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Salience and Erasure Techniques in Selected Egyptian Newspaper Articles Covering the Swine Flu: An Ecolinguistic Analysis

Fayrouz Fouad[1]

Abstract

Ecolinguistics is concerned with the relationship between language and ecology. Adopting an ecolinguistic approach based on Stibbe's model of analyzing language and ecology (2015), this paper investigates the techniques of salience and erasure and their role in revealing the dominant ecological ideologies inherent in the coverage of the swine flu epidemic in selected Egyptian newspaper articles. The study attempts to show whether the articles under investigation took a beneficial or destructive approach to the ecosystem. The study reveals that the sample articles mostly tend to erase animals from the discourse through backgrounding, objectification, suppression, and the discursive masking of their suffering.

Keywords: ecolinguistics – salience – erasure – beneficial versus destructive discourse – passivization - nominalization

تقنيات الإبراز والمحو فى التغطية الصحفية لأنفلونزا الخنازير: تحليل لغوى بيئى

ملخص باللغة العربية

يعنى علم اللغة البيئى بدراسة العلاقات المتشابكة بين اللغة والبيئة. وتتبنى هذه الدراسة نموذج آران ستيب (٢٠١٥) للكشف عن تقنيات الإبراز والمحو ودورها فى اظهار الأيديولوجيات الكامنة فى الخطاب الاخبارى وذلك من خلال تحليل لغوى للتغطية الصحفية لوباء انفلونزا الخنازير فى مختارات من مقالات الصحف المصرية. وتهدف الدراسة إلى بيان ما إذا كانت المقالات المختارة ذات توجه نافع أم مدمر للنظام البيئى. كما تهدف الدراسة إلى رصد الأساليب اللغوية التى ترتبط بتقنيات الإبراز والمحو فى المقالات المختارة.

فى يوم التاسع والعشرين من ابريل عام ٢٠٠٩ اتخذت الحكومة المصرية قرارا بذبح مئات الالاف من الخنازير وذلك كإجراء احترازى لمواجهة وباء انفلونزا الخنازير مما نتج عنه ابادة جميع الخنازير التى كانت يوما جزءا من البيئة المصرية. وترى الباحثة أن هذا القرار لم يتم إبرازه بشكل كاف فى المقالات التى جاءت فى معظمها مؤيدة للقرار الحكومى بغض النظر عن أثره على البيئة باستثناء بعض المقالات التى قامت بإبراز معاناة الحيوانات جراء تنفيذ قرار الذبح.

وقد توصلت الباحثة من خلال التحليل اللغوى البيئى إلى أن الكتاب قد اعتمدوا فى تقنية المحو على بعض الأساليب اللغوية مثل صيغة المبنى للمجهول والجمل الاسمية والكناية وذلك لمحو أو ابعاد بعض العناصر- ونخص بالذكر هنا الحيوانات التى تتعرض للذبح والابادة - عن مقدمة الصورة وافساح المجال لعناصر أخرى. بينما اعتمد بعض الكتاب على صيغة المبنى للمعلوم والتجسيد والنعت بالإضافة إلى استخدام الأفعال العملية والافعال العقلية وذلك لإبراز معاناة الحيوانات والتركيز عليها.

وقد وجدت الباحثة أن المقالات التى عارضت قرار الحكومة قد اعتمدت على تقنية الابراز لكى تتصدر الحيوانات المشهد كعناصر فاعلة وكمخلوقات تحس وتتألم. وقد اتخذ كتاب هذه المقالات موقفا مدافعا عن الحيوانات كجزء من اهتمامهم بالبيئة ككل. غير أنه تجدر الإشارة إلى أن المقالات فى معظمها مالت إلى استخدام لغة تحول دون تعاطف القراء مع الحيوانات بل وفى بعض الأحيان تمحو اللغة تماما او جزئيا عنصر الحيوان من الخطاب وتركز فقط على الانسان كمركز هذا الكون.

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Introduction

There has been a significant ecological turn within linguistics and social sciences, which has witnessed the emergence of ecolinguistics, ecopsychology, ecosociology, ecofeminism, ecocriticism, and environmental communication. These new disciplines are largely concerned with studying how humans treat the ecological systems that sustain life, and how they could help in building "sustainable societies, which protect their ecological foundations" (Stibbe, 2017, p.497). The present study is an attempt to expose beneficial as well as destructive discourses, i.e. discourses that preserve the conditions of life and those that work against the principles of the ecosophy (ecological philosophy). This is carried out through an ecolinguitstic analysis of the techniques of erasure and salience of animals, as part of the ecosystem, in selected Egyptian newspaper articles covering the swine flu in Egypt.

Aim of the Study

The present study aims at exploring the linguistic devices correlated with the techniques of erasure and salience in selected articles from Egyptian newspapers covering the swine flu in Egypt. The underlying ecosophy adopted by the research is "pro-animal ethics", which holds that animals have the right to avoid suffering (Taylor, 2009, p. 8). The analysis attempts to answer the following research questions:
1. What are the linguistic devices correlated with the erasure and salience of animals in the texts analyzed?
2. Are the sample articles examples of beneficial or destructive ecological discourse?

Theoretical Foundation
Ecolinguistics

As the name implies, ecolinguistics is concerned with the relationship between language and ecology. According to Stibbe (2015, p. 1), it explores the general "patterns of language that influence how people both think about, and treat, the world". The 'linguistic' side of ecolinguistics investigates the linguistic mechanisms by which worldviews are constructed, reproduced, spread and resisted, while the 'eco' side provides an ecological framework to consider the role of those worldviews in preserving or undermining the conditions that support life. Ecolinguistics is not merely the analysis of texts about the environment; rather it views ecology as "the interaction between living organisms and their physical environment" (Stibbe, 2015, p. 8). It aims to examine, critique, and raise awareness of hegemonic discourses that prevent the

construction of a mutually beneficial relationship between man and the environment, including animals and plants (Hughes, 2018).

One of the objectives of ecolinguistic analysis is to show how linguistic features come together to form particular worldviews or cultural codes, the sets of "shared values, norms, ethos and social beliefs" which reflect the community's common sense (Gavriely-Nuri, 2012, p. 80). Stibbe explains that ecolinguistics analyzes language with a view to revealing *the stories we live by*, "the mental models that influence behavior and lie at the heart of ecological challenges" (2015, p.2). These are the cognitive structures, "the secret reservoir of values", in the minds of multiple individuals in a particular socio-cultural context. Kingsnorth and Hine (2009) argue that the most dangerous story we live by is "the story of human centrality, of a species destined to be lord of all it surveys, unconfined by the limits that apply to other, lesser creatures".

Cognitive ecolinguistics investigates how particular frames promote ecologically beneficial or destructive behavior. A frame is a story about an area of life that is brought to cognition by particular trigger words. Framing is the use of a story from one area of life (a frame) to structure how another area of life is conceptualized, as in for example 'climate change is a time bomb'. In this frame, the source frame is 'a time bomb' and the target domain is 'climate change' (Stibbe, 2015, p. 67). Different framings lead to very different ways of conceptualizing an area of life. The frame 'nature is a resource' is an example of 'destructive' discourse, since resources are presented as valuable only if they are consumed. Frames can be created, modified, and displaced in discourse. Thus, issues can continuously be framed, re-framed, and counter-framed in text and talk.

Blackmore and Holmes (2013, p. 42) explore the various intrinsic and extrinsic values that can be inherent in ecological discourse. Examples of intrinsic values are "discovery, working together, beauty in nature, and connection with nature", since they are associated with pro-environmental behavior and mainly show concern for the Other. Commercial transaction (which sees protecting nature as a business selling the product of conservation to a customer), and ecosystem services (which put a price on nature) are examples of extrinsic values, since they are associated with ecologically destructive behavior and give profit, status and concern for Self.

The main interest of ecolinguistics is judging *the stories we live by* from an ecological perspective, resisting damaging stories, and searching for new stories to live by. By judging a story, Stibbe means comparing that story with the analyst's ecological philosophy, or ecosophy, which is the framework of values and ideal relationships between humans, other species and the physical environment. Thus, ecolinguistics not only uncovers destructive discourses, but it also addresses such damaging discourses through *resistance,* i.e., raising critical language awareness that the stories told have a potentially negative impact on the systems that support life, and that other 'possible' stories are available. Like Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (van Dijk 1993, 1998, 2000), ecolinguistics is concerned with how powerful groups convey ideologies that oppress other groups, including animals, current generations of humans who are suffering from pollution, and future generations of humans who will find it harder to meet their needs. The discourses of multinational agribusiness and neoclassical economics, for instance, can be considered destructive in the sense that they encourage people to engage in ecologically destructive activities, "overlook the environment completely or contain a 'mechanistic conception of nature as devoid of significance except insofar as it could be molded for human purposes and sold on the market" (Gare, 1996, p. 143).

Erasure and Salience

The present study is based on Stibbe's model of analysis (2015) which is essentially a cognitive framework that integrates the idea of the *stories we live by* from human ecology with CDA. The model identifies eight forms that stories may take: *ideologies, framings, metaphors, identities, evaluations, convictions, erasure, and salience.* The paper is particularly concerned with the techniques of erasure and salience, or the question of whether or not the stories about the natural world are important and worthy of consideration. Within Stibbe's model of analysis (2015), erasure and salience are two interrelated techniques, "two sides of the same coin" (p. 188).

The way the ecosystem is constructed in discourse is a major concern to ecolinguists, who examine whether the natural world is represented *saliently,* or prominently, in texts through linguistic devices, or is *erased* through patterns that omit or distort it. "We can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in" (Leopold, 1979, p. 214, as cited in Stibbe, 2017, p. 506). The erasure of the ecosystem, or the world of nature, from

discourse often results in creating the conviction that the world of nature is worthless or of no value.

Erasure is a notion that is commonly used in social sciences to indicate "the 'absence' of something important - something that is present in reality but is overlooked or deliberately ignored in a particular discourse" (Stibbe, 2014, p. 585). Erasure patterns are language devices that systematically suppress and background an area of life or even expunge it from discourse. Erasure occurs when beings in the real world are "replaced by signs in text" (Stibbe, 2012, p. 49). What is erased (from readers' minds) is the unique nature and complexity of the beings represented. Following Jean Baudrillard (1994, p. 6, as cited in Stibbe, 2014, p. 586), erasure is a matter of degree, since some language features convey more vivid and evocative images of beings while others erase them almost completely. Thus, representations can be placed on a scale ranging from "the reflection of a profound reality", through the 'masking' of reality, to "no relation to any reality whatsoever".

Machin and Mayr (2012, p. 5) argue that the absences and taken-for-granted assumptions in texts are as important as the ideas that are actually present. The *erasure* technique is employed by discourse producers in order to present "something as unimportant, marginal, irrelevant or inconsequential" through its systematic absence or distortion in text. Stibbe (2014, p.586) explains that there are three levels of erasure. The first of these levels is 'the void', where something important is completely excluded from a text. This is the most obvious, since some important component of the natural world is entirely absent in a discourse. The second level, 'the trace', is where something important is present in a discourse but in a vague, weak or abstract way. Thus, the entity is 'partially' present and backgrounded. The third level, 'the mask', is where something important is present but in a distorted form that erases its true nature. The following excerpt (Stibbe, 2015, p. 157) illustrates the erasure technique, which presents animals as unimportant and worthless:
The <u>breeding sow</u> should be thought of as, and treated as, a valuable <u>piece of machinery</u> whose <u>function</u> is to <u>pump out</u> baby pigs <u>like a sausage machine</u>. (*Walls Meat Company*)
Salience is the act of bringing something to the fore, whether linguistically or visually, to create a sense of importance and worthiness. It results from using linguistic patterns that present an element as prominent and worthy of consideration. Salience patterns are, thus, language devices which foreground an area of life and construct it as worthy of attention through concrete, specific and vivid depictions.

Ecolinguistics, in Stibbe's view (2015, p. 161), is "an attempt to increase the salience of the more-than-human world within a mainstream linguistics which tends to focus on the role of language in human interaction without considering the larger ecological context". The following quote, produced by PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), illustrates the salience technique, as it gives prominence to animals:

Chickens are <u>inquisitive</u>, <u>interesting</u> animals <u>who</u> are as <u>intelligent</u> as mammals such as cats, dogs, and even some primates. They are very <u>social</u> and <u>like</u> to spend their days together, <u>scratching</u> for food, <u>taking</u> dust baths, <u>roosting</u> in trees, and <u>lying</u> in the sun (PETA).

Drawing upon Stibbe (2012, 2014, 2015), with insights from van Dijk (1993, 1998, 2000), and Fowler (1991), the researcher investigates the techniques of erasure and salience which are encoded in a number of linguistic devices, including abstraction, hyponymy, hypernymy, transitivity, activization, passivization, and nominalization.

Abstraction is a lexical strategy whereby the discourse is constructed in general rather than specific lexical items, which results in diverting the attention from the concrete to the abstract (Fowler, 1991). This device is also known as generalization or homogenization, whereby individual entities are represented as indistinguishable parts of a larger group, crowd or mass. Examples of abstract lexical items are 'biodiversity' and 'biomass'.

Hyponymy shows the relationship between a generic term (hypernym) and a specific instance of it (hyponym). A hyponym is a lexical item whose semantic field is included in that of another, its hypernym. For example, *pigeon*, *crow*, *eagle* and *seagull* are all hyponyms of *bird* (their hypernym); which, in turn, is a hyponym of *animal*. The semantic field of a hypernym, also known as a superordinate, is broader than that of a hyponym (Fromkin and Rodman, 1998, p. 91).

Transitivity is "the way the clause is used to analyze events and situations as being of certain types" (Fowler 1991, pp.70- 71). Transitivity places agents, actions, and patients in various relations to each other. It makes options available, thus rendering the choice made by discourse ideologically significant. "Transitivity offers a network of inter-related options for representing different types of experience – our

experience of the material world, of the world of our inner consciousness, of the world of symbolization, and so on" (Matthiessen, 1997, p. 15). The text producer consults a limited set of possible structures, and selects the structure best suited to his/her view of reality. Thus, syntax "provides for alternative phrasings, and . . . wherever in language alternative variants are permitted, different values come to be associated with the different variants" (Fowler, 1991, p.77). The system of transitivity (processes and their associated participants) carries "the main responsibility for representing the events and situations to which the text refers"(198).

In an analysis of erasure and salience in discourse, it is vital to examine the types of processes employed and the participants associated with them, in order to expose the meanings implicit in the linguistic structures. According to Halliday (1985, p. 102), material processes are processes of doing. The participants associated with material processes are the actor and the goal. For example, the lion attacked the guard. Mental processes are processes of sensing. They include perception, thinking (or cognition) and feeling (or affection). For example, the boy knew the right answer. Behavioral processes are those primarily concerned with psychological and physiological behavior like smiling, crying, dreaming, breathing, coughing, sneezing. An example is the little girl smiled.

Nominalization is a language transformation that is illuminating in the analysis of erasure and salience techniques. In nominalization, a noun phrase is derived from an underlying process, as in, for example, destruction which derives from X destroys Y). It results in the deletion of the participants (who did what to whom?) with the effect of suppressing participant relations, which is of great importance in analyzing erasure in discourse. Participants in a nominalized process may be preserved, marked with possessives and prepositions, but often they disappear completely and have to be 'understood' from the context with a considerable degree of reconstruction on the part of the reader. Another consequence of nominalization is objectification or reification by virtue of which processes and qualities acquire the status of things - impersonal, inanimate, capable of being gathered and counted (Fowler, 1991, p.80).

Passivization is another syntactic transformation that is employed in the technique of erasure. Fowler (1991) maintains that active and passive structures share the same propositional meaning, differing only in syntactic ordering. "The active is chosen when the focus of the action is to be on the agent of the action, implying clear responsibility" (77- 78).

The passive voice results in agent deletion and the backgrounding, or total erasure, of participants. For example, the clause The chickens were slaughtered suppresses the actor who does the slaughter.

News discourse has the authority to construct meanings through the choice of salience and erasure. Journalists bring particular topics into the foreground or the background through their choice of words and visuals, the sources quoted, and the amount of emphasis given to each story. Those discursive resources serve to define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies.

Literature Review

In 1990, Peter Singer makes the astute remark that the media find stories about "the lives of cheetahs and sharks" more interesting or newsworthy than "the lives of chickens or veal calves" (p. 216). Farm animals are usually presented in the media, not via the news, but through advertisements for food products gained at the animals' expense. He laments that the coverage of animals is dominated by human-interest events like baby gorilla births at a zoo"; while the "developments in farming techniques that deprive millions of animals of freedom of movement go unreported" (p. 216).

Dunayer (2001) explores the use of euphemism, as a linguistic device that masks or erases the violence, exploitation, and cruel treatment of farm animals (in slaughter for food consumption, entertainment, sport, medical research, etc.). She cites, as an example using the word "beef" as a euphemistic term for "the flesh of dead cow", and considers this as one of the practices that undermine the individuality of "nonhuman animals", as she contends. Zoos, which often market themselves as "wildlife conservationists", are another example that she cites, where animals are imprisoned "in cages and tanks, deprived of natural stimuli, and driving them to repetitive and self-destructive behaviors". The author refers to words that can be used as alternatives to speciesist terms (e.g. "flesh" or "muscle" instead of "meat"), and urges the avoidance of expressions that exalt humans above other animals, such as human kindness, the rational species, and the sanctity of human life".

The relationship between humans and pigs throughout history and how this is reflected in the English language is traced by Stibbe (2003). He maintains that in Victorian Britain, pigs used to live in close proximity with their owners and were an integral part of village life,

being fed on leftover food from their owners' kitchen. In the modern times, however, the relation became a distant one with hundred of pigs kept indoors in intensive conditions for the pork industry. Everyday British English expresses an overwhelmingly negative attitude toward pigs. With only a few exceptions such as 'you lucky pig', the expressions involving the word 'pig' are mostly attributions of unpleasant or negative characteristics. Within the British culture, pigs are presupposed to be ignorant, greedy, untidy, stubborn, selfish, badly behaved, fat, get very drunk and sick, and squeal loudly when 'stuck' (378). Within the discourse of the pork industry, there are no explicit insults of pigs. Yet, pigs disappear as individuals and are constructed as inanimate objects. As Stibbe concludes, "they are just pork rather than animals" (386).

Glenn (2004) conducts a critical analysis of the ways in which discursive strategies constructed by the factory farming industry help create and sustain a practice that is cruel and environmentally dangerous (p. 65). She investigates examples of government officials referring to animals as market commodities "livestock," or using sanitized terms like "individual accommodations" or "modern maternity units" to describe the cramped cages in which they confine calves and pregnant pigs.

Freeman (2009) analyzes the representations of farmed animals in American print and broadcast news stories published between 2000 and 2003. The researcher examines whether animal representations reinforce the speciesist status quo of industry or challenge it in favor of increased justice for animals. Findings of the textual analysis show that the news stories in the sample largely support the speciesist status quo by favoring elite viewpoints and failing to provide balance. They objectify animals discursively through commodification, constructing animals as bodies not beings, failure to acknowledge their emotional perspectives, and failure to describe them as inherently valuable individuals.

Data and Methodology

The data analyzed in the present study consist of 20 newspaper articles covering the Swine Flu in Egypt in the period from the 29th of April to the 15th of May 2009. The selected articles are downloaded from a variety of Egyptian newspapers / news sites, including Al-Ahram, Al-Gomhouria, Al-Masry Al-Youm, and Al-Youm Al-Sabe. The research methodology adopted in the present paper is the descriptive qualitative analysis of data, tracing the linguistic and discursive features which result in the erasure or salience of animals.

Context of Data

On the 29th of April 2009, the Egyptian government ordered the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of pigs as a precautionary measure against the swine flu epidemic, which resulted in the official extermination of all domestic pigs in the country. Commenting on Egypt's extreme reaction, the World Health Organization (WHO) stated that there was no reason to believe that pigs were transmitting the flu to humans. Based on its genetic structure, the virus, officially known as A(H1N1), is a type of influenza that infects the respiratory system of pigs. This origin gave rise to the nomenclature "swine flu", largely used by mass media in the first days of the epidemic. Despite this origin, the strain is a human-to-human transmitted virus, requiring no contact with swine. Humans who come into close proximity of pigs can on rare occasions be infected with the swine flu virus, resulting in H1N1 flu virus, or human swine flu, according to reports by the World Health Organization (2009).

Analysis and Discussion

In the period following a governmental decision that was issued on the 29th of April 2009, hundreds of thousands of animals were killed, whether healthy or not, to contain the swine flu disease in Egypt. The researcher argues that this act of the 'mass killing' of the animals is largely 'masked' in the sample data through the use of the erasure technique. A few news writers, however, have employed the technique of salience to represent the animal suffering through using such linguistic devices as activization, personification, and sense images. The following sections will discuss each of these discursive patterns in detail, with examples from the data for illustration.

The Technique of Erasure

The erasure of animals from the newspaper discourse on the swine flu has been largely stimulated by the frantic media campaign that constructed the virus as a terrifying plague which attacks humans through pigs, and which must be duly combated in a nationwide 'war' against those 'deadly' pigs. Such an awe-stricken media coverage has resulted in the erasure of the animals themselves from most of the discourse on the swine flu, being backgrounded and overshadowed by pursuing the government procedures in fighting the disease. Rather than representing the swine flu virus as a sickness that needs to be cured, many news writers have constructed it as a 'battle' against a 'dreadful' enemy, as in the following two examples:

معركة الـخـنازيـر the battle against the pigs (Al-Masry Al-Youm, May 10) (1)

المحافظات تحارب حتى ضبط آخر طائر وخنزير the governorates fighting to the last bird and pig (Al-Shorouk Al-Gadid, May 11) (2)

The swine flu has regularly been conceptualized as a terror, a frightening fatal disease, as in the headline:

مستعمرات الرعب فى حياتنا اليومية Colonies of Terror in our Daily Lives (Al-Ahram, May 12)

In this article, the writer paints a horrifying mental image for the virus and wonders whether there is a conspiracy against humankind:

هل هي محض مصادفة أن يظهر في حياتنا كل٧ سنوات تقريبا وباء خطير يخفي وراءه فيروسا شرسا؟

قد تكون هذه المستعمرات المرعبة من الفيروسات كامنة في بنوك حفظ ويقوم مجنون بإطلاقها كلما هدأ العالم.

Is it a mere coincidence that a dangerous epidemic hiding a fierce virus appears in our lives every seven years? These frightful colonies of viruses could be dormant in special banks so that a maniac spreads them whenever an interlude of world peace prevails.

The fear appeal is also employed in the following opening lines from Al-Gomhouria's news story (May 2):

حالة من الخوف والترقب تنتاب الشارع بعد ظهور شبح انفلونزا الخنازير. وسقوط العشرات من الضحايا.

Egypt is swayed by fear and anticipation as the ghost of swine flu appears, infecting tens of victims.

The appeal to fear, as a means of persuasion, becomes effective through constructing a discourse that conveys potential destructive or painful threats and highlighting to the audience that there is some way of avoiding the cause of agony by following a certain course of action (Pfau, 2007). In the case of the swine flu in Egypt, the government argued that the only way the 'agony' could be 'avoided' was by 'killing' the pigs. By constructing a potential threat, the communicator can maintain control over the situation and manipulate the audience into accepting the extreme measures taken by the government and justifying the indiscriminate killing of suspect as well healthy animals.

Animal erasure does not necessarily mean the entire absence of animals in a text; in fact, animals can be present but in a distant and diminished form, remaining only as traces. This is obvious in the following article headline:

بعد إعلانها عدم مسئوليتها البيئة تطالب المحافظين بدفن الخنازير النافقة فى الجير الحى

Ministry of Environment requires immediate burial of dead pigs in live lime, and declares non-responsibility (Al-Youm Al-Sabe, May 8)

Although the word خنازير (pigs) has 10 occurrences in the text, there is no genuine concern with the welfare of the animals themselves; the main issue is with the way the government can 'get rid of' those dead pigs. The word الخنازير (pigs) appears three times in the noun phrase الخنازير النافقة (dead pigs). Choosing the adjective النافقة (dead) to modify the noun الخنازير (pigs) is misleading, considering the fact that those animals did not die naturally but were rather 'killed/slaughtered'. From an ecolinguistic perspective, the article, therefore, exemplifies destructive ecological discourse, as it lacks any arguments against the act of destroying a species that forms an essential part of the ecosystem, and whose slaughter inevitably causes a serious imbalance.

The discursive erasure of animals occurs when they take the place of the 'modifier' in a noun phrase, as in the following examples:

مزارع الـ خـ نازيـ ر(pigsties)

مرض اذ   فـلوذ زا الـ خـ نازيـ ر (swine flu)

(الخنازير   يـة ربـ تـ (pig farming)

لحم الخنزير (pork)

Stibbe (2015) refers to this linguistic device in his model as "grammatical embedding". The animals in these cases are linguistically 'present' in the lexical items, but they are ideologically obscured, objectified and backgrounded. They are reduced to mere objects that are defined through their economic value and deprived of their rights as living beings. The phrase   مزارع الـ خـ نازيـ ر(pigsties) is particularly interesting; it is erasure in the form of 'trace', since it refers to the places where the animals live, while erasing the animals themselves. When animals are modifiers of other nouns, they are discursively marginalized, or erased. This discursive erasure, through objectification, presents their killing as justifiable. Most of these grammatical constructions refer to pigs using labels that represent their end purpose either as a source of food (pork) or as animals that feed mainly on the organic waste of the country's trash. From an ecolinguistic point of view, the writers of these articles are more concerned with extrinsic values, which give prominence to the profit and benefit of the humans (Self), disregarding the intrinsic values related to the wellbeing of the animals (Other), as part of the ecosystem.

The erasure of animals from the newspaper discourse covering the swine flu is linguistically encoded in nominalization. This is illustrated in the following example from Al-Youm Al-Sabe (May 8):

أرسل المهندس ماجد جورج وزير البيئة خطابات للمحافظين الذين تتواجد مزارع خنازير فى
محافظاتهم، يحثهم فيها على ضرورة التخلص من الخنازير النافقة (disposal of dead pigs).
وكذلك أمكانية استخدام المحاجر المستنفذة فى دفن الخنازير (the burial of pigs) …
ثم يتم وضع كميات من الجير الحى بقاع المحجر قبل وضع الخنازير (placing the pigs).

The disposal of, placing, and burial of the dead pigs are constructed in the form of nominalizations, which result in the deletion of the 'actor' (the government authorities) and the suppression of the 'acted upon' (the animals). Erasure through nominalization is also manifested in Al-Masry Al-Youm's article (May 12):

لا أملك موقفًا قاطعًا من قضية إعدام أو ذبح الخنازير   (killing or slaughtering pigs)

طبعا يفضل التخلص من الكبار ونقل الخنازير الصغيرة أو حديثة الولادة إلى مزارع صحية (getting rid of older pigs and transferring younger ones)

تخرج أخبار عن دفن خنازير حية   (burying pigs alive)

In these examples, the animals are erased from the discourse since they are backgrounded and represented as mere objects exposed to the processes of gathering, transference, disposal, killing, slaughter, and burial. The violence against the animals is masked through nominalization.

Animals are erased from the discourse when they are passivized and denied the role of agent, as in the following examples:

وجود خنازير نافقة ملقاة على جوانب طريق الأتوستراد(1)   (that are thrown away)

(Al-Youm Al-Sabe, May 8)

بنسبة٧٤ القاهرة أنه تم ذبح وإعدام ٢٤ ألفا، بمحافظة(2)   (were slaughtered and killed) %

(Al-Masry Al-Youm, May 13)

أيها الخنازير المساقة إلى ساحة الموت (3)   (Oh pigs driven to the altar)

(Al-Masry Al-Youm, May 10)

With passivization, the focus has switched from subject/actor to object/goal, and the action has become attached to the object, as a kind of resultant attribute. With the deletion of the actor, the responsibility for such negatively-loaded actions, as slaughter and kill, is blurred and the processes reified into states or facts that should be taken for granted.

It has been noted that news writers who argue against the government decision of the mass slaughter of pigs represent the act of 'killing the animals' saliently, using such heavily-charged lexical items that accentuate the cruelty of the act. For example, in the article, خنزيريات [Pigs] (Al-Youm Al-Sabe, May 9), the writer repeatedly uses the word execution اعدام , as in the following examples:

فمن قائل بضرورة إعدام الخنزير تجنيباً للبلاد والعباد من الأنفلونزا

الإعدام هذا هو بمثابة إفناء للكانسات العظمى هذه، لما تقوم به من عمل تأنفه الحيوانات الأخرى

The writer of Al-Masry Al-Youm's article (May, 10) refers to the act using such lexical items as slaughter ذبح, execution اعدام, and even the negatively-loaded word annihilation إبادة .

slaughter هو أمر طبيعى ...اعتراض البعض على قرار الحكومة المصرية ذبح الخنازير فى مصر

slaughter .... annihilation طرح فى البداية على أنه قرار «إبادة» ثم تراجع إلى «ذبح»

annihilation of that filthy (طالب البعض) بإبادة «هذا الحيوان النجس فى بلد الأزهر» animal

On the other hand, writers who support the government decision resort to a variety of euphemistic lexical items and phrases to mitigate the severe course of action. The vaguely neutral lexical phrase التخلص من الخنازير (getting rid of the pigs) has been frequently used in the sample, as in Al-Youm Al-Sabe (May 14):

إن طرق التخلص من الخنازير تتم بمقاييس بيئية عالمية (getting rid of the pigs)

Thus, euphemism is another linguistic device that results in the erasure of animals from the discourse, as it conceals animal suffering by discursively masking and covering up the cruel treatment.

Several news stories talk about the carcasses of dead pigs being buried in mass graves using live lime. However, the analysis of the lexical choices shows that the most predominant verbs are material, like:

يدفن burn, and يحرق يـ dispose of, يتخلص من kill, يعدم slaughter, يذبح bury.

Mental or behavioral verbs that refer to the animals suffering are rarely used. Lexical choices, thus, suppress or neutralize any sense of consideration for the animals, the real victims of mass slaughter. The erasure of these emotions of sympathy in most of the stories under analysis indicates a lack of concern for animal lives, and proves the discourse to be destructive, from an ecolinguistic viewpoint.

The Technique of Salience
The writers of some newspaper articles in the corpus employ linguistic devices to build up the salience of the animals as part of ecosystem. The salience patterns in these texts make the natural world, represented by the pigs/animals, more prominent in the minds of readers and, thus, construct nature as worthy of consideration. The linguistic devices contributing to salience include: activization, sense images, and material as well as mental processes.

It has been found that the articles generally lack sources who give salience to the mass killing of the animals or argue that the slaughter could have been avoided if different measures had been taken. However, dominant cognitive-linguistic erasure patterns are challenged in selected op-eds in the sample data, where the technique of salience is manifested

in the few voices of opposition to the slaughter policy. The following excerpt from Al- Masry Al-Youm (May 13) is an example:

وتعتزم الجمعية المصرية لأصدقاء الحيوان إرسال إنذار على يد محضر لأمين أباظة، وزير الزراعة، بسبب الاتهامات الموجهة للأجهزة البيطرية بتنفيذ عمليات دفن للخنازير وهى حية ... . وأكدت المنظمة ... منح وزير الزراعة مهلة لمدة ٣ أيام للتراجع عن القرارات المخالفة للتخلص من الخنازير أو اللجوء للمنظمة الدولية لوضع مصر على قائمة الدول التى تسىء للحيوانات .

The Egyptian Society of Animal Friends is sending a warning to Amin Abaza, Minister of Agriculture, because of charges against the veterinary authorities regarding burying pigs alive…The organization is giving a three-day time limit to the ministry to withdraw the decision of getting rid of pigs before it seeks the aid of the world organizations in an effort to blacklist Egypt as a country that abuses animals.

It is true that some articles in the sample do present the 'other' point of view advocating animal rights; however, the majority of news articles avoid the moral issue of animal protection. Pigs, similar to cattle and poultry, are viewed as naturally existing only for humans' use as a necessary food resource. Even in the few articles that promote the animal welfare point of view, writers rarely address the ecological issue of whether it is ethical to kill thousands of innocent animals in the first place. Those few articles, nevertheless, represent a challenge to the mainstream view in the news sample.

Salience is also constructed through employing sense images that appeal to the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, or touch. The animals, as part of the ecosystem, are represented through lexical choices that appeal to the senses of human beings. In this way, the linguistic features of salience enhance the beneficial interrelationship between man and the environment. This is particularly manifested in the article, خنزيريات [Pigs] (Al-Youm Al-Sabe, May 9), that has been found to foreground the pigs and make them prominent through the use of such linguistic and rhetorical patterns as activization, modifiers, sense images, and personification. Such linguistic devices construct the pig as the active agent of a series of processes, and involve the animal in a range of multisensorial images (both visual and audial).

. . . (the fat pig)ها هو الخنزير السمين

gazes at us with an astonished look (يتطلع إلينا متأملاً بنظرة لا تخلو من الدهشة)

(he was not consulted)عما وصلنا إليه من آراء وأفكار بشأنه، لم يؤخذ فيها رأيه بالطبع

looks at us smiling)فها هو الخنزير يطل علينا مبتسماً (

سوف يستحيل تعويضها حتماً... (the species of the cute pigs) سلالة الخنازير الظريفة

our naïve pigs used to)لأن أى خنازير يتم استيرادها لن تقبل بما كانت تقبله خنازيرنا الساذجة accept)

من مخلفات غذائية.. .

ولم تستطع الخنازير الاعتراض فى الوقت الملائم

(pigs were not able to complain in the suitable time)

In this extract, the pig is given an entity and personified as a living being that is capable of performing several mental processes, namely, تَقَبل. and accept يؤخذ رأيه , be consulted يطل , look يتطلع gaze. The pig is described by the writer using a range of modifiers that further personify the animal, thus portraying a profile with which the readers can sympathize: fat الخنزير الـ سمـ ين, with an astonished look بنظرة لا تخلو من الدهشة, smiling مبتسما , cute الخنازير الظريفة, and naïve خـ نازيـ رذا الـ ساذجة. This is an example of a beneficial news story that, from an ecolinguistic perspective, represents animals saliently in ways that call attention to their intrinsic value.

Salience technique can also be found in the following excerpt from the article من الذابح ومن المذبوح [Who is the Slaughterer? And who is being slaughtered?] (Al-Masry Al-Youm, May 10):

أيها الخنازير المساقة إلى ساحة الموت، لستم وحدكم الذبحاء، فمن قبل ذبحنا الطيور باسم الأنفلونزا

Oh pigs driven to the altar, you are not the only ones slaughtered. We have before slaughtered the birds in the name of influenza.

The writers of those articles seem to agree that the slaughter of pigs is inhumane. The act of the mass killing of the animals is presented as being explicitly harsh and ruthless without any modifiers or euphemistic terms that mitigate or temper the act. Thus, words like "supposed" or "so called" cruelty are absent from the reports.

Concluding Remarks

Based on the ecolinguistic analysis carried out in the present study, it can be concluded that the techniques of salience and erasure enable news writers to spread cognitive-linguistic structures which contribute to the formation of ideologies as well as justify such extreme measures as the mass killing and suffering of thousands of animals. Regarding the first research question, it has been found that such linguistic devices as passivization, nominalization, euphemism, and grammatical embedding can be manipulated by news writers to erase 'important entities' from the 'stories we live by'. On the other hand, personification, modifiers, dysphemism, and the use of material as well as mental processes have been found to promote the salience technique in discourse.

Regarding the second research question, the texts analyzed in the present study have been found to exemplify both beneficial and

destructive discourses because of the ideologies they convey. The texts which defend the government's decision to slaughter the pigs use a variety of erasure techniques. On the other hand, the texts that argue against the government's decision use the salience technique to foreground the pigs as agents in active formations and personalize them as creatures that have feelings and can suffer. In the majority of the sample articles, the language prevents the readers from visualizing and sympathizing with the animals as part of the ecosystem. The language simply erases animals as part of the environment and promotes an ecosophy whose concern is only fixed on the prosperity and wellbeing of humans disregarding the wellbeing of other species.

Through analyzing the cognitive-linguistic construction demonstrated in the salience and erasure techniques, it becomes clear that, with few exceptions, the majority of news articles in this sample present the issue of swine flu from an anthropocentric, human-centered, perspective. It is implied that animals in general, including pigs, do not possess the ability to feel, and, therefore, it is quite natural that animal suffering is totally disregarded by humans. The main linguistic devices used by writers in the sample newspaper articles erase and disregard animal perspectives by presenting a cruel issue, such as the mass slaughter of animals, only in the form of numbers and counting the 'death toll'. The animals are almost invisible in the discourse, which is chiefly more concerned with the government efforts to contain the disease without equally including the perspective of the animal welfare. Such coverage represents destructive discourse, from an ecolinguistic perspective.

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