

ECOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION OF AZERBAIJAN'S REGIONS: A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF STATE STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMS

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Summary. Climate-policy documents do more than report environmental conditions: they select problems, assign responsibility, and construct preferred futures. This study examines how green transition and regional resilience are linguistically framed in three English-language documents central to Azerbaijan's climate-development agenda: the Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 2.0, 2023), Azerbaijan's NDC 3.0 (2025), and the World Bank Country Climate and Development Report (CCDR, 2023). A corpus-assisted ecolinguistic design was applied to a 70,440-token corpus. Four lexical frames - risk and vulnerability, adaptation and resilience, green transition, and participation and inclusion - were measured through normalized frequency per 10,000 tokens. Three modality categories - obligation and necessity, commitment and futurity, and possibility and capacity - were also examined. The distribution of frame tokens was tested using chi-square and Cramér's V. Green-transition vocabulary dominated all documents, but its salience increased from 92.40 in NDC 2.0 to 182.33 in NDC 3.0. The CCDR foregrounded risk and vulnerability (76.36) and adaptation and resilience (44.66), whereas NDC 3.0 recorded the strongest participation and inclusion score (60.91) and the highest commitment and futurity score (155.18). Frame distributions differed significantly, chi-square = 143.23, df = 6, $p < .001$; $V = .186$. The findings indicate a shift in national discourse toward integrated decarbonization, implementation commitments, and inclusive governance, while the international diagnostic genre emphasizes exposure, uncertainty, and enabling capacity. The study recommends clearer, more participatory, and locally meaningful climate communication.

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1. Introduction

Climate change is simultaneously a physical process, a policy challenge, and a communicative problem. Scientific assessments and policy documents do not merely transmit neutral information; through lexical selection, grammatical agency, modality, and narrative structure, they define what counts as a problem, who is expected to act, and which futures appear desirable or unavoidable. Framing theory describes this selective organization of reality as the foregrounding of particular problem definitions, causes, evaluations, and remedies (Entman, 1993). Ecolinguistics extends this concern by asking whether recurring linguistic patterns support or weaken ecologically sustainable relations among people, institutions, and the living world (Alexander & Stibbe, 2014; Fill & Penz, 2018; Stibbe, 2021). Recent climate assessments likewise underline the need to connect mitigation, adaptation, development, and social resilience within coherent policy narratives (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2023).

Climate discourse is especially sensitive to framing because it must connect abstract time scales and technical evidence with everyday decisions. Terms such as risk, resilience, transition, and green growth are not

interchangeable labels; they activate different assumptions about urgency, responsibility, uncertainty, and social participation. Research on climate communication has therefore examined metaphors, narratives, voices, and modal expressions that shape public and institutional understandings (Fløttum & Gjerstad, 2017; Nerlich et al., 2010). A risk-centered text can strengthen preparedness but may also construct communities primarily as vulnerable recipients. A transition-centered text can mobilize investment while obscuring distributional consequences when citizens and local actors remain linguistically backgrounded.

Corpus-assisted discourse analysis provides a useful bridge between close reading and reproducible quantitative evidence. Frequency patterns identify recurrent lexical priorities, while qualitative interpretation connects those patterns to institutional purpose and genre. Baker et al. (2008) show that corpus methods can test whether intuitively identified discourses are systematic across a text collection, and Mautner (2009) emphasizes their value for critical discourse research. For environmental policy, this combination is useful because official reports are long, highly structured, and lexically repetitive; normalized counts permit comparison without assuming that documents of different lengths have identical communicative functions.

Azerbaijan offers a relevant case because its climate agenda must address both exposure to climatic hazards and an economic transition shaped by the energy sector. The Updated Nationally Determined Contribution issued in 2023 established a renewed national commitment framework, while NDC 3.0 expanded sectoral pathways, implementation language, and social dimensions in 2025 (Republic of Azerbaijan, 2023, 2025). The World Bank's Country Climate and Development Report (CCDR) approached the same national context through a diagnostic development lens, linking climate shocks, decarbonization, and economic resilience (World Bank, 2023). These documents are influential, yet their linguistic differences have received little systematic attention.

This study addresses that gap through three questions: (1) Which environmental and social frames are most salient in the three documents? (2) How do obligation, commitment, and possibility differ across national pledge and international diagnostic genres? (3) What does the comparison reveal about the evolution of Azerbaijan's climate-policy discourse between NDC 2.0 and NDC 3.0? The objective is not to evaluate the technical adequacy of the policies, but to identify the linguistic architecture through which transition, risk, resilience, and participation are made prominent.

2. Materials and methods

The study used a small, purpose-built English-language policy corpus consisting of three publicly available documents. The corpus was selected to support both a diachronic comparison of national commitments and an institutional comparison between national and international policy genres. Table 1 summarizes the dataset. The final analytical corpus contained 70,440 alphabetic tokens after preprocessing.

Table 1

Composition and analytical role of the policy corpus

Document	Institutional genre	Year	Tokens	Analytical role
NDC 2.0	National climate pledge/update	2023	6,818	Baseline for diachronic national comparison
NDC 3.0	Expanded national climate commitment	2025	25,777	Current national framing and implementation discourse
World Bank CCDR	International diagnostic report	2023	37,845	Institutional and genre comparison

Source: Author's corpus compiled from the official English-language documents

PDF text was extracted from the official English versions. Soft hyphens and common ligatures were normalized; repeated page headers, disclosure notices, and document-title strings were removed; all text was converted to lowercase; and alphabetic tokens were identified, with hyphenated compounds retained as single units. Numbers were excluded because the study focused on lexical framing rather than numerical target analysis. Tables and headings remained in the corpus when they contained meaningful lexical material because they form part of each document's communicative design. A reproducible scripted workflow was used for tokenization, dictionary matching, normalization, and statistical calculation.

Four semantic frames were operationalized through transparent dictionaries developed from ecolinguistic literature and iterative corpus inspection. The risk and vulnerability frame included risk, vulnerability, hazard,

exposure, loss, damage, and shock. The adaptation and resilience frame included adaptation, resilience, resilient, preparedness, and recovery. The green-transition frame included transition, decarbonization, renewable, low-carbon, green, clean, net-zero, mitigation, efficiency, and electrification. The participation and inclusion frame included community, stakeholder, participation, citizen, public, local, women, youth, inclusive, equity, and justice. Inflectional variants were counted separately and aggregated within each frame.

Because the documents differ considerably in length, frame salience was expressed as normalized frequency per 10,000 tokens. In Equation (1), f_{td} is the frequency of term or category t in document d , and N_d is the total number of tokens in that document.

$$NF_{td} = \frac{f_{td}}{N_d} \times 10,000 \quad (1)$$

Modality was analyzed through three functional categories. Obligation and necessity included must, should, need, required, and necessary. Commitment and futurity included will, shall, aim, commitment, target, and plan. Possibility and capacity included can, could, may, potential, opportunity, enable, and capacity. These categories indicate whether a document primarily directs action, pledges future action, or constructs pathways as feasible and conditional. They are lexical indicators rather than complete grammatical annotations; for example, the analysis does not distinguish every epistemic and deontic use of may or should.

A 3×4 chi-square test compared the distribution of raw lexical-frame tokens across the three documents. Equation (2) summarizes the test, where O_{ij} and E_{ij} are observed and expected counts. Cramér's V , shown in Equation (3), was used as an effect-size measure. Because dictionary counts can include polysemous words such as public and green, the results were interpreted as document-level indicators of discursive salience rather than exhaustive semantic classifications.

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}} \quad (2)$$

$$V = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2}{N \times \min(r - 1, c - 1)}} \quad (3)$$

3. Results

Table 2 shows that green-transition vocabulary was the dominant frame in every document. Its normalized frequency nearly doubled between NDC 2.0 and NDC 3.0, increasing from 92.40 to 182.33 occurrences per 10,000 tokens. The increase was associated with expanded use of decarbonization, efficiency, renewable, mitigation, transition, and electrification. The CCDR also displayed strong transition salience (165.94), while risk and adaptation language accounted for a larger share of its frame profile.

Table 2

Normalized lexical-frame frequencies per 10,000 tokens

Document	Risk and vulnerability	Adaptation and resilience	Green transition	Participation and inclusion
NDC 2.0 (2023)	13.20	13.20	92.40	32.27
NDC 3.0 (2025)	19.40	27.93	182.33	60.91
World Bank CCDR (2023)	76.36	44.66	165.94	32.77

Source: Author's calculations. Values are occurrences per 10,000 alphabetic tokens

The World Bank report recorded 76.36 risk-and-vulnerability items per 10,000 tokens, compared with 19.40 in NDC 3.0 and 13.20 in NDC 2.0. It also had the highest adaptation-and-resilience score (44.66). NDC 3.0 differed from NDC 2.0 in two additional respects: its adaptation score more than doubled, and its participation-and-inclusion score rose from 32.27 to 60.91.

The distribution of lexical frames differed significantly across the three documents, $\chi^2(6) = 143.23$, $p < .001$, with a modest Cramér's V of .186. Standardized residuals indicated that the CCDR contained more risk vocabulary than expected, whereas NDC 3.0 contained more green-transition and participation vocabulary than expected. The statistical association does not establish causal influence.

Modality patterns in Table 3 further distinguished the texts. NDC 3.0 had the highest commitment-and-futurity frequency (155.18), reflecting extensive use of will, targets, plans, aims, and commitments. Its commitment-to-possibility ratio was 3.17, compared with 1.85 in NDC 2.0 and 0.94 in the CCDDR. The international report recorded the highest possibility-and-capacity frequency (75.84), including can, could, potential, opportunity, and capacity. Obligation-and-necessity frequencies were comparatively moderate in all three documents.

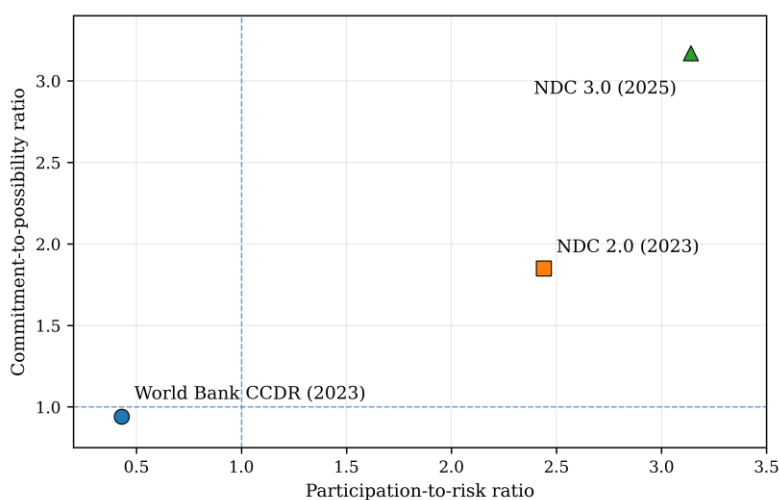
Table 3

Modality frequencies and discursive-orientation ratios

Document	Obligation	Pledge	Possibility	P:R	C:P
NDC 2.0 (2023)	36.67	92.40	49.87	2.44	1.85
NDC 3.0 (2025)	27.93	155.18	48.88	3.14	3.17
World Bank CCDDR (2023)	38.05	71.34	75.84	0.43	0.94

Note. Frequencies are per 10,000 tokens. Obligation = obligation/necessity; Pledge = commitment/futurity; Possibility = possibility/capacity; P:R = participation-to-risk ratio; C:P = commitment-to-possibility ratio.

Figure 1 combines the participation-to-risk and commitment-to-possibility ratios. NDC 3.0 occupies the upper-right position because participation language exceeds risk language by a factor of 3.14 and commitment language exceeds possibility language by a factor of 3.17. NDC 2.0 shows a similar but less pronounced pledge orientation. The CCDDR appears in the lower-left area, with a participation-to-risk ratio of 0.43 and a commitment-to-possibility ratio below one. The visualization summarizes contrasting communicative orientations and does not rank document quality.

**Fig. 1.** Discursive orientation of the analyzed documents

Source: Author's calculations based on the normalized lexical frequencies

4. Discussion

The results demonstrate that a shared topic does not produce a single climate-policy discourse. All three documents privilege green-transition vocabulary, yet they organize it around different institutional purposes. The NDCs function as sovereign commitment documents, so their language presents targets, planned measures, and future implementation as nationally owned. The CCDDR functions as an external diagnostic and investment-oriented assessment, so it foregrounds vulnerability, trade-offs, uncertainty, and the capacity required to manage change. This genre contrast helps explain why the CCDDR uses more risk and possibility language, whereas NDC 3.0 uses more commitment language.

The diachronic difference between the national documents is particularly important. NDC 2.0 already emphasized renewable energy and green development, but NDC 3.0 develops a more integrated decarbonization vocabulary and gives greater lexical space to resilience, stakeholders, youth, communities, and inclusion. From an ecolinguistic perspective, this shift is constructive because it broadens the imagined community of climate action. Environmental policy is represented not only as a technical process of emissions reduction but

also as a social process involving institutions and groups. This pattern is consistent with the view that climate narratives become more actionable when they identify agents and pathways rather than presenting change as an abstract condition (Fløttum & Gjerstad, 2017).

Lexical inclusion, however, does not automatically equal substantive agency. Words such as public and local may refer to public finance, public transport, or local infrastructure rather than to citizens acting as decision-makers. Likewise, frequent nouns such as transition, decarbonization, and implementation can nominalize processes and conceal who performs them. A fuller grammatical analysis would determine whether communities appear as active subjects, affected objects, or beneficiaries. Stibbe's (2021) concept of the 'stories we live by' is relevant here: a policy may mention people frequently while still constructing expertise, investment, and technology as the principal agents of change.

The modality findings also have practical significance. The high commitment ratio in NDC 3.0 can strengthen accountability by making intended action visible. Yet repeated will-statements may sound formulaic unless they are accompanied by clearly named institutions, timelines, and verification mechanisms. Conversely, the CCDR's possibility-oriented language can encourage flexible planning, but excessive reliance on can, could, and potential may weaken perceived urgency. Effective climate communication should connect three linguistic moves: define the risk in locally intelligible terms, identify the responsible actor, and specify the feasible action. This risk-actor-action sequence can reduce both alarmism and vague optimism.

For bilingual and multilingual communication in Azerbaijan, terminology management is also essential. English expressions such as resilience, just transition, climate-proofing, and adaptive capacity do not always have a single, widely stabilized Azerbaijani equivalent. Parallel glossaries should preserve technical precision while avoiding literal translations that are inaccessible to non-specialists. Executive summaries can use short sentences, active voice, and concrete actor labels such as municipalities, energy regulators, farmers, schools, and neighborhood organizations. Consultation materials should distinguish information provision from actual participation by using verbs that show what stakeholders can decide, co-design, monitor, or evaluate.

The study has several limitations. It examines only three English-language documents and uses dictionary-based counts. Document length, genre, and production processes differ, and some lexical items are polysemous. The statistical test evaluates the distribution of selected frame words rather than the entire discourse. Metaphor, negation, syntactic agency, visual framing, and Azerbaijani-language versions were outside the present scope. Future research should build a parallel Azerbaijani-English corpus, use concordance coding and dependency parsing, and compare policy texts with media coverage, municipal documents, and stakeholder interviews. These extensions would show whether inclusive vocabulary is reproduced consistently across levels of governance.

5. Conclusion

This corpus-assisted ecolinguistic study identified clear differences in the framing of Azerbaijan's climate-development agenda. Green-transition vocabulary dominated the three documents, but NDC 3.0 displayed the strongest integration of decarbonization, commitment, and participation language. The World Bank CCDR foregrounded risks, exposure, adaptation, and enabling capacity, reflecting its diagnostic and scenario-oriented function. NDC 2.0 occupied an earlier, more compact pledge profile, while NDC 3.0 constructed a broader future of sectoral transformation and inclusive implementation.

The research questions are answered in three ways. First, transition is the shared master frame, but risk and adaptation are much more salient in the international report. Second, national commitment discourse relies heavily on futurity, whereas the CCDR gives more space to possibility and capacity. Third, the movement from NDC 2.0 to NDC 3.0 suggests a discursive expansion from target-centered green development toward a more integrated narrative of decarbonization, resilience, and stakeholder involvement.

For policy communication, technical ambition should be accompanied by explicit social agency. Documents should name responsible actors, connect risks to concrete actions, stabilize bilingual terminology, and clarify how communities participate in implementation and monitoring. Such language can support regional resilience by making climate policy not only technically credible but also understandable, accountable, and socially shared.

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ЭКОЛОГИЧЕСКАЯ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ РЕГИОНОВ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНА: ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫХ СТРАТЕГИЙ И ПРОГРАММ

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Резюме. Документы климатической политики не только отражают состояние окружающей среды, но и определяют круг проблем, распределяют ответственность и формируют предпочтительные представления о будущем. В исследовании рассматривается, каким образом зелёный переход и региональная устойчивость получают лингвистическое фреймирование в трёх англоязычных документах, занимающих центральное место в климатической повестке и повестке развития Азербайджана: Обновлённом национально определяемом вкладе (NDC 2.0, 2023), документе Азербайджана NDC 3.0 (2025) и Докладе Всемирного банка о климате и развитии страны (CCDR, 2023). К корпусу объёмом 70 440 токенов применён корпусно-ориентированный эколлингвистический подход. Четыре лексических фрейма — риск и уязвимость, адаптация и устойчивость, зелёный переход, участие и инклюзивность — оценивались на основе нормализованной частоты употребления на 10 000 токенов. Также были исследованы три категории модальности: обязательство и необходимость, принятие обязательств и ориентация на будущее, возможность и потенциал. Распределение токенов по фреймам проверялось с использованием критерия хи-квадрат и коэффициента V Крамера. Лексика зелёного перехода преобладала во всех документах, однако её выраженность увеличилась с 92,40 в NDC 2.0 до 182,33 в NDC 3.0. В документе CCDR на первый план выдвигались риск и уязвимость (76,36), а также адаптация и устойчивость (44,66), тогда как в NDC 3.0 зафиксированы наиболее высокие показатели участия и инклюзивности (60,91), а также принятия обязательств и ориентации на будущее (155,18). Распределения фреймов статистически значимо различались ($\chi^2 = 143,23$; число степеней свободы = 6; $p < 0,001$; $V = 0,186$). Полученные результаты указывают на смещение национального дискурса в сторону комплексной декарбонизации, обязательств по реализации намеченных мер и инклюзивного управления, тогда как международный диагностический жанр акцентирует внимание на подверженности рискам, неопределённости и формировании необходимых возможностей. В исследовании рекомендуется более ясная, основанная на широком участии и учитывающая местный контекст коммуникация по вопросам изменения климата.

Ключевые слова: климатическая коммуникация, институциональная модальность, лексическая значимость, включение заинтересованных сторон, устойчивое развитие

AZƏRBAYCAN REĞIONLARININ EKOLOJİ TRANSFORMASIYASI: DÖVLƏT STRATEGİYALARI VƏ PROQRAMLARININ LİNQVİSTİK TƏHLİLİ

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Xülasə. İqlim siyasətinə dair sənədlər yalnız ətraf mühitin vəziyyəti haqqında məlumat verməklə kifayətlənmir, həm də problemləri seçir, məsuliyyəti müəyyənləşdirir və üstünlük verilən gələcək inkişaf istiqamətlərini formalaşdırır. Tədqiqatda Azərbaycanın iqlim və inkişaf gündəliyində mühüm yer tutan üç ingilisdilli sənəddə yaşıl keçid və regional dayanıqlığın linqvistik baxımdan necə çərçivələndirildiyi araşdırılır: Yenilənmiş Milli Səviyyədə Müəyyən Edilmiş Təhfə (NDC 2.0, 2023), Azərbaycanın NDC 3.0 sənədi (2025) və Dünya Bankının Ölkə üzrə İqlim və İnkişaf Hesabatı (CCDR, 2023). 70 440 tokenədən ibarət korpusa korpus əsaslı ekolinqvistik yanaşma tətbiq edilmişdir. Dörd leksik çərçivə – risk və həssaslıq, adaptasiya və dayanıqlıq, yaşıl keçid, iştirak və inklüzivlik – hər 10 000 tokenə düşən normallaşdırılmış tezlik əsasında ölçülmüşdür. Həmçinin üç modallıq kateqoriyası – öhdəlik və zərurət, öhdəlik götürmə və gələcəyə yönəlmə, imkan və potensial – araşdırılmışdır. Çərçivələrə aid tokenlərin paylanması xi-kvadrat testi və Kramerin V əmsali vasitəsilə yoxlanılmışdır. Yaşıl keçidlə bağlı leksika bütün sənədlərdə üstünlük təşkil etmiş, lakin onun ifadəlilik səviyyəsi NDC 2.0 sənədindəki 92,40 göstəricisindən NDC 3.0 sənədində 182,33-ə yüksəlmişdir. CCDR sənədində risk və həssaslıq (76,36), eləcə də adaptasiya və dayanıqlıq (44,66) ön plana çıxmış, NDC 3.0 sənədində isə iştirak və inklüzivlik (60,91), həmçinin öhdəlik götürmə və gələcəyə yönəlmə (155,18) üzrə ən yüksək göstəricilər qeydə alınmışdır. Çərçivələrin paylanması arasında statistik baxımdan əhəmiyyətli fərqlər müəyyən edilmişdir ($\chi^2 = 143,23$; sərbəstlik dərəcəsi = 6; $p < 0,001$; $V = 0,186$). Nəticələr milli diskursda integrasiya olunmuş dekarbonizasiyaya, icra öhdəliklərinə və inklüziv idarəetməyə doğru keçidin baş verdiyini, beynəlxalq diaqnostik sənəd janrında isə risklərə məruz qalma, qeyri-müəyyənlik və imkanların yaradılmasına xüsusi diqqət yetirildiyini göstərir. Tədqiqatda iqlim məsələləri üzrə daha aydın, iştirakçılığa əsaslanan və yerli şərait baxımından mənalı kommunikasiyanın qurulması tövsiyə olunur.

Açar sözlər: iqlim kommunikasiyası, institusional modallıq, leksik önəçixmə, maraqlı tərəflərin prosesə cəlb edilməsi, dayanıqlı inkişaf