

Chapter 3:

An analysis of systemic means of valuation

In the course of the study, we found that systemically evaluative words or phrases occurred in 169 of the 306 strips analyzed (55.23%). In qualitative terms, on eliminating those uses which did not distort the image of a given event,³⁶ the number of strips containing systemically evaluative lexical units was 105 (34.31%). In practice, this means that every third strip in the corpus used systemically evaluative author-dependent means of expression assessing the event in question.

Describing this group of means of valuation poses several difficulties. Firstly, in the vast majority of cases, these measures express assessment of events or entities using axiologically neutral expressions (e.g. [3] *Opozycja straszy*³⁷ *Majdanem* [The opposition is threatening with [another] *Majdan*]; [27] *Kolejne skandaliczne decyzje sędziów* [More outrageous rulings from the judges]; [169] *Marsz pamięci pod pręgierzem polityków* [March of Memory under the pillory of politicians]; [202] *Jak manipuluje niemiecka telewizja publiczna* [How German public television uses manipulation]; [278] *Złodziejska reprivatyzacja obciąża Platformę* [Larcenous reprivatization burdens the [Civic] Platform]), which in practice entails analyzing entire syntactic contexts, sometimes taking into account the context (i.e. the content of the footage).

36 We determined that the following strips met this condition: [5], [6], [9], [10], [19], [25], [26], [29], [31], [32], [33], [35], [43], [53], [54], [58], [66], [109], [110], [117], [134], [138], [145], [153], [157], [159], [163], [181], [187], [193], [213], [215], [217], [224], [225], [227], [229], [232], [237], [239], [240], [243], [249], [295], [296], [297], [298], [299], [300], [301], [302], [303], [304], [305] and [306].

37 Here and below we added emphasis to systemic means of valuation.

The second difficulty results from the fact that systemic resources are very rarely the only value-conveying elements in the text of a news strip; they are usually accompanied by elements expressing evaluation on the sentential or contextual level. However, if the author of a strip chooses to use only systemic means of evaluation (almost without exception, these are lexemes), then in the case of strips that contain a closed information package (i.e. understandable without knowing the content of the footage the strip accompanies), a regularity can be observed in that such strips usually express commonly shared or obvious evaluations. Thus, they can be considered to be essentially informative rather than persuasive. Examples of such statements include: [6] *Szukanie kompromisu wokół TK* [The search for a compromise regarding the Constitutional Tribunal]; [25] *Plan reformy sądownictwa* [The plan of the judicial reform]; [117] *Wątek lotniczy afery Amber Gold* [The airline thread of the Amber Gold scandal]; [227] *Spór o esbeckie emerytury* [Dispute over the pensions of communist secret agents]. In none of these can the author be accused of providing a distorted description of the situation, even by a recipient who is not favorably disposed toward the author. However, more often than not, the situation occurs in which a strip containing only systemic evaluative elements and communicating content consistent with the facts refers recipients familiar with the current political context to a certain evaluative set of value-oriented beliefs, held only by some. There are at least three ways of making systemically expressed valuation seem obvious and unquestionable.

1. Strips [26] *Reforma sądownictwa w Sejmie* [Judiciary reform in Parliament]; [66] *Brak jedności* [A lack of unity] and [82] *Presja na polski rząd* [Pressure on the Polish government] **open the mental spaces required for the implied formula:** and this is a good/bad thing (for the essence of this approach, cf. Laskowska 1992, pp. 118–122). Filling this formula with a positive or negative evaluative content is already at the discretion of the message sender, i.e. it depends on the way the information structure is profiled in the text.
2. In contrast, e.g. strip [159] *Prokuratura apeluje o rzetelne informacje* [The Prosecutor's Office appeals for reliable information] **implies the formula:** *which shows that X (in this case the Prosecutor's Office) is good/bad* (for more, see Laskowska 1992, pp. 118–122), in this case, with the court taking the form 'The prosecutor's office does not have reliable information, but it needs it very much (since it is making an appeal for it, i.e. it is calling for a specific action)', which shows that someone is failing to provide it (and thus acting

improperly in terms of access to information, i.e. making it difficult to establish the truth).

3. Strips [163]: *Bliżej prawdy o Smoleńsku* [Closer to the truth about Smolensk] and [256]: *Polska chce reformy Unii Europejskiej* [Poland wants reform of the European Union], apart from implying one of the above formulas, also induce the viewers to accept as obvious **specific values of the discourse**, i.e. for [163] the court: ‘The truth about the crash of the Polish government plane in Smolensk is not yet fully known, i.e. it is not yet certain whether it was an accident or an assassination’, and for [256] the court: ‘The European Union as an international organization does not act fully in accordance with the best interests of Poland.’

The third difficulty in describing this group of means of valuation is that on the level of the language system, they express values that show a clear bias, either positive or negative, but when used in texts, their value signs can be reversed. This is also at times (rarely) the case in the corpus of texts addressed in this study. We shall illustrate this phenomenon with the following examples: [38] *Nieudolna obrona tego co było* [Heavy-handed defense of what there was]; [53] *17 lat walki o sprawiedliwość* [17 years of struggling for justice]; [59] *Reformatorska PO-Budka* [The pro-reform attitude of PO-Budka (with an attempted pun in Polish)]; [198] *Moralność w trakcie kompromitacji* [Morality in the process of being compromised]; [209] *Kłótnia w obozie okupantów* [A squabble in the occupying camp]; [218] *Kapitulacja Platformy* [Capitulation of the [Civic] Platform]; [247] *Europejskie elity tolerują neonazistów* [European elites tolerate neo-Nazis]; [254] *Polska obnażyła unijne standardy demokracji* [Poland has exposed the EU standards of democracy]; [261] *Radość z Tuska pretekstem do profanacji* [Happiness with [Donald] Tusk as a pretext for desecration]; [264] *Opozycja boi się komisji weryfikacyjnej* [The opposition is afraid of the Commission of Inquiry].

In all of these statements, there are words either directly naming a value or communicating an assessment ascribed to a certain action or attitude within the system itself: *defense* [+], *justice* [+], *reformist* [+], *morality* [+], *squabble* [-], *surrender* [-], *elite* [+], *tolerate* [+], *standard (of democracy)* [+], *joy* [+], *fear* [-]. However, either their direct context (as in [38]: *heavy-handed* [-]; in [198]: *compromised* [-]; in [247]: *neo-Nazi* [-], in [254]: *expose* [-], in [254]: *desecration* [-]), or the situational and discursive context (revealed by the footage or assumed by the sender as common knowledge) is used by the broadcaster to reverse the value sign for the terms in question. It is thus

the figure of thought known as irony. Looking at it from the point of view of pragmatics, it should be noted that irony always negates the systemic (literal) content of the term used in this way, which is the basis for distinguishing various depreciative illocutions based on irony – mockery, derision, ridicule, and even insult (defamation within the meaning of the Penal Code), but also, in certain communication conditions, irony may underlie such speech acts as jokes, witticisms, and teasing. After all, it cannot reasonably be assumed that the authors of strips presented to a nationwide audience in the most important news program on public television consciously aimed for a ludic effect, therefore, the cases described above need to be treated as intentionally depreciative (in any kind of genre incarnation). Moreover, it should also be noted here that the words subjected to ironic reversal at a system level tended to be positive (eight cases) rather than negative (three cases). This can be seen as a certain persuasive strategy on the part of the broadcaster (although the sample collected is too modest to postulate a pattern) – irony is used for reversing primarily those systemically positive meanings which in the journalistic materials of *Wiadomości TVP 1* refer to the actions of the opposition (parliamentary or not), e.g. the word *obrona* [defense] in [38] is used in an axiologically reversed way, but in [216]: *Grupy “GP”* [“Gazety Polskiej”] w obronie Sejmu i rządu [“GP” Groups in defense of the Sejm and the government] the valuation is standard, not reversed, which may indicate a tendency of the broadcaster to use the evaluative means offered by language in a biased way and to treat these means with ambivalence (in the above example, defense is good when it “we” are being defended and bad when it “they” are).

Strip [192] deserves a separate analysis: *Wigilijny pasztet* [Christmas Eve pâté]. One can see in the use of the word *pasztet* [pâté] a reference to its meaning established within the linguistic system, although only in its non-standard varieties: *pasztet2* ‘an unpleasant situation; especially one in which the speaker has no influence on the negative state of affairs’. The *pasztet* in question, as presented in *Wiadomości* was the opposition blocking the Sejm rostrum. The use of this term is based on the value-conveying opposition of *pasztet1* (a dish) vs. *pasztet2* (‘unexpected trouble’), although it should be noted that Christians in Poland would not eat pâté on Christmas Eve, as it is a meat dish, but it can already be eaten on the first day of Christmas. The use of the word ‘pâté’ in this strip (accompanying the material which aired on December 27, 2016 and announcing the ongoing ‘post-Christmas’ protest) unblocks the connotations of ‘lack of freshness’ in both meanings – literal and figurative), and using the adjectival

form of Christmas Eve with it probably shows the broadcaster's desire to juxtapose positive associations connected in Polish culture with Christmas Eve with the negatively assessed actions of the parliamentary opposition: 'instead of enjoying the atmosphere of Christmas Eve, the opposition politicians protest in the Sejm, which generates unnecessary problems;' 'they intend to eat pâté for Christmas Eve supper;' 'On Christmas Eve, members of the radical opposition flaunted eating pâté and setting candles on the Christmas table.'³⁸ At this point it is also worth noting that the systemic evaluations occurring in the examined texts refer in the vast majority to only a few criteria,³⁹ with the social criterion taking first place – including, according to Laskowska (1992, pp.16–17), custom and law, which she considers to be values that are auxiliary to ethical values. Such axiological marking is found in lexemes frequently repeated in the strips: *reform* (and its derived forms) (twelve instances), as reforming the law essentially serves to improve the functioning of society; *compromise* (six instances), because it refers to a way of preventing social conflicts; *shocking* (four instances) and *scandalous* (one instance), because it refers to actions that the evaluator perceived as violating ethical principles or social cohesion; *provocation* (four instances), because this is how the activity was interpreted by the evaluator as harmful to the social order resulting from democratic elections; *radical (opposition)* (four instances), *total (opposition)* (three instances) and *the (judicial)/(extraordinary) caste* (three instances), because activities of such groups were assessed by the evaluator as interfering with the rules of social coexistence, especially in the area of relations between the governing and the governed.

Even this brief overview of the most common terms reveals a certain mechanism governing the choice of systemic means of evaluation. The actions of the government or its system of values were described with terms which have positive connotations, such as *reform* [25], [26], [29], [31], [32], [33], [35], [43], [49], [54], [59], [256], *sovereign* [89], *strong* [89], *hero* [175], *holiday* [237], *democracy* [237], *patriotism/patriots* [241], [245], and *(state) aid* [292]. In contrast, actions of those who were critical of the activities/attitudes of the authorities, or otherwise perceived by them as hostile (this is especially true of witnesses testifying

38 Source: <https://wiadomosci.tvp.pl/28372803/wigilijny-paszтет>.

39 Laskowska (1992, p. 14–19) lists eleven criteria of valuation: pragmatic, economic, hedonistic, vital, social, affective, perfectionistic, (a)esthetic, cognitive, ethical, and sacral.

before the Commissions of Inquiry for the Amber Gold scandal and the Warsaw reprivatization, who had not been convicted with a final judgment), were exclusively negative: *shocking* [106], [127], [267], [284], *scandalous* [27], *provocation* [143], [162], [164], [180], *coup* [44], [194], *scolding* [83], *blackmail* [85], *pressure* [86], *embarrassing* [162], *aggression* [170], *manipulated* [171], *destabilization* (of the state) [173], *disintegration* [175], *savagery* (of customs) [197], *failure* [204], *quarrel* [209], *surrender* [218], *pride* [231], *lie* [246], *slander* [244], [246], *profanation* [261], *translation* [265], *wild* (reprivatization) [267], [280], *insolence* [274], *thieving* [278], [287], *meanness* [284], *theft/stolen/pilfered* [288], [289], [290], *escalate* [302]. The third component of this mechanism was exploitation of negatively marked stylistic phrases as means of unjustified generalization of the evaluation (presumably created solely for this purpose), which is the basic (even “first”) eristic method (Schopenhauer 1984, pp. 48–50, Kochan 2005, pp. 68–72). There are three such phrases in the corpus: *total opposition* [46], [91], *radical opposition* [190], [196], [208], [214], and *the judicial caste/extraordinary caste* [36], [39], [45]. The pragmatic function of each of these is to introduce content into communication with the viewers that is maximally generalized and marked negatively: ‘Everything that the opposition does is against the authorities’ (*total*); ‘Every action of the opposition is dangerous’ (*radical*); ‘All judges consider themselves as members of a particularly privileged professional group’ (*caste*). Although these phrases occurred in the analyzed material only several times, they were used multiple times in the journalistic materials produced by Telewizja Polska S.A. during the period in question. This rules out the possibility of classifying them as constructions created ad hoc.

Besides the social and ethical aspects, other systemically expressed linguistic values were represented in the corpus only incidentally. Emotional evaluation can be seen, for example, in strip [57], in which the statement of the leader of the ruling political party is quoted: *Idziemy razem do przodu* [Together we go forward], which can be read as an expression of his optimism about the direction he has taken in terms of reforming the judiciary, which is confirmed by the accompanying footage. This type of evaluation can also be found in strip [249]: Poland bets on Saryusz-Wolski. Probably not the whole of “Poland” (i.e. all its citizens) bet on him – the name *Poland* is used here metonymically in the meaning of ‘the Polish government.’ By contrast, the cognitive criterion of evaluation is most clearly exposed in strips [137]: *Rząd Tuska ukrył prawdę o Amber Gold* [The Tusk government

concealed the truth about Amber Gold]; [163] *Blżej prawdy o Smoleńsku* [Closer to the truth about Smolensk]; and [246] *Szokujące kłamstwa szkalujące Polskę* [Shocking lies defaming Poland]. However, with regard to the material under study, the overall principle is that evaluation primarily concerns interpersonal relationships in the social sense, and the sender assumes the right to define their character at the very outset.

Such an image of the aspects of systemic evaluation predominant in the texts does not raise any doubts, as it is the political system that is the main regulator of social life; however, the directions of distribution of system-related evaluation terms adopted in the editorial office of *Wiadomości* described above may provide cause for reflection. None of the collected strips contained linguistic elements that negatively assessed the activity of the authorities directly (i.e. at the level of system-related meanings of the lexemes used in the strips). It is also noticeable that, with the use of systemic evaluation terms, the broadcaster profiled the image of each subject (event or process) featured in the segments shown after each strip. The following is a brief discussion of the image of each highlighted topic, focusing on the systemic means of evaluation used in each case.

Topic 1, “the Judicial Laws,” described primarily as the introduction of the *reform* (eleven uses), and the conflict that accompanied these activities was presented as a search for a *compromise* (four uses), which the opposition and the judicial community are *rejecting*. However, those who opposed the introduction of this regulation and the actions they took were referred to almost without exception using pejorative phrases: *scandalous* (decisions of judges) [27]; *coup* [44], [194]; *caste* (see above); *clumsy defense* [38]; [The Supreme Court] *has broken the law* [58], etc.

Topic 2, “The European Union on the Rule of Law,” also presented as a conflict between institutions of the European Union and the Polish government. All actions of the entities representing the EU or advocating on the same side of the dispute were assessed exclusively negatively, and variously referred to as *control* [65]; *pressure (on the Polish government)* [82]; *scolding* [83]; *blackmail (of Poland)* [85]; *support for putting pressure (on Poland)* [86]. Activities on this side were explicitly described as directed *against* Poland [87], [90], the European Union and its representatives were ridiculed, and their legal instruments were likened to a *kapiszon* [a non-starter/storm in a teacup] [92], while the resulting actions of EU officials their “mission” [84] (in ironic quotes) or *double standards* [93].

Topic 3, “Amber Gold,” also profiled as a polarized issue: on the “guilty” side were the criminals of Amber Gold, some of its employees,

as well as officers and institutions of the Polish state between 2009 (when Amber Gold was established) and 2015 (when the government changed). On the “honest” side were the victims of the scandal and representatives of the current political authorities in Poland. While the mere naming of the crime under investigation by the Commission of Inquiry a *scandal* gives no cause for doubt and may be regarded as primarily informative, the negative terms used for describing the statements, actions, and attitudes of the officers and institutions of the state exceed the limits of informativity, and fall within the category of (sometimes very vocal) editorial assessment of the facts, which makes it possible to qualify some of the strips as a priori comments on the facts rather than announcements of upcoming information or commentary on these facts. Here we clearly see the tendency, already described in relation to headlines of Internet news (e.g. Zimny 2013), for the headline to “replace” the content of the material it accompanies. In other words, the point is to give a recipient who knows nothing of the event a specific interpretative clue about the sender’s main intentions even before the material is viewed. Systemically negative terms used when referring to the “guilty” entities included the following terms: a) in relation to the prosecutor’s office – *embarrassment* [101], [103]; *amnesia* [125], [132]; *ineptitude* (as an option to choose in a rhetorical question) [135]; *sabotage* (as an option to choose in a rhetorical question) [135]; b) referring to witness statements – *shocking* [106], [127]; c) in relation to the police – *failed operation* [133]; d) concerning the state – *“failed”* [108], *“did not work as it should”* [111]; *the Tusk government concealed the truth about Amber Gold* [137]; e) referring to the Civic Platform – *concealed the actions of Amber Gold* [124]; f) an unidentified collective entity was referred to as the *Tri-City racket* [131] or *the Gdansk racket* [136].

Topic 4, “Abortion”, was present only in eight strips, which contained five systemic value-conveying terms, three of which referred to the social protests against the project to tighten up the abortion law, which was being tabled in the Sejm. The sender assessed these protests unequivocally negatively, referring to them variously as *grotesque* [143], *a provocation* [143] and including them among as actions that are *anti-government* [145].

Topic 5: In the corpus, only eleven systemic value-carrying terms referred to “Smolensk,” several of these may be considered justifiable, i.e. resulting from the need to provide information, including information on varying assessments of the event expressed by certain groups of citizens. Therefore, we consider the terms *right (to be remembered* [153]),

the Smolensk catastrophe [157], *reliable (information)* [159] or *truth (about Smolensk)* [163]) as axiologically neutral. The remaining valuing lexemes noted in the material referred mainly to the counter-picketing against the Smolensk demonstrations held every month or blocks of the so-called marches for memory. The broadcaster called these acts an *embarrassing provocation* [162], pointed to the accompanying *aggression* [170], and even obfuscated the sense of the information being provided by using the negatively phrased metaphor *under the pillory* [169] (the full phrasing of the strip: *Marsz pamięci pod pręgierzem polityków* [March for Memory under the pillory of politicians]). Other systemic value-adding terms used by the broadcaster in addressing this subject served to depreciate the opposition: (*The opposition encourages*) *provocations* [164], (*Tusk wants to be*) *above the law* [165], and *doctored documents (in the Miller commission)* [171]).

In reporting on topic 6, “The Parliamentary Crisis,” the authors focused almost exclusively on depreciating the actions of the opposition (about 50% of the collected texts contained systemically negative words, most of which referred to the protest undertaken by the opposition, and only a few to the concurrently occurring civil protests in front of the Sejm building). In keeping with Laskowska’s approach mentioned above, the negative valuations present in these strips fall primarily within the social and ethical categories: *destabilization (of the state)* [173], [191], *a (street) brawl* [175], *(the last fight) of the Communist spooks* [176], *(Komorowski) condones the violence* [179], *(non)democratic* [178], *provocation* [180], *aggression* [185], *coup* [44], [194], *radical(s)/radical* [201], [210], [214], *occupying forces* [209], *block (compromise)* [211], *surrender* [219]. The ethical terms include *the (limits) of between being decent and being ridiculous* [195], *feralization of customs* [197], *compromise* [198], *an important visit* [200] (ironic use), *failure* [204], *brawl* [220].

Topic 7, “The Forests,” were referred to in only five strips in our corpus, four of which concerned political issues (disputes with the opposition and the European Union). In each of them, the author used some kind of systemically negative term to describe the actions of both these entities: [222] *(Trees in) a political game*; [223] *(An EU judge) against (Poland)*; [224] *(EU) fines*; [226] *Double standards (of the European Commission)*.

Topic 8, “Ustawa dezubekizacyjna,” [A law taking away the pension privileges of former functionaries of the communist regime] was also addressed in only five strips. At the level of systemic value-bearing terms, in this small sample we may observe only a dichotomization of valuations

between the former communist SB functionaries (called *esbek* in Polish)⁴⁰ protesting against the above-mentioned Act [228], [231], to whom *pride* is attributed [231], and the victims of communist repressions People's Republic of Poland, to whom *humility* is attributed in turn [232].

For topic 9, "Independence Day", the key words were *patriot* and *patriotism* [238], [239], [241], [244], used with reference to the attitude arbitrarily attributed by the broadcaster to the participants of the "Independence Day March." In contrast, the actions of the circles critical of this initiative (some Polish and foreign media, politicians of the opposition, and politicians of the European Union) are described as *slandering (patriots* [244] or *Poland* [246]), *showing contempt (for Poles* [244]) and *tolerance of neo-Nazis* [247].

Topic 10, "Tusk," included only a few systemic evaluative terms, three of which can be considered as expressing author-dependent positive or negative valuations: *Strong defense (of Polish interests)* [257], *(Poland) exposed (the true EU standards of democracy)* [254], *Happiness with [Donald] Tusk as a pretext for desecration* [261]. Despite the paucity of data, we may conclude that also for this subject an evaluative opposition was imposed, with Poland and the Polish government (assessed positively) *against* the European Union and the opposition (assessed negatively).

The strips announcing reports of events related to topic 11, "Reprivatization," contained only systemically negative terms. The following entities were subject to this negative evaluation: the political opposition, the local government of Warsaw, the owners of the properties purchased or persons acting on their behalf. Persons affected by the actions of the above entities were referred to as *victims*, either of *crooks* [272], or the so-called 'townhouse cleaners' [279], [283], and their situation – *dramatic* [279], [283]. Sometimes, the entities placed on the "guilty" side were taken collectively and called the *(local-government) racket* [263] or *fraudsters* [272]. The authors of the strips show a particular tendency here to use evaluative stylistic phrasemes. In addition to the *local-government racket* mentioned above, the segment also contained such well-entrenched constructions as the one described above: *to put oneself above the law* [275], [286], *wild reprivatization* [267], [280], *thieving reprivatization* [277], [278], *a thieving octopus* [287] and *townhouse cleaners* [274], [279], [282], [283], who are also attributed (one time) with *insolence* and *arrogance* [274], as well as *meanness*

40 The formulation used by the journalist in the segment: <https://wiadomosci.tvp.pl/30181960/pycha-sbkow>.

[284], where this ethical qualification referred to *townhouse owners*, who cannot be identified with the *cleaners*, although this is what the broadcaster seems to suggest to the viewers. Such frequent use of stylistic phrasemes may indicate the broadcaster's belief, shared by many members of society, that the process of returning Warsaw properties to the heirs of the former owners was criminal in nature, which, from a linguistic point of view, may be seen as putting evaluation before presentation of facts. The evaluative content is then not up for discussion, as it is expressed through ready-made linguistic "prefabricated" formulas. Another aspect of this phenomenon may also be the broadcaster's intent to persuade in order to establish in the minds of the viewers the same evaluative judgments. This intent is also supported by the use of vocabulary concerning the crime of seizing someone's property – *thieving* (adj.) (see the examples above) and: *stolen (townhouse)* [288], *theft (of a townhouse)* [289], *a stolen (townhouse)* [290].

Topic 12, "500+", is the only one of the thirteen that was covered in *Wiadomości TVP 1* exclusively as a series of positive events. In the strips concerning this issue, the systemic value-carrying word is *aid (from the state, for families)* was used only once [292]. In light of the above theoretical assumptions, the use of this term constituted information, rather than commentary.

The use of systemic evaluative words relating to topic 13, "Protests of Resident Physicians," illustrated the chronology of this conflict, and even constructed a certain narrative. The first strips emphasized the fact that young physicians *demanded* [295], [296], [297] salary increases, and then it was emphasized that they *rejected the compromise* [298] because the offered increases were *too small* [299], [300], while in [299] and [300] they were already called *residents* rather than *young physicians* (emphasis on their function within the system rather than their age). Subsequent strips [301] and [302] already used the words *novice physicians* (emphasis on inexperience), and their actions after *rejecting the compromise* were again called *making demands* [301], but this time of *billions of zlotys* [301], and then *escalating* [302] the protest. In strip [303], the viewers were informed about the *record high* funds allocated for health care, and in strip [304], an appeal was made for the good of patients who *wanted the protest to end*. Strip [305] brought the information that the *protesting doctors sent patients away* (emphasizing conduct contrary to professional ethics), and strip [306] ending the series informed of *a chance for an agreement*.