads to the extinction of the truffula trees and the abandonment of his company by his own kind.

Reflecting on his past acts, the Once-ler gives the youngster a truffula seed, representing hope for the regeneration of the ravaged landscape. This gesture inspires the boy to assume responsibility for rejuvenating the environment and fostering the potential return of the Lorax and other occupants. The story emphasizes the value of environmental stewardship and the negative impact of

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unbridled greed and exploitation on nature's delicate balance, is also encourage the children who watched the film to care about environmental issue in real life.

Through this film, the filmmakers wanted to aim to show just how much damage has been inflicted on our earth. Because in this film, it is shown how the Earth in the future will be if we still do not protect our environment. The moral that this film wants to convey is how it should take care of this earth. The way the film promotes the supposed way of human life through artwork is analyzed using ecolinguistics. Ecolinguistic study examines the ecosystem as a part of the human life system (ecology) and the language used by humans to communicate in their environment (Stibbe, 2015). The researcher uses ecolinguistics as an approach because it provides a thorough investigation of the delicate interplay between language and the environment. Ecolinguistics investigates how language reflects, influences, and shapes society's attitudes and behaviors toward nature, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of environmental discourse. Scholars are drawn to ecolinguistics because of its potential to identify the underlying ideologies, discourses, and linguistic structures that shape human interactions with the natural world, providing insights into both sustainable and unsustainable activities. This interdisciplinary field not only illuminates verbal representations of nature but also influences policymaking and promotes environmental consciousness. Arran Stibbe's book "Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology, and the Stories We Live By" is a key work in the discipline, laying the groundwork for understanding language's function in influencing ecological consciousness and action.

Stibbe's observations, along with those of other researchers such as Alwin Fill and Julia Lupp, emphasize the importance of ecolinguistics in addressing environmental issues and supporting sustainable living habits. The researcher uses the ecolinguistics lens to analyze about the remembrance of the environment through salience patterns. According to Stibbe (2015), “salience is a story that an area of life is important and worthy of consideration”. In this film, there is a hidden intention of the film to bring awareness of the environment and how human activities can damage the environment. It is in the hope of accelerating positive change by leveraging the power of language to build greater harmony between humans and the environment.

To solve this problem, researchers conducted research using Lorax (2012) film to see how terrible the environmental damage that occurred in the film was. This makes us realize how terrible it would be if environmental damage continues. Starting with animals leaving their homes, and also humans buying air that should be something free, or can get it anyway.

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## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Film As Literary Work**

Film is a part of literature. Following Klarer's statement, the film is created with literary techniques. The presentation of film using camera angle, editing, montage, slow and fast motion, and many more, usually uses the features of literary text or can be described in a textual framework. Though film has its own specific characteristics and terminology, literary criticism is able to be applied to analyze film because film criticism is closely related to the conventional approaches of textual studies (Klarer, 1999). In addition, film as a part of literature impacts culture and society and is also impacted by them. Literature is a reflection of culture and society since it portrays people's thoughts in a creative way. It reflects and also influences social changes and is often credited as a source of cultural representation.

### **2. Arran Stibbe Ecolinguistic Framework**

According to Stibbe (2015), ecolinguistics is based on the idea that language has a big effect on how people think and see the world. For example, the words used in ads can make people want to buy things that are necessary and are bad for the earth. On the other hand, writing about nature could make people appreciate it more. Because of this, ecolinguistics can look into the bigger patterns of language that affect how people think about and act toward the world. Stibbe pulls ideas from both linguistics and cognitive science together in his book "Ecolinguistics: language, ecology, and the stories we live by" to make a framework for language. The goal of this framework is to find the stories we live by, come up with an ecological standard for judging these stories, and then use the language and ecological frameworks to look at different kinds of texts from different areas of life.

### **3. Salience Patterns**

Salience patterns is most commonly used in visual analysis, where Kress and van Leeuwen define it as "the degree to which an element draws attention to itself due to its size, its place in the foreground or its overlapping with other elements, its color, its tonal values, its sharpness of definition, and other features" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). Patterns of visual elements like this combine in images to highlight specific entities. Similarly, patterns of linguistic elements can combine to generate salience patterns, which vividly represent specific individuals in a text. By examining several linguistic properties such as activation, concreteness, transitivity patterns, metonymy, metaphor, and hyponymy (Stibbe, 2015).

#### **3.1 Activation**

Van Leeuwen (2008) describes how people (or members of other species) can be foregrounded in language by activation: Activation occurs when social actors are represented as the active, dynamic forces in an activity. Participants are activated when they are represented as doing, thinking, feeling, or saying things rather than having things done to them.

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### **3.2 Concreteness**

The term "concreteness" comes from the opposite pole of abstraction as the pattern of erasure. In general, the more abstract the description is, the less salient the entities being described (Stibbe, 2015). According to embodied cognitive theory (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Lakoff and Wehling, 2012), meaning is based in the body, and terms that relate to actual or potential bodily experience have much more power to invoke images and emotions than more abstract terms. Finding a new form of language that does not ‘dismember and deface’ the world requires the use of terms that invoke bodily experience. Lakoff and Wehling (2012, p. 42) describe how “The word environment is an abstract category. There is no one clear image that comes to mind when hearing it. Contrast this with the words forest, soil, water, air, and sky. They bring clear imagery to mind. We have all seen the sky, touched water, breathed air, and walked in forests”.

### **3.3 Transitivity Patterns**

Transitivity refers to how language represents actions, events, and participants through specific types of processes material, mental, and relational shaping, and how to understand environmental issues (Halliday, 1967). Unlike the traditional grammar definition, transitivity in this context analyzes how verbs and their structures construct meaning and assign responsibility. In material process, such as “chopped” or “destroyed,” depict physical actions and are essential in highlighting ecological harm; otherwise in mental process, like “wanted” or “felt,” reveal internal states and are used to show awareness, desire, or denial of environmental consequences. Not like mental or material process the relational process uses verbs like “is” or “was,” describes states of being or identity, and can subtly reinforce ideological positions, for instance.

### **2.4 Methapor**

Metaphor is a powerful linguistic tool that involves using one concept to represent another, shaping how people interpret and emotionally respond to environmental issues. Metaphors simplify complex ideas and reveal salience by highlighting specific aspects of events or actions, often framing them in familiar or emotionally charged ways (Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M, 1980). For example, in political or industrial discourse, environmental action is sometimes framed through metaphors like “carbon footprint,” “green revolution,” or “war on climate change.” These metaphors emphasize certain values such as urgency, combat, or innovation while potentially downplaying others, like cooperation or systemic change.

### **2.5 Metonymy**

Metonymy is the practice of referring to something by one of its attributes, components, or closely associated terms, and it plays a key role in shaping how environmental issues are framed and understood (Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M., 1980) This linguistic strategy can reveal salience by drawing attention to a specific part of a larger concept, there to influencing what people notice or prioritize. For

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example, using "the factory" to refer to a broader system of industrial pollution focuses attention on a single, tangible source rather than the complex network of global production and consumption behind it.

## **2.6 Hyponymy**

Hyponymy reveals salience by determining what details are made prominent or downplayed. For example, using a hyponym like “child labor” instead of the broader term “unfair practices” directs attention to a specific, emotionally charged issue, encouraging moral concern and action.

## **C. METHODS**

### **3.1 Research Design**

This research is a qualitative research that shows the data descriptively. (Creswell, 2014) asserted that qualitative research is a technique used to initiate the process of conducting literature research. This method demonstrates the expansion of meaning in society and the resolution of human problems. Qualitative research involves the study of conversation analysis and narrative analysis. Hancock also summarizes that the way qualitative research works is concentrating on description and interpretation may result in the creation of new concepts or theories (Hancock, 2007). Furthermore, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that qualitative analysis is about identifying themes, categories, patterns, or responses to the research questions.

### **3.2 Data and Data Design**

This research is going to obtain the data in the form of words, phrases, and sentences that reflect the salience patterns as the primary data. Besides the primary data, the researcher will also obtain the data in the form of screen capture as the secondary data, which will support the primary data since the highest level of salience is the visual (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). Those data are taken from the Lorax (2012) film, which is directed by Chris Renaud and published by Universal Pictures and Illumination Entertainment. The film's duration is 86 minutes, and it is legally available on Peacock, Prime Video, or you can rent it from Apple TV or Fandango at Home.

### **3.3 Research Instrument**

Through this research, the researchers tried to create an idea for conducting research to find environmental damage in the Lorax (2012) film. As stated by Bogdan and Biklen (1992), the researcher is the primary instrument in conducting qualitative research. This statement makes the researcher the center point of the research process.

### **3.4 Data Collection Technique**

There are many ways to collect data for research, such as interviews, focus groups, observations, and documents (Onwuegbuzie, 2010). For this research, the researcher will follow several steps, such as observing and highlighting. In the

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observation stage, the researcher watches the film several times to understand the plot and notice any representation of environmental damage. The researcher then highlights the representation of environmental damage for further analysis, and the last step is to capture the data that are relevant to the theory

### **3.5 Data Analysis Technique**

According to Taylor (2004), a variety of techniques and methods known as qualitative data analysis (QDA) are used to convert the qualitative data that has been gathered into an explanation, understanding, or interpretation of the people and circumstances being researched. Qualitative data analysis itself has many types, such as content analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, framework analysis, and grounded theory. The researcher used content analysis to analyze the data for this study.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), there are three steps of qualitative data analysis. This involves three connected steps. First is data reduction, meaning the researcher carefully chose only the important words, phrases, or sentences from the *Lorax* (2012) film that show environmental damage and left out anything unrelated, so the material became easier to study. Next is the data display, where the selected details are arranged into clear, descriptive paragraphs to make patterns and ideas more easily visible. Finally, the conclusion-drawing phase involves the researcher considering possible findings while collecting and analyzing the data, and then summarizing the key results to answer the research question directly.

## **D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Salience refers to patterns of language that give prominence to an area of life. With this salience, the researcher aims to create a scope in the film 'Lorax' using salience. (Stibbe, 2015) After salience, this research will delve into salience patterns. Salience patterns are derivatives of salience that were developed by Stibbe, which refer to several linguistic properties such as activation, concreteness, metaphor, hyponym, and transitivity pattern.

The word 'reminding' in the title 'The Reminding of Environmental Damage through Salience Patterns in *Lorax* (2012) Film: An Ecolinguistic Analysis' explains to the reader that this word has the meaning of reminding about environmental issues that are now too often overlooked or have become topics that are not talked about. Therefore, the researcher uses the word 'reminding' to invite readers to remember that preserving nature is essential and can be must even conserve it; otherwise, what happens in the film 'Lorax' will happen to the where the clean air that should be ours for free is sold, and all the trees are replaced by artificial ones, causing all the animals in the film 'Lorax' to leave the city.

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## a. Activation

Activation occurs when social actors are represented as the active, dynamic forces in an activity. Participants are activated when they are represented as doing, thinking, feeling, or saying things rather than having things done to them.

Data

“The **tree creaks and moans** as it fall and hits the ground with a thud.”

From the data above, the sentence 'the tree creaks and moans' illustrates the sound produced when a tree is cut down. Instead of using adjectives that indicate the sound resulting from that action, the author uses personification by colloquially attributing the words creaks and moans to the tree, even though these words can only reasonably be used by humans. This choice of words aims to convey a sense of pain that the tree experiences during the cutting process. By utilizing this activation process, it raises the audience's awareness that trees can feel pain, thus, the filmmakers hope that the audience will refrain from cutting down trees for human benefit.

## b. Concreteness

The term "concreteness" comes from the opposite pole of abstraction as the pattern of erasure. In general, the more abstract the description is, the less salient the entities being described (Stibbe, 2015). According to embodied cognitive theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, Lakoff and Wehling, 2012), meaning is based in the body, and terms that relate to actual or potential bodily experience have much more power to invoke images and emotions than more abstract terms. Finding a new form of language that does not 'dismember and deface' the world requires the use of terms that invoke bodily experience.

Data

“And people said that **the touch of their tufts was softer than anything, even silk. And they smelled like butterfly milk**”

In this data, Audrey recounts the Truffula tree to Ted. She describes the shape, texture, and smell of the Truffula leaves. When Audrey says the adjective 'softer', it triggers people's mental lexicon to imagine a texture that is softer than silk, even though silk itself is a very soft material. This is complemented by visuals of the Truffula tree that looks like soft cotton, illustrating the texture of the leaves. Additionally, once Ler mentions that it smells like butterfly milk. Literally, people cannot imagine the smell of butterfly milk, but the word butterfly triggers the mental lexicon to think of butterflies, even though butterfly milk has nothing to do with the milk produced by butterflies. The

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process of triggering the mental lexicon with this choice of diction is called concreteness. This sentence achieves high significance through the concreteness, using words that can be felt through the sense of touch and the sense of smell, so that the reader can clearly feel and smell the word 'tufts' described in the above sentence, making it seem extraordinary.

### c. Metaphor

Metaphor is shaping how people interpret and emotionally respond to environmental issues. Metaphors simplify complex ideas and reveal salience by highlighting specific aspects of events or actions, often framing them in familiar or emotionally charged ways.

Data

“In Thneedville we **manufacture our trees**  
Each one is **made in factories.**”

From this data, the above sentence refers to a metaphor that starts with the phrase 'we produce our trees.' Here, the filmmaker compares trees to industrial commodities. Trees, which were originally a gift given to us, are transformed into products that are manufactured like items made and mass-produced by humans, thus turning nature into an industrial product. The second sentence, 'each made in a factory,' expands the metaphor, establishing the idea of a society where what should be a tree growing and providing benefits has now become an item that only requires its essence for existence, while the functions and benefits of the tree are eliminated. Originally, trees could provide oxygen for free, but now they can only serve as decorations assembled in factories like machine-made objects. This is what makes the sentence a metaphor. Thus, the filmmakers aim to remind the audience about the importance of trees, which are often taken for granted. If this continues, the situation will be the same as what is happening in the real world.

### d. Hyponym

Hyponym reveals salience by determining what details are made prominent or downplayed. For example, using a hyponym like “child labor” instead of the broader term “unfair practices” directs attention to a specific, emotionally charged issue, encouraging moral concern and action.

Data

“A **group of pollution-covered animals sit around** a pond of Gluppity-Glupp. **One miserable Humming-Fish looks traumatized.**”

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The data above represents a sentence that shows a hyponym, where the hyponym itself describes a word that initially has a broad meaning, becoming specific. In the phrase 'a group of pollution-covered animals', that to know there are a number of animals that are covered by pollution, which is still a broad statement because the words used still include the term animals. Then, in the next sentence, 'one miserable Humming fish looks traumatized', the storyteller has specified the term that initially was animal into humming fish, which is an indicator of why the data above is classified as hyponym. The narrowing of this term increases the reader's attention and empathy towards the individual Humming-Fish in a polluted environment. This sentence emphasizes how this linguistic choice effectively guides the reader's perception from a general depiction to a more specific one, with an emotional image of a suffering creature.

### e. Transitivity Patterns

Transitivity refers to how language represents actions, events, and participants through specific types of processes, material, mental, and relational shaping of how we understand environmental issues.

Material process

**“The animals investigate the stump.”**

Actor	Pr. Material	Goal
The animals	Investigate	The stump

The data above is a sentence that shows a material process where the actor (the animals) performs a material process in the form of the verb 'observing' with the object being 'the stump'. The material process is used in this sentence as a metaphor, specifically personification, which aims to give human attributes to the animals in the forest. By giving human attributes to these animals, there is a reminding process that shows that nature has power, illustrated through animals that can act as humans. Through this reminding process, the scriptwriter tries to convey the message to the audience that when environmental destruction occurs, nature will not remain silent, and there will be a price to pay for it.

Mental process

**“Hey, she is not “some girl.” She’s a woman. In high school. And she loves trees and I’m going to get her one.”**

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Senser	Pr, Mental	Phenomenon
she	Loves	Trees

The data above shows the mental process where the sensor (her/Audrey) has a love for a truffula tree, which becomes a turning point in this story where the main character—Ted—who likes Audrey, tries to find out about the truffula tree. Ted's journey to find the Truffula tree reveals another side behind the city of Thneedville. Another side where severe environmental damage has occurred so that not a single native tree grows in that city. The environmental damage forces them to buy clean air just to breathe. This makes Ted realize that the environment he usually lives in has suffered severe damage, so initially, Ted just wanted to know about the tree, but he becomes someone who cares about the environment in which he lives, prompting him to want to plant the tree he received from Once-ler to improve the already severely damaged environmental situation. With the presence of Audrey, who initially liked trees, and followed by Ted, this spread to other people about how important trees are for the life of living beings in the city. This also made Ted realize that they should not have to buy air because nature has provided it. Here, the message is about the importance of preserving nature, especially protecting those trees from extinction.

## Discussion

Thus, several linguistic tools are identified in the salience pattern, including activation, concreteness, metaphor, hyponym, and transitivity patterns. Activation refers to the tendency to use more active sentences within a sentence or phrase, as shown in the example above, demonstrating how an active sentence can serve as a tool to convey hidden meanings intended by the filmmaker, especially by attributing human traits to non-human entities (Acha, 2023; Awny, 2023). Next, concreteness refers to the use of word choices that evoke a mental image or representation when a particular word or phrase is mentioned. As in the example above, describing how soft the leaves of a Truffula tree are, which are softer than silk and have a scent similar to butterfly milk. Concreteness is used to trigger human memory about things that are already known. By using concreteness, the filmmaker wants the audience to imagine what is being described, thereby enhancing their awareness of the existence of those parts of nature (Auracher & Bosch, 2016; Razpurker-Apfeld & Tal-Or, 2024).

A metaphor is a comparison between two dissimilar things. Several metaphors appear in this film, especially in the form of personification. Personification is a specific type of metaphor in which non-human entities are compared to humans by attributing human characteristics and qualities to them. In this film, metaphors appear more frequently when the filmmaker wants to show the

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power of nature by assigning human traits to elements of nature, such as trees and animals. Moreover, another metaphor in the film is the comparison of trees and air to industrial commodities that are produced and traded. This metaphor serves as a form of sarcastic ecological critique of environmental destruction. In this film, due to human negligence in taking care of their environment, all the existing trees are depleted and replaced by a manufactured tree produced in large quantities. This has many negative impacts because it removes the primary function of trees, which is to provide oxygen for humans, turning them into mere displays appreciated only for their appearance. The use of metaphor makes the message conveyed hidden yet profound, leaving a lasting impression on the audience (Wang, 2021).

Hyponym in the analysis of salient patterns uses specific words to replace more general ones. Hyponym is closely related to concreteness, where both use more specific words because, essentially, more specific words are easier to imagine and leave a longer impression and awareness on the audience. The use of hyponym is to trigger the audience with selected diction that can encourage thought, thereby raising awareness to protect the environment in order to preserve the nature. For example, “A group of pollution-covered animals sit around a pond of Gluppity-Glupp. One miserable Humming-Fish looks traumatized.” Here, the phrase ‘pollution-covered animals’ is a general phrase, and in the next sentence, it is made specific as ‘one humming fish looks traumatized.’ This gives awareness that if animals can feel trauma from the damage occurring in their environment, it is usually caused by humans. (Gil-Berrozpe, León-Araúz, & Faber. 2016).

Transitivity patterns are an analysis of what processes occur in a sentence and how the valency relationships in that sentence are structured. There are two types of transitivity patterns that depict the process of reminding, namely material and mental processes. Material processes are used to provide action verbs associated with activation, which are usually applied to non-human entities to show the forces of nature. Moreover, the message conveyed is that with the extensive environmental damage occurring, it is possible that nature will return those harmful effects to humans; therefore, non-human entities are depicted as capable of harming and threatening humans in the film. Meanwhile, mental processes are used to show love for the native tree, which at that time had even become extinct. Sentences containing mental processes may sound ordinary, but they also serve as the trigger for the main conflict in the film. (Ali, 2019; Zhang, 2020)

## **E. CONCLUSION**

This study reveals how the *Lorax* (2012) film serves as a powerful medium for environmental advocacy through the lens of ecolinguistics. By applying Arran Stubbe’s salience patterns activation, concreteness, transitivity, metaphor, metonymy, and hyponymy, the research demonstrates how linguistic elements in the film foreground environmental degradation and evoke emotional responses that

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encourage ecological awareness. The film’s narrative, visual cues, and language choices collectively remind viewers of the consequences of unchecked exploitation and the urgency of environmental stewardship.

The findings affirm that ecolinguistic analysis can uncover hidden ideologies and amplify messages of sustainability embedded in popular media. This contributes to the broader field of ecolinguistics by showcasing how salience patterns can be used to decode environmental discourse and promote ecological consciousness. Future research may expand this approach to other forms of media, exploring how language continues to shape our relationship with nature and influence environmental behavior

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