

Assessing the Translation of the Iraqi Constitution Based on Appraisal Theory

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Abstract

This research focuses entirely on evaluating the translation of the Iraqi constitution through the lens of appraisal theory. This theory provides a framework of linguistic resources used to convey attitudes. It consists of three primary systems: attitude, engagement, and graduation, each further divided into various subsystems. The study is structured into three main sections. The first section explores the concept of appraisal theory, while the second provides an overview of constitutional language and the Iraqi constitution. The third section is dedicated to analyzing selected data, focusing on five specific provisions. The study concludes with a summary of the key findings.



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1. The Appraisal Theory

The appraisal theory was introduced and developed by Martin, White, and their collaborators during the 1990s and 2000s. Its origins lie in the field of educational linguistics and literacy intervention, particularly in the work of the School of Sydney, led by Jim Martin during the 1980s and 1990s. This work was conducted as part of the New South Wales Disadvantaged Schools Program, contributing to the evolution of language evaluation across various disciplines. The appraisal theory is viewed as an extension and further development of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). In alignment with Halliday's perspective, the theory divides meaning-making into three interconnected modes, or "metafunctions":

- Ideational meaning:** Relates to the representation of experiences and the external world.
- Interpersonal meaning:** Involves enacting social roles, identities, and relationships through language.
- Textual meaning:** Organizes both ideational and interpersonal meanings into coherent texts suited to specific communicative contexts.

Appraisal theory represents a significant advancement in the systematic analysis of evaluation within SFL. It is referred to

as a "model of evaluation... within the broader theoretical framework of SFL" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 7). This framework explores how texts express positive or negative assessments, how the strength or focus of these evaluations is adjusted, and how speakers or writers interact with other voices or potential responses.

(White, 2015, p. 1).

The theory provides a set of linguistic tools for expressing attitudes. Martin and White (2005, p. 36) outline three key evaluative resources within the framework: engagement, attitude, and graduation. Each resource encompasses distinct semantic subsystems:

- **Engagement** includes monoglossic and heteroglossic resources.
- **Attitude** covers affect, judgment, and appreciation.
- **Graduation** involves force and focus.

According to Martin (2000, p. 145), this framework systematically organizes the semantic resources used to negotiate emotions, judgments, and values, alongside tools for intensifying and engaging with these evaluations. Martin and White (2005, pp. 35-36) further elaborate on these components, emphasizing their roles in shaping meaning and interaction in texts.

These subdivisions are well-illustrated in the following diagram:

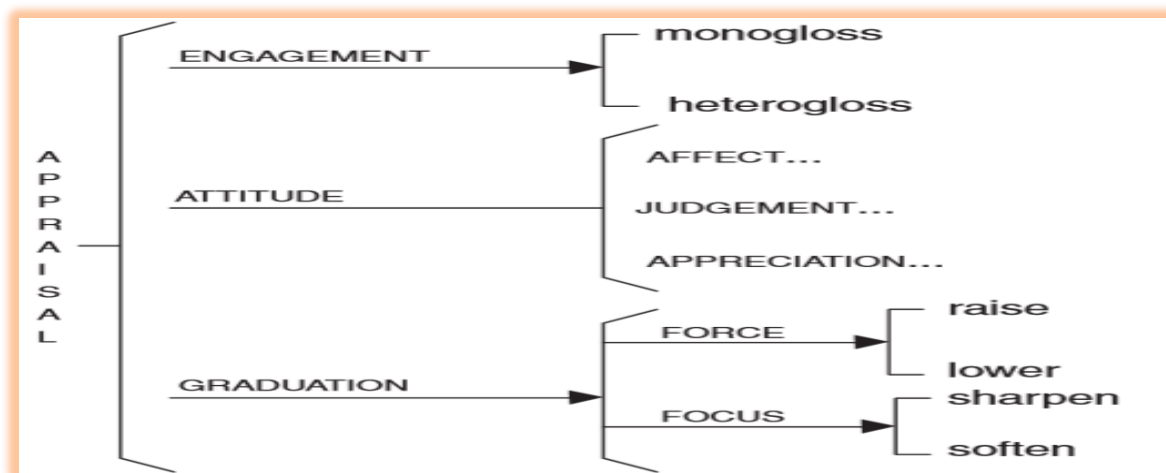


Fig 1. An overview of appraisal resources (*ibid*, p. 38).

The three systems that organize the appraisal theory and their subdivisions are clarified in the following subsections

1. 1. The Attitude System

According to Martin and White (2005, p. 35), attitude refers to our feelings, encompassing emotional responses, evaluations of behavior, and assessments of things. It serves as the core concept in appraisal theory. White (2001, p. 1) further explains that attitude involves expressions suggesting whether a person, object, situation, action, or event is viewed positively or negatively. Attitude, or attitudinal meaning, is divided into three subsystems: affect, judgment, and appreciation.

Martin (2000, p. 145) describes affect as the mechanism used to express emotional responses, such as joy, sorrow, love, hatred, or fear. It relates to emotions reflecting positive or negative viewpoints depending on the speaker's or writer's feelings. Affect is considered the central component of attitude and is analyzed through three main variables: dissatisfaction versus satisfaction, insecurity versus security, and unhappiness versus happiness. Dissatisfaction typically refers to emotions tied to reactions like curiosity, disinterest, displeasure, or admiration. Simply put, affect involves evaluating emotional responses. For example, in "I am glad to do this," the word "glad" signifies a positive emotional response related to satisfaction.

Affect can be classified into different categories, such as quality (e.g., adjectives like "happy"), process (e.g., verbs like "pleases"), or comment (e.g., adverbs like "happily"). It can also be expressed in nominalized forms, like "happiness." The unhappiness-happiness dimension refers to emotions related to feelings of joy, anger, or sadness, whereas the insecurity-security dimension relates to emotions tied to "ecosocial well-being," including fear, anxiety, confidence, or trust. (Martin & White, 2005, p. 35).

Another component of attitude is judgment. As Martin (2000, p. 145) explains, judgment serves to express moral assessments of actions., such as honesty, bravery, or ethicality, which can be either positive or negative. This subsystem assesses behavior in relation to societal norms and ethical standards. Judgment can be categorized into social esteem and social sanction. Judgments of Social esteem includes assessments of a person's normality (how typical they are), capability (how skilled they are), and perseverance (how persistent they are). On the other hand, social sanction judgments focus on truthfulness (truthfulness) and propriety (ethical behavior) (Martin, 2000, p. 156). Cultural and ideological factors influence judgments, meaning the same event may be perceived differently depending on the evaluator's perspective (White, 2001, p. 2). For instance, in the phrase "he is a quick-thinking man," "quick-thinking" reflects a positive judgment of the individual's ability.

The third subsystem, appreciation, focuses on the aesthetic and evaluative qualities of objects or processes. Martin (2000, p. 146) explains that appreciation assesses the aesthetic or functional aspects of semiotic texts, processes, or natural phenomena, such as being "remarkable," "desirable," or "innovative." This evaluation can be positive or negative and involves three dimensions: reaction, composition, and valuation. Reaction pertains to the extent to which the text or process captures attention and elicits emotional engagement. Composition deals with perceptions of balance and complexity, while valuation considers the social significance of the text or process (Martin, 2000, p. 160). Appreciation thus involves assessments of objects or activities based on aesthetics and other social evaluative frameworks. Attitude can be expressed explicitly, as in the provided examples, Or indirectly, as in the phrase 'He beats his son,' which usually leads to a negative evaluation of the father implicitly, as in the statement "He beats

his son," which typically evokes a negative judgment of the father.

1. 2. Engagement System

Another component of appraisal theory is Engagement, which addresses how attitudes are sourced and how various voices and opinions are represented in discourse. It encompasses the "resources of dialogistic positioning," which create a diverse backdrop of prior statements, differing perspectives, and potential responses within a text (Martin & White, 2005, p. 35). Engagement is categorized into two types: "monoglossic" and "heteroglossic."

Monoglossic expressions do not reference other voices or perspectives, presenting a single, unchallenged viewpoint. For instance, the statement "all first-year students fear communicative skills" does not consider alternative opinions. Conversely, heteroglossic expressions invite or acknowledge multiple perspectives, as seen in the example "it is probable that first-year students fear communicative skills."

Heteroglossic expressions can be further divided into contractive and expansive types. Contractive expressions assert a stance while limiting alternative viewpoints, such as "obviously that is the case." In contrast, expansive expressions acknowledge and provide room for alternative perspectives, as in "I believe that is the case" (ibid, pp. 99-100).

1. 3. Graduation System

The third component of appraisal theory is known as Graduation. This aspect deals with linguistic resources used to scale attitudes and engagement, reflecting the extent of the speaker or writer's commitment to the propositions presented in the text. Such scaling can occur through specific lexical choices, such as "a very shy man," or through nuanced variations. According to White (2015, p. 4), such as the contrast between "terrible" terms like "bad" or phrases such as "I believe" and "I suspect" are examples of how graduation is expressed. Graduation itself is divided into two dimensions: force and focus. and "bad" or "I believe" and "I suspect" (White, 2015, p. 4). Graduation is categorized into two dimensions: *force* and *focus*. Force pertains to the intensity or quantity, as exemplified by phrases like "very foolish" or "many writers," while focus relates to gradations in prototypicality or precision, as seen in expressions like "he is a true friend" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 137).

2. The Features of Constitutional Language

It is widely accepted that every field of life has its own distinctive language. Consequently, the features and characteristics of language vary from one field to another. Legal language, particularly the language used in drafting constitutions, possesses several unique features. One of the key characteristics of constitutional language is the use of lengthy

and intricate phrases. Sentences in constitutional texts are typically longer than those in other domains, often incorporating multiple embedded clauses in an effort to address a particular issue within a single sentence. Additionally, constitutional language is marked by redundancy, as it frequently includes terms that require clarification wherever they appear. Another notable feature is its impersonal tone (Tiersma, 1999, pp. 4-5).

The Iraqi Constitution, which was drafted in 2005 following the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, serves as the official constitution of the Iraqi government. Like all constitutions, its primary purpose is to establish a new social contract between the government and its citizens, ensuring the protection of individual rights and freedoms while limiting governmental overreach. Another significant objective of the constitution is to uphold the sovereignty and unity of the state. Thus, the constitution of any nation should reflect the aspirations and needs of its citizens. However, it is worth noting that "Paul Bremer, the Civil Administrator of Iraq, issued 100 laws and introduced them to the Iraqi Governing Council," some of which faced opposition from the Iraqi people.

3. Data Analysis

This section evaluates the English translation of the Iraqi Constitution through the lens of appraisal theory. Selected provisions from the Iraqi Constitution serve as the study's data, with appraisal terms highlighted in bold.

Sample

SL: العمل حق لكل العراقيين بما يضمن لهم حياة كريمة

TL: "Employment is a fundamental right for all Iraqis, ensuring they can lead a life of dignity."

In this example, the English translation aligns well with the source text. The term "لكل," rendered as "all," reflects the engagement system in appraisal theory. It is monoglossic, as it excludes other viewpoints. Similarly, "كريمة," translated as "dignified," represents the attitude system, specifically the affect variable, suggesting that citizens feel satisfied with this provision. The evaluation confirms that the translation effectively conveys the original function, earning a positive assessment.

Sample

SL: لا يجوز نزع الملكية الا لأغراض المنفعة العامة

TL: "Property can only be expropriated when it serves a public benefit."

Here, the phrase "لا يجوز," translated as "not permissible," illustrates the engagement system. Its monoglossic nature prohibits alternative perspectives. The analysis shows that the translation accurately reflects the original function, leading to a favorable evaluation.

Sample

SL: العراقيين احرار في الالتزام بأحوالهم الشخصية

TL: Iraqis are free in their commitment to their personal status.

This provision demonstrates the engagement system in both the SL and TL, affirming the monoglossic nature of the text, as no alternative viewpoints are allowed. The evaluation confirms that the translation reliably conveys the function of the source text, resulting in a positive assessment.

Sample

SL: التعليم عامل اساس لتقدم المجتمع وحق تكفله الدولة، وهو الزامي في المرحلة الابتدائية.

TL: Education is essential for societal advancement and is a right ensured by the state. Primary education is compulsory."

This example includes three appraisal terms. The first, "اساس", translated as "fundamental," belongs to the engagement system, particularly the monoglossic variable, as it asserts education's vital role without accommodating alternative views. The second term, "تكفله" ("guaranteed"), reflects the attitude system, specifically the affect variable, as it reassures readers about the state's commitment to education. The third term, "اجباري" ("mandatory"), relates to the graduation system, particularly focus, as it emphasizes the precision and importance of education. The evaluation demonstrates that the translation effectively mirrors the source text's function, earning a positive evaluation.

Sample

SL: جمهورية العراق دولة اتحادية واحدة مستقلة ذات سيادة كاملة، نظام الحكم فيها جمهوري نيابي (برلماني) ديمقراطي.

TL: "Iraq is an independent, unified federal state with full sovereignty, governed by a republican, representative, parliamentary, and democratic system.

This provision contains several appraisal terms. "واحدة"، "اتحادية"، and "مستقلة" translated as "single," "federal," and "independent," represent the engagement system and are monoglossic. "سيادة كاملة" translated as "fully sovereign," belongs to the graduation system, emphasizing intensity. Terms such as "برلماني"، "جمهوري"، "نيابي"، and "ديمقراطي" rendered as "republican," "representative," "parliamentary," and "democratic," also reflect the engagement system and the monoglossic variable, rejecting alternative interpretations. The evaluation confirms that the translation successfully conveys the appraisal meaning and function of the source text.

CONCLUSIONS

The current study presents some key findings and conclusions. Analyzing the selected data reveals that the majority of words and expressions in the translation of the Iraqi constitution align with the judgment system within appraisal theory. These linguistic choices predominantly reflect the monoglossic variable, emphasizing that the perspectives and opinions conveyed in the Iraqi constitution leave no room for alternative interpretations. Additionally, the analysis indicates that these expressions demonstrate the graduation system of the theory, particularly the focus variable, which underscores the concept of intensification.

Furthermore, the study highlights that institutional language tends to be characterized by intensified and strict phrasing, inherently rejecting alternative viewpoints or opinions. Finally, the translation of the Iraqi constitution effectively conveys the functional meaning of the original terminology.

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