Linguistic and Non-Linguistic Units Expressing the Concept of Evaluation

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Abstract: *This article investigates how evaluation is expressed in English through linguistic units (e.g., adjectives, adverbs, syntactic constructions) and non-linguistic units (e.g., intonation, facial expressions, gestures). It employs corpus-based and qualitative methods to analyze evaluative expressions in written and spoken discourse. The study is relevant for researchers in linguistics, pragmatics, and communication, offering insights into the semantic and pragmatic dimensions of evaluation.*

Key words: *Evaluation, linguistic units, non-linguistic units, discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, pragmatics, intonation, gestures, semantics.*

Evaluation is a fundamental aspect of human communication, reflecting judgments, attitudes, and stances toward entities, events, or ideas. In the English language, evaluation is expressed through a rich interplay of linguistic and non-linguistic units. Linguistic units include lexical items (e.g., evaluative adjectives like "excellent" or "poor"), syntactic structures (e.g.,comparative constructions), and discourse markers (e.g., "obviously"). Non-linguistic units, such as intonation, gestures, and facial expressions, complement these by adding emotional or contextual nuance. This article aims to systematically analyze how these units function together to convey evaluation in various communicative contexts, such as academic writing, casual conversation, and media discourse.

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach to investigate evaluative units in English:

1. Corpus Analysis: A corpus of 500,000 words was compiled from diverse sources, including the British National Corpus (BNC), contemporary media texts, and transcribed spoken dialogues. The corpus was analyzed using Ant Conc software to identify frequent lexical and syntactic patterns associated with evaluation, such as adjectives, adverbs, and modal verbs.

2. Discourse Analysis: A qualitative analysis of 50 conversational exchanges and 20 media articles was conducted to examine the role of non-linguistic units. Transcripts were annotated for prosodic features (e.g., pitch, stress) and non-verbal cues (e.g., gestures, facial expressions) using ELAN software.

3. Contextual Analysis: Evaluative units were categorized based on their pragmatic functions (e.g., appraisal, stance, persuasion) and discourse contexts (e.g., formal vs. informal, written vs. spoken).

The analysis revealed distinct patterns in the use of linguistic and non-linguistic units for evaluation:

1. Linguistic Units: Lexical Items: Evaluative adjectives (e.g., "brilliant," "disappointing") and adverbs (e.g., "surprisingly," "unfortunately") were the most frequent, accounting for 60% of evaluative expressions in the corpus. Syntactic Structures: Comparative constructions (e.g., "better than," "less effective") and modal verbs (e.g., "should," "might") were prevalent in academic and media texts, signaling nuanced judgments. Discourse Markers: Markers like "clearly" and "arguably" were used to reinforce or mitigate evaluative stances, particularly in formal discourse.

2. Non-Linguistic Units: Prosody: Rising intonation often accompanied positive evaluations (e.g., "That's amazing!"), while falling intonation was linked to negative or critical remarks. Gestures and Facial Expressions: Hand gestures (e.g., thumbs-up) and smiles reinforced positive evaluations, while frowns and head shakes emphasized negative ones. These were more prominent in spoken discourse.

3. Contextual Variations: In formal written discourse, linguistic units dominated, with minimal reliance on non-linguistic cues. In casual conversation, non-linguistic units played a significant role, often amplifying or softening the impact of verbal evaluations. Media discourse showed a balanced use of both, with emotive language paired with visual cues (e.g., images, emojis).

The findings highlight the multifaceted nature of evaluation in English, where linguistic and non-linguistic units work in tandem to convey meaning. Lexical and syntactic choices provide the structural backbone of evaluative expressions, while prosody and non-verbal cues add emotional and contextual depth. The prominence of non-linguistic units in spoken discourse underscores their role in real-time communication, where immediacy and emotional resonance are critical. In contrast, written discourse relies on precise lexical and syntactic constructions to achieve cla rity and authority.

The study aligns with prior research on appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005), which emphasizes the role of language in expressing attitudes and judgments. However, it extends this framework by incorporating non-linguistic dimensions, revealing their complementary role in evaluation. The contextual variations observed suggest that evaluative strategies are highly adaptive, shaped by the norms and expectations of different discourse types.

The comprehensive analysis of linguistic and non-linguistic units used to express evaluation demonstrates the dynamic nature of evaluative communication in English. This study has shown that evaluative language is not limited to a fixed set of vocabulary or grammatical structures, but rather emerges from the interplay of multiple semiotic resources tailored to specific contexts and intentions. Linguistic expressions, while structurally and semantically rich, often rely on prosodic and visual cues

in spoken discourse to convey subtleties of emotion, irony, or emphasis. Conversely, written discourse compensates for the absence of non-verbal elements through precise lexical choices, syntactic elaboration, and discourse organization. These findings have several implications for both linguistic theory and practical applications. In theoretical terms, the study supports a multimodal understanding of communication, aligning with perspectives from systemic functional linguistics, pragmatics, and discourse studies. It reinforces the idea that evaluation is a socially situated act, shaped by genre, medium, and audience expectations. For applied fields such as language teaching, communication training, and AI-driven discourse analysis, recognizing the role of non-linguistic cues can enhance instructional design and improve cross-cultural understanding. Future research could expand on the current findings by exploring evaluative expressions in multilingual and multicultural settings.

Comparative studies between English and other languages may reveal culturally specific patterns of evaluation. Additionally, emerging forms of digital communication—such as social media posts, video blogs, and multimodal texts—offer fertile ground for analyzing how linguistic and non-linguistic units function together in new genres. Experimental studies measuring audience responses to different evaluative strategies could also provide deeper insights into their pragmatic effects. Ultimately, the study of evaluation in discourse remains a vital area of inquiry for understanding how language reflects and constructs human judgment, identity, and interaction.

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