

Positioning Attitudes in Selected Prison Letters

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Abstract:

The present research aimed at positioning attitudes of a selected group of prison letters in terms of Martin and White's Appraisal Theory (2005). To have this goal accomplished, a corpus of about (3459) words was selected to represent five prison letters. The results showed that the categories of Attitude and Judgment were the most frequent in terms of occurrence, whereas the category of Appreciation came second in terms of frequency. The category of Affect, on the other hand, had the lowest percentage of occurrence. Generally speaking, the negative impression was the mastering in terms of positivity and negativity.

Keywords: Appraisal Theory, prison letters, attitudes, affect, judgment, appreciation.

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تحديد المواقف في مختارات من رسائل السجون

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المخلص:-

يهدف البحث الحالي إلى تحديد المواقف في مجموعة من رسائل السجون تم اختيارها ليتم تحليلها وفق المنظور التقويمي لمارتن و وايت (٢٠٠٥)، و الذي يسعى ايضاً بنظرية التقييم . لتحقيق هذا الهدف، تم اختيار متن لغوي مكون من حوالي (٣٤٥٩) كلمة لتمثل خمساً من رسائل السجون . وقد أظهرت النتائج أن فئة المواقف، و التي هي جزء من المنظور التقويمي، كانت بارزةً ولكنها لم تكن ليس بدرجة متساوية في البروز. فقد أظهرت النتائج بان الفئة الحكمية نالت الحصة الكبرى في الظهور بينما جاءت الفئة التقديرية في المرتبة الثانية على الطرف الآخر، حازت الفئة التأثرية على النسبة الأقل من حيث الظهور. عموماً كان الطابع السلبي متسيداً من حيث الايجابية و السلبية في المواقف.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المنظور التقويمي، رسائل السجون، المواقف، التأثر، الحكم، التقدير.

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1. Introduction

Imprisonment is considered as the last step that the justice takes as a process of correcting criminal behavior. Prison is the place where people, committing some sort of behavior against law and order, are put in as a kind of punishment or as an approach of rehabilitation and correction. A place like prison might be a fertile location for several kinds of arts like music, paintings and writing; letter writing is also included. Prison writing can support imprisoned people to sustain their relationships, recover their feeling and survive facing their fate. Prison writings may be an alternate reaction against violence (Kelly & Westall,2021:22).

Prisoners create several works that can be impressive literature as having hundreds of this kind of works. Works like these, which can describe prisoner's life and experience inside prison, are not so obvious to people outside. Nevertheless, they can be highly recognized and appreciated by people outside jails. Prison writings appeared as a result to express oneself. Imprisoned people need to describe and to inform their tales about their experience inside. (Ryan, 2016:1).

The earliest writings were delivered from prisoners started publishing after detainment (Kelly & Westall,2021:3). Prison writing started gaining an academic traction from the early 1960s and 1970s especially in the USA. The period of early 2000s has witnessed a growing up attention in such writing making a strong relationship between prison and the arts (Kelly & Westall,2021:3).

Studying prison letters in terms of appraisal theory is considered as a new approach of discourse analysis which has not got worthwhile attention. The language of prison letters charged with attitudes because writing is the only means for prisoners to express themselves and tell what they feel, suffer and experience inside prison.

The present study hypothesizes the following:

1-Discourse analysis of prison letters can be best investigated in terms of appraisal theory as it enables us to evaluate the psychological states of the imprisoned people.

2-The category of attitude is abundant in prison letters more than the other categories of Appraisal Theory.

3- The negative impression is the dominated in the discourse of prison letters.

The importance of the present study lays on its emphasis on the importance of evaluation generally and on the Appraisal Theory in particular in analyzing the attitudes of prison letters. Discussing the discourse of prison letters, in terms of the Appraisal Theory, may elevate the value of this study.

The present study has a limitation of corpus that consists of five prison letters. These letters are George Jackson's letter to his mother on February , 1964; his two letters to father on December , 1964; a fourth to his mother on March,12th 1965 and finally George's letter to his father on March,16th 1965. The study aims to analyze the attitudinal Category presented by Martin and White (2005) under the title of Appraisal Theory along with other two categories, which are Graduation and Engagement; the last two categories are not going to be used in the study.

1. Literature Review

The Appraisal Theory has been chosen as a framework for the current study because it is concerned with evaluating and expressing the writer's or speaker's opinion, attitude, feeling and judgment. Martin and White mentioned that 'appraisal' is a meaning possibly situated in a shape of semantic level comprehended later on in lexico-grammar by the main categories of appraisal : Attitude, Engagement and Graduation (Martin, 2000, as cited in Pascual & Unger, 2010:266).

The Appraisal Theory is based on three major categories: attitude, graduation, and engagement. Attitude deals with feelings and emotional reactions. It is subdivided into three sub-attitudes which are: 'affect', 'judgment' and 'appreciation'. Affect describes how people reveal their feeling in discourse, 'judgment' refers to the evaluation of human behavior, and 'appreciation' is concerned with the value of objects. The second category, Engagement, is further sub-divided into two sub-categories: monogloss meaning one voice and hetrogloss is multi voices. Graduation is the last category and it is also sub-categorized into 'force' and 'focus' (Martine and White, 2005: 37).

1.1. Attitude

Attitude is considered a general system in charge of the languages of appraisal containing reactions of emotions (what people feel), how these emotions are socially judged and how people think about those feelings and aesthetic evaluations, how beautifully those feelings are evaluated. Attitude falls into three sub-systems or domains of feeling

‘Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation’. ‘Affect’, is the domain of emotion, ‘Judgment’ is the domain of ethics, and ‘Appreciation’ whose concern is aesthetics (Thompson & Alba-Juez , 2014: 71).

1.1.1. Affect

Affect is a sub-system of attitude whose main concern is to describe the speaker’s or writer’s personal emotions .These emotions can be noticed as positive and negative. Those feelings can be referring to happiness or sadness, confidence or anxiety, interest or boredom (Martin & White, 2005:42). According to Martin & Rose (2007:29), summing up ‘affect’ can be either positive or negative affect, and that it can be recognized both directly (explicitly) and indirectly (implicitly).

Here are some examples taken from the study:

1. We were **alienated** from our sources..... (Negative affect of insecure).
2. You know I **love** my mother(Positive affect of happiness).
3. I've forgotten the feeling of **joy**..... (Negative affect of unhappiness).
4. We were **isolated** and **remolded** to fit in certain forms, to fill specific purpose.....(Negative affect of dissatisfaction).
5. We must look to each other and destroy the barriers placed between us with **trust**, and love.....(Positive affect of satisfaction) .
6. It is clear you don't love me (Negative affect of unhappiness).
7. I am being **betrayed** and have been **betrayed**..... (Negative Affect of Unhappiness).
8. Men can live **together** without chaos..... (Positive affect of security).
9. I am still **confined** to this cell..... (Negative affect of unhappiness).
10. This is not mere talk, my ego is nowhere **involved**..... (Positive affect: satisfaction).

1.1.2. Judgment

‘Judgment’ is the second attitude that includes opinions which are built on socio-cultural standards of suitable behaviors. Emotions and ethical assessments are considered as good examples influenced strongly by the standards prevailing beliefs of a certain culture; they are

prominent markers of how these emotions are evaluated in association (Martin and White 2005: 52).

Hart (2014:49) mentioned that through the system of judgment, the speaker is allowed to convey moral evaluations about other people's behaviors and characters. The system is divided into two main categories, 'social esteem', which is concerned with personal judgment, and 'social sanction', whose main concern is moral judgment. These two categories, whether positive (admire) or negative (criticism), can be recognized explicitly or implicitly.

The sub-categories of social esteem contain: normality, capacity, and tenacity. 'Normality' means how someone is special. Words like normal, lucky, unexpected, extraordinary, etc. can be included under the heading of 'normality'. While 'capacity' is concerned with the manner of someone's capability or in other words how capable someone is. Words such as 'able', 'powerful', 'weak', and 'successful' can be good examples of 'capacity'. The last sub-category 'tenacity' is related to the degree of dependability of someone or how dependable someone is. Words like 'brave', 'energetic', 'tireless' and 'heroic' are associated with tenacity (Hart, 2014:49).

Hart (2014:50) states that 'social sanction', on the other hand, is divided into two sub-categories: 'veracity', which means how truthful a person is, and 'propriety' referring to how far beyond ethics an individual is. The following examples are chosen from the study:

1. George is ***no good*** (Judgment: negative condemn).
2. My advice falls upon ***deaf*** ears (Judgment : negative normality)
3. People are ***odd*** indeed(Judgment : negative criticism)
4. If a ***good*** god exists... (Judgment : Positive propriety)
5. I am ***equal*** to anything that is required ... (Judgment :positive capacity)
6. I ***can*** overlook him more readily(Judgment: positive: capacity).
7. I ***could*** never in this existence betray my kind.....(Judgment: Negative: capacity).
8. She kept telling me how ***wrong*** I was and making me feel ***guilty***. (Judgment: Negative: Propriety).
9. I'm not just another ***convict*** or "Negro."..... (Judgment: negative: propriety).

10. I know you are **intelligent** enough to understand..... Judgment: positive: capacity).

2.1.3. Appreciation

Finally, 'Appreciation' gives the speaker or writer a permission to evaluate objects in a beautiful way. These objects can be material or semiotic. Appreciation falls into three sub-categories: 'reaction', which means effect or quality, 'valuation' including terms of uniqueness and values, and 'composition', which includes terms of being complex, balance and functional. Like the first two categories, 'appreciation' can be either positive or negative (Hart, 2014: 50). Here are some examples taken from the study:

1. *She hadn't been reading life thoughts through those rose-colored glasses of hers.....* (Positive appreciation of reaction: impact).
2. *This is a predatory man's world.....* (Negative appreciation of valuation).
3. I had no one, no one, to teach me the things of real value.... (Positive Appreciation of valuation)
4. 14. You must realize, understand fully, that we have little or no control over our lives..... (Negative Appreciation).
5. This is a betrayal of the worst kind. (Negative Appreciation of reaction: quality).
6. The cruellest and most suppressive treatment has always fallen to the males..... (Negative appreciation of reaction: quality).
7. That is the one I always win, the important one.... (positive appreciation of valuation).
8. Think of what I say in relation to things past, and the vague possibility that is our future..... (Negative appreciation of composition: complexity).
9. This should be read first for the idea to follow in logical order. (Positive appreciation of composition: balance).
10. That is too bad..... (Negative appreciation of reaction: quality).

2. Methodology and Data Collection

The data of the study comprises a corpus of total number of (3459) words of five prison letters selected from George Jackson's prison letters sent to his parents. These letters were copied from a shape of PDF and were pasted into word documents so that to make analysis easier. The

analysis was accomplished in respect to the attitudinal system presented in Martin and White (2005) as a framework of the analysis.

3. Data Analysis and Discussion

The Analysis of data has shown that the total amount of the attitudinal positioning in a selection of five prison letters is 81.

The category of 'affect' occurs (12) times only making a percentage of 14.81% of the entire amount of attitudinal occurrence. Table (1) is a summary of the affect occurrences in the selected material:

Table (1) Distribution of the *Affect* category

Affect			
Letter No.	Positive	Negative	Total
Letter No.1	0	2	2
Letter No.2	0	2	2
Letter No.3	2	3	5
Letter No.4	0	3	3
Letter No.5	0	1	1
Total	2	11	13

As it is shown in the above Table (1), the distribution of 'affect' in the five prison letters is not a big amount. The positive affect is not found in letters No.1, 2, 4 and 5, whereas the negative affect is dominant in all the five letters. This might be a normal result of the negative view of the author.

The study has shown that the judgmental category has a higher frequency than that of affect. It occurred (35) times making a percentage of 43.20 % of the whole amount of the occurrences of attitudes .Table (2) gives a summary of the distribution of judgment category of attitude in the entire study :

Table (2) Distribution of the category of judgment

Judgment					
Letter No.	Social Esteem		Social Sanction		Total
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	
Letter No.1	2	0	0	9	11
Letter No.2	2	4	0	6	12
Letter No.3	1	1	0	1	3
Letter No.4	1	0	1	1	3
Letter No.5	0	5	0	1	6
Total	6	10	1	18	35

As it is indicated above in the Table (2), the distribution of judgment shows that the negative judgment of attitude has a higher percentage than the positive ones in a number of (28) for negative, whereas the positive judgment occurred only (7) times .

The frequency of the category of ‘appreciation’ has a high percentage of occurrences in comparison with ‘affect’. The total number of occurrences that ‘appreciation’ has was (34) which make a percentage of 41.97 % of the total number of the occurrences. Table (3) shows a summary of the distribution of the category of appreciation being analyzed along the study:

Table (3) Distribution of the category of appreciation

Appreciation			
Letter No.	Positive	Negative	Total
Letter No.1	0	10	10
Letter No.2	1	3	4
Letter No.3	4	3	7
Letter No.4	0	6	6
Letter No.5	3	4	7
Total	8	26	34

As it is indicated in the above Table (3), it is clear that the percentage of negative appreciation is prominent in occurrence than the positive appreciation . It was (26) times in comparison to the positive which occurs only (8) times . Since appreciation describes things in the environment, it seems that the author has the same negative view he has had towards people in judgment and feelings in affect .

4. Conclusions

The analysis of the corpus of selected prison letters written by George Jackson combined with the attitudinal system of analysis in terms of Appraisal Theory showed that the attitudinal system can interpret the emotional state of the letters’ writer as well as the psychological one. Judgmental and appreciative systems contained a great amount of the attitudinal resources in percentage compared with the resources of affect. Furthermore, the negative impression was common while the positive impression has recorded a low percentage of prominence. All these together might be a normal outcome of being locked in a prison in isolation. Judging people and appreciating thing can be a result of seeing them as they appear, but when they disappear, the

outcome could negative based on the most recent noticed disadvantages.

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