Abstract

This thesis investigates corporate environmental discourse by focusing on the language of corporate environmental reports. It seeks to find out more about how corporations talk about environmental problems and how they position themselves in relation to these. The theoretical underpinning draws from ecocriticism, specifically ecocritical discourse analysis, which critically evaluates discourses on the environment. Environmental reports published by the company Toyota are analysed through corpus linguistic techniques which help to identify the salient concepts and then further scrutinize their textual environment to uncover the dominant discourse patterns. The analysis reveals that the aim of the reports is portray Toyota as a company which actively protects the environment, which confirms the PR nature of the reports. As a result, negative information or data are downplayed and the company distances itself from these by obliterating its role (through devices such as nominalisation, passive voice or intransitive verbs). Ecological problems as such are addressed rarely and serve more as a background for the company to improve its public image. If they occur in the reports, the link between the problems and human activity is not explicitly stated. The ecological problems are also discussed as business risk and opportunities, which confirms that the financial interest dominate the way the company addresses these issues.

Keywords: ecolinguistics, ecocritical discourse analysis, critical discourse studies, corpus linguistics, environment, ecology, corporate discourse