Transitivity Structures and Ecological Ideology in the *Awig-Awig* of Désa Adat Denpasar: An Ecolinguistic and Systemic Functional Linguistics Approach

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Abstract*

This study explores the ecological values embedded in the awig-awig of Désa Adat Denpasar by combining insights from ecolinguistics, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), and Arne Naess's ecosophy. The analysis focuses on how the transitivity system encodes the community's ecological worldview through choices of process types, participant roles, and circumstantial elements. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, several clauses from the awig-awig are examined to reveal how linguistic patterns represent obligations related to environmental care. The findings show that material processes foreground concrete ecological duties, such as maintaining vegetation and performing ritual actions in agricultural or sacred spaces. Behavioral processes highlight embodied ethical practices that frame ritual discipline as part of ecological harmony. In contrast, existential processes affirm the presence of environmental spaces, such as the telajakan, as entities that must be preserved. These linguistic patterns indicate that the awig-awig operates not only as a regulatory text but as a cultural medium through which ecological ethics are shaped and transmitted. The study concludes that integrating ecolinguistics, SFL, and ecosophy offers a productive framework for understanding how customary discourse sustains ecological awareness and relational ethics within Balinese communities

1. Introduction

Research on the relationship between language and the environment has continued to expand as global concern for ecological sustainability grows. Ecolinguistics has emerged as a field that seeks to reveal how language not only reflects human connections with the natural world but also shapes ecological ways of thinking within a community (Fill, 2001; Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2001). Within this framework, language is understood as a form of social practice that influences everyday environmental behavior. Stibbe (2015, 2021) emphasizes that discourse carries ideological power capable of shaping ecological attitudes, whether constructively or destructively. Consequently, examining language within its social and cultural context becomes essential for understanding how ecological values are constructed and transmitted across generations.

One approach that enriches ecolinguistic analysis is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Halliday (1985) argues that language is a resource for making meaning and is always used within particular contexts, including ecological ones. Within the ideational metafunction, language represents human experience, including interactions with the natural environment (Halliday, 1992,

2001). This perspective aligns with Haugen's (1972) view of ecolinguistics as an interplay between linguistic ecology and human behavior. Integrating SFL into ecolinguistic inquiry, therefore, allows for a more detailed examination of linguistic structures that reveal environmental values and ideologies.

In Balinese culture, *awig-awig*, as customary regulations, plays an important role in directing social behaviour and shaping how people relate to their environment. These texts serve not only as sources of normative guidance but also as reflections of the Indigenous community's cosmology and ecological philosophy. Using the SFL framework, especially the transitivity system, it is possible to examine how actions, processes, and environmental relations are systematically represented. This perspective is consistent with the view of Bang & Trampe (2014), who emphasise the need to trace linguistic forms that support ecological awareness. A structural and functional analysis of awig-awig is therefore relevant for understanding how ideas of sustainability are embedded and maintained through customary norms.

In addition, the ecosophical philosophy introduced by Arne Næss (1973, 1990) offers an ethical foundation for understanding how communities build harmonious relationships with their environment. Ecosophy highlights the importance of sustainability, balance, and respect for all living beings, values that are often reflected in customary regulations across the Indonesian archipelago. When *awig-awig* texts are examined from this perspective, it becomes evident that customary language is not only normative but also carries ideological force in shaping ecological relationships. The integration of ecosophy, ecolinguistics, and SFL provides a three-layered approach for interpreting ecological values in traditional texts. This combination allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the linguistic and cultural practices of Balinese communities.

A range of studies on awig-awig has been conducted, including those by Widiana et al. (2023) and Atmaja (2020) from anthropological perspectives; by Praditha (2024), Yoga (2023), Fauzi et al. (2024), Widiana et al. (2023), and Junia (2023) in the field of customary law; and by Dewi (2021), Landrawan and Juliawan (2022) within sociological frameworks. Linguistic examinations have also emerged, such as Umiyati's (2023) analysis of flora and fauna lexicons in awig-awig texts. Nonetheless, ecolinguistic research on *awig-awig* remains limited, especially work that incorporates a detailed linguistic framework such as the SFL transitivity system, as illustrated in Mahardika (2025). Previous ecolinguistic studies have tended to focus on media discourse, policy documents, or educational texts, leaving customary discourse comparatively underexplored, with only a few exceptions such as Luan and Zhang (2024). This gap underscores that ecological representation in customary legal texts has not yet been examined in sufficient depth, methodologically or theoretically. For this reason, the present study seeks to address the gap through a more systematic linguistic analysis.

The urgency of this study lies in its attempt to reveal how customary regulations articulate ecological values through specific linguistic choices. By integrating ecolinguistics, ecosophy, and Halliday's SFL, the study can describe in detail the configuration of processes, participants, and circumstances that construct ecological meaning in the *awig-awig*. This approach offers both theoretical and practical contributions to research on environmental preservation grounded in local knowledge. It also provides a new lens for understanding how customary norms function as linguistic mechanisms that shape ecological behaviour within Balinese communities. For these reasons, the study is significant for the development of ecolinguistics in Indonesia and for broader efforts in cultural and environmental conservation.

2. Research Methods
2.1 Theoretical Framework

Ecolinguistic inquiry begins from the idea that language does not merely mirror reality but also shapes how people understand and treat their environment. Since Haugen (1972) introduced the term language ecology, scholars have increasingly viewed language as part of a wider network of social and ecological life. Fill and Mühlhäusler (2001) further strengthened this view by demonstrating that a community's linguistic choices reflect its relationship with the natural world. (Stibbe, 2015, 2021) even argues that every discourse carries "stories" that may cultivate ecological awareness or, conversely, encourage harmful behaviour. This theoretical orientation provides space for reading customary texts such as *awig-awig* as mediums through which ecological values are preserved and passed from one generation to the next.

In the context of environmental philosophy, Næss's concept of ecosophy offers a deeper perspective. Næss (1973, 1989, 1990) emphasizes that every community possesses its own ecological value principles, shaped by its lived experiences and ways of life. These principles are not merely abstract norms, but manifest in the form of rules, rituals, and the ways communities organize their living spaces. Recent studies show that many Indigenous groups employ traditional legal texts as a means to preserve their natural environments. Therefore, when Balinese *awig-awig* articulates prohibitions, rules, or provisions related to living space, they can be read as part of a local ecosophy that situates nature within a cosmic balance.

To understand how ecological values are expressed through language, Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) offers an analytical approach that fits particularly well. Halliday explains that language works as a system of choices through which people represent their experiences (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) argue that the transitivity system provides a conceptual framework for uncovering how a text structures its representations of actions, participants, and circumstances, thereby showing how meaning is shaped by its wider social context. By examining process types, participants, and circumstances, researchers can see how ecological responsibilities are framed, such as who is expected to care for the environment, what kinds of actions are required or restricted, and the situations in which these actions occur. Often, these small linguistic details become crucial for understanding how ecological values are shaped and maintained.

The integration of ecolinguistics, ecosophy, and SFL provides a framework for understanding the *awig-awig* of Désa Adat Denpasar not simply as a corpus of customary law but as a textual site where ecological values are articulated and sustained. The perspective advanced by Bang et al. (2007), which emphasizes language's capacity to shape and direct human action, reinforces this interpretive stance. When the *awig-awig* outlines how members of the community should engage with their natural surroundings, it does more than issue instructions or prohibitions; it also reframes the community's orientation toward the environment. In this way, the four theoretical foundations employed in this study demonstrate that customary regulations encode principles of ecological stewardship, which are materialized through lexico-grammatical choices at the clause level.

2.2 Methods

This study employs a qualitative, phenomenological approach. As Creswell (2013) explains, phenomenological research seeks to understand the meanings that emerge from lived experiences within a particular social practice. In this context, the phenomenon under investigation concerns the ecological values embedded in the awig-awig language of Désa Adat Denpasar. Denzin and Lincoln (2017) emphasize that qualitative research positions the researcher as the primary instrument, actively interpreting data within its socio-cultural setting. For this reason, data

collection was conducted through document observation, focusing on the linguistic features in the *awig-awig* text. Every relevant lexico-grammatical form was recorded on data cards to facilitate categorization and the subsequent tracing of meaning.

The analytical stage combined Spradley's (2016) systematic procedures for examining units of meaning with the interpretive frameworks of ecolinguistics and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The collected data were analyzed to identify process types, participants, and circumstances within the transitivity system, and to interpret how these linguistic choices represent ecological values. The ecolinguistic perspective was applied to uncover the environmental orientations and ideologies embedded in the linguistic structures. At the same time, SFL served as the tool for mapping the realization of ideational meaning at the clause level. Through this approach, the study explains how linguistic form, cultural values, and ecological meaning intersect to shape the customary regulations articulated in the *awig-awig*.

3. Discussions

The analysis of the *awig-awig* text of Désa Adat Denpasar shows that choices within the transitivity system function as linguistic resources for constructing and sustaining the community's ecological practices. Each process type described in the text produces a particular pattern of relations among humans, the environment, and the customary values that bind them together. These processes are employed to represent concrete ecological actions, such as maintaining environmental cleanliness and overseeing sacred areas. The structure of the text positions community members as active agents who bear responsibility for the sustainability of their living space. Several examples of clauses in the *awig-awig* illustrate these patterns, as presented below.

(3-1)

yening	pakarangan	punika	wenten	tlajakannyané
if	yard	PRO	there	setback area. POSS.DEF
	Circumstance		Existential process	Existent
If the yard contains an ecological setback zone,				

tlajakan	pakarangan	punika	patut	kapiara	olih	sang	nruwénang karang
setback area	yard	PRO	must	PASS. preserve	by	ART	landowner
Goal				Material process	Actor		
The landowner must maintain the ecological setback zone							

(3-2)

ring	tegalan	utawi	carik	punika	patut	kalaksanayang
PREP	dry field	or	rice field	PRO	must	PASS. do. APPL
Circumstance					Material process	
On the dry field or rice field concerned,						

upakara	manut	kecap	sastra agama
ceremonial offering	according to	CONJ	holy scriptures
ritual offerings shall be performed in accordance with the sacred scriptures			

(3-3)

yéning	wénten	krama	jagi	ngadol	utawi	ngontrakang
if	there	village member	will	AV.sell	or	AV.rent out.APPL
	Existential process	Actor		Material process		
		Existent				
If there is a villager who intends to sell or lease out						

tanah pakarangan	tegalan	utawi	tanah carik,
house yard	dry field	or	rice field
Goal			
Existent			
house yard, dry field, or rice field			

∅ (krama)	patut	masadok	ring	prajuru banjar	utawi	prajuru subak
village member	must	AV.report	PREP	banjar administrators	or	subak administrators
Actor	Material process		Goal			
(krama) must report to the banjar customary administrators, or to the subak administrators,						

lan	prajuru désa adat
and	customary village administrators
Goal	
and to the customary village administrators	

(3-4)

Krama désa	patut	ngamanggehang	kawredian	tanem tuwuh
village member	must	AV. maintain. APPL	NOM. prosperity	plants and vegetation
Actor		Material process	Goal	
Villagers are obliged to make efforts to maintain the welfare of plants and vegetation				

(∅) kawredian tanem tuwuh	sané	ngawinang	désané	asri	tur	lestari
prosperity of plants and vegetation	REL	AV.cause.APPL	village. DEF	beautiful	and	sustainable
Actor		Material process	Goal			

(∅)	sané	kawastanin	Bhutahita
ecological practice	REL	PASS.name.APPL	Bhutahita
Token	Relational process		Value
This ecological practice is called *Bhutahita*			

(∅)	sané	mateges	kalestarian lingkungan hidup		
Bhutahita	REL	STAT.meaning	environmental preservation		
Carrier		Relational process		Attribute	
(Bhutahita) which means environmental sustainability					

(3-5)

Sakaluwiring	druwén	désa	patut	wénten	likitannia	sané	pastika
ALL. kinds of. PART	owned. LIG	village	must	exist	documentation. POSS.3SG. POSS	REL	certain
Circumstance				Existential process	Existent		
All types of village-owned property must have documentation that is properly ensured							

lan	(∅)	patut	kawigunayang	manut	perarem
CONJ	all kinds of village-owned	must	PASS.use.CAUS	according to	*customary rules*
	Actor		Material process		Circumstance
and (all village assets) must be used or utilized in accordance with customary regulations (pararem)					

(3-6)

Pamangku	patut	ngamanggehang	sesana	miwah	agem-ageman	pamangku
priest	must	AV. maintain. APPL	obligation	CONJ	attitude.RED. NOM	priest
Actor		Material process		Goal		
A priest must carry out his duties and uphold the conduct of the priesthood						

(3-7)

Pamangku	ngénterang	upacara piodalan	ring	Pura Kahyangan Tiga
priest	AV. guide. APPL	piodalan ceremony	PREP	Pura Kahyangan Tiga
Actor	Material process	Goal	Circumstance	
The priest leads the piodalan ceremony at the Kahyangan Tiga temples				

tur	(∅)	mangda	ma-	busana	sarwa	putih
CONJ	priest	should	AV.wear	dress	all	white
	Behaver	Behavioural process			Circumstance	
and (the priest) must wear all-white attire						

lan	ma-	déstar kapamagkuan
CONJ	AV.wear	the priestly headdress
	Behavioural process	Circumstance
and wear the priestly headdress		

Based on the analysis above, it becomes evident that transitivity within the SFL framework, as outlined by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), is not merely a descriptive device but a semiotic system through which a culture constructs and expresses its experiences in lexico-grammatical form. When this semiotic system is applied to *awig-awig*, it becomes clear that choices of process types are never neutral; they consistently encode the worldview of the adat community regarding the relationship between humans and their environment. The representation of ecological experience, whether through material, relational, or existential processes, does not simply describe actions but simultaneously shapes the values that underpin them. Within an ecolinguistic perspective, this approach is highly relevant because language is understood as a site where ecological ideologies are articulated and circulated (Stibbe, 2015, 2021). Consequently, a transitivity analysis provides a critical lens for examining how *awig-awig* conceptualizes sustainability as a social practice.

Examined more closely, the articulation of ecological action is most apparent in the use of material processes. For example, in clause (3–7), the material process expressed by ngénterang not only marks a ritualized act but also establishes a direct link between spiritual activity and the maintenance of a sacred ecological space. In this regard, Martin and Rose (2007) note that material processes construct experiences of "doing," offering concrete form to social practices; thus, the ritual action in this context can be understood as an ecological practice in its own right. This clause, therefore, illustrates that *awig-awig* does not separate ritual from ecology; instead, both are intertwined within the obligations assigned to the pemangku. Such a pattern reinforces the idea that ecological management is not an isolated concern but is embedded within the religious structures of the adat community.

In the same clause, namely clause (3–7), we can observe a shift toward a different type of process that broadens the ecological representation to include bodily and symbolic dimensions. Clauses (3–7) are categorized as behavioral-process clauses because the actions *mabusana* and *madéstar* are not merely physical acts of putting on clothing, but embodied practices infused with cultural and spiritual meaning. As Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) and Martin et al. (2010) explain, behavioral processes occupy an intermediate space between material and mental processes, encompassing physiological, ritual, and expressive human activities. In this context, dressing in the manner required of a *pemangku* is not understood as modifying an object, but as a socially meaningful conduct through which identity, ritual purity, and disciplined sacred comportment are expressed. Through these embodied gestures, the pemangku's bodily behavior becomes a marker of the human relationship with the holy realm, enacted not only through material acts but also through modes of presence that carry moral and ecological resonance.

From an ecolinguistic perspective, the interaction between the body, ritual attire, and sacred space reveals a subtler layer of ecological meaning. Stibbe (2015, 2021) suggests that language carries stories that shape how people see themselves and the world they inhabit. In the context of *awig-awig*, such behavioral processes encapsulate a story about how human behavior must remain attuned to the values that sustain the balance of the living environment. Wearing white attire, for instance, is not merely a symbol of purity but a sign that one is entering a space considered ecologically and spiritually delicate, and therefore requires respectful conduct. What appears to be a small ritual gesture is, in fact, part of a larger mechanism for maintaining harmony between humans and the village's sacred spaces. The ecosophy of Arne Naess further deepens the interpretation of these practices by emphasizing that every community possesses its own ecological philosophy. These values guide how humans ought to live in relation to the world around them. Within this framework, the act of *mabusana kapamangkuan* can be understood as an ethical expression of eco-consciousness, guiding individuals to enter a living space with heightened awareness. Such behavior is not merely adherence to custom but a way in which the body is

"positioned" to remain in harmony with the environment and the values embedded within it. In this sense, awig-awig does not simply regulate behavior; it cultivates a way of being in the world (cf. Halliday, 1992, 2001).

The interconnectedness of ecological representation becomes even more apparent in the use of material processes directly oriented toward the living environment, as seen in clauses (3–4). In this clause, the material process expressed by the verb *ngamanggehang* positions community members as ecological agents responsible for tending the village's vegetation. The linguistic configuration underscores that environmental sustainability is not an abstract obligation but is enacted through concrete actions shaped by customary norms. Within the framework of *awig-awig*, the action represented in clause (3–4) does more than signal compliance with regulations; it reveals a value orientation that situates the continuity of vegetation within an ethic of relational care (Næss, 1989, 1990). By placing plants as the goal within the clause's structure, *awig-awig* frames the environment not as property to be possessed but as a living domain requiring collective stewardship.

This representation indicates that the language of tradition has internalized an ecological worldview in which humans and nature are not conceptualized as separate entities, but as partners in an ongoing, mutually sustaining relationship. A further strengthening of ecological representation can be observed in clause (3–1) through the use of an existential process, as Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) note, existential processes function to assert the presence of an entity within the semantic world. In this case, the process legitimates *telajakan* as an integral component of Balinese spatial organization. Its linguistically asserted presence elevates the telajakan from a physical feature to a socio-legal ecological boundary that must be preserved and respected.

Within an ecolinguistic perspective, Fill and Mühlhäusler (2001) argue that existential strategies in traditional texts often serve to confer ecological authority on a space by marking it as "that which exists," a presence deserving recognition and care. Such marking is not neutral; it constructs the telajakan as an ecological entity with inherent value, resonating with the principle of ecocentric equality at the heart of Naess's ecosophy. From the standpoint of deep ecology, Naess (1973, 1989) contends that ecological entities possess the right to "be" and to have their existence maintained irrespective of their instrumental usefulness to humans. The representational pattern found in *awig-awig* aligns with this view: the existential process does not merely declare that the *telajakan* exists. However, it positions it within a larger ecological network that demands respect. In doing so, the text expands ecological representation from the realm of normative action into the ontological and ethical foundations of communal life.

Another instance of ecological representation can be observed in clause (3–2). A closer look shows that this clause employs a material process to construct its experiential meaning. Through the verb *kalaksanayang*, the clause establishes a distinctive connection between ritual action and ecological space, positioning the performance of religious ceremonies as a mandatory obligation. Although the actor is not overtly mentioned, the structure implicitly points to the *krama désa* as the responsible participants, while the *upakara* functions as the "goal," occupying the semantic role of a sacred object of action. The presence of patut introduces a layer of deontic modality that imposes moral force, suggesting that ritual practice is not merely a religious observance but also an ecological act embedded in the governance of agricultural space. Meanwhile, the placement of *tegalan* or *carik* as the circumstantial element of location reveals that agrarian fields are conceptualized as sacred territories rather than solely economic resources. Within the framework of transitivity, the organization of these elements indicates that ritual action is conceived as a mechanism for maintaining ecological order, framing human–environment relations through deliberately grounded, materially oriented practices.

In this regard, from an ecolinguistic perspective, clause (3–2) illustrates how customary discourse constructs ecological representations through normative frameworks that link ritual obligations to the maintenance of lived space. Stibbe (2015, 2021) emphasizes that language plays a central role in shaping how communities perceive and care for their environment. Language is used to assert that agricultural land is not a passive entity but part of a living network that requires moral respect and ongoing care, aligning with Fill and Mühlhäusler's (2001) view that traditional texts can regulate ecological relations through grammatical choices.

This perspective resonates with Naess's ecosophy, which maintains that healthy ecological relations cannot be sustained by instrumental logic alone but must be grounded in a relational ethics that recognizes the intrinsic value of non-human entities. In clause (3–2), the required ritual is therefore not simply an act of religious obedience; it is also a way to affirm that agricultural fields possess a value that exceeds their economic utility, reflecting a form of ecological reverence rooted in communal values. Thus, customary language does more than prescribe actions; it produces an ethical framework that positions ecological spaces as respected members of the broader environmental community.

Based on the analysis, the overall pattern of process types in the sample clauses of the awig-awig reveals a construction of relational ecology embedded within its grammatical choices. Material processes generate concrete ecological actions; behavioral processes articulate an embodied ecological ethic; and existential processes establish ecological spaces as entities with recognized status. The coherence among these processes indicates that ecological representation is not an ancillary feature of the legal text but an ideological core articulated through language. As Martin (1992) notes, representation within a text is the result of semiotic choices shaped by cultural values and social orientation. Accordingly, the transitivity analysis shows that the *awig-awig* serves as a linguistic mechanism that reproduces, teaches, and reinforces ecological sustainability as an integral component of *désa adat* life.

4. Novelty

This study presents a novel theoretical framework that reconceptualizes the transitivity system in Systemic Functional Linguistics as a means to interpret ecological ideology within customary legal texts. Rather than viewing transitivity solely as a grammatical categorization tool, this approach positions it as a system that links individuals, the environment, and customary norms. Through analysis of process types, participant roles, and circumstances within clauses, the research demonstrates how ecological values are embedded in and reinforced by grammatical structures. This approach extends beyond the scope of most ecolinguistic research, which typically focuses on contemporary or institutional texts, by incorporating customary legal texts as significant sources of ecological meaning.

5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis conducted, the *awig-awig* functions not merely as a set of regulations, but as a medium through which the community constructs and transmits its ecological worldview. The selection of processes within the transitivity system demonstrates that ritual actions, bodily conduct, and the management of living spaces are understood as an integrated whole that sustains environmental balance. Through such configurations of meaning, ecology does not appear as a technical notion but as an element of everyday life tied to moral obligations and cultural practice. In this sense, the *awig-awig* articulates a value system that coherently unites customary norms, spirituality, and environmental stewardship.

Viewed within a broader philosophical framework, this pattern of representation resonates with Arne Naess's concept of ecosophy, which asserts that the natural world possesses intrinsic

value that must be respected. The various ritual actions prescribed, ranging from wearing sacred attire to performing ceremonies in agricultural spaces, serve to cultivate an awareness that humans enter the living environment with ecological attentiveness and relational ethics. Through its linguistic choices, the *awig-awig* not only regulates conduct but also shapes how the community understands and experiences its relationship with the natural world. Thus, the *awig-awig* serves as a bridge that integrates cultural practices, spirituality, and ecological principles, ensuring that harmony between humans and their environment is maintained and transmitted across generations.

6. References

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