



Section 3. General questions of philology and linguistics

DOI:10.29013/EJLL-26-3-47-52



THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL LEXICAL-SEMANTIC DEVICES IN AZERBAIJANI NEWS NARRATIVES

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Cite: *Abdullayeva H. (2026). The Role of Emotional Lexical-Semantic Devices in Azerbaijani News Narratives. European Journal of Literature and Linguistics 2026, No 3. <https://doi.org/10.29013/EJLL-23-2.3-47-52>*

Abstract

This article is devoted to the investigation of the role of emotional lexical-semantic devices in texts published on Azerbaijani-language electronic news platforms and their influence on audience perception. The primary objective of the study is to systematically identify the emotional lexical-semantic devices employed in Azerbaijani electronic news media and to analyze their impact on the formation of public opinion, the shaping of emotional responses, and the interpretation of news texts. The theoretical foundation of the research is based on contemporary studies in the fields of media framing, emotional discourse, and lexical-semantic analysis.

The findings reveal that metaphors, emotionally charged lexical units, evaluative adjectives, intensifiers, and persuasive expressions function as the principal mechanisms of emotional framing in news discourse. These devices contribute to the generation and reinforcement of emotions such as anxiety, fear, sympathy, hope, pride, and disappointment among audiences. Consequently, the study confirms that emotional lexical-semantic devices function not only as linguistic units in news discourse but also as important mechanisms of persuasion, ideological influence, and meaning construction.

Keywords: *news discourse, emotional lexical-semantic devices, media framing, emotional language, public opinion, Azerbaijani-language digital media, discourse analysis*

Introduction

Emotional language in news media functions as a powerful tool for shaping public perception. As noted in numerous studies, “media outlets go beyond merely providing

information to a broad audience and also contribute to the development of specific ideological views and movements within society” (Absattar, A., Mambetova, M., & Zhubay, 2022: 3). By employing lexical

units that convey emotional value, journalists transform neutral reporting into an effective instrument for constructing cultural frameworks and collective identity. Accordingly, the primary objective of the research presented in this article is to systematically classify emotional lexical-semantic devices in Azerbaijani-language news media in order to understand how news media modulate political discourse and influence public sentiment.

Research conducted in this field demonstrates “the relevance of lexical-semantic analysis in political communication by revealing how specific lexical resources and semantic prosodies are strategically employed to enhance public awareness and mobilize public engagement around the most pressing political issues of the contemporary world” (Abdullayeva, 2025). By examining the linguistic examples selected for analysis according to a unified principle, the study, as it were, “reveals the mechanisms that journalists use and exploit for modulation purposes in order to foreground national or political agendas” (Koivunen et al., 2021).

Drawing on the most recent scholarly research on this topic, we aim to reveal how linguistic structures that generate effects such as anxiety and anticipation among broad audiences are integrated into wider ideological frameworks. This is because the analysis of such linguistic structures identifies the interaction between affective orientation and cognitive evaluations and, as R. Guchlu notes, “reveals how media narratives manipulate public perceptions of power and social welfare” (Güclü, 2026).

The significance of emotional framing in online communication has been highlighted in various scholarly studies and research works. For example, while examining the characteristics of virtual discourse, K. Habibova emphasizes that despite the limited availability of non-verbal means of communication in the online environment, the emotional component does not disappear entirely. According to the author, “the emotional component is present to some degree in all spheres where the human factor exists” (Habibova, 2023: 174), and therefore it would be incorrect to claim its complete absence. From this perspective, emotional framing in online communication serves as

an important element in fostering mutual understanding, shaping interpersonal relationships, and enhancing the effectiveness of information exchange among participants. Furthermore, the study notes that virtual discourse makes extensive use of strategies aimed at “shaping the emotional state of the addressee” (Habibova, 2023: 175), as well as persuasion and influence, which demonstrates the distinctive role of emotional factors in digital communication.

It should be noted that media narratives are not merely informative; they are also enriched with emotional appeals designed to shape public attitudes and participation through the deliberate selection of lexical-semantic devices. As scholars have observed, “the more relevant a social issue is, the more vividly it is presented in the mass media, and the more frequently emotional appeals are employed to attract the audience’s attention, stimulate interest, and influence attitudes toward the issue” (Ünal-Aydın et al, 2020: 50). Research on the language of digital media further suggests that “the comprehension and interpretation of news texts by audiences are significantly influenced by emotional lexical-semantic factors such as intensifiers, affective adjectives, and emotionally charged nouns. These components affect how information is cognitively processed and emotionally evaluated at both lexical and pragmatic levels” (Boulianne et al, 2022: 149). Such findings further underscore the importance of investigating lexical-semantic devices in electronic news media as a means of understanding public opinion and audience response.

Literature Review

Research in the fields of media and communication demonstrates that lexical-semantic choices and framing strategies employed in news texts significantly influence the ways audiences perceive events, their emotional responses, and the formation of public behavior. As has been rightly observed, “contemporary media discourse does not merely perform the function of transmitting information; it also creates specific interpretative frameworks for events and shapes emotional evaluations” (Macagno & Walton, 2014; Koivunen et al., 2021). From this perspective, news texts are not regard-

ed as neutral representations of social reality but rather as communicative spaces in which ideological and emotional meanings are constructed.

A. Absattar, M. Mambetova and O. Zhubay (2022) argue that emotional expressions used in the media “influence readers’ comprehension of textual content and provide a particular direction for the evaluation of events.” Similar conclusions are presented by W. Chung and D. Zeng (2020) in their study of user behavior within social media communities. The authors note that emotional content affects both user interactions and the dissemination of information. Likewise, Y. Ge et al. (2020) emphasize that emotions in social media are not limited to positive and negative categories; rather, different emotional nuances generate distinct patterns of behavior.

Framing theory also constitutes one of the principal approaches for explaining the impact of media content on audiences. R. Nabi, A. Gustafson, and R. Jensen (2018) demonstrate that the presentation of events within specific frames shapes audiences’ emotional reactions and behavioral intentions. Investigating communication strategies related to climate change, Y. Wang, X. Li, and S. Zhou (2024) provide evidence that the frames employed directly influence emotional responses as well as intentions to engage in online activities. Similarly, S. O’Neill and S. Nicholson-Cole (2009) observe that threat-oriented frames in news coverage and visual materials may sometimes foster passivity among audiences, whereas positive and constructive frames tend to encourage higher levels of public engagement.

The lexical-semantic aspects of media framing have also been reflected in studies conducted across a variety of subject areas. Investigating the construction of agency in climate change discourse, N. Kramar (2023) demonstrates that specific lexical units and metaphors serve to present the causes of events and the parties responsible for them in different ways. Such findings suggest that lexical-semantic choices play a crucial role in shaping audience interpretations of social and political issues.

The influence of emotional discourse in social media environments has emerged as a distinct area of research. S. Boulianne et

al. (2022), in their study of the international youth climate protest movement, found that social media functions as an important platform for emotional mobilization and collective action. Similarly, T. Taufek et al. (2021), using sentiment analysis to examine public attitudes toward climate change, concluded that emotional content plays a significant role in shaping public opinion. The study conducted by Ünal-Aydın et al. (2020) further revealed a relationship between individuals’ emotional perception abilities and their patterns of social media use.

In recent years, the relationship between emotional language and discourse manipulation has also attracted considerable scholarly attention. K. Habibova (2025), examining framing and priming mechanisms in artificial intelligence-based dialogue systems, argues that lexical choices and presentation strategies can direct users’ perceptions and decision-making processes. Likewise, N. Mammadli and K. Habibova (2025), through a psychometric analysis of the interaction between academic communication and discourse manipulation, highlight the persuasive potential of emotional and evaluative language. K. Habibova’s (2023) research on virtual discourse likewise demonstrates the important role of emotional components and persuasive strategies within digital communication environments.

Thus, the existing body of literature demonstrates that emotional lexical-semantic devices constitute an integral component of media discourse. These devices serve not only to describe events but also to shape audiences’ emotional responses, influence the construction of public opinion, and encourage particular patterns of behavior. Through the strategic use of emotionally charged vocabulary, evaluative expressions, metaphors, and framing techniques, media texts can direct attention toward specific aspects of reality, assign significance to certain issues, and influence how audiences interpret social and political developments. Consequently, the study of emotional lexical-semantic mechanisms provides valuable insights into the ways media discourse contributes to the formation of collective perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions in contemporary digital and information environments.

Methods and Materials

Within the framework of this study, a corpus of news articles was compiled from leading Azerbaijani electronic news agencies for linguistic analysis. The selection criteria included the popularity and accessibility of news platforms, the relevance of the selected articles to contemporary social, political, economic, and cultural issues, and a particular emphasis on headlines, lead paragraphs, and evaluative sections. To this end, special attention was given to news texts exhibiting a high degree of emotional and evaluative language.

The collected materials were examined to identify recurring emotional lexical-semantic devices, including emotionally marked vocabulary, evaluative lexical units, metaphorical expressions, intensifiers, and other linguistic resources contributing to emotional framing within news narratives. For this purpose, the study employs discourse analysis, descriptive analysis, and comparative-descriptive methods as its principal linguistic research approaches. These methods facilitate the systematic identification and classification of emotional lexical-semantic patterns and enable an assessment of their role in shaping the communicative and persuasive functions of contemporary news discourse.

Results and Discussion

Lexical framing, owing to its inherently ideological overtones, directly influences the perception and interpretation of information. As K. Habibova emphasizes, when presenting information, “both lexical framing and the tonality of expressions are employed, which may distort interpretations and direct the user’s opinion in a particular direction.” (Habibova, 2023: 173) The researcher further notes that presenting the same information through different words and expressions affects users’ decision-making processes, since “one and the same piece of information may evoke different reactions depending on the way it is presented.” (Heydarov et al., 2019: 795) Therefore, lexical framing is regarded as one of the most effective instruments for guiding audiences toward particular viewpoints, especially within socio-political, ideological, and media discourse.

In recent years, frequently occurring examples in Azerbaijani news discourse have

included metaphorical expressions such as “ölkənin gələcəyinə açılan qapı” (“a gateway to the country’s future”), “iqtisadiyyatın lokomotivi” (“the locomotive of the economy”), “regionun qaynar nöqtəsi” (“the region’s hotspot”), and “tarixi zəfərin memarları” (“the architects of a historic victory”). Evaluative adjectives such as *critical*, *sensitive*, *important*, *unprecedented*, *historic*, *complex*, and *remarkable* have reinforced the emotional impact of news reports and guided readers toward particular interpretations of events. Likewise, expressions emphasizing unity, social responsibility, national progress, and collective effort – such as “milli həmrəylik” (“national solidarity”), “birgə səyahət” (“a shared journey”), “ölkənin inkişaf yolunda vacib addım” (“an important step on the country’s path to development”), and “xalqın iradəsinin təntənəsi” (“the triumph of the people’s will”)—have been widely employed to generate positive emotional responses and strengthen audience engagement.

Within this discourse, headlines containing emotionally charged vocabulary tend to attract greater attention and are particularly effective in shaping readers’ perceptions of the significance and urgency of reported events. Headlines such as “Regionda gərginlik artır” (“Tensions Escalate in the Region”), “Tarixi qərar qəbul edildi” (“A Historic Decision Has Been Adopted”), “Milli təhsil üçün ciddi təhdid” (“A Serious Threat to National Education”), and “Ölkə üçün yeni inkişaf mərhələsi başlayır” (“A New Stage of Development Begins for the Country”) illustrate the use of emotionally loaded lexical units designed to capture audience attention. News reports highlighting social challenges, crises, or conflicts tend to evoke feelings of concern and anxiety, whereas stories focused on achievements, development initiatives, and positive social change frequently generate emotions of hope and optimism. Consequently, emotional lexical-semantic devices function not merely as linguistic resources but also as mechanisms through which media narratives shape public perception and audience engagement.

Positively framed narratives containing expressions such as “uğurlu inkişaf modeli” (“a successful development model”), “tarixi nailiyyət” (“a historic achievement”), and “gələcəyə inamla addımlayan Azərbaycan”

(“Azerbaijan confidently advancing toward the future”) inspire a sense of civic engagement and social responsibility. Conversely, negatively framed reports employing expressions such as “artan təhdid” (“an increasing threat”), “dərinləşən böhran” (“a deepening crisis”), and “narahatlıq doğuran vəziyyət” (“a cause for concern”) encourage a more critical perception of existing social, political, and economic challenges.

The analysis of the collected linguistic material demonstrates that emotional lexical-semantic devices play a significant role in Azerbaijani news narratives by shaping audience perceptions, strengthening emotional engagement, and influencing attitudes toward contemporary issues. The findings of this study confirm that lexical-semantic choices in news discourse function not merely as means of linguistic expression but also as important mechanisms of persuasion and meaning construction.

Azerbaijani electronic media employ a wide range of emotional lexical-semantic devices to influence audience perceptions and evoke emotional responses. Emotions such as anxiety, fear, sympathy, hope, pride, and disappointment are frequently activated through specific lexical choices and framing strategies. Although negatively oriented emotional appeals often attract immediate attention and emphasize the significance of social, political, or economic issues, their excessive use may contribute to emotional fatigue, anxiety, and audience disengagement. In contrast, positively framed narratives and solution-oriented messages tend to exert

a stronger motivational effect, particularly among younger audiences, encouraging civic awareness, social participation, and constructive engagement with public affairs.

These findings suggest that a balanced use of emotional lexical-semantic devices may be more effective in sustaining audience interest and engagement than an overreliance on negative emotional appeals. Accordingly, the strategic deployment of emotional language within news discourse should be viewed not only as a means of attracting attention but also as a communicative practice capable of shaping public attitudes, fostering civic participation, and influencing the broader social interpretation of contemporary events.

Conclusion

The analytical framework is based on the assumption that lexical-semantic choices constitute one of the principal mechanisms through which emotions are constructed, intensified, and communicated in news discourse. Within this model, emotional lexical-semantic devices are classified into several categories, including metaphors, evaluative lexical units, emotionally charged vocabulary, and persuasive expressions. These categories correspond to the dominant emotional responses identified among readers, such as anxiety, sympathy, hope, pride, and disappointment. Through their strategic deployment, such linguistic resources contribute to the emotional framing of news narratives and influence the ways in which audiences perceive, interpret, and evaluate contemporary events and social realities.

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submitted 15.07.2026;

accepted for publication 29.07.2026;

published 31.08.2026

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