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Coining the Crisis: Neology and Word Formation in the Climate-Change Lexicon

Aneta Naumoska and Biljana Naumoska-Sarakinska

1. Introduction

- 1 Words are not a decorative layer on climate change, but they are part of its infrastructure. The domain is widely described as interdisciplinary, yet it is also institutionally anchored: reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and decisions under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) shape what counts as established knowledge, which concepts are foregrounded, and which labels become globally mobile. This science-policy interface role helps explain why climate change can be treated as a non-prototypical specialized domain, as it is neither a single discipline nor a professional register with stable boundaries, but a negotiated field whose lexis circulates among scientific assessment, political agreements, and mediated public debate (Bureau [2023]).
- 2 This paper focuses on words about climate change, or more precisely, on neology and word formation in contemporary English. It addresses six linked questions: (1) Which grammatical types predominate; (2) Which word formation processes are most prevalent; (3) Are innovations chiefly lexical or semantic; (4) What functions do climate neologisms serve; (5) Does productivity vary across time and space; and (6) Which processes show greater creativity. The contribution is twofold. Empirically, it provides a corpus-informed profile of high-salience climate vocabulary in institutional English (IPCC, UNFCCC, UK policy), where many terms are standardized and disseminated. Analytically, it connects word formation processes to communicative functions and to the discursive effects of nominalization and entity-making (hypostatization) in governance. The paper is positioned at the intersection of (i) ecolinguistics, which foregrounds how linguistic choices shape ecological narratives and values (Lechevrel

[2008]; Lechevrel [2010]; Stibbe [2021]); (ii) terminology and variationist approaches that track term creation and diffusion in climate discourse (Bureau [2022]; Bureau [2023]); and (iii) rhetorical and discourse-analytic work on metaphor and argumentative framing (Augé [2023]). It also draws on sociological and cross-cultural accounts that emphasize the conceptual clustering of climate key-terms (risk, vulnerability, resilience, mitigation) and their political consequences (Domingues [2023]), as well as multilingual perspectives on local uptake and vernacularization (Brüggemann & Rödder [2020]).

2. Theoretical frame and key notions

2.1. Neology: lexical vs semantic

- 3 Following standard lexicalist practice, neology is used here in a broad, domain-sensitive sense: it covers (a) lexical neology, the emergence of new forms or fixed multiword units (*net zero*, *nature-based solutions*), and (b) semantic neology, the emergence of new or sharpened senses for existing forms (*resilience* as an adaptation keyword; *pathways* as a policy-planning schema). In climate discourse, semantic neology is often hard to date because a word may pre-exist but gain a specialized, institutionally stabilized meaning and prosodic profile in the domain (Domingues [2023]). Moreover, since climate change is discussed across scientific assessment, governance, and public communication, terms may become new not through formal invention but through recurrent institutional recontextualization, i.e. definitional framing, repeated co-texts, and routinized deployment can produce a de facto terminological status even for historically established words.
- 4 Due to the fact that the present data set is institutional and diachronically short, the analysis treats newness primarily as new-in-domain salience: a unit is considered a climate neologism if it (i) names a climate-related entity / process / governance tool that becomes prominent in the period, and / or (ii) displays domain-specific entrenchment, collocational patterning, or evaluative polarity. In practice, this means that candidate items are evaluated not only by form but also by their distribution across registers and subcorpora, their degree of formulaicity, and their capacity to function as stable labels for planning, measurement, or intervention. A term may not be morphologically new, yet it can be institutionally new when it becomes a routine organizing category in authoritative texts and begins to function as a stable handle for policy design, reporting, and evaluation. The approach therefore aligns neology with the domain's communicative ecology: a climate neologism is often best understood as a lexical unit whose meaning has been stabilized precisely to enable portability and coordinated uptake.

2.2. Word formation processes and productivity

- 5 The analysis focuses on four types of word formation processes: (i) compounding and multiword unit formation, including noun-noun compounds (*carbon budget*) and phrasal templates (*low carbon*, *net zero*), as well as hyphenated compounds (*net-zero*, *climate-related*, *nature-based*); (ii) affixation, with attention to prefixation in programmatic verbs and action nouns (*decarbonise*, *decarbonisation*; *reforest*,

reforestation); (iii) conversion (zero-derivation), especially verb creation from nouns / adjectives (*to target*, *to offset*, *to transition*); and (iv) blending and truncation, which are less frequent in institutional registers but salient in public discourse (*greenwashing*), as documented in neological inventories (Aguiar, Carrington & Wang [2019]; Francœur [2022]). These processes are not equivalent in communicative effect: compounding tends to maximize transparency and compositionality, while blending often maximizes memorability and evaluative force.

- 6 Productivity is observed in two complementary ways: (i) token frequency (how often forms occur), and (ii) type diversity (how many different realizations a pattern generates). These measures capture different dimensions of dominance. High token frequency may index agenda status, routinization, or institutional headline function, while on the contrary, high type diversity reveals scalable naming capacity and thus a domain's ability to lexicalize new policy objects as they emerge. For compounding, a key indicator is the diversity of "X + head" templates such as *carbon* + *N*, which scale as new policy tools, metrics, and technologies become discussable. In institutional genres, productivity is also shaped by pressures of accountability: formations that remain legible to mixed audiences and compatible with monitoring and reporting practices are more likely to be repeated and generalized across documents.

2.3. Determinologization and circulatory dynamics

- 7 This analysis also highlights determinologization, i.e. how terms move from specialized discourse to general language and back. The present corpus captures only one segment of that loop (institutional writing), but the mechanism can still be observed: institutions often ratify items already circulating, and conversely, institutional terms are re-used in public discourse with broadened, sometimes axiologically shifted senses. French-language work provides models for tracking such diffusion empirically (Bureau [2022]; Bureau [2023]). In this paper, determinologization is treated as a genre shift plus meaning drift: a unit moves to broader genres and acquires widened reference, increased metaphorical use, or evaluative loading. Such drift is not merely semantic, but it is also functional, as terms may shift from designating a delimited technical object to operating as a stance marker or argumentative shorthand. Conversely, the return path (from public uptake back to institutional language) often involves attempts to stabilize meaning through definitional contexts, procedural constraints, or narrowed usage. The analysis therefore assumes a feedback system in which lexical units can be popularized, contested, and partially restandardized, and where institutional uptake does not simply reflect linguistic change but can actively shape it.

2.4. Hypostatization and semantic prosody

- 8 Finally, the analysis uses hypostatization to describe the ability of lexical items (often abstract nouns) to form concepts: they turn processes and relations into manipulable objects in discourse (Schmid [1998]; Schmid [2008]). In climate governance, such nouns enable coordination and measurement (*mitigation*, *adaptation*, *transition*, *resilience*), but they may also form a background to agents, responsibilities, and distributive conflicts. Hypostatization is thus treated as a double-edged resource because it supports

institutional action by making complex processes handleable, while also encouraging representations in which agency is implicit or dispersed.

- 9 As these nouns recur in institutional texts, their semantic prosody (the evaluative tendency of their surrounding collocates) becomes central to how urgency, feasibility, and responsibility are communicated. Prosody is particularly relevant where terms are presented as neutral or technical but are repeatedly embedded in co-texts that assign positive or negative value. Tracking such prosodic tendencies helps connect lexicological description with discursive effects, clarifying how terminology participates in framing even in ostensibly objective institutional prose.

3. Data and methods

3.1. Corpus design: CNC-Inst

- 10 CNC-Inst (Climate Neology Corpus-Institutional) is the name given to the corpus compiled for this study. The label reflects both its focus and its provenance, as it comprises institutional climate-change texts produced at the science-policy interface and in governance settings, rather than journalistic or social media discourse. The time span (2015-2023) refers to the publication dates of the documents included, from the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC 2015) to the IPCC AR6 Synthesis Report Summary for Policymakers (2023). CNC-Inst is designed as a bounded, replicable dataset for examining the stabilization and institutional uptake of climate-related neologisms and word formation patterns, and its composition and token counts are summarized in Table 1. This study uses a bounded, fully traceable institutional corpus designed around standard-setting texts that shape climate terminology across the science-policy interface and into national governance. The corpus is intentionally small but authoritative since the goal is not to approximate general English, but to capture the lexical dynamics of institutional uptake and terminological stabilization, where coinages must be portable, legible, and administratively actionable. The corpus sources are: IPCC (2021; 2022a; 2022b; 2023), UNFCCC (2015; 2021), and UK Government (2021).

Table 1. The CNC-Inst corpus (2015-2023)

Subcorpus	Document (year)	Setting / register	Word tokens	Numeric tokens
UNFCCC	Paris Agreement (2015)	International legal / policy	7,048	304
UNFCCC	Glasgow Climate Pact decision (2021)	COP decision language	2,990	171
UK policy	Net Zero Strategy (2021)	National strategy / implementation	119,625	6,520
IPCC	AR6 WGI SPM (2021)	Science-policy assessment	17,225	2,445
IPCC	AR6 WGII SPM (2022)	Science-policy assessment	21,018	2,322
IPCC	AR6 WGIII SPM (2022)	Science-policy assessment	29,532	4,265

IPCC	AR6 SYR SPM (2023)	Science-policy synthesis	19,694	1,832
TOTAL			217,132	17,859

(Word tokens are alphabetic tokens as defined in 3.2; numeric tokens are reported for transparency but are not treated as neologism candidates.)

- 11 Documents were selected for inclusion in the corpus on the basis of four converging criteria. First, they had to display institutional centrality, in the sense of being produced by bodies that play a recognized role in standardizing climate knowledge and policy categories, notably the IPCC, the UNFCCC, and a national government strategy. Second, they needed to have high diffusion potential, therefore texts that are widely redistributed, cited, and re-used were prioritized, such as IPCC Summaries for Policymakers rather than full assessment chapters, and treaty or decision language rather than internal working notes. Third, they had to ensure genre comparability, meaning that each document represents a stable institutional genre with recurrent rhetorical and lexical constraints (assessment summary, treaty, COP decision, national strategy), allowing distributional patterns to be compared without conflating fundamentally different communicative formats. Finally, public availability and replicability were required, in that all documents had to be downloadable and processable from the same publicly accessible PDF source.
- 12 Within this framework, IPCC Summaries for Policymakers were selected because they are the most consequential component of the assessment reports for cross-domain circulation. They are explicitly designed for boundary-crossing communication from science to policy and onward into media uptake, and they typically combine definitional formulations with operational terminology used for governance and reporting, making them particularly well suited to examining which lexical items stabilize beyond specialist communities. The UNFCCC documents were included because they provide legally ratified and procedurally authoritative language that functions as a reference point for subsequent institutional discourse: the Paris Agreement (2015) offers a baseline of consolidated treaty wording, while the Glasgow Climate Pact decision (2021) reflects later COP decision language in which agenda labels and governance instruments are more explicit. Although these texts are comparatively short, they are lexically consequential, operating as normative anchors that delimit what can be claimed, committed to, and rendered actionable in later policy and assessment writing. The UK Net Zero Strategy (2021) was selected as a representative national implementation document, since such strategies are among the clearest sites where institutional climate vocabulary becomes implementation-ready and where action-oriented and instrument-oriented lexicon is expected to be particularly productive (*decarbonisation*, *retrofit*). It also provides a controlled institutional variety contrast, reflecting British government English conventions (including orthography such as *-isation*) against the more transnational institutional English typical of IPCC and UNFCCC texts.
- 13 The corpus represents a deliberately specific slice of climate discourse: high-authority, high-diffusion institutional texts. This scope is appropriate for the paper's central aim, which is examining how neologisms and word formation patterns behave under standardization pressures, while also implying a limitation: it will under-represent

playful, polarizing, or community-specific neology that is more typical of social media and advocacy genres (Francœur [2022]).

3.2. Preprocessing, token counts and high-salience inventory construction

- ¹⁴ All texts were downloaded as publicly available PDFs and converted to plain text via page-level extraction (PyMuPDF). Since institutional PDFs contain substantial non-content material (e.g. running headers / footers, page numbers, layout artifacts, cross-references, and figure / table remnants), the extracted files were subjected to a transparent normalization procedure intended to reduce systematic noise while preserving orthographic cues relevant to word formation, especially hyphenation. Preprocessing proceeded in four steps: (i) Documents were extracted as continuous text and conservatively de-noised by removing recurrent non-content strings (such as repeated report titles in headers). (ii) Whitespace was normalized by converting line breaks to single spaces and collapsing multiple spaces; analysis was conducted at the level of tokens and multiword units rather than paragraphs. (iii) Hyphenation was handled by distinguishing layout-driven end-of-line hyphenation from lexical hyphenation because hyphenation in this domain often signals semi-lexicalized compounds. (iv) Common PDF character artifacts (non-breaking spaces, dash variants, curly quotes / apostrophes) were normalized to American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) equivalents for stable matching.
- ¹⁵ Word tokens were defined as contiguous alphabetic sequences, allowing optional internal hyphens and apostrophes (*net-zero*, *co-benefits*, *nature-based*). Numeric tokens were counted separately for transparency but were excluded from the neology candidate pool (Table 1). This definition ensures that the main sites of climate word formation (compounds, hyphenated compounds, and multiword patterns) are not artificially fragmented. Word-token totals reported in Table 1 refer to these alphabetic tokens after cleaning and normalization. As is the case that many institutional terms circulate in both hyphenated and unhyphenated forms (*net zero* / *net-zero*; *low carbon* / *low-carbon*), searches were conducted with explicit variant patterns, and Table 2 reports combined counts where relevant. This approach reflects the linguistic status of such items, in that variation is often orthographic rather than conceptual, and collapsing variants yields a more faithful measure of the unit's institutional prominence.

Table 2. Selected high-frequency multiword units in CNC-Inst (tokens)

Multiword unit	Total tokens	Main locus (highest-count document)
climate change (incl. climate-change)	573	UK Net Zero Strategy (245)
greenhouse gas(es) (incl. greenhouse-gas)	263	UK Net Zero Strategy (178)
net zero + net-zero	1,194	UK Net Zero Strategy (1,048)
carbon budget(s)	225	UK Net Zero Strategy (177)

low carbon + low-carbon	357	UK Net Zero Strategy (353)
negative emissions	30	UK Net Zero Strategy (19)
carbon dioxide removal	9	IPCC WGIII SPM (5)
nature-based solutions	16	UK Net Zero Strategy (11)

(Counts include hyphen / space variants where relevant; main locus= document with highest count.)

- 16 For cross-document comparisons, raw counts were complemented by normalized frequencies per 10,000 word tokens (Figure 1). Normalization was computed as:

$$\text{NormFreq}_{10k} = \frac{\text{TokenCount}}{\text{WordTokens}} \times 10,000$$

- 17 This step is essential because CNC-Inst includes documents of very different lengths, and institutional genres also differ in the density of headings, lists, and enumerations.

Figure 1. Normalized frequency (per 10,000 words) of *net zero* (+ *net-zero*) in CNC-Inst

Paris (2015)	0.0
Glasgow (2021)	10.0
UK (2021)	87.6
IPCC WGI (2021)	7.5
IPCC WGII (2022)	0.0
IPCC WGIII (2022)	31.8
IPCC SYR (2023)	18.3

(values use Table 1 word-token denominators)

- 18 The paper does not aim to compile an exhaustive dictionary of climate vocabulary. Instead, it focuses on high-salience neological items and productive word formation patterns that allow principled claims about grammatical type dominance and process prevalence in institutional discourse. Candidate selection therefore combines quantitative triggers (to avoid anecdotal choice) with qualitative validation (to ensure frequency is not mistaken for terminological status). Candidate items were generated using three complementary heuristics: (i) hub-based n-gram extraction for productive pivots in climate discourse (*carbon*, *climate*, *emissions*, *net*, *zero*, *transition*, *pathway*, *risk*, *resilience*), capturing scalable templates such as *carbon* + N and *climate* + N/Adj; (ii) morphological family harvesting via pattern matching for high-frequency action / restoration series (*decarbon*-, *reforest*-, *retrofit*-), and procedural operators such as *phase out*; and (iii) hyphenated-token extraction, since hyphenation is a strong cue to semi-

lexicalization and compositional modifier packaging in institutional genres (*climate-related*, *low-carbon*, *net-zero*, *nature-based*), and a frequent locus of orthographic variation. Automated lists were then refined by removing extraction noise (formatting artifacts, internal labels, non-lexical strings) and by concordance checking (KWIC) to confirm climate-relevant, patterned use, which is an essential step for identifying semantic neology and domain-entrenched abstractions. Salience was treated as a composite property, i.e. items were retained if they showed institutional prominence, strong register concentration (functional specialization), membership in a productive template / family (type-based scaling), or recognizable agenda / evaluative status with institutional uptake (even at low frequency).

3.3. Word formation classification and quantitative measures

- 19 Once candidates were identified, each retained item was classified according to its primary word formation profile, with explicit attention to borderline cases where the distinction between terminology and phraseology is analytically consequential. Classification was intentionally conservative since the goal was not to force all items into rigid categories, but to extract robust generalizations about which processes dominate institutional climate naming.
- 20 Each candidate was assigned to one primary category, with notes when secondary characteristics were relevant:
 - Compounding / multiword units. This category includes noun-noun compounds and stabilized multiword units that behave as terminological designations or institutional labels (*carbon budget*, *carbon pricing*, *carbon dioxide removal*, *nature-based solutions*). Multiword units were treated as analytical objects when they showed (i) stable recurrence and (ii) coherent reference in context.
 - Hyphenated compounds. Hyphenated forms were treated as a subcase of compounding where orthography signals semi-lexicalization and modifier packaging (*low-carbon*, *climate-related*, *nature-based*, *net-zero*). As hyphenation varies across institutional style guides, hyphenated and unhyphenated variants were documented and, where conceptually identical, often reported jointly in frequency summaries (e.g. Table 2).
 - Affixation (prefixation-dominant). Prefixal series were classified as affixation when the morphological segmentation was transparent and semantically compositional (*decarbonise / decarbonisation*; *reforest / reforestation*; *retrofit / retrofitting*). The analysis focuses on prefixation because it is the most visible affixational strategy in the institutional climate action lexicon.
 - Conversion (zero-derivation). Items were classified as conversion when an established base form was used as a verb without overt derivation and with a climate-governance procedural function (*to target*, *to offset*, *to transition*). Conversion can be difficult to identify from form alone, so classification required contextual confirmation.
 - Blending / clipping. Items were classified as blends / clippings when their form reflected fusion or truncation (*greenwashing*). In CNC-Inst these items are rare since their inclusion is motivated by their framing importance and by their role in linking institutional uptake to wider public coinage.
- 21 Three complementary quantitative measures were used:
 - Raw token frequency. Raw counts capture institutional prominence within each document and across the corpus (Table 2, Table 4, Table 5). As institutional genres often repeat agenda

labels as headings or targets, high raw frequency can indicate organizational function rather than purely referential necessity.

- Normalized frequency. For cross-document comparison, counts were normalized per 10,000 word tokens (Figure 1). This allows meaningful comparison between short legal texts and long strategy documents.
- 22 Type diversity as a productivity proxy. For template-driven compounding, productivity is better captured by type counts than by token totals. Table 3 therefore reports distinct *carbon + N* types above a conservative frequency floor (≥ 2), excluding fixed chemical expressions. This method isolates scalable naming behavior from one-off mentions and supports the paper's claims about compounding as a dominant and expandable process in institutional climate discourse.

Table 3. Productivity proxy: distinct *carbon + N* types (frequency ≥ 2)

Document	Distinct types (≥ 2)
Paris Agreement (2015)	0
Glasgow Climate Pact decision (2021)	0
UK Net Zero Strategy (2021)	67
IPCC AR6 WGI SPM (2021)	3
IPCC AR6 WGII SPM (2022)	1
IPCC AR6 WGIII SPM (2022)	10
IPCC AR6 SYR SPM (2023)	7
Overall unique types in corpus (≥ 2)	73

(excluding carbon dioxide / carbon monoxide)

- 23 Multiword units were counted using explicit pattern matching that recognizes the principal orthographic variants (space vs hyphen). This is especially important for climate terminology because institutional conventions vary, and many multiword units occupy a gradient space between free syntax and lexicalized termhood.

3.4 Methodological limitations

- 24 Undoubtedly, limitations follow directly from the corpus design and from the use of PDF-based institutional sources. These limitations are acknowledged not as defects but as scope conditions that determine what can and cannot be concluded from the present data.
- i. Institutional and genre bias. CNC-Inst represents high-authority, high-diffusion institutional writing. This is appropriate for studying stabilization pressures, but it necessarily underrepresents the creativity typical of media, activism, and social platforms (Francœur [2022]). Blends, slogan-like coinages, and overtly evaluative labels are therefore expected to be rarer here than in public discourse. The analysis interprets such rarity as evidence of institutional

selection pressures, favoring transparency, procedural utility, and cross-lingual portability, rather than as evidence that such forms are unimportant in climate discourse at large. The corpus should thus be understood as capturing a key stage in lexical circulation (institutional codification), not the full ecology of climate neology.

- ii. Limited diatopic coverage. While the corpus includes a controlled institutional variety contrast (UK government English vs transnational IPCC/UNFCCC English), it does not provide broad coverage of world Englishes or a systematic comparison of national policy corpora. Claims about diatopic variation are therefore limited to the level of orthographic conventions and institutional style rather than regionally distributed lexical repertoires. Extending the design to additional national strategies would be required for stronger claims about geographic variation.
- iii. PDF extraction artifacts and layout effects. PDF-to-text conversion can introduce minor distortions (broken tokens, duplicated strings, misrecognized hyphenation). The cleaning protocol reduces systematic noise, but residual artifacts are possible. This is why the methodological emphasis is on transparent normalization, conservative thresholds for productivity proxies, and qualitative validation via concordance inspection. Importantly, the analysis targets robust patterns (template scaling, prefix families) that are unlikely to be materially altered by small residual extraction errors.
- iv. Limits on diachronic inference. The corpus spans 2015–2023, which is sufficient to observe agenda crystallization in institutional writing (e.g. the rise of *net zero*), but it does not support long-run historical claims about the emergence of climate terminology. The paper therefore frames diachronic conclusions as within-period institutional uptake rather than as claims about first coinage.
- v. Operationalization of neologism as a term. The paper uses a domain-sensitive conception of neology (new-in-domain salience). This approach is well-motivated for climate discourse, where semantic neology is central, but it also means that neologism here is not equivalent to first attested form. The study aims to explain how lexical items become institutionally entrenched and functionally specialized, not to establish absolute first occurrences.

4. Results

4.1. Grammatical types: a nominal bias

- 25 Across CNC-Inst, the most salient innovations are overwhelmingly nominal, especially as multiword nominal units and as nominalizations. This reflects both the genre (policy and assessment writing) and the governance needs of the domain: institutions must name entities, categories, metrics, and policy instruments. A first indicator is the prominence of noun-headed multiword units built on hubs such as *carbon* and *climate*. Table 2 lists a set of high-frequency units illustrative of institutional climate lexis, but the same hub-based strategy extends to a wider institutional inventory of scalable designations, including *greenhouse gas emissions*, *greenhouse-gas inventories*, *climate-related risks*, *climate finance*, *emissions trajectories*, *warming levels*, *temperature goals*, *mitigation options*, and *adaptation measures*. Equally prominent are instrument and governance labels that are lexically compact yet administratively handleable, such as *carbon pricing*, *emissions trading*, *carbon markets*, *carbon credits*, *carbon tax*, and *carbon capture and storage*. These units are characteristic of a domain in which lexical choice is tied to monitoring, reporting, and policy design rather than only to description.
- 26 Noun formation also appears through recurrent nominalizations that function as governance handles: *mitigation*, *adaptation*, *transition*, *resilience*, *vulnerability*; and, in

implementation-oriented registers, action and infrastructure nouns such as *decarbonisation*, *electrification*, *retrofitting*, *deployment*, and *afforestation / reforestation*. Such nouns are not necessarily newly coined, but their domain-specific entrenchment and patterned co-occurrence make them central instances of semantic neology (Domingues [2023]; Fisichelli, Schuurman & Hoffman [2016]). In institutional genres, these nouns often behave as shell nouns in Schmid's sense, pointing to complex propositions while being treated as manipulable entities (Schmid [1998]; Schmid [2008]). The same entity-making tendency is visible in abstract planning nouns that circulate with quasi-technical meanings, such as *scenario*, *baseline*, *pathway*, *feasibility*, *equity*, and *ambition*, which frequently function as compressed decision-frames rather than as everyday vocabulary.

- 27 Verbs are present but comparatively less salient as innovation sites. When verbs are created or foregrounded, they tend to be programmatic and procedural, naming intervention types and policy moves rather than novel processes in the natural world: *decarbonise*, *retrofit*, *phase out*, *phase down*, *scale up*, *roll out*, *deliver*, *fund / finance*, and *align* (e.g. *align targets*, *align pathways*). Adjectives occur mainly as relational and compositional modifiers, frequently hyphenated and thus semi-lexicalized: *low-carbon*, *climate-related*, *climate-resilient*, *zero-emission*, *high-emitting*, *hard-to-abate*, *unabated*, *long-term*, and *nature-based*. Adverbs are marginal and largely formulaic, tending to occur as conventionalized calibrators in institutional prose (e.g. *substantially*, *rapidly*, *globally*, *significantly*), where they modulate pace, scale, and certainty rather than introduce neological content.

4.2. Compounding and multiword templates

- 28 Compounding is the dominant productive strategy in the institutional sample. In particular, the *carbon + N* template scales as policy and technology inventories expand, supporting both referential naming and operationalization. The template does not simply yield a small set of stable terms, rather, it supports an expandable naming infrastructure in which *carbon* functions as a pivot noun around which new governance objects can be routinely generated and normalized. Alongside the familiar *carbon budget*, CNC-Inst contains a broad family of institutional carbon-objects, such as *carbon pricing*, *carbon tax*, *carbon market(s)*, *carbon credit(s)*, *carbon offset(s)*, *carbon capture*, *carbon storage*, *carbon sequestration*, *carbon intensity*, *carbon neutrality*, and *carbon leakage*. The distribution of these items is not random: implementation and governance genres are precisely the contexts in which the lexicon needs to name tools that can be measured, incentivized, regulated, and audited.
- 29 This productivity is not only lexical but also epistemic, since the template frames climate action as carbon-accounting, enabling calculability and comparability. The same is true for *net zero*, which functions as a compact formula for balancing emissions and removals and which readily combines with additional modifiers and domains in institutional writing (e.g. *net-zero targets*, *net-zero pathway*, *net-zero strategy*). Its distribution is sharply time-sensitive and genre-sensitive: it is absent from the Paris Agreement but becomes a central organizing label in later mitigation policy. Figure 1 shows register differentiation: the UK strategy uses *net zero* as an agenda label and organizing headline, while the IPCC uses it more sparingly and in a more constrained way, typically within scenario and pathway discussions. More broadly, compounding in

CNC-Inst extends well beyond carbon templates. Institutional texts regularly stabilize multiword planning objects, such as *long-term strategy*, *nationally determined contributions*, *emissions reduction*, *mitigation pathway*, *adaptation pathway*, *risk assessment*, and *climate-resilient development*. These units occupy the gradient space between phraseology and terminology as they are syntactically transparent, but their recurrence and institutional function make them behave as quasi-lexicalized instruments of governance.

4.3. Affixation: prefixal verbs and action nouns

- 30 Beyond compounding, prefixation is the second clear productivity hotspot in CNC-Inst, particularly in the transition and implementation lexicon of policy writing. Two prefixes dominate in institutional usage: *de-* as a transition-program prefix (*decarbonise*, *decarbonisation*), encoding directionality (away from carbon) while keeping the base transparent and metrically compatible; and *re-* as a restoration / renewal prefix (*reforest*, *reforestation*, *retrofit*, *retrofitting*), packaging reversibility and repair into governable action-words. In institutional registers, this prefixal pattern is especially visible in action nouns that align with document structures (*strategies*, *pathways*, *plans*, *measures*) because they can be scheduled, funded, and evaluated. The lexicon thus readily supports nested combinations of action and sectoral scope, as in formulations such as *decarbonised electricity*, *decarbonised transport*, *decarbonised heating*, or the more general *decarbonisation of sectors*. Similarly, *retrofit* lexicalizes a complex cluster of practices into a single administratively tractable label, commonly embedded in subdomain phrases that specify targets and instruments (*building retrofit*, *retrofit programme*, *retrofit measures*).
- 31 Prevalence and portability are key in this context. First, these formations are portable across registers because their semantics are compositional and their morphological structure is legible to non-specialists, which supports diffusion and translation (Bureau [2023]). Second, prefixation is not merely referential, but it actually contributes to programmatic framing, presenting transition as a sequence of manageable operations (*retrofit*, *reforest*, *decarbonise*) rather than foregrounding distributive conflict. Orthography also reflects institutional variety: with a UK government document in the corpus, British spellings (*-isation*) are prominent. This is a limited but concrete instance of variety differentiation in institutional English: the concept is standardized, but spelling reflects administrative setting.

4.4. Conversion and verbal agility

- 32 Institutional climate discourse shows less overt creativity in verb coinage than public-facing discourse, but it does use conversion (zero derivation) and light verbal patterns to create operational verbs that align with planning and accounting:
- N → V: *to target*, *to finance*, *to fund*
 - Adj/N → V around hubs: *to offset*, *to transition*, *to align* (*align policies*, *align pathways*)
 - Verb phrases that behave as procedural operators: *to phase out*, *to phase down*, *to scale up*, *to roll out*
- 33 Conversion is well-suited to institutional writing because it reduces morphological load and preserves transparency. For example, *offset* is already established as a noun in

accounting contexts, and *to offset* transfers that logic into action. Similarly, *to target* operationalizes goal-setting as a procedural verb. In climate governance, such verbs frequently pair with the noun inventory produced by compounding: *to offset emissions*, *to phase out unabated coal*, *to scale up renewables*, *to finance mitigation*, *to align transitions*, *to deliver decarbonisation*. The pattern supports the operational function described in §5.2: verbs are less about lexical novelty per se than about proceduralizing the nominal lexicon.

4.5. Blending, clipping, and creativity at the institutional margins

- 34 Blends and clipped forms are rare in CNC-Inst, and where they occur they often enter as metalinguistic or critical labels rather than as core technical terms. *Greenwashing* is the clearest example in this dataset since it functions as an evaluative or watchdog term rather than as a planning category, and it often appears in contexts of legitimacy management (alongside *transparency*, *disclosure*, *credibility*, or *standards*). Table 5 likewise shows that creative or rhetorically charged forms are much scarcer than transparent compounds and programmatic prefixes in institutional materials, even when they are prominent in broader public discourse. This difference is itself an important result. Neological inventories built from media and social media show many more creative forms, including occasionalisms and polarized debate labels (Francœur [2022]). Institutional uptake is selective: creativity that thrives in circulation (memorable blends, pointed labels) does not necessarily stabilize in assessment and policy texts, where terminology tends to favor accountability and cross-lingual portability (Bureau [2022]; Bureau [2023]). Where evaluative formations do stabilize institutionally, they tend to do so via more compositional means, for example through value-laden but transparent nouns such as *co-benefits*, *equity*, *feasibility*, and *effectiveness*, which can be embedded within reporting frameworks without the stylistic markedness of blends.

5. Discussion

5.1. Lexical and semantic neology: practical diagnostics

- 35 The CNC-Inst profile suggests that climate neology is best described as a mixed economy. Lexical neology dominates where institutions need compact names for policy objects, metrics, and instruments: *net zero*, *carbon budget*, *carbon dioxide removal*, *nature-based solutions*; as well as operational labels such as *emissions trading*, *carbon pricing*, *carbon tax*, *carbon credits*, *carbon offsets*, *carbon capture and storage*, *negative emissions technologies*, *direct air capture*, and *long-term strategy*. Many of these are structurally transparent compounds or multiword units whose stability derives from repeated institutional use and their fit with administrative templates.
- 36 Semantic neology dominates where existing words are recruited as governance abstractions and sharpened into technical-operational senses: *pathway*, *scenario*, *baseline*, *attribution*, *forcing*, *sensitivity*, *risk*, *hazard*, *exposure*, *resilience*, *vulnerability*, and *transition*. A practical diagnostic for semantic neology in this domain is institutional re-entrenchment: a pre-existing word acquires (i) stabilized co-text (recurring collocates), (ii) definitional scaffolding (glossary-like usage in assessment writing), and (iii) a

function in scenario design or policy accounting. Domingues [2023] shows how a small set of terms (*risk, vulnerability, resilience, mitigation, adaptation*) forms a conceptual grid through which the climate problem is made interpretable and governable. Fisichelli, Schuurman & Hoffman [2016] likewise demonstrate that even apparently helpful umbrella terms such as *resilience* can become problematic when their senses proliferate and drift across jurisdictions and practitioner communities.

5.2. Why these processes dominate

- 37 The distribution of word formation processes in CNC-Inst becomes more explanatory when linked to communicative functions. Four functions recur:
- i. Referential function (naming new entities / phenomena / tools). Compounding and multiword units are ideal: *carbon budget, carbon dioxide removal, negative emissions, direct air capture, heatwave, extreme precipitation, sea-level rise, ocean acidification, permafrost thaw, and managed retreat*. Their transparency supports rapid uptake and relatively stable reference, particularly when the designation must be understood across disciplinary boundaries.
 - ii. Operational function (packaging actionability and measurement). This is where compounding and prefixation converge: *net zero* (as balance logic), *decarbonisation* (as agenda-program), *carbon pricing* and *emissions trading* (as governance instruments), *carbon credits / offsets* (as accounting units), and procedural operators such as *phase out, phase down, scale up, and roll out*. The lexicon behaves like a toolkit for turning goals into steps, often in a format compatible with planning and reporting (*emissions trajectories, implementation pathway, monitoring and reporting*).
 - iii. Evaluative / persuasive function (encoding stance, urgency, legitimacy). Institutional writing is more restrained than advocacy discourse, but evaluative formations still appear, often through critique labels (*greenwashing*) or positively loaded terms that can be institutionalized without overt rhetorical excess (*co-benefits, equity, feasibility, cost-effectiveness*). Metaphor and framing research helps explain why certain labels gain traction as arguments rather than as neutral descriptors (Augé [2023]).
 - iv. Identity / classificatory function (labeling actors, sectors, practices). This function is less prominent in the institutional subset, but policy texts build categories through hyphenated relational compounds and classificatory templates: *hard-to-abate sectors, high-emitting sectors, zero-emission vehicles, climate-related risks, climate-vulnerable communities, and unabated fossil fuels*. Such labels enable governance by classification: they delineate where targets apply, who counts as affected, and which interventions are considered legitimate.
- 38 The key point is that process choice is not arbitrary. Compounds and transparent multiword units dominate because they are simultaneously interpretable, translatable, and compatible with accounting and policy templates. Prefixation is productive because it converts goals into sequences of named actions (*decarbonise, retrofit, reforest*), which can then be allocated responsibilities, costs, and timelines.

5.3. Productivity across time and institutional settings

- 39 Even within a short time window (2015-2023), CNC-Inst shows strong diachronic skewing: post-2015 institutional texts expand the operational lexicon markedly. The clearest illustration is the rise of *net zero* (Figure 1), which was absent in the 2015 treaty text but highly frequent in the 2021 UK strategy and present in later IPCC SPMs, where it is embedded within *scenarios* and *pathways*. Two broader productivity mechanisms

appear: (i) Template scaling is visible once a hub like *carbon* is entrenched: institutions generate many carbon-objects (as Table 3 indicates), including governance and market lexicon such as *carbon pricing*, *carbon tax*, *carbon markets*, *carbon credits*, *carbon offsets*, and technology lexicon such as *carbon capture*, *carbon storage*, and *carbon dioxide removal*. This naming infrastructure supports calculability and comparison: *carbon* becomes a pivot noun around which policy objects can be generated as needed, and the repeated template fosters uptake. (ii) Programmatic prefixation (the *de-* and *re-* series) aligns with transition narratives, encouraging repeated lexicalization of interventions and targets (Table 4): beyond the core series (*decarbonise* / *decarbonisation*; *reforest* / *reforestation*; *retrofit* / *retrofitting*), institutional writing readily produces sector-targeted elaborations (*decarbonised electricity* / *transport* / *heat*) that preserve compositional legibility while expanding scope.

Table 4. Selected prefix families in CNC-Inst

Family / pattern	Paris	Glasgow	UK	WGI	WGII	WGIII	SYR	Total
decarbon- (e.g. decarbonisation, decarbonise)	0	0	332	0	0	9	1	342
reforest- (e.g. reforest, reforestation)	0	0	0	0	2	11	6	19
retrofit- e.g. retrofit, retrofitting)	0	0	24	0	1	9	1	35
phase out / phased out	0	0	29	0	0	0	0	29

(tokens, case-insensitive; hyphen variants included)

- 40 “Across space” in this corpus is primarily a matter of institutional setting rather than a wide geographic sample: IPCC and UNFCCC English trends toward a transnational bureaucratic register, while UK policy English adds national policy lexis and orthographic conventions. A fuller diatopic comparison would be needed to test whether different governance cultures prefer different templates or prosodic frames.

Table 5. High-salience creative forms in CNC-Inst (tokens)

Form (variant handling)	Paris	Glasgow	UK	WGI	WGII	WGIII	SYR	Total
greenwashing	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
net-zero (hyphenated token only)	0	0	24	0	0	9	1	34
co-benefit(s) / co benefit(s)	1	0	10	0	3	19	14	47

5.4. Determinologization and the science-policy-public feedback loop

- 41 Because CNC-Inst is institutional, it does not directly model general-language diffusion; however, it captures the domain's ratification dynamics. Institutions do not merely coin; they also stabilize and legitimate items that then circulate outward. Agenda labels are particularly revealing in this respect: *loss and damage* appears across UNFCCC and IPCC contexts, while *net zero* and *carbon budget* function as portable governance handles that circulate from institutional texts into wider policy commentary and back into technical assessment contexts with shifting degrees of precision. Bureau's work on terminological variation and neology in climate discourse emphasizes precisely this interplay between specialized and broader circulation (Bureau [2022]; Bureau [2023]). A term's life-cycle often involves: (i) emergence in expert or policy contexts, (ii) public uptake and metaphorization, and (iii) partial re-entry into specialized usage with broadened senses or different prosodies. Even within institutional writing, traces of this loop are visible when compact technical labels become headline-friendly policy shorthands (*net zero*, *phase out*) and then reappear in assessment texts as carefully qualified components of scenarios and pathways. In such cycles, process matters: transparent compounds tend to be more portable, while rhetorically marked items tend to remain peripheral to institutional standardization.

5.5. Hypostatization, nominal governance and semantic prosody

- 42 The institutional climate lexicon is not just noun-heavy, but it is abstraction-heavy, and that has consequences. Schmid's analysis of shell nouns shows how abstract nouns can encapsulate complex content and lend it thing-like status (Schmid [1998]; Schmid [2008]). In climate governance, this mechanism can be productive: it turns distributed, long-term processes into objects that can be planned, measured, and coordinated (*mitigation*, *adaptation*, *transition*, *resilience*). The same entity-making logic extends to additional governance abstractions that recur with institutional force, such as *risk*, *vulnerability*, *exposure*, *equity*, *feasibility*, *effectiveness*, and *ambition*, which frequently function as organizing categories for prioritization and justification. However, hypostatization also risks agency erasure. For instance, *decarbonisation* can be framed as something that happens or is delivered rather than as contested political choices about infrastructure, finance, and distribution. Similarly, *resilience* can become a positive-value shell that hides disagreement about who adapts, at whose cost, and with what trade-offs (Fisichelli, Schuurman & Hoffman [2016]). This is where semantic prosody becomes analytically useful: even when the term itself appears neutral, its consistent co-text may position it as desirable (*resilience* with *strengthen*, *build*, *enhance*), inevitable (*transition* with *must*, *need to*, *accelerate*), or technocratic (*risk* with *manage*, *assess*, *monitor*), shifting discourse from responsibility to management.
- 43 Ecolinguistics provides a complementary lens because the stories and frames encoded in routine word choices can normalize certain imaginaries of human-environment relations (Lechevrel [2008]; Lechevrel [2010]; Stibbe [2021]). From that perspective, the institutional preference for calculable nouns (*budgets*, *trajectories*, *targets*) and actionable prefixes (*de-*, *re-*) is not merely stylistic, but it is part of how climate change is made governable and speakable.

6. Conclusion

- 44 This paper set out to respond directly to how words about climate change are coined, stabilized, and circulated, by focusing on neology and word formation in a bounded, replicable institutional corpus. The corpus design deliberately privileges texts that act as standard-setters in the science-policy interface and in governance / implementation. That choice has a methodological consequence worth stating plainly: the paper does not claim to capture the full creativity of public climate discourse, rather, it explains which formations survive institutional selection pressures (portability, definitional manageability, and accountability) and why those survive.

6.1. Answering the six questions: a synthesis

- 45 The institutional climate lexicon is strongly nominal. In CNC-Inst, high-salience innovations cluster in (i) noun-headed multiword units and compounds, and (ii) nominalized governance abstractions. A further nominal layer comprises planning and accountability nouns that recur with quasi-technical force. This nominal bias is not merely a stylistic feature of bureaucratic prose, rather, it reflects the institutional need to produce stable objects of knowledge and governance that can be monitored, funded, and evaluated.
- 46 Two processes dominate the institutional profile. First, compounding and multiword templates generate transparent, scalable designations, especially hub-based patterns such as *carbon + N* and other stabilized multiword units. Second, prefixation (notably *de-* and *re-*) yields programmatic action lexicon that is legible, compositional, and compatible with planning and reporting. Conversion supports procedural verb creation, but is secondary to the compound-and-prefix backbone. Blending and clipping, though salient in public discourse, remain peripheral in institutional texts.
- 47 The domain exhibits lexical neology where institutions require compact naming of policy instruments and metrics, and semantic neology where existing terms become domain-entrenched as planning and governance abstractions. The paper's practical diagnostic is newness-as-entrenchment: even when a form is historically old, it becomes new in the climate domain when it gains stable institutional co-text, definitional scaffolding, and a procedural role in scenarios and governance (Domingues [2023]). This matters because semantic neology is often where misunderstanding and policy slippage occur: apparently familiar words can conceal technical commitments, contested assumptions, and different institutional interpretations (Fischelli, Schuurman & Hoffman [2016]).
- 48 Process choice aligns with function in a systematic way: (i) Referential items name newly salient entities, risks, and processes, and policy-relevant response categories, alongside instrument labels. (ii) Operational items package actionability and metrics for governance supported by procedural operators. (iii) Evaluative / persuasive items encode stance or legitimacy management more selectively in institutional prose and more compositional value terms. (iv) Identity / classificatory items delineate regulated objects and affected groups through relational compounds and templates.

- 49 Even within a short time window, productivity is strongly conditioned by governance expansion. The carbon-template provides a clear proxy for scaling, with type diversity concentrated in post-2015 strategy / assessment texts (Table 3). Similarly, *net zero* illustrates agenda crystallization: its absence from the 2015 Paris Agreement and strong presence in the 2021 UK strategy and later IPCC SPMs (Figure 1) are consistent with the claim that certain labels become institutional organizers once they are politically and administratively actionable. In this corpus, “across space” is mainly “across institutions”: UNFCCC legal drafting differs from national strategy prose, which differs again from assessment language. This supports a methodological point, which is that standardization does not remove variation, but it relocates it into institutional genre constraints and communicative objectives.
- 50 Overt morphological play is uncommon in institutional writing. Blends and slogan-like formations, which are highly productive in public discourse and in neological inventories (Aguilar, Carrington & Wang [2019]; Francœur [2022]), are filtered by institutional selection pressures favoring transparency, auditability, and translatability. When creative forms do appear in CNC-Inst, they tend to do so at the level of evaluative critique or as orthographically variable, semi-lexicalized compounds. By contrast, the domain’s most robust institutional creativity lies in scalable compositionality: the ability to generate new, legible governance objects through templates and to proceduralize them via prefixal actions and conversion verbs.

6.2. Implications and limitations

- 51 A central interpretive thread of the paper is that climate word formation is not merely descriptive, but it helps constitute the object of concern. Compounds like *carbon budget* and formulae like *net zero* are not neutral containers, rather, they build an epistemic and administrative world in which climate action is legible as accounting, balancing, and scenario management. That is not inherently negative, indeed, institutional coordination depends on shared, repeatable labels, but it has discursive side-effects. The hypostatization analysis highlights the tension. When nominalizations and shell nouns turn processes into entities (*transition*, *resilience*, *mitigation*), they facilitate planning and comparability, yet they can also obscure agency and conflict (Schmid [1998]; Schmid [2008]). *Decarbonisation* can be framed as an autonomous process rather than as a politically contested reconfiguration of infrastructure and distribution. *Resilience* can function as a positively valenced abstraction that compresses heterogeneous realities and encourages consensus talk where disagreement may be substantive (Fisichelli, Schuurman & Hoffman [2016]). From an ecolinguistic perspective, these recurring lexical patterns contribute to the “stories we live by” in which governance is imagined as technical management rather than as contested social transformation (Lechevrel [2008]; Lechevrel [2010]; Stibbe [2021]). Crucially, none of this implies that institutional terminology is wrong or that abstraction should be avoided. Rather, it suggests a practical analytic payoff: tracking which word formation processes dominate in institutional writing helps identify where the discourse is likely to (i) depoliticize responsibility through nominalization, (ii) intensify calculability through carbon-templates, and (iii) constrain creativity to zones of critique or commentary. Those tendencies are part of the domain’s communicative ecology, i.e. a

global, policy-relevant domain must be legible across jurisdictions and languages, and that requirement shapes its lexicon.

- 52 As the paper links word formation to function, it can offer concrete guidance. For terminologists and lexicographers: prioritize documenting templates (*carbon + N*, *climate + N/Adj*) and their semantic constraints because they are the engine of scalable institutional naming. Tracking template productivity is often more informative than tracking isolated neologisms. In addition, monitor the life cycle of agenda labels (*net zero*, *loss and damage*) because once such labels become institutional organizers, they can acquire broadened uses and competing interpretations across settings. For translators and multilingual communicators: transparent compounds and prefixal action terms are comparatively portable, but semantic neology in shell nouns is a risk zone. Terms like *resilience* and *transition* need careful glossing because equivalence is rarely one-to-one once policy meanings proliferate (Domingues [2023]; Fisichelli, Schuurman & Hoffman [2016]). A practical recommendation is to treat governance abstractions as candidates for terminological notes, so even when a translation exists, the institutional sense may need disambiguation. For educators and science communicators: distinguish (i) operational accounting vocabulary (*net zero*, *carbon budget*) from (ii) evaluative framing vocabulary (*greenwashing*), and make explicit when a term is a metric device rather than a physical entity. This mitigates misunderstandings produced by nominalization and by entity-like metaphors. Pedagogically, it can be useful to reverse engineer a compound: what is being treated as a countable object, what is being backgrounded as an agent, and what kind of action is being normalized by the term's form?
- 53 Several limitations follow from the study's deliberately bounded design: (i) The corpus is institutional, and it under-represents the creative neology and polarization dynamics of mass media and social platforms. Future work should add press corpora and platform data to model determinologization and evaluative drift more directly, especially for blends and slogan-like units (Francœur [2022]). A concrete next step would be a paired design, e.g. institutional corpus + press corpus (same years), tracking which items move across and how prosody shifts. (ii) The variety contrast here is primarily institutional (UN/IPCC vs UK government) and orthographic. A fuller diatopic study should incorporate additional national policy corpora (e.g. US, Canada, Australia) to test whether different governance cultures prefer different templates or prosodic frames, and whether spelling and lexical choices cluster by institutional tradition. (iii) The present analysis foregrounds English because of its international role. Extending the design to parallel corpora (IPCC translations; multilingual national strategies) would allow direct measurement of borrowing / calquing, lag times, and meaning drift, complementing cross-cultural discourse work (Brüggemann & Rödder [2020]).
- 54 Ultimately, this paper's main claim is that climate neology in institutional English is shaped by a particular communicative ecology: a global, interdisciplinary domain whose legitimacy and effectiveness depend on terminological stability across genres and borders. That ecology favors transparent compounding and programmatic prefixation, and it encourages the hypostatization of abstractions that make the problem administratively tractable. Recognizing these patterns helps explain why certain words become durable infrastructure (why they recur, travel, and feel inevitable) and it also helps identify where misunderstanding, depoliticization, or semantic drift may arise. In that sense, studying climate word formation is not only a

descriptive lexical project; it is a way of making visible how language participates in the management, and contestation, of the climate crisis.

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ABSTRACTS

Climate change is a highly mediatized, interdisciplinary and internationally coordinated domain whose lexis is co-produced at the science-policy interface and then recontextualized in wider public discourse. Treating climate change as a non-prototypical specialized domain, this paper examines neology in contemporary English climate discourse and answers six questions: (1) which grammatical types predominate; (2) which word formation processes are most prevalent; (3) is innovation chiefly lexical or semantic; (4) which communicative functions do neologisms serve; (5) how does productivity vary across time and institutional settings; and (6) where does creativity concentrate. Empirically, the analysis draws on a bounded, replicable institutional corpus (Climate Neology Corpus-Institutional, 2015-2023; 217,132 word tokens). Results show a marked nominal bias: multiword nominal units and transparent compounds dominate institutional texts, while verbs are comparatively scarce and arise mainly through prefixation and conversion. Compounding and prefixation are the most productive and portable processes in the corpus; blending and other playful formations are marginal, surfacing primarily at the edges of institutional uptake. A functional typology links processes to discursive work: referential terms name emergent entities and processes; operational terms package metrics and governance; evaluative terms develop systematic semantic prosodies; and identity labels index actors and practices. The paper argues that hypostatized nouns facilitate coordination and accountability while risking the erasure of agency, and it concludes with guidance for terminologists, translators, and educators on monitoring semantic drift and favoring transparent formations.

Le changement climatique est un domaine fortement médiatisé, interdisciplinaire et coordonné à l'échelle internationale, dont le lexique est co-produit à l'interface entre science et politique avant d'être recontextualisé dans un discours public plus large. En considérant le changement climatique comme un domaine spécialisé non prototypique, cet article examine la néologie dans le discours anglophone contemporain sur le climat et répond à six questions : (1) quels types grammaticaux prédominent ; (2) quels procédés de formation des mots sont les plus répandus ; (3) l'innovation est-elle principalement lexicale ou sémantique ; (4) quelles fonctions communicatives les néologismes remplissent-ils ; (5) comment la productivité varie-t-elle selon les périodes et les contextes institutionnels ; et (6) où la créativité se concentre-t-elle ? Sur le plan empirique, l'analyse s'appuie sur un corpus institutionnel borné et reproductible (Climate Neology Corpus-Institutional, 2015-2023 ; 217 132 tokens). Les résultats montrent un net biais nominal : les unités nominales polylexicales et les composés transparents dominent les textes institutionnels, tandis que les verbes sont relativement rares et résultent principalement de la préfixation et de la conversion. La composition et la préfixation sont les procédés les plus productifs et les plus transférables du corpus ; les mots-valises et autres formations ludiques restent marginaux et apparaissent surtout aux marges de l'appropriation institutionnelle. Une typologie fonctionnelle relie les procédés au travail discursif : les termes référentiels nomment des entités et des processus émergents ; les termes opérationnels condensent des métriques et des dispositifs de gouvernance ; les termes évaluatifs développent des prosodies sémantiques systématiques ; et les étiquettes identitaires indexent des acteurs et des pratiques. L'article

soutient que les noms hypostasiés facilitent la coordination et la reddition de comptes, tout en risquant d'effacer l'agentivité, et il se conclut par des recommandations à l'intention des terminologues, des traducteurs et des enseignants sur la surveillance de la dérive sémantique et la préférence à accorder aux formations transparentes.

INDEX

Mots-clés: changement climatique, néologie, formation des mots, composition, changement sémantique

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