Using Appraisal in the Classroom

Damian Lucantonio
University of Electro-Communications, Tokyo

In recent years, there has been growing interest in merging theory with classroom practice. The purpose of this paper is to show how appraisal, a system from Systemic Functional Linguistics, can be used in a speaking classroom. The overview provides an introduction to the theory that underpins the practice. Following this, a model of appraisal is given that has been adapted from the most recent research in the area. The next section deals with teaching activities for using appraisal in the classroom. These include using clines, grouping and collocation activities, identifying synonyms and antonyms, and reformulation tasks. Finally, the implications of using appraisal in the classroom are discussed. The paper focuses on practical insights into the role of appraisal, as well as new ideas for merging theory with classroom practice.

近年、クラスルームでの実践で、併言説への関心が増えています。この論文の目的は、どうアプレイザル、系統機能言語学をスピーキングのクラスで用いる事が出来るかを示すものです。 理論の大要は、その実践を確証する論説の概論を提供しています。これに続き、示されたアプレイザルのモデルは、この分野で一番最近の研究から適合されています。次のセクションでは、クラスルームでアプレイザルを使用する為の教授アクティビティーの扱いです。これらは、クライン、グループ、コロケーションなどのアクティビティー、同義語と反義語の見分を用いる事も含まれています。 最後にクラスルームでアプレイザルを用いる言外がディスカッションされます。この論文は、アプレイザルの役割においての実践的な識見又、クラスルーム実践での併合説と言う新しいアイディアに焦点をおいている。

ppraisal is the language that is used to take a position in interpersonal communication (Martin & Rose, 2003), that is, to evaluate, to argue, to present points of view, to react, and to express attitudes. It is a grammatical category from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) that has developed over the last fifteen years, most notably through the work of Martin (2003) and White (2004). In SFL, grammar is viewed as a resource for making meaning at the level of a text (Butt, Fahey, Feez, & Yallop, 2000). It is not viewed as a resource for creating syntactical rules. Consequently, appraisal has a semantic role. It shows how writers take a stance in spoken and written texts. It describes how people express feelings and emotions, how people react to situations, how people express strong or weak opinions about things, and how people take positive or negative views about things. As such, it would seem to be an important language resource for learners to acquire in both spoken and written language classrooms.

Appraisal deals with the interpersonal function of language (Eggins & Slade, 1997). It shows how people make attitudinal evaluations in spoken and written modes (Hood, 2004). These can be either explicit, or implicit (Hood, 2004). For example, a speaker might explicitly state *It's very cold!* However, the same speaker might

convey the same meaning implicitly, by simply shivering and shaking his head, saying *Bloody hell!* From the context, both the explicit and implicit types of evaluation would be suitable. Therefore, it would seem to be important for our students to recognize and use both types of appraisal when using language to make judgments and evaluations.

The interpersonal aspects of language are important in the classroom for successful communication, yet often seem to be neglected by both textbooks and teachers (Butt, Fahey, Feez, & Yallop, 2000). Teachers deal with content language for various situations, but often neglect interpersonal aspects. For example, in a restaurant situation, content words for food and expressions for placing an order are commonplace. However, few textbooks deal with the interpersonal language that is necessary to express opinions about the food being eaten, or reactions to people or topics being spoken about while eating, which are common in real life situations.

Through the interpersonal function of appraisal, we can see how people use language to express likes and dislikes, express feelings, and make judgments. More broadly, we can see how language is used interpersonally to bond as friends, to persuade people to accept or reject a particular point of view, and to express solidarity or opposition to a topic. For example, one of the most universal genres of casual conversation is gossip (Eggins & Slade, 1997). In this genre, people usually gossip about an absent third person(s), with the intention of making some pejorative evaluation(s) concerning the behavior of the absent person(s) (Eggins & Slade, 1997). The evaluative language that people use to perform this interpersonal function is appraisal. Furthermore, as a case is built up in the gossip for sympathy or support,

acceptance or rejection, these evaluations can be tracked and described across the text as a whole. In other words, the evaluative language will not normally occur only once. Rather, it will be built up and developed several times over from the beginning to the end of a text. Hence, it is not only important to give students tasks to identify specific expressions of appraisal in a text. It is also important to give them tasks to see how these evaluations relate to each other across a text, and the subsequent meanings that emerge from these connections.

A Model of Appraisal

Drawing on the work of Eggins & Slade (1997), Martin & Rose (2003), and Hood (2004), a model of appraisal has been developed by the author of this paper. This model has three main categories: attitude, graduation, and engagement (see Appendix 1).

Attitude is the expression of values in taking a position. This can be divided into three sub-categories: affect, appreciation, and social behavior. The first sub-category is the value of affect, that is, the way in which feelings and emotions are described. For example, words or expressions such as *happy*, *cheerful*, *interested*, *sad*, *down*, *tired*, and *fed up* are often used to describe how people feel about something or someone. The second sub-category of attitude is the value of appreciation, that is, the ways in which likes and dislikes are expressed. For example, words such as *wonderful*, *deep*, *meaningful*, *horrible*, *boring*, and *over-the-top* are commonly used to describe what people think of something or someone. The third sub-category is the value of judgment, that is, the ways in which social behavior is

described. How right or wrong, how moral or immoral, how normal or abnormal is the social behavior that is being described. For example, words such as *right*, *lucky*, *ethical*, *brave*, *disgusting*, *gross*, *dishonest*, and *weak* are examples of words that are used to describe one's social behavior. Thus, by analyzing the category of attitude, the ways in which people can express affect, appreciation, and social behavior in the English language can be made explicit to learners.

The second main category is graduation, which deals with the degree of grading or amplification used in taking a position. This can be divided into two sub-categories: force and focus. The first sub-category is the degree of force that is used in taking a stance, that is, choosing words to describe how strong or weak an evaluation is. For example, expressions such as <u>bloody</u> *beautiful*, *ran <u>and ran</u>*, *played <u>like shit</u>*, <u>really</u> *bad*, and <u>very</u> *young girl* are used to do this. The second sub-category is the degree of focus that is used in taking a stance, that is, choosing words to sharpen or to blur an evaluation. For example, expressions such as <u>sort of</u> *friendly*, <u>like</u> *stupid*, <u>kind of</u> *cool*, <u>not much</u> *good*, <u>pure</u> *folly*, and <u>true</u> *friend* are used to do this. Thus, by focusing on the category of graduation, the ways in which people can express force or focus when taking a stance can be made explicit to learners in the classroom.

The third main category is engagement, that is, the ways in which people acknowledge or distance themselves from others when taking a position. This deals with the ways in which people either recognize or disclaim others in a text. In SFL, a text can be either a spoken dialog or a piece of writing. It is not only recognizing other people and views, but also other possibilities. In this category, the Bakhtin view of voice (Hood, 2004) is important. Engagement can be divided into two sub-categories: monogloss and heterogloss. The first sub-category is that of monogloss. This means that there is only one possibility. For example, verbs such as *said*, *stated*, *is*, and *were*, are used to express facts or absolute certainty. There is no other possibility because there is no uncertainty. The second sub-category of engagement is that of heterogloss. This means there is more than one possibility. For example, expressions such as <u>according to</u> …, *he* <u>allegedly</u> *stated* …, <u>in their opinion</u> …, *she* <u>might've</u> *said* …, and *he* <u>thinks</u> *so*, are ways in which people do this. The use of modality (underlined) means that there is a lack of certainty in these views, and therefore, there is more than one possibility or more than one possible answer. Thus, by examining the category of engagement, the ways in which people acknowledge, or distance themselves from others when taking a stance in English, can be made explicit to learners in the classroom.

By making explicit the ways in which people take a stance in English, teachers are not just focusing on words or expressions. Rather, focus is placed on the functions of these words in a particular context Furthermore, it is unnecessary to use technical terms like *monogloss* and *heterogloss* in the classroom. Terms such as *fact* versus *opinion* might be sufficient. However, showing students that taking a stance in English has a system can be very useful as an introduction to classroom activities. This is particularly the case in classroom activities that highlight the role of context and the appropriate use of language in context.

Teaching Activities

The following classroom activities have been used to teach appraisal. These activities have been used with English language learners in university classes in Japan. The student proficiency levels have ranged from upper beginner through to intermediate. The teaching activities are as follows: identifying examples in the text, identifying synonyms and antonyms both in and outside the text, using cline activities, using grouping or collocation tasks, and designing fact versus opinion activities (see Appendix 2).

The first, and perhaps most common, task is getting students to identify examples of evaluations in the text. In this paper, the word *text* refers to the dialog that the students are analyzing. For example, if appreciation (likes and dislikes) is an important way to take a stance in the text, teachers could get students to work in pairs and underline examples of the ways the speakers express likes and dislikes. Likewise, if judgment (evaluating good or bad behavior) is important to the text, students should identify examples of this. Underlining and gap filling are useful tasks for students in order to identify appropriate examples. Once this has been done, students can then clearly see the ways in which these expressions relate to each other in the text. Patterns begin to emerge that show how the speaker's attitudes have been built up in the text. Finally, a question such as *What do these expressions show about the speaker's overall attitude?* would enable recognition of the speaker's overall stance in the text. In this way, learners are not only identifying specific examples, but are also recognizing how these expressions are connected and developed in the text.

Once students have identified examples of certain types of appraisal in the text, they can then brainstorm in pairs or groups for synonyms and antonyms of the expressions that are not necessarily in the text. According to Martin & Rose (2003), exploring devices of lexical cohesion in a text, such as synonyms and antonyms, is an effective way to facilitate register development. That is, learners are not just expanding their vocabulary, but are also recognizing and using language that is appropriate to the context.

Another useful classroom activity is the use of clines. These are particularly effective in graduation, showing the degree of force or the degree of focus being used. Instructing students to put evaluative expressions on the *ladder* to show either a strong or weak attitude makes explicit the functions of these expressions in the text, as well as their general meanings. These can be inclined from strong to weak, from negative to positive, or in percentages of strength. For example, students may be asked to put expressions on the cline that are 50%, 70%, or 90% in strength. Through the use of clines, learners can plot the degree of force or focus that is appropriate to the context being analyzed.

Grouping and collocation activities are also useful in showing the functions and the meanings of the expressions in the text. The task is for students to put the words or expressions into the appropriate columns, according to their functions. For example, teachers can get students to place words into groups of positive expressions, neutral expressions, or negative expressions. These might be words in the text that highlight the functions of *likes* versus *dislikes*, or of *good* versus *bad* social behavior, and so on, according to whatever groups are considered important in the text.

Once this is done, a pattern usually emerges that shows how the speaker's overall evaluation has been developed across the text. Finally, a question relating to this connection is useful. For example, *Looking at the column with the most expressions, what does this tell you about how the speaker feels about the person or the topic being discussed in the dialog?* This illustrates that these words do not occur in isolation, and that the stance that is taken is gradually built up throughout the text.

Finally, classroom tasks designed to encourage students to recognize fact from opinion are important, particularly in recognizing the role of engagement. This is useful in writing, particularly academic writing, where students need to be able to refer to other sources and opinions and, conversely, recognizing the weaknesses of an argument if a writer has not done this. However, it is also of benefit in speaking classrooms. In speaking, students also need to recognize whether or not additional views have been included in a discussion. For example, expressions such as *in the opinion of …*, *she thinks …*, and *according to …* indicate that other speakers' opinions have been taken into consideration. Additionally, students need to recognize whether or not the speaker is expressing a fact or an opinion. For example, in gossip texts, the speaker might be stating a fact, or merely someone else's opinion. In distinguishing fact from opinion, students need to recognize appropriate levels of definiteness and certainty. In addition to recognizing other speakers in a text, learners need to be familiar with expressions of modality, such as stating possibility, probability, usuality, and definiteness. Thus, people can take a stance by recognizing fact from opinion, by recognizing other speakers views,

and by agreeing with or by distancing ourselves from them. Classroom tasks can include identifying examples of other speakers' views by gap-filling or underlining, identifying examples of fact versus examples of opinion, constructing clines of fact versus opinion in terms of strength and weakness, reformulating expressions of fact into opinion, or reformulating opinion into fact. Finally, a question relating to the strength of the speaker's overall argument or overall attitude in the text can then be given. In these ways, students can learn the functions of appraisal through simple classroom tasks.

Implications for the Classroom

It would seem that appraisal has a direct role to play in the language classroom. One implication is that through appraisal, students learn how to express their feelings, reactions, opinions, attitudes, and points of view in speaking classes. Not to teach these would be doing our students a disservice. The ways in which people take a stance represent important interpersonal functions of language. Thus, the teaching of appraisal facilitates these and would seem to be important in the classroom.

Furthermore, according to neo-Vygotskian and socio-cultural approaches to language learning (Gibbons, 2002), taking a stance needs to be made explicit to students. Thus, explicit learning is another important implication for the classroom. There is no guarantee that students will learn how to do this intuitively (Gibbons, 2002). Hence, by designing classroom activities based on the system of appraisal, the ways in which we take a position are made explicit to learners. It shows them that this is not chaotic

and haphazard. Rather, the interpersonal choices that are necessary for taking a stance have a functional system that can be described and learned.

Another implication of using appraisal in the classroom is the role of language in context. In all the classroom activities referred to in this paper, students are analyzing words and expressions as they appear in the text. In this paper, the word *text*, in a speaking class, has referred to a dialog. Thus the context has been established by the text. Examining words within the context of the text is an important implication of this. Word meanings do not occur outside of a context (Martin & Rose, 2003). If the context changes, then so too can the meanings change. Words that are appropriate in one context may not be appropriate in another.

In authentic spoken language, speakers adjust their point of view across a text, not just a sentence. Therefore, another implication is that the teaching focus should be placed on the level of the text, not just the sentence. As we have seen, examples of attitudinal and evaluative language do not usually occur just once, or in isolation. They are normally built up and developed in the text, from the beginning through to the end. Recognizing how these reactions and attitudes relate to each other in the text is also important for understanding the stance that is being taken. Therefore, working on whole texts, rather than disconnected sentences, is an implication of this approach for the classroom.

Finally, students themselves seem to think that the explicit teaching of appraisal is effective. Appendix 3 contains the results of an end-of-course survey. This was conducted in a speaking class of first year university students. Forty-five students in tot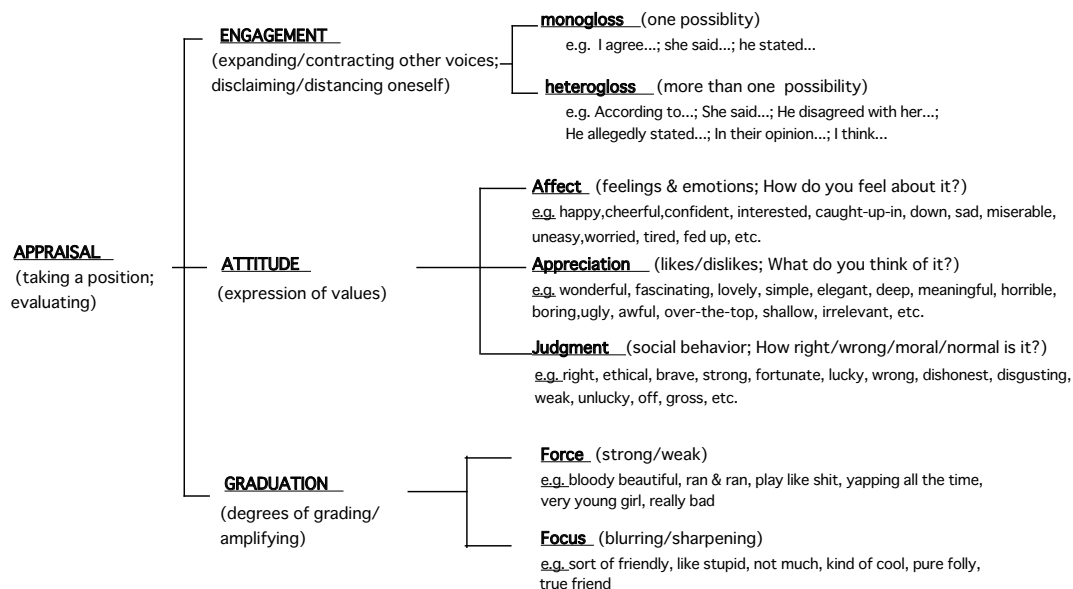al were asked to answer the following two questions: *1. Have your communication skills improved in this course? 2. Please explain why?* The responses of seven of these students have been taken and presented in Appendix 3. Only seven responses could be included in this paper for reasons of space, because it was considered to be important to use the actual words of the students. However, these seven responses are considered to be typical of the overall number of responses. The interesting point was the number of times the students referred to appraisal. There were many issues covered in the course, not just appraisal. Students were not asked to comment specifically on appraisal. Yet, most of the students did. For example, six out of the seven students referred to appraisal and did so very positively. This pattern was typical of the overall number of responses. The word *appraisal* was not explicitly used by the teacher during the course, nor was it specifically referred to in the end-of-course survey. Instead, words describing the functions of appraisal were used. For example, words such as *reactions*, *comments*, *speak and react*, *responses*, *speak seriously or not*, and *reply and make comments* were used by the teacher. Consequently, these were the kinds of words used by the students to refer to appraisal in the end-of-course review (see Appendix 3). The positive responses suggested that the students themselves found the explicit teaching of appraisal to be both useful and effective in their speaking class.

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Appendix 1

Appendix 1

ENGAGEMENT
(expanding/contracting other voices;
disclaiming/distancing oneself)

monogloss (one possiblity)
e.g. I agree...; she said...; he stated...

heterogloss (more than one possibility)
e.g. According to...; She said...; He disagreed with her...;
He allegedly stated...; In their opinion...; I think...

APPRAISAL
(taking a position;
evaluating)

ATTITUDE
(expression of values)

Affect (feelings & emotions; How do you feel about it?)
e.g. happy,cheerful,confident, interested, caught-up-in, down, sad, miserable,
uneasy,worried, tired, fed up, etc.

Appreciation (likes/dislikes; What do you think of it?)
e.g. wonderful, fascinating, lovely, simple, elegant, deep, meaningful, horrible,
boring,ugly, awful, over-the-top, shallow, irrelevant, etc.

Judgment (social behavior; How right/wrong/moral/normal is it?)
e.g. right, ethical, brave, strong, fortunate, lucky, wrong, dishonest, disgusting,
weak, unlucky, off, gross, etc.

GRADUATION
(degrees of grading/
amplifying)

Force (strong/weak)
e.g. bloody beautiful, ran & ran, play like shit, yapping all the time,
very young girl, really bad

Focus (blurring/sharpening)
e.g. sort of friendly, like stupid, not much, kind of cool, pure folly,
true friend

Adapted from Eggins & Slade (1997), Martin & Rose (2003), and Hood (2004)

Appendix 2. Teaching Activities

1. Identifying Attitudes

e.g.

A. Pick out examples from the text of the speaker(s):

   i. expressing likes/dislikes (**Appreciation**)

   ii. evaluating good behavior/ bad behavior (**Judgment**)

B. What does this show about the speaker(s) attitude towards ….. in the text?

2. Synonyms / Antonyms

e.g.

A. Write down different words that have the same meanings (as those from above) in the text or others that are not in the text.

B. Write down words that have different/opposite meanings (as those from above) in the text or others that are not in the text.

3. Clines

e.g.

Put the words (from the text) on the ladder in the correct order of strong or weak (**Graduation**: **Force/Focus**).

e.g.

i. Strong	**ii. Strong**
Very bloody cold	Disgusting
Bloody cold	Really gross
Pretty cold	Gross
Kind of cold	Pretty off
Weak	**Weak**

4. Groupings / Collocations

e.g.

A. Put the words (from the text) in the correct column (**Affect**)

Positive	**Neutral**	**Negative**
Wonderful	So-so	Awful
Excited	Not too bad	Terrible
Happy		
On cloud nine		
Bloody unreal		

B. How did the speaker feel about ….. in the dialog?

5. Fact versus Opinion

e.g.

A. Pick out examples of speaker(s) or examples of referring to other speaker(s) in the text. (**Engagement**)

(e.g. I think …; he said …; In the opinion of …; ….. disputes ….. this idea; it allegedly happened ….; she might've said

…; It seems …; According to …; …. heard him say …; they would come over for any reason; he might've got tired of it; I never liked her; etc.)

B. Are these examples of Fact or Opinions (Strong/Weak)?

C. Change the statements of Fact into statements of Opinion (Reformulations)

D. What does this show about the speaker's attitude toward the other person/people/topic?

Appendix 3: Course Review

Q. Do you think your communication skills have improved in this course? (√)

A. No Mostly No A Little Mostly Yes Yes

B. Why? Please explain.

Respondent 1:

A. Yes.

B. Because this course taught me how different each casual conversation is and how I should speak and react.

Respondent 2:

A. Yes.

B. Because I didn't know that there are some different styles in casual conversation.

Respondent 3:

A. Yes.

B. Because I learned *comments* and responses in the English way.

Respondent 4:

A. Mostly Yes.

B. I learned not only how to speak but *several reactions* which are very useful to improve casual conversation.

Respondent 5:

A. Mostly Yes.

B. I learned different speaking ways. Now I can understand whether a speaker *wants to speak seriously or not,* and that daily conversation is not question and answer.

Respondent 6:

A. Mostly Yes.

B. I've learned *reactions* and that conversations have genre.

Respondent 7:

A. Yes.

B. Because at first I didn't know how to *reply and make comments*. It is good for me to learn how real conversations is going and how to participate in that.