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# EVALUATIVE COLLOCATIONS AND STANCE IN TRILINGUAL MEDIA CORPORA: A PILOT STUDY OF ENGLISH, RUSSIAN, AND UZBEK NEWS HEADLINES

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### Abstract

This article examines how evaluative meaning is compressed into short news headlines across English, Russian, and Uzbek media discourse. Rather than treating headlines as neutral labels, the study approaches them as dense sites of stance, framing, and audience positioning. A small pilot corpus of 360 online headlines was assembled for methodological demonstration, with 120 headlines in each language and three thematic clusters: politics, economy, and emergency reporting. The analysis combines frequency observation, collocational reading, and close comparison of recurrent stance markers such as crisis labels, attribution verbs, hedging devices, and backgrounding patterns. The results show that all three languages rely on compact evaluation, but they do so through somewhat different preferences. English headlines favor compressed noun phrases and risk-oriented framing; Russian headlines show a higher rate of explicit attribution and contextual framing; Uzbek headlines more often balance institutional neutrality with indirect evaluation through lexical pairing and source-based wording. Because the corpus is small and purposively built, the findings are exploratory. Even so, the study demonstrates that corpus-assisted headline analysis can reveal not only what media texts say, but also how they guide readers toward a preferred interpretation.

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**Keywords:** Media discourse, corpus linguistics, collocation, news headlines, stance, trilingual analysis.

### Introduction

Corpus research has changed the scale at which discourse can be studied, but its real value is not only numerical. A corpus makes recurring wording visible, and recurring wording is rarely innocent. In news discourse, repetition gives shape to common assumptions, preferred framings, and habitual ways of naming public events. That is why corpus methods are especially useful for media analysis: they help the researcher move from isolated examples to patterned linguistic behavior (Baker, 2006; Biber et al., 1998; McEnery & Hardie, 2012).

Headlines deserve special attention. They are short, typographically salient, and pragmatically loaded. A headline does not summarize an event in any simple mechanical sense. It selects, compresses, foregrounds, and often evaluates. Bednarek and Caple (2012, 2017) show that news language constructs newsworthiness through lexical and visual choices, while corpus-assisted discourse studies demonstrate that repeated phraseology can expose ideological preferences that remain easy to miss in one-off reading (Baker et al., 2008; Partington et al., 2013).

Research on multilingual media discourse often stays uneven. English receives detailed corpus treatment, Russian is frequently approached through discourse analysis, and Uzbek still lacks enough corpus-based studies of journalistic patterning. That gap matters. When three media traditions report similar kinds of events, their lexical routines do not align perfectly. What changes is not only vocabulary, but the pragmatic distribution of agency, certainty, urgency, and institutional distance.

The present article addresses this problem through a small pilot study of English, Russian, and Uzbek news headlines. The aim is modest by design. I do not claim to describe three whole media systems. Instead, I use a compact trilingual corpus

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to ask a narrower question: which evaluative collocations and stance markers recur most clearly in headline discourse across the three languages, and what do those recurrences suggest about pragmatic framing?

### Method

A pilot corpus of 360 online news headlines was compiled for the study: 120 headlines in English, 120 in Russian, and 120 in Uzbek. The corpus was balanced across three recurrent media domains that tend to produce strong framing pressure, namely politics, economy, and emergency reporting. Only headlines were collected, without subheads, in order to keep the unit of comparison stable. The dataset is small, manually curated, and intended for exploratory corpus reading rather than broad statistical generalization.

The analysis proceeded in three steps. First, the corpus was read for repeated lexical items and recurrent multiword patterns. Second, those patterns were grouped into four functional categories: explicit evaluation, attribution, backgrounding or contextual framing, and headline compression. Third, selected concordance-like clusters were compared qualitatively across the three languages. This combination follows the logic of corpus-assisted discourse study, where counting alone is not enough and interpretation must return to local context (Hunston, 2002; Partington et al., 2013).

The unit of frequency in this article is raw recurrence within the pilot corpus, not a claim about national media frequency. This point is important. Because headlines are short, even a small shift in editorial routine can produce visible frequency differences. I therefore interpret the results cautiously. The tables below should be read as indicators of patterned tendency inside the present corpus, not as universal distributions for all English, Russian, or Uzbek media.

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**Table 1** Most recurrent evaluative or framing patterns in the pilot headline corpus

Pattern function	English	Russian	Uzbek
Contextual backgrounding	amid, under pressure	na fone, v usloviyakh	fonida, sharoitida
Crisis labeling	crisis, shock, warning	krizis, risk, ugroza	inqiroz, xavf, ogohlantirish
Attribution	official says, report finds	zayavil, po dannym	ma'lum qilindi, manbaga ko'ra
Prediction / hedge	likely, expected, may	mozhet, veroyatno, ozhidaetsya	mumkin, kutilmoqda, ehtimol

Note. The table reports recurrent pattern types in the illustrative corpus, not nationally representative frequencies.

### Results and discussion

A clear pattern appears before any fine-grained interpretation begins. All three headline groups prefer compressed evaluation over full propositional explanation. The headline is not a miniature paragraph. It is a pressure chamber. Words are selected because they carry more than denotation: they suggest scale, urgency, or institutional alignment in very little space. In the present corpus, this compression was visible in all three languages, but its linguistic packaging differed.

English headlines in the sample frequently relied on nominal clusters and pressure-oriented framing. Phrases such as crisis talks, market shock, border pressure, or aid warning condensed evaluation into compact lexical blocks. The agent was often postponed or omitted, which gave the headline a fast, event-centered rhythm. This pattern fits earlier observations that news discourse builds relevance through condensed lexical choices rather than overt commentary (Bednarek & Caple, 2012, 2017).

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Russian headlines in the corpus showed a stronger tendency toward explicit attribution and contextual framing. The recurrence of forms equivalent to said, according to data, or against the background of did two things at once: it anchored the statement in an identifiable voice, and it widened the interpretive frame before the reader reached the article itself. This does not make the headline neutral. On the contrary, attribution can serve as a framing device because it controls the source through which evaluation enters the text.

Uzbek headlines displayed an interesting middle position. Strongly evaluative lexemes were present, especially in economy and emergency reporting, yet direct categorical judgment was often softened by source-based wording or by institutional phrasing. Expressions such as *ma'lum qilindi*, *fonida*, or *kutilmoqda* created an official, procedural tone. At the same time, lexical pairings like *keskin o'sish*, *jiddiy xavf*, or *inqiroz fonida* still carried clear evaluative force. In other words, restraint at the clause level did not eliminate stance; it redistributed stance into collocation.

**Table 2** Distribution of selected headline stance features in the pilot corpus

Feature	English (n=120)	Russian (n=120)	Uzbek (n=120)
Explicit evaluative lexeme	24	29	31
Attribution marker	27	34	38
Backgrounding frame	21	32	28
Compressed noun phrase / ellipsis	46	43	39

*Note.* A single headline could contain more than one feature; totals therefore exceed the number of headlines in each subcorpus.

The figures in Table 2 support a restrained conclusion. English headlines in the pilot set leaned more heavily on compression, Russian headlines more often

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signaled interpretive framing through attribution and backgrounding, and Uzbek headlines showed the highest rate of source-based or procedural phrasing alongside explicit evaluative items. This distribution does not mean that one language is more objective than another. It suggests instead that objectivity is stylistically performed in different ways.

A further point concerns collocation. In the corpus, evaluation rarely appeared as an isolated adjective. It clustered. Words such as crisis, pressure, risk, or keskin became pragmatically stronger when they recurred near references to policy, economy, border, narx, or bozor. That is precisely why corpus reading matters. It reveals how repeated lexical neighbors gradually build a discourse atmosphere, even when individual headlines look routine in isolation (Hunston, 2002; Partington et al., 2013).

There is also a methodological lesson here for research on Uzbek media. Corpus work does not need to wait for a massive national database before it becomes useful. Even a relatively small, transparent, manually described corpus can clarify where a researcher should look next. In the present case, the pilot corpus already indicates promising directions: source attribution formulas, crisis vocabulary, and compressed noun phrases are all productive entry points for larger multilingual studies.

### Conclusion

This article set out to examine how evaluative collocations and stance markers operate in English, Russian, and Uzbek news headlines. The pilot corpus does not justify sweeping claims about entire media systems, and that limitation should stay visible. Still, the findings are consistent enough to support one central point: headline discourse is pragmatically dense, and corpus-assisted analysis can show where that density is linguistically stored.

Across the three languages, evaluation was rarely absent. More often, it was compressed, attributed, or distributed across recurring lexical combinations.

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English headlines favored compact nominal framing, Russian headlines more frequently externalized stance through attribution and contextual framing, and Uzbek headlines combined institutional tone with collocational evaluation. These are not merely stylistic surface differences. They shape how agency, urgency, and credibility are offered to readers at the very first point of contact with the news text.

Future work should expand the corpus, include full articles alongside headlines, and test the same categories across specific media outlets rather than across language groups alone. That larger design would make it possible to separate language-specific patterning from outlet-specific editorial routine. For now, the pilot study shows that corpus research on media texts remains a strong path for multilingual pragmatics, especially when quantitative recurrence is kept in dialogue with close discourse interpretation.

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