



Unpacking ideological affiliation through evaluative language: Attitudinal and coupling patterns in *The Jakarta Post* editorials

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ABSTRACT

Editorials are widely recognized as a space where newspapers express their views and shape public opinion. While much attention has been given to the persuasive function of editorials, relatively little scholarly work has explored how evaluative language is used to build affiliation between writers and readers. This study addresses that gap by examining how *The Jakarta Post* constructs ideological affiliation through evaluative languages (attitudes), coupling patterns, and affiliation strategies. Drawing on Appraisal Theory within Systemic Functional Linguistics, the study explores how attitudes are constructed and combined with ideational content to position readers. The data were five editorial texts which were selected using a constructed week sampling method over a one-month period to ensure variety and balance. The findings show that appreciation is the most common type of attitude, which often appears in negative forms to criticize policies and institutional performance. Judgment is often used in the investigated editorials, especially when evaluating public figures. In contrast, affect appears less frequently, but it still plays an important role in conveying shared emotional concerns. These attitudes are usually presented through couplings with ideational elements such as actors, events, or policies. This combination makes the evaluations more persuasive. Two dominant coupling patterns were identified, namely [NEG + INDONESIA] which is used to criticize government performance and policy and [POS + INDONESIA] which highlights national values or collective goals. To foster alignment with readers, the editorials employ affiliation strategies such as conceding and overriding (a divisive strategy) and repetition (a solidary strategy) which help guide readers toward shared viewpoints or editorial stances. The findings shed light on a clearer understanding of how evaluative language in editorials builds ideological affiliation. The study offers theoretical insights into appraisal in Indonesian media discourse and practical contributions by highlighting how evaluative language shapes reader perspectives and supports media literacy development.



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INTRODUCTION

Editorials in Indonesian media are more than spaces for expressing opinion. They are powerful tools that shape public opinion on national issues. This persuasive power primarily comes from the way language is used. As a result, the role of language now goes far beyond everyday communication. It has become a powerful tool to construct social reality. Whether conveyed through headlines, stories, or editorials, the language of media discourse helps shape readers' perspectives on reality by selectively highlighting certain events, problems, or issues. Therefore, rather than neutrally presenting events, news content is purposefully crafted, reviewed, and packed with specific values or evaluative meanings reflected in language choices (Bednarek & Caple, 2012, 2017; Mulholland, 1994). These choices encourage readers to align with such values (Knox et al., 2010; Liu, 2018; Liu et al., 2025; Liu & Hood, 2019). In this manner, such language helps news agencies to construct collective perspectives, ideological positions, or identities actively (Richardson, 2007) and simultaneously project their own 'imagined,' 'ideal,' or 'putative' readers (see Hasan, 1999; White, 2020). These strategies help readers align or affiliate with the constructed positions and identities as reflected in editorials.

Editorials are purposefully designed to persuade. Unlike news reports, which maintain neutrality or objectivity, editorials provide writers with a space to share their views and respond to current events. Accordingly, such texts are much about arguments loaded with evaluative language (Martin & White, 2005; Ngai, 2022; Richardson & Stanyer, 2011; White, 2006, 2015; Zaidi & White, 2021). Editorials are widely recognized as expressions of an institutional voice (Ngai, 2022). In practice, editorial boards select certain issues, frame them to fit the institutional stance, and advance a particular ideology (see Keeble, 2006; Reeves & Keeble, 2015). The selection and framing of the issues, which are combined with evaluative meaning, enable editorial board members to position their institutions in the broader political spectrum and to influence public opinion.

Given their persuasive nature, editorial texts deploy various linguistic resources to establish a particular stance or ideological position. One of the most common strategies is the use of evaluative language. Current literature has discussed that evaluative language allows writers to express their values, support or challenge perspective, and position their readers (e.g., Hood, 2010; Martin & White, 2005; White, 2006, 2015). As mentioned earlier, the evaluative language used in editorials does not solely reflect individual opinion, but it

represents a broader institutional stance. Therefore, it is important to take a comprehensive approach to how evaluative meanings are encoded in editorials and how those contribute to constructing a particular point of view. The evaluative meanings can be systematically explored through the Appraisal framework, which provides analytical tools for mapping how language expresses attitude, engagement, and graduation (White, 2011). In particular, the appraisal system enables a deeper understanding of how editorial writers build alignment with readers and position them ideologically through shared values.

Much research has examined the evaluative language in editorials (Daniarsa & Kartika-Ningsih, 2023; Daniarsa & Mulatsih, 2020; Liu et al., 2025; Liu & Chang, 2021; Liu & Hood, 2019; Nurjanah, 2021; Simanjourang et al., 2023; Wijayanto, 2016). To name a few, Daniarsa and Mulatsih (2020) analyzed editorials on the Papua conflict and revealed that *Tempo* employed stronger negative judgments, whereas *Kompas* used more moderate language which reflects differing approaches to sensitive political issues. Nurjanah (2021) examined attitudes in editorials in *The Guardian*. She found that the writers expressed negative attitudes towards the government. Daniarsa and Kartika-Ningsih (2023) compared *Kompas* and *Tempo* editorials on the 2019 presidential election. They discovered that *Kompas* followed a discussion genre with implicit and cautious evaluations, while *Tempo* used an exposition structure with more explicit and critical stances. Liu et al. (2025) examine how editorial writers employed affiliation strategies, that is, conceding and overriding to negotiate opposing values in news in Australian editorial discourse and persuade readers to affiliate with the editorial stance. While these studies have helped to explain how evaluative language is used in editorials, studies which specifically focus on affiliation strategies in Indonesian editorial discourse remain largely unexplored.

Existing studies have focused on how attitudes are expressed or how editorials are organized. However, less attention has been given to how writers use language to build solidarity with readers and position themselves in relation to their audience. This gap matters because editorials are designed not only to inform but also to shape public opinion. This study addresses this gap by exploring how ideological affiliation is constructed in Indonesian editorials. In doing so, it offers new insight into how evaluative language is used across texts to guide readers toward shared viewpoints. A better understanding of these linguistic strategies can enhance media literacy by helping readers critically engage with editorial content in the Indonesian media landscape.

This present study examines how *The Jakarta Post* editorials use language to shape opinions and connect with their readers. Notably, it investigates how the editorials use Appraisal resources, especially attitude

and how these are combined with references to people, events, or issues through coupling patterns. To guide the analysis, this study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) What kinds of attitudes are used in *The Jakarta Post* editorials, and how often do they appear?
- 2) How are the attitudes combined with ideational entities (people, events, or issues) through coupling patterns?
- 3) What affiliation strategies are used in the investigated editorials to build a connection with the readers?

The findings of the current study are expected to broaden how Appraisal Theory is applied within Indonesian media settings and to offer a clearer view of how editorials convey shared values. This analysis deepens understanding of the ways ideological affiliation is constructed through language and how evaluative choices foster alignment between editorial writers and their audiences. It also adds to the ongoing development of Appraisal Theory by demonstrating how evaluative resources function across different cultural and media-specific contexts. From a practical perspective, the study shows how journalists use language to promote critical thinking and involve readers in public discussion. These insights can support media literacy by helping readers recognize persuasive language patterns in editorials. They may also serve as a valuable reference for journalists and educators in developing editorial content that promotes reflection and civic awareness.

METHOD

Research Design

The present study is grounded in a qualitative paradigm, specifically employing a qualitative case study design and discourse analysis. This design enables a detailed examination of how editorial writers use evaluative language and affiliate with their imagined readers thoroughly. The qualitative approach is well-suited for the investigation since it allows for an in-depth analysis of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Within this approach, the study adopts a case study design to investigate editorials published in *The Jakarta Post*, which focuses on their use of evaluative language. This design provides a holistic perspective (Gall et al., 2003; Yin, 2018) by treating the editorials as specific examples shaped by their context and connected to everyday media discourse.

To provide a detailed and in-depth analysis, this study employed discourse analysis, specifically using discourse semantics developed within the tradition of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Banks, 2019; Bloor & Bloor, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Discourse semantics is well-suited for examining how evaluative meanings are constructed across whole texts since

it allows for the investigation of language beyond isolated words and sentences and considers the broader contextual meanings (Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005). Given the study's aim to investigate how *The Jakarta Post* editorials use language to align with readers ideologically, this framework provides a robust analytical tool. The analysis focused on two key dimensions, namely Ideation, which explores how participants are categorized and Appraisal, which examines how stances, values, and attitudes are constructed, sourced, and intensified. Within the Appraisal system, this study focuses particularly on the subsystem of attitude, which reveals how emotions and judgments are expressed in editorial texts.

Analytical Framework

This study adopts the Appraisal framework (Hood, 2019; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005) to examine how evaluative meanings are constructed in editorials. The analysis focused on the attitude system, which captures how emotions, judgments, and evaluations are conveyed in discourse. The following components guide the analytical procedure of the present study:

- a. **Affect** refers to expressions of emotions and personal feelings (e.g., *joy, fear, frustration*) which are triggered by events, behaviors, or phenomena.
- b. **Judgment** involves the evaluation of people's behaviors and characters. This is typically classified into social esteem (normality, capacity, tenacity) and social sanction (veracity, propriety).
- c. **Appreciation** concerns the evaluation of things, events, or processes. It focuses on their emotional impact (reaction), structural qualities (composition), or significance (value).

Attitudinal values may be inscribed (explicitly stated through lexical items) or invoked (implied through contextual or ideational cues). Following Martin and White (2005), this study identified values invoked by analyzing three key strategies:

- a. **Provoke** involves activating attitudes through figurative or emotional language that makes readers feel something, although the attitude is not stated directly.
- b. **Flag** is used to invoke attitude using words that show how intense or mild something is. This way helps construct the writer's position.
- c. **Afford** conveys attitudes indirectly through the choice of words or ideas that reflect shared cultural values or expectations without saying them directly.

Each attitudinal value is paired with a corresponding ideational element. This is referred to as a coupling [attitude + ideation] (Hao & Humphrey, 2012; Martin, 2011). These couplings, which are central to

examining affiliation, refer to the semiotic process through which writers align with or distance themselves from their imagined readers by promoting or rejecting shared values (Martin et al., 2013). To explore how affiliation is constructed, this study applied Liu's (2017) classification of affiliation strategies. These strategies are grouped into:

- a. Divisive strategies which distance readers from undesirable values consist of:
 - **Conceding and overriding** refers to a way of cancelling a negative or positive evaluation by adding another point that changes how the first one is seen. This is typically signaled by contrastive conjunctions such as *but*, *however*, or *nevertheless*.
 - **Invalidating**, which refers to a strategy that is used to make a positive statement, appears less credible or less significant.
 - **Sarcasm** refers to when a positive word is used to describe something negative so that it creates a mocking or ironic effect.
- b. Solidary strategies which reinforce shared or preferred values consist of:
 - **Repetition** refers to the strategy that strengthens an evaluative position by repeating similar attitudinal expressions throughout a text.
 - **Antonymy** refers to the strategy that strengthens a message by using opposite ideas (antonyms) to highlight what is good and what is bad.
 - **Hyponymy** refers to the strategy which the same positive or negative attitude is applied across related ideas that belong to the same category
 - **Meronymy** refers to the strategy that spreads the same positive or negative attitude across different parts of something.

Data Collection

The data used in this study were taken from the online edition of *The Jakarta Post* available at <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/editorial>. *The Jakarta Post* is an English-language newspaper in Indonesia that is circulated nationally. It was chosen as the source of data since it plays a significant role in shaping public opinion and has a broad readership. To ensure a representative dataset, the present study adopts a constructed week method. This method "involves selecting days by a random process across several weeks to make up a composite week of days. The composite week may be five days (for a Monday to Friday composite) or six days (for a Monday to Saturday composite)" (Bell, 1991, p. 23). The use of a constructed week helps avoid bias from specific news events and offers both topics and time variation by ensuring every weekday is represented (Luke et al., 2011; Riffe et al., 1993). As a result, it captures how the newspaper presents its opinions across

different days. By employing constructed week sampling, the study minimized bias in data selection and enhanced the reliability of the findings.

Regarding the composite week, this study adopted a five-day constructed week. The data were collected between 3 February and 7 March 2025, resulting in a composite week of editorials. The five days within the composite week include Monday, 3 February; Tuesday, 11 February; Wednesday, 19 February; Thursday, 27 February; and Friday, 7 March. Table 1 shows the data used in the present study. Although the sample consists of only five texts, this is acceptable for a qualitative discourse analysis, which prioritizes depth of analysis over quantity (Patton, 2015). Furthermore, a smaller sample size enabled a focused and detailed examination of how evaluative and affiliative language is employed in each editorial, as exemplified by Liu (2017).

Table 1. Editorial texts used in the study

Dates	Titles	Topic	Word Counts
3 February 2025	Prudence in state budget	Public Budgeting	675
11 February 2025	Why we should stick with Paris Agreement	Climate Policy	694
19 February 2025	The good old days of global trade	International Trade	592
27 February 2025	Decide swiftly, secure the country	National Security	667
7 Maret 2025	Fighting floods, together	Disaster Management	742

Data Analysis Procedures

In analyzing the data, the study used the Appraisal framework introduced by Martin and White (2005; White, 2006, 2015). To ensure depth and clarity in the analysis, a multi-step procedure was followed. First, each editorial was carefully read by the researchers to gain an initial understanding of the overall evaluative stance embedded in the discourse. The editorials were then divided into analytical units, mainly at the sentence level, to help identify attitudinal expressions across lexical, clausal, and sentential structures. These units were examined for three categories of attitude: affect (emotions and feelings), judgment (evaluation of behavior or character), and appreciation (evaluation of entities, processes, or phenomena). Both inscribed (explicit) and invoked (implicit) attitudes were identified. The explicit realizations were identified through lexical items, while implicit ones were inferred from contextual cues such as graduation, metaphor, or culturally embedded meanings. Coding was performed manually by the primary researcher and

was guided by transcription conventions from Martin and White (2005) to ensure consistency throughout the process.

To enhance the reliability of the analysis, a negotiated coding process was implemented (Garrison et al., 2006). A second analyst with training in Appraisal Theory independently coded a subset of the data (approximately 20%). Differences in interpretation were discussed in detail, and agreement was reached through dialogue and reference to theoretical criteria. This process, consistent with established practices in discourse analysis, helped ensure a shared understanding of attitudinal meanings and improved the consistency of the coding. After coding was finalized, frequency patterns were then calculated to identify dominant evaluative tendencies and to support the interpretation of coupling patterns between attitudinal and ideational meanings. Table 2 exemplifies the procedure for analyzing Attitude and Coupling.

Table 2. An example of the analytical matrix to examine Attitude, Coupling, and Affiliation Strategies.

Texts	Attitude	Coupling [Attitude + Ideation]	Affiliation strategies
Prabowo <u>has called for loyalty</u> ... [+prop],	+ve judgment: propriety	[+ve judgment: propriety + Indonesia government]	Conceding
but without careful implementation and strong law enforcement, inefficiencies [-val] are likely.	-ve appreciation: valuation	[-ve appreciation: valuation + Indonesian policy]	Overriding

The next stage focuses on coupling analysis, which examines how attitudinal meanings are combined with ideational elements as the target of evaluation. This step identifies the pairs of [attitude + ideation] patterns that reflect editorial stances. Coupling analysis was conducted manually using a qualitative matrix to track and categorize patterns systematically, as shown in Table 2. The identification of coupling patterns was guided by established principles in discourse semantics.

To maintain consistency, an initial coding scheme was collaboratively tested on a sample of data by two analysts trained in Appraisal Theory. Any disagreements in the identification of couplings were resolved through a negotiated coding approach. Building on these patterns, the analysis then moves to examine affiliation strategies – specifically how *The Jakarta Post* uses language to establish social bonds with its imagined readership. This stage explores how attitudinal and coupling resources function persuasively, aligning readers with the newspaper's values and ideological positions.

FINDINGS

This section presents the attitudinal values and coupling patterns found in *The Jakarta Post* editorials. Specifically, it outlines the distribution of attitudinal resources, including affect, judgment, and appreciation, with reference to Martin and White (2005; White, 2006, 2011, 2015) across the dataset. In addition to mapping such attitudinal values, it reveals the most frequently occurring coupling patterns which combine attitudinal values with ideational targets or triggers and affiliation strategies.

Attitudinal Values in *The Jakarta Post* Editorials

The attitudinal values identified in the editorial texts from *The Jakarta Post* are presented in Table 2. The table categorizes the attitudinal values according to three primary types of Attitudes, that is, affect, judgment, and appreciation. For each type, positive and negative evaluative meanings are identified, and their respective frequencies are recorded. This quantitative overview provides a synoptic view and basis for identifying general trends in the use of attitudinal resources within the editorial discourse.

Tabel 3. Summary of attitudinal values in *The Jakarta Post* Editorials

No	Attitude	Frequency		Total
		Positive	Negative	
1	Affect	9	4	13
2	Judgment	34	31	65
3	Appreciation	17	51	68

Table 3 displays the distribution of attitudinal values in the investigated editorial texts. Appreciation appears as the most frequently used category with a total of 68 occurrences. This is closely followed by judgment, which occurs 65 times. Affect is used the least, with only 13 occurrences. In terms of polarity, judgment is relatively balanced. It comprises 34 positive and 31 negative occurrences. Appreciation shows more negative evaluations with 51 negative instances and only 17 positive ones. Affect includes nine positive and four negative instances. These statistical figures show variation in the frequency and polarity of attitudinal values within the editorials. These findings further support Martin and White's (2005) assertion that judgment and appreciation are central to opinion texts.

The dominant use of appreciation suggests that the editorial tends to focus on evaluating programs and social conditions. Conceptually, this type of attitudinal meaning is typically used to assess quality and effectiveness, as illustrated in the following excerpt, which contains both positive and negative appreciation values.

Excerpt 1. Appreciation values

The program aims to reach 82.9 million school children and pregnant mothers nationwide, or about a quarter of the country's population [t.+val]. In an **efficient** delivery system [-val], this may be the case. But the history of past government programs has shown that **poor** [-val] data as well as reporting and bureaucratic **inefficiency** [-val] have caused frequent misallocation and corruption.

In Excerpt 1, the first clause presents a positive evaluation of the program in terms of valuation [+val]. This evaluation is conveyed through a flagging strategy. It means the writer uses graduation resources such as numerical references “82.9 million” and “a quarter of the country's population” to trigger the positive evaluation from readers. The initial evaluation is then contrasted with negative evaluations (-ve appreciation: valuation) in the following clause. The evaluations here are expressed more directly through the lexical choices such as “efficient” and “poor”. These contrasting evaluations illustrate a shift in stance within the same excerpt. It moves from a positive evaluation of the scope of the program to a negative evaluation of the implementation.

Judgment emerges as the second most frequent category. Such judgment values serve to evaluate people's behavior, ethics, and capacity, especially those in positions of authority. Theoretically speaking, these values help the editorial establish accountability and assert moral or professional standards. The following excerpt illustrates instances of judgment related to propriety.

Excerpt 2. Judgment values

[2a] Hashim and Bahlil are known to have close ties with the coal industry, but as part of a government that is committed to energy transition toward net zero emissions, they [-prop] should have not made such statements in the first place.

[2b] the Prabowo administration [+prop] can **steer Indonesia confidently** through this changing landscape, ...

Excerpt 2 illustrates the use of judgment values through both negative and positive evaluations. Excerpt [2a] presents a negative judgment of propriety since the editorial comments on the actions of two public officials, Hashim and Bahlil, in relation to national environmental commitments. The evaluation is realized indirectly through the flagging strategy, as it draws on readers' knowledge of policy expectations to evaluate the officials' behavior. The trigger of judgment is underlined. The underlined phrase serves as the trigger for judgment, which indicates a token of negative propriety. In contrast, Excerpt [2b] conveys a positive judgment of propriety, which positions the Prabowo administration as the evaluated actor. This evaluation is realized directly through attitudinal lexis, specifically the phrase “steer

Indonesia confidently” and is coded as [+prop]. This instance suggests a positive assessment of the Indonesian government.

Although less frequent, affect values are used to express shared emotional responses and are often linked to issues of national concern or global challenges. Affect is typically expressed through collective or shared desires, which align the reader with the editor’s moral or emotional position. The following examples show affect in action.

Excerpt 3. Affect values

- [3a] We surely **do not want** [+des] to buy Trump’s anti-science rhetoric by withdrawing from the agreement, ...
- [3b] Surely, we **do not want** [+des] more disasters to happen in the coming years and closer to our home.

Excerpt 3 illustrates the use of affect values, especially in the form of positive emotional inclination. The words “We surely do not want” in the first clause reflect a shared desire to reject misinformation and continue supporting international efforts on climate cooperation. This evaluation is realized directly through the attitudinal lexis “want” which is marked as a positive desire. This is further reinforced by the modal “surely” which signals collective alignment. Similarly, the words “Surely, we do not want more disasters to happen ...” in the second clause communicate a positive affective inclination. It is a shared hope to prevent future environmental crises. Again, the evaluation is realized directly through the verb “want”. In this context, the verb in a negated form is used to express shared concern.

Coupling Patterns in *The Jakarta Post* Editorials

The Jakarta Post editorials foreground two of the most dominant coupling patterns. Those are [NEG + INDONESIA] and [POS + INDONESIA]. These patterns are formed by combining attitudes, especially judgment and appreciation, with ideational content such as government institutions, policies, and political figures. The [NEG + INDONESIA] pattern appears more often. In the present study, it typically includes negative judgments of government officials and negative appreciation of national policies and programs. Although it occurs slightly less often, the [POS + INDONESIA] pattern still plays an important role. It includes positive appreciation of certain policies and positive judgments of government officials who are portrayed as acting responsibly or supporting progress. This pattern also includes inclusive reference, which is marked using “we” to promote shared responsibility and collective efforts. The general pattern of coupling and its realization is illustrated in the following table.

Tabel 4. General coupling patterns and their realization couplings

General Coupling Patterns	Realizations
[POS+INDONESIA]	[+ve Judgment: Propriety + Indonesian Government] 8x [+ve Judgment: Propriety + We] 5x [+ve Judgment: Capacity + Indonesian Government] 5x [+ve Judgment: Capacity + Consultants] 2x [+ve Judgment: Tenacity + Indonesian Government] 1x [+ve Appreciation: Valuation + Indonesian Policy] 11x [+ve Appreciation: Composition + Indonesian Policy] 4x [+ve Appreciation: Reaction + Indonesian Policy] 2x [+ve Affect: Desire/Inclination + We] 5x [+ve Affect: Security + We] 2x [+ve Affect: Satisfaction + Indonesian Government] 1x
[NEG+INDONESIA]	[-ve Judgment: Propriety + Indonesian Government] 11x [-ve Judgment: Capacity + Indonesian Government] 10x [-ve Judgment: Normality + We] 1x [-ve Judgment: Capacity + We] 2x [-ve Appreciation: Valuation + Indonesian Policy] 17x [-ve Appreciation: Reaction + Indonesian Policy] 4x [-ve Appreciation: Reaction + Disaster] 5x [-ve Appreciation: Reaction + Location] 7x [-ve Appreciation: Composition + Cause] 2x
[POS+OTHER COUNTRIES]	[+ve Judgment: Capacity + Other Governments] 2x [+ve Appreciation: Reaction + International Relations] 2x [+ve Appreciation: Valuation + International Relations] 1x
[NEG+OTHER COUNTRIES]	[-ve Appreciation: Reaction + International Relations] 3x [-ve Appreciation: Reaction + Other Government Policies] 1x [-ve Appreciation: Valuation + International Relations] 2x [-ve Judgment: Propriety + Other Governments] 2x [-ve Judgment: Capacity + Other Governments] 2x

The most frequently occurring coupling pattern found within the data is the pattern [NEG + INDONESIA] with 59 occurrences. This general pattern covers various realizations, as can be seen in Table 4. One prominent form is the pattern [-ve Appreciation: Valuation + Indonesian Policy], which indicates strong evaluation on domestic policy performance. This critical stance is reinforced by the presence of negative appreciation, which is combined with other ideational targets such as international relations, location, and disasters.

Excerpt 4. Coupling [-ve Appreciation + Indonesian Policy]

Experts have also warned of economic consequences from the welfare programs [t. -val], including the free meals program. The **lack of resilience** [-val] of the country's food system may lead to further dependence on imports, which will make the economy **more sensitive** [-val] to global shocks in supply and prices. As the government [-cap] is still experimenting

with the program, with all the implementation risks, spending on the program is expected to increase [t. -val].

Excerpt 4 illustrates the use of negative appreciation values that are coupled with ideational references to Indonesian policy. The clause "the lack of resilience of the country's food system" triggers a negative valuation from readers. This strategy is realized directly through the lexical item "lack of resilience". Another negative evaluation further supports this negative evaluation. This is achieved through the phrase "more sensitive to global shocks" where the term "sensitive" implies fragility and a lack of preparedness. These evaluations target a national welfare program. Here, the program is negatively predicted to increase "spending on the program". Through these language choices, the editorial frames the policy as a potential source of economic vulnerability, which indicates a negative value. Linking these negative appreciation values to specific policy actions establishes a clear coupling pattern [-ve Appreciation + Indonesian Policy] that highlights concerns about economic stability.

Excerpt 5. Coupling [-ve Appreciation + International Relation]

Yes, we **have to admit** [+sec] that the agreement and overall global climate negotiations are **unfair** [-react] toward developing countries like Indonesia. The long, often-disrupted climate talks in Egypt and Azerbaijan in the past two years [t. -val], for example, only produced small results that do not often help the Global South survive the crisis.

Excerpt 5 presents another example of negative appreciation. It is related to international climate negotiations. The clause "we have to admit that the agreement... is unfair" reflects a mix of positive affect (security) and negative reaction. This structure enables the editorial to recognize the issue while at the same time expressing dissatisfaction with the outcome. The use of words like "long, often-disrupted climate talks" and "small results" clearly triggers negative valuation towards the negotiations that have been carried out and what they have achieved. These evaluations are realized directly through attitudinal lexis and coupled with ideational content relating to global climate talks. This pattern positions the events as ineffective, especially for developing countries.

Judgment couplings also constitute a significant part of the data, particularly those which convey negative evaluations of the Indonesian government's propriety and capacity. The pattern [-ve Judgment: Propriety + Indonesian Government] reflects strong editorial evaluations on ethical and moral conduct in governance. Additionally, the coupling [-ve Judgment: Capacity + Indonesian Government] and other negative Judgment couplings further highlight doubts about competence and truthfulness (e.g., veracity and tenacity).

Excerpt 6. Coupling [-ve Judgment: Propriety + Indonesian Government]

But special presidential envoy for energy and environment Hashim Djojohadikusumo has caught many people off guard **[t. -prop]** for suggesting that Indonesia follow in Trump's footsteps, albeit for a different reason. Hashim, also the younger brother of President Prabowo Subianto, **[t. -prop]** questioned why Indonesia should comply with the climate pact if the US refused to stick to the agreement.

Excerpt 6 illustrates the use of negative judgment: propriety, which is directed at an Indonesian government official. The phrase “caught many people off guard” in reference to Hashim Djojohadikusumo's suggestion that Indonesia follow the U.S. in withdrawing from climate agreements evokes a negative evaluation. This evaluation is not stated directly but is realized through a flagging realization, functioning as a token [t]. The mention of Hashim's close relationship to the president adds another dimension to the evaluation. It combines negative judgment with ideational elements related to national leadership. This coupling strengthens the critical stance taken in the editorial.

Excerpt 7. Coupling [-ve Judgment: Capacity + Indonesian Government]

Indonesia could also **[-cap]** lose access to funding for, among other projects, rebuilding areas damaged by climate-induced weather disasters or fulfilling its national energy needs with renewable sources; the latter of which would cost the country about US\$62 billion per year until 2060.

Excerpt 7 presents another example of negative judgment. This time focused on capacity. The editorial highlights the risk that Indonesia “could lose access to funding” for crucial climate-related projects such as renewable energy development. This negative judgment [-cap] is realized directly through lexical items like “lose access” and the reference to substantial financial burdens (US\$62 billion per year). These expressions signal concerns over the government's ability to meet long-term sustainability goals. They are constructed by combining a negative judgment of capacity with the ideational content of climate policy implementation.

At the same time, the editorials also use affect to highlight emotional concerns, especially regarding the safety and well-being of Indonesian people. A frequent negative pattern is [-ve Affect: Security + Indonesian People]. This pattern appears in discussions about disasters or emergencies that affect the public.

Excerpt 8. Coupling [-ve Affect: Security + Indonesian People]

One of **the most dramatic** [- sec] incidents unfolded at the Mega Bekasi Hypermall, situated near the Bekasi River, where muddy waters filled the ground floor and trapped countless shoppers for hours on Tuesday [t. -sec].

In Excerpt 8, the affect is expressed directly and indirectly through the description of events. The direct realization appears in the phrase “the most dramatic” which signals emotional response [-sec]. Meanwhile, the invoked affect is triggered by the vivid descriptions, which indicate a flagging strategy. Here, the phrase “trapped countless shoppers” evokes the feelings of fear and helplessness, while “muddy waters filled the ground floor” portrays disruption. Both affect values evoke feelings of insecurity. These negative emotional responses are coupled with the experiences of ordinary people and highlight the vulnerability of the public during disaster events.

Although negative evaluations dominate, the data also reveal examples of positive coupling that target the Indonesian government. These include positive judgments of government performance or the inclusive pronoun “we”, positive appreciations of policy, and occasional expressions of positive affect. Together, they form the general pattern of [POS + INDONESIA], which appears 46 times. Specific instances of positive include judgment couplings such as [+ve Judgment: Propriety + We] and [+ve Judgment: Capacity + We]. In these cases, the editorial writers attribute moral responsibility or competence to a collective national “we.” The positive judgments are commonly realized through directive language (see Martin & White, 2005, pp. 110–114; Masroor & Ahmad, 2017) and paired with a collective pronoun or government performance.

Excerpt 9. Coupling [+ve Judgment: Propriety + We]

In contrast to Bahlil’s argument [t. -react] that Indonesia still needs to fire coal to fulfill its electricity needs, we [t. +prop] should start phasing down, or out, from coal in our energy mix.

Excerpt 9 displays a positive judgment of propriety which is targeted at a collective pronoun “we”. In this instance, the negative reaction is triggered by Bahlil’s statement in support of continued coal dependency. The writer then contrasts this position by stating “we should start phasing down... from coal”. This clause implies a sense of ethical action. This positive moral judgment is realized through the directive language in the form of the modal phrase “should start phasing down”.

Although affect couplings appear less frequently than appreciation and judgment, they still contribute to the emotional tone of the editorials. One of the most common positive patterns is [+ve Affect: Inclination + We]. This pattern is used to express collective desires or intentions. It is often marked using the inclusive pronoun “we” and typically appears in statements related to national concerns or future goals.

Excerpt 10. Coupling [+ve Affect: Inclination + We]

Surely, we **do not want** [+des] more disasters to happen in the coming years and closer to our home.

In Excerpt 10, the phrase “we do not want” is a clear example of positive affect: inclination. The use of the inclusive pronoun “we” indicates collective orientation, and the verb “want” indicates a positive expression of desire. This emotional attitude is coupled with an ideational content concerning the occurrence of natural disasters. This pattern demonstrates how emotional responses are paired with ideational references related to public safety and environmental concern.

Affiliation Strategies in *The Jakarta Post* Editorials

The analysis also indicates that couplings of attitude and ideation are not distributed randomly but are systematically organized across the editorial texts using affiliation strategies (Liu, 2017, 2018; Liu et al., 2025; Liu & Chang, 2021; Liu & Hood, 2019). One prominent strategy observed is divisive strategies through semantic relation of *repetition*, in which either positive or negative evaluative meanings are reiterated to maintain a consistent evaluative stance. This strategy is often realized through the repeated use of positive or negative judgment and appreciation. As a result, it creates a prosody that aligns readers with a certain viewpoint. By repeating similar evaluative meanings throughout a text, the editorial writer builds a cohesive negative or positive stance toward the government and its policy. This pattern of repetition is evident in multiple texts within the dataset. It further suggests that such a strategy is employed to strengthen reader alignment by reinforcing a particular evaluative position over time. The following excerpt instantiates the strategy.

Excerpt 11. Repeating strategy

Late last year, the government [-cap] caused controversy in public by announcing a VAT increase to 12 percent to finance the state budget [t. -val]. The increase [t.-val] was later cancelled, creating more pressure for the government to find other sources of revenue to finance its programs. If the government continues to fail to improve revenue from taxes and other duties [t.-cap], the final effort will be to increase debt [t.-val].

Excerpt 11 illustrates the use of a repeating strategy in the discussion of fiscal policy. The editorial writer includes multiple negative evaluations of a proposed value-added tax (VAT) increase and the government's financial management. Negative judgment targets the government's handling of financial matters as reflected in the phrases "caused controversy" and "fail to improve revenue". Simultaneously, negative appreciation is targeted at the VAT policy itself, which presents it as an ineffective economic measure. These

evaluations are expressed through both direct attitudinal language and indirect realization via a flagging strategy. This strategy is achieved through descriptive references to economic consequences and the escalation of financial risks. This pattern is visually represented as a straight line.

Another affiliation strategy observed in the investigated editorial texts is a conceding and overriding strategy. This pattern is consistent with previous findings by Liu (Liu et al., 2025; Liu & Hood, 2019). In the study, this strategy begins by acknowledging an alternative or positive viewpoint. It then shifts to emphasize a contrasting or more critical evaluation. Linguistically, this shift is often marked by concessive discourse markers such as “however” and “but” which signal a shift in evaluative direction (see Martin & Rose, 2007). The structure enables writers to introduce multiple perspectives while they maintain a consistent stance. This pattern is observed in several texts and can be visualized as a wave-like sequence of evaluations.

The conceding and overriding strategies in the excerpt below demonstrate how editorials organize arguments. The editorial writer begins by acknowledging a potentially positive position. She or he then shifts to raise specific concerns. This strategy enables the text to present a more complex evaluation of the issue. The pattern occurs in multiple texts across the dataset. It suggests its function in managing evaluative flow and guiding reader interpretation.

Excerpt 12. Conceding and overriding strategies

Indonesia's growing ties with the Global South, **[+react]** crowned by our recent steps toward BRICS membership, have so far served us well by enriching our circle of economic and diplomatic partners. **[However]**, the renewed warmth between US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin raises **fresh challenges [-react]**.

Excerpt 12 demonstrates the conceding and overriding strategy through a coupling of positive and negative appreciation. The first clause presents a positive evaluation of Indonesia's diplomatic progress, particularly its involvement with the Global South and its potential membership in BRICS. This evaluation is realized indirectly through the flagging strategy by referencing observable developments in international relations. The following clause introduces a shift in evaluation. The phrase “raises fresh challenges” introduces a negative appreciation, which highlights concerns about possible geopolitical issues linked to renewed ties between the United States and Russia. This shift is marked by the concessive discourse marker *however*, which enables the override of the initial positive appraisal with a more critical perspective.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of attitudinal patterns in *The Jakarta Post* editorials reveals careful use of evaluative language to construct a particular editorial stance and align with a projected readership. The dominant use of negative appreciation indicates a critical orientation toward government policies and performances. This consistent evaluative stance positions the newspaper as a rational and socially responsible commentator that critiques rather than simply reports (see Martin & White, 2005, p. 177). Judgment is used more moderately. This resource assesses the propriety and capability of social actors such as politicians or government officials. It could be argued here that the newspaper positions itself as a fair and unbiased evaluator. On the other hand, Affect is employed more selectively. It is often used to support moral or evaluative points rather than to appeal directly to emotion. Through these choices, *The Jakarta Post* seems to construct its ideal reader as someone who thinks critically, cares about society, and is open to fair and well-reasoned viewpoints.

This tendency aligns with broader patterns in editorial discourse, where judgment and appreciation are consistently the dominant attitudinal resources used to evaluate the behavior of social actors and the value of policies or events, while affect appears only minimally. Studies across both Indonesian and international media (Daniarsa & Kartika-Ningsih, 2023; Daniarsa & Mulatsih, 2020; Ekawati, 2015; Nurjanah, 2021; Sarikon & Abdullah, 2025) have shown that editorials typically prioritize rational and ethical evaluations over emotional appeals. This supports the view that *The Jakarta Post*, like many reputable news outlets, constructs its stance through measured critique and value-laden reasoning, appealing to a readership that values fairness, accountability, and critical thinking.

The analysis reveals that attitudinal values in *The Jakarta Post* editorials are purposefully coupled with ideational content such as people, events, and policies. The coupling patterns enable editorial writers to build evaluative meanings that are closely tied to real-world issues and presented in a persuasive manner. Thus, they deliver convincing arguments that incorporate ethical, rational, and emotional dimensions. In other words, they can communicate their stance clearly and effectively. Accordingly, their evaluative position can be more accessible to readers and encourage them to engage with the issues and consider the given perspectives.

The findings show that these couplings generally fall into two dominant patterns: [NEG + INDONESIA] and [POS + INDONESIA]. Negative evaluations are mainly directed toward national policies, economic programs, and government officials. Negative appreciation frequently targets government policies, while judgment tends to focus on the propriety and capacity of political figures. This pattern is also evident in previous studies

(Daniarsa & Mulatsih, 2020; Nurjanah, 2021). Although affect is used less often, it appears strategically to invite emotional responses from readers, particularly in relation to national concerns such as environmental crises or disaster events.

Conversely, positive evaluations are also present, though they appear less frequent. These positive couplings are often associated with certain Indonesian policies, which are positively appraised in terms of their contribution to national development. In addition, positive Judgment is occasionally attributed to members of the government, political allies, and institutional actors who support national interests. Another target of positive Judgment is the collective pronoun “we” which refers to both the writers and readers who are portrayed as ethically responsible and aligned with progressive national goals.

As previously discussed, the distribution of attitude types and their coupling with ideational meanings contribute to the formation of affiliation strategies that serve to align readers with the newspaper’s position. To further illustrate how these strategies operate within a text, the present study examines an editorial text entitled *Prudence in State Budget* drawn from the dataset. This analysis adopts a dynamic view of the text. This view helps readers trace how evaluative meanings unfold throughout a text. In the opening of the investigated text, the editorial writer foregrounds a series of negative evaluations directed at the government, employing negative judgment and token appreciation to critique its policy. This approach establishes a critical tone that frames the subsequent discussion of fiscal policy as shown in the excerpt below.

Excerpt 13. Negative evaluations

The government has decided to reallocate Rp 306.7 trillion (US\$18.9 billion) of the state budget to foster its welfare programs, in a major shift in fiscal direction this year [t.-prop]. The spending shift [t.-react], which accounts for 8.5 percent of the 2025 budget, means there will be budget cuts from ministerial and regional expenditures and increases in welfare spending.

It could be suggested that the use of negative Judgment: propriety frames the government's decision as controversial and potentially inappropriate in the current Indonesian situation. The phrase “major shift in fiscal direction” indicates a significant change that may be interpreted as uncertain or risky. In addition, lexical choices such as “spending shift” and “budget cuts” convey a strong negative response (-react) toward the policy. Together, these expressions encourage readers to question the government’s priorities and decision-making.

However, in the next section of the text, the editorial adopts a more supportive stance. It offers a positive evaluation of both the government and

its policy. It is achieved through positive Judgment: propriety and appreciation, which suggest that the policy may bring economic benefits. This marks a noticeable shift in tone, which is illustrated in Excerpt 14.

Excerpt 14. Positive evaluations and repeating the strategy

While the budget adjustment seems **rational** [+val] on paper, it is *paramount* that the government [+prop] guides the implementation of the programs and manages any consequences that may arise from the fiscal action. The Prabowo administration has claimed that the large spending on the free meals program [t.+val] will significantly drive economic growth by boosting domestic consumption.

In this text, the lexical choice “rational” shows a positive appreciation of the policy, while the phrase “guides the implementation” suggests a degree of trust in the government’s role. The editorial also presents the government’s claim that the program will “drive economic growth” and “boost domestic consumption”. These positive expressions help readers see the benefits of the policy and help the editorial writer construct a temporarily supportive tone. However, the positive tone does not last. The editorial shifts back to a critical stance using a conceding and overriding strategy. This strategy begins by acknowledging a possible benefit but follows with a stronger negative evaluation. The shift is often marked by contrastive signals like “but”, as demonstrated in Excerpts 15 and 16.

Excerpt 15. Conceding and overriding

In an **efficient** [+val] delivery system, this may be the case [t.-val]. **But** the history of past government programs has shown that **poor** [-val] data as well as reporting and bureaucratic **inefficiency** [-val] have caused frequent misallocation and corruption.

In Excerpt 15, it first acknowledges the potential for successful implementation through the conditional phrase “in an efficient delivery system”. However, this concession is immediately overridden by a series of negative appreciations using words “poor data”, “bureaucratic inefficiency” and “misallocation and corruption”. These lexical choices signal broader systemic problems and reduce confidence in policy execution.

Excerpt 16. Conceding and overriding

Prabowo has called for loyalty from his administration [+prop], **but** without careful implementation and strong law enforcement, **inefficiencies** [t.-val] are likely.

A similar pattern continues in Excerpt 16. While the value of “loyalty” is briefly mentioned, the focus shifts to concerns about “inefficiencies” which are attributed to limited implementation capacity and weak law enforcement. In several cases, this conceding and overriding strategy is followed by additional negative evaluations that are repeated across the text. The

combinations of conceding-overriding and repetition strategies highlight a critical stance while making space recognize possible advantages at the beginning.

This shifting pattern creates a wave-like movement in the text's prosody. This evaluative pattern enables the editorial to sound balanced and thoughtful while it gradually leans towards a more cautious and critical perspective. It recognizes the potential benefits in the beginning. It then shifts to highlight concerns. In this way, the editorial develops a voice that is both fair and careful in its assessment. This strategy contributes to the newspaper's broader affiliation objective, that is, to align with readers who care about transparency and accountability in governance. Besides, the editorial appeals to an audience that expects public officials to show both competence and integrity in managing national issues.

Although the overall tone of the editorial tends to be critical, it also incorporates a positive attitude, especially in the form of hope or intention. This can be seen in the closing phrase "let's hope he chooses wisely" which expresses a hopeful attitude toward future decisions. This expression adds a more human dimension to the editorial's evaluation. Using hopeful language together with evaluative Judgment contributes to a sense of shared concern about leadership and national direction. Furthermore, it helps bridge the gap between critique and collective expectation. By combining Judgment (ethic) with emotion (ethos), the editorial underscores shared values, particularly those related to leadership and careful decision-making. Such a strategy helps connect with readers who care about public issues. It creates a space to show common values and public concerns and encourages readers to think about the bigger ideas behind each issue.

This dynamic pattern of attitude and coupling contributes to the newspaper's broader affiliation strategy. By shifting between negative and positive evaluations, the editorial creates a wave-like pattern of stance, as illustrated in Figure 1. This evaluative movement also helps the newspaper sound balanced and reasoned, instead of giving only praise or criticism. Besides, switching between contrasting attitudes enables the newspaper to maintain a clear, careful, and responsible voice when addressing national issues.

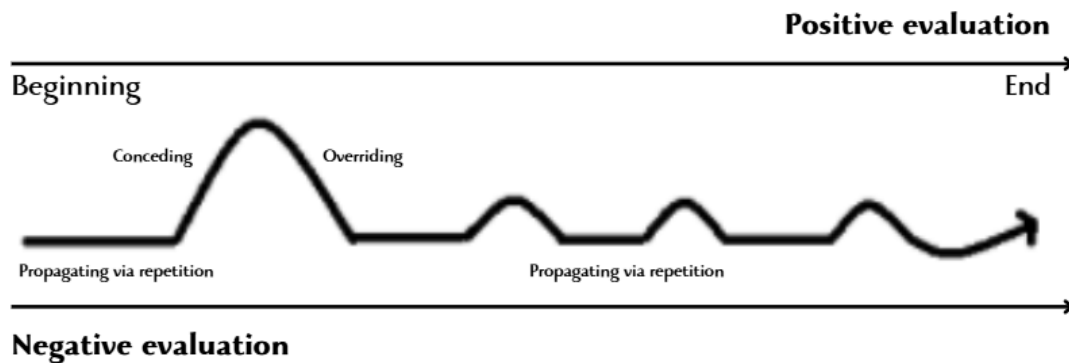


Figure 1. A wave-like pattern of stance in *Prudence in State Budget*

This evaluative pattern also helps the editorial connect with its readers. It positions readers as thoughtful individuals who are engaged with public matters and open to considering multiple perspectives. By integrating both supportive and critical language, the editorial invites readers to examine different aspects of an issue. It could be suggested that this strategy helps construct a sense of connection between the editorial and readers who value fairness, careful thinking, and leadership.

In summary, the editorial appears to construct its putative readers as individuals who share similar values and concerns. These include a commitment to good governance, responsible policymaking, and national development. In doing so, affiliation strategies are used not just to express evaluation but also to create a shared space where the newspaper and its readers connect. Such shared space helps build a sense of community, which is built around common goals and mutual expectations (see Martin & White, 2005, pp. 211–212).

CONCLUSION

This study explored how *The Jakarta Post* constructs evaluative meanings in its editorials using attitudinal language, coupling patterns, and affiliation strategies. It focused on three main areas of inquiry: the types and frequency of attitudes expressed, how these attitudes are paired with ideational content, and the strategies used to build alignment with readers.

The analysis indicates that appreciation is the most common type of attitude. It is particularly in its negative form and used to assess public policies, government programs, and institutional practices. This is followed by judgments which frequently evaluate the behavior and competence of public figures, especially state officials. While affect appears less frequently, it plays an essential role in expressing emotional responses to issues of public concern, particularly in social and environmental contexts. These findings reveal the broader patterns of evaluation present in the editorial discourse.

In examining how attitudes are combined with ideational meanings, the study identified two dominant coupling patterns: [NEG + INDONESIA] and [POS + INDONESIA]. The former reflects critical stances toward government actions or institutional performance, while the latter represents endorsement of selected national values or hopeful prospects. These pairings demonstrate how attitudinal meanings are systematically aligned with national identity to convey clear editorial positions.

The investigation also revealed two notable affiliation strategies. The first is conceding and overriding, in which a positive view is acknowledged before being challenged by a stronger critical stance. The second is repetition, which reinforces evaluative meanings across the editorial to strengthen coherence and persuade the audience. These strategies show how *The Jakarta Post* builds rapport with readers by positioning itself as a rational and principled commentator.

The findings enhance our understanding of how ideological affiliation is built through language in editorial discourse. They show how evaluative and affiliative resources align writers with readers and contribute to Appraisal Theory by illustrating how attitude, coupling, and affiliation work together to shape meaning. The study also expands the use of discourse semantics by showing how these strategies function in specific cultural and media contexts, especially in Indonesian English-language editorials. It reveals how editorial voices craft persuasive messages that encourage critical reflection. These insights support media literacy by helping readers identify and evaluate persuasive language. More broadly, the study promotes critical thinking and public awareness in Indonesia and contributes to global discussions on media and democracy.

However, this study has several limitations. In the present study, the analysis was conducted manually. This may lead to some subjectivity and make it harder to repeat the results in the same way. Although detailed close reading offers valuable insights, it also risks overinterpretation. To address this, future research could incorporate concordance tools and corpus-assisted methods to provide more systematic and quantifiable support for the analysis (see Coffin & O'Halloran, 2005; O'Halloran & Coffin, 2004). These approaches may enhance the reliability of the findings and allow for broader generalizations across a larger corpus of editorial texts.

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