

Positive Discourse Analysis and Appraisal Theory in Michael Malice's Political Interview

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تحليل الخطاب الإيجابي ونظرية التقييم في اللقاء السياسي لمايكل ماليس

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Abstract

The present paper applies Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) and Appraisal theory (AT) on Lex Fridman's interview of Michael Malice in his Podcast "Michael Malice: Freedom, Hope, and Happiness Amidst Chaos". These two important frameworks, in the field of linguistics, lay an important topic for discourse analysis, especially nowadays, with the analysis of leaders' speeches. The research analyzes, accordingly, Michael Malice's face-to-face interview, which has been the research subject of this paper. PDA and AT have been conducted on this interview with the aim of investigating Michael Malice's spoken word, in order to achieve an exploration of whether or not his speech is a stand floor for the negotiation of interpersonal ideas and experiences between the speaker and his listeners. As Positive Discourse Analysis is aimed to examine the use of language and communication in creating positive social roles and relationships, the aim of this research is to investigate these facts by taking Michael Malice's interview as a data sample. Through the implementation of PDA and AT, on the above-mentioned interview, this study has observed on how discourse is used by writers/speakers to expand positive values and promote values of cooperation and respect. **Keywords: Positive Discourse Analysis, Appraisal Theory**

المخلص

تم في هذا البحث تحليل الخطاب من خلال نظريتي تحليل الخطاب الإيجابي ونظرية التقييم وتم تطبيق هذا التحليل على خطاب مايكل ماليس في اللقاء المباشر بينه وبين فريدمان في البث بعنوان "مايكل ماليس: الحرية، السعادة، في خضم الفوضى" تعتبر كل من نظرية التحليل الإيجابي للخطاب ونظرية التقييم موضوعين بارزين ومهمين في تحليل الخطاب خاصة اليوم مع التحليل المتزايد لخطابات أصحاب النفوذ بشكل عام والنفوذ السياسي بشكل خاص. الباحث هنا يحلل طباقا الحوار وجها لوجه مع مايكل ماليس والذي يعتبر الأرض الخضراء لتطبيق نظرية تحليل الخطاب الإيجابي ونظرية التقييم وذلك لغاية بحثية وهي دراسة وتبيان إن ما كان هذا اللقاء أرض خصبة لاستخدام اللغة لزراعة أدوار اجتماعية إيجابية وعلاقات بناءة من خلال تطبيق النظريتين السابق ذكرهما أعلاه. والهدف من ذلك كله هو تحليل استخدام الكاتب/الناطقين في إثارة معاني سامية وقيم إيجابية للتعاون والاحترام المجتمعي من خلال الاستخدام اللغوي البناء.

Introduction

Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) and Appraisal theory (AT), are two important frameworks in the field of linguistics. According to Martin & White (2005: 94) cited in (Ting Su, 2016) that both PDA and AT has to do with meaning negotiations among real or potential speakers. Martin & White stated that the aim of developing an appraisal theory framework was in order to consider speaker/writer evaluation, certainty, commitment, knowledge, and to also account to how the textual voice positions itself regarding to other voices and other positions in the discourse. These two theories are, thus, developed in order to create an analysis of meaning in context and towards creating an analysis of rhetorical effects rather than giving an analysis of grammatical forms. For, as mentioned by Martin & White, the grammar of a language is regarded as a set of resources that 'make' meanings, more than as just rules to organize structure. This is also the case

with discourse. Therefore, Positive Discourse Analysis and Appraisal Theory are used as tools to understand how language functions among its users when communicating. They are mostly systemized to analyze and identify attitudes, emotions, and power relations. It is important to mention that PDA is Contrary to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is used to analyze discourse inequalities and negative aspects. Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) is an approach that focuses on evaluating and expressing discourse's positive elements. This is done by positively analyzing events, people, actions and social positions.

Appraisal Theory systems are used widely in a diversity of fields such as comparative translation studies, political debate texts and literary discourse analysis. Positive Discourse Analysis and Appraisal Theory are linguistic functions that used in understanding how language shapes people's perceptions, for example, in media, politics, or everyday conversation. (Wang & Li, 2024)

2. Literature Review

Positive Discourse Analysis and Appraisal Theory are two frameworks that are concerned with ways of expressing emotions, attitudes and values through the use of language. Language is stated to be a linguistic function that plays an important role in text analysis, social context, cultural context also. (Wang & Li, 2024) PDA and Appraisal Theory are both frameworks that assist in evaluating how language shapes attitudes, values, and social realities. Nonetheless, these two frameworks differ in focus. PDA tends to look at how positive language is used. Through the analysis of positive language, PDA maintains social harmony, cooperation, or positivity in communication. Thus, PDA would emphasize the positive framing of individuals, actions, or events. Whereas Appraisal is used to analyze the specific evaluative language used to express both positivity or negativity, including the components of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. (Wang & Li, 2024)

Positive Discourse Analysis and Appraisal Theory are two important framework within the field of Functional Linguistics. It was Australian linguist James Martin and his collaborator David Rose, among others, who developed the Appraisal Theory, because Functional Linguistics does not have a comprehensive theoretical system in regard to language users' viewpoints. During the 1990's, The Appraisal Theory was expanded based on Halliday's Systematic Functional Linguistics and the, thus, the theoretic framework "Appraisal System" was created. PDA was introduced by J.R. Martin in his paper "Positive Discourse Analysis: Solidarity and Change". In his international seminar he recommended that linguistic analysis should not only include bad news but also welcome good news. (Tung Su, 2016)

Appraisal Theory, moreover, was divided into three categories. "Appraisal System" theoretical framework, which is divided into three categories: Attitude System (Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation), Engagement System (Monogloss and Heterogloss), and Graduation System (Force and Focus). (Wang & Li, 2024)

PDA and Appraisal Theory are both frameworks that contribute to evaluating how language shapes attitudes, values, and social realities. Nonetheless, these two frameworks differ in focus. Positive Discourse Analysis, as stated above, analyzes language by looking at how "positive" language is used. Through the analysis of positive language, Positive Discourse Analysis, sustains social harmony, cooperation, or positivity in communication. Positive Discourse Analysis emphasizes the positive framing of individuals, actions, or events. Whereas, Appraisal Theory is used to analyze the specific evaluative language used to express both positivity or negativity, by including an analysis of its components of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. (Wang & Li, 2024)

Thus, it can be stated that Positive Discourse Analysis, which is regarded to be put forward by J.R. Martin, emphasizes constructive discourse and wants to "build a better world". Positive Discourse Analysis has a great significance of the development from Critical Discourse Analysis to Positive Discourse Analysis. Thus, Positive Discourse Analysis changes discourse analysis from deconstructive to being constructive. (Tung Su, 2016)

The Appraisal theory as declared by Martin has to do with evaluation, negotiations of attitude, intensity of emotion and alliance with readers. Therefore, readers are required to pay attention to literal meaning and also focus on deeper meaning of the discourse. But what is exactly is Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) and how is The Appraisal Theory defined? (Tung Su, 2016)

According to Tung Su (2016), Appraisal Theory emphasizes the ways in which writers and speakers express their attitudes, evaluations, and emotions through language. Evaluation is the manner in which people should use evaluative resources to negotiate social relations with other people. They do this by telling readers and listeners how they feel and their viewpoints towards other things and other people. Therefore, language

evaluation involves the writer's or speaker's attitude towards other events and things surrounding them, as well as people's actions. So, first of all, evaluation has to do with someone's attitude towards people or things, which is called "attitude". Then, we have "engagement" which is related with the source of the attitude. Here, it may not necessarily be the speaker himself but narrated by other people. Third, we have "graduation" which encompasses the degree of intensity of attitudes (i.e., either high, medium or low). Attitude; however, is the core of appraisal theory.

According to Attitude, the language used explains the speakers' emotion towards a certain behavior, text, or phenomenon. Here, the speaker makes use of language or lexical resources to judge or appreciate a certain action, behavior or value of something. Attitude is divided into subsystems of affect, judgment and appreciation. These subsystems are concerned with the various emotions of language users towards people or things, both positive or negative feelings. As, for example, happiness (or not), security (or insecurity), satisfaction (or dissatisfaction). Then, there is the subsystem of Judgment, which refers to the opinions of language users on the basis of social norms. Judgement is usually concerned with people attitude towards behavior and include the use of adjectives such as admire (or criticize), praise (or condemn) and so on. Sometimes, nouns and verbs maybe used which contain attitudinal meaning that express judgmental meanings also usually with a legal sense. Appreciation is the view of speakers towards certain things. Usually appreciation focuses on inanimate objects, such as products or processes. (Tung Su, 2016)

Engagement Systems is the language resource used to express the author's voice. It includes two types, a voice which admits only one standpoint and does not express or admit other voices of other people. While there is another type which makes use of other people's voices. So, The Engagement System is the language resource indicating voices of the author and texts, which is divided into monogloss and heterogloss. Monogloss, reflects the author's thoughts, opinions and attitudes, which seems to provide only one standpoint and does not admit the possibilities of other voices in public. Whereas, Heterogloss intends to make use of others' voices to express their own views indirectly, showing that there may exist other opinions. Heterogloss can, furtherly, be divided into two categories. If the words keep away from the existence of another position and voice, it belongs to dialogic contraction, If the words do not keep away from other voices, it is regarded as dialogue expansion, and thus, provides space for the difference of speaker's viewpoints and positions. (Tung Su, 2016)

Graduation has a place in Attitude System and has a place in Engagement system as well. Graduation shows different levels of evaluation meaning. The most important character of attitudinal meaning is gradability. Affect, judgment and appreciation are all concerned with affirmation and negation, Graduation, nonetheless, has two axis, intensification or quantification as well as typicality or definiteness, in which the former is the (force) and the latter is called the (focus). According to Martin, focus can be divided into two categories, sharpen and soften. Sharpen indicates that the author intends to maximize the value position, whether it is positive or negative, so as to attract the reader to his side, and regard the reader as an ally. Effect of soften depends on the words of focus. That is, if the word is negative, its function is to soften the value position of the writer/ speaker. And, if the word is positive, its effect is difficult to determine! (Ibid)

Therefore, A summary of the three main semantic systems, domains or components of the Appraisal Theory framework are:

1. **Attitude System:** relates to the expression of feelings, emotions, and evaluations. The system of attitude, refers to the manners in which feelings are considered as a system of meanings. It has three sub-systems (three semantic areas) : Affect (Emotions), Judgment (Ethics), and Appreciation (Aesthetics).

- Affect deals with the evaluation of emotional states of people. It includes the expression of positive or negative feelings. For instance, using the emotional expressions "happy" or "angry" an in the sentences "She was happy" (positive affect) or "He was angry" (negative affect).

- Judgment which is concerned with the evaluation of behavior and moral qualities. It refers to attitudes towards behavior, either approving or disapproving. As, for instance "good", "bad", "to admire", "to criticize", "to praise", or "to condemn" as in the sentences "His performance was good" (positive judgment) or "Her actions were bad" (negative judgment).

-Appreciation which involves the evaluation of things, processes or phenomena. Appreciation includes evaluations of semiotic and natural phenomena regarding the ways in which they are valued or not in a certain field. I.e., in terms of aesthetic or value-based judgments. As for instance the evaluations “well-built”, “beautiful”, “short” as in the sentences "This artwork is well-built" (positive appreciation) or "The presentation was short" (negative appreciation).

2. **Engagement System:** which refers to the ways in which writers/ speakers remark on other voices or perspectives. For example, agreeing or opposing with certain viewpoints.

3. **Graduation System:** which refers to the stating of the degree or intensity or “force” of an evaluation. For instance, either intensifying or softening the evaluation. For example, the use of evaluative words “extremely happy” or “slightly happy”.

Therefore, Positive Discourse Analysis and The Appraisal Theory can shape public opinion, social harmony, or other positive social effects. So, whether in a news report, political Speech, or other contexts, PDA and AT portray the world through language!

3. Methodology

Positive Discourse Analysis and Appraisal Theory are used in this study as two theoretical frameworks of explanation. The speech between interviewer Lex Fridman and interviewee Michael Malice in “Lex Fridman Podcast #150” under the interview headline “Michael Malice: Freedom, Hope, and Happiness Amidst Chaos”/ <<https://youtu.be/uykM3NhJbso>> is analyzed by the application of these two frameworks. The analysis, according to PDA and AT, is done to provide a better understanding of the interpersonal meanings expressed in this political interview. The interview is analyzed from three aspects, attitude, engagement and graduation. This research paper undergoes a qualitative approach in its analysis results. As Appraisal Theory is used in understanding how language shapes people’s perceptions, for example, in media, politics, or everyday conversation, the researcher, in this paper, follows this framework in the analysis of the interview of Michael Malice. Appraisal Theory is used in this paper to emphasize the ways in which writers and speakers express their attitudes, evaluations, and emotions through language. The components of the Appraisal Theory framework are followed accordingly, in this research. In order to analyze the speech chosen, a Positive Discourse Analysis was implemented. The framework was based on analyzing the face-to-face interview and its spoken context. This was achieved by analyzing lexical and textual features in the discourse. The analysis is based on the theory found in Systematic Functional Linguistics and emphasizes on the analysis of The Appraisal Theory as well as Positive Discourse Analysis framework of data analysis. This is a live spoken context sample of the application of The Appraisal Theory method of discourse analysis, in this face-to-face interview between interviewer and interviewee by underpinning an analysis of the AT systems or semantic components, Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

In the interview of “Michael Malice: Freedom, Hope, and Happiness Amidst Chaos” in Lex Fridman Podcast, it is seen that Positive Discourse Analysis and The Appraisal Theory frameworks and method of discourse analysis are very much implemented. Michael Malice is an anarchist political thinker. In his conversation “Freedom, Hope, and Happiness Amidst Chaos” he uses humor and wisdom. He has dangerous ideas and uses dark humor to get his message across.

Through the use of language that emphasizes feelings and emotions of affect, judgment, and appreciation it is best illustrated in this interview the ways that language is intelligently used to interpret institutionalizations. As Positive Discourse Analysis and The Appraisal Theory can shape public opinion, social harmony, or other positive social effects, this political interview is analyzed according to PDA and AT to reveal how these methods and framework portray the world through language!

In other words, the purpose of Michael Malice’s interview is to propose and evaluate the region and the governments, in particular, through using words and expressions of meanings of Attitude (affect, judgment, appreciation), Engagement and Gradation – that is, the semantic resources for construing emotions which can be organized by means of a typology of these six variables.

Michael Malice uses humor and wisdom to advocate for his ideas. Discourse analysis of his conversation has been used as an investigation tool, in terms with Appraisal Theory and systems of affect, engagement and graduation. Throughout Michael Malice's conversation we see Malice's method of conceptualizing his personal emotional experiences and knowledge through the use of special language and words that convey his positive and negative feelings. Analysis of data also suggests that Michael Malice's conversation can be investigated in terms of Positive Discourse Analysis and Appraisal Theory, in which it is found that his attitude might gain or lose value depending on the quality of his conversation partner, Lex Fridman. His interpersonal experiences and perceptions of justice, mostly through the placement of tendency of aggression and blame on governments is obvious in his use of words in this interview.

Extract (1) of the interview:

In his selection of words, he starts using words such as "kind of argued" to show (Force) in order to soften his views in which he highlighted differences between capitalism and anarchism" showing his angriness and judgmental views of governments and "differences" to reflect upon the phenomena of both capitalism and anarchism. He also uses the expression "I feel a very big responsibility" to intensify and strengthen his strong views and attract the audience to align with these views of his. And, this is just the start-up and opening of Michael Malice's interview.

Extract (2): "Violence under anarchism"

Now as Michael moves on to speak about "Violence under anarchism" Using the word "monopoly" in the sentence that describes "having a government" is like "having a monopoly on violence" shows the speaker's "affect" and feelings of positive and negative feelings towards having a government" and the issue of "controlling" violence, which is an issue going on around the world today. He gives a descriptive picture that governments control violence and that it is similar to a game of monopoly. Here, showing the negative feelings towards that and by saying "governments are great at that" showing the "affect" of unhappiness and negative judgment in attempt to express the underachieved roles of governments. Then again strengthening his views of misappreciation of governments, which will indeed reinforce his speech. Describing this issue of government control on violence and its similarity to "a game of monopoly" as he stated by using the noun "problem" to describe the issue, shows the unhappiness feelings as an "affect" revealing and gaining a wider-attention on part of the audience due to rising hidden "criticism" and disapproval people have about leaders and governments today.

Michael Malice shows his judgmental views of governments, as lacking justice in the "appreciation" corner. By, using the words "everyone has to be dependent on this issue" to describe that people are dependent on government's control of violence shows negative feelings by using the adjective "dependent" which has a negative connotation to it, especially in Western societies. Thus, insisting on the negativity and disapproval "judgmental" view and "misappreciation" feelings. Using the description "really really bad" in his talk about "objectivists" and their view of government, supports the analysis above. As by using these words, Michael strengthens his views and creates more (Force) to his arguments, as well as increases the (Focus) of his speech in the eyes and ears of his listeners. Michael Malice does not always describe governments with negative words, but also gains the attention of the audience by the use of the adjective "objective" to describe "law". This is to show "affect" of approval and giving positive judgments, praise and appreciation to the justness of this. The use of the adjective "imaginary" in his description of governments as an "imaginary" thing that has "never existed" and "there's no evidence that it can exist" reinforces his views and feelings of disapproval of the governments that have led and still do lead the world, so far. Through showing disapproval of these political issues, at hand, he reinforces feelings of criticism and that his topic of under-appreciation of governments is due to them "lacking" efficient presence. By doing this he is also gaining support of the analysis he undergoes due to the fact that governments are seen in this view, especially today. By encouraging these views and the use of positive words to describe advocates of justice and human rights and acts, whether through the written or spoken word, is all to contribute to the peaceful development of the world, nowadays. It, therefore, can be seen that the two frameworks PDA and AT, in combination, provide a way of understanding how positive values are constructed through evaluative language and how they can influence perceptions in social interactions. The analysis above of the political interview of Michael Malice, could reveal how the speaker uses negative evaluations of negative situations (AT) and positive evaluations of the other side of the scale which are human-rights advocates to promote a sense of unity or hope (PDA & AT).

Michael Malice, by intensifying or regulating these evaluations, engages the audience and strengthens the desired emotional effect.

5. Conclusions

Positive Discourse Analysis and Appraisal Theory are both frameworks that assist in evaluating how language shapes attitudes, values, and social realities. Nonetheless, these two frameworks differ in focus. PDA tends to look at how positive language is used. Through the analysis of positive language, PDA maintains social harmony, cooperation, or positivity in communication. Thus, PDA would emphasize the positive framing of individuals, actions, or events. Whereas Appraisal is used to analyze the specific evaluative language used to express both positivity or negativity, including the components of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. (Tung Su, 2016)

Appraisal Theory, then again, is considered a system of discourse evaluation. It is a means of categorizing interpersonal meanings which are related to speech function and negotiation. The evaluation of discourse is important and has been a worthy area of study in linguistic studies, social and cultural studies also. The evaluation of discourse, indeed, organizes discourse and indicates its significance also. By evaluating discourse, through Positive Discourse Analysis, and Appraisal Theory, writers/ speakers get to express their opinions and get to reflect on their values and their community's values too. So, by following these frameworks, we get to construct and maintain relations between the writer/speaker and the reader/ listener.

All in all, both Positive Discourse Analysis and Appraisal Theory provide frameworks for exploring how language constructs positivity and evaluative meaning, and when used together, they offer a powerful lens for understanding social communication.

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