

Workshop Appraisal Theory. The language of Evaluation

CEDIT – ValTrad Project

We present work in progress where we analyse the evaluative dimensions in the first chapter of the novel *Mansfield Park* by English writer Jane Austen (1814). Our goal is to test the application of the framework Appraisal Theory (Martin and White 2005) to the linguistic stylistic analysis of narrative fiction; our results will widen the existing knowledge on Jane Austen's work, particularly on the textual resources by which she negotiated interpersonal meanings with her community of readers.

In order to achieve the goals of social commentary and moral judgement pursued in her novels, Jane Austen describes and evaluates different aspects of her characters' personalities. Her evaluation of characters, of social groups or of their behaviour is transmitted to the reader in different ways: sometimes directly, through the narrator, who from an external extradiegetic position comments on and judges the qualities or actions described, often using irony; other times, also directly, through the words or thoughts of a reliable character; but most often it is done indirectly, through the characters' words and consciousness, to which the reader has access by means of a variety of constantly shifting speech and thought (and writing) presentation modes. This shifting between narrative modes makes it possible to subtly alternate the narrator's voice and/or point of view and those of various characters, thereby providing the reader with different perspectives from which to observe and evaluate. Such linguistic subtlety and complexity is of course a challenge to translators who must try to identify all the concurrent interpretation possibilities and reproduce them in the target language. In this contribution we compare the English source text with various translations into Spanish, Catalan and German.

Using Martin and White's typologies for a fine-grained semantic analysis of a sample of textual choices (and their proposed translation equivalents) reveals the full extent of their multidimensionality and potential narratological consequences.

Our analysis focuses on the engagement styles of narrator and characters, i.e. whether they are contractive or expansive. This is done by focusing on lexicogrammatical realisations of engagement such as *verba dicendi*, and epistemic expressions, and also on the development of narration—as far as that is possible in a study centering on the first chapter—, since it is often the case that narrator stance is modified as the text unfolds. In the first chapter of *Mansfield Park* the narrator either expresses her own views or else acts as a mediator of views of characters. When she is acting as a mediator her most frequent engagement move is the attribution of characters' propositions. Apparently the propositions are acknowledged since the *verba dicendi* are not explicitly distancing. However, distancing is more nuanced in a literary work than in non-fiction genres; in *Mansfield Park* it takes place on different levels, both linguistic and narratological, including the juxtaposition of voices and the portrayal of the characters behind them, and the expression of attitude and graduation.

The narrator lets the characters speak for themselves, forcing the reader to engage directly with them and their more or less expansive or contractive styles in conversation, regardless of the speech presentation mode used. An examination of the translations shows that this aspect of the characters' disposition can be significantly altered by the way their speech is rendered in the target language.

We propose the notion of "engagement-rich" points—in analogy with the "value-rich" points in Munday (2012: 41)—items which contribute to the ironical feel, the impression that the narrator is at the same time acknowledging propositions from other voices but distancing herself from them by projecting attitudinal values (affect and judgment). Something similar can be said about shifts in orientation, from ambivalent to positive. The effects of the loss of attitudinal components such as surprise and hyperbole, and of shifts in orientation, on the reception of the translated version may range from negligible—if they are local and sporadic—to far-reaching, if they are sustained, as they gradually undermine the message.

But *Mansfield Park* also contains a high frequency of lexical elements whose semantics exclusively consist in graduation and which are therefore combinable with a wide range of scalable elements. These quantifications get in turn quantified or intensified, or appreciations are intensified and the intensifications themselves intensified again. This accumulation astonishes in two respects: on the one hand through the sheer number and on the other hand through the banality of the lexical items used. The translations often opt for reduction or for more elaborate vocabulary, but the narrator seems to cherish the very basic adverbs like *very*, *little*, *less*. Short and worn as they are, they pass unnoticed until they are revealed by the appraisal raster. Moulding naturally into discourse, they give it the familiar ring of everyday speech: certain passages may be perceived as reported or free indirect speech in the wording of for example 'all Huntingdon'; others let us believe hearing an unconceited narrator who gives his/her semi-improvised story in a family circle. Appraisal theory thus confirms its usefulness as an instrument for detecting fictive orality.

Multiple simultaneous readings judgement vs appreciation. The criteria used by Austen to judge people are criteria that Martin and White apply to objects only (beauty, for example). Martin and White justly state that valuation depends to a great extent on social context, institutionalized conventions, habits of thinking

(Martin/White, 57) and the very fact that items like 'handsome', 'pretty', etc. do not appear in their lists of resources to express appreciation or judgement is significant: it is no subject of theirs. Judgement is applied to humans, but it operates on the ethics level, with regard to behaviour; appreciation is applied to things, on an aesthetic scale.

For a storyteller like Jane Austen it is on the contrary a central narrative ingredient: some of her main characters live in a "handsome" house, which is a token of **appreciation**, and several of her female characters are *handsome*. Miss Maria Ward is so *handsome* that she captivates Sir Thomas Bertram and becomes a baronet's lady, in spite of a modest dowry. Beauty as a case of capacity (categorised as social esteem), not of appreciation.

Graduation enlarging the number of possible interpretations

The greatness of the match: lexical ambiguity of 'match' not resolved by 'greatness'.

Engagement and the identification of speakers/sources of evaluation. Types of speech and thought presentation, particularly free indirect speech

Free indirect speech presents the reader with a different configuration of voices. It is characterised by the absence of the reporting verb and the presence of linguistic features that might typify the language of a character or characters (see Fludernik 1993: 398-408). The passage will be perceived as a form of reported discourse only if the reader realizes that the narrator's phrasing might be a (partial) reproduction of one of the character's wording. Since the forms of assimilation are as multi-faceted as the diversity of imaginable speech acts, Appraisal Theory has not yet been able to develop sufficient tools to detect them.