

**Preface: *Comparative Perspectives on  
Environmental Law, Sustainability, and  
Governance***

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We are pleased to present to our readers the first issue of *Comparative Legilinguistics* in 2026 (vol. 65). This special issue, entitled *Comparative Perspectives on Environmental Law, Sustainability, and Governance*, brings together contributions that engage with some of the

most pressing challenges at the intersection of legal regulation, linguistic construction, and sustainability discourse.

The intellectual premise of this volume is grounded in the recognition that environmental governance cannot be adequately understood as a purely regulatory or institutional phenomenon. Rather, it must be approached as a discursively constituted field in which legal meaning, environmental responsibility, and institutional authority are continuously produced, negotiated, and contested. From the perspective of legal linguistics and critical discourse analysis, sustainability is not merely regulated—it is linguistically constructed through definitional practices, framing strategies, and interpretive regimes that shape both the scope and the limits of what counts as legitimate environmental action.

In this sense, the present issue advances the view that contemporary environmental governance operates through what may be termed *linguo-legal performativity*: legal norms and sustainability commitments derive their force not only from formal enactment but from the ways in which they are articulated, circulated, and interpreted within specific discursive contexts. This perspective aligns with critical approaches to discourse (Fairclough, 2003; van Dijk, 1997) and with the concept of the linguistic worldview (Bartmiński, 2009), which emphasise that language does not merely reflect reality but actively structures social knowledge, normative expectations, and patterns of institutional practice. At the same time, research on discourse and communication demonstrates how modality, evidentiality, and framing strategies shape the perceived bindingness of institutional commitments and influence their practical uptake (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Hyland, 2005; van Leeuwen, 2008).

The present issue is also the result of an unexpectedly strong scholarly response. The editorial team received over 30 submissions addressing diverse aspects of environmental law, sustainability, and governance. While this level of interest clearly confirms the timeliness and relevance of the topic, it also necessitated a particularly rigorous selection process aimed at identifying contributions that combine analytical rigour with conceptual coherence and alignment with the interdisciplinary profile of the journal. The contributions included in this volume represent those submissions that most convincingly demonstrate how legal and linguistic analysis can jointly illuminate the complexities of sustainability governance.

The volume opens with the article by Veena Roshan Jose and Shivender Rahul, which reconceptualises Indigenous storytelling as a

form of environmental jurisprudence. By foregrounding oral traditions as repositories of ecological knowledge and normative ordering, the authors challenge anthropocentric legal paradigms and propose a relational, ecocentric framework grounded in reciprocity and intergenerational responsibility. Their work resonates with broader scholarship on traditional ecological knowledge and relational ontologies (Berkes, 2018; Kimmerer, 2013), while demonstrating how narrative structures encode normative principles and function as culturally embedded regulatory systems.

The second contribution, authored by Fabiola Notari, adopts a corpus-informed legal-linguistic methodology to examine the discursive construction of environmental commitments in corporate communication. The study reveals a systematic displacement of obligation by commitment-oriented language, realised through modality, evidentiality, and distributed agency. This finding aligns with systemic-functional and discourse-analytic approaches (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) and illustrates how corporate sustainability discourse operates through carefully calibrated linguistic strategies that maintain flexibility while projecting responsibility and transparency.

Taken together, the contributions in this issue demonstrate that contemporary environmental governance is inseparable from the linguistic processes through which it is articulated and realised. They reveal how environmental norms are stabilised, contested, and transformed within different communicative domains, ranging from Indigenous narratives to corporate discourse and regulatory texts. By positioning sustainability within a linguo-legal and discursive framework, this volume seeks not only to reflect current debates but also to contribute to the consolidation of an emerging research agenda at the intersection of law, language, and environmental governance.

It is our expectation that this special issue will encourage further interdisciplinary dialogue and stimulate critical reflection on the role of language in shaping the future of environmental regulation. There is a clear and growing need to strengthen the dialogue between legal studies and linguistics, particularly in response to the complex and evolving challenges of environmental governance and sustainability. This issue provides a basis for developing cross-disciplinary approaches that examine how legal norms, regulatory frameworks, and sustainability commitments are discursively constructed, interpreted, and realised through language. In this respect, the concept of linguo-legal performativity becomes particularly relevant, as it foregrounds the capacity of legal language not merely to describe or regulate reality, but

to actively constitute environmental obligations, institutional roles, and normative expectations through its use. It is our expectation that this dialogue will continue to evolve into a sustained scholarly partnership, contributing to the advancement of research at this dynamic interface and fostering more analytically precise, conceptually grounded, and socially responsive approaches to the study of law, language, and environmental discourse.

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