



## **Ecolinguistic study of the IKN discourse in global and national news media**

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### **ABSTRACT**

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This study aims to examine how news outlets construct discourse about Indonesia's new capital (IKN) in North Penajam Paser, East Kalimantan. The researchers employed Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistic framework. The problem lies in the contrasting views between stakeholders and indigenous communities of East Kalimantan toward such development. Therefore, this study bridges the gap by discovering how both parties defend their stances: "Is IKN an ideal project or not?" This study adopted a textual analysis technique, with relevant data collected from Al Jazeera, CNN, and Tempo.co between January 18, 2022, and March 19, 2025. The researchers used a note-taking technique and mapped each text onto Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistic stories of ideology, framing, evaluation, and identity. Furthermore, the researchers classified each text based on modal verbs such as "should," "must," and "will," adjectives such as "good" or "bad," and phrasal nouns such as "environmental activists." The results show that the story of evaluation appears more frequently, accentuating people's negative responses, evidenced by terms such as "haunting," "miserable lives," and "shrinking." The researchers affirm that the news media tend to report narratives of a conflict between neoliberal agendas (the government) and ecological sustainability (indigenous tribes of East Kalimantan).



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## INTRODUCTION

Ecolinguistics is a scientific consolidation of language and ecology, including human beings, animals, soil, water, air, and so forth (Lamont, 2024; Ma & Stibbe, 2022). Numerous issues in ecolinguistics (e.g., ecolexicons) have been discussed previously, yet ecological discourse on Indonesia's new capital, IKN, remains understudied. This study, therefore, aims to dismantle ecological discourse on IKN grounded in Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistic stories of ideology, framing, evaluation, and identity. Language constructs social movements, shapes behavior, and formulates policies affecting the entire ecosystem (Stibbe, 2015). Stibbe's concern led to the inception of ecolinguistics. Ecolinguistics is a critical, transdisciplinary subject that examines how language and linguistic features deliver messages about the ecosystem (Abida et al., 2023; Penz & Fill, 2022; Stibbe, 2015). Thus, human awareness of other abiotic organisms is shown by how language conveys ecological narratives among them.

Stibbe's (2015) paper entitled "Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology, and the Stories We Live By" is the cornerstone of the study. He conceptualizes eight key terms, namely ideology, framing, metaphor, evaluation, identity, conviction, erasure, and salience. These stories stem from the idea that society contends with sophisticated industrialization and ever-expanding technological advancement, which substantially collide with the ecological system (Stibbe, 2015, 2017). Such a trajectory, he suggests, is less favorable to the natural world. Ecolinguistics is developed to bridge the disparity between humans and nature, emphasizing language as a dynamic means of human communication. As such, ecolinguistics seeks to unearth implied meanings in the discourse on ecological catastrophes.

Ecological concern has become a global campaign over the past few decades (Wiredu et al., 2023). Climate crisis, for instance, has detrimental effects upon living and non-living organisms (Huhta et al., 2024). Most countries in North and South America (e.g., the United States, Canada, Brazil, etc.) perceive climate change as a major ecological catastrophe that is acute and must be addressed promptly (Calderón-Contreras et al., 2022). The profound concern about the climate crisis has turned into ecological discourse (Mmbando & Ngongolo, 2024). The capital city of Jakarta, for instance, faces calamitous ecological degradation, including sea-level rise, floods, air pollution, and a highly dense population (Syaban & Appiah-Opoku, 2024). This is the backdrop of Indonesia's new capital relocation planning. Based on Indonesian Law (UU) No. 3 of 2022, President Joko Widodo plans to transfer the capital from Jakarta to North Penajam Paser, East Kalimantan (Perwira et al., 2024). The capital has earned the moniker of *Ibu Kota Nusantara* (IKN), honoring the country's former identity as Nusantara. Kalimantan is believed to be an ideal island for Indonesia's government hub due to its biodiversity,

geological security, peatlands, and, most notably, its tropical rainforests (Baharuddin et al., 2022).

This megaproject, however, has aggravated existing problems in East Kalimantan. Despite being projected to be a 'green and smart city,' IKN is most likely susceptible because of deforestation, natural resources exploitation, and wildlife destruction (Teo et al., 2020). Not to mention that there are a large number of indigenous people being threatened and displaced from their native land (Prayitno et al., 2023). This is not a mere environmental degradation; even worse, this is an ecological catastrophe (Mustakim et al., 2023; Perdana & Abdurrachman, 2023). Consequently, the so-called "world's lungs" will not be able to absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen into the air (Kodir et al., 2021). Not only does it threaten human beings and the environment, but it also threatens primate species like Bornean orangutans (*Pongo pygmaeus*), Mahakam dolphins (*Orcaella brevirostris*), hornbill (*Buceros rhinoceros*), proboscis monkey (*Nasalis larvatus*), etc. (Condro et al., 2021; Rustam et al., 2025). This relocation plan has aroused public discourse, debates, reactions, comments, and criticism in the news media (Suganda et al., 2025). In this study, we provide relevant data and findings that intersect with the discourse on the establishment of Indonesia's new capital.

## **Literature Review**

### **Ecolexicons**

The appraisal structures on the Kalimantan tourism website, as studied by Istianah & Suhandano (2022), adopted an ecolinguistic approach. The result showed that ideology (e.g., the breathtaking beauty of Kalimantan Island) manages to influence people's positive attitudes. While they focused solely on the scope of appraisal, which reflects how people respond positively to fabricated narratives, we believe their study lacks a discourse analysis on why people take pride in Kalimantan, despite the cases of deforestation and illegal coal mining on the island. Moreover, an ecolinguistics study on food products (e.g., brands, packaging, etc.) was conducted by Ain et al. (2023), suggesting that most food commercials underscore erasure to shift certain narratives. Contrary to Istianah and Suhandano (2022), Ain et al. (2023) emphasized how certain narratives are completely removed in food commercials to appeal to consumers' needs for daily food consumption.

Additionally, ecolexicons featured in conservation news in Indonesia, as carried out by Yuniawan et al. (2023), affirmed that conservation news mostly represents ideological, sociological, and biological aspects. An ecolexicon includes a set of terms related to ecology, like 'plant seeds,' 'waste bank,' 'green open space,' etc., to raise people's awareness of the environment surrounding them. Yuniawan et al. (2023) endorses Istianah & Suhandano (2022), in which ideology is key to influence the way that people would think

of ecology, while Ain et al. (2023) concluded that such removals are necessary to make food commercials more seamless, as consumers tend to buy what suits them best regardless of the fabricated storytelling within the advertisements. Furthermore, ecolexicons on climate crisis literacy were discussed by Baral et al. (2024), suggesting that ecolexicons intertwining with climate change awareness can serve as a medium for a climate preventive catalyst. Nonetheless, their conclusion lacks further elaboration on the key roles of the government or stakeholders. We firmly believe that ecolexicons do not have a direct impact on climate action unless the government is willing to create and enact policies that will disable illegal coal mining, deforestation, and air pollution caused by factories.

Similarly, a research project on ecolexicons in the Manggarai vernacular language was undertaken by Sanubarianto et al. (2025), revealing a wide variety of nouns and verbs related to agroforestry in Manggarai terms. The data were collected from in-depth observation, semi-structured interviews, and note-taking, with 15 participants. They affirmed that ecolexicons are essential in order to empower farm and forest maintenance efforts; however, such a claim remains insufficient since farm and forest maintenance requires cooperation between Manggarai indigenous communities and the government to co-create strict regulations for forest protection. While Baral et al. (2024) scrutinized ecolexicons in terms of the climate crisis, Sanubarianto et al. (2025) included both ecological and sociocultural practices.

### **Ecological Discourse**

An ecolinguistic study on the narratives of Sumatran orangutans' preservation was conducted by Wardana and Geubrina (2024), contingent upon Stibbe's ecolinguistic stories of framing and metaphor. They interviewed some locals and environmental conservationists at the Bukit Lawang Orangutan Conservation. Their study found that the stories of framing and metaphors reflected people's negative responses toward the causes of orangutan endangerment. It is because orangutans are a primate species pivotal for balancing the ecosystem in Sumatra. However, neither researchers nor conservationists have adequately elaborated on why orangutans are on the brink of extinction or on the ideal mechanisms that stakeholders must implement.

Meanwhile, a comparative study on a gold mining project in Sangihe Island, as conducted by Nabila and Wahyudi (2024), was grounded in Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistic story of erasure, salience, conviction, as well as ecosophy. The data were collected from news articles published by Tempo.co and VOI.id, examining their lexicogrammar. As a result, Tempo.co promotes ecological sustainability through a story of conviction, while VOI.id reports

on the project's destructive effects without a bold emphasis on ecological aspects. It is because Tempo.co and VOI.id have different storytelling approaches (one includes framing; the other does not). Of aforementioned prior studies, Nabila and Wahyudi's (2025) study aligns with ours; however, their study lacks the four other stories of Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistics, including ideology, framing, evaluation, and identity.

### **Literature Gap**

While the aforementioned prior studies mostly highlight ecolexicons and lack discourse on ecology, this study employs Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistic stories of ideology, framing, evaluation, and identity in the IKN discourse. The selection of Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistics is based on multiple reflections, namely (1) a set of ecosophical values that seeks to dismantle implied narratives on ecological disrepair; (2) a means of advocacy against skyrocketing ecological inequality and over-consumption; and (3) a theoretical framework that challenges neo-liberal agendas. The study underscores the ecological discourse of IKN across three news outlets, namely Al Jazeera News, CNN, and Tempo.co. The study strives for addressing the extent to which ecological discourses endorse or undermine the ecological resilience of the new capital.

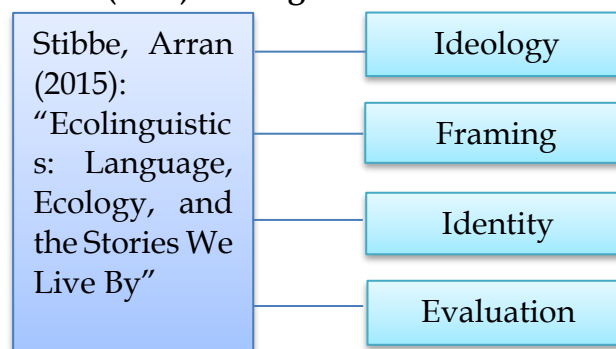
The research questions are thoughtfully generated, as follows:

1. How are ideology, framing, identity, and evaluation tailored within ecological discourse pertaining to IKN?
2. To what extent does ecological discourse raise awareness of environmental and social concerns pertaining to IKN?

### **METHOD**

This study employs a textual analysis technique, grounded in Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistic framework. A textual analysis technique aims to delve deeply into hidden ideologies and power dynamics, and to comprehend how people construct meaning about the world. This scientific combination aims to advocate for the natural environment and underrepresented communities. Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistics comprises four multidimensional models. The Ecolinguistic four-dimensional model involves the ideology, framing, evaluation, and identity. There are undoubtedly several careful considerations behind the application of Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistics, namely (1) the driving force of ecocriticism and (2) the advocacy for environmental and social justice enforcement.

### Framework of Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistics:



**Figure 1.** Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistic four-dimensional model.

### Data Source

The data sources were news articles broadcast online and well-renowned for their credibility and reliability. Thus, the selected news media include Al Jazeera News, CNN, and Tempo.co, which published news articles about the development of *Ibu Kota Nusantara* (IKN) from January 18, 2022, to March 19, 2025. Prior to selecting the data, there are a small number of specific considerations as to why these news media were taken into account. These news media were selected based on several things: (1) Al-Jazeera News, CNN, and Tempo.co are believed to highlight environmental and social concerns within the context of underrepresented communities; (2) Al-Jazeera News and CNN are globally recognized news media companies, so their audiences sprawl from the Global North to the Global South; (3) Al-Jazeera News, CNN, and Tempo.co have several journalists and reporters working in the field; and (4) Tempo.co alone represents national mass media, complementing the accuracy from internal parties.

### Data Analysis Procedure

This study uses secondary data in the form of written texts. The researchers initially defined *Ibu Kota Nusantara* (IKN) as the primary domain, followed by a purposive search for news articles concerning IKN discourse across Al-Jazeera, CNN, and Tempo.co. Furthermore, seven articles were purposively gathered and archived from these media catalogs for analysis. Next, each datum was analyzed by coding it based on four of Stibbe's (2015) stories in ecolinguistics: ideology, framing, evaluation, identity. The researchers used a note-taking technique to organize the data. Moreover, the researchers mapped each text onto the ideology (how things are and should be), framing (trigger words), evaluation (how things are seen as positive and negative), and identity (who the actors involved). In addition, the researchers included **modal verbs** such as "should," "must," "can," "will," **adjectives** like "good"

and “bad,” as well as **phrasal nouns** like “environmentalist activists,” “conservationists,” and “policymakers.” Subsequently, the researchers examined the discourse by integrating its relevant social contexts.

## FINDINGS

These findings are synthesized to answer two research questions (1) How are ideology, framing, identity, and evaluation tailored within ecological discourse pertaining to IKN? and (2) To what extent does ecological discourse raise society’s awareness of environmental concerns pertaining to IKN? Initially, we analyzed seven news articles on the IKN ecological discourse using a textual analysis technique. Using Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistics, we present findings coded into the ecolinguistic stories of ideology, framing, evaluation, and identity. To provide a brief overview of the findings, Table 1 summarizes the amount of data scrutinized within the ecolinguistic four-dimensional model across the Al Jazeera News, CNN, and Tempo.co media outlets.

**Table 1.** Summary of data counts in Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistics.

Type of Story	News Media	Data Counts	Amount of Data Counts
<b>Ideology</b>	Al-Jazeera News	Datum 1,2,3	3
	CNN	Datum 4,5	2
	Tempo.co	Datum 6,7	2
<b>Framing</b>	Al-Jazeera News	Datum 8	1
	CNN	Datum 9	1
	Tempo.co	Datum 10,11	2
<b>Evaluation</b>	Al-Jazeera News	Datum 12,13,14	3
	CNN	Datum 15,16,17,18	4
	Tempo.co	Datum 19,20,21,22	4
<b>Identity</b>	Al-Jazeera News	Datum 23,24	2
	CNN	Datum 25,26	2
	Tempo.co	Datum 27,28	2



**Figure 1.** Environmental degradation in IKN (Source: Tempo.co).



**Figure 2.** One of East Kalimantan’s indigenous tribes refusing the plan (Source: CNN Indonesia).



## Story of Ideology

### Al-Jazeera News

#### Datum 1

"Development **should not** violate the human rights of indigenous people, they can't just be sacrificed in the name of national development." (Al-Jazeera News, March 15, 2023)

Ideology is inextricably linked to the way that society perceives the world (how it was, is, and should be). In extract 1, the modal verb "should" and negative adverb "not" were used to underline that human rights violations towards indigenous tribalists are not favorable to Article 6 of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that "Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law." This statement affirms that the lives of East Kalimantan's indigenous tribal communities are of the utmost importance to before considering relocating the capital. IKN's indigenous tribes include the Kutai, Balik, and Paser tribes.

#### Datum 2

"We have to respect them. The Indigenous people, the local wisdom. That **should be** part of our development process." (Al-Jazeera News, March 15, 2023)

Such a repetitive pattern as the term "indigenous people" becomes a prevalent target domain. Likewise, the modal verb "should" was utilized to highlight IKN's indigenous tribes and their local wisdom simultaneously. Indonesia's stakeholders attempted to convince the audience that these well-established aspects would not be overlooked. Despite this declaration, the development of IKN remains detrimental to ecosystems, including indigenous tribes, tropical rainforests, soils, and primate species.

#### Datum 3

"Indigenous people's land ownership **is not** considered to have strong legality, if there is no certificate." (Al-Jazeera News, March 15, 2023)

In datum 3, the absence of legal documents is deemed unacceptable. One of the ideological institutions encompasses law enforcement. There have been endless debates between the stakeholders and IKN's indigenous tribes regarding the legal ownership of the land they set foot on. On the other hand, the indigenous tribes of IKN present counterarguments that the land was inherited by their venerated ancestors on the island of East Kalimantan.

### CNN

#### Datum 4

"Kalimantan's Heart of Borneo forests **must be** preserved as Nusantara takes shape." (CNN, February 20, 2022)



While the modal verb “must” was used in this statement, it underlines that Kalimantan’s tropical rainforests are the most essential natural resource for the sustainable life of Kalimantan Island, and of IKN itself. Nevertheless, this assertion is believed to contradict the actual situation here, where deforestation, floods, air and water contamination, the displacement of indigenous peoples, as well as flora and fauna, still occur. Despite this, environmental conservation remains necessary for its sustainability. The human effort towards forest preservation is typically associated with a scheme of ethical beliefs about the close-knit interrelatedness among humans, other living creatures, and the environment.

#### **Datum 5**

“The relocation of the capital city to Kalimantan **is based on** several considerations, regional advantages, and welfare.” (CNN, January 18, 2022)

In datum 5, the ideological aspect is reinforced to elucidate normative principles about the construction of the new capital (IKN). Accordingly, the relocation of Indonesia’s new capital was statutorily approved on the basis of its benefits to East Kalimantan. These regional benefits, according to Indonesia’s Seventh President Joko Widodo, include economic growth, social justice, and human resource development, while progressing towards Indonesia’s purposeful vision, *Indonesia Maju* 2045.

#### **Tempo.co**

##### **Datum 6**

“This agreement **provides** legal force regarding land rights.” (Tempo.co, March 19, 2025)

In this statement, a lawful act is repeatedly amplified to ensure that the development of IKN does not violate Law No. 3 of 2023 about the National Capital, stating that “the relocation of Indonesia’s capital is required to optimize implementation, preparedness, development, and the Administration of the Special Regional Government for IKN.” Thus, the Indonesian stakeholders have the right to build IKN, which is situated between North Penajam Paser and Kutai Kartanegara Regencies, East Kalimantan. This land rights, however, is contradictive. This legal enforcement is believed to neglect the inalienable rights of the indigenous tribes and the ecology of IKN.

##### **Datum 7**

“Retired TNI General Prabowo **emphasized** the importance of global collaboration to address challenges of poverty, hunger, and climate change, as well as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and green energy transition.” (Tempo.co, November 21, 2024)

In datum 7, the ideological aspect is shown by stakeholders' awareness of both social and environmental problems. In this statement, for instance, the main actor (President Prabowo Subianto) plans to team up with global parties to accelerate the realization of the SDGs. This type of story conveys that the establishment of the new capital must reflect social prosperity and environmental sustainability.

### Story of Framing

#### Al-Jazeera News

##### Datum 8

"A capital city **is not just** a symbol of national identity, **but also** a representation of the progress of the nation." (Al-Jazeera News, August 16, 2024)

In terms of framing, IKN is conjured up as Indonesia's national progress. Framings are stories divided into two types: source frame and target domain. To put it simply, in datum 8, the term "progress" serves as a source frame, and "capital city" is a target domain. Although IKN is epitomized as a source of pride for the majority of Indonesian stakeholders, ecological predicaments remain unsolved.

#### CNN

##### Datum 9

"It **will be** a smart city, with green technology and friendly to the environment." (CNN, February 20, 2022)

In datum 9, IKN is set to become a cutting-edge capital city, equipped with environmentally friendly technological systems. This statement affirms the universal conception of an object being framed. Despite that, the goal of turning IKN into a smart, green city remains opaque due to its complex ecological challenges.

#### Tempo.co

##### Datum 10

"Basuki **emphasized** that the signing of these Land Utilization Agreements and ADP Land Allocations represent an important milestone in providing legal certainty for business stakeholders." (Tempo.co, March 19, 2025)

Legitimate schemes of the development of IKN are narrated as legal procedures (considered to be socially and legally acceptable). It is marked by the use of the words "emphasized" and "milestone" to frame the Land Utilization Agreements and ADP Land Allocations. This narrative aligns with the ecolinguistics story of framing, where trigger words, such as "milestone," can trigger people's minds and perceptions.

#### **Datum 11**

"Indonesia is directly **affected** by climate change. Our coastal areas are now **submerged** by rising sea levels. We are **forced** to move our capital." (Tempo.co, November 21, 2024)

Similarly, the phrasal noun "climate change" is depicted as one of the most pressing environmental issues in Indonesia. Accordingly, it urged them (e.g., stakeholders, etc) to relocate Indonesia's capital to the East Kalimantan region. Such narratives as "climate change" are subtly woven to remind people of how catastrophic it would be in the near future.

#### **Story of Evaluation**

##### **Al-Jazeera News**

#### **Datum 12**

"We used to live **good lives**, we never had to buy things like wood, water or vegetable. Now, we live **miserable lives**." (Al-Jazeera News, March 15, 2023)

In datum 12, the term "good" was expressed to describe the lives of East Kalimantan's indigenous tribes, long before the establishment of IKN. Concurrently, the term "miserable" was used to recount the circumstances they are thriving in today. Negative criticism on the construction of IKN immediately came to the surface, suggesting that this development has disabled the indigenous tribes from living their lives prosperously. This development results in a scarcity of livelihood and food, leaving them disappointed by this plan. Hence, this type of story is labelled as a negative evaluation.

#### **Datum 13**

"The new capital is **haunting** us, and haunting the future of our children too." (Al-Jazeera News, March 15, 2023)

In datum 13, the word "haunting" was conveyed metaphorically. Through a literal context, the word "haunting" refers to the existence of ghosts or spirits of the dead. In this statement, "haunting" means that IKN will be detrimental to the indigenous tribes and their offspring. It is thought to damage their lives, livelihoods, cultural heritages and practices, and the environment they live in. Therefore, this ecolinguistics type of story is labelled as a negative evaluation.

#### **Datum 14**

"You **can't do** anything. You are **isolated** in your home... Cars **can't move**, electricity and communications are **down**, and drinkable water supplies have become **contaminated** by overflowing drains and sewers." (Al-Jazeera News, November 9, 2022)

Likewise, the story of evaluation is labelled as **negative** in datum 14. This evaluation accurately shows IKN's indigenous tribalists' complaints about their safe places (e.g., houses, green open spaces, public facilities, etc) being annexed and their living necessities being unsterilized. Consequently, the development of IKN is unfavorable to the locals.

## CNN

### Datum 15

"But alongside the excitement, there's also **deep concern** for the **shrinking** lowland tropical rainforest and its wildlife." (CNN, February 20, 2022)

East Kalimantan is home to a considerable number of tropical rainforests, which are inhabited by endemic primate species (e.g., orangutans), floristic species (e.g., black orchid), and other Bornean endemic primate species. Regrettably, these Bornean natural resources are on the brink of extinction due to massive deforestation caused by the land clearing for the development of IKN. While Bornean indigenous tribes have a deep connection with nature, they believe it is harmful to ecological sustainability. Accordingly, it is categorized as a negative evaluation.

### Datum 16

"The UN says humans are driving the orangutan to **extinction**." (CNN, February 20, 2022)

In datum 16, the term "extinction" was employed to describe the endangered lives of orangutans (Bornean endemic primate species). As humans consider themselves superior, they tend to be ethnocentric. Their ethnocentrically driven voracity leads orangutans to languish amid humans' moral deterioration. Over two decades (1995 to 2015), more than 1,000 Bornean orangutans have been diminished. Not to mention that the development of IKN exacerbates the population decline of Bornean orangutans. Hence, this narrative serves as negative evaluation.

### Datum 17

"These ecosystems are already **hit** by large-scale coal mining, logging, and monoculture oil palm plantations." (CNN, February 20, 2022)

Ecological systems are a paramount source of sustainable life. In East Kalimantan, locals harness its ecosystems to meet their day-to-day needs. Unfortunately, irresponsible coal mining and palm oil cultivations have bulldozed tropical rainforests, fertile soils, and clean water. Furthermore, these projects emit carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), which accelerates climate change. Given this, the story of evaluation can be classified as negative evaluation in datum 17.

#### **Datum 18**

"Since 2006, its orangutan sanctuary, Samboja Lestari, has been caring for injured and orphaned orangutans, rescued from jungle **destroyed** by logging and palm oil crops." (CNN, February 20, 2022)

Not only did palm oil plantations affect the lives of the indigenous communities, but it also harmed the lives of primate species, such as orangutans. As tropical rainforests have been cleared by illegal loggers, orangutans have lost their habitats (as evidenced by the term "destroyed"). This phenomenon disheartens locals because orangutans have been part of the natural ecosystem in East Kalimantan. This narrative can be categorized as a negative evaluation.

#### **Tempo.co**

#### **Datum 19**

"He asserted that investment remains **strong**, but the IKN authority adheres to a strict and credible selection process for both foreign and domestic investors." (Tempo.co, March 19, 2025)

Not only is IKN planned to be a governmental hub, but it is also set to be a financial hub in East Kalimantan. IKN stakeholders anticipate financial investments from both local and foreign companies. Considering its long-term impact, IKN is expected to be an economically independent capital. Thus, it is classified as a positive evaluation.

#### **Datum 20**

"This will **worsen** poverty and hunger." (Tempo.co, November 21, 2024)

A demonstrative pronoun of "this" refers to the construction of IKN. In addition, the verb "worsen" was also augmented to describe exacerbated social problems there. Poverty and hunger are two of the numerous socio-economic challenges, encompassing housing, food supplies, education, and health care. This story is categorized as a negative evaluation.

#### **Datum 21**

"Their fields and rice are **damaged**." (Tempo.co, November 21, 2024)

In datum 21, the adjective "damaged" was used to reveal the conditions of the indigenous tribes' livelihoods and source of food (e.g., fields, rice, etc). Due to the adverse construction of IKN, their livelihoods have been annihilated. This devastating condition has left them languishing in economic uncertainty and instability. As such, this is defined as a negative evaluation.

#### **Datum 22**

“Lauzardi revealed that the toll road project is nearly 80% complete, **promising** a journey time of around 45 to 50 minutes between Balikpapan and IKN upon its completion, which is **anticipated** for December.” (Tempo.co, November 19, 2024)

Prior to building IKN, one of the major deliberations included infrastructures and public facilities. Accordingly, the highway construction project is considered to be useful for mobilization. On top of that, efficient commuting duration between IKN and Balikpapan is concrete proof of the success of the development of the new capital. As such, it is classified as a positive evaluation.

### Story of Identity

#### Al-Jazeera News

##### Datum 23

“My plantation is inherited from my **ancestors**.” (Al-Jazeera News, March 15, 2023)

In terms of the ecolinguistic story of identity, the agricultural lands of the indigenous tribes of East Kalimantan are part of their identity and cultural inheritance, handed down through generations. Indigenous tribal communities in IKN include the Balik, Dayak, Paser, and Kutai tribes. This statement suggests that their commitment to maintaining hereditary agricultural sites remains genuinely robust.

##### Datum 24

“They act like **we don’t exist**. They act like **we aren’t human**.” (Al-Jazeera News, March 15, 2023)

During the initial discussion of the new capital plan, the indigenous tribes were not adequately included as decision-makers. In fact, they were being left behind and ignored. Indonesian stakeholders and the IKN authority decided to move the capital to East Kalimantan without thoughtfully examining the indigenous people who have lived there for nearly two centuries. As a result, the IKN project has unapologetically destroyed their houses, plantations, livelihoods, life necessities, cultural heritages, as well as flora and fauna. Accordingly, the story of identity in datum 24 characterizes marginalization.

#### CNN

##### Datum 25

“Today, **staff** here take care of over 120 rescued orangutans in a conservation area of regenerating forest.” (CNN, February 20, 2022)

In datum 25, the ecolinguistic story of identity was signified by the impactful roles of primatologists who have helped save the lives of primate species (e.g., orangutans, etc). This statement underscores the importance of

primatologists in protecting, conserving, and advocating for endangered Bornean primate species. Accordingly, their awareness of the ecological loss in East Kalimantan prompts them to act rapidly.

#### **Datum 26**

“The influx, mostly of **civil servants** and their families from Jakarta, could force the dispossession of **people** and animals.” (CNN, January 20, 2022)

In datum 26, it was stated that civil servants (*Pegawai Negeri Sipil*) and their relatives will move to IKN from Jakarta. Consequently, the indigenous tribes of East Kalimantan are anxious about city people who may arbitrarily take over and occupy their lands. Further, Bornean endemic species will also be affected by deforestation. Therefore, the existence of the indigenous people is regrettably susceptible.

#### **Tempo.co**

##### **Datum 27**

“**Environmental activists** have also expressed concerns about the impacts of development and the potential displacement of land.” (Tempo.co, November 21, 2024)

Amidst the disastrous conditions in East Kalimantan (IKN), environmental activists are there to advocate for ecological sustainability. They constantly advocate for the environment, including the marginalized indigenous tribal communities and endemic primate species of East Kalimantan. Therefore, environmental activists are more likely to emphasize their stances on ecological wellbeing, ensuring that the environment and its biodiversity are seamless.

##### **Datum 28**

“Forest Watch Indonesia (FWI) Campaign and Intervention Manager Anggi Putra Prayoga stated that the displacement of **indigenous peoples** occurred in the Core Area of the National Capital Region or IKN.” (Tempo.co, November 21, 2024)

Likewise, the development of IKN has led to the expulsion of indigenous tribes who have been there for centuries. The phrasal noun “indigenous people” appears frequently throughout the textual data. Simultaneously, it occurs in datum 28. Given this finding, the story of identity has become a preeminent discourse throughout the construction of IKN.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Story of Ideology**

Initially, Al-Jazeera News and CNN have tangibly shown prominent ideological narratives. Al-Jazeera News, for instance, used modal verbs (e.g., “should not” and “have to”). Al-Jazeera News seems to highlight its stance on the rights of the indigenous tribes, revealing that it is supposed to be the ideal



groundwork prior to relocating Indonesia's capital city to East Kalimantan. Moreover, Al-Jazeera News underscores the susceptibility of the indigenous tribes' local wisdom since it has been threatened by construction. This principle aligns with Stibbe's (2015) idea that society's positive perception of the government is based on normative values or the way it is (e.g., human rights, advocacy for marginalized communities, etc.), thereby preventing them from envisioning any social wrongdoings that might happen in the near future. Nevertheless, according to Greenpeace Southeast Asia, it remains a controversy because, while President Joko Widodo commemorated the 79th Independence Day in IKN, the locals demanded justice by sailing in boats carrying signs that read "Save Balikpapan Bay," "Protect Indigenous People's Rights," and "79 Years of Independence, 190 Years of Colonization" (Greenpeace Southeast Asia, 2024). This action indicates that most of them refused to acquiesce to such a plan because their land had been exploited.

CNN, on the other hand, strives to construct narratives about the environmental challenges and economic perks of the development of IKN. However, such narratives refute each other's ideologies. While the economic sector is being prioritized by the government, deforestation and land use changes remain (Mustakim et al., 2023). This results in an overlapping message, conveying that the long-term economic benefits (e.g., enhanced job opportunities, increased wages, financial investments, etc.) will be reaped from palm oil, timber, iron ore, and coal mining. Therefore, CNN portrays the neoliberal ambitions of the stakeholders (Fairclough, 2013). This neoliberal agenda, according to Kompas.id, stems from President Joko Widodo's conviction about foreign investment. He has been constantly assured that foreign companies, including Delonix Group (China) and Australian Independent School (Australia), will settle in IKN (Susilo, 2024). However, as reported by Tempo.co, the Former Governor of Jakarta Anies Baswedan stated that the current establishment of IKN will not bring about new equity. In contrast, it will result in new inequalities because the development is focused on a single city, making it out of sync with the surrounding regions near IKN and across Indonesia (Maulana, 2023). Hence, the neoliberal agenda remains debatable.

Tempo.co consolidates two ideological narratives, underpinning legal practices and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since the relocation of Indonesia's new capital began, the IKN authority has claimed that the land-use changes neither violate the law nor annex the indigenous tribes' traditional houses (Kodir et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the indigenous people believe that the government has trivialized them. Take, for instance, the indigenous tribes of Dayak, Balik, Paser, Kutai, Tidung, and Banjar. According to their local wisdom, there is a profound connection between their cultural practices and the environment. Their traditional dwellings, for

instance, not only serve as places to live but also as representations of their cultural heritage and philosophy. Given this, despite the legal documents, the indigenous people are convinced that SDGs cannot be realized soon enough because what the government does is terribly detrimental to the entire ecological systems. This aligns with previous research by Yuniawan et al. (2023) ,showing that a particular institution or community widely uses ideology to justify what is right. However, the current study affirms that an ideology does not necessarily sound convincing to those associated with it, as they will not believe it without empirical proof.

### **Story of Framing**

Moreover, in terms of framing, Al-Jazeera News and CNN emerge less frequently compared to Tempo.co. However, both Al-Jazeera News and Tempo.co disseminate quite similar narratives. They focus on framing the National Capital City of Indonesia (IKN) as one of the nation's most outstanding achievements. Building a new capital from scratch is regarded as a major milestone (Stibbe, 2015). CNN, on the other hand, frames IKN as a progressive city filled with environmentally friendly technologies. While the relocation is still halfway through, this type of narrative has been heralded as an endeavor to tackle the threat of climate change. The government has its own dominant power to influence how people conceive the new capital, regardless of the innumerable ecological constraints. It has been discovered that most people have apparently become pessimistic about the implementation of such a groundbreaking initiative (e.g., smart and green city projections) because it has degraded and eroded the environment. (e.g., deforestation, land clearing, palm oil, coal mining, fossil fuel, etc). Therefore, framings such as "achievement," "green city," and "economic profit" fail to convince the residents of North Penajam Paser, East Kalimantan, because they want concrete evidence rather than sophisticatedly tailored statements. This endorses research by Wardana & Geubrina (2024) about framing on Sumatran orangutans, where it consists of trigger words to create a distinct source frame in the mind. Meanwhile, the current study encompasses a broader context of environmental and economic factors.

### **Story of Evaluation**

Furthermore, in terms of evaluation, Al-Jazeera News and CNN reflect people's responses, reactions, and criticism as negative evaluation. The negative evaluation is supported by the terms "miserable," "haunting," "shrinking," "extinction," "hit," "injured," etc. The indigenous tribes have become witnesses to the establishment of IKN, which, in fact, is less favorable to their lives. The natural resources have been exploited massively, undermining the sustainable livelihoods on which indigenous people depend

for their lives. Additionally, East Kalimantan has kept numerous one-of-a-kind species, including orangutans, proboscis monkey (*monyet bekantan*), Mahakam dolphin (*pesut Mahakam*), etc. Moving the capital city to the East Kalimantan region, the indigenous people would say, will hurt those endemic primate species that have inhabited the Island for millions of years since their ancestors. For instance, countless gigantic barges would carry the coal and timber down the river, which would pollute the air and contaminate the water. Similarly, deforestation has cast orangutans out of their habitats. This culminates in an extremely high mortality rate among endemic species. Finally, this finding aligns with research by Istianah & Suhandano (2022) suggesting that appraisal patterns (e.g., describing something as “good” or “bad”) are decisive in raising people’s awareness of the ecological disasters in the East Kalimantan region. Meanwhile, the current study reveals that while indigenous people in East Kalimantan hold mixed views (positive and negative) on IKN, their sentiment is predominantly negative; despite the massive infrastructure growth, they continue to face displacement from their homes. This also confirms **the story of ideology**, where people refuse to believe it because they have not seen empirical evidence of economic benefits and environmental improvements.

In the meantime, Tempo.co reveals both positive and negative stories of evaluation. To begin with, the positive evaluation is marked by economic benefits (e.g., domestic and foreign investment, adequate, accessible infrastructure, etc.). Should this plan is enacted appropriately, the economic circumstances of the people who reside in IKN, including the indigenous tribal communities, will improve significantly. As such, the neoliberal economic system remains predominant. Moreover, Tempo.co construes the negative evaluation by underlining the impoverished people. This has actually been a never-ending issue around, but the state of being impoverished, as the indigenous people believe, is worsened by the relocation of the new capital city. If they are economically less fortunate, they will not be able to provide nutritious food to their families. To explain why it can occur, it is simply because their livelihoods (e.g., rice fields, etc.) are removed in the aftermath of land-use changes for mining, palm oil plantations, etc. This mirrors a prior study by Nabila and Wahyudi (2024) that such activities can potentially harm the environment. Furthermore, the current study investigates the interrelatedness of ideology and evaluation, reflecting how one responds to a belief or principle.

### **Story of Identity**

The following story, identity, Al-Jazeera News provides the indigenous people with a means to express their thoughts and feelings about IKN. Simultaneously, CNN and Tempo.co focus on external parties (e.g.,

environmental activists, civil servants, etc). To begin with, Al-Jazeera News foregrounds the hereditary heritage of the indigenous tribes. This relocation plan not only jeopardizes ecological sustainability but also cultural sustainability. Not to mention that their rituals, traditional ceremonies, and agriculture are fundamental to their sacred identity. The land use changes have caused environmental destruction, impacting the sustainable traditional plantations of the indigenous tribal communities. In addition, Al-Jazeera News becomes a voice for the voiceless, marginalized indigenous tribes.

Meanwhile, CNN and Tempo.co are inclined to highlight environmental deterioration and the fauna impacted by it. Both environmental activists and primatologists are considered two key catalysts in environmental conservation, contributing to the improved quality of the lives of endemic primate species (Condro et al., 2021). Their presence is worthwhile for the recuperation of destructive ecological circumstances. In contrast, civil servants (*Aparatur Sipil Negara*) are perceived as a less contributive identity in the realm of ecological sustainability. The transfer of civil servants (ASN) to IKN further threatens the ecological authenticity of East Kalimantan. This susceptibility stems from the transition of a large population from Jakarta, whose fast-paced, metropolitan habits may impose unsustainable urban demands on the region's environment. Subsequently, as reported by CNBC Indonesia, President Prabowo Subianto plans to relocate over 9,000 civil servants to IKN by 2029, where they will be housed in official residences funded by a total budget of 75.8 trillion rupiahs (Rachman, 2025). According to the residents of North Penajam Paser, this idea will create a socioeconomic gap between government officials and the indigenous communities of East Kalimantan. Therefore, **the story of identity** emphasizes how civil servants may increase the vulnerability of coexisting indigenous communities.

## CONCLUSION

This study was carried out through ecocritical discourse analysis, which stems from ecolinguistics. Based on the ecocritical discourse analysis, we suggest that Al Jazeera News, CNN, and Tempo.co news outlets strive to foster ecological concerns (e.g., the natural world, marginalized communities, and primate species) through four stories of ideology, framing, evaluation, and identity. Simultaneously, the story of evaluation outweighs three other stories of ideology, framing, and identity. Therefore, the relocation of Indonesia's capital city to IKN has sparked people's criticism and negative responses.

We also assert that the current study provides insights into how news media shift certain narratives to construct discourse. However, this research remains limited since the data collected were from secondary data only, such as news articles and other written forms of data sources. Given this, future

research could expand on Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistics using primary data, such as field observation and semi-structured interviews, to gain in-depth empirical perspectives and analyses.

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