Evaluating Literary Meaning: Appraisal and Argumentation in *Dancing in the Dust*

Tinashe Charles Matiyenga[1]

[1] Department of Languages and Social Sciences Education, University of Zululand, South Africa. Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0004-1476-2441

Correspondence: Tinashe Charles Matiyenga, Department of Languages and Social Sciences Education, University of Zululand, South Africa.

Abstract

This study evaluates literary meaning using appraisal theory and argumentation analysis in Kagiso Lesego Molope's novel, Dancing in the Dust (2002). Through qualitative analysis, it explores the interplay of appraisal resources and argumentation strategies. The research provides an overview of appraisal theory and argumentation analysis, highlighting their relevance in literary analysis. By closely examining the novel, it identifies diverse appraisal resources such as Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation, analysing their relation to themes, character development, and social commentary. The study also explores the author's argumentation strategies, including logical reasoning, evidence, and rhetorical devices. The findings deepen the understanding of how literary meaning is constructed through appraisal and argumentation, shedding light on artistic choices, character portrayals, and socio-cultural commentary. This research enhances appreciation of Molope's novel by revealing evaluative and persuasive techniques, emphasising their importance in literary analysis and their role in language, literature, and meaning construction.

Keywords: appraisal theory, argumentation analysis, literary meaning, textual analysis, evaluative language

1. Introduction

In the past few years, there has been a growing curiosity in investigating the connection between linguistics and the construction of meaning in literary discourse. This paper seeks to contribute to this inquiry by illustrating the relevance of two theoretical frameworks, namely Appraisal Theory and the Pragma-dialectic Theory of Argumentation, within the context of literature, specifically focusing on Kagiso Lesego Molope's novel, *Dancing in the Dust*. *Dancing in the Dust* offers a captivating narrative that delves into themes of social dynamics, personal struggles, and cultural contexts, making it an ideal case study for this research. Departing from conventional approaches to literary criticism, this study adopts a discourse analysis model to provide a fresh perspective on the novel's meaning construction.

Rather than solely emphasising the appreciation of literary works, this research takes a different approach by employing discourse analysis, which enables a more comprehensive understanding of the novel's linguistic intricacies and their role in meaning construction. Through a linguistic analysis of *Dancing in the Dust*, this study aims to illustrate how linguistic theories and discourse analysis can deepen our comprehension of the complexities involved in constructing meaning in literature. By engaging with the Appraisal theoretical framework and Pragma-dialectic Theory of Argumentation, this research sheds light on the nuanced relationships between appraisal and argumentation within the narrative. Its objective is to uncover fresh insights into the interplay of appraisal and argumentation in the interpretation and understanding of the novel, thus contributing to the ongoing exploration of linguistics in literary analysis and laying the groundwork for future studies in this field.

The selection of *Dancing in the Dust* for this study is anchored in its distinctive narrative perspective and thematic richness, which are highly relevant to the study of African literature in high school and undergraduate programs. The first-person narration provides an intimate lens through which to explore identity and personal experience, allowing readers to connect deeply with the protagonist's journey. This perspective not only enriches the narrative but also enables a nuanced examination of broader social issues, such as resilience and cultural identity, which are pivotal to the analysis.

Additionally, this text blends well with the approach employed to serve as an effective tool for assisting ESL students in their appreciation of literary works. Its accessible language and relatable themes can help bridge cultural gaps, making complex concepts more understandable.

In essence, this study critically examines the significance of linguistics and discourse analysis in comprehending the intricacies of meaning in literary discourse, utilising *Dancing in the Dust* as a lens for analysis. By embracing a novel perspective and drawing upon established theoretical frameworks, it aims to make a contribution to the evolving landscape of literary criticism and provide new avenues for the interpretation and appreciation of not only Molope's work but also literature as a whole.

Discourse Analysis

Discourse Analysis, with its focus on language patterns and how language and socio-cultural contexts relate, provides a comprehensive understanding of how participant relationships influence language use and impact social identities and relationships (Paltridge, 2006). This perspective recognises that discourse shapes worldviews and social identities, offering a solid foundation for studying literary works within diverse contexts of meaning creation. As an interdisciplinary field, discourse analysis examines language use in specific contexts, including literary texts, which are seen as instances of language in use (Martinez, 2011; Sell, 1991). Literature is not isolated but intricately connected to ongoing discursive processes in society (Sell, 1991; Matiyenga, 2012; Matiyenga & Ajani, 2025). Linguistics and literature share a natural and interconnected relationship, emphasising interdisciplinarity (Bednarek, 2007). However, there has been historical tension between literary analysis and language study, with critics and linguists often criticising each other's approaches. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognise that language is the medium through which literary experience is mediated. Understanding literary works requires engaging with the language in which they are constructed (Lodge, 1966; Matiyenga & Ajani, 2025).

The novel, as described by Bakhtin (1981), encompasses a rich tapestry of themes and ideas, expressed through diverse speech types and individual voices. The novel becomes a platform for the entry of heteroglossia by incorporating authorial speech, narrators' voices, inserted genres, and character dialogue. It transcends simplicity by giving voice to various social and ideological interests through a multitude of social voices and their intricate interrelationships. Dialogism is central in meaning construction within the novel, as it emerges through interactions among the author, the work, and the reader, all influenced by their respective social and political contexts. The novelistic discourse becomes a context where unfamiliar words and accents converge or clash, resembling a game of chess where each word anticipates and responds to the answering word. Language in the text is viewed as complex due to the dynamic nature of its interpretation. Bakhtin celebrates the diverse voices within a novel as a vibrant representation of reality, free from the constraints of a singular, hegemonic worldview. These progressive developments in meaning appreciation have paved the way for intertextuality.

Intertextuality, a concept influenced by Bakhtin and further developed by Kristeva, offers a framework for analysing the relationships among texts, authors, readers, and conventions within the processes of reading and writing. This theory posits that texts derive meaning through their associations with other texts in a social context. The interpretation of any given text is informed by its connections to preceding texts and the manner in which users engage with them, thereby underscoring the interconnectedness of texts within a cultural and literary landscape (Thibault, 1994). In the interplay between linguistics and literature, literature can be regarded as a second-order semiotic system that is fundamentally rooted in language. The traditional view of literature as a language act has been expanded upon by the appraisal and argumentation approach, which offers a more systematic perspective on how language functions in literature (Barfield, 1964). Appraisal Theory, with its focus on uncovering evaluative meaning in texts, is increasingly used in various fields and styles of textual analysis because of its lucidity and promising potency (Alsina, Espunya, & Naro, 2017; Munday, 2012).

Various scholars have explored different genres and literary forms using the Appraisal framework. Jakaza (2013), Jakaza and Visser (2016), and Sabao (2013) have focused on parliamentary and journalistic genres, analysing them through the lens of Appraisal Theory. Similarly, Monyakane and Malete (2023), Ataei (2019), and Alsina et al. (2017) have examined poetry and prose fiction from a linguistic perspective, drawing upon the foundational principles of Appraisal Theory. In the realm of prose fiction, Ataei (2019) specifically highlights the use of human emotions to elicit specific effects on the reader. In addition to these genre-based analyses, Magwebu (2007) has conducted an extensive critical analysis of the literary translation of *Dancing in the Dust*, shedding light on its intricacies and nuances. Dlamini (2017), on the other hand, undertakes a textual analysis that explores womanhood within the context of the struggle against apartheid, employing a feminist perspective to examine its significance. Patterson (2017), adopting a unique approach, explores the novel through the perspective of childhood narrative, uncovering the themes and elements that emerge from this particular viewpoint. These varied scholarly approaches contribute to a comprehensive and multifaceted understanding of the novel.

The Appraisal Framework

The Appraisal framework provides a categorisation of language used to express evaluation, encompassing personal feelings, inter-subjective positioning, and the scaling of prototypicality and intensity (Martin & White, 2005). It explores how writers convey their presence, attitudes, and engagement in texts, allowing for analysis across languages and the incorporation of indigenous languages in literary works. Appraisal theory aims to explain how writers relate to their material and readers, employing methods to accept, refuse, praise, and criticise, constructing communities and expressing emotions and tastes. It offers a systematic approach to studying evaluations and writer-reader communication. The framework's three categories, Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation, will be discussed further in the paper.

Adjectives serve as grammatical realisations of Attitude, providing frameworks to distinguish Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation (Martin & White, 2005, p. 58). Affect, representing emotions, holds a central position in the attitude framework, as it is an innate tool of expression. Affect categorises positive and negative feelings, reflecting the author's state of mind as conveyed in their text. Judgement, on the other hand, focuses on the language that criticises or praises human behaviour, actions, beliefs, motivations, and more (White, 2004, p. 17). Like Affect, judgement can be constructive or adverse, overt or subtle, and extends to personal and societal norms and morals. Through the evaluation of characters, writers communicate their emotional experiences and shape the esteem in which characters are held within their community (White, 2004). The overall organisation of the Appraisal system is depicted in Figure 1 below.
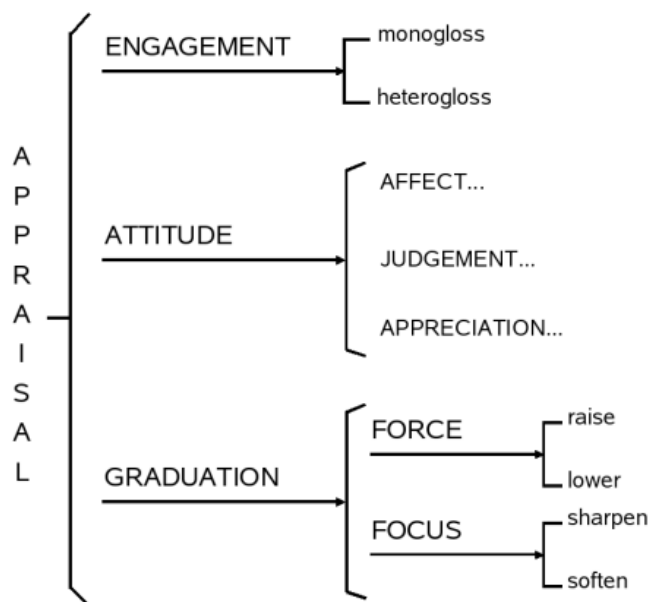
Figure 1. Appraisal System (Martin and White, 2005)

Judgement within the Appraisal framework can be further categorised into two main sub-categories: social sanction and social esteem. Social esteem encompasses the perception of one's standing in the eyes of the public, relating to notions of "normality" (degree of uniqueness), "capacity" (level of capability), and "tenacity" (degree of determination) (Martin & White, 2005; White, 2007). Conversely, judgements of social sanction pertain to assessments of "veracity" (degree of truthfulness) and "propriety" (degree of ethical behaviour) (Martin & White, 2005). Research has indicated that the resource of social esteem is prominently evident in oral culture across diverse means and channels such as gossip, jokes, stories, and chat (Eggins & Slade, 2004; Martin & White, 2005).

Appreciation within the Appraisal framework involves assessments of positive and negative evaluations of things, artifacts, procedures, and statuses of matters, rather than focusing on human conduct (White, 2004, p. 13). It encompasses graphic evaluations, where things are classified based on their value and worth, inclusive of "things we make and performances we give" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 56). While appreciation primarily addresses aesthetic values, it also extends to non-aesthetic categories of "social valuation," such as interpretations related to significance and harm (White, 2004, p. 24). Additionally, appreciation can be directed towards human participants, particularly when the valuation does not solely focus on the appropriateness of their behaviour, but rather views them as entities rather than solely as behaving participants (White, 2004, p. 13, 25).

The interaction between attitudinal values

Affect, judgement, and appreciation as attitudinal values are interconnected and interrelated, as they all involve the expression of feelings. Affect, being the primary value, is concerned with emotions. Therefore, in the full context of a text, it is challenging to separate affect from judgement or appreciation, as emotions are inherent in both. Nonetheless, it remains feasible to differentiate affect from the other two values (Jakaza, 2013). Affect meanings are typically conveyed through verbal processes involving conscious human participants, whereas judgement and appreciation represent emotions that are institutionalised and ascribed to the evaluated phenomena themselves (Martin & White, 2005; White, 2007). In the relationship between judgement and appreciation, the boundary between them can become somewhat blurred (Jakaza, 2013). However, it has been posited that an unfavourable evaluation of a specific object suggests a negative assessment of the individual accountable for its creation (Martin & White, 2005).

Attitudes can be evoked through multiple strategies, such as employing lexical metaphors, choosing non-core vocabulary, and utilising other forms of ideation (Martin & White, 2005; White, 2004). The origin of emotions and how authors depict their own (authorial) or others' (non-authorial affect) emotions also have a notable impact on the assessment of attitudes (Ethelston, 2009; Hunston & Thompson, 2000; Bednarek, 2008; Martin & White, 2005). Through their authorial stance, writers invite their audience to share or understand their emotional responses, which can lead to harmony, consideration, or alignment between the novelist and the reader (Jakaza, 2013). Different readers' interpretations of the text depend on their individual "reading positions," influenced by their beliefs and expectations (White, 2004; Martin & White, 2005). The appraisal framework provides a theoretical basis for analysing evaluation in discourse, and while it is a relatively new theory, it offers a promising foundation for language analysis. Further research is still needed to refine and enhance the appraisal framework. This study aims to contribute to this ongoing research by critically discussing aspects of linguistic theory based on findings from literary discourse.

Engagement in appraisal focuses on how writers utilise linguistic resources to accept an opinion concerning the value stances presented in the text and their intended audience (Martin & White, 2005:92). It encompasses the expression of viewpoints by authors and the resources

they employ to position themselves in relation to the objects of their evaluations. The concept of engagement aligns with Stubbs' (1996) notion that all utterances convey a point of view, as well as Bakhtin's (1981) idea of dialogism and heteroglossia, which acknowledges that utterances occur in the context of other utterances on the same subject and carry implicit and explicit responses to one another. Thus, all texts are inherently dialogic as they encode the authors' reactions to their experiences. Drawing on Bakhtin and Voloshinov's concepts of dialogism and heteroglossia, the engagement system posits that all texts are dialogic. They respond to something, affirm something, anticipate likely replies and oppositions, and seek backing. Each sentence is written in consideration of what has been previously said and in answer to real, possible, or imaginary audiences (Martin & White, 2005). This can be detected when authors overtly employ words such as "*obviously*," "*I believe*," or "*admittedly*." In such cases, the textual voice aims to acknowledge, engage with, and position itself in relation to alternative viewpoints presented in the text (White, 2007). Within the framework of engagement, heteroglossic exclamations are categorised into two main sub-systems: dialogic contraction (intra-vocalisation) and dialogic expansion (extra-vocalisation). Dialogic contraction refers to resources used to reject or refute alternative positions, while dialogic expansion comprises resources that actively consider and accommodate alternative dialogical stances and voices (Martin & White, 2005, p. 102).

Graduation encompasses resources for grading attitudinal interpretations and engagement values, altering the force of appraisal. Attitudinal meanings, including affect, judgement, and appreciation, are inherently gradable, expressing varying levels of positivity or negativity through lexico-grammatical realisations (Martin & White, 2005, p. 135). Scalability is another characteristic of the engagement system, scaling the novelist's investment in a particular value situation (ibid). Gradability operates in both attitude and engagement, allowing authors to express different levels of positivity or negativity in attitude and varying degrees of conviction in engagement. Graduation is thus integral to the Appraisal framework, where attitude and engagement can be seen as scalable fields that contradict in how the meanings are scaled (Martin & White, 2005, p. 136).

The Extended Pragma-dialectic Theory of Argumentation

Argumentation emerges from or in anticipation of a divergence of viewpoints, whether actual or perceived (van Eemeren et al., 2014, p. 2). Linguists acknowledge the ubiquitous nature of argumentation across all forms of discourse, including literary texts. Thus, it is essential to comprehend the nature of argumentation and its significance in the study of literary discourse. Argumentation should not be viewed solely as a structural entity; rather, it is fundamentally a complex communicative act that entails a practical amalgamation of communicative moves (van Eemeren et al., 2014). This communicative dimension positions argumentation within the broader pragmatics of discourse.

The practical intentions underlying the communicative act of argumentation are reflected in the operational framework of the discourse. Furthermore, argumentation is inherently interactive, designed to elicit a response that demonstrates acknowledgement of the defended position (van Eemeren et al., 2014). Thus, argumentation typically occurs within an exchange with the listener or reader, and potentially with others who engage with that audience. This exchange may be explicit, as in a direct conversation, or implicit, when directed toward a non-interactive audience that may be absent. The interactional nature of argumentation is shaped by the explicit or implied discussions present within the argumentative discourse.

From these foundational perspectives, argumentation can be defined as a communicative and interactional act aimed at resolving a difference of opinion with the addressee (van Eemeren et al., 2014). It involves the presentation of a set of propositions for which the arguer is accountable, to render the stance acceptable to a rational adjudicator.

The idea of strategic manoeuvring is a result of integrating rhetoric and dialectic (van Eemeren, Houtlosser, and Henkemans, 2007; van Eemeren and Houtlosser, 2009). Strategic manoeuvring denotes the continuing efforts applied by all participants involved in argumentative discourse to resolve their search for rhetorical efficiency with the dialectical ideals of rationality (van Eemeren and Houtlosser, 2009). It addresses the inherent "argumentative predicament" of balancing effectiveness and reasonableness. This theoretical notion recognises that engaging in argumentative discourse entails striving for both critical reasonableness and persuasive efficacy (van Eemeren and Houtlosser, 2002, p. 4).

Strategic manoeuvring acknowledges that arguers aim to be understood and also seek acceptance and appropriate responses to their arguments. Therefore, speech acts serve both communicative and interactional purposes. Language users strive to strike a balance between efficiency and reasonableness in all the moves they make during an argumentative dialogue. This balance is not only sought for oneself but also for others being represented, which is particularly relevant in institutional discourse (Jacobs, 2002). In the context of literary texts as an institution, authors strategically manoeuvre not only to advance their arguments but also those aligned with the ideological stance they represent. Throughout the critical discussion and exposition stages, authors strategically manoeuvre to resolve differences of opinion by aligning dialectical aims with rhetorical effectiveness (van Eemeren, 2010, p. 43).

To achieve this equilibrium, three essential elements of strategic manoeuvring are identified: topical potential, audience-oriented adaptations, and the use of linguistic or other strategies (van Eemeren and Houtlosser, 2009; van Eemeren, 2010; van Eemeren and Garssen, 2008). Topical potential pertains to the selection of controversial and advantageous topics for presentation and discussion. At each stage of argumentation, the protagonist and rival must choose the most effective arguments in light of the dialectical context. Audience-directed adjustments involve making moves that are optimally satisfactory to the other participant, taking into account their views and preferences. Participants in the argumentation process strive to cause the necessary "communion" by depending on shared beliefs, specific concerns, and related obligations. The third aspect, linguistic or presentational devices, encompasses the strategic selection and use of figures of speech and other stylistic elements to effectively present arguments. These devices are considered strategic when they contribute to winning the

argument both reasonably and effectively.

Strategic manoeuvring permeates all phases of the argumentative procedure to reconcile differences of view. At each stage, the participants aspire to achieve the dialectical objectives while also pursuing optimal rhetorical outcomes. This perspective combines the argumentative and discourse-analytic approaches, utilising the appraisal system and extended pragma-dialectical concept to interrogate literary discourse contexts in selected narrative texts (van Eemeren et al., 2014).

2. Method

The study, grounded in textual analysis, employs an exploratory approach and rests its foundation on content analysis to analyse discourse in literary texts, appreciating interpersonal relations and argumentation strategies as part of its research tools. The analysis is performed by systematically going through the different thematic categories and also along theoretical principles; the text is closely scrutinised, and the examples of different categories are highlighted.

3. Results

Dancing in the Dust employs a first-person narrative, distinguishing between authorial and character voices. The novel explores a young female narrator's traumatic experience in a racially divided community, addressing apartheid education, police brutality, and the struggle for freedom. The study focuses on analysing grammatical structures to understand how appraisal resources convey the author's intended meaning. By examining language usage, this study explores how authors evoke emotional responses and convey their viewpoints. Appraisal theory is employed to analyse the writers' emotions, opinions, and the value they assign to specific phenomena. It offers the reader a means to analyse the writers' emotions and opinions (Read & Carroll, 2012) for enhanced understanding and appreciation of the writers' world viewpoint. Point-of-view and style are key elements in constructing the voice of a text, whether through the first-person narrator or the implicit author behind the characters. Understanding the concept of authorial voice is crucial in both first-person and third-person narratives. Authorial intrusion, a literary device where the author directly addresses the readers, serves to establish a connection between the author and the reader. It is crucial to acknowledge that texts with omniscient storytellers often exhibit authorial intrusion. However, in texts presented from a first-person or third-person perspective, the author's voice becomes an intrusion. This intrusion is referred to as authorial intrusion, where the author interjects to provide remarks or clarifications while the storyteller conveys the situation, characters, and plot.

Table 1. Illustrations of Affect

	POSITIVE (+ve)	NEGATIVE(-ve)
INCLINATION	Mama was like every other mother I knew: she worked all of her days, had a **good** idea about everything and everyone around her… (p13)	I was feeling **annoyed** because I believed him (p25)
HAPPINESS	I was **fascinated** and afraid at the same time. (p25)	… I think it took a lot of courage to give an **unwelcome** child that name. (p14)
SECURITY	I could not have been **happier** to leave that kitchen. (p41)	The quiet of the neighbourhood was making me **nervous**. (p9) I was interested but equally **terrified**. (p16)
SATISFACTION	My life felt **perfect** around Thato. (p22) He seemed so **pleased** and **proud** of himself… (p25)	Most people usually give their **unplanned** children names that are apologetic… (p14)

Based on the examples of Affect in Table 1 provided above, it is evident that the author employs linguistic techniques to depict the emotional, mental, and behavioural processes of characters or participants in the text. Consequently, language can be classified into two functions: 'scientific' and 'emotive' (Richards, 2017). This argument posits that language serves the dual purposes of providing scientific reference, whether based on factual or false information and expressing emotions and attitudes associated with the subject being referenced. The examples also highlight the presence of both positive and negative markers of Affect, which is a crucial element in character analysis and thematic interpretation of literary texts.

Table 2. Illustrations of Judgement

	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
ESTEEM NORMALITY CAPACITY TENACITY	We were all really **fascinated** by his talent… (p54) My sister was really **confident** in her English…(p57) "Tihelo!" she exclaimed, her **emphatic** tone telling me…	…it was that many different **horrible** things were constantly happening…(p60) The place was overcrowded with **desperate** masses… Frankly, I thought he was arrogant and **bossy**, but that was just me. (p56)
SANCTION VERACITY PROPRIETY	We could only be **sure** that we had one or two nights…(p60) Anger was a little more **bearable** than worry and fear. (p58)	We sat down together, **unsure** of what to think. (p58) …I found her excitement over Mohau very **annoying**. (p56)

When examining the resource of Judgement, it becomes apparent that ethical evaluations are influenced by social values. To enable readers to identify and articulate these values, it is crucial to understand the context and background of the text in which expressions and utterances are made. The distribution of these qualities, as illustrated in Table 2, indicates that the text demonstrates what Lemke (1989) refers to as the

complex value orientation of texts and textual practices, which involves constructing hypothetical models of the intended audience and the discourse context where opposing viewpoints are heard.

Appreciation, as a resource within the appraisal framework, focuses on how individuals react to events or phenomena, their composition, and the value ascribed to them or the communication of aesthetic evaluations. Appreciation entails evaluating semiotic and natural phenomena based on their perceived value within a specific domain (Martin & White, 2005, p. 43).

Table 3. Illustrations of Appreciation

	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
REACTION IMPACT QUALITY	Somehow, the latter was more **tolerable** to a lot of women…(p77) I was walking around frantically trying to find a way to make it all **good** and **perfect** before…(p76)	…or if I was just feeling **regretful** about my sister losing her chance to leave the township. (p76) He was **skinny**, **very skinny**, with a beard and dreadlocks. (p67)
COMPOSITION BALANCE COMPLEXITY	Abortion was never spoken of with **kind** words… (p75) …thinking of it as a **regular** and necessary step in their lives. (p68)	All the riots and marches were **draining** to me. (p67) Both ideas made me feel **uneasy**. (p75)
VALUATION	…thinking of it as a regular and **necessary** step in their lives. (p68)	…that was considered **abominable** by both men and women around her. (p75)

Appreciation can be seen as the process of formalising emotions into propositions, involving norms that dictate how products, performances, and natural phenomena are valued (Martin & White, 2005). As demonstrated in the previous examples, adjectives play a crucial role in this process by assigning social value to objects, artifacts, and states of affairs. This allows the writer to establish a connection with the readers in terms of their relationship to the phenomenon being discussed. These observations also indicate that the author considers standards that can be used to assess characters, readers, and the author's evaluative reactions to objects and phenomena. The resources authors employ to modify the impact of their appraisals can be understood as a system of Graduation (Martin & White, 2005). Graduation encompasses both attitude and engagement. Gradability in attitude allows writers to express varying grades of positivity or disapproval, while gradability in engagement reflects the author's level of conviction in their expression.

Table 4. Illustrations of Focus

Up-scaling	Down-scaling
I got busy trying to comfort Keitumetse, who was _more distraught_ than all the people in the kitchen put together. (p91)	I resented him because my sister was obviously _quite disappointed_. (p90)
I must have looked _too young_ to be sitting alone, but I didn't feel young, I felt like I had committed a _very adult crime_. (p101) We walked for an _excruciatingly long time_, …(p102)	All I could afford was a _feeble nod_. (p 102)

Sharpening formulations in literature have been referred to as "intensifiers," "boosters," and "amplifiers." The results indicate that the usage of Focus is a prevalent strategy in literary texts. Fiction authors employ this resource to either heighten or reinforce phenomena on one hand or to diminish or downgrade them on the other. The identified examples also demonstrate that Focus is achieved through modifying nouns, with variations that can be either upward or downward, depending on the emotions being conveyed.

Strategic manoeuvring in _Dancing in the Dust_

At its core, argumentation serves the fundamental purpose of resolving disagreements concerning the appropriateness of a particular standpoint. It achieves this by appealing to the other member's rationality (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, p. 11–18).

Example 1: "_Mama is an **exceptionally tall** woman. She may like it or she may not. It just isn't important to her to spend any amount of **valuable** time – and it's all valuable to her – talking about how she looks._" (p 13)

Example 2: "_Mama was like every other mother I knew: she worked all of her days, had a **good** idea about everything and everyone around her, and **almost never** cried._" (p 13)

Examples 1 and 2 strategically develop an argument that challenges the traditional definition of women and instead presents them as bold, unflinching, resolute, and positive individuals in life. This argument runs consistently throughout the text, countering the dominance of patriarchy. In the realm of argumentation, strategic manoeuvring plays a crucial role by integrating both efficiency and rationality (van Eemeren, 2010). Examining the argumentative discourse through an appraisal and evaluation analysis reveals the diverse array of strategic manoeuvres utilised during the discussion. It is important to recognise that authors engage in continuous debate and discussion with their perceived readers to effectively present their viewpoints. Strategic manoeuvring's diverse forms are evident in all the moves crafted within the argumentative discourse. In this case, what emerges as intriguing is not only the identification of these strategic moves, but also the analysis of the influence that each move has on resolving the difference of opinion.

Example 3: "*My mother wanted me and my sister to respect and honour the memory of our father, but she **never** asked our forgiveness for not bringing us someone to replace him. Even after all the events that took place in my adult years, my mother and my sister remain the only family I have **ever** known, the only two people I have **ever** longed for when I was desperate for the comfort of family.*" (p. 15)

The argumentative indicator ***never*** dialogically increases the argumentative space, simultaneously blocking the argumentative options of the envisaged rival. The protagonist tactically presents the likely contestation of the rival and develops a proposition that quashes that misgiving. The usage of the argumentative indicator ***ever*** in this situation is also decisive and irrefutable. The argumentative sign dialogically shrinks the argument room, aligning all the contributors rhetorically to the protagonist's supposition. The protagonist renders the attained decision irrefutable and incontestable.

Example 4: "*I got the sense that people saw us the way you see someone who is missing a limb: you assume their entire lives are really sad and inadequate just because you can't imagine your own life being full were you in the same position. And you never bother to find out if you're right so you go on assuming it and never seeing the other person as a whole. In the same way, no one ever got to fully understand that my family felt to me as full and whole as anyone else's.*" (p. 15)

Attempting to dialogically shrink the argumentative space, the protagonist in Example 4 makes a fallacy of hasty generalisations about societal assumptions about the father-figure notion. The fallacy is a unique way of manoeuvring strategically in argumentative discourse. The specific strategic role of this fallacy in argumentative exchanges is to cause one to withdraw their viewpoint dialectically and rhetorically (see van Eemeren and Houtlosser, 2002; van Eemeren, 2010).

Example 5: "*Most people usually give their unplanned children names that are apologetic, like 'forgiveness', 'mercy', or 'be welcoming'. **However,** anyone who knew my mother well would never expect her to apologise for something that belonged to her.*" (p. 14)

Example 6: "*All I thought was that it was sad how everyone assumed that I needed this person just because some other kids had someone like him in their lives. Personally, I had **no complaints** about being raised in a home run by women, but because of my age, no one ever asked my opinion.*" (p. 14)

Example 7: "*There is always the belief that a house with no men is missing something essential. Men were always asking us if we needed help fixing things, and boys we played with voluntarily took on the role of older brothers to my sister and me because they thought we needed extra protection.*" (p. 15)

The examples above highlight strategic techniques employed in literary discourse, namely Dissociation and Association. In Association, the author initiates a connection between two separate things to assign the audience's judgments about one entity to the other (van Rees & van Rees, 2009, p. 25). On the other hand, Dissociation involves the writer dividing an idea, which the reader perceives as a unified concept, into two distinct concepts. One concept includes elements that the reader views as actual or fundamental (Concept 2), while the other concept includes elements perceived as apparent or peripheral (Concept 1) (van Rees & van Rees, 2009). In other words, Dissociation entails foregrounding one aspect of a notion while backgrounding the other. Both Dissociation and Association serve as strategic manoeuvres in argumentation.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on several key aspects related to the analysis of literary discourse. The study focused on the utilisation of Appraisal and the Extended Pragma-dialectic Theory of Argumentation as linguistic theories to examine and understand literary texts.

In terms of Appraisal, the study explored the framework of Attitude, specifically the sub-systems of Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation. It was observed that adjectives played a significant role in expressing Affect, allowing for the portrayal of emotional, mental, and behavioural processes of characters or participants in the text. The analysis also revealed the presence of both positive and negative markers of Affect, which proved vital in character analysis and the interpretation of thematic concerns in literary texts.

Regarding Judgement, the study highlighted the socially informed nature of ethical evaluations. It was found that understanding the setting, background, and context of the text was crucial for readers to identify and express these values. The distribution of these qualities, as illustrated in Table 2, indicated the manifestation of complex value orientations of texts and textual practices, which involved constructing hypothetical models of addressees and the discourse world of competing voices.

Furthermore, the study delved into the resource of Appreciation, which focused on human reactions to occurrences, composition of phenomena, and aesthetic evaluations. It was noted that Appreciation involved evaluations of semiotic and natural phenomena based on their significance in a specific domain. Adjectives were once again identified as a means to assign social value to objects, artifacts, and states of affairs, allowing the writer to establish a relationship with the readers in terms of their engagement with the phenomenon.

In the realm of argumentation, strategic manoeuvring was found to be a significant element. The study highlighted the integration of effectiveness and reasonableness in argumentation, with authors strategically developing their arguments to counter the supremacy of patriarchy and challenge traditional definitions of women. The analysis emphasised the continuous debate and discussion between authors and perceived readers, as well as the effect of strategic manoeuvring on the resolution of variances of viewpoint.

Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the application of linguistic theories, namely Appraisal and the Extended Pragma-dialectic Theory of Argumentation, in the analysis of literary discourse. The findings enhance our understanding of how linguistic

resources are employed to express affective, judgmental, and appreciative stances, and how strategic manoeuvring shapes argumentative discourse in the context of literary texts.

5. Conclusion

This study has provided a comprehensive analysis of literary discourse through the lenses of the Appraisal Framework and the Extended Pragma-Dialectic Theory of Argumentation. The examination of the conceptual frameworks, as well as the empirical findings from the study of the literary text *Dancing in the Dust*, has confirmed their significance in understanding and explaining important aspects of literary discourse.

Through the use of the Appraisal framework, the study has revealed the role of linguistic resources in expressing affective, judgmental, and appreciative stances in literary texts. The analysis of grammatical structures has demonstrated how adjectives play a vital role in portraying emotions, character traits, and evaluative perspectives of the text's participants. Additionally, the investigation of the sub-systems of Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation has provided valuable insights into the social values, ethical evaluations, and aesthetic appraisals embedded in the literary discourse.

Furthermore, the study has explored the Extended Pragma-Dialectic Theory of Argumentation and its integration into the analysis of literary texts. It has highlighted the strategic manoeuvring employed by authors to counter patriarchal dominance and present alternative definitions of women. The analysis of argumentative discourse has emphasized the continuous debate and discussion between authors and readers, as well as the impact of strategic moves on the resolution of differences of opinion.

Overall, this study has contributed to our understanding of the nexus of linguistic theories, discourse analysis, and the interpretation of literary texts. It has provided detailed findings that support the applicability of the Appraisal Theory and the Extended Pragma-Dialectic Theory of Argumentation in analysing grammatical structures and their function in literary discourse. By examining the specific case of *Dancing in the Dust*, the study has demonstrated the practical utility of these theories in illuminating the nuanced aspects of literary texts and enhancing our comprehension of their deeper meanings.

Authors' contributions

This is a single-author project.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

Copyrights

References

Alsina, V., Espunya, A., & Naro, M. W. (2017). An appraisal theory approach to point of view in Mansfield Park and its translations. *International Journal of Literary Linguistics, 6*(1). https://doi.org/10.15462/ijll.v6i1.103

Ataei, S. (2019). Exploring the emotional language in the Twilight novel as a literary discourse: An appraisal theory analysis. *Purdue Linguistics, Literature, and Second Language Studies Conference*. Retrieved from https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/plcc/2019/papers/2

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). "Discourse in the Novel." In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, edited by Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, 259-423. University of Texas Press.

Barfield, O. (1964). *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning*. McGraw-Hill.

Bednarek, M. (2007). Teaching English literature and linguistics using corpus stylistic methods. *Bridging Discourses: ASFLA 2007 Online Proceedings*, 1-13.

Bednarek, M. (2008). *Emotion talk across corpora*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230285712

Dlamini, N. (2017). *Comrades in their own right: Women's struggle against apartheid in the South African novel*. Electronic Theses and Dissertations. 133. https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/etds/133

Eggins, S., & Slade, D. (2004). *Analysing casual conversation*. Equinox Publishing Ltd.

Ethelston, G. (2009). 'Appraisal in evangelical sermons: the projection and functions of misguided voices'. *Text & Talk-An Interdisciplinary Journal of Language, Discourse & Communication Studies*, *29*(6), 683-704. https://doi.org/10.1515/TEXT.2009.035

Hunston, S., & Thompson, G. eds. (2000). *Evaluation in text: Authorial stance and the construction of discourse: Authorial stance and the construction of discourse*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198238546.001.0001

Jacobs, S. (2002). Messages, functional contexts, and categories of fallacy: Some dialectical and rhetorical considerations. In *Dialectic and Rhetoric: The warp and woof of argumentation analysis*, 119-130. Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-015-9948-1_9

Jakaza, E. (2013). *Appraisal and evaluation in Zimbabwean parliamentary discourse and its representation in newspaper articles* [Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch University]. Retrieved from https://scholar.sun.ac.za/items/e16f9acd-cbe9-4aef-a812-0387a83b5eef

Jakaza, E., & Visser, M. (2016). 'Subjectivity' in newspaper reports on 'controversial' and 'emotional' debates: An appraisal and controversy analysis. *Language Matters*, *47*(1), 3-21. https://doi.org/10.1080/10228195.2015.1060513

Lemke, J.L. (1989). Making text talk. *Theory into practice*, *28*(2), 136-141. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405848909543392

Lodge, D. (1966). *Language of Fiction*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Magwebu, D. N. (2007). *Decisions, translation strategies and process in the translation of Molope's Dancing in the Dust: a critical analysis* [Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch University]. Retrieved from https://scholar.sun.ac.za/items/a4591510-f76e-4195-8157-cddd32fcfbe9

Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. R. (2005). *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Martinez, D. F. (2011). *Introducing discourse analysis in class*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Matiyenga, T. C. (2012). *Appraisal in Literary Texts: A Study of Appraisal Resources Used in Mission to Kala and Scarlet Song*. [Unpublished MA Dissertation, Midlands State University, Zimbabwe].

Matiyenga, T. C., & Ajani, O. A. (2025). Linguistics in Literary Discourse: Exploring Meaning Construction and Alternative Approaches. *World Journal of English Language*, *15*(3), 376-376. https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v15n3p376

Molope, K. L. (2002). *Dancing in the dust: A novel*. Tsar Publications.

Monyakane, M., & Malete, E. N. (2023). The application of appraisal theory in Maphalla's poem: 'Ditema'. *South African Journal of African Languages*, *43*(1), 40-46. https://doi.org/10.1080/02572117.2023.2200484

Munday, J. (2012). *Evaluation in translation: Critical points of translator decision-making*. Routledge.

Paltridge, B. (2006). *Discourse Analysis: An Introduction.* London: Continuum.

Patterson, R. R. (2017). *From 'apartheid' to the 'rainbow nation' and beyond: The representation of childhood and youth in South African coming-of-age narratives* [Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch University]. Retrieved from https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/188224438.pdf

Read, J., & Carroll, J. (2012). Annotating expressions of appraisal in English. *Language resources and evaluation*, *46*, 421-447. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10579-010-9135-7

Richards, I. A. (2017). *Principles of literary criticism*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351223508

Sabao, C. (2013). *The reporter voice and objectivity in cross-linguistic reporting of controversial news in Zimbabwean newspapers: An appraisal approach* [Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch University]. Retrieved from https://scholar.sun.ac.za/items/b7afea47-f64e-4787-97e8-624069e8a5b8

Sell, R. D., ed. (1991). *Literary Pragmatics.* Routledge.

Stubbs, M. (1996). *Text and Corpus Analysis: Computer-Assisted Studies of Language and Culture.* Blackwell.

Thibault, P. J. (1994). "Intertextuality." In Ron E. Asher (Ed.) *The Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics, Volume 4.* Blackwell.

van Eemeren, F. H. (2010). *Strategic Manoeuvring in Argumentative Discourse*. John Benjamins Publishing Company. https://doi.org/10.1075/aic.2

van Eemeren, F. H., & Garssen, B. eds. (2008). *Controversy and confrontation: Relating controversy analysis with argumentation theory.* John Benjamins Publishing Company. https://doi.org/10.1075/cvs.6

van Eemeren, F. H., & Grootendorst, R. (2004). *A Systematic theory of argumentation: The pragma-dialectical approach.* Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511616389

van Eemeren, F. H., & Houtlosser, P. (2009). Strategic manoeuvring: Examining argumentation in context. In F. H. van Eemeren (Ed.), *Examining Argumentation in Context: Fifteen Studies on Strategic Manoeuvring*, (1-24). John Benjamins Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1075/aic.1.02eem

van Eemeren, F. H., & Houtlosser, P. eds. (2002). *Dialectic and rhetoric: The warp and woof of argumentation analysis.* Kluwer Academic Publishers. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-015-9948-1

van Eemeren, F. H., Garssen, B., Krabbe, E. C. W., Henkemans, F. S., Verheij, B., & Wagemans, J. J. M. (2014). *Handbook of Argumentation Theory*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-9473-5

van Eemeren, F. H., Houtlosser, P., & Henkemans, F. S. (2007). *Argumentative indicators in discourse: A pragma-dialectical study.* Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-6244-5

Van Rees, M. A., & van Rees, M. A. (2009). Indicators of dissociation. *Dissociation In Argumentative Discussions: A Pragma-Dialectical Perspective*, 31-44. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-9150-6_3

White, P. R. (2004). The language of attitude, arguability and interpersonal positioning. *The Appraisal Website: Homepage. Disponível em: http://www.grammatics.com/appraisal/. Acesso em*, *14*(6).

White, P. R. R. (2007). *Appraisal.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company. (Available at www.grammatics.com/appraisal)