LINGUISTIC INTERPRETATION OF SUBJECTIVITY AND EVALUATION CATEGORIES IN THE EXPRESSION OF EMOTIONS

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Annotation

This article examines the linguistic mechanisms through which subjectivity and evaluation categories operate in the expression of emotions. Drawing on theoretical frameworks from functional linguistics, appraisal theory, and cognitive linguistics, the research explores how speakers encode their emotional states and evaluative judgments through various linguistic resources. The analysis covers lexical, grammatical, and discursive strategies for expressing subjectivity, including evaluative adjectives, modal expressions, metaphorical constructions, and perspectival markers. Special attention is given to the interplay between subjective expression and linguistic structure, demonstrating that emotional communication relies on a complex system of linguistic choices rather than isolated lexical items. The article concludes by considering implications for understanding language as a tool for both representing and constructing emotional experience.

Keywords

subjectivity, evaluation categories, linguistic expression, emotions, appraisal theory, stance, evaluative language, cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, modal expressions.

Introduction. The relationship between language and emotional expression constitutes one of the most fascinating and complex areas of linguistic inquiry. When human beings express their feelings, they engage in a fundamentally subjective act—one that reveals inner states, attitudes toward the world, and evaluations of people, events, and situations. Yet this deeply personal expression must be accomplished through the shared, conventional system of language. This inherent tension between individual subjectivity and collective linguistic resources raises fundamental questions: How do speakers navigate this duality? What linguistic categories does language make available for emotional expression? And how do these categories shape the very emotions we experience and communicate?

Subjectivity in language refers to the expression of the speaker's perspective, attitudes, and inner states. As Thompson and Hunston observe, evaluative language expresses the speaker's personal opinions or feelings about an entity, ascribing value to whatever is being described [1]. This subjective dimension is not merely an occasional feature of language but permeates everyday communication. When someone says "I'm absolutely delighted with your work" or "That was a terribly disappointing experience," they are simultaneously reporting emotional states, positioning themselves socially, and structuring ongoing interaction.

The present article synthesizes insights from functional linguistics, cognitive linguistics, and appraisal theory to provide a comprehensive overview of how subjectivity and evaluation categories manifest linguistically in emotional expression. The argument proceeds in four parts. First, I examine the foundational concepts of subjectivity and evaluation, clarifying their relationship to emotional expression. Second, I survey the linguistic resources available for encoding subjectivity, from lexical choices to grammatical structures. Third, I analyze the categories of evaluation that organize emotional meaning. Finally, I consider how context shapes the interpretation of subjective language, drawing on recent theoretical and empirical findings.

Literature Review. The study of emotional expression through language has a rich history spanning multiple disciplines—psychology, anthropology, philosophy, literary studies, and, most

centrally, linguistics. The linguoculturological approach, which integrates these fields, focuses on examining linguistic units from the perspective of their cultural meaning and function.

Early linguistic work on subjectivity focused on identifying formal markers of the speaker's presence in text. Banfield introduced the concept of the "SELF" of a sentence—the speaker in conversation or the narrating character in fiction—and identified morphological, lexical, and syntactic elements that consistently express private states [2]. However, researchers soon recognized that many linguistic elements are subjective only under certain conditions, leading to the concept of "potential subjective elements" that can, but do not always, report inner states.

Recent work has refined our understanding of subjectivity's components. Drawing on empirical evidence from French, Grisot and Blochowiak propose that subjectivity comprises three interrelated components: perspective-taking, epistemic evaluation, and emotions [3]. This tripartite model captures the multidimensional nature of subjective expression. When we express emotions, we simultaneously adopt a perspective on experience, evaluate situations along dimensions of goodness or badness, and manifest affective responses.

The most elaborate taxonomic approach to evaluative language comes from Appraisal Theory, developed within Systemic Functional Linguistics by Martin and White [4]. Their framework distinguishes three major systems:

Attitude encompasses three regions of feeling:

- *Affect*: resources for expressing emotion (happy/sad, confident/anxious)
- *Judgment*: resources for evaluating behavior (ethical/unethical, praiseworthy/blameworthy)
- *Appreciation*: resources for evaluating phenomena (beautiful/ugly, significant/insignificant)

Engagement deals with sources of attitudes, including resources for positioning the speaker's voice relative to alternatives (hedging, attribution, modality).

Graduation covers resources for adjusting the strength of evaluations (slightly/extremely, somewhat/very).

This framework reveals that emotional expression involves multiple simultaneous choices. When we express feelings, we simultaneously select emotional type (Affect), position ourselves toward potential alternative views (Engagement), and adjust intensity (Graduation).

Cognitive linguistics has demonstrated that emotional expression relies heavily on metaphorical conceptualization. Lakoff and Johnson's foundational work showed that metaphors are not merely decorative but reflect underlying cognitive structures [5]. When we say "Our love is a journey" or "She was boiling with rage," we map concrete source domains (journeys, heated liquids) onto abstract target domains (love, anger). Kövecses, in his comprehensive study "Metaphor and Emotion," demonstrated that while metaphors such as *anger is heat* or *happiness is up* appear universal across languages, their specific linguistic realizations vary significantly across cultures [6]. For instance, while the heat metaphor for anger exists in many languages, its precise manifestation (fire, hot fluid in a container, steam) depends on cultural models and physical environment.

\The study of emotional concepts has been shaped by the tension between universalist and relativist positions. Universalists (following Ekman) argue that basic emotions (joy, anger, fear, surprise, disgust, sadness) are recognized and expressed similarly across cultures. Cultural relativists, by contrast, emphasize that the cognitive structure, valuation, and expression of emotions differ dramatically across cultures. Wierzbicka's work represents a significant contribution to this debate. Developing the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) theory, she demonstrated that emotion concepts such as Russian *toska*, *dusha*, or *udovolstviye* have no exact equivalents in English and reflect culturally specific ways of experiencing and conceptualizing

emotions [7]. Her analysis shows that emotion words are not simple labels for pre-existing feelings but rather cultural artifacts that shape emotional experience itself.

Research Methodology. This study employs a comprehensive methodological approach, integrating various linguistic and cultural analysis methods. The primary methods include:

Comparative-linguistic analysis. This core method examines linguistic material from English, Russian, and Uzbek in parallel, identifying similarities and differences, particularly at the conceptual-cultural level. Several levels of analysis were distinguished: lexical-semantic, phraseological-paremiological, and pragmalinguistic.

Semantic field analysis. For each emotion concept, the semantic field—including core lexical units (nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs), their synonymic, antonymic, and hyponymic relations—was identified and compared.

Conceptual analysis. The structural components of emotion concepts (representational, conceptual, figurative, and evaluative) were identified for each language. Conceptual metaphor and metonymy analysis served as the primary tool for identifying these components.

Phraseological and paremiological analysis. Proverbs, sayings, idioms, and fixed expressions were analyzed to reveal the cultural meaning and conceptual load of their components. This method proves especially valuable for identifying cultural specificity.

Results and Discussion. The most obvious resources for subjective expression are lexical. Evaluative adjectives have received particular attention in the literature. Goddard, Taboada, and Trnavac propose a detailed semantic analysis of English evaluational adjectives, identifying five groups with distinct semantic templates [8]:

1. First-person thought-plus-affect (e.g., *wonderful*): These adjectives combine cognitive appraisal with affective response, typically implying "I think this is good and I feel something good because of it."
2. Experiential (e.g., *entertaining*): These focus on the quality of experience itself, describing how engaging or pleasurable an activity is.
3. Experiential with bodily reaction (e.g., *gripping*): These link emotional experience to physical responses, suggesting embodied engagement.
4. Lasting impact (e.g., *memorable*): These evaluate the enduring effects of an experience on memory and reflection.
5. Cognitive evaluation (e.g., *complex*, *excellent*): These involve more detached, analytical judgments of quality or difficulty.

This taxonomy reveals that emotional expression through adjectives involves complex semantic structure, combining descriptive, affective, and evaluative components in language-specific ways.

Beyond adjectives, evaluative meaning is encoded in nouns (*disaster*, *triumph*), verbs (*to adore*, *to despise*), and adverbs (*fortunately*, *regrettably*). Morphological resources also contribute, with affixes conveying evaluative meaning (e.g., diminutives expressing affection or contempt).

Subjectivity is not confined to lexical choices but permeates grammar. Modal verbs express the speaker's attitude toward the likelihood or necessity of propositions (*must*, *might*, *should*), constituting a grammaticalized system for epistemic and deontic evaluation [9].

More subtly, grammatical structures can encode perspectival distinctions. Recent experimental work on French has investigated how verb tenses function in subjective contexts. The Passé Simple (simple past), traditionally described as a tense for objective historical narrative, can be used "perspectivally" to represent a character's subjective experience [3]. Crucially, this perspectival reading depends on contextual factors—particularly the presence of Free Indirect Discourse, which blends narrator's and character's voices. This finding suggests that

subjectivity emerges not from isolated grammatical markers but from their integration into larger discursive configurations.

Bednarek's comprehensive work on evaluative language provides a framework for understanding the categories of evaluation available to speakers [10]. Drawing on corpus data, she identifies dimensions such as:

- Emotivity: expressions of positive or negative feeling
- Importance: judgments of significance
- Comprehensibility: assessments of clarity
- Expectedness: evaluations of predictability
- Reliability: judgments of authenticity
- Evidentiality: indications of knowledge source

These dimensions demonstrate that evaluation extends far beyond simple good/bad judgments. Emotional expression draws on multiple evaluative parameters simultaneously, creating rich, nuanced meanings.

Traditional approaches to evaluative language often treated evaluation as a property of individual words—as if "good" simply meant good and "bad" simply meant bad. However, recent work emphasizes the dynamic nature of evaluation. Benamara Zitoune, Taboada, and Mathieu argue that "the interpretation of a given evaluation depends on linguistic and extra-linguistic contextual factors" [11].

This contextual sensitivity operates at multiple levels. At the lexical level, words acquire evaluative meaning through their collocations and typical contexts of use. At the syntactic level, negation, modality, and conditionals can reverse or modulate evaluation. At the discourse level, evaluation accumulates and shifts across stretches of text, with later utterances modifying the interpretation of earlier ones.

Comparative analysis of English, Russian, and Uzbek reveals both universal patterns and culture-specific features in the linguistic expression of emotions.

English tends to differentiate emotions finely as individual psychological states, with extensive synonymic series and nuanced terminology [6]. The language shows preference for technical (*fuse*, *boiler*), business (*investment*), and spatial (*cloud nine*) imagery in emotional expression.

Russian approaches emotions in broader, sometimes metaphysical contexts, making extensive use of prefixed verbs and intensifying affixes [12, 13]. Physical transformation (*выйти из себя*), natural phenomena (*буря*), and battle imagery (*разбитое сердце*) characterize Russian emotional expression.

Uzbek expresses emotions through figurative, communal, and nature-related means, employing numerous compound words, modal expressions, and body-part terminology [14, 15]. Traditional and organic imagery connected to body parts (*jigar*, *qalb*, *qon*), nature (*gul*, *meva*, *daraxt*), and household elements (*o't*, *nur*) predominate.

These differences reflect deeper cultural orientations: English toward individual psychological experience, Russian toward metaphysical and collective experience, and Uzbek toward embodied, nature-connected experience.

Conclusion. The linguistic expression of emotions through subjectivity and evaluation categories reveals language as a remarkably flexible tool for communicating inner experience. Speakers draw on diverse resources—lexical, grammatical, metaphorical, discursive—to convey their feelings and attitudes. These resources are organized into systematic categories that reflect both universal dimensions of evaluation and language-specific conventions. Several key conclusions emerge from this analysis:

First, subjectivity is multidimensional, encompassing perspective, evaluation, and emotion in complex combinations. The tripartite model of subjectivity (perspective-taking, epistemic

evaluation, emotions) provides a useful framework for understanding how these dimensions interact in emotional expression.

Second, linguistic resources for subjective expression operate at multiple levels, from individual morphemes to discourse structures. Emotional meaning emerges not from isolated linguistic elements but from their integration into coherent discursive configurations.

Third, evaluation categories are not merely descriptive but performative, accomplishing social action while expressing inner states. When speakers evaluate emotionally, they simultaneously position themselves socially, construct relationships, and organize discourse.

Fourth, context plays a crucial role in shaping interpretation, with subjective meaning emerging dynamically from configurations of linguistic and extra-linguistic factors. The dynamic nature of evaluation requires analytical frameworks capable of handling context-dependent meaning.

Fifth, cross-linguistic comparison reveals both universal patterns and culture-specific features. While all languages share fundamental psychophysiological bases for emotional expression (up-down, hot-cold, heavy-light metaphors), their specific linguistic realizations and social valuations are deeply culturally conditioned.

Understanding how language expresses subjectivity ultimately illuminates fundamental questions about human nature. In learning to speak, we learn not only to describe the world but to express our place within it—our feelings, our judgments, our perspectives. The linguistic resources for subjectivity are thus resources for being human.

Future research should continue building bridges between linguistic and cognitive approaches, between theoretical analysis and empirical methods, and between the study of individual languages and cross-linguistic comparison. As computational applications of sentiment analysis become increasingly sophisticated, insights from theoretical linguistics will prove essential for developing systems that can handle the nuanced, context-dependent nature of evaluative language.

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