

## ATTITUDE EXPRESSED FROM ONLINE NEWS DISCOURSE ON RUSSIA - UKRAINE WAR: A PERSPECTIVE OF APPRAISAL THEORY

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**Abstract:** This study explores the attitudinal meaning of three well-known international online news media companies, namely Reuters, CNN News and BBC News, focused on the Russia and Ukraine crisis by using the Appraisal theory (Martin, 1992; 2000; Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005). Appraisal theory concerns the evaluative language of attitude and emotion expressed. The specific objective of this study is to unfold the main attitudinal resources of online news discourse analysis that journalists utilize to construe and negotiate feelings with their audiences. The results reveal that the journalists made use of both positive and negative attitudinal resources through either adjective, noun phrases, or verb phrases. The use of appreciation resources accounts for the largest proportion of particular reaction types which deal with aesthetic assessment. In terms of judgement resources, which concern moral assessments of human behavior, the journalists employ mainly social sanction of propriety type related to ethical behavior and the use of affect resources is the least concerning emotional assessments. The importance of this study contributes to new readers considering a better insight into how journalists convey and negotiate attitudinal meanings with their intended audiences.

**Keywords:** Appraisal theory, Attitudinal resources, Online news discourse, Russia and Ukraine crisis

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

In a rapidly progressive globalized online mass media, it plays an increasingly important role in transmitting information to the public and significantly impacts how people view the world around them. As international online news, people around the world easily access up-to-date information. However, the use of language in online news could be affected readers' perceptions due to being only the recipients. Therefore, whatever online news people read can influence their judgment. This paper aims at exploring the language evaluation of attitudinal resources through three international well-known online news, namely Reuters, BBC, and CNN news on the newsworthy topic 'Russia and Ukraine war'. Since the end of February 2022, the Russia – Ukraine war has started and its effect on the world, particularly the economy. Many online news publishers pay attention and write this issue every day.

This paper uses the theory of appraisal, a semantic system-focused theory that extends over Halliday's interpersonal metafunctions by representing the ways in which news writers seek to negotiate attitudes with their readers, to discover how Thai reviewers use vocabulary items to express and negotiate attitudes towards their readers, to explore the way in which international news writers use lexical items to express and negotiate attitudes with their readers.

## 2. Research Methodology

This paper mainly focuses on the attitudinal resources of online news discourse analysis employed by appraisal framework. Appraisal framework (AF) is an analytical tool of the data and the author only concentrates on only one out of three main systems, namely ‘Attitude system’ in order to uncover how journalists utilize the attitudinal resources to reflect and negotiate feelings with their readers concerning recently popular news – Russia and Ukraine war – among three well-known international online news such as Reuters, BBC News, and CNN News.

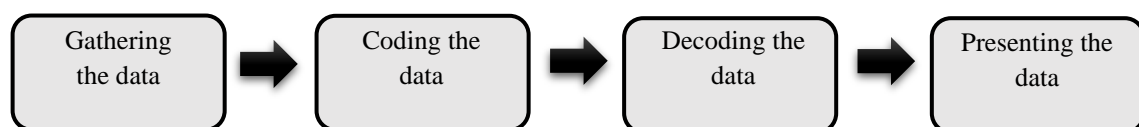
### 2.1 Data collection

The news data in this study were collected from the official website of Reuters, BBC News, and CNN News. These well-known international online news report about Russian – Ukraine war every day, which provides a large sufficient corpus for this study. The author randomly selected 20 news from the three online news companies, since February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022 to May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022.

### 2.2 Data analysis

Regarding the data analysis in the current study, attitude system was employed. The author organized the procedures of data analysis: step 1: the author gathers 20 online news from Reuters, BBC News, and CNN News, step 2: Coding the data followed by attitude system, step 3: Decoding the data, and finally presenting the data. The author organized the procedures to analyze the current study in the following figure 1.

**Figure 1:** Four steps of data analysis procedures



#### 2.2.1 Abbreviations of Attitude coding scheme

With respect to the abbreviations for coding attitudinal resources, the manual coding was adopted. The data transcription was coded by (1) Attitude system (affect, judgement and appreciation) with the polarity attitude indicated into two kinds: (i) a positive attitude encoded as (+) and (ii) a negative attitude substituted for (-) and an invoked attitude used ‘t’. The coding scheme of Attitude is illustrated in the following table 1.

**Table 1:** The abbreviations of Attitude coding scheme

Polarity	ATTITUDE SYSTEM		
	Affect	Judgement	Appreciation
+ 'positive attitude'	<b>des</b> 'affect: desire/ non-desire	<b>norm</b> 'judgement: normality'	<b>reac</b> 'appreciation: reaction'
- 'negative attitude'	<b>hap</b> 'affect: un/ happiness'	<b>cap</b> 'judgement: capacity'	<b>comp</b> 'appreciation: composition'
	<b>sec</b> 'affect: in/ security	<b>ten</b> 'judgement: tenacity'	<b>val</b> 'appreciation: valuation'
Invoked	<b>sat</b> 'affect: dis/ satisfaction'	<b>ver</b> 'judgement: veracity'	
<i>t</i>		<b>prop</b> 'judgement: propriety'	

**Source:** Adapted from Martin and White, 2005: 71.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

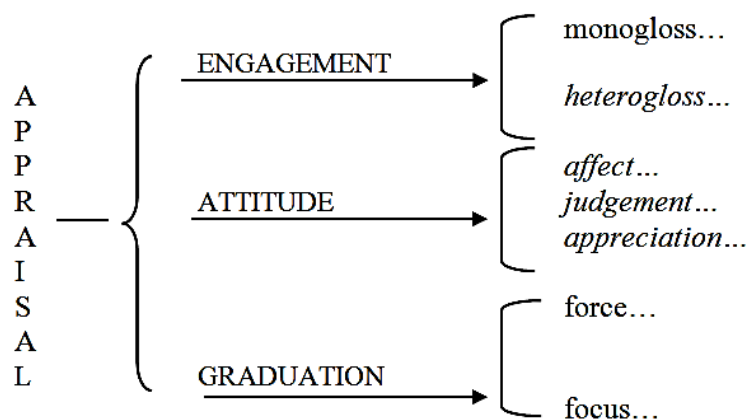
The appraisal framework (AF) is a system of interpersonal meanings developed from Systemic Functional Linguistics theory. This framework deals with the evaluative language of expressed attitudes or emotions (Martin and Rose, 2003; Martin and White, 2005). The resources of appraisal are employed for negotiating social relationships and construing solidarity shared values. The author selects the appraisal theory as a functional model of evaluative language at the discourse semantics level. There are three main regions of meaning are identified as 'Attitude, Graduation, and Engagement'; however, this paper focuses only on Attitude domain. The two other domains which are Graduation and Engagement were not employed in the study. This is due to the present study's main focus of exposing the attitudinal language choices of the international online news.

The attitude domain is concerned with sensations, including emotional response (affect), behavioral evaluation (judgement), and things evaluation (appreciation). The attitudinal meaning can be expressed directly as an attitude of "inscribing" and indirectly as a known attitude of "invoking". The inscribed attitude or explicit feelings are feelings that are overtly sufficient to be understood lacking the interpretation. It can be evaluated through some kind of adjectives. The implicit or invoke attitude, on the other hand, are the feeling that need to be interpretation, they often realize through lexical metaphors, the selection of ideational meanings, and non-core vocabulary items (Martin &

Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005). The system of attitude composes three semantic domains are ‘affect, judgement, and appreciation’.

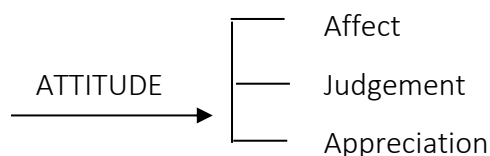
The engagement domain refers to the resources characterizing the speaker’s or writer’s voice as it ‘positions itself with respect to, and hence to ‘engage’ with, the other voices and alternative positions construed as being in play in the current communicative event’ (Martin & White, 2005, p. 94). The graduation domain deals with the resources of grading the feeling of someone or something (Martin and Rose, 2007), there are two types of resources for amplification. Firstly, it is called ‘force’. It concerns the turning of the volume up or down, and the second type is called ‘focus’ which deals with sharpening or softening kinds of people and things. The basic system of Appraisal theory is shown in the following figure 2.

**Figure 2** The system of Appraisal framework (Martin and White, 2005: 38)



To clarify the sub-categories of the attitude domain, these consist of affect, judgement and appreciate systems. Three systems of attitude domain outline in figure 3.

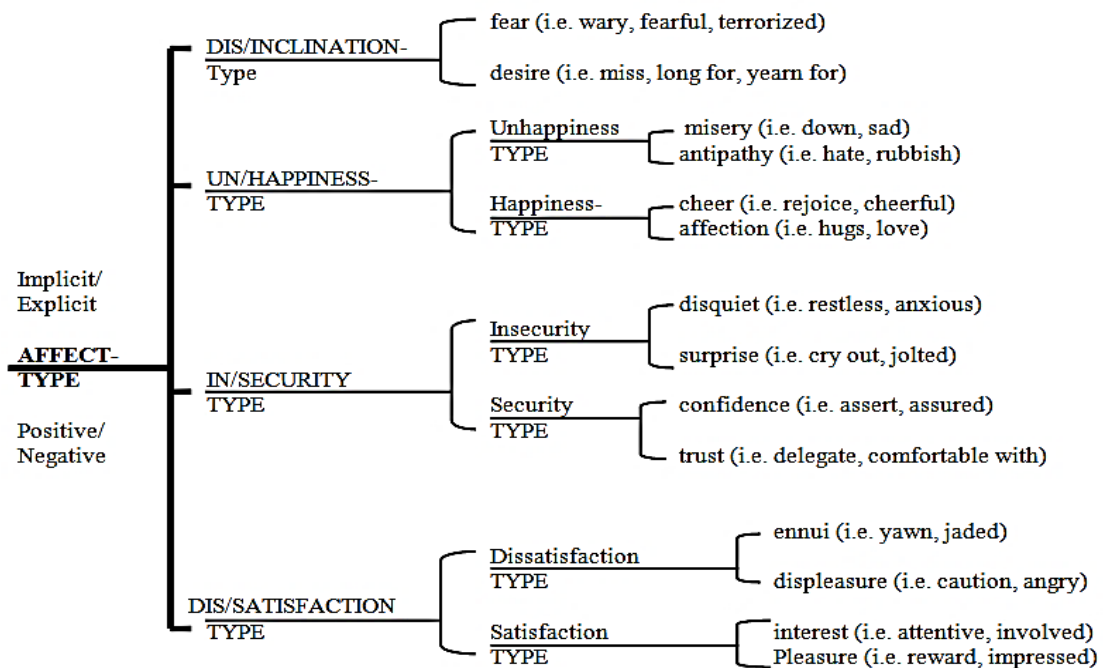
**Figure 3** The system of attitude domain



Affect is the emotional region which refers to expressing feelings, opinions, and emotions. Affect can be grouped into four categories: dis/inclination, un/happiness, in/security and

dis/satisfaction. The 'dis/inclination is related to how the speaker is inclined or disinclined towards something; the un/happiness is concerned with the emotions of happy or sad; the in/security involves the feelings of peace and anxiety; and finally, the dis/satisfaction refers to feelings of achievement and frustration in terms of the activities in which people are engaged. The figure 3 presents the details of affect system with its categories.

Figure 4 Affect system (Martin and White, 2005: 48-51)



The examples of extracts from the online news below demonstrate the analysis of the affect system with its categories as showed in underline italic letters within square brackets.

Extract 1:

She said Ukraine was seeing "another wave of implementation of this terroristic plan of [the] Russian Federation". Ms. Stefanishyna claimed Russia was suffering [aff - unhappiness] "enormous losses" of soldiers and equipment, but this "does not deter Russia". "It only encourages further aggression," she said.

Source: BBC News, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

Extract 2:

Kuleba also reserved criticism for Coca-Cola and McDonalds as two multinational companies that continue to do business in Russia. “We were upset [*aff - dissatisfaction*] to hear companies like Coca-Cola and McDonald's remain in Russia and continue providing their products,” he said.

Source: CNN News, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

According to the examples of the analysis of affect system, the majority of negative and inscribed attitudes were found in the online news and its categories were un/happiness, dis/inclination, and some dis/satisfaction. As the results, it could be said that the news writers convey the messages as unpeaceful and unpleasure feelings.

The next system is called ‘Judgement’, involving the evaluation of the people’s behaviors/ characters. Judgement can be divided into two categories: social esteem and social sanction. Social esteem has to be made following ‘Normality’ (how special someone is?), ‘Capacity’ (how capable they are?) and ‘Tenacity’ (how dependable they are?). Mostly, its sharing values happen in the formation of social network for instance, family, friends, colleagues, and etc. (Martin & White, 2005: 52). Social sanction has to be made according to ‘Veracity’ (how honest they are?) and ‘Propriety’ (how ethical they are?) (Martin & White, 2005, pp. 52-53). According to An introduction tour through the appraisal theory website, the system of judgement or the way people judge ability, normality, morality, honesty, etc. is frequently based on their culture. Here is the table of categories of Judgement with the lexical instantiations.

**Table 2:** The categories of Judgement with the lexical instantiations (Martin & White, 2005, p. 53)

SOCIAL ESTEEM	Positive (admire)	Negative (criticize)
<b>Normality</b> (how special?)	lucky, natural, fashionable...	unlucky, odd, eccentric...
<b>Capacity</b> (how capable?)	robust, mature, clever, successful...	weak, childish, slow, unsuccessful...
<b>Tenacity</b> (how dependable?)	resolute, brave, dependable...	cowardly, despondent, undependable...
SOCIAL SANCTION	Positive (praise)	Negative (condemn)

<b>Veracity</b> (how honest?)	truthful, honest, credible...	dishonest, lying, deceitful ...
<b>Propriety</b> (how far beyond reproach?)	good, moral, respectful, ethical...	bad, immoral, unfair, selfish...

Regarding the analysis of judgement system and its categories, there found several resources as illustrated below.

Extract 3:

The U.S. government said in the wake of *Moscow's invasion [jud - propriety]* of Ukraine last week it will implement export controls designed to cut Russia off from semiconductors and other advanced technology crucial to its weapons development and biotechnology, measures that could hurt chipmakers including Samsung.

Source: Reuters, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

As the examples of the analysis of judgement system with its categories, it showed that the category of propriety in which under the social sanction displayed frequently and followed by the category of tenacity, normality and capability belonging to social esteem that assess someone's determination to accomplish a particular piece of work (Souza, 2006: 542). According to the results of the analysis of judgement system, the news writers often deliver the messages in terms of moral and ethics domain.

The last system is called 'Appreciation'. It refers to interpersonal resources for expressing positive and negative things, texts, natural phenomena and processes (Martin & White, 2005, p. 56). The appreciation system can be divided into three categories which are Reaction, Composition and Valuation. Within three categories, subcategories are provided. Reaction involves the evaluation of people's impact about something and its quality. Composition is concerned the assessment of the balance and complexity of something, and Valuation refers to the value of something. The table 2 illustrates some examples of appreciation instances.

**Table 3:** The category of Appreciation with the lexical instantiations (Martin & White, 2005, p. 56)

Type of Appreciation	Positive	Negative
<b>Reaction</b> Impact (did it grab me?)	arresting, exciting, fascinating ...	dull, boring, tedious, dry...
Quality (did I like it?)	okay, fine, good, splendid, lovely...	bad, nasty, ugly, plain, repulsive...
<b>Composition</b> Balance (did it hang together?)	balance, harmonious, unified, symmetrical...	unbalance, discordant, irregular...
Complexity (was it hard to follow?)	simple, pure, elegant, clear...	ornate, extravagant, unclear...
<b>Valuation</b> (was it worthwhile?)	profound, innovative, creative...	shallow, reductive, insignificant...

According to the international online news, the appreciation system found largely proportions in which the reaction sub-system resources were mainly used in the online news. It could be said that the news writers frequently expressed by evaluating the entire, process and phenomenon in the Russia – Ukraine war. The examples demonstrated the appreciation resources as follow.

Extract 4:

Her comments follow Friday's attack on the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which she said reflected *a "dangerous new escalation"* [app – reaction: impact] in Russia's invasion. Moscow's ambassador, Vasily Nebenzya, dismissed reports that Russian troops attacked the plant as "lies" and "disinformation". Meanwhile in Russia, *a new law* [app + reaction: quality] signed by President Vladimir Putin that would impose prison terms of up to 15 years on people charged with spreading *"fake news"* [app – reaction: quality] about the war in Ukraine has seen several western media outlets, including the BBC, suspend operations in the country.

Source: BBC News, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

Extract 5:

The doctor's stress levels are through the roof. This is *a dangerous journey* [app – value: harmful] for children who need *palliative care* [app + reaction: quality] *in the best of circumstances* [app + reaction: quality]. Now 12 of them are doing it in a war. Small and frail bodies are hoisted up for the last time in weary mothers' arms as they descend from the bus. Some are gently handed over to waiting doctors and nurses. For others, their health is too delicate and requires extra help to *safely transport* [app + reaction: quality] them on to the train, which will take them to Poland.

Source: CNN News, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022.



According to the online news, the writers mostly used the category of reaction both positive and negative attitudes. Martin (2000) explains that values of reaction have to do with the degree to which entity, process or phenomenon capture our attention and emotional impact it has on us.

#### 4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The results of the study can be summarized and discussed in the following points. Firstly, the expression of inscribed attitude resources in the online news discourse were mainly adopted rather than the expression of invoked attitude resources. According to Martin (1997, p. 155), inscribed evaluations are “harder to resist or ignore” than indirect ones since they are more prescriptive about the feelings, values, and normative behavior their author wants his/her readers to share. Similarly, the analysis of the nation anthems the author used mainly inscribing attitude expression (Souza, 2006). This is due to the fact that “the direct delivery message is easier to get better understanding what the writer wants to convey to the reader” (Badklang, 2019). It is therefore intended to contribute to a better understanding of the mindset of online news writers and the personal position they reflect in news discourse.

Secondly, the analysis showed that the appreciation system plays a significant role in the online news issue. The large frequency of appreciation’s subsystems is used by the online news writers to negotiate concerning shared feelings of aesthetic assessment. As Martin (2000) explains that values of reaction have to do with the degree to which entity, process or phenomenon capture our attention and emotional impact it has on us. Besides, the online news writers used frequently negative attitudes, it could imply that the online news issue is in crisis so the news writers tend to employ the negative language choice; on the contrary, the study of Jing, & Lihuan (2021) regarding Covid-19 news found the distribution of attitude polarity in China Daily mainly used positive attitudes rather than negative attitudes. They claim that “attitude-polarity can indicate that Chinese reporters and people have positive attitudes towards COVID-19, believing that we can overcome the current difficulties and overcome the epidemic together (p.177).”

This study helps encourage news readers to approach news stories by effectively considering the ways of news writers deliver texts in news details. Likewise, Arunsirot (2012) was designed to contribute an effective means of supporting Thai media consumers, especially in terms of practical methods of analysis when reading varying opinions and standpoints in newspapers. Therefore, any readers must have a deeper awareness of how language is used to represent and

evaluate the world. Consequently, appraisal can contribute the news readers to criticize the texts because appraisal perspective focuses on the relationship between the textual choices and the social context, it is an important tool for audiences to perceive how news writers present themselves and to seek to negotiate attitudes with their readers in the discourse of international online news.

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