An ecolinguistic analysis of the salience of non-human beings in children's literature as represented by Katherine Applegate's *Wishtree*

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Abstract

This paper aims to study *Wishtree* by Katherine Alice Applegate from an ecolinguistic perspective by revealing how the non-human elements of nature, as represented in the novel by the tree Red, the crow Bongo, and the other birds and animals, are depicted saliently and prominently. In contrast to other branches of linguistics that concentrate on the function of language in human-to-human communication without taking the broader environmental context into account, ecolinguistics concentrates on the function of language in increasing the importance and prominence of the non-human world. The study investigates whether the salience patterns mentioned by Stibbe (2015) in his framework of ecolinguistics are present in the novel and whether they are employed for the same purpose, i.e., foregrounding the non-human species and presenting them as important and worthy of consideration. The paper adopts a descriptive qualitative approach to the analysis of the novel, surveying the linguistic and discursive elements which construct the salience and high prominence of the non-human living beings. Based on the analysis of the salience techniques and how they contribute to the revelation of the prevalent ecological ideology in the novel, its text is assessed as to whether it exemplifies a beneficial, ambivalent, or destructive ecological discourse. The analysis reveals that five linguistic devices are used to give

prominence to non-human entities: basic-level terms, individualization, personalization, activation, and imagery. The researcher concludes, according to the study's ecolinguistic analysis, that Wishtree is an ecologically beneficial discourse.

Keywords: ecolinguistics, salience, children's literature, Wishtree, activation, imagery

1. Introduction

Over the past decades, scholars of humanities, urged by a burgeoning awareness of environmental problems such as climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, unsustainability, and ozone layer depletion, have shown a growing interest in the environment. It is argued that, within this Anthropocene epoch where man is seen as the center of the whole universe and all other species and natural resources exist only for him to exploit, human perception of nature is one of the reasons for the ecological catastrophe currently taking place and that a new perception of the relationship between man and nature is needed. Paşcalău, et al. (2021), for example, maintain that the man-to-nature relationship, as inherently represented through language, differs both within and across cultures, leading to varying views regarding how the environment should be treated and how people should engage in various human activities. Consequently, other exocentric beliefs were offered where all species and natural resources are equally seen as important for sustainability. This resulted in a plethora of fictional and nonfictional works dealing with humans' changing relationship with the natural world (Buell, et al., 2011).

Literary texts are fundamental when it comes to their influence on how humans feel and think about their environment. Literature, by appealing to people's empathy and imagination, can provide readers with a deep understanding of social as well as environmental equity (Mackenthun, 2021). Children's literature is especially important because it can play a pivotal role in fostering environmental education and ethics, which contributes to making life more advanced and sustainable. Reading literature will indirectly assist children in developing attitudes toward themselves and the environment, i.e., how they position themselves in the environment and interact with it.

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As a novel whose early chapters focus almost entirely on the natural world and with the importance of ongoing environmental protection as one of its central themes, *Wishtree* constitutes an essential part of the ecological discourse aimed at child readers. The current paper adopts Stibbe's framework (2015) to analyze *Wishtree* from an ecolinguistic perspective, focusing specifically on the notion of salience. The main aim is to figure out the ecosophy that Applegate adopts in her novel and to judge its discourse as whether it is eco-constructive or eco-destructive. *Wishtree* has been chosen for analysis in this study since it addresses many themes and messages, including the value of a harmonious community that welcomes outsiders and values its connections to nature. The most significant message of the book, however, is that no living being is dispensable and that only by respecting all people and all living beings can a society live in harmony. Applegate's novel presents a worldview that cherishes the natural world where both human and non-human beings live in harmony and have their important roles in protecting the environment. All this turns the novel into an ecological discourse that calls for sustainability, equality among all species, and supremacy of nature, and thus it is analyzable from an ecolinguistic perspective.

Katherine Alice Applegate, the author of this book, is an American writer of both young adult and children's novels whose works have been translated into numerous languages and whose books have received honors like the Christopher Medal, the Golden Kite Award, the Bank Street Josette Frank Award, and the California Book Award Gold Medal. She is the best-selling author of multiple novels for young readers, according to the New York Times, such as *The One and Only Ivan*, *the Endling* series, *Crenshaw*, *Wishtree*, the *Roscoe Riley Rules* chapter book series, and the *Animorphs* series.

Wishtree tells the story of a 216-year-old northern oak tree named Red, who serves as a wish tree in an American town influenced by the bigotry and Islamophobia of Trump's era. It all began in 1848 when immigrants transformed Red into a wish tree, with Maeve, an Irish woman, tying a love wish to its branch. An Italian immigrant abandoned a baby in Red's hollow, and Maeve adopted her and named her Amadora. Maeve's great-

great-granddaughter, Francesca, is currently the owner of Red. Despite the escalating harassment faced by a new Muslim family in the community, she shows no positive reaction. The Muslim family has only one child whose name is Samar. Samar is quiet, intelligent, and friendless, but she has a special bond with nature. When a threatening message to the Muslim family is carved on Red's trunk, Francesca shows no reaction and plans to cut it down. In an effort to fulfill Samar's wish for a friend, Red collaborates with its animal and bird residents. Breaking the rule of not speaking to humans, Red shares the story of Maeve and Amadora with Samar and Stephen. Inspired by the story, Samar and Stephen attempt to persuade Francesca to spare Red, but she remains stubborn. On Wishing Day, the townspeople load Red's branches with their wishes. Samar and Stephen get Francesca to read her great-great-grandmother's diary. Meanwhile, the students from the primary school, urged by Stephen, load Red's branches with a wish that counteracts the damage carved on Red's trunk. Finally, Francesca realizes the importance of love and fighting prejudice, and she decides not to cut Red down and expresses her hope for Samar and her family to stay.

1.1. Theoretical framework

As a social semiotic tool, language contributes significantly to the construction of the concept of nature and the various ideologies relating to human-nature interaction, which in turn shape the way we engage with the natural world and how we think about and perceive our surroundings (Akcesme, 2013). Ecolinguistics is a relatively new interdisciplinary branch of linguistics that studies how language helps to develop and resolve ecological and environmental issues (Dash, 2019). The particle 'eco' in *ecolinguistics* pertains to ecology, the science that is concerned with examining the interactions between living beings, including humans, and their surrounding ecosystems. Ecolinguistics has been defined differently according to what it exactly means to the researcher who defines it. Some researchers regard it as an examination of the ecology of language. Einar Haugen (1972) was the first linguist to stress the importance of studying the ecology of language and the language of ecology. Language ecology was defined by Haugen as the investigation of

how a particular language interacts with its environment. The culture that uses a language as one of its codes constitutes the genuine environment of that language. According to him, a language simply exists in the minds of those who use it, and it only serves to connect people to one another, to the natural world, or to their respective social and environmental contexts. Environment here does not merely refer to the social environment, but it also extends to include the biological and physical aspects of the environment, since, to many linguists (e.g., Fill, 2001; Mühlhäusler, 2001, 2003; Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2001; Mühlhäusler & Peace, 2006; Halliday, 2001), studying language in relation to society is not enough. Stibbe (2015) highlights the connection between ecology and language by arguing that our thoughts, conceptions, ideas, ideologies, and worldviews—which are themselves formed by language—have an impact on how we treat one another and the natural environment.

However, it was not until the 1990s when scholars like Michael Halliday emphasized the necessity of studying a language within its social as well as ecological contexts that ecolinguistics truly began to take off and develop as a distinct field of language study. In his article "New Ways of Meaning: The Challenge to Applied Linguistics" (1990), Halliday is concerned with relating linguistics to contemporary issues and crises, more specifically the massive destruction of ecosystems. Because he approaches language study from a functional standpoint, it is understandable why he thinks that the anthropocentric nature of human language is largely to blame for people acting in an unecological way (Chen, 2016). Since then, ecolinguistics has developed extensively and has employed various linguistic tools to investigate how language influences and is influenced by its ecological context. Ecolinguists, however, principally work by applying critical discourse analysis to texts concerning the natural environment with the aim of uncovering underlying presumptions and meanings in these texts and providing comments on how they are useful for attaining environmental goals (e.g., Alexander 2010; Harré et al., 1999; Stibbe, 2010).

Stibbe (2015), a well-known professor of ecological linguistics, defines this branch as the investigation of how language affects the

interdependence of humans, other creatures, and the physical environment for sustainability. To put it another way, ecolinguistics studies how language shapes, promotes, affects, or destroys the interaction between people, other living beings, and the environment (Alexander & Stibbe, 2014). Stibbe (2015) believes that language influences the way people see their world and inspires them to either protect or destroy the ecosystems that their lives depend on. Ecolinguistics, therefore, aims to criticize patterns of language that cause damage to the ecosystem and encourage the replacement of those patterns with others that enhance the protection of the environment as a whole.

Stibbe develops a particular form of ecolinguistics that can analyze language in order to discover "the stories we live by", evaluate those stories in light of "an ecosophy", reject stories that contradict the ecosophy, and seek to find novel stories to live by (2015, p. 183). Stories are defined by Okri as "the secret reservoirs of values." that people maintain and follow (1996, p. 12). Stibbe (2015) adds that stories are "cognitive structures" in people's minds that affect the way they think, speak, and behave. (p. 6). The most dangerous story is the one which regards the human race as supreme and more precious than the other species (Kingsnorth and Hine, 2014). Like all critical language analysts, each ecolinguist embraces an ecosophy as a primary ethical model and, all ecosophies take into account how humans interact with other living things and the physical environment. An ecosophy is a group of ethical standards ecolinguists use to evaluate stories and determine whether they reflect their own values and goals (Stibbe, 2015). When a story is investigated and revealed, it may be evaluated ecologically; if it is eco-destructive, it has to be rejected; if it is eco-constructive, it needs to be supported.

Stibbe (2015) contends that humans' attitudes toward language, culture, and the environment are shaped by the stories they believe, and it is the concern of ecolinguistics to question the stories that jeopardize linguistic diversity and have a negative impact on the environment in order to present alternative, constructive ones that people can believe and adopt. Following that, Stibbe names eight different shapes that these stories can take:

ideologies, framings, metaphors, evaluations, identities, convictions, erasure, and salience.

1.1.2. Salience

One objective of ecolinguistics, according to Stibbe's (2015) framework, is to try to make the more-than-human world more salient within conventional linguistics, which frequently concentrates on the function of language in human-human communication without taking the wider context of the environment into account. To put it another way, ecolinguistics actually aims to change the natural world's erasure by portraying it accurately and precisely in ways that help readers visualize it. Salience, in Stibbe's definition, is a story people have about a particular aspect of life that is valuable and significant. To portray something saliently, then, is to make it stand out, whether linguistically or visually, in order to instil in readers' or viewers' minds a sense of its value and significance.

1.2. Objectives of the study

The present study aims to examine Applegate's *Wishtree* from an ecolinguistic perspective, specifically focusing on the concept of salience as proposed by Stibbe (2015). The main goal is to evaluate whether the ideology presented in the novel aligns with the principles of ecolinguistics, which advocate for sustainable development and harmonious coexistence among all living beings. The study explores how non-human elements, such as trees, birds, and animals, are portrayed as prominent and noteworthy characters within the novel. It also seeks to understand how this portrayal influences child readers and their attitudes towards these elements. The study intends to address the following two questions:

- How does Applegate use language to represent the non-human living beings, such as the wishtree and the other birds and animals, as salient and prominent characters in the novel?

- Does the text of the novel demonstrate a constructive or destructive ecological discourse?

1.3. Significance of the study

This study contributes to the ecolinguistic research by examining the role that language can play in shaping our relationship with the environment. By examining the ecolinguistic aspects of the novel, such as the salient and vivid depiction of the non-human characters, a deeper understanding of the novel's ecological implications emerges. Through the examination of how these characters are portrayed and given agency, the study attempts to uncover how language can be deliberately used to activate non-human entities and emphasize their importance in the ecological context. The ecolinguistic analysis of the novel also offers a thorough and deep comprehension of the interplay among language, literature, and the environment. Exploring literary works that highlight environmental themes can certainly help people develop a deep connection with nature and recognize the impact of human actions on the environment.

2. Review of relevant literature

Some recent studies have looked at literary texts from an ecolinguistic perspective. One of these studies is Indriyanto's (2021) examination of how the Native Hawaiians' culture and the natural world are intertwined by analyzing *Wind Gourd of La'amaomao* ecolinguistically. Indriyanto employs two aspects of Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistic framework: ideology and evaluation. The analysis of language use in this story reveals the reverence and love Hawai'ian people show for their environment. The ecosophy obtained from the analysis of the text was judged to be positive or beneficial according to Stibbe's ecological framework. Indriyanto claims that the positive discourse of the story, as represented through narration, serves as a counterargument to the narrow Western viewpoint of the environment and emphasizes the necessity of sustainable life. The deep emotional bond between people and their environment, as demonstrated by wind naming patterns and Hawai'ian place names, is another example of the positive ecological discourse of the novel. Indriyanto also concludes that the beneficial ecosophy of *The Wind Gourd of La'amaomao* is also evident from the celebratory tone and vocabulary employed to positively appraise nature as the source of life. Finally, he adds that such an ecosophy

should therefore be based on nature sustainability, justice for all living beings, and the belief that nature has its own free will and inherent worth.

Another literary text which has been examined eco-linguistically is *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, where Ebim (2021), using Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach and Halliday's Eco-linguistics demonstrates that language and the natural world are inextricably linked. That researcher's study eco-linguistically examines the portrayal of nature's attributes in the novel by describing how nature reacts to the African colonial experience, and it affirms the fact that Africa, before colonization, was a society with strong, deep connections. He concludes that the African culture is eco-friendly based on his assessment of the many actions that the residents of Umuofia and their neighbors carry out to demonstrate their regard for their environment. In this epic novel, Achebe gives prominence to the land, depicting the process of agriculture, cultural customs, and the way nature responds to those behaviors which are incompatible with the "mother" earth's supremacy. Through such activities as farming, growing, caring for crops, and offering sacrifices to Ani, the earth goddess, African people appease the earth and demonstrate their reverence for the environment, and it is by means of language that all these activities are performed. Depending on all the previous findings, Ebim finally remarks that ecolinguistics is an appropriate approach to the study of the novel and points out some aspects that, among other things, define it as a novel with the protection of the environment as a sub-theme.

Moreover, Bahaa Taher's *Sunset Oasis* was chosen by Ahmed and Sarhan (2021) to be analyzed from an ecolinguistic perspective using the appraisal theory in order to show the viewpoints embedded in the characters' stories. Each viewpoint serves to highlight the story that a particular character follows, whether it is harmful, ambivalent, or advantageous to the ecosystem. An essential finding of the analysis is that eco-linguistics is an appropriate approach for analyzing genres that represent human experiences and the stories people live by, including the novel. The goal of the novel's eco-linguistic analysis is to criticize the negative attitude of the main character toward nature and to suggest new alternatives that love and respect nature. The main contribution of their study, according to the

researchers, is that analyzing characters' stances and attitudes toward the ecological surrounding system connects the notion of evaluation in ecolinguistics to the same notion in the appraisal theory.

Fouad (2019) employs Stibbe's (2015) framework of ecolinguistics to explore the strategies of salience and erasure and how they play a part in exposing the prevalent ecological ideologies present in particular Egyptian newspaper articles addressing the swine flu epidemic. Fouad's purpose was to discover whether the newspaper articles adopted a constructive or detrimental standpoint on the ecosystem. Findings reveal that authors erased animals from their discourses through such strategies as backgrounding, objectification, suppression, and the discursive masking of animals' agony. Using erasing techniques, news writers were able to present severe actions such as the agony and slaughter of thousands of animals as justifiable and acceptable. Few examples of news articles were found to employ the linguistic techniques of salience to represent animals as an essential part of the ecosystem and, as such, worthy of concern and attention. Activation, sense images, and material as well as mental processes, are the major linguistic techniques employed by authors for constructing salience. However, Fouad's analysis of salience was not as detailed and precise as his analysis of erasure.

Abdullah et al. (2022), using a cognitive-ecolinguistic approach, analyze the ambivalent representation of animals in children's stories as represented by *Cute Rooster* and *Valley Deer* by Kamel Kilani. Their study makes use of two cognitive frameworks: the conceptual metaphor theory and frame semantics, as represented in FrameNet. The researchers seek to expose the ambivalent cognitive structures derived as a result of the analysis of conceptual metaphors as well as the different frames and frame elements identified by the FrameNet theory. The two tools have proven effective and helpful in revealing that the two analyzed stories have environmentally oriented meanings and send messages that are relatively in accordance with the concepts of ecolinguistics. The study yields a group of cognitive structures that are classified as both damaging and helpful to the ecosystem in the same story, thus contributing to the ambivalent representation of animals. The two stories were found to include both

orientational and ontological conceptual metaphors. The analysis has revealed that conceptual metaphors, in addition to the frames and frame components suggested by the lexical items related to animals, are typical of the stories' ambivalent portrayal of animals. That study attempts to bridge the gap between the stories' two conflicting negative and positive portrayals of animals by offering alternate counter-frames and conceptual metaphors.

Perangin-Angin and Dewi (2020) employ an ecolinguistic approach to examine the Pagu language in North Halmahera, one of Indonesia's languages in danger of extinction, with the goal of language maintenance in mind. As one form of literature, three regional folksongs are analyzed due to the significant social and spiritual qualities they embody. That paper examines how to keep the Pagu language from dying out by taking good care of its literary heritage, which includes its folk songs. This descriptive-analytic study results in three important findings. First, the ecolinguistic analysis reveals the close emotional intimacy of the Pagu community and its natural surroundings. Second, the three folksongs have been found to be culturally and traditionally significant since they demonstrate the distinct character of the Pagu ethnic community, despite the fact that most people are not familiar with their language. The Pagu community, especially the younger generation, rarely uses Pagu in their daily activities. There are other regional languages that are more widely used and heavily influence the distribution of the three songs such as Tobelo and Modole. The researchers conclude that preserving communication among language users and protecting intangible cultural heritage like folk songs can help save the Pagu language and ensure the sustainability of Pagu environment and culture.

Zaytoon's (2022) study applies Stibbe's (2015, 2021) eco-linguistic framework along with Halliday's (2014) transitivity system to identify the linguistic features of beneficial discourse as represented by Bond's *Great Stories for Children*. Analyzing the three main components of the transitivity system of participants, process, and circumstance from an ecological perspective, the study attempts to determine the frames that Bond draws upon to influence children's viewpoint regarding

environmental issues. That study also uses positive discourse analysis (PDA) to identify Bond's ecosophy and analyze children's discourse on nature from an ecolinguistic perspective. Through the transitivity analysis of the grammar used by Bond, it is found that he constantly makes nature the agent in the clause. Even where human participants are actors in material processes, nature is still evident as circumstance. The analysis revealed that Bond utilizes language along with certain discourse patterns to advocate for the love of the environment. His language can be categorized as "green speech," or positive language because he highlights productive behavior to the environment as an alternative to the derogatory exploitation of ecology prevalent in many discourses.

It is apparent from the above literature that no previous ecolinguistic studies were conducted to investigate the salience and prominence of non-human lives in a literary text. This study aims to make up for this deficiency by exploring how Applegate, in *Wishtree*, skillfully uses language to represent non-human beings as significant and prominent characters who actively participate in the preservation of their environment and the well-being of other creatures.

3. Data and methodology

Data for this study consists of specific textual extracts and passages chosen from the novel itself based on their vivid and salient portrayals of non-human beings. The study adopts a descriptive, qualitative approach to the analysis of the novel, focusing on the linguistic and discursive elements that shape the prominence of the non-human characters. By closely analyzing the descriptions and dialogues involving these non-human characters, the study attempts to uncover the linguistic choices, patterns, and themes that contribute to the prominent representation of these characters. In other words, the text of the novel itself, or more specifically, those patterns of language elements that combine to form the salient strategies, serves as the main data of study.

To conduct the analysis, the paper draws upon the linguistic techniques proposed by Stibbe (2015) for the examination of salience, including basic-level terms, individualization, personalization, activation through transitivity, and imagery. The paper describes how the author employs

these techniques to enhance the salience of nonhuman entities. The novel is thoroughly examined to identify the specific lexical choices used when referring to trees, birds, and animals. The main objective is to analyze the terms used to describe these non-human beings, with the aim of identifying whether they are abstract or specific. The analysis aims to shed light on how the author brings these entities to life in the narrative. The analysis also considers the use of pronouns to determine if the author personalizes these entities. By applying Halliday's framework of transitivity, the analysis explores how non-human entities are portrayed in the novel and whether they are treated as active participants in the events described. The analysis further explores the author's writing style, focusing on the use of imagery to ascertain whether she uses straightforward, abstract descriptions or employs vivid language that stimulates the child readers' imagination and transports them to the depicted scenes.

This type of analysis and close examination of the novel can provide valuable insights into the underlying ecosophy conveyed by the author's linguistic choices. By closely examining the discourse employed in the novel, it becomes possible to assess whether the overall message and themes are eco-destructive or eco-constructive.

4. Analysis and discussion

This paper explores how Applegate utilizes several linguistic tools to convey the ecological significance of Red, Bongo, and other birds and animals. By analyzing the author's choice of words and use of imagery and activation, the paper aims to reveal how the author employs these techniques to develop her themes, which are all ecologically oriented.

One thing that has to be stressed at the beginning is that the articulation of the whole story from the perspective of a tree and the author's refusal to punctuate this tree's voice with any human ones reflect *Wishtree*'s predominant discourse, which is an ecologically advantageous discourse. Concerning the construction of the salience of the more-than-human elements in the novel, the study examines whether the linguistic features mentioned by Stibbe (2015) are present in the novel and whether they are used extensively or rather scarcely and sporadically.

4.1. Levels of concreteness and abstraction

One pattern of achieving salience that is dominantly used in *Wishtree* is employing the basic level of concreteness and abstraction, where basic level words like 'raccoons, foxes, skunks, opossums, and porcupine,' 'butterflies and moths,' and 'frogs and toads' have the most powerful effect on readers' minds than their superordinate forms, American animals, insects, and amphibians. An entity can be categorized at various levels. One of these levels is the basic level of concreteness or abstraction. A basic-level category, for example, the word *table* is less abstract and more specific than the superordinate category *furniture*, yet it is broader than the subordinate category *dining table.* The basic-level category is the more specific and easily perceptible word, which immediately causes imaginable frames to come to readers' minds, while the broader or superordinate-level word does not activate any possible frames (Lakoff & Wehling, 2012). Therefore, referring to a cow as a *cow* rather than an *animal* or *piece of livestock* gives it a clearer meaning and makes it sound less abstract. To put it more precisely, when we talk about a certain kind of animal, a frame that contains our mental representation of that animal and all of our information about it is activated. Thus, the word *cow* activates a frame that its superordinate *animal* or *livestock* does not. According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology, people find objects formed at this level the most natural and appropriate in their normal everyday experiences Furthermore, according to Rosch et al. (1976), because basic-level items are simpler to conceptualize and functionalize than their superordinate items, they are more salient at both the cognitive and linguistic levels. Throughout the whole text of the novel, animals, birds, and trees are referred to at the basic level which is capable of creating the most vivid images in the reader's mind. Abstract terms like trees, birds, and animals are frequently mentioned, but for other purposes different from creating vivid images and providing clarity, such as keeping from being repetitive or being more efficient; nevertheless, the more basic terms, which are also more vivid and concrete, are used much more frequently.

For example, the main character in the novel is not just a tree, but a "northern red oak, also known as Quercus rubra" (p.10), which boasts of being the host of "raccoons, foxes, skunks, opossums, and mice" (p.22) and the home to 'porcupine family' and 'owl nestlings.' The tree does not introduce itself using the superordinate form tree, but it uses the most imaginable form, the basic level category 'red oak tree', giving young readers the opportunity to create a clear, salient, and specific mental image of this tree. Red also never says that it is the host of many animals, but it details the different animal species that reside in its hollows, using the basic level terms of "raccoons, foxes, skunks, opossums, and mice'' and giving child readers the opportunity to have a clear mental image of the natural world where biodiversity flourishes and the various animals and birds live in harmony under the control of the Wishtree.

Similarly, Red's best friend is not introduced as simply being a bird, where the more abstract and less specific superordinate form is used, but rather as 'a crow,' which is a more precise form and is better able to summon up a salient and clear mental image in the children's minds of what exactly this bird is. In fact, the novel is replete with a large number of basic-level terms referring to various animal species, such as 'squirrels,' 'dogs,' 'newts,' 'spiders,' 'elephants,' 'eagles,' 'otters,' 'wrens,' 'dragonflies,' 'armadillos,' 'hamsters,' 'mice,' and 'chipmunks.' Likewise, many basic-level words referring to different types of trees are mentioned in the novel, like 'maple,' 'juniper,' 'boojum,' 'palm,' 'hawthorn,' 'linden,' 'hollies,' 'willows,' 'sycamore,' 'ponderosa pine,' 'aspen,' and 'sweet gum.' These specific names create a sense of identity and distinctiveness, allowing young readers to appreciate the individuality and importance of each species.

This approach not only helps young readers develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for the natural world but also encourages them to see birds, animals, and trees as distinct and prominent beings rather than mere components of the environment. By using specific types within the different species, the author can highlight the diversity and richness of life on Earth. Instead of grouping all animals or trees together under generic terms, she emphasizes their unique characteristics, habitats, and

behaviors. This not only makes the reading experience more enjoyable but also encourages young readers to see each living being as a unique individual. By drawing attention to the differences between species, we can foster a sense of wonder and curiosity in young readers. They will begin to understand that the natural world is not a homogenous mass but is made up of a variety of unique and interconnected beings. This understanding can ultimately lead to a greater sense of respect and responsibility towards the environment and all its inhabitants.

Of close relevance to the basic level of abstraction are the author's choice and use of concrete and specific lexis which are all derived from nature and capable of activating the young readers' imagination in terms of creating vivid images of the described living beings. Only the body can express meaning, and words that refer to possible or real bodily experiences are better able to elicit positive thoughts and imagery in the mind than abstract words (Johnson, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Lakoff & Wehling, 2012). This is exactly what Applegate does in *Wishtree*: She has avoided abstract descriptions, preferring to depict Red, Bongo, and the other birds and animals in concrete and specific terms relating to their actual bodies, shape, and movement in the natural world. A tree, for example, is not just a tree, but a tree that has "ridged, reddish-gray bark" (p.10), "leathery leaves with pointed lobes" (p. 10), "stubborn, searching roots" (p. 10), "rambling roots" (p. 35), "old limbs" (p. 15), "branches", "boughs", and "hollows—holes in a trunk or branch" (p.22). These are all words and phrases from the natural world of trees and have the power to invoke in the reader's imagination the exact shape and color of the various parts of the tree.

Red's close friend, Bongo, is also depicted by terms typical of the bird's activities and world: "flapped her wings" (p. 41), "beak open, head cocked, eyes gleaming" (p. 87), "Bongo dove straight toward his backpack. Poking at the zipper with her beak, she cawed frantically" (p. 74), "Bongo bent forward, wings spread" (p. 62), "Bongo flew to my lowest scaffold branch" (p. 40), and "Bongo stretched, admiring her lustrous blue-black wings" (p.34). It is this specific, concrete language that evokes a clear, bright picture in young readers' imagination, building up a salient picture of the

more-than-human world and encouraging them to appreciate the value and worthiness of other non-human species like birds. The use of such language not only brings Bongo to life but also highlights the unique characteristics and behaviors of birds. It emphasizes the beauty and grace of birds and encourages young readers to appreciate and value the natural world, including the diverse species that inhabit it. This emphasis on the beauty and grace of birds reflects the author's ecosophy, which is a philosophy that emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence between humans and the natural world. Overall, the use of language in *Wishtree* not only enhances the storytelling experience but also reinforces the novel's ecological message, making it an ecologically beneficial discourse.

4.2. Individualization

A second pattern of salience that is employed in this novel is individualization, which involves presenting individuals as distinct and invaluable by giving them names. When describing its best friend, Red never says its best friend is a bird, rather it says "Bongo … She's my best pal, a crow" (p.16). Red first mentions the specific unique name of her best friend 'Bongo,' giving her the highest possible salience, and then the tree mentions the specific species that her friend belongs to, 'a crow'. This not only adds depth to the characters but also enhances their significance in the narrative. Bongo's cousin also has a name, 'Gizmo,' and it has had previous seventeen names. The narrator then describes in detail how crows have names depending on the way they adopt for their names:

> Sometimes crows adopt human names; I've seen more Joe Crows than I've seen sunny days. Sometimes they name themselves after things that catch their fancy: Poptop, Jujube, DeadRat. They'll name themselves after aerobatic maneuvers: DeathSpiral or BarrelRoll. Or after colors: Aubergine or BeetleBlack.
> Many crows opt for sounds they're fond of making. (Crows are excellent mimics.) I've met crows named WindChime, EighteenWheeler, and GrouchyCabDriver, not to mention a few others that are not appropriate for polite company. (Applegate, 2017, p. 18)

Crows are individualized and given high prominence by describing how they like to have their names rather than generalized by describing the general physical characteristics of their breed. This is not the only example of individualization through naming; Red also refers to the 'fly' frog it

heard about and mentions how "frogs are named after bugs they enjoy eating" (p. 20). Unlike frogs, "opossums name themselves after things they fear" (p. 70) such as 'Hairyspiders', the mother opossum, and her "smallest baby opossum, Flashlight" (p. 79). One can even say that all the animals mentioned in the novel are individualized in one way or another; for example, crepuscular creatures are not only individualized by giving instances of these creatures like "fireflies, bats, and deer" (p. 55), but also by stating their characteristic habit of being "especially active at dusk and dawn" (p. 55). Within this species are skunks that are also individualized by describing how they have their names after pleasant scents such as 'FreshBakedBread,' 'RosePetal,' and 'HotButteredPopcorn.' Not only the animal residents of the wishtree are given names but also the 'intrepid visitors' like 'calico kittens' are even personalized and given human names 'Lewis and Clark'. The smallest barn owl is also personalized and given a human name 'Harold' since "Barn owls give themselves sensible, no-fuss names" (p. 55).

This technique of naming animals and birds entrenches in the minds of children that these species should not be seen as a single mass, but rather as individuals who are different and distinguishable from each other. Naming is important because it increases the salience of the individuals of a species as unique beings. Humans will never see the value of non-human living beings and care about them unless they know their value and uniqueness. Naming contributes to the development of the story and the reader's connection with the characters. By highlighting the individuality of each character, Applegate challenges the notion that humans are the only beings worthy of attention and care and encourages a broader and compassionate attitude toward the natural world.

4.3. Personalization

Personalization is another technique used in the novel to give non-human living beings the most uniqueness and salience. In addition to the use of human names, personalization can also be achieved through using the personal pronouns *he, she, his, and her* instead of the impersonal *it* and *its* for birds and animals. This technique is very widespread in the novel. Here is an example of how Red introduces its closest friend Bongo using the

personal pronouns *she* and *her* for the crow: "Bongo says I'm a busybody, and I suppose *she* has a point. *She'*s my best pal, a crow I've known since *she* was nothing but a pecking beak in a speckled egg [emphasis added]" (p. 16). Throughout the whole novel, Red, the sole narrator of the novel, keeps on referring to Bongo using the same personal pronouns *she* and *her*; there is not even a single example of the use of *it* and *its* for the crow, as seen in the following two examples:

> **Bongo was the first** to see what had happened to me. She landed at the base of mytrunk, head cocked. Dropping the potato chip in her beak, she cried, "I leave you alone for a few minutes, and look what happens! What on earth?" (Applegate, 2017, p. 40)

> "Bongo," I whispered, "I'm an official crime scene." She was not amused. (Applegate, 2017, p. 48)

The use of personal pronouns here creates a sense of familiarity and intimacy, allowing the reader to relate to the relationship between Red and Bongo.

Personal pronouns are employed not only for reference to the main character, Bongo, but also for all the other birds and animals mentioned in the novel as in the following two examples where reference to the squirrel and the barn owl is made through the personal pronoun *his* and *her*, not the impersonal *its*:

> "But that's not really a reason for us to be friends. I've had residents I wasn't particularly fond of."
> "That squirrel? What was his name? Squinch? (Applegate, 2017, p. 65)

> Anges, the barn owl who lives with her nestlings in my highest hollow, flapped her wings in annoyance. (Applegate, 2017, p. 67)

The author's skillful use of personalization, specifically through personal nouns and pronouns, helps to bring creatures to life. Through this technique, Applegate encourages a deep sense of connection and empathy between readers and the natural world. By giving these creatures personal identities, Applegate challenges the traditional human-centric worldview and prompts readers to consider the interconnectedness of all living beings. This approach aligns with Applegate's ecosophy, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and respecting the inherent worth and dignity of all creatures. In conclusion, Applegate's use of personal nouns and

pronouns to personalize creatures in *Wishtree* is a powerful technique that conveys her ecosophy and presents the novel as a beneficial ecological discourse.

4.4. Activation

Another important pattern of salience that is widely used in the novel and through which the prominence of non-human characters increases is activation. Activation takes place when social actors are portrayed as the action-takers, the driving forces behind an activity; in contrast, when they are portrayed as merely being the recipients or the targets of that activity, they are being passivated (Leeuwen, 2008). Fairclough (2004) states that social actors refer to participants in clauses. Leeuwen (2008) then elaborates that activation may be realized by transitivity structures where participants are activated by taking the roles of actors in material processes, behavers in behavioral processes, sensers in mental processes, sayers in verbal processes, or assigners in relational processes.

Transitivity analysis helps to reveal which participants are crucial to the clause's meaning and which ones are affected by its action (Macin & Mayr, 2012). In other words, transitivity analysis shows readers who gets a subject or an object position. Process, participants, and circumstances are the three main components of transitivity, which focuses mainly on the process in the analysis of clause structure. The process is represented by the verb in the clause structure since it is the verb that identifies the kind of process and gives information about the activity that the subject is engaged in (Ali, 2019). Halliday (1994) distinguishes six process types: material, mental, verbal, behavioral, relational, and existential.

Material processes refer to acts that are performed physically and concretely and have a material outcome or impact. They are clauses of doing and occurring (Machin & Mayr, 2012). They convey the idea that a physical act is performed by an entity, maybe at the expense of another entity (Halliday, 1994). In other words, clauses containing material processes must include a doing (process), an actor (participant one who or which is simply involved in carrying out the activity), and a goal (participant two whom the process is intended for). For example, in *The mother fed the child*, the actor is *the mother*, the process is *fed*, and the goal

is *the child*. Material processes, however, can also be metaphorical, as in *He destroyed my argument,* or abstract, as in *Prices have remarkably fallen.*

Mental processes refer to the processes of sensing and include verbs signifying cognition, perception, affection, and desire (Saragih, 2010). They help humans to identify their concept of reality, and they enable language users to convey their ideas, beliefs, and preferences. Verbs like *think* and *know* as well as *feel*, *smell*, *hear*, *see*, *want*, *like*, *hate*, *please*, *repel*, *admire*, *enjoy*, and *fear* can all be used to describe mental processes. (Ong'onda, 2016). There are two components in a mental process: the phenomenon, or what is perceived, thought, felt, or wanted, and the senser, or the person feeling, thinking, or seeing. For example, in *Sara liked the movie*, *Sara* is the senser, *liked* is the affection process, and *the movie* is the phenomenon.

Verbal process represents the action of speaking or talking and is realized by the verb 'to say' and its various synonyms (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004; Machin & Mayr, 2012). It is intermediate between mental and material processes since stating something is a physical action which reflects mental operation (Leeuwen, 2008). Clauses containing verbal processes typically include a sayer (a speaker who is human or human-like), a receiver (the person to whom the verbal process is addressed), and verbiage (the content or the message that is conveyed). For example, in *The father told his child to keep quiet*, *The father* is the sayer, *told* is the verbal process, *his child* is the receiver, and *to keep quiet* is the verbiage. *Praise*, *insult*, *abuse*, *slander*, *flatter*, *blame*, *criticize*, *chide*, speak, *talk*, *report*, *announce*, *notify*, *explain*, *convince*, *persuade*, and *promise* are some examples of verbs acting as the process in verbal clauses.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) define behavioral processes as those actions which combine both "physiological and psychological behaviors," such as laughing, tasting, crying, and watching (p. 248). Semantically speaking, they are halfway between material and mental processes. In other words, they are both material and mental in nature. For example, while 'see' and 'hear' are mental processes, 'watch', 'look', 'stare', and 'listen' are behavioral processes. However, unlike material processes, the

behavioral processes have to be experienced by a conscious single participant who is labeled a behaver (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004; Machin & Mayr, 2012). *Chatter*, *grumble*, *gossip*, *argue*, *murmur*, *frown*, *sigh*, *hiss*, *sneeze*, *cough*, *burp*, *faint*, *shit*, *yawn*, *sleep*, and *sing* are examples of verbs that act as the process in behavioral clauses.

According to Machin and Mayr (2012), the way readers perceive participants or characters in a text can be shaped by the representation of transitivity or of how they are represented as acting or not acting, which contributes to the promotion of certain discourses and certain ideologies. The discourse of *Wishtree* is eco-beneficial in perspective, and the ideologies that the novel tries to instill are that no living being is dispensable and that life cannot go on without harmonious relationships between all species−human and non-human. Transitivity representation in the novel contributes significantly to the portrayal of these ideologies: Red, Bongo, the other birds and animals, and undoubtedly humans like Samar and Steven, are activated and given agentive roles in the narrative structure of the novel; in other words, they are depicted as responsible characters who play important roles in the events of the novel.

Red is the sole narrator through whose eyes the events of the whole story are given, and logically, is activated and foregrounded in the whole text. Examples of the different things that Red and the other trees can do are: "Trees do talk to some folks" (p. 8), "But we can certainly tell stories" (p. 154), "I've always known how to keep a secret" (p. 16), "I've seen many surprising friendships during my life" (p. 17), "I think Bongo is too pessimistic for such a young bird" (p. 17), "I realized it was the garage band Bongo liked" (p. 144), "I heard a great deal of sighing" (p. 72), "we build invisible bridges to connect with the world" (p. 21), "I've even sheltered a person" (p. 22), and "But we do rest" (p. 135). Verbs here are all in the active form, with trees acting as the subjects of all verbs, not the objects to which things are done. This pattern of personifying trees and endowing them with the human traits of being capable of talking, telling, speaking, seeing, realizing, and thinking activates them and represents them to young readers as animate beings capable of action, thought, and feeling, which necessarily encourages readers to respect and care for them.

This perspective can promote a sense of responsibility toward nature, inspiring young readers to take action to protect and preserve trees and the natural world.

Applegate here professionally employs a linguistic pattern that activates the tree and makes it the senser of a number of mental processes—'known,' 'seen,' 'think,'" realized,' and 'heard'—which confirms that trees are indeed living beings with their own mental lives. By making Red the senser of mental processes, readers can gain insight into the tree's feelings and state of mind and are encouraged to experience its feelings and empathize with them. Red is not the senser of these processes only, but the novel also includes a large number of other mental processes whose senser is Red, like 'remember,' 'like,' 'feel,' 'want,' 'wonder,' 'regret,' and 'hope,' Red is also the sayer of numerous verbal processes like 'explain,' 'promise,' 'tell,' 'confess,' 'reassure,' and. 'interrupt.' This pattern of extensively attributing verbal processes to the tree represents it as the most powerful participant who has a lot to communicate to human readers. To Leeuwen (2008), the verbal process lies somewhere between material and mental processes; thus, one can say that these processes give the reader a sense of being accessed to the mental world of the tree.

In fact, Red acts as a reminder of the value of even a single tree. Even a single tree can demonstrate the value of nature in our lives by serving as both a home to a variety of animal residents and a reason for bringing people together. By making Red the protagonist of the novel, Applegate gives prominence to a non-human entity that is frequently ignored in literary writing. Williams et al. (2011), for example, claim that animals and nature have simply disappeared from a lot of recent children's books.

Similarly, birds, as represented by Bongo and the other bird species, are displayed with high activation as the actors of material processes who lead their lives for their own purposes and who are actively engaged in the environment around them. Bongo, for example, is the actor of all the following material processes: 'soar,' 'snatch,' 'set off,' 'sail,' 'stretch,' 'flit and settle,' 'dive straight toward,' 'poke at,' 'land on,' hop to the ground,' 'grab,' 'fly high,' 'flutter down,' 'strut back and forth,' ' nudge,' 'tap on,' 'head back,' and 'pop out.' These actions all denote typical

physical behaviors that distinguish birds in their daily lives. It is noteworthy that the sentences that contain the previous verbs are all constructed in the active form, with Bongo acting as the agent of the action. In other words, Bongo is portrayed through these action processes as a powerful participant capable of carrying out significant actions, such as protecting Red from being chopped down.

Likewise, in the following excerpt, which describes how the tree cutter was about to cut the tree down when animals and birds, in an attempt to stop the cutting down, came together and went back to their old residents in the tree, the author uses 18 processes to depict the movement of animals and birds; with the exception of one, they are all physical processes with animals and birds serving as the actors.

> Across the grass *streaked* HairySpiders, with her other babies *trailing*. She *went straight* to the opossum hollow, where she proceeded to *scold* Flash as she *snuggled* him close.
> In the sky, little Harold suddenly *appeared*, frantically *flapping* his wings like a fuzzy butterfly. Agnes and the rest of her brood *followed*. They *settled into* their old home as if they'd never left.
> Bongo *moved to* Home Plate to make room for the owls. The Yous *came* next, *trotting across* the lawn. Last to *join* the group was the skunk family, who quickly *scrambled up* my trunk.Seven opossums, four raccoons, five owls, and six skunks had *waddled*, *scooted*, *dashed*, and *fluttered* [emphasis added] from their various homes, just to see me off. My residents. My friends. (Applegate, 2017, p. 146)

It is this form of language, which saliently activates animals and birds and makes them the performers of action processes, that attracts child readers' attention to their positive and beneficial role in nature and inspires them to care for and protect these creatures.

As for the behavioral processes which endow participants with some kind of agency because the process functions are more like ones of doing, there are a lot of examples of these processes which are attributed to Red, Bongo, and the other birds and animals. Bongo, for instance, is the behaver of 'hissed,' 'grumbled,' 'muttered,' 'gave a screechy crow-laugh,' 'sighed,' 'looked at,' 'sulked,' 'sleeping,'' mumbled,' and 'considering.' Likewise, 'watched,' 'listened to,' 'said with a sigh,' 'worried about,' 'stared at,' and 'think on' are examples of behavioral processes of which Red is the behaver. By granting active agency and voice to the natural world, the

author encourages child readers to develop a deeper connection with the environment and to recognize their role as guardians of the planet. Through activation, Applegate conveys a profound message about the importance of ecological balance and the need for compassionate coexistence with all living beings.

4.5. Imagery

Prominence and salience can also be built up by using sense images that address the five senses of humans: sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch. Imagery can be defined as the literal and figurative use of language to evoke readers' feelings and activate their imagination. (Tompkins et al., 2015). Humans tend to fundamentally understand and interpret the world through their senses, whether that be by what they hear, smell, see, touch, or taste. Writers of poetry and novels, as well as tellers of stories, all utilize evocative, descriptive language that engages the five senses of humans to aid readers in understanding their literary works. This type of evocative, descriptive language is referred to as imagery. In any genre, the use of imagery helps the reader visualize the setting of a piece of writing. In other words, imagery engages the reader's senses to aid in better understanding what is happening and how to respond to it (Bouchrika, 2023). To put it briefly and concisely, imagery aids in the deeper and more memorable portrayal of writers' ideas and perceptions. Concerning the current case of talking about the prominence and salience of non-human elements and how this can be achieved in writing, a sense image can be described as an external force that influences the reader's senses by choosing specific lexical items that address these senses. Instead of providing the reader with an objective description of a particular situation, the author gives a personal, emotional description of what is perceived as being seen, heard, smelled, touched, or tasted. The reader is thus encouraged to visualize himself in the described situation seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, or tasting for himself, which gives high prominence to what is described (Stibbe, 2015).

For example, the author of *Wishtree* uses her vivid language to describe and detail the experience and suffering of a tree that lost one of its large branches:

> In my case, I have three hollows. Two medium-sized ones were made by woodpeckers. The largest one happened when I was quite young. I lost a large branch that was weakened by wet snow during a nor'easter. It was a big wound, slow to heal, and my spring leafing that year was paltry, my fall color pale (and, frankly, embarrassing).
> But eventually the hole healed, widened with the help of insects, and now, about four feet off the ground, I have a deep oval hollow. (Applegate, 2017, p. 23)

Her language invokes imaginable frames in the readers' minds of how the broken branch has gradually and slowly turned into a hollow, contributing to the conveyance of the belief that trees, like humans, have feelings and can feel pain. Authors employ sense images to encourage readers to better imagine themselves amidst the scenes being described, which creates high prominence and salience for what is described. In other words, when child readers are exposed to such texts that make salient the sufferings of non-human beings, it is more likely they will sympathize with these beings and avoid doing any harmful behavior toward them in the future. The reader can picture the scene of the slow and gradual healing of the wound because of the literal imagery that paints a very specific picture and helps the reader to imagine what was happening at that time. In addition, the author's description and the reader's image of the tree's pain are enhanced by the personification in 'the hole healed.' Personification here functions as a means of creating vivid imagery and reinforces the reader's comprehension of the suffering of the tree. By attributing human-like traits to a non-human character, Applegate prompts readers to acknowledge the inherent worth of all living creatures and the significance of living together in harmony. Words that appeal to the reader's sense of sight through the description of size and color (medium-sized, largest, large, big, widened, deep oval, and fall color pale) give an exact image of the hollow size, shape, and the tree state at that time.

> I have, for example, been hacked at, carved into, used for target practice. I have been underwatered, overpruned, fertilized and fussed over, ignored and neglected. I have been struck by lightning, battered by sleet. I have been threatened with axes, chainsaws, diseases, and insects. I have tolerated the sharp claws of squirrels and the nagging pokes of woodpeckers. I have been climbed by cats and marked by dogs.
> I have my aches and pains, like everyone. Last year I had a mite infestation that drove me nuts. Leaf blister, sooty mold, oak wilt, leaf scorch: Been there, done that. (Applegate, 2017, p. 31)

In the same way, Applegate, in the above excerpt, employs a strikingly

beautiful form of language and addresses the internal emotions and feelings of readers to encourage them to visualize the aches and pains of the tree. The author's descriptive language paints a picture of the tree's suffering and makes clear that other non-human living beings, including trees, are capable of feeling, making it completely understandable to humans that they are suffering. The passive form used in the above clauses can be interpreted in terms of the sympathy the author wants to attain from readers for the tree. The author knows that in order to capture a reader's attention she needs to engage with him/her mentally, physically, and emotionally. Thus, and similar to the previous example, she uses personification in "I have my aches and pains, like everyone," to enhance the reader's understanding and visualization of the tree's pains, feelings, and suffering.

As this novel is regarded as an ecological discourse that aims at raising children's awareness of the value of the serene, peaceful community, in which all beings, both human and non-human, coexist and live in harmony and respect their connection to nature, Applegate was keen to highlight this through her vivid descriptions of the various scenes that gather Samar, Red, Bongo, and the tree's other residents.

> Samar sat perfectly still. The babies circled her. Together they sat in the shimmer of moonlight and listened to my leaves rustle. Bongo settled on Samar's shoulder. "Hello," she said, in her crow version of Samar's voice. "Hello," Samar said, echoing the echo.

> Bongo squawked and Samar jumped a bit. Even Bongo's quietest caw is a bit on the harsh side. Bongo flew up to my smallest hollow and poked her head inside, her tail feathers still visible. With something shiny in her beak, she returned to the ground in front of Samar. Gently she placed a tiny silver key attached to a long, faded red ribbon in Samar's open hand.

> "It's beautiful," Samar whispered. "Thank you." (Applegate, 2017, p. 62)

By using her descriptive language in an effective and unique way, Applegate, in the above scene, creates a vivid mental picture for child readers of the closeness and intimacy that exist between Samar, the baby residents of the tree, and Bongo. She utilizes imagery as a literary tool to evoke readers' emotions and help them comprehend the characters' feelings of love. The words *shimmer of moonlight*, *still*, and *leaves rustle* which belong to the visual and auditory imagery evoke the senses of seeing

and hearing and transport the reader to that serene scene. The sensing word *gently* which appeals to the sense of touch reflects the special love that Bongo has for Samar. From this word, readers can imagine how calm, cute, and friendly the crow was when she gave the key to Samar, which enhances the value of human connection with nature and other species. Human connection with the non-human beings of the ecosystem is all what ecolinguistics seeks to achieve. The author's description of the harsh caw of the bird and its movement in and out of the hollow puts the reader directly in the exact same position as the person who actually hears and sees every little detail in the scene.

Similar to the above scene, Applegate, in the following scene, utilizes the imagery device to engage the senses of the readers and deepen their comprehension of the influence of living in harmony with nature and with other species:

> As it grew warmer, Samar would venture out in her pajamas and robe and sit beneath me on an old blanket, spattered with moonlight. Her silence was so complete, her gentleness so apparent, that the residents would crawl from their nests of thistledown and dandelion fluff to join her. They seemed to accept her as one of their own. (Applegate, 2017, p. 25)

The description here serves to awaken specific emotions inside child readers, conveying them directly to this impressive scene where Samar and the other non-human elements of nature become one unit under the auspices of the wishtree. The vividness of this scene results from the heavy reliance on various types of imagery. This imagery not only captivates the senses but also emphasizes the beauty and wonder of the natural world, urging readers to appreciate and protect it. Here, the mention of the word *warmer* which belongs to tactile imagery is more likely to provide a mental imitation of the warmth experienced by Samar and the tree residents. Words like *old blanket*, *moonlight*, *thistledown* and *dandelion*, and *silence* which appeal to the senses of touch, sight, and hearing transport the reader to the scene and make him part of it. It is this form of language which depends on vivid descriptions and sense images to create salient mental images in the minds of readers that makes the novel a beneficial ecological discourse. The author's salient representation of the non-human characters can be regarded as an intentional technique employed to effectively convey her ecological messages in a highly compelling and engaging manner.

5. Conclusion

The present study aimed at studying *Wishtree* ecolinguistically in terms of describing the type of discourse in the novel, i.e., whether the novel represents an eco-constructive or eco-destructive discourse. One aspect of Stibbe's (2015) model of ecolinguistics is used for this purpose, namely salience. The study sought to reveal how nonhuman elements, as represented by trees, birds, and animals, of the ecosystem, are vividly and variably made salient and prominent in the novel, i.e., what techniques or linguistic devices are employed for this purpose and how this influences child readers and their behavior towards these elements. It has been found that Applegate employs a variety of linguistic techniques to make the non-human element salient and significant characters in the novel. By using these techniques, she skilfully captures the attention of her audience and creates a deep connection between the young readers and the non-human characters in her work. Through her masterful portrayal, she not only brings these creatures to life but also utilizes them as powerful vehicles for delivering important ecological messages.

Basic-level words, which are more specific and less abstract than the superordinate forms, have been found to be common in the novel, and the influence of their common use is increased by the author's choice of more concrete and specific lexis, which are all derived from nature. Basic level terms, along with concrete and specific lexis, help to create vivid images of the described living beings, which gives salience and high prominence to these beings and encourages readers to appreciate their value and worthiness. Non-human species are also made salient in the novel by being individualized through names. Using expressions that treat birds and animals as unique, irreplaceable individuals, like names, gives them very high salience and potentially helps readers think positively of them. The salience and prominence of the birds and animals in the novel are additionally increased by the author's use of personal names and pronouns in reference to them. However, the most widely used pattern for attributing salience to non-human beings is activation where such beings act as active participants in the material, mental, behavioral, or verbal processes. Finally, there is the role of imagery, which is also used as a means of

attaining salience and prominence for other non-human beings. Sense images that address the five senses of humans are especially useful in making readers visualize themselves in the described situations, seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, or tasting for themselves whatever the writer is describing.

On the basis of the study's ecolinguistic analysis, it is concluded that Applegate adopts an ecosophy that calls for protecting the environment and living in harmony with nature and that *Wishtree* represents an eco-constructive discourse. The analysis highlights the utility of ecolinguistics as a multidisciplinary field for the examination of diverse literary genres, including children's fiction.

Findings from this study provide insightful information that may be used to improve environmental education. Educators can develop innovative approaches to environmental education that go beyond traditional methods. In fact, incorporating literature into the curriculum can provide a unique chance for students to understand the interconnectedness between humans, nature, and language. The study emphasizes the importance of language in effectively conveying ecological messages and promoting empathy for non-human entities. It underscores how literature can be a valuable instrument in raising awareness and developing a greater sense of environmental consciousness. Furthermore, environmental activists and conservation organizations can draw inspiration from the study to advocate for the protection of wildlife habitats and promote sustainable practices, contributing to a more harmonious relationship with the natural world.

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