

JOURNALISTS' SUBJECTIVITIES IN REPORTING THE WEST PAPUA CONFLICT : AN APPRAISAL ANALYSIS

Lidiana Astuti
Universitas Negeri
Semarang

Misslididiana@students.unnes.ac.id

Zulfa Sakhiyya
Universitas Negeri
Semarang

zulfa.sakhiyya@mail.unnes.ac.id

Yuliati
Universitas Negeri
Semarang

yuliati@mail.unnes.ac.id

Abstract

This study explores the manifestation of journalistic subjectivity in the coverage of the West Papua conflict by analyzing evaluative language used across three prominent online media outlets: *The Diplomat*, *Al Jazeera*, and *The Jakarta Post*. While journalistic objectivity is traditionally upheld as a fundamental ethical principle, particularly in hard news reporting, it frequently stands in tension with the inherently subjective nature of journalistic practice (Steensen, 2017). This study highlights the need to critically examine how subjective dimensions are subtly interwoven into news discourse. Drawing on the Appraisal Framework (Martin & White, 2005), the research investigates how linguistic resources of *attitude*, *engagement*, and *graduation* are deployed to construct evaluative meanings and shape narrative framing. Annotation conducted via the UAM Corpus Tool 6 reveals a recurrent use of *judgement markers*, indicating a discursive tendency to assess human behavior and social actors in nuanced way. These patterns suggest that journalistic texts often encode subjective stances through seemingly neutral reporting. Twenty-four students were involved to assess the impact of these evaluative strategies using Likert-scale survey. Findings indicate that subjective language choices significantly shape reader perceptions, thereby underscoring the ideological function of journalism in conflict representation. Beyond its implications for media studies, the findings of this research are expected to contribute to English Language Teaching (ELT) by fostering critical media literacy. It encourages learners to recognize and interrogate the evaluative mechanisms through which language constructs meaning, promoting deeper awareness of how texts position readers.

Keywords: appraisal, discourse analysis, journalism, media literacy, subjectivity

INTRODUCTION

With the extensive digital presence in society, journalists have numerous options for presenting their stories across many channels. Journalists disseminate information through global digital networks such as tweeters, bloggers, citizen journalists, and social media

users (Ward, 2020). Journalism studies have extensively examined technological advancements and their impact, as evidenced by the works of (Lewis & Westlund, 2015; Weiss & Domingo, 2010; Steensen, 2011; and Lindblom et al., 2022). The integration of digital technology in journalism has presented significant challenges that require journalists to

continuously adapt and uphold ethical standards to maintain public trust and deliver high-quality journalism.

Journalists must stick to ethical norms like professionals in other industries. Ethical journalism is known as journalism's professional "code of ethics," which are the guidelines journalists follow to ensure the quality of the information (Syahri, 2020). Ethical journalism should be both truthful and fair. Ezedike et al. (2019) define objectivity as a complex concept since journalists must offer an interpretation and explanation of the issue they write or talk about. However, journalists' background and experience shape their perspectives; consequently, the news story is inherently subjective.

Journalists cannot be completely impartial; they frequently encounter challenges regarding objectivity and subjectivity. Subjectivity has always been portrayed as contradicting the objective notion of journalists (Steensen, 2017). The rapid growth of social media in recent years has heightened the prominence of subjectivity in journalism. This drives journalists to adopt a more personal approach, and objectivity is considered an impractical goal that will surely fail (Onuh & Lateef, 2022). Recent studies in journalism have demonstrated the impossibility of attaining complete impartiality in news reporting. According to Steensen (2017) journalists' use of colorful language can effectively convey the richness of people's emotions, experiences, and events, which helps create vivid, engaging narratives that resonate with readers. However, critically examining how subjectivity is embedded in news reports is essential to mitigating bias and safeguarding against the subtle shaping of reader perceptions.

The construction of subjectivity aligns with Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), particularly the interpersonal system at the level of discourse semantic. The interpersonal system deals with how language is used to

establish social roles and relationships, through the interpersonal system language conveys information, constructs and negotiates. The interpersonal system in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is then developed by Martin and White (2005) through the work of appraisal framework. Martin and White (2005) extend the interpersonal dimension through the development of the Appraisal framework, which offers a nuanced model for analyzing evaluative language. Appraisal theory delineates how speakers express attitudes (affect, judgment, appreciation), engage with alternative voices (engagement), and calibrate the intensity of their expressions (graduation). This framework enables a deeper understanding of how subjectivity is linguistically encoded, negotiated, and contested across texts, making it a powerful tool for analyzing media discourse, academic writing, and other genres where evaluative stance plays a central role.

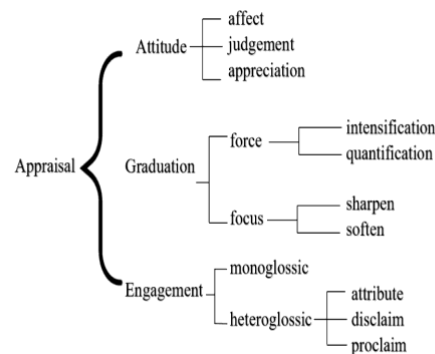


Figure 1. The appraisal system: simplified from Martin and White (2005)

This framework explains how individual use language to express their personal stances, attitudes, and emotions within social interactions. The appraisal framework which based on the solid theoretical ground of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) Halliday (1994) provides some comprehensive concepts for analyzing language in a context called language metafunction. According to Halliday, as cited in Martin and White (2005), language metafunction refers to three concepts. The first ideational metafunction represents the external world and the inner thoughts. It involves how language conveys content and experience,

especially the expression of facts, ideas, and the logical relations between them. The second concept is interpersonal metafunction, which focuses on social interactions between language users. It shows the use of language to establish and maintain roles and relationships, express attitudes, and engage with others. The third concept is textual meaning, which deals with how the language is used to create coherent and cohesive texts to structure meaningful contexts. It includes the management of information flow and the structuring of discourse. Specifically, the appraisal framework extends the interpersonal metafunction of systemic functional linguistics theory. According to Hood (2019), an appraisal is firstly explored from the perspective of realization as a system and sub-systems of interpersonal meaning choices to express attitudes, judgments, and stances in social contexts.

The primary element of the appraisal framework is attitude, as it indicates how the writer or speaker openly or covertly expresses emotions, judgements, and appreciation regarding particular objects, individuals, and events (Martin & White, 2003). It consists of the interpretive strategies employed by the speakers or writers to assign intersubjective value to the participants and to process the information through the lens of culturally determined value systems or emotional reactions.

Attitude consists of three components: affect, judgement, and appreciation. According to Martin and White (2005) affect refers to the language resources for expressing positive and negative emotions. Judgement deals with evaluating people's character and behavior (to admire or to criticize, to praise and to condemn), and appreciation gives value to things that involve evaluations of semiotic and natural phenomena. The three systems represent emotions, but the affect is the fundamental system. At the same time, judgement and appreciation are seen as the

formalization of affect developed to help people adapt to different, unusual sense communities of feeling (Oteiza, 2017). According to Martin and Rose (2003), attitude can be expressed either explicitly or implicitly. Explicit attitudes (inscribed) are conveyed through lexicogrammar, where the choice of words and grammatical structures directly inscribe the intended meaning. On the other hand, implicit attitudes (invoked) are expressed through ideational meaning, where the context, ideas, and events subtly invoke the intended sentiment without directly stating it.

Graduation is used to indicate the degrees of emotion, judgement, or appreciation and to adjust the sharpness of the categorizations being made. Martin and White (2005) demonstrate that graduation primarily involves leveling the phenomena, which involves adjusting the intensity or sharpness of the meaning. Graduation can be done through force and focus. According to Read and Carol (2012), graduation measures the intensity and authenticity of phenomena while simultaneously impacting the attitude and engagement system connected by the text.

Force is used to modify the intensity of the attitude, engagement, or graduation (Martin & Rose, 2003). According to (Putri & Cahyono, 2021), adverbs such as slightly, a little, instead, truly, very, very, and totally are commonly used to adjust the volume of emotion, judgment, or appreciation. The scaling principles, such as small, large, few, many, near, far, and so forth, can be used to value the time, space, quantity, and scope proximity. Additionally, force can be expressed through lexical elements in which a scaling value combines with an intellectual meaning that is typically high-intensity.

Focus functions to modify the accuracy of the categorization; it shows how the speaker or writer emphasizes the classification or grade of something. The concept of focus can enhance or reduce the clarity of semantic categorizations; the distinction between "It is a

bird” and “It is an eagle” is part of the focus element. Through focus, the speaker or writer can adjust the precision or sharpness of their sentiments, allowing for a more nuanced and expressive communication.

The engagement system is one subcategory of evaluative language that plays an important role in expressing how speakers or writers position themselves to engage with their audiences with their statements. It explores how they acknowledge, challenge, or align with other voices and viewpoints within a text. In general, engagement concerns how resources such as projection, modality, polarity, concession, and various comment adverbials position the speaker/writer toward the value position being advanced and concerning potential responses to that value position. Engagement is the influence; it concerns the diverse range of resources by which the writer adjusts and negotiates the arguability of what they say. This can be achieved by quoting or reporting, acknowledging a possibility, denying, countering, and affirming (Martin & White, 2005). Thus, journalists use linguistic features such as reporting verbs, modal auxiliaries, or intensifiers as a powerful tool as they elucidate the writer's perspective and assessment of a particular issue, which significantly influences their readers, encouraging the adoption of new perspectives and prompting desired actions (Sarikon & Abdullah, 2024).

Engaging and acknowledging diverse voices and perspectives is important in modern journalism, where dialogic is multivocal. This allows the journalists to construct a more comprehensive and nuanced picture of issues, enriching the narrative and cultivating a more informed and empathetic readership. Engagement views utterances as reflective of stance or attitude, indicating their connection to prior discourse while anticipating the reactions of actual, potential, or imagined audiences (Martin & White, 2005). Bakhtin (1981)

analyzed the concept of utterance, identifying two categories: monogloss and heterogloss..

Monoglossic refers to a communicative stance that presents information as singular, authoritative, and uncontested. It typically conveys a straightforward narrative that excludes alternative viewpoints, background voices, or dialogic engagement with other perspectives. This approach is often used to assert ideological dominance or maintain clarity and control, especially in institutional or persuasive texts. In contrast, heteroglossic embraces the presence of multiple voices, perspectives, and evaluative positions within a single narrative. Rooted in Bakhtin's theory of dialogism (1981), heteroglossia reflects the dynamic interplay of social, cultural, and ideological forces, allowing texts to resonate with complexity and openness.

Journalistic institutions have the power over headlines as they select which perspectives will be seen and how stories will be written (Sonni et al., 2023). Consequently, it is crucial to understand how journalists express their viewpoints in their writing and how it influences readers' understanding and interpretation of the material. The appraisal framework developed by Martin and White (2005) can be used to identify the level of subjectivities of a news report. As cited in Collen (2013), Martin and White have discovered a framework to investigate the neutrality and impartiality of a text to differentiate the objective and subjective value.

Mass media has a profound impact on how people perceive the world; several studies have been conducted to investigate the impact of mass media on people's perception, such as the influence of News Media on People's Perception of Corruption (Charron & Annoni, 2020), Media Influence Social Norms (Arias, 2019). Media influences relate to journalists' voices, which can influence public perception, commonly termed subjectivity and objectivity (Iedema et al, 1994).

The expansion of news media has significantly transformed public discourse. With the rapid dissemination of information through various platforms, people are not just passive recipients of news but active participants in discussions and debates about the topics they read. King et al. (2017) claim that news media consumption drives Americans to adopt public positions on particular issues, participate in national policy discussions, and publicly express their opinions. Debate on highly sensitive topics such as violence, politics, economics, and human rights is unavoidable and often results in conflict in society. The way news is reported can have a profound impact on public perception and the overall situation. Sensationalist reporting, which often prioritizes shocking or emotionally charged content, can indeed inflame emotions and provoke further conflict (Dixon et al., 2019).

The West Papua conflict is a global concern; it is a violation of human rights in West Papua and has negative consequences, such as physical and mental harm to the society and economy at the individual and national levels. On the other hand, a group of people called the Papua Separatism Movement (OPM) continuously struggled to combat the Indonesian security forces to gain sovereignty and separate from Indonesia.

The conflict in West Papua continues along with the serious human rights violations committed by the state security forces; Indigenous Papuans also face marginalization and discrimination, with limited access to essential social infrastructure like healthcare, education, and economic opportunities (Rahmawati, 2004; Chairil & Sadi, 2020; Wangge & Lawson, 2021). Rosyidin et al. (2022) noted that the different perspectives on the history of Papua between the Indonesian Government and the West Papuans, along with the lack of legal accountability for historical state crimes against Papuans, are contributing causes to the escalation of violence in West

Papua. In addition, the perceived lack of accountability for human rights violations by Indonesian Security Forces has exacerbated the tension in Papua. Reports indicated that the legal processes often fail to deliver justice for victims, leading to a cycle of impunity and ongoing conflict. As written by local media (Betahita, 2022) Indonesian security forces were involved in violence against civilians on 31 August 2022 in Mappi, but they never got punished even though they were proven guilty. Hardiyanto and Saryono (2023) noted that the legal process surrounding human rights violations in West Papua is often criticized for being biased and ineffective.

Beyond the well-documented political and human rights disputes in Papua, the region is also grappling with a growing number of environmental conflicts. As highlighted by Jasmine et al. (2025), tensions are intensifying between indigenous Papuans, government authorities, and external actors who seek to exploit Papua's abundant natural resources, particularly its forests. Report from (Tempo, 2024) highlighted the rapid expansion of large-scale plantations in Papua poses a serious threat to ecological sustainability and undermines the rights of Indigenous communities whose livelihoods are closely tied to the region's forests. The unresolved land dispute involving PT Freeport Indonesia, the Indonesian Government, and Indigenous Papuans represents just one of numerous ongoing conflicts in Papua, where issues of territorial rights, environmental degradation, and political tensions continue to unfold across the region. As stated by Tsaqif et al. (2024) indigenous Papuans have voiced strong opposition to Freeport's mining operations, citing a lack of fair economic benefits and the loss of ancestral lands long used for hunting, farming, and other customary practices.

Statistic Indonesia (BPS) published a crime statistics report in 2018 showing the most significant mass conflicts with 447 incidents in West Papua (Sonni et al., 2023). Given its

multifaceted nature and the wide spectrum of perspectives it evokes both domestically and internationally, the issue of West Papua holds significant geopolitical and sociocultural importance.

It provides a solid case study for studies on journalists' subjective views and how they impact the readers. Concerning this issue, mass media must conduct impartial journalism, which requires journalists to present news stories in a fair, balanced, and unbiased manner because the language they use and their perspective can significantly impact how the audience understands and reacts to the news. According to Brewer (2018), while all journalists must have an ideology, they also must report news and current affairs thoroughly and authoritatively, putting the interests of their readers above their own.

Media plays an important role in conflict; it acts as a watchdog and a platform for various voices and perspectives (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2024). Besides its essential role as a watchdog, media is indispensable in conflict zones; it acts as the spearhead for uncovering and disseminating the truth by providing accurate and timely information to help the public understand the complexities and realities of conflicts (Zahoor, & Sadiq, 2021).

Therefore, it is important to give balanced reporting because how conflict is portrayed in the media can significantly shape public perception and opinion. Media can shape and spread ideals, mitigate conflicts, and prevent hate speech. By utilizing this capability, they should present a well-rounded argument to reconcile opposing perspectives and opinions, which can contribute to a positive and sustainable notion of peace (Robie, 2021). In the context of the Papua conflict, providing a fair and nuanced presentation helps to ensure that the voices of all stakeholders are heard, and it helps to prevent the spread of misinformation, which can contribute to a conflict resolution and peace-building effort.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative approach through discourse analysis to examine how journalists maintain subjectivities in the news articles on the conflict in West Papua and how the subjectivities influence the readers' perception. Firstly, the study focuses on articles published in 2023 by Al Jazeera, The Diplomat, and The Jakarta Post. In collecting the data, the writer categorized each data that contained the same topic related to the conflict between Papua Separatist Group and The Indonesia Military. The study is grounded in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that synthesizes key perspectives from journalism studies and systemic functional linguistics (SFL) to examine the linguistic mechanisms through which media subjectivity is constructed and communicated. Central to this framework is the appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005), which offers an analytical lens for evaluating how language choices encode attitudes, align or disengage with other resources, and amplify or diminish meaning in journalistic texts. Each of the data set from the news articles is annotated using built-in manual appraisal analysis scheme of the UAM Corpus Tool. The UAM Corpus Tool is a versatile software designed for annotating and analyzing textual data across multiple linguistic layers, such as lexical, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and discursive (O'Donnell, 2008). This tool defined and annotated various layers of linguistic features within a corpus of text files, facilitating a comprehensive examination of discourse elements. The use of the UAM Corpus Tool for appraisal analysis was particularly relevant for this study as it provided a systematic and detailed approach to annotating and analyzing evaluative language to ensure a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the appraisal elements within the corpus.

Secondly, this study employed a Likert scale survey to examine how subjective language influences readers' perceptions. The instrument was distributed to graduate students of the English Program at Universitas Negeri Semarang. Although the survey was made available for a specified response period, only twenty-four students submitted the responses. This limited sample size may constrain the generalizability of the findings, as it may not fully represent the broader population of graduate-level English learners.

This group was purposefully selected due to their advanced proficiency in English and their academic exposure to linguistic and discourse-related concepts. As second-language users with a solid foundation in language analysis, these students were well-equipped to critically engage with the evaluative language and subjective strategies embedded in English-language news reports. Critical thinking is essential for analyzing information, addressing complex issues, and making informed judgments in both academic and real-world contexts (Halpern & , 2024). Their educational background aligned closely with the study's focus on how linguistic features influence perception, making them suitable respondents for assessing the nuanced interplay between subjectivity and readers interpretation.

In the final data analysis stage, the findings are presented using tabular and textual formats to highlight key evaluative features identified within the news report. The tabular data showcases the frequency and distribution of appraisal resources—namely attitude, engagement, and graduation—providing a quantitative overview of their presence across the selected text. Complementing this, the textual analysis synthesizes qualitative insights to illustrate how evaluative language was embedded within the discourse, how it reflected journalistic subjectivities, and how these subjective elements may have shaped readers' perceptions of the reported events.

Furthermore, the textual interpretation broadens the implications of these findings for media literacy, critical reading practices, and the ideological framing of conflict-related news.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research adopts the appraisal framework developed by Martin and White (2005), concentrating specifically on the attitudinal subsystem, graduation, and engagement. The attitudinal subsystem is the primary component of the appraisal framework, since it assesses how writers express their texts through words and phrases that overtly or implicitly communicate positive or negative evaluations. The attitudinal system comprises three primary components: affect, which denotes emotional expression; judgment, which pertains to character evaluation; and appreciation, which measures the value or worth of objects. Graduation refers to how language is used to scale the intensity or quantity of the evaluation. It helps the writers or speakers to amplify or soften their expression. Engagement refers to how language positions the writers or speaker in relation to other voices and perspectives. It examines whether a statement is presented as absolute (monoglossic) or acknowledges alternative viewpoints (heteroglossic).

Identifying the Attitudinal Systems

Table 1. The distribution of attitudinal system

Feature	Pol	The Diplomat		Al Jazeera		The Jakarta Post	
		freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%
Affect	Pos	1	3%	-	-	-	-
	Neg	10	28%	2	9.5%	10	34.4%
Judgement	Pos	10	28%	2	9.5%	8	27.5%
	Neg	8	21%	11	52.5%	5	17.3%
Appreciation	Pos	-	3%	-	-	2	6.8%
	Neg	7	17%	6	28.5%	4	13.8%
Total		36	100%	21	100%	29	100%

The data revealed that judgement, which was used to assess individual behavior, was the most prevalent attitude category with 44 instances across the three media outlets. This high frequency suggested that evaluating actions was a central focus in hard news reporting about the West Papua conflict. In contrast, affect, which conveyed expressions of feelings or emotions, occurs 22 times, a figure that, while lower than judgment, remains significant given the reporting on distressing events like kidnappings and ambushes. Meanwhile, appreciation, which evaluates entities, objects, or processes, appeared the least frequently, 17 instances, indicating that these reports placed less emphasis on critiquing broader conditions or developments.

The overall statistical overview of the data sets provided a solid foundation for addressing the first research question; what types of evaluative systems were employed by online media journalists when reporting on the conflict in West Papua. The analysis revealed that all three-news outlet, The Diplomat, Al Jazeera and The Jakarta Post use evaluative language across various subsystems of the appraisal framework. Specifically, the attitude system was realized through expressions of affect, judgement, and appreciation.

Excerpt 1

Indonesia's military has confirmed [eng; attribute; acknowledge] that three soldiers missing [-affect; inscribed] since a weekend ambush by separatist fighters [+judgement; tenacity] in a remote part of upland Papua have been found dead [-affect; inscribed].

This statement is an example of attributive evaluation which refers to external sources. the journalist implicitly passes evaluative language specifically judgement on the separatist group by referring to them as “fighters”, framing them as an organized force striving for independence

in West Papua. This portrayal conveys a positive judgment, particularly highlighting the tenacity. Furthermore, this statement conveys invoked affect such as missing and dead. the writer implicitly conveys an emotional undertone through the words 'missing' and 'dead,' which suggest feelings of loss and tragedy.

Excerpt 2

On April 15, fighters [+judgement; tenacity] from the West Papua National Liberation Army (TPNPB), the armed wing [+judgement; tenacity] of the Free Papua Movement, opened fire on a group of 36 soldiers on patrol in Nduga Regency, a center [appreciation; complexity] of separatist activity in Highland Papua province.

The author conveys judgement of capacity by referring to the TPNPB as the “armed wing” of the Free Papua Movement, suggesting that the group has the capability to engage in combat. This characterization reinforces the perception that the separatist movement possesses military strength and actively opposes the Indonesian government, potentially framing them in a negative light. On the other hand, the word “center” sets the context that Nduga Regency is known for separatist activities.

Subjectivities reflected in the online media

Based on the text analysis, the three articles indicated that the text maintains an overall objective stance. This finding was significant because all three texts were factual news reports, where writers were expected to maintain neutrality in their presentation of events. Journalists are expected to maintain neutrality when reporting the news since the quality of good journalism is measured by objectivity and reliability (Baleria, 2021).

Table 2. the Distribution of Engagement System

Type of Engagement	The Diplomat		Al Jazeera		The Jakarta Post	
	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%
Monogloss	12	25%	7	25%	9	26.4%
Heterogloss	36	75%	21	75%	34	73.6%
Total	48	100%	28	100%	43	100%
Type of Heterogloss	The Diplomat		Al Jazeera		The Jakarta Post	
	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%
Contract	3	8.3%	2	9.5%	2	5.8%
Expand	33	91.7%	19	90.5%	32	94.2%
Total	36	100%	21	100%	43	100%
Type of Contract	The Diplomat		Al Jazeera		The Jakarta Post	
	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%
Disclaim	3	100%	2	100%	2	100%
Proclaim	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	3	100%	2	100%	2	100%
Type of Expand	The Diplomat		Al Jazeera		The Jakarta Post	
	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%
Entertain	5	15%	1	5%	1	3%
Attribute	28	85%	18	95%	31	97%
Total	33	100%	19	100%	32	100%

The analysis revealed that The Diplomat, Al Jazeera, and The Jakarta Post predominantly employ "attribute" within their engagement system, reinforcing a sense of objectivity in their reporting. This strategy was realized through the use of direct and indirect reported speech, as well as quotations from individuals, ensuring that claims were attributed to external sources. While their coverage largely adhered to principles of objectivity, it also exhibited varying degrees of subjectivity, as evidenced by the evaluative language embedded in their reporting. This aligned with previous research indicating that subjectivity and objectivity often coexist rather than function as opposing forces (Rev, 2019). Evaluative language served as a tool for journalists to convey positive or negative assessments, either explicitly or implicitly, presenting these evaluations on their own behalf. The table 2 shows the distribution of subjective markers reflected in the three news reports.

The realization of the degree of subjectivity was concluded from the

engagement system used by online media. According to (Martin & White, 2005) engagement has also been interpreted to indicate a person's opinion, stance, or attitude towards an idea or person. Monoglossic engagement is seen as the writer's voice which closely related to subjectivity, as it presents information without acknowledging alternative perspectives or external sources, effectively reinforcing a singular viewpoint. Heteroglossic subjectivity is realized through entertain attributions, as they integrate speculation into discourse, subtly guiding the audience toward uncertainty and interpretative flexibility rather than direct assertion (Fatkhianti, 2019).

From the analysis of the three texts, The Diplomat texts revealed that it employed the highest degree of evaluative language among the three sources. The journalist distributed both positive and negative evaluations across both parties; the Indonesian government and the separatist group. To examine this pattern further, the identified clauses contain explicit expressions of approval and criticism directed toward the government.

Excerpt 3

The military has long been accused of human rights abuses[-judgement, propriety] there.

Excerpt 4

Indonesia took control [-judgement, tenacity] two years later promising an independence referendum.

The two examples above reflected the writer's voice and are closely tied to subjectivity, as they present information without engaging alternative perspectives or attributing external sources, thereby reinforcing a singular viewpoint. While providing factual details on the West Papua situation, these statements also conveyed a critical stance toward both the Indonesian military and government. The phrase, "The military has long been accused of human rights

abuses there," carried a negative evaluation, as it referenced allegations of misconduct and violence, framing the military as implicated in systemic issues. Additionally, the phrase "took control" suggested negative appreciation of the government's actions. Although the promise of an independence referendum might appear conciliatory, the phrasing implies that it remained unfulfilled or has failed to meet the region's aspirations, further shaping the critical perspective embedded within the discourse.

While the three media outlets demonstrated objective reporting, elements of subjectivity were still present. This was particularly evident in their criticism of the Indonesian government's handling of West Papua, as well as their implicit critique of the separatist movement. The media's lexical choices revealed shifts in stance referring to the movement as "rebels" when discussing the kidnapping of the Susi Air pilot, but labeling them "fighters" when covering their armed resistance against the TNI in pursuit of independence. Among the three, The Diplomat exhibited the highest degree of subjectivity in its reporting.

The influence of Subjectivities on readers' Perception

To investigate how subjectivity in news reports influenced reader perception, The Diplomat news report was utilized as the foundation for constructing a research instrument, specifically a Likert scale, which based on prior textual analysis, demonstrated the highest degree of subjectivity among the three media outlets examined. A high frequency monoglossic engagement subsystem marked this subjectivity and entertain in the engagement system signaled an overt alignment with particular ideological positions. Selected excerpts from The Diplomat were then used to construct items for a Likert scale survey to capture readers' levels of agreement with these subjective statements. This methodological

approach is grounded in the theoretical insights of Martin & White (2005), who contend that when writers infuse their discourse with personal stance, they implicitly invite readers to align with their judgments and values.

The survey utilized a five-point Likert scale to assess participants' levels of agreement with statements related to journalistic subjectivity and media interpretation. Response options ranged from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree', including a 'neutral' midpoint to accommodate ambivalence or uncertainty. The participants comprised 24 university students enrolled in the English Program at Universitas Negeri Semarang. Importantly, none of the respondents reported any personal or academic conflict of interest in relation to the subject matter. Most respondents had limited prior exposure to news about the West Papua conflict, ensuring that their reactions were primarily shaped by the presented material rather than previous familiarity with the issue.

The survey results indicated that journalistic subjectivity played a significant role in shaping reader perception. When journalists incorporate subjective framing, evaluative language, or implicit bias into their reporting, readers often internalize and align their interpretations with the presented perspective (Chuey et al., 2024). In this study, respondents were asked to assess statements related to The Diplomat's coverage of the West Papua conflict. The findings showed that a majority of respondents agreed with the perspectives embedded in the news report, suggesting that the journalist's framing influenced their understanding of key events.

First of all it can be seen that (66%) of the participants agreed with the framing that the separatist group was a rebellious force opposing the Indonesian government. Meanwhile, (20.8%) remained neutral, while the remaining (12.5%) disagreed with categorizing the group as rebels. In addition, the data showed that a majority (54%) of respondents agreed with the framing that the

separatist group initiated the attack on (TNI) as an act of territorial defense. Meanwhile, (37.5%) of respondents rejecting this perspective, while the remaining (12.5%) expressed a neutral stance on the issue.

This supported the idea that readers did not merely consume information passively; instead, they processed and interpreted news through the lens of how it was presented. Moreover, some respondents remained neutral or disagreed, indicating that other factors such as prior knowledge, ideological positioning, or exposure to alternative narratives may moderate the extent to which journalistic subjectivity affects interpretation.

These findings aligned with Martin & White (2005), who argue that journalists do more than express personal views; they invite audiences to adopt similar attitudes by embedding value judgments within their narratives. In this case, the subjectivity in The Diplomat's reporting appeared to have influenced reader perceptions regarding the conflict, the actors involved, and the broader geopolitical framing.

Conclusions

This study began its discussion by examining the use of evaluative language in the three selected news reports. As Bednarek (2006) argued, the concept of evaluation was deeply embedded in media discourse and closely linked to ideology. Her research demonstrated that journalists' lexical choices, particularly the use of attitudinal and evaluative language played important role in framing events and shaping audience interpretation.

The analysis of the reports from The Diplomat, Al Jazeera, and The Jakarta Post (see chapter 4 section 4.1.1) confirmed the presence of such evaluative language, which included linguistic expressions to convey judgments, opinions, or emotional stances toward individuals, actions, or events. This finding aligned with the study by Asad et al. (2021),

which highlighted that newspapers often maintained an authorial voice by employing rhetorical markers and external sources as supporting voices to persuade and align with their readership.

The appraisal analysis indicates that the three media sources maintain a generally objective approach in their reporting. This suggested that journalists from the three media sources presented information in a neutral tone, minimizing overt expressions of personal opinion or emotional involvement, and relying on factual reporting. This finding aligned with the nature of hard news reporting, which, as Iedema, et al. (1994) explain, was conventionally associated with objectivity and impartiality.

Nevertheless, despite the prevalence of objective features, the three media outlets still incorporate evaluative language, which subtly shapes readers' perceptions and interpretations. This finding underscores the dual function of journalistic discourse: while striving for impartiality, it simultaneously engages in subtle framing through lexical choices, attitudinal markers, and implicit judgements.

The survey, which was constructed based on subjective elements identified in The Diplomat's reporting, revealed that participants were influenced by the evaluative language and stance embedded in the text to varying degrees. Some respondents strongly agreed that the article shaped their perception of the conflict, while others expressed more moderate agreement. This variation suggested that while not all readers were equally affected. This finding aligns with previous research by Wahl (2025), which demonstrates that news reporting can significantly shape how readers perceive and interpret content. Wahl emphasizes that journalists' lived experiences, emotional dispositions, and embodied practices play a crucial role in how stories are constructed. These elements contribute to affective resonance, influencing readers' emotional

engagement and moral responses to news narratives.

This study is expected to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the use of evaluative language in media discourse, particularly in the context of hard news reporting. It also seeks to promote critical media literacy by encouraging learners to identify and interrogate the evaluative mechanisms through which language constructs meaning, thereby fostering deeper awareness of how texts position and influence readers. However, due to the limitation of the study, it is hoped that further research under the same field can be conducted in a larger context.

REFERENCES

- Arias, E. (2019). How Does Media Influence Social Norms? Experimental Evidence on the Role of Common Knowledge. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 7(3), 561–578. doi:10.1017/psrm.2018.1
- Assifa, F. (2023, February 25) Korban Tewas Kerusuhan Wamena 10 Orang. *Kompas.com*. <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2023/02/25/091625878/korban-tewas-kerusuhan-wamena-10-orang-berikut-kronologi-kejadiannya>.
- Asad, S., Noor, S. N. F. B. M., Indah, R. N., & Jaes, L. B. (2021). Attitude realization in news reports: An interpretation through an appraisal analysis. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 11(1), 177-186. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v10i3.31763>
- Baleria, G. (2021). The Journalism Behind Journalism: Going Beyond the Basics to Train Effective Journalists in a Shifting Landscape (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003095309>
- Bednarek, M. (2006). Evaluation in media discourse: Analysis of a newspaper corpus. London: Continuum
- Brewer, D. (2025, March 26). Impartiality in journalism - Media Helping Media. *Media Helping Media - FREE TRAINING RESOURCES FOR NEWS JOURNALISTS*. <https://mediahelpingmedia.org/ethics/impartiality-in-journalism/>
- Chairil.T & Sadi. W. (2020) Konflik Papua: Pemerintah Perlu Mengubah Pendekatan Keamanan dengan Pendekatan Humanis. <https://ir.binus.ac.id/2020/10/05/konflik-papua-pemerintah-perlu-mengubah-pendekatan-keamanan-dengan-pendekatan-humanis/>
- Charron, N., & Annoni, P. (2020). What is the Influence of News Media on People's Perception of Corruption? Parametric and Non-Parametric Approaches. *Social Indicators Research*, 153(3), 1139–1165. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-020-02527-0>
- Chuey, A., Luo, Y., & Markman, E. M. (2024). Epistemic Language in News Headlines Shapes Readers' Perceptions of Objectivity. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 121(20), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2314091121>
- Collen, S. (2013). The 'Reporter Voice' And 'Objectivity' In Cross-Linguistic

- Reporting Of ‘Controversial’ News in Zimbabwean Newspapers. An Appraisal Approach. Stellenbosch University: Dissertation
- Dixon, T. L., Weeks, K. R., & Smith, M. A. (2019). Media Constructions of Culture, Race, and Ethnicity. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.502>
- Ezedike, E. U., Eyo, E. B., & Bassey, S. A. (2019). Truth and Objectivity in the Ethics of Journalism: An appraisal. *PINISI Discretion Review*, 3(2), 193–204.
<https://doi.org/10.26858/pdr.v3i2.13936>
- Fatkhiati, N (2019). Identifying The Appraisal System and The Degree of Objectivity In Online Media Issuing Abu Bakar Bashir’s Controversial Case. *Unpublished thesis*. Universitas Diponegoro
- Halpern, D. F., & Dunn, D. S. (2021). Critical Thinking: A Model of Intelligence for Solving Real-World Problems. *Journal of Intelligence*, 9(2), 22.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/jintelligence9020022>
- Haryati, S. (2020, October 15). In quest of peaceful resolution to Papua conflict. *Antara News*.
<https://en.antaranews.com/news/159089/in-quest-of-peaceful-resolution-to-papua-conflict>
- Hood, S. (2010). *Appraising Research: Evaluation in Academic Writing*. University of Technology. Australia
- Iedema et al. (1994). *Media Literacy, Sydney, Disadvantaged Schools Program*. NSW Department of School Education
- James, R (2021, May 11). ‘We are living in a war zone’: violence flares in West Papua as Villagers Forced to Flee. *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/11/we-are-living-in-a-war-zone-violence-flares-in-west-papua-as-villagers-forced-to-flee>
- Jasmine, H., Harahap, R. H., Saputra, D., & Destianti, F. (2025). Forests, People and Conflict: A Socio-Ecological Analysis of the ‘All Eyes on Papua’ Case. *Jurnal Sosiologi Andalas*, 11(1), 110–120.
<https://doi.org/10.25077/jsa.11.1.110-120.2025>
- Kalogeropoulos, A., Toff, B., & Fletcher, R. (2024). The Watchdog Press in the Doghouse: A Comparative Study of Attitudes about Accountability Journalism, Trust in News, and News Avoidance. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 29(2), 485–506.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612221112572>
- Katingka, N. (2023, December 25) 79 meninggal akibat konflik di papua selama 2023 37 masyarakat sipil ikut terbunuh. *Kompas.com*.
<https://www.kompas.id/baca/nusantara>
- King, G., Schneer, B., & White, A. (2017). How the news media activate public expression and influence national agendas. *Science*, 358(6364), 776–

780.
<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aao1100>
- Lewis, S.C. and Westlund, O. (2014) 'Actors, Actants, Audiences, and Activities in Cross-Media News Work,' *Digital Journalism*, 3(1), pp. 19–37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2014.927986>.
- Lindblom, T., Lindell, J. and Gidlund, K. (2022) 'Digitalizing the Journalistic Field: Journalists' Views on Changes in Journalistic Autonomy, Capital and Habitus,' *Digital Journalism*, 12(6), pp. 894–913. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2062406>.
- Martin, J. R. & White, P.R.R. (2005). *The Language of Evaluation. Appraisal in English*. Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan.
- O'Donnell, M. (2008). The UAM CorpusTool : Software for Corpus Annotation and Exploration. *Proceedings of the XXVI Congreso de AESLA*. Almeria, Spain. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260456190>
- Onuh, M. U., & Lateef, R. O. (2022). Media Management in the Media, Objectivity as a Watchword. *Wellspring University Journal of Social and Management Sciences*, 112-130.
- Oteiza, T. (2017). *The Appraisal Framework and Discourse Analysis*. The Routledge Handbook of Systemic Functional Linguistics. Routledge
- Putri, S. A., & Cahyono, S. P (2021). Graduation in COVID-19 Virtual Press Conference by WHO from the Perspective Appraisal Theory. *PROCEEDING AISELT (Annual International Seminar on English Language Teaching)*, 6(1), 273-281. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30870/aiselt.v6i1.12518>
- Read, J. & Carroll, J. (2010) 'Annotating expressions of Appraisal in English,' *Language Resources and Evaluation*, 46(3), 421–447. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10579-010-9135-7>.
- Robie, D. (2021). *Media Freedom: A West Papuan Human Rights Journalism Case Study*. In *Springer eBooks* (pp. 1–25). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-3877-3_30-1
- Rosyidin, M., Akhmad, A., Dir, B., Fendy, E., Barat, P., & Inggis, M. (2022). The Papua Conflict: The Different Perspectives of The Indonesian Government and International Communities—Review from The English School Theory. *Global Jurnal Politik Internasional*. 24(2), 277-302. <https://doi.org/10.7454/global.v24i2.1253>
- Sarikon, S., & Abdullah, R.B. (2024). The Concept of Evaluative Language in Malay Newspaper Discourse. *Lingpoet: Journal of Linguistics and Literary Research*, 5(3), 194-203. <https://talenta.usu.ac.id/lingpoet/article/view/18089>
- Sonni, A. F., Irwanto, I., & Malau, M. H. (2023). Peaceful journalism in reporting conflict in Papua on the news portals. *ETNOSIA Jurnal Etnografi Indonesia*, 8(1), 161–173. <https://doi.org/10.31947/etnosia.v8i1.26980>
- Steensen, S. (2010). ONLINE JOURNALISM AND THE PROMISES OF NEW

- TECHNOLOGY. *Journalism Studies*, 12(3), 311–327. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670x.2010.501151>
- Steensen, S. (2017). Subjectivity as a Journalistic Ideal. In *Putting a Face on It: Individual Exposure and Subjectivity in Journalism* (pp. 25–47). <https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.28>
- Syahri, M. (2020). Journalism ethics in local newspaper. *Masyarakat, Kebudayaan Dan Politik*, 33(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.20473/mkp.V33I12.020.1-14>
- Tsaqif, A. M., Situmorang, L. R., Rajabi, Z., & Tarina, D. D. Y. (2024). Analysis of land disputes between PT Freeport Indonesia, the Indonesian government and the Papuan community. *JISIP (Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Pendidikan)*, 8(3), 1576. <https://doi.org/10.58258/jisip.v8i3.6987>
- Wahl, J. (2025). Bringing up the body: Uncovering the Subjectivity of Journalists. *Journalism Studies*, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670x.2025.2505940>
- Wangge, H. R., & Lawson, S. (2021). *The West Papua Issue in Pacific Regional politics: explaining Indonesia's foreign policy failure*. *The Pacific Review*, 36(1), 61–89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2021.1931417>
- Ward, S. J. A. (2020). Introduction: Media Ethics in a Global Age. In *Ethics and the Media: An Introduction* (pp. 1–8). chapter, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weiss, A. S., & Domingo, D. (2010). Innovation processes in online newsrooms as actor-networks and communities of practice. *New Media & Society*, 12(7), 1156–1171. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444809360400>
- Yong, N & Jonathan, H. (2023, April18) *New Zealand pilot kidnapping: Indonesia's West Papua conflict explained*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-64578375>
- Zahoor, M., & Sadiq, N. (2021). Media and Armed Conflicts: An Overview. *NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability*, 4(1), 70–80. <https://doi.org/10.37540/njips.v4i1.80>