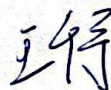


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Bachelor's thesis

**CLIMATE CHANGE IN TV NEWS
(based on Modern English)**



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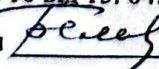
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ABSTRACT

Climate change has become one of the most urgent global challenges, shaping political agendas, economic strategies, and patterns of international communication. Television news plays a crucial role in translating complex scientific knowledge into accessible public discourse, influencing perceptions, attitudes, and policy preferences. This bachelor's paper examines how climate change is represented in television news, with a particular focus on discourse strategies, visual framing, and ideological influences. The study reviews key theoretical approaches within ecological discourse analysis, including critical discourse analysis, multimodal discourse analysis, and ecolinguistics. It also provides a historical overview of climate reporting and analyzes linguistic and visual features of contemporary climate news. Special attention is paid to vocabulary patterns, metaphors, framing mechanisms, and image-centric communication. By comparing findings from international scholarly literature and examples from major global broadcasters, the paper identifies recurring challenges in climate communication—such as catastrophe-driven narratives, political polarization, unbalanced sourcing, and lack of contextual depth. The study argues that television news should adopt more scientifically grounded, solution-oriented, and ethically responsible approaches to climate coverage.

Keywords: *climate change, ecological discourse, television news, framing, multimodality, environmental communication, media studies.*

АНОТАЦІЯ

Зміни клімату є одним із найсерйозніших викликів сучасності, що впливають на політичні процеси, економічні моделі та структури глобального врядування. Телевізійні новини відіграють ключову роль у формуванні громадського розуміння цього явища, трансформуючи складні наукові дані у доступні медіа-повідомлення. У бакалаврській роботі досліджено особливості репрезентації змін клімату в телевізійних новинах, зокрема дискурсивні стратегії, візуальні рами та ідеологічні впливи. У першому розділі подано огляд літератури з екологічної комунікації та теорії дискурсу, включаючи критичний дискурс-аналіз, мультимодальний аналіз і еколінгвістику. Другий розділ присвячено історичному розвитку медіа-висвітлення кліматичних питань і лінгвістичним та візуальним характеристикам теленовинних сюжетів. Проаналізовано типові моделі лексики, метафоризації, фреймінгу та використання зображень у міжнародних телевізійних мережах. Дослідження виявило низку системних проблем у висвітленні кліматичних змін, зокрема домінування катастрофічних наративів, політичну поляризацію, дисбаланс джерельної бази та нестачу контексту. У роботі наголошується на необхідності більш збалансованої, науково обґрунтованої та орієнтованої на рішення комунікації в телевізійних новинах.

Ключові слова: зміни клімату, екологічний дискурс, телевізійні новини, фреймінг, мультимодальність, екологічна комунікація.

THE LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis

CO₂ – Carbon Dioxide

COP – Conference of the Parties

EU – European Union

IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

NDCs – Nationally Determined Contributions

SM-CDS – Social Media Critical Discourse Studies

TV – Television

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INTRODUCTION

The relevance of the research is determined by the growing significance of climate change as one of the central environmental, political, and communicative challenges of the contemporary world. Rising global temperatures, extreme weather events, ecological instability, and climate-related socio-economic risks have intensified international public and political attention to environmental issues. In this context, television news plays an important role in shaping public understanding of climate change and influencing perceptions of environmental risk and responsibility. Through verbal, visual, and multimodal means, television broadcasting translates scientific information into accessible forms for mass audiences and constructs particular interpretations of climate-related events and processes. The increasing influence of media discourse on environmental communication highlights the importance of analysing the linguistic and multimodal mechanisms used in contemporary climate reporting.

Current research on climate communication demonstrates growing scholarly interest in the representation of environmental issues in the media. International studies primarily focus on discourse strategies, visual framing, ideological influences, and cross-cultural approaches to environmental reporting. Considerable attention is also devoted to the role of digital technologies and contemporary media platforms in the dissemination of environmental information. Researchers analyse how television broadcasting combines verbal and visual elements to construct environmental narratives and influence audience interpretation.

At the same time, recent studies emphasize the necessity of examining the linguistic and multimodal mechanisms used in climate reporting in order to better understand the communicative impact of environmental news discourse.

The scientific problem of the research lies in identifying the lexical, discursive, and multimodal mechanisms through which television news constructs public understanding of climate change and environmental risk.

The aim of the research is to identify and analyse the lexical, metaphorical, discursive, and multimodal means used in television news coverage of climate change.

The objectives of the research are:

- 1) to examine theoretical approaches to media discourse and ecological communication;
- 2) to analyse climate-related vocabulary in television news;
- 3) to investigate the historical development of climate change reporting;
- 4) to identify visual and multimodal framing strategies in climate news discourse;
- 5) to determine the ideological and communicative functions of climate-related media representations.

The object of the research is television news on climate change.

The subject of the research is the lexical, metaphorical, discursive, and multimodal means of conveying information on climate change.

Research methods include discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, lexical-semantic analysis, contextual analysis, and elements of multimodal analysis used to examine verbal and visual climate representations in television news.

Scientific novelty of the research lies in the comprehensive analysis of lexical, discursive, and multimodal mechanisms of climate change representation in contemporary international television news discourse.

The theoretical significance of the research lies in the further development of approaches to ecological discourse analysis, media linguistics, and multimodal studies of environmental communication.

Practical significance of the research consists in the possibility of applying its results in courses on discourse analysis, media linguistics, ecological communication, and contemporary media studies.

The empirical corpus of the research comprises 30 climate-related audiovisual and news materials published and broadcast between 2022 and 2026 and selected from major international media platforms and broadcasters, including

BBC News, CNN, Al Jazeera English, DW News, Reuters, ITV News, ABC News, WION Climate Tracker, Channel NewsAsia, AP News, Politico, The Guardian, Live Now Fox, and Table.Briefings. The corpus includes 18 television news broadcasts, 7 analytical video reports, and 5 multimedia online news publications. The selected materials cover reports on extreme heatwaves, wildfires, flooding, glacier and sea-ice decline, global temperature records, climate policy debates, COP28 and COP30 negotiations, environmental activism, and the socio-economic consequences of climate change. The corpus employs both verbal and visual framing strategies. The analysed sources are listed in the Illustrative Materials section.

The bachelor's paper consists of an introduction, two chapters, conclusions, references, and illustrative materials. Chapter 1 outlines the theoretical foundations of ecological communication, discourse analysis, and climate media studies. Chapter 2 presents the empirical analysis of climate change representation in international television news, focusing on vocabulary, historical development, and visual framing strategies. The conclusions summarize the main results of the research.

CHAPTER 1.

THEORETICAL FUNDAMENTALS OF ECOLOGICAL COMMUNICATION

The study of how climate change is represented in television news requires a multi-layered theoretical foundation that combines discourse analysis, environmental communication, and the analysis of political and ideological forces shaping media production. This chapter reviews the most influential scholarly contributions in these three areas, beginning with general approaches to discourse in contemporary media studies, then narrowing to environmental and climate-specific discourse, and finally examining the political and ideological dimensions that condition climate reporting.

1.1 Discourse Analysis in Contemporary Media Studies

The theoretical foundations of discourse analysis as applied to media communication have been developed across several decades by scholars from linguistics, sociology, and communication studies. Foucault [14] laid the groundwork by conceptualizing discourse as a system of statements that produces knowledge and structures power relations, an approach later adapted to mediated contexts. Building on this foundation, Fairclough [11; 12] developed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), arguing that media texts must be examined at three interconnected levels: the linguistic features of the text itself, the discursive practices of production and consumption, and the broader sociocultural context within which texts circulate. Van Dijk [38; 39] complemented this framework by introducing a socio-cognitive dimension, emphasizing how ideologies are reproduced through news discourse via mental models shared between journalists and audiences.

Subsequent scholarship has extended these foundations in several directions. Wodak and Meyer [41] advanced the Discourse-Historical Approach, which is particularly useful for analyzing climate reporting because it situates current narratives within longer historical trajectories of environmental knowledge and political debate. Kress and van Leeuwen [19] expanded discourse analysis into the

multimodal domain, providing tools for analyzing how images, layout, colour, and typography contribute to meaning-making – a particularly important framework for television news, where verbal and visual modes operate simultaneously.

More recent contributions reflect the digital turn in media research. Couldry and Hepp [6] introduced the concept of “deep mediatization”, arguing that contemporary discourse cannot be separated from the digital infrastructures and algorithms through which it circulates. KhosraviNik [18] developed Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS) to address how user participation and algorithmic curation reshape the production of public meaning. In the specific field of climate communication, Carvalho [5] has shown that ideological cultures shape what journalists treat as legitimate climate knowledge, while Boykoff [3] has documented how professional norms – particularly objectivity and balance – unintentionally distorted public understanding of climate science during the 1990s and 2000s.

Cognitive and narrative approaches have further enriched the field. Lakoff [20] demonstrated that conceptual metaphors such as “war on climate” or “carbon footprint” structure not only public reasoning but also the range of policy options that become socially and politically imaginable. Smith and Joffe [35] showed through audience research that narrative coherence and emotional tone strongly influence whether climate stories are accepted or rejected. Norgaard [27], drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Norway, argued that public disengagement from climate change is not a matter of ignorance but of socially organized denial, shaped by collective norms of attention and emotion.

Transnational comparative research has also become central. Berglez [2] proposes the concept of “global journalism” to analyze how news outlets across nations narrate planetary issues in distinct ways, while Painter [31] offers cross-country comparisons revealing systematic variation in how climate uncertainty and risk are represented. Anderson [1] and Hansen [15] provide broader overviews of the field, situating climate reporting within longer histories of environmental journalism.

Taken together, this body of scholarship establishes that discourse analysis applied to television news must combine attention to linguistic detail, visual semiotics,

institutional practice, and ideological context. These intersecting frameworks form the analytical foundation of the present study.

1.2 Environmental Discourse and Climate Communication

Environmental discourse studies have evolved into a distinct sub-field that examines how language and imagery shape public understanding of ecological issues. Cox [7] provides a foundational overview, defining environmental communication as both pragmatic – informing publics about environmental risks – and constitutive, in the sense that it actively shapes what counts as “the environment” in public consciousness. Hansen [15] similarly emphasizes that environmental media research must address not only message content but also the institutional and cultural contexts of production and reception.

One important dimension of environmental discourse involves risk communication. Renn [33] argues that risk perception is shaped not only by scientific knowledge but also by cultural values, trust in institutions, and the emotional framing of risk. Television news frequently amplifies risks through dramatic visuals and crisis-oriented narratives, which can heighten the perception of immediacy but also distort scientific context and probability. Leiserowitz [21] has shown that affect, imagery, and personal values play a decisive role in how audiences interpret climate risks – often more so than scientific literacy itself.

In climate reporting, risk communication intersects with what Downs [8] famously described as the “issue-attention cycle”. Climate change receives fluctuating levels of media attention, typically rising during extreme events, international summits, or major scientific reports, and declining during periods of political or economic distraction. This cyclical pattern limits the long-term visibility of climate change and contributes to public misunderstanding of its continuous and cumulative nature. Schäfer and Schlichting [34], in a meta-analysis of climate media research, confirm that such fluctuations are a structural feature of climate coverage across diverse national contexts.

Environmental discourse scholars also study discourses of responsibility, which shape public expectations about who should act to address climate change. Television news may frame responsibility at the individual level (“reduce your carbon footprint”), the national level (“the government must set emission targets”), the corporate level (“industry must innovate”), or the systemic level (“structural change is required”). Newell and Paterson [25] argue that most mainstream news focuses on individual and technological solutions while avoiding structural critiques – a pattern consistent with neoliberal ideology. Hulme [41] further notes that disagreements about climate change are often disagreements about responsibility, values, and political order rather than about the science itself.

A further key concept is environmental justice discourse, which emphasizes the unequal distribution of environmental harm and climate vulnerability. Parks and Roberts [32] show that climate change disproportionately affects low-income communities, Indigenous peoples, and nations of the Global South, yet these groups receive minimal representation in mainstream television news. Environmental justice frameworks highlight not only physical impacts but also the political and discursive inequalities that determine who gets to speak about climate issues.

Another emergent area is emotional discourse, which is especially relevant in climate communication. Nabi [24] demonstrates that climate narratives evoke emotions such as fear, guilt, hope, or anger, each influencing engagement differently: fear appeals can capture attention but may cause avoidance; guilt can motivate action but also resistance; hope can increase agency but risks oversimplifying complexity. O’Neill and Nicholson-Cole [30] similarly warn that fear-based imagery, while attention-grabbing, often produces disengagement rather than action. Doyle [9] adds that mediated representations of climate change carry an inherent emotional weight that journalists must handle responsibly.

Ecolinguistic approaches contribute yet another perspective. Stibbe [36] argues that the stories embedded in everyday language – what he calls “the stories we live by” – can either support or undermine ecological well-being. From this perspective, the vocabulary and metaphors used in television news are not neutral descriptive

choices but ethical and political acts that shape humanity's relationship with the natural world. Olausson [28] complements this view by showing that media frames of collective action and scientific certainty differ markedly across European public broadcasters, demonstrating that ecological discourse is always culturally situated.

Finally, environmental discourse research has expanded to include digital and visual modes of communication. Lester and Cottle [23] examine how television visualizations of climate change shape ecological citizenship, while Leiserowitz and colleagues [22] track shifting public perceptions in the United States across more than a decade. These studies show that environmental discourse is multi-dimensional, incorporating framing, metaphor, risk representation, narrative, emotion, justice, and visual culture.

1.3 Political and Ideological Influences on Climate Reporting

Political and ideological forces shape climate reporting through several overlapping mechanisms. One mechanism involves national political culture. As Feldman, Hart, and Milosevic [13] show through quantitative analysis of US newspapers, countries with entrenched partisan divides tend to frame climate change through ideological conflict, turning scientific findings into markers of political identity. Painter [31] confirms this pattern in his cross-national study, demonstrating that the prominence of “uncertainty” and “disaster” frames varies systematically with national media culture.

Media systems themselves determine the contours of climate discourse. Public service broadcasters, governed by public-interest mandates, often provide broader contextualization, include scientific perspectives, and present longer-term analyses [31]. Commercial networks, particularly those dependent on advertising revenue, are more likely to prioritize emotionally intensified content, contributing to sensationalized representations of climate risks. Boykoff and Boykoff [4] famously characterized the result as “balance as bias” – a journalistic norm that artificially elevated marginal sceptical voices to parity with mainstream climate science.

A further ideological factor is neoliberal discourse, which has dominated global media systems since the late twentieth century. Neoliberal ideology emphasizes markets, economic growth, and individual responsibility – frames that often conflict with the collective and systemic nature of climate solutions. Under neoliberal logic, climate change is framed as a market opportunity (“green growth”), a matter of consumer choice (“eco-friendly lifestyles”), a field for technological innovation (“green tech futures”), or an issue requiring minimal government intervention. Newell and Paterson [25] argue that such frames depoliticize climate action by shifting attention away from structural reform, inequality, and the responsibility of major emitters.

Closely related is techno-solutionism, the belief that technological innovation alone can solve environmental problems. Television news frequently emphasizes renewable energy breakthroughs, carbon capture technologies, or climate engineering proposals while underreporting systemic critiques or behavioural change strategies. While innovation is undoubtedly essential, Hulme [41] cautions that overreliance on techno-optimism can create unrealistic expectations and obscure deeper political dilemmas.

Nationalism is another major ideological dimension. Television news often portrays climate policy as a matter of national pride, competition, or geopolitical strategy. This framing becomes particularly evident during international negotiations, where coverage emphasizes diplomatic victories, national commitments, or rivalries between major powers. Olausson [28] shows that even in pan-European media, climate responsibility is frequently nationalized rather than presented as a shared planetary obligation. Such framing can obscure the global, interconnected nature of climate change and reinforce political divisions.

Climate reporting is also shaped by fossil fuel discourse coalitions, including industry associations, lobbyists, and think tanks. Dunlap and McCright [10] document in detail how organized climate denial in the United States has influenced media content by funding research, sponsoring news programs, providing expert interviews, and promoting particular narratives about energy reliability, economic cost, and

personal responsibility. Their influence is especially strong in countries where fossil fuel industries hold significant economic or political power.

Finally, political ideology determines how climate solutions are evaluated. Policies such as carbon pricing, renewable subsidies, public transit expansion, and energy regulation are framed differently depending on the ideological orientation of the outlet. Conservative outlets may emphasize economic burden or loss of freedom, whereas progressive outlets highlight long-term benefits and ethical responsibility [13]. Recent comparative work, including studies of Chinese climate communication [40], shows that the ideological terrain of climate reporting is itself globally varied: in some media systems the dominant frame is national development and “ecological civilization”, while in others it is partisan conflict or market opportunity.

These political and ideological influences collectively determine the discursive boundaries of climate reporting, shaping public perceptions of climate science, of moral responsibility, and of imaginable futures.

Conclusion to Chapter 1

The literature reviewed in this chapter demonstrates that climate communication in television news is shaped by complex interactions between linguistic choices, visual structures, institutional practices, and broader power relations. Foundational theories of discourse, particularly those developed within Critical Discourse Analysis, provide methodological tools for understanding how news narratives construct authority, legitimize specific interpretations of climate science, and shape public access to knowledge. Multimodal discourse analysis further demonstrates that meaning in climate reporting is produced not only through language but also through images, sound, visual framing, and editing techniques, all of which contribute to audience perceptions of immediacy, urgency, and environmental risk.

Research in climate communication and environmental discourse studies reveals systematic patterns in how climate change is represented through recurring frames such as catastrophe, political conflict, scientific uncertainty, economic impact, and environmental responsibility. Theoretical approaches to framing, metaphor, and

media representation demonstrate that climate narratives influence not only public understanding of environmental issues but also emotional response, political interpretation, and perceptions of ecological responsibility. Ecolinguistic perspectives and studies of risk perception further confirm that climate vocabulary, metaphorical constructions, and visual representation carry ethical, ideological, and cognitive significance beyond their purely descriptive function. At the same time, the conducted review demonstrates that limited attention to climate justice, historical responsibility, and the structural causes of environmental degradation may restrict broader public understanding of climate change as a social, political, and economic phenomenon.

The theoretical approaches examined in this chapter also demonstrate that political economy and ideology significantly influence climate reporting in television news. Ownership structures, advertising pressures, partisan polarization, organized climate denial, and political agendas affect which voices are amplified and which perspectives remain marginalized within environmental discourse. Comparative studies of climate communication further confirm that television news should not be regarded as a neutral transmitter of scientific information but rather as an active site of discursive production in which knowledge, ideology, institutional power, and media representation interact. Consequently, climate journalism functions simultaneously as scientific communication, political discourse, and a mechanism of public meaning-making shaped by broader social and institutional contexts.

Taken together, the theoretical perspectives analysed in this chapter establish the conceptual and methodological foundation for the empirical examination presented in Chapter 2. The reviewed approaches demonstrate that the representation of climate change in television news depends not only on scientific information itself but also on the linguistic, visual, ideological, and institutional mechanisms through which environmental reality becomes publicly meaningful. Understanding these theoretical foundations is therefore essential for analysing the vocabulary, historical development, and multimodal representation of climate change in contemporary television broadcasting.

CHAPTER 2.

CLIMATE CHANGE IN WORLD NEWS

Climate change has become one of the most visible and politically significant topics in contemporary television news. As a global phenomenon that links science, politics, economics, and everyday life, it requires journalists to translate complex environmental processes into accessible narratives for mass audiences. The present analysis of 30 international television news broadcasts, video reports, and online news publications produced between 2022 and 2026 reveals that this translation is never neutral: it involves systematic lexical choices, recurring visual strategies, and historically conditioned framing conventions that together shape public understanding of the crisis. Media reporting does not simply mirror climate change as an external reality; it actively constructs the meanings through which the public comes to understand environmental risk, urgency, and responsibility [3]. Climate discourse in the media is shaped by ideological cultures and professional routines rather than by scientific facts alone [5], and this shaping is clearly visible across the corpus analysed in the present study. This chapter examines climate change in world news from three interrelated perspectives: the vocabulary used in climate reporting, the historical development of climate change coverage on television, and the increasingly image-centred character of contemporary climate narratives.

2.1 Climate Change Vocabulary

Analysis of the 30 materials in the present corpus reveals that vocabulary is one of the most consequential dimensions of climate reporting: lexical choices do more than describe events – they frame interpretations, assign responsibility, structure public emotions, and suggest particular forms of action. Media language functions through frames that help audiences interpret scientific and political complexity [26]. Framing devices and conceptual metaphors are never neutral – they define which solutions appear thinkable and which remain outside the range of public debate [20]. This is especially visible in the television broadcasts

examined here, where journalists must convey large amounts of information quickly and memorably, producing systematic patterns of lexical choice that this section maps and analyses.

The shift from “global warming” to “climate crisis”

The most consistent lexical trend across the analysed corpus is the shift from relatively neutral scientific terminology toward more urgent and morally charged language. In earlier decades, broadcasters relied mainly on the term *global warming*, which focused attention on temperature increase as the central feature of environmental change. Over time, journalists and scientific institutions increasingly adopted the broader phrase *climate change*, which captures a wider range of transformations, including altered rainfall patterns, sea-level rise, biodiversity loss, and intensified weather extremes. More recently, many broadcasters have moved toward expressions such as *climate crisis*, *climate emergency*, and *climate breakdown*. In the present corpus, the terms *climate crisis*, *climate emergency*, and *record-breaking* appear across BBC [43; 46; 51; 53], CNN [44; 61], Al Jazeera [45; 52; 54], DW [69; 72], ITV [58], and WION [50] – confirming that this lexical escalation is now a cross-platform editorial standard rather than the practice of individual outlets. This lexical transition reflects both a stronger scientific consensus [17] and changing editorial attitudes toward the severity of the issue [31], although the language of crisis can also produce disengagement if not balanced with solutions framing [30].

Core lexical fields in climate reporting

Television climate vocabulary can be organized into four overlapping lexical fields, each performing a distinct discursive function:

Scientific terminology signals authority and grounds news claims in measurable evidence: *greenhouse gas emissions*, *carbon dioxide (CO₂)*, *methane (CH₄)*, *global temperature anomaly*, *feedback loop*, *tipping point*, *climate sensitivity*, *radiative forcing*, *carbon sink*, *ocean acidification*, *permafrost thaw*, *albedo effect*. As Zehr [38] has shown, however, public representations of climate science often simplify uncertainty and compress technical distinctions, a tendency

intensified on television by time constraints. This pattern is evident across the broadcast material examined in the present study: in BBC News' confirmation that 2023 was the hottest year in recorded history [51], the WION Climate Tracker's report on Antarctic sea-ice reaching record lows [50], and CNN Newsource's coverage of global temperature thresholds [44], scientific terminology functions simultaneously as evidential anchor and rhetorical intensifier.

Impact and disaster vocabulary dominates television coverage because it provides immediacy and visual drama: *record-breaking heatwave, catastrophic flooding, devastating wildfire, prolonged drought, flash flood, storm surge, sea-level rise, glacial retreat, coral bleaching, biodiversity loss, climate refugees, extreme weather event, once-in-a-century storm*. Such terms recur prominently across the illustrative material analysed here: BBC News' reports on European heatwaves foregrounding record temperatures [43; 46; 53], Al Jazeera English's coverage of extreme heat affecting millions [54], and Reuters' footage from Madrid documenting heat-related suffering [55] all exemplify how impact and disaster vocabulary constitutes the dominant lexical register of contemporary television climate journalism.

Policy and governance lexicon translates climate science into political action: *net-zero emissions, carbon neutrality, climate finance, just transition, nationally determined contributions (NDCs), mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, carbon pricing, emissions trading scheme, Paris Agreement, COP summit, 1.5°C target, green deal*. This governance register is especially prominent in Al Jazeera English's reporting on the COP28 negotiations, where the precise distinction between "transitioning away" and "phasing out" fossil fuels became the central diplomatic contest [45; 52], and in coverage framing the 1.5°C threshold as both a scientific benchmark and a political deadline [44; 51].

Frequent collocations combine these fields into the compressed phrases that recur across broadcasts: *tackle climate change, fight against global warming, reach net-zero, cut emissions, phase out fossil fuels, scale up renewables, frontline communities, unprecedented heat, accelerating climate crisis, irreversible damage*.

These compressed formulations appear across the full range of the broadcast material examined: from BBC News [43; 46; 51; 53] and CNN Newsource [44] foregrounding the urgency of heat records and emission targets, to Al Jazeera English [45; 49; 52; 54] and LiveNOW from FOX [48] embedding policy language within event-driven reporting, and WION [50] and Reuters [55] deploying collocations of climate attribution alongside visual evidence.

Table 2.1 summarises the four lexical fields identified across the 30 analysed materials, providing representative examples and the discursive function each field performs in television climate news.

Table 2.1.

Lexical fields in television climate reporting: examples and discursive functions

Lexical field	Representative examples from corpus [43–73]	Discursive function	Sources (corpus)
Scientific terminology	<i>global temperature anomaly; tipping point; feedback loop; 1.5°C threshold; carbon sink; ocean acidification; “mind-blowing” low [50]; “high confidence” [73]</i>	Grounds claims in measurable evidence; signals scientific authority	BBC [51], CNN [44], WION [50], Reuters [62], WMO [73]
Impact and disaster vocabulary	<i>record-breaking heatwave; once-in-a-century storm; devastating wildfire; Flood-Hit [57]; battles wildfires [56]; tests the limits of human survival [66]; fastest-warming continent [58]</i>	Conveys urgency and emotional immediacy; frames events as ruptures from historical norms	BBC [43;46;53], Reuters [55;56;57], ITV [58], ABC [66], Al Jazeera [54]
Policy and governance lexicon	<i>net-zero; transition away from fossil fuels [45]; phase-out [52]; 1.5°C target [44]; NDCs; Climate Crisis Report [61]; Global Climate Action [70]; carbon capture [71]</i>	Translates science into political stakes; encodes urgency as institutional responsibility	Al Jazeera [45;52], CNN [44;61], BBC [51;71], DW [70]
Metaphor clusters	<i>WAR: battles [56], steer clear of [72]; HEALTH: tests limits of survival [66], red alert [65], heart of the Amazon [70]; JOURNEY: transition away [45], Global Climate Action [70]; NORMALISATION: new normal [73], no longer the exception [53]</i>	Structures emotional and ideological response; makes abstract crisis experientially legible	Reuters [56], DW [72], ABC [66], Guardian [65], DW [70], Al Jazeera [45], BBC [53], WMO [73]

Context examples from television broadcasts

These lexical fields rarely appear in isolation; they cluster into stable formulations that recur across networks. The following examples, drawn from the broadcasts listed in the Illustrative Materials, illustrate how these clusters operate in practice.

In the BBC News report *Record temperature warning as heatwave hits southern Europe* (14 July 2023), the broadcast opened with images of crowded beaches and heat-stricken European cities, with the anchor describing extreme conditions as directly linked to climate change – framing the event not as a natural anomaly but as “exactly the kind of extreme weather” that science had predicted [46]. The phrase “exactly the kind of” performs an explicit attribution move that earlier coverage tended to avoid [4], signalling a discursive shift from cautious speculation toward declarative scientific certainty.

In CNN Newsource’s report *2024 is on track to be the hottest year on record* (9 August 2024), correspondents framed the record heat not as a statistical curiosity but as a threshold-crossing moment, emphasizing that 2023 had already pushed global temperatures dangerously close to the 1.5-degree benchmark [44]. The verb cluster associated with this framing – *shattered, pushed, dangerously close* – fuses impact vocabulary with governance lexicon in a single broadcast unit, reflecting the broader discursive compression Painter [31] identifies in post-2018 climate journalism.

In Al Jazeera English’s report *Historic COP28 deal agrees to “transition away” from fossil fuels* (13 December 2023), the framing shifted toward diplomacy and lexical precision. The broadcast highlighted that nearly 200 countries agreed to a deal calling for “transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner” – language that was hailed as a historic first but simultaneously criticized by climate advocates who had demanded a full “phase-out” [45]. The contrast between *transition away* and *phase out* illustrates how lexical precision becomes politically consequential, exactly as Schäfer and Schlichting [34] have argued in their meta-analysis of climate media research.

Al Jazeera English's *Inside Story* episode *Is the world focused enough on climate change?* (4 April 2024) foregrounded the political economy of climate attention, questioning whether ongoing conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine were displacing climate change from the global news agenda [49]. Guests including the Director of the Copernicus Climate Change Service framed the crisis in governance terms – *emergency declarations, drought, adaptation* – positioning climate change as a structural condition that persists regardless of political cycles, consistent with the multi-issue framing Painter [31] identifies as a feature of contemporary broadcasting.

The Table.Briefings report *United Kingdom: Climate change makes heavy rainfall ten times more likely* (24 May 2023) illustrates the impact-disaster register combined with attribution science [47]. The headline itself performs a quantitative attribution move – asserting a tenfold increase in likelihood – that compresses complex probabilistic science into a single striking figure. Three discursive moves operate simultaneously: the adjective *unprecedented* signals rupture from historical norms; the causal framing assigns clear agency to human-driven warming; and the explicit attribution performs a scientific-responsibility move that, as Boykoff [3] notes, was largely absent from broadcasting before the mid-2000s.

LiveNOW from FOX's report *Climate change has made heat waves last longer, study finds* (29 March 2024) deployed a notably scientific framing for a commercially oriented broadcaster, reporting that climate change is causing heat waves to move more slowly across the globe, exposing populations to higher temperatures over larger areas for longer periods [48]. The vocabulary of *slower, larger, longer* constructs gradual intensification rather than acute disaster, a framing strategy Zehr [38] identifies as characteristic of science-driven rather than spectacle-driven broadcast coverage. Notably, explicit climate attribution is embedded throughout, signalling a departure from the historically common pattern of separating weather events from structural climate causality.

Al Jazeera English's coverage *COP28 climate talks into overtime amid standoff over fossil fuels* (12 December 2023) illustrates the governance and tension register in condensed form [52]. The broadcast documented a day of intense shuttle diplomacy

as countries fought over the precise wording of the final agreement, with the central conflict between *phase out* and *transition away* treated as a matter of political consequence. The quantitative framing of the standoff – different national blocs, opposing demands – enacts the ideological critique that Dunlap and McCright [10] identify as central to exposing organized resistance to transformative climate action within institutional frameworks.

BBC News’ report *2023 confirmed as world’s hottest year on record* (9 January 2024) employed a strikingly present-tense, declarative register to communicate scientific consensus [51]. Rather than hedged formulations characteristic of earlier decades, the broadcast presented global temperature records as established fact, describing 2023 not merely as warm but as a historically unprecedented milestone in measurable climate data. This rhetorical shift from conditional to declarative – replacing formulations such as *may indicate warming trends* with affirmative scientific statements – encapsulates the broader discursive shift from speculative to present-tense climate journalism identified in Section 2.2 and consistent with Painter’s [31] comparative analysis of evolving certainty frames in international broadcasting.

WION Climate Tracker’s report *Antarctica sea-ice at “mind-blowing” low* (19 September 2024) demonstrates the policy-lexicon register at work [50]. The broadcaster’s choice of the phrase “mind-blowing” in the headline – quoting a scientific expert – fuses affective immediacy with empirical authority. Two distinct metaphor clusters operate: the bodily register (extremity, shock, abnormality) renders polar data as experiential rupture, while the scientific framing encodes urgency and irreversibility. Both are illustrative of the metaphor strategies Lakoff [20] describes as central to climate framing, and both appear in a non-Western broadcast outlet, demonstrating the globalisation of climate discourse conventions.

BBC News’ report *Western Europe saw hottest June on record* (9 July 2025) extended the declarative register with explicit normalization language [53]. The broadcast framed extreme heat not as an exceptional episode but as an emerging norm, situating monthly temperature records within a trajectory of accelerating climate

change. The contrastive logic – what was once extraordinary has become routine – communicates acceleration and irreversibility in accessible terms, exemplifying the “present-tense climate journalism” that Painter [31] identifies as a defining feature of post-2018 broadcasting.

Reuters’ footage report *Forced evacuations as southern Europe battles wildfires during intense heatwave* (18 July 2023) illustrates the disaster register at its most compressed [56]. The headline clusters three lexical fields in six words: the war metaphor *battles* frames human agency against natural force; the impact noun *wildfires* supplies the visual catastrophe; and the intensifier *intense* escalates the emotional pitch without specifying scientific causation. This pattern of implicit rather than explicit attribution is consistent with the commercially driven broadcast framing that Zehr [38] identifies as typical of wire-service video reporting.

Reuters’ report *At Least 19 Dead After Highway Collapses In Flood-Hit China* (1 May 2024) demonstrates the episodic framing that O’Neill and Nicholson-Cole [30] identify as a limitation of disaster-centred coverage [57]. The compound modifier *Flood-Hit* constructs the flood as the active agent striking China, while the death toll foregrounded in the headline positions the event as a human tragedy rather than a climate event. The absence of any attribution phrase linking the flooding to climate change exemplifies what Boykoff [3] describes as the persistence of event-driven, causally silent reporting, in which extreme weather is covered as an acute crisis without systemic context.

ITV News’ report *Europe becomes the world’s fastest-warming continent – with 2024 hottest year on record* (22 April 2024) offers a comparative superlative construction that performs a double discursive function [58]. The phrase *fastest-warming continent* simultaneously conveys scientific measurement and competitive ranking, transforming an abstract geophysical statistic into a locally resonant, audience-addressed claim. The dash separating the continental claim from the record-year declaration creates a paratactic structure that forces the viewer to read the two facts as causally related, even though no explicit attribution verb is used. This implicit

causality is a characteristic feature of present-tense declarative climate journalism as described by Painter [31].

CNA's report *Climate change: Parts of Asia record hottest years in 2024* (2 January 2025) illustrates how an Asian public broadcaster integrates the governance lexicon of climate change into regional temperature reporting [59]. The colon structure of the headline – *Climate change: Parts of Asia* – places the systemic cause before the regional effect, reversing the episodic logic typical of disaster reporting and instead signalling structural attribution from the outset. This framing choice aligns with Wang and Feng's [40] observation that Asian broadcasters frequently foreground climate change as a systemic frame rather than treating extreme weather events as isolated phenomena.

BBC News' report *UK heatwave "basically impossible" without climate change* (29 July 2022) exemplifies the attribution science register at its most direct [60]. The adverb *basically* functions as an epistemic hedge that calibrates scientific certainty for a general audience: it is not "impossible" in an absolute sense, but the qualification is minimal enough to communicate near-certainty. The construction *basically impossible without climate change* performs a counterfactual attribution move – asserting what the world would look like in the absence of anthropogenic warming – that translates complex probabilistic science into a single, memorable, quotable phrase. This represents the convergence of attribution science with journalistic accessibility that Boykoff [3] identifies as a defining trend in post-2015 climate broadcasting.

CNN's *Climate Crisis Report* (6 January 2025) is notable for the lexical choices embedded in its programme title itself [61]. The noun phrase *Climate Crisis* – rather than *Climate Change* – institutionalises urgent framing at the level of editorial branding. By naming a recurring segment *Climate Crisis Report*, CNN embeds the lexical shift from *change* to *crisis* into the permanent architecture of the broadcast, repeating it with every airing. This institutionalised lexical escalation is consistent with the trajectory described by Painter [31] and reflects the broader editorial shift O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole [30] associate with heightened salience framing.

Reuters' news report *2024 was the hottest year on record, scientists say* (10 January 2025) exemplifies the declarative-attribution headline formula that has become standard across major international news agencies [62]. The past-tense declarative *was the hottest* presents the record as a closed, established fact, while the tag *scientists say* performs an evidential anchoring move that grounds the record claim in institutional authority. The phrase *on record* has become one of the most recurrent collocations in contemporary climate journalism, appearing in virtually identical form across BBC [51; 53], AP News [63], Politico [64], and The Guardian [65], suggesting a shared formulaic repertoire that stabilises scientific authority across ideologically diverse outlets.

The Guardian's report "*Red alert*": *last year was hottest on record by clear margin* (19 March 2024) foregrounds the health metaphor cluster in its lead phrase [65]. The colour-coded emergency signal *red alert* – quoted from a UN report – activates emergency and medical connotations simultaneously, positioning the climate record as a diagnostic crisis requiring immediate response. The prepositional phrase *by clear margin* adds a quantitative emphasis that forecloses the possibility of scientific ambiguity. Taken together, the headline exemplifies the convergence of affective and evidential registers that Nisbet [26] identifies as characteristic of high-impact climate framing.

ABC News' report *India's record-breaking heatwave tests the limits of human survival* (6 May 2022) foregrounds the bodily vulnerability register through a striking metaphor of biological limits [66]. The phrase *tests the limits of human survival* personalizes climate risk by mapping it onto the human body, translating an abstract temperature statistic into a visceral threshold experience. The compound modifier *record-breaking* signals rupture from historical norms while the active verb *tests* personifies the heatwave as an agent acting upon human biology. This health-and-body metaphor cluster is one of the dominant strategies Lakoff [20] identifies in climate communication and is particularly prevalent in coverage of heat events affecting densely populated, economically vulnerable regions of the Global South [32].

BBC News' report *Climate crisis: New carbon capture method revealed by scientists* (11 March 2023) demonstrates how the governance and solutions lexicon operates in contrast to the disaster register [71]. The framing label *Climate crisis* – a category label used by BBC to brand climate-related stories across its output – positions the carbon capture discovery within an urgent crisis narrative, while the passive construction *revealed by scientists* elevates scientific authority as the source of hope. This combination of crisis labelling with techno-solutionist framing exemplifies what Hulme [16] identifies as the dominant register of institutional climate optimism: the crisis is named, but the solution is technological and expert-led, leaving the structural causes of emissions largely unaddressed.

DW News' report *Politicians steer clear of climate change ahead of Germany's election* (11 February 2025) illustrates the political-avoidance register that reflects the ideological tensions Feldman et al. [13] identify in partisan climate coverage [72]. The colloquial idiom *steer clear of* is a navigation metaphor that encodes deliberate evasion: politicians are not ignoring climate change by accident but are actively charting a course away from it. The phrase frames political silence not as neutrality but as a discursive choice with political consequences. This reporting stance, in which the media critiques the absence of climate speech from public life, represents a significant discursive development – climate change is not merely a topic covered in the news but a political litmus test against which electoral actors are now evaluated.

DW News' report *COP30 2025 Begins in Brazil: Global Climate Action in the Heart of the Amazon* (10 November 2025) combines the governance and symbolic registers in a single headline [70]. The phrase *Global Climate Action* belongs to the governance lexicon of the Paris Agreement era, while *Heart of the Amazon* activates a symbolic geography of ecological vulnerability and Indigenous rights. The anatomical metaphor *Heart* renders the Amazon as a vital organ of the planetary body, fusing the health metaphor cluster with spatial framing to position Brazil as both the geographic and moral centre of the global climate debate.

The World Meteorological Organization's statement *Extreme weather is the "new norm"* (22 August 2023), widely reported by international broadcasters,

provides one of the clearest institutional examples of the normalization vocabulary that characterizes post-2018 climate discourse [73]. WMO climate expert Alvaro Silva stated: “This is the new normal and does not come as a surprise. The frequency and intensity of many extremes, such as heatwaves and heavy precipitation, have increased in recent decades. There is high confidence that human induced climate change from greenhouse emissions, is the main driver.” The phrase *does not come as a surprise* is particularly significant: it performs a discursive move that simultaneously de-dramatizes the event (removing the frame of shock) and re-dramatizes it as a predictable consequence of inaction. The declarative construction *high confidence* – borrowed directly from IPCC [17] assessment language – further anchors the statement in institutional scientific authority, exemplifying the transfer of technical register into public media discourse that Zehr [38] identifies as a defining feature of contemporary climate journalism.

Metaphor in climate news

Metaphor plays a central role in climate vocabulary. Following Lakoff [20], several metaphor clusters dominate television reporting:

War metaphors – *fight climate change, battle emissions, frontline communities, weapon against warming* – dramatize action and conflict.

Health metaphors – *the planet has a fever, sick planet, climate diagnosis, the Earth needs healing* – render the issue emotionally legible by analogy with the human body.

Economic metaphors – *carbon budget, climate debt, stranded assets, green investment* – connect environmental degradation with familiar financial logic.

Journey metaphors – *path to net-zero, road to Paris, climate transition, pivot to renewables* – present climate action as a directional process with a destination.

The analysed corpus confirms that such metaphors are never merely decorative; they constitute, in Stibbe’s [36] terms, “the stories we live by” and shape which solutions appear reasonable, whether technological, regulatory, or behavioural. Across the 30 materials examined, war metaphors dominate in breaking-news disaster coverage (BBC [43; 46], Reuters [56]), health metaphors prevail in scientific-record

reports (WION [50], Reuters [62]), and journey metaphors structure governance and negotiation coverage (Al Jazeera [45; 52], DW [70]).

Regional variation

The corpus further illustrates that climate vocabulary is socially situated: the same global crisis is framed through markedly different lexical choices depending on the broadcaster's regional and institutional context. European broadcasters often stress *energy transition*, *sustainability standards*, and *climate neutrality* because climate reporting is closely tied to EU regulation. Asian media frequently foreground *green development*, *resilience*, and *technological innovation*, as documented by Wang and Feng [40] in their study of Chinese climate communication. African broadcasters tend to emphasize *food security*, *water scarcity*, and *adaptation*, while Latin American outlets connect climate vocabulary with *deforestation*, *Amazon protection*, and Indigenous rights. CNA's [59] headline structure – placing *Climate change* before the regional data – and DW's [70] framing of the Amazon as the “Heart” of global climate action illustrate this regional specificity concretely. Such differences confirm that climate discourse is never universal in form, even when the underlying crisis is global [5; 28].

Vocabulary and visual reinforcement

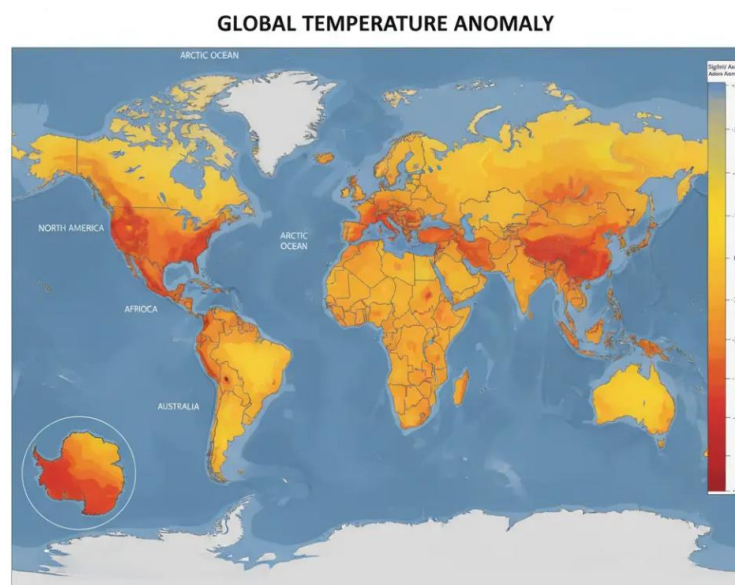


Figure 2.1. Scientific vocabulary reinforced by colour-coded temperature anomaly visualization (provided by the author from broadcast material).

As shown in Figure 2.1, scientific vocabulary in climate news is frequently reinforced by colour-coded visualizations that make abstract temperature data easier for viewers to interpret. The combination of terms such as *anomaly*, *warming trend*, and *above-average temperatures* with strong red and orange visual coding illustrates how vocabulary and imagery work together in television discourse – a multimodal coupling that confirms the framework developed by Kress and van Leeuwen [19].

Overall, the vocabulary of climate reporting demonstrates that television news does not simply communicate information; it organizes climate reality into recognizable semantic patterns. Through scientific terminology, impact-related expressions, policy language, metaphorical framing, and regionally specific lexical choices, climate vocabulary shapes how audiences understand both the crisis and the range of imaginable responses to it.

2.2. Historical Development of Climate Change Reporting

The historical development of climate change reporting in television news reflects a broader transformation in the relationship between science, media, and public discourse. Climate change did not emerge immediately as a major media issue. Rather, it moved gradually from scientific marginality to political centrality, and this transition reshaped not only the volume of coverage but also its style, tone, and conceptual framing. Boykoff [3] argues that climate reporting has always been shaped by the interaction of scientific institutions, political pressures, and journalistic norms, and its historical evolution exemplifies precisely this interplay.

Early decades (1950s–1970s): speculative science

In the early decades of television, references to climate change were rare and usually framed as speculative science. News coverage, when it appeared, tended to present atmospheric research as an isolated technical matter rather than as a threat to everyday life. Cox [7] describes this period as one in which environmental communication remained peripheral to the mainstream public

sphere. The absence of dramatic visuals and the limited political salience of environmental questions meant that climate-related content rarely became headline news. A typical formulation of the period might have been: “Some scientists believe rising levels of carbon dioxide may contribute to long-term warming trends.” This kind of statement reflects caution, distance, and low immediacy.

The 1980s: institutional legitimization

The 1980s marked an important transition. Growing environmental concern, improved climate modelling, and above all the creation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988 gave climate change stronger institutional legitimacy [17]. Television news began to treat the topic as a serious issue of scientific and political relevance. Yet uncertainty remained the dominant communicative frame. Zehr [38] shows that media representations of environmental science often transformed technical uncertainty into public doubt, and 1980s television reporting frequently exemplified this pattern. A news segment might report: “NASA scientists warn that rising temperatures may indicate a long-term warming trend, though uncertainties remain.” This stage was crucial because it moved climate reporting from the margins of science journalism into the wider arena of public affairs.

The 1990s: diplomacy and “balance as bias”

In the 1990s, climate reporting expanded significantly as climate negotiations entered the international political agenda. The Earth Summit (1992) [37] and the Kyoto Protocol (1997) generated new television attention, and climate change increasingly appeared not only as a scientific topic but also as a diplomatic and economic issue. However, the professional norm of journalistic balance created a major problem during this period. Boykoff and Boykoff [4] famously called this dynamic “balance as bias,” arguing that American prestige media often presented climate science and climate skepticism as if they carried equal weight. Television reporting frequently used formulations such as: “While many scientists agree that the planet is warming, some critics question the scale

of human influence.” This balancing structure appeared objective, but in practice it overstated scientific disagreement and contributed to public confusion. Dunlap and McCright [10] have documented how organized denial coalitions deliberately exploited this norm to inject doubt into mainstream coverage.

The 2000s: visual drama and disaster framing

During the 2000s, climate coverage became more visible, more dramatic, and more visually dependent. Several developments explain this shift. First, extreme weather events received intense coverage and became linked in public discourse with climate change. Second, the release of *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) helped move climate change into mainstream public conversation. Third, the growth of 24-hour news intensified demand for visually compelling stories, which favoured climate narratives built around disaster imagery. O’Neill and Nicholson-Cole [30] argue that the increased use of fear-based and spectacular imagery became a defining feature of climate communication during this period. A typical early-2000s formulation might read: “Melting glaciers and rising sea levels are raising concern among environmental experts.” Compared with the more distant language of earlier decades, this phrasing links climate change to visible physical evidence and growing public alarm.

The 2010s: politicization and polarization

The 2010s brought further transformation, especially through politicization and polarization. In the United States, television networks increasingly reflected ideological division in their treatment of climate stories. Feldman, Hart, and Milosevic [13] demonstrate that partisan news exposure shaped audience beliefs about global warming, with different networks promoting sharply contrasting narratives. Conservative outlets emphasized regulatory costs, elite manipulation, or scientific uncertainty, while liberal broadcasters stressed scientific consensus, moral urgency, and policy necessity. At the same time, global television reporting broadened beyond science and

diplomacy to include social consequences, climate migration, energy transition, and environmental justice [32].

From 2018 onward: climate as present reality

In the most recent phase, especially since 2018, climate reporting has become more multidimensional and more clearly embedded in everyday political life. Successive IPCC reports [17], record global heat extremes – documented across the illustrative materials in the present study, from BBC News [43; 46; 51; 53] to Al Jazeera English [45; 52; 54] to WION [50] – youth climate activism, and the intensification of visible climate impacts have together produced a new form of reporting in which climate change is presented as both a present crisis and a structural condition. Painter [31] notes that one of the most important developments in climate journalism is the move away from treating climate change as a niche environmental topic; it is now routinely covered in relation to economics, health, food systems, inequality, migration, and security. Television news language reflects this shift. A contemporary report may say: “The climate crisis is no longer a future threat but a present reality affecting millions worldwide” [46]. This sentence differs sharply from the speculative phrasing of earlier decades. It signals confidence, immediacy, and moral seriousness.

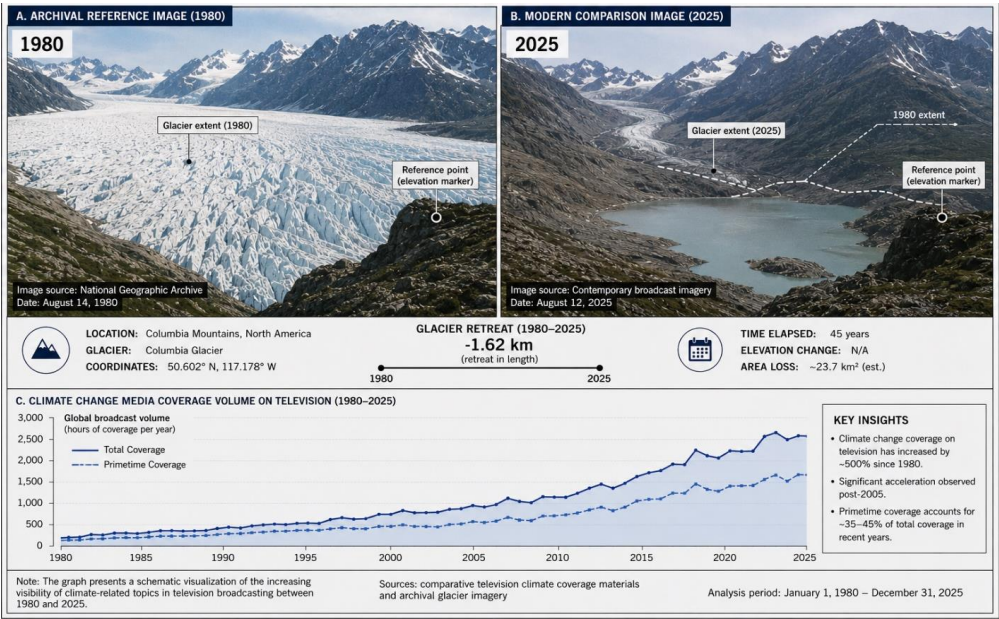


Figure 2.2. Comparative reference photographs illustrating glacier retreat in television climate reporting.



Figure 2.3. The same glacier in recent years, showing significant retreat.



Figure 2.4. Time-series visualization of climate change indicators as displayed in contemporary broadcasts.

The use of comparison imagery such as Figures 2.2–2.4 reflects a particularly important historical shift in climate reporting: the move from

discussing abstract models to showing visible, time-based evidence of environmental transformation. Glacial comparison images became especially prominent in the 2000s, when broadcasters increasingly relied on before-and-after visuals to establish continuity between scientific knowledge and observable change. Lester and Cottle [23] note that such visualizations are central to the construction of ecological citizenship, because they allow audiences to “witness” planetary processes that would otherwise remain abstract.

Taken together, the history of climate change reporting in television news reveals not merely a growth in coverage but a profound transformation in the discursive status of climate change itself. What was once treated as speculative science has become one of the central organizing themes of global public communication.

2.3 Image-Centricity in Climate Change News

Climate change is an unusually difficult subject for television because its causes are often invisible, its timescale is long, and many of its processes unfold gradually rather than dramatically. Yet television is a medium organized around visibility, immediacy, and emotional impact. This tension has made image-centricity a defining feature of climate reporting. Climate change in the media is communicated through visual proxies rather than through direct representation, since the phenomenon itself cannot be captured in a single frame [29]. Television news therefore relies on a recurring repertoire of images – disasters, scientific graphics, symbolic landscapes, and human suffering – to render climate change visible and meaningful. The visualization of climate change is socially produced, shaped by newsroom conventions and audience expectations rather than by the phenomenon alone [23].

Disaster footage

Across the analysed corpus, disaster footage is the most dominant form of climate imagery. Wildfires, floods, hurricanes, droughts, and collapsing infrastructure provide television with the kind of visual spectacle on which

breaking news thrives, and virtually every broadcaster examined – from BBC News [43; 46] and Reuters [55; 56] to Al Jazeera [54] and ABC News [66] – deploys it as a primary vehicle for communicating climate risk. Such images convey urgency, scale, and emotional intensity simultaneously. Visual exposure to climate-related disaster significantly increases perceived risk among audiences [22], and television news intensifies this effect by combining disaster imagery with attribution language, producing a strong multimodal argument [19].

A representative example is found in BBC News’ report *Spain records 46C as Europe heatwave continues* (25 June 2025), where aerial footage of deserted streets, sunbaked landscapes, and overwhelmed emergency services was paired with explicit attribution language linking the record-breaking temperatures to long-term climate trends [43]. The narration assigns causal meaning to the image, while the image gives affective force to the narration. Similarly, Reuters’ footage report *Tourists seek shade during Madrid’s latest heatwave* (22 August 2023) employed tight close-ups of heat-affected individuals alongside temperature graphics to situate individual suffering within a systemic climate narrative [55].



Southern California fire: Massive brush fire explodes, prompting evacuations

Figure 2.5. Wildfire footage from a television broadcast, illustrating the dominant visual register of contemporary climate news.

As illustrated in Figure 2.5, television news frequently relies on dramatic wildfire and extreme-heat footage to create urgency and emotional engagement. Al Jazeera English’s report *Extreme Heatwaves Plague Millions Worldwide: What’s Causing It?* (17 June 2024) deployed this visual strategy extensively, combining satellite imagery of heat-affected regions with expert testimony to construct a multimodal argument linking individual episodes of suffering to structural climate causality [54]. This strategy can make climate impacts feel immediate and concrete, but, as Nabi [24] warns, it can also narrow public understanding by focusing on spectacular outcomes rather than underlying structural causes.

Human-centred images introduce another dimension to climate reporting by foregrounding lived experience and political agency. Close-ups of affected communities, scientists monitoring sea ice, and diplomats negotiating under pressure bring climate discourse into the realm of civic action. Carvalho [5] suggests that the media’s ideological framing of climate change is partly determined by whose experiences and demands are made visible. When climate news focuses exclusively on glaciers and storms, the crisis appears physical and distant. When it shows communities mobilizing against fossil fuel emissions, climate change becomes a social and moral issue – a shift consistent with the environmental justice framework developed by Parks and Roberts [32].

WION Climate Tracker’s report *Antarctica sea-ice at “mind-blowing” low* (19 September 2024) exemplifies this multimodal construction [50]: satellite data visualizations were combined with expert interviews to position scientific measurement as a form of civic witnessing. The resulting multimodal construction does more than illustrate data; it repositions scientific observers as moral claimants in the climate debate and reframes polar ice loss as a question of global accountability.



Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg during a “Fridays for Future” protest.
(Jonathan Nackstrand / AFP via Getty Images)

Figure 2.6. A youth climate activist during a “Fridays for Future” protest, illustrating how television coverage increasingly connects climate change with civic mobilization against emissions and pollution.

Figure 2.6 illustrates a representational shift directly visible in the analysed corpus: unlike purely symbolic environmental imagery – melting ice sheets or stranded marine life – human-centred climate imagery foregrounds agency and frames climate change as a political confrontation over accountability and emissions responsibility. Mediated climate imagery carries inherent political weight [9], and frames of collective action are becoming more prominent across international broadcasting [28]. The corpus confirms this tendency: DW News [72] evaluating politicians’ climate silence, Al Jazeera [49] questioning whether geopolitical conflicts are displacing climate attention, and ITV News [58] foregrounding Europe’s fastest-warming status all position viewers as political actors rather than passive witnesses.

Digital intensification.

In recent years, image-centricity has been intensified by digital technology. Drone footage, satellite feeds, live mobile reporting, and user-generated videos from social media have expanded the range of climate visuals available to newsrooms. This has increased immediacy and visual richness, but it has also raised questions about

verification and representativeness. A flood captured on a phone camera may be emotionally powerful, but without context it may encourage episodic perception rather than systemic understanding. The analysed corpus illustrates this: Reuters' footage of highway collapse flooding in China [57] and wildfire evacuations in southern Europe [56] rely heavily on mobile and wire footage that conveys immediacy but provides no climate attribution context. Digital infrastructures and algorithmic logics now shape which climate images reach which audiences [6; 18], adding a new layer of editorial invisibility to the framing process that television journalism has yet to fully reckon with.

For this reason, image-centricity should be understood as both a communicative strength and a theoretical problem. It is a strength because it allows television to translate invisible environmental change into publicly intelligible form. It is a problem because visual immediacy can overshadow causal explanation, long-term context, and systemic analysis. Image-centred reporting is therefore not simply a stylistic feature of television news; it is a core mechanism through which climate change is made visible, emotionally salient, and politically intelligible in world news.

Conclusion to Chapter 2

The analysis presented in this chapter demonstrates that climate change reporting in world news is shaped by a complex interaction of language, historical development, and visual representation. Together, these three dimensions constitute the discursive architecture through which television news organizes public understanding of the climate crisis. The conducted analysis confirms that television climate discourse functions not only as a mechanism of information transmission but also as a system of meaning construction that shapes environmental awareness, political interpretation, emotional perception, and public engagement with ecological issues. Vocabulary choices, visual framing strategies, and historical patterns of reporting collectively influence how audiences interpret climate-related risks and understand the broader social significance of environmental transformation.

The vocabulary of climate news, examined in Section 2.1, is not a neutral set of descriptive terms but a discursive mechanism that communicates urgency, causality, responsibility, and political relevance. The lexical shift from global warming to climate change and, more recently, to climate crisis and climate emergency reflects both the growing scientific consensus regarding climate change and the increasing tendency of broadcasters to emphasize urgency in environmental reporting. Scientific terminology, impact-related expressions, policy lexicon, metaphor clusters, and regionally specific lexical choices combine into recurring semantic patterns that bridge expert knowledge and public understanding. The analysed materials demonstrate that climate vocabulary increasingly combines scientific precision with emotionally intensified formulations designed to attract audience attention and strengthen the perceived urgency of environmental reporting. At the same time, the dominance of disaster vocabulary and the compression of scientific uncertainty into dramatic formulations demonstrate that the lexical demands of broadcast journalism may simplify complex environmental processes and reduce the depth of scientific contextualization. Regional variation further confirms that climate vocabulary is socially, culturally, and politically situated, even when the underlying environmental phenomenon remains global in scale.

The historical overview in Section 2.2 shows that contemporary television coverage is the outcome of a long transformation rather than a stable journalistic tradition. Climate change has moved from the margins of scientific reporting to the centre of global news agendas through several major shifts: from speculative and cautious reporting in the mid-twentieth century to the institutional legitimacy associated with international climate research and environmental governance; from earlier attempts to balance scientific and sceptical viewpoints to a broader acknowledgement of scientific consensus; and from isolated environmental stories to a wider recognition of climate change as a structural condition affecting politics, economics, public health, migration, and international security. The conducted analysis demonstrates that this historical evolution has not been linear but contested and ideologically shaped. Television climate reporting has therefore developed in response not only to scientific

discoveries and environmental events but also to journalistic routines, political conflicts, technological transformation, and the attempts of institutional actors to shape what counts as legitimate climate knowledge within public discourse.

The discussion of image-centricity in Section 2.3 has shown that the representational logic of television news continues to privilege immediacy, visibility, and emotional resonance. Disaster footage, scientific visualizations, symbolic landscapes, and human-centred imagery – including the growing visibility of youth activism – together constitute a visual repertoire through which the abstract reality of climate change is rendered publicly intelligible. Visual framing transforms distant and scientifically complex environmental processes into emotionally accessible narratives capable of generating audience attention and strengthening public awareness of climate-related risks.

The analysed broadcasts demonstrate that wildfire footage, flood imagery, melting glaciers, satellite visualisations, heat maps, and symbolic environmental scenes function not merely as illustrative material but as central communicative mechanisms within climate discourse. Scientific graphics contribute evidential authority, while emotionally charged imagery intensifies the perception of urgency and vulnerability. Human-centred representations, particularly the visibility of youth climate movements and environmental protests, reposition climate change from a distant ecological phenomenon to an immediate social and political confrontation connected with responsibility, justice, and future generations. At the same time, the conducted analysis confirms that the growing role of digital infrastructures, algorithmic circulation, and online media environments further complicates the relationship between visual evidence, emotional response, and public understanding of environmental issues.

A consistent finding across all three sections is the tension between the complexity of climate change as a long-term global process and the formal requirements of television as a medium of rapid, image-driven communication. Even as climate reporting becomes more scientifically grounded, politically sophisticated, and morally explicit, it remains shaped by professional conventions that favour dramatic

impacts, simplified narratives, personalized stories, and emotionally resonant symbols. The result is a form of journalism that succeeds in placing climate change on the public agenda but often struggles to convey structural causes, uneven global distribution of harm, and the long temporal horizon of ecological transformation. Episodic intensity frequently overrides systemic explanation, while visual immediacy may overshadow the slower environmental processes that drive climate change on a global scale.

The conducted analysis additionally demonstrates that television climate journalism increasingly combines scientific discourse with political and ethical framing. Environmental reporting now regularly incorporates discussions of climate responsibility, fossil-fuel dependence, environmental inequality, renewable-energy transition, and international climate governance. Consequently, climate news operates not only as a form of scientific communication but also as a field of political interpretation and ideological negotiation in which environmental problems are connected with broader questions of social justice, economic development, and global responsibility. The examined materials further demonstrate that climate discourse increasingly integrates emotional storytelling and human-centred narratives in order to make ecological processes more socially meaningful and emotionally comprehensible for audiences.

Another important conclusion concerns the interaction between television journalism and contemporary digital media culture. Climate reporting no longer exists exclusively within the framework of traditional broadcasting because contemporary television news actively incorporates social-media footage, user-generated content, satellite technologies, online video circulation, and digitally mediated visualisation practices. Climate narratives are subsequently redistributed through online platforms, streaming services, and short-form video environments, where algorithmic visibility increasingly influences which environmental stories become publicly prominent. This convergence of broadcast and digital communication creates a hybrid media environment in which climate information is continuously reproduced, reframed, emotionally intensified, and circulated across multiple communicative platforms.

The analysis also demonstrates that audience perception occupies a central role in climate communication. Television climate discourse simultaneously informs viewers about environmental processes and shapes emotional responses to ecological crises through verbal emphasis, visual dramatization, and narrative framing. Fear-oriented reporting, disaster imagery, and urgent vocabulary frequently intensify public attention to climate-related events; however, excessive emotionalization may also contribute to climate fatigue, anxiety, and psychological disengagement. The examined broadcasts reveal that contemporary climate journalism increasingly attempts to balance catastrophic framing with explanatory commentary and solution-oriented narratives, although this balance remains unstable and uneven across different broadcasters and political contexts. Consequently, climate reporting must balance emotional resonance with scientific contextualization in order to maintain long-term audience engagement and public understanding.

Taken together, the findings of this chapter confirm that television news plays a central role in constructing climate change as a global public issue. Through lexical framing, historical evolution, visual representation, and multimodal communication, world news does not merely inform audiences about climate change – it actively organizes the ways in which the crisis is imagined, interpreted, emotionally experienced, and politically debated. Television vocabulary supplies the conceptual categories through which environmental problems are understood; the historical trajectory of climate reporting shapes the discursive expectations audiences bring to each new story; and image-centric communication determines which aspects of the crisis become emotionally and politically salient. These dimensions are not separate stylistic features but interconnected mechanisms of climate meaning-making that collectively shape contemporary environmental discourse. The conclusions presented in this chapter therefore establish the empirical and theoretical foundation for the final synthesis of the paper, where the broader implications of climate discourse in television news are considered in relation to ecological communication, public understanding, media responsibility, and the future development of environmental journalism.

CONCLUSION

This bachelor's paper has examined the representation of climate change in contemporary television news through the theoretical perspectives of discourse analysis, ecological communication, media linguistics, and multimodal studies. The conducted research has demonstrated that television news functions not merely as a channel for transmitting scientific information but as an influential discursive environment in which the meaning of climate change is constructed, interpreted, negotiated, and publicly circulated. The analysis confirms that climate reporting is shaped simultaneously by linguistic, visual, ideological, political, and institutional factors that influence how audiences understand environmental problems and perceive the urgency of climate-related risks.

The theoretical analysis presented in Chapter 1 has shown that climate communication requires an interdisciplinary methodological approach combining discourse studies, ecolinguistics, media studies, and multimodal analysis. The concepts developed within Critical Discourse Analysis by Fairclough and van Dijk provide important methodological tools for examining how media language constructs authority, legitimizes scientific interpretations, frames political responsibility, and organizes ideological perspectives within environmental discourse. Multimodal approaches developed by Kress and van Leeuwen demonstrate that television news cannot be analysed exclusively through verbal content because visual framing, editing techniques, sound design, colour symbolism, and narrative sequencing participate equally in meaning construction. Environmental communication scholarship further confirms that climate reporting develops within broader political, institutional, technological, and economic contexts that shape journalistic priorities and influence the representation of ecological issues in public discourse.

The research has also confirmed the close interrelation between language, ideology, and power in climate communication. Television news discourse reflects not only scientific knowledge about climate change but also broader social and

political tensions connected with environmental governance, economic interests, ecological responsibility, and international climate policy. Editorial priorities, institutional routines, commercial pressures, and political contexts influence which voices are foregrounded and which perspectives remain marginalised. Consequently, climate reporting should be understood as a dynamic communicative process in which scientific evidence, political interpretation, emotional framing, and public debate interact within a broader media environment.

The empirical analysis carried out in Chapter 2 has revealed several major tendencies in the representation of climate change across the analysed corpus. First, contemporary climate vocabulary demonstrates a clear shift from relatively neutral scientific terminology toward more urgent and emotionally intensified forms of expression. Earlier formulations centred primarily on the term global warming, whereas contemporary television reporting increasingly employs expressions such as climate crisis, climate emergency, climate breakdown, and accelerating climate crisis. The examined materials indicate that such lexical choices function not only as descriptive units but also as discursive mechanisms that frame urgency, construct responsibility, intensify emotional perception, and encourage public engagement with environmental issues. The research further confirms that scientific terminology in television news frequently undergoes simplification and compression due to the time-sensitive, image-oriented, and emotionally driven nature of broadcasting.

The study has also identified several dominant lexical fields characteristic of television climate reporting. Scientific terminology serves to establish evidential authority and reinforce the credibility of environmental reporting through references to emissions, temperature anomalies, tipping points, climate indicators, carbon neutrality, and environmental measurement. Impact and disaster vocabulary creates emotional immediacy and visual intensity through expressions connected with heatwaves, flooding, wildfires, droughts, glacial retreat, biodiversity loss, and climate-related displacement. Policy and governance vocabulary translates environmental processes into political and institutional frameworks through

references to net-zero targets, climate finance, adaptation strategies, emissions reduction, international negotiations, and climate summits. The analysis additionally highlights the importance of recurrent collocations and compressed lexical formulations that combine scientific, political, and emotional meanings within short broadcast structures specifically adapted to television communication and rapid audience perception.

The historical analysis of climate reporting has demonstrated that television coverage of environmental issues evolved gradually from marginal scientific discussion to a central component of contemporary political, social, and cultural discourse. Climate journalism has moved from cautious scientific reporting characteristic of earlier decades toward increasingly visualised, urgent, emotionally intensified, and politically engaged forms of communication. The corpus confirms that this transformation was influenced by scientific developments, institutional climate negotiations, ideological polarization, digital media expansion, and the growing public visibility of environmental activism. The study further demonstrates that contemporary television news increasingly treats climate change not as a distant future possibility but as an ongoing global reality affecting economic systems, political structures, social stability, and everyday human experience.

Another important conclusion concerns the profoundly multimodal character of climate reporting. Television news constructs environmental meaning through the interaction of verbal explanation, visual imagery, editing techniques, colour symbolism, sound design, and emotional narrative framing. The analysed broadcasts demonstrate that disaster footage, satellite visualisations, symbolic landscapes, maps, graphs, temperature animations, and images of environmental protests constitute an essential part of climate communication. Visual elements frequently function as emotional intensifiers that reinforce scientific explanations and transform abstract environmental processes into more immediate and emotionally understandable forms for audiences. Images of wildfires, floods, melting glaciers, droughts, and environmental destruction contribute to the creation

of a visually recognisable climate narrative that reinforces the perception of urgency and environmental vulnerability.

At the same time, the research confirms that excessive reliance on dramatic imagery may simplify complex ecological processes and privilege emotional reaction over structural explanation. Television reporting often prioritizes spectacular visuals, episodic disaster coverage, and emotionally powerful scenes because such material corresponds to the communicative logic of broadcast journalism. As a result, structural causes of climate change, long-term ecological transformations, and systemic economic factors may receive less detailed explanation than immediate environmental consequences. This tendency creates a persistent tension between the scientific complexity of climate change as a long-term global process and the communicative requirements of television as a medium of rapid, image-centred communication.

The analysis additionally demonstrates that climate reporting increasingly combines scientific discourse with political and ethical framing. Television news no longer presents climate change exclusively as an environmental or scientific phenomenon but increasingly interprets it through the perspectives of responsibility, justice, inequality, and governance. The examined materials reveal growing attention to environmental activism, international climate negotiations, fossil-fuel policy, renewable energy transitions, and the unequal distribution of climate-related risks across different regions and social groups. Consequently, climate journalism increasingly operates at the intersection of science communication, political discourse, and moral debate.

The findings of the research carry important implications for journalism, ecological communication, and media education. The study demonstrates the necessity of balancing emotional engagement with scientific accuracy and contextual depth in climate reporting. The analysed broadcasts confirm that affective and image-centred framing strategies effectively attract audience attention but may also contribute to simplification, fatigue, anxiety, or emotional disengagement if not accompanied by broader explanatory frameworks and

solution-oriented perspectives. Greater integration of scientific expertise, contextual analysis, and diverse social perspectives would strengthen the communicative effectiveness of climate journalism and improve public understanding of environmental issues.

The research also emphasizes the growing responsibility of international broadcasters in shaping public perception of climate change. The analysed materials demonstrate that major international media institutions increasingly combine scientific commentary, visual evidence, policy discussion, expert interpretation, and human-centred narratives in order to contextualise environmental crises within broader political and social frameworks. Such tendencies contribute to the development of more comprehensive climate reporting, although media representations continue to remain influenced by institutional priorities, ideological positions, commercial pressures, and the competitive logic of contemporary news production. The study additionally confirms that internationally oriented broadcasters frequently provide more contextualized climate coverage by integrating scientific explanation with policy analysis and global environmental perspectives.

Another important implication concerns the role of media education and professional journalistic training. Contemporary journalists require a deeper understanding of discourse framing, multimodal communication, ecological rhetoric, visual semiotics, and the ethical dimensions of environmental reporting. The research confirms that linguistic and visual choices within climate discourse are not neutral communicative elements but mechanisms that influence audience interpretation, emotional response, political perception, and environmental awareness. Consequently, climate communication should occupy a more significant place within journalism education, discourse studies, ecological communication courses, and media literacy programmes.

The study additionally demonstrates that television climate discourse increasingly interacts with digital media environments and online communication platforms. Contemporary broadcasters actively integrate satellite imagery, social-

media footage, user-generated content, and digital visualisation technologies into climate reporting. Television broadcasts are subsequently redistributed through online platforms and short-form video environments, which further expands the circulation of climate narratives and intensifies the role of algorithmic visibility in shaping audience exposure to environmental information. The growing convergence of broadcast and digital communication therefore creates new conditions for the representation and interpretation of climate change within global media culture.

Additional attention should also be devoted to the role of audience perception and emotional response in climate communication. The conducted analysis demonstrates that television news simultaneously informs viewers about environmental processes and shapes emotional reactions to climate-related events through verbal emphasis, visual dramatization, and narrative framing. Fear-oriented reporting, disaster imagery, and urgent vocabulary frequently intensify public attention to environmental crises; however, excessive emotionalization may also contribute to climate fatigue, anxiety, or psychological disengagement. The examined broadcasts reveal that contemporary climate journalism increasingly attempts to balance catastrophic framing with explanatory commentary and solution-oriented narratives, although this balance remains uneven across different broadcasters and political contexts. Consequently, future research should further investigate the relationship between emotional framing, audience interpretation, and long-term public engagement with climate-related issues.

The study additionally confirms that visual communication occupies a particularly significant role in contemporary television climate journalism because many environmental processes remain geographically distant, scientifically complex, or temporally prolonged for mass audiences. Television broadcasting therefore relies heavily on visual condensation strategies capable of transforming abstract scientific processes into recognizable and emotionally resonant representations. Satellite imagery, thermal maps, footage of natural disasters, before-and-after glacier comparisons, and symbolic environmental visuals function

as mechanisms that simplify ecological complexity and facilitate audience comprehension. At the same time, the analysis demonstrates that visual framing can selectively foreground certain aspects of climate change while marginalizing others, thereby influencing public interpretation and political understanding of environmental problems.

Another important finding concerns the growing personalization of climate discourse in television reporting. The analysed materials demonstrate that contemporary broadcasters increasingly combine scientific explanation with individual stories of environmental suffering, displacement, activism, and adaptation. Human-centred narratives personalize climate change by presenting it through the experiences of affected communities, climate migrants, emergency workers, farmers, scientists, and environmental activists. Such personalization strategies strengthen emotional engagement and make climate-related problems more socially accessible to viewers. Nevertheless, excessive focus on isolated personal experiences may also reduce attention to broader structural causes and systemic dimensions of climate change. Consequently, effective climate communication requires a balanced integration of emotional storytelling, scientific explanation, and contextual political analysis.

The findings of the present research therefore confirm that television climate discourse should be analysed not only as a form of information transmission but also as a complex social and cultural mechanism shaping environmental awareness, public debate, and political interpretation. Contemporary climate journalism increasingly operates at the intersection of science communication, political discourse, visual culture, and digital media circulation. The analysis demonstrates that linguistic choices, visual strategies, narrative framing, and multimodal interaction collectively influence how climate reality becomes understandable, emotionally meaningful, and socially significant for contemporary audiences.

The limitations of the present study should also be acknowledged. The research has focused primarily on a selected corpus of major international broadcasters and predominantly English-language media materials. A broader

comparative analysis involving additional national media systems and wider multilingual corpora could provide more extensive insight into regional variations of climate discourse. Furthermore, the study has relied mainly on qualitative discourse and multimodal analysis rather than large-scale quantitative corpus methods. Future research could therefore combine qualitative interpretation with computational approaches capable of identifying recurring lexical, visual, and narrative patterns across broader media datasets.

Several promising directions for further research emerge from the conducted analysis. Future studies may focus on comparative investigations of climate vocabulary across different linguistic and political contexts, audience reception of multimodal climate narratives, and the influence of digital media algorithms on the circulation of environmental information. Additional attention should also be devoted to the role of artificial intelligence, automated news production, and user-generated content in shaping future climate communication. The increasing visibility of youth climate activism, Indigenous environmental journalism, and alternative ecological media platforms likewise opens new perspectives for the study of contemporary environmental discourse and media representation.

In conclusion, the conducted research confirms that climate change communication in television news represents a complex interaction of scientific information, linguistic framing, visual representation, ideological interpretation, emotional intensification, and institutional mediation. Television journalism plays a significant role in shaping public awareness of environmental crises and influencing the social understanding of climate-related responsibility and action. The analysed materials demonstrate that vocabulary choices, narrative structures, visual strategies, and multimodal framing constitute central mechanisms through which climate reality becomes publicly meaningful. The findings of this paper confirm the necessity of further interdisciplinary research into environmental media discourse and demonstrate the continuing importance of television news within contemporary climate communication.

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