A Corpus-Based Study of Evaluative Language in Leading Articles in British Broadsheet and Tabloid Newspapers

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Abstract : In recent years, newspapers in the United Kingdom have been no longer just a means of sharing news about what happens in the world; they are also used to influence target readers by having them become more up-to-date, well-informed, entertained, exasperated, delighted, and infuriated. To achieve these objectives and maintain influence on public opinion, journalists use a particular language in which they can convey emotions and opinions, organize their discourse, and establish solidarity with their audience. This type of language has been widely analyzed under different labels, such as evaluation, appraisal, and stance. There is a considerable amount of linguistic and non-linguistic research devoted to analyzing this type of interpersonal language in journalistic discourse, and most of these studies were carried out to challenge the traditional assumptions of the objectivity and impartiality of news reporting. However, very little research has been undertaken on evaluative language in newspaper institutional editorials, and there is hardly any systematic or exhaustive analysis of this type of language in British tabloid and broadsheet newspapers. This study will attempt to provide new insights into the nature of authorial and non-authorial evaluation in leading articles in popular and quality British newspapers, along with their targets, sources, and discourse functions. The study will also attempt to develop a framework of evaluation that can be applied to evaluative lexical items in newspaper opinion texts. The framework is both theory-driven (i.e., it builds on and modifies previous frameworks of evaluation such as appraisal theory and parameter-based approach) and data-driven (i.e., it elicits the evaluative categories from the analysis of the corpus, which helps in the development of the current framework). To achieve this aim, a corpus of 140 leading articles were selected. The findings revealed that the tabloids tended to express their stance through explicitness, dramatization, frequent reference to social actors' emotions and beliefs, and exaggeration in negativity, while the broadsheets preferred to express their stance through mitigation ambiguity and implicitness. conceptual themes and propositions were more preferable targets for expressing stance in the broadsheets while human behavior and characters were preferable targets for the tabloids.