

ECOSTORIES IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CAMPAIGNS ON THE @GREENPEACEID ACCOUNT

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze how the microplastic campaign on the @greenpeaceid account builds an ecological narrative through a combination of language and visual communication design. The data sources are campaign materials, including text on posters and captions. The data used is qualitative data in the form of linguistic and visual elements. The method used is descriptive qualitative with two analytical frameworks: Arran Stibbe's ecolinguistics and visual communication theory, including Kress and van Leeuwen's *visual grammar*. Ecolinguistics analysis focuses on *identity stories*, *framing*, and *erasure*, while visual analysis covers visual hierarchy, AIDA persuasion structure, color selection, and layout. The results show that the campaign constructs *identity stories* that position the public as victims of systemic microplastic exposure, while industry and policymakers are framed as the main actors responsible for solutions. Visually, the campaign utilizes dark and *earth tones*, bold typography, and hierarchical composition to emphasize the immediacy of the threat and the urgency of action. The integration of linguistic and visual dimensions produces an ecological narrative that rejects the individualization of environmental blame and encourages collective action based on regulation.

Keywords: ecolinguistics; environmental campaign; microplastics; visual grammar

INTRODUCTION

Today's environmental changes and ecological crises demand not only technical solutions, but also a shift in the public narrative about the relationship between humans and nature. Arran Stibbe asserts that language shapes "*the stories we live by*," the dominant narratives that shape attitudes, values, and practices toward the environment, making the analysis of language important for understanding and changing ecological behavior (Stibbe, 2021).

In the realm of environmental campaign communication, verbal messages rarely stand alone. Visual messages (images, colors, typography, iconography, composition) often work together with text to form powerful multimodal meanings. Multimodal approaches

such as those developed by Kress & van Leeuwen show how visual *grammar* builds systematic interpretations of images. Therefore, studies of language-visual interactions are necessary to understand the construction of ecological meaning in campaign materials (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020).

Several studies show that environmental campaigns in visual media, including posters and social media content, utilize a combination of semiotic sources (visual + lexical) to mobilize emotions and actions. Multimodal analysis of environmental protection posters reveals the hidden contribution of visual and textual features in shaping audience attention, empathy, and intent to act. Such findings underscore the need for integrating ecolinguistics analysis and visual design

analysis (Dallyono, 2019).

Studies on framing in environmental campaigns show that the way environmental issues are framed influences public engagement and policy responses (Muliawan, et al, 2024). Visual and verbal framing also play an important role; for example, images of climate impacts often create psychological distance or reinforce the politicization of the issue. Therefore, analysis that examines both linguistic and visual framing in campaigns is a necessary conceptual step (Nisbet, 2009).

Studies on framing in climate change communication show that the way environmental issues are framed influences public engagement and policy responses. Visual and verbal framing also play an important role; for example, images of climate impacts often create psychological distance or reinforce the politicization of the issue (O'Neill, 2020). Therefore, analysis that examines both linguistic and visual framing in campaigns is a necessary conceptual step (Sari, 2024).

The development of social media, particularly image-based platforms such as Instagram, has changed the dynamics of environmental message dissemination: short visual content (posts, stories, reels) can create widespread resonance and collective behavior, especially among younger generations (Peiró, et al, 2025). Recent studies have found the effects of exposure to pro-environmental campaigns on social media on knowledge and behavioral intentions, but this effectiveness depends on the chosen visual-verbal strategy. Therefore, empirical studies examining environmental campaigns on social media through a multimodal ecolinguistics lens are relevant and urgent (Zhang, 2025).

From a visual communication design (VCD) perspective, design principles such as the use of color for association, typography for tone/urgency, and illustration to trigger empathy have a direct impact on how ecological messages are received (Papanek, 2009). Design literature also demands designers' ethical responsibility in the context of sustainability, arguing that design should support socio-environmental goals, not merely commercial aesthetics. Design theory groups for sustainability emphasize the role of communication design in encouraging sustainable behavior (Landa, 2018).

The theories of visual rhetoric and semiotics proposed by Barthes provide a framework for reading the latent meaning in images of how visual signs can obscure or normalize environmentally destructive practices through *mythmaking* (Barthes, 1972). This approach is useful for identifying *erasure* (ecological aspects that are omitted) and hidden ideologies in campaign materials (Stibbe, 2015). Furthermore, critical discourse theory (Fairclough) helps link textual/visual analysis to broader power relations in environmental discourse production (Fairclough, 1997).

In the empirical realm, analytical studies of visual rhetoric and communication strategies show that content features (visual ethos, pathos, logos) influence user engagement and share/retweet behavior on digital platforms; other research examines how campaign design can be optimized for behavioral change using agent-based approaches and persuasion theory. These findings provide a methodological basis for testing the relationship between ecolinguistics strategies and visual design choices in environmental campaigns (Pang, 2017).

However, interdisciplinary studies that explicitly combine Arran Stibbe's ecolinguistics model with visual communication design analysis are still relatively limited, especially in the context of environmental campaigns on Indonesian social media. Several local studies have conducted multimodal analyses of environmental posters and green branding practices, but few have integrated *the Stories We Live By* framework with visual grammar and semiotics analysis toolkits to produce ethical and effective design recommendations. This opens relevant research gaps for studies in communication, ecology, and design practices.

Based on these theoretical foundations and empirical findings, this study aims to fill the literature gap through multimodal analysis of environmental campaigns on social media, combining Stibbe's ecolinguistics principles (identity identification, framing, erasure, and new stories) with visual communication design analysis (color, typography, iconography, composition) to map how ecological narratives are produced, reinforced, or obscured by the synergy of language and

visuals. This approach is expected to provide theoretical contributions (enrichment of multimodal ecolinguistics methodology) as well as practical contributions (recommendations for more persuasive and ethical campaign design).

METHOD

This study applies to a qualitative descriptive method. It combines critical ecolinguistics and visual semiotics to understand the ecological messages formed in the text and visuals of the microplastics campaign on the @greenpeaceid account. Data collection in this study uses the documentation, observation, and transcription methods proposed by Creswell (Creswell, 2023). This method involves collecting information through existing documents or records, with the aim of tracing historical and social data embedded in documented sources (Bungin, 2003). In this study, both the text in the captions and photos from the @greenpeaceid Instagram account were used as the main data to examine the meanings, ideologies, narratives, and symbols that appeared in the microplastic campaign, as well as the relationship between verbal language and visual elements. The data were analyzed using the theory of ecolinguistics proposed by Arran Stubbe, visual semiotics by Barthes & Kress, and the theory of multimodality.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that the microplastic campaign analyzed constructs a strong ecological narrative through the synergy between language and visuals. By applying Arran Stubbe's ecolinguistics framework, visual semiotics by Barthes & Kress, and multimodality theory, this campaign can be understood as a multimodal discourse practice that strategically shapes *the stories, we live by* about the microplastic crisis and ecological responsibility.

From Arran Stubbe's ecolinguistics perspective, this campaign explicitly challenges the dominant ideology that has long positioned consumers as the main actors responsible for

plastic pollution.

As seen in Data 1, society is positioned as passive victims of the plastic production system, which is emphasized through the phrase “*tubuh kita, lingkungan kita, masa depan kita tak boleh terus jadi korban.*” Conversely, industry and the state are constructed as actors who have the power and moral responsibility to act. This identity creates an unequal power relationship and places the issue of microplastics within the framework of environmental justice, in line with Stubbe's principle that ecological discourse must reveal the injustices hidden in language.

Data 1



Figure 1. Data 1.

In terms of framing, microplastics are not presented as a distant or abstract environmental issue, but as a direct threat to the human body. This framing increases salience by narrowing the psychological distance between the audience and environmental issues. The emphasis on the phrase “*masuk ke tubuh kita*” shifts the discourse from mere ecosystem pollution to a public health crisis, thereby reinforcing the urgency of the message.

However, this campaign also exhibits practices of erasure. The absence of specific industry actors or detailed scientific data indicates a simplification of ecological realities. Within Stubbe's framework, such erasure can be understood as a rhetorical strategy to maintain moral focus and mobilize action, even if it potentially limits the audience's critical understanding of the structural complexities of the plastic crisis.

Through direct appeals such as, Melalui ajakan langsung seperti “*kurangi dan hentikan produksi plastik sekali pakai*”, this campaign offers new stories oriented towards systemic change and collective action. This new narrative emphasizes that ecological solutions cannot be

achieved through individual lifestyle changes alone but require policy and regulatory intervention.

From the perspective of visual communication theory and visual grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen), the visual elements of this campaign serve to reinforce and expand linguistic meaning. The image of hand holding microplastic fragments functions as a visual icon that denotatively represents small plastic waste but connotatively symbolizes a hidden threat that has permeated human life.

The use of dark and earth tones in the visual background creates a serious and gloomy atmosphere, which is in line with the crisis framing in the text. The dominant dark green and blue colors represent nature and the sea, but in a polluted state, thus forming a visual paradox between nature and destruction. This color contrast reinforces the negative evaluation constructed verbally.

Typographically, the headline, with its bold, large font, occupies the most prominent visual position, indicating the high information value of the question “*Siapa yang Harus Bertanggung Jawab?*”. This rhetorical question is a visual communication strategy that provokes critical reflection from the audience and directs attention to the issue of structural responsibility. Within the framework of visual rhetoric, this strategy combines pathos (emotion), logos (logic of responsibility), and ethos (Greenpeace's authority as a credible actor).

The visual composition of the campaign follows a clear hierarchical principle: the headline as the entry point, the microplastic visual as an emotional reinforcement, and the caption as a space for argumentative elaboration. This structure reflects the AIDA (Attention–Interest–Desire–Action) model of persuasion, which shows how visual design is directed not only to inform, but also to encourage engagement and action.

In Data 2, from an ecolinguistics perspective, the poster “*Kita Semua Sama-Sama Ngemil... Plastik?!*” presents identity stories that portray society as victims, not as the main perpetrators of environmental damage. The phrase “*nggak ada yang lolos dari ancaman mikroplastik*” indicates that exposure to plastic is inevitable and systemic. Consumer identity is not portrayed as the sole cause, but

rather as subjects within a system dominated by the production and distribution of single-use plastics. Instead, industry and policymakers are framed as the actors with the greatest capacity and responsibility for change, as emphasized in the caption calling for regulation and reduction of single-use plastic production. This aligns with Stibbe's idea that ecolinguistics should expose the ideology that normalizes unsustainable practices and replace it with more ecologically just alternative narratives.

Data. 2



Figure 2. Data 2

In terms of framing, this campaign shifts the issue of microplastics from abstract environmental discourse to a public health issue that is close and personal. Microplastics are framed not only as waste in the ocean, but as something that is "eaten" and enters the body. This framing strategy narrows the psychological distance between the audience and the issue raised and increases the sense of urgency. By positioning microplastics as part of daily activities such as snacking and drinking popular beverages, this campaign utilizes proximity framing to show that the environmental crisis is no longer distant but rather attached to the human body.

The practice of erasure is also evident in the discourse of this campaign. The posters do not mention specific brands, corporations, or quantitative scientific data, nor do they explain the toxicology of microplastics in detail. In Stibbe's framework, this erasure is not merely a weakness, but a discursive strategy to focus attention on the main moral message: the plastic crisis is a systemic problem and requires structural policy intervention. Erasure here is strategic to keep the public focused on the responsibility of industry and the state without burdening the audience with technical details that could distract from emotion and urgency.

From a visual communication theory perspective, this poster uses powerful visual rhetoric. The image of two hands holding a mixture of snacks and plastic fragments presents a contrast between something familiar (snacking) and something threatening (plastic waste). Emotionally, this visual evokes discomfort, disgust, and fear, thereby activating the audience's pathos. At the same time, the presence of the Greenpeace logo establishes ethos as a trusted source, while the argumentative text in the caption presents logos in the form of reasoning that the plastic problem is not only related to individual behavior but also to production structures.

Analysis using Kress & van Leeuwen's visual grammar shows that this poster has structured representational, interactional, and compositional meanings. Representationally, the main object, a human hand holding a mixture of food and plastic, constructs a visual narrative that humans "eat" plastic in their daily lives. Interactionally, the eye-level perspective creates closeness and invites the audience to feel as if they are receiving the food directly. Compositionally, the visual center is occupied by the hand and the plastic-food objects, while the large, contrasting headline text is placed at the bottom to increase the salience of the message.

The use of dark and earth tones such as earth brown, dull blue, and plastic gray creates a gloomy atmosphere and reflects polluted ecological conditions. The bright yellow of the headline text creates high contrast, attracts attention, and serves as a warning color. The bold, large sans-serif typography reinforces the strong and urgent impression, while the informal language style ("*ngemil plastik?!*"), tailored to a young social media audience, makes the message feel familiar and conversational.

The campaign's visual composition follows a systematic hierarchy: the organization's logo at the top build's credibility, the main visual in the center draws emotional attention, and the large headline text clarifies the message, while the call to action is placed in the caption to direct the audience toward political participation. This structure is consistent with the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) persuasion model, showing that the design is not merely aesthetic, but designed to drive

behavioral change and policy support.

Overall, the integration of Arran Stibbe's theory and visual communication theory shows that the main strength of this campaign lies in its ability to combine language and visuals to construct a new ecological narrative. This campaign rejects the old narrative that focuses on individual blame, replacing it with a narrative of ecological justice that demands structural accountability. These findings emphasize the importance of a multimodal approach in analyzing contemporary environmental discourse and show that visual communication design is not merely an aesthetic tool, but an ideological tool that shapes the way we "live in stories" about nature, the body, and the future.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Greenpeace Indonesia's microplastics campaign utilizes the synergistic relationship between language and visuals to construct a persuasive ecological narrative. Through the application of Arran Stibbe's ecolinguistics framework, it was found that the campaign formed identity stories that positioned the public as victims of the hegemonic single-use plastic production system, while industry and policymakers were framed as the actors primarily responsible for change. This narrative explicitly challenges the ideology of individualization of environmental blame and replaces it with a discourse of ecological justice that emphasizes the structural dimensions of the plastic crisis.

From the perspective of visual communication and visual grammar, this campaign demonstrates the management of composition, color, typography, and visual hierarchy that is directed at creating cognitive and affective engagement. The application of the AIDA persuasion model confirms that visual elements do not only serve as complementary information, but as rhetorical devices that direct the

audience from attention to action. The use of dark and earth tone colors, the depiction of microplastics in the context of daily consumption, and the placement of prominent headlines reinforce the framing of microplastics as a close, real, and inevitable threat.

The integration of linguistic and visual dimensions in this campaign produces new eco-stories that have the potential to shape public

perceptions of the relationship between humans and the environment. Thus, this study emphasizes the importance of a multimodal approach in the analysis of contemporary environmental discourse. Theoretically, these findings expand the application of ecolinguistics to the realm of visual communication design, while practically providing implications for campaign designers and policymakers to craft more ethical, inclusive, and persuasively effective environmental messages. Further research could be directed toward cross-platform comparative analysis or empirical testing of the impact of similar campaigns on changes in audience attitudes and ecological behavior.

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