Principles for Applying Appraisal Theory

A perspective from corpus-based discourse analysis

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Overview

Four themes

1. Choosing texts for Appraisal analysis
2. Analysing for Appraisal
3. Interpreting Appraisal
4. Ensuring Impact of Appraisal analysis
1. Choosing texts for Appraisal analysis

› Lots of different kinds of ‘text’
  - E.g. interviews, questionnaire data, elicited narratives, published texts...
  - E.g. language, image, typography ...

› Appraisal analysis: ‘naturally occurring’ texts
  - One or a few texts
  - Small collections of texts (e.g. 40-100 texts)
  - Large collections of texts (e.g. millions of words)
1. Choosing texts for Appraisal analysis

One or a few texts

› As exemplar:

‘The success of this work depends on the quality of the exemplars chosen for analysis: typical scientific procedure, typical historical recounts, typical book reviews and so on. This in turn depends on good ethnography, drawing on the expertise of core members of a given field and whatever insider knowledge outsiders can acquire.’ (Martin & Rose 2007: 313)

› As artefact:

Some texts are ‘highly valued in the community or ... [have] special significance in some domain such as history or politics. Here we treat texts as artefacts – objects of study in their own right.’ (Matthiessen 2006: 108).
1. Choosing texts for Appraisal analysis

Small or large collections of text (→ language variety)

› Representativeness: ‘extent to which a sample includes the full range of variability in a population’ (Biber 1993: 243)

› ‘The research question one has in mind when building (or thinking of using) a corpus defines representativeness. If one wants a corpus which is representative of general English, a corpus representative of newspapers will not do. If one wants a corpus representative of newspapers, a corpus representative of The Times will not do.’ (McEnery et al 2006: 18)
1. Choosing texts for Appraisal analysis

Qualified claims

‘The CLLC is a learner corpus in that it includes only texts written by Chinese EFL learners; it is diachronic and longitudinal in that it follows the students across two years of university. While the corpus does not attempt to be representative of all Chinese EFL learners, it does allow a narrow, more focused investigation of participants’ ontogenetic development of academic literacy. References in this paper to ‘Chinese EFL learners’ thus do not assume representation of all Chinese English learners, but rather serve as an abbreviated reference to the Chinese EFL learners who participated in the present study.’ (Fawcett forthcoming)
1. Choosing texts for Appraisal analysis

Small or large collections of text

› Sampling: ‘Given that we cannot exhaustively describe natural language, we need to sample it in order to achieve a balance and representativeness which match our research question’ (McEnery et al 2006: 19)

  - Simple random sampling
  - Stratified random sampling
  - Demographic sampling
  - Proportional sampling
  - …
Manual vs. computerised analysis

- Appraisal analysis: ‘naturally occurring’ texts
  - One or a few texts $\rightarrow$ manual
  - Small collections of texts (e.g. 40-100 texts) $\rightarrow$ manual or computer-assisted manual annotation (CAMA) ‘where a human annotates the text in terms of patterns that generally computers cannot recognize’ (O’Donnell 2007)
  - Large collections of texts (e.g. millions of words) $\rightarrow$ automatic/computerised (e.g. corpus-linguistic)
Tognini-Bonelli (2010: 19):

› Text
› Read whole
› Read horizontally
› Read for content
› Read as unique event
› Read as individual act of will
› Coherent communicative event

› Corpus
› Read fragmented
› Read vertically
› Read for formal patterning
› Read for repeated events
› Read as a sample of social practice
› Not a coherent communicative event

The Wire Season 5 DVD blurb

One of television's most critically acclaimed programs, the Peabody Award-winning drama series "The Wire" continues to challenge viewers with a "cop show" unlike anything on air. The fifth and final season of "The Wire" centers on the media's role in addressing—or failing to address—the fundamental political, economic and social realities depicted over the course of the series, while also resolving storylines of the numerous characters woven throughout the narrative arm of the show.
Ways of ‘reading’ or ‘analysing’

› E.g. Text-as-text vs. text-as-corpus
‘Text-as-corpus’ – Example 1


2. Obama sweeps to historic victory - nation elects its first African-American president amid record turnout, 11. And Sen. Obama broke ground as the first black party nominee for president. "Obama is doing million, a sum made possible when he opted to forgo public financing, the first candidate to do so since the system was implemented less than four years of national political experience. Sen. Obama is the first northern Democrat elected president since John..."

3. Fiercely in areas of traditional Republican strength. He won Virginia, the first time a Democratic candidate has taken the state..."

4. Although a preliminary figure, his 51% of the popular vote marks the first time since Mr. Johnson that a Democrat had cleaned..."

5. Ushears in a period of dominance for Democrats in Washington for the first time since the early years of President Bill Clinton..."


7. Campaign in U.S. history, was a watershed in many ways. It featured the first woman - New York Sen. Hillary Clinton - to serious..."

(Bednarek & Caple 2012a: 47)
'Text-as-corpus’ – Example 2

1. A terror that took their breath away ... and it's coming again It's a tragedy of
2. into a giant torrent, sweeping packed cars away just metres from his office building. "It
3. that are halfway up trees, homes a kilometre away from where they were. "The terrible
4. moved to Helidon RSL about nine kilometres away, although her mother stayed behind due
5. and furnishings and it's just blown shops away. "We have a railway line about 60 or 70
6. to trees and posts, of cars being swept away in the torrent, of property being
7. a boy, 13, believed to be her son, were swept away as they clung to a tree at the
8. streets, Toowoomba, when they were washed away just after 2pm, The Chronicle reported.
9. 'Pretty bloody scary' Drivers were washed away in their cars, a house was swept off its
10. pub, the Grantham Hotel, have been washed away, she said. "Most houses are built up to
11. , the house next to the pub has been washed away. "Apparently, last night the water was
12. night after he saw two women washed away by floodwaters during an attempted

(Bednarek & Caple 2012b: 110)
2. Analysing for Appraisal

‘Texts-as-corpus’

(Bednarek 2006a)

E.g. ‘evaluative collocations’

Looking *bitterly disappointed*... Mr Blair said... (evidentiality + emotion)
Ways of ‘reading’ or ‘analysing’:

› Read whole - fragmented
› Read horizontally - vertically
› Read for content - formal patterning
› Read as unique event - for repeated events
› Read as individual act of will - a sample of social practice
› Treat as coherent communicative event – or not

- Computer analysis
- Manual analysis
- CAMA
- One or a few texts
- Small collections of texts
- Large collections of texts
2. Analysing for Appraisal

Inductive and deductive research

Deductive reasoning

1. Theory
2. Hypothesis
3. Observation
4. Confirmation
2. Analysing for Appraisal

Inductive and deductive research
2. Analysing for Appraisal

Related to:

› Corpus-based vs. corpus-driven approaches (Tognini-Bonelli 2001)
› Text-based vs. text-driven analysis (Bednarek 2006b)
› Continuum, not dichotomy (Halliday 2004: 24)
2. Analysing for Appraisal

Deductive (text-based, corpus-based)

Appraisal theory  
Apply  
Observations
2. Analysing for Appraisal

Inductive (text-driven, corpus-driven)

› ‘ensure that descriptive categories are not merely postulated and then assumed to have some kind of universal status but that they have to be justified in the course of description of every language. Whether or not such descriptive categories can be applied in the description of several languages (or even all languages) is an empirical question, not a theoretical one; and it is a question to be decided only after the categories have been independently motivated in comprehensive descriptions of every language’ (Caffarel et al 2004: 11)

› ‘This may mean that Appraisal systems are register- and genre-dependent’ (Bednarek & Caple 2010: 20)
General research principles

› Transparency
› Consistency
› Ockham’s Razor
› ...
2. Analysing for Appraisal

Transparency

› ‘With transparency, I would encourage students [read *researchers*] to be as clear as possible about their methodological choices … Another aspect of transparency would involve making as much of their raw data as possible available to other researchers’ (Baker 2009 : 83)

› How was Appraisal identified?
2. Analysing for Appraisal

Specific SFL criteria/tests

› Frames for adjectives differentiating Affect/Appreciation/Judgement (Martin & White 2005: 58-59, see Bednarek 2009, Hunston 2011:130-138 for a corpus perspective)
  - Judgement: It was X for person/of person to do that/(For person) to do that was X *(immoral)*
  - Appreciation: Person consider something X/see something as X *(beautiful)*
  - Affect Person feels X about sth/It makes person feel X that...*(happy)*

› Experiential vs. interpersonal Epithets (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004: 318-319)

› Tables with example lexis from Martin & White (2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capacity (positive)</th>
<th>Capacity (negative)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>powerful, vigorous, robust...</td>
<td>mild, weak, whimpy...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘It must also be stressed that we provide such a list of terms only as a general guide to the meanings which are at stake here. When it comes to language use in context, it is often the case that a given lexical item will vary its attitudinal meaning according to that context. ... The list, therefore, should not be treated as a dictionary ... which can be mechanically applied in a text analysis.’ (Martin & White 2005: 52, my bold).

Examples from the British National Corpus (100 million wds):

› *In very strong winds* the critical place for ground handling is at the tail. (~When there is a lot of wind... → Graduation)

› *A strong swimmer*, she managed to reach a rock jutting above the water (~Because she can swim well... → Judgement)

› These expression and structural data for p un provide strong evidence that the DN10 cDNA corresponds to the p gene itself (~ the evidence is good... → Appreciation)
2. Analysing for Appraisal

Top 50 collocating nouns (1R-5R, LL) in BNC:

- winds, sense, position, support, wind, feeling, links, opposition, feelings, commitment, influence, views, emphasis, ties, evidence, showing, preference, element, arms, resemblance, criticism, light, correlation, tradition, supporter, smell, demand, tendency, incentive, interest, argument, pressure, accent, flavour, impression, convictions, swimmer, presence, desire, competition, growth, sunlight, leadership, identity, force, fingers, relationship, base, arm, objections
2. Analysing for Appraisal

Consistency

› ‘In terms of consistency, I would recommend that once researchers have made decisions regarding their analytical techniques, they remain with them throughout that particular piece of research.’ (Baker 2009: 83)

› Intra-rater consistency (one analyst)

› Inter-rater consistency/agreement (several analysts)

› Measuring consistency

- Usually done through sophisticated statistics (e.g. Kappa), see Wiebe et al (2005)

\[
\kappa = \frac{\text{Pr}(a) - \text{Pr}(e)}{1 - \text{Pr}(e)}
\]
2. Analysing for Appraisal

Ockham’s Razor

› Development of theory, e.g. Lemke’s evaluative dimensions (1998: 39)
› Application of theory, e.g. level of delicacy

Most delicate application:

Attitude: positive/negative  
Judgement: Social esteem: Normality/Capacity/Tenacity or Social sanction: Veracity/Propriety  
(etc. for Affect, Appreciation)

Least delicate application:

Attitude: positive/negative
2. Analysing for Appraisal

Comparing texts or text collections

› Text (collection) 1
› Positive Affect: 345 instances

› Text (collection) 2
› Positive Affect: 300 instances
Comparing texts or text collections

› Text (collection) 1 (100,000 words)  
  › Positive Affect: 345 instances

› Text (collection) 2 (30,000 words)  
  › Positive Affect: 300 instances

› How to ‘normalise’ Appraisal instances for comparison?
› Unit of analysis?
› Word → normalise per 1000 words, 10,000 words, 100,000 words, 1 million words – depending on text (collection) size
› Other (Per words? Per clause?)
2. Analysing for Appraisal

Analysing text collections

- Text (collection) 1 (100,000 words)
- **100 texts in collection**
- Positive Affect: 345 instances
- 50 instances in one text, 0 instances in 2 texts...

How are instances distributed among the texts in the collection?

- How much variation is there?
- dispersion, standard deviation
- (e.g. McEnery et al 2006: 53-54)

\[ \sigma = \sqrt{\frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{N} (x_i - \mu)^2} \]
The two ‘T’s:

› Transtextuality
› Triangulation
3. Interpreting Appraisal

Transtextuality

- Transtextuality: texts ‘need to be understood productively, contextually and discursively’ (Pennycook 2007: 53)
  - *pretextual* history (processes of creation)
  - *contextual* relations (context of use)
  - *subtextual* meanings (ideologies)
  - *intertextual* relations (intertextuality)
  - *posttextual* interpretations (by audiences)
3. Interpreting Appraisal

Transtextuality and TV series

› Pretextual history
› Contextual relations
› Subtextual meanings
› Intertextual relations
› Posttextual interpretations

› Creation (interviews with writers & creators)
› Analysis of texts and paratexts
› Analysis of consumption (audiences)
What are paratexts?

- Literary theory – Genette (1997)
- TV narratives: DVD blurbs, title sequences
E.g. references to audience as fan (10% of all blurbs)

› *It’s a must have for any Grey’s Anatomy fan!*

› ‘either help to construe the readership of these texts as “knowledgeable fans” or point the “uninitiated” to the fact that [the TV series] is well known and in fact has many fans, that is, is well worth getting to know. References to fans [...] also background the narrator’s own voice, and make it clear that his/her positive evaluations are shared by many. They turn the act of watching [a TV series] into a communal and social activity rather than an individual experience [...]. On the other hand, they confirm that it is natural for audience members to form an emotional attachment to a series and its characters’ (Bednarek 2010: 55)
3. Interpreting Appraisal

Transtextuality and TV series

› Pretextual history
› Contextual relations
› Subtextual meanings
› Intertextual relations
› Posttextual interpretations

› Creation (interviews with writers & creators)
› Analysis of texts and paratexts
› Analysis of consumption (audiences)
3. Interpreting Appraisal

Triangulation

› Triangulation of data (e.g. texts & paratexts)
› Triangulation of methods and techniques (e.g. text-as-text and text-as-corpus, manual and automatic)
› Triangulation of theoretical perspectives (e.g. Journalism/Communication Studies & historical positioning)
4. Ensuring Impact of Appraisal analysis

Reaching different audiences

› Technicalisation of findings for SFL audience
› Translation of findings for other audiences
› General public/professions
The End

(see separate handout for references)