

OCEAN IN WORDS: CORPUS-ASSISTED CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF OCEAN ISSUES IN FRENCH MEDIA

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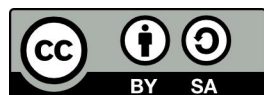
ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 04-05-2026 Revised: 30-06-2026 Accepted: 22-07-2026 Published: 31-07-2026 Volume: 10 Issue: 3 DOI: 10.33019/lire.v10i2.623	This study aims to analyze representations of ocean issues in French media using a corpus-based discourse analysis approach. By combining Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) and Theo van Leeuwen's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, this study examines how the ocean is discursively constructed in the context of maritime issues. This study adopts Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) to identify lexical patterns through frequency, collocation, and concordance analysis, which are then interpreted using categories of social actor representation such as exclusion, inclusion, activation, and passivation. The research data consists of French media articles focusing on environmental and marine issues. The findings reveal 5 frequent themes in the ocean. The themes are climate crisis, threatened ecosystem, authorities, science, and resources, with the climate crisis as the most frequent, comprising 16 keywords. The sea is also predominantly portrayed as a passive actor and as an affected entity, while human agents are often excluded or represented abstractly through institutions.

*News, Ocean, Corpus-Assisted
Discourse Studies, Critical
Discourse Analysis, French*

1. INTRODUCTION

The ocean covers more than 71% of the Earth's surface and plays a vital role in regulating climate, sustaining biodiversity, and supporting human life through food, trade, and culture (Rhein et al., 2013). In the Earth's climate, ocean helps to absorb the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere to regulate global temperature (Salayan et al., 2024). Not only does it regulate the climate, the ocean is also home to millions of species that form complex ecological networks and support the balance of the biosphere. Coastal ecosystems such as coral reefs, mangrove forests, and seagrass beds provide natural protection against abrasion and storms, while also being a source of livelihood for local communities. However, anthropogenic pressures such as overexploitation, plastic pollution, ocean acidification, and rising sea surface temperatures have threatened the sustainability of these ecological functions (Priya et al., 2023).

The ocean's place in discussions about climate change, biodiversity loss, and the sustainable development agenda has grown in importance in tandem with the growing awareness of the world's environmental crises. This fact is evident from the increasingly intensive media coverage of environmental issues (Gooch, 1996), as well as from the growing number of organizations working in the environmental field and the increasingly strategic nature of environmental issues in the realm of global policy and politics (Uzzell, 2000). The United Nations Ocean Conference 2025 has become one of the ongoing international events that brings together various countries and stakeholders to discuss the protection and sustainable use of the ocean (United Nations, 2025). This conference highlights various critical issues such as plastic



pollution, the exploitation of marine resources, and the impact of climate change on marine ecosystems. In situations like this, the media plays a crucial role as a bridge, bringing these global issues into the public discourse.

The media plays a vital role in creating opinions for the public (Kramar, 2023). Previous studies have examined environmental discourse in media, but fewer studies have combined corpus-assisted analysis and van Leeuwen's social actor framework to examine how French media construct ocean issues. It tends to overlook the establishment of public awareness as well as the discursive discourse about other planetary boundaries (Dubey et al., 2024). As a result, despite being a vital component of the global environmental system, marine issues have not yet been extensively addressed in the media discourse. Nevertheless, the way the media portrays marine issues plays a crucial role in shaping public understanding of the environmental crisis. Therefore, this study aims to identify the most frequently discussed topics and analyze how the media portrays the social actors' representation in this situation.

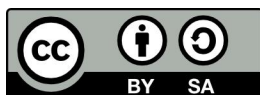
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study adopts a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach combined with Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis (CADS) to analyze the representation of maritime issues in the media. Critical discourse analysis is an approach to studying language that focuses on understanding how the abuse of power, inequality, and social domination are practiced, reproduced, and resisted through texts and speech in social and political contexts (Van Dijk, 2015). This study uses van Leeuwen (2008) flexible model of social actor representation to identify how actors emerge, are obscured, or are erased in the text. This method allows for a more nuanced analysis of the distribution of agency, particularly in terms of categories such as inclusion/exclusion, activation/passivation, and personalization/impersonalization.

The first topic to be discussed is the categorization of the exclusion or inclusion of social actors. Exclusion refers to the process by which certain individuals or groups are not featured in the media. This process is carried out to protect or exempt those who do not wish to be featured in the media or who align with a particular group (Irawanto, 2022). There are two sub-strategies under the exclusion clause: backgrounding and suppression (Van Leeuwen, 2008). Suppression includes a range of techniques or approaches that can be used to marginalize or erase the agent, such as nominalization, non-finite clauses, and the omission of the passive agent. Van Leeuwen (2008) describes backgrounding as a method to exclude actors from media texts. Unlike suppression, which completely removes actors without providing any indication, backgrounding keeps the actors present while downplaying their visibility, preventing them from becoming the primary focus of the sentence.

Inclusion is the opposite of exclusion; it is a strategy for featuring social actors in the media. According to Van Leeuwen (2008), inclusion is divided into several subgroups. This article discusses only two of these subgroups. The first subgroup is activation/passivation, which examines whether social actors are described in the active or passive voice. For example, in RFi (2025c) news report:

“Le gouvernement a déclenché la procédure accélérée de reconnaissance de l'état de catastrophe naturelle”



(The government initiated the accelerated procedure for recognizing a state of natural disaster.)

The phrase *a déclenché* is an active past tense form that indicates an action performed directly by the agent. In this case, *le gouvernement* is positioned as the agent who has the agency and control over the action performed. Passivation, on the other hand, is a strategy employed through the use of passive sentences. Van Leeuwen (2008) states that personalization occurs when social actors are depicted as human beings or possess characteristics that reflect humanity. Conversely, impersonalization occurs when social actors are depicted in abstract or non-human forms, such that they do not directly display aspects of humanity.

According to Hunston (2002), Corpus Linguistics (CL) uses examples of natural language to study language. Due to the tendency of discourse analysis, to be potentially arbitrary in data selection, this study employs corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) to enhance analytical rigor by incorporating systematic and quantitative evidence (Shin, 2017; Baker, 2006). Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) is an approach that combines corpus-based quantitative analysis with qualitative discourse analysis to uncover meanings that are not immediately apparent in the text (Partington, 2011).

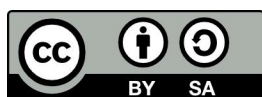
Previous studies have used Van Leeuwen (2008) model social actor representation to analyse on online media. For example, Nguyen & Clancy (2026) analyzed the representations of LGBT people in Vietnamese media. This study used a corpus to build the data that was gathered from Vietnamese media such as Kênh14, Báo Mới, Dân Trí, and more. Theo van Leeuwen's Critical Discourse Analysis framework was applied in this study. The findings found that LGBT people are often seen negatively because of the connection with the HIV/AIDS disease and high-risk gender transition surgery.

Similarly, Kundharu & Ermanto (2020), in their study titled "Indonesian Online Media's Construction of 'Maritime': A Critical Discourse Analysis", explained how online media constructs maritime with Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and qualitative method. It found that the maritime discourse in online media tends to focus on the relations between the government and the public. Online media also portrayed the government in an ambiguous light, which is generally positive, with an emphasis on the success of its maritime programs.

Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by analyzing French media representations of the ocean, focusing on how the ocean is incorporated into public discourse through lexical choices, collocation patterns, and the discursive approaches employed. The aim of this analysis is to uncover emerging trends in its representation. Furthermore, this study aims to demonstrate how social actors' representation shapes the portrayal of the ocean in French media.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study constructs a corpus from two French online media outlets, France 24 and RFI, focusing on news articles published in French. The articles were collected manually, and



unnecessary hyperlinks, advertisements, podcasts, and social media elements were removed. According to Grouin (2008), manual data collection methods are preferred over computer-based language processing due to the potential for errors such as typos, spelling errors, and grammatical errors. The collected articles cover a period of less than one year, from January to September, 2025. The articles are under the environment rubric. There are 375 news articles under the environment category collected from France 24 and RFI on the internet.

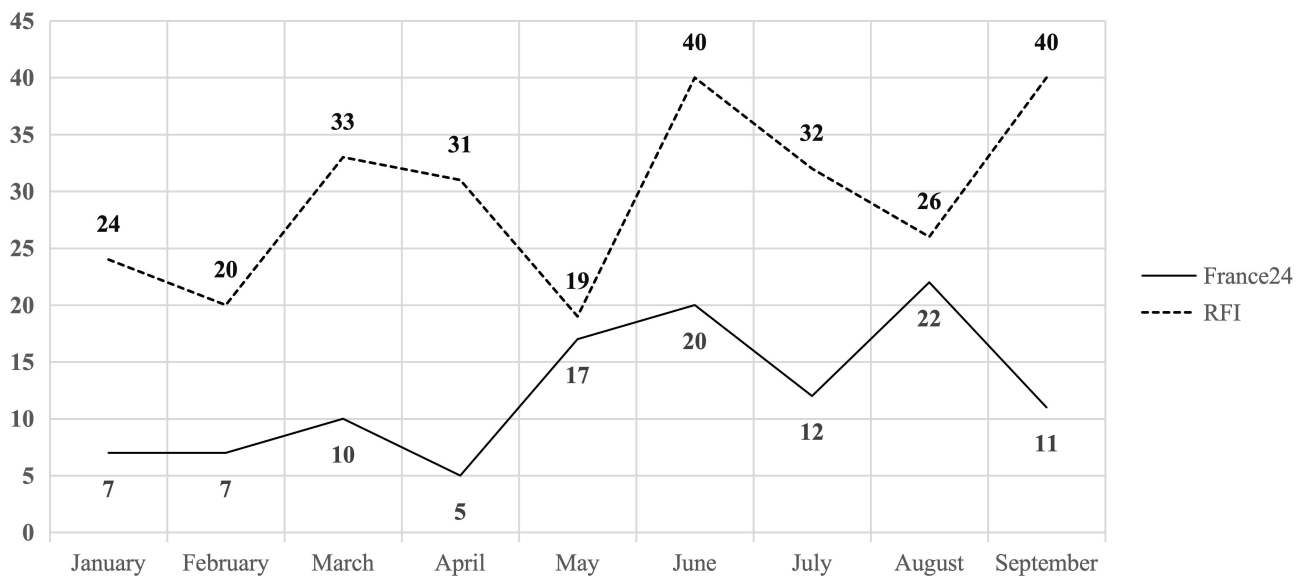
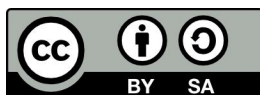


Figure 1. Monthly Frequency of Environmental News Articles in 2025

AntConc (Anthony, 2024) software was used in this corpus development process. AntConc is a free corpus analysis software that can be used across multiple platforms and performs a wide range of functions. Its extensive suite of tools includes word distribution plots, tools for lexical bundle and cluster analysis, word and keyword frequency generators, and an effective word search tool (Anthony, 2004). It also analyzes word frequency and collocations, as well as word lists. A total of 375 environmental articles were used as the initial corpus. From this corpus, AntConc was used as a search tool to filter the target data by applying the search terms ‘océan’, ‘mer’, ‘maritime’, ‘eau’, ‘marin’ including all variations of their plural forms. The plural form is explicitly separated from the singular form to allow for a more detailed analysis of lexical distribution. The application of those keywords aimed to identify articles that explicitly discussed maritime issues. Through this filtering process, 182 articles were obtained that specifically represented ocean news. Overall, the corpus comprises 163.947 word tokens. To obtain an objective analysis of the material compiled in the ocean issue corpus, it needs to be compared with the reference corpus. This comparison was then used to generate a list of keywords that serve to identify lexical items that have a prominent level of representation in the ocean issue corpus. The reference dataset was taken from the French news corpus based on material crawled in 2024 (Leipzig Corpora Collection, 2024). It has 612.337 of word tokens.



This study adopts Van Leeuwen (2008) flexible model of social actor representation to identify how actors emerge, are obscured, or are erased in the text. This method allows for a more nuanced analysis of the distribution of agency, particularly in terms of categories such as inclusion/exclusion, activation/passivation, and personalization/impersonalization. There is no requirement to apply this model strictly; rather, it is applied in accordance with the context of the corpus data, which allows for an examination of the various linguistic approaches that emerge to address marine issues.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis stage began with AntConc, which was used to compile a list of keywords by comparing the target and reference corpora. This process yielded 49 top keywords, which were then sorted by the log-likelihood keyness score for each word.

Table 1. Keywords from target dataset and reference dataset

Rank	Keywords	Frequency	Keyness	Rank	Keywords	Frequency	Keyness
1	océan	324	904,161	26	haute	119	194,604
2	climatique	351	817,89	27	carbone	98	192,477
3	mer	299	580,188	28	planète	107	190,822
4	eau	395	562,441	29	protégées	68	188,066
5	réchauffement	174	473,773	30	algues	67	185,042
6	scientifiques	176	431,936	31	cop	84	184,169
7	océans	147	422,222	32	gaz	113	184,034
8	climat	167	355,992	33	nice	90	182,214
9	traité	145	350,305	34	pays	441	178,473
10	pêche	153	346,817	35	unoc	55	171,062
11	pollution	132	329,257	36	aires	66	166,819
12	marines	107	313,812	37	scientifique	89	166,218
13	émissions	139	304,201	38	co2	86	156,03
14	marins	115	302,309	39	écosystèmes	65	155,496
15	états	243	291,744	40	températures	89	150,04
16	plastique	120	290,172	41	sécheresse	63	149,746
17	biodiversité	121	285,19	42	antarctique	53	148,606
18	eaux	146	274,343	43	chaleur	86	146,9
19	glaciers	94	273,883	44	poissons	52	145,571
20	changement	176	260,153	45	fonte	49	143,070
21	environnement	171	252,071	46	maritime	82	141,292
22	espèces	106	225,763	47	fossiles	50	139,504
23	ong	115	221,436	48	serre	62	132,928
24	climatiques	93	209,345	49	exploitation	83	131,279
25	étude	129	197,173				

The 49 keywords are displayed in Table 1, which shows that the dataset is collected on the representation of the ocean in news articles. In the process, the words preserve the original text's lexical forms without lemmatization. Stop words such as *les*, *des*, and *l* were removed to ensure focus on meaningful lexicon. The AntConc software includes a collocation feature that determines the relationship between keywords and thematic classifications. This collocation analysis aims to identify words that frequently appear alongside the keywords. Thus, patterns of lexical association and contextual usage within the corpus can be identified. Using these patterns,



each keyword is assigned to specific groups based on its tendency to appear in the text and its semantic relationships. The list of keywords shows that representations of the sea in French media are predominantly framed in terms of climate change and the global environmental crisis. This is reflected in the appearance of high-frequency keywords such as *océan*, *mer*, *eau*, *climatique*, *réchauffement*, *climat*, and *émissions*, which place the sea at the center of the climate discourse. In addition, the presence of words such as *pollution*, *plastique*, *biodiversité*, *écosystèmes*, *espèces*, and *banquise* indicates that the ocean is represented as a fragile ecological space threatened by human activities and global warming. On the other hand, the emergence of global policy and governance terms such as *traité*, COP, UNOC, *États*, *pays*, and *ONG* confirms that the ocean is not only constructed as a natural entity, but also as an object of political regulation and international responsibility. This lexical pattern reflects the discursive construction of the sea as an indicator of planetary health (*planète*) as well as the main victim of the climate crisis, which implicitly constructs a moral narrative about the urgency of sustainable protection and management of the sea.

Table 2. Theme in French media in 2025

Theme	Keywords
Climate crisis	<i>climatique</i> ‘climatic’, <i>climatiques</i> ‘climatic’ (plural), <i>climat</i> ‘climate’, <i>réchauffement</i> ‘warming’, <i>changement</i> ‘change’, <i>émissions</i> ‘emissions’, <i>carbone</i> ‘carbon’, <i>gaz</i> ‘gas’, <i>serre</i> ‘greenhouse’, <i>températures</i> ‘temperatures’, <i>fonte</i> ‘melting’, <i>glaciers</i> ‘glaciers’, <i>banquise</i> ‘sea ice’, <i>antarctique</i> ‘Antarctica’, <i>haute</i> ‘high’, and <i>co2</i> .
Threatened ecosystem	<i>pollution</i> ‘pollution’, <i>plastique</i> ‘plastic’, <i>biodiversité</i> ‘biodiversity’, <i>écosystèmes</i> ‘ecosystems’, <i>espèces</i> ‘species’, <i>algues</i> ‘algae’, <i>sargasses</i> ‘sargassum’, <i>coraux</i> ‘corals’, <i>eaux</i> ‘waters’, and <i>sécheresse</i> ‘drought’
Authorities	<i>traité</i> ‘treaty’, COP, UNOC, <i>ONG</i> ‘NGO’, <i>États</i> ‘states’, <i>pays</i> ‘countries’, <i>protégées</i> ‘protected’, <i>aires</i> ‘areas’, and <i>environnement</i> ‘environment’, <i>Nice</i> ‘Nice’
Science	<i>Scientifiques</i> ‘scientists’, <i>scientifique</i> ‘scientific’, <i>étude</i> ‘study’, Copernicus, and PFAS.
Resource	<i>eau</i> ‘water’, <i>pêche</i> ‘fishing’, <i>planète</i> ‘planet’.

The analysis traced the appearance of keywords across concordance lines to reveal how the media constructs justification and legitimacy in its reporting (Van Leeuwen, 2008). This approach emphasizes identifying linguistic patterns that shape certain meanings of the ocean. French media portray the ocean through several different frames by looking into the concordances. Each frame will be explained in detail in the following section, accompanied by illustrative examples and concordance lines that reflect its distinctive patterns.



1.1 Climate Crisis

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1 rfi-185....	de production d'eau douce », est-il spécifié. « Le changement	climatique	a des effets radicaux sur l'ensemble des composants
2 rfi-12.txt	il pour la gestion transfrontalière de l'eau ? Le changement	climatique	a un impact sur le cycle hydrologique, c'est-
3 rfi-265....	Mercator Océan agrège les grandes variables du changement	climatique (	montée des eaux, acidification), de la chute de la
4 rfi-265....	Mercator Océan agrège les grandes variables du changement	climatique (	montée des eaux, acidification), de la chute de la
5 F24-50....	tion finale. Le traité pointe "les effets néfastes du changement	climatique "	pour l'océan et ses écosystèmes, sans pour autant
6 F24-51....	net Le texte dénonce ainsi "les effets néfastes du changement	climatique "	pour l'océan et ses écosystèmes, sans pour autant
7 rfi-12.txt	Crise climatique et partage de l'eau: « Le changement	climatique	augmente encore la demande» en eau L'Éthiopie a
8 rfi-116....	tre-mer français particulièrement vulnérables au changement	climatique	Cyclones plus intenses, sécheresses prolongées, recul du trait c
9 rfi-248....	iodiversité des océans et leur dégradation par le changement	climatique	et toutes sortes de pollutions, le traité permettra la
10 rfi-22.txt	bien. Il intègre la montée des eaux liée au changement	climatique ,	l'affaissement du plancher de la ville en raison
11 rfi-173....	patrimoine mondial de l'Unesco. À l'heure du changement	climatique ,	les nuages et l'eau qu'ils contiennent, deviennent
12 rfi-42.txt	est formel : « La cause numéro un, c'est le changement	climatique . »	Lorsque l'eau est trop chaude, les coraux expulsent
13 rfi-59.txt	ur internationale fait le lien entre la question du changement	climatique	mondial et celle de l'océan qui couvre pourtant 70%
14 rfi-157....	ent. Résultat : les scientifiques estiment que si le changement	climatique	se poursuit à ce rythme, la mer Caspienne pourrait
15 rfi-59.txt	rendait pour la première fois un avis sur le changement	climatique .	son impact sur l'océan et les obligations des

Search Query ☒ Words ☐ Case ☐ Regex Results Set All hits Context Size 10 token(s)

climatique Start ☒ Adv Search

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Figure 2. Concordance line sample of the node "climatique"

This study uses the word *climatique* as example because it appears in the keyword list, showing its relevance to climate topics. It is paired with *changement* to form the phrase *changement climatique*, highlighting that the discussion centers on climate change. This frame also represents the ocean not merely as a geographical space, but as a key element in the narrative of the global climate crisis, marked by the emergence of lexical clusters that directly link the ocean to the global warming system. The presence of terms such as *fonte*, *glaciers*, *banquise*, and *antarctique* further emphasizes the ocean as a space that is significantly impacted by increasing temperatures, through melting ice and shrinking sea ice sheets as material evidence of the crisis, so that the ocean is constructed as an ecological system under pressure due to the accumulation of carbon emissions and greenhouse gases.

« Le changement climatique a un impact sur le cycle hydrologique, c'est-à-dire sur la quantité et la répartition géographique de l'eau disponible »

("Climate change affects the hydrological cycle, which is the quantity and geographic distribution of available water")

(RFi, 2025b)

This passage discusses how exclusion, as outlined by Van Leeuwen (2008), functions as a form of suppression. It illustrates how climate change is depicted as an abstract agent, without mentioning the human contributors involved. This approach of nominalization conceals social responsibility by shifting attention from the causes to the effects, specifically, impacts on the hydrological cycle and water distribution. Consequently, this discursive style not only simplifies



the complex causal relationships but also risks diminishing human accountability in environmental matters.

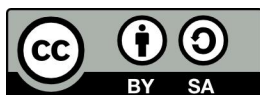
« À l'époque, le **climat** du sud-ouest de l'Europe était beaucoup plus froid, et l'océan Atlantique se trouvait 120 mètres en-dessous de son niveau actuel. Tous les sites côtiers de cette époque ont été détruits par la **remontée** des eaux ou sont encore immergés, ce qui a conduit à "sous-évaluer" l'utilisation de ces ressources. »

("At the time, the climate in southwestern Europe was much colder, and the Atlantic Ocean was 120 meters below its current level. All coastal sites from that era have been destroyed by rising sea levels or are still submerged, leading to an 'underestimation' of the use of these resources.")

(FRANCE 24, 2025a)

The indication of framing the ocean as an entity in the climate crisis can be seen from the use of lexicon that describes destructive environmental changes, such as *froid* (cold), *détruits* (destroyed), *immergés* (submerged), and the phrase *la remontée des eaux* (sea level rise). This lexicon shows that changes in sea conditions are not neutral, but have a real ecological impact on coastal areas. This pattern constructs a narrative that the ocean is under pressure due to changing climate dynamics, positioning the ocean as an ecological space affected by the global environmental crisis. Thus, this representation not only describes historical changes in sea level, but also reinforces the discursive construction of the ocean as an indicator of the broader climate crisis.

The data represent exclusion, especially suppression, because there is no human actor. The agent, such as humans, is not exposed explicitly, even though human activities are the major drivers of climate change (Maslin et al., 2025). Furthermore, the causal structure *ce qui a conduit à 'sous-évaluer'...* (leading to an underestimation) establishes a cause and effect relationship linking environmental changes to epistemic errors, yet without revealing who performed the evaluation. Overall, these strategies constitute a discursive framing in which environmental processes appear as autonomous forces, while human involvement remains hidden.



1.2 Threatened Ecosystem

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1 rfi-117....	sur une politique d'économie circulaire : comment éviter que la	pollution	plastique arrive en mer et comment on crée de
2 rfi-35.txt	les petits États insulaires qui récupèrent sur leurs côtes la	pollution	plastique charriée par l'océan, écrit notre envoyée spéciale
3 F24-29....	l'ouverture. "Nous sommes face à une crise mondiale. La	pollution	plastique endommage les écosystèmes, pollue nos océans et nos
4 rfi-101....	une des maladies dont souffre l'océan, c'est la	pollution	plastique et à quelques mois d'un nouveau round
5 F24-59....	des crustacés s'étant incrustés à la faveur de la	pollution	des eaux sur leurs carapaces ou leurs nageoires, les
6 rfi-145....	de Rennes a ordonné à l'État de « réduire la	pollution	des eaux par les nitrates d'origine agricole », dénonçant
7 rfi-101....	tenariat avec Plastic Odyssey, un collectif engagé pour réduire la	pollution	des océans. Pour commencer, Plastic Odyssey ira nettoyer 25 îles
8 rfi-229....	PFAS: «La France doit prendre des mesures urgentes contre la	pollution	de l'eau potable» En France, un composé chimique,
9 rfi-170....	stocks de poissons. Les espèces disparaissent à cause de la	pollution	de l'océan, qui provient à la fois des
10 rfi-242....	appelle mazout, se sont déversées dans la mer Noire. La	pollution	a commencé dans le détroit de Kertch puis elle
11 F24-10....	intervenir immédiatement en mer, directement à la source de la	pollution	Car, tant que cela n'est pas fait, les
12 rfi-117....	d'ambition de son réseau d'aires marines protégées, la	pollution	du milieu marin par les activités terrestres ou encore
13 rfi-264....	reste un fléau : air, sols, eau et bruit confondus, la	pollution	est à l'origine d'au moins 10 % des morts
14 F24-51....	e l'Organisation maritime internationale. Appel à lutter contre la	pollution	plastique Chaque année, des millions de tonnes de plastique
15 rfi-105....	versité et même désertification), les négociations en cours sur la	pollution	plastique, celles à l'Organisation maritime internationale (qui rég

Search Query ☒ Words ☐ Case ☐ Regex Results Set 1000 random hits Context Size 10 token(s)

pollution Start ☒ Adv Search

Sort Options Custom Sort 1 1L Sort 2 1R Sort 3 2R Order by freq

Figure 3. Concordance line sample of the node “pollution”

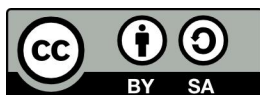
Figure 3 above displays the concordance sample of the word *pollution*. The results show that this term frequently appears alongside specific collocations, such as *pollution plastique*. Consequently, this phrase highlights the discourse's emphasis on environmental concerns related to plastic waste and its effects on ecosystems. The ocean is depicted in this frame as an ecosystem threatened by various environmental pressures, especially those caused by human activities. In media discourse, the ocean is also depicted as a damaged and destroyed ecological system.

« Premières victimes bien identifiées : les coraux des eaux tropicales qui blanchissent en masse. Enfin, l'océan est pollué par les millions de tonnes de plastiques qui sont déversées chaque année »

(“The first victims to be clearly identified are the corals in tropical waters, which are bleaching massively. Finally, the ocean is polluted by the millions of tons of plastic that are dumped into it every year.”)

(RFi, 2025d)

This theme represents the ocean as the victim that needs to be protected. The word *victimes* (victim) explicitly represents as passivated actor. It means that the coral is an affected agent that is caused by the pollution. Humans are not represented as the actor in the occurrence of pollution but included by the impersonalization. Theoretically, pollution is a direct result of human activities. As explained by Landrigan et al. (2020) pollution is defined as unwanted waste released into the air, water, and soil as a result of human activity. However, the cause of the pollution is realized through non-human entities, which in the data above is attributed to plastic



in the oceans. In the clause *l'océan est pollué...* (the ocean is polluted), the ocean is placed in a passive position as the affected party, while the millions of tons of plastic function as the agent through impersonalization, as the material (plastic) replaces humans as the actor. Furthermore, the passive construction *qui sont déversées chaque année* (which are dumped every year) again erases the actual actor performing the act of dumping. Thus, this representation consistently obscures human responsibility and frames pollution as an anonymous process without a clear perpetrator.

1.3 Authorities

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1 rfi-7.txt	de mesures de gestion des stocks. À ce titre, le	traité	sur la Haute mer (BBNJ), qui devrait lui aussi
2 rfi-98.txt	l'Unoc3 a tracé la voie à deux progrès : le	traité	sur la haute mer qui, sauf coup de théâtre,
3 rfi-247....	ratifié par 60 pays et par l'Union européenne (UE). Le	traité	sur la protection de la haute mer (ou BBNJ
4 rfi-248....	Environnement: le	traité	sur la protection de la haute mer entrera en
5 rfi-248....	rier 2026 Adopté en juin 2023 après quinze ans de négociations, le	traité	sur la protection de la haute mer est désormais
6 rfi-250....	la surface terrestre, n'étaient protégées par aucune juridiction. Le	traité	sur la haute mer met fin à cette période
7 rfi-250....	en haute mer, comme les organisations régionales de pêche ? Le	traité	sur la haute mer ne remplace pas les instruments
8 rfi-250....	ne respecte pas ses dispositions, c'est prévu par le	traité	sur la haute mer, un comité du respect des
9 rfi-102....	envoyé spécial à Nice, D'où vient ce traité ? Le	Traité	sur la haute mer est d'abord un sobriquet.
10 F24-1.txt	des océans qui n'appartiennent à aucun pays. Explications. Le	traité	de protection de la haute mer, désormais ratifié et
11 F24-57....	Qu'est-ce que le	traité	de protection de la haute mer ? Le traité de
12 F24-57....	que le traité de protection de la haute mer ? Le	traité	de protection de la haute mer, dont l'entrée
13 F24-57....	en vigueur d'ici la fin de l'année, le	traité	de protection de la haute mer doit permettre de
14 rfi-98.txt	Australie y réfléchit ; l'Inde ne se prononce pas... « Le	traité	de la haute mer est une avancée civilisationnelle majeure
15 rfi-115....	la biodiversité. les scientifiques encouragent les pays à ratifier le	Traité	de la Haute mer. « Mais c'est très important

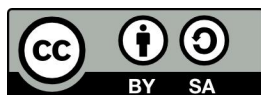
Search Query ☒ Words ☐ Case ☐ Regex Results Set All hits Context Size 10 token(s)

traité Start ☒ Adv Search

Sort Options Custom Sort 1 1L Sort 2 1R Sort 3 2R Order by freq

Figure 4. Concordance line sample of the node “*traité*”

In this study, the term *traité* is used because it appears in the keyword list, signifying its relevance. For example, the term often appears alongside *haute mer* in the *phrase traité sur la haute mer*, indicating the discourse's focus on the regulation and protection of the high seas. The main patterns identified in the collocation analysis indicate that the oceans as objects of global governance. This framework conceptualizes the ocean as a complex geopolitical space in which various international actors interact to regulate, exploit, and protect marine resources. The keywords such as *traité* ‘treaty’, COP, UNOC, *ONG* ‘NGO’, *États* ‘states’, *pays* ‘countries’, *protégées* ‘protected’, *aires* ‘areas’, and *environnement* ‘environment’, *Nice* ‘Nice’, which collectively point to the ocean’s positioning within an international governance and diplomatic framework. Those underscore the role of the state as the primary actor in decision-making regarding the management of maritime space. The emergence of this lexical item indicates that the ocean is not positioned as a neutral space, but rather as a territory laden with political and economic interests among nations. In this context, nations function as the parties with the authority to establish policies, negotiate treaties, and determine the boundaries and forms of marine resource utilization. For example:



« *Les ONG environnementales se félicitent de l'entrée en vigueur programmée du traité sur la haute mer* »

(“Environmental NGOs welcome the planned entry into force of the treaty on the high seas.”)

(Rfi, 2025)

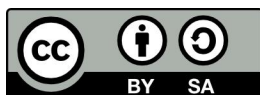
The data indicates the involvement of human social actors. The phrase “*les ONG environnementales*” shows that the actors are active, with the subject explicitly mentioned in an active sentence. This indicates that these social actors play a direct role in the actions described, thereby clarifying the assignment of responsibility in the discussion.

« *Objectif qui se retrouve logiquement au cœur des discussions de Nice, notamment parce qu'il implique la création d'aires marines protégées sur de vastes portions de l'océan international. Or, cela ne peut se faire que via le Traité pour la protection de la haute mer et de la biodiversité marine, le BBNJ.* »

(“This objective is, logically, at the heart of the discussions in Nice, particularly because it involves the creation of marine protected areas across vast swaths of the international ocean. However, this can only be achieved through the Treaty on the Protection of the High Seas and Marine Biodiversity, the BBNJ.”)

(Rfi, 2025)

According to the data above, there is a tendency to downplay the actors involved by employing a backgrounding strategy. This approach emphasizes *le Traité pour la protection de la haute mer et de la biodiversité marine* (Agreement on the Protection of the High Seas and Marine Biodiversity) as the main focus, while not explicitly mentioning the actors responsible for formulating and implementing the policy. Additionally, the use of nominal phrases such as *la création d'aires marines* (the creation of marine protected areas) nominalizes the agents behind these actions. Referring to the *le Traité pour la protection de la haute mer et de la biodiversité marine* (Agreement on the Protection of the High Seas and Marine Biodiversity) primarily as a means to achieve goals shifts the focus toward the policy tool rather than the social actors driving it. As a result, this discursive style guides attention toward objectives and mechanisms while concealing the roles of the involved social actors.



1.4 Science

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1 rfi-171....	depuis les années 1950 jusqu'à cette situation actuelle que les	scientifiques	appellent la défaunation. » L'océanographe Sylvia Earle sur la
2 F24-10....	mois, ou encore se briser en plusieurs morceaux. Selon les	scientifiques,	l'A23a, pourrait notamment se diviser en plusieurs
3 rfi-151....	se comporte dans l'eau ? » Pour obtenir ces images, les	scientifiques	ont utilisé un submersible télécommandé, lumineux et bruyant
4 rfi-164....	anciennes créatures marines préservées dans la pierre. Mais les	scientifiques	pensent désormais que les déchets modernes – des vêtements
5 F24-14....	une étude publiée mercredi 20 août dans la revue Nature. Les	scientifiques,	pour la plupart basés en Australie, soulignent "l'émergence
6 F24-60....	des données factuelles. Pour connaître la biodiversité marine, les	scientifiques	se basent en effet traditionnellement sur des retours de
7 F24-68....	de maintenir une surveillance continue des sites. Cette fois, les	scientifiques	vont pouvoir effectuer des mesures beaucoup plus précises à
8 rfi-105....	les populations autochtones, les professionnels de la mer, des	scientifiques,	des diplomates et des ONG, se sont trouvés un
9 F24-27....	dans l'archipel des Chagos, dans l'océan Indien, des	scientifiques	montrent que les très grandes aires marines protégées sont
10 F24-27....	de taille pour atteindre 30 % d'océans protégés d'ici 2030. Des	scientifiques	ont mis en évidence l'utilité de très grandes
11 rfi-115....	Avant la conférence onusienne sur l'Océan, des	scientifiques	publient 10 recommandations pour le préserver Plus de 2 000
12 rfi-256....	l'avez-vous mesuré ? Nous avons eu des nouvelles données	scientifiques	cette année grâce à des nouveaux systèmes de mesure
13 F24-60....	basée à Nice, qui œuvre à la collecte de données	scientifiques	dans les océans. "L'ADNe vient ouvrir tout un
14 rfi-99.txt	exploitation minière des fonds marins en l'absence de données	scientifiques,	il ne s'oppose pas à l'exploration d'
15 rfi-117....	sur le plan scientifique. » De fait, la place attribuée aux	scientifiques	dans une conférence onusienne sur l'océan est inédite :

Search Query ☒ Words ☐ Case ☐ Regex Results Set 1000 random hits Context Size 10 token(s)

scientifiques Start ☒ Adv Search

Sort Options Custom Sort 1 1L Sort 2 1R Sort 3 2R Order by freq

Figure 4. Concordance line sample of the node “scientifiques”

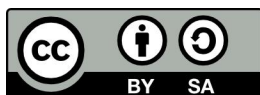
This theme is analyzed using the node *scientifiques*, which serve as entry points to explore the lexical distribution, collocations, and discursive patterns that form a representation in the corpus. The pattern of concordance indicates that scientists are consistently portrayed as epistemic actors who possess the authority to generate and legitimize knowledge about the environment. In this context, they function as active agents who issue warnings and frame potential hazards.

« À la veille de l'ouverture des débats, scientifiques et ONG ont fait monter la pression sur les délégués. »

(“On the eve of the start of the talks, scientists and NGOs stepped up the pressure on the delegates.”)

(FRANCE 24, 2025b)

The data above represent inclusion in the sub-strategy activation. The actors *scientifiques* and *ONG* are portrayed as parties capable of influencing the discourse, particularly by “pressuring” the delegates. In contrast, the delegates are positioned as the objects of these actions, tending to occupy a passive role. Thus, the discursive construction in this data highlights the role of institutional actors in advancing environmental issues onto the political agenda, while also revealing power dynamics in which pressure is exerted by the scientific community and civil society on decision-makers. This data also portrays personalization because the social actors are explicitly identified as human beings, who are scientists and NGOs. Although it does not mention specific individuals, these two actors are still portrayed as human entities.



« C'est une nouvelle mise en garde de **scientifiques** sur les nuisances que pourraient représenter des activités industrielles extractives pour la vie sous-marine. »

(“This is yet another warning from scientists about the potential harm that industrial extraction activities could cause to marine life.”)

(RFi, 2025)

This example highlights several key discursive strategies based on Theo van Leeuwen's framework for representing social actors. First, in terms of inclusion or exclusion, *scientifiques* are explicitly portrayed as actors issuing warnings, while the actors responsible for *activités industrielles extractives* are removed through exclusion strategy and leaving no clear accountability. Second, regarding activation/passivation, *scientifiques* are depicted as active actors (activation) because they act as agents carrying out the act of *mise en garde* (warning). This also represents personalization, scientists continue to refer to human actors, whereas industrial mining activities are represented impersonally through abstraction. Consequently, the representation of concrete actors, such as specific companies or institutions, becomes increasingly distant.

1.5 Resource

	File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1	rfi-83.txt	blique », qui regroupe 139 collectivités et opérateurs publics de l'	eau	et de l'assainissement. Les « défis » climatiques et économiques
2	rfi-22.txt	comme disent les Hollandais. Il s'agit de stocker l'	eau	et de la laisser s'infiltrer, avec l'aide
3	rfi-12.txt	passera-t-il en cas de sécheresse ? Vous accumuleriez l'	eau	et la laisseriez s'écouler en fonction de vos
4	F24-16...	eau et les nappes, (...) comme une éponge qui garde l'	eau	et la relâche graduellement". "En 1925, il y avait 50 cours
5	rfi-12.txt	plupart du temps d'abord leur propre utilisation de l'	eau.	Et cette planification entre malheureusement souvent en concurrence
6	rfi-237...	sont toutefois pas sans danger. Éparpillées dans les sols, l'	eau	et l'air, elles contaminent l'ensemble de la
7	rfi-185...	installées en aval dépendent des eaux de montagne pour l'	eau	potable et l'assainissement, l'alimentation (irrigation), l'énergie (
8	F24-74...	leur fournit tout de même une nouvelle fois de l'	eau	potable et des cigarettes. Les Sri-Lankais leur donnent,
9	rfi-229...	chimique, l'acide trifluoroacétique (TFA), a été retrouvé dans l'	eau	potable d'une large majorité des villes où il
10	rfi-229...	d'inclure le TFA dans le contrôle sanitaire de l'	eau	potable en France pour qu'on ait enfin des
11	rfi-116...	Hexagone) », rappelle le Réseau action climat. L'accès à l'	eau	potable illustre cette vulnérabilité. En Guadeloupe, le mètre cube
12	F24-10...	Danilov-Danilyan, scientifique à l'Institut des problèmes de l'	eau	de l'Académie des sciences de Russie, à la
13	rfi-197...	ou plus de fonte, va changer les caractéristiques de l'	eau	de mer et donc cela va avoir des effets
14	rfi-83.txt	dépollution est « une impasse » Pour ces régions publiques de l'	eau,	la ré-autorisation, même dérogatoire, des pesticides néonicotinoï
15	F24-41...	de la vie, y compris le plus essentiel: de l'	eau.	La surface de la plus proche voisine de la

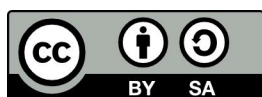
Search Query ☒ Words ☐ Case ☐ Regex Results Set 100 random hits Context Size 10 token(s)

eau Start ☒ Adv Search

Sort Options Custom Sort 1 1L Sort 2 1R Sort 3 2R Order by freq

Figure 5. Concordance line sample of the node “eau”

The last theme is resource, which portrays the ocean as a resource that can be utilized to meet human needs. In the cited passage, the ocean is implicitly positioned as a provider of water through the practice of desalination. It is the process of converting seawater into potable water. This indicates that the ocean is constructed within a utilitarian framework, as an entity possessing practical value for human survival.



« *L'équipe de chercheurs n'en a pas mais leur fournit tout de même une nouvelle fois de l'eau potable et des cigarettes.* »

(“The research team doesn't have any supplies, but they still provide them with drinking water and cigarettes once again.”)

(FRANCE 24, 2025c)

This sample portrays inclusion based on the phrase *l'équipe de chercheurs* (the research team). These actors are positioned as agents through a process of activation, as indicated by the use of the active verb *a* (have) and *fournit* (provide). Another sample :

« *Face à cela, de plus en plus de pays se tournent vers le dessalement pour produire de l'eau potable en retirant le sel de l'eau de mer, comme l'Espagne, les pays du Golfe et surtout l'Algérie, qui vient d'inaugurer quatre usines de dessalement de l'eau.* »

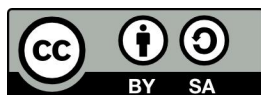
(“In response to this, more and more countries are turning to desalination to produce drinking water by removing salt from seawater, including Spain, the Gulf states, and especially Algeria, which has just opened four desalination plants.”)

(RFi, 2025)

Furthermore, human actors such as states are explicitly represented as active agents in utilizing these resources. Unlike the previous theme, here there is no erasure of the actor; rather, the emphasis is on human capacity, particularly that of the state, to manage and exploit marine resources. Meanwhile, the ocean itself is not positioned as an agent, but rather as an object to be utilized, thus occupying an implicit role as a resource provider. Overall, this representation reinforces an anthropocentric framing, in which the ocean is understood primarily in terms of its functions and benefits for human needs.

5. CONCLUSION

This study focuses on corpus-assisted critical discourse on how ocean issues are represented by the French media. The analysis reveals that five themes recur in the keywords identified in the corpus. The themes are climate crisis, threatened ecosystem, authorities, science, and resources, with the most frequent theme being the climate crisis, comprising a total of 16 keywords. These findings indicate that the ocean is merely viewed as an integral part of a broader narrative of global crisis. Furthermore, concordance analysis reveals that each theme is constructed through distinct representational strategies. In the themes of climate crisis and environmental degradation, the ocean and its ecosystems tend to be represented as the affected parties, while human actors are often erased or obscured through passive and impersonal constructions. Conversely, in the themes of science and authorities, actors such as scientists and institutions emerge as sources of authority that lend legitimacy to the issues discussed. As for the theme of resources, humans, primarily in the form of the state or collective actors, are explicitly portrayed as active agents in managing and utilizing the ocean. Therefore, this pattern of representations reveals an uneven distribution of agency. Humans tend to be absent in contexts where ocean problems are caused, but become highly visible in contexts of solution, governance, and resource utilization.



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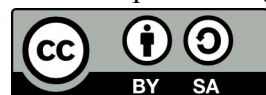
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