

The System of Engagement in a Sample of Prose Fiction and the News

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Abstract

Emerging within Systemic Linguistics, Appraisal/Evaluation is a framework for analyzing the language of evaluation, providing techniques for the systematic analysis of evaluation and stance as they operate in whole texts and in groupings of texts. There are three systems in the Appraisal framework: Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. This study sets out to analyze the use of the system of Engagement within a sample of English Literature (prose fiction) and the News (news articles). Engagement is a medium through which the speaker or the writer engages dialogistically with others (i.e., the addressees, within the process of evaluation). A corpus of 20,000 words was selected from each genre, involving five cornerstones of short fiction and a collection of news articles from CNN, Reuters, BBC, Daily Mail and Yahoo News. The study sheds light on the fact that both genres are strikingly close in using the four subsystems of Engagement, and both are inclined towards dialogic expansion, albeit for different generic reasons, with dialogic contraction taking a backbench. Appraisal as a whole is a promising model to explore texts in different genres, paving the way for richer more illuminating analyses of the interpersonal semantics operating in them.

Keywords: Appraisal/Evaluation, Engagement, dialogic expansion, dialogic contraction

Introduction

We start off with a small look at and a brief introduction to Appraisal/Evaluation before touching upon the objectives of this paper. White (2011) is a lucid, accessible and, at the same time, comprehensive account of the theory, explaining the underpinnings of the theory of Appraisal/Evaluation.

Appraisal/Evaluation is a framework for analyzing the language of evaluation. It has emerged from within Systemic Functional Linguistics (see, for example, Halliday 1994; Martin 1992a; Matthiessen 1995) and was driven in its early days by work in the field of educational linguistics and the development of Australia's genre-based literacy programs (see, for example, Iedema, Feez & White, 1994; Christie & Martin, 1997; Martin, 2000a). It provides techniques for the systematic analysis of evaluation and stance as they operate in whole texts and in groupings of texts. It is concerned with the social function of these resources, not simply as the means by which individual speakers/writers express their feelings and take stands, but as the means by which they engage with socially-determined value positions and thereby align and dis-align themselves with the social subjects who hold to these positions.

The systemic functional linguistics out of which the framework has emerged holds that linguistic phenomena can best be explained by reference to the social functions performed by language, by reference to the functional demands placed upon language by its users (see, for example, Halliday, 1971). Additionally, it holds that these social functions fall into three broad types: those by which language represents the world of experience (the ideational), those by which social roles and relationships are constructed (the interpersonal), and those by which texts are made coherent, both internally and with respect to the context in which they operate (the textual) (see Halliday, 1994). Within this context, the appraisal framework is directed towards developing the account of interpersonal functionality, with extending descriptions and understanding of those aspects of language by which speakers/writers construct for themselves particular identities or personae and by which they position themselves and those they address.

Emerging within the realm of the "interpersonal" meta-function of language in systemic functional linguistics, "appraisal" is a framework for the exploration of the ways in which language is used for evaluation and

adaptation of stances by discourse producers. Appraisal takes its roots and existence from a work on narrative genres carried out in the late 1980s, and the framework was developed as the fruit of the efforts of a group of functional linguistics researchers led by Professor James Martin of the University of Sydney.

The medium for the realization of “appraisal” is mainly lexical rather than grammatical, although the significant role grammatical structures play in such a realization is left unexplored to a great extent.

Appraisal scrutinizes how discursive productions of writers and speakers is a reflection of the way they pass judgment on other people, events, material objects, and in general, the way they see the world. Appraisal is the language of evaluation.

There exist three simultaneous subsystems intermixing with each other in the way of giving shape to the appraisal framework, one of which is “attitude”. Attitude negotiates the manner in which feelings are explicated and demonstrated in English texts. Attitude in turn, is the crux of three semantic regions traditionally pointed out as emotion, ethics and aesthetics; also respectively known as Affect, Judgment and Appreciation:

- Affect is concerned with the manifestation of positive and negative emotions brought alive to the speaker or the writer mainly by an external agent other than the speaker or writer himself/herself.
- Judgment deals with registration of evaluation and assessment towards behaviors of other individuals by the speaker or the writer with an eye on the social norms and morality; i.e. passing judgment on individuals’ behaviors through checking them against current social norms as the optimal patterns for behaving in a particular context.
- Appreciation is concerned with disclosure of evaluation of natural and semiotic phenomena by the speaker or the writer, i.e. passing judgment on such phenomena. Attitude is one of the three subsystems of appraisal framework, which, in turn, consists of such three semantic regions of affect, judgment and appreciation.

Graduation is the second subsystem of the appraisal framework, implicating with grading, up-scaling and down-scaling the two other simultaneous constitutionally gradable subsystems of the appraisal

framework, namely “attitude”, the first subsystem discussed above, and “engagement”, the third subsystem whose discussion follows. There exist two axes of gradability around which the graduation subsystem revolves: force, amount and intensity, and focus, all of which are systems geared to exploring the mentioned gradability of categories impossible to scale experientially, and would only lend themselves to scalability only by indication to a presumed instance of a semantic category that can do so. Graduation can reasonably be regarded as a central concept in the appraisal system, bringing attitude and engagement together as a property of both realms.

The third subsystem of the appraisal framework, also the pertinent mainstay of this study, is “engagement”, which is a medium through which the speaker or the writer engages dialogistically with others, i.e. the addressees, within the process of evaluation. Such dialogistic evaluation can only take place and be consolidated when assumed against the resonant backdrop of other voices and positions, a paradigm of other possible, albeit invisible ‘choices of voices’ (our own term), i.e. a “heterogloss”. Otherwise, “monogloss” is the dialogistic status of ‘bare assertions’, as seen by Martin & White (2005). ‘Bare assertions’, however, are rare phenomena; that is, the dialogistic nature of language as a ‘social semiotic’ staves off, to almost a hundred percent, the production of utterances that could be devoid of some degree of dialogistic value, even if on the surface they seem like utter plain monologues. This is a position Martin & white (2005) also take and talk at convincing length about. This is how the theory of both Systemic Functional Linguistics and Appraisal look upon the matter. Engagement meanings are capable of being located within a taxonomy of four dimensions:

- Disclaim – the textual voice positions itself as at odds with, or rejecting, some contrary position.
- Proclaim – by representing the proposition as highly warrantable (compelling, valid, plausible, well-founded, generally agreed, reliable, etc.), the textual voice sets itself against, suppresses or rules out alternative positions.
- Entertain – by explicitly presenting the proposition as grounded in its own contingent, individual subjectivity, the authorial voice represents the proposition as but one of a range of possible positions – it thereby entertains or invokes these dialogic alternatives.

- Attribute – by representing proposition as grounded in the subjectivity of an external voice, the textual voice represents the proposition as but one of a range of possible positions – it thereby entertains or invokes these dialogic alternatives.

In order to illuminate further the picture of inter- and intratextual interaction with the addressee, it is noteworthy to mention that one of the pioneers of a social dialogic perspective on these resources which looks at whether or not and how speakers acknowledge alternative positions to their own – monoglossic or heteroglossic discourse – was Mikhail Bakhtin. In fact, the Sydney School, London School and even Prague School Linguistics can all be said to have benefited extensively from Bakhtin's ideas on dialogism in written text and discourse to develop the interpersonal layer of meaning, and later the elaborate extension of it as interpersonal semantics in the form of Appraisal/Evaluation. Martin and White (2005) explicitly mention that their **Engagement** is comparable in many respects to evidentiality, but that their social perspective is inspired by Bakhtin's dialogism, and contrasts with the truth functional orientation of more philosophically influenced approaches.

Martin and White (2005) point out that their approach, more specifically, is informed by:

Bakhtin's/Voloshinov's now widely influential notions of dialogism and heteroglossia under which all verbal communication, whether written or spoken, is 'dialogic' in that to speak or write is always to reveal the influence of, refer to, or to take up in some way, what has been said/written before, and simultaneously to anticipate the responses of actual, potential or imagined readers/listeners (Martin & White, 2005: 92).

Interested readers/researchers can refer to Martin & White (2005) for a lucid account of the theory and practice of the Appraisal framework along with its subsystems. There is also an enlightening, contextually well-placed and relevant account of the Bakhtinian roots of the theory and also Bakhtin's own ideas.

Conducted as papers, four studies similar to the present research have been picked out to be reviewed laconically in chronological order in this section. This will provide some idea of what the paradigm of research in this connection is like and the sort of questions pursued by researchers.

Painter (2003) argues that within approaches to child language development, with regard to interpersonal meaning, the emphasis has dominantly been with the child's proto-speech acts plus evolution of such acts into conversational exchange. The article demands for the enhancement of considerations for the inclusion of the emergence of evaluative language as well. To this aim, the researcher has conducted a naturalistic case study, gathering data from children aged between nine months to four years old using Appraisal analysis. The researcher argues that language should be considered as based upon affectual beginnings. Following from this, the paper traces the evolution of two children's resources for expression of evaluations. Also, it examines the interplay of inscribed and invoked attitudinal instances in mother-child talk besides exploring the role of Attitude in language development in general.

Coffin and O'Halloran (2006) believe that political communications are supposed to employ a neutral voice, while in fact a biased message is possible of being heard by the target community. Their article investigates the use of such journalism in British popular tabloid "The Sun" by scrutinizing a published news report of it. The researchers suggest a combination of Appraisal analysis of the mentioned news report with an Appraisal analysis of a corpus of relevant news articles so as to account for stance-taking influence of covert evaluation on the readers. While the many contributions of Appraisal/Evaluation to Critical Discourse Analysis and kindred fields of enquiry are not difficult to locate and argue for, this study is a good indication of this fact.

Souza (2006) highlights the role of national anthems in the process of struggle for political power in modern societies. The general concern of the paper is exploring a textual sample investigating discourse semantic functions, lexicogrammatical properties, and production processes of national anthems. To this aim, an Appraisal analysis of twenty four national anthems in English was carried out by the researcher to analyze and bring out the principal attitudinal resources the authors of the anthems employ to interpret and negotiate feelings and interpersonal meanings with their intended audiences.

White (2009) demonstrates the functionality of the Appraisal framework by conducting an Appraisal analysis of English-language hard news reports,

which obscure the subjectivity of the journalist author. While supposed as objective, these authors usually take biased stances on the events being described to influence readers' attitudes towards those engaged. To investigate the indirectly conveyed positive and negative evaluations in these reports, an Appraisal analysis of an article from the British newspaper Daily Mail was carried out by the researcher to outline the way in which evaluative instances enable the journalist authors to operate ideologically while distancing themselves from any explicit evaluation.

This study sets out to analyze the use of the Appraisal dialogistic subsystem of Engagement resources within a sample of English Literature and the News. The genre of English Literature, being obviously a very broad category and running a hugely expanded gamut by way of category and generic variables, the focus of this study has shifted onto English prose fiction, short fiction in particular. A selection was made of five rather more distinguished short stories penned with different styles and by different authors in order that proper categorization of Engagement resources could be undertaken, for upon grounded discourse/text analysis with the Evaluation subsystem of Engagement serving as the base and framework, it appears that, with the exception of 'bare assertions' (Martin & White, 2005), almost every clause in a sample of real-life authentic English text of any genre is bound to position itself with regard to Engagement; but more importantly to the interpersonal plane of meaning making in general, and by extension, to other interpersonal factors subsumed under the interpersonal metafunction of Halliday that lie farther out towards the semantic end of the continuum in text and discourse such as ideology, power, solidarity and evaluation, among others (e.g. Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Martin & White, 2005; Gee, 2005).

A similar analysis of the deployment of Engagement within the genre of the News is also undertaken, so that some light is thrown on Engagement in the sample of short fiction when a comparative outlook is achieved into a juxtaposed genre, in this case the news.

Appraisal/Evaluation, being a relatively young development from Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, research into the different resources of Evaluation as deployed and manifested in different genres is still

in its infancy, not to say that little appreciable work has been done over the last decade, but the theory has far vaster promise and territory than what has already used it to enrich our understanding of semantics of text and discourse.

A rather recent outgrowth of Systemic Functional Linguistics, Appraisal/Evaluation is yet to see its true research potential realized, for there seem to be many genres and registers, not to say small and big corpuses that are yet to be explored and tapped into using this interesting and promising powerhouse of functional/semantic analysis and variation. One can also easily see that Discourse Analysis as a whole, and affiliated branches therein like stylistics, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and genre/register analysis can find refreshingly new ground and promise in shifting some of their under-researched areas and ideas (and already-researched ones just as well) onto the new frontier of tools and resources opened up by Appraisal/Evaluation theory, thus nudging their sometimes struggling skeletons of the discursive closet into breaths of fresher air, happier turns and less gloom.

Method

The Corpus

The corpus size selected for each genre amounted to 20,000 Words. Five cornerstones of English short fiction were selected which, on the aggregate, approximated 20,000 words:

- Hills like White Elephants by Ernest Hemingway (1927)
- Moon-face by Jack London (1902)
- The Lottery by Shirley Jackson (1948)
- The Most Dangerous Game by Richard Connell (1924)
- The Rocking Horse Winner by D. H. Lawrence (1926)

Therefore, the same number of words for the genre of the news was kept in view. The news articles were selected from what were five well-established news producers: the BBC, Reuters, CNN, Daily Mail, and Yahoo News.

Results

Below is a quick look at the instances of the four Engagement attributes in our corpus of English short stories. It can be easily seen that, in the case of Hills like White Elephants, for instance, out of a total of 286 utterances

employing the dialogistic resources of Engagement, 68 are Disclaim, 46 are Proclaim, 123 are Entertain and 49 are Attribute.

In terms of stylistics of Prose Fiction, Engagement constitutes a 'paradigm', a network of choices, out of which the author makes certain choices but not others that could have been made but are not. Meaning is the semiotic, cognitive and discursive product of the choice that is finally made and that finds its way to print or sound, against the background (the interrelated network and 'system' of choices) of other choices in the paradigm (the system) that could have been made for the expression of pretty much the 'same' meaning but are not. Studying and getting behind the significance of these choices within the Appraisal resources of engagement is the relevant stylistic analysis we'll undertake below.

Table 4.1

Instances of the four Engagement attributes in the corpus of short stories

Short Story Title	Disclaim	Proclaim	Entertain	Attribute	Total
Hills like White Elephants	68	46	123	49	286
Moon-Face	70	12	139	20	241
The Lottery	49	29	76	133	287
The Most Dangerous Game	179	88	350	356	973
The Rocking Horse Winner	185	129	332	359	1005

The table below paints the same picture, but for clarification purposes, the distribution of Engagement resources is given in percentages this time. This will be more informative and useful.

Table 4.2

The percentages of the four Engagement attributes in the corpus of short stories

Short Story Title	Disclaim	Proclaim	Entertain	Attribute
Hills like White Elephants	24%	16%	43%	17%
Moon-Face	29%	5%	58%	8%
The Lottery	17%	10%	26%	46%
The Most Dangerous Game	18%	9%	36%	37%
The Rocking Horse Winner	18%	13%	33%	36%

Table 4.2 sets out the distribution of Engagement within the genre of the news. Tables 4.4 and 4.5 sum up another important fact: the number of instances of each type of dialogistic/appraisal device in both of the genres in question (table 4.4), and rather the same information given in percentages in table 4.5. The latter is interestingly illuminating since it points to the fact that in terms of the deployment of dialogistic resources of engagement, only minor differences can be observed separating the two genres, even though the overall deployment of Engagement seems to be at a significantly higher number in the corpus of short stories representing a subgenre of (the mother genre) English literature-text.

*Table 4.3
Distribution of Engagement resources in the 20000-word corpus of the news articles taken from CNN, Reuters, Yahoo News, BBC and Daily Mail*

Subsystems of Engagement	Instances	Percentages
Disclaim	343	18%
Proclaim	266	14%
Entertain	754	39%
Attribute	587	30%

*Table 4.4
Total number of the instances of Engagement in the 20000-word corpus representing each genre*

Subsystems of Engagement	of News	Short Stories
Disclaim	343	551
Proclaim	266	304
Entertain	754	1020
Attribute	587	917
Total of Instances	1950	2792

*Table 4.5
Percentages of each subsystem of engagement within the whole corpus in each genre*

Subsystems of Engagement	News	Short Stories
Disclaim	18%	20%
Proclaim	14%	11%
Entertain	39%	37%
Attribute	30%	33%

In the following sections, attempts are made first to produce a number of stylistic/discursive explanations on the differential usage of Engagement within each of the five short stories as the representative sample for literature-text in general and prose fiction in particular. Then, certain explanatory notes are given on the genre of the news and the differences and apparent similarities between the two genres in terms of deploying the resources for engagement. It should be borne in mind that a true critical and comprehensive treatment and analysis of these stories is not undertaken below. There will be just a passing glance at their plot and operating themes to support and throw more light on the ensuing linguistic/stylistic characterization of their use of Engagement resources. Only then will the Engagement choices actually made be explained against the backdrop of other heteroglossic choices that could have been made.

Hills like White Elephants by Ernest Hemingway (1927)

This short story revolves around the conversation between an American girl and boy waiting for a train in a Spanish train station over a beer or two at the outdoors Spanish station bar. The setting does not shift and there are no more characters, apart from a small scene of the bartender bringing over top-ups. Themes of uncertainty, love, war, wilderness and loss are a common thread running through all Hemingway's works. In Hills like White Elephants, in particular, it is the same story, with the vacuity and sterility of the modern world serving as underlying themes that are derived from the same mother themes of loss and wilderness. It is the girl who seems tasked with completing the grim picture of these themes, hurling them at the boy constantly, while the boy in turn seems to be depicted as the pacifier, the silver-lining agent who is tasked with endeavoring to bring some grain of light to this otherwise grim picture, striving to brighten it but to no avail. The conversational give-and-take constantly supports this reading. But most importantly, linguistically speaking, and in terms of the intersubjective resources of Engagement, we see that Entertain is used in 43 percent of the cases (table 4.2). To revisit the category of Entertain, the authorial voice explicitly presents the proposition as grounded in its own contingent, individual subjectivity. The same authorial voice represents the

proposition as but one of a range of possible positions – it thereby **entertains** or invokes these dialogic alternatives. Here, the clear purport and style of the author commands it that the authorial voice add flesh to these constituent themes of uncertainty, fragility, loss and futility of the modern world by means of a more frequent recourse to resources of Entertain by wordings like:

- *Could we try it?*
- *I guess so.*
- *What will we do?*
- *I think.*
- *We could have everything.*

Following Entertain, we have Disclaim (24 %). It is to be expected that denials and counter-expectations would follow on from Entertain and assume next place to it. Hopes and questions and ideas are constantly nipped in the bud and frustrated, with the reader lost in a constant battle for resolution or an escape to a brighter, more settled, place. But this doesn't obviously happen. The linguistic devices of Engagement support this style for it to be realized. In third place, we have Attribute and Proclaim at roughly the same rate of usage. What is of note in this stylistic analysis of the short story with particular emphasis on the linguistic realization of Engagement here and for the following sections below is that Engagement provides the means to characterize a speaker/writer's interpersonal style and their rhetorical strategies according to what sort of heteroglossic backdrop of other voices and alternative viewpoints they construct for their text and according to the way in which they engage with that backdrop (Martin & White, 2005). The framework groups together under the heading of 'engagement' all those locutions which provide the means for the authorial voice to position itself with respect to, and hence to 'engage' with, the other voices and alternative positions construed as being in play in the current communicative context.

In other words, as indicated above, Engagement constitutes a 'paradigm', a network of choices, out of which the author makes certain choices but not others that could have been made. Meaning is the semiotic, cognitive and discursive product of the choice that is finally made and that finds its way to

print or sound, against the background (the interrelated network and ‘system’ of choices; the heteroglossic backdrop) of other choices in the paradigm (the system) that could have been made for the expression of pretty much the ‘same’ meaning. The dominant recourse to Entertain in this short story, for example, is significant as a set of choices that are made to convey a certain intersubjective positioning rather than others.

Moon-face by Jack London (1902)

The story concerns an unnamed protagonist’s extreme and irrational hatred of John Claverhouse, a man with a "moon-face". The protagonist becomes obsessed with Claverhouse, hating his face, his laugh, his entire life. He hatches a rather ingenuous scheme involving a retriever dog that he presented Claverhouse with and which finally provided the means for his seemingly accidental death. The death is ruled an accident while engaged in illegal fishing. The protagonist takes pride in killing Claverhouse with no mess or brutality and lives in peace.

Here again, we see the theme of ‘extreme antipathy’ in a ‘primitive world’ with ‘primitive relationships’ accord itself with the higher allocation of dialogistic resources to Entertain and second position going to Disclaim, a pattern similar to the previous one in Hemingway’s short story above, and of course with an even more dominant place occupied by Entertain this time, i.e. 58 percent. With Disclaim at 29 percent, this all leaves an even smaller space for the two lowermost subsystems of Attribute and Proclaim, 8 and 5 percent, respectively. It seems that the themes of the story interweave with certain pieces of harsh reality that need to be portrayed to the reader alongside accompanying modality markers that reflect the determinations, stark angles of the protagonist’s vision and belief towards Claverhouse or degrees of commitment and obligation on his part. Entertain is realized by wordings like these:

- *Other men could laugh.*
- *I could have forgiven him.*
- *Should a man live with such a name?*
- *I could stand it no longer.*
- *The earth should be quit of him.*

Disclaim comes after Entertain in the light of the author's clear intention to pick up the dialogistic alternatives (choices) of Counter and Denial and portray things like the questions that the protagonist asks himself on several occasions of self-reverie and soul searching and weighing his conscience and straightening out his dramatic leap of inhumane breach of conscience, the unrelenting stab of loathing, and the oblivious degeneration into acting on sheer personal antipathy.

The Lottery by Shirley Jackson (1948)

The story depicts a mindless lottery tradition in a village, the winners of which do not receive any material gifts or money, but are stoned to death if their names come up off the draw! As its working themes, it dredges up the unwholesome nature of blind compliance with rotten, potentially and inherently horrifying tradition, along with the violence that comes with it. Such horrible and dangerous traditions can mould a society that becomes so used to violence as to grow numb to it. Traditions are deeply rooted, however, and can be very difficult to change or to get rid of because they become a part of a community's heritage and history. Another theme that is subsidiary to these ones but does have an impact in the background is sexism. What is striking in this story is that the women do not draw at the outset; the men do this, yet the women are able to pick once their family is chosen and be stoned to death!

The data tells us that, unlike the two previous short stories, the prominence is assumed by Attribute, at 46 percent. Lower down the line lies Entertain at 26 percent. To ground an explanation for this in a glance at the themes of the short story, we could point to the palpably dominant image of conversational exchanges that take place among the chief characters in the story. The theme has, as another of its underlying elements, the gossipy feel of the buzzing crowd, the babbling reduction of culturally and morally dwarfed minds to baseless whisper and hearsay. It could be observed that this is, in fact, in character with such dangerously traditional societies. Wordings like the following abound in the story:

- *Mr Summers had argued.....*
- *Some people believed*
- *Several people said.....*
- *Mrs Dunbar answered*
- *He asked.....*

The Most Dangerous Game by Richard Connell (1924)

The Most Dangerous Game takes the motifs of death and violence to shocking extremes and levels, especially considering the new ground it broke in English literature of prose fiction at the time it was written. Two men seasoned in hunting various games turn to their most brutal selves possible when the lines between hunter and prey are blurred by the author, pitting the two main characters against each other in a chilling game of human hunting human.

The authorial language of intersubjective positioning holds up almost the same pattern of Engagement as the three short stories looked at so far. What is different here is the almost identical pattern of Entertain and Attribute. One palpable force on which the story hangs is the ubiquitous speculative dialogues the characters engage in. Question-answer exchanges abound. Direct projecting clauses are used to a regular and frequent extent:

-*remarked Rainsford*.....
- *said Whitney*.....
-*Whitney replied*.....
-*promised Whitney*.....
-*Agreed Rainsford*.....

This will clearly make a dominant pattern out of Attribute, the authorial voice attributing the proposition to an external voice, and in this case the shuttling back and forth among the different voices of the characters. On the other hand, the Engagement device equally operating here is 'Entertain' by means of which the author 'engages' with many propositions and 'secondary voices' (possible choices in the interpersonal paradigm in our wording, the 'heteroglossic backdrop' as couched by Martin & White, 2005; and, to put it in different terms again, the system network of intersubjective positioning) and whence 'entertains' alternative propositions. Note that the system of Entertain only 'entertains' these dialogistic alternatives. That is, it sends out the message to the reader that these are the possibilities for the proposition. In our view, the distinguishing feature of the theory of Engagement as a whole and the subsystem of Entertain in particular is that, in its substantive outlook, it does not posit any actual/realized 'choice' made along the syntagm and structure; the interpersonal job (and not the

ideational one, since Appraisal and therefore Engagement are all about extending the limits of the interpersonal; the perlocutionary ‘effects’ at best upon the interpersonal interlocutor, the intersubjective position the speaker/writer adopts when in interaction with the addressee) is only to resonate to the reader the dialogistic presence of this multi-voiced (heteroglossic) backdrop.

The Rocking Horse Winner by D. H. Lawrence (1926)

The Engagement pattern with this short story is very close to the previous one, as table 4.2 tells us. There is, again, a lot of conversation and direct speech thrown back and forth by the characters, constituting a mainstay of dialogic interactions among them. This story is D. H. Lawrence’s fierce indictment of materialism and his strongest portrayal of the incompatibility of the love of money and the love of human beings. All through the story, Lawrence takes issue with the modern notion that luck and happiness come from the outside, rather than from within; that happiness must take the form of money and goods rather than of inner happiness. A small child is victimized by his people’s frenzied rush to hit the jackpot through betting on horses and getting lucky. We have, again, a certain kind of humanity reduced to callous indifference and oppressive self-destruction through ignorance. Many literary critics also believe this to be one of the important motifs to mark the-turn-of-the-century English literature.

Conclusion

Table 4.5 is the representation of the percentages of Engagement uses in both genres, the genre of the news and the overall deployment of Engagement in the five short stories. It is evident that the two are strikingly close in using the four subsystems of Engagement. The fact that the distribution of Engagement resources is convincingly similar across what, in theory at least, should be two decidedly different genres is indication of the fact that the dialogistic positioning, maneuvering and intersubjective stances adopted in both genres are similar, although for different reasons.

One of the relevant concepts now that we are drawing things to a close is the matter of ‘dialogic expansions’ and ‘dialogic contractions’. Read & Carroll (2012) put this in concise terms arguing that dialogic expansions make allowances for the stances of others, and, thus, open up more points of view for discussion. Dialogue can be expanded through ‘the entertainment or attribution of propositions’. Dialogic contractions, on the other hand, challenge the position of others, reducing the range of alternative viewpoints through expressions that either Disclaim or Proclaim. Dialogic expansion in the news brings about the intended ideological play news bulletins and authors seek. News discourse, out of necessity, is designed to leave dialogic spaces open. It is through this that the designers of such texts are able to keep their readers interested, but, more importantly, more likely to place faith in the ideological/political message being presented to them. As we saw, in literary texts, the dialogic stances adopted by the writers are geared towards achieving the stylistic effects intended by their various themes and motifs. In sum, both genres are inclined towards dialogic expansion, albeit for different stylistic, generic, ideological and discursive reasons.

The study sheds light on the fact that both genres are strikingly close in using the four subsystems of Engagement, and both are inclined towards dialogic expansion, albeit for different generic reasons, with dialogic contraction taking a backbench. Dialogic expansions make allowances for the stances of others, and, thus, open up more points of view for discussion (both mentally/inwardly and out in the open with concretely present interlocutors). As explained above, dialogue can be expanded through Entertain or Attribute. Dialogic contractions, on the other hand, challenge the position of others, reducing the range of alternative viewpoints through expressions that either Disclaim or Proclaim. Dialogic expansion in the news brings about the intended ideological play news bulletins and authors seek, as news discourse is designed to leave dialogic spaces open. This dialogic expansion, as Critical Discourse Analysis frequently unravels, is usually done in a cunning and indirect way. In literary prose, the dialogic stances adopted by the writers are geared towards achieving the stylistic effects intended by their various themes and motifs.

By the same token, one important finding and insight of this paper that has far-reaching implications for our understanding of discursive practices is that texts belonging to distinctly diverse discursive practices and genres and with clearly different discursive values may represent similar textual properties but this similarity should not be taken as an indicator of similarities in ‘functioning’. In other words, one insight from this paper is that such opposing genre-samples (texts) will ‘engage’ dialogically with their readers in similar ways, but still carry over different imprints, functions and effects, as designated by their respective generic differences. One instance was what this paper portrayed in terms of the two distinct genres of short fiction and political news articles.

This study was a very small look at the Appraisal system of Engagement, a system that only indicates how the author engages with both the proposition and imagined/real readers/listeners (Martin & White, 2005), but the Appraisal system of Attitude can bring out other very interesting and more profound insights into texts and discourses in different genres, since it deals more profoundly with the semantics of the interpersonal. This is fertile grounds for research that will not only enrich critical discourse analysis of non-literary texts, but will contribute in significant and illuminating ways to the stylistic analysis of literary texts.

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Biodata

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