



Transitivity system of the lexemes development, growth, and sustainability in the mass media regarding the relocation of the Indonesian capital city: An ecological discourse analysis

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ABSTRACT

Background: The development, growth, and sustainability of relocating Indonesia's national capital have become ecological crisis phenomena, making language use in mass media crucial for shaping the public perception of environmental issues. This study aims to analyze the transitivity system of the lexical items "development," "growth," and "sustainability" in mass media coverage of the relocation of Indonesia's national capital. **Methods:** This study employs a mixed-methods design. The data consist of words and clauses sourced from news articles about the relocation of Indonesia's national capital in media outlets Kompas.com for the years 2023–2024. Data were collected using Octoparse and Bootcat and subsequently analyzed with AntConc 4.3.1. A total of 974 articles were obtained, comprising 294,169 tokens. Concordances containing the lexemes "development," "growth," and "sustainability" were analyzed using transitivity theory within the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework of Halliday and Matthiessen (2014). **Findings:** The results indicate a prevalence of material processes that foreground actions and events. The findings also reveal a dominance of non-natural resource entities as the source domain and passive participants in clauses. This transitivity pattern reflects eco-ambivalent discourse grounded in the eco-philosophy principle of "recognition of rights for all parties," which represents an anthropocentric perspective. **Conclusion:** The findings reveal how Kompas.com mass media express the experiences and perspectives of stakeholders in an ambivalent manner regarding the relocation of the national capital. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** The study's novelty lies in the lexeme "development," in the use of Kompas.com news from 2023–2024 as the object of analysis, and in the integration of diverse data-processing tools.

KEYWORDS: analysis of transitivity; ecolinguistics; mass media; relocation of national capital.

1. Introduction

Entering the 21st century, the ecological crisis has become a global issue encompassing knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and other capacities acquired by individuals as members of society. This condition threatens and damages the natural life of plants, animals, and humans (Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2006). The ecological crisis arises from rapid economic development and increased human productivity, which in turn raises the demand for higher living standards. Humans tend to fulfill these needs even at the expense of

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environmental and ecosystem sustainability, resulting in environmental changes and ecological problems (Wang et al., 2019). In other words, the environmental degradation occurring is a direct consequence of human activities that neglect long-term ecological impacts.

One global ecological crisis phenomenon that has drawn considerable attention is the relocation of the capital city from Jakarta to East Kalimantan (Qulub, 2025). The expansion of infrastructure involved in the capital relocation has the potential to threaten biodiversity (Suhandano et al., 2023). Additionally, forest fires, droughts, mining, and agricultural industries have caused deforestation exceeding 30% (Vuurst & Escobar, 2020). In this context, the mass media play a crucial role in addressing the issues surrounding the capital relocation according to their respective editorial policies. Therefore, the information conveyed must be critically analyzed.

Mass media bear the responsibility of delivering information through discourse to broaden public understanding (Maha et al., 2022). The mass media serve functions including honest event reporting, news filtering, truth guiding, information forums, and interlocutor roles (Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2006; Hambali et al., 2025). Language used in the mass media, particularly environmental discourse, plays a role in shaping human attitudes, behaviors, and policies toward environmental preservation. This occurs because language helps construct narratives that influence human environmental values (Alexander & Stibbe, 2014). However, media discourse is not neutral, it is often influenced by editorial priorities, institutional interests, and broader socio-political structures.

From the perspective of environmental communication, media function as symbolic arenas in which environmental meanings are constructed, negotiated, and stabilized within the public sphere. As conceptualized by Cox (2007) and Pezzullo & Cox (2022), environmental communication constitutes symbolic action that mediates human relationships with nature and ecological systems. Communication performs two interrelated functions, constitutive and pragmatic. Constitutively, discourse shapes definitions, values, identities, and emotional orientations toward environmental issues. Pragmatically, communication serves as an instrument for educating, persuading, mobilizing, legitimizing policies, and guiding collective responses to ecological challenges.

In 2014, Alexander and Stibbe introduced the term ecological discourse analysis, which was later reintroduced by Wei (2021) as a new paradigm emphasizing future generations and non-human species as participants affected by and subjected to oppression. Specifically, ecological discourse analysis seeks to uncover narratives depicting environmental oppression and identify stories that promote harmonious co-existence among humans, human-nature interactions, and nature itself (Alexander & Stibbe, 2014). Consequently, ecological discourse analysis is implemented based on linguistic and ecosophy theories that lead to an assessment of discourse orientation (Cheng, 2022).

Ecosophy encompasses several principles, including the concept of prioritizing the protection of the earth and its inhabitants over profit, recognition of the rights of all parties (to health, safety, welfare, and future prospects), systems thinking by acknowledging the existence of causal networks, justice, welfare, social equity, care, compassion, diversity and harmony, as well as interaction and coexistence (Franklin et al., 2022). In line with this philosophical foundation, ecological discourse analysis is implemented through three main procedures: 1) determining an analytical framework using appropriate linguistic theories; 2) identifying linguistic features by analyzing discourse to uncover orientations and hidden meanings; and 3) considering ecological measures: whether eco-beneficial, eco-ambivalent, or eco-destructive (Cheng, 2022).

The relocation of the national capital is a national issue positioned by the government as a "Sustainable World City." This commitment binds the new capital to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework (2022), which includes four main pillars: Social, Economic, Environmental, and Legal and Governance. Therefore, this study focuses on the lexemes "development," "growth," and "sustainability," as they represent discursive contestation within the new capital discourse. The lexeme "development" represents the Social Infrastructure Pillar (SDGs Goals 9 and 11). Analyzing this lexeme is necessary to

identify the dominant actors controlling development processes and how actions potentially harmful to the environment are represented. Meanwhile, the lexeme "growth" represents the Economic Pillar (SDGs Goal 8). This lexeme is analyzed to determine whether the media narrative tends to focus on the potential economic benefits rather than the real impacts of development. Meanwhile, the lexeme "sustainability" represents the Environmental Pillar (SDGs Goals 11, 13, and 15). Examining this lexeme allows the researcher to understand how ecological commitments are realized linguistically.

In this context, media discourse on the relocation of the capital does not merely report ecological facts, rather, it symbolically constructs the meanings of "development," "growth," and "sustainability." These lexemes function as symbolic actions that mediate public perceptions of environmental risk, responsibility, and legitimacy. Because many environmental impacts are not immediately visible in everyday life, their representation in media discourse is shaped by journalistic conventions, gatekeeping practices, and newsworthiness criteria (Pezzulo & Cox, 2022). Editorial decisions influence which actors are foregrounded, which ecological dimensions are backgrounded, and how sustainability is framed within narratives of modernization and national progress. Moreover, environmental reporting is constrained by the political economy of media, including ownership structures, institutional interests, and broader economic and political affiliations that influence content selection and framing (Cox, 2007).

This discursive tension between development and sustainability can be further illuminated through Ecological Modernization Theory developed by Mol (2002) and Mol & Sonnenfeld (2007). Within this framework, modern development is not necessarily positioned as antagonistic to environmental protection. Rather, it can be reconstructed through technological innovation, institutional reform, and policy rationalization in order to align with principles of sustainability. The theory argues that the state, market, and modern institutions possess reflexive capacities to internalize ecological considerations into development processes. Nevertheless, various critiques contend that ecological modernization often remains reformist and technocratic, preserving the dominant logic of economic growth by framing sustainability as an instrument of efficiency rather than as a structural transformation of human–nature relations. In the context of the relocation of Indonesia's new capital, it is crucial to examine whether media discourse represents development as a reflexive form of ecological modernization or instead reproduces a conventional development paradigm that integrates environmental aspects merely in symbolic and legitimizing terms.

Based on this background, the study aims to analyze the transitivity system of the lexemes "development", "growth", and "sustainability" in the discourse of the relocation of Indonesia's national capital in mass media. This research adopts the ecosophical principle of "recognition of the rights of all parties" (regarding health, safety, welfare, and the future) (Franklin et al., 2022). This concept rejects discrimination that leads to exploitation or destruction of other beings. The approach used in this study is an ecolinguistic transitivity system analysis within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) by Halliday & Matthiessen (2014). Transitivity analysis is employed to reveal how text creators represent ecological perspectives (Alexander & Stibbe, 2014).

This analysis involves identifying the lexicogrammatical aspects of the text to uncover how the authors represent reality through language (Eggins, 2004). The transitivity system is examined by analyzing the types of processes containing the lexemes "development", "growth", and "sustainability" within the clauses of the text. The transitivity analysis of Kompas.com news is crucial for uncovering the representation of actors (who performs and who is acted upon) and linguistic processes (which actions are emphasized) in the development of the new capital city/*Ibu Kota Nusantara* (IKN).

Previous studies have examined ecolinguistic aspects of Indonesia's capital relocation from various perspectives. Maha et al. (2022) emphasized the use of euphemism in IKN reporting in Indonesian mass media. Isti'anah et al. (2025) studied climate change and global warming framing in Indonesian media. Furthermore, Suparno et al. (2025) analyzed transitivity in print media discourse concerning ecological and development issues.

Suhandano et al. (2023) analyzed narratives of “growth” and “sustainability” in IKN legal documents.

Additionally, several studies have examined media representation and public communication from critical and political perspectives. Nurpadillah et al. (2025) analyzed how Metro News and Kumparan.com construct power and identity in IKN coverage. Buwono (2025) investigated pro-government and counter-discourses on land use and environmental protection. Subono and Eriyanto (2024) mapped pro and contra discourses using discourse network analysis, highlighting social and political dynamics shaping public debate. Ikfina (2023) examined parliamentary support and public responses, illustrating the interplay between policy communication and public perception. These studies collectively underscore the importance of critical media analysis in understanding environmental and political communication around IKN. However, prior research has mainly focused on political framing, stakeholder salience, or legal discourse, leaving a gap in examining the ecological dimension of IKN coverage in mass media through a linguistic lens.

This study is a development from Suhandano et al. (2023) which critically examined the lexemes “growth” and “sustainability” in the legal documents of Indonesia’s capital relocation. Their research was limited to legal documents and did not explore language transitivity in mass media. This study fills that gap by adding the lexeme “development” as an analytical focus and expanding the object of study to mass media, specifically Kompas.com. This approach links critical discourse perspectives with ecolinguistics while also drawing on environmental communication theory. Moreover, the study considers ecological modernization principles to assess whether media narratives reflect reflexive development that integrates ecological considerations or reproduce conventional development paradigms that merely symbolize sustainability. This combined approach provides deeper insights into how development, growth, and sustainability are communicated and the role of media as a symbolic arena in shaping public understanding of sustainable development.

The results of this study are theoretically valuable for enriching ecolinguistic research and expanding the understanding of the application of the transitivity system in mass media discourse analysis. Practically, this study provides insights to media practitioners, policymakers, and environmental activists on how language choices in the media shape public opinion regarding the relocation of the national capital and ecological crises. This research can serve as a basis for evaluation and reference in designing more responsible and environmentally friendly media communication strategies, as well as supporting inclusive policies and sustainability.

2. Methods

This research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analyses. The quantitative phase measures word frequency, collocations, and concordances, while the qualitative analysis examines the transitivity system in discourse. Word frequency, collocation, and concordance provide empirical data for interpreting the frameworks and ideologies of a discourse (Franklin et al., 2022). The data consist of words and clauses from an Indonesian news corpus about the state capital relocation, sourced from Kompas.com during 2023–2024. Kompas.com, ranked first nationally by SCImago Media Rankings (2025), represents news and public opinion perspectives. The selected period corresponds to the commencement of the capital relocation project, generating dynamic and diverse discourse on development and public responses.

Data were collected using the Octoparse application through automated web scraping of news articles. This process involved setting search criteria based on the keyword “IKN,” defining a publication date range, and extracting news links. Subsequently, all obtained links were saved in .txt format and imported into the Bootcat application. Bootcat then performed crawling and automatically downloaded the texts into .txt format. After text extraction, the

researchers removed the news bylines, datelines, and advertisements to ensure the data was free from irrelevant elements. As a result, 974 articles containing 294,169 tokens were obtained.

Data analysis in this study utilized the corpus software AntConc 4.3.1. AntConc is a software developed by Laurence Anthony from Waseda University to explore and extract information from text collections (corpora). AntConc is a reliable tool in critical discourse studies, including discourse on copper mining ecology (Poole, 2016), climate policy (Yahya & Roselani, 2024), ecological discourse in textbooks (Awal, 2025), climate crisis news discourse (Hafez & Hassaballah, 2025), and ecology in supreme court rulings (Noor et al., 2025). The study focuses on a three-word window to the left and right (3L-3R) around target words. Collocation criteria require a minimum frequency of three occurrences. Analysis is limited to the top ten collocators based on frequency, likelihood, and effect values to highlight the most frequent and relevant word association patterns while excluding function words (Krasnopeyeva, 2023). Concordance analysis is restricted to 20 concordance lines per collocation to ensure representativeness.

The analysis of the transitivity system adheres to the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework developed by Halliday & Matthiessen (2014), which identifies lexicogrammatical features to determine process types and participant roles within discourse. Lexicogrammar conceptualizes the continuity between lexis and grammar as two poles of a single continuum characterized by shared systemic features. Consequently, to study ideational functions, text analysis must focus on the clause, recognized as the fundamental representation of experience. Within this framework, transitivity serves as a vital resource for construing experience through the configuration of processes, participants, and circumstantial elements.

Halliday's grammar establishes a consistent relationship between lexical choices and their intended meanings, emphasizing that comprehensive understanding of language use requires more than isolated analysis of linguistic forms. Language must be analyzed from multiple perspectives to uncover its multifaceted functions. According to Halliday & Matthiessen (2014), a unit of experience is considered complete when realized in a clause comprising a process, participant(s), and circumstantial elements. The process, expressed through verbs, represents the core activity or event that determines the presence and classification of participants. The six recognized process types within a clause are material, behavioural, mental, verbal, relational, and existential, as illustrated in Figure 1.

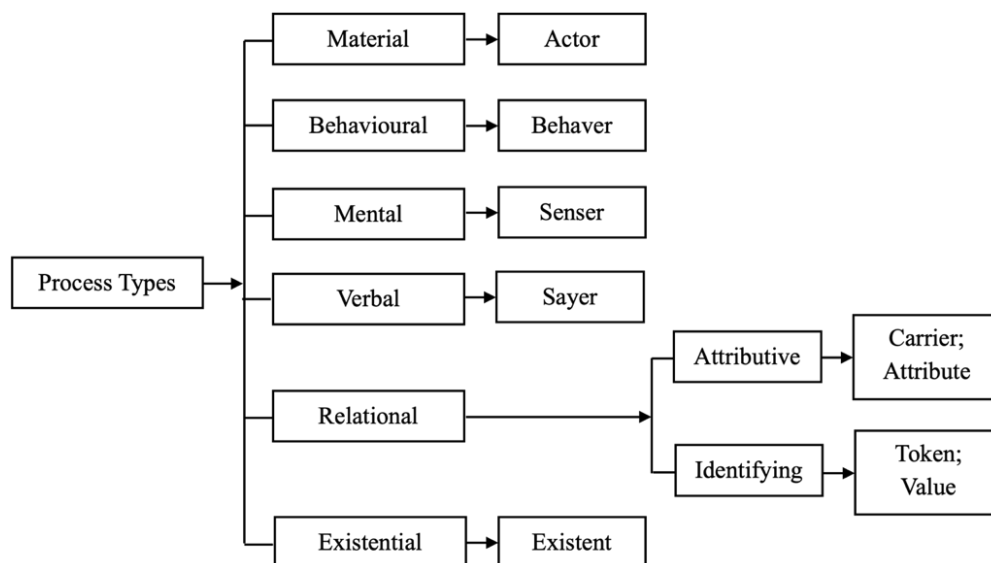


Fig. 1. Types of transitivity processes
Halliday & Matthiessen (2014)

After identifying the types of processes and participants within the clauses, the next step is to categorize the discourse as eco-beneficial, eco-ambivalent, or eco-destructive.

Eco-beneficial discourse acknowledges non-human species and other voiceless agents. Eco-destructive discourse prioritizes human needs or desires, ignoring voiceless agents. Eco-ambivalent discourse reflects ambivalence between positive and negative attitudes, recognition and rejection, or support and criticism concerning ecological issues (Cheng, 2022).

In this study, the coding procedure was conducted manually by analyzing concordance lines of the lexemes *development*, *growth*, and *sustainability* within the transitivity framework of SFL. Each selected clause was systematically categorized according to (1) process types, (2) participant roles, and (3) ecosemantic orientation. Coding focused on the top 20 concordance lines for each primary collocation identified through corpus analysis to ensure analytical depth while maintaining representativeness. The manual coding process enabled careful identification of implicit participants, passive constructions, and nominalizations that might obscure agency in the discourse.

The analytical procedure was conducted in four integrated stages. First, the compiled corpus was quantitatively examined to identify lexical distribution patterns of the target keywords through frequency counts, collocation analysis, and concordance line examination. Second, the quantitative results informed the selection of relevant clauses for qualitative analysis within the SFL framework, with particular attention to transitivity configurations. Third, findings from both analytical strands were interpreted by correlating frequency and collocation patterns with process types (see Table 1) and participant roles to reveal tendencies of ideational representation and their ideological implications in the capital relocation discourse. Finally, the interpreted results were contextualized within broader theoretical perspectives, including ecolinguistics, environmental communication, and ecological modernization theory, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the discursive construction of ecological issues.

Table 1. Transitivity process categories

Process Category	Meaning/Definition	Main Participants	Example Verbs
Material	Physical process or action of "doing"	Actor (agent), Goal (target)	build, attack, go
Mental	Sensory/cognitive process: perception (seeing), affection (feeling), cognition (thinking)	Senser (senser), Phenomenon (phenomenon)	see, love, know
Relational	Relational process of "being": attributing (assigning attributes), identifying (identifying)	Carrier (carrier), Attribute (attribute); Token (token), Value (value)	is, become, have
Behavioral	Physiological-psychological behavior process (boundary between material and mental)	Behaver (behave), Phenomenon (optional)	laugh, breathe, observe
Verbal	Verbal process of "saying"	Sayer (sayer), Verbiage (content), Target (optional)	say, state, ask
Existential	Existence process of "existing"	Existent (existent)	exist, there is

Halliday & Matthiessen (2014)

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Result

3.1.1 Collocation analysis

Collocation analysis evaluates dominant words connected to the lexemes "development," "growth," and "sustainability". These collocations reveal how Kompas.com narrates the capital relocation through participant roles, process types, and discourse forms. Corpus analysis of Kompas.com shows the lexeme "development"

appears 2085 times, “growth” 66 times, and “sustainability” 54 times. Their collocations are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Collocations of the lexemes “development,” “growth,” and “sustainability”

Collocate	Freq.	Likelihood	Effect
Development			
ikn	1228	722.350	1.235
Infrastruktur/infrastructure	138	238.648	2.395
Proyek/project	162	196.305	1.923
Progres/progress	61	185.308	3.454
Percepatan/acceleration	69	181.016	3.133
Pemerataan/equity	50	128.797	3.096
Perkembangan/development	49	126.569	3.102
Nusantara/Nusantara	281	123.213	1.063
Ibu/capital	306	114.401	0.972
Proses/process	73	109.158	2.189
Growth			
Ekonomi/economic	48	347.259	6.578
Pemerataan/equity	15	102.556	6.328
Pusat/center	20	74.161	4.006
Baru/new	16	43.063	3.213
Titik/point	7	40.972	5.620
Indonesia/Indonesia	18	37.340	2.702
Jadikan/to make	4	35.587	7.813
Keunggulan/advantage	3	25.743	7.591
Fungsinya/its function	3	23.577	7.076
Diubah/changed	3	19.126	6.006
Sustainability			
Penyempurnaan/refinement	4	39.447	.489
Transisi/transition	7	38.229	5.333
Jaminan/assurance	5	32.460	6.088
Kilat/rapid	3	27.797	8.074
Sedikit/slightly	4	25.495	6.004
Kelola/manage	4	25.217	5.953
Belajar/learning	3	23.567	7.074
Pembangunan/development	18	22.354	1.955
Sustainable	3	20.036	6.226
green	4	18.889	4.789

Table 2 data shows the top ten collocations with the highest frequency, likelihood, and effect. These collocations reflect the intent of words co-occurring. Statistically, frequency measures how often collocate and lexeme appear together, likelihood assesses real association over chance, and effect indicates association strength, meaning high effect reflects strong contextual relation despite low frequency (Hamed, 2021). Based on the data in Table 1, it can be observed that the lexeme “development” collocates with the lexemes Nusantara Capital City (IKN), infrastructure ‘*infrastruktur*’, project ‘*proyek*’, progress ‘*progres*’, acceleration ‘*percepatan*’, equity ‘*pemerataan*’, development ‘*perkembangan*’, Nusantara ‘*nusantara*’, capital ‘*ibu*’, and process ‘*proses*’. Meanwhile the lexeme “growth” collocates with the words economy ‘*ekonomi*’, equity ‘*pemerataan*’, center ‘*pusat*’, new ‘*baru*’, point ‘*titik*’, Indonesia, to make ‘*jadikan*’, advantage ‘*keunggulan*’, its function ‘*fungsinya*’, dan changed ‘*diubah*’. In contrast, the lexeme “sustainability” collocates with the words refinement ‘*penyempurnaan*’, transition ‘*transisi*’, assurance ‘*jaminan*’, rapid ‘*kilat*’, slightly ‘*sedikit*’, manage ‘*kelola*’, learning ‘*belajar*’, development ‘*pembangunan*’, sustainable, dan green. This collocation analysis serves as a basis for understanding how these three lexemes are conceptually framed within the mass media discourse concerning the relocation of Indonesia’s capital city.

3.1.2 Transitivity analysis

The author identified five transitivity processes in clauses related to “development,” “growth,” and “sustainability” in Kompas.com media.

Table 3. The percentage of process types in the mass media of kompas.com

Types of transitivity processes	Development	Growth	Sustainability	Average
Material	62.5%	56.9%	45.1%	54.83%
Relational	12%	33%	47.1%	30.70%
Verbal	15%	0.9%	7.8%	7.90%
Mental	9%	4.6%	0%	4.53%
Existential	2.5%	4.6%	0%	2.37%

Table 3 shows that material processes dominate at 54.83%, followed by relational (30.70%), verbal (7.90%), mental (4.53%), and existential (2.37%). The absence of behavioural processes and the low occurrence of existential processes reflect the distinction between primary processes (material, mental, relational) that dominate clauses and secondary processes (verbal, behavioural, existential) that support meanings from primary ones (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Existential processes are rare in discourse and thus less frequent. In addition to analyzing process types, semantic participant and ecosemantic roles were also examined. The results can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Semantic role, participant, and ecosemantic analysis

Analysis		Development	Growth	Sustainability	Average
Semantic Role	Active	17.40%	19.30%	5.90%	14.20%
	Passive	81.60%	78.00%	86.30%	81.97%
	Process	1.00%	2.80%	7.80%	3.87%
Participant Role	Non-natural resource entities	99.5%	100%	100%	99.83%
	Human entities	0.5%	0%	0%	0.17%
Ecosemantic	Beneficial	8.5%	0.9%	11.8%	7.07%
	Destructive	3.0%	0%	0%	1.00%
	Ambivalent	88.5%	99.1%	88.2%	92.23%

Table 4 indicates that lexemes “development,” “growth,” and “sustainability” in Kompas.com discourse are dominated by passive participant roles (81.97%), indicating focus on the affected object rather than an active agent (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Regarding participant roles, the majority are non-natural resource entities (99.83%). In the transitivity analysis framework, participants are divided into living organisms (human and non-human) and non-living organisms (natural and non-natural resources such as houses, cities, roads) (Luan & Zhang, 2024). Ecosemantically, the discourse of capital relocation in Kompas.com tends to be eco-ambivalent (92.23%), balancing anthropocentric and ecocentric.

3.1.3 Process systems in clauses

Clauses with material processes dominate the concordance of lexemes “development,” “growth,” and “sustainability” on Kompas.com (54.83%). Material processes describe actions of implementing and constructing concrete changes by the actor of instruction (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). There are two main actions: doing process and happening process realized by physical activity verbs (Wiratno, 2018). Two types of participants are found in material processes in Kompas.com ecological discourse, namely Actor and Goal. However, Actor can be obscured by passive sentences and nominalization. The lexemes “development,” “growth,” and “sustainability” perform several functions in material processes, namely Actor, Goal, and Circumstance, as in examples (1a)–(3b).

- (1a) Proyek pembangunan Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) [Actor] tidak boleh merugikan [Material Process] masyarakat [Goal].
- (1b) Dan juga memperkuat [Material Process] ikhtiar, usaha [Goal] kita [Actor] untuk berkontribusi bagi percepatan pembangunan Ibu Kota Nusantara... [Circumstance].
- (1c) Pemerataan pembangunan [Goal] juga bisa dilakukan [Material Process, Passive] dengan cara membesarkan kota-kota yang sudah terbangun dengan baik [Circumstance].
- (2a) Pertumbuhan ekonomi [Actor] di Kalimantan Timur dan Kabupaten Penajam Paser Utara [Circumstance] akan meningkat [Material Process].
- (2b) Proyek ini [Actor] mampu mendukung [Material Process] pemerataan pembangunan dan pertumbuhan ekonomi [Goal] di luar Pulau Jawa [Circumstance].
- (2c) Kawasan IKN [Goal] akan diubah [Material Process, Passive] fungsinya [Goal] sebagai pusat pertumbuhan ekonomi [Circumstance].
- (3a) Jaminan keberlanjutan pembangunan IKN [Goal] dibutuhkan [Material Process, Passive] untuk meyakinkan para investor [Circumstance].
- (3b) Nanti mungkin di sana [Circumstance] bisa melakukan [Material Process] riset [Goal] secara kilat [Circumstance] dan belajar [Material Process] tentang sisi keberlanjutan [Goal].

As an Actor, the lexemes “development” and “growth” collocate with entities of non-natural resources. This can be observed in data examples (1a) and (2a). Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) explain that an Actor can be any entity that performs an action in a material process. As a Circumstance, the lexemes “development” and “growth” collocate with entities of non-natural resources as shown in data (1b), (2c), and (3b). Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) state that Circumstances in material processes contribute to indicating the context or setting such as place, time, cause, manner, and other aspects accompanying the main process. However, the lexeme “sustainability” does not appear either as Actor or Circumstance in material processes. The absence of the lexeme “sustainability” indicates that the aspect of sustainability is not positioned as a driving force or main condition of the material processes in the discourse, but rather as the recipient of action.

Besides presenting Actors through active clauses, the lexemes “development” and “sustainability” in the narrative of the capital city relocation on Kompas.com media also obscure Actors through passive clauses as seen in data (1c), (3a), and (3b). Generally, passive verb formation in Indonesian can be identified by prefixes di- and ter- (Wiratno, 2018). In passive constructions, actors often do not appear or are omitted, shifting the focus to the Goal (Eggin, 2004). According to Halliday & Matthiessen (2014), passive verbs in material processes indicate the clause’s focus on the receiver of the action (Goal). In examples (1c), (3a), and (3b), the lexemes “development” and “sustainability” collocate with participant entities of non-natural resources such as equitable development, economic growth, and research. However, the lexeme “growth” does not appear as a Goal in passive clauses, but only occurs in active clauses (2b). This means that in the process of the capital city growth, Kompas.com media does not obscure the responsible Actor.

Relational processes constitute the second category appearing in the Kompas.com discourse of the capital city relocation. Identification results show 30.70% of clauses belong to relational processes. Relational clauses function to characterize and identify entities. Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) distinguish three types of relational processes: intensive (attributive and identifying), possessive, and circumstantial. Intensive relational processes are related to the attribution of qualities. Meanwhile, possessive relational processes connect the ownership relationship between entities. Circumstantial processes link entities with additional contexts, such as time, place, cause, and others. Relational clauses in the discourse of capital city relocation on Kompas.com can be observed in examples (4a)–(6c).

- (4a) The development of the Nusantara Capital City (IKN), which was initiated by President Jokowi [Possessor] will have [Possessive Relational Process] strategic position [Possessed] in Indonesia’s future development [Circumstance].
- (4b) That [Token] are [Identifying Relational Process] a commitment [Value] to continue equitable development through an Indonesia-centric development vision [Circumstance].

- (4c) This development of the Nusantara Capital City (IKN) [*Carrier*] be [*Attributive Relational Process*] serves as a symbol of civilizational progress, equitable development, and national unity [*Attributes*].
- (5a) IKN [*Carrier*] will be [*Attributive Relational Process*] a new center of economic growth [*Attribute*].
- (5b) What Indonesia needs today [*Token*] is [*Identifying Relational Process*] equitable economic growth [*Value*].
- (5c) IKN [*Carrier*] in the future [*Circumstance*] will be [*Attributive Relational Process*] one of the magnetic centers of Indonesia's economic growth [*Attribute*].
- (5d) **Economic growth** [*Carrier*] recently [*Circumstance*] as big as [*Attributive Relational Process*] 5.17 percent [*Attributes*].
- (6a) This is it [*Carrier*] just a little improvement, governance, and sustainability [*Attributes*].
- (6b) *Embung* [*Token*] is [*Identifying Relational Process*] one of the concepts of environmental sustainability in the development of the IKN [*Value*].
- (6c) So the sustainability of development [*Carrier*] not only [*Attributive Relational Process*] regarding green development [*Attribute*], but respectful [*Attributive Relational Process*] on the results of decisions and implementation of development [*Attribute*].

The relational clauses in the discourse on the relocation of the state capital on Kompas.com are dominated by intensive relational processes (attributive and identifying). In attributive relational processes, the lexemes “development,” “growth,” and “sustainability” function as Carrier (4a, 5d, 6c) and Attribute (4c, 5c, 6a), predominantly representing non-natural resource entities in the form of physical and economic development, while environmental aspects remain unmentioned. Meanwhile, in identifying relational processes, the lexemes “development,” “growth,” and “sustainability” serve as Circumstance (4b) and Value (5b, 6b), with a dominance of non-natural resource entities and occasional inclusion of environmental aspects, albeit not dominant. Circumstance provides temporal context related to the identification process, whereas Value refers to entities that establish the identity of the Token (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Additionally, possessive relational clauses functioning as Possessor were found presenting non-natural resource entities (4a). Nonetheless, possessive clauses appear only with the lexeme “development” with low frequency. This is because the development of the state capital has clear ownership or association attributes, whereas “growth” and “sustainability” are more abstract and do not indicate direct ownership in the discourse. In possessive clauses, the relationship between two entities is ownership (Wiratno, 2018).

Verbal process clauses average 7.90% in percentage. The verbal process is a process that refers to activities or actions related to information, with commonly used verbs such as speaking, asking, commanding, and praising (Aisaro & Suhardi, 2023; Ismail et al., 2022). In Indonesian, verbal processes relate to declarative clauses consisting of at least two participants: Sayer and Verbiage. Sayer is the participant responsible for the verbal process (Martin et al., 2010), while Verbiage describes what is said. In some clauses, verbal processes are extended by Receiver, referring to conscious beings or institutions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Examples in the discourse on the state capital relocation in Kompas.com are observed in examples (7a)–(8c).

- (7a) Jokowi [*Sayer*] tell [*Verbal Process*] regarding the development of the IKN based on urban forests [*Verbiage*].
- (7b) Hadi [*Sayer*] also revealed [*Verbal Process*] progress of construction of the Garuda Palace which is behind the State Palace [*Verbiage*].
- (7c) Secretary of Development of the Indonesian Capital City Authority (IKN) Achmad Jaka Santos Adiwijaya [*Sayer*] say [*Verbal Process*], his party invited international investors [*Verbiage*].
- (8a) The SKP [*Sayer*] membahas [*Verbal Process*] regarding the sustainability of the IKN until the transition of government [*Verbiage*].
- (8b) Suharso [*Sayer*] emphasize [*Verbal Process*] there must be a guarantee of sustainability regarding the development of the IKN [*Verbiage*].

- (8c) Basuki [Sayer] say [Verbal Process], the sustainability of IKN development has also been conveyed [Verbiage] to IKN investors [Receiver].

The lexemes “development” and “sustainability” in the verbal clauses of the discourse on the capital city relocation on Kompas.com function as Sayer (7c) and Verbiage (7a, 7b, 8a, 8b, and 8c), involving non-natural resource entities as participants and dominated by active verbs. Only one instance (7a) references environmental aspects related to the lexeme “development”. According to Halliday & Matthiessen (2014), verbs indicating verbal processes represent acts of speaking, reporting, or verbally expressing something. Meanwhile, Verbiage contains Sayer’s statements about the capital city relocation. The Receiver role appears only in clause (8c) as a human entity, namely IKN investors. On the other hand, verbal processes do not occur with the lexeme “growth”, which more often functions as an abstract concept describing a condition or quality, while verbal processes appear in “development” and “sustainability”, which more concretely and actively depict real actions or processes related to the relocation.

Clauses with mental processes in the relocation discourse average 4.53%. Mental processes represent participants’ internal experiences of the world (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The mental process clause encodes the meanings of thinking and feeling (Al-Behadily & AL-Sheikh, 2019). This type describes the process of an individual’s conscious engagement, such as perception of something, judgment, expressing feelings, or cognitive involvement (Ismail et al., 2022). Eggins (2004) divides mental process verbs into three main categories: cognition (verbs related to thinking, knowing, and understanding); affection (verbs related to liking, feeling fear, and so on); and perception (verbs related to seeing, hearing, and the like). Participant roles in mental processes include Senser (experiencing the mental process) and Phenomenon (object) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Mental clauses observed are found in data (9a–10b).

- (9a) Head of state [Senser] seems to be enjoying [Mental Process] morning air [Phenomenon] while looking [Mental Process] view [Phenomenon] and the progress of IKN development [Phenomenon] on the hill [Circumstance].
- (9b) Equal distribution of development in agglomeration areas is carried out [Phenomenon] expected [Mental Process] does not result in eviction.
- (9c) Let us [Senser] pay attention [Mental Process] new direction for the development of IKN as a forest city [Phenomenon].
- (10a) Relocation of the capital to East Kalimantan [Circumstance] consider [Mental Process] equitable growth [Phenomenon].
- (10b) Indonesia [Senser] need [Mental Process] equitable growth [Phenomenon].

The lexemes “development” and “growth” in the discourse of the state capital relocation on Kompas.com function as Phenomena with the role of non-natural resource participants. Meanwhile, the lexeme “sustainability” is not found in the discourse. The clauses in this discourse are dominated by active verbs, as shown in examples (9a), (9c), (10a), and the use of passive verbs is also found as in data (9b), which indicates the obscuring of the Senser. The Phenomena in the above data illustrate that the discourse on the state capital relocation on Kompas.com narrates environmental aspects as part of the phenomena experienced or noticed. Meanwhile, the lexeme “sustainability” does not appear in mental processes, signifying that the environmental sustainability aspect is positioned as a conceptual phenomenon and lacks strong emotional expression. Senser in the discourse on the state capital relocation refers to human entities as in data (9a) and (9c) and to non-natural resources (9b) and (10b). This means Kompas.com positions the environment as a phenomenon experienced or sensed by various entities, enabling readers to perceive environmental impacts through the subjective experiences of actors and non-natural entities.

Clauses with existential process types in the discourse of the state capital relocation on Kompas.com represent the smallest average percentage of 2.37%. Existential processes relate to the existence of an entity (Ali, 2019). The existential process is a clause that

presents an entity as existing without any additional predicate about it (Al-Behadily & AL-Sheikh, 2019). This term refers to the process of "being or occurring," which is usually realized through the reconstruction of existence, such as an object, event, or human (Ismail et al., 2022). Existential clauses contribute to introducing the main participant at the beginning of the story (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Existential clauses in the Kompas.com discourse can be observed in data (11a)–(12b).

- (11a) There is [*Existential Process*] five large hotels, four hospitals, international standard schools, PSSI training center and large mall [*Existent*] in the IKN which is currently under construction [*Circumstance*].
- (11b) There is [*Existential Process*] the seeds of social tension [*Existent*] in the development project for the Indonesian National Capital (IKN) [*Circumstance*].
- (12a) On another island [*Circumstance*] there is also [*Existential Process*] economic growth [*Existent*].
- (12b) On islands other than Java [*Circumstance*] there is also [*Existential Process*] new economic growth points [*Existent*].

Mass media Kompas.com narrates the lexemes "development" and "growth" in the discourse of the state capital relocation as Existent with non-natural resource entities (12a, 12b). Besides Existent, the collocation of "development" also appears as Circumstance (11a, 11b), whereas this function is absent in "growth". As with mental clauses, existential clauses are not found with "sustainability", indicating that the sustainability narrative is not yet explicitly or predominantly construed as a concrete existence in the capital relocation discourse.

3.2 Discussion

Transitivity analysis shows that there are five types of clause processes associated with the lexemes "development", "growth", and "sustainability". These processes are material, as the dominant process (54.83%), relational (30.70%), verbal (7.90%), mental (4.53%), and existential (2.37%). This aligns with the research of Mansyur et al. (2022) on human representation in environmental speeches, Yahya and Roselani (2024) on human dominance representation in climate policy documents, He and Zhang (2024) on transitivity in the song Peach Blossom Land, Luan and Zhang (2024) on transitivity in educational texts, and Suparno et al. (2025) on transitivity in sustainable development related to the Indonesian Capital City relocation featured in Tempo magazine, all of which conclude that environmental discourse is predominantly characterized by material processes. Moreover, the general distribution of agent participants in this study mostly refers to passive participants (81.97%), non-natural resource entities (99.83%), categorized as eco-ambivalent discourse (92.23%). These findings correspond with Suhandano (2023), who found that transitivity processes and participants in the legal documents of the IKN do not involve entities referring to the environment and constitute eco-ambivalent discourse.

Building on this quantitative distribution, material processes as the dominant process type in the Kompas.com discourse on the capital city's relocation are found in both active and passive verbal constructions, dominated by the role of passive participants (Goal). This dominance illustrates that actual activities and concrete actions are strongly emphasized in the narrative of "new capital development". This aligns with Al-Behadily & AL-Sheikh (2019), who state that material clauses represent actions performed by participants who do something to other entities. The material process refers to the experience of doing and the occurrence of something in the external world, describing the process that answers the questions of what someone does or what happens. This clause explains two subcategories, namely events (occurrences) and actions (doing) (Ismail et al., 2022). In the transitivity system, material processes function to encode how participants act and objectively describe what happens (Zheng, 2021). It means Kompas.com narrates the capital relocation as a continuous process directly

touching social, economic, and environmental aspects. The high number of agent participants referring to non-natural resource entities and the dominance of passive participants reveal a typical transitivity pattern that positions "development," "growth," and "sustainability" as focused on infrastructure development and economic expansion, which are impacted or controlled (Syaban & Appiah-Opoku, 2023).

From a broader theoretical perspective, particularly environmental communication Cox (2007) and Pezzulo & Cox (2022), the dominance of material processes suggests that Kompas.com constructs the capital relocation primarily as a domain of concrete institutional action rather than ecological deliberation. In constitutive terms, the discourse frames development as dynamic, progressive, and agent-driven, while ecological elements are rarely granted grammatical agency. Consequently, this pattern shapes public understanding of environmental issues as secondary to infrastructural implementation, thereby normalizing a development-first orientation.

In addition to material processes, the second dominant type is relational processes of the intensive type, showing assignment of attributes or entity identification. Relational processes aim to create explanations, characterizations, or definitions that connect (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Intensive participants in Kompas.com mass media also refer to non-natural resource entities, dominated by passive participants. This indicates that the relocation narrative in Kompas.com tends to position these three lexemes as essential parts of the socio-economic structure of development, recognizing the role and status of non-natural resource entities. Relational actions establish connections between actions and participants along with certain attributes associated with them. This means that relational processes indicate that one participant influences another in some way (Al-Behadily & AL-Sheikh, 2019). Relational processes involve connecting, identifying, or marking "existence," which implies that something is considered to have attributes and identity markers (Aisaro & Suhardi, 2023).

The overwhelming presence of non-natural resource entities and passive participants further illustrates how environmental communication mediates human-nature relations. When natural entities are backgrounded or positioned as Goals rather than Actors, the environment appears as an object of management rather than a subject with intrinsic value. In Cox and Pezzullo's framework, such symbolic positioning influences environmental consciousness by reinforcing anthropocentric hierarchies within public discourse.

Beyond material and relational processes, verbal, mental, and existential processes involving non-natural resource and human agents are also present. This suggests that Kompas.com not only emphasizes concrete actions and ownership in narrating the relocation discourse but also involves aspects of communication, perception, and existence. This shows the complexity and dynamics of the relocation involving actual actions, societal beliefs and attitudes, and the existence of issues and concepts emerging comprehensively, reflectively, and contextually in the processes of "development," "growth," and "sustainability" of the new capital (Hilal et al., 2024).

However, when examining lexical collocations more closely, the collocations of the lexeme's "development", "growth", and "sustainability" in the Kompas.com media discourse more often serve as perceived and discussed objects rather than active agents. In verbal, mental, and existential clauses, these lexemes tend to be passive and conceptual, implying that environmental and sustainability issues remain positioned as supporting factors in the narrative of "development" and economic "growth," not as primary focuses receiving intensive attention in the media discourse (Buwono, 2025). Accordingly, concern for "sustainability" in the context of the capital relocation is more conceptual and administrative rather than a reflection of feelings or actual actions in the news (Sultan et al., 2022).

Given these patterns, the discourse of capital relocation narrated by Kompas.com is eco-ambivalent, meaning it contains aspects that are both beneficial and destructive to the environment. According to Cheng (2022), eco-ambivalent discourse reflects tension between narratives of "development" and economic "growth" and ecological impact

awareness that may be harmful. This supports Alexander and Stibbe's (2014) view that such discourse reflects ambivalence between human interests (anthropocentrism) and environmental preservation needs (ecocentrism). Consequently, this ambivalence calls for a more critical engagement with environmental narratives, encouraging media to balance economic progress with sustainable ecological practices to ensure long-term environmental well-being.

In line with this interpretation, the eco-ambivalent perspective is relevant to the ecosophical principles advanced by Franklin et al. (2022), recognizing the rights of all parties, human and non-human, to health, safety, welfare, and future. The identified discourse shows recognition of the need for "development" and equity, but with limited emphasis on ecological risks. As a result, although the discourse strives to find a middle ground between economic growth and environmental sustainability, it does not fully adopt the principles of ecosophy, as it continues to prioritize human concerns above those of the natural world.

From a communicative standpoint, the eco-ambivalent discourse identified in this study can therefore be interpreted as a communicative negotiation within the public sphere. On the one hand, sustainability is invoked to align with global environmental commitments and the SDGs framework. On the other hand, its limited grammatical centrality suggests that sustainability functions more as a legitimizing rhetoric than as a transformative ecological paradigm. In pragmatic terms, the discourse promotes development-oriented action while symbolically accommodating environmental values, thereby balancing economic growth with ecological reassurance.

This communicative negotiation is also shaped by journalistic structures. Cox (2007) argues that environmental reporting is shaped by gatekeeping practices and newsworthiness criteria that prioritize events, official statements, and institutional actors. This may explain the prominence of state agencies and development institutions in material processes within the corpus. Environmental risks that are gradual, complex, or less visually dramatic may receive less grammatical emphasis, resulting in limited representation of long-term ecological consequences. Thus, the observed transitivity patterns reflect not only linguistic preferences but also journalistic conventions that influence environmental meaning-making.

Furthermore, the political economy of media influences how environmental narratives are structured. Media institutions operate within broader economic and political contexts that shape editorial priorities. Consequently, representations of development and growth may align with national modernization agendas, while sustainability is incorporated in ways that maintain discursive harmony rather than conflict. This reinforces the interpretation that the eco-ambivalent pattern identified in this study is not accidental but structurally mediated through communicative and institutional practices.

Revisiting environmental communication framework proposed by Pezzullo and Cox (2022), the dominance of material processes and non-natural resource participants indicates that the media tend to foreground the pragmatic dimension of communication, namely, the presentation of development actions and policy legitimization, rather than the constitutive dimension that shapes public ecological consciousness. The discourse on the relocation of Indonesia's new capital (IKN) in *Kompas.com* symbolically frames "development" and "growth" as progressive institutional actions, while "sustainability" tends to appear as a normative attribute or supporting rhetoric.

This pattern demonstrates that media communication does not merely reflect ecological reality; rather, it actively constructs a hierarchy of meanings in which nature is positioned as an object of management rather than as a subject possessing intrinsic value. Accordingly, the eco-ambivalence identified in this study is not simply a matter of grammatical choice, but a manifestation of communicative practices that negotiate between the legitimization of development and the demands of sustainability within a democratic public sphere.

This study also shows that the capital relocation discourse narrated by Kompas.com aligns with the SDGs (2022). The lexemes "development", "growth", and "sustainability" in this discourse represent infrastructure "development" and economic "growth" prioritized for equitable welfare and improved quality of life, consistent with the social and economic pillars of the SDGs. However, the low emphasis on environmental issues indicates that "sustainability" within the environmental pillar receives less attention, marginalizing ecological risk and environmental damage concerns. This suggests a need for greater integration of environmental priorities in discourse to fully realize the balanced goals of the SDGs.

4. Conclusions

The quantitative and qualitative analysis of this study shows that the collocation of the lexemes "development", "growth", and "sustainability" projects the infrastructure and economic aspects of IKN, while the environmental aspect is minimal. Transitively, five process types are used in the media Kompas.com: material, relational, verbal, mental, and existential processes, with material processes dominating. The transitivity pattern features dominance of non-natural resource entity participants and a passive participant tendency. The study finds that mass media narrate the capital relocation discourse with an anthropocentric perspective and an eco-ambivalent pattern, emphasizing development and economic growth over environmental sustainability.

These patterns suggest broader implications for media discourse and environmental communication. The dominance of material processes and non-natural resource participants indicates that media representations may gradually normalize a development-centered worldview in which ecological concerns are symbolically acknowledged but grammatically marginalized. Within the environmental communication framework, this reflects a stronger emphasis on the pragmatic function of communication, highlighting policy action and institutional progress, while the constitutive function that shapes deeper ecological consciousness remains limited. As a result, public perception of the capital relocation may be framed primarily through narratives of infrastructure advancement and economic opportunity, with sustainability functioning more as legitimizing rhetoric than as a transformative ecological commitment.

This study is limited to three lexemes and one media outlet. Future research should expand by comparing government-managed media, legal documents, or public comments on social media. Media practitioners are advised to highlight ecological impacts and prioritize balanced narratives between development and environmental preservation. IKN authorities are expected to concretely integrate eco-sophy principles in policy and public communication for balanced development and conservation.

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The data supporting the findings of this study are publicly accessible on Kompas.com. All analyzed datasets are available at the following:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1hyywW3w_VmVqPgRhIR8shm3S71j3uGYz

Conflicts of Interest

The author declare no conflicts of interest.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

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