



# The Use of Appraisal and Debate Structure in English Debate Competition of Senior High School Students

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### Abstract

This study aimed to explain the appraisal system manifested in students' debate competition, the students' realization of using appraisal, and the contribution of appraising items to debate structure. By using discourse analysis, the data which are in the form of transcripts from video recordings were analyzed in both tables of appraising items and debate structure. Several methods of analyzing data were done including transcribing, reading, categorizing, and analyzing. In order to validate the findings, the data and the analysis of this study had been examined and judged by one lecturer in West Nusa Tenggara as the expert of appraisal and debate. The findings map out the higher use of appreciation in attitude, disclaim in engagement, and force in graduation applied. The use of appreciation items makes students' speeches more appreciative than personal and emotional. While a high occurrence of disclaim is applied for denying the debaters' arguments from the opponent team, and the use of force of graduation is to express meaning when describing the situation or complaining about the statements and build up persuasion by assessing the degree of intensity of qualities and processes. Furthermore, the appraising items are more realized when students were doing rejection by using the low degree of gradability. Those appraising items are also highly found in both substantive arguments and rebuttal as the longer parts for explaining the substantial points in the debate competition.

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## INTRODUCTION

As EFL teachers or lecturers, we should involve our students how to create a text meaningfully in order to use the language, negotiate meanings, and share their messages. Something is called text when it has meaning whether in a spoken or written form (Gerrot & Wignell, 1994, p. 12). Meanings are created not only through what speakers say to each other but also through what they do with words to satisfy the needs of their environment.

One of the types of meanings highlighted in this study was interpersonal meanings. It focuses on the ways in which the speakers act upon with one another through language. Students have to know the interpersonal meanings since it will help them to express their attitudes or feelings to others by considering word choices. The act of picking words or dictions which has been adjusted with the context is the key to successful text. Furthermore, the meanings are also centrally influenced by context since it is produced and interpreted based on the context. Certain grammatical structures and words do not always make the same meanings.

As a development in the study of interpersonal meanings, appraisal plays its role (Lee, 2008; Wang & An, 2013). Appraisal is used to refer to the semantic resources including words, phrases and structures which speakers or writers employ to negotiate emotions, judgments and valuations (Wei et al., 2015). It is needed to evaluate attitudinal meanings in texts in a systemic way (Wan, 2008) because the system of attitude constitutes the main resource for evaluating, adopting stances, constructing textual person as and managing interpersonal positioning and relationships (Signos, 2010).

Concerning with how the speakers or writers approve or disapprove, appraisal system shows how the speaker or the writer position their listener or reader to do likewise in communication by using evaluative language to express an attitude regarding one thing or matter (Martin & White, 2005). In addition, appraisal is composed of three interacting domains which

include the systems of attitude (it refers to our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgments of behaviour and evaluation of things), engagement (it deals with sourcing attitudes and the play of voices around opinions in discourse), and graduation (it attends to grading phenomena) whereby feelings are amplified and categories blurred (Martin & White, 2005, p. 35). Attitude, engagement, and graduation as the appraisal domains are applied to negotiate our relationship with others through our own positive or negative attitudes (Wan, 2008).

The area of appraisal covers up the various texts such as the academic writing and voice of ESL students (Schleppegrell, 2000; Coffin, 2002; Coffin & Hewings, 2004; Lee, 2010; Liu, 2013), speech (Conrad & Biber, 2000; Pascual & Unger, 2010; Read & Carroll, 2010; Purwaningjati, 2012; Drasovean & Tagg, 2015; Geng, 2015; Wei et al., 2015; Wijayanto, 2016; Ghasani & Sofwan, 2017), persuasive and argumentative speech (Lee, 2008; Khoo et al., 2012; Ngo et al., 2012), textbooks (Kawamitsu, 2012; Sugiarto et al., 2015; and Solihah et al., 2018).

However, based on our literature review on appraisal system, the writers recognized that the appraisal system did not find in students' debate competition so it is needed to be conducted further. Debate is a discussion between pro and contra groups to express the different opinions or views about the issue. Debate means instead of causing students to consider a multiplicity of perspectives, it might persuade students to view an issue as having only two positions (Vargo, 2012). In addition, conveying the ideas in debate is different from speech or conversation because it happens instantly. It means that the speakers should convey their ideas against the statements of the opponent group. Therefore, they must be ready to speak meaningfully and understandably by structuring the speech well.

Basically, the main goal of debate competition is to persuade the judges, audience, and also the other debaters. Every debater needs to influence the other people's feelings, beliefs,

values, or behaviours. To maintain that goal, appraisal takes a salient role in state the debater's point of view towards an issues. By applying appraisal, the debater tries to persuade and influence the others by showing his/her attitude.

Furthermore, most studies about appraisal in spoken discourse focus on appraising items only. However, as an exchange meaning among debaters, adjudicators, and audience, debate is also influenced by some aspects. One of them is method which covers debate structure. It shows how the debater creates meaning through structuring her or his statement. Both words and debate structure are used to show students' meanings and intentions in their debate structurally.

In this regard, to see the interpersonal meanings of each student, the writers pick the brains of appraisal and debate structure used by students in english debate competition. The writers hope, the settlement of appraisal and debate structure would help students to improve their understanding how to show up their contention by words or arguments systematically so the notion of the utterances will be clearly caught by the adjudicators and audience.

## METHODS

This study aimed to explain the act of judging the value of appraising items manifested in students' debate competition, to explain the students' realization of using appraising items in debate competition, to explain the contribution of appraising items to debate structure of debate competition.

In order to fulfill the objectives of the study, the writers concerned with the discourse field and used discourse analysis as research design. Bavelas et al. (2002) define discourse analysis as the systematic study of naturally occurring (not hypothetical) communication in the broadest sense, at the level of meaning (rather than as physical acts or features). It studies more than words in clauses and focuses on meaning beyond the clause, on semantic

resources that lead us from one clause to another as a text unfolds (Martin & Rose, 2003).

In this study, the main source of data were spoken text in the form of word, clause, and clause complexes. Gerrot and Wignell (1994) define clauses as the largest grammatical units and clause complexes is two or more clauses logically connected. The data were the video recording files of students' debate competition held by ESA FAIR of Sebelas Maret university in the academic year of 2017/2018 which were chosen from the final round. These data were qualitative as they were the collecting information from a small number of individuals or sites (Cresswell, 2012, p. 205). These qualitative data formed in audio recording files belonged to audiovisual materials. According to Cresswell (20012, p. 224), audiovisual materials consist of images or sounds that researchers collect to help them understand the central phenomenon under study.

To analyse the data, several methods were done including transcribing, reading, categorizing, and analyzing. In order to avoid bias, the writers used triangulation as a tool to test the validity of the study (Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 142). According to Symonds and Gorard (2008), triangulation is seen to increase validity when multiple findings either confirm or confound each other (thus reducing the chances of inappropriate generalisations. Denzin (1970) as cited in Cohen (2007) divided triangulation into six, namely: time triangulation, space triangulation, combined levels of triangulation, theoretical triangulation, investigator triangulation, and methodological triangulation.

Furthermore, in this study, the writers used methodological triangulation as the one which has the most frequently to apply and has the most to offer in education. To achieve the purposes, the data and the findings were examined by using the theory about appraisal system (Martin & White, 2005) and debate structure (D'Cruz, 2003; Quinn, 2005). Besides, the writers also used the investigator triangulation as an alternative observation from different experts or observers in order to get the

valid data and appropriate findings. He examined and judged that the findings of this thesis have answered the research questions.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This part will follow the statement of research objectives.

The first objective of this study is to explain the act of judging the value of appraising items manifested in students' debate competition. In order to achieve the goal, some findings are found after conducting the analysis of the appraising items. The summary of the findings of the act of judging the value of attitude, engagement, and graduation of students' debate competition is shown in table 1.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Attitude Choices

Type	Affect	Judgement	Appreciation	Total
Instances	84	27	116	227
Percentages	37	12	51	100

Based on table 1, it can be seen that appreciation system exceeds the other appraising items of attitude. Almost 51% of attitudinal resources in the students' debate competition forms appreciation. The next subsystem belongs to affect with 37% and followed by judgement with 12%. According to Martin and White (2005), appreciation items are revealed by the speakers towards phenomena. The findings of this study support the previous studies done by Ngo et al. (2012), Liu (2013), and Wijayanto (2016). These studies reveal that appreciation is played towards phenomena provided by the judges and committee, so it is important to apply the resources for evaluation. In the theoretical framework of this study, the writers stated that the goals of debate are a persuasive speech. Therefore, in debate, the speakers need the appropriate arguments to support their position and being the winner.

The distribution of engagement items in the whole students' debate competition is set out in table 2.

**Table 2.** Distribution of Engagement Choices

Type	Disclaim	Proclaim	Entertain	Attribute	Total
Instances	209	58	193	46	506
Percentages	41	12	38	9	100

As the table 2 maps out, disclaim exceeds other engagement appraising items. Almost 41% of attitudinal resources in the students' debate competition constitutes disclaim. The second place belongs to entertain with 38% and proclaim takes up 12%, while attribute found in the students' debate competition is 9%. The distribution of engagement choice confirms the result of study done by Dravosean and Tagg (2015) which reveals that solidarity in a group is not necessarily expressed through total agreement, but rather than through respect for alternative opinions. Based on the table above, the writers stated that these two subsystems are working together.

The distribution of graduation items in the whole students' debate competition is set out in table 3.

**Table 3.** Distribution of Graduation Choices

Type	Focus	Force	Total
Instances	35	277	312
Percentages	11	89	100

The table above shows that the students or debaters in debate competition use more force with 89% rather than focus which only has 11% of occurrence. According to Dravosean and Tagg (2015), graduation in the appraisal system has two subcategories, force (which increases or decreases the intensity of an evaluation) and focus (which elaborates on the 'typicality' of an evaluation, by either sharpening or strengthening it). Since this study reveals that the

students use 'force' rather than 'focus', it confirms the result of study done by Liu (2013) that the use of force in the students' speeches is to build up persuasion. Wan (2008) also reveals the high use of graduation of force in his study. He states that the frequently employment of graduation as force are to express meaning when the speaker describes the situation or complain about problem.

The second objective of this study is to explain the students' realization of using appraising items in debate competition. In order to achieve the goal, some findings are known after interviewing the students as the speakers in debate competition. According to Drasovean and Tagg (2015), attitude is concerned with our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgements of behaviour, and evaluation of things and it is generally realized adjectively. They need to state their position strongly by knowing well that they are in government or in opposition side. This case affects their behaviour to judge either their selves or the debaters in the opposite group and also to grade the things appropriately.

In interview, the students said that the using of positive and negative word or clause will be determined by the context of speaker strategies. In addition, when they are stating the justification and status quo, they prefer to apply the positive judgement. This is urgent to keep stand their arguments so they can get the judges' attentions and it is a possible way to be the winner. The students also use the judgement items in evaluating and assessing the behaviours of other speakers in the opponent team. They revealed that one way to attack the opposite speakers is to keep maintain the unity of statement which focuses on the contention.

Furthermore, the second subsystem of appraisal is engagement. Chatterjee (2008) added that engagement refers to the presence or absence of other voices in a text. In this study, the students realize the engagement system using in debate competition when they are rejecting the statements of the opponent team. It can be proved that the percentage of using disclaimer category exceeds as the textual voice positions

itself as at odds with or some contrary position in order to deny the statements.

The last of appraising items is graduation. Based on the result of interview, most of students chose the low degree because they assume that this is as the good strategy to attack the opponent team's arguments. They can appreciate first, later they can also offer the blaming or disagreement towards the proposal of the opponent team. In addition, students or debaters prefer to use the low degree when grading the attitudinal meanings and engagement values. The graduation items in debate competition are realized when the students attack the statement of the opponent team by giving the grade about the problems.

The third objective of this study is to explain the contribution of appraising items to debate structure of debate competition. In order to achieve the goal, some findings of debate structure are found after examining the students' debate competition. The summary of the findings of appraising items contribute on debate structure of the students' debate competition is shown in table 4.

**Table 4.** Distribution of appraisal in Debate Structure

Type	Opening statement	Substantive arguments	Rebuttal	Closing statement
Instances	14	450	368	22
Percentages	1.5	53	43	2.5

As the table 4 maps out that the substantive arguments exceeds other subsystems of debate structure. Almost 53% of attitudinal resources in students' debate competition are in substantive arguments. Then rebuttal takes up 43%. The third place belongs to closing statement with 2.5% and the last is followed by opening statement with 1.5%.

In this study, the opening statement as the first structure of debate is the way to start speech in order to catch the attention of

audience. In the fact, this part of debate structure is not used by all the speakers or debaters. Some of them directly state their arguments without using the opening statement or greetings to the judges, audience, or even the other debaters. In addition, the second part of debate structure is arguments. Generally, there are two main kinds of arguments in debate, substantive argument and rebuttal. Substantive arguments are prepared in favour of a team's side of the topic, whereas rebuttal refers to the arguments to attack the opposition's arguments (Quinn, 2005).

Moreover, the last part is the closing statement as the summary of the major points in the speech. The writer wants to highlight that the closing statement of debate is simple. Sometimes, the debaters could close their speech by using one close or more without giving the summaries. They just focus on presenting the arguments to attack the opposition team or showing their substantive arguments to defend their own case. The substantive arguments and rebuttal are used to show why the government or opposition team is right or wrong. Quinn states that it is impossible to say whether substantive arguments or rebuttal are more important because each is just as important as the other, and each is vital for successful debating (2005, p. 3).

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis and discussion of this present study, there are some conclusions that can be drawn as follows:

Firstly, the appraising items were used by all the student in spite of it is vary in number depending on the debate structure that they used. Among the three items of appraisal, engagement has the highest percentage in all text compared with graduation and attitude. In attitude item, it is found that the distribution of appreciation exceeds other items. The use of appraising items of appreciation makes the students' speech more appreciative than personal and emotional. Moreover, there is a high

occurrence of disclaim as a subsystem in engagement then followed by entertain, proclaim, and attribute. As the main goal of debate is to persuade, the speakers need to expand their arguments by producing utterances which represent the current proposition as replacing or supplanting. In graduation as system for scaling the meaning, the students apply more force than focus. It verifies that the students express meanings for describing the situation or complaining the motion and build up persuasion by assessing to degree of intensity and quantity.

Secondly, the result of students' interview maps out that the students have predominantly realized the appreciation in attitude resources, disclaim in engagement, and the low degree statement in graduation. Relating to the nature of debate competition, there are two main arguments which are divided into substantive arguments and rebuttal. In one hand, the students use more attitude in substantive arguments because they want to make an appreciative speech by providing the justification. The students prefer to show their value towards the motion that they talked. On the other hand, the engagement and graduation systems are used in rebuttal. The students apply more disclaim when they want to reject the statements from the opponent team. Besides, they also use the low degree statement when they defend their arguments by showing the status quo.

Thirdly, the appraising items can be found in all parts of debate structure. In doing debate competition, the students have well-structured their speech. The contribution of appraising items takes more place in substantive arguments and rebuttal because these two parts of debate structure are longer than opening and closing statements. Moreover, most of the students did debate in the well structure. From those results, it can be concluded that by applying appraising items, the students can convince the judges and audience and also define their position either in government team or opposition team.

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