Construction of Ideology in Teacher Protection Regulation: A Systemic Functional Linguistic Approach

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how teacher protection regulations in Indonesia are discursively shaped by ideological structures embedded within legal language. Employing the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), particularly the transitivity system, this study analyses selected clauses from three regulatory documents Law No. 14/2005, Government Regulation No. 74/2008, and Ministerial Regulation No. 10/2017 focusing on how participants, processes, and agency are represented. Transitivity patterns were examined to identify grammatical structures, which were then interpreted using van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach to uncover ideological meanings. The findings reveal a consistent use of material, relational, and verbal processes that portray the state as an active and authoritative agent, while teachers are positioned primarily as passive participants. In addition, the pervasive use of nominalization obscures agency and reframes social actions as depersonalized, technocratic procedures. These linguistic patterns are indicative of a broader neoliberal ideological framework, characterized by symbolic legalism, bureaucratic formalism, and the suppression of individual agency. Rather than enabling empowerment, the discourse of protection constructs a hierarchical relationship in which the state centralizes authority and reduces teacher agency. This study contributes to the critical examination of education policy by highlighting how regulatory discourse reproduces institutional dominance and calls for a more participatory, justice-oriented approach to teacher protection.

Keywords: neoliberal ideology; policy language; systemic functional linguistics; teacher protection; transitivity

INTRODUCTION

For over thirty years, the issue of teacher protection has been an ongoing concern in global education. Scholars have raised various points of tension ranging from legal actions against teachers enforcing classroom discipline (Budoyo, Widodo, & Suyadi, 2024), to moral dilemmas about continuing to teach during the COVID-19 pandemic (Levinson & Fay, 2024). Other studies examine the limited legal safeguards for teachers administering disciplinary action (Gazali, 2021), and the broader question of fairness in student treatment (Colnerud, G., 1997). While governments have launched policies to support teachers, it's worth asking: do these initiatives truly meet teachers' needs?

Across the world, reports of discrimination against teachers continue to surface. UNESCO's 2015 recommendation emphasizes the need to ensure teachers' rights, including legal protection, safe working conditions, and freedom from violence. Progressive nations like Finland and Canada have adopted rights-based frameworks that promote professional

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freedom and institutional support (Sahlberg, P., 2011). Yet, challenges remain even in these contexts. In the U.S., female teachers and racial minorities often face discrimination in hiring and promotion (Bristol, 2020), while in Europe, migrant teachers report social isolation and stereotyping (EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2019).

In developing nations, teacher protection is even more precarious. In Sub-Saharan Africa, many teachers face violence and social pressure that diminish their motivation (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). In Latin America, physical and verbal abuse of teachers is on the rise, fueled by declining public respect for the profession (Delprato et al., 2019). In parts of rural Asia, such as India, female teachers struggle with cultural constraints and gender-based violence (UNESCO, 2015). Clearly, teacher protection is a global issue that demands fair, inclusive, and context-sensitive policies. From this perspective, teacher protection policies should not be taken at face value. Instead, they must be critically interrogated to reveal the power structures and ideological interests that shape them. This study adopts a critical discourse analysis stance to examine how language in legal texts serves not only to regulate but also to reproduce social control.

Indonesia is no exception. Teachers are often vulnerable to discrimination and even criminalization, especially when disciplining students. According to Rachmawati (Kompas.com, May 20, 2025), the case of Supriyani, an honorary teacher in South Sulawesi, highlights this vulnerability. In 2024, Supriyani faced legal action after disciplining a student, despite her actions being pedagogically justified. The student's parent—a police officer—filed a complaint, leading to her prosecution. This case reveals a disconnect between legal frameworks and the everyday realities teachers face, particularly when the law is interpreted in ways that disregard educational intent. The Indonesian government has taken steps to improve teacher welfare, with one of the most well-known programs being teacher certification. Originally intended to enhance professionalism and raise teaching standards, the program has often become an added bureaucratic burden for educators (Silverius, S., 2015). Drawing on Gramsci's (1971) notion of cultural hegemony, this reflects how the state uses policy instruments not just to manage education, but to maintain ideological control. Education policies and curricula are not neutral they shape how teachers and students think and behave. In this framework, teachers become conduits for state ideology, and certification functions less as professional validation and more as a mechanism of alignment with state interests (Apple, 2004).

Although Law No. 14 of 2005 guarantees legal and professional protection for teachers, its application remains inconsistent. Many educators hesitate to enforce discipline for fear of being sued. This reflects a need for stronger, clearer, and more enforceable safeguards that empower teachers to do their jobs without fear.

Indonesian teacher protection is outlined in several key documents, including Law No. 14 of 2005, Government Regulation No. 74 of 2008, and Ministerial Regulation No. 10 of 2017. While these policies recognize the rights of teachers, the gap between legal promise and actual practice is stark. Research shows that many teachers lack awareness of legal procedures and ethical standards, making them vulnerable in conflict situations (Darmaningtyas, 2005; Slamet, 2018; Nawawi, 2019). Those working in remote areas the so-called 3T (disadvantaged, frontier, outermost) regions face even greater challenges.

A recent study using a socio-legal lens examined the implementation of teacher protection as outlined in Law No. 14 of 2005 (Iskandar & Rosary, 2024). Their findings suggest that while the legal framework exists, its practical application is hindered by social and structural challenges. Limited public awareness and inadequate dissemination of regulatory information often leave teachers uninformed about their rights. This highlights a gap between legal promises and lived realities an issue that this study also seeks to address, albeit through a different analytical approach.

Despite the growing number of cases involving discrimination and even criminalization of teachers in Indonesia, research on this subject remains relatively limited. Much of the existing literature focuses on general education policy or teacher professionalism, with few studies exploring how the law itself shapes the position and agency of educators (Nawawi, 2019; Iskandar & Rosary, 2024). This study, therefore, aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on teacher protection by adopting a critical lens one that scrutinizes not just what the law says, but how it says it, and what that reveals about power, ideology, and institutional intent (Fairclough, 2013; van Dijk, 2008).

At both national and global levels, the issue of teacher protection is complex and multifaceted. It cannot be fully understood through a legal lens alone. Cultural norms, social perceptions, institutional structures, and ideological frameworks all interact in shaping how teacher protection is conceived and implemented (Gutman & Pershitz, 2018; Shapira-Lishcinsky, 2011). As such, a holistic and participatory policy approach is needed one that is grounded in justice, professionalism, and a deep understanding of the everyday realities teachers face (Levinson & Fay, 2024; UNESCO, 2020).

This raises deeper questions about the political nature of teacher protection policy. Legal frameworks often present themselves as objective, but they may obscure underlying power dynamics. To uncover these, it is crucial to examine how policy language is crafted and internalized. Language is more than a tool of communication it is a means of shaping social reality (Fairclough, 1995).

This raises a deeper inquiry concerning the political aspects of teacher protection policy. Legal frameworks, like policies, are presented as neutral and objective, but this often conceals attempts at control and domination (power relations). To reveal those, the how and why of policy formulation and internalization requires attention. Communication involves much more than a means to convey information; it can also refer to the creation of social reality (Fairclough 1995). In education law, several studies have been conducted from a linguistic perspective on a global scale. For example, Torgerson (2005) applied discourse analysis to examine how language constructs politics through policies in educational change. In Indonesia, Arifin (2020) and Kurniawan (2019) have undertaken discourse analytic studies focusing on ideological aspects with regard to curriculum policy and education governance. However, no studies specifically focused on teacher protection policies applying an integrated framework combining Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics and van Dijk's ideological critique. The application of that integration to legal texts on teacher protection policies constitutes an original contribution indicating the importance of this study.

To critically analyze the language of these laws, this study employs Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), a framework developed by Halliday. In particular, it uses transitivity analysis to examine how actions, actors, and responsibilities are represented in legal texts. This approach helps reveal how the language of teacher protection policy reflects deeper power relations between the state and educators. From this perspective, laws are not merely rules they are ideological narratives that shape teachers' identities and professional roles (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Fairclough, 2013; van Dijk, 2008). From this lens, grammar is not simply a technical model, but rather a social resource that exercises institutional power, bestows identities, and consolidates dominion. Hence, exploring transitivity becomes critical in exposing how education policies convey figurative messages laden with ideology about the construction of teachers' identities within the broader context of governance.

This study explores teacher protection laws in Indonesia using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and transitivity analysis together with van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach to ideology. This research aims to reveal the ideological obscurity of regulatory language through the representation of actions, participants, and responsibilities in legal texts. The

interest is not only in the content of policies but also the structure, rationale behind it, and what it exposes concerning internalized power dynamics between the state and teachers.

The novelty of this research comes from its integrated methodology. There has been broader work in educational discourse that utilizes discourse analysis; however, very few have utilized SFL alongside critical ideology analysis focused on teacher protection laws. Such an inquiry demonstrates how language goes beyond mere regulation and strategic construction concerning the identity, agency, and profession of teachers. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research questions, 1) how do transitivity systems grammatical structures that indicate who does what to whom operate within teacher protection policies and regulations?, 2) what ways are the relations of dominance and subordination among teachers, the state, and other institutional actors rendered in the regulatory text?, 3) what ideological rationales underpin the policy language regarding these protections as formulated by its framers?. The educator's experiences are often neglected when policies are drafted; this work attempts to address this discrepancy while also examining whether legal frameworks purportedly designed to protect teachers serve to reinforce prevailing power dynamics within educational institutions. Additionally, it has scope for advancing conversations on educational policy, discourse analysis, as well as critical linguistics by drawing attention to language's role in defining institutional authority and professional identity.

METHODOLOGY

The current research adopts a qualitative technique based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with the aim of examining how teacher protection is legally constructed within the framework of Indonesian law. The analysis uses two complementary frameworks: Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and transitivity systems (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach to ideology (van Dijk, 1998, 2008). This combination provides multi-layered scrutiny into the grammatical structures and sociopolitical patterns of policy language.

This study analyses three legal documents which regulate teacher protection in Indonesia: Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, Government Regulation No. 74 of 2008 concerning Teachers, and Ministerial Regulation No. 10 of 2017 concerning Protection of Educators and Education Personnel. These documents were chosen using Hans Kelsen's (2005) theory of legal hierarchy Stufenbau, a theory that arranges legal norms in a stratified order.

The selection of data involved finding clauses that referred to the protection of a teacher, using keyword searches such as: protection, teacher, rights, obligations and even dismissal. After locating them, the clauses were manually coded and categorized by their words and thematic topics. Each clause received a code indicating: Type of process (material, relational, verbal), Participant roles (e.g., Actor, Goal, Bearer, Sayer), and contextual elements (obligation, right, agency).

The first layer focused on transitivity analysis of SFL to study how actions and responsibilities are delineated within grammatical structures; In the case of this research data set where teachers appeared as Actors (active agents in legal arrangements)—or Targets (recipients of actions) were examined to analyze position and agency within legal frameworks (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014).

The second layer derives from van Dijk's ideological applied analysis where he examines discourse concerning power relations between social groups or totalitarian institutions. Within this scope focus is directed towards linguistic choices made through nominalization or its counterparts like the use of passive voice and less concrete language on

agency denial where authority is legitimized state control becomes naturalized (van Dijk 2008). Above all design is given both macrostructure (overarching themes) microstructure: lexicon grammar whereby ideological motifs are traced.

To maintain alignment between the two approaches, the study uses a sequential and interpretive strategy where transitivity analysis first exposes distinct patterns connected to the participants' roles, processes, and representational structures. Those findings are then interpreted within an ideological framework by van Dijk with regard to their ramifications for power dynamics, domination, and discourse strategy.

This approach aids in identifying and addressing the micro dimension of language (grammar clauses and word choice) alongside its macro level of ideology (state authority, teacher agency, legal policy framework). This is to say that while SFL describes how meaning is made in discourse, van Dijk's framework explains why certain constructed meanings bear significance.

In employing this integrative methodology, the study uncovers not only teachers' discursive portrayals embedded within legal texts but also reveals wider ideological frameworks that govern policy discourse in relation to power dynamics within education.

In situating SFL alongside van Dijk's ideological framework, this study joins the critical discourse analysis (CDA) tradition that perceives language as an arena of ideological conflict. It treats legal documents not as neutral instruments devoid of purpose but as devices brimming with discourse meant to execute, validate, and often obfuscate institutional authority wielded.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

The findings is divided into three main parts: participant position, nominalization, and transitivity.

PARTICIPANT POSITION

Data coding revealed the emergence of participant lexemes representing their respective roles in the discourse on teacher protection. The dominant participants include "teachers", "the government", and "the community". Among these, lexeme "teacher" appears with the highest frequency, totaling 584 occurrences. This high frequency is understandable as the teacher is the central topic of discussion in the analyzed discourse.

However, from a power relation perspective, despite its high frequency, lexeme "teacher" is positioned as weak. Functionally, the teacher often appears in the role of *Goal*, indicating that teachers as participant of actions or policies from other authorities. Grammatically, lexeme "teacher" can occur in both active and passive constructions, yet in both, it still occupies the position of a participant, demonstrating its dependency on external agents.

Meanwhile, lexemes "government" and "community" often co-occur, with "government" appearing more frequently (266 times) compared to "community" (65 times). Lexeme "government" forms collocational clusters such as "central government", "regional government", and "district city government", consistently acting as a *dominant actor*, especially when paired with action verbs directed at teachers or the community. The function of lexeme "community" varies depending on context. When acting as an educational provider, the community is expected to protect teachers by appointing them, providing facilities for teaching, and fulfilling their rights such as salaries, incentives, and insurance. However, since both the government and community have the authority to appoint and dismiss teachers, there

is potential for abuse of power. Subjective assessments of teacher performance may lead to unilateral dismissals, which further weaken the teacher's position.

In the context of regulatory discourse, both government and community appear passive, without explicit obligations to prevent injustice against teachers. This reinforces the unequal power relation in which the teacher is placed in a subordinate role.

From the analysis of participant lexemes, it is evident that there is an asymmetrical power relation among teachers, the government, and the community within the legal discourse on teacher protection as reflected in the analyzed regulations. These patterns have meaning and reflect the mobilization of grammar serving institutional ideologies. Referring to teachers predominantly as Goals instead of Actors in policy discussions is not simply a case of peculiar language usage it goes deeper than that. It marks attempts to construct–sustain layered control systems within and over the education system.

NOMINALIZATION

Nominalization is a common strategy in legal discourse, employed to establish authority, formality, and objectivity. In the discourse of teacher protection, nominalization is evident in various lexical forms, as shown in the following table:

Table 1. Nominalization of the lexis "protection" and the semantic functions

No	Form of Nominalization	Number (Frequency of Occurrence)	Sentence	Source Document	Semantic Function
1	*perlindungan* protection	10+ times	*"Perlindungan hukum... mencakup perlindungan terhadap tindak kekerasan, ancaman..."* "Legal protection... includes protection against acts of violence, threats..."	Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 10/2017 regarding teacher protection	Representing protective action as institutional rights
2	*pemutusan hubungan kerja* termination of employment	5 times	*"...perlindungan terhadap pemutusan hubungan kerja yang tidak sesuai..."* "...protection against inappropriate termination of employment..."	Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 10/2017 regarding teacher protection	Abstracting administrative action as legal object
	pemberhentian termination	7 times	*"Guru dapat diberhentikan dari jabatan... karena pelanggaran..."* "Teachers can be dismissed from their positions... due to violations..."	Republic of Indonesia Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, Article 30	Marking the process of legal termination of employment relationship/contract
3	*pelaksanaan tugas* implementation of tasks	6 times	"Perlindungan diberikan dalam pelaksanaan tugas..." *"Protection is provided in the*	Republic of Indonesia Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and	Declaring the scope of work that is the basis for protection

		implementation of duties..."	Lecturers, Article 29	
4	*perlakuan diskriminatif* discriminatory treatment	3 times	"Perlindungan hukum... terhadap <u>perlakuan diskriminatif</u>." *"Legal protection... against discriminatory treatment."*	Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 10/2017 regarding teacher protection	Constructing forms of injustice as objects of protection

Based on the data, nominalization can be classified into four semantic functions: (i) as institutional entities, (ii) within the context of employment (termination), (iii) in relation to professional duties (task performance), and (iv) as representations of social threats (discriminatory treatment). The lexeme *protection* is the most frequently used, appearing in phrases such as "legal protection", "professional protection", and "occupational safety" protection. These nominalized forms represent the verb "to protect", converted into policy entities. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), nominalization is not merely a transformation of an action into a noun; it institutionalizes and legitimizes the protection being described, embedding it within formal structures that offer legal security.

Sensitive topics such as teacher dismissal are often expressed using nominalized forms like "termination" or "dismissal", rather than directly stating "the school fired the teacher." This strategy creates a neutral and objective tone, removing the agent from the surface structure. The focus is shifted from the actor to the process, making the regulation appear general, systemic, and depersonalized.

For example, the phrase "implementation of duties" serves to delineate the formal domain in which protection is applied, implying that state responsibility is limited to the professional context, not extending to personal aspects of teachers' lives.

Similarly, phrases like "discriminatory treatment" and "threat" encapsulate acts of injustice. In the sentence "Legal protection against discriminatory treatment from the community...", nominalization compresses information, removes agency (agent deletion), and presents legal actions as fixed entities (thing-ification). This reflects the legal discourse's impersonal nature and its effort to legitimize social control through formal semantic structures (Fairclough, 2013).

In systemic functional linguistics, nominalization functions as a means to construct legal texts that are objective, structured, and impersonal. It shapes public perception that teachers must be protected by law, framing such protection not merely as a moral responsibility but as an institutional obligation embedded in legal systems.

TYPES OF PROCESSES IN THE TRANSITIVITY SYSTEM: REPRESENTING ACTION, IDENTITY, AND AUTHORITY

This study identifies three distinct process types within the transitivity system: material processes (*highlighting actions*), relational processes (*expressing identity*), and verbal processes (*reflecting authority* or *policy*). From a systemic functional linguistic standpoint, these processes illustrate how legal discourse constructs meaning related to *action, identity*, and *institutional authority*, particularly in the context of teacher protection.

THE USE MATERIAL PROCESSES IN POLICY TEXTS

The coding results indicate a notable dominance of material processes across the three analyzed policy documents. Frequently used verbs include "provide" (4 times), "guarantee"

(3), "obtain" (3)," implement" (2), "carry out" (1), "protect" (1), "respect" (1), "reinforce" (1), "act" "against" (1), and "recognize" (1).

These verbs are associated with tangible actions involving an Actor and a Goal, reflecting real-world activities. Within the legal texts concerning teacher protection, such verbs frame protective measures as concrete responsibilities, articulated through lexicogrammatical structures. Table 2 below outlines how material processes are employed to express duties performed by both institutional and social actors in the teacher protection system.

Table 2. Representation of Material Processes in Teacher Protection Policies: Actor, Process, and Goal

Data number	Source Documents	Clause	Actor	Material Process	Goal	Description
(2a)	Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 10 of 2017 concerning Teacher Protection	*Pemerintah menyediakan sumber daya.* The government provides resources.	The government	provides	resources	to support protection mechanisms
(2b)	Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 10 of 2017 concerning Teacher Protection	*Kementerian memberikan advokasi nonlitigasi.* The Ministry provides non-litigation advocacy.	The Ministry	gives	non-litigation advocacy	forms of legal protection
(2c)	Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 10 of 2017 concerning Teacher Protection	*Guru mendapatkan bantuan hukum.* Teachers get legal aid.	—	gets, obtains	legal aid	teachers as participant of protection
(2d)	Republic of Indonesia Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers	*Masyarakat wajib memberikan perlindungan.* Society is obliged to provide protection.	society	gives	protection	external obligations towards teachers
(2e)	Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 10 of 2017 concerning Teacher Protection	*Pemerintah daerah menyusun mekanisme perlindungan.* Local governments develop mechanisms of protection.	local government	compile, arrange	mechanisms of protection	administrative procedures

As shown in table 2, material processes are central to the way these policies articulate concrete protective actions. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), material processes represent real events or activities involving change, typically structured through an Actor–Process–Goal pattern.

The data suggest that institutional actors particularly the central government, the Ministry, and local governments play the dominant role in implementing protective actions. For instance, in the clause "The Ministry provides non-litigation advocacy" (data 2b), the Ministry is the Actor, "provides" is the material process, and "non-litigation advocacy" is the Goal. Here, the clause communicates an action where the Ministry delivers a service that benefits teachers involved in legal issues. This illustrates a dynamic in which the process directly enables change or support for the teacher, the recipient of protection (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Semantically, the clause assigns responsibility to the Ministry to ensure legal protection through non-litigation mechanisms. From a discourse analysis perspective, this portrays the state not as a passive regulator but as an active, preventive force. It frames teachers as subjects who require protection and legitimizes institutional intervention through administrative means.

In addition to state entities, social actors also appear, as in the clause "Society is obliged to provide protection" (data 2d). This construction extends the scope of responsibility beyond the state to the wider public, suggesting that teacher protection is a shared societal duty rather than merely an institutional obligation.

Another example, "Local governments develop protection mechanism" (2e), highlights the administrative and procedural role local authorities play. This indicates the importance of a structured framework underpinning teacher protection policies.

Overall, material processes in these legal documents serve not only to describe actions but also to structure and distribute institutional and societal responsibilities. Legal and regulatory texts characteristically use material processes to define actions that are normative, prescriptive, and formalized (Eggins, 2004). These structures not only convey content but also establish a grammatical framework for institutional accountability and individual entitlements. In systemic functional terms, grammar is not just a matter of form—it is a resource for enacting social relations and building discourse logic (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Therefore, in the case of teacher protection, material processes do more than describe literal actions they embody the institutionalization of social responsibilities through language.

THE USE OF RELATIONAL PROCESSES

Relational processes play a pivotal role in policy discourse by defining institutional actors and constructing conceptual meanings, particularly in relation to status, rights, and institutional functions. As demonstrated in table 3, the policy texts concerning teacher protection make strategic use of relational processes to convey institutional meanings embedded within the regulatory framework.

Table 3. Representation of Roles and Obligations in Teacher Protection Policies: A Relational Process Analysis

Data number	Source Documents	Clause	Carrier/ Identified	Relational Process	Attribute / Identifier	Relational Type
(3a)	Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 10 of 2017 concerning Teacher Protection	*Perlindungan merupakan kewajiban pemerintah* Protection is the government's obligation	protection	is, constitute	government's obligation	attributive

(3b)	Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 10 of 2017 concerning Teacher Protection	*Perlindungan meliputi perlindungan hukum, profesi, keselamatan kerja, dan kekayaan intelektual* Protection includes legal protection, profession, work safety, and intellectual property	protection	consist of	four aspects of protection	attributive, class
(3c)	Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 10 of 2017 concerning Teacher Protection	*Guru adalah pendidik* Teachers are educators	teacher	is	teacher	identification
(3d)	Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers	*Advokasi nonlitigasi adalah bentuk perlindungan* Non-litigation advocacy is a form of protection	Non-litigation advocacy	is	a form of protection	identification

In general, the data show that relational processes are employed to articulate conceptual definitions, institutional status, and the legal contributions of various actors involved in managing teacher protection cases. These processes are crucial for establishing semantic relationships that define identity, classification, and attribution of key concepts within the teacher protection system.

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), relational processes are designed to ascribe roles or characteristics to entities through specific grammatical structures. These include attributive structures, which connect a Carrier to an Attribute, and identifying structures, which link an Identified to an Identifier. These linguistic patterns provide a mechanism for constructing and maintaining legal and institutional order within formal discourse.

For example, the clause "Protection is a government obligation" (data 3a) constructs protection as a state responsibility, attributing institutional duty to the government. Similarly, the clause "Protection includes legal, professional, occupational safety, and intellectual property protections" (data 3b) delineates the internal components of the concept, indicating that "protection" comprises multiple, formally recognized domains.

Other examples, such as "A teacher is an educator" (data 3c) and "Non-litigation advocacy is a form of protection" (data 3d), use identifying processes to affirm professional identity and define protection mechanisms. These clauses exemplify how relational processes support the classification of actors and roles within an established legal and educational framework.

Together, these examples illustrate how relational processes frame teacher protection as an integral component of the national education system, embedded within stable legal and institutional categories. For instance, the clause "Protection is the government's obligation" (3a) is not merely descriptive; it utilizes an attributive process to encode an institutional imperative categorizing teacher protection as an inherent state obligation. As Eggins (2004) notes, such grammatical choices are instrumental in constructing systemic meaning in formal texts, especially when delineating institutional roles and duties.

From a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) perspective, relational processes do not simply represent relationships between entities; they construct conceptual and classificatory meanings. Unlike material processes, which express concrete actions, relational processes

serve to define and explain institutional roles and conceptual entities. In policy discourse, they function less as imperatives and more as explanatory and declarative statements as seen in constructions such as "Protection is a right," "Protection is part of the education system," or "Advocacy is a form of protection."

These expressions are not neutral. They play an essential role in strengthening legal argumentation, establishing normative classifications, and constructing a stable and prescriptive network of propositions. In this way, relational processes form the discursive backbone of the linguistic representation of teacher protection -through the definition, attribution, and identification of key lexical items and institutional responsibilities.

In conclusion, relational processes in teacher protection policies serve as powerful tools for constructing legally binding meanings. They not only clarify institutional functions and entitlements but also legitimize the state's obligations through language, demonstrating the inherently ideological nature of grammar in policy discourse.

THE USE OF VERBAL PROSES

Based on the data, it was found that verbal processes are used in policy documents to represent communicative actions with an emphasis on information transfer, expression, and institutional discourse.

Table 4. Representation of Communication and Authority in Teacher Protection Policies: A Verbal Process Analysis

Data number	Source Documents	Clause	Sayer	Proses Verbal	Verbiage / Receiver	Description
(4a)	Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 10 of 2017 concerning Teacher Protection	*Kementerian menyampaikan hasil advokasi kepada pihak terkait* Ministry delivers advocacy results to relevant parties	The Ministry	convey	advocacy results	Regarding the settlement of teacher protection disputes
(4b)	Government Regulation Number 74 of 2008 concerning Teachers	*Guru dapat melaporkan ancaman kepada pihak berwenang* Teachers can report threats to authorities	Teachers	report	threats	Teachers' rights in the protection system
(4c)	Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 10 of 2017 concerning Teacher Protection	*Pihak terkait memberikan pernyataan dalam proses penyelesaian kasus* Relevant parties provide statements in the case resolution process	Relevant parties	give	statements	In the context of resolving legal protection

Based on table 4, the verbal process is used to represent communicative actions among actors in the teacher protection system. In this process, teacher protection is carried out through institutional communication, such as reporting and policy socialization. Participants who appear include the Ministry, Teachers, and Related Parties in terms of the verbal process act as Sayer, while the information conveyed such as "advocacy results", "threats", and "protection policies" function as Verbiage. Other functions used are Receiver, such as "authorities" or "educators".

In the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics, verbal processes represent the act of conveying, reporting, stating, or socializing something from one participant (Sayer) to another participant or to the wider community (Receiver or Verbiage) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In the verbal process, the text maker sees the importance of communicating protection mechanisms such as how to report cases, how to advocate, and the need to formally inform policies. With the use of verbal processes, teacher protection discourse is carried out through language activities that connect institutional actors with participants and policy targets.

Clause in data (4a) *The Ministry* acts as Sayer, the process is to convey, and the results of advocacy become Verbiage, which are conveyed to the Receiver in the form of "related parties". The verbal process represents the act of communication or conveying information from one party to another (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In this data, the verbal process functions as a liaison between the Ministry as Sayer and the administrative action in the form of advocacy results to "related parties". "Advocacy results" in this article relate to the resolution of legal problems that befall teachers.

Semantically, this clause contains the meaning that the Ministry as an official institution has the responsibility to convey non-litigation advocacy results to "related parties". which in this context can be legal institutions, educational institutions, or other authorities that are directly related to the case. Meanwhile, the process of conveying shows formal and hierarchical communication activities (Ministry). In the context of teacher protection policies, *advocacy results* likely include case resolution or conflict mediation between teachers and external parties.

Data (4b)

"Teachers can report threats to the authorities".

Clause in data (4b) "Teachers" act as Sayer, the process is "to report", and "threats" become Verbiage, which are delivered to the Receiver in the form of an authorized party. The use of modality can be interpreted as a legal right that conveys the message that teachers can voice or report the form of threat they experience. As Verbiage, "a threat" is a situation that has the potential to disrupt the safety or dignity of teachers. Meanwhile, "the authorized party" as Receiver can refer to the legal authority holder or institution that is hierarchically related to the status of teachers, such as the police or the Education Office, or a teacher protection institution. The verbal process in this context shows the importance of communication in building inter-institutional relations and activating the legal system. The clause confirms that teacher protection actions should not only be passive, but must be active by opening access in the form of a legitimate reporting channel.

Data (4c)

"The related party provides a statement in the case resolution process".

Data (4c) describes the practice of official communication with the use of the "related parties". as Sayer. The mention of the lexis "related parties". is intended to not provide an opportunity for actors who have authority in trying to resolve cases that befall teachers. However, on the other hand, this can be a potential for the case not being handled because the actor in question may be avoiding it by not having a definitive appointment.

The verb "to make a statement" is a form of formal communication and has an administrative nature. In addition, policy makers show that the state will be responsible for efforts to resolve problems transparently through the use of "statement" lexis as Verbiage that represents the content of the information provided. Phrases "in the case resolution process" function as circumstances of location (time/process) that explain the context of the verbal action.

From the three clauses that have been analyzed, it shows that teacher protection needs to be communicated formally. This communication is legal and is an integral part of efforts to

resolve disputes, provide advocacy, and guarantee teachers' rights not to be afraid to voice various threats received. Thus, the use of verbal processes in policy discourse does not only function linguistically, but as an institutional mechanism in efforts to support the protection of the teaching profession.

DISCUSSION

PARTICIPANT POSITION

The analysis of transitivity patterns in teacher protection regulations shows a consistent tendency: teachers are most often placed in the grammatical role of Goals in other words, they are the ones actions are done to, rather than the ones doing the actions. This is evident in clauses like "Guru mendapatkan bantuan hukum" ("Teachers receive legal aid") or "Guru diberhentikan dari jabatan..." ("Teachers are dismissed from their positions"), where teachers are portrayed as recipients of institutional actions. Through this kind of language, teachers appear not as active participants in shaping the legal and professional frameworks that govern their work, but rather as passive figures who must accept decisions made by others. This repeated pattern subtly constructs teachers as dependent on the state, eroding both their autonomy and professional standing.

This linguistic pattern supports what Apple (2004) has long argued that education policies often function as ideological instruments through which the state exerts control over educators. In his view, teachers are often reduced to implementers of state-determined policies, rather than respected professionals with the authority to make independent decisions. This finding is echoed in Kurniawan's (2019) study of Indonesian educational policies, which shows a similar trend of positioning teachers in subordinate roles. The present analysis adds a new layer to these insights by offering concrete linguistic evidence: across the three regulatory texts examined, teachers are overwhelmingly cast as Goals in material processes, while state entities such as the Ministry, the government, or local authorities take up the more dominant Actor roles. For example, in the clause "Pemerintah menyediakan sumber daya" ("The government provides resources"), the government clearly initiates the action, while teachers are the implied recipients dependent on this state-driven provision.

What's important to note is that this imbalance isn't random. Rather, it reflects deeper ideological structures embedded in the legal language of these texts. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) remind us that transitivity choices are never neutral. They shape how reality is portrayed and determine whose perspective is made central. When teachers are consistently denied the role of Actor, their potential to influence educational decisions is effectively silenced. This doesn't just reduce their presence in the text it also reinforces a top-down power dynamic where authority flows only from the state to the teacher, not the other way around. Ironically, the very policies that claim to protect teachers often reinforce their dependence by casting them in grammatically passive roles. As Fairclough (2013) and van Dijk (2008) argue, such subtle discursive patterns reveal how ideology operates in language, and this study offers a clear illustration of how teacher agency can be systematically marginalized through regulatory discourse.

NOMINALIZATION AND THE OBSCURING OF AGENCY

One of the most notable patterns found in the teacher protection policies analyzed in this study is the frequent use of nominalization a grammatical technique where actions or processes are turned into abstract nouns. This strategy shows up clearly in terms like "*perlindungan*" (protection), "*pemutusan hubungan kerja*" (termination of employment),

"pemberhentian" (dismissal), and *"pelaksanaan tugas"* (task implementation). These terms are repeated across various policy clauses, such as *"Perlindungan hukum mencakup perlindungan terhadap tindak kekerasan"* (Legal protection includes protection against acts of violence) and *"Guru dapat diberhentikan dari jabatan"* (Teachers may be dismissed from their position). What's striking here is how the use of nominalization shifts the focus away from who is actually doing the action. Instead of clearly naming the responsible actors whether it be school authorities, administrators, or government officials the policies reduce actions to impersonal, institutional events.

From a Systemic Functional Linguistics perspective, this is not a neutral choice. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) explain that nominalization serves to compress complex meanings into concise noun phrases, which adds a layer of formality and abstraction. But beyond stylistic effect, this can also obscure agency. For example, referring to *pemutusan hubungan kerja* rather than saying *"pihak sekolah memberhentikan guru"* (the school terminated the teacher) subtly shifts the tone from a clear, accountable act to a bureaucratic process. And that shift carries ideological weight. It turns socially impactful decisions into seemingly objective procedures making them appear routine, inevitable, and less open to challenge (Fairclough, 2013). In effect, nominalization becomes a way to assert authority while avoiding responsibility.

This linguistic pattern reflects a broader trend seen in legal and policy discourse globally. As Torgerson (2005) observes, policy documents often present decisions as "technocratic necessities" rather than as deliberate, value-laden choices. In the Indonesian context, the use of nominalization in teacher protection laws seems to perform a similar function. It masks who is doing what to whom, and in doing so, limits teachers' ability to engage critically with the policy language. Instead of being framed as participants in a shared process, teachers are positioned as recipients of top-down decisions. The idea of "protection" thus becomes something granted by the system, not something co-constructed with those it seeks to protect.

Ultimately, the findings from this study suggest that nominalization is more than just a textual feature it is a discursive tool that helps maintain the asymmetry of power within the educational legal system. By abstracting actions and erasing agents, these linguistic choices reinforce hierarchical authority and limit opportunities for accountability and professional agency. As Apple (2004) and van Dijk (2008) argue, such patterns reveal how language shapes and is shaped by power relations within institutions.

TRANSITIVITY STRUCTURES AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF POWER

The transitivity analysis of this study reveals a clear and consistent pattern: material processes dominate the legal discourse surrounding teacher protection. These types of processes those that express concrete actions play a crucial role in shaping how relationships and authority are constructed in language. Across the regulatory documents examined, such as Law No. 14 of 2005, MoEC Regulation No. 10 of 2017, and Law No. 23 of 2022, the *Actor* is overwhelmingly represented by state institutions like the government, education offices, or school organizers. In contrast, teachers are repeatedly positioned as *Goals*, the recipients of these actions. A typical example appears in the clause *"Pemerintah memberikan perlindungan hukum kepada guru"* (The government provides legal protection to teachers), where the grammar clearly casts the state as the active provider and teachers as passive receivers. Through such constructions, the government is framed as both benevolent and powerful, while teachers are discursively placed in a dependent, even subordinated, position.

Viewed through the lens of critical linguistics, this recurring *Actor Process Goal* structure is not random it is deeply ideological. As Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) explain,

grammar is more than a set of rules; it is a resource for making meaning and constructing social reality. In this case, the reality being shaped is one in which agency belongs to the state, while teachers are shown to have little influence over their professional environments. Even when teachers are presented as Actors, the actions they perform are often limited or constrained. Take, for example, the clause *"Guru dapat melaporkan pelanggaran kepada pihak berwenang"* (Teachers may report violations to the authorities); the use of the modal *dapat* (may/can) implies permission rather than genuine empowerment. These patterns reflect what van Dijk (2008) describes as institutional discourse strategies ways in which neutral-sounding language is used to maintain unequal power relations. In effect, the grammar itself becomes a tool that reinforces a top-down structure of control in education.

What sets this study apart from earlier work (such as Arifin, 2020; Rosary, 2022) is its close attention to the grammar of legal texts. While previous research has rightly highlighted the hierarchical nature of educational policymaking, it often approached discourse at a thematic or interpretive level. This study, however, demonstrates that ideology is not only embedded in *what* policies say, but *how* they say it through the grammar that silently shapes roles and relations. The legal language doesn't just regulate teachers it constructs them as subjects who are vulnerable and in need of protection, rather than as autonomous professionals capable of shaping their own practice. This insight calls for a more participatory approach in policy discourse, one that sees teachers not only as beneficiaries of protection but also as co-authors of their professional identity and agency.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study reveals that teacher protection regulations in Indonesia are not purely normative instruments but are ideologically constructed texts. Using Systemic Functional Linguistics, particularly through an analysis of transitivity processes material, relational, and verbal this research identifies the portrayal of the state as the dominant, active agent, while teachers are positioned as passive participants. This reflects a top-down, state-centered ideology, where the government is cast as the sole provider and guardian, and teachers are denied active participation in shaping policy (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Relational processes reinforce fixed legal identities, embodying a legal-formalistic stance in which teacher status is rigidly defined and resistant to contestation (Eggins, 2004). Verbal processes show an institutional preference for one-directional, bureaucratic communication. Most notably, the pervasive use of nominalization conceals the agents of social action and frames ideologically charged processes as neutral and technical, illustrating depersonalization and power neutralization (Fairclough, 2013).

Finally, teacher protection policies are couched in a legal discourse that appears impartial, yet actively reproduces hierarchical and hegemonic social structures. To ensure that such protection is not merely symbolic, policy frameworks must adopt more participatory and transformative approaches ones that recognize and restore the agency, autonomy, and dignity of the teaching profession in a meaningful and substantive manner.

Furthermore, this study underscores the necessity of re-evaluating existing regulatory frameworks through a critical lens that acknowledges the socio-political contexts underpinning educational policies. Empowering teachers as active stakeholders rather than passive recipients requires not only linguistic and discursive shifts but also concrete institutional reforms. Such reforms should foster dialogic engagement, promote transparency, and facilitate collaborative policy-making processes that legitimize teachers' voices and experiences. By doing so, the education system can move beyond procedural formalities towards a more equitable and responsive paradigm that genuinely protects and values

educators. Future research might explore the intersections of language, power, and identity in policy enactment to better understand how discursive practices shape, sustain, or challenge these entrenched power dynamics.

This study set out to critically investigate how Indonesian teacher protection policies construct ideological meanings through legal discourse. By combining Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) specifically transitivity analysis with van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach to ideology, this research offers an integrated analytical lens that reveals how language choices in regulation structure roles, responsibilities, and power relations. The findings show that teachers are predominantly positioned as passive participants (Goals), while state and institutional actors are consistently foregrounded as active agents (Actors). Material processes highlight state-led interventions, relational processes define fixed institutional identities, and verbal processes construct bureaucratic authority. Additionally, the widespread use of nominalization depersonalizes key actions, transforming legal obligations into abstract procedures that mask agency and limit accountability.

This integrative framework represents a methodological contribution to the field of critical policy studies. While prior research has examined educational policies or legal frameworks independently, this study bridges the gap between micro-level grammatical structures and macro-level ideological analysis. It provides a replicable approach for researchers interested in exploring how discourse both reflects and reinforces institutional power. The findings suggest that regulatory discourse in teacher protection, while framed as supportive and neutral, in fact sustains a hierarchical model of governance where the state retains authority and teachers' voices remain largely absent. This critical insight helps move the field beyond descriptive legal analysis toward a more nuanced understanding of how grammar enacts ideology in formal policy texts.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that future teacher protection frameworks adopt more inclusive and participatory discourse models. Policymakers should move away from overly bureaucratic language that obscures agency, and instead develop formulations that recognize teachers as co-constructors of professional and legal meaning. Specifically, legal documents should employ active constructions that explicitly affirm teachers' rights, responsibilities, and voices in decision-making processes. In terms of practical action, education ministries and legal drafters should collaborate with teacher associations and grassroots educators to ensure that regulations are grounded in lived classroom realities, not just administrative expectations.

For future research, scholars could extend this integrated linguistic-ideological approach to examine the implementation stage of such regulations, including how they are interpreted in schools, courts, and training programs. Comparative studies across different legal and cultural contexts could also deepen understanding of how discourse shapes professional identity and agency. Ultimately, shifting the way we talk about protection is a first step toward genuinely empowering those who teach.

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