A Comparative Analysis of Actors' and Actresses' Oscar Acceptance Speeches Based on Big Data Methodology

Liuchun Wen

Guangdong Technical College of Water Resources and Electric Engineering, Guangzhou, China

Keywords: Big Data Methodology, Oscar Acceptance Speech, Python Program, A Comparative Analysis.

Abstract: The adopted methods and instruments include SPSS analysis, EXCEL statistics, python program, etc. Based on big data methodology, with the theoretical framework of Appraisal theory, the author makes a comparative analysis of the Appraisal resources in the actors' and actresses' Oscar acceptance speeches and their effects in realizing the Interpersonal function. The result of the study shows that both the Oscar acceptance speeches from actors and actresses share the same distribution feature of the Appraisal resources. The most frequently used ones are the Attitude resources, and the second are Graduation resources and the third ones are Engagement. The current study has broadened the application of the Appraisal theory. It proves that the Appraisal theory is applicable for the analysis of the field of Oscar acceptance speeches, the sub-genre of public speeches.

1 INTRODUCTION

As is known to all, the representation of language can be either in written form or in spoken form. Brown and Yule list ten distinctive features "which characterise spoken language"(1983:15). They point out that the data of analysis of discourse should be the language in use. The great differences between spoken and written language result in great distinctions between spoken and written discourse. In Halliday's *Spoken and Written Language* (1989), he singled out the characteristics of spoken discourse in terms of grammar, lexical, structure etc. Generally speaking, spoken discourse tends to be less informal than written discourse (Huang, 2001). Halliday, the founder of Systemic Functional Grammar (hereafter SFG), clearly states that his aim of the construction of SFG is "to construct a grammar for purposes of text analysis: one that would make it possible to say sensible and useful things about any text, spoken or written" (Huang, 2001: 29). He also explains that there are two levels of discourse analysis: the lower level is to contribute to the understanding of the text, and the higher one is to the evaluation of the text. In this sense, the application of SFG to the evaluative analysis of spoken discourse is available.

According to Halliday's SFG, language is viewed as a way of making meaning and it has three metafunctions: Ideational, Interpersonal and Textual. As Chang (2004) points out, "In Halliday's model, the Interpersonal metafunction has to do with how we use language to interact with other people, to establish and maintain appropriate social links with them, and to express our own attitude and our evaluation of things or events in the world".

Developed from SFG, Appraisal theory was set up by Martin and his colleagues in the early 1990s to extend the analysis of Interpersonal meaning from a new perspective. There are three sub-systems of Appraisal theory: Attitude, Engagement and Graduation. Appraisal theory has been proved to be a progress in discourse analysis as it has incorporated the semantics of evaluation.

Appraisal theory has been effectively applied in the analysis of different types of texts，including spoken texts. There are, of course, many types of spoken discourse. Huang (2001) states that in terms of the form of discourse, spoken discourses include everyday conversations, telephone talks, interviews, public speeches, debates etc. So, public speech is one important form among spoken discourses. Public speeches are represented in various forms. According to the field of public speech, it can be divided into political speech, academic speech, military speech, and so on. In recent years, many

studies about political speeches have been carried out from different linguistic perspectives. However, few attempts have been made to the comparative analysis of Oscar acceptance speeches (hereafter OASs), a sub-genre of public speeches, within the framework of Appraisal theory. This study will try to fill this gap by employing the Appraisal theory as the theoretical framework to make a comparative analysis of the Appraisal resources in the actors' and actresses' OASs and their effects in realizing the Interpersonal function. We hope to find out if there are any different Appraisal resources used by the actors and actresses, although they have the same goal to achieve, to express their strong feelings.

2 THE APPRAISAL ANALYSIS OF THE OSCAR ACCEPTANCE SPEECHES

the Appraisal theory is developed from the Interpersonal metafunction within SFG. Ideational metafaction, Interpersonal metafunction and Textual metafunction are the three metafuctions.

we would analyse the ten OASs with the theoretical framework of Appraisal theory. The detailed analysis would be conducted from the following four parts. The first part is the general survey of the Appraisal resources in the actors' and actresses' speeches. The second part to the fourth part is to compare the actors' and actresses' speeches from the perspectives of the Attitude, Engagement and Graduation systems and examine the differences between them to explore the underlying reasons.

2.1 The General Survey of the Appraisal Resources in OASs

We have analysed the distribution of the Appraisal resources in actors' and actresses' OASs, as is shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1 The Appraisal Resources in Actors' OASs

System	Number	Percentage (%)	Ranking
Attitude	117	54.4	1
Engagement	22	10.2	3
Graduation	76	35.4	2
Appraisal	215	100	

Table 2 The Appraisal Resources in Actresses' OASs

System	Number	Percentage (%)	Ranking
Attitude	93	44.7	1
Engagement	38	18.3	3
Graduation	77	37.0	2
Appraisal	208	100	

Tables 1 and 2 show that in both the actors' and actresses' OASs, there are almost the same amount of Appraisal resources, 215 and 208. Both of them have the most resources of Attitude in the three subsystems and take up the biggest portion, up to 54.4% and 44.7%. The Graduation resources in actors' OASs are 76, taking up to 35.4%, ranking the second, and in actresses' OASs 77, 37.0%, and also the second. The Engagement resources of both are ranking the third, with 22 and 38, taking up the percentages of 10.2% and 18.3%.

The statistics above indicates that both actors' and actresses' OASs employ three subsystems of the Appraisal system, with the most abundant Attitude resources. We would do further research on how the three subsystems individually are involved in OASs.
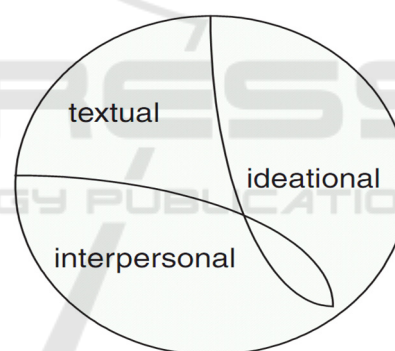

Figure 1 Ideational, Interpersonal and Textual metafunctions (Martin & White, 2008:8)

Figure 1 shows the interpersonal metafunction of SFG. Ideational metafunction refers to the world outside and inside of ourselves that we talk about, presenting "our view of the world as consisting of 'going-on' (verbs) involving things (nouns) which may have attributes (adjectives) and which go on against background details of place, time, manner, etc. (adverbials)" (Thompson, 2000: 76). Interpersonal metafunction is concerned with establishing and maintaining social relationships. People can use languages to interact, to communicate and to maintain and create social relationships with each other. Textual metafunction organizes the Ideational metafunction and

Interpersonal metafunction into a coherent and unified way in a text.

Martin and White further divide the Appraisal theory into three subsystems: Attitude, Engagement and Graduation. The overview of the Appraisal resources is presented in Figure 2 (Martin & White, 2008: 38).
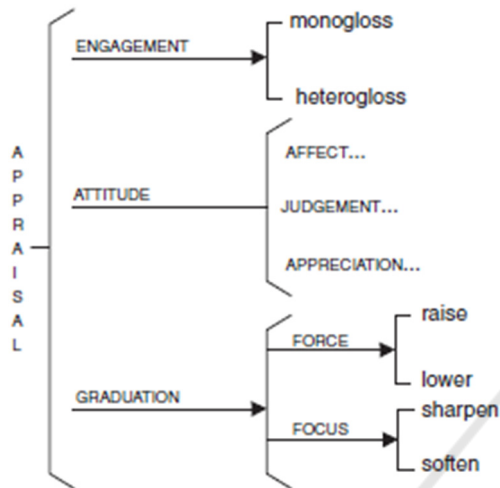

Figure 2 An Overview of Appraisal Resources

2.2 Analysis of Attitude in OASs

The potential goal of OASs is to let the winners express their feelings that they are happy and honored to accept the academic awards. Thereby, we assume that most of the Attitude resources are used to express their feelings and there are some different ways of expressing that feelings between actors and actresses. We have chosen five OASs from actors and five from actresses. The analysis of Attitude in this part is conducted by comparing the employment of the three sub-systems of Attitude in actors' and actresses' OASs.

In actors' OASs, the general distribution of Attitudinal resources is that Appreciation accounts for 42.7%, ranking the first, and Affect 35.9%, the second, and Judgement 21.4%, the third. In the five OASs, 2 Affect, 3 Judgement and 1 Appreciation are negative, while the rest of the Attitudinal resources are positive. The negative resources are listed as follows.

Affect

(1) For those who saw the signs of hatred as our cars drove in tonight, I think that it is a good time for those who voted for the ban against gay marriage to sit and reflect and anticipate their great shame and the shame in their grandchildren's eyes if they continue that way of support. (M 3: 10)

Judgement

(2) I did not expect this, but I, and I want it to be very clear that I do know how hard I make it to appreciate me, often. (M 3: 3)

In Example (1), the actor uses the negative Affect of "shame" to criticize those who voted for the ban against gay marriage. The actor plays a leading role in a movie about gay marriage, and by this role, he wins the Oscar Actor in a Leading Role. He loves the role he plays and supports the gay marriage. By using the negative Affect of "shame", he tries to align the potential audience who share the same view and have the same positions.

In Examples (2), the actor makes negative Judgement of himself to acknowledge others or others' supports.

We could generalize that although the actors use all kinds of negative Attitudinal resources to express their mixed and happy feelings at the time when they receive the awards, all these resources can be interpreted as positive ones.

the Affect resources in the five actresses' OASs are 40, taking up to 43% in the three Attitudinal resources, ranking the first. There are 29 Appreciation resources, with the proportion of 31.2%, which ranks the second. The least is Judgement, with the number of 24, accounting or 25.8%. We could not find any negative Attitudinal resources in the five actresses' OASs.
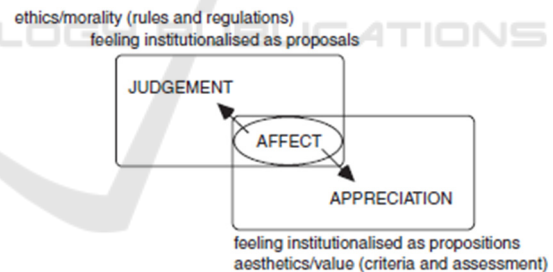

Figure 3 Judgement, Appreciation and Affect

By comparing the statistics in the two tables, we note that there are two different figures in the two different OASs.

The first one is that the ranking of the three resources is different. In actors' OASs, the biggest portion is the Appreciation resources, while in actresses' OASs, the Affect resources occupy the first place. It explains the fact that actors are more rational than actresses when they receive awards and make a speech on the stage. By employing Appreciation than Affect resources, they are expressing more feelings of assessment of objects,

artefacts, processes and states of affairs than their own inner feelings of emotions.

The second one is the distribution of negative Attitudinal resources. There are several negative resources in actors' OASs, while we could not find any negative resources in actresses' OASs. It reflects that actors are showing greater sense of humour than actresses on the awarding-received stage. Because all the negative resources can be interpreted as positive ones. The negative usage of languages reversely is one way of showing humour.

2.3 Analysis of Affect in OASs

Affect deals with utterances "which either convey(s) a negative or positive assessment" or invite "the reader to supply their own negative assessment" (White, 2001:1). What is valued is the speakers' or writers' emotional states. There are four sub-categories in Affect, which are un/happiness, in/security, dis/inclination and dis/satisfaction, as is illustrated in Table 3. In this part, the author would examine the distribution of the four categories in both of the OASs.

Table 3 Distribution of Affect in Actors' OASs

Subsystem	Un/happiness	In/security	Dis/satisfaction	Dis/inclination				
Total number	38		0		3		1	
Percentage(%)	90		0		7.5		2.5	
+/-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-
Total number	38	0	0	0	1	2	1	0
Percentage(%)	90	0	0	0	2.5	5	2.5	0

Un/happiness, among the four categories, take up the biggest proportion of 90%. There are thirty eight out of forty two. All of them are positive emotional feelings - happiness. In the five OASs, the words which are used to express the authors' gratitude should be pointed out particularly, in the form of noun, verb, adjective or adverbial, such as *acknowledgement*, *thankful*. In OASs, the speakers try to align the potential audience and invoke the audience's positive value toward the winners and the ones who have helped them. The speakers also try to align the ones who have helped the speakers by

mentioning their names for their contributions. For a better understanding, we will list some examples to be focused on.

(3) And finally, I want to <u>thank</u> my mom and my dad; I want to <u>thank</u> my wife Keisha, my children, my ancestors who continue to guide my steps, and God, God who believes in us all and who's given me this moment in this lifetime that I will hopefully carry to the end of my lifetime into the next lifetime. (M 1: 13)

(4) I wrote something down because I thought if it would happen I would be a little <u>overwhelmed</u> and I am. (M 1: 4)

The examples above demonstrate that the word "thank" here is interpreted that the speakers like or love someone so much that the speakers want to express their positive emotion to the ones from whom they get help or support. So the words of "thank" are put into the category of un/happiness. It shows their emotions of happiness. In the five OASs, there are thirty positive words of "thank", which are 78.9% of the un/happiness category.

there are three dis/satisfaction, with one positive and two negative. There is one Dis/inclination, which is positive. Dis/satisfaction deals with "our feelings of achievement and frustration in relation to the activities in which we are engaged" (Martin & White, 2008: 50). Dis/inclination is irrealis Affect, in which there is a Trigger.

(5) I'm very, very <u>proud</u> to live in a country that is willing to elect an elegant man president and a country who, for all its toughness, creates courageous artists, and this is in great due respect to all the nominees, but courageous artists who, despite a sensitivity that sometimes has brought enormous challenge, Mickey Rourke rises again and he is my brother. (M 3: 13)

(6) For those who saw the signs of hatred as our cars drove in tonight, I think that it is a good time for those who voted for the ban against gay marriage to sit and reflect and anticipate their great <u>shame</u> and the <u>shame</u> in their grandchildren's eyes if they continue that way of support. (M 3: 10)

Example (5) is the positive dis/satisfaction. By expressing the feelings "proud" in relation to the activity of being "in a country that is willing to elect an elegant man president and a country who, for all its toughness, creates courageous artists", the speaker tries to align as many potential audience who share the same view and take the same position as possible.

By adopting the negative resources of Dis/satisfaction in Example (6), the speaker tries to

be distant from those who voted for the ban against gay marriage.

2.4 Analysis of Graduation in OASs

As we introduced before in Chapter 3.3.3, the system of Graduation deals with the gradability of the other two systems of Appraisal theory: Attitude and Engagement. Under Graduation, there are two sub-systems, Force and Focus. In this chapter, we

are going to conduct a detailed analysis of the distribution of these two sub-systems. We tend to examine how the Graduation resources are used to valuate the turning up or down Oscar winners' positive or negative attitudinal feelings to intensify the degree of their utterance. The general distribution of the Graduation resources in actors' and actresses' OASs are seen in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4: The General Distribution of Graduation Resources in Actors' OASs

	Force		Focus	Up-scale	Down-scale	Total
	Intensifi-cation	Quantifi-cation				
M 1	6	4	3	11	2	13
M 2	10	0	1	11	0	11
M 3	11	5	2	17	1	18
M 4	17	4	1	22	0	22
M 5	16	5	1	19	3	22
Total	50	18	8	70	6	76
Percentage	65.8%	23.7%	10.5%	92.1%	7.9%	100%

Table 5: The General Distribution of Graduation Resources in Actresses' OASs

	Force		Focus	Up-scale	Down-scale	Total
	Intensifi-cation	Quantifi-cation				
Pr. 1	11	4	0	15	0	15
Pr. 2	5	0	2	7	0	7
Pr. 3	13	1	4	18	0	18
Pr. 4	9	6	1	16	0	16
Pr. 5	12	8	1	21	0	21
Total	50	19	8	77	0	77
Percentage	64.9%	24.7%	10.4%	100%	0	100%

From Tables 4 and 5, we could see that both of the OASs have more Force resources than Focus resources, and within Force resources, Intensification accounts for more than Quantification. Most of the resources are to up scale the Attitude and Engagement resources.

3 CONCLUSION

In our research, we have selected ten pieces of OASs of the recent years, five by leading actresses and five by leading actors. In this thesis, because of space limitation, we choose four pieces of OAS and

elaborate them. All of the pieces of OASs are downloaded from the Internet through the homepage of The Academy: http://www.oscars.org. Within the framework of the Appraisal theory, through qualitative approach, we have conducted a detailed analysis of the four samples, trying to find out the Interpersonal functions of OASs.

For the analysis of the Attitude resources in the ten OASs, we note that there are two different figures in the two different OASs.

The first one is that the ranking of the three resources is different. In actors' OASs, the biggest portion is the Appreciation resources, while in actresses' OASs, the Affect resources occupy the

first place. It explains the fact that actors are more rational than actresses when they receive awards and make a speech on the stage. They employ more Appreciation than Affect to express more feelings of assessment of objects, artefacts, processes and states of affairs than their own inner feelings of emotions.

The second one is the distribution of negative Attitudinal resources. There are several negative resources in actors' OASs, while we could not find any negative resources in actresses' OASs. It reflects that actors are showing greater sense of humour than actresses on the awarding-received stage. Because all the negative resources can be interpreted as positive ones. The negative usage of languages reversely is one way of showing humour.

The Engagement resources employed in the actors' and actresses' OASs are different. From Table 4.10, it is evident that in actors' OASs, the Dialogistic contraction and Dialogistic expansion share almost the same proportion of Engagement sources. Within the Dialogistic contraction, Deny holds larger shares than other resources, and we cannot find any Concur resources. In Dialogistic expansion, all of the resources are Entertain, no Attribute can be found. It shows that the actors pay more attention to interaction with the audience as well as to expressing his feelings.

The research on the Graduation resources clearly shows that both of the OASs have more Force resources than Focus resources, and within Force resources, Intensification accounts for more than Quantification. Most of the resources are to up scale the Attitude and Engagement resources.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

REFERENCES

Brown, G. & Yule, G. 1983. *Discourse Analysis.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Halliday, M.A.K. 1994/2000. An Introduction to Functional Grammar (2nd edn). London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd/Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Martin, J. R. & White, P. R. R. 2008. *The language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan/Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Hood, S. 2004. Appraising Research: Taking a Stance in Academic Writing. http://www.grammatics.com/appraisal/hoodS-phd-links.htm. http://www.oscars.org.

Li, L. 2007. *Evaluative Meanings in a TV Talk Show: A Case Study.* Unpublished M.A. dissertation. Sun Yat-sen University.

Liang, Y.Y. 2007. *A Functional Stylistic Analysis of Oscar Acceptance Speeches.* Unpublished M.A. dissertation. Sun Yat-sen University.

Martin, J. R. 2004. *English Text: System and Structure.* Beijing: Peking University Press.

Martin, J. R. & Rose, D. 2007. *Working with Discourse: Meaning beyond the Clause (2nd Edition).* London: Continuum.

Page, R. E. 2003. An Analysis of APPRAISAL in Childbirth Narratives with Special Consideration of Gender and Storytelling Style. *Text.*

Wilson, D. 1994. *Relevance and Understanding.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Xu, J.Z. 2010. *Attitudinal Meanings in Cosmetic Advertisements.* Unpublished M.A. dissertation. Sun Yat-sen University.