

Subjectivity Analysis: Negative Sentiment and Linguistic Features in Page Six News Headlines¹

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Received 17 June 2024

Revised 28 August 2024

Published 2 September 2024

Abstract

The subjectivity in news headlines frequently occurs in today's world of journalism, leading to scandals and misleading information for readers. This present study aims to investigate and analyze the headlines of the well-known scandal web page, Page Six, which will go through 1) Linguistic features does Page Six employ in headlines, and 2) Linguistic features reflect the attitude and subjectivity of Page Six. The data was collected by gathering 501 news headlines from Page Six and analyzed by the subjectivity indicators, the method developed from Prasithrathsint (2014)'s Language and Power paper and sentiment hybrid analysis from the MonkeyLearn platform, and the rate of humans. The result showed that the subjectivity indicators method could detect that all headlines contain intense content words that show subjectivity, consisting of the content words that depict trait with 46.6%, the content words that depict action with 40.5%, and the content words that depict emotion with 12.9%. While sentiment hybrid analysis can reflect the attitude that the majority of the headlines were negative, with 80.6%, while positive headlines were only 19.4%.

Keywords: English news headlines, linguistic features, pragmatic, subjectivity

¹ This research is a part of a research and seminar subject from the School of Liberal Arts, Mae Fah Luang University that studies the subjectivity in gossip news through the scope of linguistics features employed in the journalism world.

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Introduction

Over the years, news headlines have become the “eye” for evaluating news significance (Dong & Shao, 2016). Likewise, readers are captivated by headlines instead of going into the entire news article (Hossain et al., 2021). Most of the time, we find ourselves misconstruing the headlines of news articles. This implies that these headlines can influence reader’s cognitive processes, leading them towards deceptive interpretations of statements (Padakannaya et al., 2022). Furthermore, certain news stories are presented differently across various online sources (Geers, 2020). Hence, determining the features applied in a news caption or headline is crucial.

Bowles and Borden (2010) state that effective news headlines should prioritize facts, accuracy, and clarity, including abstain libel. The stated explanation refers to objectivity which is considered a principle for the news’s language use. It is the report method that is based on truth and accuracy, avoiding opinion, emotion, and prejudice that can lead to misleading information and considers a concept that creates justice and naturality (Daniel et al., 2023). Moreover, Akpan et al. (2012) also explain the importance of objectivity as an ethical aspect of news and journalism since it is a concept that should be taken into consideration to protect professional dignity. To exemplify, Overholser (1997) analyzed the news headlines from various newspapers about the speech of the 42nd President of the United States, Bill Clinton, about race policy and found that some of the headlines can represent objectivity among all the gathered headlines. An example of a headline perceived as objective was presented, such as *“Clinton sets up a dialogue about race. Pledges to draft a specific plan over the next year.”* (The Boston Globe) and *“Clinton Urges U.S. Effort to Defuse Racism.”* (The Denver Post). These statements adhere to the objective requirement of impartiality, avoiding any bias or emotional involvement. They represent objectivity by focusing on President Clinton’s goal to address racial issues in the U.S., without advancing any particular agenda. The word choices, such as *“set up”* or *“urges”* in examples, perform as neutral words that only show the action of the President Clinton said in his speech.

However, Chong (2019) points out that objectivity is the ideal for modern journalism, but social media nowadays does not seem to be what it is supposed to be. According to Prasithrathsint (2014), in addition to precision and conciseness, the remarkable characteristic of news headlines is subjectivity. While the nature of news should be objectivity, there is the rise of subjectivity in journalism. The analysis of cultural journalism found that subjectivity is the

practice that contains the revealing of bias, emotions, and self-interest despite differences of media platforms. Some of media platforms share a value of fairness and reader trust; therefore, there is a possibility of subjectivity being refused or accepted depending on the media platform's norm, and subjectivity was a new wave of creating a new way of reporting beyond the traditional report. Accordingly, Steensen (2017) gives a definition of subjectivity as a casual speech that contains an opinion, which has been embraced by today's journalism and should be considered by journalists as either sources or identities of subjectivity in their work. Hamborg (2022) gives examples of headlines that contain bias (which considers as a subjectivity) about Republican Party presidential primaries in 2016, for example, *"Top tier takes heat: Rubio, others under fire at NH debate"* (2016, Fox News) and *"Marco Rubio is biggest loser. Trump and the governors all have a good night in NH"* (2016, Fox News). As the researcher noted, these examples show bias and subjectivity, evident through word choices in phrases like *"under fire"* and *"biggest loser"*, which reflect a particular viewpoint. While objectivity in journalism aims for ethics of accuracy and neutrality, subjectivity introduces personal opinions, leading to bias and emotional influence in reporting today.

Unlike spoken language, headlines lack the cues of pauses, stress, or tone. While people skim headlines for rapid news comprehension, the risk of confusion and misunderstanding increases when headlines are intentionally ambiguous (Tirangga, 2010). This ambiguity is exacerbated by the intense competition among headlines to capture reader attention in a crowded media landscape. Headlines often compete for clicks within a restrictive character limit, which can lead to the use of sensational language and emotionally charged words at the expense of objectivity (Lindgren et al., 2022). However, current research on subjectivity in headlines presents notable gaps. While Tirangga (2010) and Lindgren et al. (2022) provide insight into the pressures influencing headline construction, they do not thoroughly explore the specific linguistic strategies employed to convey subjectivity. To address this gap, our research intends to focus more on the component of the sentence in news headlines. Prasithratsint (2014) media often use verbs to depict images, action, and emotions, as respectively seen *โหด* (*brutalize*), *จู่ยิง* (*shoot*), and *สยดสยอง* (*horrify*). Chaturvedi et al. (2018) support the idea that English media also uses sensitive verbs or other kinds of words to identify sentiment polarity. Furthermore, Indrambarya et al. (2015) finds that adverbs, which intensify verbs, vividly portray the emotional and violent nature of events, using exaggerated

descriptors like *“tremendously”*. Accordingly, these insights lead interest for the research undertaken to develop a comprehensive analytical framework that focuses on the use of word for identifying subjectivity in headlines. This framework will address the gaps identified in existing studies by providing a more detailed analysis of how each element contribute to the portrayal of subjectivity.

Page Six, a prominent gossip column in the New York Post, plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions of the entertainment industry. With substantial followings on Instagram (one million) and Facebook (eight hundred thousand), Page Six claims to be *“a world leader in celebrity and entertainment news”* (Page Six, n.d.). Its influence is evident in its daily updates and breaking news, which often capture global attention. For example, recent headlines from Page Six include *“Grammys 2024 predictions: Who will win the Big Four — and who should”* (Page Six, 4 February 2024), *“Prince Harry has ‘zero’ chance of returning for royal duties despite King Charles’ cancer diagnosis: report”* (Page Six, 18 February 2024), and *“Ethan Slater’s wife ‘blindsided’ by Ariana Grande relationship - Page Six”* (Page Six, 21 July 2023). Given the widespread nature of gossip news and its reliance on sensationalism, it is crucial to examine how subjectivity is employed in such reporting. Hammarlin (2019) notes that modern journalism often emphasizes emotional reactions and scandals, suggesting that subjectivity is used to create sensational stories. This trend raises concerns about transparency and the ethical implications of news production, as discussed by Karlsson (2011) and Thompson (2005). With news production often occurring behind the scenes, the audience’s focus remains on the sensational aspects rather than the accuracy or fairness of the reporting. Our study aims to address a significant gap in understanding how subjectivity influences the portrayal of scandals in gossip media, specifically through platforms like Page Six. By analyzing how Page Six employs subjective language and sensationalism, this research seeks to explore the following question:

- 1) What subjectivity indicator does Page Six employ in their headlines?
- 2) How do headlines reflect the negative attitude of Page Six?

To answer these questions, this work aims to investigate the application of the subjectivity used in writing news headlines including the attitude towards the subjectivity, which are mainly selected from Page Six's gossip column. When practices of Page Six could affect

public perception, they not only assist in analyzing insights of the emotional tone, biases, and perspectives embedded in the language but also reflect current media trends.

Methods

1. Data

The data for this study consists of 501 news headlines, published between February 2021 and February 2024. These headlines were all headlines from the “THE LATEST” column of the Page Six gossip category, specifically shown up on March 2, 2024. “THE LATEST” column showcases a curated selection of recent news and news in the past few years, offering the most up-to-date gossip and scandals. By collecting data from this column on March 2, 2024, we aimed to capture a relevant and diverse range of headlines while also exploring trends and changes over time.

2. Data Analysis

2.1 Linguistic Features Expressing Subjectivity

2.1.1 Analytical Framework

In order to investigate subjectivity from the selected news headlines, this study develops an analytical framework that expands upon the theoretical framework provided by Prasithrathsint (2014)'s Language and Power paper. While Prasithrathsint (2014) identified verbs depicting trait, action, and emotion as key features of subjectivity in news, this study aims to develop a more proper approach by focusing on other word classes additionally. Since subjectivity could occur in other word classes as well, analyzing only verbs might not find words signifying subjectivity as much as analyzing every word class except function words (Pang & Lee, 2008). In this case, this shift in focus is supported by the understanding that content words are the building blocks of meaning in a sentence. They carry the semantic weight, conveying the ideas and information (Jurafsky & Martin, 2000). Conversely, function words primarily express grammatical relationships and structure sentences without carrying significant meaning on their own. Analyzing function words might not be as effective in identifying subjective language as focusing on the content words that carry the core meaning. As a result, the developed analytical framework results in three major features which consist of;

A. Content words that depict trait

These words are expressions of the feelings and attitudes of the media towards the event. In addition to providing vivid imagery, they also tend to exaggerate.

Examples

(1) *Secrets of art world's biggest loser: How oligarch Dmitry Rybolovlev's \$1B fraud claim ended in ruin* (Page Six, 10 February 2024). [N]

“Loser” implies a negative outcome or defeat. In this context, it suggests that Dmitry Rybolovlev's legal claim was unsuccessful, potentially leaving him with a sense of loss or failure.

(2) *Royal family in 'genuine crisis,' 'damaged' by scandals in 'The Crown' Season 5* (Page Six, 20 October 2022). [V]

The word “damaged” suggests harm or negative impact. In this case, it implies that the scandals depicted in “The Crown” have negatively affected the reputation of the royal family.

(3) *Erin Foster claims Chad Michael Murray cheated on her with Sophia Bush in 'egregious' scandal* (Page Six, 20 October 2023). [ADJ]

“Egregious” was used in this headline to describe the nature of the scandal. It carries a strong negative connotation, implying the scandal is far beyond typical or acceptable. By using “egregious,” the author emphasizes the severity of the cheating and suggests a strong moral failing on the part of the person involved.

(4) *Dorit Kemsley's husband, PK, savagely responds to Erika Jayne's divorce prediction* (Page Six, 17 October 2022). [ADV]

The adverb “savagely” portrays an intense, uncontrolled, and potentially cruel way of responding.

B. Content words that depict action

This type of word refers to the intense words that are used to portray actions.

Examples

(5) *Kanye West accused of being 'obsessed' with Taylor Swift after name-dropping her on new album* (Page Six, 10 February 2024). [N]

“Name-dropping” is a deliberate act by Kanye West. Instead of using neutral terms like “mentioning” or “referencing”, the headline provides the term that carries a slightly negative connotation.

(6) *Adam Levine hits the beach with Behati Prinsloo and kids amid cheating scandal* (Page Six, 9 October 2022). [V]

The word “hits” acts as a verb depicting Adam Levine's action of going to the beach. The literal meaning of “hit” is to come into contact with something forcefully. In this context, “hits” creates a more vivid image than a neutral verb like “goes” or “visits.” It suggests speed, suddenness, or a potential lack of concern for the ongoing scandal.

(7) *Penn State quietly mulling naming field after Joe Paterno* (Page Six, 15 February 2024). [ADV]

A discreet and secretive manner is conveyed through the use of the adverb “quietly”, suggesting they are not openly discussing it or seeking public opinion.

C. Content words that depict emotion

They are words that reflect the journalist's attitude towards a person or situation, through selection and embellishment to increase emotional intensity, and sometimes exaggeration.

Examples

(8) *SEC abets latest climate cheat by Dems: The Green New Deal is a **shuck!*** (Page Six, 14 October 2023). [N]

The term “shuck” evokes a sense of anger or frustration towards the Democrats (Dems) who are supposedly behind the Green New Deal. By calling it a “shuck”, the headline expresses a negative opinion about the Green New Deal. It's not a neutral description, but rather a judgment about its legitimacy.

(9) *Whitney Rose '**shocked** and **saddened**** (Page Six, 21 January 2022). [V]

The words “*shocked*” and “*saddened*” directly convey feelings of surprise and sadness. While the phrase itself might seem objective on the surface, its presence in a headline affects the understanding about Whitney Rose as the interpretation of how she feels about a particular situation relies on the reader's prior knowledge about her and the context surrounding the headline.

(10) *The **sordid** timeline of Billy Crudup and Claire Danes' '00s cheating scandal*

(Page Six, 15 June 2023). [ADJ]

This headline used the word “sordid” to describe the timeline of the cheating scandal. It has a strong negative connotation, implying something dirty, unpleasant, or morally wrong. By using “sordid,” the author evokes a sense of disgust or disapproval towards the events of the scandal. Thus, it provides that the timeline is not just a series of facts, but something shameful or upsetting.

(11) *Jimmy Fallon **sheepishly** sidesteps questions about 'Tonight Show' scandal*

(Page Six, 14 October 2023). [ADV]

“Sheepishly” describes the way Jimmy Fallon might feel awkward or shy while sidestepping the questions. By the way, it is the writer's judgment that his way of sidestepping the questions suggests shyness or awkwardness too. However, we do not know for sure if that is the actual reason behind his behavior.

All in all, this study considers the three features as “*subjectivity indicators*” in news headlines, and every content word found in selected news headlines will be analyzed based on the three subjectivity indicators as the starting point.

2.2 Attitude toward the Sentiment Level of News Headlines

For assessing how each headline has negative or positive sentiment, an individual headline itself will be calculated as 1 unit of analysis for each rater.

2.2.1 Tools

Following the subjectivity analysis, sentiment was assessed using MonkeyLearn, a cloud-based platform for text analysis. MonkeyLearn employed NLP algorithms to identify sentiment within the text data (De La Cruz, 2023). It had been widely used for analyzing textual data across various domains, such as customer feedback and social media interactions. This broad applicability made MonkeyLearn an effective tool for understanding sentiment in diverse language data and refining analytical approaches. Figure 1 illustrates the sentiment analysis tool used from MonkeyLearn.

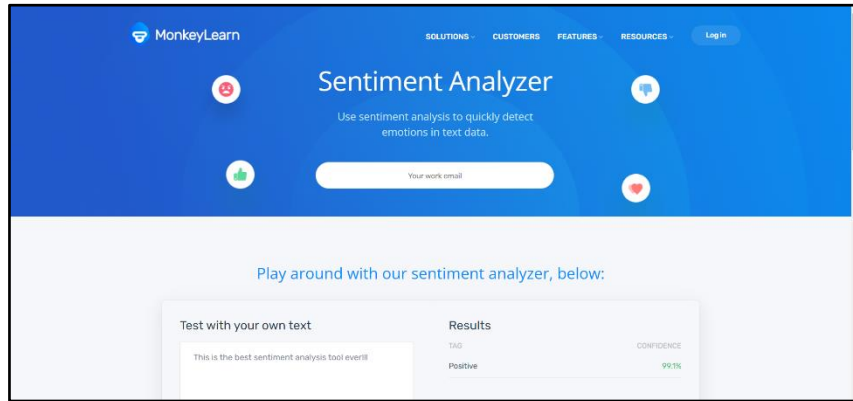


Figure 1 The Picture of MonkeyLearn Website for Sentiment Analysis

According to Figure 2, each headline from the collected dataset was uploaded into the MonkeyLearn platform. This process was to enter text (headlines) into a search box.

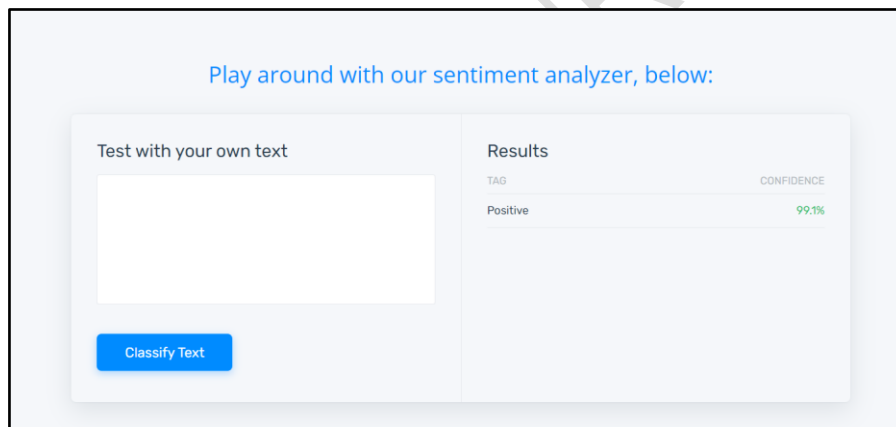


Figure 2 The Picture of a Search Box for Sentiment Analysis on MonkeyLearn Website

Once uploaded, the MonkeyLearn sentiment analysis tool analyzed each headline using NLP algorithms. The model generated a sentiment classification for each headline. The output was a **percentage score for each category**, indicating the likelihood of the headline expressing **positive or negative sentiment** as shown in Figure 3.

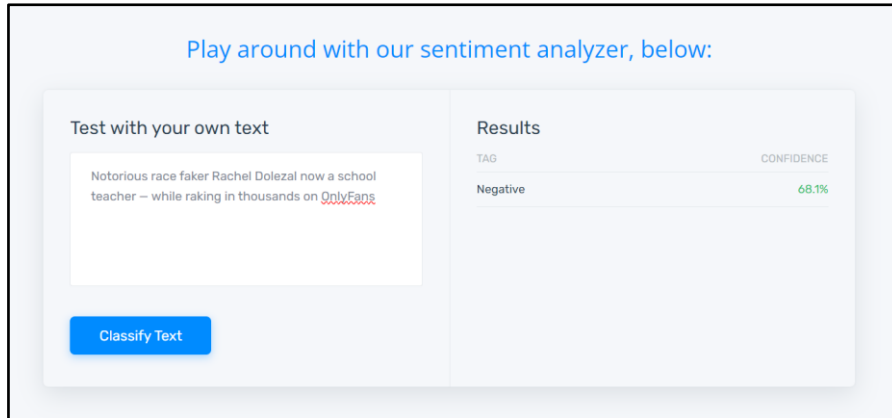


Figure 3 The Picture of the Result of Sentiment Analysis

Additionally, following the initial tool classification, two researchers independently rated the headlines whether they have positive or negative sentiment.

2.2.2 Analyzing Criteria

For rating attitude towards headlines, this study employs a hybrid approach for sentiment analysis, combining a sentiment analysis model with human judgment in order to offer a balance between efficiency and accuracy. Consequently, to bring about the conclusion of sentiment analysis of each headline (positive [P] or negative [N]), the attitude of subjectivity in collected news headlines were concluded by three raters in 2.2.1) based on majority agreement.

Table 1 Analyzing Criteria

MonkeyLearn	Rater 1	Rater 2	Result
P	P	P	<i>P</i>
P	P	N	<i>P</i>
N	N	P	<i>N</i>
N	N	N	<i>N</i>

In this analysis, the difference between [P] and [N] is that [P] might refer to feelings of enjoyment, satisfaction, approval, or amusement while [N] might convey feelings of dislike, disapproval, frustration, sadness, or anger instead.

3. Presentation of Results

Subsequently, the implementation of data and analytical framework will work as follows.

3.1 Linguistic Features Expressing Subjectivity

3.1.1 Qualitative Analysis

This section involved a qualitative analysis of words signifying subjectivity within the 501 headlines. For analyzing the data, each headline was investigated under the three subjectivity indicators which are 1) *content words that depict trait*, 2) *content words that depict action*, and 3) *content words that depict emotion*.

3.1.2 Quantitative Analysis

After analyzing each headline, the result of investigating all selected news headlines were calculated into percentages and presented in charts. Those charts were visuals that clearly show the frequency of occurrence of each applied feature compared. Additionally, some features that have outstanding occurrences might be brought to discussion in case that they could reflect the significant purpose of the Page Six gossip column.

3.2 Attitude towards the Sentiment Level of News Headlines

At this point, all the headlines have undergone the sentiment analysis on three raters (see 2.2). This section will present the results of the sentiment analysis using descriptive statistics and visualizations. In terms of descriptive statistics, it includes the proportion of how negative and positive sentiment occur by presenting the mean percentage of both sentiments. A bar chart will be used to visually represent those percentage of headlines classified as positive and negative based on the final rater agreement. The result will be shown how the headlines lean more towards positive or negative sentiment overall from February 2021 to February 2024. Therefore, the distribution of positive and negative will be discussed any patterns or trends over time.

Results and Discussion

1. Linguistic Features Expressing Subjectivity

A qualitative analysis was conducted to identify words signifying subjectivity within the 501 headlines collected from Page Six. Each headline was examined for the presence of

content words depicting trait, action, and emotion, as defined in the analytical framework (Section 2.1.1). This process involved manually evaluating the headlines. To answer the first research question, subjectivity indicators employed in Page Six headlines as follows:

A. Content words depicting trait

Most content that is conveyed through content words depicting trait will be satire, parody, and informal which are shown in 4 types of content words (noun, verb, adjective, and adverb).

- The **satire** characteristic uses humor or irony to criticize ideas, behaviors, or institutions, highlighting people's flaws, as examples.

(12) *Prince Harry's a cold-hearted **traitor** to his family and his country* (Page Six, 15 December 2022). [**N**] (By labeling Prince Harry as a "traitor," it criticizes his decision through the image of a person who abandon family for commercial gain.)

(13) *Royal family in 'genuine **crisis**,' 'damaged' by scandals in 'The Crown' Season 5* (Page Six, 20 October 2022). [**N**] (The word "crisis" is used in a satirical context to exaggerate the impact of scandals depicted in a TV show on the royal family.)

(14) *'**Idiot**' Paris Hilton, husband Carter Reum slammed for PDA-filled Maui vacation 30 miles from deadly fires* (Page Six, 14 August 2023). [**ADJ**] ("Idiot" is used satirically to criticize Paris Hilton and her husband for their perceived insensitivity.)

- The **parody** characteristic has the use of content words depicting trait to mock the typical language or portrayals found in the original as follows.

(15) ***Disgraced** Prince Andrew is in the hot seat in Netflix's 'Scoop' trailer* (Page Six, 12 February 2024). [**ADJ**] (The term "disgraced" is used to mockingly amplify Prince Andrew's negative reputation.)

(16) *Meghan Markle, Prince Harry were '**alienated**' at last gathering with 'hard-hearted' King Charles: expert* (Page Six, 5 January 2024). [**V**] ("Alienated" mocks royal family conflicts.)

- The **informal** characteristic prioritizes personal expression and uses a relaxed style.

(17) *Royal family in 'genuine crisis,' 'damaged' by scandals in 'The Crown' Season 5* (Page Six, 20 October 2022). [V] (The word “damaged” is used to describe the royal family in a direct and relatable manner.)

(18) *Dorit Kemsley's husband, PK, savagely responds to Erika Jayne's divorce prediction* (Page Six, 17 October 2022). [ADV] (The term “savagely” conveys a strong, dramatic reaction in a colloquial manner.)

(19) *King Charles 'desperately wants to reconcile' with Prince Harry amid cancer battle: royal expert* (Page Six, 7 February 2024). [ADV] (“Desperately” expresses King Charles’s personal emotion in a casual way.)

B. Content words depicting action

Most content that is conveyed through content words depicting action will be intense and show the manner of action that refers to how an action is performed. It doesn't necessarily describe the physical movement itself, but rather the intensity or characteristics associated with the action which could be shown in 4 types of content words in examples (20)-(26).

(20) *Rolling Stone editor in chief Noah Shachtman exits amid clash with boss Gus Wenner* (Page Six, 12 February 2024). [N] (“Clash” implies two people coming into contact with great intensity of paradox.)

(21) *Kanye West accused of being 'obsessed' with Taylor Swift after name-dropping her on new album* (Page Six, 10 February 2024). [N] (“Dropping” visualizes the action of casually mentioning or inserting Taylor Swift’s name into song.)

(22) *Meet the 'badass' lawyer who could blow up Trump racketeering case over Fani Willis' sex secrets* (Page Six, 14 February 2024). [V] (“Blow up” pictures a situation where something expands rapidly and explosively.)

- (23) Prince Harry **trashes** family's lack of 'support' after Princess Diana's death in latest royal dig (Page Six, 30 August 2023). [V] ("Trashes" metaphors Prince Harry's action, criticizing or verbally attacking his family.)
- (24) Ukrainian-born Miss Japan gives up crown after tabloid **exposes** affair with married 'muscle doctor' (Page Six, 6 February 2024). [V] ("Exposes" visualizes the uncovering or revealing of something hidden.)
- (25) CNN PR execs who oversaw **devastating** Atlantic profile of Chris Licht get the boot (Page Six, 7 June 2023). [ADV] (The term "devastating" reflects an action that causes significant damage or distress.)
- (26) Penn State **quietly** mulling naming field after Joe Paterno (Page Six, 15 February 2024). [ADV] ("Quietly" implies that the action is done in a subdued, unobtrusive manner, without drawing much attention or making a lot of noise.)

C. Content words depicting emotion

Content words depicting emotion provide sensational feelings. Additionally, it can be found in 4 types of content words in examples (27)-(34).

- (27) **Shame** on celeb crypto grifters like Tom, Gisele and Larry David — who promoted FTX with no thought for money their fans may lose (Page Six, 17 November 2022). [N] ("Shame" evokes a sense of moral or ethical disapproval. It conveys strong negative emotions directed towards the celebrities mentioned for their actions.)
- (28) SEC abets latest climate cheat by Dems: The Green New Deal is a **shuck!** (Page Six, 14 October 2023). [N] (Ending headline with "Shuck" evokes a sense of betrayal or indignation from those who might feel misled by the policy.)
- (29) Whitney Rose **'shocked and saddened'*** (Page Six, 21 January 2022). [V] (This phrase explicitly describes emotional states.)
- (30) Calif. Lottery **urged** to release video of Edwin Castro buying \$2B ticket — by men claiming he's not the winner (Page Six, 6 June 2023). [V] (The word "urged" implies

a strong recommendation or pressure. It carries an emotional undertone of insistence or importance.)

(31) *Jax Taylor wants to be on Tom Sandoval's podcast despite slamming 'distasteful' announcement* (Page Six, 10 October 2023). [ADJ] (The adjective “distasteful” reflects a negative emotional reaction. It conveys a feeling of dislike or disgust towards the announcement.)

(32) *House Republicans fail to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas in dramatic 216-214 vote* (Page Six, 6 February 2024). [ADJ] (The adjective “dramatic” conveys a sense of high emotional intensity and tension.)

(33) *Astros mercilessly booed during All-Star Game entrance in Seattle* (Page Six, 11 July 2023). [ADV] (The adverb “mercilessly” describes the manner in which the Astros were booed. It conveys an intense and harsh level of disapproval, suggesting that the reaction from the crowd was relentless and unforgiving.)

(34) *Jimmy Fallon sheepishly sidesteps questions about 'Tonight Show' scandal* (Page Six, 14 October 2023). [ADV] (“Sheepishly” suggests that Jimmy Fallon’s response was marked by a lack of confidence or discomfort, adding an emotional layer to his actions.)

Moreover, the qualitative analysis identified a total of 904 words signifying subjectivity across the 501 headlines. These occurrences were further categorized based on the three subjectivity indicators as follows; trait (421 words), action (366 words), and emotion (117 words).

Figure 4 visually represents the percentage breakdown of these subjectivity indicators. As shown in the Figure 4, words depicting trait appear most frequently (46.6%), followed by action (40.5%) and emotion (12.9%). Looking back at the framework of Prasithrathsint (2014), analyzing only verbs might not be enough to capture this level of subjectivity, as evidenced by our findings. Since our developed analytical framework also analyzes other types of content words as suggested by Pang and Lee (2008), it leads to these high numbers, and it can prove that subjectivity can occur in other word classes too.

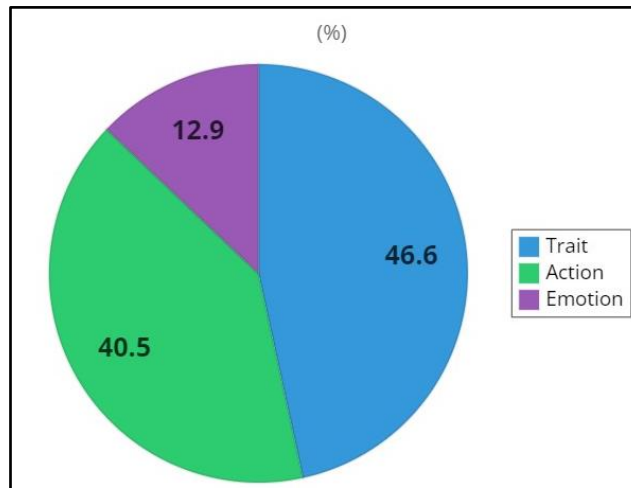


Figure 4 Proportions of the Occurrence of Words Signifying Subjectivity found in 501 Headlines across Page Six

Since the content and writing style of Page Six itself focus on celebrity gossip and social lives, target readers are more likely to be interested in pop culture. They enjoy keeping up with current trends and events in the entertainment world. What they would like to know is who, what, and how. Therefore, this could be the reason for the proportion of the occurrence in Figure 4 where content words depicting trait and action are significantly more frequent because these types of words are used to describe characteristics and actions. Consequently, readers could visualize the information more than receiving sensational elements. Accordingly, the journalist may practice that on purpose to serve their readers.

Besides, Figure 5 displays the frequency of subjectivity indicators over February 2021 until February 2024. Interestingly, while the impact of having more or less indicators is still unclear, Figure 5 shows that every headline has at least one indicator of subjectivity. However, the fact that every headline includes subjectivity might imply some factors of becoming more subjective. One possibility is that journalists are employing more subjective language to capture reader's attention, as supported by Civila and Lugo-Ocando (2024). Another explanation could be that subjectivity plays a role in some way in the nature of gossip-oriented or media discourse styles (Fowler, 2007).

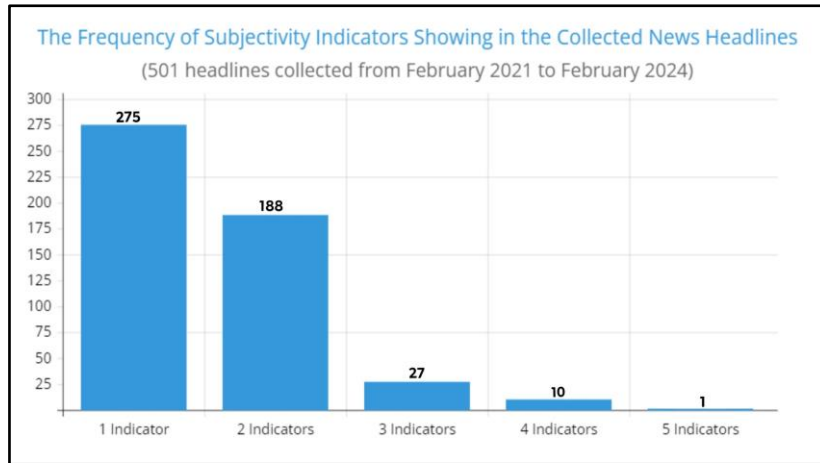


Figure 5 Frequency of Subjectivity Indicators Showing in the Collected News Headlines

2. Attitude toward the Sentiment Level of News Headlines

Following the sentiment analysis process outlined in Section 2.2, the final rater agreement resulted in Figure 6.

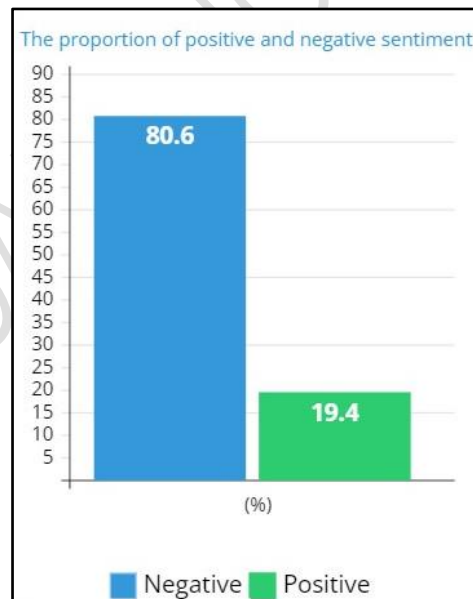


Figure 6 Proportions of Positive and Negative Sentiment across 501 Headlines on Page Six

As shown in Figure 6, the distribution of sentiment leans more toward negative sentiment, with 80.6% classified as negative and 19.4% classified as positive respectively. This suggests that the overall tone of the analyzed content is generally negative.

Andersen et al. (2024) support that news media tends to portray violence, crimes, and being personally affected more negatively. The previous study reveals that there is an impact on both how the media shapes our perception of reality and our overall understanding of how mainstream and alternative media function in society. While Andersen et al. (2024) focus on the general portrayal of negativity, our study specifically examines how this negativity is reinforced through subjective language in gossip news. Building on this, our analysis suggests that negativity is not only prevalent in gossip news headlines but also closely linked to the frequent use of words showing subjectivity, particularly words describing traits and actions. This usage enhances the visualization of stories and significantly influences the overall tone.

For example, headlines like *"Still no shame in Hunter Biden's game"* (Page Six, 9 December 2022) and *"Vito Fossella snags Trump endorsement in race for Staten Island BP"* (Page Six, 19 June 2021) illustrate how negative sentiment and subjective language can work together to evoke strong emotional responses and capture reader attention. The headline *"Still no shame in Hunter Biden's game"* (Page Six, 9 December 2022) employs subjective language by using the word *"shame"* to pass moral judgment on the subject. This choice of language not only conveys a negative sentiment but also implies a moral failing, thereby intensifying the emotional impact on the reader. The subjective nature of the word *"shame"* frames Hunter Biden's actions in a highly negative light, influencing how the reader perceives his behavior and the story. Similarly, the headline *"Vito Fossella snags Trump endorsement in race for Staten Island BP"* (Page Six, 19 June 2021) uses the verb *"snags"* in a way that conveys opportunism or underhandedness. The term *"snags"* is a subjective choice that implies a certain level of opportunistic maneuvering, which can evoke a negative sentiment about Fossella's political strategy. This subjective framing colors the endorsement with a sense of controversy or untrustworthiness, affecting how readers interpret the significance of the political endorsement. This interplay between sentiment and subjectivity emphasizes the effectiveness of sensational language in influencing public opinion and highlights the critical role of language in media communication. From that direction, the combination between negative sentiment and subjectivity may be another attribute and strategy among gossip news for reaching some journalistic purposes in the competitive news industry because having content that stands out, even if it is negative, can provide a competitive edge and help media organizations maintain their market position.

Our findings highlight the need for media literacy to help readers critically evaluate sensational headlines. However, we did not account for broader contextual factors, such as socio-political climates or audience demographics. This omission may restrict our understanding of how these factors influence the use and impact on other aspect in headlines. For this reason, future research could further explore how different demographic groups respond to such language and whether similar patterns are observed in other types of media content.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In relation to linguistic features expressing subjectivity, the finding revealed that Page Six headlines heavily rely on subjective language, particularly words describing traits and actions. These words make up nearly 90% of all subjective language used. This suggests that the focus is on painting a picture of the celebrities and the events surrounding them, allowing readers to visualize the stories. Compared to other works, the concept of descriptiveness in journalism partially agrees with some previous studies. A study by Anderson (2017) found that news articles using descriptive language depicting emotions and actions led to higher reader recall compared to those focusing solely on facts. This suggests that creating a mental picture enhances information retention. Also, another study by McAndrew and Milenkovic (2002) explored the psychology behind celebrity gossip consumption. They found that people engage with celebrity gossip to forge social connections and feel part of a community. Thus, words describing traits and actions were used to make readers feel more connected to the characters and events reported in online news (McFerran et al., 2010). This aligns with the Page Six target audience's interest in the "who, what, and how" of celebrity life, making the collected headlines consist of at least one subjectivity indicator which makes each headline sensational (Lee, 2022).

However, the emphasis on subjectivity of the present study goes beyond descriptiveness. While both Anderson (2017) and McAndrew and Milenkovic (2002) discussed only descriptive language, they did not study into the emotional tone or bias conveyed by word choices. In relation to attitude of Page Six, the study found that the overall tone of the headlines leans heavily toward negativity. Over 80% of the headlines were classified as negative. This finding not only suggests how Page Six headlines create the descriptive writing style but also how they potentially influence reader perception through subjective language choices.

That means focusing on subjectivity in headlines presents a valuable addition to the current understanding of how language shapes reader's minds. According to both findings, it presents the connection between two findings that intentionally have the practice of using negative headlines through the frequent use of the particular linguistics features (contents words depicting trait and action). Therefore, both findings contribute to our understanding of how news outlets like Page Six tailor their headlines and resonate with their target readers.

Definitely, the practice of writing gossip news headlines on Page Six would not be employed without reasons. To some extent, this practice could imply how Page Six serves their target readers' preferences since Page Six caters to both the cognitive and social aspects. For this reason, the findings can be applied for both further investigation and self-application. First, the findings of the sentiment analysis and employing the content words that support reader's visualization can be developed to investigate the practice of online news consumers. By building upon the foundation laid by this study, future research can dig deeper into the 'why' behind negative headlines and their impact on readers. Future research could analyze how preferences for negativity in news headlines vary across different demographics such as age groups or sociocultural backgrounds. Since understanding the motivations and effectiveness of this approach can inform broader discussions about journalism and its influence on news consumption habits, the analysis could provide insights into the broader media landscape. Additionally, the identification of linguistic features associated with subjective headlines offers a valuable starting point for developing tools that promote greater objectivity and transparency in news writing. Future research could leverage these findings to develop effective tools for journalists or editors to identify and potentially adjust headlines that might be perceived as overly biased or sensational

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