

## Analyzing selected letters by Antonio Gramsci in terms of appraisal theory: A review study

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### *Abstract*

*This paper uses the appraisal theory to analyze selected letters by Antonio Gramsci letters because no studies have used the appraisal theory to examine Antonio Gramsci. Thus, the qualitative method has been considered to analyze and compare these categories. Such comparison and analysis benefit from previous research works conducted in this field. The paper identifies the three interconnected levels of analysis to provide a complete picture of the text's interpretation. These levels are: description, explanation and interpretation. A good interpretation cannot be achieved by dividing these levels of analysis. Interpretation and explanation are part of description, which is concerned with the formal aspects of the text. Because power, beliefs, and identities are intertwined with the text's linguistic elements, the researchers is able to decipher ideologically shaped and produced texts to show relations and patterns of power and dominance that are created and shaped by discursive and societal structure. In texts, grammatical emphasis is used to convey authority and persuade the reader, the degree of power and ideology in text production may be seen in the usage of strong words and clauses. The study findings showed that many discursive strategies, including reported verbs, complete and connected concepts, and unambiguous intentions, in text articulation, creation, and understanding were used. Gramsci was able to effectively prepare the route to his argument by connecting the concepts and comparing the present to the past. To make his language strong and compelling, he used more model verbs, transitive verbs, passivisation, repetitious structure, and nominalization".*

*Keywords: Analyzing, letters, Antonio Gramsci, appraisal theory.*

### **Introduction**

Language is an important communication tool. People use language to express ideas, opinions, thoughts, or desires, whether in spoken or written form. It is the highest form of intelligent interaction that

differentiates humans from animals. Through spoken or written language, people are able to share ideas, opinions, and emotions with others. One of the best forms of communication is letter writing. The current study is concerned with prison letter writing. Wacquant (2009) stated that prison writing is the link between the inside and the outside world. Letter writing bridges the gap between the two worlds. As well as presenting prison life to external readers, prison writing, in its varying styles, can also provide opportunities for the imprisoned to express themselves, analyze the system of confinement, and document their struggle for survival and sanity. Prisoners create several works that can be impressive literature as having hundreds of this kind of works. Works like these, which can describe prisoner's life and experience inside prison, are not so obvious to people outside. Given that inmates have restricted access to the telephone and receive few, if any, visits from their friends and family, letter writing may play a significant role in their daily lives. There are instances where the writings of inmates become well-known, either due to their authors' political significance or their own. Nelson Mandela and George Jackson are the two most well-known political prisoners. Linguists had the opportunity to examine this linguistic phenomenon thanks to these works. Many academics used the appraisal theory when it was developed to analyses diverse discourses, including daily conversations, media literature, scholarly debates, journals, and public speeches. The systemic functional approach-holding discourse analysis was developed by J.R. Martin which in turn created the appraisal theory in the 1990s. J.R. Martin, D. Rose, and Peter PR White furthered it in 2007 and 2005, respectively, and it focuses on how evaluation, feeling, and other position expressions are embodied in language. The focus of appraisal is evaluation: the types of attitudes that are discussed in a book, the intensity of the emotions involved, and the methods used to source values and align readers. Evaluations are interpersonal types of meaning that acknowledge the difference in the tone of social exchanges portrayed in a text. Despite "the hard work of the previous attempts to analyzing selected letters by Antonio Gramsci by the appraisal theory, there is still a gap to further understand Antonio Gramsci in terms of appraisal theory. Therefore, this review paper tries to shed light on this gap. In order to do so, the qualitative method has been considered to analyze and compare these categories. Such comparison and analysis are solely based on the previous research works conducted in this field".

### **Background of the study**

Appraisal theory's fundamental goal has been to propose a thorough and systematic restructuring of the linguistic resources that can be

employed to value the social experience. This goal partially relates to the increased interest in studies that look at how language creates social roles and the possibility for these roles to function rhetorically and have an impact on people's ideas, attitudes, expectations, and interpersonal relationships(White, 2004). To help readers comprehend the language employed in Antonio Gramsci's Letters from Prison, the appraisal theory can provide a theoretical framework for the analysis of critical statements. According to Wei, Wherrity, and Zhang (2015), the theory of appraisal is concerned with the language resources that enable a speaker or even a text to produce, naturalize, and communicate inter-subjective information specifically. Within the broad range, the theory primarily focuses on the ways in which emotion, evaluation, and attitude are expressed, together with a fixed resource that explicitly and interpersonally frames a text's recommendations.

According to James Robert Martin and Rose (2003), the components of appraisal theory consists of assessment, attitude negotiation, emotional intensity, and reader alliance. Readers should pay a close attention to the discourse's deeper and literal meanings. By focusing on a language metafunction like interpersonal metafunction, James R Martin and White (2003) defined appraisal theory as "[e]valuative use of language" and developed it based on Halliday's interpersonal metafunction . The resources for developing the writer's identity, particularly in interactions with others, are negotiated with the people's evaluation (Attitude), how this evaluation could be greater or lower (Graduation), and the appraisal theory (Engagement). The topic of attitude is feelings and emotional responses. There are three sub-attitudes that make up this attitude: affect, judgement, and appreciation. The terms "affect," "judgement," and "appreciation" all pertain to how people express their emotions in speech. Appreciation is concerned with the worth of things. The second category, Engagement, is broken into two more subcategories: monogloss, which refers to a single voice, and hetrogloss, which refers to multiple voices". The final category is "graduation, which is further divided into "force" and "concentration"(James R Martin & White, 2003).

White (2004)stated that appraisal is a particular method for examining, outlining, and elucidating how language is used to judge, take positions, create textual identities, and govern interpersonal positionings and relationships. To better understand how student writers, or EFL university students, utilize lexical resources to express and negotiate attitudes with their readers.

The Appraisal Theory is one“method that has been applied to discourse analysis. This theory seeks to clarify "how assessment is established, enhanced, targeted, and sourced"(Halliday, 1985). It is a

component of, and is developed by. Systemic Functional Linguistics (James R Martin & White, 2003) a method for examining the language of evaluation. It interprets "the subjective presence of writers/speakers in texts as they adopt viewpoints towards both the content they offer and those with whom they communicate" by focusing on the interpersonal dimension of discourse (James R Martin & White, 2003). According to Jin (2019), the systemic functional linguistics' theoretical framework is where the creation of interpersonal meaning occurs. It focuses mostly on the verbal expression of the speaker's or authors subjective attitude. The appraisal theory, like other theories of systemic functional linguistics, emphasizes the rhetorical selection of linguistic resources, which is the study of language assignment semantics, and constructs a complex system to investigate how language users might convey linguistic objects through language. White (2004) described appraisal as a system of interpersonal meaning that aims to explore, describe, and explain how language is designed to deliver an evaluation, to embrace attitudes, to develop textual personas, and to manage positioning and connections. The theory of appraisal is concerned with the linguistic tools that a speaker or even a book can use to effectively pull off, naturalize, and express inter-subjective in particular.

The discourse semantic resource known as AT is focused on the manner in which authors of texts communicate their attitudes. By focusing on how speakers and writers clearly encode their attitude as well as how they subtly express it and place both themselves and their audience members, AT goes beyond conventional theories of judgement. AT is concerned with the interlocutors' rhetorical status, ideology, and identity in addition to their sentiments and beliefs (Oteíza, 2017). James R Martin and White (2003) created a framework for the appraisal analysis of texts using the appraisal theory. Each section of text (such as a noun phrase, verb phrase, or clause) that alludes to one occurrence of appraisal is referred to in their framework as a "appraisal group." Every time an appraisal is conducted, the appraiser and the subject of the appraisal are the two main actors. Peyralans (2019) claimed that appraisal theory offers a larger thematic manner of examining a text to detect logical progressions that the reader or listener may be unaware of, in addition to allowing lexical data from a text to be studied for author attitude. No studies have yet applied the appraisal theory to detect how meanings are constructed in the data under consideration. Also, little is known about the underlying meaning of the letters by Antonio Gramsci. So, this study aims to change this.

### **Literature review**

Appraisal theory and its use in discourse analysis have been the subject of numerous Arab and international studies. For educational purposes, some of them are listed below in chronological order from oldest to newest. Arunsirot (2012) examined commentary from Thai newspapers on the April 11, 2009 ASEAN Summit disruption. Examining the linguistic techniques used by appraisal theory, a method to more thoroughly understand the attitudes represented in newspaper commentaries, is the goal of the current study. 32 newspaper commentaries from nine online publications were used to get the data for the study. The findings show that the commentators utilized both positive and negative emotional responses through adjectives, noun phrases, or verb phrases in terms of affect. They also made references to people's behavior in terms of attitude, either positively or negatively, using language as a means of expressing their attitude.

S. Zhang and Pei (2018) conducted a “contrastive analysis of the speeches given by Xi Jinping and Donald Trump at the World Economic Forum in 2017 and 2018, respectively, using James R. Martin's Appraisal Theory. The goal is to examine how individuals utilize language to organize emotions, judgements, and appreciation as well as how they engage with and graduate semantic contents in order to examine how language and power are constructed in tandem. The researcher employed content analysis to analyze qualitative data. The study's findings demonstrated that positive words in both speeches that dealt with attitude were more prevalent than negative ones. If they write their speeches using the appraisal theory as a guide, they are convincing and powerful. By examining and assessing, the researchers attempted to offer a reference for the better composition and understanding of such speeches through the analysis and evaluation of the distribution and use of resources in the speeches of both leaders. They also hoped to expand the applications of appraisal theory. The distribution of assessment resources in Li Bai's poem *Changgan Xing*'s English translations was examined by Dong and Lin (2018). Based on J. R. Martin's Appraisal Theory, it seeks to do a comparative analysis and discover the similarities and contrasts between the translated poetry. The Chinese poetry has been translated into two traditional English versions by Ezra Pound and Xu Yuanchong. According to the attitude system, the distribution of attitudes in the two English translations has been examined from three angles: affect, judgment, and appreciation. It has also been investigated how polarity and explicitness are distributed throughout the poetry. In order to undertake a comparative analysis of the attitudinal resources in the translated poetry, the study has utilized quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Additionally, the causes of

the variations in the translated versions' attitudinal resources have been investigated. Dong and Lin (2018) showed the relevance of the Appraisal Theory in the comparative studies of Chinese-English poems by highlighting the similarities and differences of the attitudinal resources. W. Zhang and Cheung (2018) looked on how authors of published research use Attitude and Graduation tools to assess literature that has already been written in the field based on a corpus of literature reviews from 204 research articles (RAs) in second language writing and computer networks and communications (CNC) (SLW). The UAM Corpus Tool was used to code the data. Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis were used by the researcher. The study's findings revealed that writers use resources for Graduation and attitude in a manner that is generally consistent. These findings showed that all three groups of writers strongly preferred to communicate attitude as appreciation as opposed to affect or judgement. Last but not least, the research added to our understanding by connecting Attitude and Graduation resources to the construction of voice in the disciplines of CNC and SLW.

From a linguistic perspective, Atalla (2021) aimed to investigate biased language and provides systematic categorization of several types of evaluation. Regarding the analytical approach, Atalla used the Appraisal Theory, concentrating on the attitude resource and its three sub-systems. The researcher looked at a number of articles from various newspapers about two politicians: General Qassem Soleimani of Iran and George Walker Bush, a former American president. The study's findings demonstrated that, despite editors' claims to be objective and neutral in their approach, news is a reflection of their beliefs and reflects their political, personal, and societal leanings. Li (2021) used the appraisal theory for Critical Discourse Analysis to examine the movie reviews for the film *Nezha* (CDA). The study made use of content analysis to gather qualitative data. IMDb and Rotten Tomatoes reviews from the previous year were the sample used. 205 comments were gathered from Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb. The three checklists were used to gather this. Utilizing content analysis, the researcher took a qualitative approach to analysis. The three systems of appraisal were employed in the appraisal methodology, which was used by CDA. The suggested that both positive and negative movie reviewer opinions were represented on the websites IMDb and Rotten Tomatoes. The results also demonstrated that the many sub-systems discovered, such as AFFECT, which accounted for 21% of the Attitude System Positive attitude was more prevalent and was plainly expressed, with appreciation scoring 50% and judgement 29% among others. Aljuraywi and Alyousef (2022) investigated evaluative language in political discourse "using James R Martin and White's (2003) assessment framework. The characteristics of the three types of

attitude affect, judgment, and appreciation used by Donald Trump, Joe Biden, Leslie Stahl, and Norah O'Donnell in four political interviews on 60 Minutes during the 2020 American presidential elections were examined by the study using a mixed-methods research design. So, our study adds to the literature by examining our data by combining quantitative and qualitative methods qualitative data analysis and the data has not been analyzed from the perspective used in this work. Also, our study is different from the previous one by using Martin's Appraisal Theory Framework as its accepted model (2005) because it is clear and applicable to our data.

#### Research question

The study is trying to answer the following main question:

- 1-what are the components of the Appraisal theory used in the letters and what is the percentage of each?
2. To what extent can the selected letters by Antonio Gramsci be analyzed by the appraisal theory?.

This main question can be subdivided into the following questions:

- a- How are selected letters by Antonio Gramsci viewed from the Appraisal perspective of attitude?
- b- How are selected letters by Antonio Gramsci' viewed from the Appraisal perspective of engagement?

#### **Methodology of the study**

The qualitative method has been considered to analyzing selected letters by Antonio Gramsci in terms of appraisal theory. Such comparison and analysis are solely based on the previous research works conducted in this field.

#### Data Collection procedures

Ten prison letters in total, chosen from Antonio Gramsci's prison correspondence, make up the study's corpus of data. To facilitate analysis, these letters will be copied from a PDF file and put into word documents.

#### Data analysis procedures

Data will be analyzed through several steps: reducing data, calculating, explaining, and conclusion drawing. Reducing data means that the researcher will put the indicated expressions of each sources. We will use both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the data.

### The model adopted

The study uses Martin's Appraisal Theory Framework as its accepted model (2005). According to some, examining prison letters within the framework of appraisal theory is a cutting-edge discourse analytical technique that has not gotten enough attention. The text of the letters will be read out clearly for a deeper understanding. After that, the letters will be analyzed for the Appraisal system.

### Results and discussion

From Antonio Gramsci's collection Letters from Prison, the researcher chose ten letters for their significance. They were addressed to his loved ones and friends. These letters were written on various dates. In order to analyze these letters' discourse, the researcher used a model based on Martin and White's Appraisal Theory. Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation were the three key systems featured in this approach. Each system is then further broken down into other subcategories. The definition of the appraisal theory is followed by instances of the system using the chosen letter in the analysis. The information obtained from the analysis is then organized into frequency and percentage tables for each system.

#### 1. Attitude:

The appraiser's attitude toward the object is the essence of their feelings about it. In the evaluation groups, feelings or attitudes such as "It's such a lovely day!" can be expressed, along with other emotions or attitudes like love, wrath, fear, jealousy, enthusiasm antagonism, and satisfaction. Expressions like "[t]his policy will not work" are viewed as attitude-conveying evaluation groups in more formal contexts like news stories. According to James R Martin and White (2003), the idea of taxonomy-based appraisal covers attitude, which refers to our feelings, as well as behavior, emotional reactions, judgements, and the valuing of things. The appraiser's primary emotion is attitude, which includes three semantic zones (James R Martin & White, 2003).

The speakers assign participants and processes an intersubjective value or assessment by making reference to emotional reactions or systems of culturally defined value systems, this is referred to as having an ATTITUDE. The ATTITUDE system itself is divided into three parts.

- APPRECIATION: the appraisal of objects and goods (rather than human behavior) by reference to aesthetic principles and other systems of social value.



- AFFECT: the characterization of phenomena by reference to emotion.
- JUDGMENT: the evaluation of human behavior with respect to social norms.

#### 1. Affect

Affect communicates “the appraiser's feelings. It can be a behavioral process (e.g., "I couldn't help crying at the tragic news") or an internal mental state (e.g., "I feel sorry for folks who have lost beloved ones in the tragedy"). The verbs "to love" or "to hate," "to fear" or "to reassure," as well as the adverbs "happily" and "sadly," "angry" and "pleased," and the nominalized forms "joy" and "despair," "confidence" and "insecurity," can all be used to describe affect (Edwards, White, Gray, & Fischbacher, 2001). This means the speaker/writer is more concerned with his mental state (inner world) than the physical state (external world). The analytical model divides emotions into three subcategories of affect. Below are some examples of impact. One group involves the moods of feeling happy or sad (“affairs of the un/happiness the a-heart”, such as sadness, love, hate etc.)”.

1. You should write about these things rather than harping all the time on my sad plight. (Letter n.5)
2. –“I fear that whatever I write, I will be pouring a great deal of pressure on you”. (Letter n.10)
3. –“I'm convinced that I will hug you once more and see you happy”. (Letter n.4)
4. –“He thought I was angry with him for drawing my salary for five or six months without letting me know”, (Letter n.4)
5. -Moreover, I was happy for a (Letter n.4)
6. -I'm glad you liked the postcards (Letter n.7)
7. -This all amused me very much as you might imagine. (Letter n.1)
8. -I wish I could cheer you up in some way (Letter n.1).
9. –“Thank you for your nice thought of wanting to send me eggs” (Letter n.3).
10. –“Did you notice how I didn't hesitate to take advantage of your offer to take care of the books”? (Letter n.3).
11. –“You should write about these things rather than harping all the time on my sad plight”. (Letter n.4).

12. -I “fear that Delio, despite your contribution, by now must be much smokier than I ever was”. (Letter n.6).

## 2. Judgment

The appraiser must evaluate an intelligent object in order to exercise judgment. The assessment may focus on social norms or societal ethical standards (also known as social sanctions) (social esteem). Veracity (i.e. assessing someone's honesty, as in “[c]an we trust the President on this?”) or appropriateness (i.e. assessing someone's moral behavior, as in “A brutal and cruel dictator”) are two examples of social penalties. Social esteem may involve a

Judgment of a person's capacity (e.g., “the government's weakness in quelling violence”), their behavior (e.g., “He is the slightly off-center genius...”), or their tenacity (e.g., “She could work relentlessly for a day”).

James Robert Martin and Rose (2003) observed “that judgment is frequently expressed adjectivally (e.g., unfair/fair, competent/incompetent), while it can also be expressed through nominalized forms (e.g., best behavior, remarkable achievement) and prepositional phrases (in order, in shape). Language users' assessments of the socially sanctioned and esteemed behavior of others comprise judgment. James R Martin and White (2003) claim that social sanction conducts the evaluation from the viewpoints of veracity (is s/he honest) and propriety (is s/he beyond reproach), whereas social esteem concerns itself with the judgment of character and behavior in terms of normality (is s/he special), capacity (is s/he capable), and tenacity (is s/he dependable). One way to realize values is”.

1. Adverbials - justly, fairly, virtuously, honestly, pluckily, indefatigably, cleverly, stupidly, eccentrically.

2. “Attributes and epithets - a corrupt politician, that was dishonest, don't be cruel, she's very brave, he's indefatigable, a skilful performer, truly eccentric behavior”.

3. nominals - a brutal tyrant, a cheat and a liar, a hero, a genius, a maverick.

4. Verbs - to cheat, to deceive, to sin, to lust after, to chicken out, to triumph.

Examples of Judgment are:

1. -I can assure you that I've been well all along. (Letter n.1).

### 3. Appreciation

An object's appreciation is its evaluation. It is typical in political news since events and policies, both of which lack intellectual depth, are the two primary items that are examined. An appreciative appraisal of the object is how the appraiser responded to it (i.e. whether he or she likes it). This reaction may speak to the item's quality or how the appraiser is affected by it (for example, "an uninviting display") (for example, "a gorgeous piece"). The appraiser may focus on composition in addition to reaction, which could speak to the object's balance (for instance, "a consistent report") or complexity (for example, "a detailed report").

The appraiser may finally discuss the item's value and how valuable it is (for example, "ineffective amendments").

Appreciation is used to assess a "thing's" worth. According to James R Martin and White (2003), there are three different categories of appreciation: our response to "things" (reaction), their makeup, and valuation. The term "reaction" refers to the effect on emotion; "composition" refers to the text, which describes the intricacy and specifics of an object; and "valuation" refers to the assessment of things, processes, and products based on social norms. Most of the examples in our data are valuation which means the letter are more concerned with assessing things than describing intricacy or texts:

1. "I might not risk a beating from some overexcited individual". (Letter n.8).
2. "And is it possible that I, who am in prison, with the ugliest of prospects before me have to encourage a young man who is free to do as he likes and who can apply his mind to some useful activity every day?" (Letter n.5).
3. "Don't think I want to touch your emotions this way: what I'm trying to say is that after so long a time and so many events, the true significance of which may have escaped me, after so many years of a compressed, shabby, obscure, and miserable life, if I could talk with you as friend-to-friend, it would be a great help". (Letter n.5).
4. "This doesn't mean you have to feel the weight of awful responsibilities on your shoulders; simple conversations such as friends usually engage in are all that I have in mind". (Letter n.10).
5. In the "past, Ghil's municipal funds were very scanty, since its inhabitants owned land in the neighboring communes and paid the major part of the taxes there". (Letter n.10).

## Conclusion

This paper analyzed selected letters by Antonio Gramsci in terms of appraisal theory, it aimed to fill the gap to further understand Antonio Gramsci in terms of appraisal theory in the literature. In order to do so, the qualitative method has been considered to analyze and compare these categories. Such comparison and analysis are solely based on the previous research works conducted in this field. According to the findings of the study, three levels of analysis (description, explanation and interpretation) are interconnected to provide a complete picture of the text's interpretation. Taking each level separately can distort this picture. The level of interpretation and explanation are related to the level of description, which is concerned with (the formal aspects of the text). Power, beliefs, and identities are intertwined with the text's linguistic elements. Additionally, the researchers are able to decipher ideologically shaped and produced texts to identify relations and patterns of power and dominance that are created and shaped by discursive and societal structure through the various methods of interpretation and explanation that follow the process of description. In addition to relying on grammatical emphasis to convey authority and persuade the reader, the degree of power and ideology in text production may be seen in the usage of strong words and clauses. Many discursive strategies, including reported verbs, complete and connected concepts, and unambiguous intentions, in text articulation, creation, and perception were dominant in the data. To make his language strong and compelling, he has a tendency to use more model verbs, transitive verbs, passivisation, repetitious structure, and nominalization.

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