



REVIEW ARTICLE

Section: *Literature, Linguistics & Criticism***A critical discourse analysis of ideology-loaded eco-sustainability in Saudi News reports**Mohamed Abdelfattah Abdelraouf¹ & Abdelhamid Elewa²¹Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia²Department of English Language, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU), Saudi Arabia*Correspondence: m.abdelraouf@psau.edu.sa**ABSTRACT**

This study examines how the environmental ideology embedded in ecol-sustainability discourse is reproduced in news reports. It analyzes 43 reports from Saudi newspapers and the Saudi Press Agency using van Dijk's socio cognitive framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, complemented by insights from ecolinguistics. The reports are examined at macro structural and micro linguistic levels to identify discursive strategies and linguistic choices through which journalists reproduce three key environmental principles incorporated in the Saudi Vision 2030: anthropocentric sustainability, environmental protection as a moral and implicitly religious duty, and the State as the primary guardian of environmental protection. The findings indicate that headlines and leads frequently construct the State as the main initiator and driver of environmental action, while other participants predominantly appear as supporting and enacting this vision. The campaign slogan "Your Impact Is Green" links individual responsibility to state leadership and frames citizens' actions as part of a wider national project grounded in moral and religious accountability. At the syntactic level, material processes commonly cast government officials and institutions as principal actors in environmental protection, and their evaluative statements are foregrounded in prominent positions. The reports also repeatedly use the phrase "natural resources" for soil, air, water and ecosystems, associating their protection with human welfare and economic development. Overall, the analysis suggests that the coverage promotes a mainly anthropocentric and state centric environmental discourse that legitimizes state leadership in environmental protection and presents the environmental principles of Vision 2030 as a taken for granted framework for imagining sustainability.

KEYWORDS: sustainability, critical discourse analysis, ecolinguistics, socio-cognitive approach, environmental ideology, media discourse

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1. Introduction

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) treats language as a form of social practice rather than as a neutral vehicle for pre-given information (Fairclough, 1992; Wodak & Meyer, 2015). Discourse always carries assumptions, value judgements, and ideological positions that reach beyond the immediate text, so that discourse is not simply a mirror of the world but also helps constitute social reality (Fairclough, 2013a; van Dijk, 1998). Ecolinguistics extends the concerns of CDA by investigating discourses that legitimize ecologically destructive practices, such as consumerism and climate denial, as well as those that advocate sustainability and care for nonhuman life. While it draws on many of the same analytical tools as CDA, it evaluates discourses in terms of their consequences for ecosystems, other species and future generations against explicitly ecological principles.

1.1. Media Discourse

Many CDA studies investigated media discourse because it is a key site where language, power, and ideology intersect in ways that affect large populations (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1988; Wodak & Busch, 2004). Media texts are widely circulated and embedded in political and economic structures, making them ideal for reproducing ideologies and sustaining power relations in the society. Fairclough (1995) therefore argues that analyzing media language is important in understanding how contemporary societies organize social identities and power relations. Building on this, media discourse is seen as doing more than simply mirroring preexisting social relations; it helps to constitute “situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people,” (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258), thereby making particular, ideological worldviews appear as commonsense reality. van Dijk (1992, p. 9) notes that the power of media extends beyond influencing their audience to “the broader framework of the social, cultural, political, or economic power structures of society”.

Even News reports that may appear neutral in communicating information, they are actually shaping the way people perceive events and understand the world around them. They select, structure, explain, and evaluate events in ways that shape language users' interpretation of key social and political issues. By deciding which events are newsworthy, news reports organize what counts as reality for a mass audience. van Dijk (1985, 1988) notes that news reports tend to follow a conventional schema. In this structure, the Headline and Lead express the highest macropropositions by summarizing what the story is about, while the Main Events section presents the core questions about the story, “what”, “who”, “where”, “when”. Background provides contextual information, Consequences describe the outcomes of the main event, Reactions contain reported speech from sources, and Comments offer evaluative or interpretive statements, often by the journalist. Not all categories appear in every report, but Headline, Lead and Main Events are usually present, whereas the others are optional and depend on newsworthiness and space.

Categories in the news report schema are not neutral but ideologically-loaded, since they may favor some perspectives, actors, or meanings (van Dijk, 1988). The Headline and Lead are especially important because they summarize the story, highlight what is most central, and offer an initial framing. By foregrounding particular actors and actions, they can be used to realize van Dijk's ideological square. The Main Events category can present some elements as central and others as background, reflecting the priorities of the media institution or journalist, while Background selectively provides history, causes, and context that make certain interpretations more likely. Verbal Reactions shape the story by determining whose voices and evaluations are included, which can facilitate positive self-presentation of some groups and negative other-presentation of others, and Comments often contain the most explicit evaluations of events and actors.

The ordering of schema categories also has potential ideological implications (van Dijk, 2013). In the conventional schema, “what happened” typically precedes “what people say” or how the newspaper evaluates it, so that factual information is foregrounded and evaluations appear later; when Verbal Reactions or Comments are moved into earlier positions (for example, into the Headline or Lead), the event is more directly framed through those opinions and readers are encouraged to interpret it from that perspective.

1.2. Critical Discourse Analysis of News Reports

Many CDA approaches argue that language both shapes and is shaped by wider social structures (Fairclough, 2013a). Rather than simply describing social reality, language actively participates in shaping, constructing,

and transforming social identities, social relationships, attitudes, and systems of knowledge. In this sense, the interactive relationship between discourse and society can be exploited to consolidate or challenge existing social power relations (Fairclough, 1992). Through critical discourse analysis approaches, we can uncover how power dynamics are reinforced or challenged across varied types of discourse, particularly institutional discourse, where access is often dominated by elite groups such as officials, experts and politicians (van Dijk, 2015). By controlling who can speak, when, and on what terms, these groups are able to dominate discourse production and, in turn, shape social cognition through the circulation of their preferred ideologies (Rogers, 2004; van Dijk, 1993). In this way, institutional discourse does not merely reproduce existing power relations in the society; it naturalizes them and legitimizes policies by casting them as rational, commonsensical, or simply inevitable (van Dijk, 1998, 2006c).

From a CDA perspective, media institutions possess a distinctive form of symbolic power because they control access to, and circulation of, influential public discourse. van Dijk (1992, p. 16) notes that “the mass media play a crucial role in the reproduction of ideologies, because they are the main source of people’s knowledge, attitudes and ideologies”. Fairclough (1995, p. 3) makes a parallel point when he states that the media has the power “to shape governments and parties...to influence knowledge, beliefs, values, social relations, social identities.” This remark reflects his broader view of the media as a key site where wider social changes are negotiated and where elite ideologies are normalized into “common sense” for audiences. In the present study, this perspective underpins the analysis of how Saudi news reports help shape public understandings of sustainability and environmental responsibility by embedding Vision 2030’s environmental ideology in everyday media narratives.

Therefore, CDA can uncover the hidden mechanisms through which power structures normalize and legitimize dominance. This can operate across both micro and macro levels of analysis, examining linguistic choices before situating the linguistic features within the broader social, political, and institutional contexts (Fairclough, 2013b; van Dijk, 2008). Through this multilevel approach, CDA demonstrates how media texts help to naturalize social hierarchies and power relations in the society. By systematically linking the formal organization of media discourse to wider structures of power and control, CDA demonstrates how discourse participates in constructing social reality that typically privileges powerful groups while marginalizing others (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1993). At the same time, CDA emphasizes that media discourse is not just a tool for maintaining hegemony, but it can also function as a site of resistance where existing power imbalances are questioned, contested, or redefined (van Dijk, 2015; Wodak, 2009).

Several influential approaches have shaped CDA, each offering a distinct but complementary way of linking discourse and power. Fairclough’s sociocultural approach treats discourse as a form of social practice that both shapes and is shaped by power relations, ideologies, and inequalities (Fairclough, 1992, 1995). His framework highlights a dialectical relationship between discourse and social change, where texts can both reproduce and transform existing social structures. van Dijk’s sociocognitive approach, in contrast, focuses on the mediating role of cognition between discourse and society. It emphasizes how mental models, shared social representations, and ideologies shape the way texts are produced and interpreted, and how these cognitive structures, in turn, help sustain dominance and inequality (van Dijk, 2008). The discoursehistorical approach adds a strong contextual and historical dimension (Wodak, 2001; Wodak & Reisigl, 2016). It brings together argumentation analysis, a sociodiagnostic examination of power relations, and the development of alternative ways of framing and enacting discourse (Wodak, 2015). In contrast to primarily cognitive or dialectical models, van Leeuwen’s framework concentrates on representational choices in discourse. It offers systematic tools for analyzing how social actors, actions, and social practices contribute to legitimizing or challenging power relations (van Leeuwen, 2013).

These approaches differ in focus and method, but CDA scholars identify several common foundations (Fairclough, 2013a; van Dijk, 2008; Wodak & Meyer, 2015). First, CDA is explicitly interdisciplinary, drawing on linguistics, sociology, psychology, history and critical social theory. Second, it operates across micro and macro levels, connecting detailed textual analysis with wider social and institutional structures. Third, language is treated as a strategic social practice rather than a neutral medium, so particular discursive choices are examined in terms of whose interests they serve. Finally, CDA assumes a dialectical relationship between discourse and society, whereby discourse both shapes and is shaped by social structures and power relations. On this basis,

CDA provides a useful framework for examining political, media and legal discourse, including the Saudi news reports analyzed in this study.

The same angles of analysis could be pursued through ecolinguistics as regards the data collected for this study related to environmental sustainability. It examines how linguistic choices and underlying stories of limitless growth, human dominance and resource exploitation influence the way people treat the ecological systems that sustain life, and maintains that protecting these systems is a prerequisite for just, sustainable societies (Stibbe, 2017, 2021). Using the CDA analysis toolkit, ecolinguistics studies how discourse can normalize unsustainable practices or, alternatively, support more lifesustaining ways of living, and evaluates such discourses against an ecosophy (Stibbe, 2017, 2021). Within this framework, Stibbe (2015) distinguishes destructive discourses, which oppose ecosophical principles and contribute to ecological damage, ambivalent discourses, which share some ecological aims but still prioritize growth and human-centered interests, and beneficial discourses, which value human and nonhuman life and promote reduced consumption and social justice.

2. Literature Review

Few studies have been written on ideology-loaded eco-sustainability discourse in general. Sadiq et al. (2025) analyze Pakistani print and digital media coverage of climate change, deforestation, water scarcity and pollution to assess whether these texts foster ecological awareness or prioritize political and economic interests. Drawing on Fairclough's CDA and Stibbe's ecolinguistics, they investigate how anthropocentric versus ecocentric storylines are realized through lexical choice, metaphor, agency and framing. They find that anthropocentric narratives dominate, foregrounding economic growth, political conflict and immediate human needs, while giving limited space to ecological interdependence and nonhuman wellbeing. The authors argue that such patterns dilute ecological responsibility and call for more ecocentric media discourse that presents environmental protection as a core social value.

Narin et al. (2025) apply van Dijk's sociocognitive CDA to 942 forestrelated news and opinion articles from three ideologically distinct Turkish newspapers (2010–2021). They examine how forests and forestry are thematized, how discursive strategies operate across four themes (deforestation, forest degradation, forest fires, afforestation/other forestry issues), and how ideological alignments shape understandings of forestry policy and environmental crisis. Using van Dijk's macrostructure–microstructure framework, they show that coverage focuses on discrete events and crises, especially forest fires, which are often dramatized, while biodiversity loss, climate change and longterm governance concerns remain comparatively marginal. Ideological differences are most visible in evaluative lexis and sourcing patterns. Overall, the authors argue that these discourses tend to support neoliberal, progovernment storylines and treat forestry issues as shortlived “daily news,” limiting space for sustained, critical public debate.

Liang et al. (2025) use corpusassisted Critical Discourse Analysis, drawing on Wodak's discoursehistorical approach, to examine 283 climaterelated news articles on China from *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* (2018–2022). They examine five key discursive strategies—nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, and intensification / mitigation—to trace how British news outlets construct China's role in climate change. The analysis indicates that British coverage consistently casts China as a central player in global climate governance, foregrounding its emissions, coal dependence and climate policies through extensive use of numerical data and crossnational comparisons. At the same time, recurrent othering moves and reliance on threat and responsibility topoi highlight China's position as the world's largest emitter and a potential source of risk, while giving comparatively less weight to structural constraints or historical emissions in other countries. The authors argue that this pattern produces an ambivalent image of China as both indispensable partner and problematic “other” in international climate politics.

Hoang et al. (2025) combine Fairclough's threedimensional CDA with Reflexive Thematic Analysis and Corpus Linguistics to examine how sustainability is framed in Mekong Delta agritourism across governmental websites, tourism company promotions, mass media and tourist reviews. Their sequential workflow moves from quantitative mapping to qualitative and critical interpretation. Government texts typically adopt a technocratic–developmental frame centered on policy goals and green growth, whereas business promotions rely on romanticized, aesthetic language that foregrounds enjoyment and scenery while downplaying verifiable sustainability practices. Tourist reviews, in contrast, often voice critical reactions that question these idealized

narratives and highlight gaps between promotional imagery and actual environmental conditions. Hoang et al. argue that these patterns construct a “green fantasy” that works through selective emphasis and omission, commodifying nature as an attractive backdrop rather than representing it as an ecological system requiring meaningful protection.

Using a corpusbased CDA framework grounded in Fairclough’s threedimensional model, Li and Zhao (2025) analyze 70 China Daily news reports to examine how China’s national image is constructed around its dual carbon goals. With AntConc and KH Coder, they explore highfrequency lexis, cooccurrence networks and collocations of China. Three thematic clusters emerge: government policy and carbonreduction commitments, industrial and corporate green transformation, and technology and energy innovation. Frequent items such as achieve, green, neutrality and development foreground determination, responsibility and proactive governance. Li and Zhao argue that these discursive patterns construct an image of China as environmentally responsible and technologically forwardlooking, and that China Daily serves as a strategic platform for projecting a coherent, positive narrative on climate governance to international audiences.

Drawing on a corpus-based CDA informed by Wodak’s discourse-historical approach, Yang and Wang (2023) examine a number of Chinarelated environmental news reports in The New York Times to explore how China’s national image is constructed. Using keyword, concordance, and argumentation (*topoi*) analysis, they identify recurring themes around place, actors, and environmental issues, and show how these elements are linked through reasoning patterns such as the *topos* of threat and responsibility. The authors argue that, within this coverage, China is often depicted as simultaneously committed to environmental governance yet constrained by tensions between economic growth and environmental protection, and they suggest that more transparent and diversified international communication could help present a fuller picture of China’s environmental efforts. In the Arabic context, Almaghlouth (2022) investigated how environmental sustainability was constructed in Saudi Arabia’s online media discourse through corpus-based discourse analysis of keyness, intertextuality, and interdiscursivity. The study built the Saudi Online Environmental Sustainability Corpus (SOESC), consisting of 87,237 words from Saudi Green Initiative news articles and English tweets from official environmental accounts. Linguistic analysis revealed that action discourse (protect, plant, achieve) dominated consequences discourse (emissions, methane, climate change), emphasizing state-led interventions over problem description. Analysis highlighted a strong emphasis on officials and decision-makers, suggesting sustainability was a national achievement project led by officials. Intertextuality linked Saudi initiatives to global sources like Reuters and Bloomberg, positioning them as internationally credible rather than framing environmental problems as shared global responsibility.

Drawing on Stibbe’s (2015) ecolinguistic framing model and corpus analysis, Jabeen (2024) analyses 129 climaterelated opinion pieces from Arab News from November 2022 to November 2023. The study aims to achieve three objectives: assess how climate issues are framed, identify dominant discursive and lexical strategies, and explore how this discourse may shape public understanding and engagement. These frames present climate change as a humancaused global emergency affecting both people and ecosystems. The analysis shows four central frames constructed around “climate”: change, crisis, fight, and collective action/responsibility, with “climate change” as the dominant collocation. The study concludes that through repeated frames and strategic lexical choices, the newspaper effectively raises awareness of climate change as an urgent, humancaused global emergency and encourages readers to assume individual and collective responsibility for remedial action.

The current study addresses a gap in media discourse research by investigating how state environmental ideologies are reflected in Saudi newspapers using van Dijk’s socio-cognitive CDA framework to Saudi print media coverage of news campaigns. It focuses on news reports in Saudi daily papers as a key site where the broad environmental aims of Saudi state ideology are translated into concrete media discourse. Drawing on van Dijk’s sociocognitive framework, the study also explores how the discourse of news reports contributes to shared mental representations through which readers come to understand the environment, themselves, and their responsibilities as members of society.

More specifically, the study examines how the state’s environmental ideology is constructed, reproduced, or resisted in Saudi newspaper reporting. It is guided by the following research question: How do Saudi news reports discursively reproduce the three environmental ideological principles of Vision 2030 (anthropocentric sustainability, environmental protection as a moral and religious duty, and the State as

primary guardian of environmental protection)?

Addressing this question enables an integrated analysis of news report discourse to generate insights into how environmental ideologies are promoted and reinforced among readers in Saudi Arabia. In turn, this helps to clarify how media discourse shapes readers' understandings of environmental issues and their perceived roles in protecting the environment.

3. Methodology

The analysis combines van Dijk's (1998, 2006b) socio-cognitive CDA model with ecolinguistics by first identifying how news schemata and linguistic choices encode the environmental principles of Vision 2030, and then evaluating these patterns against an ecosophy that distinguishes anthropocentric, statecentric stories from more ecocentric and participatory stories about human–environment relations. This framework is particularly well suited to analyzing how state environmental beliefs and views of human–environment relations are built up and reproduced through the discourse of news reporting.

Ideology plays a central role in van Dijk's sociocognitive model as the shared belief system that structures group attitudes and polarizes social representations (van Dijk, 1998, 2015). It operates as a cognitive framework that guides both the production and interpretation of discourse, while systematically shaping the mental models people form about social events and actors.

van Dijk (2008) describes mental models as the dynamic, personal, multimodal representations of events and situations that language users continuously construct and update while producing and interpreting discourse. These models operate as the main cognitive link between ideology and discourse in his sociocognitive framework. As people engage with texts, they actively update these models by accepting, resisting, or reinterpreting incoming information in line with their ideological beliefs. This process sustains dominant ideologies when updated mental models confirm shared beliefs, but it can also enable resistance when conflicting discourse triggers a shift in their belief system. In this way, mental models mediate whether discourse helps to maintain or transform societal power relations (van Dijk, 2008). Mental models are valuable for explaining how readers may internalize the state's environmental ideology as it is constructed in Saudi newspaper coverage.

Within van Dijk's sociocognitive framework, the ideological square functions as a key analytical model that operationalizes group polarization through concrete linguistic patterns. It highlights the systematic emphasis on positive attributes of the in-group "Us" and the de-emphasis or negative portrayal of the out-group "Them" (van Dijk, 1998). This strategy can be used to trace how texts construct "ecocitizens" (responsible, cooperative, lawabiding) in contrast to "environmental violators" (irresponsible, selfish, harmful) (van Dijk, 2006b).

At the microlevel, this model guides the analysis of lexical choices, evaluative adjectives, metaphors, pronouns, and syntactic structures to see how they encode and enact environmental ideology. At the macrolevel, the same framework helps to examine how news report schema (Headline, Lead, Main Events, Background, Consequences, Reactions, Comments) reinforce particular mental models of "good" and "bad" environmental actors. Through these structural patterns, the model also reveals how content can legitimize punitive measures against environmental violators by presenting sanctions as natural, necessary, or in the public interest.

3.1 Data and Procedures

The corpus of this study comprises all 43 news reports available that covered the 'Environment Week 2026' campaign in Saudi print media and Saudi Press Agency (SPA), namely 34 reports from Saudi daily newspapers and 9 from SPA. All news reports were published during Environment Week 2026, held under the slogan (Atharuka Akhḍar) 'Your Impact Is Green'. Which focused on sustainability, biodiversity, and pollution reduction within the framework of Vision 2030. News reports were collected from the online editions of the newspapers. The analysis is confined to the linguistic content of the reports and does not include semiotic analysis of accompanying images.

The identification of environmental ideology in the news reports follows three steps. First, each news report is read in full to gain an overall understanding of its environmental messages and to identify its main environmental themes. Second, all sentences that convey environmental ideology are identified. Third, each sentence is classified into one of three ideological categories linked to Saudi Vision 2030: (1) anthropocentric sustainability, 2) environmental protection is a moral and religious duty, 3) State as primary guardian of

environmental protection. Sentences are then coded according to these three ideological principles. For instance, if a sentence emphasizes environmental protection for the sake of human wellbeing, improving quality of life, or ensuring the prosperity of future generations, it is coded as “anthropocentric sustainability.”

Linguistic analysis of discourse uncovers how language reproduces specific environmental ideologies (Fairclough, 2003; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Martin & Rose, 2003; van Dijk, 2011a). To address the current study research questions on ideological construction in news reports, analysis of the macrostructure of news reports aims to show how overall organization and global meanings of news reports shape readers’ understanding and interpretation of the State’s environmental ideology. It also attempts to show how the news report schema guides readers toward particular interpretations and value judgements compatible with the State’s environmental ideology. Analysis of the microstructure features in these news reports examines lexical choices (wording, connotations), syntactic structures (voice, agency, nominalization), local semantics (implications, presuppositions), framing, topicalization, polarization, and intertextuality. These linguistic features uncover how subtle linguistic patterns construct and normalize ideologies. Lexical analysis shows how certain word choices encode value judgements, syntactic structures obscure agency in environmental harm, semantic patterns embed unstated assumptions about human dominance, while framing and polarization prioritize certain ecological narratives over others. Stibbe (2015, p. 24) describes these as “patterns of linguistic features that run across multiple texts and subtly convey the same ideology over and over again,” enabling systematic exposure of the underlying environmental worldview expressed in the news reports.

Given the size of the corpus in this study (43 news reports), the analysis offers illustrative rather than exhaustive examples. Examples were selected according to two principles drawn from van Dijk’s socio-cognitive model. The first is recurrence: only patterns that occur repeatedly across the news reports are treated as ideologically significant, on the assumption that ideology operates through systematic repetition rather than isolated lexical choices (van Dijk, 2006a). The second principle is that examples were chosen when they instantiate one of the discursive strategies that van Dijk identifies as central to the reproduction of ideology, such as lexical choice, the ideological square, agency assignment and concealment, and presupposition (van Dijk, 1998, 2006a, 2008). Where several news reports exemplify the same strategy equally well, the clearest and most explicit instance is presented. Examples that include Arabic source text are reproduced in romanised Arabic alongside English translations, using a simplified IJMES-based system to preserve relevant consonantal and vowel distinctions; the name of the newspaper is always indicated alongside the instance.

4. Analysis

Drawing on van Dijk’s sociocognitive framework, the analysis is informed by ecolinguistics, which examines how language contributes to either protecting or damaging the ecosystems that life depends on (Stibbe, 2015, 2021). In this sense, the three environmental principles of Vision 2030 are treated as “stories we live by” about environmental governance and responsibility, and the analysis considers whether the news reports reproduce anthropocentric and statecentric stories, or open space for more ecocentric understandings of human–environment relations.

To address this aim, the analysis draws on van Dijk’s socio-cognitive framework and conducts discursive and linguistic analysis at both macro and micro levels. At the macro level, it focuses on the news schema or superstructure, the global topics or themes, and the ordering of information in the reports. At the micro level, it examines lexical choices, syntax, local semantics and rhetorical devices. In van Dijk’s terms, these macro- and micro-structures are not neutral textual patterns; they actively guide how readers construct mental models of events, which can subsequently become part of the socially shared beliefs and ideologies of a group. By showing how news schemata and local linguistic choices systematically privilege certain interpretations, the analysis reveals how the environmental principles of Vision 2030—and, in particular, the State’s environmental ideology—are encoded, legitimized and reproduced in discourse.

The Vision 2030 blueprint and the Saudi Green Initiative (SGI) set environmental objectives such as protecting biodiversity across land and sea, rehabilitating damaged areas, combating desertification and creating natural reserves. These objectives are driven by an environmental ideology that revolves around three principles: (1) anthropocentric sustainability, (2) environmental protection as a moral and religious duty, and (3) the State as the primary guardian of environmental protection.

A. The State is the primary guardian of environmental protection

van Dijk (1985, 1988, 2013) treats the headline and lead as the highest, most prominent categories in the news report, summarizing the macrostructure and expressing the highest level macropropositions (topic, main actors, basic evaluation). In the data, government officials and state institutions are consistently constructed as Actors in material processes that initiate Environment Week, as in the following example:

Arabic transliteration: *Dashshana musā'id mudīr 'āmm far' Wizārat al-Bī'a wa-l-Miyāh wa-l-Zirā'a bi-minṭaqat Makka ... fa 'ālīyyāt Usbū' al-Bī'a li- 'ām 2026, taḥta shi'ār "Atharuka Akhdar," bi-mushārakat mudīr Jāmi'at al-Malik 'Abd al- 'Azīz ... wa-bi-ḥuḍūr 'adad min al-jihāt al-ḥukūmiyya wa-l-akādīmiyya wa-l-qīṭā' ghayr al-ribḥī, ilā jānib mushāraka wāsi'a min al-muhtammīn bi-l-sha'n al-bī'ī wa-l-ṭullāb wa-l-mutaṭawwi'in. (Ṣaḥīfat al-Madīna)*

English translation: "The assistant director general of the branch of the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture in the Makkah region inaugurated ... the activities of Environment Week for the year 2026, under the slogan 'Your Impact Is Green', with the participation of the President of King Abdulaziz University ... and in the presence of a number of governmental and academic bodies and the non-profit sector, in addition to wide participation from those interested in environmental affairs, students, and volunteers. (Al-Madina newspaper)"

In this example, a senior state official is represented as inaugurating the activities of Environment Week, while other actors are syntactically positioned as participants who join or witness this state-led initiative. Similar constructions appear in twenty-one headlines, foregrounding Saudi officials as spearheading the campaign and highlighting the State as the main initiator of environmental protection.

Rather than erasing other actors, however, the news reports use them to reinforce the State's positive self-presentation. By listing "the participation of the President of King Abdulaziz University ... a number of governmental and academic bodies and the nonprofit sector ... [and] wide participation from those interested in environmental affairs, students, and volunteers," the report constructs a large, respectable ingroup around the state initiative. The presence of high-status participants (such as the university president and multiple institutions) signals that key sectors of society are aligned with Environment Week. Sociocognitively, this long participation list helps readers build a mental model in which everyone who matters—government, universities, NGOs, students and volunteers—is already on board. In van Dijk's terms, this is a strategy of positive self-representation, emphasizing the ingroup's good properties and actions while presenting participation as the default, socially desirable position.

From a sociocultural perspective, this pattern has important implications. By consistently positioning state institutions as the centre of environmental action and decision-making in headlines, the news reports reproduce the ideological principle that the State is the primary guardian of environmental protection. They foreground the ingroup's good properties and actions by representing the State as a benevolent leader of environmental protection, while municipalities, NGOs, universities and citizens appear as committed partners who implement state-designed initiatives. This dual positive representation helps to legitimize the State's privileged role as the natural leader and coordinator of environmental protection, and other social actors are discursively positioned as supportive participants whose legitimacy derives from their alignment with the State's environmental vision. In sociocognitive terms, such recurrent patterns contribute to a shared social cognition in which state-led environmental governance is normalized as a commonsense and socially appropriate way to address environmental issues.

The reproduction of the ideology that the State is the primary guardian of environmental protection is evident in how verbal reactions and comments are realized in the news reports. According to van Dijk (1988, 2013), news reports typically follow a canonical order in which the main events and their context are presented first, while verbal reactions and comments usually appear toward the end. In this structure, the most important elements of the story occupy the most prominent positions, and verbal reactions are generally backgrounded. Journalists can, however, move verbal reactions and comments into earlier, more salient positions when they are deemed especially relevant, which makes this category particularly open to ideological use, since it enables

journalists to foreground ingroup voices while maintaining an appearance of impartial reporting.

Analysis of the data shows that twentyfour verbal reactions appear in the news reports, all of which are attributed to princes of regions, governors, ministers, government officials, scientists and academics, with no reactions from ordinary citizens. These verbal reactions uniformly articulate positive evaluations of “Environment Week” and highlight the government’s efforts in environmental protection, as in the following example:

Arabic transliteration: *Wa-awḍaḥat ustādh ‘ilm al-bī’a al-musā’id bi-Jāmi‘at al-Amīra Nūra bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ... anna shi‘ār “Atharuka Akhḍar” yaḥmilu risāla ‘amīqa; fa-kullu taṣarruf fardī yatruku atharan, wa-bi-imkān kull shakhṣ an yaj‘ala hādhā al-athar mustadāman ‘abra qarārātihi al-yawmiyya fī istihlāk al-ṭāqa wa-taqlīl al-hadr. Wa-laftat ilā anna hādhihi al-mumārasāt al-fardiyya tatarākamu li-tataḥawwala ilā thaqāfa ‘amma tu’aththiru fī al-siyāsāt wa-sulūk al-sharikāt. (Ṣaḥīfat al-Yawm)*

English translation: “Assistant professor of ecology at Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University ... explained that the slogan ‘Your Impact Is Green’ carries a profound message; every individual behavior leaves an impact, and each person can make this impact sustainable through their daily decisions regarding energy consumption and reducing waste. She pointed out that these individual practices accumulate and turn into a general culture that influences policies and the behavior of companies. (Al-Yaum newspaper)”

The selection of stateaffiliated speakers and their endorsements thus supports Vision 2030’s ideology that the State is the primary guardian and driving force of environmental protection; six of these twentyfour verbal reactions are attributed to academics and environmental experts.

van Dijk (2011b) identifies appeals to authority as a key ideological strategy in media discourse, where citing experts or institutions serves to support and legitimize particular positions. Attributing verbal reactions to “academics and environmental experts” borrows the epistemic authority of science to back up a stated environmental project, making the claim that the State is the primary guardian of environmental protection appear expertvalidated rather than contestable.

In six instances, verbal reactions from officials and scientists are upgraded from their expected position near the end of the report to headlines or main events sections:

Arabic transliteration: *Ashāda muḥāfiẓ al-Zulfi khilāla marāsim al-tadshīn bi-mā tu’addīhi Wizārat al-Bī’a wa-l-Miyāh wa-l-Zirā’a min dawr riyādī fī ta’zīz al-istidāma al-bī’iyya. (Ṣaḥīfat al-Riyāḍ)*

English translation: The Governor of Al-Zulfi praised, during the inauguration ceremony, the pioneering role played by the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture in promoting environmental sustainability. (Al-Riyadh Newspaper, Main Events).

This upgrading means that the first interpretive frame readers encounter is not a neutral description of the environmental event but a normative assessment by officials and experts, foregrounding the State and its agents as the legitimate center of environmental decisionmaking. Likewise, all comments used by journalists explicitly express positive evaluations of “Environment Week”, and their appearance in headlines or leads further amplifies their ideological impact:

Arabic transliteration: *Fa’aliyyāt Usbū’ al-Bī’a tushimu fī ghars al-mumārasāt al-bī’iyya al-salīma fī sulūkiyyāt ajyāl al-mustaqbal. (Ṣaḥīfat al-Madīna)*

English translation: Activities of Environment Week contribute to instilling sound environmental practices in the behavior of future generations. (Al-Madina Newspaper, headline)

Arabic transliteration: *“Atharuka Akhḍar”... Jāmi‘at al-Malik ‘Abd al-‘Azīz tarsumu malāmiḥ al-mustaqbal al-bī’ī fī jalsat “Injāzāt tatajāwazu al-arqām.” (Ṣaḥīfat Makka)*

English translation: “Your Impact Is Green”... King Abdulaziz University draws the features of the environmental future in a session titled “Achievements That Go Beyond Numbers”. (Makkah Newspaper, headline).

Arabic transliteration: *Juhūd takāmuliyya fī Juzur Farasān tu‘azzizu al-wa‘y al-bī‘ī khilāla Usbū‘ al-Bī‘a “Atharuka Akhḍar.”* (WAS)

English translation: Integrated efforts in the Farasan Islands enhance environmental awareness during Environment Week “Your Impact Is Green”. (Saudi Press Agency, headline).

Using comments in these prominent positions presents Environment Week to readers in advance as positive and successful, before any factual detail is processed. Phrases such as “contribute to instilling sound environmental practices in the behavior of future generations” and “draws the features of the environmental future” do not simply report what happened; they assert that the activities are educationally effective, futureoriented and socially valuable. This frames Environment Week as desirable and legitimizes government institutions. Stating that King Abdulaziz University “draws the features of the environmental future” assigns a visionary leadership role to a national university closely tied to the State, while describing efforts in the Farasan Islands as “integrated” and aimed at “enhancing environmental awareness” constructs a narrative of wellorganized, rational governance. Governmental and semigovernmental bodies are thus positioned as competent stewards of the environment, and the campaign is represented as evidence of their success.

The consistent positive evaluation of the stateled Environment Week project contributes to a shared social cognition in which environmental problems appear best handled through stateled, expertdriven initiatives, and where state leadership is taken for granted as both effective and legitimate. Because the first and often only interpretive frame is celebratory, it becomes more difficult for readers to perceive limitations, omissions or alternative approaches as reasonable or necessary. In this way, early positive evaluation cues readers that the appropriate course of action is to support stateled guardianship over environmental projects, while other ways of imagining environmental protection are implicitly constructed as less necessary or less rational, reinforcing a statecentric model.

From an ecolinguistic perspective, this pattern constructs a story in which environmental protection is primarily a matter of centralized, stateled stewardship rather than a shared responsibility involving nonhuman nature as a participant. Seen from this perspective, this story supports protection but remains heavily statecentered, giving little prominence to communitybased or more ecocentric forms of environmental care.

B. Environmental protection as a moral and religious duty

The slogan “*Atharuka Akhḍar*” (“Your Impact Is Green”) appears 19 times in headlines and 56 times across the news reports as in the following example:

Arabic transliteration: “*Atharuka Akhḍar*”... *Al-Su‘ūdiyya tasta‘riḍu riyādatahā al-bī‘iyya wa-tad‘ū al-mujtama‘ li-ta‘zīz al-istidāma.* (Ṣaḥīfat ‘Ukāz)

English translation: “Your Impact Is Green”... Saudi Arabia showcases its environmental leadership and calls on society to enhance sustainability. (Okaz newspaper)”

This slogan is ideologically loaded for four reasons. First, the deictic second-person pronoun (-ka) “your” directly addresses readers and constructs them as responsible participants whose role is to align themselves with the State’s environmental project, positioning them as individual agents whose actions have tangible consequences. Second, it draws on a widely circulating ecological frame in which people leave a “human footprint” or impact on the environment, implying that this impact can be beneficial or harmful; rather than presenting these options neutrally, the slogan nudges readers towards practices that make their impact “green,” building on a familiar concept instead of introducing an entirely new framing. Third, in Arabic “*atharuka*” refers to what a person

leaves behind or their trace, and the slogan appears to draw intertextually on a Qur'anic verse in which God states that He records what people put forth and what they leave behind (*āthārahum*):

Arabic transliteration: *Innā naḥnu nuḥyī al-mawtā wa-naktubu mā qaddamū wa-āthārahum; wa-kulla shay'in aḥṣaynāhu fī imāmin mubīnin (Yā Sīn: 12)*

English translation: “Indeed, it is We who bring the dead to life and record what they have put forth and what they left behind, and all things We have enumerated in a clear register” (Qur'an 36:12).

Read in this light, the slogan not only promotes environmentally responsible action but also invokes a religious understanding of human deeds as lasting traces recorded for review in the hereafter, adding a dimension in which unsustainable practices are actions for which individuals may bear responsibility before God as well as before the State. Fourth, the slogan relies on an underlying conceptual metaphor in which environmental responsibility is represented as a visible “impact” or “trace” that can be made green, turning the abstract notion of sustainable behaviour into something concrete and seemingly measurable, and inviting readers to see their everyday actions as leaving a mark on the world.

The example above also carries four ideological presuppositions. It presupposes that the State's environmental leadership is substantial enough to be “showcased,” that the State has the authority to address “society” as a whole and set the sustainability agenda, that Saudi society forms a unified audience that will in principle respond to this call, and that “enhancing sustainability” is an uncontested, desirable and necessary goal. Together with the strategic placement of the slogan at the top of the news superstructure, these presuppositions repeatedly foreground a framing of environmental action as a personal obligation. The campaign is presented as centrally concerned with readers' own relationship to the environment, while simultaneously situating that relationship within a broader stateled project. In van Dijk's sociocognitive terms, such recurrent and personalized framings do more than transmit information; they gradually shape shared social cognition about what counts as an environmentally “good” citizen who fulfils both civic and religious duties. Within this schema, citizens who respond to and implement state initiatives are implicitly constructed as a positive ingroup: morally responsible, religiously observant actors whose “green” impact aligns with God's commands and Vision 2030's environmental goals, whereas those who fail to protect the environment or whose impact is not “green” are indirectly positioned as negative others who neglect their responsibilities and stand in violation of a divinely grounded duty of care. The deictic pronoun “your” is central here, as it directly addresses readers, individualizes responsibility and ties environmentally responsible behaviour to both state leadership and divine accountability. At the same time, constructing the State as an Actor in the material processes of “showcasing” its environmental leadership and “calling on” society to participate helps legitimize the State's role in environmental protection. Thus, the slogan reproduces the ideological principle that environmental protection is a moral and religious duty and contributes to a positive representation of the ingroup as morally and religiously compliant, while environmentally irresponsible others are negatively framed as morally deficient and disobedient to God.

In ecolinguistic terms, “Your Impact Is Green” can be seen as an evaluative story that encourages sustainable practices by linking them to religious and moral accountability. This contributes to a potentially beneficial story we live by, in which caring for the environment is part of being a good citizen and believer, although it still frames nature largely in relation to human obedience and responsibility rather than as possessing intrinsic value.

C. Anthropocentric sustainability

By representing ecosystems as assets or resources, the news reports reproduce Vision 2030's anthropocentric view that environmental protection is imperative for human survival and welfare. Soil, air, water and ecosystems in general are referred to as “natural resources” thirtythree times in the corpus, as in the following example:

Arabic transliteration: *Anna al-markaz yas'ā min khilāl “Usbū' al-Bī'a” ilā īṣāl hādhihi al-mafāhīm ilā akbar sharīḥa min al-mujtama', wa-tahfīzihim li-yakūnū shurakā' fā'ilīn fī ḥimāyat al-bī'a, 'abra-iltizām bi-l-mumārasāt al-salīma ... allatī tushimu fī ḥimāyat al-mawārid al-ṭabī'iyya wa-taḥsīn jawdat al-ḥayāh. (Ṣaḥīfat al-Yawm)*

English translation: Through “Environment Week”, the Center seeks to convey these concepts to the widest possible segment of society and to motivate them to become active partners in environmental protection by committing to sound practices ... that contribute to conserving natural resources and improving quality of life. (AlYaum Newspaper)

The repeated use of “natural resources” to describe soil, air, water and ecosystems frames nature primarily as a stock of assets that exist to support economic development and human wellbeing. Protection of these resources is directly linked to improving “quality of life,” which justifies conservation in terms of human benefit rather than the rights or needs of nonhuman life, while alternative ecocentric stories in which ecosystems have value in themselves are backgrounded. Reproduction of this frame across daily newspapers helps normalize an anthropocentric stance in which sustainability is understood mainly as keeping resources available for economic growth and human comfort, in line with Vision 2030’s environmental ideology. Within this frame, government institutions and experts are constructed as rational stewards who design development-oriented environmental protection plans, while citizens are positioned as implementers of “sound practices.” As van Dijk’s work on discourse and power suggests, such discourse contributes to the legitimation of power by presenting elite control (the State and its institutions) as natural, efficient and knowledge-based, encouraging readers to see state-led, expert-driven management as the normal way to handle environmental issues and their own role mainly as compliant followers. Environmental protection is thus constructed as a technical task in the service of human development.

This anthropocentric framing aligns with what ecolinguists describe as a “resources” story, in which ecosystems are represented mainly as stocks of natural resources that serve human quality of life. Such a story can support conservation, but primarily insofar as it maintains human welfare and economic development, while more ecocentric stories that emphasize the intrinsic value or rights of nonhuman nature tend to receive little emphasis. From an ecolinguistic perspective, the coverage therefore promotes environmentally responsible behaviour, yet does so within a predominantly anthropocentric and state-centric frame, which narrows the space for alternative, more ecocentric ways of viewing human–environment relations.

5. Conclusion

This study examined how the environmental ideology articulated in Vision 2030 is represented in news reports covering the Saudi “Environment Week” campaign. Drawing on van Dijk’s sociocognitive framework of CDA and informed by ecolinguistics, it analyzed 43 news reports at both macrostructural and microlinguistic levels. The three environmental principles of Vision 2030 were treated as “stories we live by” about environmental policy and responsibility, allowing an examination of whether the coverage mainly promotes anthropocentric and state-centric narratives or also opens space for more ecocentric understandings of human–environment relations. The analysis suggests that the reports largely reflect Vision 2030’s environmental priorities: they tend to frame sustainability in anthropocentric terms, construct nature as a managed resource, present environmental protection as a moral and implicitly religious duty, and frequently position the State as the primary guardian and driving force of environmental protection.

Prominent positions in the reports, especially headlines and leads, often construct the State as the main driver and initiator of environmental action through Vision 2030 and its campaigns, while other actors are typically shown as aligned with and mobilized by that vision. The campaign slogan “Your Impact Is Green” plays a key role in linking individual responsibility to state leadership, encouraging citizens to see their actions as part of a broader national project grounded in moral and religious accountability. At the syntactic level, patterns of material processes commonly position government officials and institutions as the Actors who lead environmental protection, and the repeated attribution of their evaluative statements foregrounds environmental protection as a predominantly state-led enterprise in which officials and experts provide the most prominent voices.

A further finding concerns the representation of nature. The frequent use of the term “natural resources” to describe soil, air, water and ecosystems tends to frame nature as a stock of assets to be managed for human benefit. These resources are repeatedly linked to “quality of life” and “future generations”, so conservation is often justified in terms of human welfare and economic development rather than the intrinsic value or rights

of nonhuman life. From an ecolinguistic perspective, this pattern resembles an anthropocentric “resources” story that can support conservation, but primarily insofar as it sustains humancentered and growthoriented goals, while more ecocentric stories that recognize ecosystems as significant in their own right receive less emphasis. It should also be noted that the analysis is confined to the linguistic content of the reports and does not include semiotic analysis of accompanying images, which may carry additional ideological meanings. Taken together, these patterns indicate that the news reports help circulate an environmental discourse that is mainly anthropocentric and statecentric, broadly in line with Vision 2030’s principles. On the social and cognitive level, the coverage appears to legitimize the State’s prominent role in environmental protection and to present the environmental principles of Vision 2030 as a plausible, commonsensical framework for imagining environmental futures, while offering relatively limited discursive space for alternative, more ecocentric or communitybased ways of relating to the environment.

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