

Equinor's Climate Discourse in Light of the Russo-Ukrainian War and Following Energy Crisis in Europe:

A Corpus-assisted Discourse Study in Ecolinguistics

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Abstract in Norwegian

Denne masteroppgåva er ein korpusassistert diskursanalyse i økologivistikk som utforskar klimadiskursen til Equinor tilknytt ikkje-fornybar energi og berekraft. Det overordna målet med oppgåva er å oppdage om Russland sin invasjon av Ukraina i februar 2022 og den følgjande energikrisa i Europa har hatt innverknad på korleis olje og gass og generelle klimaomsyn blir framstilt av Equinor – ein av dei største energiforsynarane i Europa. Oppgåva fokuserer på korleis Equinor kommuniserer klimarelaterte budskap til det offentlege, og såleis består datamaterialet for analysen hovudsakleg av selskapet sine eigne nyhenderrapportar. For å avdekke om Equinor si eiga framstilling stemmer overeins med den offentlege oppfatninga av selskapet blir nyhendeartiklar som diskuterer Equinor brukt som samanlikningsgrunnlag. Økologivistikk dreier seg i hovudsak om å kritisere språkbruk som kan vere skadeleg for naturen og ulike økosystem. Hovudmotivasjonen bak oppgåva er difor å avdekke om den russisk-ukrainske krigen som har resultert i auka etterspurnad etter olje og gass har forårsaka ei nedprioritering av klimaomsyn hjå store energiaktørar som Equinor og hjå befolkninga elles. Dette utfallet verkar sannsynleg då krig og energimangel kan reknast som meir akutte og handfaste problemstillingar enn høge klimagassutslepp og global oppvarming.

Diskursanalyse innan korpuslingvistikk er ei tosidig tilnærming som blandar både kvantitative og kvalitative metodar. Som resultat inneheld analysen eit nokså klart bilete av kva språktendensar som er gjeldande i dei aktuelle korpora og kva dei kan fortelje oss om klimadiskursen tilknytt Equinor. Funna i analysen viser til to sentrale tendensar: (1) Equinor framstiller seg som eit grønar og meir berekraftig selskap enn det blir skildra som i offentlege nyhender, og (2) krigen mellom Russland og Ukraina ser ut til å ha minka klimaomsynet noko, særleg i Equinor sin diskurs. Desse tendensane viser med andre ord til at den aktuelle språkbruken ikkje fremmer miljøomsyn i betydeleg grad. Dette er ein viktig observasjon ettersom energisektoren tilknytt ikkje-fornybar energi – som Equinor er med å representere – er industrien med høgst mengde klimagassutslepp og difor kan seiast å ha eit spesielt ansvar ovanfor miljøet. Alt i alt kan denne oppgåva bidra med å rette fokus mot korleis store energiaktørar innan ikkje-fornybar energi posisjonerer seg i klimadebatten, og vidare mot korleis miljøomsyn blir vurdert av både energiaktørar og offentlegheita i lys av prøvande tider som utfordrar berekraftig fokus.

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List of Abbreviations

CL	—	Corpus Linguistics
DA	—	Discourse Analysis
CDA	—	Critical Discourse Analysis
CADS	—	Corpus-assisted discourse study
ADT	—	Audience Design Theory
NOW corpus	—	News on the Web corpus
KWIC	—	Keyword in context
LL	—	Log likelihood
CO ₂	—	Carbon dioxide
CCS	—	Carbon capture and storage
UNFCCC	—	the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
RUW	—	The Russo-Ukrainian War
MBRUW	—	Main corpus Before the RUW
MARUW	—	Main corpus After the RUW
RBRUW	—	Reference corpus Before the RUW
RARUW	—	Reference corpus After the RUW

1. INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a corpus-assisted discourse study (CADS) in Ecolinguistics. Generally speaking, Ecolinguistics deals with how language affects our perception of the natural world (Stibbe 2021: 1). The present study sets out to examine Equinor's discourse in relation to nonrenewable energy and sustainability before and after the Russo-Ukrainian War (RUW), and the goal of the study is to discover a potential shift in Equinor's discourse as a result of the war and following energy crisis in Europe. As the study aims to examine Equinor's communication strategies when conveying its take on nonrenewable energy to the public, the main data for analysis is the company's own news reports. Furthermore, to reveal whether there are similarities or discrepancies between Equinor's company portrayal and the public perception of the company in relation to nonrenewable energy and sustainability, Equinor's news reports will be compared to news reports about the company from the NOW (News on the Web) corpus. As the very purpose of Ecolinguistics is to critique forms of language that are harmful to the environment and support forms of language that encourage protection of the natural world (ibid.), the broader aim of the study is to uncover whether priorities regarding sustainability have been lessened in face of the RUW (see section 1.3. for elaboration) which may be considered a more tangible issue than climate change. In this introductory chapter, relevant background for the dissertation is presented. Section 1.1. deals with the current climate state in relation to energy, and section 1.2. presents Equinor as a fossil fuel company. Thereafter, section 1.3. briefly explains the RUW and the following effects on European markets. Section 1.4. looks at existing research gaps, and section 1.5. explains the present study.

1.1. Climate change, the energy transition, and the role of fossil fuel companies

Climate change is widely accepted as the defining crisis of our time. Put simply, the natural world is experiencing rapid changes in temperature and weather which pose a threat to several ecosystems, species, and human civilizations. Based on scientific research analyzing the concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere over time, we know that it is highly likely that rising temperatures are caused by human influence through industrial activity (Fischlin 2017: 3-4). The fossil fuel sector has a significant responsibility in climate change

as it is the industry with the highest CO₂ emissions (EPA 2023). Fossil fuels are made from decomposing plants and animals that have been reserved in the Earth's crust, and they are nonrenewable energy sources as stored carbon and hydrogen is released into the atmosphere when they are burned for energy (National Geographic Society 2022). Although the fossil fuel sector's negative impacts on the natural world are undeniable, the share of fossil fuels in global energy demand is still about 80% (Johnsson, Kjärstad & Rootzén 2019: 259). However, recent years have seen heightened efforts in lowering emissions, and the most suitable event to demonstrate the global commitment to preventing climate change is the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (the Paris Agreement) from 2015 (UNFCCC). This is an international treaty with the overarching goal of limiting the global temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. To prevent this temperature increase, greenhouse gas emissions must be cut to as close to zero as possible by 2050 (United Nations). This means that an energy transition is needed; nonrenewable energy sources must either be replaced by renewable ones or made environmentally friendly through new solutions in order to prevent greenhouse gases being released into the atmosphere. Thus, the energy transition naturally puts pressure on the fossil fuel sector.

According to Boykoff, climate change has become “a defining symbol of our collective relationship with the environment” (2011: 1). Not only has scientific research and governmental policies directed attention towards climate change, but there is also social activism dedicated to protecting the natural world. The societal involvement in preventing climate change puts pressure on fossil fuel companies through ‘corporate social responsibility’ (CSR). CSR refers to “the general belief held by many that modern businesses have a responsibility to society that extends beyond stockholders or investors in the firm” (SAGE Publications 2012: 2). This includes a responsibility to the community at large as well as the natural environment. In other words, society pressures corporations to act in compliance with what is considered ethical, and fossil fuel companies especially need to demonstrate environmental concern. As Fernández-Vázquez argues, it is necessary for fossil fuel companies to “build a persuasive and well-articulated corporate social responsibility (CSR) discourse on climate change and the environment” as they need to appeal to customers and stakeholders whilst being considered the main contributor to climate change (2021: 2693). Some corporations legitimately promote their engagement in activities which protect the environment, but some also engage in the well-known phenomenon ‘greenwashing.’ This refers to the act of “concealing environmentally harmful actions with the rhetoric of environmental friendliness to entice and manipulate the consumer” (Plec & Pettenger 2012: 464). Overall, in light of climate change policies and the

increasing societal pressure to reduce emissions, fossil fuel companies find themselves in a difficult spot. This makes it particularly interesting to examine a large fossil fuel company's discourse related to nonrenewable energy and sustainability in order to establish what communicative strategies are being used to convey its engagements.

1.2. Equinor: the largest supplier of energy to Europe

Equinor ASA is a Norwegian energy company headquartered in Stavanger, Norway. It is mainly a petroleum company, and it is responsible for about 70% of all Norwegian oil and gas production. Equinor was founded in 1972 shortly after the oil discoveries on Norwegian territory in the North Sea, and the Norwegian state owns 67% of the company. Today, it has 22,000 employees in about 30 countries (Equinor Annual Report 2022). In 2018, the company changed its name from Statoil to Equinor in order to represent a new energy future not completely dependent on oil (Equinor). In its own words, Equinor is “the largest supplier of energy to Europe, a world-leading offshore operator, the largest oil and gas operator in Norway, and an international pioneer in renewables and low-carbon solutions” (Equinor Annual Report 2022: 14). From this description, it is clear that Equinor plays a vital role in the international energy market. Furthermore, the need for an energy transition is acknowledged, and the company expresses dedication in this area. Norway is committed to the Paris Agreement, and the reduction of greenhouse emissions is placed high on the political agenda (Dahl & Fløttum 2019a: 2). This increased pressure to transition into a low-carbon future is seemingly something Equinor takes seriously. The company states that it supports the Paris Agreement and “aim[s] to become a net-zero company by 2050” (Equinor Annual Report 2022: 14). Although Equinor is expanding its renewable energy projects and is investing in technological solutions that aim to lower emissions, many changes are needed in order for the net zero goal to become a reality. According to Greenpeace, who analyzed the production numbers in Equinor's last quarterly report of 2022 based on the conversion factors presented by the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate, only 0,13% of Equinor's energy production was renewable (Greenpeace 2023). In other words, over 99% of Equinor's energy production comes from nonrenewable sources.

1.3. The Russo-Ukrainian War and the invasion of Ukraine

At the time of writing, the RUW is an ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine which started in 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea. However, in this thesis, the RUW refers to what

may be considered the peak of the war thus far: the Russian invasion of Ukraine which was initiated on February 24th, 2022. Yet, I consider it appropriate to mention the war as a whole in order to place emphasis on the fact that the invasion is a part of a much larger conflict that continues into the unforeseeable future. To serve the purpose of the study, a point in time had to be selected in order to uncover a potential discursive shift as a result of the event. The data selection will be elaborated on further in section 3.2. Essentially, the selection fell on the date of the invasion as this was when the conflict escalated.

As a response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, heavy and wide-ranging financial sanctions have been placed on Russia by the international community in order to target oligarchs and Russian officials linked to Putin's regime (Korosteleva 2022: 1678). A part of the sanctions has been to reduce Russia's export of oil, the government's largest source of revenue. Russia, as the largest provider of gas in Europe, has responded with rationing gas supplies in order to affect the EU market (ibid.). Thus, it is apparent that the conflict has affected the European energy market, and the prices for oil and gas have skyrocketed as a result of the conflict. Moreover, the war has posed a threat to global food and energy security, caused rising inflation across Europe, and disturbed supply chains (ibid.). The heightened conflict has caused, and is continuing to cause, disruption in especially European nations. The wide-ranging consequences of the war, affecting the everyday lives of people across Europe, demonstrate its influencing power.

As the largest provider of energy to Europe and the largest provider of natural gas in Europe after Russia, Equinor has naturally been affected by the RUW and its aftermath. Likely referring to the ongoing conflict, Equinor states the following: "Today, in an increasingly unpredictable world, our deliveries of oil, gas and wind power provide a vital and stabilising contribution to Europe's energy security, both in the short and long term" (Equinor Annual report 2022: 14). This quote is fit to illustrate how the RUW has caused an increased demand for fossil fuel energy, and a need for secure energy deliveries. However, this development is seemingly contradictory with the climate goals of the Paris Agreement. As discussed in section 1.1., the production of nonrenewable energy needs to decrease significantly in order to prevent climate change. Furthermore, the increased oil and gas prices as a result of the RUW caused Equinor to have the most financially successful year in the company's history in 2022 (Equinor Annual report 2022). Overall, the RUW has affected the energy market to the extent that it is reasonable to suspect that it may have influenced the discourse surrounding Equinor.

1.4. Research gaps

1.4.1. Corporate climate discourse and Equinor's discursive tendencies

There are studies from recent years that examine the corporate discourse of major fossil fuel companies in order to establish how they position themselves in relation to nonrenewable energy and climate change. As several studies (e.g. Jaworska 2018; O'Connor & Gronewold 2012) point out, businesses are increasingly expected to place environmental issues on their agenda as a response to the evidence of man-made impacts on climate change and ecological demise, and as discussed in section 1.1., this demand is a part of the CSR concept. Most fossil fuel companies include this focus in their environmental and annual reports, and these documents have typically made up the data of previous studies. Jaworska (2018) found that there has been a shift from the mid-2000s to the early 2010s in how major oil companies discursively have constructed climate change in their environmental reports; whereas earlier it was considered a phenomenon that could be done something about, in more recent years, it has been portrayed as an unpredictable agent.

This trend of fossil fuel companies gradually distancing themselves from taking responsibility of the negative impacts they have on the environment has also been observed in studies including Equinor. Dahl & Fløttum (2019a) investigates how the fossil fuel companies Total and Equinor represent the energy transition through corporate communication. In conclusion, they found that the companies have a strong focus on the profit dimension and a more modest focus on environmental considerations, potentially to serve the interests of shareholders and potential investors (2019a: 12-13). Furthermore, in another 2019 study by Dahl & Fløttum where they conduct a discourse analysis of three climate reports from the energy sector, it is found that Equinor has a tendency to portray climate change as a business opportunity (2019b: 14). In an independent 2021 study, Dahl also finds that the sustainability reports of several major fossil fuel companies (including Equinor) “share a basic climate narrative, representing a techno-optimistic approach to maintaining a profitable business in a carbon-constrained society, with gas representing a narrative Complication as well as a Resolution” (2021: 1). Furthermore, the companies acknowledge a “villain” role for being responsible for emissions, but they put more emphasis on a “hero” role that comes with providing energy and meeting a societal need (ibid.). Overall, the existing research on corporate climate discourse, and specifically of Equinor's climate discourse, demonstrates a business

focus rather than an environmental focus. However, the research is based on annual and sustainability reports, and documents like these have shareholders and potential investors as their main audience (Dahl & Fløttum (2019a: 13). This may promote a mainly financial focus. Thus, there is a research gap concerning examining Equinor's discourse surrounding nonrenewable energy and sustainability in other communication channels.

1.4.2. Public climate discourse surrounding fossil fuel companies

There are also several studies that investigate climate change in news discourse (e.g. Nerlich, Forsyth & Clarke 2012; Boykoff & Luedecke 2016). To my knowledge, however, no studies are recent enough to have examined the possible impacts of the RUW, and no studies focus primarily on the climate discourse surrounding fossil fuel companies. Addressing this research gap would mean gaining a clearer image of what the public is expecting from the fossil fuel sector in light of more pressing events that may steal priority from sustainability. The importance of examining the climate discourse surrounding fossil fuel companies in newspapers, I argue, is rooted in how the news control the societal narrative surrounding the climate crisis. Essentially, the news decide to what extent corporations should be held accountable for their environmental impacts. As Bell & Smith state, “the influence of the media in reflecting, constructing and expressing culture, politics and social life should not be underestimated. We are surrounded by media – it informs us, it is a window on the world” (2007: 85). From an ecolinguistic perspective, the news media plays a critical role in forming the public perception of climate change and environmental issues, and it also effects what level of concern is directed towards the environment (Boykoff & Luedecke 2016). Furthermore, being considered the fourth power in society next to the legislative, judicial, and executive branches, the media undoubtedly has the ability to affect laws and legislations that affect the environment.

1.4.3. New angle

There are mainly three aspects of the present study that offer new angles in examining climate discourse surrounding fossil fuel companies: (1) examining discourse from news channels as the communicative platform, (2) comparing the company portrayal with the public portrayal regarding its engagements in sustainability and nonrenewable energy, and (3) uncovering

whether a pressing and relevant event such as the RUW affects priorities regarding sustainability. Considering that Equinor's climate discourse mainly has been examined in annual and sustainability reports, studying the discourse in the company's own news reports will provide a new angle and a more thorough image of the company portrayal in relation to nonrenewable energy and sustainability. As Fernández-Vázquez points out, webpages are one of the most important tools for companies to reach larger audiences when it comes to communicating their CSR in relation to sustainability efforts. Other channels, e.g. corporate reports, tend to have more specialized audiences such as shareholders and investors (2021: 2693). The general trend in Equinor's recent climate discourse seems to be that the company is distancing itself from taking responsibility for climate change, and there is placed more on the financial focus than the environmental focus. Although Equinor's news channel is only a small part of the company website, this communication channel will offer a new perspective on the linguistic trends related to nonrenewable energy and sustainability. Furthermore, comparing this discourse to the climate discourse surrounding the company in newspapers allows for a unique and relevant comparison: Is there a correlation between Equinor's company portrayal and the public portrayal of the company in light of the climate crisis and the effects of the RUW?

1.5. The study

1.5.1. Motivation, broader aim, and research questions

Ecolinguistics is mainly concerned with identifying and critiquing language which promotes the exploitation or damage of the natural world (Fill 2018: 1). Fossil fuel companies are in a powerful position over the environment as the industrial sector with the highest emissions. Thus, they have an important role to play in reaching the climate goals of the Paris Agreement as it is universally acknowledged that emissions of greenhouse gases must be lowered. In the energy transition, it is therefore clear that nonrenewable energy sources must either be replaced by renewable ones or made environmentally friendly through new solutions. This premise is accepted by Equinor – the largest provider of energy to Europe. However, the company has had a tendency of distancing itself from environmental responsibility in previous climate discourse, and over 99% of its energy production still comes from nonrenewable sources. This makes it interesting to investigate how nonrenewable energy and its effects on the environment is

portrayed by the company. Even more interesting is investigating Equinor's climate discourse in light of the RUW as the war has strongly affected the European energy market and created an increased demand for oil and gas. The motivation behind the present study is thus rooted in examining if Equinor, as a leading European energy company in nonrenewables, takes advantage of the crisis to promote own interests in a challenging time. The broader aim of the study is to uncover whether pressing event such as the RUW has the ability to shift priorities regarding sustainability, both in the fossil fuel sector which stands to gain profit from it, and in the public opinion as the RUW may be considered a more tangible issue than climate change.

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How does Equinor – mainly an oil and gas company – communicate its nonrenewable energy projects to the public, and is there a difference between the discourse surrounding nonrenewable energy before and after the RUW? If so, why?
2. Has the RUW and the following energy crisis in Europe affected Equinor's portrayed attitudes towards becoming a more renewable energy company? If so, how?
3. Are there similarities or discrepancies between Equinor's company portrayal and how it is portrayed in public discourse in relation to nonrenewable energy and sustainability in light of the RUW?

1.5.2. A comparative corpus study: main corpora and reference corpora

This dissertation is a CADS, and that means that the data which will be analyzed in order to answer the research questions is gathered in different corpora. Corpus Linguistics (CL) is essentially the computer-aided study of digital text collections, and corpus software apply various tools for quantitative analysis that reveal relevant language patterns in a corpus (Hardie & McEnery 2011). Furthermore, Discourse Analysis (DA) is the qualitative approach which will be applied to specific language extractions in the corpus in order to understand the language patterns in a greater context (Bell & Smith 2007: 79). I will elaborate further on CL in section 2.2. and DA in section 2.3., and the specific corpora in section 3.2. However, the main constitution of the study will be explained here to present a necessary overview of the thesis.

Because the present study sets out to do several comparisons, different corpora are needed. The main focus is naturally on Equinor's discourse in relation to nonrenewable energy, and therefore Equinor's news reports make up the *main* corpora. The main corpora consists of

two different corpora – one corpus containing Equinor’s news reports six months before the RUW: MBRUW (Main corpus Before the RUW), and one corpus containing Equinor’s news reports six months after the RUW: MARUW (Main corpus After the RUW). Furthermore, in order to uncover potential similarities or discrepancies between Equinor’s company portrayal and how it is portrayed in public discourse, corpora for comparison are needed. These corpora are gathered from the NOW corpus, and they contain public newspapers that discuss Equinor. I choose to call these the *reference* corpora. With similar divisions as the main corpora, one corpus contains news articles six months before the RUW: RBRUW (Reference corpus Before the RUW), and one corpus contains news articles six months after the RUW: RARUW (Reference corpus After the RUW). Overall, four different corpora will be analyzed in the study in order to gather the necessary information to answer the research questions.

It is important to note that the term ‘reference corpus’ has a slightly different meaning in this dissertation than it generally does in CL. Normally, a reference corpus primarily describes a corpus that “is not a sample of any particular language variety, domain or text type, but is instead an attempt to represent the general nature of the language through a wide-sampling corpus design” (Baker et al. 2006: 138; in Gillings 2022: 594). In this study, however, I refer to it as a reference corpus as it provides a point of reference for understanding whether Equinor’s company portrayal is in accordance with its public portrayal or not. The purpose of a reference corpus is to represent a type of language standard that the target (main) corpus can be compared with (Anthony 2022: 109), and that is why I consider it appropriate terminology.

1.5.3. Thesis structure

Overall, the dissertation has six chapters as well as a section for references and an appendix. Chapter 2 includes a literature review and presents the theoretical background for the dissertation, and chapter 3 presents an overview over the methodology, data, and research design of the present study. Chapter 4 presents the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the corpora and thus the results of the dissertation. The main findings lead to a discussion in chapter 5 where the results are considered in a greater theoretical context. Finally, chapter 6 offers the conclusion by answering the research questions and looking at the thesis from a bigger perspective.

2. THEORY

In this chapter, relevant theoretical background for the dissertation will be presented. Section 2.1. looks at Ecolinguistics and how discourse about the natural world affects our perception of the environment. Section 2.2. presents Corpus Linguistics (CL) as a central field and methodology within linguistics. Thereafter, section 2.3. deals with Discourse Analysis (DA) and how it applies to Ecolinguistics as well as how DA and CL are connected. As the source of data for the study is news articles, section 2.4. explains news media as public discourse. Then, section 2.5. introduces Audience Design Theory (ADT), and section 2.6. presents the public opinion on the climate crisis. Finally, section 2.7. summarizes the theory chapter.

2.1. Ecolinguistics

2.1.1. Background: the power of language

The core of Ecolinguistics is the notion that language, as our main communicative platform, has the power to shape how we think about and act towards the environment (Fill 2018: 2). When thinking of studying ecology, the natural sciences tend to come to mind as they deal with the biological and chemical components which make up our natural surroundings. Yet, there has been an increased ecological consciousness within the humanities, and Ecolinguistics is a field which combines ecology and language. Fill explains that ecology and language are connected because “how humans treat each other and the natural world is influenced by our thoughts, concepts, ideas, ideologies and worldviews, and these in turn are shaped through language” (2018: 2). Stibbe claims something similar. He defines ecology as “*interaction among humans, other organisms and the physical environment*” (2018: 9), and he states that language should be a part of ecology because it is the primary tool for human interaction. As humans, we are a part of the natural world, but we also hold power over it as we make decisions with our conscious minds that have huge impacts on different ecosystems. Language and communication are in the center of this power, and that is the fundamental understanding which lays the ground for Ecolinguistics. Because “how we think has an influence on how we act,” language may “inspire us to destroy or protect the ecosystems that life depends on” (Stibbe 2021: 1). Furthermore, Fill explains that Ecolinguistics essentially is about “critiquing forms of language that contribute to ecological destruction,” and “aiding in the search of new forms of

language that inspire people to protect the natural world” (2018: 1). This means that Ecolinguistics is not neutral when it comes to values and intent, but that it sets out to either attack or support certain language uses based on how that language influences our perception of the environment.

Ecolinguistics has been used as a term and acknowledged within its own right since the 1990s (Fill & Mühlhäusler 2001: 1; in Stibbe 2021: 8), but Arran Stibbe’s founding of The International Ecolinguistics Association in 2004 was the true starting point for how we know Ecolinguistics today. Even so, the historical origin goes back further. After ‘ecology’ became an acknowledged term in the 1960’s, Ecolinguistics has increasingly become an established field within the language sciences in the western world (Fill 2018: 1). Commonly referred to as ‘the founding father’ of language ecology, Einar Haugen was the first to suggest an interdisciplinary approach between language and ecology in his 1971 paper “The ecology of language” (Eliasson 2015: 78). However, ecology made its way into language and vice versa at an earlier time, particularly through publications about the interactions between humans and nature. From an ecolinguistic perspective – focusing on language promoting protection of the natural world – literature concerning criticisms on anthropocentrism is especially relevant. Kuper (2014: 267) defines anthropocentrism as a human-centered point of view which regards humankind as superior in existence, disregards nature’s intrinsic value, and promotes “the exploitation and commercialization of the natural environment” (ibid.). Furthermore, she mentions *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau (1854), *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold (1949), and *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson (1962) as ground-breaking literary works on how industrialization and capitalism (especially within the American context) has led to environmental harm (ibid.). Overall, narratives about how we exist in relation to a larger ecosystem create awareness and reflection surrounding our position in the natural world.

How language has the power to create stories about ecology that can inspire action is something Stibbe elaborates on in his book: *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology, and the Stories We Live By* (2021). By ‘the stories we live by,’ Stibbe refers to “mental models which influence behaviour and lie at the heart of the ecological challenges we are facing” (2021: 1). These stories manifest themselves linguistically in what he divides into nine different cognitive forms; these include ideology, framing, metaphors, evaluation, identity, conviction, erasure, salience, and narrative (Stibbe 2021: 17). Each cognitive form will appear in texts in a certain characteristic way. For example, *ideology* is a group’s collective idea of what the world is or should be like, and it tends to manifest itself through discourse with “clusters of linguistic features characteristically used by the group” (ibid.). In ecology, an ideology could for instance

be the belief that as much of our energy as possible should come from renewable sources, and typical linguistic features used by the group sharing this belief could be pro-hydro power discourse. On a more general level, Stibbe refers to what Kortén (2006) describes as four central stories within western civilization that causes alienation from – and thereby harm to – the ecosystems around us. These stories are the *prosperity story* which “promotes worship of material acquisition and money,” the *biblical story* which “focuses on the afterlife rather than the world around us,” the *security story* which “builds up the military and police to protect relationships of domination,” and the *secular meaning story* which “reduces life to matter and mechanism” (248; Stibbe 2021: 3). Overall, many of the popular narratives that exist in western society promote an anthropocentric mindset, and the stories we live by tend to revolve around our own individual lives as separate from the world around us. Essentially, these different types of mental models, which are shaped through language, affect our perception of the world and how we feel entitled to act towards it.

2.1.2. Relevance: the role of Ecolinguistics

While the emergence of Ecolinguistics occurred due to the acknowledgement that language has a vital part to play in the human treatment of the natural world, we need to examine how the field actually positions itself in practical terms. The role and function of Ecolinguistics may be considered somewhat unclear due to the fact that it emerged from already established fields. Although there is agreement regarding that Ecolinguistics is concerned with the relationship between ecology and language, Huang, Li & Steffensen point out two main challenges that need to be faced in order to clarify the nature of the field: (1) figuring out the relationship between ecology and language as there are different understandings of the concept of language and because ecology is an obscure term which can be hard to define, and (2) deciding what is the aim and mission of Ecolinguistics (2020: 2). In general, the research aim, research object and methodology in Ecolinguistics can be hard to pinpoint exactly. Previous studies have had a tendency of positioning and defining Ecolinguistics based on already existing studies on ecology and language, not considering that those studies may have had widely different interpretations of the two terms. Moreover, various scholars have different opinions on how Ecolinguistics should exist as a discipline. Different classifications include: a “branch of applied linguistics,” a “paradigm,” a “platform,” an “alternative to linguistics,” or even an “independent study (or science)” (Huang et al. 2020: 3).

Although there are some unclarities regarding the nature and direction of Ecolinguistics, the general purpose of the field seems to have a strong enough position. Stibbe points out that there occurred an ‘ecological turn’ in the humanities and social science subjects as a result of an increased awareness regarding how “the ecological embedding of humans and human societies has risen to the level of urgent and immediate concern”; no longer is each object of study examined individually, but rather seen as an inseparable part of “a larger physical and living world” (2021: 7). This means that while the natural sciences traditionally dealt with ecology, the image has turned so complex with the extent of our human involvement in the environment that there are aspects of ecology that not only can, but should be studied from other perspectives. Through the ecological turn, the humanities have been given a role in addressing some of the ecological challenges we are facing – chemical contamination, climate change, drought and water depletion, energy security, etc. – as well as addressing social injustices that may be the cause or effect of these issues (ibid.). For Ecolinguistics specifically, addressing these issues boils down to examining the language surrounding them. As mentioned, criticism on anthropocentrism is central in Ecolinguistics. Fill argues that our language *inherently* is anthropocentric and “describes nature from the point of view of its use for humans” (2018: 438). Therefore, a central task for Ecolinguistics is to create awareness around human-centered views and overcoming them by using “physiocentric” and “biocentric” language; Ecolinguistics should teach different methods of doing this, and potentially find further methods for overcoming linguistic anthropocentrism (ibid.). Thus, Ecolinguistics’ role in addressing ecological challenges is creating awareness on how they are communicated, dismantling the anthropocentric narrative which promotes man’s exploitation of nature, and offering new perspectives for language use regarding the natural world.

How Ecolinguistics positions itself is demonstrated through studies which have been carried out in the field. Traditionally, Ecolinguistics has focused on the negative impacts of language use in relation to ecology and sustainability (Fill 2018: 165). The first work credited for underlining the influence language has on ecological issues was Halliday’s speech at the AILA World Congresses in 1990. The speech focused on how the grammar in our native language limits our worldview and prohibits us from perceiving the Earth as a living entity, for example through how grammar tends to limit a being that is having a sensory experience or thinking something to be either human or animal (Fill 2018: 165). This takes what Fill identifies as the ‘Whorfian approach’ – the belief that the grammar of our language inhibits us from perceiving humans as a part of the natural world; this belief is heavily based on Sapir and Whorf’s (1949) hypothesis of linguistic relativity (2018: 166). Although several studies (e.g.

Goatly 1996; Chawla 2001) have examined features in grammar as barriers to humans having an ecological worldview, other ecolinguistic studies have focused on the discursive portrayal of environmental issues. Especially relevant for the dissertation, and as mentioned in section 1.4., is the discursive analysis of corporate climate discourse. Recent studies (e.g. Dahl & Fløttum 2017; Jaworska 2018; Dahl & Fløttum 2019a) investigate how fossil fuel companies deal with environmental issues from a business perspective, and the general trend seems to be that companies are gradually distancing themselves from taking responsibility for climate change. Overall, whether ecolinguistic studies examine specific language structures or language use in a greater social context, they all set out to uncover how language affects our relationship with the natural world.

2.2. Corpus Linguistics

The present study is corpus-based research as the data is gathered from digital text collections and examined in language analysis software. This places us in the linguistic branch and methodology of Corpus Linguistics (CL). Here, relevant background on CL and what its functions are within linguistic research is presented. However, the methodology aspect and the actual procedures of this approach will be discussed further in chapter 3.

2.2.1. Background and defining the term

CL is the computer-aided study of language data, often on a large scale, and it analyzes the language in extensive collections of written texts or transcribed utterances that are available digitally (Hardie & McEnery 2011). Thus, a ‘corpus’ is the set of digital texts being analyzed. Historically, using electronic corpora started around 1960. The field of CL has developed alongside the advancement of computers since, and it grew significantly from the 2000s (Lindquist 2009: 1). The main reason for using a corpus in language research, Reppen explains, is based on how it “can serve as a useful tool for discovering many aspects of language use that may otherwise go unnoticed” (2018: 13). This is because computer software enables large-scale analysis capable of revealing language patterns and trends. It would be difficult for human analysts to read, search, and manipulate the data of text collections containing thousands, or even millions, of words (Hardie & McEnery 2011: 2). In general, CL involves the study of ‘real life’ language use (McEnery & Wilson 2001), and this is done by examining authentic language

in its natural contexts. Authentic language can be understood as the words that occur naturally in particular situations and contexts, and that are not produced for the purpose of being analyzed. Different corpora are thus text collections of various forms of language that can be found all around us.

2.2.2. CL: a branch or methodology in linguistics?

CL is not a branch of linguistics in the same sense as, for example, sociolinguistics, semantics, or syntax. Unlike the mentioned disciplines, CL does not study any particular aspect of language or explain various language phenomena. Rather, it focuses on “a set of procedures, or methods, for studying language” (Hardie & McEnery 2011: 1). Furthermore, ‘corpus’ does not tell us what is being studied, but rather in what way something is studied (Lindquist 2009: 1). By most linguists, CL is therefore considered a methodology. However, CL is not unanimously characterized as purely a methodology, and there are several reasons for this. Firstly, when something is considered a methodology, it normally interprets its finding within some established theory. This lacks in CL as its approach to interpreting data may vary on the basis of what language patterns or trends the researcher is looking for; Therefore, the theories used to interpret the findings will also vary (Gries 2009: 1225-1226). Because we can differentiate between how studying the language is approached, CL can be considered an area of, or a series of areas of, linguistics (McEnery & Wilson 2001: 2). Secondly, although it tells us more about the methodology than the object of research, CL is associated with a certain understanding of, or outlook on, language. At the center of this outlook is the notion that “the rules of language are usage-based,” and that “changes occur when speakers use language to communicate with each other” (Lindquist 2009: 1). This is connected to corpora representing authentic language, and the whole point of CL is to examine the reality of particular language uses. Thus, it is not purely a methodological tool, but it also represents a belief and a purpose. Lastly, some linguists go so far as to classify CL as a completely original field, and it has even been characterized as a “new philosophical approach” (Leech 1992: 106; in Gries 2009: 1225). This characterization originates from how it is the first linguistic approach to enable large-scale analysis of authentic language use, and therefore that it has an unique ability to identify language realities.

2.2.3. Ecolinguistics from a corpus-based approach

The application of CL in Ecolinguistic studies is relatively new compared to in other disciplines. This is connected to how Ecolinguistics, as discussed in section 2.1.2., is a young research area. Thus, there is a lot of undiscovered territory in the examination of large-scale language patterns in relation to ecology and sustainability, and this makes the present study of Equinor's climate discourse a perhaps more significant contribution to ecolinguistic CL research. However, ecolinguistic corpus studies have become increasingly popular in the last decades. One early study combining Ecolinguistics and CL is "Ecological commitment in business: A computer-corpus-based critical discourse analysis" (Alexander 1999). In this study, Alexander (1999: 14) examines several businesses' texts which are concerned with how businesses confront environmental issues. This illustrates how corporate language in regard to climate already was considered relevant early on in the emergences of both fields. Reiner & Ramesh's 2010 study, "The Discourse of Climate Change: A Corpus-based Approach," examines how the issue of climate change is framed differently in the US, the UK, France, and Germany. They discover, among other things, that climate change is an issue seen as far more important in Germany and France than in the US and the UK, and they draw this conclusion from the proportion of number of words and articles surrounding climate change (2010: 143). In "Nonhuman animals and the relative pronoun 'who' in English learner's dictionaries and graded readers," Brown (2022: 15) finds that the pronoun 'who' is generally not associated with nonhuman animals and explains how linguistic features and trends like these may participate in distancing humans from other animals and the larger ecosystem (2022: 15). All of these studies demonstrate how different language phenomena can be studied through corpus-based approaches and reveal certain truths about how language affects our perception of the environment.

2.3. Discourse Analysis

When using a corpus-based approach to analyze language, the corpus software will leave the researcher with linguistic patterns in a corpus. However, these language phenomena will not make sense unless they are examined in a greater context, and that is why it is common to combine CL with Discourse Analysis (DA). DA is a qualitative and interpretive approach and research method for studying written language in a given social context. The general understanding of the approach is presented here, but the relevant methodological procedures in the present study will be further discussed in chapter 3.

2.3.1. What is DA?

Contemporary DA has been practiced since the 1970s, and Michael Foucault is considered one of the key theorists behind this approach. However, grasping his exact take on the term is challenging because “his elliptical style of writing often avoids explicit formulation,” and because “his view of discourse is more diffuse than linguistic approaches” (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine 2017: 110). In general, DA is not considered a straightforward concept as only the more vague and general definitions have the ability to unite the various disciplines, methodologies, and researchers connected to it (Zienkowski 2011: 1). Thus, ‘discourse’ is a hard term to define on a large scale, but it has a quite straightforward definition in linguistics. It comes down to two interconnected meanings at its core: “(i) stretches of language larger than single sentences and (ii) language embedded in social contexts and used to perform social functions” (Mautner 2018: 251). The analysis aspect of this entails examining *how* language functions within its context. Brown & Yule underline that DA is “the analysis of language in use,” and they claim that a discourse analyst is “committed to an investigation of what that language is used for” (1983: 1). Thus, DA is an approach used to establish the purpose of the language in use.

Considering how DA has developed and established itself in practice, it is most fitting to view it as not a single practice, but a range of approaches where the common factor is the qualitative methodological analysis of language use (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine 2017: 110). The reasoning behind examining language qualitatively is that this approach enables “the deconstruction of language to reveal nuances and shades of meaning” that you would not be able to extract from a purely quantitative approach (Bell & Smith 2007: 79). Considering that DA is qualitative methodology, it means that the researcher’s interpretation and general involvement in the analysis is unavoidable. However, to ensure the most valid results, the researcher should lean on previous findings and theories, and they must be aware of their own potential bias (Bell & Smith 2007: 84). Furthermore, Brown & Yule classify two main language functions for analysis: transactional and interactional. Transactional language is when a language’s function is expressing content and information, and interactional language is when a language’s function is related to “expressing social relations and personal attitudes” (1983: 1). In this thesis, transactional language use will be examined as I am analyzing information both given from and surrounding Equinor. Because it is a large company conveying messages to the public, its language use may not be considered interactional.

2.3.2. Corpus-assisted discourse studies

CL and discourse studies both evolved in the 1980s and 1990s, but there were few connections between the two fields initially. Traditionally, CL focused on “lexicography and grammar, aiming to discover and quantify patterns in ever-larger corpora” (Mautner 2018: 250). Discourse studies, on the other hand, focused on “small samples of text which were suitable for close reading, ‘thick’ description, and qualitative analysis sensitive to social context” (ibid.). Today, a new field combining the two approaches has emerged: ‘corpus-assisted discourse studies’ (CADS). The main goal of CADS is thus to combine the quantitative data of CL with the social perspective of DA (Marchi and Taylor, 2018; in Mautner 2018: 253). This is a golden combination. Corpora provide authentic language in given social contexts, and these contexts can be examined further by DA. As a result, the researcher is left with a pretty clear image of what language is being used and why. Duguid, Partington & Taylor describe CADS as a subset of CL and define it in the following manner: “that set of studies into the form and/or function of language as *communicative discourse* which incorporate the use of computerised corpora in their analyses” (2013: 10). Thus, it is clear that when a researcher is using CADS, it is the actual discourse and the communicative purpose of the language that is under investigation; CL is mainly a tool to provide and process suitable data for more detailed examination. CADS started in the 1990s, and Fallon & Leech’s “Computer corpora – What do they tell us about culture?” from 1992 was arguably the first study of this kind. Ever since, CADS has become a fairly common approach in different linguistic areas.

2.3.3. CADS in Ecolinguistics

CADS in Ecolinguistics enable a thorough view into how language is used to represent different environmental aspects. In general, when using DA in a research project, Mautner explains that the driving force is “curiosity about how language and social reality are related” (2018: 251). From the ecolinguistic perspective on applying DA to CL data, this social reality concerns what language patterns are fit to tell us about various ecological aspects. Several CADS have been carried out in Ecolinguistics that may inspire approaches in the present study. In “The divergent discourses of activists and politicians in the climate change debate: An ecolinguistic corpus analysis,” Cunningham, Foxcroft & Sauntson (2022) find that climate activists focus on the negative effects of climate change connected to human behavior. Politicians, on the other hand, mainly discuss climate change in relation to non-human actors. This discovery was made

through the analysis of keyword and concordances of two different self-compiled corpora containing transcribed speeches and spoken discourse from the two groups. In Huang & Liu's "'Climate change' vs. 'global warming': A corpus-assisted discourse analysis of two popular terms in *The New York Times*" (2022), it is found that representations of global warming tend to be more scientific while representations of climate change tend to be more politicized. This discovery was made through examining the contexts surrounding the occurrences of both terms in news articles. Both of these studies are great examples of how CADS in Ecolinguistics enable the researcher to examine the occurrences of ecological language trends within a corpus in a greater societal perspective.

As presented in section 1.4.1., several studies have examined fossil fuel companies' discourse related to climate change and sustainability. Many of these were ecolinguistic CADS as they combined quantitative data from CL with DA. In "Climate change as a corporate strategy issue: A discourse analysis of three climate reports from the energy sector," Dahl & Fløttum (2019a) find that the different fossil fuel companies Equinor, Suncor, and Total portray climate change as, respectively, a business opportunity, a business risk, and a business responsibility. AntConc was used as the corpus software for processing the three climate reports, providing several quantitative findings of the most frequently used content words. Thereafter, a qualitative DA of concordances containing the content words was conducted to understand them in a greater context (Dahl & Fløttum 2019a: 7). In Dahl's 2021 study, "Global Villain, but Local Hero? A Linguistic Analysis of Climate Narratives from the Fossil Fuel Sector," she concludes with the fact that although the fossil fuel companies in question acknowledge their "villain" role, they also promote a "hero" role. This is revealed by looking at frequency lists of content words in AntConc, and by examining relevant words and phrases in a greater context. For example, Dahl states that the company BP is promoting a hero role through the sentence "We believe we are uniquely placed to lead in advancing the energy transition..." because of the positive phrases "*uniquely placed to lead*" and "*advancing the energy transition*" (2021: 10). These two ecolinguistic CADS exemplify how applying DA to frequency data enables a more thorough understanding of why language patterns look the way they do, and of what purposes they serve.

2.4. News media and DA of news

Because the corpora in the dissertation are compiled from news reports, this section will briefly refer to news media's communicative role in society and why DA is a fitting approach when

examining language use in news. However, only a limited portion of theoretical frameworks are presented here to place the study in a fitting context. Moreover, ‘news media’ can generally include many different types of platforms (newspapers, television broadcasts, radio shows, etc.), but written news reports are in focus here as this is the relevant platform for the study.

2.4.1. News media as public discourse

News is generally understood as information about recent events; it is through news people tend to learn about what is happening in the world. Because news is the communication channel reaching people in general, Van Dijk states that “news should be studied primarily as a form of public discourse” (2013: vii). Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries defines ‘the public’ as *ordinary people in society in general*. Thus, when news media is referred to as public discourse, it can be understood as the ongoing conversation in society as a whole. In addition to being an information channel, the news can be seen as a response to general attitudes and beliefs in society. As mentioned in section 1.4.2., media reflects, constructs, and expresses culture, and its role in politics and social life should not be underestimated. Media surrounds us with information, and it can therefore be understood as the window between the individual and the world (Bell & Smith 2007: 85). Thus, news media both informs the public and expresses the public opinion. As Fowler explains, language has a cognitive role because it provides “an organized mental representation for our experience” (1991: 3). Because people are exposed to the language in news media to a great extent and it deals with ongoing issues in society, the news has the ability to create representations of current realities. Overall, the power that media holds is undeniable, and this power is also expressed through how media is commonly referred to as ‘the fourth power’ in society next to the legislative, executive, and judicial organs. Although it is not a political organ in itself, it has the ability to challenge politics through framing societal issues in ways that shape the public opinion.

2.4.2. DA of news: a suitable approach

DA is an acknowledged approach to examining news linguistically. As discussed above, the news both informs the public and expresses the public opinion. However, this makes it difficult to know whether the news affects the public or vice versa. Bell & Smith state the following: “whether the media reflects or constructs reality or both is a question central to discourse

analysis” (2007: 85). As explained in section 2.3.1., DA is about investigating the purpose of language use within its context; essentially, DA is about seeking the truth. However, the context surrounding news is especially interesting because news are stories picked out and shaped to capture the public’s attention. As Fowler points out: “The vast majority of events are not mentioned, and so selection immediately gives us a partial view of the world” (1991: 11). Moreover, the selection of information is followed by processes regarding how this information is presented to the public, and numerous political, social, and economic factors influence this transformation (ibid.). Thus, there are several elements to consider when analyzing news, and DA can be a powerful tool in examining the truths behind the language constructing the narratives in society. Hartley states that a critical understanding of news discourse “can demystify social meanings that in turn will contribute towards greater equity among people” (1982; in Bell & Smith 2007: 85), and that is performing DA of news is a suitable approach.

Even scientific and highly factual areas like ecology and climate change are not immune to a process of selection and presentation before reaching the public. According to Carvalho (2007: 223), science, like “any other dimensions of reality,” is reconstructed and altered and thus not only mirrored in the media. In her 2007 study of British press, she finds that standpoints are strongly connected to discursive representations of scientific climate claims in news (ibid.). Naturally, this leads to the possibility of bias, and whoever is constructing the news holds power over how environmental issues are presented to the public. Due to the importance surrounding environmental issues, Boykoff (2011) claims that the public “rely upon media representations to help interpret and make sense of the many complexities relating to climate science and governance.” Furthermore, media representations of climate issues “are powerful and important links between people’s everyday realities and experiences” (ibid.). This is connected to ‘the stories we live by’ discussed in section 2.1.1.. The news is highly capable of constructing certain narratives about the natural world and our place in it to the extent that it affects people’s perceptions of and actions towards the environment. Especially dangerous is how news articles are capable of sharing and promoting false stories that distorts people’s understandings of the world (Burton 2005: 292; in Bell & Smith 2007: 85). Overall, performing DA on news connects to the core of Ecolinguistics: uncovering how leading narratives in society are shaping the public view on ecology, and if these narratives are harmful to the environment or promote the protection of the natural world.

2.5. Audience Design Theory

This dissertation is concerned with the discourse in news. To enable an understanding of what lies behind and shapes this type of communication, we need to break down the mechanisms in language communication in general and also how it functions in mass communication. The theoretical framework used for this is Allan Bell's Audience Design Theory (ADT).

2.5.1. What is ADT?

Allan Bell's seminal paper, "Language style as audience design" (1984), laid the ground for how we understand communication and the styling of language in linguistics today. His theory deals with how language is shaped in communication, and he focuses on what roles the speaker/communicator and the hearer/addressee play in interaction. This is relevant for the thesis as I intend to examine Equinor in its role as communicator to the public; understanding the mechanisms behind communication style is necessary in order to study the communication as a result. In essence, ADT is about how the speaker styles their language based on what they perceive that the hearer wants to hear. According to Bell, "stylistic or intraspeaker variation derives from and mirrors interspeaker variation. Style is essentially speakers' response to their audience. In ADT, speakers accommodate primarily to their addressee" (1984: 145). *Inter-* refers to 'between' whereas *intra-* refers to 'within,' so he is essentially saying that how the speaker articulates and variates language within themselves is directly related to the assumed language interaction between the speaker and the addressee. From the illustrations in figure 2.1 below, Bell explains that factors which influence linguistic variation mainly are divided into two branches: the linguistic branch and the extralinguistic branch. The linguistic branch deals with actual language structure and includes factors such as morphological, phonological, or syntactic constraints. The extralinguistic branch, however, goes beyond linguistic structures and illustrates how language is affected by behavioral factors, and it is further divided into two branches. The interspeaker (or social) dimension "denotes differences between the speech of different speakers," illustrating how linguistic variation is affected by the speaker's "class, gender, social network, and so forth" (Bell 1984: 145-146). The intraspeaker (or stylistic) dimension "denotes differences within the speech of a single speaker," and although more challenging to pinpoint and categorize, it illustrates how independent factors such as the conversation topic, attention, or addressee are able to influence the speaker's language style (*ibid*).

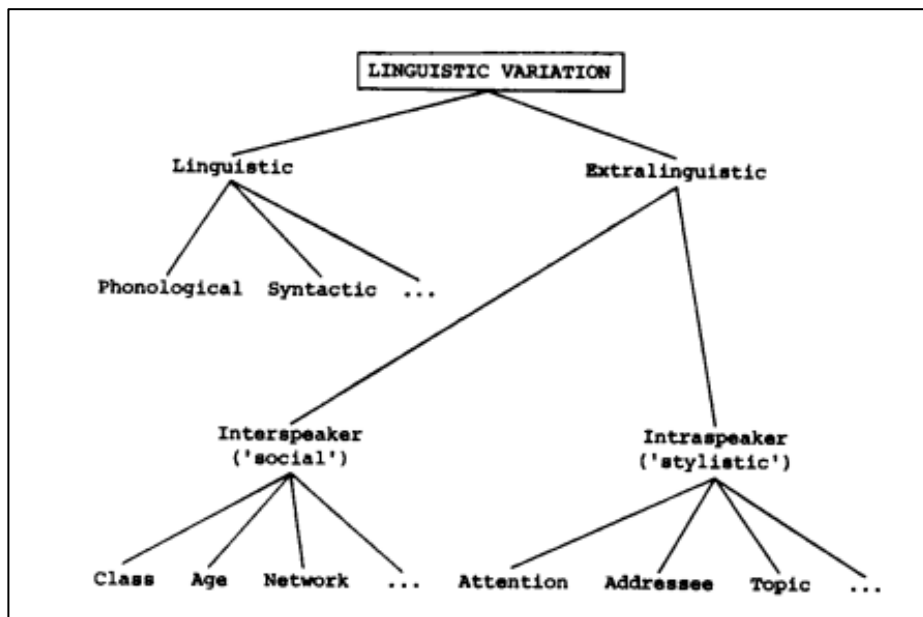


Figure 2.1: Factors influencing language variation (Bell 1984: 146)

2.5.2. ADT in mass communication

News reports are to be considered mass communication. Mass communication is yet another elusive term with no single definition, but it is generally understood as the process of sharing information through mass media with extensive range to large segments of the population. Mass communication differs widely from face-to-face communication as it mainly is a one-way communication controlled by the speaker and the audience being deprived of the possibility of modifying the language production; however, feedback is not totally absent although audience members rarely are on equal terms with the communicators (Bell 1991: 70). The audience cannot be considered to be on equal terms with the speaker as they cannot directly and instantly influence linguistic variation. Furthermore, the audience's response "remains under the editorial control of the communicators" because actual feedback to news reports is received at a later time and can be manipulated before potentially being published or broadcasted (ibid.). Yet, the audience has a huge influence over what becomes a news story and how the story is portrayed, but the effect happens in a different way than in face-to-face communication. As Bell states: "The audience exercises its main influence on the media just by being the audience" (ibid.). Because the news media wants to reach the public and be considered a quality-proof and valued source of information in order to earn money and status, the media relies on pleasing public interest. Thus, approval seeking is recognized as "a prime motive" in language

accommodation, and this is especially relevant in mass communication (McQuail 1969; in Bell 1991: 74).

So how does the audience influence linguistic variation and language style in news media? Bell explains that it is the “beliefs and stereotypes about recipients and their speech patterns [that] are the sole practical input to mass communicators’ accommodative processes” (Bell 1991: 73). The actual delayed feedback from the audience can only influence future communication. Thus, news communicators must make assumptions about their audience and how they react to and perceive various subjects. Communicators rely heavily on monitoring their language production in the absence of direct audience responses, and in mass communication and large companies, professionals are employed to specifically edit and modify language to best meet the audience (ibid.). This is done by researching public opinions and acknowledging trends and common attitudes in society. Going back to Bell’s original theory, what he calls ‘referee design’ is especially relevant in mass communication. Referee design is a speaker’s initiative style which diverges “from the addressee and towards an absent reference group” (1984: 145). ‘Referees’ are “third persons not physically present at an interaction, but possessing such salience for a speaker that they influence speech even in their absence” (ibid.). Furthermore, referees are considered to have the same effect on the speaker’s language style as a second person addressee in face-to-face communication (Bell 1984: 186). Thus, news media audience is a type of referee group, and as illustrated in figure 2.2 below, this differs from face-to-face (responsive) communication because the communicator is influenced indirectly (Bell 1991: 76).

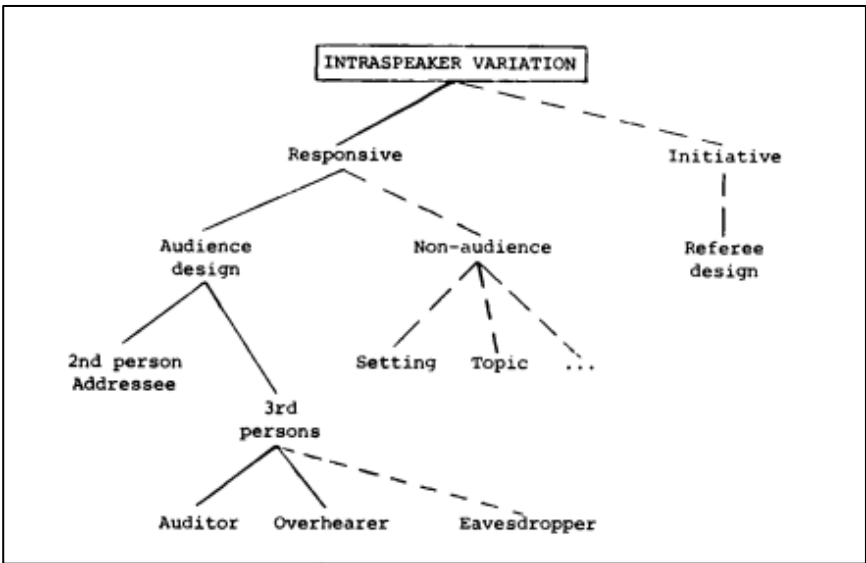


Figure 2.2: Style as audience design (Bell 1984: 162)

2.6. The public opinion on the climate crisis

Having established that the audience does influence the communicator's language style in mass communication, a central focus in the present study is what the public opinion is on climate change. As several studies point out (e.g. Jaworska 2018; O'Connor & Gronewold 2013; Milne & Gray 2012), businesses have increasingly been expected to put environmental issues on their agenda in light of evidence pointing to man-made impacts on the climate, and these demands have led to the rise of 'corporate social responsibility' (CSR). Although CSR reports are voluntary, more than three quarters of oil and gas companies produce them (O'Connor & Gronewold 2013; in Jaworska 2018: 194). Considering that the petroleum industry contribute to ecological demise to a significant extent and is therefore more prone to criticism and social activism, CSR reports are "important tools of maintaining legitimacy vis-à-vis stakeholders and society" (Jaworska 2018: 194). These reports include information about how the company is working towards a sustainable future, and fossil fuel companies tend to specifically focus on the transition to a low-carbon energy future with less carbon dioxide emissions. As CSR reports cater to public demands, it is clear that the environmental consciousness is prevalent in society. This is further reflected through the focus on lowering emissions in international treaties such as the Paris Agreement. Overall, the public opinion on environmental issues is that action must be taken to lower CO₂ emissions that contribute to climate change, and a lot of responsibility is placed on the fossil fuel sector. In general, the public opinion is that we need a more sustainable future. However, a central part in the dissertation is to discover whether these priorities have been shifted as a result of the RUW.

2.7. Summary

The theoretical background for the thesis consists of the following different understandings: (1) Ecolinguistics is an established research field which intends to reveal how language affects our relationship with the environment; (2) CL is a fitting approach to discover language trends that can reveal if language is either harmful to or supportive of the natural world; (3) analyzing news discursively in a broader context can uncover truths about existing narratives in society; (4) communication, as explained in ADT, is shaped by what the communicator expects that the recipient wants to hear. Overall, the climate discourse surrounding Equinor will be examined from the ecolinguistic, the corpus-based, and the discursive angle simultaneously. This combination creates a pretty clear image of the communication in question.

3. METHODOLOGY, DATA, AND RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter, the overall methodology, data, and research design of the present study is presented. The overall approach is to examine and compare the climate discourse in the main corpora consisting of Equinor's news reports, and in the reference corpora containing news articles about Equinor from the NOW (News on the Web) corpus. Firstly, section 3.1. argues why CL is an appropriate methodology in the dissertation. Thereafter, section 3.2. presents the corpora that are the sources of data in the study and the corpus software used for the analyses, and section 3.3. explains how the data is collected and analyzed. Considering that a mixed approach is used to analyze the data, section 3.4. explains the quantitative analysis, and section 3.5. explains the qualitative approach. Finally, section 3.6. deals with the methodological limitations of the study, and section 3.7. presents a summary.

3.1. CADS as the overall methodology

3.1.1. Aim, justification, and research philosophy

I consider CL, and more specifically CADS, the overall methodology of the present study. As mentioned in section 2.2.2., CL is first and foremost considered a methodology within linguistics as it mainly tells us *how* the data is being analyzed and not specifically *what* is being studied. In other words, CL could be applied as an approach within various disciplines of linguistics, and this particular study is conducted in the field of Ecolinguistics. There are several reasons why CL is a suitable methodology in the dissertation. The general justification for using corpora over manual investigations is that a corpus provides reliability and speed; the researcher is able to examine more material and rely on exact calculations with the aid of machine-readable texts and computer programs (Lindquist 2009: 5). More specifically, CL allows for the data to be collected and analyzed in a manner ensuring a thorough approach to answering the research questions. Firstly, a corpus represents 'real' language as it is not taken out of its natural context (McEnery 2001: 1), meaning that an accurate image of Equinor's communication is presented. Secondly, as Jones explains, a corpus is able to "uncover patterns of usage and to test out intuitions about how language is used by particular groups of users" (2022: 126). Thus, by analyzing news reports by Equinor and news articles discussing Equinor in corpus software,

the language patterns which are revealed provide comprehensive and valid insights into relevant climate discourse in the corpora.

However, there are certain things a corpus cannot do. It cannot, for example, tell us why certain language patterns occur, or why communicators have chosen to structure the language in particular ways (Jones 2022: 126). This is why the researcher's interpretation of the data is significant in the results of CL studies. Because the study is a CADS, the interpretative part of analyzing the data is conducting a DA. As explained in section 2.3.1., DA is the qualitative examination of *how* language functions within its context and what its purposes are. This is opposed to the general functions in corpus software which provide quantitative data based on numbers and patterns. Thus, in order to establish not only what the discourse surrounding Equinor looks like but also what purposes it serves, analyzing the corpus data within a greater context is necessary. The exact methodological approach, which is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), will be discussed further in section 3.5. CADS is essentially about putting qualitative approaches "on a sounder empirical footing," and this enables us to discover non-obvious meanings and identify questions that otherwise would never have been asked (Mautner 2022: 252). Overall, a CADS provides the opportunity to base the contextual analysis of language use on empirical and factual ground – thus rooting the results in both an observable and an interpreted reality. This complex approach is needed, I argue, to truly capture the essence of the communication in question.

In research, the research philosophy is the basis of how reality, knowledge, and truth is perceived; in other words, it is the fundamental ground for conducting a study as it "outlines the beliefs and values that guide the design of and the collection and analysis of data" (Ryan 2017: 14). There are generally two main paradigms within research philosophy: positivism and interpretivism. Positivism encapsulates "working with observable reality within society leading to production of generalizations" (Alharahsheh & Pius 2020: 41), and it deals with purely factual data. Naturally, positivism is linked to quantitative analysis as it focuses on the measurable and observable, and CL falls under this. Interpretivism, on the other hand, is the belief that data must be examined within a greater social and cultural context because anything human-created cannot be explored similarly to physical phenomena. This is because humans tend to create their own meanings and realities; essentially, interpretivism "assumes that reality is subjective and can differ considering different individuals" (Alharahsheh & Pius 2020: 41-42). The qualitative approach of DA is normally associated to this paradigm as discourse must be analyzed within a social context to form meaning. The positivism and interpretivism paradigms are two very different belief systems in research, but a combination of the two

approaches is needed in the present study to form an accurate and thorough image of the climate discourse surrounding Equinor. This makes CADS the most suitable approach.

3.1.2. Corpus sizes

Within CL, the corpus is “usually of a size which defies analysis by hand and eye alone within any reasonable timeframe” (Hardie & McEnery 2012: 2). It is this large compilation of data that is the reasoning behind using machine-readable texts. Yet, there are major differences when it comes to corpus sizes and contents, and how the corpus is shaped affects the data analysis process. Koester (2022: 48) points to two different trends when it comes to the compilation of corpora: On the one hand, the corpora are getting larger and larger (“mega-corpora”), and some contain millions or billions of words. On the other hand, much smaller and more specialized corpora focusing on specific genres and registers are being compiled. Flowerdew (2004: 19) states that there is “general agreement that small corpora contain up to 250,000 words (; in Koester 2022: 49). Thus, both trends will be touched on in this thesis as the NOW corpus contains billions of words, but Equinor’s news reports only contain about 20,000 to 40,000 words in each corpus.

The various sizes of corpora have different advantages and disadvantages regarding language analysis. For smaller corpora, all occurrences of high-frequency items may be analyzed whereas the number may become unmanageable in larger corpora. Furthermore, a smaller and more specialized corpus enables more contextual information because there is a “closer link between the corpus and the contexts in which the texts in the corpus were produced” (Koester 2022: 48). For the main corpora, their small sizes thus allow for Equinor’s discourse to be examined thoroughly by looking at each relevant item. Yet, a larger corpus may be preferable as “underlying regularities have a better chance of showing through the superficial variations” (Sinclair 2004: 189; in Koester 2022: 48). Additionally, a larger corpus is necessary to carry out lexicographical research because lexical items (except from the most common words) are relatively infrequent. The most obvious disadvantage of a large corpora, however, is that the frequencies may be too numerous for the researcher to examine all of them. In that case, one must work with a smaller sub-sample that is randomly provided from the corpus (Koester 2022: 48). Overall, the present study will benefit from the small and specialized main corpora as they cater well to the specific research questions, and it will also benefit from the comparison with large and general news corpora as they provide a broad ground for comparison.

3.2. Corpora as data

3.2.1. Main corpora: Equinor's news reports

The main source of data in the present study is the comparison between two corpora consisting of Equinor's news reports before and after the RUW. These news reports are available from the "All corporate news" section on the company website <https://www.equinor.com/news>. Corpus 1, Main corpus Before the RUW (MBRUW), is compiled from all of Equinor's news releases six months *before* the RUW, which peaked on February 24, 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine. Thus, the data collection is gathered from the time period August 24, 2021 until February 24, 2022. This corpus contains 19,816 words in total. Corpus 2, Main corpus After the RUW (MARUW), is compiled from all of Equinor's news releases six months *after* the RUW, stretching over the time span from February 24, 2022 to August 24, 2022. This corpus contains 37,019 words in total. The reasoning behind the six-month time frame is that the data will be able to reveal a potential shift in Equinor's discourse surrounding nonrenewable energy and sustainability in direct correlation to the outbreak of the war, and there will be enough ground for comparison to clearly see the possible effects the war has had on the discourse.

As explained in section 3.1.2., the main corpora are classified as small corpora. In the study, this is an advantage as links between language use (discourse surrounding nonrenewable energy and sustainability) and context (the RUW) is the main focus. Furthermore, the main corpora are not only small, but also specialized. Flowerdew (2004: 21) presents a list over different parameters which define corpora as such, and these include a corpus having a specific purpose for contextualization, a small size, a specific genre, a single type of text, a specific subject matter, and a variety of English. The main corpora are specialized as they specifically represent Equinor's news reports in a limited time frame, and as they are compiled for the specific purpose of examining Equinor's climate discourse. As Koester explains, smaller and specialized corpora tend to be "carefully targeted and set up to reflect contextual features, such as information about the setting, the participants and the purpose of communication." (2022: 49). Because of this targeting, a small corpus is more likely to reliably represent the data one is searching for than a large, general corpus. This is why the main corpora function as the basis for the study and also directs the analysis of the reference corpora.

Equinor's news reports differ from "regular" news as the company itself is reporting on its own projects and visions. The defining element is that there is no external examination or control over the company's reported actions; the news reports are essentially a part of Equinor's

company portrayal to the public. Naturally, this means that Equinor is able to promote its own interests to a larger extent. Gilens & Hertzman (2003) did a study to evaluate what influence corporate media owners have over news content in American mass media, and they found evidence suggesting that media owner’s financial interests influence newspaper editorials as well as news reporting in itself. Although this is not completely comparable to Equinor controlling its own news channel, the study demonstrates how companies’ own interests affect the outcome of news stories. Furthermore, Equinor’s news reports may have a slightly different format than what we normally see in newspapers. As observed when collecting the data, most of the news reports seem “regular,” but some seem more like announcements considering their short length and straightforward, informative style. For example, from time to time Equinor announces economy-related news such as “Notifiable trading” or “Ex dividend...” numbers. These financial announcements tend to be short, precise, and purely informative. In figure 3.1 below, a “Notifiable trading” announcement from March 24, 2022 is displayed showing the full announcement except from the heading and a photo.

The following primary insider has on 24 March 2022 been allocated shares in Equinor (OSE: EQNR, NYSE: EQNR) in connection with the company’s long-term incentive programme.

Ulrica Fearn – 795 Equinor shares

The long-term incentive programme is a fixed, monetary compensation calculated as a portion of the participant’s base salary; ranging from 20-30 per cent depending on the individual’s position.

On behalf of the participant, the company acquires shares corresponding to the net annual amount. The grant is subject to a three-year lock-in period.

Details on the transaction are set forth in the attached notification. The trade has been made through DNB Markets.

This is information that Equinor ASA is obliged to make public pursuant to the EU Market Abuse Regulation and subject to the disclosure requirements pursuant to Section 5-12 of the Norwegian Securities Trading Act.

Figure 3.1: Short format of Equinor’s news reports


However, most of the reports are longer, more comprehensive, and divided into regular news article sections. This regular news format consisting of headlines, an introductory paragraph, a body, and related pictures is the most frequently used format in Equinor’s news channel. This

generally goes for news regarding new energy projects, politics and conferences, or changes in boards or committees. This regular format is demonstrated in figure 3.2 below which displays parts of a news article announcing a new oil and gas discovery in the Barents Sea on June 9, 2022.

Shortly after the Snøfonn North discovery near the Johan Castberg field in the Barents Sea, Equinor has made another oil and gas discovery in Skavl Stø, exploration well 7220/8-3.

The well was drilled five kilometres south-southeast of discovery well 7220/8-1 on the Johan Castberg field, 210 kilometres northwest of Hammerfest.

Equinor is the operator of production licence 532. The size of the discovery is preliminarily estimated at between 5-10 million barrels of recoverable oil equivalent. Together with the other licensees, Vår Energi and Petoro, Equinor will consider tying the discovery into the Johan Castberg field.



"The drilling operation was safely and efficiently performed. The new discovery and information will be viewed in the light of other discoveries in the area, and together with our partners we will consider further development of the area," says Kristin Westvik, Equinor's senior vice president for exploration and production north.

The news about the Snøfonn North oil discovery was published on 25 May this year, about one year after the Isflak discovery in the same area.

Kristin Westvik, Equinor's senior vice president for exploration and production north.
(Photo: Harriet M. Olsen / Equinor ASA)

Figure 3.2: Regular format of Equinor's news reports

3.2.2. Sketch Engine

The main corpora are analyzed in Sketch Engine. Sketch Engine is a language analysis software and corpus manager available online from the website: <https://www.sketchengine.eu/>. It was developed by Lexical Computing Ltd. and made available as a commercial product in 2004. Sketch Engine is mainly a tool for examining authentic language in texts to identify what are typical, unusual, rare, or emerging trends in that language use. At the time of writing (December 2022), the software contains 600 corpora in over 90 languages consisting of various types of texts already prepared for analysis, but it also allows you to compile your own corpora or do independent searches on the web for data sources. This is why Sketch Engine can be classified as a hybrid corpus (Davies 2015). The already existing corpora contain up to 60 billion words,

ensuring representative samples of language use. This goes back to larger corpora having an advantage because the number of words can more easily expose underlying language patterns.

However, in the present study, Sketch Engine is the optimal tool as it allows me to compile smaller corpora from the web and to be in complete control over the corpus contents. Sketch Engine stands out in this sense as the import of custom data is a rare option in most corpus software (Anthony 2018: 106). This enables me to examine the specific aspects of Equinor’s discourse that serves the purpose of the study. In regard to how Sketch Engine can process the different corpora and conduct its analyses, it has “a range of flexible functions to build and analyze KWIC concordances for items ranging from lemmas to CQL query strings,” and it additionally offers “common statistical methods to produce frequency statistics, calculate co-occurrence patterns, visualize contrasts and to explore user and multilingual corpora” (Kilgarriff et al. 2014; in Koviagina & Kunilovskaya 2017: 503). Specifically, these tools include word frequency lists, the occurrences of n-grams, extracting keywords, and demonstrating concordances. These different tools will be described in further detail in section 3.3. and 3.4. dealing with quantitative and qualitative analysis. Essentially, the tools allow the researcher to observe language trends from different perspectives and analyze the data through different measures. Figure 3.3 below illustrates what Sketch Engine and its tools look like.

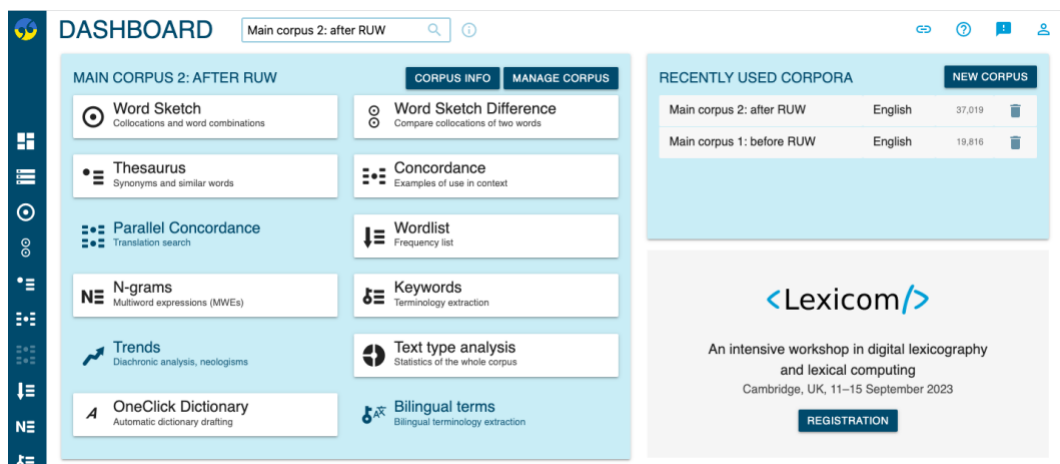


Figure 3.3: Main corpora in Sketch Engine

3.2.3. Reference corpora: the NOW corpus

The reference corpora in the study are compiled within the NOW corpus available from <https://www.english-corpora.org/now/>. At the time of writing (December 2022), the NOW corpus contains 16.4 billion words from web-based newspapers and magazines from English-speaking countries around the world from 2010 to the present time, but it grows by between

180-200 million words each month. Within this already existing news corpus, I am able to compile my own corpora by narrowing down the search to specific contents and time frames. For the content, I decide that all the news articles must include the word “Equinor” as the aim is to discover how the company is portrayed in public discourse. For the time frames, I narrow down the first corpus to articles published six months *before* the RUW and the second corpus down to articles published six months *after* the RUW (as the main corpora identically are narrowed down). Corpus 1, Reference corpus Before the RUW (RBRUW), contains 641,661 words in total, and it is made up of 505 different articles mentioning Equinor. Corpus 2, Reference corpus After the RUW (RARUW), contains 509,287 words in total, and it is made up of 442 different articles mentioning Equinor. Thus, the reference corpora are way larger than the main corpora, but the different data are analyzed in a similar manner. Like in Sketch Engine, the software in the NOW corpus allows the researcher to examine word frequencies and concordances, and these functions serve the same purposes regardless of corpus size. However, as discussed in section 3.1.2., some of the concordances will be sampled as the number of occurrences of a word or a phrase may be too extensive to examine manually. Figure 3.4 below illustrates what the reference corpora in the NOW corpus look like.

HELP		↑	↓	LIST NAME ↓	# TEXTS ↓	# WORDS ↓	FIND KEYWORDS <input checked="" type="radio"/> SPECIFIC <input type="radio"/> FREQ	CREATED ↓
1				AFTER RUW	442	509,287	NOUN VERB ADJ ADV N+N ADJ+N	1 h
2				BEFORE RUW	505	641,661	NOUN VERB ADJ ADV N+N ADJ+N	1 h

Figure 3.4: Reference corpora in the NOW corpus

3.3. Data collection and analysis methods

3.3.1. What data is needed to answer the research questions?

The starting point for conducting any study is always the research questions it sets out to answer, or the hypotheses it sets out to either confirm or attenuate. These elements function as the very aim that will lead the study in specific directions in relation to collecting and analyzing the data material. As Hardie & McEnery state, the most important element when collecting data in CL is that “the corpus data we select to explore a research question must be well matched to

that research question” (2012: 2). In other words, the chosen corpus data must be able to provide the answers the researcher needs to complete the study. As stated in section 1.5.1., there are three specific research questions the present study sets out to answer, and these decide what information the data must provide:

1. How does Equinor – mainly an oil and gas company – communicate its nonrenewable energy projects to the public, and is there a difference between the discourse surrounding nonrenewable energy before and after the RUW? If so, why?
2. Has the RUW and the following energy crisis in Europe affected Equinor’s portrayed attitudes towards becoming a more renewable energy company? If so, how?
3. Are there similarities or discrepancies between Equinor’s company portrayal and how it is portrayed in public discourse in relation to nonrenewable energy and sustainability in light of the RUW?

Naturally, considering that the aim to discover a potential shift in discourse surrounding Equinor as a result of the RUW, it is reasonable for the data to represent an equal time period before and after the war (being the six months). This time frame is needed in all three research questions as all of them relate to the RUW. For research questions 1 and 2, the main corpora need to provide information about Equinor’s energy projects. This is a given when looking at the company’s news reports as they intend to inform the public about ongoing and future operations. For research question 3, a point of reference is needed in order to make the comparison, and this is where the reference corpora containing public discourse on Equinor enter the study. Overall, and as mentioned in section 1.5.2., the examination and comparison of four different corpora make up the data in the study.

3.3.2. The data collection process

For the two main corpora, compiled and processed in Sketch Engine, the data is collected from the texts specifically picked to be included in MBRUW and MARUW. In addition to having multiple ready-to-use corpora available in the software, Sketch Engine also allows you to compile your very own corpus, either by finding texts on the web or by uploading files from your computer. The first option was used as the texts from Equinor of interest are available from the website <https://www.equinor.com/news>. To transfer the specific news reports to Sketch Engine, the option of copying and pasting the news reports’ URLs into the software was

chosen. After pasting the URLs from every news report published either six months before or six months after the RUW, Sketch Engine gathered all of the texts into two different corpora which then could be examined further in the language analysis programs. When the starting point for the study is to examine all of the data in this manner, it is referred to as a corpus-driven approach. Whereas corpus-based linguistics approaches the data from a pre-figured hypothesis, corpus-driven linguistics uses the corpus as the “basis for generating insights into language” (Tognini-Bonelli 2001: 84-100; in O’Halloran 2022: 679). This essentially means that the data is “speaking” to the researcher – the data will demonstrate through regularities, irregularities, patterns, etc. what the researcher should focus on in the study. This approach has generally been favored over the corpus-based approach since the researcher starts off without pre-existing assumptions that may steer the data in certain directions (Deignan 2005: 89). Using the corpora to get a general idea of the contents of my data, I looked at frequency lists and n-grams which are both tools the corpus software automatically provides. They display the number of occurrences over the most used words and phrases in the corpus – thus giving a general idea of the corpus contents. These were examined from an ecolinguistic perspective and whilst bearing the research questions in mind. From there, specific search items to discursively examine in concordance lines were chosen.

For the two reference corpora compiled within the NOW corpus, the corpus software makes it possible to examine various frequency lists and to do specific searches within the corpora. Generated frequency lists demonstrate, among other things, the total number of occurrences of a word or a phrase and the number of articles in which the word or phrase occurs. These are the main measurements that I will apply in the present study. As the main corpora is the starting point of the study and as the frequency lists in the reference corpora displayed similar themes as the main corpora, the similar search items will be used when examining concordances. However, it is important to note that there are some options when creating your own, specialized corpus within the NOW corpus. As explained previously, the data was narrowed down in the search to all the articles which mention “Equinor” anywhere in their texts. However, another option would be to narrow down the search to only articles that have “Equinor” included in their title. This option was tested as a possible approach, but the resulting corpora were relatively small. The reference corpus before the RUW only contained 44 news articles and 35,268 words, and the reference corpus after the RUW only contained 38 news articles and 20,813 words. Although they would ensure a more specialized focus on Equinor, the data material would be considered scarce for reference corpora. It must also be acknowledged that the NOW corpus contains news and magazine articles from English-

speaking countries only, and that Equinor is a Norwegian company. Despite being a major agent in the international energy market, it is reasonable to think that the single-handed focus on the company may be way larger in the Norwegian news sphere than elsewhere. Thus, it makes sense for the search to only specify that the articles must contain “Equinor” as the company may be discussed alongside other fossil fuel companies.

3.3.3. The data analysis process

CL uses different procedures to analyze data, both quantitative and qualitative. These procedures are constantly developing, and CL is a heterogeneous field with many variations when it comes to the approach and handling of data (Hardie & McEney 2012: 1). However, some procedures are well-established and considered central to the approach, such as generating frequency lists and examining keywords in concordances. It is also important to note that quantitative and qualitative methods are equally important to CL, respectively methods that measure the data in quantity and interpret the data in quality (Hardie & McEney 2012: 2). Corpus software is responsible for providing quantitative data, but these numbers and patterns would not make sense without examining them in a greater context, and that is when the role of the researcher increases through categorizations and interpretations. All quantitative studies include at least elements of qualitative methods, for example in relation to deciding what to count and thus making categories for searches (Lindquist 2009: 26-27).

This is how the lexico-semantic approach enters the present study. Lexical semantics is “the study of word meanings,” (Taylor 2017: 246), and this approach involves examining the reasoning behind the language use in question. Although the quantitative data works as a point of departure for the study and makes the study corpus-driven, the more specific calculations and evaluations of language use can only be done after categorizing the data by deciding particular search items. As Lindquist explains, good corpus studies must look at individual examples within a corpus in order to make proper sense of the quantitative language phenomena demonstrated in figures and tables (2009: 26). Considering that the focus of the present study is Equinor’s climate discourse related to nonrenewable energy and sustainability before and after the RUW, search items denoting these themes are used as the starting point for the qualitative analysis. I will elaborate further on each of the specific search items in section 3.5.2..

As mentioned in section 3.1.2., when a corpus like the NOW corpus is of a significant size, it can simply be too large for a researcher to examine all relevant search items qualitatively. This means that we need to extract a sample of the occurrences of a word or a phrase – a random

selection representing the language use in the corpus. In the NOW corpus, the software allows you to sample 100, 200, 500, or 1000 occurrences. For the search items exceeding 100 occurrences in the present study, only 100 will be sampled because of the limited size of the thesis. However, as the main corpora are of a much smaller size, I will have the opportunity to manually go through all of the occurrences of the specific search items. For example, whereas the phrase *oil and gas* occurs 350 times in RBRUW, it only occurs 10 times in MBRUW. Overall, the data analysis process will mix quantitative and qualitative analyses, and the combination of these two approaches will provide a pretty clear image of the climate discourse surrounding Equinor.

3.4. Quantitative analysis

In linguistics, quantitative methods “count things and use frequencies and percentages to describe language and to formulate hypotheses and theories” (Lindquist 2009: 25). For CL specifically, the arrival and development of computers was revolutionary as large amounts of texts could be analyzed in seconds. The quantitative data generated from language analysis software thus gives an overview of the corpus in question. Here, I will present the quantitative approaches in CL that are relevant for the present study, namely word frequencies, n-grams, normalization, and log likelihood (LL).

3.4.1. Word frequencies

Corpus software tools are able to count and rank the occurrences of strings of characters in text files, and they do this with extreme accuracy and speed. If the strings are identified as word tokens, then the tools can count and rank these word frequencies within the texts. Generally, this ability gives us “a rough measure of word ‘importance’ based on frequency” (Anthony 2018: 108). Searching for the frequency of words is one of the most common and simplest forms of analyzing a corpus, and most corpus software also enable frequency lists to reveal the most frequently used words or phrases in a corpus (Jones 2022: 127). Essentially, this allows the researcher to observe what linguistic patterns are given more importance in a corpus.

There are a few things to keep in mind when examining frequencies. Firstly, most frequency lists will contain “a high proportion of grammatical items (such as the determiner *the*) as their most common item,” simply because purely grammatical words like this are needed

in order to construct sentences (Jones 2022: 128). Furthermore, the frequency lists in any corpus will be “heavily influenced by the type of data” in the corpus (*ibid.*). However, in the present study, I will focus specifically on noun frequencies as the corpus software allow me to narrow down the data to specific grammatical/semantical features. Because I am mainly interested in what content words are represented in the different corpora and because the present dissertation is of limited size, it is reasonable to specify the frequencies in this manner. This means that purely grammatical items in the frequencies will be avoided. As for the type of data influencing the frequency lists, it helps that the corpora are specialized in content, genre, and time frames. This ensures that, to a large extent, only relevant language trends will occur in the frequency lists.

3.4.2. N-grams

N-grams, also referred to as “clusters” or “lexical-bundles,” are multi-word expressions or phrases identified within a corpus. Thus, n-grams can reveal “frequent multi-word patterns that may have gone unnoticed using just a frequency or keyword list” (Anthony 2018: 111). In Sketch Engine, we can choose different n-gram lengths, ranging from 2–3-word units to 5–6-word units. In the present study, the n-gram search was narrowed down to only the 3–4-word units as this is the standard search size and will outsource the most important phrases. The most frequently used 2–3-word units tend to be of grammatical character and will tell us less about semantic content than 3–4-word units (Anthony 2018: 111–113), and 4–5- or 5–6-word units tend to be unmanageably long (for a study with this limited size) and repetitive. The n-grams in the present study will also be presented in frequency lists, showing the most frequently used phrases in the main corpora and reference corpora. Although the noun frequency lists demonstrate the most prevalent content words, the n-grams frequencies can either build onto this as the same words will appear in clusters, or demonstrate other contents that otherwise would go unnoticed.

3.4.3. Normalization

In order to compare the actual relevance the number of occurrences of a word or a phrase represents in two different corpora, a normalization calculation is needed. This is important “as an item may display more frequency simply because the size of the corpus is bigger” (Jones 2022: 130). This is relevant for the present study as I am comparing corpora before and after

the RUW consistently and need to know what the different numbers of occurrences represent in reality. Normalization essentially means how many times a word or a phrase occurs per X words, normally per million in larger corpora and per thousand in smaller corpora (ibid.). For per thousand words, the formula for normalizing the occurrences is to divide the number of occurrences in the corpus with the corpus size (the number of words in the entire corpus) and multiply it by 1,000. For per million words, the same calculation is done but the multiplication is with 1,000,000 (Evison 2010: 126). For example, the word *oil* occurs 27 times in MBRUW which contains 19,816 words, and 63 times in MARUW which contains 37,019 words. To normalize these numbers, I perform the mathematical formula as illustrated in figures 3.5 and 3.6 below. I end up with the numbers 1.36 in MBRUW and 1.70 in MARUW. These numbers tell me that *oil* has a higher relevance after the RUW than before.

<p>MBRUW: Normalization of <i>Oil</i></p> $\frac{27 \text{ (# occurrences)}}{19,816 \text{ (# corpus words)}} \times 1,000 = 1.36$
--

<p>MARUW: Normalization of <i>Oil</i></p> $\frac{63 \text{ (# occurrences)}}{37,019 \text{ (# corpus words)}} \times 1,000 = 1.70$
--

Figure 3.5: Normalization example in MBRUW

Figure 3.6: Normalization example in MARUW

3.4.4. Log likelihood

Although normalizing frequencies makes the number of occurrences in different corpora comparable, it is not proof that the results are significant. To figure out the significance of a word or a phrase within a corpus, a LL calculation is needed. The web-based LL calculator, provided by Paul Rayson from the University of Lancaster, is accessible from <https://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html>. Here, you can plug in the frequency of a word as well as the corpus size of two different corpora to statistically measure whether the observable differences actually have significance from a scientific point of view. As Jones explains, “the calculator allows you to input the frequency of words or phrases in corpora of different sizes and take a comparison using log likelihood as a measure, determining whether each item is significantly more (+) or less (-) frequent in one corpus compared with another” (2022: 132). It is possible that the differences between the number of occurrences of a word or phrase in different corpora are just random, and their actual ‘significance’ can be measured statistically to establish whether the results are, in fact, of significance. If results are to be considered

significant, we are usually 95% certain or more that the results are not due to randomness (https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fss/courses/ling/corpus/blue/108_4.htm).

The actual mathematics behind this calculation is complex, but the LL calculator calculates the results as long as it is provided with the frequency in corpus 1, the frequency in corpus 2, the corpus size (total number of words) of corpus 1, and the corpus size of corpus 2. When it comes to interpreting the numbers provided by the calculator, we look at the “LL” number in the table illustrated in figure 3.7 below. If the number is greater than 6.63, it is less than 1% likely that the difference between the corpora happened by chance, and it is of 99% certainty that the result means something. If the LL is 3.84 or more, it is less than 5% likely that the difference happened by chance and we are 95% certain of the result. To illustrate how the LL calculator works, I entered the same numbers (number of occurrences and number of corpus words) in relation to *Oil* in the main corpora, and the LL number we are left with is 0.96. In other words, the difference between the occurrences of *Oil* in MBRUW and MARUW is not of significance from a scientific point of view and should not be given weight when comparing results. When mixing these results with the results from normalizing the numbers above, we can conclude that *Oil* seemingly has a higher relevance in Equinor’s news reports after the RUW than before, but that this relevance in fact is not of particular significance and could have happened by chance. However, the numbers are also considered in light of the qualitative analyses and theoretical contexts in order to understand the occurrences in a broader sense.

Log-likelihood calculator results

Key:
O1 is observed frequency in Corpus 1
O2 is observed frequency in Corpus 2
%1 and %2 values show relative frequencies in the texts.
+ indicates overuse in O1 relative to O2,
- indicates underuse in O1 relative to O2

Item	O1	%1	O2	%2	LL	%DIFF	Bayes	ELL	RRisk	LogRatio	OddsRatio
Word	27	0.14	63	0.17 -	0.96	-19.94	-9.99	0.00000	0.80	-0.32	0.80

Figure 3.7: LL of Oil between MBRUW and MARUW

3.5. Qualitative approach

Whereas quantitative analysis mainly deals with numbers and patterns in linguistics, qualitative analysis relies on the researcher examining a language phenomenon in a particular social context. As Gillins (2022: 590) explains: “One of the main benefits of corpus linguistics is that it combines both quantitative and qualitative analysis.” This is because the researcher is able to

investigate a dataset from both a “coarse-grained” and a “fine-grained” view, beginning with frequency patterns on a large scale that can be examined closer in a greater context (ibid.). Here, the elements of the qualitative approach in the study are presented, namely concordances, the lexico-semantic approach, the specific search items, and CDA.

3.5.1. Concordances

According to Lindquist, a concordance is “a list of all the contexts in which a word occurs in a particular text” (2009: 5). In CL, this qualitative approach happens when the researcher intends to understand the language trends and patterns revealed by the corpus software. Corpus software allow you to plug in specific search items within a corpus and examine them in the contexts they are placed in, and thus, the relevant words and phrases in the corpus may be understood in a greater context. These strings of search items and the contexts surrounding them are called concordance lines, and analyzing concordance lines is often referred to as concordancing (Evison 2010: 129). Anthony (2018: 113) explains concordances in the following manner: “Concordances are designed to find all the occurrences of a search term in a corpus and display these in an ordered fashion together with the words that surround them.” Thus, once you search a specific word or a specific phrase, all of the occurrences with surrounding words and sentences will appear. Concordances are presented in a way where the search term – referred to as KWIC (key word in context) – is placed in the middle, and then the “Left context” and “Right context” is placed on each side to show what tends to either precede or exceed the KWIC. Overall, concordances enable the researcher to observe potential patterns or trends in relation to how the KWIC is presented in the corpus, and they represent the broader contexts surrounding the KWIC. Figure 3.8 below demonstrates what concordance lines containing the KWIC *Oil* in MBRUW looks like in Sketch Engine.

Details	Left context	KWIC	Right context
① equinor.com	in the two following gas years.</s></s>Equinor to stop trading in Russian	oil	and oil products</s></s>March 14, 2022 22:38 CET Last modified March
① equinor.com	wo following gas years.</s></s>Equinor to stop trading in Russian oil and	oil	products</s></s>March 14, 2022 22:38 CET Last modified March 14, 20
① equinor.com	, a decision has been made that Equinor will also stop trading in Russian	oil	</s></s>This means that Equinor will not enter any new trades or engage
① equinor.com	means that Equinor will not enter any new trades or engage in transport of	oil	and oil products from Russia.</s></s>This is part of Equinor's efforts to ex
① equinor.com	that Equinor will not enter any new trades or engage in transport of oil and	oil	products from Russia.</s></s>This is part of Equinor's efforts to exit Russ
① equinor.com	tracts signed in January this year, under which Equinor will receive four	oil	cargoes in March.</s></s>Two of these are sold on to customers in Asia.<
① equinor.com	to accelerate the transition to a broad energy company by optimising the	oil	and gas portfolio, high value growth in renewables, and shaping new mar
① equinor.com	:O2 intensity of Equinor's operated portfolio was 7.0 kg CO2 per barrel of	oil	equivalent, down from 8.0 in 2020.</s></s>Increased production, changes
① equinor.com	>Norway energy hub consists of four building blocks: decarbonisation of	oil	and gas, industrialisation of offshore wind, commercialisation of CCS and

Figure 3.8: Examples of concordance lines with the KWIC oil in MBRUW

3.5.2. Lexical semantics

As mentioned in section 3.3.3., lexical semantics is the study of word meanings and decoding language in order to gain understanding of the language use in question. Lexical semantics mainly studies “the internal semantic structure of words” or “the semantic relations that occur within the vocabulary” (Geeraerts 2017: 1), and it is the latter focus that is relevant for the present study as I will examine specific search items in a greater context. With a lexico-semantic approach in CL, the specific search items taking shape as either words or phrases are singled out in concordance lines within the corpus and examined in a greater context. As Faber & L’Homme (2014: 144) explain, “when terms are activated in texts, they set in motion a wide variety of underlying conceptual relations and knowledge structures.” Thus, it is the job of the researcher to establish what insights the language use in question may tell us. Considering the relatively modest sizes of the main corpora, it makes them well-suited for a qualitative methodological approach in the shape of lexico-semantic analyses (Dahl & Fløttum 2019a: 5). This is because smaller corpora enable the researcher to have a thorough overview over their contents, thus making it easier to select particular language items to focus on without having other potentially important items go unnoticed. Although the reference corpora are much larger, the same search items will be applied here in order to establish a comparison between the discursive trends in Equinor’s news reports and public news reports about the company.

3.5.3. Search items denoting ‘nonrenewable energy’ and ‘sustainability’

The specific search items that function as the starting point for the qualitative analysis are chosen on the basis of the quantitative data in the corpora and the aims behind the research

questions. As mentioned in section 3.3.3., the study examines the discursive portrayal of nonrenewable energy and sustainability in light of the RUW, and searching for specific words and phrases within the corpora is essential in order to examine relevant concordances. This is a common approach in discursive research, and this qualitative method is especially well-suited for corpora of modest sizes. For example, in a 2019 study examining fossil fuel companies' linguistic representations of the energy transition in annual reports, Dahl & Fløttum use specific search words denoting a 'profit,' 'people,' and 'planet' dimension in order to establish what different fossil fuel companies tend to focus on in their discourse (2019a: 5). However, as with the present study, the quantitative findings in the form of frequency lists function as a point of departure as they provide a general idea of the corpora's contents.

Essentially, the search items are different semantic categories with words and phrases that refer to specific meanings within the context of fossil fuel companies and climate change. Overall, seven semantic categories are chosen in the present study. This is both a manageable number considering the limited size of the thesis, and an appropriate number considering the amount and variety of concordances needed in order to create a relevant discursive image. The search items are as follows: *Green*, *Energy transition*, *Oil*, *Gas*, *Emissions*, *Fossil fuel*, and *Oil and gas*. In general, the search items are denoting nonrenewable energy sources (*Oil*, *Gas*, *Fossil fuel*, *Oil and gas*), the shift towards a more sustainable future (*Green*, *Energy transition*), and the root cause of the climate crisis (*Emissions*). For specific explanations, a table displaying the different semantic categories and the particular meaning they are referring to is presented in section 4.2.1. Overall, the search items are essential tools in discovering the discourse surrounding nonrenewable energy and sustainability. These are the specific searches I will make within the corpora in the corpus software in order to examine their significance as well as how they function in a greater context.

3.5.4. Critical Discourse Analysis

When the specific search items are analyzed discursively in concordance lines, the approach I am taking is CDA. CDA is what Van Dijk refers to as a *critical* perspective on conducting research – it is discourse analysis “with an attitude” (2001: 96). This attitude can be understood as the response to injustice in social problems as CDA mainly is concerned with power imbalances and the role discourse plays in creating and maintaining social dominating hierarchical systems (ibid.). The researcher has a tendency of siding with the dominated/weaker groups, and this is especially the case when conducting CDA from an ecolinguistic perspective.

As discussed in section 2.1.2., ecolinguistic studies have traditionally focused on critiquing language that is harmful towards the environment, and researchers tend to defend the natural world as its own living entity when language distances us from the ecosystems we are a part of. Ecolinguistics, much like CDA, aims to reveal commonsense assumptions built into the prevailing discourses of society (Stibbe 2014: 119). The purpose of this is to raise awareness of social inequalities in various forms in order to stimulate social change. In the present study, the critical perspective of CDA is especially relevant as it not only investigates to what extent the climate crisis is acknowledged and handled, but how it is acknowledged and handled by the largest company in Norway and a major provider of nonrenewable energy. Equinor is to be considered very powerful within the context it is being examined in due to its high emission rates, its large economy, and its general position in society. As Van Dijk explains, “CDA research combines what perhaps somewhat pompously used to be called ‘solidarity with the oppressed’ with an attitude of opposition and dissent against those who abuse text and talk in order to establish, confirm or legitimate their abuse of power” (ibid.). In the present case, Equinor may abuse text to promote its own interests which are not in line with environmental concerns.

When performing a CDA, the researcher goes through three stages: “description of text, interpretation of the relationship between text and interaction, and explanation of the relationship between interaction and social context” (Fairclough 2001: 21-22; in Cheng 2013: 1). Thus, I will firstly describe the different occurrences of the various search items by considering their frequencies and significance as well as the patterns they occur in. Here, the language trends appearing in the ‘left context’ and the ‘right context’ of the KWIC are important. Secondly, I will interpret why the search items are placed in the texts in the manner they are, and why we see the language patterns that are described. Lastly, I will bring the analysis of the search item out in a greater social context – the context of fossil fuel companies’ role in climate change and sustainability. Overall, CDA is “explanatory critique in that it does not simply describe existing realities but seeks to explain them, for instance by showing them to be effects of structures or mechanisms or forces that the analyst postulates and whose reality s/he seeks to test out” (Fairclough 2012: 9). This means that the results of the study will be considered from an ecolinguistic perspective where the focus is on the powerful position of Equinor and the weaker role of the environment which is under constant threat of ecological demise.

3.6. Methodological limitations

As with any study, the methodological approach offers certain limitations in the overall research design. No research design is perfect, and it is important to be aware of certain limitations as these will affect the results. Here, I will discuss the challenges related to conducting a study in CL as well as the challenges related to the qualitative approach.

3.6.1. The limitations of corpus design

There are several limitations to different corpus designs in general. In CL, a corpus can only provide a certain amount of a particular type of information. Jones (2022: 127) states: “Any search will be limited by the design and size of a corpus.” For the main corpora consisting of Equinor’s news reports, they are limited to only showing a small fracture of the company portrayal in relation to nonrenewable energy as the company has other communication platforms as well. Naturally, this means that other aspects of Equinor’s discourse related to nonrenewable energy and sustainability may be overlooked. However, it is still a relevant channel to examine as websites are said to be corporations’ main platforms for conveying CSR (Fernández-Vázquez 2021: 2693). Furthermore, I have not gone through every single news report within the main corpora. As researchers, we like to believe that we have a full overview over the chosen contents for our data material, but the “texts within a corpus that we assume to be homogeneous may, in fact, inhibit differences” (Hardie & McEnery 2012: 2). This means that we cannot be totally sure of what the data in a corpus actually demonstrates, and this element of uncertainty must be acknowledged when drawing conclusions based on corpus results. However, this is a general truth for all CL research and not a particular limitation for this specific study. In regard to the reference corpora, as discussed in section 3.3.2., the only content criteria for the news articles is the mentioning of “Equinor” somewhere in the text. Although this search ensures that the company is relevant to some extent in the articles, I cannot know to what extent Equinor is being discussed, or if the main focus of the articles is something entirely different. However, as demonstrated in the frequency lists in the corpora compiled within the NOW corpus (which will be presented in chapter 4), the most commonly used words and phrases are related to energy production and climate. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the reference corpora are able to provide some general insights into the public portrayal of Equinor.

As mentioned, *English-Corpora-org* (where the NOW corpus exists) and Sketch Engine are online corpus software tools. Although this comes with several strengths, it also comes with a few limitations that may affect the study's results. Online tools tend to "hide the raw data of a corpus behind a web browser interface," and this means that the researcher may not know what data the corpus consists of or how it was collected, displayed, or processed (Anthony 2018: 106). In other words, the researcher is in some ways working in the dark, and they have no influence over the data material available. However, an important exception here is Sketch Engine as the researcher is able to have complete control over the data material if desired. With the NOW corpus, on the other hand, the only assured information is that it consists of newspaper and magazine articles from the English-speaking world. Moreover, users are restricted to only viewing "a random sample of concordance lines in its output" (Anthony 2018: 106). This is sufficient for viewing general patterns of language use but not necessarily sufficient for discourse-level analyses. Thus, I have to keep in mind that the concordance lines from the NOW corpus are able to give some, but not complete insight into the contents of the corpora. However, sampling is a common practice in CL research, and sampled concordance lines tend to demonstrate representativeness within a corpus (Koester 2022: 48).

3.6.2. The limitations of the qualitative approach

The most obvious challenge in qualitative analysis is the role of the researcher. A central methodological question regarding CADS in general is whether discourse can be interpreted without "relying too much on the researcher's intuition" (Mautner 2018: 252). This is because how the researcher chooses to both categorize and interpret the data has everything to say for the results of the study. In the present study, the most prevalent qualitative limitations are the specific search items chosen in the lexico-semantic approach. Although necessary in order to examine language aspects that are relevant for the research questions, they do limit insights into other language aspects that may have offered valid results. However, Mautner states that the solution to avoid researcher bias is to use "a large and representative corpus of texts, by employing discovery procedures that are transparent and replicable and by relating one's findings to other corpora and thus putting them into perspective" (2018: 252). Although the main corpora consisting of Equinor's news reports are not large, they are to be considered representative. This is because a smaller corpus of "a very specific genre is being investigated" and therefore is fit to "establish situational representativeness" (Koester 2022: 51). Moreover, the discovery procedures are basic and transparent, and a different researcher would work with

the same frequency lists and n-grams. Additionally, the corpora will be put in perspective as I am comparing them to larger reference corpora, and there are also previous studies and relevant theory to lean on to ensure valid results. Thus, the language trends discovered when examining the search items and performing CDA will be considered in a greater theoretical context in order to assure validity.

3.7. Summary

A CADS is a well-suited approach to discover how Equinor portrays itself in relation to nonrenewable energy and sustainability in light of the RUW as well as how the company is portrayed in public discourse. The quantitative and qualitative methods enable both broad and specific insights into the relevant discourse, and the study will be left with a thorough discursive image. The ecolinguistic perspective, manifesting itself in the research questions, the specific search items, and when performing CDA, ensures that the theoretical background for and the general purpose of the study are considered.

4. RESULTS

In this chapter, the findings of the present study are presented. Section 4.1. and 4.2. present, respectively, the quantitative and qualitative results from analyzing the main corpora. Thereafter, section 4.3. compares the language tendencies between Equinor's discourse before and after the RUW. Section 4.4. and 4.5. present, respectively, the quantitative and qualitative results from analyzing the reference corpora. Then, section 4.6. compares the language tendencies between public climate discourse about Equinor before and after the RUW. Finally, section 4.7. presents a comparison between the results from the main corpora and the reference corpora; between how Equinor presents itself to the public and how the company is portrayed in the public discourse in relation to nonrenewable energy and sustainability.

4.1. Quantitative results of the main corpora

In this part of the chapter, I will only look at the frequency lists and discuss the general language tendencies in Equinor's discourse before and after the RUW. The numbers provided by the quantitative analysis are displayed in tables constructed in Microsoft Excel, and these function as the point of departure for commenting on relevant language trends. As mentioned in section 3.2.1., MBRUW (Main corpus Before the RUW) contains 19,816 words and MARUW (Main corpus After the RUW) contains 37,019 words. Thus, Equinor reported significantly more on its news website after the RUW than before. Although this may indicate that the RUW caused an increase in the amount of news reports, the actual language must be examined in order to establish if the increase is related to the war or not. The noun frequencies and n-grams frequencies give an initial impression of Equinor's discourse. However, only the 20 most frequently used nouns/n-grams are included in the lists. The data is narrowed down in this manner as it is a manageable number considering the limited thesis size, and as it is sufficient in order to observe the most relevant changes in the corpora. This type of sampling is common practice in CL research as it gives an overview over the corpora's contents (Anthony 2022: 105).

4.1.1. Noun frequencies

Table 4.1: The 20 most frequently used nouns in MBRUW and MARUW

WORD FREQUENCY: NOUNS			
MBRUW		MARUW	
Content word	# Occurrences	Content word	# Occurrences
1. Equinor	238	1. Equinor	563
2. Wind	203	2. Energy	248
3. Project	148	3. Wind	233
4. Energy	133	4. Project	213
5. Hydrogen	105	5. Carbon	158
6. Farm	97	6. Power	151
7. UK	80	7. Production	135
8. Dogger	69	8. UK	134
9. Bank	69	9. Gas	125
10. Carbon	65	10. Share	120
11. Production	55	11. Development	118
12. Operation	54	12. Company	109
13. Development	54	13. Year	105
14. Share	53	14. Billion	98
15. Company	45	15. East	93
16. Field	45	16. Hydrogen	91
17. Year	44	17. Industry	90
18. Area	42	18. President	87
19. Power	41	19. Storage	85
20. Industry	41	20. Field	80

As illustrated in table 4.1, there is a high degree of similarity between the noun uses in MBRUW and MARUW. A total of 14 nouns are present among the most frequently used ones in both time periods, and the four most frequently used nouns are almost identical in each time period although the order changes some. These nouns are *Equinor*, *Wind*, *Project*, and *Energy*. On a general level, one would expect to see *Equinor* as the company is referring to itself and its

projects, visions, and actions. Furthermore, *Energy* and *Project* are also predictable as Equinor is an energy company with several ongoing and future energy projects. However, *Wind* may be considered a more surprising occurrence as Equinor is mainly a fossil fuel company providing oil and gas and wind power is a renewable energy source. Moreover, it is mentioned a considerable number of times – 203 times in MBRUW and 233 times in MARUW. From this, it is apparent that the company focuses on this type of energy projects in its company portrayal. Overall, Equinor’s news content before and after the RUW seem fairly similar from what the noun frequencies can tell us.

However, there are a few specific elements worth looking into. Firstly, not only the presence but also the absence of nouns is fit to tell us something about Equinor’s focus in its communication. Most notably here is the fact that there seemingly is a larger focus on renewable energy than nonrenewable energy although Equinor mainly is an oil and gas company. This is illustrated by the presence of nouns such as *wind*, *hydrogen*, *carbon*, *farm*, *dogger*, and *bank* denoting a renewable change, and the absence of nouns such as *oil* and *gas* (gas only before the RUW) denoting nonrenewable energy. Hydrogen and carbon are two vital elements in the energy transition as renewable hydrogen-based power is on the rise, and as there is more focus on lowering and replacing nonrenewable carbon-based energy (IEA 2019). Furthermore, wind power is a type of renewable energy, and Dogger Bank Wind Farm is the name of what is going to be the largest offshore wind farm in the world built by Equinor (Dogger Bank 2023). Thus, the noun frequencies indicate that renewable energy is acknowledged to a higher degree than the nonrenewable energy. However, considering that the corpora are gathered from Equinor’s news reports, it must be acknowledged perhaps the current developing projects and involvements are being reported on to a further extent. Secondly, there is one specific change which is particularly interesting. Only after the RUW is the noun *gas* one of the most frequently used nouns (ranking nr. 9). As discussed in section 1.3., the RUW led to an energy crisis in Europe and an increased demand for nonrenewable energy – especially gas – as European countries aim to stop the gas import from Russia. Thus, the frequency lists indicate that Equinor made its gas production more prominent in the company portrayal after the RUW, and this may be considered Equinor’s response to the increased demand.

4.1.2. N-grams frequencies

Table 4.2: The 20 most frequently used 3–4-word n-grams in MBRUW and MARUW

N-GRAMS: 3--4-GRAMS, WORD			
MBRUW		MARUW	
N-grams	# Occurrences	N-grams	# Occurrences
1. in the UK	20	1. oil and gas	31
2. Dogger Bank Wind	17	2. one of the	28
3. Dogger Bank Wind Farm	17	3. Capture Power Station	24
4. Bank Wind Farm	17	4. Carbon Capture Power	24
5. the wind farm	16	5. Carbon Capture Power Station	24
6. one of the	15	6. vice president for	23
7. offshore wind farm	15	7. the energy transition	23
8. part of the	14	8. annual general meeting	22
9. low carbon hydrogen	13	9. in the UK	21
10. vice president for	13	10. floating offshore wind	21
11. as well as	12	11. share buy-back programme	21
12. floating offshore wind	11	12. senior vice president	19
13. senior vice president	11	13. as well as	19
14. share buy-back programme	10	14. Peterhead Carbon Capture	18
15. Dogger Bank C	10	15. billion in the	17
16. the world's first	10	16. in the US	17
17. Dogger Bank A	10	17. Securities Trading Act	16
18. is expected to	9	18. the Norwegian Securities Trading	16
19. of the wind	9	19. the Norwegian Securities Trading	16
20. SEP and DEP	9	20. the Norwegian Securities	16

In section 3.4.2., it is explained in depth why only the 3–4-word n-grams are examined. Essentially, they are most fit to represent the corpus contents in the present study. As illustrated in table 4.2, the similarities are smaller when comparing phrases that are single nouns between MBRUW and MARUW, and not many phrases used frequently before the RUW that have continued to be used frequently after. The exceptions are *one of the*, *in the UK*, and *as well as*. However, these are mostly common grammatical phrases which do not contain content specific to Equinor’s occupation. The only one standing out is *in the UK*, referring to the nation, and this points to Equinor having ongoing projects there. Yet, there are words within the phrases that seem to be occurring in both time periods, such as *wind*, *offshore*, *carbon*, and *capture*. It seems that Equinor mainly portrays their wind projects before RUW and carbon capture-related projects after RUW. Again, this may be connected to the company’s involvement in ongoing projects. However, it is interesting how *oil and gas* becomes the most frequently used 3–4-word n-gram after the RUW but is not even on the top 20 list before the RUW. Like with *gas* occurring in the noun frequency list after the RUW, the occurrence of the phrase *oil and gas* may also be considered as a result of the RUW. Overall, Equinor seems to be acknowledging nonrenewable energy to a larger extent after the RUW. This may be considered as a response to a higher demand – and thus a higher acceptance in the public opinion – of fossil fuel energy such as oil and gas.

4.2. Qualitative results of the main corpora

This section presents the semantic categories of the lexico-semantic approach of the qualitative analysis and explains their meaning in the present study. Thereafter, tables displaying the frequencies and LL calculations of the specific search items are presented in order to give an overview of the quantitative comparison before examining the search items discursively in concordances. The normalizations for the main corpora are calculated by per 1,000 words as the corpora are of smaller sizes. The LL numbers are rounded up to two decimals, and all of the calculations can be found in the appendix. Concordance lines for analysis are presented in figures; each figure contains 3 different examples (where possible) of concordances containing each KWIC before and after the RUW. When examining the concordances, the patterns in the right and left contexts of the KWIC are considered before going into depth by analyzing excerpts from the concordances of each corpus.

4.2.1. Semantic context categories

Table 4.3: The semantic categories of the qualitative analysis and their meaning

Semantic category	Meaning
<i>Green</i>	Refers to the color used to symbolize a more sustainable and eco-friendly future. Green represents the color of living things that grow in nature.
<i>Energy transition</i>	Refers to the ambition of transitioning from nonrenewable energy to renewable energy to create a more sustainable future in order to protect the environment from further demise.
<i>Oil</i>	Refers to petroleum, the liquid substance of nonrenewable energy coming from dead organisms which is found in geological formations.
<i>Gas</i>	Refers to natural gas consisting of different elements in gas form which occurs from the decomposition of organic matter.
<i>Emissions</i>	Refers to CO ₂ emissions which happens when carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere as a result of burning fossil fuels such as oil and gas.
<i>Fossil fuel</i>	Refers to oil and gas – energy sources formed from the decomposition of buried carbon-based organisms that died millions of years ago. Nonrenewable energy sources.
<i>Oil and gas</i>	Refers to both types of energy sources that fossil fuel companies mainly extract and produce.

Table 4.3 displays the different semantic categories that make up the search items in the analysis and explains their meaning in the present study. As mentioned in section 3.5.3., search items denoting nonrenewable energy and sustainability are examined as the goal of the study is to discover a potential shift in how Equinor positions itself towards the environment after the RUW and following energy crisis in Europe.

4.2.2. Search items: frequencies and LL calculations

Table 4.4: The frequencies and the normalization of the search items in the main corpora

FREQUENCIES: MAIN CORPORA				
SEARCH ITEM	MBRUW		MARUW	
	Freq. (n)	Per 1,000	Freq. (n)	Per 1,000
<i>Green</i>	5	0.25	9	0.24
<i>Energy transition</i>	18	0.91	39	1.05
<i>Oil</i>	27	1.36	63	1.70
<i>Gas</i>	34	1.72	125	3.38
<i>Emissions</i>	35	1.77	64	1.73
<i>Fossil fuel</i>	3	0.15	1	0.08
<i>Oil and gas</i>	10	0.50	34	0.92

In table 4.4, the frequencies and normalization per 1,000 words of the search items in the main corpora are displayed. Throughout analyzing the search items qualitatively in concordances in section 4.2.3. and 4.2.4., I will comment on these quantitative numbers as a starting point for comparing the relevance of each search item in the different corpora. Essentially, this demonstrates whether a certain content is given more emphasis before or after the RUW. As illustrated above, in MBRUW, the highest relevance given a search item is 1.77 (*Emissions*) and the lowest is 0.15 (*Fossil fuel*). In MARUW, the highest relevance is 3.38 (*Gas*) and the lowest is 0.08 (*Fossil fuel*). These different numbers function as the parameters of what is considered to be contents of high or low relevance in the analysis.

Table 4.5: The LL calculations of the search items in the main corpora

LOG LIKELIHOOD: MAIN CORPORA					
SEARCH ITEM		MBRUW	MARUW	OVERUSE (+) / UNDERUSE (-)	LL
<i>Green</i>	Freq. (n)	5	9	—	0.00
	Corpus size	19,816	37,019		
<i>Energy transition</i>	Freq. (n)	18	39	—	0.28
	Corpus size	19,816	37,019		
<i>Oil</i>	Freq. (n)	27	63	—	0.96
	Corpus size	19,816	37,019		
<i>Gas</i>	Freq. (n)	34	125	—	6.63
	Corpus size	19,816	37,019		
<i>Emissions</i>	Freq. (n)	35	64	+	0.01
	Corpus size	19,816	37,019		
<i>Fossil fuel</i>	Freq. (n)	3	1	+	2.68
	Corpus size	19,816	37,019		
<i>Oil and gas</i>	Freq. (n)	10	34	—	3.06
	Corpus size	19,816	37,019		

Table 4.5 displays the LL calculations of the search items in the two main corpora. As mentioned in section 3.4.4., although the frequencies and normalizations enable a comparison between the corpora, a LL calculation is needed in order to establish whether the results we see are of significance or if they may have occurred at random. Essentially, the LL calculations decide what emphasis should be given the quantitative comparisons between the frequencies of the search items. To repeat how the LL numbers should be interpreted from section 3.4.4., a number higher than 6.63 means that it is less than 1% likely that the results happened by chance, and a number of 3.84 or higher means that it is less than 5% likely that the results happened by chance. Moreover, the – / + signs represent if the specific search items are overused or underused in corpus 1 (MBRUW) compared to corpus 2 (MARUW); whether the search items have more (+) or less (–) emphasis before the RUW than after. Interestingly enough, only the frequency comparison of one search item creates a LL high enough to assure a more than 99% certainty that a comparison is valid, and that is *Gas* with a LL of 6.63. However, it must be

acknowledged that the main corpora are of significantly small sizes, and that this affects the calculations. As seen in section 4.5.1. where the LL calculations of the much larger reference corpora are presented, most of the LL numbers are high enough to ensure valid comparisons.

4.2.3. CDA of search items

4.2.3.1. *Green*

The semantic category *green* occurs 5 times in MBRUW and 9 times in MARUW, and the normalization gives it a relevance of respectively 0.25 and 0.24. Although these numbers illustrate a similar relevance, it is not a term which is given much emphasis in either corpus. Moreover, the LL number shows 0.00 and an overuse in MBRUW. Thus, the frequencies cannot be compared with significance.

MBRUW

3 of the 5 occurrences of *green* before the RUW refer to “the UK Green Building Council” (UKGBC) which is an organization aiming towards reducing the environmental impacts of man-made constructions in the UK (www.ukgbc.org). The remaining 2 occurrences refer to a more sustainable production of energy. The concordances below demonstrate these two different contexts:

- [1] The O&M base will be constructed and operated in line with the UK *green* Building Council’s (UKGBC) Net Zero Carbon Buildings to ensure transparent and robust reporting of its sustainability credentials. (07/04/2022)

[2] ... leading to reduced use of surface vessels and *greener*, safer and more cost-effective subsea operations. (05/04/2022)

[3] It will also support optimal production of both blue and *green* hydrogen production as the hydrogen economy grows... (30/03/2022)

Figure 4.1: Concordance lines with *green* as the KWIC in MBRUW

Example 1 illustrates Equinor’s cooperation with UKGBC, and it is apparently acting “in line” with the organization’s aim to construct “net zero carbon buildings” and thus minimizing

environmental harm in the industry. As Equinor has energy projects in the UK, it is natural for the company to comply with UK environmental targets. Moreover, this demonstrates how Equinor is a part of an international industry which collectively addresses climate change. It is apparent that Equinor uses the term “green” to describe something environmentally friendly, and that it wants some of its operations to be “greener” and “safer” (2) as well as create “green hydrogen production” (3). However, both examples 8 and 9 illustrate how projects being green are also connected to financial aspects, for instance by being mentioned together with “cost-effective subsea operations” (2) and “as the hydrogen economy grows” (3). Overall, this reminds us of how Equinor is a large corporation which creates and sells energy with the intention of making a profit as well as being a provider of energy.

MARUW

In the 9 times *green* occur in MARUW, 3 of the right contexts display “hydrogen” and 2 display “energy.” Moreover, the remaining 4 right contexts mention “jobs,” “industrial,” “technologies,” and “economy.” For the left contexts of the KWIC, finance- and industry-related words and terms such as “hydrogen economy,” “investment,” “energy startups,” “development,” and “wind industry” seem to dominate the contents. Overall, the way *green* energy is being portrayed seems to illustrate Equinor’s intentions of creating green energy solutions in combination with creating jobs and making profit, and the concordances below illustrate this discursive portrayal more closely:

- [4] ... by helping local minority- and women-owned business enterprises benefit from the growing offshore wind industry and take advantage of the *green* jobs of the future. (03/2022)
- [5] ... helping transition major local industries towards *greener* technologies whilst creating opportunities for both local and national businesses. (22/06/2022)
- [6] ... including investments in battery technology, *green* hydrogen, renewables innovation, and fusion energy... (16/08/2022)

Figure 4.2: Concordance lines with *green* as the KWIC in MARUW

In Equinor’s climate discourse after the RUW, it seemingly emphasizes the industrial and financial aspects of green energy production to a larger extent than before the RUW. The focus is on future possibilities, illustrated through “jobs of the future” (4), “creating opportunities”

(5) and “investments” (6). From this, it is apparent that it considers business opportunities and financial growth as a vital part of the transition to greener energy. Again, as a prominent financial player both in the Norwegian economy and in the world market, Equinor places focus on the creation of profit and job creation.

4.2.3.2. Energy transition

The semantic category *energy transition* occurs 18 times in MBRUW and 39 times in MARUW, and the normalization gives it a relevance of respectively 0.91 and 1.05. This is a quite high relevance in both corpora. The LL calculation is 0.28 and shows an underuse in MBRUW. Although this indicates a larger focus on the energy transition after the RUW, we cannot make a valid comparison based on the frequencies.

MBRUW

In the 18 occurrences before the RUW, verbs such as “achieve,” “contribute,” and “assure” tend to precede the KWIC *energy transition*. An “award” is mentioned in 5 of the right contexts, and as illustrated in example 7 below, this is referring to the Energy Transition Award that Equinor was given. As demonstrated through all of the concordances below, it is clear that the energy transition overall is portrayed as something that should be worked towards and invested in:

[7] Equinor was awarded *Energy Transition* Award in recognition of the work we are doing to reach net zero by 2050 including reducing our emissions from oil and gas production, growing our offshore wind business and building a hydrogen and carbon capture business in the UK. (09/12/2021)

[8] The world is ready to make big investments in commercial fusion as a key part of the global *energy transition*. (01/12/2021)

[9] Equinor Ventures is pleased to announce an investment in Energize Ventures, a leading global alternative investment manager that funds digital first-solutions accelerating the sustainable *energy transition*... (29/09/2021)

Figure 4.3: Concordance lines with *energy transition* as the KWIC in MBRUW

The fact that Equinor was given an award for their efforts related to reaching “net zero,” reducing “emissions from oil and gas,” growing the “offshore wind business” and focusing on “hydrogen and carbon capture” (7) shows that the company is heavily invested in the energy transition and creating a more sustainable future. Furthermore, both examples 8 and 9 illustrate how the company is focused on investments in companies and products that are aimed at making the energy transition happen, such as “commercial fusion” (8) and “Energize Ventures” (9). However, there is no mention of possible challenges related to the energy transition or why the energy transition is needed. Overall, Equinor’s focus is seemingly on its efforts and possible solutions.

MARUW

Overall, the energy transition after the RUW is portrayed quite similarly to before the RUW – as an ongoing plan to be invested in and aimed towards. *Energy transition* is mentioned 39 times, making it the 4th most mentioned search item in the corpus. The left contexts of the KWIC are mainly dominated by words showing effort being put into the energy transition such as “support,” “vision,” “drive,” “invest,” “progressing,” “ambitions,” and “succeed.” Again, it is clear that Equinor shows dedication to a more sustainable future in its company portrayal. Furthermore, in 5 of the left contexts, Equinor refers to itself as a “leading company” or having “leadership” in the energy transition. In the right contexts, the word “plan” follows the KWIC 10 times, referring to Equinor’s official plan of action to make their energy more sustainable. The concordances below illustrate Equinor’s various portrayals of the energy transition:

[10] Equinor believes that CCS is vital to succeed with the *energy transition* and to reach net-zero by 2050. (29/06/2022)

[11] Equinor puts its best effort into securing safe and reliable deliveries of energy to Europe, whilst continuing to invest in the *energy transition*. (27/07/2022)

[12] Equinor is developing as a leading company in the *energy transition* with forceful industrial progress within oil and gas, renewables, as well as low-carbon portfolios. (04/05/2022)

Figure 4.4: Concordance lines with *energy transition* as the KWIC in MARUW

As example 10 makes clear, Equinor does not necessarily see reducing the production of fossil fuel energy as the key element in the energy transition, but it believes that “CCS is vital” to

make the transition happen. CCS refers to ‘carbon capture and storage.’ According to the IEA, CCS is “a suite of technologies that can play a diverse role in meeting global energy and climate goals” (IEA 2022). Thus, it is a method aimed at reducing emissions reaching the atmosphere by capturing and storing CO₂, and not by stopping emissions overall. Example 12 demonstrates how Equinor portrays itself as a “leading company” in the energy transition because of their “forceful industrial progress” related to nonrenewable and renewable energy. This indicates that the company is striving to be perceived as a growing green company that takes responsibility in climate issues. Especially interesting for the present study, however, is example 11 which presumably is directly related to the RUW. Equinor is “securing safe and reliable deliveries of energy to Europe” but is also assuring that it continues to “invest in the energy transition.” Thus, Equinor’s position as an energy provider has been strengthened after the RUW. Moreover, the increase of energy deliveries, most likely energy in the form of oil and gas, is seemingly justified by how the company claims to still be invested in the energy transition. However, increasing the production and export of fossil fuel energy is contradictory to the goal of the energy transition: to reduce emissions.

4.2.3.3. *Oil*

The semantic category *oil* occurs 27 times in MBRUW and 63 times in MARUW, and the normalization gives it a relevance of respectively 1.36 and 1.70. Thus, the term seemingly has a high relevance in both corpora, but especially after the RUW. The LL calculation is 0.96 and shows an underuse in MBRUW. Although everything points to the fact that oil is discussed to a further extent after the RUW, we cannot make a particularly valid comparison between the frequencies of the corpora.

MBRUW

In 10 of the contexts right of the KWIC, *oil* is directly followed by “and gas,” and this is a separate semantic category which will be examined in section 4.2.3.7. In the remaining 17 occurrences, a few language patterns occur. 5 of the right contexts mention “equivalent” which refers to an energy unit based on how much energy is being released by burning one barrel of oil (Norsk Petroleum 2023). The rest of the right contexts refer to certain oil fields, oil prices, and oil export. The left contexts generally mention oil production as well as discoveries and

exploration. Overall, the concordances display how Equinor reports on its ongoing oil projects, and the concordances below illustrate a few of these portrayals:

- [13] Total investments are NOK 18.3 billion and the project is profitable even with significantly lower *oil* prices than today. (12/10/2021)
- [14] Toppand is the fifth discovery in the area, and proven resources might exceed 300 million barrels of *oil* equivalent. (07/01/2022)
- [15] Equinor has, together with its partner Wellesley, discovered *oil* in the Troll and Fram area in exploration wells 35/10-7 S and 35/10-7 A in the Toppand prospect. (07/01/2022)

Figure 4.5: Concordance lines with *oil* as the KWIC in MBRUW

From the excerpts, it is obvious that Equinor focuses on growth in relation to oil, both financially and in production. This is demonstrated through sharing how the project is “profitable” (13), a new “discovery” being made (14), and how oil is “discovered” in the “Troll and Fram area in exploration wells” (15). However, although the company claims to be invested in the energy transition (as discussed in section 4.2.3.2.), there is no mention of reducing oil production or making it more sustainable in future projects. Overall, Equinor is mainly reporting on the specific aspects related to ongoing oil projects and not how these oil projects are affecting the environment.

MARUW

In 34 of the right contexts, *oil* as a KWIC is directly followed by “and gas,” and as with before the RUW, this is a separate semantic category which will be examined in section 4.2.3.7. Overall, oil is portrayed quite similarly after the RUW as before. It is mainly related to production, prices, and discoveries. However, especially relevant for the present study is how a new language pattern occurs. In the 27 remaining occurrences, 5 of the concordances include the words “Russia” or “Russian,” so oil is being directly discussed in relation to the RUW.

[16] Following the announcement that Equinor has started the process to exit its projects in Russia, a decision has been made that Equinor will also stop trading in Russian *oil*. (14/03/2022)

[17] In parallel with the maintenance and upgrades on the FPSO, a third wellhead platform, Peregrino C, was installed and is progressing towards the start of production, with the first *oil* expected in the third quarter 2022. (19/07/2022)

[18] Preliminary calculations of the size of the discovery indicate between 37 and 50 million barrels of recoverable *oil*. (25/05/2022)

Figure 4.6: Concordance lines with *oil* as the KWIC in MARUW

As example 17 and 18 illustrate, Equinor is still mainly concerned with oil “production” (17) and oil “discovery” (12) after the RUW, and the concordances are dominated by reports on specific ongoing projects. However, and just as before the RUW, neither reducing emissions or downscaling production is discussed, so the focus on sustainability and the energy transition is not prominent in the discursive portrayal of oil. In relation to the RUW, example 16 exemplifies how Equinor specifically addresses the war and how it is affecting the company. Equinor means to “exit its projects in Russia” as well as “stop trading in Russian oil.” Thus, Equinor intends to minimize its activity in Russian nonrenewable energy as part of the sanctions towards Russia as discussed in section 1.3. However, Equinor does not state how the sanctions explicitly impacts its own oil. As discussed in section 1.3., the RUW has been very profitable for the company as oil prices have rocketed.

4.2.3.4. *Gas*

The semantic category *gas* occurs 34 times in MBRUW and 125 times in MARUW, and the normalization gives it a relevance of respectively 1.72 and 3.38. This is the search item with the second highest number of occurrences and normalization in MBRUW and the highest number of occurrences and normalization in MARUW. Furthermore, the LL calculation is 13.79 and shows an underuse of the term in MBRUW. Overall, all of the calculations prove that the emphasis given gas by Equinor in its company portrayal increased significantly after the RUW.

MBRUW

Out of the 22 times *gas* is the KWIC without being preceded by “oil and,” 12 concordances mention “low carbon,” “zero carbon,” “carbon capture,” or “decarbonisation” in either the right or left contexts. Furthermore, most of these concordances also mention “hydrogen.” As seen in table 4.1, “hydrogen” is a frequently used noun in both main corpora. Thus, the continuous theme seems to be fuel switching from natural gas to low carbon hydrogen. 4 of these concordances also specifically mention “reducing emissions.” Overall, everything points to the fact that gas is mainly discussed in relation to a renewable energy shift, and that Equinor focuses on the sustainable possibilities of this type of energy production. All of the concordances below demonstrate this focus:

- [19] Producing hydrogen from natural *gas* with Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) provides a practical, scalable solution to decarbonise a wide range of sectors that currently depend on fossil fuel... (26/11/2021)
- [20] Fuel switching from natural *gas* to low carbon hydrogen would support decarbonisation of the Humber region and further accelerate the development of what could be a world first-of-a-kind hydrogen value chain project. (01/02/2022)
- [21] The Government’s recently published Ten Point Plan and Hydrogen Strategy set out the potential for the low carbon gas to decarbonise *gas* networks... (15/12/2021)

Figure 4.7: Concordance lines with *gas* as the KWIC in MBRUW

From the excerpts, Equinor’s focus on minimizing carbon is clear. This is illustrated through presenting a “solution to decarbonise a wide range of sectors” (19), and suggesting “fuel switching from natural gas to low carbon hydrogen” (20) and for “low carbon gas to decarbonise gas networks” (21). However, there is no mention of how the ongoing gas production is affecting the environment or why this renewable shift is needed. Equinor’s focus is only on future solutions and possibilities without explicitly acknowledging its current impact. Overall, this indicates that Equinor is portraying itself as a solely sustainable company.

MARUW

The way *gas* is portrayed after the RUW changes significantly from before the RUW. In the 96 times *gas* is mentioned without being preceded by “oil and,” only 5 of the concordances

mention “low carbon,” “decarbonisation,” or “carbon capture.” Instead of focusing on future sustainable possibilities related to gas like before the RUW, there seems to be a shift where Equinor focuses more on the general increase of gas production. 27 of the right contexts include the words “export” or “production.” Furthermore, 11 of the right contexts mention “demand.” In both the left and right contexts, 22 of the concordances discuss “increasing” or the “increase” of the production of gas, and “Europe” or “European” is mentioned 27 times. Overall, Equinor’s main focus seems to be portraying how the company intends to increase the production and export of gas in order to meet the growing demand in Europe as a result of the RUW. However, although this is the main focus, reducing carbon emissions still has some emphasis.

[22] Equinor and its partners, together with Norwegian authorities, take new steps to meet the *gas* demand in Europe. Increased production permits allow the high *gas* production from the Troll, Oseberg and Heidrun fields to be maintained through the summer months. (16/03/2022)

[23] With CCS, blue hydrogen and ammonia can more or less eliminate emissions from the use of *gas*, thus ensuring access to large amounts of low-carbon and reliable energy. (05/04/2022)

[24] Equinor ASA presents its 2021 annual report and form 20-F, and its 2021 Sustainability report. Equinor took measures in the second half of 2021 to increase deliveries of *gas* to Europe as demand increased. (18/03/2022)

Figure 4.8: Concordance lines with *gas* as the KWIC in MARUW

From example 22, it is clear that Equinor is aiming for “increased production” of gas in order to “meet the gas demand in Europe.” Moreover, it is emphasized that the decision is made together with the “Norwegian authorities.” Furthermore, and also related to the RUW, example 24 demonstrates how it is acknowledged that the increased production is counter-productive to the climate goals. Equinor explicitly mentions how the decision to “increase deliveries of gas” is not compatible with the aims of the “Sustainability report,” but it is quick to justify the increase “as demand increased.” Overall, the company is making sure to emphasize the fact that they are providing a need, and although this goes against climate and sustainability goals, it is backed up by official political organs. Although there still is some focus to “eliminate emissions from the use of gas” (23), the overall language trends of MBRUW and MARUW tell us that the sustainability aspect lost significance after the RUW.

4.2.3.5. Emissions

The semantic category *emissions* occurs 35 times in MBRUW and 64 times in MARUW, and the normalization gives it a relevance of respectively 1.77 and 1.73. The LL calculation is 0.01 and shows an overuse in MBRUW. Thus, we cannot make a comparison of particular significance.

MBRUW

In the 35 occurrences of *emissions* before the RUW, 32 of the concordances are discussing the reduction of emissions by including words such as “reduce,” “reducing,” “low,” “lower,” “net zero,” “remove,” and “bring down.” These words are dominating both the right and left contexts. The remaining 3 concordances are discussing how high the emissions per oil barrel is, and specific emissions related to Equinor’s energy projects in the UK. Overall, and as illustrated in the concordances below, Equinor is mainly portraying plans and actions that are meant to lead to reduction of CO₂ emissions from their involvements:

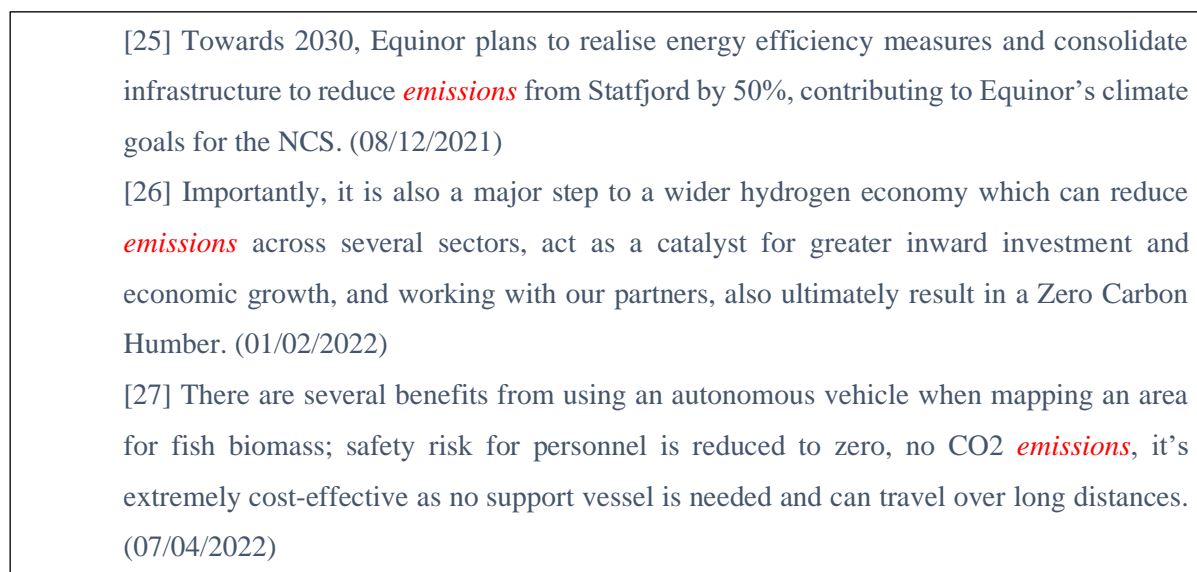


Figure 4.9: Concordance lines with *emissions* as the KWIC in MBRUW

It is clear from example 25 that Equinor aims to “reduce emissions” because it contributes to the company’s “climate goals for the NCS.” The NCS is Natural Climate Solutions, so Equinor is cooperating with environmental actors in order to create a more sustainable energy future. In example 26, Equinor is emphasizing the importance of a “wider hydrogen economy” as it will

have positive effects on reducing emissions and create “greater inward investment and economic growth.” In example 27, Equinor is seemingly promoting its constant sustainable focus, even in the execution of small operations and procedures, as it is stated that “no CO2 emissions” were released when “using an autonomous vehicle when mapping an area for fish biomass.” Overall, emissions is mainly discussed in relation to how Equinor intends to minimize them. As with the several of the other semantic categories, the company is only focusing on future possibilities and sustainable actions they are responsible for, without seemingly acknowledging the current impact its projects are having on the environment.

MARUW

After the RUW, Equinor overall has a similar focus as before the RUW regarding the reduction of emissions. In the 64 occurrences of *emissions*, 51 concordances include words such as “reduce” or “reducing,” “low” or “lower,” “net zero,” or “remove,” and these words are dominating both the left and right contexts. The concordances below demonstrate this continuous focus:

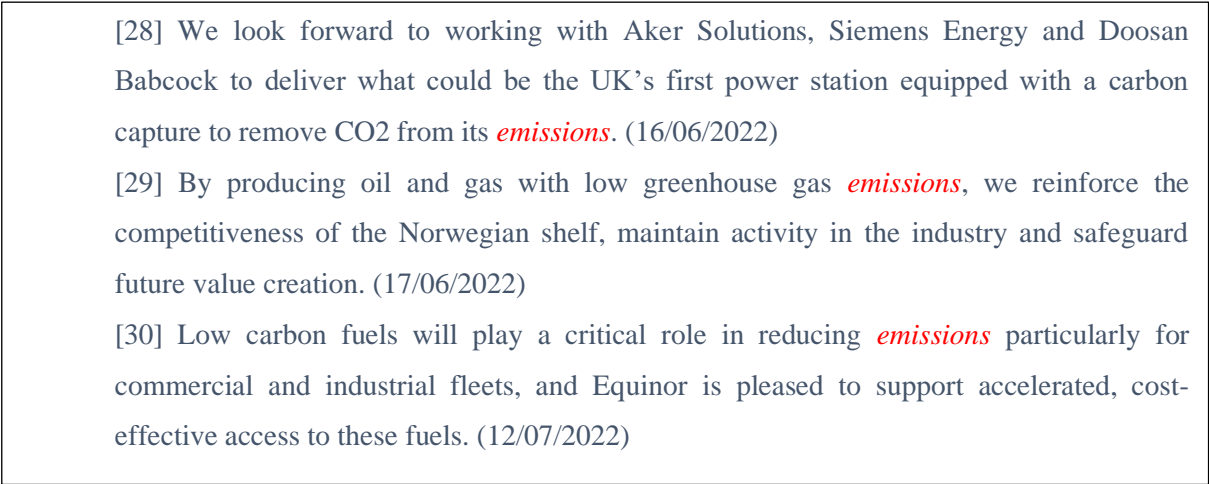


Figure 4.10: Concordance lines with *emissions* as the KWIC in MARUW

Example 28 demonstrates Equinor’s aim to “remove CO2 from its emissions” by using “carbon capture,” and example 30 underlines how the company believes that “low carbon fuels will play a critical role in reducing emissions.” Furthermore, in example 29, the intention of “producing oil and gas with low greenhouse gas emissions” is also made clear. However, there is also a clear focus on the financial aspects of Equinor’s productions, illustrated through attitudes towards maintaining “activity in the industry and safeguard future value creation” (29) and

ensuring “cost-effective access” to the fuels (30). Overall, Equinor is making sure to portray itself both as a company that focuses on a more sustainable future, and as a company that continues to focus on making profit and creating jobs and value for the future.

4.2.3.6. Fossil fuel

The semantic category *fossil fuel* occurs 3 times in MBRUW and 1 time in MARUW, and the normalization gives it a relevance of respectively 0.15 and 0.08. Thus, it has a very low relevance in both corpora, but it is slightly more relevant before the RUW. The LL calculation is 2.68 and shows an overuse in MBRUW, and this means that the comparison is moderately valid.

MBRUW

The overall trend in the 3 concordances of *fossil fuel* is how Equinor portrays a shift away from fossil fuel energy:

[31] Producing hydrogen from natural gas with Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) provides a practical, scalable solution to decarbonise a wide range of sectors that currently depend on *fossil fuel*... (26/11/2021)

[32] Using hydrogen instead of *fossil fuels* within its processes can reduce its emissions and produce lower carbon chemicals for wider use in the economy or for export. (01/02/2022)

[33] By switching from *fossil fuels* to low carbon hydrogen it can accelerate the decarbonisation of the Park and its other users. (01/02/2022)

Figure 4.11: Concordance lines with *fossil fuel* as the KWIC in MBRUW

From the concordances, it is clear that switching to hydrogen-based energy is seen as the future solution when moving away from fossil fuel sources. This is demonstrated through hydrogen being presented as a “practical, scalable solution” (31), as the option “instead of fossil fuels” (32), and as the factor that can “accelerate the decarbonisation” (33). Overall, Equinor is not discussing ‘fossil fuels’ as a theme by itself, but only in the context of reducing its use. This is interesting as it is a fossil fuel company where over 99 % of its energy production comes from oil and gas (Greenpeace 2023). This underlines Equinor’s continuous trend of only focusing on

future possibilities and green investments without acknowledging the current impact the company is having on the environment and climate change.

MARUW

Although only mentioned once after the RUW, we see that Equinor has the similar focus regarding *fossil fuel* as before the RUW:

[34] The Humber region is the most carbon intensive industrial area in the UK and there are a number of major emitters that could use hydrogen to transition from *fossil fuels* and reduce their emissions. (22/06/2022)

Figure 4.12: Concordance lines with *fossil fuel* as the KWIC in MARUW

Example 34 demonstrates that Equinor suggests using “hydrogen to transition from fossil fuels” in order to “reduce their emissions.” Again, fossil fuels are only discussed in the context of offering a future solution that would be more sustainable, but the actual effects of using fossil fuels are not acknowledged.

4.2.3.7. Oil and gas

The semantic category *oil and gas* occurs 10 times in MBRUW and 34 times in MARUW, and as displayed in table 4.2, it is the most frequently used 3–4-word n-gram after the RUW. The normalization gives it a relevance of respectively 0.50 and 0.92, so it has more relevance after the RUW. The LL is 3.06 and shows an underuse of the term in MBRUW. This tells us that we can be quite sure (but not quite 95 % sure as if the number was 3.84) that the increased focus on oil and gas after the RUW is significant.

MBRUW

In the 10 occurrences of *oil and gas* before the RUW, it is apparent that oil and gas is being discussed in relation to different things. 2 concordances mention “oil and gas leaks,” 2 mention “oil and gas production,” mention “transformation” or to “transform,” and 2 mention

“reducing” or “lower” emissions. The concordances below demonstrate the different portrayals of oil and gas:

[35] In this transformation, *oil and gas* play a crucial role, both in delivering energy that is critical to society, but also through the expertise, technology and capital needed to realise the transformation. (18/01/2022)

[36] Eleven *oil and gas* leaks have been recorded during the past 12 months. (20/10/2021)

[37] Securing this role demonstrates that skills and expertise gained from working in *oil and gas* can be transferred across to roles in the renewables industry, a really important message to convey as we will need thousands of people to deliver on the Government’s net zero and renewables targets. (28/09/2022)

Figure 4.13: Concordance lines with *oil and gas* as the KWIC in MBRUW

In example 35, the transformation being referred to is a low-carbon energy one. Equinor states that oil and gas is crucial because it is “delivering energy,” and because it offers “expertise, technology and capital” that is needed to “realise the transformation.” Through this, Equinor is acknowledging that oil and gas is vital for energy production. However, the company makes sure to underline the fact that its energy is “critical to society,” again portraying itself as an important provider of an existing need. In example 36, Equinor is acknowledging and sharing information about the “Eleven oil and gas leaks” that the company has recorded during a year. Although it is apparent that Equinor takes it seriously, it is not explicitly mentioned how these leaks have a negative impact on the environment. Example 37 is similar to example 35 where oil and gas are portrayed as important actors in the energy transition, and it is underlined how the “skills and expertise” from working with fossil fuels may be “transferred across to roles in the renewables industry.” Overall, the general portrayal of oil and gas is connected to how fossil fuels still are considered important sources of energy, and that they have a role to play in the energy transition. However, the actual harms these fossil fuels cause to the environment is less acknowledged by Equinor.

MARUW

Although more emphasis is placed on oil and gas after the RUW, it is still discussed in a similar manner as before the RUW. In the 34 mentions of *oil and gas*, it is being discussed in relation to various things such as different “installations,” “prices,” “discovery,” “production,” “leaks,”

and “low carbon.” Although there are no language patterns that stand out in the left or right contexts, the general focus seems to be that oil and gas still has a role to play in providing energy and in the energy transition as a whole. Interestingly enough, and unlike the search items *oil* and *gas* on their own, the RUW is not specifically mentioned in any of the concordances.

[38] We have set a clear direction to apply our experience, competence and the financial muscle from *oil and gas* to new value creating sectors of the energy system. (19/04/2022)

[39] Therefore, while we still need *oil and gas*, we aim to develop and operate projects such as Rosebank with the lowest possible carbon footprint while bringing maximum value to society in the shape of UK investment, local jobs and energy security. (05/08/2022)

[40] Equinor, which is the operator of production license 293 B, has discovered *oil and gas* close to the Troll and Fram area. (11/04/2022)

Figure 4.14: Concordance lines with *oil and gas* as the KWIC in MARUW

In example 38, it is clear that Equinor places value on the “experience, competence and the financial muscle” provided by oil and gas, and it sees these assets as vital for new and renewable energy creations. Furthermore, in example 39, Equinor states that we “still need oil and gas,” but that creating the “lowest possible carbon footprint” is the goal of its projects. Example 40 shows how Equinor is reporting on oil and gas discoveries, and as opposed to before the RUW where no discoveries were mentioned, 3 discoveries are mentioned here. The only element indicating a potential connection to the RUW is how example 39 mentions bringing “energy security.” This is presumably connected to the war as Russia’s deliveries of energy became unpredictable. Overall, Equinor’s focus surrounding oil and gas has to do with how it still has a part to play in the energy market and in the transitioning to more renewable energy.

4.3. Comparison: Equinor’s climate discourse before and after the RUW

Equinor’s climate discourse surrounding nonrenewable energy is fairly similar before and after the RUW. However, many of the discursive trends are interesting and relevant for the research questions of the present study. In the portrayal of the four semantic categories *Green*, *Energy transition*, *Emissions*, and *Fossil fuel*, Equinor has a tendency of focusing on its involvement in sustainable projects and possible “green” solutions which will lower carbon emissions and prevent climate change in the future. This is illustrated by, for instance, the constant focus on switching to low-carbon hydrogen, implementing CCS, and investing in other green projects

like offshore wind parks. However, there is little to no mention of, for example, how its current energy projects (which are mainly fossil fuel-based) are impacting the environment, what scale of emissions the company is responsible for, why the energy transition is needed in the first place, or possible challenges related to making the energy transition a reality. The presence of a sustainability focus and the absence of acknowledging how the fossil fuel sector is unsustainable and harmful to the environment points to the fact that Equinor is portraying itself as a greener company than it actually is. Furthermore, and as illustrated in the three semantic categories *Oil*, *Gas*, and *Oil and gas*, Equinor never mentions reducing or stopping its production of nonrenewable energy despite constantly discussing the energy transition. It is obvious that the company rather sees “greening” fossil fuels as the solution instead of replacing them. This is interesting as the company many times refers to itself as a “leader” or a “leading” force in the energy transition. Moreover, a general focus on industrial and financial aspects is continuous in most of the semantic categories. Equinor places emphasis on creating green jobs, making profit, and securing value creation, and this focus is present both before and after the RUW.

Although Equinor’s portrayal of nonrenewable energy is quite similar before and after the RUW, some differences occur which are directly related to the RUW and following energy crisis in Europe. This shift is most notable in the semantic categories *Oil* and *Gas*, and to a minor extent in *Energy transition* and *Oil and gas*. Equinor states that it will exit its projects in Russia and stop investing in Russian oil, and the company emphasizes how it will increase and secure gas exports to Europe as demand has increased. In the overall portrayal of how the RUW has affected the energy market, Equinor generally focuses on portraying itself as an important provider of energy. Moreover, it is apparent from the analyses after the RUW that the climate and sustainability focus has lost some significance. However, although oil and gas prices skyrocketed after the war, Equinor does not mention the increased profits which have been record-high. In other words, there is no focus on how Equinor is capitalizing on and benefiting from the war in the company portrayal. Instead, Equinor is making sure to emphasize how its productions and exports are needed, and how it is taking responsibility in the situation. Overall, it seems that the RUW led Equinor to both acknowledge and promote its fossil fuel-based energy production to a larger extent, and as a result of this, the environmental focus the company previously underlined has been somewhat lessened.

4.4. Quantitative results of the reference corpora

This section looks at the quantitative results of the reference corpora. A frequency list displaying the 20 most frequently used nouns before and after the RUW is presented. This is the only basis for general language tendencies as the NOW corpus does not have n-grams lists.

4.4.1. Noun frequencies

Table 4.6: The 20 most frequently used nouns in RBRUW and RARUW

WORD FREQUENCY: NOUNS					
RBRUW			RARUW		
Word	# Occurrences	# Texts	Word	# Occurrences	# Texts
1. Company	1761	426	1. Oil	2424	336
2. Share	1758	305	2. Company	1988	356
3. Year	1704	430	3. Gas	1909	335
4. Gas	1147	208	4. Energy	1559	331
5. Energy	1080	258	5. Year	1456	332
6. Oil	1021	216	6. Project	1285	232
7. Time	900	356	7. Price	1133	235
8. Program	852	232	8. Market	918	243
9. Project	852	275	9. Country	823	260
10. Market	832	330	10. Billion	724	218
11. Million	826	298	11. Government	709	218
12. Billion	751	272	12. Million	706	202
13. Buyback	689	156	13. Business	666	225
14. Technology	609	206	14. Time	652	252
15. Plan	550	235	15. Production	640	227
16. Team	541	210	16. Investment	631	216
17. World	540	243	17. Supply	597	197
18. Price	538	243	18. World	584	252
19. Industry	534	197	19. Share	574	156
20. People	532	190	20. Climate	572	127

As mentioned in section 3.2.3., RBRUW (Reference corpus Before the RUW) contains 641,661 words and RARUW (Reference corpus After the RUW) contains 509,287 words. Furthermore, the number of articles discussing Equinor is 505 before the RUW and 442 after. On a general level, this indicates that Equinor as a company was mentioned and discussed slightly more in English-speaking news media before the RUW. For examining how Equinor as a fossil fuel company has been portrayed in news articles, the content words displayed in the frequency list functions as a point of departure in the general discussion and comparison with the search items. As illustrated in table 4.6, there are quite a few similarities between the most frequently used nouns before and after the RUW. 13 of them, so the majority, are similar. Moreover, 4 out of the 5 top nouns in both time periods are identical although the order changes a bit. These include *company*, *gas*, *energy*, and *year*. All of these nouns may be considered to be predictable as Equinor is an *energy company* with *gas* as one of its largest energy sources. Furthermore, *year* presumably presents yearly productions or profits, as this is a usual time frame for reporting on companies' activities. Especially interesting for the present study, however, is how *gas* and *oil* went from being respectively the fourth and sixth most frequently used nouns in RBRUW to the third and the most used nouns in RARUW. This indicates that although their relevance in news reports regarding Equinor were always high, it seemingly became even higher after the RUW. Otherwise, on a general basis, there seems to be a focus on the financial and industrial aspects of the energy market, denoted by nouns such as "price," "market," "business," "billion," "million," "industry," "investment," "production," and "supply." However, in section 4.7.1., the general tendencies of the reference corpora will be compared with the general tendencies of the main corpora, thus creating a clearer image of what the language in the company portrayal and the public opinion is able to tell us about the climate discourse surrounding Equinor before and after the RUW.

4.5. Qualitative results of the reference corpora

For the qualitative analysis of the reference corpora, the identical procedure is done as when qualitatively examining the main corpora. However, most of the search items occur over 100 times in the corpora (only *energy transition* occurs under 100 times). As mentioned in section 3.3.3., that means that mainly 100 concordances that the NOW corpus samples within the corpora will be examined. It must also be mentioned that although Equinor is specifically discussed to some extent in the news corpora, the company is often discussed among other fossil fuel companies. Thus, the public opinion's general view on the fossil fuel sector in

relation to nonrenewable energy and sustainability before and after the RUW is sometimes presented. This goes back to the corpus design limitations discussed in section 3.6.1.

4.5.1. Search items: frequencies and LL calculations

Table 4.7: The frequencies and normalization of the search items in the reference corpora

FREQUENCIES: REFERENCE CORPORA				
SEARCH ITEM	RBRUW		RARUW	
	Freq. (n)	Per 10,000	Freq. (n)	Per 10,000
<i>Green</i>	253	3.94	148	2.91
<i>Energy transition</i>	94	1.46	82	1.61
<i>Oil</i>	1159	18.06	2623	51.10
<i>Gas</i>	1209	18.84	1976	38.80
<i>Emissions</i>	503	7.84	477	9.37
<i>Fossil fuel</i>	104	1.62	171	3.36
<i>Oil and gas</i>	350	5.45	687	13.49

In table 4.7, the frequencies and normalization per 10,000 words of the search items in the reference corpora are displayed. The normalization calculations are done by per 10,000 words instead of per 1,000 words as in the main corpora because the reference corpora are of larger sizes and the numbers provided are more manageable. As illustrated above, in RBRUW, the highest relevance given a search item is 18.84 (*Gas*) and the lowest is 1.46 (*Energy transition*). In RARUW, the highest relevance is 51.10 (*Oil*) and the lowest is 1.61 (*Energy transition*). These different numbers function as the parameters of what are to be considered contents of high or low relevance in the analysis.

Table 4.8: The LL calculations of the search items in the reference corpora

LOG LIKELIHOOD: REFERENCE CORPORA					
SEARCH ITEM		RBRUW	RARUW	OVERUSE (+) / UNDERUSE (-)	LL
<i>Green</i>	Freq. (n)	253	148	+	8.90
	Corpus size	641,661	509,287		
<i>Energy transition</i>	Freq. (n)	94	82	—	0.39
	Corpus size	641,661	509,287		
<i>Oil</i>	Freq. (n)	1159	2623	—	970.40
	Corpus size	641,661	509,287		
<i>Gas</i>	Freq. (n)	1209	1976	—	406.16
	Corpus size	641,661	509,287		
<i>Emissions</i>	Freq. (n)	503	477	—	7.73
	Corpus size	641,661	509,287		
<i>Fossil fuel</i>	Freq. (n)	104	171	—	35.63
	Corpus size	641,661	509,287		
<i>Oil and gas</i>	Freq. (n)	350	687	—	203.20
	Corpus size	641,661	509,287		

In table 4.8, the LL calculations of the search items in the reference corpora are displayed, and the – / + demonstrate whether a term was given more or less emphasis in corpus 1 (RBRUW) than in corpus 2 (RARUW). Interestingly enough, all of the search items except for one were given more emphasis after the RUW. The exception is *green* which has an overuse in RBRUW. As illustrated through the numbers displayed, the frequencies of most of the terms increased after the RUW although the general amount of content (corpus size) regarding Equinor was smaller. Furthermore, all of the LL calculations but one (*Energy transition*) assure 99% or more that the comparisons between the corpora are of significance. Generally, this may indicate a stronger focus from the public on fossil fuel companies in relation to nonrenewable energy after the RUW, but qualitative analyses of relevant concordances are needed in order to establish why the terms are given more emphasis.

4.5.2. CDA of search items

4.5.2.1. Green

The semantic category *green* occurs 253 times in RBRUW and 148 times in RARUW, and the normalization gives it a relevance of respectively 3.94 and 2.91. The LL is 8.90 and shows an overuse in RBRUW. Overall, the calculations tell us that there was more emphasis on the term before the RUW than after.

RBRUW

In the occurrences of *green* before the RUW, the concordances are overall discussing specific energy projects, natural resources, finance, and politics. More specifically, the right contexts mention “energy” 12 times and “power” 3 times, illustrating how some energy sources are to be considered eco-friendly. It is obvious from the 25 concordances mentioning “hydrogen” and the 8 concordances mentioning lowering “carbon” that these two elements are vital regarding creating green energy, and the concordances below illustrate the different ways green energy is portrayed in relation to fossil fuel companies like Equinor:

- [41] Capable of providing *green* energy for six million homes in the UK, the Dogger Bank Wind Farm is due to be complete by 2026. (Trade Arabia, 22/12/2021)

[42] *Green* hydrogen is seen as a game-changing solution to emissions in the heaviest of industries, but it has a long way to go – less than 1% of the world’s hydrogen today is *green*, according to Fitch Ratings. (CNN, 22/12/2021)

[43] ...we are now representing almost 8,000 *green* shareholders who all share our conviction that we need the oil industry to change to have any chance to stop climate change, to achieve the Paris goals. (National Observer, 14/10/2021)

Figure 4.15: Concordance lines with *green* as the KWIC in RBRUW

As mentioned in section 4.1.1., the Dogger Bank Wind Farm is going to be the largest offshore windmill park in the world, and in example 41, Equinor is credited for “providing green energy for six million homes in the UK.” Wind farms are considered green energy as wind is a renewable power source. Moreover, example 42 demonstrates how Equinor is invested in developing “green hydrogen,” considered a “game-changing solution” to stopping emissions.

Thus, it is apparent in public discourse that Equinor not only is a fossil fuel company, but that it is active in the energy transition and focuses on green projects as well. However, it is stated that hydrogen still “has a long way to go” as “less than 1% of the world’s hydrogen today is green” (42). Furthermore, example 43 demonstrates how shareholders (in this case in Canada) in fossil fuel companies “need the oil industry to change” if the Paris Agreement goals are to be achieved in order to “stop climate change.” Thus, although Equinor is looking to develop green energy projects, the public opinion in general is that bigger changes are needed in order to prevent further negative impacts on the environment by fossil fuel companies.

RARUW

Overall, the discursive portrayal of *green* is fairly similar after the RUW as before, and this is not a semantic category which explicitly displays a discursive shift as a result of the war. The right contexts mention “energy” 9 times and “power” 1, and 23 concordances are discussing “hydrogen” and 8 “carbon.” Furthermore, 6 concordances mention “transition.” Thus, it is clear that the focus is on green energy projects in order to make the energy transition happen. However, criticism towards Equinor and fossil fuel companies in general is still prominent, and the concordances below illustrate this:

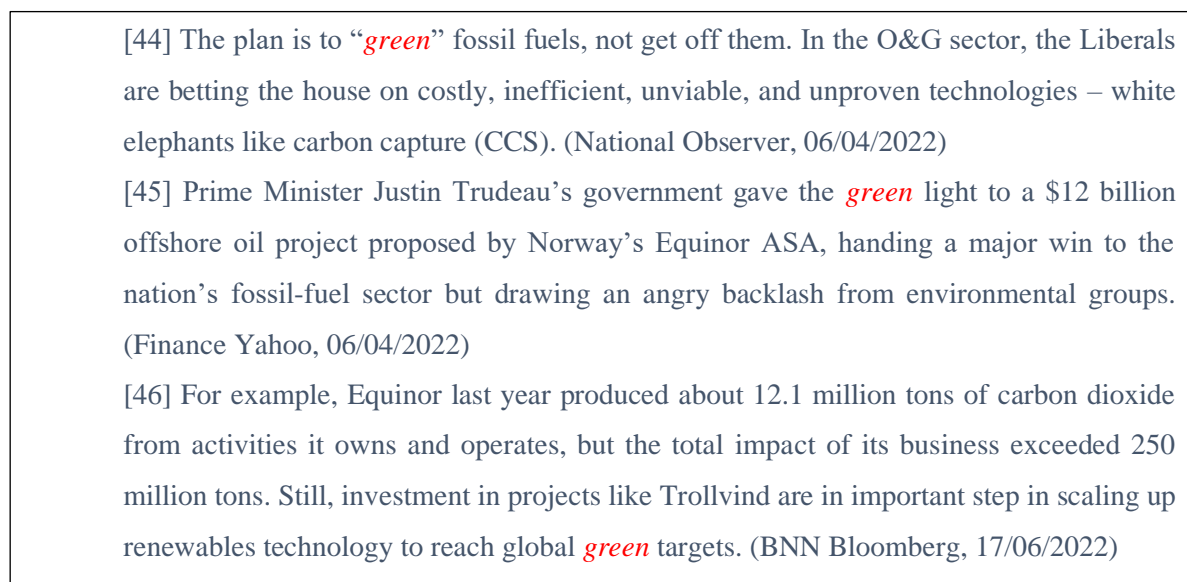


Figure 4.16: Concordance lines with *green* as the KWIC in RARUW

In example 44, it is obvious that the oil and gas sector is being criticized for attempting to “green” fossil fuels instead of cutting them out, and the criticism is rooted in how they focus

on technologies like “carbon capture” although these may be considered “costly, inefficient, unviable,” and most of all, “unproven.” This indicates how a part of the public opinion claims that fossil fuel companies are ‘greenwashing’ their actions by mainly focusing on green solutions that may not even provide sufficient results instead of changing their course away from nonrenewable energy. In example 45, *green* does not describe something eco-friendly, but is used in the phrase “green light” to describe giving permission. In this case, Equinor was granted an “offshore oil project” in Canada, resulting in a “major win” for the company. However, the project received “an angry backlash from environmental groups.” This is fit to illustrate the conflicting interests that often occur between the industry and activists as environmentalist consider the protection of the natural world as more vital than the industrial and financial benefits from fossil fuel projects. Moreover, example 46 demonstrates how Equinor is a large player in the fossil fuel sector in general, also outside of its own projects. It is highlighted how the company produced about “12.1 millions tons” of emissions from its own operations, but is responsible for over “250 million tons” of emissions from its involvements overall. It is important to note how specific companies also affect the environment indirectly, and in Equinor’s case, there is a substantial negative impact. However, the article also points out the importance of “investment” in projects that may not be totally renewable yet in order to scale up “renewables technology to reach global green targets.” This illustrates parts of the public opinion also believes that “technology” is the right direction for fossil fuel companies.

4.5.2.2. Energy transition

The semantic category *energy transition* occurs 94 times in RBRUW and 82 times in RARUW, and the normalization gives it a relevance of respectively 1.46 and 1.61. This is a quite low relevance in both corpora. The LL is 0.39 and shows that the term is underused in RBRUW, but the results cannot be considered significant.

RBRUW

In the 94 occurrences of *energy transition* before the RUW, certain language patterns occur. Most notably is how 13 concordances mention “challenge” or “challenges,” indicating that there are difficult aspects of making the energy transition happen. Furthermore, 10 concordances mention “investment,” “investing,” or “investors.” This can point to both the fact that there is money needed for the transition to happen, and that there is money to be made from

it. 9 of the concordances also mention “carbon,” showing that this element has a vital purpose in the energy transition. Carbon is to be considered important as it can refer to carbon dioxide which is the greenhouse gas most responsible for climate change, but also because lowering carbon emissions and developing carbon capture are seen as primary solutions in preventing further environmental demise. The concordances below illustrate how the various ways the energy transition is portrayed in news articles regarding Equinor:

[47] Labour backed the Conservative government’s white paper on energy presented in June, which bet on hydrogen and offshore wind for Norway’s *energy transition* while letting oil and gas firms continue extraction until 2050 and beyond. (New York Post, 31/08/2021)

[48] “The Big Oil companies know they have to invest in renewables or die,” said Mahdavi, who studies the role of oil and gas companies in the *energy transition*. (E&E News, 29/10/2021)

[49] Some oil production will remain a key fuel in the *energy transition* and natural gas output is set to increase as countries such as India and China look to substitute gas for the most polluting fossil fuel – coal. (UK News Yahoo, 10/01/2022)

Figure 4.17: Concordance lines with *energy transition* as the KWIC in RBRUW

From example 47, it is clear that Norway and Equinor are going in the direction of renewable energy sources like “hydrogen and offshore wind” to make the energy transition happen, but also that “oil and gas firms” may continue their operations for several more decades to come. It is obvious that major fossil fuel companies like Equinor have the biggest transitions to fulfill in the shift towards nonrenewable energy as they are the largest emitters, and example 48 underlines how these companies “know they have to invest in renewables or die.” Thus, they are in a challenging position because they carry the burden of having the most responsibility whilst also being expected to supply energy and create capital. However, it seems to be acknowledged in certain news articles that “some oil production will remain a key fuel in the energy transition” (49).

RARUW

In the 82 occurrences of *energy transition* after the RUW, many of the similar things are being discussed as before the war. 10 of the concordances mention “invest,” “investment,” or

”investors,” and 11 mention lowering carbon emissions or CCS. Thus, the focus is still mainly on financial aspects as well as carbon’s role in the transition. Furthermore, in the left context, there are 6 occurrences of the word “clean” directly in front of the KWIC, indicating a focus towards energy sources that are clean in the sense that they will not have a negative impact on the environment. Different from before the RUW, however, is how some concordances specifically mention the war. Related to this are the 3 occurrences of “demand” in the left contexts, referring to an increased energy demand in Europe as a result of the RUW. 2 of the concordances below specifically mention the war:

[50] In Italy, Reuters reported that *energy transition* minister Roberto Cingolani said that the situation in Ukraine had accelerated the need for structural changes to Europe’s energy markets, including gas storage. (Eco Business, 07/03/2022)

[51] Equinor referred to its *energy transition* plan as being on a Paris-aligned pathway. (International Business Times, 04/04/2022)

[52] " I've never had as many good discussions with governments since the Ukraine war started. "A lot of them... a deeper realization of the depths of the challenge that we are in with when it comes to energy security also a better appreciation that, if this is what it takes to deal with conventional energy, how difficult can the *energy transition* really be..." (S&P Global, 03/08/2022)

Figure 4.18: Concordance lines with *energy transition* as the KWIC in RARUW

In example 50, it is made clear that the RUW has created a “need for structural change” in the energy market in Europe, and that “gas storage” will be one of the solutions for possible future energy crises. This underlines how the war created disruption in the European energy flow, and how geopolitical tensions affect the export, import, and prices of natural resources. Moreover, the fact that Italy has an own “energy transition minister” demonstrates how the effects of climate change and the goal of shifting towards renewable energy sources is taken seriously on political levels across the continent. However, as illustrated through example 52, the news also point out how the RUW has created “a deeper realization of the depths of the challenge” that comes with both making the energy transition happen and having energy security across Europe. The war created an increased demand for nonrenewable energy, especially gas, and it was also made clear that the holders of natural energy resources also are holders of power. Although the RUW has given Equinor the opportunity to meet the energy demand, it is stated in example 51 that the company still claims to follow an “energy transition plan” which is “on

a Paris-aligned pathway.” Here, “Paris” refer to the Paris Agreement and the relevant climate goals.

4.5.2.3. *Oil*

The semantic category *oil* occurs 1159 times in RBRUW and 2623 times in RARUW, and the normalization gives it a relevance of respectively 18.06 and 51.50. This is the search item with the second highest number of occurrences and normalization in RBRUW and the highest number of occurrences and normalization in RARUW. Thus, it has a very high relevance in both corpora, and this makes sense as Equinor is a fossil fuel company discovering and producing oil. However, the relevance is much higher after the RUW than before, and the LL shows an underuse in RBRUW. Moreover, the LL of 970.40 tells us that this comparison is of great significance, and overall, it is the highest LL number produced in all of the comparisons.

RBRUW

In 31 of the occurrences, *oil* as a KWIC is directly followed by “and gas” in the right contexts, and *oil and gas* is a separate semantic category which will be examined in section 4.5.3.5. For the remaining 69 occurrences, there are some language trends that occur. 5 of the right contexts mention “discovery” directly after the KWIC, so it is obvious that the news articles are reporting on Equinor’s oil exploration and findings. Furthermore, “company” follows the KWIC 8 times, illustrating the fact that Equinor mainly is an oil company. In general, 10 of the concordances mention “demand,” and 9 concordances mention “investment,” “investors,” “invested,” or “investing.” Overall, this points to there being a need for oil as an energy source, and that it is an energy source which is still being invested in. However, there are also 6 mentions of “carbon” and 3 of “hydrogen,” and these are the two elements most discussed in relation to transitioning from fossil fuels to renewables. Moreover, the “climate” is mentioned 2 times and the “environment” 1 time. The concordances below illustrate the different portrayals of oil:

[53] If the next 10 years will be business as usual, which most *oil* majors want, then we already lost any chance to reach the Paris Agreement. (National Observer, 14/10/2021)

[54] The growing pressure from investors, activists and governments to tackle climate change means that European *oil* giants are turning off the taps on spending on *oil* even as the outlook for prices and demand remains robust. (UK News Yahoo, 10/01/2022)

[55] Nowhere is the focus on climate change policies as high as in Stavanger, a windswept west coast city set among fjords that is home to Equinor and other *oil* firms. (New York Post, 31/08/2021)

Figure 4.19: Concordance lines with *oil* as the KWIC in RBRUW

In example 53, it is stated that oil companies like Equinor wants “business as usual” for the next 10 years in relation to fossil fuel production, and also that if this ends up being the case, any chance to “reach the Paris Agreement” is lost. Thus, some news articles have a negative view on the amount of effort fossil fuel majors put into the energy transition and claim that an energy transition is not truly wanted by them. However, as example 54 shows, there is “growing pressure” from several groups in society to “tackle climate change,” and this has led oil majors like Equinor to stop “spending on oil” although prices and demands are high. The three groups mentioned – “investors, activists and governments” – can be understood as building respectively financial pressure, social pressure, and policy pressure. Also, in example 55, it is stated that Stavanger, Equinor’s headquarters city, has the greatest “focus on climate change policies” than anywhere else in the world. This indicates that Norway and Equinor are considered in the front of the energy transition by some sections of the public opinion.

RARUW

In 25 of the occurrences, *oil* as a KWIC is directly followed by “and gas” in the right contexts, and *oil and gas* is a separate semantic category which will be examined in section 4.5.3.5. For the 75 remaining occurrences, there are some obvious trends that represent a shift in the discursive portrayal of oil as a result of the RUW. Overall, 28 concordances mention “Russia,” and many of these have “Russian” directly in front of the KWIC in the left contexts. Thus, the RUW has heavily affected the news image of Equinor in relation to oil. Furthermore, 10 concordances mention “production,” and 4 concordances mention “increase” or “increasing.” This indicates that there is more focus on oil production after the RUW, and that the war may have affected an increase in Equinor’s operations. However, similarly to before the RUW, “climate” is mentioned 3 times, and the “environment” is mentioned 1 time. Thus, there is still

a focus on how oil is affecting the natural world. 2 of the concordances below illustrate how oil is discussed in direct relation to the RUW, and the remaining concordance illustrates the climate focus that still exists:

[56] European sanctions on Russian *oil* supply and reduced gas flows have sent prices soaring and driven up inflation to 40-year records in some countries.

[57] Approving a new *oil* project that will emit that much greenhouse gas emissions and contributes to the climate emergency will certainly go beyond international boundaries... (The Globe and Mail, 11/05/2022)

[58] The world's biggest gathering of energy industry leaders returns to Houston this week as the Russian invasion has sent global *oil* prices soaring. (iPolitics, 07/03/2022)

Figure 4.20: Concordance lines with *oil* as the KWIC in RARUW

As both examples 56 and 58 show, when mentioned in relation to the RUW, *oil* is mainly discussed in the context of oil prices increasing drastically as a result of the war. The price jump is a consequence of “sanctions on Russian oil supply” as well as “reduced gas flows,” and the increase has “driven up inflation” to as much as “40-year records” in certain countries (56). Furthermore, the soaring oil prices has led to the “world’s biggest gathering of energy industry leaders” (58), presumably to figure out possible solutions to the issue. The two examples illustrate how the RUW has affected Europe financially, both making oil much more expensive and negatively impacting countries’ economies overall. Although this apparent crisis naturally creates a stronger demand for oil, which oil majors like Equinor can provide, example 57 demonstrates how the climate focus still has a place in the midst of the discussions. It is stated that the approval of a potential new oil project “will emit that much greenhouse gas emission” and thus contribute to the “climate emergency.” Overall, although an increase in demand is acknowledged, fossil fuel companies like Equinor are seemingly criticized for potentially increasing the production of oil.

4.5.2.4. *Gas*

The semantic category *gas* occurs 1209 times in RBRUW and 1976 times in RARUW, and the normalization gives it a relevance of respectively 18.84 and 38.80. This is the search item with the highest number of occurrences and normalization in RBRUW and the second highest number of occurrences and normalization in RARUW. Thus, it has a very high relevance both

before and after the RUW. However, the relevance increases significantly. The LL shows an underuse in RBRUW and produces the calculation 406.16, making it the second highest calculation produced in the comparisons overall.

RBRUW

In 33 of the occurrences, the KWIC *gas* is directly preceded by “oil and,” and *oil and gas* is a separate semantic category which will be examined in section 4.5.3.5. In general, 10 of the concordances mention “emissions,” and 9 of the concordances are discussing lowering “carbon.” Furthermore, 6 of the concordances mention “climate” and 2 mention “environmental” or “environmentalists.” Overall, these language trends point to a climate-related focus. In the right contexts specifically, the KWIC is directly followed by “prices” 4 times, illustrating the economy-related aspect of the gas industry as well. In general, the concordances mainly contain information about specific gas projects, gas fields, and gas prices, and the concordances below demonstrate the different portrayals of gas:

[59] As governments around the world devise new energy strategies to rapidly remove the carbon from their economies, major fossil fuel companies are lobbying hard to keep blue hydrogen in the mix. In doing so, energy and climate experts say, they are locking in the global use of natural *gas*, a planet-warming fossil fuel, potentially for decades to come. (CNN, 23/12/2021)

[60] The *gas* industry is increasingly promoting carbon-neutral LNG cargoes using carbon offsets that finance renewable energy ventures or the protection and restoration of forests. (Eco Business, 23/09/2021)

[61] Those programs will include support for both conserving natural *gas* and others that will encourage the use of electric appliances and low-carbon *gas* alternatives, including hydrogen and renewable natural *gas*. (Finance Yahoo, 01/11/2021)

Figure 4.21: Concordance lines with *gas* as the KWIC in RBRUW

Example 59 is fit to illustrate how governments and fossil fuel companies like Equinor have conflicting interests in relation to gas production. As governments are obliged to follow international climate treaties such as the Paris Agreement and thus aim to “rapidly remove the carbon from their economies,” companies like Equinor “are lobbying hard to keep blue hydrogen in the mix” as this allows for gas production – and thus a growing economy – to

continue. Climate experts are expressing concern regarding how this lobbying is “locking in the global use of natural gas” as gas is a “planet-warming fossil fuel.” As lobbying is the act of influencing policies for desired outcomes, it is clear that there exists criticism in the public opinion regarding how fossil fuel companies like Equinor prioritize own financial gains over the much needed protection of the natural world. However, as both examples 60 and 61 illustrate, renewable solutions are on the table, such as “carbon-neutral LNG” (liquefied natural gas) (60) and “hydrogen and renewable natural gas” (61). This means that the news are also reporting on promising renewable solutions that may be applied to the gas industry instead of abolishing it as a whole.

RARUW

In 29 of the occurrences, the KWIC *gas* is directly preceded by “oil and,” and *oil and gas* is a separate semantic category which will be examined in section 4.5.3.5. As with oil, the language trends in the concordances point to an obvious discursive shift in the portrayal of gas as a result of the RUW. Overall, 14 concordances mention “Russia” or “Russian.” 8 concordances mention “pipeline,” 8 “production,” and 8 “export,” indicating a lot of industrial activity related to gas. Furthermore, 14 concordances mention “prices,” signaling that there has been a price shift for gas. However, the climate focus is still apparent after the RUW, illustrated through 1 occurrence of “climate” and 6 occurrences of “emissions.” However, there was no mention of the “environment.” The concordances below illustrate how gas is portrayed in several ways, and 2 of the excerpts explicitly discuss the RUW:

[62] Norway’s Equinor reported a record quarterly pretax profit on Wednesday, as the war in Ukraine triggered an energy supply crunch that sent natural *gas* prices soaring to all-time highs. (UK Finance Yahoo, 05/05/2022)

[63] The EU still relies on Russia for around 40 per cent of its natural *gas* – anything beyond a short term shock to supply could lead to difficulties in meeting rebounding consumer demand, as outlined earlier this year by European think tank Bruegel. (City A.M., 06/03/2022)

[64] Tremendous amounts of energy are required to produce pure hydrogen, and only hydrogen produced using renewable energy as a fuel source truly cuts greenhouse *gas* emissions. (Penn Live, 24/06/2022)

Figure 4.22: Concordance lines with *gas* as the KWIC in RARUW

In example 62, it is expressed how Equinor has profited financially from the RUW with a “record quarterly pretax profit” as a result of gas prices reaching “all-time highs.” Norway is the second largest producer of natural gas in Europe after Russia, so Russia both withholding their natural resources and being boycotted has led to the possibility of Equinor to fulfill the demands. Furthermore, as shown in example 63, the EU “relies on Russia for around 40 per cent” of gas supply, and this naturally means that disturbances with Russia as a supplier will affect the countries drastically. Whereas criticisms towards fossil fuel companies like Equinor regarding fossil fuels were prominent before the RUW, the need for a secure energy supply and how Equinor may fulfill this need seemingly has a bigger focus after the RUW. However, gas is still discussed in relation to climate change as well, and example 64 demonstrates the renewable energy focus. More specifically, it illustrates what it takes for gas production to “truly” cut “greenhouse emissions,” and how this involves that hydrogen must be “produced using renewable energy as a fuel source.”

4.5.2.5. Emissions

The semantic category *emissions* occurs 503 times in RBRUW and 477 times in RARUW, and the normalization gives it a relevance of respectively 7.84 and 9.37. Thus, the term has a high relevance both before and after the RUW. Moreover, the LL calculation is 7.73 and shows an underuse of the term in RBRUW, so the comparison is significant and shows slightly more emphasis on the term after the RUW.

RBRUW

Overall, the language trends appearing with the KWIC *emissions* before the RUW show a strong focus on lowering emissions in order to reach climate goals. 25 concordances mention “reduce,” “reduction,” or “reducing,” 12 concordances mention “cut” or “cutting,” and 10 concordances mention “net zero.” This all demonstrates how the main concern when it comes to fossil fuel companies and emissions is making it stop. Moreover, 14 left contexts have “carbon” directly in front of the KWIC, and 7 concordances mention “capture.” Again, this underlines how carbon dioxide is the main greenhouse gas being let into the atmosphere, and how developing technology to capture carbon may be a possible solution in cutting emissions. The concordances below illustrate how cutting CO₂ emissions is the main focus in the public portrayal of Equinor:

[65] These two ground-breaking projects are putting our scientists and engineers at the forefront of developing the key technologies that will be needed the world over if we are to reduce *emissions* – making our region a global centre of excellence for hydrogen and carbon capture technology. (The Northern Echo, 25/01/2022)

[66] The latest state-of-the-science report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) showed that the world needs to cut greenhouse gas *emissions* in half over the next decade and achieve net zero by 2050 to have any chance of keeping global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

[67] European majors persevere and consider renewables as a key pillar of decarbonization of the global power sector and of reduction of their own *emissions* from operations. For example, Equinor wants to be a big name in offshore wind, and Norway's major bid for offshore wind acreage in the major ScotWind leasing round earlier this year. (Finance Yahoo, 11/10/2021)

Figure 4.23: Concordance lines with *emissions* as the KWIC in RBRUW

As mentioned in example 66, the IPCC has stated that we need to “cut greenhouse emissions in half” in the next 10 years to “achieve net zero by 2050” and thus prevent further global warming. It makes sense for Equinor to be discussed alongside this message as fossil fuel companies are the biggest CO₂ emitters in the industry. Through example 65 and 67, it is clear that there are two main ways to make this reduction happen: to develop “hydrogen and carbon capture technology” (65) that will be implemented in the fossil fuel industry, or by considering “renewables as a key pillar of decarbonization” (67). Furthermore, it is apparent that Equinor is invested in both of these possible solutions, especially by wanting to be a “big name in offshore wind” (67). Overall, *emissions* before the RUW is mainly discussed in relation to the energy transition that needs to happen as well as the consequences if it does not happen.

RARUW

After the RUW, the focus on lowering emissions is still strong with 22 concordances mentioning “reduce” or “reducing,” 5 concordances mentioning “cut,” and 17 concordances mentioning “net zero.” In other words, the climate considerations are still the most prominent. Moreover, the situation with Russia is only explicitly mentioned once. The concordances below illustrate how there is a similar discursive style overall surrounding emissions after the RUW:

[68] Many governments, meanwhile, even those which have made big-picture commitments to slashing *emissions*, are also facing immense domestic pressure over rising gas prices and securing non-Russian oil supplies. (Independent, 25/03/2022)

[69] The world must reach net-zero carbon *emissions* by 2050, even as industrial demand is growing and energy prices are spiking. (Nature, 24/03/2022)

[70] The project aligns with both the United States' and project partners' ambitions to realise net-zero carbon *emissions* by 2050. To support its development, Equinor and Shell will jointly apply for US Department of Energy funding designated for the creation of regional clean energy hubs. (Gasworld, 17/08/2022)

Figure 4.24: Concordance lines with *emissions* as the KWIC in RARUW

It is clear from both the context patterns and the specific concordances that *emissions* is being discussed similarly before and after the RUW. Again, in both examples 69 and 70, the fact that the world needs to “net-zero carbon emissions by 2050” is stated, demonstrating how lowering emissions for environmental protection is the main focus. Interestingly enough, however, is how this is portrayed as more challenging after the RUW. This is illustrated in example 69 which states that emissions must be lowered despite the fact that “industrial demand is growing and energy prices are spiking.” We know that both the increased demand for fossil fuels and the increased energy prices are results of the RUW. Furthermore, as illustrated in example 68, lowering emissions is portrayed as challenging because governments are “facing immense domestic pressure over rising gas prices and securing non-Russian oil supplies.” Overall, although the climate goals and reaching net zero is still the main focus in the public opinion, there has been a clear discursive shift in how challenging this is portrayed as due to the RUW.

4.5.2.6. Fossil fuel

The semantic category *fossil fuel* occurs 104 times in RBRUW and 171 times in RARUW, and the normalization gives it a relevance of respectively 1.62 and 3.36. Thus, it has a quite low relevance in both corpora, but it has more relevance after the RUW. Furthermore, the LL is 35.63 and demonstrates an underuse in RBRUW, and this tells us that the comparison is of significance.

RBRUW

As with the search item *emissions*, there is a focus on reducing the amount of fossil fuels before the RUW. This is illustrated by how the left contexts mention “stop” 3 times, “cut” 1 time, “abolish” 1 time, and “reduce” 1 time. Moreover, the “environment” is mentioned 3 times and “climate” is mentioned 12 times, thus indicating that the use of fossil fuels needs to be reduced or stopped to prevent further environmental harm. Interestingly enough, 7 concordances mention “lobby” or “lobbying,” referring to how fossil fuel companies may try to affect political decisions in order to keep their nonrenewable projects going. Also, 12 concordances mention “invest,” “investment,” or “investors,” signaling how there is money involved in fossil fuel projects. The concordances below illustrate how fossil fuel companies like Equinor are being held accountable for their impacts on the natural world in public discourse:

[71] An analysis provided to CNN from the independent climate think tank InfluenceMap, which uses data to track the influence of business and finance on climate policy, found that several major *fossil fuel* companies are using the hydrogen hype to keep natural gas on the playing field, and that's having an impact on a crucial upcoming decision in the European Union. (CNN, 06/01/2022)

[72] On the coastlines of Argentina and South Africa, they say, thousands are mobilizing against European *fossil fuel* corporations, including Shell, Equinor and Total, poised to conduct seismic surveys, deepwater drilling and fracking. (Myjoyonline, 03/02/2022)

[73] The scientific study is the first to lay bare the huge discrepancy between the goals of the Paris Agreement and the expansion plans of the *fossil fuel* industry. "Fossil fuels continue to dominate the global energy system..." (Buzz, 23/09/2022)

Figure 4.25: Concordance lines with *fossil fuel* as the KWIC in RBRUW

From all of the examples above, it is clear that the fossil fuel industry, including Equinor, is facing a lot of criticism from the public opinion regarding their impacts on the environment. In example 71, it is claimed that several companies are “using the hydrogen hype to keep natural gas in the playing field.” ‘Hyping’ means portraying something as better than it is in reality, so fossil fuel companies are being accused of overselling this solution for their own profits by being able to keep gas production going. Furthermore, example 72 shows how activists are “mobilizing against European fossil fuel corporations,” including Equinor, because of how the companies intend to harm the environment in their projects. In example 73, fossil fuel

companies are being called out for “expansion plans” and how this directly goes against the Paris Agreement. Thus, the fossil fuel sector seemingly has the intentions of continuing to “dominate the global energy system.” Overall, there is placed a lot of responsibility on and directed criticism towards Equinor and the fossil fuel sector for continuing with fossil fuels.

RARUW

After the RUW, there is still some environmental focus in relation to the KWIC *fossil fuel*, and this is indicated by the 5 concordances mentioning “environment” and 18 concordances mentioning “climate” as well as 3 concordances mentioning “reduce” and 1 concordance mentioning “stop.” However, 9 of the concordances mention “Russia,” “Russian” or “Ukraine,” illustrating how the RUW has affected the fossil fuel sector. Moreover, the left contexts have 5 occurrences of “increase” or “increasing,” pointing to the fact that fossil fuel production may have grown as a result of the war and following energy crisis in Europe. In the concordances below, the RUW is explicitly mentioned twice to illustrate a potential discursive shift:

[74] After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there has been a shameful attempt by *fossil fuel* proponents in Canada, seemingly echoed by the premier of Newfoundland, to justify Bay du Nord as an answer for ending dependence on Russian fossil fuels, even though the project would take years to be operational and would have no impact on the immediate situation. (The Guardian, 05/04/2022)

[75] Decarbonization plans from Equinor, Shell and British Petroleum (BP) to reduce *fossil fuel* consumption are not working fast enough to meet the ambitious goals laid out in the 2015 Paris Agreement to curb the effects of climate change... (Forbes, 16/08/2022)

[76] UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has said increasing *fossil fuel* use amid the war in Ukraine is akin to "madness" and "mutually assured destruction," just as using nuclear weapons was during the Cold War. However, it seems the only way more renewables would come online to replace Russian oil is if governments and investors alike had the same kind of urgency around climate change as they did on the invasion of Ukraine.

Figure 4.26: Concordance lines with *fossil fuel* as the KWIC in RARUW

Like with before the RUW, fossil fuel companies like Equinor are being criticized and held responsible for their impacts on the environment. In example 75, they are called out for “not working fast enough” to reach the goals of the Paris Agreement, and are thus being held

responsible for the “effects of climate change.” Moreover, and as illustrated in example 74, fossil fuel companies are even called out for using the RUW to promote their own interests in fossil fuels. This is demonstrated by the description of a “shameful attempt” to justify nonrenewable projects in Canada as an answer to “ending dependence on Russian fossil fuels.” From this, it is clear that the fossil fuel sector has taken the opportunity the war has provided to advocate for further production of nonrenewable energy, thus indicating down-prioritizing of environmental protection. How increasing fossil fuels as a result of the RUW and following energy crisis is not a step in the right direction is expressed in example 76. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres called it “madness” and “mutually assured destruction,” demonstrating how an official political organ is condemning how the situation is being handled.

4.5.2.7. Oil and gas

The semantic category *oil and gas* occurs 350 times in RBRUW and 687 times in RARUW, and the normalization gives it a relevance of respectively 5.45 and 13.49. Thus, it has a much higher relevance after the RUW, and the LL of 203.20 tells us that this comparison is of great significance. It makes sense to examine this semantic category separately from *oil* and *gas* as the two nonrenewable energy sources often are discussed together, and because Equinor mainly is an *oil and gas* company.

However, some trouble occurred in the data gathering of this search item in the NOW corpus. The software was unable to provide the specific concordances within the selected time frame (six months before and after the RUW) although the number of occurrences were made clear. I believe this is connected to how the search item consists of 3 words, and that it somehow “crashes” the system and opens up the portal for occurrences outside of the selected the dates. Thus, to enable comparisons within the correct time frame, I looked at the concordances with just *oil* as the KWIC and then used the search setting on my laptop with the term “oil and gas” to help me navigate the relevant concordances within the search. This approach is illustrated in figure 4.27 below. Although this allowed me to examine specific examples and observe general trends, it made it difficult to point out specific patterns in the right and left contexts. Thus, this semantic category will be discussed in slightly more general terms than the rest of the search items.

SEARCH		FREQUENCY	CONTEXT	OVERVIEW
9	21-08-24 US Houston Chronicle	1	ventures in refineries and chemical plants. # In poorer regions, meanwhile, government-controlled oil producers face greater pressure to balance s	
10	22-02-10 US YAHOO!Finance	1	Nikkei 225 New York's Pension Fund Plans to Restrict Its Investments in Oil and Gas Companies # Oops! # Something went wrong. # Please try agai	
11	21-11-15 GB scotsman.com	1	Team at AAB, agrees that trade buyers have a big role to play in oil and gas , and energy in general, in the north east. Following the	
12	22-01-21 US YAHOO!Finance	1	reports which are given in wellhead production quantities (oil and rich gas converted to oil equivalents).5 As per industry standards the reserves ref	
13	22-01-31 US markets.businessinsider.com	1	stranded remains a wide open question. # Big Oil -- and small and medium oil , too -- is doing what any business would do in the current environme	
14	21-08-27 US Ars Technica	1	doesn't suffer from the same carbon accounting issues. But neither does it reuse oil and gas companies' existing infrastructure. So while this new st	
15	21-09-27 US New York Times	1	oil industry have fallen nearly 40 percent over the last five years, according to Oil and Gas UK, a trade group. # Once a mainstay of the Scottish	
16	22-02-14 US seekingalpha.com	1	a massive jump in net income and free cash flow in 2021. # The oil and gas industry has recovered strongly throughout 2021, with oil prices reachin	
17	22-01-31 US markets.businessinsider.com	1	wind, solar, and EVs while quietly drilling to ensure there will be enough oil for tomorrow and the day after. 73991105	
18	22-01-23 KE theeastafrican.co.ke	1	Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo to consider Mombasa as their main oil source, as it will be cheaper than using the Central (
19	21-12-08 NG sunnewsonline.com	1	Gulf Corporation, was registered in Nigeria and obtained its first prospecting license. Gulf Oil Company is the precursor of CNL. # For 60 years, Chev	
20	21-09-23 SG eco-business.com	1	" unfeasible ", the announcement is set to deal a blow to coal, oil and gas project development in the Asia Pacific, as the country is a major	
21	21-10-01 NG oraclenews.ng	1	the country. The company has put its full commercial interests in some 19 operated oil blocks on sale. # With full joint venture asset divestment, Sh	
22	21-10-27 BD bdnews24.com	1	the example of France's Banque Postale, which said it would stop serving the oil and gas sectors outright by 2030. # " Many of the banks who are	
23	22-02-04 US politico.com	1	finalized environmental rule changes meant to reduce the amount of methane and other emissions from oil and natural gas in the state, Gov. Kathy	
24	21-11-07 US Yahoo	1	of three planned production tests at our Royston-1 exploration well which has confirmed a light oil discovery in the lowermost section of the well. TI	
25	22-01-23 KE theeastafrican.co.ke	1	10 percent gas to Tanzania's domestic use. # Tanzania has been exploring for oil and gas for the past 64 years, making the first natural gas discover	
26	21-12-14 US Yahoo	1	projects submitted for approval after 2027 would have to use something other than gas or oil -- such as electricity -- for heating, hot water and cook	
27	21-09-05 US Business Insider	1	short of the ' net-zero business' pledge that has become very popular among European oil majors, including Shell, BP, Eni, Repsol, Equinor, and Tota	
28	21-10-28 IN bloombergquint.com	1	Chief Executive Officer Patrick Pouyanne said it's " too early " for the French oil major to consider spinning off its renewable-energy business becaus	
29	22-02-09 MY maa.thedgemarkets.com	1	and increased production, " CEO Anders Opedal said in a statement. # The oil and gas industry saw a massive turnaround last year as markets over	
30	21-10-20 US CNN	1	advanced stages of development are operated by oil, gas and coal companies. # Oil companies have had and used the technology to capture carbon	
31	21-10-19 ZA timeslive.co.za	1	# EQUINOR -- From 2027 to 2028 # The Norwegian oil and gas producer expects oil demand to peak from 2027 to 2028, two to three years sooner t	
32	21-11-07 US Yahoo	1	of three planned production tests at our Royston-1 exploration well which has confirmed a light oil discovery in the lowermost section of the well. TI	

Figure 4.27: How the semantic category *oil and gas* was examined in the reference corpora

RBRUW

As illustrated in the concordances below, *oil and gas* is discussed in different ways before the RUW, including in relation to its benefits, how fossil fuel companies intend to lower their emissions, but also how fossil fuel companies are held accountable for not doing enough.

[77] However, emphasizing the benefits of <i>oil and gas</i> for our civilization is appropriate because many of the benefits are regarded as essential for much of the world. (Forbes, 06/01/2022)
[78] Europe's top <i>oil and gas</i> firms have all committed to becoming net-zero energy businesses by 2050 or sooner. (Finance Yahoo, 11/10/2021)
[79] Mahdavi and three other researcher recently published a paper looking at whether the largest privately held <i>oil and gas</i> companies were making good on their promises to go green. They found zero companies transitioning away from fossil fuels in any meaningful way. (E&E News, 29/10/2021)

Figure 4.28: Concordance lines with *oil and gas* as the KWIC in RBRUW

In example 77, it is made clear how parts of the public opinion also considers the “benefits of oil and gas,” and this is related to how the fossil fuel energy production still is “essential for much of the world.” In other words, oil and gas production provides necessary and wanted energy. Example 78 shows how major oil and gas firms, including Equinor, have “committed to becoming net-zero energy businesses by 20150 or sooner,” indicating that the fossil fuel sector is taking its responsibility in environmental impacts seriously. However, and as illustrated in example 79, a news article is reporting on a study revealing how no fossil companies “were making good on their promises to go green” by “transitioning away from fossil fuels in any meaningful way.” This continuous criticism in the public opinion indicates that a lot of the promises being made by Equinor and other fossil fuel companies are mostly talk and not enough action.

RARUW

After the RUW, *oil and gas* was heavily discussed in relation to the situation in Ukraine, and the concordances below illustrate how the Russian oil and gas market is boycotted, how prices have increased, and how Norway has been largely benefiting from the situation.

[68] Norway’s Equinor said on Wednesday it has exited its Russian *oil and gas* joint ventures due to the war in Ukraine, transferring assets to state-owned Rosneft, its long-term partner. (UK Finance Yahoo, 25/05/2022)

[69] “We’re seeing a spike in oil prices, and that oil companies will be successful in exploiting this scramble from Russian *oil and gas* by convincing governments to make investment decisions that lock even greater levels of fossil fuel dependency...” (Independent, 25/03/2022)

[70] Europe’s frantic search for alternatives to Russian energy has dramatically increased the demand – and price – for Norway’s *oil and gas*. As the money pours in, Europe’s second-biggest natural gas supplies is fending off accusations that it’s profiting from the war in Ukraine. Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, who is looking to the Scandinavian country to replace some of the gas Poland used to get from Russia, said Norway’s “gigantic” *oil and gas* profits are “indirectly preying on the war.” (Devdiscourse, 28/05/2022)

Figure 4.29: Concordance lines with *oil and gas* as the KWIC in RARUW

Example 68 illustrates how Equinor has “exited its Russian oil and gas joint ventures” as a result of the RUW, and this makes it one of many companies that boycotted Russia due to their invasion of Ukraine. However, Equinor and other fossil fuel companies are seemingly benefiting from the situation. This is shown in example 69 which claims that governments are being convinced to “make investment decisions that lock even greater levels of fossil fuel dependency” and states how there is a “spike in oil prices.” Overall, the increased energy demand as a result of the RUW has proved very beneficial for companies such as Equinor, and it is clear that the company has taken advantage and promoted own interests over environmental concerns. This is further illustrated in example 70 which shows how Norway and Equinor is being accused of “indirectly preying on the war.”

4.6. Comparison: public climate discourse on Equinor before and after the RUW

The climate discourse in news articles regarding Equinor and the fossil fuel sector is quite similar before and after the RUW, but there are several discursive trends which are relevant for the research questions of the present study. The general attitude present in all of the semantic categories is that significant changes are needed in order to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement and prevent climate change. Moreover, the tendency in the discursive portrayal of fossil fuel companies such as Equinor is how they must be held accountable for the impacts they have on the environment, and there is a general criticism towards these companies for not doing enough to reduce their emissions. However, there is also a strong focus on green projects, technologies, and solutions, as well as a focus on financial and political aspects related to the energy sector. Although it is acknowledged, for example in the semantic categories *Green*, *Energy transition*, and *Oil*, that Equinor and other companies are involved in sustainable projects as well as the fact that some fossil fuels are still needed, the constant criticism is how the fossil fuel sector is not doing enough to lower emissions. Furthermore, in both the semantic category *Gas* and *Fossil fuel*, Equinor and other fossil fuel companies are accused of lobbying in order to keep the production of nonrenewable energy going, and they are also accused of hyping up green solutions like low-carbon hydrogen and CCS although we still are unsure of their effects. Overall, Equinor and fossil fuel companies are held accountable for their lacking efforts in the energy transition both before and after the RUW.

There are a few discursive shifts which occur as a result of the RUW, and these are present in the semantic categories *Oil*, *Gas*, *Emissions*, *Fossil fuel*, and *Oil and gas*. For example, as seen in the analysis of *Gas*, the increased energy demand in Europe is

acknowledged after the RUW as well as the need for energy security, and there seems to be less criticism towards Equinor as they are able to provide this. However, and as illustrated in the analyses of *Fossil fuel* and *Oil and gas*, there is still a lot of criticism directed towards the fossil fuel sector, but there is a shift regarding what they are being criticized for. Before the RUW, the criticism mostly regarded how Equinor and fossil fuel companies were not doing enough to lower their emissions and prevent climate change. After the RUW, however, the criticism is directed towards how fossil fuel companies are capitalizing on and profiting from the war. The increased oil and gas prices, and thus Equinor's record-high profits, are being discussed, and fossil fuel companies are accused of using the consequences of the war as leverage in developing new oil and gas projects that can secure energy supply.

4.7. Comparison between Equinor's discourse and public discourse: concluding remarks

In this section, the findings from analyzing the main corpora and the reference corpora will be compared in order to establish whether there are similarities or discrepancies between Equinor's company portrayal and the public portrayal of the company in relation to nonrenewable energy and sustainability. The first section compares the quantitative findings and the more general language trends between the corpora, and the second section compares the discursive trends related to the specific search items in the qualitative analyses. Finally, the main findings of the present study will be presented and lead up to the discussion which follows in the next chapter.

4.7.1. General tendencies

From the frequency lists, it is clear that the main corpora mostly focus on renewable energy, especially wind power, both before and after the RUW. Furthermore, there is placed emphasis on CCS and hydrogen, and these are both elements that denote the energy transition and the aim for a more sustainable future. Although the contents in MBRUW and MARUW are fairly similar, it is clear that oil and gas is acknowledged to a further extent after the RUW. In the reference corpora, the content words are very similar before and after the RUW. When comparing this public discourse to Equinor's discourse, it is apparent that the focuses are somewhat different. In RBRUW and RARUW, oil and gas is acknowledged both before and after the RUW (although seemingly slightly more after the RUW), and there is no mention of hydrogen or carbon. Furthermore, there seems to be a larger financial focus than in Equinor's

reports. Overall, the differences between the general tendencies indicate that Equinor's discourse is colored by the company's intentions of conveying its renewable efforts, and that public discourse is more concerned about conveying a more diverse image of Equinor. Furthermore, it seems that the RUW has affected to what extent Equinor acknowledges its involvement in nonrenewable energy, but that the focus on nonrenewable energy in relation to Equinor has been consistent in public discourse.

4.7.2. Semantic categories

From examining the different semantic categories in the main corpora, the main trend occurring is how Equinor largely focuses on future technological solutions and sustainable energy projects in its news reports. Absent, however, is any acknowledgement regarding how the company's nonrenewable energy projects are currently causing environmental harm right now. Furthermore, Equinor makes sure to express dedication and commitment towards the energy transition and the Paris Agreement, and it describes itself as a leading company in regard to creating a more sustainable future. When analyzing potential discursive shifts as a result of the RUW, it is apparent that Equinor acknowledges oil and gas production and export to a larger extent after the RUW. Moreover, Equinor portrays itself as an important provider of energy that is merely meeting the increased energy demands in Europe. Although a sustainable focus is still present in the company's discourse after the RUW, it is clear that the environmental focus has been lessened somewhat.

However, when examining the semantic categories in the reference corpora, there is placed a lot of responsibility on fossil fuel companies in relation to emissions and environmental harm; the general attitude is that not enough is being done in order to reach net zero by 2050. Furthermore, Equinor and fossil fuel companies are being criticized for lobbying in order to both maintain and increase the production of gas. Thus, the negative impacts of nonrenewable energy as well as the critical role the fossil fuel sector plays in climate change is acknowledged to a much larger extent in public discourse. However, there is also a tendency of acknowledging that oil and gas is still needed in the energy market and has a vital role to play in the energy transition, and this need is emphasized after the RUW. This leads to Equinor being portrayed as an important energy provider in public discourse as well. However, the war has also led to Equinor and other fossil fuel companies being criticized for profiting from and exploiting the war to promote own interests.

4.7.3. Main findings

From examining and comparing the main corpora and the reference corpora, very different images of the climate discourse surrounding Equinor appears. Furthermore, the RUW has affected Equinor's discourse to a large extent, and the public discourse to some extent. The findings from the qualitative analysis are quite compatible with what the initial quantitative findings were indicating. Overall, Equinor presents itself as a greener company than it is portrayed as in public discourse, and there is a large discrepancy between how the responsibility for both environmental harm and the energy transition is portrayed. Furthermore, the RUW seems to have lessened the environmental focus somewhat and replaced it with concerns about energy demand and security, and this is especially prevalent in Equinor's news reports.

5. DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the results will be considered in a greater theoretical context in order to establish why the relevant discursive trends in relation to nonrenewable energy and sustainability may have occurred. The two main findings of the present study will be used as a point of departure for the discussion: (1) Equinor portrays itself as a greener company than it is portrayed as in public discourse, and (2) the RUW seems to have lessened the environmental focus somewhat (especially in Equinor's news reports) and replaced it with concerns about energy demand and energy security. Section 5.1. deals with greenwashing as a trend among fossil fuel companies as well as the public perception of Equinor's sustainability efforts, and section 5.2. investigates how the RUW may have created a discursive shift in the portrayal of nonrenewable energy and environmental issues.

5.1. Equinor and greenwashing

As demonstrated by the results, Equinor mainly has a green focus in its company portrayal of energy projects. However, the dominating narrative in the news articles of the reference corpora is that Equinor is mainly concerned with continuing production of nonrenewable energy and generating profit, and that the company is not sustainable enough to help prevent climate change. The results of the present study, illustrating the discrepancy between the company portrayal and how Equinor is portrayed in public discourse, reflects a potential greenwashing trend that is also found in the climate discourse of other fossil fuel companies.

5.1.1. Greenwashing as a tendency in the fossil fuel sector

Many studies examine how greenwashing is a phenomenon which is prevalent in the climate discourse of major fossil fuel companies. In a 2022 study analyzing several fossil fuel companies' annual sustainability reports, Megura & Gunderson identifies four discursive frames which express a subtle form of climate change denialism: 'techno-optimism,' 'necessitarianism,' 'compliance,' and 'countermeasures.' However, discourse surrounding potential environmental and societal harm as a result of fossil fuels was absent in the reports (2022: 1). Overall, the study demonstrates how fossil fuel companies tend to focus on possible

technological advancements that will reduce emissions, how they are providing a necessity to society, that they are in compliance with environmental regulations and policies, and possible solutions and strategies that can counter environmental harm. Yet, notions of how they effectively are negatively impacting the natural world are absent (ibid.). Although Equinor specifically was not examined in the study, the results have clear correlations with the findings of the present study. The concordances reveals how Equinor largely focuses on technology related to CCS as a solution to reducing emissions, that it is providing energy which is necessary to society (particularly to Europe after the RUW), that it is in compliance with the Norwegian government as well as international policies such as the Paris Agreement, and that it is investing in new solutions such as low-carbon hydrogen to make gas production more environmentally friendly. However, except for the occasional acknowledgment of oil leaks, there is no mention of how the company is affecting the environment with its productions and emissions. This ‘solution-optimistic’ and ‘responsibility-taking’ focus as well as the neglect of environmental impact seems to be the tactical approach for fossil fuel companies to appear more sustainable than they may be considered in reality.

Similar greenwashing trends are identified when specifically examining the climate discourse of the American company ExxonMobil – one of the world’s largest producers of oil and gas. In a 2022 study by Bricker & Justice, ExxonMobil is being accused of greenwashing based on the environmental communication of CEO Darren Woods. Three communicative characteristics which indicates this fact are pointed out: “(1) acceptance of responsibility for environmental action, (2) insistence on an expansive role for fossil fuels, and (3) strategic ambiguity regarding the fossil fuel corporation’s commitment to environmental action” (2022: 521). The findings of this particular study also correlates with the results of the present one. Like ExxonMobil in the first characteristic, Equinor places emphasis on taking responsibility in order to reach climate goals, often referring to itself as a leader or a leading force in the energy transition. For the second characteristic, Equinor also makes sure to claim that fossil fuels have a key role to play in the energy transition, and that fossil fuels still are a necessity to society. In relation to the third characteristic, this ambiguity is also seen in Equinor’s discourse, for example by how it assures increased energy supplies to Europe whilst still promoting climate goals although these two promises are inherently contradictory. Furthermore, in relation to its advertisements, Plec & Pettenger (2012) claim that ExxonMobil’s “use of a didactic, greenwashed frame stifles criticism and discourages examination of ideologies of consumption by exploiting the ethos of the scientist and highlighting technological solutions to problems that are deeply tied to a culture of consumerism” (2012: 459). This discovery is relevant for

Equinor's discourse as it also mainly focuses on technological solutions in order to maintain, and even expand, the production of nonrenewable energy. Moreover, by constantly promoting its own actions and responsibility-taking in the energy transition, Equinor is making it harder to be criticized for lacking efforts.

When looking at Equinor's climate discourse specifically, discursive trends in other channels than its news reports also uncover tendencies that can be related to greenwashing. In a 2021 study examining the linguistic climate narratives of major fossil fuel companies in sustainability reports, Dahl finds that although Equinor acknowledges its 'villain' role in climate change, it also portrays a 'hero' role in the same narrative (2021: 15). Furthermore, she discovers that the 'hero' role is more prevalent than the 'villain' role (2021: 1). This discovery may be related to greenwashing as fossil fuel companies are the largest emitters and thus are considered the main 'villains' in the climate narrative. In the present study, the 'villain' role is not acknowledged as much in Equinor's discourse, but this may naturally be related to the fact that the news reports are fronting what the company wants to gain attention. Sustainability reports, on the other hand, call for awareness specifically related to climate issues and the energy transition. However, the 'hero' role is very much present in Equinor's news reports, demonstrated through its constant 'solution-optimistic' and 'responsibility-taking' focus. Additionally, in the 2019 study examining how Equinor and Total linguistically represent the energy transition, Dahl & Fløttum discover that the fossil fuel companies consider gas to be a key element in the energy transition. However, this promotion of gas is not compatible with what institutions or environmental organizations suggest being what is best for the environment and a sustainable future (2019a: 12). Overall, Dahl & Fløttum claim that the sustainability and annual reports "reflect a primarily strategic rather than moral perspective of climate change and the energy transition" (2019a: 13). The results in the present study indicate the same fact. Also in Equinor's news reports is low-carbon gas heavily promoted as the solution to lowering emissions, but there is no mention of stopping or reducing the production of oil and gas as a whole.

5.1.2. Equinor's sustainable efforts and the public perception

There is no doubt that the fossil fuel sector has the most challenging task regarding the energy transition, and there are evidence demonstrating Equinor's sustainability efforts. Equinor was ranked first in a review and comparison of the climate performance of the ten largest fossil fuel companies, largely based on how it was a leading force in producing climate reports and making

long-term plans for the energy transition (Investor Climate Compass 2017; in Dahl & Fløttum 2019: 3). Additionally, in the results of the present study, Equinor shares how it recently was awarded the “Energy Transition Award” for its efforts in reaching net zero by 2050 (example 7). This points to the fact that other official organizations recognize Equinor’s sustainability efforts, and that the company stands out as a greener force in the fossil fuel sector. As mentioned in section 1.2., the company name shift from *Statoil* to *Equinor* demonstrates a commitment to changing energy sources from predominantly oil and gas to renewables. Overall, Equinor’s efforts and intentions related to becoming a more sustainable company are both communicated by the company and acknowledged in the industry. This means that not all of Equinor’s discourse related to lowering emissions in its nonrenewable energy sector is painting a greener image than the reality.

However, how the public perception of Equinor’s sustainability efforts mainly differs from the company’s own portrayal is the main indicator of how the company may be guilty of greenwashing. There are several reasons why Equinor’s discourse must be considered carefully. Firstly, as Plec & Pettenger claim, the definition of ‘green energy’ is “controlled by those with the power to generate persuasive public messages about the sources and production of energy” (2012: 459). Equinor is undoubtedly in this powerful position as the largest provider of energy to Europe and Norway’s largest company. As demonstrated by the results, Equinor places a lot of confidence in technology as the solution to reducing emissions, and it is mostly sharing information about its renewable energy projects. In reality, however, we do not know how efficient and well-functioning technological solutions actually will be in preventing climate change (e.g. Asayama & Ishii 2018; Gunderson, Stuart & Peterson 2020), and over 99 % of Equinor’s profits come from nonrenewable energy sources (Greenpeace 2023). This demonstrates how Equinor shapes its communication – and thus its company portrayal – to meet the CSR standards that are expected from society. This goes back to Allan Bell’s ADT, as discussed in section 2.5.2., and how the communicator (Equinor) in mass communication will shape its language after what is expected that the audience (the public opinion) wants to hear. Secondly, webpages are one of the most important tools for companies to reach larger audiences when it comes to communicating their CSR in relation to sustainability efforts. Other channels, e.g. corporate reports, tend to have more specialized audiences such as shareholders and investors (Fernández-Vázquez 2021: 2693). The present findings are based off of Equinor’s online news site and must thus be considered part of the company’s main channel for sharing sustainable energy projects, plans, and actions which will please the public opinion. This aim may contribute to creating an unilateral image of Equinor’s involvements.

5.2. The RUW and a discursive shift in the portrayal of nonrenewable energy

The peak of the RUW, happening in February 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine, is a recent event. Although some studies have examined the geopolitical effects as well as the financial market and the energy market as a result of the war, to my knowledge, no studies have examined how fossil fuel companies' or the public's climate-related discourse may have been affected by it. For the present study, this means that the results cannot be compared to similar studies. The results will instead be discussed in light of how the invasion has affected other aspects that may be related to the discursive shift surrounding nonrenewable energy and sustainability.

As demonstrated by the results, Equinor's sustainable focus seems to have lost some significance after the RUW. The energy transition and green solutions still have a presence in Equinor's discourse after the RUW, but concerns about energy demand and energy security related to oil and gas have been given more emphasis. The 'necessary energy provider' portrayal is also seen in studies of other fossil fuel companies in the justification of continuing the production of nonrenewable energy. For example, in a 2012 study of ExxonMobil, it is found that the two most notable discourses surrounding the company's advertisements are related to the capitalist marketplace as well as energy supply and security (Plec & Pettenger 2012: 464). As seen in the news articles in the reference corpora, the need for fossil fuels is acknowledged before the RUW as well, but the energy crisis which followed the invasion undoubtedly promoted the need for nonrenewable energy to a further extent. As Misík & Nosko (2023: 3) state: "To overcome the energy crisis following February 2022, the EU has found new crucial energy partners (especially the USA) and strengthened cooperation with existing ones (for example, Norway)." This demonstrates how Norway with Equinor as the leading energy force has an important part to play in the European energy market. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that Equinor's strengthened position as an energy provider in Europe has created a more accepting attitude towards the company's production and export of oil and gas. As a result of this acceptance, Equinor may have shifted its discourse in relation to nonrenewable energy and sustainability. This is because the public opinion directs the CSR of companies.

Although it is still early to pinpoint exactly how the public opinion is towards Equinor and fossil fuel companies in general after the war, different research points to two different possible effects in relation to nonrenewable energy and sustainability. Misík & Nosko (2023) identify two groups within the EU after the invasion: the 'price-sensitive' camp, and the 'clean' camp. The first group advocates for forceful short-term reactions to prevent further large-scale economic problems, and is therefore interested in restarting the EU economy and provide

energy security with low-cost energy like coal although it produces high levels of CO₂ emissions. The second group sees the crisis as an opportunity to fully invest in the energy transition and decarbonization, and sees a long-term plan which will strengthen the EU's energy dependence and create a more sustainable future (2023: 1). Although the results of the present study demonstrates a somewhat increased acceptance towards nonrenewable energy, the sustainability focus is still stronger. This may indicate that what Korosteleva (2022: 1681) claims will become a reality: "The Russia-Ukraine war will speed up the greening transition of the EU, placed at the core of its twin objective for sustainable development, while embarking both on digital transformation and green transformation to transition to a 'zero carbon, zero waste' economy." Oil prices have skyrocketed as a result of the war (Korosteleva 2022), and as discussed in section 1.3., Equinor had a record year for financial profit in 2022. In the results of the present study, Equinor is being criticized for profiting financially from the war, and for how it exploits the tensions to promote expansion of nonrenewable energy projects that will provide secure oil and gas without dependency on Russian energy. Thus, the public opinion seems to still place responsibility on Equinor and the fossil fuel sector to become more renewable although they provide solutions in the challenging time after the RUW.

6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I will present the concluding points of the dissertation. In section 6.1., the specific research questions of the thesis will be answered by combining the main findings from the results and the main points from the discussion. Section 6.2. considers the concluding points through an ecolinguistic perspective. In section 6.3., the limitations of the study will be mentioned, and this will lead to section 6.4. which deals with further possible research and the relevance of the present study.

6.1. Research questions: concluding points

6.1.1. Research question 1

How does Equinor – mainly an oil and gas company – communicate its nonrenewable energy projects to the public, and is there a difference between the discourse surrounding nonrenewable energy before and after the RUW? If so, why?

Equinor does not communicate its nonrenewable energy projects to a large extent in its news reports. Most of the company's focus is directed towards its renewable energy projects and possible technological solutions to lowering emissions – especially wind power and CCS. The absence of acknowledging nonrenewable energy sources as well as the negative effects fossil fuels have on the environment seems to be a trend among major fossil fuel companies.

As demonstrated by several studies in the discussion, fossil fuel companies are often accused of greenwashing due to how they angle their communication, and the results of these studies correlate with the findings of the present one. By mainly portraying itself as a responsible company taking the necessary steps to make the energy transition happen, Equinor is only communicating a fraction of the company's involvements. This 'green' fractioning shows a very narrow image considering the fact that Equinor is mainly an oil and gas company with over 99 % of its energy production originating from fossil fuels. How the company avoids conveying information about and acknowledging the effects of its nonrenewable energy projects creates a perception that Equinor is greener than it is in reality. Considering that websites are the main arena for fossil fuel companies to communicate their CSR to the public,

it makes sense that Equinor chooses a green angle in its news reports. However, this company portrayal is inherently misleading as Equinor mainly produces nonrenewable energy, and as the fossil fuel sector is the largest CO₂ emitter and holds a particular responsibility in the prevention of climate change.

After the RUW, however, Equinor acknowledges its nonrenewable energy to a much larger extent than before. Furthermore, its projects are often communicated in direct relation to the war. The discourse mentions the production and export of oil and gas together with Europe's increased energy demand and need for energy security. Equinor is portraying itself as a responsible and important energy provider which is doing everything possible in order to improve the energy situation in Europe. In other words, the company makes sure to communicate how it is merely adapting to the crisis and what is expected from the company as a result of it. This 'necessary provider' portrayal is also seen in studies of other fossil fuel companies, and the RUW has created an opportunity to make this focus even larger. The main reason for the discursive shift is likely that the energy market and financial market in Europe have been weakened to the point that a change of priorities may have taken place. Equinor in particular, as the second largest provider of natural gas in Europe after Russia, was given a strengthened position as it could prevent energy dependency on Russia. It is also reasonable to think that the public has directed concerns towards more tangible issues related to the war, but this will be discussed further in research question 3. Overall, environmental concerns through CSR is mainly meant to satisfy the public opinion; if the public opinion acknowledges the need for oil and gas to a greater extent, it is also natural for Equinor to communicate its nonrenewable energy projects to a greater extent.

6.1.2. Research question 2

Has the RUW and the following energy crisis in Europe affected Equinor's portrayed attitudes towards becoming a more renewable energy company? If so, how?

Although sustainability efforts and renewable energy projects are present in Equinor's news reports after the RUW, the war seems to have lessened the company's environmental focus somewhat. Because the war led to an energy crisis in Europe and an increased demand for nonrenewable energy, Equinor was allowed to increase the production and export of gas in particular. In general, the acknowledgment of nonrenewable energy increased in Equinor's discourse after the RUW, and concerns about the environment seems to have been replaced

with concerns about energy demand and security. Moreover, as seen in public discourse, Equinor and fossil fuel companies are accused of exploiting the war to promote own interests of developing and expanding oil and gas projects. Considering that continuing and increasing nonrenewable energy projects is contradictory to reducing emissions and thus contradictory to the Paris Agreement, it seems like the RUW has somewhat changed Equinor's intentions of becoming a greener company.

It must also be acknowledged that although Equinor has a large focus on meeting climate goals and reducing emissions, it never communicates intentions of stopping or reducing the production of nonrenewable energy. The most 'green' aspect of the company is its focus on and complete trust in technological solutions – especially CCS. Although these investments make Equinor appear sustainable, there is still not enough evidence to support that these technological solutions will provide the prevention of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere to the extent we need.

6.1.3. Research question 3

Are there similarities or discrepancies between Equinor's company portrayal and how it is portrayed in public discourse in relation to nonrenewable energy and sustainability in light of the RUW?

In relation to nonrenewable energy, the present study demonstrates large discrepancies between Equinor's company portrayal and how it is portrayed in public discourse. Whereas Equinor gives the impression of taking the energy transition seriously and becoming a more sustainable company in its news reports, news articles about the company tend to criticize Equinor and fossil fuel companies in general of lacking efforts in reducing emissions. This discrepancy points to how fossil fuel companies have a tendency of using greenwashing as a technique to promote the environmental concern that is expected from them through CSR.

Although the public opinion still seems to be that Equinor and fossil fuel companies must do more in order to reach the climate goals of the Paris Agreement, the need for oil and gas that still exists is acknowledged, especially after the RUW. However, criticisms about how Equinor is profiting from the war as a result of increased oil and gas prices, and how Equinor is exploiting the dangerous Russian energy dependency to develop new nonrenewable projects do arise as a result of the RUW.

Equinor, on the other hand, simply portrays itself as a necessary provider who is doing everything possible to meet the new demands in Europe. Whereas Equinor has a tendency of portraying itself as a hero and a believer in new solutions, the public discourse tends to frame Equinor as a villain who is avoiding its actual responsibilities. Yet, the importance of the fossil fuel sector is still acknowledged to a certain degree. Overall, Equinor's attempted company portrayal seems to be in compliance with the public opinion on fossil fuel companies, but the negative reality of the company's engagements in nonrenewable energy projects is the central theme of discussion in public discourse.

6.2. The concluding points in light of Ecolinguistics

The ecolinguistic perspective on language mainly seeks to criticize language patterns that are harmful to the environment. Typically, and as demonstrated in previous studies presented in section 2.3.3., ecolinguistic CADS discuss existing linguistic representations of environmental phenomena, such as, for example, climate change. However, the results of the present study demonstrate how also the absence of such linguistic representations can tell us something about climate discourse.

The study examines discourse surrounding nonrenewable energy and sustainability, and Equinor has a disproportionate amount of focus on renewable energy and sustainable solutions considering the fact that over 99% of its energy production still comes from oil and gas. Equinor is able to fraction relevant information regarding energy sources and emissions as it sees fit because the company is in a powerful position and controls its own information channel. Furthermore, when nonrenewable energy sources are mentioned, reducing emissions or stopping production is not mentioned. They are only promoted through how Equinor is providing a need in the European market or how there are bright low-carbon solutions for the future. Overall, the way Equinor portrays nonrenewable energy and sustainability would be considered harmful in Ecolinguistics as the company is creating a very one-sided, and thus false, narrative about its environmental engagements. The passivity of ignoring environmental issues, especially when the evidence are clear and suggest changing the fossil fuel industry drastically, may be interpreted as a form of harm.

However, the public discourse surrounding Equinor and fossil fuel companies in relation to nonrenewable energy and sustainability in newspapers would largely be considered environmentally friendly discourse in Ecolinguistics. Ecolinguistics does not only seek to criticize environmentally harmful language, but also to praise language patterns which promote

protection of the natural world. Newspapers clearly have a tendency of supporting the environment, and there is placed responsibility on fossil fuel companies such as Equinor because of their influencing powers. Although there are some nuances and the need for fossil fuels is acknowledged to a certain extent, the public discourse is angled in a way that demands action from the fossil fuel sector. The focus on reaching the climate goals of the Paris Agreement is strong, and Equinor is partly portrayed as a villain for hindering climate achievements. Although the RUW created a minor shift in public discourse regarding sustainability as Equinor's contributions to the energy market were acknowledged and welcomed, a sustainable focus still prevailed.

6.3. Limitations of the study

In section 3.6., the methodological limitations of the study are discussed. Here, the limitations of the study as a whole will be considered. Considering the fact that the RUW is used as a point of departure for examining climate discourse in Equinor's news reports and in news articles in general, the most obvious limitations of the study are related to the conflict. As discussed in section 1.3., the RUW is an ongoing conflict. At the time of writing, Russia and Ukraine are still at war, and wide-ranging sanctions against Russia are in place. Because of how recently the invasion happened, a six-month time frame was the most reasonable choice for the data collection, but this is a relatively narrow frame for examining discourse. However, I argue that the narrow time frame is compensated by the data material. I base the analysis in the study on news reports, both company news and public news, and this is a text genre where the whole premise is to communicate frequent and relevant information. Another limitation is how Equinor's news channel only makes up a fraction of the company portrayal. Thus, the same results may not have occurred if other parts of the company's communicative platforms were included. However, since the purpose of a news channel is to inform the public of relevant events, I argue that this is a text genre which provides representativeness of Equinor's intentions in relation to nonrenewable energy and sustainability. Furthermore, considering that Equinor is a Norwegian company, it may be limiting for the thesis that only news articles from English-speaking countries made up the data in the reference corpora. Although Equinor is a large international company, it is reasonable to assume that the company gains more attention in the Norwegian media. Moreover, only the UK and Ireland are English-speaking countries in Europe where the RUW takes place, and this means that a mainly overseas perspective on Equinor and fossil fuel companies in light of the RUW was examined.

6.3. Further research and the study's relevance

As discussed in the section above, there are several limitations in the study. However, these may inspire future research in the field of ecolinguistic CADS to give a broader image of both corporate climate discourse and public climate discourse in light of the RUW. Interesting angles for future possible studies would be to, for example, examine the discourse of several different fossil fuel companies, or to compare the news discourse about fossil fuel companies in different countries. I argue that the news perspective is especially interesting as it both informs and expresses the public opinion. How the public perceives the climate crisis and the role of the fossil fuel sector is essential as this both potentially affects companies' CSR and actual governmental policies. Furthermore, uncovering whether there are similarities or discrepancies between a company's portrayal and how it is portrayed in the news, especially in relation to sustainability, is useful as it tends to point out more strategic communication from the companies. Another interesting perspective for future research is how different outcomes in relation to energy sources are expected as a result of the RUW. Although the results of the present study point to an increase in oil and gas and a possible greater acceptance for expanding nonrenewable energy projects, some research suggest otherwise. As mentioned in the discussion, Korosteleva (2022) expects that the war will actually speed up the greening process of energy in the EU. Thus, examining climate discourse after more time has passed since the invasion may provide a different perspective on sustainable energy.

Overall, the present study aims to contribute to the field of ecolinguistic CADS by offering new angles and perspectives on how climate discourse can be studied. More specifically, it aims to demonstrate how corporate climate discourse within the fossil fuel sector can be shaped by both the public opinion and its own interests. Furthermore, the study intends to demonstrate how a pressing event like the RUW has the ability to lessen environmental focus, both in the nonrenewable energy sector and in society as a whole. This perspective underlines how a central part of Ecolinguistics is to examine how worldly events affect the language surrounding environmental issues and how this language in turn affects people's perception of the natural world.

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APPENDIX

LL calculations of the search items:

Green

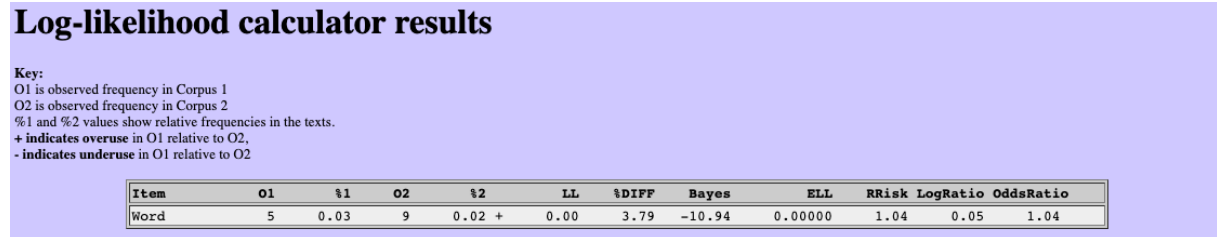


Figure 1: LL calculation of *Green*

Energy transition

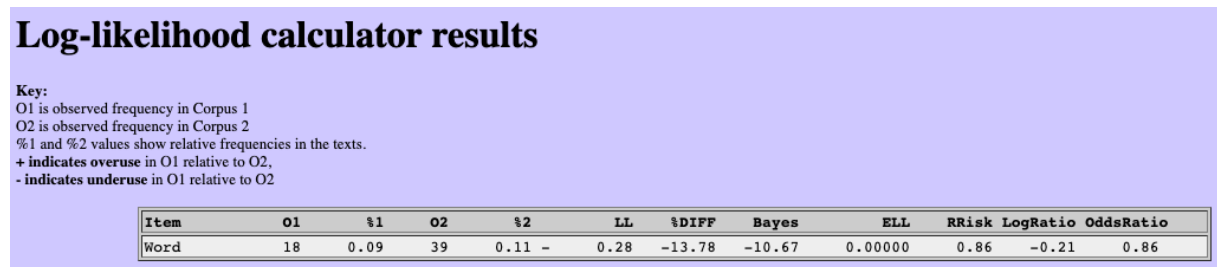


Figure 2: LL calculation of *Energy transition*

Oil

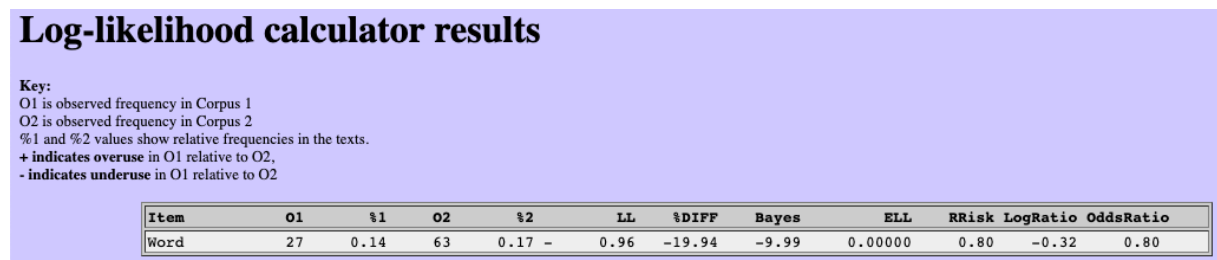


Figure 3: LL calculation of *Oil*

Gas

Log-likelihood calculator results

Key:
O1 is observed frequency in Corpus 1
O2 is observed frequency in Corpus 2
%1 and %2 values show relative frequencies in the texts.
+ indicates overuse in O1 relative to O2,
- indicates underuse in O1 relative to O2

Item	O1	%1	O2	%2	LL	%DIFF	Bayes	ELL	RRisk	LogRatio	OddsRatio	
Word	34	0.17	125	0.34	-	13.79	-49.19	2.84	0.00006	0.51	-0.98	0.51

Figure 4: LL calculation of *Gas*

Emissions

Log-likelihood calculator results

Key:
O1 is observed frequency in Corpus 1
O2 is observed frequency in Corpus 2
%1 and %2 values show relative frequencies in the texts.
+ indicates overuse in O1 relative to O2,
- indicates underuse in O1 relative to O2

Item	O1	%1	O2	%2	LL	%DIFF	Bayes	ELL	RRisk	LogRatio	OddsRatio	
Word	35	0.18	64	0.17	+	0.01	2.16	-10.94	0.00000	1.02	0.03	1.02

Figure 5: LL calculation of *Emissions*

Fossil fuel

Log-likelihood calculator results

Key:
O1 is observed frequency in Corpus 1
O2 is observed frequency in Corpus 2
%1 and %2 values show relative frequencies in the texts.
+ indicates overuse in O1 relative to O2,
- indicates underuse in O1 relative to O2

Item	O1	%1	O2	%2	LL	%DIFF	Bayes	ELL	RRisk	LogRatio	OddsRatio	
Word	3	0.02	1	0.00	+	2.68	460.44	-8.27	0.00014	5.60	2.49	5.61

Figure 6: LL calculation of *Fossil fuel*

Oil and gas

Log-likelihood calculator results

Key:
O1 is observed frequency in Corpus 1
O2 is observed frequency in Corpus 2
%1 and %2 values show relative frequencies in the texts.
+ indicates overuse in O1 relative to O2,
- indicates underuse in O1 relative to O2

Item	O1	%1	O2	%2	LL	%DIFF	Bayes	ELL	RRisk	LogRatio	OddsRatio	
Word	10	0.05	34	0.09	-	3.06	-45.05	-7.89	0.00002	0.55	-0.86	0.55

Figure 7: LL calculation of *Oil and gas*