AN ECOCRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF ANTHROPOCENTRISM IN THE CAMEROONIAN PRESS

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Abstract
The manner in which the media presents nature matters a lot. The media legitimises abusive beliefs. On this basis, this work investigated the ecologically oppressive ideologies reinforced by the Cameroonian English newspaper. Analysis focused on uncovering-to-resist discursive patterns that activated anthropocentrism (human dominance over nature). The data comprised thirty-five newspaper articles randomly selected from nine English Language newspaper publishers in Cameroon. Ecocriticrical discourse analysis (EcoCDA) is the theoretical framework adopted in this study. The descriptive statistical method (DSM) was used to analyse the data. Analyses subsumed identification, quantification and interpretation of discourse entities. Findings revealed that the Cameroonian press used diverse language patterns to manipulate agents, processes and aftermaths of environmental depletion. The press, thus, encoded anthropocentric ideologies in discursive forms like pronouns, verbs, transitivity, personification and jargon. Ecological injustices uncovered and resisted included deforestation, consumerism and growth, mineral extraction and construction, inter alia. Cognizant of the sustenance nature that offers earthly life, it was recommended that press [wo]men should refrain from manipulative language forms and stories that downplay efforts to conserve nature. They should rather cover nature-conserving stories regularly, and in language forms that align with and reinforce global efforts to protect and conserve the biophysical environment.

Keywords: anthropocentrism, Ecocritical Discourse Analysis, ecology, ecolinguistics, ideology

Introduction
        Discourse is a repository of varied strata of social meanings. It is [re]produced to transmit a desired ideology, notably to reinforce or debunk a political, cultural or ecological construct or thought. Its meaning-driven structure and texture, according to Murtaza and Qasmi (2013), explains the reason that discourse producers adopt unique strategies. In tandem with Griffiths (2006), the use of different discursive styles is not fortuitous, nonetheless, they are meant to make the producer (speaker) as communicative and 'persuasive' as much as possible, and the interlocutor (listener) to be as 'interpretative' as intended (p. 9). Persuasion in discourse, therefore, is an offshoot of the textual and contextual pattern(s) woven by the

producer. In essence, text producers make tactful use of linguistic and pragmatic styles that activate intended meanings and change.

Utterances convey different meanings in different contexts. The sensitivity of ideologies to language use accounts for the suspicions and different interpretations that addressees give a particular utterance. To buttress this line of thought, Grice (1975) postulates that the ideology-welded nature of language (discourse) has rendered it 'non-neutral' and fluid in different contexts (Yule, 1996, p. 36). In alignment with the latter, Jørgensen and Philips (2002) argue that language use in every human endeavour is seldom neutral to different identities, social relations, and environment, as it plays a pivotal role in constructing and striving for social change. The incongruity between language use and meaning in different contexts justifies the reason most interlocutors fail to interpret the intended meaning of an utterance. When listeners breach an interpretation, the consequence is that they would be incapable of identifying, and therefore, complacent with destructive, hegemonic ideologies in discourse.

Amid other discourse genres, Van Dijk (2015) considers the media the most powerful conduit of social meaning. It is a tool used by political and capitalist elite to manipulate social meaning. In line with Fairclough (2001), the media institutionalises social inequalities or dominance of minority and less powerful groups via the propagation of discriminatory ideologies: racism, gender (sexism), class, and many others. The dominance advocated by the media is not just [hu]man-[wo]man, but equally human-nature. Like other discourse practices, the media, via stories and language choices, has potentials that legitimise human dominance over nature, thus, anthropocentrism (Stibbe, 2015).

In the relationship between the material and the symbolic (semiotic); and the textual and the ideological, Peeples (2015) describes the media a social practice wherein language and signs (images) are deployed subjectively to refer to the "environment or the natural world". In this light, the function of the media is considered to overlap with that of rhetoric, as both are persuasion-oriented. The texts and textual categories in the media that evoke the environment, in fact, serve as persuasive strategies to effect what Burk (as cited in Peeples (ibid) refers to as reflecting, deflecting or selecting a particular reality or belief. DeLuca 1999, p. 14) perceives language and signs that are ideological referent as "mind bombs" that shape public opinion, and so, must be checked.

In clear terms, the intensions of the 'stories' evoked by Stibbe (ibid) take manifest in the discursive resources and the abusive ecological frames mushrooming from them. In Halliday's (2001) seminal paper, "New Ways of Meaning", he forebodes that there are victimising and dominance-inspiring resources of grammar that coexist "to construe reality in a certain way; and it is a way that is no longer good for our health as a species". (p. 103) "New ways of meaning", in essence, underpins the use of novel discourse practices that legitimise inequalities between humans and other biospecies. Grammatical constructions, Mühlhäusler (2003) adds, are some of the language habits that have exacerbated the contemporary ecological collapse. Deviant discourse practices that blur an agent(s) or doer(s) of environmental injustice are accused of acting in furtherance of the same act(s) committed by eco-aggressors. Language uses suchlike, in fact, telltale an attitude of domination, and thus, nonchalance towards the conservation and/or survival of the natural environment, thus anthopocentric.

Fairclough (1989) considers discourse as a "social practice" invested with in-group (institutional) ideologies; and this convinces Fill and Mühlhäusler (2001) that language is a vector of ecological meanings: devastation or conservation. As pointed hitherto by Halliday (op.cit.), language has lexical and grammatical potentials that [re]produce and reinforce ecological [in]equality. This encompasses the use of what Stibbe (2001) considers manipulative lexico-syntactic and pragmatic resources; which will be the subject of analysis in this work.

In furtherance of the thoughts above, Stibbe (2014; 2015) considers Language (discourse) as having potentials that can either drive motifs of nature protection and conservation, or facilitate the devastation and eventual destruction of the biophysical environment. In these ambivalent agenda, the media, being a circuit of social meaning, plays a prominent role to transmit and institutionalise ecological ideologies. The media reports natural disaster, policy actions on conservation, and nonetheless, propagates capitalistic ideologies. In this light, the media influences public opinion by framing reality to reflect imaginary or possible worlds (Fairclough, 2003); to advocate conservation or consumerism. The production of an imaginary world(s), therefore, implicates the proliferation of bias-welded language constructs that culminate in abusive ecological meanings in the media. This manipulation has inspired Ardrèvol-Abreu (2015) to impugn the objectivity of the media in the framing of reality (p. 429). It is on this premise that this work investigates the hidden and transparent discursive tools that realise anthropocentrism in the Cameroonian newspaper of English expression.

Language, Ecology and Ideology

Contemporary discourse has been very concerned with the current state of the natural environment. In his seminar publication, "Language Ecology" (1972), Einar Haugen was the pioneer scholar who galvanised global theorisation on the connection between language and its environment of use [language(s) contact]. Albeit the euphoria that embraced this shift from structuralism, Haugen's (ibid) paradigm was criticised by contemporary linguists, cf. Mühlhäusler (1996; 1998); Fill and Mühlhäusler (2001); Fill (2002); who refuted Haugen's (ibid) "metaphorical definition of environment as "the society that uses it as one of its codes" (p. 325). This was considered an ontological flaw, considering that its inbuilt was silent, and therefore, indifferent to the plights (devastation) of the natural environment. The lapses of the Haugenian [metaphorical] paradigm sparked the emergence of environmental policy approach (policy-oriented approach) to environmental discourse analysis championed by Luisa Maffi and Peter Müwhäusler, and lately, Arran Stibbe. This novel scientific experience has led to a unique, innovative linguistic field called 'ecolinguistics'. Steffensen and Fill (2014) define ecolinguistics as investigation of "language-nature relations" in discourse (p. 9); otherwise, the symbiosis between culture (language) and nature. This paradigm shift termed 'Ecolinguistics' has caused science and society to experience what Stibbe (2012) brands an "ecological turn" in linguistics, thus, the "ecolinguistic turn" (p. 1). The "ecolinguistic turn" is marked by global consciousness vis-à-vis the role language plays in reinforcing nature conservation or depletion.

Singer (as cited in Stibbe, 2001, p. 149) postulates that "the English language, like other languages, reflects the prejudices of its users". In this regard, it is established that the distinction between "animals and people" gives room for

'speciesism'; which is an out-group cognition that discriminates and, eventually, detaches the human environment from the non-human environment. This takes into cognizance the fact that [eco]discourse is rife with surreptitious power ideologies: dominance, discrimination, oppression and exploitation of the non-human environment. Power (disciminatory) ideologies in discourse take diverse forms.

Anthropocentrism is the superordinate ideology that reflects or manifests the discrimination between homo sapiens and other biospecies. The concept of "linguistic anthropocentrism" was first postulated in Michael Halliday's 'New Ways of Meaning' (2001). Chen (2015), thus, discusses "linguistic anthropocentrism" from two perspectives: firstly, as discourse trends that construct culture-nature relations, foregrounding the usability of the nature to humans; and secondly, the advocacy of environmentally unsustainable practices (consumerism, construction and natural resource exploitation) in discourse. Like speciecisism, anthropocentrism is an ecologically biased concept that privileges human animals the centre of the ecosystem, and therefore, and vests them with powers to exercises absolute control, domination and use of non-human animals for their survival. Anthropocentric discourses are human-centred, and as McNenny (2018) expatiates, use extenuating language constructs (notably metaphorical frames) that conceal or downplay environmental abuses perpetrated by humans. The anthropocentic ideologies (forest exploitation, fishing, hunting and mining, inter alia) that are seated in anthropocentric discourse, as McNenny (ibid) warns, frustrate sustainability education and/or ventures in great proportions.

Maffi (1998) advances that environmentalists have always considered Christianity as the pioneer doctrine and catalyst of anthropocentrism. In line with the premise above, environmentalists have tagged Christianity a hegemonic movement that places the human race over the control (dominance) of nature. This opinionated centre position, Maffi (ibid) explains, gives humans the pretext to plunder nature for their comfort. Jowett (1921) refutes the thought that anthropocentric language constructs are limited to Christianity, for Aristotle is equally culpable for propagating the environmentally dangerous ideology that birds, animals and plants "exist for the sake of man" (p. 10). In essence, this ecosophy rather expedites the rate of environmental degradation by subjugating the biophysical environment to human exploitation.

Moreover, acute anthropocentrism also revrberates in an ecosophy Stibbe (2015) has identified with the coinage 'cornucopianism' (p. 12). This ecosophy that is qualified as "politically conservative", thus, priorities human creativity and technological innovation and advancement over the biophysical environment. 'cornucopianism', in fact, defends the view that it behoves the human race to expedite industrial progress in order to satisfy their biological and social needs (Ridley, 2010). This ideology is insouciant to the harm (notably natural resource exploitation, consumerism and pollution) industrialisation causes the natural environment. Industrialisation, which Ridley (ibid) considers a pretext of economic growth, has provoked ambivalent feelings in Baker (2006) who counsels that growth drives should go in tandem with environmental protection. Baker (ibid), thus makes a very optimistic projection that economic growth that is accompanied by environmental consciousness vis-à-vis conservation leads to the ecosophy Stibbe (op. cit.) terms "sustainable development".

Adams and Gruen (2014) aver that ecofeminists, in parallel stance with socio-ecologists, have rather created a link between what Stibbe (2015) qualifies as men's "oppression of animals and the environment, and [equally] men's domination of women" (p. 12). It is strongly argued that the conservation and stability of nature can be feasible only if women are liberated from male dominion, and given an equitable social position and recognition; like that arrogated their domineering male counterpart. The epistemological position of ecofeminists is that if women are not emancipated from male domination, they will never be able to add their voices to environmental advocacy, and so, man's (human) domination and oppression of the biophysical environment will continue to thrive.

Anthropocentrism in the Media

Negative discourse, rather, projects and reinforces damaging constructs about the natural environment (Caspa, 2014). In accordance with the above, ensuing discussions would dwell on the varied constructs that political and public media circuits assign to nature (biophysical environment) and ecological catastrophes (climate change and global warming). The media discourses under review, as Fairclough (1995a) categorises, subsume ecological constructs in news, advertisements and music.

Stibbe (2003) blames the media for [re]producing and reinforcing the subjugation and shameful constructs that mainstream cultures and pork wear on pigs. The constructs imposed on the pig, as a useable resource, take manifest in the stigmatising language (metaphors, similes and idioms) connected to pigs in discourses. Expressions and clusters like "happy as a pig in the mire", "lucky pig"; "greedy pig" and "capitalist pig", inter alia, are referential to derogatory porcine attributes accorded human entities in discourse. The grammatical vehicle "Adjective + Pig" (fat pig; filthy pig, for instance) is the linguistic currency in cultural models that identify pigs with false, unpleasant and abusive meanings. The adjectival "filthy pig" implies pigs are filthy, and so mappings of pig metaphors into human entities have as perlocution to abuse. The latter abusive metaphor above infringes the existential rights of the pig as a natural entity. This presupposes that the media frames pig slaughter as an environment tidying plan.

In the investigation of media language during an environmental crisis, Alexander (2012) states that corporate bodies deploy highly manipulative discursive resources that obfuscate or mitigate environmental dangers that threaten their reputation. The language used in the face of an environmental disaster is effective in "saving of face", promoting self and restoring the credibility of corporations as nature protection partners. Media constructs that fail to conscientise public opinion on the environmental dangers of industrial disasters have provoked Frandsen and Johansen (2010) to accuse corporate bodies of hijacking and "instructing communication" in the media at the expense of nature (p. 544). It could be inferred that the use of "terminological control" (selective registers) to obscure the environmental damages of industrial disasters is a discursive enhancement of hegemonies that override and oppress nature.

In the study of ecological conscious in the Nigerian media, Japhet and Komolafe (2015) indict the Nigerian press for erasing the environment in their publications. In spite of the current environmental problems (deforestation, pollution and soil erosion) to which the Nigerian rural and metropolis are victims,

the Nigerian press has displayed robust insensitivity to environmental preservation by devoting unwavering attention to events and debates in politics, sports and entertainment. Even when the environment is selectively evoked, it is rather a post-disaster report(s) that exposes the press as lacking in proactiveness to natural disasters. Analysts have appraised the aforementioned framings as utter complacency with the ecological threats hitting Nigeria and the entire globe. Citing Ityavyar and Tyav (2013), Japhet and Komolafe (ibid) are critical to the fact that the Nigerian press is wanting in its mission to raise an alarm and educate the populace on environmental stakes apropos of adequate measures to restoring ecological sanity.

Lakoff (2010) expresses dissatisfaction with the skimpiness of environmental frames in the media and politics. The lack of suitably adequate frame to capture the reality of environmental depletion is what Lakoff (ibid) refers to as 'hypocognition' (p. 76). Environmentalism in media and political discourses is appraised as 'hypocognitive' on account of the dichotomy that is created between nature and humanity. When discourses frame the human environment as separate from the global physical environment, it thus, engenders an aura of anthropocentrism in humans; wherein they exhibit authority and dominance over nature. In effect, the media is cautioned to be environmentally proactive by framing "environmental action": using less energy, driving less, and walking more, et cetera.

Stibbe (2009) categorises advertising as a form of media discourse that undermines environmental sustainability. Advertising language is perceived as dangerous to the nature, as it employs catchy language constructs that manipulate the cognition of audience. This highly manipulative language whets the appetite for products, thus promoting the over-consumption of manufactured products that are considered 'unnecessary' (Stibbe, ibid, p. 38). Language patterns that boost unsatisfactory consumption are referred to as "pseudo-satisfier discourse". Advertising language that conditions human psyche to over-consume spurs production, which in turn elicits cumulative environmental risks in the form of over-exploitation of natural resources and pollution. The media has been proven, therefore, to frame consumerism by adopting manipulative language (notably metaphors) and semiotic resources that transfer the virtues of natural entities to a manufactured product. The modelling of corporate products with the image or values of an environmental entity is what Cox (2006) refers to as "green marketing" (p. 373).

Ecolinguistics is still a nascent field in Cameroon. To the best of the researcher's understanding, most indigenous Cameroonian researchers, cf. Fai (2018); Tabe and Fieze (2018); Soh (2020), continue to take keen interest in the investigation of political ideologies in the media. Even when a glimpse of awareness is displayed about the effects of media constructs and the current ecological state, most Cameroonian researchers still shun from conducting a content analysis of ecological meanings (frames) [re]produced and reinforced by the Cameroonian media to focusing on the frequency of nature stories (discourse); cf. Kengoum 2011); Angwah (2019). Insofar as the Cameroonian experience is concerned, this work is unique and, thus, marks an innovation, complementary to Ubanako and Acha (2022)[1] in that it conducts an ecocrtical discourse analysis of

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[1] *Upcoming paper: An Ecocritical Discourse Analysis of Erasure in Cameroonian Media Discourse*

ecologically abusive language constructs in the Cameroonian newspaper of English expression.

Theoretical Considerations

In a bid to uncover what Abdul Jabar and Kaariah (2017: 358) consider "hidden and transparent" discursive categories (p. 358) that realise biased ecological constructs (anthropocentrism) in the Cameroonian newspaper, Ecocritical Discourse Analysis (EcoCDA) was adopted as the framework of analysis for this work. Critical analysis of "green discourse" (environment-related newspaper articles selected) will adopt Fairclough's (1989) tributary approach to the CDA. Lechevrel (2009) describes the pursuance of Fairclough's (ibid) critical approach to investigate hidden ideologies of dominance in environmental discourse as the "Eco-critical Discourse Analysis" model (p. 8). In effect, this analytical model questions the disproportionate power (oppressor-oppressed) relationships between men and women, and by implication, humans and the larger ecological systems that sustain terrestrial life.

Hidden and biased ecological meanings in discourse activate the asymmetry in the existence between culture and nature. It is in this regard that Milstein (2008: 173) reckons the epistemology of the EcoCDA a powerful "mediating force in [the] human-nature power relations". As an analytical framework that is disposed with tenets that are sensitive to power differences in discourse, it effectively resists by uncovering pragma-linguistic entities that resonate with varied forms of ecological (power) inequalities (human hegemony or anthropocentrism) that are embedded in nature writing (green discourses). This capacity to mediate and reshape ecological relations has sparked the emergence of a critical paradigm to ecological linguistics, thus, EcoCDA (Stibbe, 2014).

The application of the CDA to environmental discourse is in prompt response to Singer's (1990) caution that "the fundamental objections to racism […] apply equally to speciesism" (p. 6). The analytical parameters of the CDA in eco-discourses have inspired resistance to injustices against nature (Stibbe, 2014; 2015b). This paradigm that is still in its gestation phase has not got a succinct approach and definite scope yet. Nonetheless, Stibbe (2014) shapes and delimits the approach that is in vogue by stating that it:

> *[…] consists of questioning the stories that underpin our current unsustainable civilisation, exposing those stories that are clearly not working, that are leading to ecological destruction and social injustice, and finding new stories that work better in the conditions of the world that we face* (p. 117).

Invested with potentials to probe, expose and question the ecologically unfriendly "stories we live by", the EcoCDA prescribes wholesome ideologies and practices that are instructive of ecological inclusion and parity, and sustainability. In essence, the EcoCDA is in pursuance of justice via the search for novel stories (discourse trends) that have potentials to safeguard the survival of the biophysical environment, and in addition, remedy or assuage the current ecological strife: climate change and global warming.

Cognizant of the existence of destructive discourses that institutionalise ecological inequalities, the EcoCDA has been chosen because of its efficacy in

uncovering and resisting surreptitious hegemonic ideologies in the environmental texts selected. Being a rich toolbox for the analysis of biased and abusive constructs (language) in discourses, the EcoCDA has potentials to create awareness on the dangerous symbiosis between ecologically abusive language and the progressive wearing out of the biophysical environment. Approaches to ecolinguistic theory may vary, but the goals and importance remain the same. As far this work is concerned, the relevance of the EcoCDA, which Stibbe (2014) rather considers characteristics (pp. 4-5), includes the fact that:

- It draws public attention to discourses that profoundly impact man's treatment of fellow [wo]man, and their relationship with the larger ecological systems.
- The EcoCDA analyses linguistic patterns that are encoded with particular worldviews or culture-rooted ideologies.
- It is within the purview of the EcoCDA to interpret the explicit or implicit ecosophies based on the social meaning (world view) projected. This is judged from the depth of interaction between human and non-human animal; and how this interaction fuses with and relates to the physical environment.
- EcoCDA has the epistemological wherewithal to expose nature-endangering discourses, which Harré et al. (as cited in Stibbe, 2015, p. 29) derogatorily label 'greenspeak'. 'Greenspeak' is a manipulative language pattern that has as function the simplification, mitigation or concealment of agents (causes) of environmental hazards, environmentally harmful activities, behaviours and/or their effects.
- This model is effective in creating public awareness about ecologically aggressive discourses that should be abandoned, and in remedy, encourages the conception and transmission of [positive] 'stories' that advance ecological sustainability efforts at [inter]national levels.

Method

Methodology can be considered the directory of every research piece; it stipulates the task(s) at every stage of this research piece. Methodology, alternatively labelled 'procedure', refers to the entire research plan and/or steps that were followed in this research work (Singh, 2006, p. 26). In essence, this research work was conducted in pursuance of Ebim's (2016) prescription that "a good, sound and logical research output should be governed by a well-defined research methodology based on scientific principles" (p. 5). These scientific principles (steps) subsume choices of type, source and collection of data; theoretical framework; techniques of statistical analyses of data; and presentation of results.

Singh (2006) describes population as people, animals, trees, vehicles, books or objects manifesting or are affected by a problem under study. This study that investigates anthropocentric undertones in Cameroonian media discourse has as population, newspaper articles (in English expression). It is worth emphasising that population chosen for this research piece is not an entire newspaper, but suitable articles that framed the environment. The data, so to speak, constituted thirty-five (35) newspaper articles extracted from nine (09) newspaper publishers of English expression. The corpus analysed in this work is classified Table 1 below.

Table 1. Statistics of Anthropocentric Newspaper Articles Used

| S/N | Newspaper Publisher | Number of Newspaper: | |
		Issues Analysed	Articles Analysed
1	Cameroon Tribune	03	04
2	Cameroon Business Today	04	07
3	Municipal Updates	02	04
4	The Sun	04	04
5	The Eden	03	03
6	The Star	03	03
7	The Median	02	03
8	The Green Reporter	03	05
9	Eco-Outlook	02	02
	Total	25	35

These articles were collected between March 2019 and July 2020. Considering that time is not a factor sustained in this work, the data does not represent a synchronic or diachronic survey, but rather, simply an arbitrary selection that suits the purpose of this study. It is to this effect that the judgemental sampling technique was used to select the newspaper. Each edition of the newspapers was selected based on the availability of an environmental article(s) advocating an ecologically abusive ideology: consumerism, natural resource exploitation (deforestation, fishing and hunting, etcetera) and industrialisation. While most of the data were news articles of general interest, a few others were advertorials.

The data was analysed using the descriptive statistical method (DSM). This is a quantitative and qualitative method that involved selecting suitable environmental newspaper articles; building a mini-corpus; classifying the articles, identifying and interpreting discursive categories encoded with abusive ecological ideologies. The quantitative method involved giving the frequencies (numerical values) of the discursive categories identified, meanwhile, qualitative aspect related to giving the ecological bearings (undertones) of the discursive entities identified in the corpus. In all, data analysis involved three tasks: identification, interpretation and discussion of discourse patterns.

Findings and Discussion

Analysis was conducted on textual and contextual component that knit ecological inequalities in Cameroonian newspapers. In the thirty-five (35) environmental newspaper articles analysed in this part of the corpus, six (06) discursive patterns were identified. The pursuance of analysis was geared at interpreting and discussing the abusive ecosophy (ecological philosophy) each of these categories engenders vis-à-vis the ecosystem they evoked in their usage.

Pronouns

The seven (07) main types of pronouns identified in this part of the corpus included *we*, *our*, *us*, *all*, *their*, *I* and *my*. These pronouns that were personal and possessive singular and plural forms were classified apropos of the meanings encoded in them. These pronouns are classified as follows.

Table 2. Frequency of Pronouns Used

Pronoun Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
We /Our /Us/ all	14	70
Their	03	15
I and My	03	15
Total	20	100

The most dominant pronouns were inclusive pronouns, mostly of the third person plural category: *we*, *our* and *us*. This dominant category, with a frequency of 14 (70%), is exemplified in the excerpts below.

> *[1] Paul Biya ... had implored Cameroonians to "produce what **we** consume and consume what **we** produce"* (*Cameroon Business Today*, No. 162 of 01-07/07/2020, p11)
>
> *[2] **We** will ... shape the assessment and work for the benefit of **all*** (*The Eden*, No. 1146 of 26/03/2020, p7)
>
> *[3] Reducing **our** use of plastics ... should be seriously considered* (*The Green Reporter*, Vol. 1, No. 020 of October 2019, p4)

As seen in the instances above, plural pronouns, most especially, of the third person category were used as a manipulative tool to unjustly blame everybody for the deteriorating environment, and in turn, call for a general environmental response. The use of *we* and *our* is a shifting and including device that considers innocent, but victimised masses, as accomplices in nature erosion. The false inclusion of innocent masses in different nature restoration, protection and conservation ideologies and/or activities with recourse to plural pronouns, in effect, shifts the blame and burden of environmental degradation from the economic (capitalist) elite to the entire society.

To add, *I* and *my*, and *their* are at par with very scanty occurrences of 03 (15%). The main peculiarity with the use of *their* is that it downgrades nature to a resource owned by humans. See the examples that follow.

> *[4] ... eating habits changed with the destruction of **their** forest ... The community can no longer fish with ... invading of **their** water by large-scale fishermen* (*The Median*, No. 391 of 15/06/2020, p6)
>
> *[5] When **I** go back to Maroua, **I** return to **my** meat* (*The Sun*, No. 0613 of 23/07/2020, p6)

The phrases *destruction of **their** forest*; and *invading **their** water by large-scale fishermen* in *[4]* above, thus, subjugate nature to the ownership, use and control of human communities. This ownership and what can be termed "resourcification" accounts for the persistence in abusive and unsustainable exploitation of nature by human beings. The use of ***my*** in *[5]*, like the case with ***their***, also disparages nature as an ordinary object that is subject to ownership. This accounts for the different exploitative tendencies and/or abuses perpetrated against nature and her entities.

Verbs Activating Anthropocentrism

The use of verbs that reinforce ecological inequalities was prominent in the newspapers selected. In essence, these verbs literally mean actions that inflict pains on the biophysical environment. Out of the forty (40) erasing verbs identified, twenty-seven (67.5 %) majority epitomise [violent] actions that wear-out the

country's natural environment in the forms of exploitation, industrialisation and construction, as exemplified in the following instances:

*[6] The affected zone **was still emitting** smoke (Cameroon Tribune, No. 11856/8055 of 03/06/2019, p4)*

*[7] The plastics eventually **find** their way into water bodies, **causing** harm to aquatic animal (The Green Reporter, Vol. 1, No. 020 of October 2019, p4)*

*[8] The oil **spread** downriver, first along the Coca River … eventually even **reaching** Peru, **contaminating** water, soils, plants and wildlife along the way (Eco-Outlook, No. 031 of 20/07/2020, p12)*

From these utterances, it could be observed that the use of verb forms like *was still emitting*, *have been threatening*, *destroyed/ were completely destroyed*, *burn, spread, contaminating, unleashed* and *aggravated* are semantically loaded with violent, and therefore, ecologically erasing actions that decimate nature in one way or the other. They are literally expressive of environmental aggression; or the aggressiveness and harshness of nature provoked by depletion. These natural hazards that endanger human existence are still anthropogenic, as evident in the verbs above. In effect, these verbs realise the exploitation of the natural resources.

Moreover, verbs that reproduce the consumption and marketisation of nature (economic growth) come second, with a frequency of 08 (20 %). Reporters' growth interests, thus, account for the use of verbs that reverberate with the consumption and commercialisation of nature. Such verbs that are commonplace in the discourse type Stibbe (2015: 29) derogates as "green advertising" (marketing of natural entities) refer to ecologically devastating actions imbued in the italicised verbs that follow.

*[9] Quality and standard is another issue that **pushes** Cameroonians to **import** products (Cameroon Business Today, No. 127 of 16-22/10/2019, p24)*

*[10] … the tusks had **disappeared** from their keeping without their knowledge (Municipal Updates, Vol. 3, No. 082 of 13/07/2020, p6)*

*[11] … growth this year **will fall** to its lowest rate (Cameroon Business Today, No. 127 of 16-22/10/2019, p24)*

Like other verbs in this category, the use of *pushes* and *import* in *[9]* above, thus, are markers of precipitated urges to consume natural entities unsustainably. While *disappear* in *[10]* denotes exploitation, *will fall* in *[11]* activates calls for increased or heightened consumerism that boosts growth plans. In varied patterns, so to speak, verbs in this category advocate the unsustainable exploitation and consumption of plants and animals; that face threats of extinction.

The scantiest in this part are verbal constructs that are suggestive of actions directed towards the exploitation of the country's forest riches. Below are some examples from the corpus.

*[12] Cameroon's legal framework **has organised** the forestry sector into 3 categories (Cameroon Business Today, No. 107 of 22-28/05/2019, p11)*

*[13] The forestry policy seeks … **to promote** and **diversify** the use of locally processed products (Cameroon Business Today, No. 107 of 22-28/05/2019, p11)*

[14] *... the Project Manager ... lamented that ... we noticed an area **lost** 2.21 ha of tree cover* (*The Median*, No. 391 of 15/06/2020, p6)

While the verbs *has organized*, *promote* and *diversify* are telling of concerted, gang-up exploitation of the country's forest with the complicity of policy makers, the verb *lost* intimates the disappearance of Cameroon's forest, without stating the causes.

Mode of Transitivity

This is a grammatical (syntactic) aspect that relates to the directness of the action (effect) of the verb on a direct object. In this segment of the corpus, it was manifest that Cameroonian newspaper reporters manipulated, thus downplayed, the impact of deleterious environmental actions and/or activities by concealing the natural entity directly affected by such actions. With the motif to project the process in lieu of the agent, reporters used two modes of transitivity to manipulate meaning, viz; nominalisation and ergative.

Nominalisation

By nominalisation, focus was on language uses involving the conversion of ecologically erasing action verbs into nominal or noun [groups]. The nominalisation of destructive environmental actions was expedient and efficacious in covering the agency (doer) of the action. Eighty-seven (87) such instances were found downplaying on varied environmentally harmful actions, as considered in the table below.

Table 3. Nominalisation of Biosphere Eroding Actions

Eco-abuse Nominalised	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Biosphere Degradation/ Pollution	43	49.43
Forest Exploitation (Deforestation)	29	33.33
Nature Exploitation/ Consumerism/ Marketisation	15	17.24
Total	87	100

Table 3, in fact, testifies of the preponderance of language constructs that realise the nominalisation of mineral extracting, industrialising and constructing actions that wear-out the biophysical environment. Some instances of nominalisation extracted from the corpus, in which journalists hid the agents of the aforementioned ecological abuses are illustrated below.

[15] *SONARA intends to maximise the **use of crude oil** produced in Cameroon ... It [SONARA] only buys from **extraction companies*** (*Cameroon Tribune*, No. 11856/8055 of 03/06/2019, p4)

[16] *... investigations into the socio-environmental impact of the **construction of the dam** says ... ha have been destroyed* (Cameroon Business Today, No. 110 of 19-25/06/2019, p2)

[17] *... eating habits changed with the **destruction of their forest**, they are faced with a **loss of their cultural identity** with the **destruction of the Dengdeng forest** that hosted their cultural rituals* (*Cameroon Business Today*, No. 110 of 19-25/06/2019, p2)

[18] *... **natural resource extraction** and **processing** account for more than 90% **global diversity loss** and **water stress**, and ... global **greenhouse gas emissions*** (*The Green Reporter*, Vol. 1, No. 023 of March 2020, p10)

> *[19] These oil **spills** are as much **a threat** to their physical health as it is to their spiritual well-being* (*Eco-Outlook*, No. 031 of 20/07/2020, p12)

Extracted from the excerpts above, tactful verb-to-noun [group] conversions like *use* of crude oil, *extraction* companies*, construction* of the dam*, destruction* of their forest*, destruction* of the Dengdeng forest, natural resource *extraction* and *processing,* global greenhouse gas *emissions,* oil *spills* and *a threat*, inter alia, were strategic linguistic tools to transform concrete ecologically abusive actions (verbs) into processes and/or phenomena (nouns) whose causes were covered or unknown. In the nominalisation instance *extraction companies* from *[15]* above, in fact manipulates the construct clear accusation "companies extract minerals". In other patterns like *destruction of their forest* and *greenhouse gas emissions* from *[17]* and *[18]* respectively, the journalist strengthen ecological abuses by transforming ecologically abusive [action] verbs into nouns to shade their agents. The suppression of the agents in these instances is robustly manipulative, thus ecologically erasing.

Second in occurrence are nominalising patterns and groups that cover perpetrators of forest exploitation (deforestation). Twenty-nine (29) instances were found nominalising abuses perpetrated against the country's forests and forest resources. From the foregoing statistics, 33.33% of the eighty-seven (87) nominalisation threads found in the corpus downplayed acts of violence orchestrated on Cameroon's forest reserves. Such nominalising instances are presented below.

> *[19] Local communities adjacent to forest zones are reaping ... the **exploitation of the natural resources*** (*Cameroon Business Today*, No. 107 of 22-28/05/2019, p11)

> *[20] ... inhabitants generated revenue ... for the **exploitation of 1,096 cubic metres** of **sawn wood*** (*Cameroon Business Today*, No. 107 of 22-28/05/2019, p6)

> *[21] A delegation of **wood exploiters** operating in Cameroon will take part in the **wood fair*** (*Cameroon Business Today*, No. 110 of 19-25/06/2019, p2)

> *[22] The study identifies areas of intact forest ... for protection ... and survival of **threatened** species* (*The Green Reporter*, Vol. 1, No. 020 of October 2019, p5)

Among others, the deployment of lexico-syntactic patterns in the corpus like *destruction* to Madagascar's eastern rainforest; *overharvesting*; *threatened species*; *freshly cut wood*; *wood exploiters*; *log processing*; *exploitation* of the forest; *processing* (value addition) of timber; *sawn wood*; and *exploitation* of the natural resources, thus, were manipulative tendencies meant to soften punishable acts of forest destruction. The structures *exploitation of the natural resources* and *wood exploiters*, from *[19]* and *[21]* for instance, respectively nominalise the active verbs (actions) "*... exploit natural resources*" and "A delegation that *exploits wood*". With this, journalists displayed guilt and/or bias for these abuses as they were projected as mere occurrences that have no or unknown causes. This follows the tactful evasion or non-existence of the agency of this environmental abuse in the utterance.

To add, linguistic patterns that nominalise the exploitation, consumption and marketisation of nature were equally ocular in the corpus. Fifteen (17.24 %) of the nominalisation instances identified masked and blunted actions that expedite the erosion of nature. These patterns are instantiated in the excerpts that follow.

> [23] ... *for whom* **animal ownership** *ensures varying degrees of sustainable farming* (*Cameroon Tribune*, No. 11931/8130 of 19/09/2019, p19)

> [24] *... 11,000 ha of hydro agriculture and* **fish farming sites** *will be established* (*Municipal   Updates*, Vol. 3, No. 082 of 13/07/2020, p7)

> [25] *A notorious* **wildlife trafficker** *has been arrested for unlawful possession of ivory tusks* (*Eco-Outlook*, No. 029 of 22/06/2017, p4)

The use of nominal construct like *animal ownership*; *consumption*; *imported goods*; *food-industry products*; *food products*; *fish farming sites*; and *wildlife trafficker*, manipulate ecologically oppressive actions into phenomena-denoting nouns. This manipulation is an act of complicity with ecological injustice, as it blurs the identity of perpetrators of exploitation, consumption and commercialisation of nature.

Ergative

Also remarkable in this segment was the use of abstract nouns denoting environmental calamities as the subjects of utterances. It equally involved ambiguous subjects and/or objects that obfuscate the agency (human causes) and media of varied abuses on the ecosystem. The fifty-one (51) instances of ergative identified are classified in table 3 that follows.

Table 4. Occurrences of the Use of Ergative

Eco-abuse Obfuscated	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Mineral extraction/ industrialisation/ construction	25	49.02
Forest Exploitation (Deforestation)	17	33.33
Consumerism/ economic growth/ marketisation of nature	09	17.65
Total	51	100

With a frequency of twenty-five (49.02%), the majority of ergative forms identified in this segment are obfuscating agencies that wear-out biosphere via activities like mineral extraction, industrialisation and construction. Some excerpts of ergative forms extracted from the corpus are given below.

> [26] *The project ...* **will involve the drilling of an appraisal well to target gas** (*The Eden*, No.   1146 of 26/03/2020, p7)

> [27] *A report published by SAILD ...reveals that* **the realisation of the hydroelectricity dam project … is bringing untold socio-environmental destruction** (*The Eden*, No. 1146 of 26/03/2020, p7)

> [28] *... the* **total economic damage to the world's marine ecosystem** *amounts to at least 13   billion dollars yearly* (*The Median*, No. 391 of 15/06/2020, p6)

> [29] *Most of these plastics are ... disposable plastics* **which create even more problems by clogging the drainage system, littering the streets and environment** (*The Green Reporter*, Vol. 1, No. 020 of October 2019, p4)

> [30] *One way to reduce greenhouse gases is* **the use of recycled and environmentally friendly building materials** (*The Green Reporter*, Vol. 1, No. 023 of March 2020, p8)
>
> [31] *… a landslide ruptured three pipelines along the Coca River,* **spilling at least 15,800 barrel of crude oil in a region long affected by a history of toxic dumping** (*Eco-Outlook*, No. 031 of 20/07/2020, p12)

In utterance *[26]*, for example, the reporter used an evasive subject (the erasing activity itself) that performs a non-action verb, thus, obscuring the image of mineral exploiters that wear out the biophysical environment. Moreover, by presenting *disposable plastics* as a subject that *create even more* (environmental) *problems* in *[29]*, the journalist constructs plastic litter as agents of pollution in the environment, shading the identities of producers and consumers of the products in plastic containers being littered. The reporters deployed ergative to safeguard the public image of mineral extractors and capitalist; who desire profit at the malevolence of the biophysical environment. In essence, the use of ergative exposes the complacency of the media in harbouring capitalistic drives that exacerbate the degrading state of the biophysical environment.

Forms that manipulate the identity of forest exploiters, on their part, attained a prominence rate of seventeen (33.33%). The manipulation of agency is instantiated in the following utterances:

> [32] *"…* **trashing the rainforest and natural habitats** *is what makes zoonotic diseases like COVID-19 spread more easily"* (*Municipal Updates*, Vol. 3, No. 083 of 20/07/2020, p5)
>
> [33] *The* **dense curtain of trees … grows thinner** *until eventually,* **it opens on a bare patch of land**, *the size of three football pitches* (*The Green Reporter*, Vol. 1, No. 020 of October 2019, p5)
>
> [34] *Around* **two thirds of Russian logging are going to China**, *where* **factories process it into furniture and flooring** (*The Green Reporter*, Vol. 1, No. 022 of January 2020, p2)

Just as in *[33]* in which the journalist uses a more stative and/or descriptive verb, *grows*, acting on a compliment, without revealing the cause, *[34]* on its part uses an abstract [the proportion of exploited Russian wood (*two thirds of Russian logging*)] and inanimate nouns (*factories*) as metaphorical nouns that perform the actions of *going to China* and *process it into furniture and flooring*. These syntactic constructs, thus, cover the identities of persons (companies) that abuse (unsustainably exploit, export and transform) forest potentials. This shading tendency, in fact, minimises the repercussions of the activities of forest exploiters on the ecosystem.

The least occurrence in this segment is recorded by syntactic forms that cloud the face of consumers and marketers of nature. This scanty occurrence of seven (17.65%) also adduces the complicity of Cameroonian reporters in eco-oppressive practices like consumerism and commercialisation. Some instances are exemplified below.

> [35] *…* **livestock, fisheries and dairy products often get short in supply** *in some parts of Cameroon* (*Cameroon Tribune*, No. 11931/8130 of 19/09/2019, p19)

*[36] **Even if growth picks-up in 2020**, the current rift could lead to changes* (*Cameroon Business Today*, No. 127 of 16-22/10/2019, p24)

*[37] The SDO said it is **disgraceful for … Kumba to harbour chunks of household refuse*** (*The Median*, No. 396 of 20/07/2020, p3)

Considering *[36]* above, reporters cover stakeholders (consumers and producers) by presenting the abstract noun *growth* as an animate that resuscitates and advances, thus, covering agents of growth. To add, the reporter of *[37]* unjustly incriminates by shifting the blame to '*Kumba*' (an environment) for harbouring (hiding/ keeping) waste. As a discursive technique aimed at manipulating, physical space is rather blamed for unrestrained refuse disposal, not those who litter the town. Ergative is a powerful device used to shade persons and companies that pollute the environment.

Personification
Sixteen (16) instances of personification were found framing different forms of environmental abuses. As would be presented and analysed subsequently, this involved the use of language patterns that transfer to the environment human attributes that engender violence and equally inflict pain. Moreover, reporters effected manipulation by using abstract nouns (states of degraded environment) to cover agency of violence. The statistics of the use of personification is presented as follow:

Table 5. Use of Personification

Abuse Personified	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Consumerism/ economic growth/ marketisation of nature	06	37.5
Forest Exploitation (Deforestation)	05	31.25
Mineral extraction/ industrialisation/ construction	05	31.25
Total	16	100

The results in Table 5 stipulate that the personification of acts of consumerism, economic growth and marketisation of nature are the most abusive, with a frequency of six (37.5%). These abusive tropes are exemplified below.

*[38] Today, even more of **the world economy is moving** in synch, this time, **growth is decelerating** (Cameroon Business Today*, No. 127 of 16-22/10/2019, p24)

*[39] The food industry … **has grown significantly** from 764-2,564 companies* (*Cameroon Business Today*, No. 162 of 01-07/07/2020, p11)

In the tropes "*the world economy is moving*" and "*food industry … has grown significantly*" in [38] and [39] respectively, reporters construct economic growth as a person moving forward. Economic growth is constructed to as an improvement or progress in the lives of consumers (Cameroonian). This construct is manipulative as it shoves to the background, the effects of unsustainable exploitation and consumption of the country's natural resources expedited by (economic) growth motives.

In addition, the personification of exploited mineral and forest resources follow suit with an occurrence of five (31.25%) each. The anthropocentric meanings transmitted could be analysed in the following excerpts:

*[40] ... much of **Bamenda's waste** is dumped at random* (*Cameroon Tribune*, No. 11863/8062 of 13/06/2019, p4)

*[41] Oil representatives may not care whether **oil kills nature or the people**, but the ICC does* (*Eco-Outlook*, No. 031 of 20/07/2020, p12)

*[42] … **the stressed taiga faces a multiplicity of threats*** (*Municipal Updates*, Vol. 3, No. 083   of 20/07/2020, p5)

In utterance *[40]*, the reporter deploys personification to arrogate the origin and/or ownership of filth (urban decay or pollution) to a physical environment (Bamenda). The possessive [construct] *Bamenda's waste* unjustly lays blames of waste emission and disposal on natural space, therefore, manipulating the identity of the real polluters. As concerns *[41]*, exploited natural resources are personified as agency of violence against humanity. The devastated state of the biophysical environment is rather incriminated with acts of killing. By so doing, mineral extraction is constructed/ justified to be a defence mechanism against and remedy for the aggressiveness of nature against human animals. In *[42]*, the endangered forest is presented as 'stressed' to manipulate the notion and/or gravity of abuse. In essence, the attribution of abusive human attribute to natural entity was meant to hide the human agent.

Technical Register

The use of technical register (jargon) was also found to be of great significance in the realisation of abusive ecological frames. On the whole, fifteen (15) technical registers were found in this segment. The use of technical (specialised) diction in news discourse was to attain a manipulative aim; as it clouded anthropocentric ideologies. In most cases, the lexical composition of these specialised words displays semantic neutrality in the lay reader. The semantically void content of these registers, in effect, covered ecologically erasing activities: consumerism, industrialisation and economic growth, as quantified below.

Table 6. Statistics of Technical Register Abuse Shaded

Technical Register	Abuse Shaded	Frequency	Percentage (%)
aquaculture livestock projects GDP finished products economic patriotism ecocide ecosystem ecocide ecocide	Consumerism/ growth/ marketisation of nature	09	60
processing value addition finished semi-finished products export by-products	Mineral extraction/ industrialisation/ construction	06	40
Total		15	100

Majority of the technical registers in this segment were those that blurred acts of consumerism, economic growth and marketisation of nature, with a frequency of nine (60 %). The use of specialised, uncommon registers and expressions like *aquaculture*, *livestock projects*, *GDP*, *finished products*, *economic patriotism* and *ecocide*, etcetera, were lexical devices rather used with a manipulative intent; they are semantically laden with ideals. See the illustrations below.

> *[43] the country has a favourable climate and ecology ... for different types of* **aquaculture** *and* **livestock projects** (*Cameroon Tribune*, No. 11931/8130 of 19/09/2019, p19)

> *[44] It [SONARA] also exported some of its* **finished products** *to CEMAC countries and* markets (*Cameroon Business Today*, No. 110 of 19-25/06/2019, p11)

The register *livestock projects* in *[43]* gives the false implication that the rearing and eventual consumption of animals is, so to speak, a developmental initiative. The notion of '*projects*' is development driven. As for *[44]*, *finished products* leaves the [lay] reader with the swayed view that meat adds quality (more meaning) to human life. In essence, reporters project injustices (inequalities) perpetrated againg nature in distorted patterns that mitigate and/or conceal the dangers of consumerism and economic growth on the biophysical environment.

Also visible in this part of the corpus are technical registers relating to the mineral extraction and industrialisation; that have an occurrence of six (40 %). The distribution of specialised diction, for instance *processing* of timber, *by-products, semi-finished products, finished products* and *export*, label industrial products in relation to the state and stages of industrial processes. This conceptualisation activates the omission of the dangers caused by industrial activities on the biophysical environment. The use of jargon that watered down the deleterious consequences of industrial activities was, in fact, intended to distort meaning, and so, wield dominance.

Recommendations

On the basis of the key findings vis-à-vis the ecological dangers engendered by and unique to some language patterns analysed above, it behoves the researcher to make some recommendations that could improve upon nature reporting in the [inter]national media landscape. The natural environment is a collective asset whose care, protection and conservation require a collective effort, and so, it is important for linguistics to conduct frequent enquiries on novel and routine discursive patterns that enact anthropocentrism. The results of such studies should be used to caution Cameroonian journalists against manipulative language uses that reinforce ecological domination. Cameroonian linguists could frequently organise or take part in workshops and seminars organised by other stakeholders to train journalists on ideal journalistic practices. It is in such fora that linguists should illustrate concrete instances and/or examples of pragma-linguistic (syntactic, lexical, metaphorical and euphemistic) patterns in media discourses that respectively enhance environmental freedom and oppression. In a nutshell, to play a concrete role in environmental activism, linguists should be more concerned with the types of environmental frame transmitted by the Cameroonian media, and

equally liaise with media regulatory organs in the country to enact environmental justice.

In espousal of Stibbe's (2015) argument that the biophysical environment is pliable to the "stories we live by", it is worth emphasising that the media should propagate stories that idealise natural entities. As a powerful circuit of social meaning, frequent projections or coverage of media stories about the intrinsic values of nature to humanity would be both entertaining and educating. Such stories would weave enormous ecological meanings if nature-idealising metaphors, resisters, proverbs and idioms are used.

Lastly, the National Communication Council should take the responsibility to organise frequent workshops and symposia for journalists, with the environment being a regular item on the agenda. Different partners and specialists (ecolinguists, environmentalist, horticulturists, socio-anthropologist, zoologist and botanists) involved in environmental protection should be invited to share conservation experiences and/or train journalists on techniques of positively framing nature and related phenomena

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Conclusion

The critique of destructive discourses was intended to expose and create awareness about manipulative (eco-abusive) discourse practices that should be resisted. I was found that Cameroonian newspaper journalists weave and transmit ecologically destructive ideologies (consumerism, forest exploitation, mineral extraction, industrialisation and economic growth, among others) with recourse to hidden and transparent pragma-linguistic categories. In this regard, pronouns, verbs, transitivity (nominalisation and ergative), personification and technical register were uncovered to be potent and efficacious manipulative (discursive) devices that activated human dominance over nature, thus anthropocentrism in the Cameroonian newspaper. In essence, this research work complements others to galvanise resistance against ecologically biased language patterns and/or anthropocentric constructs seated in newspaper discourses. So, it was found that the enactment and reinforcement of speciesism (human dominance and devastation of the biophysical environment) in the Cameroonian press was constructed by dint of lexico-syntactic and pragmatic resources, and therefore, should neither be read nor interpreted with levity nor complacency. Finally, it was found that the media is a powerful conduit of diverse and polar ecological frames. For the media to play a constructive (rather than destructive) role in the Cameroonian landscape, it should sympathise with concerted efforts that advocate nature protection and sustainable development, by projecting nature in patterns that are idealizing and conserving. In other words, the Cameroonian media should refrain from the advocacy of consumerism, exploitation/ extraction and economic growth. It should embrace and engage in environmental activism; nature protection and preservation, and sustainable development.

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