

Examining Social and Emotional Relation: Attitude Resources in the Spoken Dialogue of Spellbound (2024)

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Abstract

Attitudinal aspect in Appraisal framework focuses on how speakers express and evaluate meaning. Examining how Attitude resources within the Appraisal Framework used to interpret meaning in the animated film *Spellbound* (2024) is the purpose of this study through identifying the frequency of Attitudinal aspects—Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation—and investigating how characters employ these resources to express emotions, interpret behaviour, and describe situations. A qualitative content analysis approach is applied. The film's transcript was cleaned, coded and segmented through White & Martin's (2005) Appraisal Framework. The results reveal Affect is the most dominant category, followed by Judgment and Appreciation lastly appears. This sequence shows that emotional expression has the important roles in shaping how the characters interact each other and influencing the way story develops, while assessing others' behaviour and evaluating settings and situation are slightly used to complement the integrated storyline. Attitude resources help significantly character development, interpersonal relationship, and narrative meaning. However, this study is limited on one animated movie and only focused on written script particularly spoken dialogue. Future study can further research by involving multimodal features such analysis of gestures and surrounding environment. Overall, valuable insights into evaluative language in animated film dialogue are provided by the study, highlighting the usefulness of the Appraisal Framework for exploring interpersonal meaning in evaluation discourse.

Keywords: *Appraisal Framework; Attitudinal Resource; Spellbound (2024); Spoken Dialogue.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Language in film is not only acknowledged as the vehicle for dialogue; constructing identities, shaping emotions, organizing interpersonal relationships, and guiding audience interpretation to the story also need a language as the resources analysis. This means language is viewed as a basic meaning-making resource in

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social life, depends on the situation (Halliday, 1985). In films, to produce the meaning and convey the message of the story, all features such visuals and setting must work together with language.

In line with this, Awinzeligo et al., (2022) stated that revealing characters' inner states, moral positioning, motivations, and relationships are revealed through spoken dialogue in the cinematic storytelling. While the visual and multimodal elements of film are highly crucial (Wildfeuer, 2014), the shape of narrative meaning is highly influenced by linguistic choices—how characters speak, how they evaluate people and situations, and how they express emotions (Martin & White, 2005). This is how animated films do, where language is heightened to strongly describe characters (Awinzeligo et al., 2022) conveying emotions and evaluations that may not be fully captured visually. As a result, linguistic analysis has a rich context and get insightful domain through film dialogue, specifically in examining how language creates and evaluates meaning.

The ongoing transformation of media consumption is another worthwhile rationale for this study roots in. Animated content expanded to younger audiences' engagement, often interpreting character emotions and moral messages through dialogue (Awinzeligo et al., 2022). Within this context, *Spellbound* (2024), a fantasy musical produced by Skydance Animation, becomes a relevant and contemporary issue of analysis. As a newly released animated film, it has not yet received scholarly attention in linguistic or discourse-analytic studies. The movie centres on Princess Ellian, she committed to break a powerful curse that transforms her parents and her kingdom into monsters. Although the film contains musical sequences, much of its emotional intensity and narrative progression is driven by spoken dialogue—moments where characters negotiate fear, loyalty, moral conflict, and hope.

Considering the film's contemporary relevance, its linguistic richness, and the lack of scholarly research on its evaluative language, investigating how Attitude resources are used to construct emotions, moral positions, and narrative evaluations in its spoken dialogue is needed. To address this need, the present study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What types of Attitude resources (Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation) are realized in the spoken dialogue of the film?
2. How does each Attitude subsystem occur frequently in the dialogue?
3. How emotions, behaviour evaluation, and situations description within the narrative are constructed by characters?

Given this context, the study serves theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it offers contemporary appraisal literature related to a newest animated movie, presenting how attitudinal meaning used in fictional dialogue, thus extending the scope of Appraisal Theory into narrative-based spoken discourse. In practical, the study highlights how film dialogue can be used as linguistic data for teaching evaluative language, narrative comprehension, and discourse interpretation, specially in EFL and media literacy contexts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Appraisal Framework and Attitude Subsystem

Previous studies highly used language analysis in the scope of Appraisal framework (Arjanti, 2021; Fitriati et al., 2018; Gan et al., 2024; Nafisah et al., 2020; Prastikawati, 2021; Rambe, 2015; Susanto, 2025; Wei et al., 2015) indicating the interest of explaining emotion, behaviour, and relationship increased significantly. Appraisal Theory, developed by Martin and White, provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing how speakers and writers evaluate people, behaviour,

situations, and events. According to Martin & White (2005), appraisal is a system of interpersonal meaning to explore how language is used to express interpretation, take stances, build textual personas, and manage positioning and relationships (Prastikawati, 2021)

The Attitude system—one of the three subsystems—enacts three key domains: (1) Affect; defined as emotional expressions and responds including feelings such as sadness, misery, suffer, happiness, delightful, joyful, anxiety, confidence and fear (Martin & White, 2005), (2) Judgment; refers to how someone express and comment to evaluate behaviours, whether it is admiring, annoying or amazing (Martin & White, 2005), and (3) Appreciation; used to assess how valuable, important, or meaningless the things are in social or specific conditions on both symbolic (e.g., language, images, gestures, texts) and real-world (e.g., places, situations, actions) (Martin & White, 2005).

2.2 Attitudinal Language Across Contexts and Fictional Discourse

Attitude is assumed as central to build interpersonal meaning and social relationships as shown in most recent studies. Hoemann et al. (2025) emphasized that emotional meaning-making across different situations, individuals, and cultural contexts can be created by patterns and contribution of attitude. Prastikawati (2021) analysed news article using Attitude that shaping how the feelings of people and the reported events or phenomena were conveyed. Yuting (2023) applied the framework in translation analysis, showing that translator often makes the author's explicit and implicit attitudes more visible, influencing how readers perceive the text's characters, events, and overall stance. More recently, Susanto (2025) found the significant attitudinal aspects are negotiated through language on spoken discourse in EFL classroom. Although these studies differ in context—psychology, news articles, translation—they reinforce the idea of understanding evaluative meaning through attitudinal language is essential.

In the other hand, films provide rich narrative and expressive potential for linguistic evaluation research yet still largely under researched and underexplored. The focus of existing studies often emphasizing metaphors, cultural representation, multimodal features, or transitivity, while attitudinal meaning only receives limited attention. Furthermore, research that does address evaluative language in film also typically only examines a single category of meaning or uses mixed methods without systematically applying the Appraisal Framework. This study points out the need of a comprehensive analysis of attitude in cinematic discourse, specifically from a text-linguistic perspective.

Additionally, the literature fields show an even higher gap for animated films. Linguistic study on animation typically stresses on dubbing, subtitling, children's media literacy, or multimodal cohesion (Awinzeligo et al., 2022) rather than attitudinal meaning. Actually, its narratives that frequently draw on emotional expression, moral contrasts, and dramatized interaction are ideal to be examined on how linguistic choices create interpretation meaning.

To fill these gaps, a systematic appraisal analysis of Attitude in the spoken dialogue of an animated fantasy film is conducted. It investigates how Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation are represented within the narrative to get emotional tension, moral positioning, and evaluations of events and situations. Moreover, Liu (2018) argues that attitudinal meanings help analyze how characters are depicted, how the plot develops, how themes are presented, and how emotions or evaluations are expressed.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This study used a qualitative content analysis approach that applying Appraisal Framework from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Content analysis yields a systematic and objective approach for identifying patterns and meanings within texts and other forms of communication (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). Krippendorff (2013) explains, content analysis seeks to reveal the conceptual structures provided by a text—how readers or viewers interpret the worlds constructed through linguistic choices, as cited in Weninger and Kiss (2014). In applied studies, researcher is required to categorize, code, and quantify linguistic features in order to trace underlying themes, values, or representations when using this analysis approach (Weninger & Kiss, 2014).

Therefore, it is fundamental step to build clear and theoretically grounded coding categories, particularly when analysing evaluative meanings embedded in narrative discourse. Howitt (2019) emphasizes that the central features of the data must be captured in coding systems and reflected the analytical aims of the study. This is supported by Drisko & Maschi (2016), who argue that although qualitative content analysis may involve deeper meanings explanation, its primary goal is that the contents are systematically and transparently organized and described.

In the context of the present study, content analysis is used to classify the Attitude resources—Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation—in the spoken dialogue of *Spellbound* (2024). By coding each example of evaluative meaning, the method facilitates a structured and reliable analysis of how characters express emotions, evaluate others, and describe events within the narrative. This systematic categorization forms the basis for examining patterns in the film's evaluative language and addressing the research questions.

3.2 Data Source

The data for this research were collected from the movie with the English subtitles which was watched for several times for ensuring accuracy. This research data also got the full transcript of the *Spellbound* (2024) film that were obtained from **Springfield! Springfield!** (<https://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/>), a reputable online archive known for curating verified scripts and subtitles commonly used in research and media analysis these two scripts are then compared to verify and confirm the validity. To maintain a focused dataset, this study analyses only the spoken dialogue in *Spellbound* (2024), excluding all musical numbers and lyrical performances. This ensures that the evaluation of Attitude resources only focuses on interpersonal interaction rather than stylized or poetic language typical of musical scenes.

All characters' spoken lines were included to capture how meanings shift across different interactions, and because the film's evaluative meanings emerge through multiple relationships—between Princess Ellian, her parents, advisors, allies, and antagonists. Analysing only one or two characters would restrict the broader pattern of attitudinal expression that shapes the story's emotional and moral tensions.

3.3 Coding Procedures and Analytical Framework

This study employed Appraisal Framework to analyse the Attitude subsystem which is rooted in Halliday's (1985) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Martin & White (2005) developed the Appraisal Framework to systematically examine

evaluative language and categorized into three types: Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation.

Every dialogue was coded according to these attitudinal categories. Only the clear, explicit and interpretable dialogues for evaluative meaning were coded and included. Whereas the implicit ones were excluded.

3.4 Reliability and Validity

To make sure the reliability and validity of the analysis in this study, the researcher took several measure.

- 1) The coding process was conducted by single researcher in order to maintain consistency on whole data and the potential of confusion in classifying Attitude types was minimum.
- 2) The process of coding followed the definitions provided in Appraisal Framework strictly to support the objectivity of analysis.
- 3) The researcher only quote the dialogues which express Attitude types clearly.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were followed during the process of this study related to content analysis and discourse research. The *Spellbound's* (2024) transcript was publicly available and the website source was mentioned. As respect for intellectual property. The interpretation of each dialogue was done carefully and respectfully, stressing the emotional and moral meanings without changing any original characters.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the result data are presented into two main categories. The first section is presenting types of Attitude resources found in the film and the frequency of each occurrence. The second section is focusing on the analysis results on the use of Attitude resources to express emotion, evaluation, and narrative comprehension through Affect, Judgment and Appreciation in shaping social relations.

4.1 Frequency of Attitudinal Aspects in *Spellbound* (2024)

The frequency of Attitudinal aspects in *Spellbound* (2024) were shown in the following table.

Table 1. Frequency of Attitudinal Aspects

<i>Attitude Type</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Affect	83	50%
Judgment	65	39%
Appreciation	18	11%
Total	166	100%

Based on Table 1, Affect is the most dominant Attitude types with 50% occurrences of all evaluative expressions. This means that characters most frequently

express emotions such as fear, frustration, worry, hope, affection, or relief. This high frequency shows that affect was used for explaining what characters' feeling (Martin & White, 2005). The result followed by Judgment with 39% of the data, suggesting that evaluating behaviour, morality and personal quality in frequent. While the last appearance is Appreciation at 11 %, showing that reviewing events, things, or situations less happen than interpersonal and emotional expression.

This spread fits the whole storyline of the film which containing conflicts and struggles. *Spellbound* (2024) tells the unstoppable efforts of Princess Ellian to get her parents back to be a normal human-being, King and Queen. This theme underpins the entire story. Thereby most of spoken dialogues there expressing the stress, disappointment, fear, struggle and optimism—resulting Affect as the highest frequency.

The narrative is drawn on strongly emotional expression in constructing tension and conveying interpersonal interest, as shown on the dominance of Affect (50%). Martin & White (2005) explains that Affect is central in texts where characters must express vulnerability, desire, fear, or courage. This pattern is consistent with Fitriati et al. (2018) observation that Affect was highly employed in narratives with heavy emotional arcs to guide audience sensitivity and engagement. In *Spellbound*, language is used as a tool to express emotional that reflecting Princess Ellian's struggle, internal optimism, the unsteady kingdom, the curse and the need of refurbishing the situations, contributes the strong presence of Affect.

In addition, the emphasize of moral and behavioural evaluation is shown on the major presence of Judgment (39%), supporting Khotimah & Widhiyanto's (2025) argument that constructing moral and social relationship within story can apply judgment aspect. Characters often judge actions as right or wrong, such as the moment captured in the scene of film, specifically when the King and Queen reveal their selves to the crowded community in front of the castle, many soldiers and the people criticize their King and Queen Monster. Such evaluative is important to differ and give moral clarity for audience interpretation.

In contrast, Appreciation shows the relatively lower frequency on 11%, the evaluation of object, things and events are fewer than compared to emotional and moral evaluation. This finding is consistent with Arjanti's (2021) observation that Appreciation is often used primarily during the orientation stage to introduce characters and describe the setting of a story. In *Spellbound*, while the cursed kingdom and magical elements are central to the plot, the settings and objects are rarely described in long dialogues by the characters. However, they more focus on the situation affect their emotional or moral.

Overall, in this study, spoken dialogue in narrative media tends to highlight the emotional and social meanings over descriptive evaluation. The pattern observed in *Spellbound*—with Affect as the dominant category, followed by Judgment and a smaller proportion of Appreciation—also reflects Halliday's (1985) notion that

interpersonal meaning is a central function of spoken language, particularly in emotionally charged and character-driven narratives.

4.2 Use of Attitude Resources in Constructing Emotions, Evaluations, and Narrative Descriptions

The use of Attitude resources in *Spellbound* (2024) distributes respectively. Characters consistently rely on these resources to convey personal feeling, social evaluation, and critic. The following illustration are the examples of each subtype in context, with analytical interpretation grounded in the Appraisal framework.

4.1.1 Affect

Ellian: *"Sure, woo-hoo, I'm a princess. Still, my life's not ideal."*

That utterance indicates a frustration and admission of the unluckiness, although she is a princess. She sarcastically expresses her emotional conflict, unrevealing the hidden pressure buried under the surface.

Queen Nazara: *"Oh, I hate this. Look at the circles under my eyes... What have become?"*

On this scene, the queen cries out her frustration with a heavy sigh. The phrase *"I hate this"* is an explicit expression of negative affect (personal dislike/anger) and tired reference to dark circles signals a fatigue. In Appraisal term, a strong negative emotional stance was illustrated on the lexeme *"hate"*. Nazara's mood was represented through her outburst for the audience and builds sympathy for her burdened state. By stressing her feelings, the utterance performs an interpersonal function: it signals to other characters (and to the audience) that her royal duties make her feeling overwhelmed and demoralized (Fitriati et al., 2018).

Minister/Bolinar: *"I'm afraid to guess."*

The phrase *"I'm afraid"* indicates personal anxiety about an unclear and doubtful outcome. This utterance was spoken when the advisers speculate about the consequences of revealing the royal secret of being monsters, this line explicitly expresses fear. As Martin & White (2005) note, through first-person affective expressions, the character's internal emotion was conveyed into the discourse. In the narrative, this brief admission signals that the advisers themselves are difficult and full of struggle, adding to the general atmosphere tension.

4.1.2 Judgment

Toy chicken: *"Bad king. Bad queen."*

This utterance is spoken by the squeaky toy that Ellian commands stating this line about the cursed monarchs, offering a straightforward ethical evaluation of their behaviour. In Appraisal terms, this represents negative Judgment, the king and queen

are labelled as a “*bad*”, The repetition adds a light sense of mockery. Interpersonally, the line introduces humour by allowing an inanimate object to voice criticism, gently disrupting the usual royal authority. Narratively, it provides a brief moment of comic relief within the scene.

Princess Ellian to her parent: “*You’re ruining my life.*”

This outburst is directed at one of Ellian’s parents during an everyday interaction, and it functions as a direct second-person complaint. The line conveys Ellian’s negative Affect—her frustration and distress—while also expressing negative Judgment of the parent’s behaviour. The use of “you” assigns blame, and the phrase “ruining my life” exaggerates the impact to stress her emotional state. In the narrative, this moment highlights Ellian’s frustration and her struggle with parental control, showing how her feelings shift into a sharp evaluation of the situation.

Oracle: “*Your parents are monsters because they’ve lost their light.*”

This moral evaluation attributes blame to Ellian’s parents for their monstrous behavior, framing it as the result of their moral decline. The loss of their “light” symbolizes their ethical fall.

Minister/Bolinar to Cardona: “*You are big man-boy.*”

General Cardona and playfully combines “man” and “boy” as a light insult is directed on his remark. In Appraisal terms, a negative Judgment of maturity is presented in this sentence, suggesting that the character is acting less responsibly than expected represents. Although teasing in tone, evaluative force is still carried. Interpersonally, a sense of familiarity and informal humour is created by the line between the characters. Narratively, it helps to soften the tense situation by adding a brief moment of levity.

Queen Nazara, speaking of Ellian: “*She’s not exactly the chill type.*”

In this line, Ellian’s temperament is commented by the character. The phrase “*not exactly the chill type*” functions as a negative Judgment of her personality, suggesting that Ellian tends to react strongly. In Appraisal terms, it evaluates her disposition as less calm or flexibility. How others perceived her is shaped through this remark, Ellian is depicted as energetic or easily agitated. Interpersonally, it explains why the characters act cautiously around her, and narratively, it supports the idea that her emotional strain influences how others respond to her behaviour.

Appreciation

Ellian: “*I just really miss you both.*”

Here, Ellian expresses Appreciation for the emotional bond with her parents, even though their relationship is strained. Despite their monstrous forms, she values the family connection.

Oracle: *"You're a daughter of light..."*

The Oracles express Appreciation for Ellian's potential role in saving her parents. This is a positive evaluation of Ellian's symbolic importance, framing her as the key to renovate balance.

Ellian: *"I wish there was a way back to the way it was before."*

Appreciation for the family's previous harmonious state is reflected through this expression, showing her longing for the normalcy that was lost after her parents' transformation.

Queen Nazara, in the Dark Forest: *"My beautiful body."*

This expression is said after the queen horrifying her monstrous transformation, this is a bitter, ironic statement. The adjective *"beautiful"* is used to appraise her new form with, which contrasts with the obvious grotesqueness. In Appraisal terms this uses positive Appreciation vocabulary ironically to describe a negative reality – the beauty is a sarcastic twist. Interpersonally, Nazara's disbelief and despair are conveyed by the line. Narratively, it underscores the horror of the situation by framing it in aesthetic terms and highlights the characters' struggle to reconcile their identities with their cursed forms.

Royal Postmaster: *"...in the Dark Forest of Eternal Darkness, the most treacherous place."*

The postmaster is describing the oracles' location. The phrase *"most treacherous"* is a clear example of positive-to-negative scalar evaluation of the environment. In Appraisal, Appreciation deals with qualities of things, and here *"treacherous"* (combined with superlative *"most"*) is a high arousal negative valuation of the forest. Danger is communicated in this language. Interpersonally, seriousness about the quest is conveyed, and narratively it foreshadows peril, setting the scene's mood. It appraises the setting in an evaluative way that enhances tension.

How Appraisal resources shape interpersonal meaning are demonstrated in each example. Affect expressions reveal characters' emotional states (making them relatable), Judgment terms encode social/moral evaluations (aligning or distancing characters), and Appreciation vocabulary depicts and colors the narrative world. Martin & White's Appraisal framework helps to show that these utterances do more than convey plot information: they negotiate feelings, values, and impressions between characters, guiding the audience's response to each situation. In *Spellbound*, the strategic use of affect, judgment, and appreciation builds character, highlights conflicts, and adds depth to the storytelling.

6. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the use of Attitude resources in *Spellbound* (2024) by examining the frequency of Attitudinal aspects and the ways characters construct emotional, moral, and descriptive meanings within the narrative through Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation employment. The analysis showed that Affect was the most dominant category, indicating that emotional expression to portray characters' internal states and to shape audience engagement are heavily relied on the film. Judgment appeared frequently, reflecting how characters evaluate one another's behaviour and negotiate interpersonal relationships throughout the story. Appreciation, although less common, played a meaningful role in describing settings and situational contexts, particularly at key narrative moments. Together, these findings demonstrate that the film's dialogue strategically uses Attitude resources to develop characterization, advance the narrative, and guide viewers' interpretations of both events and relationships.

This study also highlights the value of analysing animated film dialogue for the Appraisal Framework, as it helps reveal how evaluative meanings shape characters' relationships and the overall narrative. By examining how emotions, judge behaviour, and evaluate situations were expressed by the characters, a clearer understanding of how language contributes to meaning-making in the film was offered by the analysis.

However, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study focused on a single film, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Only relying on the written transcript may also make the important paralinguistic cues were overlooked such as tone or gesture.

Future research could include more films from different genres, incorporate multimodal features, or explore other components of the Appraisal Framework, such as Engagement and Graduation, to provide a more comprehensive analysis of evaluative meaning. The findings offer implications for linguistic research, language education, and media studies. They reinforce the usefulness of Appraisal theory in analyzing interpersonal meaning, provide material for teaching evaluative language in EFL contexts, and offer insights for storytellers on how linguistic choices influence audience perception and character development.

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