

TEACHERS DISCOURSE IN THE UNIVERSITY: AN APPRAISAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT: *This paper aims at presenting samples of discourse analysis of two college teachers from a university in Mato Grosso - Brazil, based on the Appraisal theory. For this paper, the analysis will be focused on the category of affect found in the participants' speech. The participants were selected through an institutional evaluation in which students evaluate the teachers' performance in the class. Systemic Functional Linguistics is the theoretical framework (Halliday 1994, more specifically Appraisal (Martin, 2000; Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005). The data were taken from classroom recordings and interviews with the teachers. The samples presented in this paper correspond only to the classroom recordings. This research is a part of an ongoing doctorate dissertation that concentrates on the study of Appraisal in spoken discourse in order to explain how Appraisal is evidenced in samples of those two different college teachers.*

KEYWORDS: *Appraisal; affect; discourse; teacher.*

1. Introduction

This study aims at presenting a description of some examples of appraisal categories (affect, judgment, appreciation) presented in the participants' speech: two teachers in a degree course (language and law). However, in the examples with the process types, the category of affect will be privileged. The study also presents some concepts about appraisal, its relevance for linguistics research, especially in the field of discourse.

My discussion in this paper focuses on how teachers appraise people, situations and objects when they interact with their students in the classroom based on the appraisal theory and some directions current work might take in negotiating these interactions.

The term “appraisal”, which is translated in Portuguese as “avaliatividade”, has been introduced by Professor James Martin (1992, 2000) to cover evaluative attitude expressed in the written and spoken discourses.

For Martin (2000), the way we express our thoughts, opinions and attitudes about someone or something based on our emotions, involves appraisal as well as setting judgments and later giving some worth to these attitudes. It is someone’s opinions about things and the world reflecting ideology, beliefs and culture that become evident by the linguistic choices made in the discourse.

Appraisal studies have made meaningful advances in different context analysis, for instance, the article by Zhanzi (2003), which presents an autobiographical analysis whose topic is language acquisition and cultural identity. Furthermore, the analysis in oral texts, which is the focus of this study, may widen the horizons of the appraisal studies.

This article is divided into three parts: the first one takes into account evaluation and appraisal theory; the second deals with the transitivity system, since the processes that work with appraisal will be in the data analysis, and, finally, the third one focuses on the data presentation and discussion of samples of the participant’s discourse in appraising situations.

2. Terms used to express the evaluative phenomenon

According to Hunston & Thompson (2000:2) there is a vast number of terms used to express the evaluative phenomenon. Some of them are: *Connotation* (Lyons, 1977), *Affect* (Bernsler, 1993) and *Attitude* (Halliday, 1994). The first term emphasizes the “words” that reflect connotations, the second and the third terms have to do with the language users, in other words, the people who “possess” the attitudes.

In the same way, Martin (2000) chose “appraisal”; Conrad & Biber (2000) preferred “stance”; Hunston & Thompson (2000) elected “evaluation”. These terms are used to refer to the evaluative phenomenon.

Hunston & Thompson (2000:5) point out that evaluation is a broad term to describe the expressions of the speaker’s attitudes or the feelings about entities or their propositions. The attitudes can be related to certainty, obligation, wish or other aspects from a value group. The

authors suggest three evaluation functions that depend on each other and appear simultaneously in the discourse:

- 1) to express the speaker's opinion reflecting the value system of a person and his/her community;
- 2) to build and maintain the speaker/writer's relationship with the listener/reader.
- 3) to organize the discourse.

(Hunston & Thompson, 2000:06)

Expressing opinion is the most obvious one, from the point of view of Hunston and Thompson. In this function, evaluation is responsible for showing the reader what the author thinks or feels about a subject. It goes further, reaching the person's ideas and interests. In turn, it is the speaker/writer's ideology component that permeates the text. Moreover, evaluation reveals the society ideology where the text was produced.

Hunston & Thompson (2000:7) assured that ideologies are a set of values: good and bad, what should or not happen, what is true or false. These ideological values come to light when evaluating people, objects and situations, mainly in the participants' context of the discourse.

The second function of the evaluation is to build and maintain the relations between the reader and the writer. This function has been investigated under three aspects: manipulation, hedging and politeness. In each of these aspects, the writer exposes himself/herself in order to build the relationship with the reader.

The third and last function is the organization of the discourse. The relationship between writer and reader exists not only in the information in the text, but also within the text. That is, the writer does not say, "it happened and this is my opinion about this", but "this is the beginning of our text, this is the way the arguments are organized and this is the end of our interaction"

It is possible to exemplify this fact with a mother who writes a letter to her daughter: the interaction happens between them when the mother and daughter react to events in the world and, in addition, the interaction happens between the writer and the reader in the text organization (cf. Hunston & Thompson 2000:10).

Halliday (1994) does not discuss evaluation categories separately as Martin does. Halliday deals with evaluation considering modality and attitudinal meanings as interpersonal meanings exploring the modality and its subcategories: modalization and modulation.

Regarding evaluation studies, Martin (2000; 2003) makes a deep research where he expands attitudinal meanings, naming them Appraisal and setting such meanings into three subcategories: Affect, Judgment and Appreciation.

2.1 Dealing with appraisal categories

Appraisal is defined as a specific approach that explores, describes and explains the way language is used to evaluate, to adopt an attitude, to build textual personas and to deal with interpersonal relationship. The way speakers/writers make judgments about people and the events in the world is studied based on this approach (White, 2004).

Attitudes, judgments and affect are implicit in oral texts. However, they are assumed by the participants in the discourse. And, in many cases, they are carefully understood taking for granted the possibility of challenge or contradiction on behalf of the ones who have different points of view (White, 2004).

Martin (2000:145) considers Appraisal as a system of interpersonal meanings. A semantic resource used for negotiating emotions, judgments and appreciations.

Appraisal is concerned with evaluation: the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and the ways which values are sourced and readers aligned.
(Martin, 2003:22)

Attitudes have to do with this evaluation; they can be more or less amplified (Martin, 2000). They occupy an essential place in the evaluative process. Therefore, they reveal the types and the levels in which appraisal is developed and structured in the discourse. Attitudinal meanings are divided into three categories: affect, judgment and appreciation (Martin 2003:25).

Affect is a semantic resource used to build up emotions. It refers to emotions, an evaluation based on the participants' feelings. In the same

way, it indicates how the speakers behave emotionally in relation to other people, things, objects and situations.

Under the affect category, the emotions are subcategorized: feelings of Happiness/Unhappiness related to affairs of the heart; Security/Insecurity related to ecosocial well-being; Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction related to the pursuit of goals. All these feelings are used to cover emotional attitudes about someone or something.

Ex: *I don't like to be treated as a fool!*

(AFFECT: - UNHAPPINES) (*teacher from Language Course*)

*This (changes a lot) during college study. The law study is the **most beautiful thing in the world.***

(AFFECT: + HAPPINESS) (*teacher from Law school*)

Martin (2003:25-26) describes affect explaining that people have good and bad feelings: positive and negative affect, implicit or explicit.

The judgment category indicates ethics questions, a prescriptive analysis of the human behavior based on rules (Social Sanction) and behavior conventions (Social Esteem).

Judgment feelings related to normality (how normal), capacity (how capable) and tenacity (how resolute) express the way people are appraised according to the society rules. On the other hand, judgment feelings related to moral: veracity (how trustful) and morality (how ethic) express the way people are evaluated in terms of moral and law. These feelings can be positive or negative.

The category of judgment is seen as an attitudinal position shaped for a certain culture and an ideological situation. The way people make judgment about morality, loyalty, ability, normality, etc. are always based on their culture, their experiences, expectations and beliefs. (White, 2004)

Bearing this in mind there will always be possibilities of different judgments varying according to the context where they were produced.

Ex: (...) *I am an **open** person....to the dialogue, ok??*

(JUDGEMENT: +NORMALITY) (*Teacher from Language Course*)

(...) *The lawyer, he needs to be **ethic**, the lawyer, **needs to be ethic**, he doesn't need to ask anybody to lie!*

(JUDGEMENT: + MORALITY) (*Teacher from Law school*)

The third category of appraisal is called appreciation. It is concerned with negative and positive evaluations of objects, processes and conditions, and it is connected to what is traditionally known as “esthetics”: positive and negative appreciations of appearance, presentation and impact of the objects and entities (White, 2004). The quality is associated with the object being appraised rather than the person doing the appraising. As well as other categories, appreciation is subdivided into three subcategories: reaction, composition and valuation.

Ex: (...) *that's what I say! It won't give you anything. It doesn't work. You may organize a **fraudulent** thesis, a **fraudulent** Version. It is not going to work! –*

(APPRECIATION: - VALUATION) (*Teacher from Law school*)

(...) *it is **untied** this way; you finished this subject and already started another one.* – (APPRECIATION: - COMPOSITION) - (*Teacher from Language Course*)

3. The role of the processes types

For the systemic-functional approach, the ideational or experiential metafunction understands the language use as representation, serving to show the world plainly: how it is perceived, sensed, experienced and represented. With this in mind, the speaker makes representations of the facts and organizations of the external world (events, elements) and makes representations of the inner world (thoughts, beliefs, and feelings) (cf. Halliday (1994:106).

Belonging to the ideational metafunction, the transitivity system is responsible for providing a linguistic framework to interpret the human experience about world events. Halliday (1994) emphasizes that the human beings need the language to create a mental picture of the reality in order to comprehend what happens around and inside them. This reality is made by processes, that is, events that express external and inner experiences: our external and inner conscience.

For this reason, the transitivity system is responsible for transforming the experienced world into a manipulative world of kinds of processes. Such system renders elements to explain how the situation field is being

constructed. In other words, how the information from the text is articulated and how the changes of the mood are being realized.

Thompson (1996:78) mentions that the transitivity system goes beyond the simple verbal group. This system also settles that it is possible to identify the participants' role in discourse by the processes choice.

It refers to a system for describing the whole clause, rather than just the verb and its Objects. It does, though, share with the traditional use a focus on the verbal group, since it is the type of process which determines how the participants are labeled.

The processes types indicate that the speaker is choosing actively a specific manner of the world representation instead of others. Equally important is the fact that, in the transitivity system, the experiential meaning is accomplished at the same time as the interpersonal meaning: that is to say, the transitivity description in the clause complements the mood description.

Therefore, whereas the mood structure (Mood) in the clause is related to the contextual dimension of relationships (tenor), the transitivity choices are related to the field dimension. Hence, the choices of the processes and participants' roles are seen as interactants coding their experiential reality (Eggins, 1994).

As Halliday (1994:107) points out, transitivity analysis is done in the midst of three aspects in a clause:

- a) The process choice: done by the verbal group in the clause;
- b) The participants' choice: done by the nominal groups;
- c) The circumstance choice: done by the adverbial groups or prepositional clauses.

Since this paper focuses on the process choices connected to appraisal, a brief comment on the processes types may be useful.

Halliday (1994:107) acknowledges that there are three kinds of processes: material, mental and relational. And there are three others that occupy an intermediate position: behavioral, verbal and existential:

- 1) Material processes: processes of doing. They represent the actions performed by an actor or an event. In the institutional

context, these processes describe actions developed in the classroom (Lock, 1996).

- 2) Mental processes: processes of sensing. They reflect the mental reactions. In this research, the mental processes are connected to appraisal.
- 3) Behavioral processes: they intermedate the material and mental processes. They refer to physiologic and psychological behavior.
- 4) Verbal processes: the processes of saying. They aim at transmitting the message.
- 5) Existential processes: the processes of existing. They represent what exists and happens.
- 6) Relational processes: the processes of being. They indicate the relation of two different entities. They can be: intensive, circumstantial and possessive, each one of them can be attributive and identifying

Consequently the process choices bring out aspects concerning the teachers' attitudes in relation to people, things and the events around them.

Both material and mental processes, in some cases, indicate affect features in the teachers' speeches. On the other hand, verbal processes indicate the teachers' needs to describe the activities done in the classroom.

4. Methodology

In this paper, samples of affect categories were taken from the teachers' speeches in the moment they were interacting with their students. The classes were recorded, transcribed and analyzed taking into consideration how teachers express affect in the discourse. The participants were selected through an institutional evaluation in which students evaluate the teachers' performance in the class. The participant from the Language Degree Course is a teacher of Portuguese language who has been working in the institution for over ten years, she is in her fifties. The other participant from Law school is a young teacher who

has been teaching for seven years in the university and he is president of the Brazilian Lawyer Organization (OAB) in the city.

In the analysis, the words underlined represent the processes and in bold refer to the evaluative items.

5. Data sample

For the purposes of this article, I will draw attention to the affect category, presenting samples of processes that work with the affect category in the two contexts (Language and Law Degree Courses). The examples were taken from the teachers' speeches in the moment they were interacting with their students. The classes were recorded, transcribed and analyzed taking into consideration how teachers express affect in the discourse.

The participant from the Language Degree Course (LC) is a Portuguese teacher who has been working in the institution for over ten years. She is in her fifties. The other teacher is from the Law School (LS). He is a young teacher who has been teaching in the university for seven years and he is the president of the Brazilian Bar (OAB-Organization of Brazilian lawyers) in the city. Both showed affect characteristics in their speech as it will be commented below.

5.1 Language Degree Course:

The samples below represent the speeches of the teacher from the Language Course (LC) when she interacts with her students, telling them about her personality and the methodology she uses in the class. She describes attitudes she does not like students to do, especially because, according to her, they will be future teachers, so they have to behave as such. We can see from the examples, the way she expresses positive and negative affect in her discourse.

Positive affect

a) with relational possessive processes as attribute and relational attributive:

*Eu tenho essa **consciência!***

(I am aware of this!)

Eu tenho essa experiência, eu já estou descolada de saber isso aí.

(I have this experience, I've known that for ages!)

The processes choice above shows the teacher's awareness of her limits, beliefs and experience as a teacher for more than ten years.

- *Não fiquem preocupados com o tempo (...) não existe um plano fixo: é isso e acabou! É maleável tá? Se alguém tem dúvida vamos sanar a dúvida tá??*

(Don't be worried about the time (...) There is no limited plan: That's it and it's over!

It's adaptable ok?? If anybody has any doubt we'll solve the problem, ok??)

Teacher tranquilizes students about the time and about some problems with the content of the class.

b) with metal processes:

Eu gosto de críticas positivas, daquelas que me ajudem a melhorar!

(I welcome constructive criticism, those that help me to improve!)

This teacher uses material and mental processes to express her opinion about the methodology in the classroom. She points out some possible problems, and, at the same time, she shows that she is an open minded person who accepts criticism from other people.

Negative affect:

a) With mental and relational processes:

Eu não gosto de passar por boba!

(I don't like to be treated as a fool!)

Eu não gosto muito de três ou quatro alunos, não porque já divaga, né!

(I don't like more than three students in a group, cause they can deviate!!)

Também não quero avaliação na folhinha de caderno, não!

(I also don't want a test in a simple notebook sheet, no!)

Eu não acredito que existam pessoas que tenham o mesmo pensamento, na verdade tem gente que brinca por aqui, vai lá no colega e pega o texto dele e vai e me dá o texto.

(I don't believe that there are people who share the same thought, indeed, there are people who mess around here, get the partner's paper and bring it to me!)

Gente, eu quero a leitura desse livro, eu não quero que aconteça igual ao anterior (...) nós temos de fechar isso aqui. (...) nós não podemos perder tempo.

(Folks! I want this book read, I don't want it to happen the same as to the last one (...) We have to finish this here.(...) We can't waste time.)

*Baderna é ser **moderno!** então, eu não quero ser moderna nunca.*

(Making a mess is to be modern! So, I never want to be modern.)

Eu tenho vergonha de chamar a atenção, eu não vou fazer isso.

(I'm ashamed of calling your attention. I won't do this!)

5.2 Law School:

The examples presented below were taken from the teacher's speech in the Law School (LS) when the teacher was interacting with his students in the class, like the teacher from the Language Course. However, in this situation, the Law teacher is telling his students about their job, how ethic a lawyer should be and also about the dangerous people that they face in their everyday lives as professionals. As we can see below, the teacher expresses positive and negative affect using relational and mental processes.

Positive affect:

a) with relational possessive processes as attribute and relational attributive:

*Isso (muda muito) durante a faculdade, a lei do direito é a coisa **mais linda do mundo**.*

This (changes a lot) during college. The law study is the most beautiful thing in the world.

*É. Na verdade a defesa criminal, ela é **interessante**, mas o advogado tem que ser muito inteligente e saber usar a sua inteligência para o lado bom.*

(Yeah, indeed, the criminal defense, it's interesting, but the lawyer has to be very smart and has to know how to use his intelligence for the good side.)

The teacher shows affect when he mentions the importance of his job, and also the qualities required to a good lawyer.

Negative affect

b) with mental and relational processes:

*O ladrão não merece confiança nenhuma. Esse é o, que pratica crime contra o patrimônio: **o estelionatário, o que furta, o que rouba**, esses são perigosos. Esses daí não dá muito prá dar confiança a esses não. Geralmente eles são dissimulados, eles têm esse comportamento de **bonzinho, têm uma boa conversa, boa lábia, o coitadinho, o pobrezinho** e acaba conseguindo algum benefício. Não merecem confiança, realmente são, apesar da **periculosidade toda** (que envolve), da rotina dele (os **homicidas**).*

(The thief does not deserve any trust. This is the one who practices the crime against the property: the swindler, the one who steals, the one who robs, these are dangerous. These ones, we can't trust them anyway. They are usually dissimulated, they act as good guys, they have a good talk, they are deceitful, the poor guy that, at the end, gets some benefit. They don't deserve any trust, they really are, although all the danger (which involves) his routine (the murderers)

Teacher shows negative affect when describing a person who committed a crime.

6. Conclusion

The examples of teachers from college presented in this paper indicate that Affect foregrounds the emotion undergone by the speaker, whereas Judgment centers on the social and moral implications of the actions of individuals and Appreciation is related to the aesthetic attributes associated with an entity including physical aspects of human appearance. Moreover, something else that this very small sample also demonstrates is that further degrees of delicacy are also possible in the analysis of Appraisal.

The high dependence of Appraisal on the context for its interpretation makes it a fitting analytical tool for investigating these areas. The way people express their opinion about other people and things involving their feelings can reveal personality features. In this paper, it was evident the way teachers from Language and Law degree courses appraise situations emotionally in the class based on positive and negative affect.

There were a higher number of relational processes, which was not a surprise, since these processes are directly related to the appraisal categories. Besides that, there were also mental processes expressing good and bad feelings.

When the teacher from the Language Course refers to the students' attitudes that she does not accept in the class, the negative affect can be seen in the choice of the process, indicating the marks of her authority in the class. On the other hand, the teacher from the Law School softens his speech, even when he comments about people who commit crimes.

Needless to say how appraisal resources contributed for the discourse analysis covering all the broad frontiers of meanings expressing emotion. In this paper, it was possible to perceive how the participants presented their emotions when talking about themselves and their profession. The attitudinal evaluations are of interest not only because they reveal the speaker's/writer's feelings and values but also because their expression can be related to the speaker's/writer's status or authority as construed in the text. They are of interest, as well, because they operate rhetorically to construct relations of alignment and rapport between the writer/speaker and actual or potential respondents.

As Systemic Functional Linguistics is the theoretical support of this research and because more work crossing such boundaries might be a way to understand language in new and exciting ways, I would like to finish this paper with Frances Christie and Len Unsworth words:

“ Since the 1960s when Halliday and his colleagues first commenced their studies, the field has been richly expanded, and there is good reason to believe that it will continue to develop and expand. Language educational theory and practice owe Halliday a great deal. We look forward with confidence and optimism to new developments in the future.”

(Christie & Unsworth, 2005)

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