
An Ecocritical Discourse Analysis of Erasure in Cameroon Media Discourse

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ABSTRACT: This research paper investigates the ecologically abusive constructs that are realised and reinforced in the Cameroonian English Language newspaper. Analysis focuses on uncovering and resisting hidden, and overt discursive patterns encoded with ecological erasure. The data comprised thirty-five newspaper articles randomly selected from nine English Language newspaper publishers in Cameroon. The theoretical framework adopted in this research is ecocritical discourse analysis (EcoCDA). The researcher used qualitative and quantitative methods to analyse the articles. Findings revealed that the Cameroonian press used varied language patterns to conceal agents, processes and aftermaths of environmental destruction. Media practitioners, thus, mapped erasing ecosophies in ecologically manipulative discursive forms: nouns, adjectives, the passive voice, manipulative statistics, euphemisms and intertextuality. Ecological abuses uncovered and resisted include deforestation, consumerism and growth, mineral extraction and construction, inter alia. In advocacy for ecological sustainability, it is recommended that media practitioners should make conscious and concrete efforts to promote environmental protection and conservation, and above all, guard against manipulative language forms and stories that activate ecological abuse.

KEYWORDS: Ecocritical Discourse Analysis, Erasure, Ecology, Ecological abuse, Ecosophy

1. INTRODUCTION

Discourse is layered with varied meanings. The fact that language [use] is a mould of ideologies, thus, explains the diverse interpretations that addressees give a particular utterance. To advance this thought, Grice (1975 as cited in Yule 1996, p.36) avers that the ideology-welded character of language and/or discourse makes it 'non-neutral' and fluid in non-uniform contexts. Jørgensen and Philips (2002) espouse Grice (ibid) with the argument that discourse in every human interaction realises changing meanings vis-à-vis different identities, social relations, and environment interfaced with; as it plays a salient role in constructing and striving for social change. The incongruity between language use and contextual meanings justifies the reason most interlocutors hardly negotiate the intended meaning of an utterance. When an interpretation is breached, the consequence is that listeners would not be incapable of identifying and, by implication, complacent with destructive, hegemonic ideologies in discourse. It is on the basis of the forerunning gap that this work examines the hidden and undermined discursive entities that activate ecological erasure in the Cameroon English media.

Paralleling the commitment in other academic fields, contemporary environmental stakes (Climate Change and Global Warming) have become a major pre-occupation among linguistic researchers. This shift expresses profound concern for the degrading biophysical environment. This paradigm shift, termed 'Ecolinguistics', has caused science and society to experience what Stibbe (2012, p.1) brands an 'ecological turn'. The application of environmental theories and concepts to Linguistics is an exhibition of the 'ecological turn' in linguistic science. This turn has galvanised myriads of multidimensional research perspectives on the mutuality between languages and their biophysical environment. Ardrèvol-Abreu (2015, p.429) impugns the objectivity of the media in the construction of reality, given that it institutionalises social inequalities via the propagation of discriminatory ideologies (Fairclough 2001).

The concept of framing is salient in media discourse. Every media discourse has a frame, considering that it propagates a particular ideological stance; by selecting the flank of an image and/or reality to project or sheath. In the framing process, the media selects an aspect of a phenomenon to make salient. Entman (1993, pp.52-53), thus, refers to frame as a discursive process in which the media constructs "some aspects of perceived reality" by selecting, reiterating and making them prominent, while overlooking others. By so doing, the media [re]produces and reinforces a particular ideology, and in the same pattern, suppresses another. It is worth noting that the media realises framing via the expedient use of registers. In essence, frames manifest erasure by concealing and suppressing social meaning. On the basis of the latter, this research examines the ecologically erasing constructs that are reinforced in the Cameroonian English Language newspaper.

2. ERASURE IN THE MEDIA

To start with, Stibbe (2015, p.146) describes erasure as a term that is “used to indicate that something important that we should give attention to has been ignored, side-lined, or overlooked within a text or discourse”. Erasure manifests in environmental texts when the biophysical environment is marginalised or misrepresented. The erasure of the natural world in many discourses is indicative of anthropocentric ideologies and activities.

Stibbe (2003) indicts the media for [re]producing and reinforcing the discriminatory and disparaging constructs more powerful cultures impose on pigs. The constructs imposed on the pig, as a useable resource, take the form of the stigmatising metaphors, similes and idioms connected to pigs in discourses. Expressions and clusters in the likes of ‘happy as a pig in the mire’, ‘lucky pig’; ‘greedy pig’ and ‘capitalist pig’, inter alia, are referential to derogatory porcine attributes accorded non-human entities in discourse. A grammatical vehicle like ‘Adjective + Pig’, as in ‘fat pig’; ‘filthy pig’, is the linguistic currency in cultural models that stigmatise pig species with biased, unpleasant and abusive meanings. The adjectival ‘filthy pig’ implies pigs are filthy, and so, mappings of pig metaphors into human entities are meant to [re]produce an abuse(s). These abusive metaphors that transcend to physical abuses on pigs, thus, infringe the existential rights of the pig as a natural entity. This presupposes that the media frames pig slaughter as an environment tidying plan.

Moreover, as a form of media discourse, advertising has been identified as and reprimanded for undermining environmental sustainability. Stibbe (2003) appraises advertising language as a hidden tool used by media practitioners to propagate the ecologically devastating drives of capitalists. It has been uncovered that media advertisers employ catchy, but manipulative language constructs that blur the cognition of their audience to the dangers of nature exploitation. This language sways the audience towards hyper-consumption of industrial (manufactured) products; that some ecolinguists consider ‘unnecessary’ (Stibbe, *ibid*, p.38). Discursive configurations that boost unsatisfactory consumption are referred to as ‘pseudo-satisfier discourse’. Advertising language that conditions human psyche to over-consume spurs production, which in turn elicits cumulative environmental risks in the form of over-exploitation of natural resources and pollution. The media has been proven, therefore, to frame consumerism by adopting manipulative language and semiotic resources that transfer the virtues of natural entities to a manufactured product. In the face of this ecological devastation, Cox (2006, p.373) perceives the modelling of corporate products with the image or values of an environmental entity as ‘green marketing’.

An unnoticed form of ecological erasure Lakoff (2010) has uncovered is the scanty production of environmental frames in the media, like in politics. The paucity of suitably adequate frames that project the reality of environmental depletion is what Lakoff (*ibid*, p.76) refers to as ‘hypocognition’. Environmentalism in media and political discourses is appraised as ‘hypocognitive’ on account of the dichotomy that is created between nature and humanity. When the human environment is framed as separate from the global physical environment, it thus, validates an agenda of use and exhaustion of the biophysical environment. In effect, the media is cautioned to be eco-conscious and sustainability-driven by framing ideal ‘environmental actions’: using less energy, driving less, walking more, and so on.

Japhet and Komolafe’s (2015) study of ecological consciousness in the Nigerian media is an indictment of the Nigerian press for erasing the environment in their publications. In spite of the current environmental problems (deforestation, pollution and soil erosion) to which the Nigerian rural and metropolis are victims, the Nigerian press displays persistent nonchalance to environmental preservation by devoting unwavering attention to events and debates in politics, sports and entertainment. In an event where the environment is selectively evoked, it is often a post-disaster coverage(s) that exposes the press as lacking in proactiveness to natural disasters. Such post-disaster framings have been considered by eco-critics overt complacency with the ecological threats hitting Nigeria and the world. In line with this blame, Ityavyar and Tyav (2013, as cited in Japhet and Komolafe, *ibid*) are worried that the Nigerian press is wanting in its mission to inform and educate Nigerians on critical environmental issues; most especially on concrete actions that contribute to the restoration of ecological sanity.

Ecolinguistics is still a nascent paradigm in Cameroon, and to the best of the researchers understanding, as far as critical linguistic analysis of ecological abuse and dominance in the Cameroonian media is concerned, the thin indigenous literature on this subject is drawn from Acha (2022); who investigates anthropocentrism (ecological dominance) in the Cameroonian newspaper. With recourse to the ecocritical discourse analytical framework, this study uncovers to resist what Gramsci (1991, as cited in Acha, 2021, p.176) terms ‘taken-for-granted’ discourse practices that reinforce human dominance over the biophysical environment. The analysis of the thirty-five Cameroonian newspaper articles of English Language expression used in this research revealed that the Cameroonian press makes tactful use of pragma-linguistic resources (pronouns, verbs, transitivity, personification and jargon) to [re]produce and legitimise dominance in the guise of deforestation, consumerism and growth, mineral extraction and construction, inter alia. From these findings, it is cautioned that media language that evokes nature should not be considered neutral. The difference between the current study and the latter is that, unlike the latter which dwell on ecologically oppressive language, the former rather checks language categories encoded with extinction motifs.

3. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ecocritical Discourse Analysis (EcoCDA) was adopted as the framework of analysis for this work. The EcoCDA is efficacious in uncovering what Abdul Jabar and Kaariah (2017, p.358) conceptualises as ‘hidden and transparent’ language used in the Cameroonian newspaper that is encoded with ecologically erasing constructs. Fairclough’s (1989) tributary approach to the CDA is the paradigm used to analyse the ‘green discourse’ selected. Lechevrel (2009, p.8) appraises the Faircloughian approach as ‘Eco-critical Discourse Analysis’ model that has the propensity to uncover and resist neutral language patterns marked with nature extinction ideologies. The EcoCDA model, in a nutshell, questions the disproportionate power relationships between humans and the larger ecological systems that sustain terrestrial life.

4. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Considering that this work focuses on the critical analysis of linguistic and contextual threads that activate ecological exclusion and oppression in Cameroonian newspaper discourses, the quantitative and qualitative method were adopted. The population of this study consists of English Language newspaper articles that propagate erasure. Note be taken that the population chosen for this study is not an entire newspaper, but suitable articles framing ecological extinction. The data constituted thirty-five (35) newspaper articles extracted from nine (09) newspaper publishers of English expression, as presented below.

Table 1: Classification of Erasure Newspaper Articles Used

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

Bearing in mind that time is not a factor sustained in this work, the data does not represent a synchronic or diachronic survey, but rather, simply an arbitrary selection that suits the objectives of this study. It is to this effect that the judgmental sampling technique was used to select the newspaper. Each edition of the newspapers was selected based on the availability of an environmental article(s) exhibiting the discursive patterns and ecological frames: natural resource exploitation (deforestation, fishing and hunting, etcetera); industrialisation and economic growth (consumerism and pollution)] that are germane to this work. While most of the data were news articles [of general interest], a few others were advertorials.

The data were classified and labelled vis-à-vis serial number of the newspaper (publisher), publisher’s name, publication number and date and title of the article number. To facilitate sourcing each article, reference was made to the serial number of the newspaper and the article number concerned only, say [8. 32], which refers to *The Green Reporter*, article 32.

5. ANALYSIS OF DATA AND DISCUSSIONS

Discussions here shift to the analysis of discursive categories that [re]produce and reinforce ecological erasure in Cameroonian newspaper discourse. By erasure, interest is on discourse practices that reverberate with consumerism, construction, natural resource exploitation and industrialisation (economic growth), among others. Five discursive (three formal and two contextual) entities are identified and discussed in the thirty-five newspaper articles collected.

5.1 Nouns Realising Erasure

The nouns analysed here were identified as dangers posed to some ecosystems. Such nouns are the lexical categories being modified (qualified) in word clusters. The natural entities threatened by the activities inherent in the nouns include biosphere, non-human animals and the forest. The first group of nouns identified was semantically laden with activities that pose a threat to Cameroon’s biosphere. These nouns are calibrated with destructive activities that range from pollution to mutilation of the country’s biosphere via consumerism, industrialisation, mining and construction. The thirty-five biosphere-erasing nouns were analysed below.

Table 2: Statistics of Nouns Marking Erosion of Biosphere

<i>Head Word</i>	<i>Erasing Noun</i>
<i>most littered</i>	<i>areas</i>
<i>garbage</i>	<i>cans</i>
<i>fire</i>	<i>explosion</i>
<i>fire</i>	<i>disaster</i>
<i>gas</i>	<i>emission</i>
<i>oil</i>	<i>extraction</i>
<i>building</i>	<i>materials</i>
<i>fired</i>	<i>bricks</i>
<i>earth</i>	<i>blocks</i>
<i>ecological cement</i>	<i>blocks</i>
<i>marble</i>	<i>project</i>
<i>local</i>	<i>economy</i>
<i>fire</i>	<i>explosion</i>
<i>gas</i>	<i>company</i>
<i>petroleum</i>	<i>project</i>
<i>industrial</i>	<i>gas</i>
<i>petroleum</i>	<i>framework</i>
<i>petroleum</i>	<i>companies</i>
<i>artisanal</i>	<i>miners</i>
<i>illegal</i>	<i>mining/miners</i>
<i>mining</i>	<i>sites</i>
<i>industrial</i>	<i>site</i>
<i>copper</i>	<i>assets</i>
<i>mine</i>	<i>disasters</i>
<i>gold-mine</i>	<i>flood</i>
<i>bomb</i>	<i>blast</i>
<i>bomb</i>	<i>explosion</i>
<i>explosive</i>	<i>device</i>
<i>skin</i>	<i>burns</i>
<i>plastic</i>	<i>waste</i>
<i>plastic</i>	<i>bags</i>
<i>oil</i>	<i>spill</i>
<i>toxic</i>	<i>dumping</i>
<i>oil</i>	<i>wells</i>

In the corpus, it was realised that thirty-five nouns were used as labels for the plethora of destructive activities carried out in the environment. These eroding nouns referred to different acts of violence, pains and injustices perpetrated against the biophysical environment: *explosion*, *emission*, *extraction*, *burns*, *spills* and *dumping*, inter alia. The ideologies inherent in, transmitted and reinforced by the nouns above are characteristically abusive to the ecosystem. They implicate the pollution and defacement of Cameroon's land, waters and atmosphere.

The second group identified, comprising twenty-six nouns, realises the exploitation and marketisation of the country's forest riches. These nouns denote different activities that wear out Cameroon's forest resources, as presented in the table that follows.

Table 3: Statistics of Nouns Marking Erosion of the Forest

<i>Head Word</i>	<i>Erasing Noun</i>
<i>Forest</i>	<i>resources</i>
<i>forest</i>	<i>sector</i>
<i>communal</i>	<i>forest</i>
<i>community</i>	<i>forest</i>
<i>timber</i>	<i>products</i>
<i>value</i>	<i>addition</i>
<i>flagship forest</i>	<i>products</i>
<i>logs of</i>	<i>timber</i>
<i>non-timber</i>	<i>products</i>
<i>exploitable</i>	<i>forest</i>
<i>forest</i>	<i>exploitation</i>
<i>forest</i>	<i>resources</i>
<i>community</i>	<i>forest</i>

forest	<i>revenue</i>
wood	<i>exploiters</i>
wood	<i>fair</i>
log	<i>processing</i>
logging	<i>tax</i>
logging	<i>companies</i>
logging	<i>sector</i>
wood	<i>sector</i>
logging	<i>industry</i>
cedar	<i>felling</i>
logging	<i>bans</i>
wood	<i>importer</i>
deforestation	<i>rate</i>

As seen in Table 3, the twenty-six nouns refer to different forms of activities that reinforce forest exploitation in Cameroon. Nominal groups involving timber or forest *product*; forest *exploitation*; wood *exploiters*; forest *revenue*; log *processing*; logging *company/industry*; cedar *felling*; wood *importer*, and many others, thus denote activities that activate anthropocentric motivation and/or exploitation of the country's forest worth. Basically, market and growth interests (signalled by nouns like *revenue*, *resource*, *processing*, *industry* and *importer*) are propelling the *exploitation* and *felling* of the country's *forest*.

The third group of nouns was interpreted as having some affinity with activities that endanger non-human animal species. These nouns, thus, echoed different forms of perils that confront Cameroon's wildlife, livestock and fisheries, as in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Statistics of Nouns Marking Erosion of Non-human Animals

Head Word	Erasing Noun
Live	<i>stock</i>
fisheries	<i>sector</i>
livestock	<i>project</i>
fish	<i>imports</i>
fish	<i>farming</i>
frozen	<i>fish</i>
dairy	<i>products</i>
fish	<i>production</i>
meat	<i>production</i>
nutritional	<i>security</i>
elephant tusk	<i>traffickers</i>
food	<i>security</i>
food	<i>systems</i>
food	<i>production</i>
global food	<i>markets</i>
fish	<i>farming</i>
sustainable water	<i>management</i>

The seventeen nouns identified above project activities that enhance erasure. These nouns are semantically encoded with the consumption and marketisation of non-human animals, notably wildlife, livestock and fish species. The use of nouns in phrasal groups like fisheries *sector*; livestock *project*; fish *product[ion]*; and meat *production*, are indicative of principal economic activities that are deleterious to the survival of fish and other animal species. These lexes reflect capitalistic ideologies advocating economic growth via the consumption of nature, thus, framing consumerism.

From the statistics above, it is observed that the dominance of nouns framing ecological erasure emanates from the operation of many ecologically eroding economic activities that relate to construction, extraction and industrialisation in the biophysical environment.

5.2 Adjectives Highlighting Erasure

These adjectives are lexical categories that quantify and derogate different acts and effects of environmental degradation perpetuated by human beings. The forty-five determiners identified involved the use of erasing adjectives denoting the volume, depth, impression and physical attribute related to the destruction of different spheres of Cameroon's ecosystems. Three groups of adjectives were analysed, and are encoded with different ecologically eroding activities.

Out of the forty-five adjectives identified in this segment of the corpus, it was observed that sixteen (35.55 percent) were markers of ecologically erasing ideologies, notably natural resource exploitation, industrialisation and construction. These adjectives were attributive to the gravity and depth of ecological abuses, as in the examples below.

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[1] *The economic damage caused by **plastic** waste is **vast*** (*The Green Reporter*, Vol. 1, No. 020 of October 2019, p4)

[2] *Children in the **biggest carbon-emitting** countries are the healthiest, while those with the **lowest** emissions suffer twofold from **poor** health* (*The Green Reporter*, Vol. 1, No. 023 of March 2020, p10)

[3] *... the Amazon Region has been hit by one of the **worst oil** spills in decades* (*Eco-Outlook*, No. 031 of 20/07/2020, p12)

The use of adjectival threads like *plastic waste* and *biggest carbon-emitting countries*, and *lowest emissions*, from [1] and [2] respectively, thus, points to the grave consequences of industrialisation. Nonetheless, the phrase *worst oil spills* uncovers the dangers of oil exploitation in the biophysical environment. Complementary to the quantifying determiners above, this segment also had attributive phrases like *heavy material damages*; *illegal artisanal miners*; *serious air pollution*; and *unpleasant sight of plastics*. The italicised adverse attributes are indicative of the nature and gravity of abusive undertakings, and their effects on the country's natural environment.

Moreover, twelve (26.67 percent) other determiners were pejorative attributes invested with consumerism, economic growth and marketisation of nature. The use of some of these qualifiers is presented thus:

[4] *The sector which has **enormous** potentials still remains **untapped** to its optimum* (*Cameroon Tribune*, No. 11931/8130 of 19/09/2019, p19)

[5] *minister ... lamented the **massive** importation of **food** products which Cameroon could produce and export* (*The Sun*, No. 0613 of 23/07/2020, p6)

[6] *rice, maize and **frozen** fish are still being imported in **large** quantities* (*The Sun*, No. 0613 of 23/07/2020, p6)

The highlighted adjectives above harbour consumerism-enhancing ideologies. The meaning gathered from the use of adjectives in clusters like *domestic production* has remained *limited*; *large quantities* of *frozen fish*; and *massive* importation of *food* products reinforce unrestrained consumerism and economic growth via marketisation of nature. In essence, these adjectives activated frames that are inimical to the existence of Cameroon's biodiversity.

The third group of determiners, with a frequency of twelve (26.67 percent), refers to lexical selections that quantify and qualify the exploitation of the country's forest resources.

[7] ***logs of timber** and **non-timber** products / are **exploited** in **huge** quantities* (*Cameroon Business Today*, No. 107 of 22-28/05/2019, p6)

[8] *Not least, **illegal** logging, driven by demand from the world's **largest wood** importer: China* (*The Median*, No. 391 of 15/06/2020, p6)

[9] *... there were officially 103 species ... all classified as **rare/vulnerable** and **endangered*** (*The Green Reporter*, Vol. 1, No. 020 of October 2019, p5)

In this category, it was realised that adjectival phrases like *logs of timber*; *exploited in huge quantities*; *marketable forest species*; *worst case of illegal cedar felling*; *largest wood importer*; and *notorious trafficker* bespeak the dangers of human activities, especially forest exploitation, to the survival of the ecosystem. In all, these determiners are ecologically erasing by dint of realising large scale exploitation and saleability of Cameroon's forest resources. Parallel with other adjectives discussed hitherto, they express the breadth and depth of endangerment of Cameroon's forests.

In all, the statistics above reveal that adjectives activating deforestation and exploitation of forest resources were the most recurrent, with a frequency of seventeen (37.78 percent). The prevalence of forest-erasing adjectives in this segment surmises the beleaguered and precarious existence of Cameroon's forest that needs protection.

5.3 The Passive Voice

Moreover, it was observed that the use of the passive voice by reporters was not autotelic, but rather, a conscious act to obscure the subject(s) or agent(s) of environmental abuses in utterances. It is powerfully manipulative for syntactic forms to passivise verbs encoded with ecologically abusive actions. These structures divert public attention from the actors (perpetrators), and focus on the actions or effects by projecting them as subjects.

Amidst the twenty-five instances of passive voice identified, eleven (44 percent) of them obfuscate agents of mineral exploitation, industrialisation and construction. This analysis is exemplified by the following utterances extracted from the corpus.

[10] *As for non-timber forest products, **processing is still done on a small scale*** (*Cameroon Business Today*, No. 107 of 22-28/05/2019, p11)

[11] *Phase one ... focuses on ... providing housing to **those whose houses were burnt down*** (*The Eden*, No. 1167 of 06/07/2020, p4)

[12] ***some 11,000 ha of hydro-agricultural and fish farming sites will be established within the next few years*** (*The Eden*, No. 1169 of 13/07/2020, p6)

[13] *Reports indicate that **some forest areas were converted during the construction works on the project*** (*The Green Reporter*, Vol. 1, No. 020 of October 2019, p5)

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As seen in [10] above, reporters gave prominence to an abusive act (timber processing), tactfully omitting the performers (agency) of this abuse. In [11], the reporter rather projected victims of arson, thus, shading the image of arsonists who devastate biosphere with pollution. Meanwhile, in [12] and [13], journalists framed the devastated states of nature, as a result, blurring their causes. In the latter, devastated natural landscapes (*11,000 ha of hydro-agricultural and fish farming sites*) and shattered forest areas (*some forest areas*) are respectively presented as subject (agency) of the utterance to cover and decriminalise the environmental aggressors implicated in these acts.

Ten (40 percent) instances were also deployed to render consumers and marketers of nature redundant. The passive voice of perpetrators of consumerism and commercialisation of nature is manifest below.

[14] *With the social and political crisis ... much of Bamenda's waste is dumped at random* (Cameroon Tribune, No. 11863/8062 of 13/06/2019, p4)

[15] *Agricultural and fisheries products ... are still being imported* (Cameroon Business Today, No. 162 of 01-07/07/2020, p11)

[16] *Plastics are not biodegradable and the rate at which they are produced and not recycled, they remain in the environment for long* (The Green Reporter, Vol. 1, No. 020 of October 2019, p4)

In the utterances above, consumerism-related effects and affected natural entities are magnified as themes, omitting their perpetrators. In [14] and [16], for instance, *much of Bamenda's waste* and *plastics*, the aftermath of consumerism, are respectively deployed as subjects, with purpose of shielding those who respectively dump the waste and produce plastics. As for [15], transformed natural categories, *Agricultural and fisheries products*, calibrated with consumerism are rather projected, suppressing the image of their importers. In essence, this manipulation points to the complicity between the press and capitalists to advocate consumerism and marketisation of nature.

Instances that realise the passive voice of forest exploiters are scanty, with occurrence four (16 percent) instances. These few instances were used to discuss exploited forest entities without revealing the identity of the exploiters. See the excerpt below.

[17] *One of such resources is the forest wherein logs of timber and non-timber products are exploited in huge quantities* (Cameroon Business Today, No. 107 of 22-28/05/2019, p6)

Parallel to other constructs in this segment of the corpus, the syntax of [17] is robust in manipulation, as it rather frames the importance of timber and (finished) timber products, downplaying the exploiters and the effects of their forest abuses. The discursive act of withholding the identity of forest (timber) exploiters is in collusion with marketers expediting the erosion of the country's forest riches. In effect, without naming to shame, the concealment of agents of environmental aggression is tacit aggravation of ecological injustice, thus, erasure.

5.4 Use of Statistical Information

The use of statistical information was also apparent in the corpus. This statistical information pertaining to time, measuring units and estimates was used to achieve a manipulative effect. This manipulation was in two ways: figures downplaying the intensity of natural living standards brought about by industrialisation via consumerism. The statistics identified underpin the ecologically erasing ideologies.

The most recurrent statistics in this segment are those reproducing and reinforcing consumerism, economic growth and marketisation of nature. Recording dominance of eight (50 percent), the use of statistical information on the latter abuses was imminent in the following utterances:

[18] *Meat production rose only by 9.78 percent ... from 313,000 tons in 2011 to 334,000 tons in 2016* (Cameroon Tribune, No. 11931/8130 of 19/09/2019, p19)

[19] *close to 40 emerging markets and developing economies ... have GDP growth rate of above 5 percent* (Cameroon Business Today, No. 127 of 16-22/10/2019, p24)

[20] *Some 11,000 ha ... 5,000 ha of fish farming sites will be developed* (The Sun, No. 0613 of 23/07/2020, p6)

In [18], the reporter overlooks the surge in consumerism (meat consumption) as it is considered to be a negligible increase of *only by 9.78 percent ... from 313,000 tons in 2011 to 334,000 tons in 2016*. The rate (9.78 percent) may seem infinitesimal, but observing the equivalence in (313,000-334,000) tons, it is found that the rate of consumerism (meat consumption) has recorded a devastating increase. The reporter uses this rate to manipulate, as they give a negligible figure about the rate of consumerism, thus toning down effect-related fears that could have been sparked by this unrestrained consumption of meat. To add, larger figures as in [19] relating to the rise of *40 emerging markets and developing economies having GDP growth rate of above 5 percent*, and [20] vis-à-vis the development of *5,000 ha of fish farming sites*, signal the alarming consumption (of fish and other non-human animals) in the country. The locution behind these figures was to give the impression that economic growth and marketisation improved living standards.

The statistical information relating to mineral extraction, industrialisation and construction, on the one hand, and deforestation, on another, are the least used. This is analysed in the following excerpts:

[21] *The fire consumed 70,769,400 litres of stocks-fuel as the company had ... an eight-month periodic work stoppage*

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(Cameroon Business Today, No. 127 of 16-22/10/2019, p24)

[22] investigations into the socio-environmental impact of the construction of the dam say **from 2012 when it was launched to 2018, 36,000 ha of forest have been destroyed** (The Median, No. 391 of 15/06/2020, p6)

The statistical information (70,769,400 litres of stocks-fuel) in [21] is representative of the unsustainable, exaggerated extraction of fuel in Cameroon. In like manner, the 36,000 ha of [destroyed] forest is a sharp pointer to the fact that construction (of dams, roads and other infrastructure) is ecologically unfriendly, therefore, erasing of the biophysical environment. The figure above was meant to project an insignificant dimension of land polluted as compared to the total land surface of the earth. In a nutshell, statistical data was used to minimise and/or manipulate the gravity of environmental damage perpetrated by extraction and construction companies.

5.5 Euphemisms

Euphemism was also uncovered as a powerful, manipulative tool used by newspaper reporters to transmit ecologically devastating ideologies. Twenty-nine (29) instances of euphemisms were identified. Varied language patterns were churned out by reporters to assuage ecologically erasing activities and actions in the different facets of the country's ecosystem. These patterns ranged from the use of superordinates, antonyms, registers and expressions that mitigated the gravity and effects of erasure.

Statistics revealed that the most recurrent instances of euphemism were used in discourses about mineral extraction, industrialisation and construction. This preponderance was peculiar as it bore different patterns, as presented below.

[23] **The incident** [fire] triggered the movement of gov't ministers (Cameroon Tribune, No. 11856/8055 of 03/06/2019, p4)

[24] Its chief objective was to **treat crude oil and supply refined petroleum products** (Cameroon Tribune, No. 11856/8055 of 03/06/2019, p4)

[25] ... the environment will be **safer with reduced polluting gas emissions** (Cameroon Business Today, No. 110 of 19-25/06/2019, p11)

[26] Yet across advanced economies ... there is a **softening of economic activities** (Cameroon Business Today, No. 127 of 16-22/10/2019, p24)

It was euphemistic and, so, manipulative to find reporters using neutral and superordinate nouns, for instance 'incident(s)' in [23], to downplay the gravity of an ecologically endangering fire disaster resulting from the transformation of petroleum. It was equally common to find reporters making preference to ideal-encoded registers to shade abusive activities. This is reminiscent of [24] in which mineral transformation is constructed in terms of value addition; treatment and refinement. As for [25] and [26], inoffensive language took the form of unspecified (and insignificant) reductions in economic activities. This reductionist tendency was meant to give faint hope about conscious efforts to guarantee the survival of nature, whereas exploitation is still deepening immeasurably.

In addition, the mitigation of acts of consumerism and deforestation followed with (17.24 percent) instances each. To start with, acts of consumerism were lessened using coinages and manipulative collocations, some of which are illustrated in [27] and [28] below.

[27] ... that poultry accounted for 34.38 percent of ... **overall meat production** (Cameroon Tribune, No. 11931/8130 of 19/09/2019, p19)

[28] ... significant potential for different types of **aquaculture and livestock project** (Cameroon Tribune, No. 11931/8130 of 19/09/2019, p19)

In the two instances above, *livestock projects* and *meat production*, just as *fish imports*, are mitigating coinages and/or collocations that cover up acts of consumerism with notions of project, importation and production that expedite economic growth.

As concerns discourse on forest exploitation, the most prominent mitigation technique found was the use of hyponyms. The use of hyponyms, most often with a nuance that is unclear to the audience, was used as a manipulative device, as below.

[29] ... the local management committees **most often give out the forest to timber companies** (Cameroon Business Today, No. 107 of 22-28/05/2019, p11)

[30] The president of Cameroon **Loggers' Association** ... expressed the concerns of operators in the [logging] sector (Municipal Updates, Vol. 3, No. 083 of 20/07/2020, p5)

[31] **Loggers have taken all of the cedar**, leaving scrawny pines and eviscerated soil in their wake (The Green Reporter, Vol. 1, No. 020 of October 2019, p5)

In [29] and [30], the reporters use the hyponyms *timber* and *log* to omit overt references to exploited forest or wood. In the two instances cited hitherto, the respective nominal groups, *timber companies* and *loggers' association*, the nouns *companies* and *loggers* were mitigations for 'exploiters' of the forest. In [31], nonetheless, the reporter literally constructed forest exploitation as a mere act of 'taking'; decriminalising illegal and unsustainable forest exploitation.

5.6 Intertextuality

Intertextuality was another outstanding discursive device used by Cameroonian reporters to frame biased ecological meanings. This involves all references reporters made to other texts (laws, magazines, official statements and cultures) in their environmental reports. Fourteen (14) instances of intertextuality were identified in the corpus. Intertextuality was marked with expressions indicating information source: 'according to ...'; '... said [that]'; '... revealed/ states/ notes/ indicates that'. It was, thus, understood to be a powerful, exculpating tool used by reporters to justify ecologically erasing courses of action and biased ideologies (re)produced and reinforced in newspaper discourse. These references also protected the ideological stance of text producers.

The most dominant use of intertextuality was referent to mineral extraction, industrialisation and construction, with frequency of nine (64.29 percent). Reporters deployed it to distance themselves pretentiously from the acts of nature exploitation and industrialisation being reported, exemplified follow.

[32] **Cameroonian officials are said to have contacted Russian traders for the importation of Fuel** (*Municipal Updates*, Vol. 3, No. 083 of 20/07/2020, p2)

[33] **According to the outlined schedule, some 5,000 ha (of fish farms) will be developed between 2020 & 2025** (*The Sun*, No. 0613 of 23/07/2020, p6)

[34] **According to the 2019 Global Status Report for Building and Construction, almost 40 percent of energy-related greenhouse gas emissions are from the building and construction Sector** (*The Green Reporter*, Vol. 1, No. 023 of March 2020, p8)

[35] **... there are thousands of oil wells in the region that spill equivalent to 4,000 gallons (15,000 litres) per day, according to Amazon Frontlines** (*Eco-Outlook*, No. 031 of 20/07/2020, p12)

The utterances above suggest that this pragmatic tool was desirous of a distancing effect; as reporters wanted their Cameroonian audience to consider the capitalistic ideologies of mineral exploitation, industrialisation and construction they projected not as theirs, but rather as those of the texts evoked.

References to texts about the exploitation of forest resources is the scantiest in the corpus, with two (14.29 percent) negligibly instances. A very striking aspect here is the vindication of forest exploitation (by domestic and foreign forest exploitation companies) with recourse to laws, as below.

[36] **A CIFOR study ... reveals that ... forest and wildlife revenue-sharing models have not adequately achieved the policy objectives** (*Cameroon Business Today*, No. 107 of 22-28/05/2019, p11)

[37] **The 1994 law on forest exploitation ... introduced a participatory approach to the management of forest resources** (*Cameroon Business Today*, No. 107 of 22-28/05/2019, p6)

Such references are inimical to the survival of the country's forest wealth, given that agents of forest exploitation are constructed as acting in compliance with and protected by Cameroon's legal framework. By and large, the use of intertextuality fosters ecological erasure in that its justifying intent, therefore, decriminalises capitalists' environmentally abusive activities reported. In all, analysis revealed that the use of formal and contextual resources in Cameroonian newspaper discourse was not fortuitous; nonetheless, it was meant to realise and propagate ideologies that render nature unsustainable: consumerism, natural resource exploitation, industrialisation (economic growth) and construction. In line with Stibbe (2015), criticism that exposes discourses and stories that [re]produce and reinforce ecologically deleterious ideologies is an effective form of resistance against speciesism (ecological domination) as enacted by powerful discourses.

6. CONCLUSION

Critical analysis of the erasing discourse selected for this study uncovered manipulative discourse patterns and ecologically abusive ideologies that should be resisted and replaced. Findings showed that Cameroonian newspaper journalists encode ecologically erasing ideologies in linguistic or pragmatic discursive entities. In effect, analysis revealed that nouns, adjectives, passive voice, statistical information, euphemism and intertextuality were powerful devices adopted by Cameroonian newspaper reporters to manipulate and/or distort ecological ideologies. In pursuance of environmental justice (protection and conservation), and espousal to other works in the ecocritical paradigm, this research work exposes and refutes ecologically biased, though taken-for-granted erasing constructs in Cameroonian newspaper discourse. Results had it that language was tactfully used to realise and propagate ideologies that either distort the ideals of nature or compromise the survival and sustainability of the biophysical environment. Discursive choices in lexical, syntactic and pragmatic forms, thus, activated ecologically destructive ideologies: exploitation (of forests and other natural resources), minerals extraction, consumerism and industrialisation (growth), inter alia.

Cognizant of the pivotal role the media plays in constructing and reinforcing of social change, if the media continues to propagate ecologically abusive ideologies, it is evident that global efforts to contain the ongoing ecological collapse will be futile; ecologically depleting activities will proceed and the natural environment will continue to retrograde, eventually, exacerbating the globally changing and warming climate. As a powerful conduit of activism, the Cameroonian media must join hands with its

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international counterpart to advocate ecological protection, and above all, the importance of conserving nature for posterity. Environmental advocacy in the Cameroonian media would yield more concrete results if environmentally idealising and moralising stories are frequently covered, and in positive discourse forms.

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