

## Lexical-Stylistic Features in Media Discourse

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### Abstract

*This study investigates the lexical-stylistic features of media discourse, focusing on how linguistic choices shape meaning, influence interpretation, and reflect ideological positions. Drawing on a corpus of 50 media texts, including news articles, editorials, and social media posts, the research applies a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative frequency analysis with qualitative discourse interpretation. The findings reveal that media discourse is characterized by the extensive use of evaluative vocabulary, loaded language, and recurring lexical patterns that reinforce key themes. In addition, stylistic devices such as metaphor, hyperbole, rhetorical questions, and parallelism are widely employed to enhance engagement and emotional impact. The study also demonstrates that lexical and stylistic features function together as framing mechanisms, guiding audience perception by emphasizing certain aspects of reality while downplaying others. Differences across media platforms are identified, with digital media showing a higher tendency toward informal, expressive, and attention-driven language. These results support existing theories in stylistics and critical discourse analysis, highlighting the persuasive and constructive nature of media language. Overall, the study underscores the importance of critical language awareness in understanding media messages and contributes to ongoing research on discourse, communication, and ideology.*

**Keywords:** *media discourse, lexical features, stylistics, framing, persuasion*

### 1. Introduction

Media discourse occupies a central position in contemporary society, functioning not only as a channel for information dissemination but also as a powerful instrument of social construction. In an era characterized by rapid digital communication and information overload, the language of media has become increasingly strategic, shaped by the need to attract attention, sustain engagement, and influence public perception. As a result, the study of lexical-stylistic features in media discourse has gained significant importance within the fields of linguistics, communication studies, and media analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Bednarek & Caple, 2012).

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Lexical-stylistic features refer to the deliberate selection of vocabulary and the use of stylistic devices that contribute to the tone, meaning, and persuasive force of a text. In media contexts, these features are rarely neutral. Journalists and content creators make conscious or unconscious choices about words, expressions, and stylistic structures that frame events, construct narratives, and position audiences in specific ways. Fowler (1991) emphasizes that even seemingly objective news reporting is shaped by lexical choices that encode ideological perspectives. For example, the use of alternative labels such as freedom fighters versus terrorists illustrates how lexical variation can significantly influence interpretation and evaluation.

The evolution of media platforms from traditional print newspapers to digital and social media has further intensified the role of stylistic and lexical strategies (Babayev, 2022). Unlike traditional journalism, which often prioritized formal and standardized language, contemporary media discourse frequently incorporates informal expressions, emotive vocabulary, and attention-grabbing stylistic devices. Headlines, in particular, have become highly stylized, often employing metaphor, wordplay, and sensational language to maximize reader engagement (Bednarek & Caple, 2012).

From a theoretical perspective, the analysis of media language is grounded in several linguistic traditions, including stylistics, systemic functional linguistics, and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Stylistics focuses on how linguistic choices create meaning and aesthetic effects (Simpson, 2004), while systemic functional linguistics highlights the relationship between language and its social functions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). CDA examines how discourse structures enact, confirm, and reproduce power relations in society (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1988).

Moreover, lexical-stylistic features are closely linked to the concept of framing, which refers to the way information is presented and organized in discourse. Through selective word choice and stylistic emphasis, media texts highlight certain aspects of reality while downplaying others, thereby shaping audience interpretation (Entman, 1993). This process not only influences cognitive understanding but also affects emotional responses, as the use of emotionally charged vocabulary in reporting on crises or conflicts can evoke fear, sympathy, or outrage (Richardson, 2007).

Another important dimension is the role of intertextuality and cultural context in shaping media language. According to Fairclough (1995), intertextuality allows media discourse to connect with broader social and cultural discourses, reinforcing dominant ideologies. At the same time, globalization and the expansion of digital media have led to the emergence of hybrid linguistic styles that combine formal and informal registers, as well as local and global influences (Crystal, 2008).



Despite the growing body of research on media discourse, there remains a need for integrated analyses that examine how lexical and stylistic features interact within contemporary media environments. This study seeks to address this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of lexical-stylistic features across different types of media texts (Babayev et al., 2025). The main objective is to investigate the patterns and functions of lexical-stylistic features in media discourse and to understand how these features contribute to persuasion, framing, and audience engagement. The research is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the dominant lexical features in contemporary media discourse?
2. Which stylistic devices are most frequently used, and in what contexts?
3. How do lexical and stylistic choices interact to shape meaning and influence audiences?

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive analysis of lexical-stylistic features in media discourse. The quantitative component focuses on identifying frequency patterns of lexical items and stylistic devices, while the qualitative component aims to interpret their communicative and ideological functions within specific contexts. Such an integrative approach is consistent with methodological practices in corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis, where numerical patterns are complemented by in-depth textual interpretation (Biber et al., 1998; Fairclough, 1995).

### 2.2. Data Collection

The dataset consists of a purposively selected corpus of 50 media texts drawn from a range of English-language sources, including hard news reports, opinion and editorial articles, online news headlines, and social media posts published by verified news organizations. The texts were collected from widely recognized international media outlets such as BBC, CNN, and The Guardian between 2020 and 2024. To ensure diversity and representativeness, the sample includes texts covering politics, economy, health including pandemic-related discourse, social issues, and international relations.

### 2.3. Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling method was employed to select texts that exhibit clear examples of stylistic variation and lexical richness. The selection criteria included relevance to current public discourse, presence of evaluative or persuasive language, diversity of genres and platforms, and accessibility and authenticity of the source. Efforts were made to balance the dataset in terms of text type and topic to avoid bias toward a single domain or discourse style.



## **2.4. Analytical Framework**

The analytical framework integrates concepts from stylistics, systemic functional linguistics, and critical discourse analysis. The analysis is structured around three main categories.

### **2.4.1. Lexical Analysis**

Lexical features were examined using the following parameters: frequency and distribution of key lexical items; semantic fields such as conflict, economy, and crisis; evaluative and emotive vocabulary; collocations and lexical patterns; and use of jargon and technical terms. Corpus analysis tools such as AntConc were used to identify recurring lexical items and patterns.

### **2.4.2. Stylistic Analysis**

Stylistic features were identified and categorized based on established frameworks in stylistics (Simpson, 2004). These include figurative language such as metaphor, simile, and metonymy; rhetorical devices such as hyperbole, rhetorical questions, and irony; syntactic structures such as parallelism, repetition, and ellipsis; and tone and register. Special attention was given to headlines, as they often exhibit a high density of stylistic devices.

### **2.4.3. Discourse and Framing Analysis**

Drawing on CDA (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1988), the study examines how lexical and stylistic features contribute to the framing of events and issues, representation of social actors, construction of ideology and bias, and persuasive strategies and audience positioning. This stage involves interpreting how linguistic choices reflect broader social and political contexts.

## **2.5. Data Analysis Procedure**

The analysis was conducted in several stages: corpus preparation involving compiling and cleaning all texts; coding and annotation of texts for lexical and stylistic features using predefined categories; quantitative analysis through frequency counts and keyword analysis; qualitative interpretation of selected examples; and cross-comparison of patterns across different genres and platforms to identify similarities and differences.

## **2.6. Reliability and Validity**

To ensure reliability, a systematic coding scheme was developed and applied consistently across the dataset. Where possible, categories were based on established linguistic frameworks to enhance theoretical validity. Triangulation was achieved by combining quantitative corpus analysis with qualitative discourse analysis, which strengthens the credibility of the findings (Biber et al., 1998).

## **2.7. Ethical Considerations**



All data used in this study are publicly available media texts, and no personal or sensitive information was collected. Proper attribution is maintained for all referenced sources. The study adheres to ethical standards in research, ensuring that data is used responsibly and without misrepresentation.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Lexical Features

The quantitative analysis of the corpus revealed a high frequency of evaluative and emotionally charged lexical items across all media genres. Words such as crisis, dramatic, controversial, and unprecedented appeared repeatedly, particularly in political and health-related reporting. These findings support the claim that media discourse relies heavily on evaluative language to construct salience and urgency (Bednarek & Caple, 2012). In addition, the data demonstrated a consistent use of loaded language, where lexical choices implicitly conveyed ideological positions, reflecting patterns noted by Fowler (1991). Similarly, semantic prosody was observed in the frequent pairing of terms like economic reform with positive descriptors and immigration with negative or problem-oriented language (Sinclair, 1991).

Another prominent feature was the use of lexical repetition and keyword prominence, especially in headlines and lead paragraphs (Babayev, 2023). Repetition served to reinforce key themes and guide reader interpretation, aligned with van Dijk's (1988) concept of macrostructures in news discourse. Furthermore, neologisms and media-specific jargon such as infodemic, clickbait, and fake news reflected the evolving nature of media language in response to technological and social changes (Crystal, 2008).

#### 3.2. Stylistic Features

The stylistic analysis revealed a high density of rhetorical and figurative devices across the dataset. Metaphor emerged as one of the most frequently used devices, particularly in political and economic reporting, where political processes were often conceptualized as battles, games, or storms, consistent with conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Hyperbole was also widely observed, especially in headlines (Alisoy, 2026): expressions such as massive backlash or historic collapse often exaggerated the scale or significance of events, amplifying news values of negativity and impact (Bednarek & Caple, 2012).

The use of rhetorical questions was particularly prominent in opinion pieces and editorials, functioning as persuasive tools that guided readers toward specific interpretations (Simpson, 2004). Similarly, parallelism and syntactic repetition were frequently used to create rhythm and emphasis, contributing to memorability and rhetorical force (Babayev, 2025). The increasing use of informal and conversational tone in digital and social media texts, with contractions and direct address, reflected a shift toward audience engagement and personalization (Crystal, 2008).



### 3.3. *Framing and Ideological Representation*

The interaction between lexical and stylistic features played a crucial role in framing media narratives. Framing was frequently achieved through strategic lexical selection combined with stylistic emphasis, reinforcing Entman's (1993) definition of framing as the selection and salience of certain aspects of reality. For example, terms such as reform versus overhaul or protesters versus rioters framed the same events in markedly different ways, supporting Richardson's (2007) argument that lexical choices in media texts are central to the construction of social actors and events. Stylistic devices such as metaphor and hyperbole intensified these frames (Javid, 2025), while patterns of foregrounding and backgrounding were consistently achieved through lexical prominence and stylistic positioning, consistent with van Dijk's (1988) theory of discourse structures.

### 3.4. *Cross-Genre and Platform Variation*

Significant variation was observed across different media genres and platforms. Traditional news reports tended to maintain a more formal and restrained lexical style, whereas digital media and social platforms exhibited a higher frequency of stylistic devices, including hyperbole, informal language, and direct audience engagement. Headlines across all platforms showed the highest concentration of lexical-stylistic features, confirming their role as key sites of persuasion and attention management (Bednarek & Caple, 2012). Social media posts demonstrated a hybrid style blending informational and promotional discourse, often prioritizing emotional impact over neutrality.

## 4. Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that lexical-stylistic features are central to the construction and interpretation of media discourse. Far from being neutral conveyors of information, media texts rely on strategic linguistic choices that shape meaning, guide audience perception, and reflect underlying ideological positions, supporting the broader claims of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1988). The pervasive use of evaluative and loaded lexical items suggests that media discourse actively constructs rather than merely reflects reality, aligning with Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) systemic functional perspective, which views language as a resource for making meaning in social contexts.

The study highlights the crucial role of stylistic devices, particularly metaphor, hyperbole, and rhetorical structures, in enhancing the persuasive and affective dimensions of media texts. The widespread use of metaphor confirms the arguments of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who demonstrate that metaphor is fundamental to human cognition. In media discourse, metaphors such as war, battle, or crisis frame complex phenomena in simplified and often dramatized terms, making them more accessible but potentially distorting their complexity. Similarly, the use of hyperbole and sensational language reflects the increasing commercialization and competitiveness



of modern media environments, raising important questions about the balance between informativeness and sensationalism (Aslanova, 2025).

Another key insight concerns the relationship between lexical-stylistic features and framing processes. This study provides empirical evidence that the selection of certain aspects of reality is often achieved through subtle lexical and stylistic means. The choice between semantically related terms such as migrants versus refugees can significantly alter the perceived legitimacy or urgency of an issue. The findings further underscore that lexical repetition, headline construction, and stylistic emphasis all contribute to reinforcing dominant narratives and perspectives (Alisoy, 2026).

The variation observed across media platforms confirms a broader move toward informalization in public discourse (Crystal, 2008), where boundaries between spoken and written language become increasingly blurred. As media texts become more stylistically complex and persuasive, audiences must develop greater critical awareness of the linguistic mechanisms that shape meaning (Richardson, 2007). However, the relatively small and English-language-focused corpus restricts the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand the scope of analysis by incorporating multilingual corpora, cross-cultural comparisons, and more advanced computational methods for large-scale discourse analysis.

## 5. Conclusion

This study has explored the lexical-stylistic features of media discourse, demonstrating that language in media texts is far from neutral and plays a crucial role in shaping meaning and audience perception. Through the combined analysis of lexical patterns and stylistic devices, the findings reveal that media discourse relies heavily on evaluative vocabulary, metaphor, hyperbole, and other rhetorical strategies to frame events and influence interpretation. These features not only enhance the communicative effectiveness of media texts but also contribute to the construction of ideological perspectives.

The results highlight that lexical choices and stylistic structures work together to foreground certain aspects of reality while backgrounding others, thereby guiding readers' understanding and emotional responses. Furthermore, the study shows that digital media environments intensify the use of stylistic devices, reflecting the growing importance of audience engagement and attention economy. Overall, the research underscores the importance of critical awareness in interpreting media discourse. Future studies may expand on these findings by examining cross-cultural differences, evolving media formats, and larger and more linguistically diverse corpora.

## Declarations

**Conflict of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.



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