EVALUATIVE MEANING IN UZBEK ONLINE NEWS REPORTS: ATTITUDE, ENGAGEMENT AND GRADUATION IN EMERGENCY

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Abstract. This paper applies Martin and White's Appraisal framework to Uzbek online news reports published between May 2025 and April 2026 on two topics: emergencies and prices and tariffs. The analysis of a pilot set of reports from Kun.uz, Gazeta.uz and Daryo.uz shows that the three appraisal systems are unevenly distributed. Attitude is dominated by appreciation and by judgement that is attributed to institutional sources rather than voiced by the reporter; affect is almost absent from hard news and surfaces only where ordinary participants are quoted directly. Engagement is organised around attribution, and the verbs selected for it are endorsing rather than distancing. Graduation is realised mainly through quantification — figures, time sequences and enumerations of resources — which carries evaluation while leaving the text formally neutral. Two extensions to the coding scheme are proposed for Uzbek: a morphological feature covering evidential and concessive suffixes, and an explicit distinction between authorial and attributed evaluation.

Keywords: appraisal, attitude, engagement, graduation, Uzbek online media, news discourse, evidentiality, reporter voice.

1. Introduction

Evaluation is not an optional addition to a news report. Even a text that contains no evaluative adjective positions its reader through the facts it selects, the voices it admits and the intensity with which it presents them. Martin and White (2005) formalise this insight in the Appraisal framework, which describes evaluative meaning through three interacting systems: attitude, engagement and graduation. The framework has been applied extensively to English-language media (Bednarek, 2006; White, 1998), but it has not been systematically applied to Uzbek news discourse, where evaluation has traditionally been studied at the level of lexical semantics and sentential modality.

This paper reports a pilot application of the framework to Uzbek online news. The aim is to establish which appraisal resources are actually productive in Uzbek hard news and to identify the points at which the framework, developed for English, requires adjustment.

2. Theoretical framework

Attitude covers three subtypes: affect (emotional response), judgement (evaluation of human behaviour against social norms) and appreciation (evaluation of things, processes and states of affairs). Each instance may be inscribed, that is, carried by an explicitly evaluative item, or invoked, that is, produced by the selection of facts (Martin & White, 2005). Engagement describes how a text positions itself with respect to alternative voices, expanding the dialogic space through entertaining and attributing, or contracting it through denial, countering and endorsement. Graduation adjusts the force and focus of evaluative meanings through intensification and quantification.

Of particular relevance to news is White's account of journalistic evaluative keys, in which reporter voice is defined by the absence of authorial inscribed

judgement: any judgement present in the text is attributed to an external source, and the appearance of objectivity is produced precisely by this distribution of evaluative responsibility.

3. Material and method

The material forms part of a corpus of Uzbek and English online news texts published between 1 May 2025 and 30 April 2026 on two topics — emergencies (fires, explosions, gas-related incidents, floods) and prices and tariffs. Texts are taken exclusively from the websites of news publications; social-network material is excluded. The present paper draws on a pilot subset of Uzbek reports from Kun.uz, Gazeta.uz and Daryo.uz. Each evaluative item was coded for system, subtype, polarity, mode of expression, graduation and source.

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4. Analysis

4.1. Attitude. Authorial affect is virtually absent from the Uzbek reports examined. In emergency coverage the emotional load of the event is conveyed instead through the selection of consequences: «Yong‘in oqibatida jabrlanganlar yo‘q» (Gazeta.uz, 28 August 2025) and «Hodisa oqibatida tan jarohati olganlar to‘g‘risida ma’lumot kelib tushmagan» (Kun.uz, 5 September 2025). These are informationally neutral formulations that nevertheless invoke positive appreciation of the outcome.

Judgement follows the pattern predicted for reporter voice: it is present but rarely authorial. In the report on the Boysun juniper-forest fire (Gazeta.uz, 18 June 2025), the capacity of the emergency services is evaluated positively through the enumeration of the resources deployed — eighty-five personnel, four vehicles, forty forestry workers, twenty servicemen, a helicopter and forty local volunteers — followed by the formulation «keng maydonlarga tarqalishi oldi olingan». No evaluative adjective

occurs; the positive judgement is invoked by the facts selected and by their arrangement.

Inscribed negative judgement appears only in attributed form. In a market-fire report, a trader is quoted directly: «Bozorimizda doim svet o‘chadi. Bozor ma’muriyati umuman e’tibor qilmaydi bu narsaga» (Kun.uz, 11 August 2025). The criticism of institutional capacity is unambiguous, but it belongs to the cited voice, not to the reporter. The distribution is systematic: the further a text moves from the official statement towards on-site reporting, the more inscribed attitude it contains.

4.2. Engagement. Attribution is the organising resource of the Uzbek reports. Emergency reports are anchored to the emergency service almost formulaically: «deb xabar bermoqda Toshkent shahar Favqulodda vaziyatlar boshqarmasi», «Bu haqda shahar FVB xabar qildi». Price reports are anchored to the Central Bank, to sectoral ministries or to a local council. The reporting verbs used — xabar berdi, ma’lum qildi, qayd etildi — are neutral to endorsing; distancing attribution of the type «da’vo qilmoqda» was not attested in the pilot subset.

Two further engagement patterns deserve mention. The first is layered attribution, in which one outlet cites another that in turn cites a named speaker, as in the Kun.uz report on Tashkent heating tariffs (13 August 2025), which cites Gazeta.uz citing the director of the supplying company. Evaluative responsibility is thereby distributed across three levels. The second is dialogic expansion in reports on measures that have not yet been adopted: «chegirma berish taklif etilmoqda», «muhokamalar davom etmoqda» (Gazeta.uz, 12 December 2025). Such formulations leave the proposition open and simultaneously protect the outlet from commitment.

4.3. Graduation. Quantification is the principal graduation resource. In emergency reports it takes the form of a time sequence: the moment the call was received, the moment the crews arrived, the moment the fire was contained and the moment it was extinguished (Gazeta.uz, 22 May 2025; 31 July 2025). The sequence is presented as pure information, yet the narrow intervals between its elements produce an evaluation of institutional efficiency that the text never states.

In price reports quantification is percentage-based and is frequently sharpened by an intensifier: «Haydovchilik kurslari narxi rekord darajada (71,3 foiz) qimmatladi» (Kun.uz, 22 September 2025); «tariflar 38,6 foizga oshiriladi» (Kun.uz, 25 March 2026). A distinctively Uzbek resource is morphological: the concessive suffix -sa-da and the comparative -roq adjust evaluative force grammatically, while the iterative adverb yana raises the force of a negative evaluation by presenting an event as a repetition, as in the headline «Bo‘stonliqdagi tog‘larda yana yong‘in chiqdi» (Gazeta.uz, 31 July 2025).

4.4. Topic as a variable. The two topics yield different evaluative profiles within one and the same genre. Emergency reports foreground appreciation of outcomes and judgement of institutional capacity, both predominantly invoked, with affect confined to quoted participants. Price and tariff reports foreground quantified appreciation and dialogic expansion, since much of what they report is proposed rather than decided. This confirms that topic, and not only genre, is a controlling variable for the distribution of appraisal resources — a finding with direct methodological consequences for corpus design.

5. Discussion

Two adjustments to the coding scheme follow from the pilot analysis. The first is a morphological feature. Uzbek encodes evidentiality (-ibdi, -ekan, -inishicha), concession (-sa-da) and comparison (-roq) affixally, whereas the original framework assigns these functions to lexical and syntactic resources. Without such a feature, a substantial part of Uzbek engagement and graduation remains invisible to the analysis. The second is an explicit source feature separating authorial from attributed evaluation. Given that inscribed judgement in Uzbek hard news is almost always attributed, an analysis that does not record the source would misdescribe the Uzbek reporter as evaluative where the evaluation belongs to a cited official or participant.

6. Conclusion

Uzbek online hard news operates with a restricted but systematic set of appraisal resources: invoked appreciation, attributed judgement, endorsing attribution and quantified graduation. The profile corresponds closely to reporter voice as described for English-language quality press, which indicates that the framework is transferable; the differences lie in the level of encoding rather than in the inventory of meanings. The next stage of the work is the analysis of the full corpus and its systematic comparison with English reports on the same two topics.

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