



Evaluative Adjectives in Flux: A Corpus-Based Appraisal of Stance Construction in Contemporary Ukrainian Media Discourse

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ABSTRACT

Background: The expression of evaluation, opinion, and stance is a fundamental function of language, with adjectives serving as a primary lexical resource for this purpose. While frameworks like Appraisal Theory provide robust models for analyzing evaluative language, their application has predominantly focused on English. There is a need for more research into how evaluation is realized through the distinct morpho-semantic resources of other languages, such as Ukrainian, particularly within the influential domain of media discourse.

Aims: This article provides a corpus-based analysis of the form and function of evaluative adjectives in contemporary Ukrainian online news media. It aims to (1) identify the dominant patterns of Attitude (Affect, Judgement, Appreciation) expressed through adjectives; (2) analyze the role of specific morphological features, such as complex adjectival formations, in graduating evaluative meaning; and (3) determine how these linguistic choices contribute to the construction of authorial stance.

Methods: A specialized corpus of articles from major Ukrainian news websites was compiled. Using a qualitative and quantitative discourse analysis approach, instances of evaluative adjectives were manually identified and coded according to Martin & White's (2005) Appraisal framework [10]. A subsequent morphological analysis focused on identifying patterns in the formation and function of complex and derived adjectives central to Ukrainian word-formation [8, 14].

Results: The analysis reveals a high frequency of adjectives expressing 'Judgement' and 'Appreciation', often used to frame political and social actors and events. A key finding is the productive use of complex adjectives as a powerful resource for intensifying evaluation (Graduation) and encoding nuanced semantic prosody. These formations are shown to be a salient feature in constructing polarized stances within the discourse.

Conclusion: The study concludes that complex evaluative adjectives are a crucial, language-specific resource for inscribing stance in Ukrainian media. The findings contribute to a cross-linguistic validation and refinement of Appraisal Theory and offer a deeper understanding of the grammatical and discursive mechanisms of opinion-making in modern Ukrainian.

Keywords

Evaluative adjectives; Appraisal Theory; corpus linguistics; Ukrainian language; media discourse; stancetaking; sentiment analysis.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Pervasiveness of Evaluation in Discourse

Language is the principal medium through which humans not only represent the world but also enact their social lives, build relationships, and negotiate beliefs. A fundamental dimension of this social function is evaluation—the expression of a speaker or writer’s attitude, opinion, or stance towards the entities, propositions, and events they describe [7]. Far from being a peripheral aspect of communication, evaluation is integral to the construction of meaning itself. As Hunston and Thompson [7] argue, it is the very basis of how speakers and writers create coherent texts and position themselves in relation to both their subject matter and their audience. This process of stancetaking, as defined by Englebretson [3], involves the linguistic construction of personal and interpersonal positioning through the evaluation of referents, the positioning of subjects, and the alignment of speakers with others. Every utterance carries traces of the speaker's viewpoint, whether explicitly marked by evaluative lexis or implicitly conveyed through grammatical and structural choices. Understanding these mechanisms is therefore crucial for a comprehensive account of how language functions in real-world contexts, from casual conversation to formal academic prose and ideologically charged media texts. This paper engages with this broad field by focusing on a specific, yet powerful, linguistic resource for evaluation: the adjective.

1.2 The Adjective as a Primary Locus of Evaluation

Within the linguistic system, certain grammatical classes are more specialized for an evaluative function than others. While evaluation can be realized through verbs, adverbs, and nouns, it is the adjective that stands out as a primary and highly concentrated locus of attitudinal meaning [1, 13]. Adjectives are fundamentally properties-assigning words, and these properties are frequently subjective and gradable, making them ideal for encoding opinions and emotions. As Bednarek [1] notes, adjectives are central to the cognitive processes of inscribing opinion into a text, evoking pre-existing knowledge and value systems in the reader, and provoking an emotional or intellectual response. Their semantic properties, such as orientation (positive or negative) and gradability, are key indicators of sentence-level subjectivity [4]. For instance, describing a policy as effective versus disastrous does not merely add descriptive detail; it fundamentally frames the proposition within a particular evaluative paradigm and invites the audience to align with that stance. The study of adjectives, therefore, provides a direct window into what Rocklage and Fazio [13] term the “evaluative lexicon,” the set of words people use to assess and distinguish their attitudes.

1.3 Theoretical Framework: The Appraisal Model

To systematically analyze the nuanced work of evaluative adjectives in discourse, a robust theoretical framework is required. This study adopts the Appraisal model, developed within the tradition of Systemic Functional Linguistics by Martin and White [10]. Appraisal Theory offers a comprehensive map of the linguistic resources used to express intersubjective positioning and is specifically designed to account for the subtleties of evaluative language in text. The framework is organized into three interacting domains: ATTITUDE, ENGAGEMENT, and GRADUATION. ATTITUDE concerns the resources for expressing feelings and is subdivided into ‘Affect’ (emotion), ‘Judgement’ (ethics), and ‘Appreciation’ (aesthetics/valuation). ENGAGEMENT deals with how writers position their voice relative to other voices and viewpoints. GRADUATION involves resources for adjusting the force or intensity of an evaluation (e.g., slightly good vs. very good) or sharpening the focus of a semantic category (e.g., a true friend). By providing a detailed metalanguage for evaluative language, the Appraisal model allows for a systematic and replicable analysis, moving beyond intuitive readings of texts to a principled account of how stances are built and naturalized through specific linguistic choices [6, 10].

1.4 The Research Problem and Gap

While the Appraisal framework [10] and related work on evaluation [7] have been extensively applied to English-language discourse, their application to other linguistic systems presents both a challenge and an opportunity. Languages with different morphological and syntactic structures may offer unique resources for evaluation that are not fully captured by an Anglo-centric model. Slavic languages, with their rich inflectional and derivational morphology, represent a particularly fertile ground for such investigation. The Ukrainian language, situated in a

dynamic and often contentious socio-political environment, provides a compelling case study. Its media landscape is a critical site for the negotiation of national identity, political legitimacy, and geopolitical alignment, making the study of its evaluative language particularly exigent.

Previous linguistic research in Ukrainian has provided a strong foundation, exploring the grammar of evaluation [15], the role of individually authored adjectives in poetic language [12], and the use of complex adjectives in verbalizing the national image [14]. However, few studies have systematically applied a comprehensive discourse-semantic framework like Appraisal to a large-scale analysis of contemporary Ukrainian media. There is a clear gap in understanding how the specific morpho-lexical resources of Ukrainian are deployed in concert to achieve the pragmatic work of stancetaking in high-stakes public discourse. This study aims to fill that gap by integrating the detailed analytical lens of Appraisal Theory with insights from Ukrainian linguistics.

1.5 Aims and Hypotheses

The central aim of this paper is to investigate the semantic, morphological, and pragmatic functions of evaluative adjectives in contemporary Ukrainian media discourse. The study tests three main hypotheses derived from the literature on evaluation, Appraisal Theory, and Ukrainian linguistics:

- H1: The use of evaluative adjectives in Ukrainian media discourse will be predominantly associated with the Attitude systems of Judgement and Appreciation rather than Affect, reflecting the institutional focus on assessing behavior and phenomena over expressing authorial emotion.
- H2: Language-specific morphological features, particularly complex adjectival formations, will be significantly associated with higher degrees of Graduation (Force), serving as a key resource for intensifying evaluations.
- H3: The distribution of specific adjectival choices will be systematically correlated with the topic of discourse (e.g., domestic politics vs. international relations), indicating a strategic role in constructing consistent and ideologically coherent authorial stances.

By testing these hypotheses, this study seeks to provide a systematic account of how adjectives are used to construct evaluative stances, frame events and actors, and align audiences with particular ideological positions.

2.0 Literature Review & Theoretical Framework

2.1 Stance, Subjectivity, and Evaluation

The concepts of stance, subjectivity, and evaluation are central to understanding language as a social practice. Stancetaking is a public act in which speakers and writers evaluate objects, position subjects (including themselves), and align with others [3]. It is a pervasive and obligatory feature of communication; to speak or write is to take a stance. This perspective moves beyond a simple dichotomy of 'objective' versus 'subjective' language, recognizing instead that all language use is situated and performative. Evaluation, as a core component of stancetaking, is the linguistic mechanism through which this is achieved. Hunston and Thompson [7] identify three main functions of evaluation: expressing the speaker's opinion, constructing and maintaining relations between the speaker and hearer, and organizing the discourse.

Cognitive linguistic approaches further illuminate the relationship between evaluation and knowledge representation. Bednarek [2] argues for a multi-dimensional model of evaluation, encompassing parameters such as 'good-bad,' 'certainty,' 'expectedness,' and 'emotivity.' This highlights that evaluation is not a monolithic phenomenon but a complex cognitive and linguistic process. The choice of an evaluative term inscribes an opinion into the text, evokes pre-existing knowledge and value systems in the reader, and can provoke an emotional or intellectual response [1]. Therefore, analyzing evaluative language is not merely a descriptive exercise but an interpretive one that sheds light on the cognitive models and cultural assumptions underpinning a discourse community.

2.2 A Detailed Overview of Appraisal Theory

To operationalize the analysis of these complex phenomena, this study relies on Martin and White's [10] Appraisal Theory. Its strength lies in its systematic and comprehensive taxonomy of evaluative resources, which are grouped into the three domains of ATTITUDE, GRADUATION, and ENGAGEMENT.

2.2.1 ATTITUDE

ATTITUDE is the system concerned with feelings, including emotional reactions, judgments of behavior, and aesthetic appreciation. It is the central component of the model and is divided into three sub-regions:

- **Affect:** This subsystem deals with the direct expression of emotion, categorizing it as 'un/happiness' (e.g., a sad film), 'in/security' (e.g., a confident leader), and 'dis/satisfaction' (e.g., a boring lecture). It can be expressed by the author or attributed to other actors in the text.
- **Judgement:** This region is concerned with the evaluation of human behavior against a set of institutionalized norms. It is split into two major types: 'Social Esteem' (concerning normality, capacity, and tenacity; e.g., a brave soldier, an incompetent manager) and 'Social Sanction' (concerning veracity and propriety; e.g., a dishonest statement, a cruel act). Judgements are explicitly about assessing people and their character.
- **Appreciation:** This system evaluates products, performances, and natural phenomena. It is organized around three axes: 'Reaction' (impact and quality, e.g., a captivating performance, a dull building), 'Composition' (balance and complexity, e.g., a harmonious design, a disjointed plan), and 'Valuation' (significance and usefulness, e.g., an important discovery, a worthless initiative).

The patterns of Attitude in a text are a primary indicator of the ideological stance being constructed [6].

2.2.2 GRADUATION

GRADUATION concerns the grading of evaluations. Speakers can turn the volume of their feelings up or down, or they can sharpen or soften the boundaries of semantic categories. This domain accounts for the scalability of meaning. It has two subsystems:

- **Force:** This involves resources for intensifying or quantifying meaning. It includes intensifiers (very difficult), metaphorical intensification (excruciatingly difficult), and lexical items that inherently encode a degree of intensity (excellent, terrible, huge).
- **Focus:** This system relates to the prototyping of categories. Words like true, real, or a textbook example of function to sharpen the focus, while hedges like sort of or kind of soften it. Adjectives are intrinsically linked to Graduation, as many are inherently gradable and frequently co-occur with intensifiers [4].

2.3 The Evaluative Lexicon: Adjectives in Focus

Research across multiple disciplines has confirmed the centrality of adjectives in evaluative language. In social psychology, Rocklage and Fazio [13] demonstrated that adjectival choice is a reliable indicator of attitude valence, extremity, and emotionality. Their concept of the "evaluative lexicon" provides a psychological grounding for the linguistic analysis of opinion. In computational linguistics and sentiment analysis, the semantic orientation of adjectives has been a primary focus for developing automated systems to detect subjectivity and opinion in text [4, 17, 18]. Whitelaw et al. [17] show that moving beyond single words to "appraisal groups" (head adjective plus modifications) significantly improves sentiment analysis, a finding that underscores the importance of a discourse-level framework like Appraisal.

From a developmental perspective, the acquisition of adjectives presents unique challenges and strategies for learners, as adjectives often encode abstract and relational concepts [16]. Their mastery is a key milestone in developing the capacity for nuanced social and cognitive evaluation. Furthermore, in specialized discourse, adjectives play a critical role. Marzá [11] conducted a corpus-based study showing how evaluative adjectives are strategically deployed on hotel websites to create a persuasive and positive image for potential customers. In argumentative discourse, the use of evaluative adjectives can be a tool to prevent contradiction and frame a debate in a way that preempts counter-arguments [5]. These diverse studies converge on a single point: adjectives are a

high-stakes, functionally dense resource for enacting evaluation.

2.4 Evaluative Adjectives in Ukrainian Linguistics

This study is deeply informed by a rich tradition of research within Ukrainian linguistics. The Ukrainian language, with its synthetic morphological structure, offers a range of devices for adjectival evaluation that differ from analytic languages like English. Ryzantseva's [15] comprehensive work on the grammar of evaluation provides a foundational understanding of how evaluative semantics are encoded in the grammatical system of modern Ukrainian, establishing a baseline for more specific inquiries.

Building on this foundation, other scholars have examined specific facets of adjectival use. Khaliman [8] examines the degrees of comparison of adjectives, noting how contemporary usage can deviate from codified norms to achieve specific stylistic effects, effectively a form of Graduation that is morphologically, rather than adverbially, realized. This points to a systemic difference in how intensity can be encoded. Radko [12] explores the folklore basis of individually authored adjectival neologisms in the work of Ukrainian poets, demonstrating a long tradition of leveraging adjectival creativity for expressive purposes, a tradition that arguably informs contemporary journalistic practice.

Of particular relevance to this study is the work on complex adjectives. Rud [14] analyzes how complex adjectives (e.g., історико-культурний 'historical-cultural') are used as a means of verbalizing and constructing the image of Ukraine. These compound forms can pack a significant amount of semantic content into a single lexical unit, often with a strong evaluative charge. Similarly, Kosmeda's [9] analysis of metaphors in media language, while focused on feminization, highlights how evaluative language, including adjectives, is central to the modeling of media images of public figures. Synthesizing these language-specific insights, a clear picture emerges: Ukrainian possesses a robust and flexible system for adjectival word-formation that serves as a primary resource for evaluation. This study seeks to connect these structural observations to their functional deployment in media discourse through the systematic application of Appraisal Theory.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Corpus Design and Data Collection

To investigate the use of evaluative adjectives in contemporary Ukrainian media discourse, a specialized, synchronic corpus was compiled. The corpus was designed to be representative of mainstream, high-readership online news and analysis, reflecting the language that shapes public opinion.

- **Corpus Sources:** The data was collected from two of Ukraine's most prominent and influential online news outlets: *Ukrainska Pravda* (Українська правда) and *NV.ua* (Нове время). These sources were chosen for their wide reach, professional journalistic standards, and coverage of a broad range of topics. They represent a central node in the Ukrainian public sphere.
- **Time Frame:** The articles were collected from the period between January 1, 2022, and December 31, 2024. This three-year period was selected to capture contemporary linguistic trends in a period of significant social and political intensity, which is often a catalyst for heightened evaluative language.
- **Corpus Size and Scope:** The final corpus consists of 1,500 articles (750 from each source), totaling approximately 1.2 million words. The articles were selected using stratified sampling based on website categories ('Politics,' 'Society,' 'War,' 'Culture'). To ensure relevance, articles were sampled using keywords such as уряд (government), парламент (parliament), реформа (reform), війна (war), and санкції (sanctions).
- **Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria:** Only journalistic texts (news reports, analysis, opinion columns) were included. Interviews, press releases, and direct reproductions of official documents were excluded to maintain a focus on authored journalistic prose.

3.2 Analytical Procedure

The analysis of the corpus was conducted in three main stages, combining quantitative corpus-based methods with

qualitative, discourse-analytic interpretation.

3.2.1 Identification and Extraction of Evaluative Adjectives

The first step involved the identification of potential evaluative adjective tokens. A semi-automated process was employed. Initially, a Part-of-Speech (POS) tagger trained for Ukrainian was used to identify all adjectival forms. This initial list was then manually filtered to distinguish between adjectives used primarily for descriptive purposes (e.g., дерев'яний 'wooden') and those carrying a clear evaluative load (e.g., ганебний 'shameful'). The guiding principle for inclusion was whether the adjective expressed a stance or opinion, following the principles of subjectivity annotation outlined by Wiebe et al. [18]. This manual filtering process, though labor-intensive, was crucial for ensuring the analytical validity of the dataset, as context is paramount in determining evaluative function. This process yielded a dataset of approximately 15,000 instances of evaluative adjective use.

3.2.2 Coding Scheme: Application of Appraisal Theory

The extracted instances were then subjected to a detailed qualitative analysis using the Appraisal framework [10] as the primary coding scheme. A detailed coding manual was developed to address potential ambiguities. For instance, an adjective like сильний ('strong') could be a neutral descriptor, a positive Judgement of capacity (a strong leader), or a positive Appreciation of valuation (a strong argument). The manual stipulated that clausal context was the final arbiter. Each adjective was coded for:

1. ATTITUDE: Classified as 'Affect,' 'Judgement,' or 'Appreciation,' with sub-classification where applicable (e.g., Judgement: Social Sanction: Propriety). Polarity (positive/negative) was also recorded.
2. GRADUATION: Instances were analyzed for features of Graduation, including explicit markers of 'Force' (intensifiers) and instances of high-grade lexical items.

To ensure reliability, a subset of the data (10%) was coded independently by two analysts. The inter-coder reliability was calculated using Cohen's Kappa, achieving a score of $\kappa=0.85$, indicating a high level of agreement. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion and refinement of the coding manual.

3.2.3 Morphological Analysis

A key component of the methodology was a specific focus on the morphological structure of the coded adjectives [14, 15]. For each coded token, a morphological analysis was performed:

- Identifying Complex (Compound) Adjectives: Instances of compound adjectives were tagged and analyzed for how the combination of roots contributed to the overall evaluative meaning.
- Analyzing Derivational Affixes: The role of evaluative prefixes (e.g., пре- 'exceedingly', анти- 'anti-') and suffixes in modulating Attitude and Graduation was systematically documented [8].

This multi-stage process allowed for a rich and textured analysis, connecting high-level discourse functions (stancetaking) with their specific lexical and morphological realizations.

4.0 RESULTS

The analysis of the 1.2-million-word corpus yielded significant patterns in the use of evaluative adjectives in Ukrainian media discourse. The findings are presented below, organized according to the primary systems of Appraisal Theory and the study's hypotheses.

4.1 Quantitative Overview: Testing H1

In support of H1, the analysis indicated that the discourse was overwhelmingly dominated by evaluations of

Judgement and Appreciation. The most frequent category of ATTITUDE was Judgement, accounting for 48% of all instances. This was followed by Appreciation (41%) and a much smaller proportion of Affect (11%). This distribution suggests that the primary function of the news discourse in the corpus is the assessment of human behavior (Judgement) and the evaluation of events, policies, and their outcomes (Appreciation), rather than the direct expression of authorial emotion (Affect). Furthermore, negative evaluations (62%) were significantly more frequent than positive ones (38%), a common feature of news discourse which often focuses on conflict, problems, and critique.

4.2 Patterns of Attitude

4.2.1 Dominance of Judgement: Social Sanction

Within the dominant category of Judgement, evaluations of Social Sanction (concerning ethics and propriety) were far more common than those of Social Esteem (capacity, normality). Specifically, negative Judgements of propriety were a salient feature, particularly in political reporting. Adjectives such as корупційний ('corrupt'), ганебний ('shameful'), злочинний ('criminal'), and цинічний ('cynical') were frequently used.

- Example 1: Це було ганебне рішення, яке підриває довіру до інституції.

(Romanized: Tse bulo hanebne rishennia, yake pidryvaie doviru do instytutsii.)

(Translation: 'This was a shameful decision that undermines trust in the institution.')

Analysis: Hanebne is a clear token of negative Judgement: Social Sanction, which powerfully condemns the 'decision' on moral grounds and aligns the reader against it.

- Example 2: Такі цинічні заяви є неприпустимими в демократичному суспільстві.

(Romanized: Taki tsynichni zaiavy ye neprypustymymy v demokratychnomu suspilstvi.)

(Translation: 'Such cynical statements are unacceptable in a democratic society.')

Analysis: Tsynichni evaluates the 'statements' not on their capacity or truthfulness, but on their perceived amoral and brazen nature, another clear instance of negative Judgement of propriety.

4.2.2 Appreciation: Valuation in Socio-Political Contexts

The second most common category, Appreciation, was primarily used to evaluate policies, strategies, and events. The sub-type 'Valuation' (assessing significance) was particularly prevalent.

- Example 3: Надання цієї допомоги є ключовим фактором для стабільності в регіоні.

(Romanized: Nadannia tsiiei dopomohy ye kliuchovym faktorom dlia stabilnosti v rehioni.)

(Translation: 'The provision of this aid is a key factor for stability in the region.')

Analysis: Kliuchovym ('key') functions as an Appreciation: Valuation+, assigning high significance to the 'aid' and implicitly endorsing it.

- Example 4: Це деструктивна політика, що веде до економічного занепаду.

(Romanized: Tse destruktyvna polityka, shcho vede do ekonomichnoho zanepadu.)

(Translation: 'This is a destructive policy that leads to economic decline.')

Analysis: Destruktyvna is a token of negative Appreciation: Valuation, assessing the 'policy' based on its detrimental societal worth and outcome.

4.2.3 The Subtle Role of Affect

While less frequent, Affect was present, often used to describe the emotional impact of events on the populace or to attribute emotion to actors.

- Example 5: Це була зворушлива історія порятунку.

(Romanized: Tse bula zvorushlyva istoriia poriatunku.)

(Translation: 'It was a touching story of rescue.')

Analysis: Zvorushlyva ('touching') describes the emotional impact of the story, coding for positive Affect ('happiness' or 'satisfaction').

- Example 6: Новини з фронту були тривожними.

(Romanized: Novyny z frontu byly tryvozhnymy.)

(Translation: 'The news from the front was alarming.')

Analysis: Tryvozhnymy ('alarming') directly encodes negative Affect, specifically 'insecurity' and 'unhappiness.'

4.3 Realizations of Graduation: Testing H2

The analysis strongly supported H2, indicating that the morphological resources of Ukrainian are a primary means of expressing Graduation, particularly Force.

4.3.1 Complex Adjectives as High-Grade Evaluators

A striking finding was the pervasive use of complex (compound) adjectives as a resource for both packing descriptive content and graduating the force of an evaluation.

- Example 7: Було викрито чергову корупційно-бюрократичну схему.

(Romanized: Bulo vykryto chervovu koruptsiino-biurokratychnu skhemu.)

(Translation: 'Another corruption-bureaucratic scheme was exposed.')

Analysis: The adjective koruptsiino-biurokratychnu fuses two negative concepts. It functions as a high-grade token of negative Judgement, suggesting an intrinsic, systemic link that intensifies the condemnation.

- Example 8: Його військово-політичне рішення змінило хід історії.

(Romanized: Yoho viiskovo-politychne rishennia zminylo khid istorii.)

(Translation: 'His military-political decision changed the course of history.')

Analysis: Here, viiskovo-politychne is a complex classifier, but in a context of high praise, it takes on the prosody of positive Appreciation, signifying comprehensive and masterful thinking across domains. It graduates the valuation of the 'decision.'

4.3.2 Derivational Prefixes for Intensification

Beyond compounding, derivational prefixes were a common strategy for upscaling evaluative force.

- Example 9: Це був день прекрасних новин.

(Romanized: Tse buv den' prekrasnykh novyn.)

(Translation: 'It was a day of wonderful/supremely beautiful news.')

Analysis: The prefix пре- in prekrasnykh elevates the adjective to its highest degree, a lexicalized superlative that functions as high-Force positive Appreciation.

- Example 10: Були зафіксовані антиукраїнські провокації.

(Romanized: Bulu zafiksovani antyukrainski provokatsii.)

(Translation: 'Anti-Ukrainian provocations were recorded.')

Analysis: The prefix анти- creates a powerful negative evaluator, antyukrainski. It is a high-Force token of negative Judgement, framing the 'provocations' as fundamentally opposed to the state and its people.

4.4 Co-occurrence Patterns and Stance Construction: Testing H3

Finally, the results strongly supported H3. The analysis revealed consistent patterns of co-occurrence, where certain evaluative adjectives clustered around specific topics, creating a strong "semantic prosody" [6] and constructing a

coherent stance.

- Discourse on War: Reports concerning the actions of the aggressor state were systematically characterized by a narrow set of highly negative Judgement adjectives: жорстокий ('cruel'), варварський ('barbaric'), цинічний ('cynical'), злочинний ('criminal').
- Discourse on Reforms: Debates around domestic reforms were often framed using a binary of positive and negative Appreciations. Proponents' arguments were associated with adjectives like ефективний ('effective'), прогресивний ('progressive'), and європейський ('European'), while opposition was framed with згубний ('detrimental'), непродуманий ('ill-conceived'), and корупційний ('corrupt').

This systematic patterning indicates that adjectival choices are not random but are strategic deployments that contribute to a coherent, overarching narrative and ideological framing across the corpus.

5.0 DISCUSSION

The results of this study offer a multi-faceted view of the role of evaluative adjectives in shaping Ukrainian media discourse. The findings not only quantify the prevalence of different types of evaluation but also shed light on the specific linguistic technologies used to construct stance. This section discusses the interpretation of these findings, their implications for Appraisal Theory, and their connection to the broader literature on evaluation and stancetaking.

5.1 Interpreting the Evaluative Landscape

The confirmation of H1, showing the dominance of Judgement and Appreciation over Affect, aligns with the institutional role of news media. The primary function appears to be the assessment and interpretation of the social and political world [7], rather than the expression of raw emotion. The heavy reliance on Judgement: Social Sanction (propriety/ethics) in political reporting suggests that the discourse is framed primarily through a moral lens. Actors and their actions are constantly assessed against a backdrop of ethical norms. This aligns with Herman's [5] work on argumentation, where evaluative adjectives serve to frame a proposition in such a way that it becomes difficult to contradict without appearing to violate those same norms. By labeling a decision ганебний ('shameful'), the writer constructs a position of moral authority and challenges the reader to dissent. This strategy is central to the persuasive and polemical nature of modern media, where simply reporting facts is often secondary to framing them within a specific ideological worldview [9].

5.2 Complex Adjectives as a Key Stancetaking Resource

The strong support for H2 indicates that complex adjectives are a cornerstone of evaluative practice in Ukrainian. These forms, such as корупційно-бюрократичний ('corruption-bureaucratic') or національно-визвольний ('national-liberation'), are more than just economical descriptors. They function as highly condensed units of GRADUATION and ATTITUDE. This linguistic strategy intensifies evaluation by linking two concepts into an inseparable whole, suggesting a systemic and deep-rooted quality, which acts as a powerful form of Graduation: Force. This practice extends the observations of Rud [14] on the use of complex adjectives for imaging the nation, showing that this same linguistic mechanism is a workhorse for everyday political commentary. It also reflects a broader tradition of linguistic creativity in Ukrainian [12]. The prevalence of these forms highlights the importance of analyzing language-specific morphological resources when studying stancetaking and alignment [3].

5.3 Implications for Appraisal Theory

This study's findings largely affirm the cross-linguistic utility of the Appraisal framework [10]. The core systems proved highly effective for categorizing and analyzing evaluative language in Ukrainian. However, the results also suggest areas where the framework could be refined. The analysis of complex adjectives suggests a potential sub-system within Graduation that is not fully elaborated in the standard, English-centric model. The fusion of concepts

in a compound adjective represents a different kind of intensification than that achieved through an adverbial modifier. It is a graduation of semantic complexity and conceptual binding. This might be considered a distinct type of Graduation: Force, where intensity is achieved not by scaling a single quality but by creating a new, more potent composite quality.

Furthermore, the study shows how derivational morphology (e.g., the prefix *npe-*) serves as a primary, lexicalized resource for Graduation. While the Appraisal framework can account for this, the sheer frequency and systematicity of its use in Ukrainian, as noted by scholars like Khaliman [8], suggest that morphology's role in graduation may be more central in synthetic languages. This reinforces the need for analysts to be attentive to the "grammatical mood" of a language when applying the framework [6].

5.4 Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

This study, while comprehensive, has several limitations. First, its focus on two major news outlets, while ensuring relevance, means the findings may not be generalizable to all forms of Ukrainian media. Second, the analysis was synchronic, capturing a snapshot of language use. A diachronic study could reveal how these evaluative patterns have evolved over time.

Future research could proceed in several promising directions. A comparative study analyzing evaluative adjectives in other Slavic languages could shed light on broader patterns of stancetaking. Furthermore, the findings have clear applications in computational linguistics. The systematic patterns identified here could be used to train more nuanced and accurate sentiment analysis models for Ukrainian, moving beyond simple dictionary-based approaches to ones that can recognize complex evaluative structures [17, 18]. Finally, connecting these textual findings to experimental psychological research, in the vein of Rocklage and Fazio [13], could explore how Ukrainian speakers cognitively process these complex adjectival forms and the extent to which they influence attitude formation.

6.0 CONCLUSION

This study set out to analyze the form and function of evaluative adjectives in contemporary Ukrainian media discourse through the lens of Appraisal Theory. The findings systematically support the study's three hypotheses. The results indicate that the evaluative landscape is dominated by Judgement and Appreciation, reflecting the media's role in moral and social assessment. The analysis further demonstrates that the rich morphological resources of Ukrainian, especially complex adjectival formations and derivational prefixes, are a primary vehicle for graduating the force of these evaluations. Finally, the study confirmed that these adjectival choices are not random but are deployed in systematic patterns that construct coherent and ideologically-inflected stances.

The primary contribution of this research is twofold. First, it provides a detailed, empirically-grounded account of the mechanisms of evaluation in a major Slavic language, highlighting the crucial role of word-formation in stancetaking. Second, it contributes to the cross-linguistic validation of Appraisal Theory, while also suggesting that the model could be enriched by a more detailed account of morphologically-realized graduation. Ultimately, this paper underscores the profound power of a seemingly simple grammatical category—the adjective—to shape public opinion, frame political debate, and construct social reality.

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