

Evaluative Adjectives Lesson Plan

| General Information | |
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| Lesson Title | Evaluative Adjectives |
| Class/Student Information | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. upper-level undergraduates in an ecology or physiology course OR 2. multi-major undergraduates in an introductory or advanced technical writing course OR 3. multi-major graduates in a writing-intensive course |
| Length of Class/Activity | 22 mins |
| Overall Instructional Goal | To teach students how to use evaluative adjectives to express opinions on the importance, intensity, quality, variation, and probability of technical information. |
| Lesson Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the primary functions of evaluative adjectives and how to classify them (e.g., importance, size/intensity, quality, variation, and probability). • Investigate how evaluative adjectives are used in technical writing. |
| How will you measure each objective? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The in-class activities measure if students can identify the functions of evaluative adjectives. • The homework assignments measure if students can (a) identify how certain adjectives can be used to express an opinion and (b) independently identify evaluative adjectives that are more appropriate to technical writing. |
| Justification for Lesson | Students are often told to limit their use of expressive, more subjective parts of speech. However, adjectives can be used persuasively to make a judgment about technical information. Their effective use can create more buy-in from readers. |
| Materials | <p>You will need access to the following –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This file, which outlines the lesson. 2. Presentation slides for the Orientation and Presentation stages (URLs linked in Canvas). 3. In-class activities for the Orientation and Engagement stages (on purple paper) 4. Homework file for the Expansion stage (DOC file linked in Canvas). 5. Fact sheet for the Expansion stage (URL linked in Canvas). <p>In addition, students will use AntConc, the Professional Writing data set, and the Professional Speech data set for this unit.</p> |

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| <p>Orientation (8 min.)</p> <p>Before the lesson begins, ensure that AntConc as well as the Professional Writing data set and the Professional Speech data set are available to students (NOTE: Data sets will be housed in the My Documents folder of TECM lab computers).</p> <p>Display Slide 1 of the presentation as students enter the lab or as you orient students to the lesson. Distribute a copy of the in-class activities (printed on purple paper).</p> <p>Orient students to the topic of the unit. Explain that adjectives can perform many functions, but this lesson is on how they can be used to convey opinion or make judgments about technical information.</p> <p>Transition into the “Take a Look” activity. Read the instructions to students and give them 45-90 seconds to consider the patterns of the evaluative adjective <i>different</i>. Discuss the findings.</p> | <p>Students work in pairs for the “Data Digging” activity, so one student will complete it with the Professional Writing data set and the other with the Professional Speech data set. If possible, these data sets can be preloaded for students.</p> <p>Students will be familiar with adjectives, but this lesson shows how adjectives can build a convincing argument from an interpersonal perspective. Emphasize that not all adjectives are evaluative in function. For example, <i>country</i> music isn’t an evaluation of the type of music, but a means of classifying the music. Other examples are <i>foreign</i> film or <i>progress</i> report.</p> <p>As students work on the in-class activity, remind them that the goal is not to just circle all the nouns. Rather the act of circling is meant to get students to consider how <i>different</i> is evaluating specific nouns.</p> <p>Watch the YouTube tutorial on how to do this activity in AntConc: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgoF6W-vR1I</p> <p><i>Different</i> is used to evaluate a variety of nouns. The adjective signals a subjective judgment about what is considered dissimilar to something else. However, observe that these nouns are all objects rather than people. Examples include <i>renegotiation</i> (Line 2), <i>spending</i> (Line 6), and <i>interpretation</i> (Line 8).</p> <p>In professional writing, the application of evaluative adjectives follows a general to specific approach. Research suggests that writers use positive adjectives to signal approval for <i>general</i> ideas, theories and methods. But they use critical adjectives to signal differences in opinion related to <i>specific</i> aspects of those ideas, theories, and methods. However, it’s always ideas, not people (or other researchers) that receive the praise or criticism. This rhetorical move creates the appearance of objectivity when, in fact, evaluative adjectives, are a device intended to gain the reader’s buy-in or acceptance.</p> |

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| | <p>If there's time, you also want to make students aware of the placement of <i>different</i>. It occurs in the middle of sentences (e.g., Lines 9 and 10) and at the end of sentences (e.g., Lines 2 and 8).</p> <p>There are also instances where the adjective appears before and after the noun (e.g. Lines 6 and 8 and Lines 1 and 5). This suggests that evaluative adjectives have some placement flexibility within a sentence.</p> |
| <p>Transition</p> <p>“This first activity showed you how adjectives can be used to evaluate technical information. Now, let's examine some of different classifications for evaluative adjectives.”</p> | |
| <p>Presentation (4 min.)</p> <p>Transition to Slide 2.</p> <p>There are five main functions of evaluative adjectives: to signal (a) importance (b) and size/frequency/intensity</p> <p>Transition to Slide 3.</p> <p>You can also use adjectives to signal (c) quality, (d) variation, and (e) probability.</p> | <p>Since the concept of <i>evaluative</i> adjectives will be new to most students, stop after each classification and verbalize some of the listed adjectives and the example sentences.</p> <p>As always, remind students that all the examples are in the linked Fact Sheet.</p> |
| <p>Transition</p> <p>“Evaluative adjectives are considered a more subjective or emotional language device. A lot of our everyday use of these types of adjectives is in our speech communication. However, we use adjectives different in speech than in writing. Our next activity helps illustrate this point.”</p> | |
| <p>Engagement (6 min.)</p> <p>Read students the instructions for the “Data Digging” activity. Reiterate the recommended sorting for this activity: 1R/2R/3R. This should be intuitive to most students since adjectives often modify (or are to the right of) nouns.</p> <p>Remember that in AntConc, you first generate the concordances with the Start function and</p> | <p>Let the student pairs work through this activity on their own but prompt them to write down their findings as they complete the activity. You also want student pairs to interact with each other, so you may need to prompt them to share their findings with each other before they get too far into the activity.</p> <p>As students work, walk around the classroom to help them stay on task and to troubleshoot technology issues. The RA can also help</p> |

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| <p>then resort with the Sort function. Users who skip the first step and just use the Sort feature will get jumbled results.</p> | <p>troubleshoot technology issues and answer individual questions.</p> <p>Give students about 6-8 minutes to work through this activity. It's okay if students don't have time to analyze every word. Some students will spend more time on a specific word, reading and laughing at the associated concordance lines – this is a good thing and is engaging them with the material. Others will just run through the activity and log the frequencies. This is fine too – you can't engage everyone!</p> |
| <p>Evaluation (4 min.)</p> <p>Discuss the results of the activity. The instructor key and summary of the primary takeaways is in the right-hand column.</p> | <p>When reviewing this activity, open AntConc twice on your instructor computer (just click the AntConc icon to open the program again) Load the Professional Writing data set on the right and the Professional Speech data set on the left. This will make writing-to-speech comparison easier to discuss.</p> <p>Choose how to lead this discussion. For example, you could stand in front of the class and facilitate responses as the RA types the search terms into AntConc. Conversely, you could engage with the technology yourself and enter the search terms as you facilitate the discussion. Students will often type the search terms into AntConc as you review them, so the RA can also walk around the lab the ensure students are not having technology issues.</p> <p>Watch the YouTube tutorial on how to do this activity in AntConc: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2x96wzuUDU</p> <p>Dropbox includes the instructor key for this activity</p> <p>Below are the key takeaways for this activity. Again, it's okay if you don't address every single finding. It's also fine if you jump around because your discussion of one finding prompts a student to comment on another finding.</p> <p>Within the professional writing dataset, <i>important</i>, <i>significant</i>, <i>simple</i>, and <i>relevant</i> are popular evaluative</p> |

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| | <p>adjectives. These adjectives are typically positive in context, so recall to students what you said in the orientation stage: writers use positive adjectives to signal approval for <i>general</i> ideas, theories and methods. For example, nouns commonly associated with <i>important</i> are <i>general aspects, contributions</i> or <i>differences</i>.</p> <p><i>Significant</i> is another example of an adjective that is use much more frequently in writing than speech. Remind students of the near-synonyms/intro unit homework, where they actually explored the context of <i>significant</i>. In professional writing, <i>significant</i> often has a mathematical association, and, so students should discover that indeed this word is commonly associated with the nouns <i>difference, effect, and interaction</i>. This adjective is used very differently and less frequently in speech, associating with nouns like <i>change, difference, and minority</i>. Here, the word functions more as synonym for <i>important</i> or <i>major</i>.</p> <p>There's some commonalty between the professional writing and the professional speech data sets. <i>Important</i> is a word shared across both registers, but it modifies more ambiguous nouns in speech, such as <i>thing</i>. You'll notice a similar "thing" pattern with the adjective <i>bad</i>.</p> <p>In sum, reiterate that, as communicators, we naturally, gravitate toward expressive language patterns, such evaluative adjectives. However, their students' use of these patterns is more common/acceptable in speech, so emphasize to them how these patterns are often used differently.</p> <p>But evaluative adjectives are not just adjectives. This is a distinction many students will need to make. In order for an adjective to be evaluative, it has to make a quality judgment or express an opinion. Therefore, their proper application can be quite persuasive. Writers use them to draw readers' attention to the importance of an idea or to express an opinion, recommendation, or call to action.</p> |

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| <p>Summary Statement(s)</p> <p>“Remember that not all adjectives are evaluative. To be classified as evaluative, the adjective has to offer judgment on the importance, intensity/size, quality, variation, or probability of the information.</p> <p>Transition to Slide 4.</p> <p>Remember too that adjectives can evaluate information positively or negatively, often depending on the discipline. Let’s look at how eight disciplines evaluate technical information. The information in red is the percentage of negative adjective used compared to the percentage of positive adjective used.</p> <p>As you can see, philosophy and sociology are the only disciplines that use more negative evaluative adjectives than positive. You’ll also notice that the hard sciences like electrical and mechanical engineering, physics, and cell biology use a much higher percentage of positive evaluative adjectives than negative.</p> <p>Therefore, consider how you use this information in your own technical writing. Research suggests that writers use positive adjectives to signal approval for <i>general</i> ideas, theories and methods. But they use critical adjectives to signal differences in opinion related to <i>specific</i> aspects of those ideas, theories, and methods. You might use evaluative adjectives to promote the findings from an important secondary source in the call-to-action/recommendations section of a report. As with any language pattern, the persuasiveness often comes from how and where evaluative adjectives are used rather than how often they are used.”</p> | |
| <p>Expansion (2 min.)</p> <p>Tell students there is a brief homework assignment associated with this lesson, which they can find linked on Canvas (as a Word document).</p> <p>The homework should only take 15-20 minutes to complete. Neither of the two activities requires students to download and use AntConc or the data set.</p> <p>Refer students to the Fact Sheet for this task. Students can consult this sheet when working on homework and assignment drafts.</p> | <p>The first homework assignment was designed to measure if students can identify <i>evaluative</i> adjectives (rather than just all adjectives) in two text passages.</p> <p>The second homework assignment was designed to measure if students can identify evaluative adjectives that are more appropriate for professional and technical writing.</p> <p>The Fact Sheet for this unit should provide students with all the information they need to complete the homework.</p> |