

Realization of Judgment Elements of Appraisal System in Sentences Representing Psychopathic Character in Novels

Deny Kuswahono^{1*}, M.R. Nababan², Dyah Ayu Nila Khrisna³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Sebelas Maret, Jl. Ir. Sutami No.36A, Kentingan, Jebres, Surakarta, 57126, Indonesia

Corresponding Author.

*Email: dennykuswahono@gmail.com

dennykuswahono@student.uns.ac.id

Abstract: This study aimed at revealing judgment elements of appraisal system implied in sentences depicting psychopathic character in Thomas Harris's *The Silence of the Lambs* and in Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* novels. The character analysed were Hannibal Lecter, Jame "Buffalo Bill" Gumb, and Patrick Bateman. The research paradigm adopted was descriptive qualitative using single embedded case study with content analysis as the analytical method. The source of data were documents that comprised sentences describing psychopathic characterization narrated in those novels. The data were primary data containing judgment elements. The data collection method in this study was content analysis using appraisal framework. The findings found that there were 31 data for Hannibal Lecter, 62 data for Jame "Buffalo Bill" Gumb, and 207 data for Patrick Bateman. It can be concluded that judgment propriety negative was the most dominantly used by those novels' authors in representing the psychopathic characters of Hannibal Lecter, Jame "Buffalo Bill" Gumb, and Patrick Bateman.

Keywords: Appraisal System, Judgment, Novel, Psychopathic Character, Sentences

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1. INTRODUCTION

Literary work is a form of creative work that deals with human objects and lives using language as its medium. It is essentially manifestation of events or incidents. The events or incidents depicted in literary work are brought to life by characters who play important roles in the story. Through these characters, the author creates events that describe human life, which differ due to the differences in characters that generate behaviours and events in the story [1]. Characters of story are people portrayed with moral qualities and specific tendencies as expressed in speech and actions. A novel's story becomes alive with the presence of characters completed with various conflicts they face [2]. Characterization is something that authors must consider when crafting the narrative [3]. Without the presence of characters and characterization in literary works, the text lacks the appeal to captivate readers' attention. Characters and characterization allow for the portrayal of a plot and the interaction between characters in the text created by the author [4]. The behaviour of the characters can be conveyed through their actions, dialogue, habits, and so on [5] [6]. Characterization is highly appropriate when examined using appraisal system that offers a framework for analysing the evaluative language used in texts. The application of appraisal theory provides insights into how to navigate the subjective elements of texts, including attitudes, emotions, and assessments.

To date, there has been no research examining sentences that represent psychopathic characters using appraisal framework, let alone studies that specifically employed engagement category and identified forms of heteroglossic multiple voicing. Heteroglossic multiple voicing is the presence of two voices in the text, namely, the narrator's voice, which depicts the scene and makes implicit evaluations, and the character's voice, or in other words, the existence of more than one voice position or perspective. Thus, it indicates a contrast between the character's perception and the narrative reality, and reveal the character's psychological complexity as well as the evaluative distance between the narrator and the character [7]. Some studies applying appraisal framework did not focus on psychopathic characters, other studies analysed such characters using a psychoanalytic

approach. Accordingly, this study focuses on the engagement category to identify instances of heteroglossic multiple voicing in sentences representing psychopathic character.

Appraisal System

Appraisal system or Appraisal theory was proposed by Martin and White based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which is a new perspective on translation studies and focuses on the interpersonal meaning of the text [8]. Systemic Functional Linguistics was proposed by Halliday that formulated three text metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The Appraisal theory is directly used to expand the model of interpersonal meaning [7]. Appraisal is dialogic and is related to the interpersonal in language, i.e., the expression and construction of communities of attitude, shared feelings, and values through the linguistic mechanisms for the sharing of emotions, tastes, and normative assessments [9] [10]. In order to have a better understanding of appraisal, a brief introduction of appraisal resources is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Appraisal resources (based on Martin & White, 2005)

Domain of Appraisal	Category
Attitude	Affect
	Judgment
	Appreciation
Engagement	Monogloss
	Heterogloss
Graduation	Force
	Focus

Psychopathic Character

A personality condition known as psychopathy is characterized by a number of antisocial, emotional, interpersonal, and lifestyle traits [11]. Usually, someone that is a psychopath or has a psychopathy is lacking empathy, good at lying and manipulation yet feel no regret from what they have done [12] [13]. First impression of a psychopath always tends to behave well and attract the attention from people around them. Psychopaths are social predators that mercilessly plough their way through life by charming, manipulating, and shattering expectations while harbouring no remorse or sense of guilt [14]. A psychopath is an aggressive, impulsive, antisocial individual who lacks guilt and is unable to develop strong emotional ties with other people. They communicate with intelligence and a positive attitude [15] [16].

2. METHOD

The paradigm used in this research is descriptive qualitative with a single embedded case study employing content analysis method. Descriptive qualitative research aims to understand phenomena such as behaviours, perceptions, motivations, actions, and others experienced by research subjects in a holistic manner, described in words or sentences within a specific natural context and utilizing various scientific methods [17]. Qualitative research employs five types of study frequently used in the social and health sciences today: narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, case studies, and basic theory [18] [19] [20]. The source of data in this research were documents that comprised sentences describing psychopathic characterization narrated in Thomas Harris’s *The Silence of the Lambs* and Bret Easton Ellis’s *American Psycho* novels. The data in this research were primary data containing judgment elements of appraisal framework. The data collection method in this research was content analysis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents results of analysis of expressions that depict psychopathic characterization in the novels *The Silence of the Lambs* and *American Psycho*. The judgment subcategories of expressions representing psychopathic characters in those novels is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Distribution of judgment subcategories in the novels *The Silence of the Lambs* and *American Psycho*.

Subcategory	Hannibal Lecter	Jame “Buffalo Bill” Gumb	Patrick Bateman	Total
Normality (-)	4	12	12	28
Propriety (-)	26	49	92	167
Veracity (-)	-	1	3	4
Capacity (-)	1	-	-	1

In the category of negative normality judgment, there are four data items related to Hannibal Lecter. This character is evaluated negatively in terms of normality, but the number is relatively small. This indicates that he is perceived as abnormal; however, his deviation is concealed and elitist in nature. His abnormality is not always explicitly visible because he is able to function socially. In other words, although his character is indeed deviant, his deviation is often wrapped in intelligence and high culture, as seen in Datum 1, which narrates a sentence uttered by the character coldly and casually to an FBI officer who visits him in the prison where he is being held.

Datum 1

“I collect church collapses, recreationally. Did you see the recent one in Sicily? Marvelous! The facade fell on sixty-five grandmothers at a special mass.”

The category of negative normality judgment appears more frequently in the character of Jame “Buffalo Bill” Gumb with a total of 12 data. This higher number indicates that the character is represented as profoundly socially deviant, with behavior and identity that fall outside commonly accepted norms and positioned as *the other* within society. The negative normality attributed to this character emphasizes alienation and social non-acceptance, as illustrated in data 71. The context of that datum depicts the nickname that has been assigned by the general public to Jame “Buffalo Bill” Gumb.

Datum 71

Master of the dark, queen of the dark.

The same number of occurrences is also found in the character of Patrick Bateman. This indicates that Patrick Bateman is likewise perceived as abnormal, even though he appears to be part of the elite society as depicted in datum 164. His abnormality is concealed behind his professional life and well-established lifestyle. The negative aspect of normality in this character suggests a sharp contrast between his outwardly normal appearance and his deviant psychological reality.

Datum 164

I remove the head, placing it in Paul’s oak and teak armoire, and then I’m sitting in a chair, naked, covered with blood, watching HBO on TV, drinking a Corona.

From the table above, it can also be observed that the category of negative judgment of propriety is the most dominant attitude element in the data, or the most frequently occurring one. This category evaluates aspects of morality, ethics, and the appropriateness of behavior. The occurrence of 26 data points related to the character Hannibal Lecter represents his immoral nature through various manipulative acts, violence, and murder, as can be seen in datum 4 which contains an utterance by someone recounting actions previously committed by the character. However, this representation is often accompanied by intellectual and aesthetic nuances. His crimes are not portrayed as impulsive but rather as deliberate and refined. This positions the character as an immoral yet charismatic figure.

Datum 4

“He gave us nothing useful and he helped Will Graham get a knife jammed through his face last time. For fun.”

For the character Jame “Buffalo Bill” Gumb, the higher number of occurrences of negative propriety judgment category, amounting to 49 data, indicates that this character is represented as someone who severely violates moral norms. His actions are perceived as disgusting, brutal, and inhumane. The realization of negative propriety here functions to demonize the character and position him as a symbol of pure evil without moral ambiguity. This can be observed in Datum 5 below, which presents an evaluation of the character by another individual.

Datum 5

He wants a vest with tits on it

Meanwhile, the character Patrick Bateman shows the highest frequency of negative propriety, totaling 92 data, indicating that his immorality becomes the primary focus of his character representation. Violence, narcissism, misogyny, and moral nihilism dominate the construction of his character. The dominance of negative propriety portrays Patrick Bateman as an extreme critique of the morality of modern capitalist society, in which crime is concealed behind social success. The datum below expresses this condition. The sentence in this datum is the character’s narration of what he thinks and feels.

Datum 95

Maybe the glass of Scharffenberger has deadened my impulse or maybe it’s simply that I don’t want to ruin this particular Alexander Julian suit by having the bitch spray her blood all over it.

In the aspect of negative judgment of veracity, which relates to honesty and sincerity, no data were found for Hannibal Lecter. Only one datum was found for the character Jame “Buffalo Bill” Gumb and three data were identified for Patrick Bateman. It can be concluded that Jame “Buffalo Bill” Gumb is portrayed as having a dishonest personality, concealing his identity and intentions and using deception to achieve his criminal goals, as described in Datum 58 which is the novelist’s narration used to depict the character’s personality.

The greater number of data found for Patrick Bateman indicates that he frequently lies, pretends, and manipulates other people’s perceptions. Furthermore, he maintains a dual identity between his public image and his private reality. Negative veracity reinforces the portrayal of Patrick Bateman as a hypocritical character filled with social falseness. Datum 152 below clearly represents this.

Datum 58

He was more of a trapdoor spider. With his own digs.

Datum 152

I find myself shouting out, my voice heavy with emotion, “I’m a doctor, move back, I’m a doctor,” and I kneel beside the mother

In the category of negative judgment of capacity, which evaluates an individual’s ability or competence, there is one datum representing Hannibal Lecter. Interestingly, the negative capacity datum appears only in this character as shown in Datum 34 below. This indicates that the evaluation does not negate his intelligence in general, but rather highlights a particular moment in which his actions are perceived as unsuccessful or limited. On the contrary, this character is more frequently positioned as highly capable, making the occurrence of negative capacity minor and contextual in nature.

Datum 34

Years ago, when Dr. Lecter was declared insane

In datum 34, the word *insane* semantically means not sane, having lost the ability to think rationally or being unable to control one’s thoughts or actions in a normal manner. In social and legal contexts, *insane* directly signifies mental incapacity. This explicitly evaluates Hannibal Lecter’s cognitive and psychological capacity as deficient. The use of the passive form carries an important implication: the judgment does not originate from a personal narrator but from an institutional authority (for example, a court, a mental hospital, or the state). Consequently, this negative evaluation appears objective, socially legitimized, and stronger than a mere personal

opinion. This sentence contains negative judgment of capacity because the character is positioned as an individual who is unable to think normally, does not meet the mental standards required to function in society, and lacks the rational capacity deemed acceptable. The sentence is particularly interesting because the word *insane* not only directly labels a mental condition but also reflects that the narrator does not appear to judge explicitly, as the evaluation is shifted to a third party.

Within the appraisal system, this is referred to as invoked judgment. The reader is guided to accept the negative evaluation without the speaker having to express a personal opinion. The sentence in data 34 clearly realizes negative judgment of capacity because it assesses the character's mental ability as inadequate, employs a strong medical or social label, is delivered through an external authority so that it appears objective, and functions to construct an image of a character who is socially and mentally defective. Thus, the element of negative judgment of capacity in this sentence is strong, explicit, institutionally legitimized, and highly effective in shaping the reader's perception of the character under discussion.

The domination of negative propriety subcategory constitutes the primary source in representing the three characters as criminal and deviant figures. The character Patrick Bateman is portrayed in the most extreme way in terms of his immorality. The character Jame "Buffalo Bill" Gumb is emphasized more as an abnormal and socially immoral figure, while the character Hannibal Lecter is presented as more complex, both immoral and abnormal, yet possessing high emotional control, intelligence, and charisma. Thus, the attitude category within the appraisal system functions not only to evaluate the characters but also to guide readers in constructing evaluative and ideological positions toward each character.

The dominance of negative propriety in the portrayal of Hannibal Lecter indicates that he is most frequently evaluated as a figure who violates moral and ethical norms, even though he is often depicted as highly controlled and refined. The relatively small number of negative normality elements suggests that he is not frequently evaluated as strange or abnormal, but rather as an individual who consciously and rationally chooses immoral actions. The character Jame "Buffalo Bill" Gumb demonstrates a strong combination of negative propriety and negative normality realizations. This suggests that he is positioned not only as morally improper but also as psychologically and socially deviant. The presence of negative veracity evaluations, although limited, reinforces judgments concerning dishonesty or distortion of reality in his actions. Meanwhile, Patrick Bateman exhibits the highest frequency of negative propriety by a significant margin. This confirms that nearly all evaluative representations of Bateman are directed toward cruelty, extreme amorality, and repeated ethical violations. The very minimal presence of negative affect (happiness) elements indicates that his emotional dimension is almost entirely distorted or reduced, reinforcing his image as a cold and empathy-deficient figure.

The evaluative focus differs qualitatively for each of them. The evaluation of Hannibal Lecter is more focused on moral transgression with intellectual control, emphasizing moral violations committed consciously, elegantly, and in a controlled manner. The low frequency of negative normality aspects indicates that he is not represented as chaotic or impulsive in personality, but rather as a functional psychopath capable of superficially adapting to social norms. In the case of Jame "Buffalo Bill" Gumb, the evaluative focus is divided between moral impropriety and abnormality. He is more frequently evaluated as unnatural, unstable, and fragmented in identity, constructing the image of a psychopath who is not fully capable of controlling his impulses and his sense of reality. Meanwhile, the evaluation of Patrick Bateman is almost entirely centered on negative propriety. This demonstrates that the narrative consistently highlights an extreme moral void and social mask—total moral emptiness, sadistic violence, and extreme objectification of others. Negative normality appears, but it does not become the central focus. Instead, he is portrayed as socially normal yet morally corrupt.

The research findings consistently show that the category of judgment, particularly negative propriety, constitutes the primary foundation in the representation of psychopathic characters in both the source text and the target text. The three characters are not constructed through expressions of emotion (affect) or aesthetic evaluation (appreciation), but rather through moral and social assessments of their actions. This finding affirms that psychopathy in narrative texts is constructed as a moral failure rather than an emotional outburst. Evaluative language functions as an ideological mechanism to mark those who transgress the boundaries of humanity and social norms. Thus, the appraisal system – especially judgment – serves as the principal tool for directing readers toward a particular evaluative stance, normalizing moral rejection of the character, and reinforcing the ethical distance between reader and character.

Although all three characters are predominantly shaped by negative judgment, differences in the distribution of attitude subcategories create qualitatively distinct spectrums of psychopathy. The dominance of negative propriety in the character of Hannibal Lecter, accompanied by a low degree of negative normality and

an almost complete absence of affect, indicates an elite psychopath who is rational, controlled, and socially functional. Hannibal Lecter is not represented as insane, but as a conscious, intelligent subject who chooses evil rationally. Paradoxically, the minimal presence of negative normality makes his deviance even more terrifying because he appears normal on the surface.

In the character of Jame 'Buffalo Bill' Gumb, the strong combination of negative propriety and negative normality—along with negative veracity as a marker of distorted identity—reflects a dysfunctional, fragmented, and socially alienated psychopathic personality. This character is constructed as a radical “other,” with evaluative language reinforcing abnormality and dehumanization. In the character of Patrick Bateman, the dominance of negative propriety, coupled with an almost nonexistent presence of affect and a marginal role of negative normality, suggests that he is not portrayed as strange, but rather as entirely normal yet wholly amoral. This representation constructs an ideological critique of modern capitalist society, in which psychopathy is not an anomaly but a logical outcome of the prevailing social value system.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion presented in previous section, it can be concluded that the appraisal system in the subcategory of judgment propriety negative is most dominantly employed by the novelists in representing the psychopathic character. The analysis demonstrates that negative judgment – particularly negative propriety – is the most dominant evaluative element in representing Hannibal Lecter, Jame 'Buffalo Bill' Gumb, and Patrick Bateman. In terms of negative normality, Hannibal Lecter shows relatively few occurrences, suggesting that although he is deviant, his abnormality is concealed beneath intelligence, refinement, and social functionality. In contrast, Jame “Buffalo Bill” Gumb displays a higher frequency of negative normality, marking him as socially alienated and overtly deviant. Patrick Bateman also exhibits notable negative normality, but his abnormality is hidden behind his elite lifestyle and professional success.

Negative propriety emerges as the most dominant category for all three characters. Hannibal Lecter’s immorality is portrayed as deliberate, controlled, and intellectually refined. Jame “Buffalo Bill” Gumb is depicted as brutally immoral and socially monstrous, with little ambiguity. Patrick Bateman demonstrates the highest frequency of negative propriety, emphasizing extreme amorality, narcissism, misogyny, and moral nihilism. His character becomes a representation of moral emptiness concealed within social success.

Negative veracity appears minimally suggests that deception and hypocrisy are central primarily to Bateman’s characterization, reinforcing his dual identity and social falseness. Negative capacity appears only once, in relation to Hannibal Lecter, where institutional authority labels him “insane,” functioning as an invoked and socially legitimized judgment. Overall, the appraisal system shows that these characters are constructed mainly through moral and social evaluations rather than emotional expression or aesthetic appreciation. Psychopathy is represented primarily as a moral failure rather than an emotional disturbance.

The findings confirm that negative propriety serves as the principal evaluative mechanism in constructing psychopathic characters. However, differences in the distribution of judgment subcategories create distinct qualitative representations of psychopathy. Hannibal Lecter is portrayed as an elite, rational, and socially functional psychopath whose immorality is conscious and controlled. His limited negative normality makes him appear superficially normal, which intensifies the horror of his calculated evil.

Jame “Buffalo Bill” Gumb is constructed as both morally corrupt and socially abnormal, positioned as a radical “other” whose identity is fragmented and alienated. His representation emphasizes deviance and dehumanization. Patrick Bateman is overwhelmingly characterized by negative propriety with minimal negative normality. He is depicted as socially normal yet entirely amoral, functioning as an ideological critique of modern capitalist society in which psychopathy becomes systemic rather than exceptional. Thus, the appraisal system – particularly the judgment category – functions not only to evaluate characters but also to guide readers ideologically, reinforcing moral rejection and constructing varying spectrums of psychopathy across the three narratives.

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