

Evaluation and Negotiating Stances in US Supreme Court Opinions and Poland's Constitutional Tribunal. A Comparative Perspective

The major goal of the project is to investigate how the elusive and context-sensitive phenomenon of evaluation is construed linguistically in the highly specialised discourse type of legal justification and how linguistic forms are related to the semantic property of evaluation. Pursuing this research goal involves examining the following more specific research questions:

- Determining whether evaluative meanings are communicated in patterned and systematic ways characteristic of the judicial professional community? What culturally available resources do judges have to align themselves with a range of different audiences: their own professional (judicial) community, the litigants, the legal discipline, the outside world (e.g. the media)?
- Providing a systematic and coherent description of evaluative language. Can the complexity of evaluative language be captured in terms of 'phraseological patterning'? Is there a local grammar of evaluation applied in judicial discourse?
- Providing a comparative analysis to determine differences and similarities in the way evaluation is expressed in English and Polish legal languages
- Do such patterns constitute conventional expressions used to project judicial disciplinary voice? What are the boundaries which restrict the authorial 'voice'?
- Does the use of evaluative language vary depending on the type of opinion (majority opinion vs. concurring or dissenting opinions)? How do judges signal their 'protest'?

The link between evaluative language used to signal attitudes and indicate values as premises for assessments seems to have been largely ignored in (legal) linguistics literature. Existing research tends to focus on analyzing evaluation in different contexts by examining single linguistic items. The research envisaged in this project will identify, analyze and compare linguistic resources used in two different legal languages and cultures. It will shed important light on whether evaluative language is genre- and/or culture-specific. The findings will contribute towards our understanding of how legal argumentation is constructed and how the professional community of judges creates its identity.

This project combines corpus linguistics methods with a discourse analytical 'close reading' of texts. The former employs both corpus-based techniques such as, searching for a wide range of pre-defined linguistic markers of evaluation (e.g. modal verbs, evaluative lexis, evidential items, intensifiers,) as well as corpus-driven methods (e.g. searching for frequent n-grams), some of which can then be identified as having an evaluative function.

The results of the project will be disseminated during six international conferences in Poland and abroad. The findings will be published as a research monograph with an international publishing house.