

GENDER REPRESENTATION AND ECOLOGICAL VALUES IN THE HASHTAG #IBUKUDIETPLASTIK: A CRITICAL ECOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the intersection of gender representation and ecological values through a critical ecolinguistic analysis of the hashtag *#ibukudietplastik* featured on the Instagram account @griyaluhu. Grounded in Stibbe's (2015) "stories we live by" framework, the research uses a descriptive qualitative method and employs critical discourse analysis to examine how language constructs ecological narratives and gendered roles in digital media. Primary data consists of captions and photographs from Instagram posts using the hashtag. The findings indicate that women particularly mothers are framed as key moral agents in environmental action, with their domestic behaviors valorized through positive evaluation. While these narratives promote ecological awareness and foster collective engagement, they may also reinforce traditional gender expectations by positioning sustainability as primarily a woman's responsibility within the household. The study contributes to understanding how digital storytelling in environmental campaigns both empowers women and perpetuates patriarchal norms. This research offers insights into the dual function of Ecolinguistic narratives in shaping societal views on gender and sustainability.

Keywords: critical ecolinguistics; evaluation; gender

INTRODUCTION

Climate change has become a global issue that demands immediate and comprehensive responses. One of the most pressing environmental problems today is plastic pollution, which poses significant threats to both marine and terrestrial ecosystems, as well as to human health (Sani, 2024). Improperly managed plastic waste can persist in the environment for hundreds of years, leading to ecosystem damage and the risk of entering the food chain (Jambeck et al., 2015). Addressing this issue effectively requires not only structural policies but also strategic efforts to foster environmental awareness and behavioral change through public communication. According to Auta et al. (2023), microplastics are now found in human bloodstreams and placentas, reinforcing the urgency of reducing plastic exposure. Furthermore, Wang et al.

(2022) argue that policy interventions alone are insufficient without concurrent shifts in public perception and individual behavior.

Digitalization has significantly influenced society in many ways, including the way people communicate (Abdillah et al., 2022). Amid various environmental campaigns, digital social movements have emerged, utilizing social media as a platform for advocacy and engagement. For example, Chen et al. (2021) found that digital storytelling on platforms like Instagram enhances emotional connection and pro-environmental behavior. Media has the power to influence people through the messages and images they choose to display every day (Sinani and Matoshi, 2019), and such digital engagements are shaping contemporary environmental discourses (Brühl & Diehl, 2023). One such movement is embodied in the hashtag *#ibukudietplastik*, which highlights the

role of mothers, especially in local contexts, in reducing single-use plastic consumption. This hashtag constructs a narrative that emphasizes ecological responsibility through everyday practices while simultaneously representing broader social constructs of gender roles.

Such narratives invite critical reflection on how environmental responsibility is framed in relation to gendered expectations, particularly within patriarchal cultural frameworks. As noted by Hassan et al. (2023), gendered eco-activism often places a disproportionate burden on women, especially in the Global South. From a gender studies perspective, women's involvement in environmental issues has often been associated with ecofeminism, which draws connections between the exploitation of nature and the marginalization of women (Shiva, 1988). More recent works such as by Gaard & Gruen (2022) and Alarcon et al. (2023) highlight the growing complexity of ecofeminist frameworks in digital activism, suggesting the need to analyze not only empowerment but also potential reinforcement of traditional roles. The narrative of #ibukudietplastik, while potentially empowering, may also inadvertently reinforce traditional gender burdens by positioning women as the primary moral agents of ecological change (Rizal & Handayani, 2022). Thus, there is a need to critically examine how such discourse constructs gender roles and ecological values through language and digital storytelling.

The theory of Critical Ecolinguistics, developed by Arran Stibbe (2015), offers a relevant analytical framework to explore this phenomenon. Stibbe introduces the concept of "stories we live by", referring to dominant societal narratives that shape how humans perceive and interact with the world. Through ecolinguistic discourse analysis, researchers can evaluate ecological and social sustainability. Recent studies such as Wang & Zhao (2023), and Dewi & Susanti (2024) show the applicability of this theory in dissecting eco-narratives across digital platforms. The hashtag #ibukudietplastik can thus be examined as a form of environmental narrative that deserves scrutiny regarding its alignment with principles of ecological justice and gender equity. Salamah & Pranowo (2022) emphasize the role

of linguistic framing in constructing gendered environmental discourses in Indonesian social media.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to explore the gender representations and ecological values embedded in the hashtag #ibukudietplastik from posts on the Instagram account @griyaluhu. To campaign against the use of single-use plastics at the household level, the Instagram account @griyaluhu employs the hashtag #ibukudietplastik as a marker in each post that shares inspirational stories of women in their roles as mothers within their respective families. These narratives serve as rich sites for ecolinguistic inquiry into how language, culture, and digital media co-construct perceptions of environmental responsibility.

This research is significant for understanding how language in digital spaces contributes to how public narratives influence societal structures and worldviews related to sustainability. Through this analysis, the study seeks to offer both theoretical insights and practical contributions to contemporary discourse on environment and gender. As shown by Lee et al. (2021), digital activism not only mobilizes action but also reshapes normative gender expectations. Moreover, Nisa (2022) explores how Islamic environmentalism intersects with gender and media campaigns in Southeast Asia, underscoring the cultural dimensions of eco-discourses.

METHOD

This research is a descriptive qualitative study using a critical ecolinguistic discourse analysis approach. The data in this study were collected using the documentation method, as outlined by Creswell (2014). This method involves gathering information through existing records, aiming to trace historical and social data embedded in documented sources (Bungin, 2003). In this research, both captions and photographs from the Instagram account @griyaluhu were utilized as primary data to examine the narratives constructed within the posts, based on the "stories we live by" theory proposed by Arran Stibbe. For the data analysing, this research using the framework of critical ecolinguistics, focusing on both gender representation and ecological discourse within

social media content specifically Instagram posts using the hashtag **#ibukudietplastik**.

DISCUSSION

Assessment is related to evaluation, which refers to an attitude negotiated within a text, the intensity of the emotions involved, and the ways in which values are derived from the reader (Martine & Rose, 2007). Evaluation refers to the stories people hold in their minds about whether a particular domain of life is considered good or bad. In critical ecolinguistics, evaluation is concerned with how language positions readers or listeners to adopt similar judgments (Martin & White, 2005).

The hashtag **#ibukudietplastik** refers to a movement or campaign aimed at reducing the use of plastic in everyday life as an effort to protect the environment. In this context, story evaluation is a crucial concept. Evaluation involves how individuals engage with the hashtag **#ibukudietplastik**, particularly in terms of the values and actions it promotes. The intended action associated with this hashtag is the adoption of environmentally friendly alternatives when shopping.

In the case of **#ibukudietplastik**, stories are shared about personal experiences in reducing plastic use within the household. Thus, the interaction of social relations and intercorrelated narratives within this hashtag plays a significant role in fostering awareness and encouraging collective action to reduce the use of single-use plastic bags.

Data 1



Figure 1. Data 1

There are two narrative components that emerge in data 1. The first part reads as follows:

“Sudah sejak lama ibu terbiasa membawa tas belanja sendiri setiap kepasar, maklum belanjaan ibu selalu banyak dan berat. Tapi sejak mendengar pergub bali tentang plastik sekali pakai, ibu mulai menolak setiap diberi kresek oleh pedagang. Katanya sih #ibukudietplastik. Para pedagang juga senang, mereka bilang “luung be dadine lebih hemat sing perlu meli kresek”, “baguslah jadinya tidak perlu beli tas kresek plastik” Second part is *“Yuk bagikan ceritamu! Griya Luhu sedang mencari 100 kisah tentang ibu luar biasa. Cerita tentang ibu yang berani ambil sikap untuk diet plastik. Yuk tulis ceritamu dan tag kami. Kita inspirasi semakin banyak ibu diluar sana. Jadikan ibumu, Ibu inspirasi”*.

The narrative illustrates the behavior of a mother who has long brought her own shopping bag to the market, symbolizing her rejection of single-use plastic bags to support the **#ibukudietplastik** initiative. This is followed by an invitation to readers to share their own stories about behavioral changes related to single-use plastic consumption. The post continues by explaining that Griya Luhu is seeking 100 inspiring stories of mothers who have taken a stand to reduce plastic usage, with the hope that these stories will encourage and inspire more mothers to take similar action.

In this narrative, the act of a mother consistently bringing her own shopping bag is evaluated positively as a form of environmentally responsible behavior. The language used positions this behavior as commendable and desirable, aligning it with the values promoted by the **#ibukudietplastik** initiative. Through this evaluation, the narrative encourages readers to view such actions as morally and socially responsible.

According to Martin and White (2005), evaluation involves positioning the audience to feel a certain way about a behavior, value, or idea. In this case, readers are positioned to admire and emulate the mother's choice, thereby

reinforcing pro-environmental attitudes. The call to share similar stories further extends this evaluation by implying that such experiences are valuable and worth being publicly recognized.

The narrative embedded in the **#ibukudietplastik** campaign not only promotes ecological awareness but also constructs a specific representation of women particularly mothers as central agents of environmental change. The mother figure is portrayed as proactive, responsible, and morally committed to sustainability, especially within the private sphere of the household. This representation reinforces a culturally embedded association between women, domestic responsibility, and care for the environment.

While the narrative is framed as empowering, it is essential to critically examine whether this representation may also reinforce traditional gender roles. By positioning mothers as the primary actors in the reduction of plastic use, the narrative can inadvertently suggest that environmental responsibility is an extension of women's domestic duties, rather than a shared obligation across genders and societal levels. As such, it reflects what Stibbe (2015) refers to as "stories we live by" that may carry both beneficial and ambiguous dimensions.

From a critical ecolinguistic perspective, this kind of gendered framing invites deeper reflection. On one hand, it valorizes women's roles and provides visibility to their environmental efforts, contributing to what can be seen as beneficial stories that support ecological values and social participation. On the other hand, it may subtly normalize the gendered division of environmental labor, limiting broader structural and collective accountability.

Thus, while the campaign promotes a positive environmental message, the representation of gender within the

narrative deserves nuanced analysis. It is crucial to ensure that such narratives do not solely celebrate women's ecological roles but also challenge patriarchal assumptions about who is responsible for sustainability.

Data 2.



Figure 2. Data 2

The narrative found in the second data set is as follows: *"Hai kawan, sekarang #ibukudietplastik. Tak hanya bagi kaula muda, bagi ibu-ibu pun mencuci pakaian ataupun sekedar menyetrika adalah PR besar saat ini, apalagi melihat setrikaan yang menggunung! Duh bikin males kan? Begitu juga ibuku. Sebagai ibu rumah tangga yang juga bekerja, ibuku tentunya menggunakan jasa laundry untuk sekedar menyetrika pakaian. Akan tetapi, beliau juga menyadari bahwa plastik yang terbuang sia-sia saat laundry. Nah, datanglah inisifitif "untuk apa kita pakai plastik lagi, sedangkan tas reusable saja sudah cukup?" Dan jeng jeng jeng..... Setelah beli reusable bag yg cukup besar, sekarang ga ada lagi tuh plastik yang terbuang sia-siang!"*

The narrative evaluates the use of plastic particularly in laundry services as wasteful and environmentally harmful. The mother's awareness of this issue and her initiative to change behavior is framed as admirable and forward-thinking. Phrases like "*why should we still use plastic when a reusable bag is enough?*" position plastic use as unnecessary and undesirable,

encouraging readers to adopt a similar evaluative stance.

The transition to using a large reusable bag is described in a celebratory tone (“*jeng jeng jeng...*”), adding a light-hearted yet persuasive emphasis on the success of the behavioral change. This tone reinforces the positive emotional value attached to sustainable action.

The narrative also contributes as it adds to a chain of shared experiences among mothers engaging in similar environmental efforts. These stories help construct a collective ecological identity and build momentum for broader participation in sustainable practices. It promotes real-life behavioral change (shifting from plastic to reusable bags), showcases an individual’s ecological awareness, and situates personal action within a larger collective movement through the hashtag **#ibukudietplastik**.

This narrative portrays the mother figure as central to domestic responsibilities such as doing laundry and ironing tasks traditionally associated with women. The sentence “*Sebagai ibu rumah tangga yang juga bekerja ...*” reflects the double burden often carried by women: managing both professional and household duties.

While the narrative acknowledges the reality of working mothers, it simultaneously reinforces the traditional gender role that places domestic work primarily in the hands of women. This creates a complex gender representation on one hand recognizing women’s active role in sustainability, but on the other hand maintaining the expectation that environmental responsibility at home is inherently a woman’s duty.

The narrative presented in Data 2 reflects a layered and meaningful representation of gender roles, particularly concerning women’s labor and responsibility within the domestic and environmental spheres. The mother figure is depicted as someone who not only fulfills

traditional domestic tasks such as doing laundry and ironing but also balances these responsibilities with formal employment. This depiction highlights the double burden or double shift experienced by many women, especially mothers—managing both paid work and unpaid domestic labor.

Such portrayal aligns with long-standing social constructions of femininity, where domestic work is naturalized as a woman’s domain. The text reinforces this by casually presenting the mother’s use of laundry services and her reaction to mounting household chores as a shared, relatable female experience. This normalizes the idea that domestic and environmental caregiving are inherently feminine responsibilities. The association between women and environmental care has roots in eco-feminist discourse, which argues that patriarchal structures often link women and nature through roles of nurturing, sustaining, and managing life

While the narrative seeks to empower the mother by highlighting her eco-conscious initiative to switch from plastic to a reusable bag, it simultaneously constructs her as the sole moral actor within the domestic space responsible for implementing sustainable practices. There is no mention of male involvement or shared responsibility within the household, which subtly perpetuates the assumption that environmental action in the home is a woman’s duty.

This reinforces what Arran Stibbe (2015) critiques in his concept of “stories we live by”: recurring societal narratives that shape how people perceive their roles and responsibilities. In this case, the story encourages environmental awareness but does so by embedding it within a gendered moral framework that continues to place the burden of ecological action on women particularly mothers without challenging the broader structural or gender dynamics at play.

Thus, although the story can be classified as a beneficial narrative in terms of promoting environmental sustainability, its framing of gender roles is more ambiguous. It may empower some women by recognizing their capacity for change, yet it risks reinforcing traditional gender norms by positioning women as the default caretakers of both the household and the planet.

CONCLUSION

Hastag #Ibukudietplastik exemplifies how everyday practices can be framed as part of a broader environmental movement. The use of evaluation positions pro-environmental behavior as admirable, while the strategy of intercorrelating stories fosters community engagement and narrative continuity. Together, these elements help solidify the hashtag #ibukudietplastik not just as a campaign, but as a growing social narrative that redefines motherhood in the context of ecological responsibility.

This narrative constructs a representation of women specifically mothers as environmentally conscious agents operating within the domestic sphere. It blends traditional gender roles with progressive ecological values, positioning everyday domestic choices as impactful. From a critical ecolinguistic perspective, this constitutes a beneficial narrative that both supports sustainability

and amplifies the collective voice of environmentally responsible motherhood.

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