A STUDY OF "ATTITUDE" IN ENGLISH RESTAURANT REVIEWS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF APPRAISAL THEORY

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Abstract - Appraisal Theory is a framework developed by James Martin and Peter White in the 1990s which was based on the theoretical model of systemic functional linguistics. The appraisal system in this theory is a functional model that functions at the discourse semantic level, with a focusing on interpersonal meaning. The purpose of this paper aims to find out the language of "Affect", "Judgement" and "Appreciation" in the category "Attitude" used in English restaurant reviews in terms of syntactic features and semantic features. The findings reveal that the semantic features, the positive evaluative Attitudes reflected in the samples outweigh the negative values. In terms of the syntactic features, Adjective Groups and Nominal Groups are more frequently used than Verbal Groups, Adverbial Groups and Prepositional Phrases. On the basis of the finding, the article provides basic knowledge about the evaluative discourse and to some extent enables them to interpret a discourse.

Key words - Affect; Judgement; Appreciation; semantic features; syntactic features

1. Rationale

Understanding the expression "Attitude" in English restaurant reviews is critical in today's competitive culinary market. These reviews play an important communication channel between customers and businesses, which allows people to share their preferences, rates, and experiences with food and service. A well-written review not only improves consumer decisions but also influences restaurant reputations. Furthermore, the linguistic features used in these reviews have an important function in influencing perceptions and can increase the persuasive power of feedback. According to Martin and White [1] the effective use of language evaluative circumstances allows people to successfully communicate their feelings (Affect), assess the quality of services and behaviors (Judgement), and evaluate the cuisine and overall dining experience (Appreciation).

Being aware of the importance of "Attitude" in English restaurant reviews is essential for understanding consumer behavior and enhancing the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms in the restaurant industry. In the light of Appraisal Theory, this article explores how linguistic features such as Affect, Judgement and Appreciation are reflected in the syntactic features and semantic features of English restaurant reviews, providing deeper insights into evaluative language and its implications.

From these bases, this study seeks to answer two research questions: (1) What are the syntactic features of Affect, Judgement and Appreciation in English restaurant reviews? (2) What are the semantic features of the above-mentioned sub-categories of "Attitude" in English restaurant reviews?

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Appraisal Theory by Martin and White (2005)

2.1.1. Appraisal Theory

Appraisal Theory, developed by Martin and White [1] is a framework within the broader field of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) that focuses on how language is used to express evaluation, stance, and emotion in discourse. According to Martin and White [1, p.1], Appraisal theory emphasizes the interpersonal function of language, highlighting how writers and speakers project their subjective perspectives in discourse by taking stances toward both the topic they present and the audience with whom they communicate. Furthermore, this theory is concerned with "evaluation - the kinds of Attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and how values are sourced and readers aligned" [2].

Angela Downing and Philip Locke [3] take a functional approach to English grammar, basing their analysis on the works of Halliday [4]. This viewpoint emphasizes that grammar is not just a set of rules but a tool for effective communication, allowing learners to understand how different structures serve specific purposes in language use.

This study is mainly concerned with an investigation into "Affect", "Judgement" and "Appreciation" in English restaurant reviews in terms of their syntactic features by Downing and Locke's view [3] and semantic features in the light of Appraisal Theory by Martin and White [1].

2.1.2. The sub-categories of "Attitude"

According to Martin and White [1, p.35], Attitude is one of three sub-systems of Appraisal Theory which refers to *"our feelings, including emotional reactions"*.

Attitudinal meanings can be divided into three subtypes [1]:

"Affect": the characterization of phenomena by reference to emotion.

"Judgement": the evaluation of human behavior concerning social norms.

"Appreciation": the evaluation of objects and products (rather than human behavior) by reference to aesthetic principles and other systems of social value.

2.1.3. Restaurant

Restaurants play a significant role in our lifestyles and dining out is a popular social activity. Today, more meals than ever are being eaten away from home. As a result, reviews can significantly impact a restaurant's reputation, affecting everything from customer footfall to menu adjustments. The author discusses how feedback from customers, whether positive or negative, can guide owners in refining their offerings and enhancing the overall dining experience [5].

2.2. Previous researches related to the study

Numerous studies have been undertaken across different subfields, applying Appraisal Theory to examine evaluative language in diverse contexts. However, few studies have systematically analyzed the sub-categories of Attitude namely "Affect", "Judgement" and "Appreciation" in English restaurant reviews. The application of Appraisal Theory, particularly its syntactic and semantic features has not been thoroughly investigated. This study provides a detailed analysis of how Attitude categories are realized in English restaurant reviews, focusing on their syntactic and semantic features. It offers both theoretical contributions to Appraisal Theory and practical implications for the restaurant industry.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research Design

The qualitative approach is used in describing and analyzing the data to find out the distinctive realizations of "Affect", "Judgement" and "Appreciation" in terms of syntactic features and semantic features in English restaurant reviews. On the contrary, the quantitative produce is useful for determining occurrence frequencies of "Affect", "Judgement" and "Appreciation" in percentage.

3.2. Research Methods

The researchers employed descriptive analysis techniques to identify specific linguistic features and realizations of "Affect", "Judgement" and "Appreciation" in the collected restaurant reviews. Additionally, the study focused on the frequency of these categories to further understand their prevalence in English restaurant reviews.

3.3. Data Collection

Based on the investigation of English Restaurant Review websites, 5 websites were found active namely: *TripAdvisor, Fine Dining Explorer, Zomato, The Infatuation, and Great British Chefs.* The locations of the restaurants being reviewed on these websites include larger cities across English-speaking regions and worldwide. Among these platforms, two provide restaurant reviews generated by professional reviewers, while the other three feature reviews from consumers.

Each website provides numerous reviews that discuss the customer's dining experience. However, for the purposes of this study, only those reviews containing instances of "Affect", "Judgement" and "Appreciation" were selected for analysis. This selective approach ensures that the data collected is closely related to the research subject.

With such criteria, 400 samples are chosen from the most popular restaurant review websites. Finally, such collected data are taken into researching and analyzing in order to find out the linguistic features in terms of syntactic features and semantic features.

3.4. Research Instrument

The tools for identifying and collecting data of the study were observation and documentary review. Along with this technique, the Sketch Engine tool was used to investigate occurrence frequencies of word types such as Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives, and adverbs in the three aspects of "Attitude" in syntactic and semantic features.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Syntactic Features of "Attitude" sub-categories

According to Martin and White [1], the development of Appraisal Theory within the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) model enables the identification of "Affect", "Judgement" and "Appreciation" markers in a variety of syntactic features such as Verbal Groups, Nominal Groups, Adverbial Groups, and Prepositional Phrases.

4.1.1. Syntactic Features of "Affect"

a. "Affect" Features by means of Nominal Groups

Nominal Groups constructed as one of the prominent structures of "Affect" are complex Nominal Groups consisting of Head nouns, Pre-modifiers and Post-modifiers. For example:

(4.1) **A deep satisfaction with the exquisite dishes** [6].

(4.2) **My profound appreciation for the chef's creativity** was evident throughout the meal, leaving me hopeful for the future of Gourmet Haven [6].

Table 1. "Affect" in the structure of Nominal Groups

	Structural Elements			
	Determiner	Pre-modifier	Head Noun	Post – modifier
(4.1)	A	deep	satisfaction	with…
(4.2)	My	profound	appreciation	for…

The framework comprising Determiner, Pre-modifier, Head Noun and Post-modifier is used to analyze these reviews. Determiners are often possessive adjectives such as *"my"* or the article *"a"* are frequently used to relate to personal experiences. Pre-modifiers like *"deep"*, connected the Determiners. Head Nouns *"satisfaction"* and *"appreciation"* express positive Affect. The post-modifiers expanding the information of Head nouns are Prepositional Phrases and That - clauses.

b. "Affect" Features by means of Verbal Groups

Verbal groups which consist of a main verb and its auxiliaries or modifiers, often play a significant role in expressing the reviewer's feelings.

(4.3) **We enjoyed the element of surprise** and were not disappointed by the food [6].

(4.4) A very well-executed soufflé but **I would have preferred more bitterness** [7].

Table 2. *"Affect" in the structure of Verbal Groups*

	Structural Elements			
	Subject	**Auxiliary**	**Main Verb**	**Noun Phrase**
(4.3)	I		enjoyed	the element...
(4.4)	I	would have	preferred	more bitterness

As can be seen in Table 2, analyzing these Verbal Groups the examples (4.3) and (4.4) *"enjoyed", and "preferred"* helps us understand customer's emotions and satisfaction levels.

c. "Affect" Features by means of Adjectival Groups

The structure of Adjective Groups in English restaurant reviews is Adverb, Head Adjective and Prepositional Phrase. The Head of an Adjective Group is always realized by an adjective, which may function alone in the representation of a whole Adjective Group.

(4.5) All were above expectations, but **we were really impressed with the desserts** [6].

(4.6) *If you need a place to rest up over a cup of coffee, check this place out.* **I'm deeply glad to enjoy pastel Vasco** [6].

Table 3. *"Affect" in the structure of Adjectival Groups*

	Structural Elements		
	Adverb	**Head Adjective**	**Prepositional Phrase**
(4.5)	really	impressed	with …
(4.6)	deeply	glad	to enjoy …

d. "Affect" Features of Adverbial Groups

Among the "Affect" resources in the data, there are no cases where emotions are denoted by Adverbial Groups in "Affect" realizations in English restaurant reviews.

e. "Affect" Features by means of Prepositional Phrases

(4.7) **I have to confess to having many years of experiencing Michelin 3-star quality in Europe behind me** [8].

Table 4. *"Affect" in the structure of Prepositional Phrases*

	Structural Elements		
	Head Noun	**Adjective Phrase**	**Prepositional Phrases**
(4.7)	I	have to confess	to having…

Table 4 shows the structure determined by Nouns, Adjectives and Prepositional Phrases as a complement.

4.1.2. Syntactic Features of "Judgement"

"Judgement" is further divided into social esteem and social sanction covering aspects like normality, capacity, tenacity, veracity, and propriety.

a. "Judgement" Features by means of Nominal Groups

Nominal Groups include various components such as Determiners, Head Noun, Pre –modifiers and Post – modifiers. Let's consider the following examples:

(4.8) *If you leave Au Cheval disappointed because the food wasn't uniformly great, it's a sign you didn't go in with* **the right expectations** [8].

(4.9) **His meticulous honesty in the presentation was impressive** [6].

Table 5. *"Judgement" in the structure of Nominal Groups*

	Structural Elements			
	Determiner	**Pre-modifier**	**Head Noun**	**Post – modifier**
(4.8)	The	right	expectations	
(4.9)	His	meticulous	honesty	in the …

From Table 5, Pre-modifier in the structure of Nominal Groups of "Judgement" are mostly adjectives, linked to the Determiners are often possessive adjectives or articles, with the Head Noun word that expresses "Judgement".

b. "Judgement" Features by means of Verb Groups

It is found that that clause or Noun Phrase can function as a complement to the verb. Here are some typical examples:

(4.10) **The authenticity of the chicken is still not convincing that it meets traditional standards,** *but the rice certainly was, making the steamed rice the best dish* [6].

(4.11) **The management demonstrated professionalism and attention to detail,** *making the visit to this restaurant a memorable and enjoyable experience* [6].

Table 6. *"Judgement" in the structure of Verb Groups*

	Structural Elements		
	Noun Phrase	**Main Verb**	**That clause of or Noun Phrase**
(4.10)	The authenticity of the chicken	is still not convincing	that it meets traditional standards
(4.11)	The management	demonstrated	professionalism and attention to detail…..

c. "Judgement" Features by means of Adjectival Groups

The typical structure is as follows: *Modifier + Head Adjective + Prepositional Phrase Complement.*

(4.12) *Whether you are a novice wanting to learn more about wine or an aficionado seeking to explore new pairings,* **they are remarkably adept at guiding customers through an extensive selection with ease and enthusiasm** [6].

Table 7. *"Judgement" in the structure of Adjectival Groups*

	Structural Elements		
	Adverb	**Head Adjective**	**Prepositional Phrase Complement**
(4.12)	remarkably	adept	at guiding customers ……

d. "Judgement" Features by means of Adverbial Groups

The number of Adverbial Groups as "Judgement" is quite limited in English restaurant reviews.

(4.13) **The macarons are ridiculously good and well-made** [6].

Table 8. *"Judgement" in the structure of Adverbial Groups*

	Structural Elements			
	Subject	**Verb**	**Adverb**	**Adjective**
(4.13)	The macarons	are	ridiculously	good

Adverb *"ridiculously"* as a "Judgement" marker modifies the Adjective in (4.13).

e. "Judgement" Features via Prepositional Phrases

(4.14) *The food was fantastic.* ***The chef was commended for his innovative dishes*** *[6].*

Table 9. *"Judgement" Features via Prepositional Phrases*

	Structural Elements		
	Noun Phrase	**Verb**	**Prepositional Phrases**
(4.14)	The chef	was commended	for his innovative dishes

4.1.3. Syntactic Features of "Appreciation"

Like "Affect" and "Judgement", "Appreciation" also focuses on the syntactic Features shown by types of syntax groups, namely, Nominal Groups, Verbal Groups, Adjective Groups, Adverbial Groups and Prepositional Phrases.

a. "Appreciation" Features by means of Nominal Groups

(4.15) *We took the menu which was* ***an excellent combination of ingredients and taste*** *[6].*

(4.16) *Beyond the wine culture, there's* ***an extraordinary concentration of Michelin-starred restaurants in the regio***n *[6].*

Table 10. *"Appreciation" in the structure of Nominal Groups*

	Structural Elements			
	Determiner	**Pre-modifier**	**Head Noun**	**Post - modifier**
(4.15)	an	excellent	combination	of …
(4.16)	an	extraordinary	concentration	of …

Table 10 illustrates that Pre-Modifiers are adjectives that connect with Determiners and Head Nouns. Post-modifiers often in the form of prepositional phrases provide additional details about the Head Noun.

b. "Appreciation" Features by means of Verbal Groups

(4.17) ***The feedback from customers has consistently been valued ensuring a top-notch dining experience*** *[6].*

(4.18) ***The restaurant has repeatedly succeeded in creating a dining experience that combines great food with exceptional service*** *[7].*

Table 11. *"Appreciation" in the structure of Verbal Groups*

	Structural Elements			
	Subject	**Auxiliary**	**Head Verb**	**Gerund Phrase or Prepositional Phrases**
(4.17)	The feedback from customers	has consistently been	valued	ensuring a …
(4.18)	The restaurant	has repeatedly	succeeded	in creating a dining …

c. "Appreciation" Features by means of Adjectival Groups

(4.19) ***The food was really outstanding that we were surprised*** *[6].*

(4.20) ***Prices are very reasonable to offer a refreshing and appreciated experience*** *[6].*

Table 12. *"Appreciation" in the structure of Adjectival Groups*

	Structural Elements		
	Adverb	**Head Adjective**	**That clause, To –infinitive**
(4.19)	really	outstanding	that …
(4.20)	very	reasonable	to offer a …

The adjective is modified by the adverb forming a *Modifier + Head Adjective* structure. Besides, That clause, To –infinitive functions as a complement to the adjective.

d. "Appreciation" Features by means of Adverbial Groups

(4.21) ***The decor showcased a remarkably elegant design***, *adding to the overall charm of the place [6].*

Table 13. *"Appreciation" in the structure of Adverbial Groups*

	Structural Elements		
	Noun Phrase	**Verb Phrase**	**Adverb Phrase**
(4.21)	The decor	showcased	remarkably

e. "Appreciation" Features by means of Preposition Phrases

(4.22) *The pasta was cooked* ***with remarkable skill*** *by the chef [6].*

(4.23) *The meat was grilled* ***with wonderful flavor***. *The waitstaff delivered great service which raised the overall experience [6].*

Table 14. *"Appreciation" in the structure of Prepositional Phrases*

	Structural Elements		
	Noun Phrase	**Verb Phrase**	**Preposition Phrases**
(4.22)	The pasta	was cooked	with remarkable skill
(4.23)	The meat	was grilled	with wonderful flavor

The following figure illustrates the occurrence of "Affect", "Judgement" and "Appreciation" in the sample data and the distribution of syntactic structures in each type.
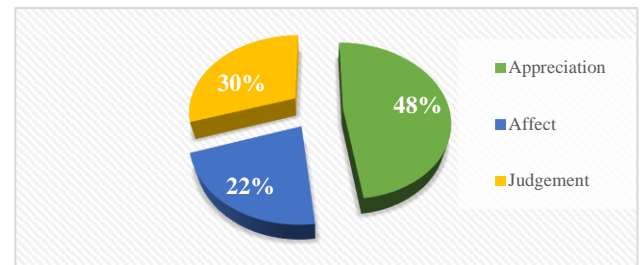

Figure 1. *Occurrence Frequencies of the "Attitude" sub-categories in terms of Syntactic Realizations*

The result of data analysis shows occurrence frequencies of "Attitude" sub-categories. The result indicates that "Appreciation" is employed at the highest frequency (48%), the appearance of "Judgement" takes the second (30%) and "Affect" is the third (22%).

4.2. Semantic Features of "Attitude" Sub-Categories

This framework expresses emotional responses such as Un/happiness, In/security, Dis/satisfaction, and Dis/inclination. By analyzing the semantic features of Attitude sub-categories, we can observe how both positive (+) and negative (-) evaluations are expressed, highlighting the ways in which emotions, judgements, and appreciations are framed in English restaurant reviews.

a. Un/happiness by means of "Affect" Markers

The Un/happiness variable includes emotions related to which are connected to the mood and feelings, such as sadness, hate, anger, happiness, and love, etc. [1, p.51]

(4.24) *I felt so really happy to spend here* (+) [6].

(4.25) *The unexpected delight from the appetizers truly surprised me, but **my strong sense of disappointment with the main course** prevented me from being fully satisfied* (-) [6].

b. Dis/satisfaction by means of "Affect" Markers

The dis/satisfaction variable covers emotions concerned with telos (the pursuit of goals) – ennui, displeasure, curiosity and respect [1, p.51].

(4.26) *A **deep sense of satisfaction** filled me from the exquisite dishes,* (+) [6].

(4.27) *The unexpected delight from the appetizers truly surprised me, but my strong sense of disappointment with the main course **prevented me from being fully satisfied**,* (-) [6].

c. In/security by means of "Affect" Markers

The In/security variable covers emotions concerned with eco-social well-being- anxiety, fear, confidence and trust [1, p.51]. Below are some examples:

(4.28) *The cleanliness of the place and the professionalism of the staff gave me a strong sense **of assurance and safety**,* (+) [7].

(4.29) *I'm honestly **perplexed** by the positive reviews of this pastry shop,* (-) [6].

d. Dis/inclination by means of "Affect" markers

Inclination refers to such feelings as desire or fear. It denotes how the speaker/writer is inclined or disinclined to something. [1, p.51]. Below are some examples:

(4.30) *I was really **craving with** Ice cream last night in San Sebastián and this place did not let us down,* (+) [6].

(4.31) *We were **unenthusiastic** about trying the new vegan dishes at Green Leaf Bistro,* (-) [10].

4.2.1. Semantic Features of "Judgement"

a. Social Esteem by means of "Judgement" Markers

"Judgement" of esteem has to do with "normality" (how unusual someone is), "capacity" (how capable they are) and "tenacity" (how resolute they are) [1, p.53].

Normality

(4.32) *His **meticulous honesty** in the presentation was impressive,* (+) [6].

(4.33) *The **noisy** atmosphere and **haphazard** decor detracted from what should have been a pleasant dining experience,* (-) [6].

Capacity

(4.34) *Their **exceptional professionalism** made our evening unforgettable,* (+) [10].

(4.35) *Despite the beautiful setting, the overall experience was marred by the **unprofessional behavior** of the staff,* (-) [6].

Tenacity

(4.36) *Le Bernardin is a testament to culinary artistry and **ethical** cooking,* (+) [6].

Veracity

(4.37) *The chef's **truthfulness** about the origins of each dish adds to the dining experience. This **honesty** set the restaurant apart,* (+) [6]**.**

(4.38) *The pictures and descriptions online did not match what was served. This **lack of honesty** was quite disappointing,* (-) [10].

Propriety

(4.39) *The servers were attentive without being intrusive, and their **consideration** for our dining preferences truly elevated the experience,* (+) [6].

(4.40) *The **rude** behavior of the staff was unacceptable. They are **disrespectful**,* (-) [6].

4.2.2. Semantic Features of "Appreciation"

a. Reaction by means of "Appreciation" Markers

Reaction is related to affection (emotive – "it grabs me", desiderative – "I want it"). Reaction consists of Reaction Impact and Reaction Quality [1, p.56]. For example:

Reaction Impact

(4.41) *The presentation of each dish was **breathtaking** and truly **captivating**,* (+) [6].

(4.42) *The food was visually **unappealing**, making the entire meal a disappointment,* (-) [6].

Reaction Quality

(4.43) *The setting of the restaurant was simply **wonderful**, creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere,* (+) [6].

(4.44) *The pasta was overcooked and lacked any distinct flavor, making it an **underwhelming dish**,* (-) [10].

b. Composition by means of "Appreciation" Markers

Composition is related to perception (our view of order). It also consists of two small parts: Composition Balance and Composition Complexity [1, p.56].

Composition Balance

(4.45) *The dish was a **harmonious blend of flavors**, where each ingredient was in **perfect proportion** to the others,* (+) [6].

(4.46) *The ingredients were **not properly aligned**, leading to a **disjointed flavor profile** that detracted from the overall dining experience,* (-) [6].

Composition Complexity

(4.47) *The menu at this restaurant is a testament to the chef's ability to create dishes of **stunning complexity**,* (+) [6].

(4.48) *The menu **is just made up of decadent versions** of standard diner dishes, with most things priced under $20, and the burger at center stage,* (-) [9].

c. Valuation by means of "Appreciation" Markers

Valuation is related to cognition (our considered opinions). Furthermore, valuation reveals our opinions to things [1, p.56]. For example:

(4.49). *This is small restaurant with **good** staff. Even though the restaurant is small the ambience is **good and maintained***, **(+)** [10].

(4.50) *The appetizers were **insignificant** and did nothing to set the tone for the meal*, **(-)** [6].
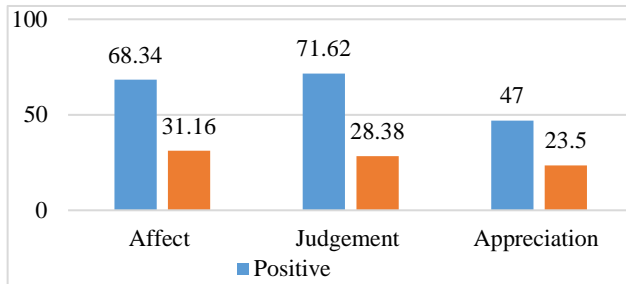

***Figure 2**. Occurrence Frequencies of Positive and Negative Evaluations of the three sub-categories of "Attitude"*

As can be seen in Figure 2, both subcategories of "Attitude" like "Affect", "Judgement" and "Appreciation" have positive and negative ratios approximately the same. However, positive evaluations in the three sub-categories of "Attitude" prevail over negative ones.

4.3. Discussion

The findings of this study expand on previous research on Appraisal Theory by providing a focused analysis of how "Affect", "Judgement", and "Appreciation" are realized in English restaurant reviews. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of evaluative language and its role in consumer feedback. Additionally, the findings offer practical implications for restaurant owners and customers in interpreting and responding to reviews.

5. Conclusion

The findings of the study have answered the two research questions and they show the results as follows:

Syntactically, Nominal Groups and Adjectival Groups are used more frequently than Verbal Groups, Adverbial Groups, and Prepositional Phrases across all three subcategories of "Attitude". Nominal Groups are the most common, followed by Adjectival Groups, which express evaluations of quality.

Semantically, the results show that "Affect", "Judgement" and "Appreciation" values all of the subtypes with positive and negative values. However, the positive values are used more commonly than the negative ones. Moreover, Appreciation is the most frequently used subsystem, indicating that reviewers focus more on evaluating the quality and value of their dining experiences than on expressing emotions or making moral judgments.

The findings provide insights for restaurant owners to improve services based on customer feedback and help customers make more informed choices. Future research may examine cultural differences in evaluative language and explore the impact of social media on consumer behavior.

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