

Editorial Evaluating evaluative language

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This special issue is welcome for a variety of reasons: it reports work undertaken over a period of time in a focused domain; it arises from ongoing dialogues in workshops and seminars; it relates to and complements an earlier special issue on “the pragmatics of affect” published in *Text* 9–1 (1989). I take this opportunity to offer two sets of comments: a) the convergence of theoretical views about functions of language from a communication/interpretation perspective, and b) the methodological issues surrounding multi-level text/discourse analysis.

“To breathe is to judge” wrote John Dryden in the 1660s marking the distinctive nature of descriptive vis-à-vis legislative and theoretical criticism (Watson 1962). If we were to substitute breathing with language, Vološinov’s (1973: 105) following pronouncement comes very close:

No utterance can be put together without value judgement. Every utterance is above all an *evaluative orientation*. Therefore, each element in a living utterance not only has a meaning but also has a value [emphasis in original].

As it turns out, for Vološinov, value judgments are more fundamental than grammatical coordination or word meaning. He goes on to claim that it is evaluation which determines referential meaning, and “a change in meaning is, essentially, always a *reevaluation*: the transposition of some particular word from one evaluative context to another” (Vološinov 1973: 105).

The evaluative orientation is inescapable because the words we speak are not our own; they are borrowed from others and from elsewhere. As Bakhtin ([1935] 1981: 293) puts it:

All words have the “taste” of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life.

Along the same lines, Vološinov (1973: 79) reiterates, “there are as many meanings of a word as there are contexts of its use”. The context of use

orients us from production of utterance towards its targeted reception. Vološinov (1973: 85–86) summarizes his position as follows:

There can be no such thing as an abstract addressee, a man unto himself, so to speak . . . In point of fact, *word is a two-sided act*. It is determined equally by *whose* word it is and *for whom* it is meant. As word, it is precisely *the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee*. Each and every word expresses the ‘one’ in relation to the “other” [emphasis in original].

This dialogicity and reciprocal relationship between addresser and addressee has remained a talking point in the literary circle. Peter Jones (1975) in his *Philosophy and the Novel* argues that interpretive practice is “aspectival”:

Disputes arise over the legitimacy of certain viewpoints, and of the interpretations dependent on them. Interpretations reveal what significance or import of a text a reader has determined, and the notion of determining here suitably covers the patterns he finds as well as those he forms. Interpretation is the business of making sense of the text, rendering it coherent; this is achieved by placing emphases, drawing connections, suggesting presuppositions and implications. (Jones 1975: 182)

Henry James (1948: 12–13) in *The Art of Fiction* has made a similar observation:

People often talk of these things [action, description, narration] as if they had a kind of internecine distinctness, instead of melting into each other at every breath, and being intimately associated parts of one general effort of expression.

The allusion to breathing is self-explanatory. The view that language functions at both descriptive and evaluative levels is a long-standing one. Different scholars have captured these functions under different categories—which can roughly be labeled *informational* and *affective*—and have debated their inter-relationship. It makes sense to see these functions not as two separate entities but as intricately intertwined along a communication continuum, very much like a double helix. Among others, Bateson (1972) has persistently shown the inseparability of thought/cognition and feeling/emotion.

It may, however, be useful here to reproduce how Richards (1926: 267) conceptualized the two functions of language under the labels “scientific” and “emotive”:

A statement may be used for the sake of the reference, true or false, which it causes. This is the scientific use of language. But it may also be used for the sake of the effects in emotion and attitude produced by the reference it occasions. This is the emotive use of language.

Both these functions have an evaluative orientation: the scientific signals a factual status while the emotive indexes an intersubjective stance. Richards ([1929] 1964) elaborates these two functions in terms of four kinds of meaning—*sense*, *feeling*, *tone*, and *intention*—which coincidentally have underpinned much of pragmatic, sociolinguistic and discourse analytic work in recent years.

Sense:

We speak to say something, and when we listen we expect something to be said. We use words to direct our hearer's attention upon some state of affairs, to present to them some items for consideration and to excite in them some thoughts about these items.

Feeling:

But we also, as a rule, have some feelings about these items, about the state of affairs we are referring to. We have an attitude towards it, some special direction, bias, or accentuation of interest towards it, some personal flavour or colouring of feeling; and we use language to express these feelings, this nature of interest. Equally, when we listen we pick it up, rightly or wrongly; it seems inextricably part of what we receive . . .

Tone:

Furthermore, the speaker has ordinarily an attitude to his listener. He chooses or arranges his words differently as his audience varies, in automatic or deliberate recognition of his relation to them. The tone of his utterance reflects his awareness of this relation, his sense of how he stands towards those he is addressing . . .

Intention:

Finally . . . there is the speaker's intention, his aim, conscious or unconscious, the effect he is endeavouring to promote. Ordinarily he speaks for a purpose, and his purpose modifies his speech. The understanding of it is part of the whole business of apprehending his meaning. Unless we know what he is trying to do, we can hardly estimate the measure of his success . . . (Richards [1929] 1964: 181–182)

Jacobson's (1960) six functions of language—referential, poetic, emotive, conative, phatic, and metalinguistic—can also be configured along the informational and affective continuum.

One needs to move away from such typologies and focus instead on their dynamic inter-relations in real-life settings. Hayakawa's ([1939] 1972) identification of three modes of information exchange—*report*, *inference*, and *judgments* provides a useful starting point. *Report* is the language of science or what he calls “map language”:

We state things in such a way that everybody will be able to understand and agree with our formulation. (Hayakawa [1939] 1972: 36).

These statements can be verified or disproved. *Inference* is:

A statement about the unknown made on the basis of the known. (Hayakawa [1939] 1972: 36)

Judgments are:

All expressions of the writer's approval or disapproval of the occurrences, persons, or objects he is describing. (Hayakawa [1939] 1972: 38)

As Hayakawa ([1939] 1972: 266) goes on to illustrate, a report (e.g., "I am a service-station attendant") moves into the judgmental level (e.g., "I am *only* a service-station attendant"), because the addition *only* triggers a number of inferences (e.g., "I ought to be something different. It is disgraceful that I am what I am.") In a systemic model, which prioritizes choice making, there are implications here about how and when we are inclined to using a report as opposed to a judgmental statement. For instance, it would be interesting to see how in different institutional settings—e.g., courtroom cross-examinations, therapeutic counseling, committee meetings—reports and judgments are strategically formulated and reformulated for purposes of minimizing or maximizing inferential moves.

There is a wealth of literature on evaluative stance, more along the lines of footing and frame (Goffman 1974; Bateson 1972), contextualization cues (Gumperz 1982), and discourse roles (Thomas 1986). Pomerantz (1984) shows how assessments in the forms of agreements and disagreements are sequentially accomplished through preferred/dispreferred turn shapes in interaction. It is worth noting that Labov and Waletzky's (1967) notion of evaluation in narrative has a macro-function with regard to the overall narrative structure, although critics point to the fact that evaluation also cuts across all stages of a given narrative.

This brings me to the methodological points raised especially by Martin in his introduction and by Macken-Horarik in her envoi: coding of textual data; dependence on ethnographic insights for identifying implied realization of stance; negotiation between participants and analysts categories; combining of quantitative and qualitative data analysis in a systematic way, etc. The challenge at the micro-analytic level is one of tracing the multi-layered tastes and flavors in the Bakhtinian sense and then of attributing them a value category. Where does one trace stop and the other begin? How deep does one have to dig to be able to recognize direct as opposed to indirect evaluations or explicit as opposed to implicit reports? The so-called inter-rater reliability exercises may take us somewhere, but at the level of text and discourse, we need to look for what may be called intertextual or interactional reliability. The conversational analytic notions of "adjacency pairs" and "uptake" can be a necessary validating tool.

Against this backdrop it makes little sense to draw lines between description and interpretation. The issue becomes one where description can lead to robust classificatory systems and, which in turn, can have some predictive

relevance. In other words, text/discourse analysis needs to have a goal beyond description and classification. Text/discourse *synthesis*—in the sense I am using the term here—is an attempt to approach empirical data and theory simultaneously so as to consider substantive issues of social and practical relevance. In focusing on the social function of language (through stance and role taking), our interest should go beyond the analytic mode—from a classification of appraisal tokens to exploring their dynamic trajectories in building up and sustaining communities of practice. Broadly speaking, it is an attempt to address the question: “What follows from text/discourse analysis?” Coffey’s (1981) observations about science more generally are relevant to us:

While the analytic method has emphasised the development of precise techniques for making empirical observations and for the analysis of data, it is the role of the synthetic mode to attempt to view the data in new ways that will promote the discovery of general relationships among them . . . Thus, analysis and synthesis are not antithetical concepts but are, rather, complements which together provide science with its most productive methodology.

The notion of convergence is central to any synthesis effort and this can be approached from different angles. In the context of the evaluative function of language, there is a need for the coming together of different descriptive and classificatory systems. Synthesis can be understood in terms of cumulative evidence building, while allowing for responsive framework and cross-validation. For example, the non-verbal and paralinguistic in communicating appraisal remains unanalyzed, as Martin acknowledges. The division of labor between linguistic and paralinguistic dimensions which breaks down the barriers between systemic functional linguistics, pragmatics and discourse analysis will be a definitive way forward. The studies included here range from second language acquisition and casual conversation to political rhetoric and narratives of childbirth and instruction. We are offered excellent micro-level analyses of these discursive sites. It would be interesting to see how SLA researchers or narrative researchers or political discourse scholars would engage with these analyses. For instance, would SLA researchers who may find Painter’s data less rigorous still be willing to take on her analytic points and apply them to their study of speech production in more developmental, sequential terms? This is the kind of synthesis I have been alluding to.

Categorization of data and the claims arising from them continue to divide researchers on the basis of etic and emic stances, which are adopted according to what gets analyzed. Our analytic codes are categories, which may appear descriptive to us, but can invoke an evaluative orientation in others, including the participants (Sarangi et al. 2003). Certain categories because of their theoretical origin may even resist negotiation.

The audience and the reader are often implied in our analysis, but they rarely become a topic of study in their own right. So, there is the challenge for us to reflect on how we categorize textual data and to what extent we wish to make our work recipient-designed. And how do we go about describing and evaluating our own analytic practices/stances, especially with regard to residue texts that do not fall within a given category system?

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