

The role of evaluative nouns in shaping modern English movie discourse: An axiological and morphological analysis

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received 04 March 2026

Revised: 19 March 2026

Accepted 02 April 2026

Available Online 30 April 2026

Keywords

Artificial intelligence

EFL

Google Gemini

Lexical appropriateness

Paragraph writing

ABSTRACT

Evaluative language has been widely examined, but evaluative nouns in cinematic discourse remain insufficiently studied. This study addresses this gap by systematically analyzing evaluative nouns in English movie dialogue. A sample of 176 lexemes with explicit evaluative marking was selected from authoritative dictionaries and analyzed using the Movie Corpus with a frequency threshold of ≥ 10 occurrences. The study combines lexicographic analysis with corpus-based methods to identify recurrent patterns and contextual usage. The findings reveal a strong quantitative asymmetry between negative and positive evaluative nouns (84 vs. 8), indicating a linguistic tendency to mark deviations in cinematic language. Morphologically, evaluative meanings are primarily realized through suffixation, with -y/-ie, -ling, -er, and -o demonstrating high productivity in the dataset. These suffixes exhibit functional ambivalence, encoding both pejorative and meliorative meanings depending on context. The results show that evaluative nouns function as recurrent elements in cinematic dialogue, contributing to character construction and interactional dynamics. This study contributes to evaluative morphology and discourse analysis by integrating lexicographic and corpus-based approaches. The findings may inform research in film studies, translation, and applied linguistics.



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How to Cite: Snikhovska, I., Soloviova, L., Bereziuk, J., Poplavska, S., & Zalibovska-Ilnitska, Z. (2026). The role of evaluative nouns in shaping modern English movie discourse: An axiological and morphological analysis. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal*, 9(1), 109-120. <https://doi.org/10.12928/eltej.v9i1.15939>

1. Introduction

Linguistic evaluation refers to the expression of value judgments in language. It is grounded in socially shared norms that guide communicative behavior across contexts (Parviz et al., 2024; Stará, 2020; Tianying & Bogoyavlenskaya, 2023). In linguistic research, evaluation is typically understood as a cognitive and communicative mechanism through which speakers interpret and categorize reality (Li, 2021; Gao et al., 2024). At the same time, it is important to distinguish evaluation from axiology: axiology constitutes the philosophical theory of values, whereas evaluation refers to their linguistic expression. In this study, evaluation is treated as a linguistic category, while axiology provides its broader conceptual background (Liefke, 2024; Barradas & Sakka, 2022).

Although evaluative language has been widely studied across different discourse types, including media and film-related texts (Omar & Razi, 2022; Fuoli et al., 2022), evaluative nouns as a distinct lexical category remain underexplored, particularly in cinematic discourse (Sarfati, 2024; Wang, 2023). This gap

is especially evident in movie dialogue, where nouns with inherent evaluative meanings (e.g., rascal, genius, monster, angel) play an important role in character portrayal and audience alignment (Palmer, 2024; Chang et al., 2024). Cinematic discourse differs from everyday communication in that it is scripted, performative, and oriented toward producing specific effects on viewers (Lomas, 2023; Liu et al., 2023). In this context, evaluative nouns function not only as lexical items but also as tools for structuring interaction and shaping character relations. Despite sustained scholarly attention to evaluative adjectives and verbs, evaluative nouns have not received systematic analysis (McManus, 2024). The present study addresses this gap by focusing on evaluative nouns with inherent emotional and evaluative semantics in contemporary English-language cinematic discourse.

The aim of this study is to analyze evaluative nouns in contemporary English-language cinematic discourse. To achieve this aim, the study (1) compiles a sample of evaluative nouns based on explicit evaluative marking, (2) identifies dominant word-formation patterns, particularly affixation (-y/-ie, -ling, -er, -o), and (3) examines their pragmatic functions and contextual usage in cinematic dialogue.

The study advances the hypothesis that evaluative nouns in cinematic discourse form a dynamic lexical class whose meanings emerge through the interaction of morphological structure and discursive context.

Novelty. This study makes several contributions. First, it provides a systematic and corpus-validated classification of evaluative nouns in English-language cinematic discourse. Second, it demonstrates the functional ambivalence of key derivational suffixes (-y/-ie, -ling, -er, -o), which can encode both pejorative and meliorative meanings depending on context. Third, it links morphological patterns to pragmatic functions in scripted dialogue, including the marking of in-group solidarity, the stigmatization of outsiders, and the simplification of moral positioning. Unlike previous studies of general evaluative lexis (Kosmeda et al., 2024), this research focuses specifically on evaluative nouns and their role in constructing character relations and ideological meanings in cinematic discourse.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Nature and Structure of Evaluation

Contemporary linguistic scholarship features a substantial body of research devoted to linguistic evaluation. In the authors' view, particularly promising insights emerge from axiological studies. Within the present research, special attention is given to Astri's et al. (2024) theory of evaluation. The author delineates the structure of evaluation by distinguishing mandatory and optional components. The mandatory elements encompass subjective and objective factors that reflect the value relationship between subject and object, alongside properties of the evaluative predicate (such as emotionality, rationality, expressiveness, and affectivity). This work proves valuable for the current study by providing a comprehensive theoretical framework for evaluation analysis, one that accounts for both explicit and implicit elements while clearly defining structural components. Nevertheless, the theory lacks empirical validation, appears overly complex for practical application, and overlooks cultural variability in evaluative structures.

2.2. Classification and Nature of Evaluation

According to Malyuga (2024), evaluation processes can be classified into five types: (1) positive/negative/neutral, (2) general/specific, (3) objective/subjective, (4) emotional/rational/emotional-rational, and (5) absolute/comparative. Rational evaluation reflects widely accepted intellectual judgments, whereas emotional evaluation conveys the speaker's feelings, frequently amplified by intensifiers to enhance expressiveness and affectivity. Shuxratovna (2025) emphasizes the pivotal role of evaluation in social and communicative processes, arguing that every evaluative utterance contains a subjective component – the speaker's attitude toward the object – while the so-called objective (or descriptive) component is optional, thereby calling into question the objectivity of evaluations. The "truth" of an evaluation is often subjective and deemed reliable only by individuals sharing similar worldviews. Notably, the expressive and properly evaluative components of an utterance's meaning exist independently of one another (Sarfati, 2024). The scale of uniform evaluation is inextricably linked to the object's nature; its structure reflects the two principal aspects – objective and subjective – and is determined by the proportion of properly evaluative to descriptive content. In language, different means of expressing evaluation are oriented toward distinct sides of this scale. Although Malyuga's typology offers a comprehensive classification system that acknowledges the interdisciplinary nature of evaluation research, overlaps between categories introduce analytical ambiguity, undermining practical utility. The

approach notably lacks clear operational definitions for category application. Similarly, the distinction between expressive and evaluative components, while conceptually insightful, suffers from the absence of a verifiable methodology for their practical differentiation in linguistic analysis.

2.3. Evaluation, Stereotypes, Subjectivity and Modern Research in Axiological Linguistics

Liefke's (2024) axiological analysis centers on an evaluative scale that permits a neutral position where "good" and "evil" remain balanced. This scale is grounded in an evaluative stereotype comprising a conventional set of features that serves as a standard for comparative verification of objects (Palmer, 2024). The evaluative predicate constitutes a key structural element, integrating the act of evaluation into the subject's conceptual worldview (Capps, 2024). Contemporary axiological linguistics focuses on the systematic analysis of evaluative meanings, with particular emphasis on functional aspects of axiological categories (Saint-Joanis, 2024), the specificity of linguistic means of expression (Gries, 2023; Solovyova & Snikhovska, 2024), pragmatic factors (Thompson et al., 2014), and detailed examination of morphological parameters in the realization of axiological meanings (Kosmeda et al., 2024). Despite its pronounced interdisciplinary character and methodological diversity, axiological linguistics exhibits conceptual fragmentation. The lack of critical reflection on the compatibility of different approaches results in the isolated operation of research streams.

2.4. Cross-Linguistic Evaluation of Negative Emotions

Comparative studies in the linguistics of emotions have gained particular relevance in recent years. Puhach (2024) analyzes English and Ukrainian phraseological units denoting negative states, revealing language-specific patterns: English phraseology predominantly represents a "negative emotional state," whereas Ukrainian emphasizes the "expression of emotion" or "negative emotional action." These findings demonstrate a correlation between the category of evaluation and nomination processes, wherein evaluative terms serve to mark denotata. Such concepts are systematized in the language's evaluative thesaurus – a key segment of its lexico-semantic system that provides a holistic view of axiological categories. Despite the topic's extensive study, there persists a tendency toward overgeneralization based on comparisons of only two linguistic systems, with dialectal variations often overlooked. This narrows the predictive potential of conclusions and limits their applicability in broader linguistic contexts.

2.5. The Role of Evaluation in the American English Lexicon

Polli (2025) investigates transformations of evaluative meaning within the semantic structure of American English discourse, challenging the traditional notion of linear semantic processes. The study demonstrates that axiological shifts extend beyond mere amelioration or pejoration. According to the author, the synergy of emotive and evaluative components gives rise to both conventional and occasional changes, with extralinguistic factors playing a decisive role in semantic processes. Despite the value of its diachronic perspective, the work exhibits methodological imprecision in differentiating types of semantic shifts, particularly in underestimating the role of intralinguistic mechanisms. Issues of axiological marking in evaluative lexis also occupy a prominent place in linguo-axiological discourse. Odrekhivska (2021) argues that evaluation determines the meaning and scope of historicisms in context, thereby influencing translation transformation strategies. Norov (2024), in turn, proposes an integrative approach to modality analysis in Italian, treating the axiological mode as one element within a multi-level system that balances objective and subjective parameters while integrating epistemological and ontological dimensions of utterance. Although these studies offer refined analytical models, their high level of theoretical abstraction and complex terminology somewhat restrict practical applicability. Nonetheless, they provide essential methodological grounding for analyzing evaluative nouns in broader communicative contexts. In summary, despite the abundance of approaches to studying evaluation, linguistic theory of this category still requires comprehensive description. Evaluation in language, as a multifaceted phenomenon, integrates cognitive, lexical, and pragmatic characteristics, reflecting the subject's attitude toward reality. Consequently, there remains an urgent need for a thorough classification of evaluative lexis that accounts for both subjective intentionality and objective properties of reality.

2.6. Axiological and Evaluative Aspects of Historicism and Modality

Odrekhivska (2021) investigates the axiological aspect of historicisms, arguing that evaluation determines the type and scope of a historicism's meaning in a given context, thereby informing a translator's choice of translation transformations. Similarly, Norov (2024) thoroughly analyzes evaluative statements, proposing an approach that converges modality and modus, ontology and epistemology, and synthesis and analysis. In this framework, the Italian language's modal system primarily aims to balance

the objective and subjective. Author defines modality through various modes (perceptual, emotional, epistemic, volitional, axiological) and sees it as a four-level entity: modal field, modal value, modal unit, and functional-semantic option. While these studies successfully connect evaluation to translation studies and modality research while providing sophisticated analytical frameworks, their highly theoretical nature offers limited practical application potential. The complex terminology employed may hinder accessibility for researchers and practitioners, though the approaches offer valuable methodological frameworks for analyzing evaluative nouns within broader modal systems.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Procedure

The first stage of the research involved the selection of evaluative lexical units from the dictionary resources of the English language. At this stage, methods of continuous sampling as well as analysis of dictionary definitions were utilized. The second stage of the study involved the classification of the selected lexical units. During this classification, we employed a set of criteria, namely: part-of-speech affiliation, types of evaluation (positive and negative), as well as derivational word-building strategies. An annotated dataset was compiled during this stage, effectively illustrating the evaluative nuances of lexical units in the English language. With this aim, we utilized the analysis of dictionary definitions, classification methods, and descriptive approaches, employing methods of both quantitative and qualitative statistical analysis. The third stage focused on ascertaining the predominance of evaluative derived substantives in the movie discourse, aimed at drawing conclusions regarding the evaluative characteristics inherent in cinematic language.

3.2. Discussion

The empirical foundation of the study was formed by a curated sample of 176 evaluative lexical units. The selection of these lexemes was conducted through continuous sampling from modern English explanatory dictionaries. Specific criteria were established to focus the research. Lexemes were included in the sample only if their dictionary entry contained an explicit evaluative component, often indicated by labels such as *disapproving*, *derogatory*, *contemptuous*, *ironic*, *humorous*, *approving*, *affectionate*, or *informal*. Furthermore, the evaluation had to be an inherent part of the word's core meaning, rather than a context-dependent implication. The primary sources for sampling included four authoritative dictionaries: *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (5th ed., 2010), *Collins English Dictionary* (12th ed., 2014), *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2003), and *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (Newest ed., 2022). The choice of these sources provided a balanced representation of both American and British lexicographic traditions.

The sampling process involved a meticulous manual review of relevant entries. It began with the systematic identification of words with the specified evaluative labels. Each eligible lexeme was then extracted and cross-referenced across the other dictionaries to confirm its evaluative status. Finally, a non-duplicated list of 176 units was compiled to form the core sample for subsequent analysis. This sample is considered sufficient for identifying key patterns and tendencies because it was formed through the method of continuous sampling from multiple authoritative dictionaries, ensuring systematic coverage of explicitly marked evaluative units. This principled approach, based on strict selection criteria requiring inherent evaluative meaning confirmed across sources, guarantees both the quality and sufficiency of the data for revealing fundamental patterns in evaluative noun formation and usage. However, it is important to acknowledge that the sample includes only lexemes with explicit evaluative marking in dictionaries. Implicitly evaluative nouns, whose evaluative meaning depends on context, are not represented in the sample. Therefore, the findings reflect patterns among explicitly marked evaluative units rather than the full spectrum of evaluative meaning in cinematic discourse.

The sample size of 176 units was determined by the principle of data saturation, meaning that continued dictionary sampling did not yield new evaluative patterns or suffix types. This size is consistent with comparable corpus-based studies of evaluative lexis in specialized discourse, which typically operate with samples ranging from 150 to 200 manually verified units.

3.3. Research Methods

Theoretical methods of linguistic research were used to achieve the research goal. The analytical method was used to assess the current state of English language development. The research was also based on the method of abstraction, which involves moving from the analysis of general theoretical

framework to the formation of specific generalizations. *The continuous sampling method* facilitated the selection of lexemes for in-depth analysis. Through the implementation of *the dictionary definition method*, we carried out the analysis of the lexical units' types of evaluation (positive and negative), as well as word-building strategies. *The classification method* enabled us to distinguish the selected lexemes based on their parts of speech categorization, as well as their manifestations and word-building strategies. This methodology also made it possible to create an annotated dataset that exemplify the types of evaluation (positive and negative), as well as word-building strategies. Employing both *quantitative and qualitative analysis*, we ascertained the percentage values of the trends examined within the entire sample.

Furthermore, an important stage in the study was *corpus-based approach* aimed at “describing and explaining the linguistic models of variability and usage” (Pescuma et al., 2023) grounded on representative sample (Larsson et al., 2022). Corpus-based research is largely deductive, since it begins with existing descriptions, categories, and classifications that the linguist uses before starting to work with the corpus, which are then tested on the corpus data. In this case, the use of the corpus is a research methodology, and the corpus-based approach is ascertaining (Jenset & McGillivray, 2017) in its essence. According to Csomay & Crawford (2024), Desagulier (2017), a linguistic corpus characterized by a number of distinctive features (sample-based, balanced, representative, comparable, and naturalistic), which clearly distinguish it from electronic libraries, electronic text collections, and archives.

Corpus analysis was conducted using *The Movie Corpus* by performing lemma-based searches for each identified evaluative noun to examine its actual usage patterns in cinematic discourse. The search accounted for frequency thresholds, prioritizing contexts where these nouns occurred at least 10 times. The threshold of 10 occurrences was selected for two reasons. First, it excludes hapax legomena (words appearing only once in the corpus), which may represent idiosyncratic or accidental usage rather than stable evaluative functions in cinematic dialogue. Second, a minimum of 10 occurrences allows for the observation of recurrent syntactic patterns and collocational behavior, which is necessary for reliable pragmatic analysis. This threshold follows established practices in corpus-based discourse analysis, where frequency cut-offs typically range between 5 and 15 occurrences depending on corpus size and research focus.

The corpus data serve both a validating and a complementary function relative to the dictionary data. Validation occurs when corpus examples confirm the evaluative polarity indicated by dictionary labels (e.g., a noun marked as derogatory in the dictionary consistently appears in negative contexts in movie dialogue). The complementary function arises when corpus analysis reveals pragmatic nuances not captured by dictionary definitions, such as the affectionate use of a suffix that is predominantly pejorative in lexicographic descriptions. Thus, the combination of dictionary-based sampling and corpus-based verification provides a more complete picture of evaluative noun behavior than either source alone.

3.4. Tools

The study utilized the functional capabilities of Microsoft Excel software. Its built-in elements were used to visualize the obtained data.

4. Findings and Discussion

The first stage of the analysis involved selecting and classifying evaluative lexical units from English dictionaries. A total of 176 lexemes were included. Figure 1 shows the distribution by evaluative polarity (positive vs. negative).

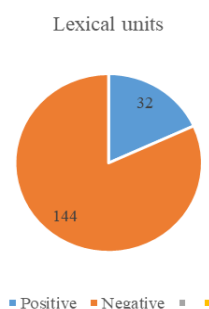


Fig. 1. The distribution of the evaluative lexis according to the evaluation sign
Source: AHD (2016), Collins (2014), Woodford (2003), Webster (2022)

As shown in Table 1, negatively marked nouns predominate in the sample, consistent with the broader linguistic tendency to mark deviations more explicitly than conformities. This asymmetry is not merely quantitative but also semantic: negative nouns cover a wider range of human failings (dishonesty, stupidity, cruelty), whereas positive nouns are fewer and cluster around concepts of moral or aesthetic excellence.

Table 1. The Distribution of Evaluative Lexis by Part of Speech and Evaluative Polarity

Part of speech	Sign “ - “	Sign “ + “	Total (lexical units)
Nouns	84	8	92
Adjectives	22	14	36
Verbs	14	0	14
Substantival word-combinations	13	5	18
Adjectival word-combinations	7	3	10
Verbal word-combinations	4	2	6
Total	144	32	176

Source: AHD (2016), Collins (2014), Woodford (2003), Webster (2022)

Nouns constitute the largest category (92 out of 176 units, or 52%), with a strong predominance of negative evaluation (84 negative vs. 8 positive). Adjectives follow with 36 units, while verbs in the sample are exclusively negative (14 units). This distribution confirms that nouns are the primary carriers of inherent evaluative meaning in English. Representative examples of inherently negative nouns include *devil*, *monster*, *rascal*, *scoundrel*, *crook*, *moron*; positive examples include *angel*, *beauty*, *genius*, *joy*. The full list is available in the supplementary materials. Figure 2 visualizes the same distribution by part of speech.

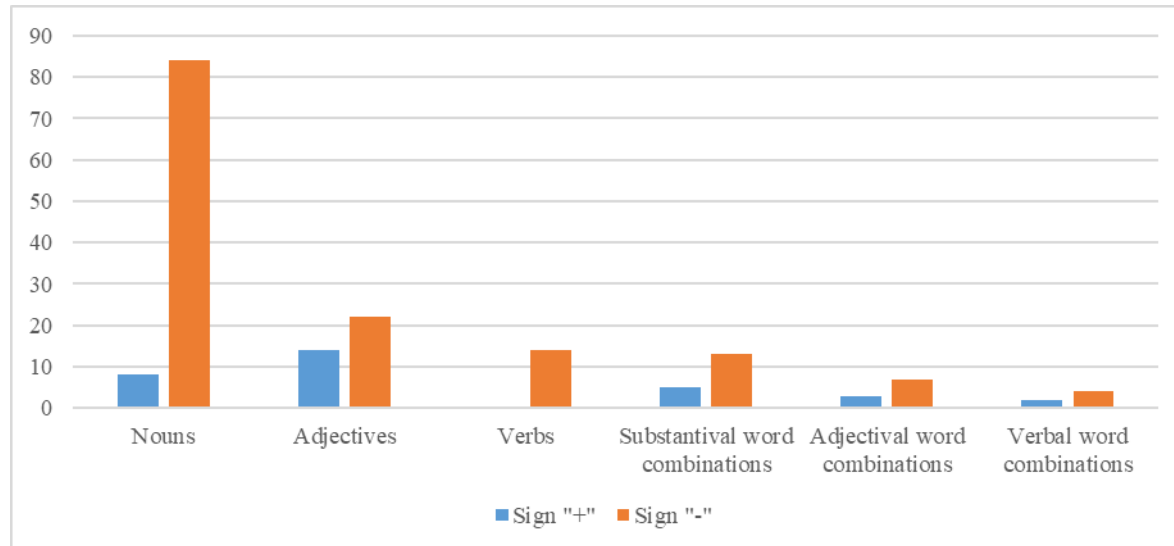


Fig1. The distribution of the evaluative lexis according to the part of speech affiliation and evaluation sign

Source: AHD (2016), Collins (2014), Woodford (2003), Webster (2022)

Beyond simple polarity, the analysis focused on word formation patterns, particularly suffixation, as a key mechanism for generating evaluative nouns. Derived evaluative nouns in the sample fall into three main types: deverbatives (e.g., *buttinsky* < *to butt in*, *mugger* < *to mug*, *pusher* < *to push*), denominals, and deadjectivals. These formations share a common property: the suffix carries the evaluative charge while the stem provides descriptive content. Table 2 systematizes the most productive suffixes in the sample, along with their evaluative polarity and contextual examples from The Movie Corpus.

Table 2. Morphological and Semantic Analysis of Evaluative Diminutives in Colloquial English

Suffix	Evaluative Polarity & Connotation	Lexicographical Data & Sources	Contextual Examples (The Movie Corpus, 2024)
-y (-ie)	Pejorative: Contempt, social stigma, or mocking of deviations.	rummy (drunkard), druggie (habitual user), chippy (promiscuous) (AHD, 2016); (Webster, 2022).	"A rummy like that lives on dreams"; "a bad case of druggie pneumonia"
-y (-ie)	Meliorative: Affection, attractiveness, or friendly address.	cutie, patootie (attractive), buddy, bunny, chappie, chummy (AHD, 2016); (Collins, 2014); (Green, 2010).	"if you've got a cutie Who's a real sweet patootie"; "Wait, what? Okay, bunny"
-ling	Pejorative: Disapproval, perceived insignificance, or mercenary status.	hireling (mercenary), priestling (insignificant priest) (AHD, 2016); (Webster, 2022).	"She's a hireling... she goes back on the next train"; "What do you want exactly, little priestling?"
-o	Pejorative: Disparagement, irony, or labeling shoddy quality.	drinko (party-goer), cheapo (shoddy), plonko (alcoholic) (The Movie Corpus, 2024).	"Yeah, it's a cheapo, but it still does the job"; "Thanks very much, plonko"
-er	Meliorative: Admiration for ambition or physical qualities.	hummer (ambitious/noteworthy), looker (attractive person) (Green, 2010).	"She's very nice, Quite a looker"; "Boy, that Rollie's somethin' else... That's a ripper."

Source: AHD (2016), Collins (2014), Woodford (2003), Webster (2022)

Several patterns emerge from Table 2. First, the suffix -y/-ie exhibits functional ambivalence: it can express either contempt (druggie, chippy, rummy) or affection (buddy, cutie, bunny) depending on context. Second, suffixes -ling and -o are almost exclusively pejorative, marking insignificance (priestling) or shoddy quality (cheapo). Third, the suffix -er appears in both pejorative and meliorative roles, but in the sample, it is predominantly meliorative (looker, ripper, hummer).

These morphological patterns are not merely taxonomic; they acquire pragmatic weight in cinematic dialogue. For example, the affectionate use of bunny occurs in romantic exchanges, signaling intimacy, whereas druggie appears in confrontational scenes to stigmatize and distance. The predominance of negative formations (84 vs. 8) suggests that movie dialogue relies more heavily on explicit deviation marking than on positive evaluation, a finding that aligns with the narrative function of conflict in cinema.

5. Discussion

This study set out to systematically analyze evaluative nouns in English-language cinematic discourse, focusing on their morphological patterns and pragmatic functions. The findings confirm the hypothesis that evaluative nouns constitute a dynamic lexical class whose semantics emerges at the intersection of word formation and discursive context. Below, the results are discussed in relation to theoretical frameworks, previous research, and the specific characteristics of movie dialogue.

5.1. Asymmetry Between Negative and Positive Evaluation

The predominance of negatively marked evaluative nouns (84 vs. 8) aligns with the broader linguistic principle that languages tend to mark deviations from norms more explicitly than conformities (Slipetska et al., 2023). This finding is consistent with Kovalchuk's (2025) typology of "good" (instrumental, technical, facilitative, utilitarian, medical, hedonistic), which suggests that positive evaluation is often more differentiated conceptually but less frequent lexically. However, the asymmetry observed in cinematic discourse is particularly pronounced compared to general language use. One possible explanation is that movie dialogue prioritizes conflict and character opposition, which naturally favors negative evaluation as a tool for establishing antagonists and moral stakes (Bednarek, 2018).

It is important to note, as acknowledged in the methodology, that the sample includes only explicitly marked evaluative nouns. Implicitly evaluative expressions, which might include positive meanings conveyed through neutral nouns in context, are not captured. Therefore, the 84:8 ratio reflects the distribution of inherent evaluative polarity in dictionary-defined nouns, not the full range of evaluative effects in actual movie discourse. Future research should examine implicit evaluation to provide a more complete picture.

5.2. Asymmetry Between Negative and Positive Evaluation

The analysis of derivational suffixes confirms that evaluative meanings are systematically encoded through morphological means, supporting the framework of evaluative morphology proposed by Grandi (2015) and applied to Ukrainian by Kosmeda et al. (2024). Three main patterns emerged.

First, the suffix *-y/-ie* exhibits high functional ambivalence, serving both pejorative and meliorative functions depending on context. This ambivalence supports the view that evaluative morphology is not inherently fixed but is negotiated in discourse (Martín Calvo, 2022). For instance, *bunny* (affectionate) and *druggie* (contemptuous) share the same suffix but acquire opposite pragmatic values through collocational patterns and speech situation. This duality is particularly useful in cinematic dialogue, where characters may use the same suffix to express solidarity or stigmatization depending on their relationship.

Second, suffixes *-ling* and *-o* are almost exclusively pejorative in the sample. Their function is to reduce the referent to a single negative attribute (e.g., *hireling* as a mercenary, *cheapo* as shoddy object). This reduction aligns with the ideological function of evaluative nouns in film: they simplify moral frameworks for the audience by clearly marking antagonists or morally compromised characters (Palmer, 2024).

Third, the suffix *-er* appears predominantly in meliorative roles (*looker*, *ripper*, *hummer*), though it can also be pejorative in other contexts (e.g., *pusher* for drug dealer). This suggests that *-er* is less inherently evaluative than *-ling* or *-o*; its evaluative charge depends more on the stem meaning and discourse context. Compared to Astri's et al. (2024) general theory of evaluation, which treats evaluative predicates as having mandatory and optional components, the present findings suggest that for nouns, the evaluative component is often fused with the suffix rather than being a separate predicate. This morphological fusion has implications for how evaluative meanings are processed in real-time comprehension, a point worth exploring in future psycholinguistic research.

5.3. Pragmatic Functions in Cinematic Discourse

The corpus analysis revealed that evaluative nouns are not merely ornamental; they perform specific pragmatic work in movie dialogue. Following Bednarek's (2018) analysis of television dialogue, evaluative nouns in film serve three interrelated functions. First, they mark in-group solidarity. Affectionate terms like *buddy*, *cutie*, or *bunny* occur in scenes where characters express intimacy or shared identity. These usages are often reciprocal and accompanied by other markers of positive politeness. Second, they stigmatize outsiders. Pejorative terms like *druggie*, *hireling*, or *cheapo* appear in confrontational scenes, where one character delegitimizes another. These nouns reduce complex individuals to a single negative category, simplifying moral alignment for the viewer. Third, they construct character hierarchies. The choice of an evaluative noun can index power relations. For example, a superior addressing a subordinate as a *hireling* reinforces status asymmetry, whereas an equal addressing another as *buddy* flattens hierarchy.

These functions are amplified by the scripted nature of cinematic discourse. Unlike spontaneous conversation, movie dialogue is designed to achieve specific perlocutionary effects on the audience. Evaluative nouns thus become tools for filmmakers to guide viewer sympathy and antipathy. The predominance of negative formations (84 vs. 8) suggests that conflict-driven narratives rely more heavily on stigmatization than on solidarity marking, a finding that aligns with the prevalence of antagonist-driven plots in mainstream cinema.

5.4. Comparison with Previous Research

The present findings both confirm and extend previous work. Polli's (2025) study of semantic shifts in American English noted that evaluative meaning changes over time, but the present study shows that synchronic ambivalence (e.g., *-y/-ie* as both pejorative and meliorative) is equally important. Puhach's (2024) cross-linguistic comparison of negative emotion phrases found language-specific patterns; similarly, the morphological preferences for *-ling* and *-o* may be specific to English and might not translate directly to other languages.

Unlike general studies of evaluative lexis (Malyuga, 2024; Shuxratovna, 2025), the present study focused specifically on nouns in scripted dialogue. This focus reveals that the category of part of speech matters: nouns carry stable evaluative meanings that adjectives or verbs do not, because nouns categorize rather than describe. This categorical difference has implications for translation studies, where an evaluative noun in English may require a phrase or adjective in another language (Odrekhivska, 2021).

5.5. Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample was restricted to explicitly marked evaluative nouns from dictionaries. Implicitly evaluative nouns (e.g., a neutral noun that becomes evaluative in context) were excluded. Second, the analysis used a single corpus (The Movie Corpus), which, while large, may not represent all genres or periods of cinema. Third, frequency thresholds (≥ 10) exclude rare but potentially significant usages. Fourth, the study is synchronic; diachronic changes in evaluative noun usage in cinema remain unexplored.

Future research could address these limitations by incorporating implicit evaluation measures, comparing multiple corpora (e.g., film dialogue vs. real conversation), and conducting cross-linguistic comparisons to identify universal vs. language-specific patterns of evaluative morphology. Additionally, experimental studies could test whether viewers' moral judgments are affected by the presence or absence of evaluative nouns in dialogue.

6. Conclusion

This study contributes to evaluative morphology and cinematic discourse analysis by providing a systematic analysis of evaluative nouns in English-language movie dialogue. The main contributions are threefold: (1) a corpus-validated classification of evaluative nouns based on morphological structure and axiological polarity; (2) evidence of functional ambivalence in key derivational suffixes (-y/-ie, -ling, -er, -o); and (3) identification of the pragmatic roles these nouns play in constructing character relationships and ideological meanings in cinematic discourse.

The findings support the hypothesis that evaluative nouns form a dynamic lexical class, although this conclusion is constrained by the study's methodological limitations. The quantitative asymmetry between negative and positive nouns (84 vs. 8) aligns with broader linguistic patterns of deviation marking.

Limitations. The sample includes only lexemes with explicit evaluative labels in dictionaries, excluding implicitly evaluative nouns. The use of a single corpus (The Movie Corpus) means that the findings primarily reflect mainstream contemporary cinema rather than all genres or historical periods. The frequency threshold (≥ 10) excludes rare but potentially meaningful usages.

Future research should incorporate implicit evaluation, compare multiple corpora (e.g., across genres and time periods), and extend the analysis cross-linguistically. Such directions would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of evaluative meaning in cinematic discourse and its role in shaping audience perception.

Acknowledgment

The authors express their profound gratitude to all individuals who played a role in the research undertaking, including those involved in the collection and examination of data, as well as those who provided constructive feedback.

Declarations

- Author contribution** : All the authors participated and were involved in the conceptualization of the study, collation of data, analysis and review of the study as well as the writing, and proof reading of the manuscript. The manuscript has been read and approved by all the authors and all the authors were involved in the conceptualization, collation of data, analysis and review of the study. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript
- Funding statement** : This research did not receive any financial support.
- Conflict of interest** : The authors declare no conflicts of interest.
- Ethical declaration** : This research did not involve human participants, animal subjects, or any material that requires ethical approval.

The authors fully support ELTEJ's commitment to maintaining high standards of academic integrity, professional conduct, and honesty in all academic and professional activities.

Additional information : No additional information is available for this paper.

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