

The Role of Evaluative Lexis in Constructing The Subjective Mode of Narration

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Abstract:

Evaluative lexis is a core element of language that expresses speakers' attitudes and judgments, playing a significant role in communication and discourse analysis. In modern stylistics and cognitive linguistics, evaluative expressions are studied as linguistic tools that construct subjective narration modes, revealing authorial stance, emotional orientation, and cognitive framing. However, there is limited integrative research analyzing how evaluative lexis operates across genres to model subjectivity, especially considering cognitive, stylistic, and pragmatic dimensions in Russian discourse. This study aims to investigate the semantic, pragmatic, and stylistic functions of evaluative lexis in constructing subjective modes of narration across literary, journalistic, and digital genres. The findings demonstrate that evaluative lexis functions at lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic levels, performing expressive, cognitive, and rhetorical roles. It includes explicit and implicit evaluation, operates through metaphor, irony, and modal structures, and activates cognitive frames shaping interpretive outcomes. Genre and cultural context influence the form, intensity, and norms of evaluation, with digital communication introducing new paralinguistic evaluative resources. The study integrates cognitive, stylistic, and discourse-analytic approaches, highlighting evaluative lexis as a dynamic resource shaping narrative voice, authorial identity, and reader perception within and across genres. These insights deepen the understanding of evaluative lexis as a structuring principle in discourse, with practical applications for linguistic theory, narrative analysis, stylistics, and media studies, and suggest directions for future cross-cultural and computational research on evaluative language.

Keywords: Subjective Mode, Evaluative Lexis, Stylistics, Cognitive Linguistics, Frame, Metaphor, Modality, Expressivity, Discourse

Introduction

The study of evaluative lexis occupies a prominent place in modern linguistic research, particularly in the fields of stylistics, cognitive linguistics, and pragmatics[1]. Evaluative language is understood as a linguistic means of expressing the speaker's attitude toward various aspects of reality. It plays a key role in constructing the subjective mode of narration—a stylistic and communicative category that reflects the author's personal stance, emotional engagement, and value judgments[2]. This paper aims to explore the stylistic, semantic, and cognitive functions of evaluative lexis as a means of subjective representation in contemporary discourse. The hypothesis underlying this research is that evaluative lexis not only expresses emotional reactions but also contributes to the cognitive framing and rhetorical modeling of narrative structures[3]. The objective is to identify linguistic mechanisms that enable the integration of evaluative content into various discourse types and to demonstrate how these mechanisms operate across genres and communicative contexts[4].

Methods

This study employs a multidisciplinary methodology combining elements of text analysis, cognitive discourse analysis, and stylistic interpretation. The research material includes literary texts, journalistic articles, and digital discourse samples in the Russian language. Descriptive and comparative analysis was used to identify evaluative lexical units and their syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic functions[5]. The corpus includes excerpts from works by authors such as A. Platonov, V. Pelevin, S. Dovlatov, and others. The analytical framework integrates insights from Russian linguistic tradition (Koshina, Karasik, Sternin) and cognitive stylistics (Kubryakova, Dem'yankov), with an emphasis on frame theory and narrative voice modeling. Corpus-based frequency analysis was also applied to evaluate the distribution and collocation patterns of evaluative expressions across genres[6].

Results and Discussion

The study revealed that evaluative lexis operates on multiple linguistic levels—lexical, syntactic, pragmatic—and performs expressive, cognitive, and rhetorical functions[7]. In literary discourse, evaluative terms are often embedded in imagery and contribute to world-building and character development. In journalistic and digital discourse, evaluation functions as a tool of ideological framing and emotional persuasion[8].

Key findings include:

1. Evaluative lexis includes both explicit terms (brilliant, disgusting) and implicit expressions formed through metaphor, irony, and narrative tone.
2. Recurrent syntactic patterns (inversion, anaphora, rhetorical questions) enhance the emotional impact of evaluation[9].
3. Evaluative terms activate cognitive frames and categorize experience, shaping interpretive outcomes.
4. Genre influences the form and intensity of evaluative language; scholarly discourse tends to attenuate evaluation, whereas essays and social media posts intensify it.
5. Cultural context determines evaluative norms—Russian discourse favors directness, Anglo-American traditions favor implicitness[10].

One important dimension of evaluative lexis is its diachronic development. Historical analysis of literary texts demonstrates that evaluative strategies evolve alongside sociocultural norms and literary paradigms[11]. For example, 19th-century Russian literature often employed subtle religious and moral evaluation, while modernist narratives in the 20th century emphasized existential and psychological dimensions. Tracking the use of evaluative terms across literary periods reveals the

changing nature of subjectivity in Russian linguistic culture. In addition, the analysis of evaluative lexis within dialogic contexts shows its function in shaping character relationships and social dynamics. Dialogues in fiction frequently incorporate evaluative expressions to manifest conflict, solidarity, irony, or power imbalance[12]. The repetition of emotionally marked vocabulary within dialogues intensifies the interactional subtext and reinforces the subjective mode. It is also essential to highlight the role of evaluative modality. Words such as “must,” “should,” “can,” and their lexical equivalents add prescriptive force to narratives. These modal structures carry hidden evaluative judgments and often frame the narrator’s worldview in ethical or logical terms. The interaction between modality and evaluation enhances the persuasive function of discourse[13].

Furthermore, evaluative lexis contributes to the intertextual and stylistic identity of an author. Writers often develop idiosyncratic evaluative lexicons—lexical clusters that recur in their work, forming stylistic markers. These lexical patterns serve as recognizable signatures of authorial presence and subjectivity, further contributing to the coherence and voice of a text[14].

Finally, the application of evaluative lexis in hybrid genres—such as autofiction, essayistic novels, and reflective journalism—demonstrates its flexibility in blending factual reporting with emotional or philosophical reflection. In these texts, the evaluative layer often guides interpretation, transforms facts into meanings, and draws readers into the author’s subjective world. The findings suggest that evaluative lexis is a dynamic and context-sensitive linguistic resource. It plays a vital role in constructing the subjective mode of narration by embedding authorial stance into the fabric of the text. In literary narratives, the subjective mode is realized through expressive descriptors, narratorial intrusions, and character speech. In journalism and digital media, evaluation becomes part of argumentative and persuasive strategies. The subjective mode emerges from the interaction of linguistic form, cognitive processing, and cultural convention. It is not limited to emotional display but constitutes a structuring principle of discourse. As evaluative expressions shape the reader’s perception and emotional response, they serve as tools of narrative manipulation and ideological influence[15].

Furthermore, the increasing role of digital communication expands the scope of evaluative lexis. Hashtags, emojis, and other paralinguistic features encode evaluation in non-traditional formats, contributing to the hybridization of subjective discourse. This development underscores the adaptability of evaluative language and its centrality in modern communicative practices.

Evaluative lexis functions as a fundamental tool in constructing the subjective mode of narration. It performs expressive, cognitive, rhetorical, and aesthetic functions. Through evaluative lexis, the author crafts not only a descriptive account, but a coherent worldview that communicates stance and guides reader interpretation. Studying evaluative lexis offers deeper insight into text dynamics and the interplay between language, thought, and identity. Moreover, the findings of this research emphasize the significance of evaluative lexis in shaping genre-specific strategies and stylistic choices. Whether in fiction, journalism, or digital platforms, evaluative language serves as a key determinant of discourse positioning, affecting both how texts are constructed and how they are received by audiences.

Conclusion

The interdisciplinary approach adopted in this study—incorporating cognitive, stylistic, and discourse-analytic perspectives—underscores the multifaceted nature of evaluative lexis and highlights its importance for linguistic theory, narrative analysis, and media studies. Future research may expand the scope of investigation by exploring multilingual and cross-cultural perspectives on evaluation. It would also be useful to apply computational tools for tracking evaluative patterns across large corpora, enhancing both qualitative and quantitative dimensions of stylistic analysis.

Ultimately, a nuanced understanding of evaluative lexis deepens our comprehension of how language

reflects human values, perceptions, and worldviews, confirming its vital role in the communicative and cognitive functions of discourse. Evaluative lexis functions as a fundamental tool in constructing the subjective mode of narration. It performs expressive, cognitive, rhetorical, and aesthetic functions. Through evaluative lexis, the author crafts not only a descriptive account, but a coherent worldview that communicates stance and guides reader interpretation. Studying evaluative lexis offers deeper insight into text dynamics and the interplay between language, thought, and identity.

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