

## EXPRESSING ATTITUDE IN ENGLISH AND UKRAINIAN ECONOMIC MEDIA DISCOURSE

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### Summary

This paper studies linguistic devices used by the authors of English and Ukrainian economic media texts to reveal their opinion and give attitudinal assessment to the state of affairs in the sphere of economy. It is well-known that the main function of mass media is to communicate different viewpoints, but the ways and linguistic devices used to this purpose can significantly differ depending on the target audience. Business and economic journalism is quite young in Ukraine, and the recipients are not as demanding as the readers in English-speaking countries. Thus, there exist certain differences in presenting economic data and news in the compared languages. The research is based on the corpus of 50 articles from *The Economist*, *Business Week* and *The Guardian* in English and *Interfax-Ukraine*, *NV (Novoe vremya)*, *Obozrevatel* and *Unian* in Ukrainian, where economic implications of the coronavirus pandemic are described. It is proved that expressing attitude is inevitably connected with the pragmatic aim to influence the reader's perception of economic news and coax them to the author's point of view.

**Keywords:** economic discourse, expressive means, communicating opinion, attitudinal assessment, figurative language.

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### Introduction

In modern world where money makes the things go round the demand for business and financial journalism has risen dramatically. It can be explained by the growing role of the Internet in spreading the information. Its all-encompassing nature makes it a powerful means of influence and persuasion that facilitates the tasks of key players in economic development which consist in shaping the reality, directing economic policy, changing recipients' convictions, and creating a fertile ground for economic prosperity. Thus, the tone of media texts describing and analyzing economic situations, news, and phenomena is far from being impartial. However, the author's opinion is rarely given explicitly with the aim to direct the reader's thoughts and create desired attitudes.

This paper represents a contrastive study of linguistic devices used by the authors of English and Ukrainian economic media texts to express their opinion and give attitudinal assessment to the state of affairs in the sphere of economy. Undoubtedly, the verbalization of the author's opinion differs depending on the target groups, in our study these are audiences belonging to different cultures. The research is based on the corpus of 50 articles from *The Economist*, *Business Week* and *The Guardian* in English and *Interfax-Ukraine*, *NV (Novoe vremya)*, *Obozrevatel* and *Unian* in Ukrainian, where economic implications of the coronavirus pandemic are described. All the articles were published over the span of five months (*March – July, 2020*).

The research is underpinned by discourse studies (*Dijk, 1998, Shevchenko & Morozova, 2003*) and works on categorization and evaluation (*Prikhodko, 2012*). In this paper we adhere to the idea expressed by T. van Dijk (1998), that ideologies are reproduced in discourse. That is why we use discourse analysis to determine the implied meanings which stand behind attitudinal markers. In our paper the articles selected from Ukrainian and English online magazines are subjected to content analysis, during which media texts are analyzed and the representations of the author's attitude in the two languages are found and compared. Finally, some tentative conclusions on the use of the means of attitudinal assessment in English and Ukrainian economic media discourse are offered.

### Economic Media Discourse

According to the definition of I. S. Shevchenko and Ye. I. Morozova (2003):

Discourse is an integral phenomenon, a cognitive-communicative activity which takes place in a broader socio-cultural context; it is a unity of the process and the result which embraces extralingual as well as lingual aspects; the latter includes the text, the presupposition and the context (pragmatic, social, and cognitive), that dictate the choice of language means (*Shevchenko & Morozova, 2003: 38*).

This definition reflects a versatile nature of such a broad notion as discourse and enables to look into linguistic features of the text taking into account the conditions of its creation and perception, as well as the participants, their roles in communication, their intentions, background knowledge etc.

It should be noted that linguists have not come to an agreement concerning discourse typology, but taking into account the definition mentioned above it is obvious that economic discourse can be considered a separate type. The socio-cultural context for this type of discourse embraces all the communication in economic sphere, it includes negotiations with business partners, interaction within companies, addressing public through various media, sharing knowledge with students, specialists and non-specialists who are interested in economic phenomena and so on. The result of such communication is the text whose peculiarities and set of language means depend on the situation and the target recipient.

Economic media discourse represents only one type of economic discourse which, in its turn, includes also academic, popular-scientific, reference, and didactic types (*Lut, 2014*). Texts belonging to economic media discourse are represented by accessible articles describing real-world situations which are intended for the general but educated public. They, as stated by O.G. Petushinskaya (*Petushinskaya: 148*), usually cover various topics from economic issues of everyday people's lives to problems concerning companies and economies on national and international levels. The reader gets the idea of the problem in question from the beginning, as the authors state them in the titles or subtitles:

(1) *Gold price hits record high amid fears over coronavirus crisis (The Guardian, Jul. 27, 2020).*

(2) *UK working mothers are 'sacrificial lambs' in coronavirus childcare crisis (The Guardian, Jul. 24, 2020).*

(3) *A shift from paper to virtual cash will empower central banks (The Economist, Jul. 25, 2020).*

The language of such articles is versatile and serves to reach two main objectives of media texts: to give information and to exert influence. The former is achieved by the use of neutral and bookish words, namely, terminology which can be followed by explanation if the notion is new or specific and might be unknown to the recipients:

(4) *Making assumptions about the “haircuts” (losses on government bonds across Europe), Mediobanca estimates €81bn could be knocked off banks' capital, 9% of the sector, in 2012 (The Guardian, Jul. 15, 2011).*

The latter is achieved by the use of expressive means and stylistic devices which become noticeable on the background of the neutral language. Since the apparition of works by P. Kitcher (1995), D. Locke (1992), W.J. Samuels (1990), S. Toulmin (1995), D. McCloskey (1994; 1998) and others the new perception of economic texts has been formed – they are now considered not only as being scientific, but also as aiming to facilitate understanding and to communicate attitudinal assessment. Economic media discourse is the most expressive of all the types of economic discourse as it is intended to attract and hold the reader's attention.

### Means of expressing opinion and attitude

The research showed that the authors of economic texts use various devices to share their opinion on economic issues. They can achieve it explicitly by means of modal words (verbs and adverbs), simile, hyperbole, attitudinal adjectives or idioms. Quite often explicit means are accompanied with implicit ones: metonymies, metaphors, allusions, emphatic constructions, rhetoric questions etc.

Let us consider some excerpts that illustrate the use of attitudinal markers.

Modal verbs not only show the author's opinion, but also can urge some reaction, as in (5):

(5) *There is plenty to do, but we **have to** do it fast (The Guardian, Apr 19, 2020).* Next excerpt shows a hedging device that lets the author soften the utterance while stating their attitude to the information provided:

(6) *The chart aims to control all the other variables that **might** have affected returns (Bloomberg, Jul 29, 2020).*

In this example the author uses hedging in order not to take responsibility for the statement.

(7) *The World Bank **must** also decide how much weight to give each item.*

In (7) the author implies that the problem is to be solved by the World Bank, thus, the recipients do not need to find the answer themselves.

Modal verbs in Ukrainian (*має, повинен, може etc*) convey meanings similar to those in English:

(8) *...влада **повинна** аналізувати і думати наперед (NV, May 15, 2020).*

Pragmatic function of modal adverbs (*amazingly, apparently, certainly, likely, perhaps, presumably, probably, surprisingly, undoubtedly, unmistakably etc*) is to predetermine the reader's perception by giving an explicit attitude to what is described.

(9) *Now, **unmistakably**, there's a feeling that “things will never be the same after it's over” and “we can't go back to all that” (The Guardian, Apr 19, 2020).*

Attitudinal adjectives are ample both in English and Ukrainian economic media texts:

(10) *It has led to a **desperate** scramble to enact policies that only a few months ago were either unimaginable or heretical (The Economist, Jul 23, 2020)*

(11) *The final feature is **the most important**: low inflation (The Economist, Jul 23, 2020).*

(12) *The inverse correlation is **stunning** (Bloomberg, Jul 29, 2020).*

Below there is an example from Ukrainian media text:

(13) ***Цікаві** зміни відбулися в парі євро – швейцарський франк (NV, Jul 21, 2020).*

In order to achieve the desired result, the authors often use the combination (convergence) of expressive means that are dedicated to one idea. In the article *After the crisis, a new*

*world won't emerge as if by magic. We will have to fight for it* the author shares his attitude to the lockdown. He creates the extended metaphor of sleep which is supported by means of a simile and an idiom (14-16):

(14) *These lockdown weeks are more like induced sleep* (*The Guardian*, Apr 19, 2020).

This example of a simile reveals the author's perception of the activity happening during the quarantine. It is described as a slow-motion picture, where people are not completely aware of the events, they get snippets of information from radio, television and newspapers.

(15) *For most people, life is on hold* (*The Guardian*, Apr 19, 2020).

The idiom on hold vividly illustrates the author's view on the situation.

(16) *In the first place, emerging from isolation – waking up – must be handled carefully* (*The Guardian*, Apr 19, 2020).

This sentence adds up to the whole picture of a sleepy place with the help of a metaphor: *waking up* means getting back to normal lives after the quarantine rules are lifted.

Idioms can also be found in Ukrainian media texts:

(17) *Близьконульові ставки податку кануть в Лету* (*NV*, Jul 21, 2020).

(18) *Вона показала, що в умовах кризи центральна влада вмиває руки і пасує проблему на низи – там розберуться* (*NV*, May 15, 2020).

The authors can also use emphatic constructions with *do* (*does*) that emphasize certain ideas:

(19) *And here one comparison with wartime does work* (*The Guardian*, Apr 19, 2020).

In Ukrainian corpus we have found examples with lexical substitution of such a syntactic construction. As the language does not possess similar emphatic structures, it offers lexical markers instead: *дійсно, звісно* (*indeed*), *справді* (*really*):

(20) *Україна справді знаходиться у складній ситуації* (*Obozrevatel*, Mar 30, 2020).

(21) *Звісно, деякі бізнеси зараз виграють* (*Obozrevatel*, Mar 30, 2020).

Rhetoric questions are supposed to evoke thoughts but they can also implicitly communicate the author's attitude driving the recipient's attention in a certain direction:

(22) *But who will do the politics of "never again" when we open our eyes?* (*The Guardian*, Apr 19, 2020).

In this example the author implies that there are no volunteers to implement the ideas that emerged during the period of isolation and austerity.

(23) *And a dose of moderate inflation? Why not?* (*The Guardian*, Apr 19, 2020).

Here rhetorical questions also serve to convey irony.

Metaphors are really numerous in economic texts. The most widespread ones are those represented by transposition from medical, military, and sport spheres (*Lut*, 2014):

(24) *First of all, the more a stock was held by institutions (shown on the horizontal axis in this chart), then the more it fell during the "fever" sell-off period from Feb. 24 to March 20* (*Bloomberg*, Jul 29, 2020).

The conceptual metaphor *fever* vividly describes the economic situation of a certain period and sums it up as abnormal, nervous, and frantic.

(25) *... even Russia also have growing armies of retail investors* (*Bloomberg*, Jul 29, 2020).

It is clear that the number of investors has already been huge and it is still growing.

The authors sometimes use allusions to economize lexical means and to give a better description of the phenomenon, situation, or a person:

(26) *Given what happened in the second quarter, we can assume this worked out better for the merry men* (*Bloomberg*, Jul 29, 2020).

In (26) the phrase *the merry men* is used to refer to the representatives of Robinhood discount brokerage members. On the other hand, it is a facetious name for a group of followers or assistants that reminds the readers of Robin Hood's fellows. In such a way the author implicitly compares the actions of brokerage members and those of the group of outlaws, showing them as reckless.

(27) *Summertime, and the Trading's Not Easy....(Bloomberg, Jul 29, 2020).*

The well-known song *Summertime* creates the feeling of tranquility and safety, though this transformed allusive subtitle leads the recipients to the opposite conclusion.

As is seen from the examples, allusions and metaphors are called to appeal to the background knowledge of the recipients. They might facilitate understanding, evoke necessary emotions, and help express more ideas with less words.

### **Communicating attitude in Ukrainian and English media texts**

Our research has discovered significant differences in presenting the news concerning the economic crisis caused by the coronavirus outbreak and the quarantine. Ukrainian media tend to be objective and quite often appeal to expert opinions, so the majority of articles quote statements of the economists, governors, public authorities etc., merely transmitting the facts without giving their own interpretation of the state of affairs.

The only magazine that offers analytical content and gives opinions of various specialists in the sphere of economy is *NV* (both in online and printed versions). The website provides articles that cover current events both in Ukraine and abroad together with the author's point of view, that is a peculiar characteristic of English media texts. The probable cause for the presentation of bare facts without any analysis or assessment in the majority of Ukrainian magazines and newspapers is that the tradition of business and economic journalism on the territory of former Soviet republics has not been formed yet. As for *NV*, their policy is to establish relations between the authorities, politicians, companies' representatives etc. and the recipients. To that end, analysts, top experts of economic institutions, financiers, business representatives, and journalists writing analytical articles for *NV* tend to express their own point of view both explicitly and implicitly, and to provoke critical thinking.

English economic media texts are characterized by a more figurative language, the authors do not hesitate to make use of similes and metaphors, which are quite often extended ones and spread all over the text. While Ukrainian articles show a smaller amount of imagery.

If to consider semantic level, then the nouns containing specific attitudinal meanings are equally used in both languages (*disaster, shock, danger etc.*). Idioms and allusions are more numerous in English articles, though they are also used by Ukrainian authors. Such devices as modal verbs and adverbs, attitudinal adjectives, rhetoric questions are almost equally represented in both corpora.

### **Conclusions**

Our corpus-based analysis revealed that attitudinal markers are used in economic media discourse not only to show the author's opinion, but also to exert some influence on the reader's perception of economic situation and guide their thoughts in a certain direction. English texts are crammed with figurative language and means of expressing attitude, that is explained by a longer tradition of creating media content in the sphere of economy and orientation at the reader. Ukrainian mass media tend to follow the lead of their foreign counterparts, but the

majority of paper and online magazines and newspapers still chose to appeal to the authoritative opinion and only sum up what is said or written by experts.

Expressive means used to communicate the author's attitude are represented differently in the compared languages, as they are aimed at different target audiences. However, some linguistic devices can be met in both corpuses. It proves that Ukrainian media strive to achieve the same level of proficiency in presenting economic data as English media already demonstrate.

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