The Evaluative Aspect of the Messages of Social Media Influencers

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ABSTRAKT

Czech abstract

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá hodnoticím aspektem zpráv influencerů na sociálních médiích. Práce se skládá z teoretické a praktické části. Teoretická část obsahuje popis pragmatiky, hodnoticím jazykem a sociálními médii. Praktická část obsahuje analýzu 50 vybraných zpráv vytvořenými pěti influencery. Analýza ukazuje na použití vybraných pragmo-gramatických a semantických jevů užitých ve zprávách na sociálních médiích. Závěr práce poukazuje na výsledky provedené analýzy.

Klíčová slova:

hodnocení, pragmatika, lingvistika, influenceři, sociální média, emoce, pozitivní a negativní význam

ABSTRACT

English abstract

This bachelor thesis deals with the evaluative aspect of the messages of social media influencers. The thesis is divided into theoretical and practical part. The theoretical part contains a description of pragmatics, evaluative language, and social media. The practical part includes the analysis of 50 selected messages written by five influencers. The analysis points to the usage of selected pragmo-grammatical and semantic aspects used in selected messages. The conclusion of the thesis shows the results of the analysis.

Keywords:

evaluation, pragmatics, linguistics, influencers, social media, emotion, positive and negative meaning

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's/Master's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This bachelor thesis focuses on influencers and their written messages shared in social media content. The purpose of this thesis is to outline the term evaluation and pragmatics and show its usage in analytical part. The theoretical part was divided into four categories. First of the dealt with pragmatics- a linguistic discipline. The historical insight is mentioned as well as the most common principles used in pragmatics. Then, the second category focuses on evaluation with the interpretation of parameter-based theory, appraisal and finally, non-verbal aspect of evaluation is portrayed. Lastly, social media and the language of influencers is shown.

The analytical part is divided into three main sections: deixis, pragmmogrammatical aspect of evaluation and semantic aspect of evaluation.

I.   THEORY

1 PRAGMATICS

Pragmatics as a linguistic discipline and its usage evolved over time. It originates from semiotics (developed by Charles Morris), the investigation of a vast extent of sociological and psychological issues related universally to the system of signs (so-called Continental perception). Secondly, it could refer to the exploration of the specific notions that are abstract and refer to agents (formed by Rudolf Carnap); and thirdly, it could relates to the study of deictic terms and indexicals (originated by Richard Montague). Modern-day pragmatics borders on philosophy and linguistics (Levinson 1983, 5).

The origins of pragmatics date back to the 1930s and are connected with the names of Charles Peirce, Charles Morris and Rudolf Carnap. Under the influence of Peirce, Morris introduced the idea of a treble section into syntax, semantics, and pragmatics within semiotics – a universal science of signs. Pragmatics, he claimed, focuses on the relationships of linguistic forms and their users and representatives. Carnap embraced this category of three and compared it hierarchically according to the degrees of abstractness, concluding that pragmatics is the least abstract science within semiotics (Huang 2013, 2).

In the 1960s, the philosophers of language such as L. Wittgenstein, G. Ryle, P. Strawson, and J.L. Austin studied so-called 'performance phenomena', and other linguists started to embrace that knowledge. J. L. Austin, J. R. Searl and H. P. Grice focused on the meaning of the speech rather than written sentences or words. Pragmatics became a multidisciplinary study of language using prior knowledge from contextualism, anthropology, functionalism, European sociology, and ethnomethodology (Bublitz and Norrick 2011, 2). These days, on the one hand, pragmatics is considered a contemporary field of linguistics; while on the other hand, it also has its roots in the philosophy of language.

Pragmatics is identified as a universal social, cognitive, and cultural view on linguistic phenomena in connection with their usage in forms of behaviour. It strives to answer the question: How does language work in people's lives? (Verschueren 1999, 7-8). To answer this question, pragmatics concentrates on the context of the speaker's meaning that depends significantly on the speaker's purposes (see Ariel 2010). The speaker's and addressee's identification, time, and placement in which they participate in the discourse are the illustrations of contextual data that partakes in language explanation and production. Therefore, the meaning in pragmatics is highly contextualised (Ariel 2010, 24). As a complex field with all sorts of disciplinary influence and few, scarcely any, apparent limits,

pragmatics introduced a number of terms that could help it to study language in context. The main themes in the study of pragmatics encompass the study of a reference, speech act, implicature, deixis and presupposition, among others.

1.1 The notions of 'deixis' and 'reference' in pragmatics

According to Grundy (2000, 3, 19, 275), pragmatics examines the language used in the context of communication and the application of rules related to it. It deals with the interpretation of production and understanding and sometimes odd usage of language — pragmatics investigates how language is suitable for the context of communication in which it is performed. Language is sufficiently underdetermined to enable us to deduce how a statement can be understood in the context in which it exists. In many cases, a person who speaks might not necessarily mean what the words she uses say, but it is the person who listens who decides how to understand the message.

The principles of pragmatics enable many components of a text to be deduced than being apparently described, which ensure a shortening of written corpus (Cruse 2000, 329).

1.1.1 Deixis

One of the key terms in pragmatics is 'deixis'. Since context is important for pragmatics, time, place and situation in which the speech activity happens become important. Language speakers use verbal means to provide such references. Deixis is a technical expression for what is called as "showing" through language. A deictic expression (also called indexicals) refers to any form of language used to achieve this "showing" (Yule 1996, 9).

Deixis is divided into three main categories that deal with the person, the location and the time. Examples below represent (1) personal, (2) spatial, and (3) temporal deixis in the analysed messages (Yule 1996, 9).

(1) I barely have time.

(2) This is a paid partnership.

(3) I am so excited to now be launching the campaign.

All of them are dependent on whether the speaker and the addressee share the same context for the interpretation and can easily recognize who "I" am, when is "now" and what "this" involves. The indexicals have their most basic use in spoken face-to-face communication, where utterances are easily understood by people involved in a conversation

but may need translation for someone not involved. They express relative distance, and their interpretation relies on the context and the speaker's purposes. Deictic expressions always convey more information than they say (Yule 1996, 9).

1.1.2 Reference

Another principle important for pragmatics is that of reference, which is the action of a writer using linguistic structures to permit the addressee to recognise something previously stated or referred to. Those structures are known as referring expressions. First of them represents pronouns (4), then definite noun phrases (5), noun phrases (6) which are indefinite and (7) proper nouns (Yule 1996, 9).

(4) I still rely on it these days.

(5) The house is real!

(6) It's like a gift to my body!

(7) Something Carrie Bradshaw and I have in common.

Choosing between, for example, *a house* and *the house* (5) is derived mainly from the speaker's suppositions that the addressee is already aware of. The reference is connected to the speaker's aims and values regarding the language use. For a successful reference, the role of inference is crucial. By using specific referring expressions, the reader's goal is to infer the writer's intentions to distinguish the object. It is quite common that we know about something or person; however, we cannot remember the proper name of it in an immediate situation. Therefore, vague expressions can be used if the addressee is able to decipher the reference that the speaker bears in mind (Yule 1996, 17-18).

Reference is used in the analysis when commenting on examples from messages. In the analysis, influencers mainly refer to the advertised items by pronouns and finite and infinite noun phrases. Proper nouns are used least. From the examples, it is sometimes not evident what the influencer means if the specific phrases are not used, but in the whole context, yes. Proper names can be unknown even in the whole context.

The pragmatic characterisation of the language signify not only the illustration of language as an independent and limited type unit but it consider another non-linguistic properties based on the context and specific situation of the usage of language. Thus, contextual conditions are reformulated into prototypical, representing the pursuit of pragmatic discipline (Bublitz and Norrick 2011, 5).

2 EVALUATION IN PRAGMATICS

Pragmatics deals with the context of a meaning and evaluation among other things. As Thompson and Hunston (2000) state, the evaluation can be defined as:

> *The broad cover term for the expression of the speaker's or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about. That attitude may relate to certainty or obligation or desirability or any of a number of other sets of values (Thompson and Hunston 2000, 5).*

Pounds (2015, 1) determined that evaluative language (EL) consists of representational, interpersonal, and structural dimensions. The representational dimension represents the opinions of speakers or writers about the world. Simultaneously, EL attracts, forms and effects the feelings and opinions of others (the interpersonal dimension). To a certain extent, evaluative language has cohesive attributes in spoken and written discourse (the structural dimension).

Since evaluation is very complex in terms of textual context, several theories emerged. Two of them are discussed below.

2.1 Parameter-Based Theory

Parameter-based Theory is s founded on the premise that speakers can assess evaluative aspect of the word by using various parameters. According to Bednarek (2006, 3), those 'set of values' that are mentioned in Thompson and Hunston are recognised as evaluative parameters, premising that speakers could evaluate word aspects.

The scholar identifies six core dimensions:

- the parameter of reliability – whether the messages are honest or fake (reliable or unreliable);

- the parameter of emotivity – bad or good meaning;

- the parameter of expectedness – whether the topic we are discussing is portrayed as expected or unexpected;

- the parameter of importance – important or unimportant;

- the parameter of comprehensibility – vague or explicit;

- the parameter of possibility/necessity – evaluation of what is (not) possible or (not) necessary.

Further, the following parameters can be used to describe evaluation: appreciation and judgment; levels of certainty/probability; desirability/obligation. Other crucial components that might influence the impact and attribute of evaluation are the aim, the degree of subjectivity contrary to actuality inserted in the evaluation, the source and the levels of explicitness. Those parameters are usually measured on a high/low or positive/negative scale. Certain linguistic components, such as adverbs or modal verbs, correlate with some evaluative meanings (Pounds 2015, 1).

2.2   Appraisal Theory and its Patterns

The term appraisal is directly linked to an evaluative operation in varied patterns. As Martin and White (2005) outlined, language evaluation is concerned with engagement, attitude, and graduation. Each of them could further develop into more specific sub-categories. A notion "attitude" investigates emotions thoroughly and systematically focuses on feelings; it consists of judgement, affect, and appreciation. Engagement focuses on obtaining stance and coordination between opinions in discourse. As for graduation, it deals with the gradation by which feelings are intensified. Graduation concept concentrates on modulating the meaning by degree, and adverbs (such as *rather, greatly, deeply, enough, very, slightly, somewhat, entirely, true/pure, and sort of/kind of*) usually represent it. It modifies how weak or strong the feelings are. This kind of gradation belongs to the sub-category called 'force' (Martin and White 2005, 35-40). In the analytical part, I will focus on the notions that trigger emotions: judgement, affect, and appreciation.

Affect express what someone thinks about something, appreciation examines how good/bad a unit is, and judgement deals with how good/bad what someone does is. Affect concentrates on feelings, so adjectives that interpret affect collocate with the verb *feel*, appreciation collocate with the verb *consider* and applies the rule of *it v-link ADJ of n to-inf*. Judgement is characteristic with the pattern *it v-link ADJ of n to-inf* (Hunston 2010, 130-134).

2.3   Evaluation through language use

According to Hunston (2010, 128-129), evaluation in language can have different forms. For instance, many grammatical patterns have evaluative potential. For example, in the

English language such clauses as to-infinitive clauses, wh-clauses including wh-elements (what, who, which, when) at the beginning, and that-clauses are used by the language speakers to show their assessment of various things. Additionally, prepositions or prepositional phrases are known for distributing information. Some of them are directly linked to the evaluative meaning (e.g., *against, about, as, in, of, over, towards, with*). Those categories (whether prepositional phrase or clause) signify the object of the evaluation or the wide range of its reach. The usage of adjectives demonstrates another essential pattern in evaluative meaning. Importantly, adjectives belong to the word class that is mainly related to evaluation where intensifiers usually gather with them. Patterns that supply adjectives almost always occur together with evaluative meaning (*by, that, about, as, in, of, over, towards*, with ADJ). All those patterns contribute to evaluation.

2.4 Non-verbal Aspect of Evaluation

Evaluation can also have manifestation via visual representation, especially in modern world, where people use social media to express their favourite experience, record important events, and distribute personal knowledge (Barton and Lee 2013, 73). Social media users connect images and other visual components with the written word. They do not replace the language itself, but it serves as a supplement, new ways of mode to work powerfully together (Barton and Lee 2013, 18).

Generally, semiotics investigates the sign systems but more precisely, it deals with language meaning in the broadest sense. The same as linguistics belongs to the semiotics and carries the meaning; then, there are many other forms of meanings outside the language area- e.g. in a culture. Culture can be defined as a collection of interrelated semiotic systems or meaning systems. For example, it incorporates sculpture, music, dance, and painting. All of them carry a meaning. The notion 'social' refers to the relationship between language and social construction, regarding social construction as a part of the social system. As a whole, it forms a social-semiotic perspective on a language (Halliday and Hasan 1989, 3). Via visual representation, influencers express their favourite experience, record important events, and distribute personal knowledge about travelling spots they have seen (Barton and Lee 2013, 73). Social media users connect images and other visual components with the written word. They do not replace language itself, but it serves as a supplement, new ways of mode to work powerfully together (Barton and Lee 2013, 18)

With the development of the internet, graphical means, such as emojis, became … Emojis are defined as brightly coloured signs, i.e. love hearts, smileys, winks, and more, that could be involved in the digital keyboards as single symbol pictures or glyphs. Those symbols depict ideas, entities, events or feelings visually. Emojis first appeared on mobile devices in 2011 and caused a great boom, but their origin dates back to the 1990s in Japan (Evans 2017, 13). Nowadays, emoticons are the most expanded way of communication worldwide - over 90% of Internet users use them on social media platforms (Evans 2017, 22). Any form of communication, including emojis, is dependent on the context in which it is used. For example, an aubergine customarily considered a vegetable and peach as fruit can represent male and female genitalia in some contexts (Evans 2017, 32). It is necessary to go beyond the words to understand the communicative purpose completely. Nonverbal signals, such as a wink or a grin, can help to uncover what someone means. In the context of digital communication, emojis play a significant role (Evans 2017, 39) as they signal how a message can be read. According to Evans (2017, 27), heart emojis, happy faces, and sad faces belong to the top three categories of emojis that show emotions, but they can be used as a tool of evaluation supplementing the language, too.

2.5 Approaches to the Analysis of Evaluation

Evaluative language is difficult to analyse since there is no collection of grammatical or lexical forms that comprise the whole range of evaluation expressions. Adjectives and adverbs frequently communicate evaluative meaning (Hunston 2010, 3). In linguistics, evaluation stays a mostly undiscovered niche (Bednarek 2006, 4).

In analysis, the pragmatic approach is applied because pragmatics is closely related to the evaluation of language, especially in terms of its contextual meaning.

3 SOCIAL MEDIA AS A SEPARATE DISCOURSE

Social media, a recent technological development, led to the creation of virtual platforms where users' fears and anxieties, thought and likes, etc. are "shared" and "liked". Previous studies indicate that social media are suitable for an engagement in more socially essential issues, the maintenance of social relations and even identity construction (Bouvier 2016, 14). As reported by Bouvier (2016), in terms of linguistics, the language in social media tends to be "subjectivized". As ordinary people have become more visible, so do their positions, opinions, values, and thought. Very often the users share their attitudes and stance to products, political issues, events, etc. At the same time, this hybrid type of communication allows to preserve and track the linguistic activity among communicants.

3.1 Social Media Characterization

According to a 2018 study, one-third of customers' buying decisions are influenced by influencers from YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, and about 47 % of Generation Z uses social media to research companies (Roback 2018). In the last ten years, we register that the importance of social media has skyrocketed. The results show that over 3.4 billion people actively participate in social media. It counts for 45 % of the population of the world. These people primarily follow influencers on social networks to search for inspiration in various areas of human life (Geyser 2022).

The discourse of social media is unique is many ways. According to Foster (2015), social media discourse is characterized by the usage of vocabulary that is appropriated. Words that already had current meanings later evolved to entirely different meanings within the online context. Finally, it spreads into real-life verbal communication. It refers to the example of the word wall. Primarily, it refers to the wall in a building, but thanks to social media, it also bears a meaning of a homepage on the social media platform. Most likely, nobody has known about the words like "unfiriend", "selfie", "fleek", or "emoji" some time ago, yet these concepts have moved from social media platforms into everyday communication. The contemporary social media trend is about connecting the proper names of celebrities or highly known people into one cluster. It is later widespread and often used on social media, such as Brangelina, Bennifer. Extensive use of particular acronyms appears on social media like LOL (Laughing Out Loud), DM (Direct Message).

In the messages of influencers analysed, the most frequently used acronym is AD, referring to the advertisement and usually positioned at the beginning of the message or at the end.

So far, young people have not had so many chances to make their self-presentation flawless. For example, they are able to constantly improve their digital images and self-portraits before posting them online or sending them to friends. Several social media have reached the top in a short time. Therefore, a giant like Facebook has to make every effort not to lose its supporters due to emerging media such as Instagram or Snapchat (Piotrowski and Valkenburg 2017, 231).

4 THE LANGUAGE OF INFLUENCERS

4.1 Influencer and Influencer Marketing

The influencers are people who create content and establish a connection with their followers in a trustworthy and real way. They developed fame on the internet over time, regardless of their geography. Lately, influencers are viewed as "digital" who can create effective relationships with their followers through the communication via digital platforms. Some of them turn into business brands or identities functioning in the social media world who base their success on engagement, impression and reach (Macri 2021). Social media influencers often become celebrities in a social group, ranging in sizes, ages, etc. (Jin, Musqaddam, and Ryu 2019, 3). Influencers show their lives, sometimes with their most personal experiences, just like closest friends or family would do. In contrast, celebrities, however, take a more restrained attitude and are more reserved (Roback 2018).

Influencers can be divided into several groups: by the number of followers, content types, and level of influence. They can also be categorised by their best-suited place (niche) in which they stand right now. In short, influencers, who may belong to a less influential group according to one type, on the other hand, may seem more compelling if we look at them differently. Many mega influencers, for instance, are also celebrities. Nonetheless, because they are missing expert skills in a specialised niche, both groups often do not really affect their followers. Suppose they are good at what they do (in their niche). In that case, some micro or nano-influencers can build a more significant impact on their followers. Many companies or brands involve influencers for marketing of their products or services (Geyser, 2022). One of the reasons for this is a somewhat more effective advertising since influencers tend to build a closer connection to their audience (consumers, followers), who consider them more trustworthy, compared to the traditional advertising channels. Simply, the customers personally associate with the influencers and try to copy them (Jin, Musqaddam, and Ryu 2019, 3), thus, buying products and services recommended by a specific influencer. Cognitive biases simplify the information process, and therefore, influencer marketing is so successful (Raback 2018).

In the analysed messages, influencers implement strategies that subconsciously target their followers to attract them to a particular product or service in a non-violent form. Non-verbal aspects through visual interpretations of items also belong to one of the strategies.

Influencers want to catch the follower's eye by showing beautiful, often adjusted photos or short videos, where they want to show that they are using the products or services. Verbal communication represents the text of the message (so-called post) that must also be deliberately chosen so as not to be too offensive and at the same time show as many pros and personal experiences as possible.

II.   ANALYSIS

5   DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The corpus of messages was selected from Instagram lifestyle and beauty influencers' accounts. As Instagram is a medium based on adjusted photos (visual attractiveness); thus, it has become an ideal means of promoting various products, popularising the physical appearance or supporting a particular lifestyle or prominent luxury brands. Instagram is a social network platform that serves as an intermediator between companies, institutions, and users with their followers. Altogether, it is an easier way to interact with over 1 billion of potential consumers (Jin, Musqaddam, and Ryu 2019, 2). This platform enables to utilise many different features. For example: show yourself in trendy features (photos), create short, amusing videos (reels), see stories and live videos from people of your choice, exchange messages, photos and videos with friends or groups of friends, and browse the latest trends from favourite brands and creators, discover content according to your concerns (Instagram, n.d.).

The purpose of this thesis was to characterize and analyse the evaluative aspect of the messages of social media influencers by pragmatic approach. All of them were woman that have English language as their native language. The total number of 5 influencers were chosen from the Instagram social media platform by my own choice and ten messages from each were analysed. The messages was specifically chosen for the purposes of influencer marketing. As all of them belong to the group of life-style influencers that primarily advertise the beauty and fashion products.

The AntConc programme was used to analyse important word structures that belong to the scope of study. As the AntConc analysed, the whole written corpus incorporates 3 844 words. For the acquisition of emotively charged vocabulary in terms of its negative and positive meaning, the TwinWord online tool was used. It show the result of

6 DEIXIS

Among the top ten words in the corpus are three personal pronouns: first person - *I*, second person - *you*, and the third person pronoun - *it*.

6.1 Personal deixis

In the context of influencer messages, it is evident that personal pronouns play an important role because the first person pronoun - *I* (8) occurs 114 times (see Fig. 1). The third person pronoun- *it (9)* appears in the text 65 times. The last from this group concludes the second person pronoun - y*ou (10)* occurring in the text 55 times.

(8) I always moisturise my body.

(9) It's also completely invisible.

(10) Whatever you prefer, the perfect finishing touch is always.

The frequent usage of the first-person narration indicates that the influencer has a personal experience with the item that she advertised, thus making the messages influencer-centered. Since the person shares her allegedly personal experience, the use of the pronoun contributes to the authenticity of the message with the aim of making customers believe and purchase.

Two other pronouns position the product and the addressee in close proximity to the creator of the message. The second person pronoun constitutes the recipient of the message. Influencers are trying to persuade their audience (followers, consumers) to buy something. They address them in the second person because they do not know their proper name, yet, they try to maintain close distance, appearing to address each viewer individually. Pronoun "it", on the other hand, is used as a reference to the product(s) which is used by the influencer, but whose characteristics are important for persuading the audience to purchase it.
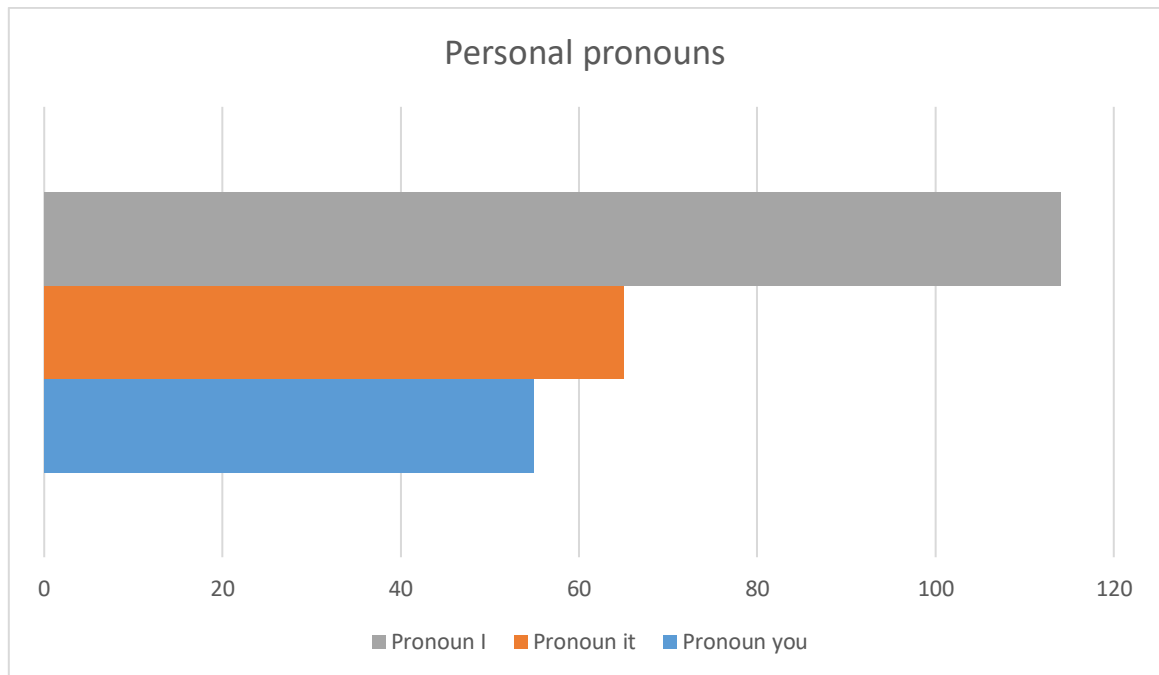
Figure 1. Personal pronouns

6.2 Spatial deixis

Spatial deixis points to the relative location of people or things. The most frequent word- *this* (11), is mentioned by influencers 38 times.

(11) This is what would make me feel the most confident.

The pronoun usually refers to the product (11) and positions it close to the influencer who is using it. Since the influencer is personally involved in testing/using product, the customer can be confident that the review which leans towards positive/negative/neutral evaluation is trustworthy. From the broader context in (11), it is clear that *this* refers to a specific skin serum that helps to eliminate acne. Without acne, the author feels confident.

6.3 Temporal deixis

This group relates to time and is used by the influencers least. The most frequent word for temporal deixis - *time (12)* appears just 12 times in all 50 messages. Primarily is used with the prepositions- *of* or *for*. Other temporal deictic expressions were found as well: *now, day, this morning* and *year*. Their usage was, however, sporadic. It means that the specific time range is not so relevant for influencers when they advertise a product/service.

(12) a) The perfect colours for this time of year.

b) Something tells me it's time for cake!

The first of them refers to the specific season of the year, but as the influencer is not sure when the follower will see the text message, the message has only indirect time reference. According to the author, an orange jumper and a pink dress are an ideal combination to wear in winter.

Since temporal deixis is used to communicate the distance from current time and current reality, (12b) shows how the use of present tense and the word *time* as a part of an idiom blurs the distance again. According to the Urban Dictionary (2020), the phrase "cake time or time for cake" means "to flirt and be of sweat appearance". The author is talking about some piece of clothes that is very feminine and festive. The photo of the influencer shows what kind of clothes she is talking about. By putting the message into the narrative present, the influencer highlights the immediacy of the hypothetical action, once the outfit is on. This is done by the influencer to reinforce positive attitude to the product she advertises that is also rendered through the reference to a positive goal of becoming more confident to flirt.

7 PRAGMOGRAMMATICAL ASPECT OF EVALUATION

The corpus was analyzed with AntConc with the purpose of identification the frequency of certain words that are related to the content of the analysis. The first ten most commonly used words belong to the group of function words consisting of articles, pronouns, prepositions, and conjunctions. Some of these words are indexicals which shed light on the position of the evaluator against their followers.

7.1 Clauses with evaluative potential

Relative clauses have high evaluative potential. In the following sections I will describe evaluative that- and wh- clauses.

7.1.1 That- clauses

According to the AntConc programme, the word- *that* appears 30 times. I decipher that this word is used 26 times in that-clauses. That-clauses are a kind of subordinate clauses that develop further properties of the main clause by offering the writer's opinions or perspectives about the product. Thus, they tend to carry an evaluative meaning. According to the analysis, it is clear that those clauses are widespread. The conjunction- *that* links whether to *noun, adjective,* or *verb*.

In the examples below, influencers use (13) *that- clauses* that indicate evaluative language.

> *(13) a) I will openly admit <u>that it's taken me all of my 25 years to find active wear</u>…*
>
> *b) I'm forever grateful for the small things <u>that make me smile.</u>*

In the first example (13a), that-clause describes the noun- *admit*. The influencer admits to followers that she finally finds sportswear that suits appropriately. The influencer is evaluating how complicated the process of finding suitable clothes is in terms of time. In the influencer's words, it took an entire life. The influencer obviously exaggerates the time process of searching to show how great and unique the brand is. Although the evaluative meaning of it is seems to be negative (by complaining about time), the final evaluation is positive and can bring positive results (purchases). Customers are prone to buy it because they believe the influencer's words and probably think there is no better fashion brand for activewear. It is a misleading claim because if some piece of clothes suits somebody, it does not have to suit you.

The second example (13b) is about *small things* that make the influencer happy. That- clause develops the noun- *things*. By *small things* we can imagine everything, but it surely has a positive meaning from the influencer's point of view. In terms of context meaning, the author of the message describes s*mall things* teeth whitening products. Now it is clear that the word- s*mile* is deliberately chosen. It is a reference for those products.

7.1.2 WH-clauses

The evaluation aspect is recognised by using wh- elements (*what, which, how, when, and who*) that are placed at the beginning of a clause. Wh- elements are analyzed in the order of their appearance in a corpus (see Table 1).

Preposition	Number of occurrences
What	13
Which	13
How	11
When	11
Who	3

Table 1. Wh-elements

The following randomly selected examples of my choice (18) illustrate how evaluation is rendered in the messages.

(14) a) <u>What an amazing brand!</u>

b) My fav is the hydrating body wash <u>which smells so lovely.</u>

c) You can see <u>how it works for you too!</u>

d) <u>When the powder is that incredible.</u>

e) Originally made for nurses <u>who suffer from constantly washing their hands.</u>

Example (14a) at the first sight expresses positive evaluation. The influencer is obviously enthusiastic about the brand and praises it in the slighted exaggerated manner. There is an exclamation mark at the end to enhance the effect.

Example (14b) definitely denotes a positive meaning because wh- clause is describing the hydrating body wash in a pleasant manner. It points to the fragrance which the writer considers lovely.

Example (14c) shows positive meaning as well because the exclamatory sentence evokes an enormous enthusiasm about service (30 days return policy) of the brand. The reference to the audience is by using pronoun- *you* that shows proximal closeness by the influencer.

Example (14d) is expressed positively by the influencer who has a positive experience with the skin product (powder).

Example (14e) illustrates the negative meaning from first sight. Regarding the whole context, it contributes to the positive meaning of the audience because the influencer mentions a hand cream developed by nurses. It can be viewed as a positive because nurses are medical employees who understand what is good for the skin.

8 SEMANTIC ASPECT OF EVALUALTION

Since most of the evaluative potential of the message comes through the use of specific vocabulary with evaluative connotation, I concentrated on adjectives and intensifiers (see discussion above).

8.1 Adjectives

Adjectives play a major role in terms of evaluation. AntConc was used to identify the frequency of adjectives (Table 2), ranking them on a high to low-frequency scale.

Two adjectives in the Table 2- *new and paid* independently have a general, non-emotively charged meaning but in a context could have whether positive or negative meaning. In those examples, the adjective- *new* has a positive meaning because those dry shampoos have innovative features, which means good. The adjective- *paid* is neutral in this context and has a descriptive meaning that signals the paid advertisement which the influencer has with the brand.

Adjective- *perfect* describes the resultant positive effect that the skin product has on the skin. Adjective- *free* is positive in the context because it refers to the money that does not have to be spent by using this specific membership card- influencer shows benefits. Adjective- *favourite* denotes positive meaning even separately. In this context, influencer writes about the online fitness studio (VAHA). She loves the possibility to choose one of her favourite workouts on her own.

Top 5 Adjectives	Examples from messages	Number of occurrences
New	New bunch of dry shampoos	28
Perfect	A perfect matte base	10
Paid	A paid advertisement	9
Free	Free ATM withdrawals	8
Favourite	One of my favourite things	7

Table 2. Adjectives

Though the number of the same occurrences was not significant, the application of adjectives in the whole text is conclusive. That means that influencers primarily use specific adjectives tailored to the requirements for the description of their products. Those specific adjectives describe the item, or a personal impression evoked from its usage. The examples below show both cases (15).

(15) a) I am so <u>excited</u> to now be launching the campaign.

b) The light gel-like texture is <u>so refreshing</u>.

Example (15a) shows the personal impression. The influencer feels very enthusiastic about the new campaign that is launching. It is also intensified by the use of- *so.*

Example (15b), on the other hand, has descriptive character that is positive. It describes the structure of a skin serum that feels refreshing on her skin.

Intensifiers are often connected with the evaluative adjectives, and as analysis shows, they are used heavily. The most frequent intensifier is the word- *so* that occurs 16 times. Other intensifiers are: *enough, slightly, very*, and *kind of*:

(16) a) This was <u>so</u> good I even ordered one for my parents.

b) Are you an elegant day dress or dramatic gown <u>kind of</u> person?

In example (16a) is depicted the most common intensifier- *so* which trigger positive emotion. It relates to the adjective-*good* that is independently considered as positive. From the context is apparent that the influencer describes food.

Example (16b) is a question. The influencer is asking whether the reader likes more elegant style or provocative. She wants to involve the followers to the debate which causes the increase of relationship. The intensifier- *kind of* describes a specific taste of style that is for now unknown for the author. So, it denotes an evaluation that is not is negative, but rather it show neutrality.

8.2 Other emotively charged vocabulary used for evaluation

The analysis of emotively charged vocabulary deals with the emotionality of words that trigger positive or negative evaluation.

8.2.1 Positive versus negative

I rank all corpus through the TwinWord online tool that was constructed for the sentiment analysis on the basis of negative/positive/neutral meaning. The total of 50 messages incorporates three messages with a neutral meaning, and the rest of 47 messages were evaluated as positive. None of them was regarded as negative. For illustration, it is possible to see the 10 ten words associated with the positive meaning (Table 3).

Top 10 positive words	Number of occurrences
Love	24
Like	16
New	11
Time	11
All	10
Perfect	9
Make	8
Favorite	7
Free	7
Day	6

Table 3. Positive versus negative words

As a result of the sentiment analysis of influencers' messages, the used vocabulary triggers positive emotions. It is clear that for the purposes of advertising, positive vocabulary is appropriate. Customers would not buy something that is being viewed as negative. That is why influencers evoke positive meaning from the advertised products or services. The most frequent word is *love,* representing a deep positive emotion that focuses on satisfaction and recommendation. In most cases, it is a verb, and sporadically, it is also used as a noun (19).

   (19) a) I <u>love</u> the shiny top coat.

     b) My quick & easy glowing skin routine featuring my forever <u>love</u> Luminous Silk.

Example (19a) shows the verb-*love* that in the context triggers positive meaning but even without context.

In Example (19b) is depicted the noun-*love* which is a reference of proper noun *Luminous Silk* which in the context characterizes the skin product.

8.2.2 Affect, Appreciation, Judgement

Evaluative language depends on various patterns that trigger emotions (whether positive or negative). This section focuses on three patterns (see Table 4) developed by Martin and White (2005). The notion- *affect* refers to an individual emotional state and is expressed explicitly. It describes what someone thinks about something, and usually, the verb *feel* describes *affect*. The term- *Appreciation* evaluates external units. It collocates with the verb

consider and deals with how good/bad the external unit is. The pattern- *Judgement* focuses on how good/bad the deeds of external units are. All of those patterns are constituted by adjectives.

As I have already mentioned elsewhere, adjectives in this written corpus are very topic-specific. Influencers rely on the deliberate choice of specific words and structures because it is their only weapon to attract their audience. Therefore, they usually did not appear more than once or twice. As a result of my analysis, appreciation and affect have the most prominent representation. Affect describes the personal feelings of influencers that appear to be positive. That is because influencers express their exciting experiences with the advertised items. Then, appreciation expresses the properties of the advertised items. That means most of them are considered positive as well. Judgement is the least represented part but surprisingly has the adjective with negative emotion- *bad*. Examples below show those patterns in sentences (20).

Affect	Frequency	Appreciation	Frequency	Judgement	Frequency
Excited	3	Elegant	2	Best	4
Confident	2	Improved	1	True	3
Grateful	2	Interactive	1	Last	2
Hooked	2	Glowing	1	Bad	1
Happy	2	Satisfying	1	Unfiltered	1

Table 4. Patterns

(20) a) I am totally <u>hooked</u>.

b) It's got a cute <u>interactive</u> display.

c) <u>Bad</u> Wi-fi connection is something I have no patience for.

The first sentence contains an adjective- *hooked*- representing strong addiction to a television streaming service (Sky Tv) that the influencer advertises. This adjective is commonly considered negative. However, this statement represents something that the influencer likes so much that she has become addicted to it. This, of course, can have a negative connotation because, generally, too much dependence on technologies can be harmful to our health.

The adjective-*interactive* refers to a digital gadget (electric toothbrush) that has high-tech features. It is surely evaluated as positive because new technologies are considered beneficial to humankind in general.

The last example shows the negative meaning of the adjective-*bad.* In this case, denotative and connotative meanings are the same. In this context, the influencer expresses negative feelings about the slow Wi-Fi connection that is needed for daily life. On the other hand, she promotes a company that, in her words, provides 100% service and a full signal always.

8.3   Emoticons and evaluation

In the messages of influencers are 15 kinds of emoticons. On the one hand, they primarily serve as an additional visual complement to the message with the same meaning. On the other hand, some of them could represent emotively charged vocabulary (21). The heart emoji is the most frequent one.

(21) a) The way he smiles

b) Highly recommend this for a weekend treat

Example (21a) shows the emoticons of crying smiley and dog's paws that denote extremely positive meaning- in a loving and cute sense that influence especially the audience of animal lovers. The influencer refers to a picture attached to the message where is her dog. The influencer promotes a music streaming service (Spotify) that can be personalized to her dog's personality so the dog can listen to his own playlist.

Example (21b) contains the heart emoji, which undoubtedly has a positive meaning. There is no need for words. The influencer writes about food that comes from the paid advertisement. She found it very tasty, and that is why she recommends it.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to characterize and analyse the evaluative aspect of the messages of social media influencers by pragmatic approach. The thesis focuses on meanings of the words in terms of its context that can be whether positive or negative. All of them were woman that have English language as their native language. The total number of 5 influencers were chosen from the Instagram social media platform by my own choice and ten messages from each were analysed. The messages was specifically chosen for the purposes of influencer marketing. As all of them belong to the group of life-style influencers that primarily advertise the beauty and fashion products.

The AntConc programme was used to analyse important words that relates to the scope of evaluation and pragmatics. The analysis showed that the whole written corpus incorporates 3 844 words.

In the first part of analysis, the most relevant pragmatic principle was under the scope of examination- deixis. Deixis is subcategorized into personal, spatial and temporal. Among the top ten words analysed by the AntConc programme were words: *I, you* and *it* that can represent deixis. The first category of personal deixis revealed that pronoun *I* is prevailing with the total number of 114 occurrences in the whole corpus. It is a consequence of the state that influencers are using first- person narration in terms of self-presentation. The second category of deixis concentrated on spatial deixis- *this* that aims at certain product/service that is already known from the context of message. The last category dealt with temporal deixis which presented word-*time.* From the corpus was evident that their usage was rare and so the time range is not so relevant for the influencers.

In the second part, pragmogrammatical aspect of evaluation was discussed. It focuses on clauses that bears evaluative meaning- *that*-clauses and *wh*-clauses. According to the AntConc programme, the word-*that* appeared 30 times in the corpus. *Wh*-clauses are connected with *wh*- elements *what, which, how, when, and who.* Many examples were depicted, and all showed that those clauses have evaluative aspect.

The next part concentrated on the semantic aspect of evaluation. This part was represented by adjectives which creates the most important part in evaluative language.

For the acquisition of emotively charged vocabulary in terms of its negative and positive meaning, the TwinWord online tool was used. It shows the result of the most positive words that were ranked in the table and examples were discussed.

The final parts of analysis constituted evaluative patterns that deals with emotions-judgement, appreciation and affect and visual representation of emoticons that can trigger emotions as well.

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LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

APPENDIX

List of Messages Analysed

Liana, Amelia (@amelialiana). 2020. "ad. A bewitched moment dreaming of a new mascara for my droopy lashes… As the biggest @ctilburymakeup pillow talk fan" Instagram reels, August 27. https://www.instagram.com/p/CEZcPvTj0Sv/

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Millen, Lydia (@lydiamillen). 2020. "Ad In these times, i'm forever grateful for the small things that make me smile, like my wonderful husband bringing me my morning coffee." Instagram photo, April 3. https://www.instagram.com/p/B-g01K0HU9n/

Millen, Lydia (@lydiamillen). 2021. "Ad A home isn't something you buy, it's something you create and creating mine has been a dream come true." Instagram photo, September 21. https://www.instagram.com/p/CUFS6ioodp3/

Millen, Lydia (@lydiamillen). 2021. "Ad How do you like to start your day? My mood is instantly lifted by being outside and appreciating nature." Instagram reels, September 14. https://www.instagram.com/p/CTzFfgzIllN/

Millen, Lydia (@lydiamillen). 2021. "Ad They were my last trip before lock down it's only right that they were my first event back." Instagram photo, September 16. https://www.instagram.com/p/CT5IXteIe0D/

Millen, Lydia (@lydiamillen). 2021. "Ad This year has highlighted the need to be more conscious of the choices we make when purchasing, shopping less and choosing well" Instagram photo, September 17. https://www.instagram.com/p/CT7VeT2oit9/

Millen, Lydia (@lydiamillen). 2021. "Ad when the powder is that incredible people are literally in your DMs accusing you of filtering the video" Instagram reels, September 8. https://www.instagram.com/p/CTjvKq8IImE/

Millen, Lydia (@lydiamillen). 2021. "Are you an elegant day dress or dramatic gown kind of person? Whatever you prefer the perfect finishing touch is always @aerinbeauty." Instagram reels, October 11. https://www.instagram.com/p/CU4s7Zrox5q/

Millen, Lydia (@lydiamillen). 2022. "Ad I barely have time to choose my gym outfit at 6am but choosing my workout is one of my favourite things. With one touch of the @Vahaflow_uk I can sink into a Yin yoga class" Instagram reels, January 14. https://www.instagram.com/p/CYtOI1oBVox/

Millen, Lydia (@lydiamillen). 2022. "Ad Winter bouquets in The Winter Room at @cartonhouse can you imagine my excitement when I was told there was a suite for every season there?" Instagram photo, February 20. https://www.instagram.com/p/CaMgIrpIK_e/

Pebbles, Lily (@lilypebbles). 2020. "ad I don't need to tell you guys how important the Wi-fi is in my home. Whether I'm using it for work or for fun... bad wi-fi connection is something I have no patience for." Instagram photo, December 11. https://www.instagram.com/p/CIqw3dyHH0V/

Pebbles, Lily (@lilypebbles). 2021. "ad Filling my @wildrefill case with the brand new limited edition Peach Bellini scent. The refills are 100% compostable as they are packaged in bamboo pulp and the ingredients are natural, which I absolutely love." Instagram reels, February 16. https://www.instagram.com/p/CLXS5Sen_PC/

Pebbles, Lily (@lilypebbles). 2021. "ad I LOVE a print so when I heard that @wildrefill were bringing out a new limited edition printed case I was excited to hear what it would be… well here it is!" Instagram reels, July 15. https://www.instagram.com/p/CRWwGuBFdKq/

Pebbles, Lily (@lilypebbles). 2021. "ad I love re-ordering my favourite @hellofreshuk dishes but today I'm trying out something new to me. The oven-baked chorizo and sweetcorn risotto which took only 35 minutes to make." Instagram reels, June 27. https://www.instagram.com/p/CQn-DvxFw8l/

Pebbles, Lily (@lilypebbles). 2021. "ad What a beautiful setting to do my morning skincare and makeup routine! I've been using the @vichylaboratoires Minéral 89 Hyaluronic Acid Hydration Serum" Instagram photo, July 5. https://www.instagram.com/p/CQ9A4XPrbsx/

Pebbles, Lily (@lilypebbles). 2022. "ad A nod to the incredible dinner party scenes in @skytv's new period drama The Gilded Age. I loved creating this and getting all fancy. The show was created." Instagram reels, January 25. https://www.instagram.com/p/CZKSSVDoKMO/

Pebbles, Lily (@lilypebbles). 2022. "ad Let me show a few things I added to my @ocadouk shop this week. I've used Ocado for years, I love how easy it is to book a delivery and edit it on the app." Instagram reels, April 10. https://www.instagram.com/p/CcKqNEkFIFI/

Pebbles, Lily (@lilypebbles). 2022. "ad The body care range from @heyistrid is so great, whether you chose to shave or not. A scrub to polish and prep, a two-in-one shower and shaving gel." Instagram reels, February 15. https://www.instagram.com/p/CZ__R4oFsOg/

Pebbles, Lily (@lilypebbles). 2022. "I've had this @nursemskincare hand cream on my desk for over a week now and I've been loving it for my dry winter hands." Instagram reels, January 12. https://www.instagram.com/p/CYotjf1o2RP/

Pebbles, Lily (@lilypebbles). 2022. "Weapon of choice for tonight's makeup removal - a fresh tub of @cliniqueuk Take the Day Off balm. A balm to oil cleanser." Instagram reels, January 5. https://www.instagram.com/p/CYW4tcKor7F/

Snooks, Katie (@katesnooks). 2019. "AD | 🧖‍♀️ Just when I thought I couldn't love @batiste_hair anymore they bring out an incredible new bunch of dry shampoos for all hair types." Instagram photo, June 18. https://www.instagram.com/p/By3Or9-grLc/

Snooks, Katie (@katesnooks). 2020. "AD | I don't know about you but if I'm having a hard time with my body, the best thing to get myself out of that funk is to put on some sexy underwear" Instagram photo, February 2. https://www.instagram.com/p/B8EANOqggTT/

Snooks, Katie (@katesnooks). 2021. "ad | Getting thoroughly into the Christmas spirit with a highball by my side 🥃 This festive season I'll be giving the gift of @johnniewalker to my loved ones" Instagram reels, November 23. https://www.instagram.com/p/CWn9mKNFn8T/

Snooks, Katie (@katesnooks). 2021. "ad 🌸 Clean babes have the dirtiest thoughts 🌸 For the past month I've been using @frank_bod Everyday Range which is made without ingredients like sulphates" Instagram photo, April 15. https://www.instagram.com/p/CNscUsODSCf/

Snooks, Katie (@katesnooks). 2021. "ad🔒 Me & my bathroom-bestie, @heyestrid in Space! And my best shaving tip? Whether you choose to shave or not, OWN IT!" Instagram photo, June 7. https://www.instagram.com/p/CPz7qBIj2DQ/

Snooks, Katie (@katesnooks). 2021. "An unfiltered haul of some new petite dresses from @abercrombie - obsessed with all of these which is so dangerous for the old bank account." Instagram photo, June 24. https://www.instagram.com/p/CQgkwXiDyPY/

Snooks, Katie (@katesnooks). 2021. "🔍LIVING FOR THE WEEKEND🔍 I tested out the newest meal kit on the block from @le.swine and it was SUPERB." Instagram reels, March 22. https://www.instagram.com/p/CMu3D09DEXv/

Snooks, Katie (@katesnooks). 2022. "Absolutely couldn't be happier with my locks after a trip today to @samanthacusicklondon for my last hair appointment before my wedding!" Instagram photo, April 20. https://www.instagram.com/p/CclS2JusSX-/

Snooks, Katie (@katesnooks). 2022. "My fav part of self love is obviously, orgasms… they are literally the quickest way to make me feel confident, empowered and like I can overcome anything.cAnd quick they are with this little beauty, the @vush_official Empress 2!" Instagram photo, March 17. https://www.instagram.com/p/CbNoWYvsQbF/

Snooks, Katie (@katesnooks). 2022. "Thank you to @nouveaulashesuk & @hdbrowsofficial for giving me a GLOW UP! I had SVS lash extensions by Noveau Lashes as a trial in the lead up to my wedding." Instagram photo, March 30. https://www.instagram.com/p/CbvOln7stWB/