

Envoi: Intractable issues in appraisal analysis?

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In his introduction to this special issue, Martin posted some of the issues which an evolving theory and practice of appraisal analysis needs to address. I return to some of these issues here, exploring current and ongoing challenges in a social intersubjective model of evaluation. My discussion focuses on some of the methodological challenges of a rich text and corpus based theory of appraisal and some directions current work might take in negotiating these.

1. Prosody and beyond in appraisal realisations

In the early 1980s, Michael Halliday proposed a radical break with analytical frameworks designed to capture only segmental or particulate realization structures relevant to ideational meanings. He used the notion of ‘prosody’ to capture the distinctive realization patterns of interpersonal meanings.

(The) interpersonal kind of meaning is a motif that runs throughout the clause, and this is represented by lexicogrammatical or phonological motifs that are likewise strung unboundedly throughout. The speaker’s attitudes and assessments, his judgements of validity and probability; his choice of speech function, the mode of exchange in dialogue – such things are not discrete elements that belong at some particular juncture but semantic features that inform continuous stretches of discourse. It is natural that they should be realized not segmentally but *prosodically*, by structures (if that term is still appropriate), that are not particulate but field-like. The linguist’s tree is an inappropriate construct for representing structures of this kind. (Halliday 1981 37 [emphasis added])

The notion of ‘prosody’ is important for explorations of appraisal because it allows for unboundedness or at least ‘fuzzy boundedness’ in stretches of evaluation in text. Furthermore, it captures concatenations of interpersonal motifs strung throughout a message or phase. Finally, it suggests dynamism in choices—a mutating quality to evaluative choices. Present work in appraisal, including that in this present edition, is crucial

because it explores overlaps in choices, possibilities of multiple coding, implicit (evoked) and explicit (inscribed) patterns of APPRAISAL, gradient features such as amplitude (force and focus within GRADUATION) (Martin 2000; White 2002) and ENGAGEMENT (White, in this issue). Future work by these and other linguists will move us beyond localized notions of ‘prosody’ and incorporate broader, more global text structures. These structures can be likened to the harmonic progressions in a piece of music, which have a distinctive quality in themselves but also enter in relationship with other ‘chord progressions’ in the piece and contribute to the interpersonal structure of the text as a whole. Future work will explore different kinds of dynamism in appraisal patterns in text, perhaps building on the potential of the logical metafunction in Halliday’s grammar (Halliday 1978).

Martin and other authors in this volume have raised some issues facing linguists as they attempt to develop coding schemes that are adequate to prosodic realizations of attitude in text. Comparable challenges are faced by scholars working in corpus-based studies of stance in different registers (see for example, Precht, in this issue, Biber and Finegan 1989, and Biber et al. 1999). But more will need to be done. The coupling of so-called neutral messages with heavily appraised ones puts the less attitudinal ones into an evaluative schema if only because of the ‘company these words keep’. Spans of text can take on what Lemke (1998) calls a ‘propagative quality’ or what Thompson (1998) calls a ‘resonance’ because they contract a relationship with directly appraised segments of text.

If we are to develop an analytical apparatus that takes account of this evaluative reality, we need frameworks that are sensitive to the way that texts as a whole go to work on readers. As Martin mentioned in his introduction, ‘It is texts that mean, through their sentences and the complex logogenetic contingencies among them’. We could add that, within texts, it’s implicitly evaluative meanings that are most coercive of the reader simply because they appear to pass beneath the threshold of conscious awareness. Current work in appraisal theory attempts to build an account of the mesh of different types of evaluation in text and the effect of these on readers and listeners. And, of course, as the contributions in the present volume all make clear, these evaluative resources and effects are institution- and context-specific (see Hunston and Thompson 2000, for several useful papers exploring evaluation in a range of text types and contexts).

2. Developing an institutionally sensitive apparatus for appraisal analysis

If only because of the influence of institutions on available evaluative resources, our analytical apparatus needs to be firmly based in an account of

the discourse requirements and possibilities of the context that produces/reworks this genre. Certain reading/viewing/appraising strategies and value systems will be more or less salient in certain social milieux. In one milieu with which I am familiar, the literary reading of selected texts is valued over personalist or even critical readings. Examination English foregrounds the literary reading even of works which are not particularly prized for their canonical value. This has implications for appraisal analysis which first needs to ascertain how evaluation is produced and interpreted in a particular milieu and then to develop an analytical apparatus which is in keeping with this (or at least in connection with this). A resistant reading will be a second order phenomenon. If we are to understand how evaluation works for a given set of readers/listeners/viewers, we need to develop an analytical framework which is sensitive to the formation and the practices employed by these stakeholders. The current work moves us further toward socially and institutionally sensitive mechanisms of analysis. Page (in this issue) has developed an account of the interaction between gender and appraisal choices in childbirth narratives. White (in this issue) has introduced a systemic framework for analyzing the extent and type of dialogism in media texts and practices. This work makes us aware that appraisal resources ‘never freely combine in a particular register but form themselves into syndromes of choices’ which analysts call ‘keys’ (see Martin 2000 and the introduction to this volume for an account of these patterns). One way of exploring a context or social institution is through the linguistic analysis of syndromes of attitude—resources which are deployed in particular ways over and over again in the interest of particular rhetorical or practical outcomes and effects.

In the social subjective perspective adopted in the current volume, we are now at the point of considering not just production-centric accounts of evaluation but also reception-centric accounts which build in readers/listeners’ perspectives on appraisal. Painter’s work on the ontogenesis of attitude in children’s language development demonstrates the extent to which affective meanings are realized in negotiation with important others. Even so-called ‘impersonal’ areas of development such as causal relations and generalizations emerge initially from the impetus to share attitude with others. APPRAISAL is an intersubjective process, whether we consider this in the ongoing exchange of evaluative meanings in everyday conversation or more formal contexts such as narrative performance (see, for example, work on evaluation in narrative by Cortazzi and Jin 2000).

In our consideration of intersubjective evaluation, we shift emphasis from studies of hierarchical relations based on power to studies of vertical relations based on solidarity. The current volume puts alignment on the

theoretical agenda. This focus on how texts build solidarity with readers/listeners is long overdue and represents a site for more positive discourse analysis. This is a research agenda from which others can draw in times of ever-widening rifts and crises of communication at global and local levels.

3. Perspectival shifts in reading appraisal

The current work recognises the importance of combinations of and interactions between appraisal choices. At this stage, it is fairly static in its modelling of ongoing choice for appraisal throughout a text. Coding complicates this task because it requires that we settle on a *valeur* for any item of APPRAISAL in a text. However, coding of an item (word or wording) is itself a fragile process. It fixes a value for a word which later reading and later co-textualization may overturn. This brings me to the point about the importance of consideration of the analyst's perspective. The analytical value we give to any item deemed to be evaluative depends on whether we are coding according to a more dynamic or synoptic perspective. In a dynamic perspective, we tend to code as we read, on-line (logogenetically). The values we give a particular item of appraisal will be conditioned by the position we have taken in the text 'up until now'. These values are likely to be overturned or adjusted as we read on by shifts in the co-text and in the appraisal values of key terms as this unfolds. Many text types such as narratives or advertisements play with expectations that a reader brings to an event sequence, dialogue or point of view. If a writer or speaker sets out to change our views on something, then our apparatus needs to enable us to pick up on these changes and to show their genesis in the analysis itself. This puts the emphasis on an instantial appraisal system rather than a system which establishes values for choices from the outset, which are extraneous to the text-instance. In the case of narrative, for example, the text conditions the reader to empathy through alternating, mutually reinforcing (and redundant) patterns of appraisal. But the global significance of these patterns may not be apparent in the phase-by-phase development of the text. Logogenesis is the means by which the reader builds up this significance but we can't model synoptic salience syntagmatically. Two perspectives on the meaning of the phase are required: an on-line perspective which processes significance dynamically and an overview perspective which construes it synoptically.

This brings me to the vexed question of the environment of our appraisal analysis.

4. Analysis of APPRAISAL within units of different sizes

Once we accept the need to contextualize our analysis, we have to face the issue of the size and type of environment we admit into our framework. It seems to me that there are (at least) four environmental ‘frames’ that we can consider in contextualizing our analysis: the local frame surrounding any evaluative item (word or phrase or complex); the global frame of the text itself; the intertextual frame of other texts conditioning our production and reading of this text; and the contratextual frame by which we reframe our reading of appraisal values and ‘read against the grain’. Other studies such as Hunston (2000) are asking similar questions about how to distinguish and interrelated evaluation on different ‘planes of discourse’.

Contextualizing our analysis is important because, every *lexical* expression of APPRAISAL takes on a particular *valeur* depending on the environment in which it is found. Our ‘coding’ of lexical instantiations of appraisal needs to be conditioned by a consideration of their place within these larger co-textual environments. For me, the notion of the phase developed by Gregory (1988) and Gregory and Malcolm (1981) is very useful here. The *phase* corresponds to the formal compositional unit in writing known as the paragraph albeit with a functional unity and quality. It is typically ‘all of a piece’ semantically and can be characterized metafunctionally.

Phase characterizes those stretches of text where there is a significant measure of consistency in what is being selected ideationally, interpersonally and textually . . . phase can be thought of as a delicate statement of register (Gregory and Malcolm 1981: 8).

The types of phases that can occur in a text is very much an effect of the genre in which it is written. And, here, I find the notion of ‘genre’ a useful ‘way in’ to a text’s relevant intertexts.

The *genre* in which a text is produced imposes certain constraints on choices—makes particular combinations or appraisal ‘voices’ or ‘keys’ less or more likely. (eg., the psychological narrative is only one kind of narrative genre). As a reader processes the phases of a text, shaped by its genre, she or he enters into a virtual dialogue of a particular kind.

This dialogue can be partial, resisted and reconstrued. Our coding of the appraisal choices in any text will recognize the *valeur* they take on in this text, in this genre but may also choose to reconstrue these.

In Figure 1, the environmental orders look pretty much as follows.

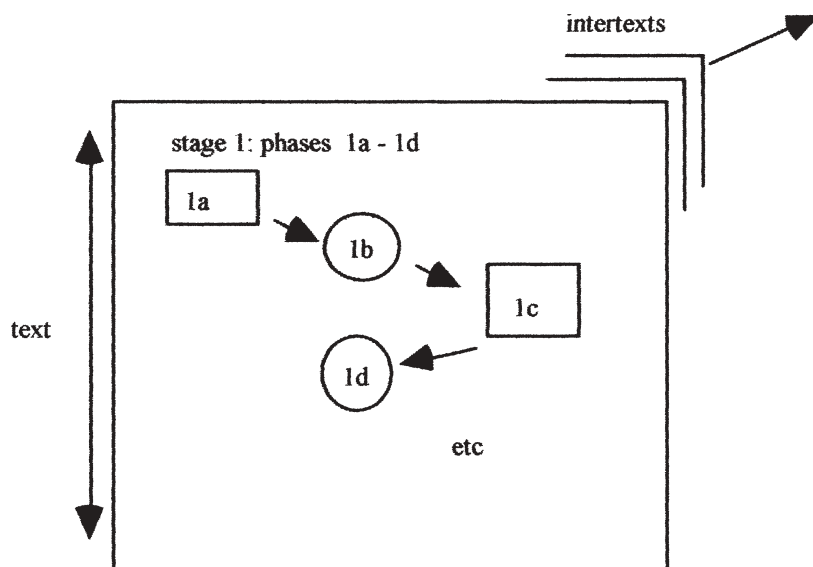


Figure 1. *Four environmental frame contextualizing analysis of appraisal*

5. Implications for an APPRAISAL system

If our analysis is to be sensitive to the shaping force of logogenesis, it cannot (should not) be too dense or overdetermining. With respect to how a text positions its reader, much will be lost if an overarching appraisal system is presented with values attached. Bakhtin's work on the expressive function of the utterance is useful here. APPRAISAL values will accumulate significance on the basis of the intertexts from which they are drawn (the genres in which they are typically used this way), on the basis of the text in which they are instantiated and, more locally, on the pattern of their expression within the phase.

If we consider the environment in this way, there is no such thing as a neutral instantiation. At the level of the register (as salient meaning potential) and of genre (as salient text type), the producer and the reader of a text will take 'as given' a particular set of conditions on the degree and kind of interpersonal intrusiveness allowed. The text relativizes all choices—downplaying or overturning some and elevating others to higher order significance. We need to take account of the whole text (and the genre it instantiates) if we are to link appraisal analysis powerfully to the genesis of a particular value position in an ideal reader. This is a position likely to be popular within stylistic uses of appraisal. Literary and mundane texts like advertisements innovate on and sometimes overturn the appraisal systems they set up. A heavily overdetermined system will not really enable us to

track the heteroglossia of a text within a genre or of particular genres within a broader social discourse.

A model of APPRAISAL that is sensitive to text in context is in early days. Perhaps the metaphor of the swamp is no longer appropriate. Perhaps a better metaphor is that of jazz. We need to develop an analytical apparatus that is tuned into the capacity for texts and text makers and users to ‘riff’, ‘innovate’ and ‘jam’. This way, we consider systems in action, systems in play, systems in text instances. This is much more fun than trying to map the intricacies of a swamp using coding schemes developed for very different more firmly grounded terrain.

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