

Constructing Environmental Issues in Nickel Mining Raja Ampat: Ecolinguistic Analysis

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Abstract. This research analyzes how environmental discourse is constructed in Greenpeace Indonesia's Instagram posts captions discussing nickel mining issues in Raja Ampat. This research also combines Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) particularly the transitivity system and an ecolinguistic perspective by using a descriptive qualitative approach. Source data from eight selected captions on Greenpeace Indonesia Instagram. The Findings show the utterances in captions in Greenpeace Instagram frames nickel mining as an active threat through material processes, while Raja Ampat is represented as a high-value entity under threat through attributive relational processes. Participants establish a power hierarchy in which the mining industry emerges as the actor, nature as the victim, and the public as the potential protector. Circumstance elements function to reduce psychological distance and create a sense of urgency. This research concludes that Greenpeace's digital campaigns not only describe environmental issues but also construct moral narratives that raise awareness and encourage action. This research highlights the role of language as a tool for transforming environmental discourse.

Keywords: ecolinguistics; SFL; nickel mining; Raja Ampat; social media

Introduction

Nickel mining has become a strategic sector in Indonesia due to its crucial role in energy transition and economic growth. There are many studies show that environmental issues and climate change are constructed through framing strategies, media narratives, and discourse choices (El Moene, 2026; Mahmud, 2026; Suryadi et al., 2026). Similarly, studies about ecolinguistics narratives (Bhatti, 2026; Rahayu et al., 2025) also nature and metaphor perspectives (Ain et al., 2023; Yuan, 2026) reveal how word choices, economic, and commercial narratives can displace ecological realities including in the context of nickel mining where this can frame mining as green development while obscuring its impacts (Husen & Nugraha, 2025).

Climate change and the ecological crisis have become urgent global issues, raising awareness of the importance of environmental sustainability (Antarissubhi et al., 2023). In Indonesia, the tension between economic development and environmental protection is increasingly apparent, especially in the exploitation of natural resources such as nickel mining. As a key mineral for the global energy transition, nickel has driven rapid expansion of mining, which often puts serious pressure on local ecosystems (Simatupang & Wulandari, 2024; Tanjung & TP, 2025). Raja Ampat as known as one of the world's centers of marine biodiversity, now faces a serious threat from plans to mine nickel on its small islands (Ali & Wekke, 2021; Hidayat et al., 2024). These mining plans risk

damaging coral reef ecosystems, mangrove forests, and the livelihoods of indigenous communities that depend on these environments.

Fatimah (2025) explains that social media can be a common space for information exchange, including environmental discourse, public mobilization, and policy planning. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Greenpeace actively use platforms such as Instagram to share environmental protection narratives through designed visual and text content (caption). Instagram captions serve not only as a means of conveying information, but also as a tool for persuasion, issue framing, and collective action example like Greenpeace's Instagram (Pranata, 2025). Through this Instagram media communication approach, Greenpeace seeks to raise public awareness while encouraging policy changes related to the exploitation of natural resources in Raja Ampat.

The relationship between environmental issues and the language used in Greenpeace Instagram posts caption need to be further researched. Stibbe (2015) explains that the ecolinguistic approach offers a critical perspective for understanding how language shapes human perceptions, values, and relationships with nature. Furthermore, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) provides a systematic analytical framework for analyzing text structure, lexical choices, and the social function of discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This research can not only describe linguistic patterns but also critically evaluate how environmental issues are represented in Greenpeace's digital campaigns.

For this reason, this research use two main approaches, namely ecolinguistic and SFL. More specifically, this research focuses on the transitivity system which consists of processes, participants, and circumstances as the primary tool for analyze how relationships between humans, nature, and industry are represented. Then, Stibbe's ecolinguistic perspective provides a critical analysis to explore how language shapes "the stories we believe" about nature and reveals the environmental constructs that exist in lexical choices and discourse structures.

In the context of this research, both theories were applied in depth to analyze Greenpeace's Instagram captions about nickel mining in Raja Ampat. SFL (Systemic Functional Linguistics) analyzes linguistic structures, while ecolinguistics provides space to interpret the social and ecological implications of constructed discourse. For example, in the sentence "*Raja Ampat selalu jadi kebanggaan Indonesia dengan pemandangan alamnya yang memukau.*" (SB-1-01), SFL analysis identifies the use of the attributive relational process (*menjadi*) which gives Raja Ampat the status of a stable and eternal place. From an ecolinguistic perspective, the choice of words used describes an effort to build a collective identity that links environmental protection with national pride (Raja Ampat) and serves as an effective framing strategy to gain public support.

Previous researches have shown that ecolinguistics has been widely applied to analyze environmental discourse in various media contexts. Jabeen (2024) found that Arab News describes climate issues as crises, changes, and shared responsibilities through repetitive and expressive lexical choices. In higher education, Rusmawaty et al. (2025) reveal tensions between conservation and ecological discourses in student organization social media, where nature is often portrayed as a passive entity that needs human protection. Meanwhile, Firmansyah et al. (2024) highlight the ambiguous nature of government discourse, which can either address or even exacerbate climate challenges.

In the context of social media and commercial discourse, Swari et al. (2024) explain that environmental communities on Instagram use positive and negative framing to encourage sustainable actions. On the commercial side, Nurisma et al. (2024) criticize greenwashing practices in skin care advertisements that use "green" language as a marketing strategy without any

meaningful environmental commitment. These researches emphasize the relevance of ecolinguistics in uncovering ideological meanings in environmental discourse. However, recent research have not specifically analyzed the representation of nickel mining in Raja Ampat through Instagram posts caption from global NGOs such as Greenpeace, particularly by combining the Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and ecolinguistic analysis.

Based on the theoretical framework of Systematic Functional Linguistics and Ecolinguistics, this research formulates two main research questions. First, how do the choices of transitivity processes in Greenpeace's Instagram captions represent power relations and interactions between human actors, natural entities, and the nickel mining industry in Raja Ampat? Second, how are participant and circumstance configurations in transitivity structures used to depict mining as an ecological threat and construct nature as an entity with intrinsic value worthy of protection?

Therefore, this study aims to achieve two main objectives. The first is to analyze how the relationship between humans, nature, and industry is represented through a system of transitivity by identifying the dominant linguistic processes and the roles of participants in Greenpeace's Instagram post captions. The second is to reveal the ecological framing strategies used by Greenpeace through the configuration of participants and circumstance, particularly in shaping public perceptions of mining-related threats and promoting narratives of conservation and environmental justice in Raja Ampat.

This research makes a significant theoretical contribution by integrating the Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach with the critical perspective of Ecolinguistics in the analysis of digital environmental discourse. From a practical perspective, these findings can serve as a strategic reference for environmental organizations in designing more persuasive and impactful communication campaigns. This research also provides insights for policymakers and the general public on critical linguistics to understand the dynamics of discourse, power, and environmental representation in the context of natural resource conflicts including nickel mining.

Method

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach, focusing on Instagram captions from Greenpeace Indonesia that discuss the issue of nickel mining in Raja Ampat. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for a more in-depth analysis of the meaning, language choices, and ideology contained in the text (Creswell, 2014). The data sources for this study consist of eight Instagram photo captions posted by Greenpeace Indonesia (@greenpeaceid) discussing the issue of nickel mining in Raja Ampat. The data was taken from Greenpeace Indonesia's official Instagram account, which serves as the organization's main platform for digital environmental advocacy. Greenpeace was chosen because it is one of the most influential environmental organizations worldwide, according to the GlobeScan/ERM Sustainability Leaders 2024 survey, it ranks second after WWF, with 14% recognition among sustainability experts.

From the total of 21 posts collected between May 31 and June 15, 2025, eight posts published between May 31 and June 6, 2025 were selected because they represented the early stages of public discussion before the government announced its decision on nickel mining permits in Raja Ampat. Data selection was based on the relevance of the issue, the existence of written linguistic material, and suitability for Greenpeace's advocacy goals. Data was collected through documentation techniques by copying captions and hashtags, as well as noting the visual context and publication date to ensure the data was valid and representative.

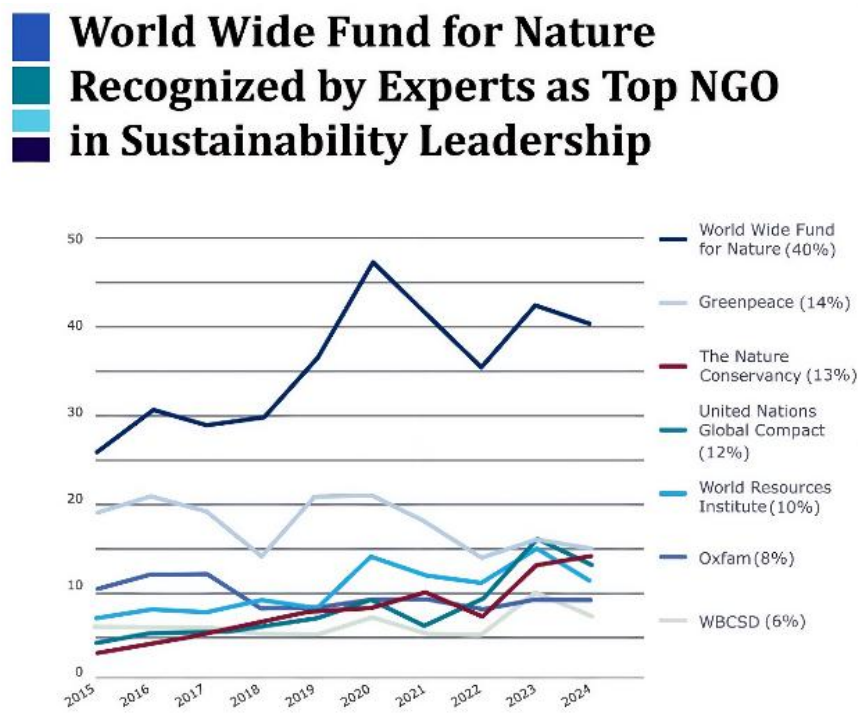


Figure 1. GlobeScan Sustainability Leaders 2024 Survey

The data analysis was conducted in several stages to properly analyze the data: (1) All speech data was entered into an SFL analysis table. (2) Identify the types of transitivity processes, participants, and circumstances to explore how the relationship between humans, nature, and the mining industry is represented through language. (3) Group recurring linguistic patterns into specific forms of ecological frames, such as constructions of ecological threats, human responsibility, and depictions of nature as a valuable entity. (4) Analyzing each utterance data with SFL and an ecolinguistic perspective. (5) Make a conclusion from the overall data analysis to identify patterns of power relations and environmental ideologies constructed in Greenpeace's Instagram captions about nickel mining in Raja Ampat.

Results and Discussion

This analysis focuses on the process of transitivity found in Greenpeace's Instagram photo captions related to nickel mining in Raja Ampat, with particular attention to how various types of processes, participants, and circumstances are used to construct meaning. Through this analysis, the findings reveal how power relations and interactions between human actors, natural entities, and the mining industry are represented. Ecolinguistics describes mining activities as an ecological threat and depicts nature as an entity with intrinsic value that requires protection.

Representation of Power Relations through Transitivity Process Type Choices

Data SB-1-05

Kini, Raja Ampat ada di persimpangan jalan: mau tetap mempertahankan keindahan alamnya, atau harus jadi korban kerakusan tambang?

In data SB-1-05 illustrates the hierarchy of power through a combination of material and relational processes. The first clause uses a relational process (*ada di*) that places Raja Ampat as the Carrier in a critical situation (*di persimpangan jalan*), describing it as an entity that is trapped in power but has no power. The use of material processes (*mempertahankan*) further introduces active

actions that can be taken by implied human actors, such as local communities or governments, with (*keindahan alamnya*) serving as the goal. Conversely, the alternative clause applies an attributive relational process (*jadi*), changing the position of Raja Ampat from an entity with potential to a victim (*korban tambang*). In this construction, mining does not appear as an explicit participant in the material process, but is framed as a negative moral attribute (*kerakusan*) attached to victim status.

These processes establish relationships between three main actors that are humans as potential protectors, nature as an entity, and the mining industry as an abstract but powerful threat. The material process (*mempertahankan*) is the process of agent towards humans, while the relational process (*jadi korban*) removes agent from nature and shifts power towards mining through morally charged vocabulary (*kerakusan*). This representation reinforces power relations in which humans and mining are positioned as actors with the ability to act, while nature appears as an affected entity. Environmental conflict is constructed as a struggle between conservation and exploitation, where moral choices are directly presented to readers through rhetorical questions that encourage clear polarization.

Data SB-2-02

Kami menyaksikan bagaimana tambang, pembalakan, dan perkebunan besar merusak dan menghapus jejak keaslian Papua.

The Data SB-2-02 shows the dominance of material processes in describing the power relations between industry and the natural environment of Papua. Three industry actors namely (*tambang*), (*pembalakan*), and (*perkebunan besar*), are explicitly positioned as Actors in the process of material destruction (*merusak*) and erasure (*menghapus*), while (*jejak keaslian Papua*) serves as the intended goal of these actions. The use of two consecutive material processes (*merusak kemudian menghapus*) not only highlights the intensity and scale of the damage, but also constructs a narrative in which the impact is progressive and total, moving from physical destruction to the erasure of cultural and ecological identity. This reinforces the position of industry as an active agent with full power to change and destroy, while nature and Papuan authenticity are depicted as passive entities that can only accept these impacts.

In addition to the material process, the data also uses a mental process (*menyaksikan*) that positions Greenpeace, through (*Kami*), as an active senser witnessing destruction. This position strategically gives Greenpeace authority and moral standing as a witness with access to the reality on the ground. The function as a senser that observes the phenomenon of industrial damage, Greenpeace not only reports facts but also builds a position of power as a critical media outlet that understands the complexity of the damage. The resulting power relationship is industry as the agent of damage, nature as the victim, and Greenpeace as a critical observer with the ability to articulate, expose, and mobilize resistance against injustice.

Data SB-3-01

Saat ini Raja Ampat, tempat yang dijuluki Surga Terakhir di dunia, berada dalam ancaman kehancuran oleh tambang Nikel.

Data SB-3-01 clearly uses attributive relational processes and material processes to construct representations between ecological values and industrial threats. The relational clause (*dijuluki Surga Terakhir di dunia*) positions Raja Ampat as a Carrier equipped with universal value attributes, constructing nature not only as a physical location but as a symbolic entity. However, the subsequent main clause uses a material process (*berada dalam ancaman kehancuran*), which, although

grammatically relational, semantically introduces nickel mining as an implicit Actor posing a threat. This threat is not represented as an active action (*menghancurkan*) but rather as a state (*berada dalam ancaman*), which reinforces the impression that destruction is inevitable.

This data also illustrates an unequal power relationship through the positions of the participants. Raja Ampat appears both as a highly valuable Carrier and as a threatened Goal. Meanwhile, nickel mining is introduced as the sole main cause through the phrase (*oleh tambang nikel*) which highlights the industry's direct responsibility for the existing threats. This construction forms a one-way power relationship, in which mining functions as the dominant subject capable of generating threats, nature as a valuable but vulnerable object, and no other actors (such as the government or local communities) are seen as mediators or protectors. This kind of representation deliberately constructs a narrative of ecological urgency, where conflict is simplified into a struggle between sacred entities (nature) and forces (industry).

Data SB-4-03

Menambang nikel di Raja Ampat ibarat menyembelih angsa yang bertelur emas.

The Data SB-4-03 uses a material process (*menyembelih*) to represent the power relationship between the mining industry and the ecological value of Raja Ampat. While the phrase (*menambang nikel di Raja Ampat*) is a neutral material process, the analogy (*ibarat menyembelih angsa yang bertelur emas*) changes its meaning to a destructive act. In the material process (*menyembelih*), miners are positioned as actors who commit a fatal act against the goal (*angsa yang bertelur emas*), a symbolic representation in which Raja Ampat functions as a source of sustainability (*angsa*) that continuously produces long-term value (*telur emas*). Economic activity "mining" becomes a suicidal act, thus portraying the mining industry not only as an environmental destroyer but also as a short-sighted actor that harms itself and the wider community.

This data also establishes a contrasting power relationship between short-term gains (*menambang*) and long-term sustainability (*angsa bertelur emas*). The mining industry, which is conventionally considered to have economic and political power, is instead portrayed as an actor that fails to recognize the true source of value. Raja Ampat, personified as (*angsa*), does not appear as a passive victim, but rather as a productive entity whose value exceeds the minerals extracted. As a result, the representation of mining power has the physical strength to (*menyembelih*), but lacks the wisdom to understand that such actions ultimately destroy far more valuable resources. Implicitly, this representation gives Greenpeace and environmental activists the authority as legitimate of ecological knowledge, while the mining industry is reduced to a greedy actor against the principles of sustainability.

Data SB-5-04

Indonesia sangat beruntung dianugerahi bentang alam yang indah dan kaya akan keanekaragaman hayati, seperti salah satunya di Raja Ampat.

Data SB-5-04 effectively uses an attributive relational process (*sangat beruntung dianugerah*) to represent the hierarchical relationship between the Indonesian people and their environment. Indonesia functions as the Carrier, blessed with attributes of fortune through its natural wealth, while its beautiful landscapes and rich biodiversity operate as both the Attribute and sources of value. This construction not only affirms the intrinsic value of Indonesia's natural environment as a national asset, but also shapes an identity in which the entire nation is positioned as joint recipients of the same blessings. By citing Raja Ampat as a specific example (*seperti salah satunya*), this data makes this ecological value more tangible and establishes a relationship in which Raja Ampat

represents Indonesia's broader natural wealth, so that threats are seen as threats to national identity.

The power relations in this data are reciprocal but unequal with nature positioned as the giver of blessings (through implicit participants in the process (*dianugrahi*)) and humans (Indonesia) as the fortunate recipients. This construction implicitly gives authority and agent to nature as the provider of benefits, while creating a moral responsibility for humans to protect what has been given to them. In the context of the threat of mining, this representation establishes a three-tiered power relationship that are (1) nature as the highest source of value, (2) the Indonesian people as the holders of the mandate for preservation, and (3) the mining industry as the actor that threatens the sacred relationship between humans and nature's gifts. As a result, environmental damage is no longer seen merely as an ecological problem, but as a betrayal of shared blessings.

Framing Ecological Threats through Participant and Circumstance Configurations

The configuration of participants consistently constructs ecological threats through the placement of key actors. Nickel mining is repeatedly described as the main actor in destructive material processes, while Raja Ampat is positioned as a destination that passively accepts the impact. Furthermore, human participants are configured in different ways. The younger generation is portrayed as Carrier with attributes such as "*paling terdampak*" and "*terbatas pilihan*" which results in a narrative of victim. Conversely, readers or audiences are positioned as actors in imperative sentences and are therefore given the authority to act. This configuration forms a three hierarchy of threats that are (1) industry as the source of danger, (2) nature and the younger generation as passive victims, and (3) the public as potential protectors.

Circumstances evidence play a general role in describing ecological threats as something real, specific, and urgent. The repeated use of the phrase "*di Raja Ampat*" not only identifies the geographical location but also describes the threat to a space of high ecological value. Additional specifications such as "*di pulau-pulau kecil*" and "*dari tanah papua*" reinforce the framing by highlighting areas that are both ecologically vulnerable and symbolically important. Meanwhile, the context of "*di act.gp/saverajaampat*" uniquely combines digital space with real-world action, creating a "transitional space" where ecological threats can be addressed through virtual participation.

The temporal context creates a strong sense of urgency that demands an immediate response. The explicit use of the words "*segera*" and "*saatnya*" creates time pressure, while "*sudah menjadi*" indicates an ongoing and potentially irreversible condition. Modal expressions such as "*harus*" and "*bisa jadi*" set the scale of urgency, moving from possibility to obligation. The phrase "*sejak seruan #SaveRajaAmpat menggema*" builds a link between past actions and current responses, while normalizing resistance as an established movement. Through this circumstantial context, ecological threats are transformed from abstract issues into crises that require immediate intervention.

The configuration of participants can also strengthen the legitimacy of the threat narrative through legal and ethical authority. For example, "UU No. 27 Tahun 2007" appears as a goal that has been violated, transforming environmental damage from a moral issue into a verifiable legal violation. Then "*Ekonomi Hijau*" functions as an actor offering solutions, introducing alternative authority based on the discourse of sustainable development. This configuration builds what can be described as (1) legal legitimacy through reference to the law, (2) moral legitimacy through the portrayal of the younger generation as victims, (3) solution-based legitimacy through alternative economies. As a result, ecological threats are not only seen as environmental problems, but as violations of established value systems.

The Carrier–Attribute configuration is strategically used to build value contrasts that reinforce the threat frame. Raja Ampat is consistently associated with high-value attributes such as “*Surga terakhir*,” “*sangat indah*,” and “*kaya*.” On the other hand, the younger generation is associated with word “*malang*” and “*terbatas*,” while job options are described as “*sangat terbatas*.” This contrast creates a clear value dilemma, where nature is confronted with negative socio-economic conditions. This configuration implicitly establishes a cause-and-effect relationship between environmental degradation directly causing human suffering. This framework is highly effective because it links ecological threats with immediate and tangible social consequences.

Finally, the configuration of participants and circumstances in the construction serves as a sophisticated mobilization mechanism. The use of “*kita*” as the Actor establishes collective inclusivity, while “*ayo*” and the implicit use of “*mari*” in the imperative form operate as elements that reduce the social distance between Greenpeace and the audience. The condition of “*bersama*” not only signifies collectivity in an active sense but also builds solidarity. This configuration achieves two goals simultaneously, first, it transforms ecological threats from “their” problems into “our” shared concerns. Second, it transforms anxiety into agency through the inclusive role of participants. As a result, this framework sees not only threats but also concrete actions as solutions.

The findings of this research indicate that the ecological threat framework in Greenpeace campaigns is constructed through a configuration in which participants and circumstances function as tools for shaping discursive reality. Nickel mining consistently emerges as an actor in destructive material processes, while nature and the younger generation are represented as entities that are impacted but still possess high intrinsic value. This construction simultaneously reproduces and critiques the human-nature dichotomy that dominates environmental discourse (Stibbe, 2015). Specific contextual elements such as “*di Raja Ampat*,” “*segera*,” and “*di act.gp/saverajaampat*” play a crucial role in reducing psychological distance by transforming abstract environmental issues into urgent and personal threats (Spence et al., 2012), while creating a transitional space between digital awareness and concrete action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, this research reinforces the importance of integrating micro-level linguistic analysis through Systemic Functional Linguistics with macro-level critical perspectives from ecolinguistics to better understand how language shapes perceptions of and responses to environmental crises. Choices in transitivity do not just reflect power relations but actively construct subject positions such as victim or protector and direct moral responsibility within the discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Practically, these findings offer guidance for environmental organizations in designing more effective advocacy messages by paying close attention to how participant configurations and circumstance elements influence public engagement. Future research may extend this research through multimodal analysis, comparative studies across organizations, or experimental research to test the effectiveness of different framing strategies in the rapidly evolving context of digital environmental communication.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that Greenpeace Indonesia's Instagram photo caption strategically constructs an environmental discourse through the configuration of transitivity processes and an urgent ecolinguistic frame on the effects of nickel mining in Raja Ampat. This representation positions the mining industry as an active destructive actor, nature as a highly valuable entity under threat, and humans as victims. This not only reflects an unbalanced ecological power relationship but also actively constructs a moral narrative that drives public mobilization.

The application of SFL and ecolinguistic shows that word choices at the micro level play a crucial role in shaping ecological awareness. Ecolinguistics highlights that language can reduce the distance from environmental issues and bridge the digital space with collective action in the real world. Thus, these findings highlight the role of language as a powerful tool for socio-ecological transformation in the environmental context in Indonesia, especially on social media. The findings to ecolinguistic studies by showing how social media discourse transforms environmental concerns into collective action through strategic linguistic framing.

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