

An Appraisal Analysis of Affect in Vietnamese Journalistic Commentary: A Case Study of *Tuoi Tre* and *Nhan Dan* Newspapers

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Abstract—Appraisal theory, developed by Martin and White (2005) based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, has increasingly demonstrated its potential in discourse analysis studies. This study applies the Appraisal theory to identify and interpret realizations of *Affect* in 40 commentaries in *Tuoi Tre* and *Nhan Dan* newspapers during the COVID-19 pandemic on the following issues: healthcare, education, economics, and tourism. Rather than treating the two newspapers as isolated objects of comparison, the study approaches them as case studies representing different institutional journalistic voices, aiming to elucidate patterns of evaluative language use in Vietnamese journalistic commentary discourse. Findings show that *Affect* is mobilized as a strategic discursive resource to construct stance, organize interpersonal relations, and enact persuasive strategies directed at the public.

Index Terms—appraisal theory, affect, attitude, commentary discourse, Vietnamese journalistic

I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of the rapid development of digital media, journalism continues to affirm its important role in reflecting social reality and shaping public opinion. Not merely functioning as a channel of information dissemination, journalism also serves as a forum for the exchange of ideas, where attitudes, emotions, and viewpoints are expressed in response to major societal issues. Within the system of journalistic genres, commentary occupies a distinctive position as it combines informational and analytical functions with the expression of evaluative meanings and institutional stance. Commentary integrates rational analysis with emotional appeal to persuade readers and shape social stance.

From the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) perspective, Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) offers an effective framework for investigating how attitudes and stance are constructed in discourse. Within this framework, the subsystem of *Affect* functions as a key evaluative resource that enables journalists to express their viewpoints, evoke empathy, alignment or contestation among the public, thereby construing interpersonal relations with readers and enhancing the persuasive force of the text.

A. Problem Statement

In Vietnamese journalism, commentary is a genre that clearly demonstrates the role of evaluative language in constructing stance and shaping public opinion. Although previous studies have examined Vietnamese journalistic commentary from a variety of perspectives (Dung, 2008; Chuyen, 2014), they have generally focused on ideational meaning and argumentation, while the examination of *Affect* as a systematic evaluative linguistic resource remains limited. This research gap becomes even more noticeable in the diverse context of Vietnamese journalism, where media organizations differ in their missions, roles, and target audiences.

These institutional differences may imply the existence of different styles and strategies for expressing emotion within the same genre of journalistic commentary, which has not yet been systematically examined from a functional linguistic perspective. Addressing this gap, the present study examines the subsystem of *Affect* in print newspaper commentaries in *Tuoi Tre* and *Nhan Dan* as representative case studies, aiming to clarify the use of evaluative language in Vietnamese journalistic commentary discourse. Specifically, this study focuses on the subsystem of *Affect* within the category of *Attitude* in a corpus of forty print newspaper commentaries published in *Tuoi Tre* and *Nhan Dan*, addressing four major issues during the COVID-19 pandemic: healthcare, education, economics, and tourism.

B. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

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1. Describe and analyse resources for *Affect* realizations in Vietnamese journalistic commentary discourse, based on case studies from *Tuoi Tre* and *Nhan Dan* newspapers.
2. Identify tendencies in the employment of evaluative language to fulfil interpersonal functions in commentary discourse, thereby revealing stylistic differences associated with different institutional journalistic orientations.
3. Based on these analyses, outline key stylistic features of evaluative language in Vietnamese journalistic commentary discourse.

C. Research Questions

1. What resources are employed to realize *Affect* in Vietnamese journalistic commentary discourse?
2. How do similarities and differences in the expression of *Affect* across journalistic voices with different institutional orientations reflect commentary styles and persuasive strategies toward readers?
3. Based on the case studies, what stylistic characteristics of evaluative language can be identified in Vietnamese journalistic commentary discourse?

D. Significance of the Study

This study aims to extend the application of Appraisal Theory to the analysis of Vietnamese journalistic discourse by positioning *Affect* as a strategic discursive resource. Through a comparative analysis of COVID-19–related commentaries in the two newspapers, the study demonstrates that the selection and distribution of *Affect* resources are closely associated with each newspaper's communicative goals and social roles, thereby elucidating the relationship between *Affect*, discursive stance, and institutional context.

E. Theoretical Framework

(a). Overview of Appraisal Theory

Developed within the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics, Appraisal Theory is a functional model concerned with interpersonal meaning at the discourse-semantic level. The Appraisal framework provides a systematic account of the linguistic resources through which evaluative meanings are construed in discourse. Martin and White (2005) argue that evaluative language extends the interpersonal metafunction by enabling speakers and writers to express stance and negotiate interpersonal relationships. They classify the Appraisal framework into three interrelated systems: *Attitude* (expressing emotions and positive or negative evaluations), *Engagement* (sourcing voices and negotiating dialogic space), and *Graduation* (adjusting the intensity or degree of evaluation). Within *Attitude*, three subsystems are identified: *Affect* (emotions), *Judgement* (evaluation of behaviour), and *Appreciation* (evaluation of things and phenomena). This study focuses on the *Affect* subsystem, which concerns the representation of individuals' positive and negative emotional responses to ongoing events and entities in their environment.

(b). Affect Subsystem

Affect refers to the expression of positive and negative feelings of individuals, such as happiness or sadness, and confidence or anxiety. Authorial *Affect* refers to the authors' own emotional responses to events and entities, whereas non-authorial *Affect* captures the emotions of other participants in the discourse as observed and reported by the authors.

Martin and White (2005, p. 35) classify *Affect* into four categories: *inclination*, *happiness*, *security*, and *satisfaction*. Each category is construed along a positive–negative polarity, forming pairs of contrasting emotional meanings, including *inclination/ disinclination*, *un/ happiness*, *in/ security*, *dis/ satisfaction*.

Dis/inclination concerns emotions related to wishes and desires, such as *miss*, *wish*, *long for/neglect*, *reject*.

Un/happiness concerns emotions related to affairs of the heart, such as *happiness*, *smile*, *joy/sadness*, *hate*.

In/security concerns emotions related to feelings of *safety* and *confidence*, or, conversely, *anxiety* and *fear*.

Dis/satisfaction includes emotions related to the fulfilment or frustration of goals, such as *satisfaction*, *comfort*, *boredom*, and *frustration*.

Each of these emotional states is realized through a system of lexico-grammatical resources, including words, phrases, and sentence types.

(c). Resources for Realizing Attitude

The term “resources” refers to the elements, means or conditions necessary to perform an activity, achieve a goal, or maintain a system. Resources may exist in different forms depending on the field of research and application. In linguistics, resources are understood as the set of linguistic means that enable individuals to construe and communicate meaning in discourse.

Language is structured into multiple strata, including: (1) phonology, which concerns sounds and pronunciation; (2) lexis, which comprises words and their meanings; (3) grammar, which involves the rules governing the formation of words and sentences; and (4) discourse, which refers to the organization and use of language in specific communicative contexts. Each of these strata provides corresponding resources: (1') phonological resources, including such means as phonemes, syllables, and intonation; (2') lexical resources, realized through words (in terms of word formation and word classes) and fixed expressions; (3') grammatical resources, consisting of linguistic means such as free word combinations (understood as combinations of words in coordination and subordination) and sentence types; and (4') rhetorical resources,

which encompass a set of devices and stylistic strategies that enable speakers or writers to express meaning in a vivid, persuasive, and expressive manner.

Each language possesses its own evaluative resources. Although Martin and White have examined these resources in English, typological differences across languages mean that evaluative resources in Vietnamese do not fully correspond to those in English. Based on an examination of the corpus, we find that the expression of *Attitude* in commentaries in *Tuoi Tre* and *Nhan Dan* is realized through lexicogrammatical resources, specifically through such linguistic means as words, free word combinations, and sentence types:

- Words are analysed in terms of word formation, word classes, and fixed lexical combinations.
- Free word combinations are understood as combinations of words formed through coordination and subordination.
- Sentence types in the corpus are classified according to communicative purposes.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past two decades, Appraisal Theory has been widely applied in a wide range of research domains. In political discourses, studies have focused on how politicians employ evaluative language to construct self-image, legitimize authority, and position opponents (Jalilifar & Savaedi, 2012; Ni & Tao, 2009). These studies demonstrate that evaluative language functions as a strategic instrument for shaping public attitudes and emotions. In the field of education, Appraisal Theory is applied to examine classroom discourse, academic writing, and teaching materials, thereby clarifying how teachers and learners express attitudes, make arguments, and demonstrate levels of academic commitment (Coffin, 2006; Guan, 2009; Hood, 2010; Hu & Choo, 2015). These studies highlight the role of evaluative language in developing learners' reasoning and critical thinking skills.

In translation studies, Appraisal Theory has primarily been employed to investigate how attitudes, stances, and emotions are transferred from source language to target language, particularly in political, journalistic, and literary translation (Munday, 2018; Liu & Yu, 2021; Xu & Wang, 2017). These works indicate that translators do not merely reproduce informational content but actively adjust evaluative tone and stance in accordance with the target sociocultural context. In journalism and media studies, Appraisal Theory has been considered as an effective tool for analysing how news discourse simultaneously constructs an appearance of objectivity while expressing its stance and shaping public opinion. Studies by White (1998) demonstrate that evaluative language plays a central role in organizing journalistic voice, managing heteroglossia, and persuading audiences.

As shown, Appraisal Theory has been developed and refined for nearly two decades, and it is no longer a new research direction in applied linguistics. Due to its flexibility and adaptability across various communicative contexts, the framework has shown its potential for application to discourse analysis in less explored languages such as Vietnamese. In Vietnam, the application of Appraisal Theory, based on the SFL approach, remains relatively novel. The doctoral dissertation by Sao (2010) is considered a pioneering study applying the Appraisal Framework to investigate the interpersonal metafunction in international news and reportage in both Vietnamese and English newspapers. Subsequently, several follow-up studies have investigated different systems of the Appraisal framework across various corpora, including journalistic discourse, academic discourse, and Vietnamese–English contrastive analyses (Hien, 2017; Hong, 2023; Lan, 2026; Trang, 2020; Hau, 2025). Overall, these studies have contributed to demonstrating the adaptability of the Appraisal Framework to Vietnamese and identifying differences in evaluative resources between Vietnamese and English. However, most research has concentrated on broad systems (Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation) and on cross-linguistic comparisons, while in-depth investigation of a specific subsystem, particularly *Affect*, within a clearly defined journalistic genre remains limited.

An overview of both international and Vietnamese studies reveals that, although Appraisal Theory has been widely employed in journalistic discourse analysis, the *Affect* subsystem has not received proportional attention, especially in journalistic commentary research. Moreover, within the context of Vietnamese journalism, which is characterized by diverse institutional orientations, very few studies have examined the use of *Affect* in relation to journalistic voice and the social roles of different media organizations. This gap becomes even more salient in times of social crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when emotion functions not merely as an individual reaction but as a strategic discursive resource for shaping public perception and social behaviours.

Against this backdrop, the present study focuses on the *Affect* subsystem in Vietnamese journalistic commentary discourse through a comparative analysis of commentaries published in *Tuoi Tre* and *Nhan Dan* newspapers. By doing so, it aims to elucidate the relationship between *Affect*, discursive stance, and institutional orientation in contemporary media practice in Vietnam.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Data Collection

The corpus of the study consists of 40 commentary articles published in *Tuoi Tre* and *Nhan Dan* between January and June 2022. Articles were selected from relevant sections of each newspaper and covered four thematic domains related to the COVID-19 pandemic: health, education, economy, and tourism. Each thematic group consists of five articles from

each newspaper, ensuring a balanced distribution and comparability of content. Although both *Tuoi Tre* and *Nhan Dan* are published in print and electronic formats, the present study focuses on the print versions to ensure textual stability and avoid potential changes resulting from post-publication updates or revisions.

B. Theoretical Framework

This study draws on Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005), focusing on the *Affect* subsystem of *Attitude*. *Affect* is analysed in terms of emotion types (Un/Happiness, In/Security, Dis/Satisfaction, and Dis/Inclination), polarity (positive/negative), and sources of appraisal (authorial/non-authorial). The analysis is limited to inscribed *Affect* and does not examine invoked appraisal resources.

C. Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis was conducted through a combination of discourse analysis, descriptive and statistical methods, and comparative analysis to elucidate how emotions are expressed in the commentary discourse of the two newspapers. After selection, each sentence and paragraph in the corpus was carefully examined and annotated for potential expressions of emotion. The identification and classification process was conducted in the following steps:

- (1) identifying *Affect* expressions based on linguistic criteria such as part of speech, syntactic structure, and semantic features;
- (2) classifying these expressions according to the four *Affect* emotional pairs and additional criteria (polarity, sources of appraisal, and modes of realization);
- (3) coding the data and entering them into a database, with each entry representing one analytical unit;
- (4) synthesizing and processing quantitative data by calculating the frequency of different types of emotions across newspapers, topics, and classification categories;
- (5) conducting qualitative analysis to interpret the discursive functions of *Affect* in relation to argumentative strategies and discourse style, and to examine similarities and differences between the two newspapers.

Qualitative analysis plays a central role in this study, enabling a deeper understanding of emotional expressions in relation to genre characteristics, ideological orientation, target audience, and the persuasive strategies of each newspaper. Linguistic phenomena are situated within the specific socio-political context of the pandemic period to ensure a close connection between language use and authentic discourse.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Frequency and Realizations of *Affect* in Commentary Discourse in *Tuoi Tre* and *Nhan Dan* Newspapers

(a). Frequency of *Affect* in Commentary Discourse in *Tuoi Tre* and *Nhan Dan* Newspapers

- *Frequency of Affect in commentary discourse in Tuoi Tre newspaper*

Based on the analysis of 20 commentary articles on health, education, economic, and tourism issues published in *Tuoi Tre* between December 2021 and June 2022, the following results were obtained (Figure 1).

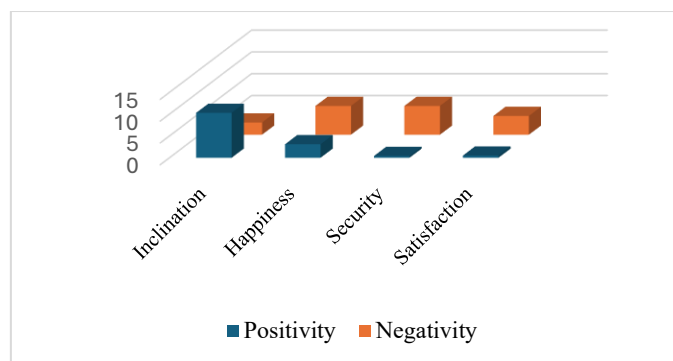


Figure 1. Polarization of *Affect* in Commentary Discourse in *Tuoi Tre* Newspaper

As shown in Figure 1, *Inclination* has the highest frequency (112 times), followed by *Happiness* (87 times) and *Security* (61 times), while *Satisfaction* records the lowest frequency (38 times). Among these, *Inclination* is the only subtype with a higher frequency of positive instances than negative ones (3.16 times). All other *Affect* subtypes have more negative than positive instances, with *Happiness* showing 2.03 times more negative than positive instances. Notably, negative instances of *Security* and *Satisfaction* far outnumber positive ones: for *Security*, negative instances are 16 times as frequent as positive ones, while for *Satisfaction*, the figure is 7.6 times. This disparity can be attributed to the social context in which the emotional subjects are situated. All commentaries in *Tuoi Tre* were produced during a critical period when both the world and Vietnam were confronting the COVID-19 pandemic, characterized by threats to human life, economic disruption, and educational interruption. Commentaries in *Tuoi Tre* focused on workers' precarious living conditions, public anxiety and fear, pressures associated with online learning, and dissatisfaction with opportunistic behaviours during

the crisis. Therefore, the emotions expressed in the *Tuoi Tre* commentaries largely reflect the suffering, anxiety, and fear experienced by workers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Illustrative examples are given below:

(1) *If this package were passed and effectively implemented, millions of workers would feel **warmed** because their difficulties had been understood and supported.* (*Tuoi Tre*, January 10, 2022)

The Emoter in (1) were non-author: *millions of workers*. The *Affect* subtype of (1) was *Happiness*: workers would feel happy if the Government's COVID-19 support package for workers were passed and effectively implemented because they felt that the Government understood the difficulties that they had suffered due to the impact of the pandemic. *Happiness* was realized through the word “warmed”.

(2) *The **desire** of policy makers when designing a BHHH (social insurance - writer's note) network is to ensure the lives of workers after retirement.* (*Tuoi Tre*, April 14, 2022)

The Emoter in (2) were non-author: *policymakers*. The *Affect* subtype expressed in (2) was *Inclination*: the purpose of policymakers when designing the social insurance network was to ensure the lives of workers after they retired. *Inclination* was realized by the word “Desire”.

(3) ***Unable** to endure the situation after a hard day's work, workers return to their cramped, stuffy rented rooms day after day, month after month.* (*Tuoi Tre*, April 26, 2022)

Example (3) is classified under the *Affect* subtype *Dissatisfaction*, in which the Emoter is the author, whose presence is implicit. This subject-suppression strategy enhances objectivity and persuasive force. The writer's dissatisfaction, arising from the observation of workers' poor living conditions in the industrial park, is realized through the lexical item “unable”.

(4) *Information about the increase in gasoline prices for all products, including the 5th consecutive increase in gasoline prices, RON95 gasoline exceeding 30,000 VND/liter from 3:00 p.m. on May 23, once again makes the poor and workers flounder and worry.* (*Tuoi Tre*, May 25, 2022)

In Example (4), the Emoters are non-authorial, namely the poor and workers. This instance is categorized as *Insecurity*, as the rise in gasoline prices—an essential commodity affecting daily life—during the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated their precarious living conditions, causing them to *flounder and worry* and to experience fear.

- *Frequency of Affect in commentary discourse in Nhan Dan newspaper*

An analysis of 20 commentaries in *Nhan Dan* newspaper reveals that *Affect* is realized through four categories: *Inclination*, *Happiness*, *Security* and *Satisfaction*. All categories exhibit a polarity of either positive or negative evaluation. The distribution of this polarity is presented in Figure 2.

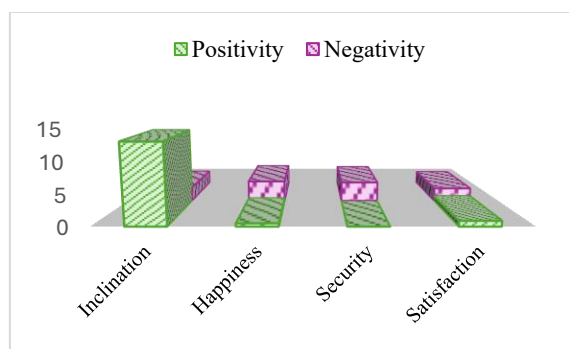


Figure 2. Polarization of *Affect* in Commentary Discourse in *Nhan Dan* Newspaper

Figure 2 shows that *Inclination* is the most frequent *Affect* subtype (132 times), occurring 4.92 times more frequently than *Disinclination*. However, these instances of *Inclination* do not primarily reflect personal feelings, but rather objective needs grounded in rational judgment. Most *Inclination* realizations in *Nhan Dan* commentaries express recommendations or solutions for addressing practical issues, rather than emotions of longing or anticipation, and are typically realized through the modal verb “need.” In *Nhan Dan* commentaries, authors often express their desires through suggestions, recommendations, or proposed solutions to address problems, while the Emoters (i.e., the authors) are frequently backgrounded. This suggests that authors in *Nhan Dan* newspaper tended to focus more on proposing solutions than on expressing their own emotions, either their own or those of other participants. *Happiness* ranks second with 31 instances, while *Security* and *Satisfaction* occur at approximately similar frequencies. A common pattern across these three *Affect* subtypes is their predominance in negative rather than positive polarity. Notably, *Security* only appeared in negative form. These patterns can be attributed to the social context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which adversely affected all sectors of society, including healthcare, education, the economy, and tourism. During this period, people experienced widespread fear and anxiety about their lives and families, as well as indignation toward those who exploited the crisis for personal gain. Consequently, negative instances of *Affect* occur more frequently than positive ones across these subtypes. Some illustrative examples are provided below.

(5) *This is content that **needs** to be further researched, supplemented, and revised to facilitate people in choosing medical examination and treatment appropriate to their actual conditions.* (*Nhan Dan*, June 24, 2022)

In Example (5), the Emoter is the writer, but it remains implicit. This subject-suppression strategy enhances objectivity and persuasive force in addressing relevant parties. The modal verb *need* simultaneously realizes *Inclination* and functions as a resource through which the author proposes solutions to challenges in medical examination and treatment.

(6) *National Assembly representatives are concerned and worried about many issues that are affecting people's health care in daily life.* (Nhan Dan, June 24, 2022)

In Example (6), the Emoters are non-authorial (National Assembly representatives). The lexical items “*concerned*” and “*worried*” are used to realize anxiety and *Insecurity* about the current healthcare situation affecting the public.

(7) *The above information not only helps workers and labourers who are renting accommodation get excited but also motivates many businesses to receive more orders.* (Nhan Dan, April 12, 2022)

In Example (7), the Emoters are workers and labourers. After two years of severe disruption caused by the pandemic, many businesses were forced to suspend production, leading to significant income loss among workers. Consequently, their return to normal work and extended working hours generated strong feelings of happiness, realized through the verb phrase “*get excited*.”

(8) *With the positive changes taking place, the damage to the labour market has somewhat eased.* (Nhan Dan, April 20, 2022)

With positive results in epidemic control and the gradual recovery of the labour market, the writer (the implicit Emoter) expresses *Satisfaction*, which is realized through the lexical item “*positive*”.

(b). *Realizations of Affect in Commentary Discourse in Tuoi Tre and Nhan Dan Newspapers*

In *Tuoi Tre* and *Nhan Dan* commentaries, *Affect* is realized through a range of lexicogrammatical resources, including nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, phrases, and sentence types.

The findings on *Affect* resources from the analysis of 40 commentaries are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 1
AFFECT RESOURCES IN COMMENTARY DISCOURSE IN TUOI TRE NEWSPAPER

Resources	Inclination		Happiness		Security		Satisfaction		Total	
	Quantity	Frequency	Quantity	Frequency	Quantity	Frequency	Quantity	Frequency	Quantity	Frequency
Sentence types	1	1	0	0	1	4	1	2	3	7
Nouns/noun phrases	3	5	12	22	6	13	1	1	22	41
Verbs/verb phrases	20	98	18	30	12	40	5	11	55	179
Adjectives/adjective phrases	1	2	11	26	3	4	8	8	23	40
Adverbs	2	6	0	0	0	0	1	5	3	11
Idioms	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2

TABLE 2
AFFECT RESOURCES IN COMMENTARY DISCOURSE IN NHAN DAN NEWSPAPER

Resources	Inclination		Happiness		Security		Satisfaction		Total	
	Quantity	Frequency	Quantity	Frequency	Quantity	Frequency	Quantity	Frequency	Quantity	Frequency
Sentence types	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nouns/noun phrases	2	2	3	7	2	4	2	2	9	15
Verbs/verb phrases	11	121	5	8	6	11	5	8	27	148
Adjectives/adjective phrases	1	2	3	14	3	9	4	6	11	31
Adverbs	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1

Results on the *Affect* resources in commentary discourses in the *Tuoi Tre* and *Nhan Dan* newspapers are presented in Figure 3.

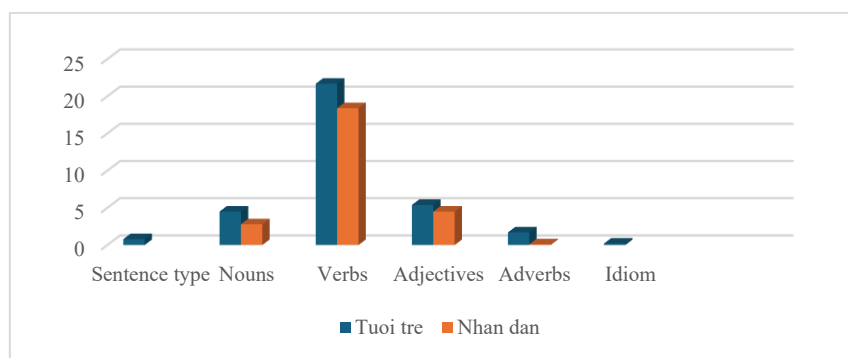


Figure 3. Ratio of *Affect* Resources in Commentary Discourse in *Tuoi Tre* and *Nhan Dan* Newspapers

As shown in Tables 1 and 2 and Figure 3, *Affect* resources are more prevalent in *Tuoi Tre* newspaper than in *Nhan Dan* newspaper. In both newspapers, verbs and verb phrases are the most frequently used linguistic resources for expressing

Affect, whereas idioms and adverbs are the least frequently employed.

B. Realizations of *Affect* in Commentary Discourse in *Tuoi Tre* and *Nhan Dan* Newspapers

(a). *Inclination Realizations*

Inclination refers to emotions associated with wishes or intentions, whether latent or realized in practice. Corpus analysis shows that *Inclination* is the most frequent *Affect* subtype in both newspapers, realized through both lexical and grammatical resources.

❖ *Tuoi Tre* Newspaper

In *Tuoi Tre* newspaper's commentary discourse, *Inclination* is realized through the following lexicogrammatical resources: nouns and noun phrases, verbs and verb phrases, adjectives and adjective phrases, adverbs, fixed expressions (particularly idioms), and sentence types.

- Resources used to express *Inclination* include: nouns/noun phrases (e.g., *hope*, *dream*, *expectation*); verbs/verb phrases (e.g., *wish*, *need*, *must*, *desire*, *be forced to*, *hope*, *want*, etc.); and the adverb "kindly".
- *Disinclination* is also expressed through nouns/noun phrases (e.g., *difficulty*, *barrier*), verbs/verb phrases (e.g., *fail to*, *can't count on*, *can't hope*, *be left with no choice but to*, *fail to meet*, *don't want*, *not live up to*, *be forced to*, etc.), adjectives (*bumpy*), adverbs (*never*), and idioms (*might just as well*, *out of necessity*).

Some typical examples are as follows:

(9) *Many families desire a summer fully spent together, but this year's summer will not be behind closed doors like the summer of 2021 - but in a place with a warm blue sea and sunny weather, in a place with green roads filled with the scent of fragrant leaves...* (*Tuoi Tre*, June 26, 2022)

In Example (9), many families function as non-authorial Emoters of *Affect*. After two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which most people studied and worked from home, they experienced confinement and stress. As a result, they express a legitimate and positive desire for a happy summer vacation with their families. This *Inclination* is realized through the verb "desire".

(10) *The world oil market is in a sensitive phase, prices are about to increase, and supply is unstable. Therefore, never let the domestic oil market become "hotter", affecting consumer psychology, because behind that is national energy security.* (*Tuoi Tre*, February 11, 2022)

In Example (10), the writer functions as an implicit Emoter. This strategy of backgrounding the Emoter enhances objectivity and strengthens the persuasive force when proposing solutions to existing problems. The writer expresses negative emotion toward the increasingly tense petroleum market situation, realized through the adverb "never".

❖ *Nhan Dan* Newspaper

The emotion of *Inclination* in commentary discourse in *Nhan Dan* newspaper is also realized through nouns/noun phrases, verbs/verb phrases, adjectives/adjective phrases and adverbs.

- Resources used to express *Inclination* include verbs/verb phrases (e.g., *need*, *be required to*, *want*, *wish*, *request*, *demand*, *expect*, etc.) and the adverb "soon."
- *Disinclination* is realized through the following elements: nouns/noun phrases (e.g., *entanglements*, *extreme psychology*), verbs/verb phrases (e.g., *must*, *be forced to*, *suffer*, *miss*, *don't want*, *reduce desire*, *be demanded to*, etc.), and the adjective "difficult".

Among the linguistic means realizing *Inclination*, the verbs *need* and *must* occurred with the highest frequency. These verbs not only encode the writer's desire—often implicitly constructed as the Emoter—but also function to propose suggestions or solutions to address existing limitations and shortcomings. Therefore, it can be seen that the authors of *Nhan Dan* newspaper rarely express their subjective emotions, and the desires often arise from rationality and objective requirements of reality. This can be illustrated by the following examples.

(11) *To control the average annual consumer price index growth rate at about 4% as set by the National Assembly, relevant sectors need to continue to make efforts to remove difficulties for production and business, ensure abundant supply, and gradually increase income for people and workers.* (*Nhan Dan*, February 15, 2022)

(12) *However, given the complicated situation of smuggling and commercial fraud in petroleum products, state management agencies must have a plan to fight resolutely to prevent this problem.* (*Nhan Dan*, April 5, 2022)

In Examples (11) and (12), the Emoter is the writer, though implicitly represented. The verbs "need" and "must" are employed by the writer to propose suggestions to hypothetical readers and relevant parties so that they could consider and implement them. Simultaneously, these verbs also encode the writer's objective desires for the subjects mentioned in the discourse (*relevant sectors and state management agencies*).

(13) *According to the latest survey by the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor on the lives of workers in 2021, 21% of workers must eat more instant noodles, 48% reduced their daily meat intake, 22% switched their daily shopping to food provided by relatives, 15% combined meals to reduce costs, 60% saved on expenses, 11% must borrow money to spend, 0.3% had to borrow at high interest rates, black credit or social insurance.* (*Nhan Dan*, April 8, 2022)

In Example (13), the verb "must" is not used to propose a suggestion but to encode the worker's unwillingness. A decrease in quality of life is something that no one desires, and "must" is used to express this negative emotion.

(b). *Happiness Realizations*

Happiness concerns emotions related to inner feelings such as joy, sadness, admiration, gratitude, and suffering. In the corpus, it is the second most frequent *Affect* subtype in both newspapers. This emotion is realized in positive and negative forms through lexicogrammatical resources.

❖ *Tuoi Tre* newspaper

In *Tuoi Tre* commentary discourse, *Happiness* is realized through lexicogrammatical resources by the following means:

- *Happiness* is realized through nouns/noun phrases (e.g., *good news, joy, blessing, happiness, gladness, excitement, hearty laugh, jubilation, etc.*), verbs/verb phrases (e.g., *rejoice, cheer, be moved, get excited, delight in, burst out, tense up, exult, lose, hurt, jubilate, revel in, temporarily resolved, etc.*), and adjectives/adjective phrases (e.g., *warmed, eager, bustling.*)

- *Unhappiness* is realized through nouns/noun phrases (e.g., *difficulty, misery, burden, unfortunate victim, tragic scene, depression*), verbs/verb phrases (e.g., *fume, complain, grieve, sacrifice, bear, hurt, "injured", endure, despair, sulk, accept to sacrifice, suffer, suffocate, torment, etc.*), and adjectives/adjective phrases (e.g., *difficult, disadvantaged, hard, miserable, arduous, burdensome, unbearable, tragic, painful, heartbreaking, grievous, confusing, tough, bitter, angry*).

Consider some examples:

(14) *The story of the crimes committed by individuals involved in the citizen rescue flights makes people **grieve**, but that is not the reason for us to deny the policy, the focus, and the priority that the State has strived to give to Vietnamese people around the world during the pandemic.* (*Tuoi Tre*, April 16, 2022)

In the face of the controversy about citizen rescue flights, the writer (the hidden Emoter) felt sad. This subject-hiding strategy universalizes the emotion, presenting it as shared by the public rather than as a purely personal response, thereby enhancing reader empathy and engagement. The negative emotion is realized through the verb “*grieve*”.

(15) *The director of a tourism company **rejoiced** and boasted that this year his company had just given 13th-month salary bonuses to employees, and that Tet tours were gradually booked.* (*Tuoi Tre*, January 24, 2022)

The director (the Emoter) rejoiced because the company's finances were stable and he was able to pay the 13th-month salary to his employees after two years of the pandemic. This instance of *Happiness* is realized by the verb “*rejoice*”.

❖ *Nhan Dan* newspaper

Happiness in the commentary discourse of *Nhan Dan* newspaper is realized through lexical resources across 11 different linguistic means, occurring 29 times.

- Realizations of *Happiness* include nouns/noun phrases (e.g., *joy and gratitude, optimism*) and verbs/verb phrases (e.g., *get excited, rejoice, believe*).

- Realizations of *Unhappiness* include nouns/noun phrases (e.g., *pressure, hurt, etc.*), verbs/verb phrases (e.g., *crack, disadvantage, negatively affect, etc.*), and adjectives/adjective phrases (e.g., *difficult, painful, unfortunate*).

Examples are:

(16) *Mina Bui said, wherever she looked at, she felt **painful** as if she was being hurt.* (*Nhan Dan*, June 9, 2022)

Mina Bui (the Emoter) felt painful and unhappy about the devastation of the epidemic on the tourism industry in general and her own tourism business in particular. The feeling of *unhappiness* is realized through the adjective “*painful*”.

(17) *However, witnessing Vietnam's effective control of the epidemic, as well as its admirable economic recovery, as soon as the country reopened, Mina Bui decided to pack up and return to her homeland with full of **optimism and confidence**.* (*Nhan Dan*, June 9, 2022)

The noun phrase “*optimism and confidence*” expressed Mina Bui’s (the Emoter) *happiness* at the amazing recovery of Vietnam’s tourism industry after the COVID-19 pandemic.

(c). *Security Realizations*

Security refers to feelings of safety or anxiety related to social security issues, ranging from optimism and confidence to fear and concern about potential future difficulties. In both newspapers, *Security* ranks third among *Affect* subtypes. Notably, *Insecurity* occurs far more frequently than positive *Security* in both corpora.

❖ *Tuoi Tre* newspaper

In the commentary discourse in *Tuoi Tre* newspaper, the emotion of *Security* only appears 4 times through the following linguistic means: verbs/verb phrases (e.g., *believe, lift the burden*); and adjectives (*confident, optimistic*).

The emotion of *Insecurity* is realized through: nouns/noun phrases (e.g., *concern, risk, apprehension, dark side, worries, insecurity and risk, disaster, anxiety*); verbs/verb phrases (e.g., *worry, wonder, fear/ dread, concern, apprehend, panic, brood, alarm, warn, hesitate, fail to calm down, flinch, etc.*); and adjectives/adjective phrases (e.g., *risky, insecurity*).

(18) *The city's tourism businesses are in the busy and nervous days of the Tet business season, but they still fully **believe** in themselves.* (*Tuoi Tre*, January 24, 2022)

The verb *believe* realizes the emotion of *Security* of tourism businesses (the Emoters). They have confidence in a bright future for the tourism industry after the pandemic.

(19) *According to the Vietnam Hotel Association, in many localities, only 50-60% of accommodation establishments are back in operation, while the majority are in a serious human resource crisis and lack capital to maintain services... That is a real **concern**.* (*Tuoi Tre*, March 16, 2022)

In Example (19), the Emoter is the writer, though it is left implicit. Faced with the serious crisis in many aspects (human resources, capital, etc.) for accommodation establishments after the pandemic, the Emoter feels worried about the future of the tourism industry. That worry is realized through the noun “*concern*”.

❖ *Nhan Dan* newspaper

In the commentary discourse of *Nhan Dan* newspaper, our survey did not identify any linguistic means that explicitly express the emotion of *Security*. The emotion of *Insecurity* appears 24 times, realized through 11 linguistic means, including: nouns/noun phrases (e.g., *risk*, *worry*, *panic*); verbs/verb phrases (e.g., *worry*, *warn*, *fear*, *dread*, *flounder*, *panic*, etc.); and adjectives/adjective phrases (e.g., *worried*, *lonely*, *weak*, *anxiety*, etc.). For example:

(20) *The policy is in place; however, when implemented, problems have arisen, causing many labour experts and unions to **fear** that the policy's coverage may not reach all workers and labourers.* (*Nhan Dan*, April 12, 2022)

The verb “*fear*” realizes the anxiety of *labour experts and unions* (the Emoters). They worry that the policies to support workers after the pandemic might not be able to reach all workers.

(d). *Satisfaction Realizations*

Satisfaction relates to feelings of fulfilment or disappointment in achieving goals or expectations. In both newspapers, it is the least frequent *Affect* subtype, occurring more often in its negative than positive form. In *Tuoi Tre* and *Nhan Dan* commentaries, *Satisfaction* is realized through lexicogrammatical resources.

❖ *Tuoi Tre* newspaper

The linguistic means used to realize the emotion of *Satisfaction* in the commentary discourse of *Tuoi Tre* newspaper include verbs/verb phrases (e.g., *like*, *somewhat accept*) The emotion of *Dissatisfaction* is realized through: nouns/noun phrases (e.g., *accepting mentality*); verbs/verb phrases (e.g., *cannot accept*, *must/have to accept*, *really regret*, *resent*, *disagree*); adjectives/adjective phrases (e.g., *temporary*, *indignant*, *outraged*, *annoying*, *frustrated*, *upset*, *negative*); adverbs (*never*); and sentence types. Consider some of the following examples:

(21) *We can **somewhat accept** solutions to cool down the price increase, such as supporting rent for some workers, reducing VAT, supporting interest rates for some groups...* (*Tuoi Tre*, March 30, 2022)

In this case, “*we*” functions as the Emoters, encompassing both the author and readers. The use of this pronoun reduces the distance between writer and audience, presenting the writer’s attitudes and emotions as shared with readers. This strategy serves to attract readers, guide emotional alignment, and enhance persuasive impact. In Example (21), the writer expresses *Satisfaction* with the measure to curb price increases; however, this satisfaction is weak, as indicated by the phrase *somewhat accept* which conveys reluctant acceptance by the Emoters.

❖ *Nhan Dan* newspaper

The emotion of *Satisfaction* in the commentary discourse of *Nhan Dan* newspaper is realized through the following linguistic means: nouns/noun phrases (e.g., *improvement*, *positive energy*, *positive sign*); verbs/verb phrases (*flourish*); and an adjective/adjective phrase (*positive*). The emotion of *Dissatisfaction* is realized through: verbs/verb phrases (e.g., *fume*, *decrease the satisfaction level*, *can hardly accept*, *bear*, *stir*, *strain*); and adjectives/adjective phrases (e.g., *negative*, *inadequate*, *discontented*).

Consider some examples:

(22) *Although the development of the COVID-19 pandemic is still very complicated and unpredictable, **positive energy** has been returning to socio-economic life.* (*Nhan Dan*, February 26, 2022)

In Example (22), lexical items such as *positive energy* and *return* convey optimism and evoke feelings of joy and reassurance. This expression not only reflects personal emotion but also encourages the community and guides public attitudes in a positive direction.

(23) *Previously, at the 3rd National Don Ca Tai Tu Festival held in Can Tho city from April 7 to 11, **Mr. Le Quoc Khanh**, a member of the art troupe from Hanoi participating in the festival, **fumed** about the tourist boat driver **harassing and forcing** him to buy tickets to visit Ba Hiep fruit garden in Phong Dien district.* (*Nhan Dan*, April 25, 2022)

Example (23) reveals Mr. Le Quoc Khanh’s anger and discomfort toward harassment by a tourist boat driver. This emotion is realized through negative lexical items, such as *fumed*, *harassing*, and *forcing him to buy tickets*, which emphasize his strong opposition and dissatisfaction. The incident occurred during the National Don Ca Tai Tu Festival, a cultural event where participants were expected to enjoy an artistic atmosphere but instead encountered disturbance and coercion. Consequently, this example reflects not only personal emotion but also implicit criticism of a negative social reality, expressing frustration with behaviours that undermined the festival experience.

C. *Characteristics of Evaluative Language in Vietnamese Journalistic Commentary Discourse*

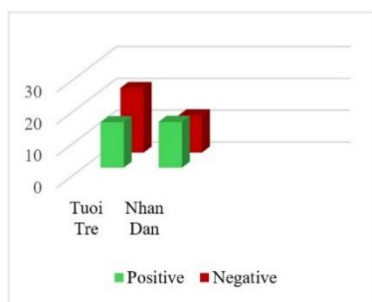


Figure 4. Polarization of *Affect*

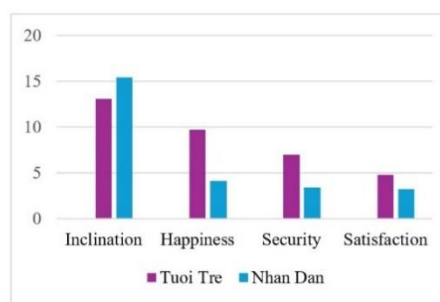


Figure 5. Frequency of *Affect's* Categories

Based on the results and analysis above, both similarities and differences are identified in the ways in which the two newspapers expressed *Affect*.

Similarities: Across both corpora, *Affect* constitutes the most dominant subsystem within the Attitude system, manifested through four subcategories: *Inclination*, *Happiness*, *Security*, and *Satisfaction*, with *Inclination* occupying a central position. In both newspapers, *Inclination* displays a higher proportion of positive than negative values, whereas the remaining categories are predominantly negative, reflecting the strong impact of social context and situational circumstances on the expression of attitude in commentary discourse. In terms of realizations, the two newspapers show considerable similarity in their use of linguistic resources to encode *Affect*. Moreover, *Affect* in commentary texts is mainly sourced from the authorial evaluator, with particular emphasis on the expression of *Inclination* directed toward competent authorities.

Differences: Despite these shared tendencies, the two newspapers also exhibit notable differences in the frequency and stylistic deployment of *Affect*. *Affect* occurs with higher frequency in *Tuoi Tre* commentaries and is realized through a wider range of linguistic resources than in *Nhan Dan*. Although *Inclination* appears more frequently in *Nhan Dan* than in *Tuoi Tre*, it does not represent subjective or emotion-driven feelings; rather, it is grounded in rational judgment based on objective reality, and takes the form of proposals or recommendations addressed to relevant social actors in order to resolve existing problems. By contrast, *Inclination* in *Tuoi Tre* is largely rooted in the evaluator's personal emotions and heartfelt concerns. These differences can be explained in terms of each newspaper's institutional orientation and political mission: *Nhan Dan* prioritizes a normative and restrained voice with controlled emotional expression, whereas *Tuoi Tre* fulfils its role as a public forum, allowing for more explicit manifestations of personal emotion and subjective stance.

Remarks: Based on the similarities and differences in the realization of *Affect* between *Tuoi Tre* and *Nhan Dan*, several stylistic characteristics of evaluative language in Vietnamese journalistic commentary discourse can be identified, as follows.

Firstly, at the generic level, Vietnamese journalistic commentaries demonstrate a clear tendency to prioritize the mobilization of *Affect* resources within the Attitude system in order to construct stance and enhance the persuasive force of discourse. With the full presence of the four subcategories, *Inclination*, *Happiness*, *Security* and *Satisfaction*, commentary reflects the nature of the genre as a discourse situated at the intersection of reason and emotion. Among these, *Inclination* occupies a central role, enabling writers not only to express emotional states but also to orient social action through appeals, proposals, and recommendations directed at authoritative actors.

Secondly, the findings demonstrate that social and situational contexts significantly shape the structure and value of *Affect*. The dominance of negative *Affect* (*unhappiness*, *insecurity*, and *dissatisfaction*) mirrors the turbulent realities of the pandemic and indicates that evaluative language in commentary discourse is closely tied to collective experience rather than individual emotion.

Thirdly, Vietnamese journalistic commentaries tend toward author-centred evaluation while flexibly incorporating non-authorial voices to strengthen objectivity and argumentation. Authorial *Affect*, especially *Inclination*, plays a crucial role in shaping textual tone and expressing both personal stance and collective concerns.

Finally, the contrast between *Tuoi Tre* and *Nhan Dan* reveals that the stylistic use of evaluative language in Vietnamese journalistic commentary is not homogeneous but varies according to each newspaper's institutional orientation and social function. *Nhan Dan* adopts a more rational and policy-oriented style with restrained subjectivity, whereas *Tuoi Tre* allows greater emotional expression and employs more diverse linguistic resources to foster reader engagement.

Overall, Vietnamese journalistic commentary operates along a continuum between institution–reason and forum–emotion. In both cases, *Affect* functions not only as an expression of attitude but also as a strategic resource enabling the press to reflect, guide, and intervene in contemporary social issues.

V. CONCLUSION

This study applies the Appraisal framework within the SFL Theory to analyse the *Affect* subsystem in 40 commentaries from *Tuoi Tre* and *Nhan Dan* newspapers. The findings show that *Affect* is a key evaluative resource in journalistic commentary, mainly realized through lexicogrammatical means and shaped by social and institutional contexts. Both authorial and non-authorial voices contribute strategically to *Affect*, with authorial *Affect* tending to be implicit and non-authorial *Affect* enhancing representativeness and persuasion. Comparative results indicate stylistic variation according to media orientation: *Nhan Dan* favours restrained, rational, and directive expressions, whereas *Tuoi Tre* employs more personal *Affect* to promote empathy and reader engagement. Overall, Vietnamese journalistic commentary operates along a continuum between institutional reasoning and emotional expression, with *Affect* functioning as a strategic discursive resource for meaning-making and social intervention. This research contributes to a socio-functional understanding of Vietnamese news discourse and provides insights for teaching and researching evaluative language in commentary genres.

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