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AUTHORIAL STANCE IN ENGLISH MIGRATION NEWSPAPER DISCOURSE

Summary. This article investigates the realization of authorial epistemic and effective stance in contemporary English newspaper discourse on migration, focusing on how journalists construct ideological meanings through linguistic choices. The **object** of the research is English media discourse on migration, while the **subject** is the linguistic and discursive mechanisms of stance-taking used by journalists. The **aim** of the study is to identify, classify, and interpret the epistemic and effective stance markers that shape evaluative positioning and ideological framing in news reporting. Modality is examined as a key discursive resource that enables writers to express certainty, probability, obligation, intentionality, and moral judgement. The analysis, based on recent publications from *The Guardian*, identifies the principal markers of epistemic stance – factive verbs, cognitive predicates, modal auxiliaries, and evidentials – as well as the components of effective stance, including deontic, intentional, and normative modalities. Epistemic stance reveals the degree of authorial commitment to truth and inference, whereas effective stance highlights how journalists assess political actions, articulate expectations, or construct evaluative judgements. The findings show that English media often frame migration through polarized lenses: either as a crisis associated with instability and political pressure, or as a natural, historically grounded phenomenon. Modal expressions play a central role in reinforcing these frames, subtly guiding readers toward perceiving migrants as either vulnerable groups requiring protection or as subjects of political contention. **The conclusions** indicate that the interaction of epistemic and effective stance forms a coherent modal metatext that mediates between represented reality and reader interpretation. Stance-taking thus operates as a powerful mechanism of ideological production, shaping how audiences understand migration, attribute responsibility, and evaluate political responses in contemporary media discourse.
Keywords: authorial stance, newspaper migration discourse, ideology.

Introduction. In contemporary society, the media occupies a central role in shaping public opinion and constructing social reality. Newspapers, as one of the most influential forms of media discourse, do not merely inform readers about events but also convey implicit ideological positions and evaluative stances. Through linguistic choices, journalists and editors can subtly guide readers' interpretations and attitudes toward the subjects they report on. As van Dijk (1998) and Wodak (2009) have emphasized, media discourse functions as a powerful instrument of ideological reproduction, influencing how audiences perceive political and social issues.

This study focuses on the concept of **authorial stance** – the ways in which writers position themselves in relation to their statements, readers, and subjects of discussion. Following Fairclough's (1991) observation that "newspaper texts can be seen as the implicit and unconscious materialization of ideologies," the present research explores how stance-taking in newspaper discourse reflects and promotes ideological meanings. Special attention is given to modal and evaluative means used by journalists to express opinion and persuade readers.

The **object** of the research is English media discourse on migration, while the **subject** is the linguistic and discursive mechanisms of stance-taking used by journalists. The **aim** of the study is to identify, classify, and interpret the epistemic and effective stance markers that shape evaluative positioning and ideological framing in news reporting.

The topicality of this research lies in the growing recognition that language in the media is not neutral but ideologically charged. Understanding how stance operates in media texts is crucial for uncovering the subtle mechanisms through which ideology is manifested and disseminated. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to identify and analyze the linguistic strategies through which authors' stance contributes to the ideological function of English media discourse.

In contemporary media studies, stance is understood as the author's position or evaluative attitude toward a topic, event, or social group. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2025), stance means "an opinion or belief about something, especially if you say it in public" [5]. In discourse linguistics, stance is viewed as the interactional display of a speaker's or writer's perspective, emotions, and alignment [3; 8].

Methods and Materials. The research is based on a qualitative and quantitative analysis of stance markers in English newspaper discourse on migration. The empirical material consists of analytical and opinion articles published in *The Guardian* between 2023 and 2024, a newspaper known for its liberal ideological orientation and extensive coverage of migration–related issues. A total of **15 articles** were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring thematic relevance, genre comparability, and the presence of modal-evaluative expressions. The corpus comprises **approximately 32,000 words** and includes texts by prominent journalists such as Gaia Vince, Maria Ramirez, Daniel Trilling, Ruben Andersson, and David Keen. The methodological framework combines elements of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 2009), stance-taking theory (Biber, 2006; Du Bois, 2007; Hyland, 2005), and modal semantics (Palmer, 2001; Arrese, 2017). The analysis proceeds in three stages: **i**dentification stage: extraction of all epistemic and effective modal markers, including cognitive factives, attitude predicates, modal auxiliaries, evidentials, deontic expressions, intentionality markers, and normative evaluators; **c**lassification stage: categorization of stance markers into full epistemic support, partial epistemic support, evidentiality, deonticity, intentionality, and normativity based on semantic and functional criteria; interpretation stage: contextual analysis of the extracted markers to reveal how stance contributes to ideological framing of migration, migrants, and political decisions. Frequency counts were used to determine the distribution of stance types, resulting in **267 identified instances**, the proportions of which are presented in the diagrams. This mixed-method approach enables a comprehensive examination of how modal and evaluative resources shape authorial positioning and contribute to the ideological functions of contemporary English media discourse on migration.

Discussion. Migration, as a topic, has become a testing ground for stance construction in English newspaper discourse. It encapsulates ideological tensions between humanitarian values and political control, between open societies and national protectionism. The present study investigates how journalists construct their stance toward migration, migrants, and policy responses by analyzing discourse practices in "The Guardian", a publication known for its liberal orientation.

The aim of this paper is to (1) define the linguistic and discursive mechanisms through which stance is expressed, and (2) reveal the ideological implications of authorial positioning in media narratives about migration.

Epistemic stance, also known as epistemic support, pertains to the linguistic expression of validity of the information, and is realized through: personal cognitive factives (*I/ we know, remember, forget, accept, etc.*); impersonal cognitive factives (*the truth / fact / reality is, in truth, in reality, etc.*); cognitive attitude predicates (*I am / we are sure, certain, I / we have no doubts, I / we think, believe, suppose, feel, sense, etc.*); impersonal cognitive attitude predicates (*one thinks, it is believed*); personal epistemic modals (*perhaps, possibly, surely; may, might, could; will*).

Personal and impersonal cognitive factives comprise the meaning of *full epistemic support*.

Cognitive attitude predicates, impersonal cognitive attitude predicates, personal epistemic modals are *components of partial epistemic stance*.

Epistemic evidentiality, also known as epistemic justification, embraces the expressions of the kind or source of information, and is realized in the expressions like *it seems / appears; it feels*; or in adjectives *clear / evident / obvious*; as well as through markers of information interpretation: *X suggests / shows / means / says.*

Effective modal stance pertains to the writer's striving for control, and involves the expressions of stance concerning the realization of events, or influence the course of reality (M. Arrese). It is realized through: **deonticity**, or expressions of deontic modality (obligation, recommendation, or permission), like modals *must, should, ought to, can't, need to, oblige, allow, permit, etc.*; **intentionality**, expressions like *I/we intend to, mean to; or my / our goal / aim / intention is, etc.*; **normativity** that is expressed through *it is right, it is worth, it is better / best; it is important / essential, crucial, vital, etc.*

The analysis of the analytical articles revealed 267 cases of using modal stance, both epistemic and effective, the distribution of which is shown in the diagrams below.

Diagram 1. The distribution of epistemic stance modals in migration discourse
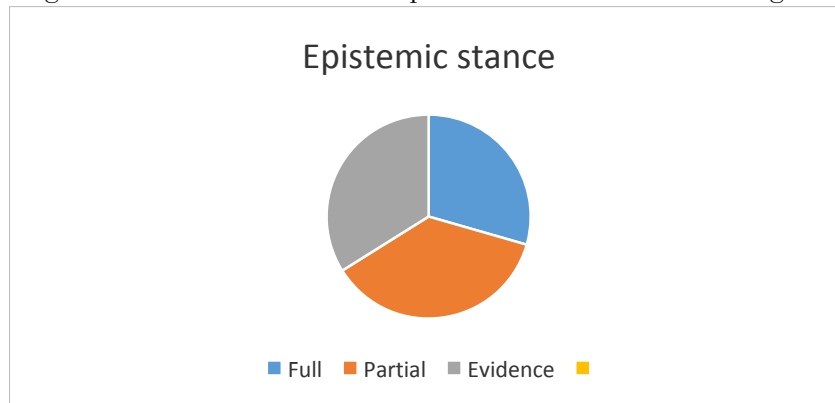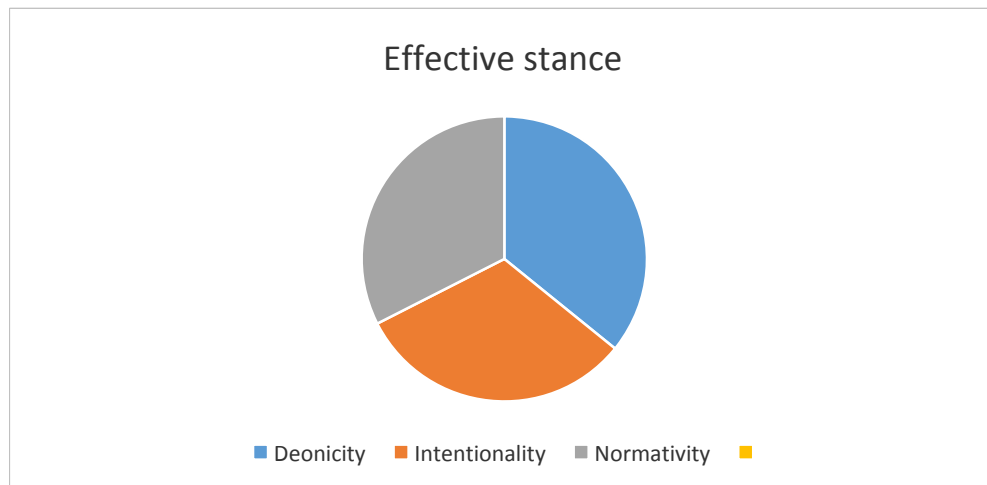

Diagram 2. The distribution of effective stance modals in migration discourse

The study of stance manifestation enables to reveal the ideology and attitude towards population migration, imposed by media and defined *as crisis*, along with the strategies of migrants' image construction, normally perceived as vulnerable or dangerous.

Epistemic Stance. Epistemic stance is linked to stance-taking theory [6], which posits that speakers and writers encode their commitment to truth, knowledge, and belief through linguistic choices. Epistemic markers–factive verbs, modal auxiliaries, evidentials–signal the degree of certainty, credibility, or inference, shaping how readers interpret the information [11; 3].

Full epistemic support (the "K-group") is represented by factive verbs and expressions of strong certainty. In Gaia Vince's article *Leaders should finally tell us the truth about migration: it's here for good* (2024), the impersonal factive *in truth* constructs migration as inevitable:

"Although many countries have their 'long, long ago' symbolic foundation story, in truth the vast majority of them have only existed as independent constitutions for a matter of decades... We can all claim ancestry from across the world" [14].

Here, Vince expresses authorial certainty, signaling that the phenomenon of migration is natural, historical, and unavoidable. The choice of *in truth* indicates that the journalist positions themselves against nationalist narratives, presenting migration as an inherent part of human history (Hyland, 2005). The explicit evaluation (*we can all claim ancestry from across the world*) signals an inclusive ideological stance, suggesting that societies are interconnected rather than bounded by rigid national myths. Intensifiers like *indeed* further strengthen the author's confidence:

"Indeed, borders, where they existed historically, were for keeping people in, not out" [14].

By emphasizing historical context, Vince critiques contemporary border restrictions, aligning her position with humanitarian and inclusive principles, highlighting the moral responsibility of leaders and citizens to recognize human mobility as natural.

Partial support (the "T-group") expresses probability rather than certainty. Maria Ramirez in *In Spain, we don't share Britain's migration panic* (2023) uses cognitive predicates to construct a positive evaluative stance toward migration:

"Most politicians and the public see migration as a benefit" [12].

The use of cognitive verbs (*see, think, believe*) aligns with epistemic stance [4], showing partial commitment. This reflects a subjective, interpretive positioning, rather than absolute factuality. Ramirez positions herself as analytical and comparative, implicitly contrasting Spain's pragmatic view with Britain's alarmist framing.

Similarly, in *Migration to Europe will increase in 2024, thinktank says* (2024):

"Migration to Europe will increase in 2024 as people try to reach the continent before new laws" [12].

The journalist positions themselves as anticipatory and evidence-oriented, highlighting structural pressures that shape migration flows. Evidentials mark source of knowledge (Aikhenvald, 2004). Direct evidentials (*find evidence*) signal first-hand observation or strong verification, whereas indirect evidentials (*it is very clear*) indicate inferential reasoning. By framing migration as inevitable, the author implicitly critiques restrictive migration policies, signaling humanitarian concern and ethical evaluation of societal responses.

Ruben Andersson and David Keen (2023) write:

"Look at the business of tackling the migration crisis in Europe, and you will find evidence not of some one-off failure... but a systematic pattern" [2].

Here, the authors adopt a critical and investigative stance, signaling skepticism toward simplistic political narratives. The use of evidence conveys epistemic authority, positioning the journalist as informed, rational, and morally reflective. Indirect evidentials (*it is very clear, indeed*) indicate inference, while reportative evidentials signal alignment with verified sources, reinforcing the author's credibility and evaluative authority.

Effective Stance. Effective stance, often linked to interpersonal and appraisal frameworks [Martin & White, 2005; Hunston, 2002], reflects authorial evaluations, obligations, and moral positions. Markers of deonticity, intentionality, and normativity encode what is necessary, desirable, or ethically correct, mediating social alignment and ideological interpretation.

Deonticity conveys obligation and moral positioning. Vince (2024) states:

"Leaders must be honest about the realities of human movement" [14]. Deontic expressions (*must, have to*) indicate obligation or necessity, reflecting the writer's ethical evaluation [11]. Here, Vince adopts a normative-authorial stance, explicitly evaluating leaders' behavior and emphasizing ethical responsibility. The position is prescriptive and interventionist. Similarly, statements about economic necessity (*Europe needed migrants if the EU was to maintain a robust workforce*) combine factual reporting with an ideologically informed evaluation, highlighting how migration benefits society while critiquing restrictive approaches.

Intentionality signals volition and critical assessment. Daniel Trilling's *The EU's new migration pact is intended to neutralise the far right* (2024) states:

"The pact is an attempt to fix some of the problems that have bedevilled European politics since 2015" [13].

Purpose clauses (*intended to, aim to*) reflect intentional stance, linked to interpersonal meaning [7]. They communicate agency and volition, highlighting the motivations behind political action. Trilling positions himself as analytical and evaluative. Conversely, Vince critiques nationalist intentions:

"...leaders' 'mythical' intention to return the country to a pre-immigration state" [14].

Here, the author's stance is critical and oppositional, exposing ideological unreality and positioning herself morally against exclusionary and nostalgic nationalism.

Normativity communicates ethical evaluation. Normative expressions encode moral evaluation and social judgment [10], signaling what is desirable, right, or important. Vince reminds readers:

"It's worth remembering this" [14].

Andersson and Keen (2023) write: "It is worth reflecting on the border policies that shape human lives" [2].

These expressions convey moral engagement, directing readers' attention to ethical implications of migration governance. The authorial stance is explicitly evaluative, guiding interpretation beyond neutral reporting.

Conclusion. The analysis of epistemic and effective stance in English newspaper discourse on migration demonstrates that modality functions as a key linguistic and ideological resource in shaping public perceptions of population movement and related political processes. The examined

articles from *The Guardian* reveal that journalists systematically employ epistemic markers–factive verbs, cognitive predicates, modal auxiliaries, and evidentials–to construct varying degrees of certainty, inference, and credibility. These linguistic means enable authors to present migration either as an inevitable, historically grounded phenomenon or as a complex socio-political challenge requiring informed interpretation. Effective stance markers–deontic, intentional, and normative modalities–further reinforce the evaluative and ideological dimension of media discourse. They serve to articulate obligations, express desired courses of action, highlight political intentions, and foreground moral judgement. Through such modal choices, journalists guide readers' alignment with humanitarian, inclusive, or critical perspectives on migration policy and societal responses. Overall, the findings show that the interaction of epistemic and effective stance forms a coherent modal framework that mediates between represented reality and audience interpretation. Stance-taking not only frames migration in terms of crisis, inevitability, vulnerability, or threat, but also implicitly positions readers within broader ideological narratives. Thus, authorial stance emerges as a crucial mechanism of ideological construction in contemporary English media discourse, revealing how linguistic choices shape public understanding of migration and influence attitudes toward migrants and political decision-making.

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АВТОРСЬКА ПОЗИЦІЯ В АНГЛІЙСЬКОМОВНОМУ МІГРАЦІЙНОМУ ГАЗЕТНОМУ ДИСКУРСІ

Анотація. Стаття присвячена дослідженню реалізації авторської епістемічної та ефективної позиції в сучасному англомовному газетному дискурсі про міграцію, зосереджуючись на тому, як журналісти конструюють ідеологічні значення через мовні засоби. **Об'єктом** дослідження є англомовний медіадискурс про міграцію, а **предметом** – лінгвістичні й дискурсивні механізми вираження авторської позиції. **Метою** роботи є виявлення, класифікація та інтерпретація маркерів епістемічної та ефективної позиції, які формують оцінне позиціювання та ідеологічне фреймування в новинних публікаціях. Модальність розглядається як ключовий дискурсивний ресурс, що дає змогу авторам виражати упевненість, імовірність, зобов'язання, намір та моральні оцінки. На матеріалі публікацій газети *The Guardian* ідентифіковано основні маркери епістемічної позиції – фактивні дієслова, когнітивні предикати, модальні дієслова та евиденціальні засоби, – а також компоненти ефективної позиції, зокрема деонтичну, інтенціональну та нормативну модальність. Епістемічна позиція виявляє ступінь авторської впевненості в істинності чи інференційності висловлювань, тоді як ефективна позиція демонструє, як журналісти оцінюють політичні дії, формують очікування або конструюють оцінні судження. Результати дослідження свідчать, що англомовні медіа часто подають міграцію крізь поляризовані інтерпретаційні рамки: як кризове явище, пов'язане з нестабільністю та політичним тиском, або як природний, історично зумовлений процес. Модальні засоби відіграють центральну роль у формуванні цих рамок, непомітно спрямовуючи читача до сприйняття мігрантів як уразливих груп, що потребують захисту, або як учасників політичного протистояння. **Зроблено висновок**, що взаємодія

епістемічної та ефективної позиції створює цілісний модальний метатекст, який опосередковує зв'язок між представленою реальністю та інтерпретацією читача. Таким чином, авторська позиція постає потужним механізмом ідеологічного впливу, який формує громадське розуміння міграції, розподіл відповідальності та оцінювання політичних рішень у сучасному медіадискурсі.