GRADUATION in Play with Other Systems of Meaning in the Enactment of Interpersonal Relations

Susan Hood\(^1\) and Dongbing Zhang\(^2\)

\(^1\) University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia;
\(^2\) University of International Business and Economics, Beijing 100029, China

Abstract: Over the past two decades the quantity and scope of research drawing on the system of APPRAISAL in SFL has massively expanded. It is reasonable to claim that the majority of these studies have foregrounded the subsystems of ATTITUDE and ENGAGEMENT. Our aim in contributing to this special issue celebrating two decades of APPRAISAL research is to focus on the subsystem of GRADUATION. We do so in descriptive accounts of three studies exploring the role of GRADUATION in the enactment of social relations and the building of affiliative communities. The intended contribution is two-fold. Together the studies provide an indication of the progressive development and application of this dimension of SFL theory. Specifically they range from analyses of written academic discourse to the semiosis of body language and studies of English to Khorchin Mongolian. While each study foregrounds the interpersonal function of GRADUATION we do not suggest that one can attend to this in isolation. The thread that unites the studies is an emphasis on the ways in which expressions of GRADUATION always co-instantiate or couple with choices in other systems in the enactment of social relations with different kinds of coupling differently supporting bonds for affiliation.

Key words: Systemic Functional Linguistics, APPRAISAL, GRADUATION, coupling, affiliation

I. Introduction

Amongst an extensive body of research on evaluative discourse that has drawn on the SFL system of APPRAISAL over the past two decades relatively few studies have made their primary focus on the subsystem of GRADUATION that is the system that models the potential for scaling meanings by degree in the interpersonal discourse semantics of language. The aim in this paper is to highlight directions in research with GRADUATION as the focus and at the same time give emphasis to ways in which expressions of GRADUATION co-instantiate or couple with choices in other systems in the enactment of social relations and to explore how different kinds of coupling differently support bonds for affiliation. A first step is to elaborate briefly on relevant theoretical foundations.

An early significant contribution to explaining the evaluative role of graded meanings is Martin (1992a) Macro-proposals: meaning by degree. Inspired by Sapir (1949/1994: 123) Martin explored gradable systems of meaning in English noting that choices within these systems always “enter into oppositions concerned with the evaluation of experience” (1992a: 366). The concept of coupling is first referred to in Martin (2000: 161) in discussing this tie up — “this coupling of ideational and interpersonal meaning”. In Martin (2010: 19) it is explained more generally as “the way in which meanings combine — across strata, metafunctions, ranks and simultaneous systems (and across
modalities)”. While the term ‘coupling’ might suggest the co-instantiation of choices from just two systems, as in \( x + y \), they can extend further as \( x + y + z \) etc. A coupling itself might re-couple with a choice from another system, which would then be presented as \( x + y + z \) (Szenes 2017; Liu 2017). For example instances of GRADUATION invoking ATTITUDE will always at least couple with a choice in IDEATION (Martin 1992b; Martin & Rose 2007) as the Trigger or Target of evaluation. A coupling of this kind might itself then re-couple with an instance of inscribed ATTITUDE. For example the claim ‘the expansion of research is impressive’ first couples GRADUATION + IDEATION + research + impressive then re-couples as GRADUATION + IDEATION + ATTITUDE + expansion + research + impressive.

There are two means by which GRADUATION enacts interpersonal meaning in discourse. The first is in grading explicit or inscribed expressions of ATTITUDE in text. Inscriptions can be scaled up or down in GRADUATION as force or as focus. Force can adjust intensity as in affect: insecurity in ‘I was very surprised’ or ‘... somewhat surprised’. Force can also adjust quantity of inscribed attitude as in appreciation: reaction in ‘it was of considerable interest’ or ‘... of little interest’. A second grading feature is focus which concerns adjustments to the sharpness or softness of the borders or boundaries of categories of attitude. For example in ‘she is a thoroughly dishonest person’ or ‘... a less than completely honest person’ it is the borders of the judgement ‘dishonesty’ that are adjusted — sharpened in the first instance and softened in the second. In above examples inscribed ATTITUDE is in bold and the graduation or scaling of that ATTITUDE is in italics. Each of the above expresses isolating GRADUATION realised in a discrete item as italicised in little interest and very surprised. In infusing expressions scaling integrates with inscription as in shocked or stunned (Martin & White 2005: 131 – 134).

A second evaluative function of GRADUATION is to imply or invoke ATTITUDE. Invocations are realised through resources of GRADUATION that scale an ideational meaning rather than an inscription of ATTITUDE. While ideational meanings are intrinsically categorical they are nonetheless gradable and their grading implicates the subjective perspective by which ATTITUDE is invoked (Martin 1992a; Hood 2010).

The system network for GRADUATION in Figure 1 expands on that presented in Martin & White (2005: 154) in particular with respect to focus. The feature focus is discussed in Martin & White (2005) as sharpening or softening the categorical boundaries around ideational meanings but is elaborated mainly with respect to entities and qualities. The system in Figure 1 (and an earlier emergent version in Hood 2010) extends the concept of a categorical meaning to be inclusive of ideational figures (proposals or propositions) and occurrences. The naming of ideational targets (e.g. as entity figure occurrence) has been revised to account for recent developments in theorising IDEATION (see Hao 2015-2020). In Figure 1 options in force and focus can function to grade inscriptions of ATTITUDE or to grade ideational meanings to invoke ATTITUDE. The bracketed instances adjacent to each option can all couple with ideational meanings. (For more comprehensive discussion see e.g. Martin & White 2005; Hood & Martin 2007; Hood 2010; 2019; Martin 2017 this volume).
The system network in Figure 1 functions as a reference point for analyses and discussion in Study 1 and as a point of comparison for the system of PARALINGUISTIC GRADUATION in Study 2 and the emergent system of GRADUATION in Khorchin Mongolian in Study 3.

II. Study 1: The role of GRADUATION in enacting bonds of affiliation with readers of academic research

This study takes as its point of departure Martin’s (2000: 161) reference to the fundamental “coupling of ideational and interpersonal meaning” in discourse. In enacting interpersonal meaning through choices in GRADUATION ideational meaning is always implicated as the Trigger or Target of evaluation. This is so whether GRADUATION functions to scale inscriptions of ATTITUDE or whether it invokes attitude through the scaling of units of IDEATION. A particular significance attaches to these couplings of ‘how we value what’. When shared with others and reciprocated they constitute bonds foundational to the building of affiliative communities (Knight 2010; Martin 2010). In the conversational data in Knight (2010) these bonds can be reciprocated in the flow of talk. In written texts this is typically not possible. Nonetheless bonds are proposed or proffered to putative readerships (Liu 2017) with an anticipation of reciprocity. The aim of this study is to explore how interpersonal resources of GRADUATION couple with resources of IDEATION in managing the affiliation of readers of academic research writing. In particular we consider how the kinds of bonds proffered to readers vary with shifts in the patterning of ideation that construe shifts in field.
2.1 Data

The study draws on phases of discourse from the introductory chapter of a research monograph (Painter, Martin & Unsworth 2013) — Reading Visual Narratives: Image analysis of children’s picture books. The chapter is similar in structure to a canonical introduction to a research article although on a larger scale. Phase (1) functions to introduce the chosen object of study in such a way as to persuade the readership of its worthiness as a topic of research. Phase (2) functions to establish space for new knowledge by positioning the authors’ study in relation to other relevant research and their contributions (Hood 2010).

(1) [sourced with permission from Painter, Martin & Unsworth 2013: 1]

Children’s picture book stories play a foundational role in the lives and education of young children in several ways. There is first and foremost the sheer delight that children take in them whether reading or being read to and the fact that these activities are generally regarded as an essential preparation for the child’s transition into literacy and future school success. As well picture books in narrative form arguably provide the beginning reader with an entry into the highly valued realm of literature (Meek 1988) giving these books additional value which is capitalised on in ‘literature based’ reading programs in primary schools. Finally picture books most obviously those in narrative form constitute a significant instrument of socialisation as a source of both overt and covert ‘ideological’ messages about the world and about social values (Stephens 1992).

(2) [sourced with permission from Painter, Martin & Unsworth 2013: 5–6]

Other writers have attempted to taxonomize the specific relationships possible between word and image with Schwarz (1982) offering one of the earliest analyses suggesting ‘congruency’ and ‘deviation’ as the major types each having a number of subcategories (cf. Golden 1990: ch. 6). More recently picture books themselves have been classified into types according to the relations between images and words. For example Agosto (1999) distinguishes ‘parallel storytelling’ (visual and verbal redundancy) from ‘interdependent storytelling’ suggesting eight subcategories of the latter grouped within two main types that recall those of Schwarz ‘augmentation’ and ‘contradiction’ (...6 lines...).

While the diversity of picture books is brought into focus in these classification schemes a general problem with them is that they allow for only one possible kind of relationship between any image and the words it accompanies and/or propose that a single kind of relationship will hold throughout the text. Chapter 5 of this book will provide an alternative approach based on (...1 line...).

The general functions attributed to each phase above necessarily derive from linguistic studies of the discourse (e.g. Hood 2010) a summary account of which is provided in the following sections. Initially we focus on the choices in IDEATION that construe field in each phase then identify corresponding patterns in choices in GRADUATION.

2.2 IDEATION and the construal of differences in field

The discourse semantic system of IDEATION (Martin 1992; Martin & Rose 2007) models the potential to construe an ideational ‘reality’ in both static and dynamic terms (Hao 2020). For reasons of space and in response to the reporting nature of the texts this account primarily takes a static perspective focusing on the construal of entities types of entities and relations between entities (Hao 2020). (Brief references to occurrences indicate a dynamic perspective). Entity types include thing entities canonical objects in
everyday terms semiotic entities that name meaning itself and activity entities that name an occurrence or sequence of occurrences that can be taxonomized. Instances in each category can construe a field as more or less commonsense specialised or technical in kind. A given term such as storytelling might instantiate an everyday activity entity in one text but take on a technical meaning in another for example through classification as in parallel storytelling. The everyday semiotic entity message instantiated in leave a message is similarly technicalized when classified in overt or covert ideological messages. Different kinds of entities their qualities and the relations they enter into with other entities in texts contribute to the construal of differences in field (Doran & Martin 2020).

Phases (1) and (2) both begin with a hyper–Theme (h-Th) that functions textually as a predictive point of departure for the ideational message of the phase as a whole (Martin 1992b; Martin & Rose 2007). On that basis and for reasons of space we primarily limit our comparative descriptions of IDEATION and field here to indicative differences evident in these hyper–Themes.

h-Th (1)

Children’s picture book stories play a foundational role in the lives and education of young children in several ways

h-Th (2)

Other writers have attempted to taxonomize the specific relationships possible between word and image in picture book stories.

Both hyper–Themes make reference to picture books but differently. In h-Th (1) picture books has a classifying function in the entity Children’s picture book stories. The entity is highly prominent as Theme within the hyper–Theme of the opening phase of the book. The hyper–Theme predicts a phase which in ideational terms construes the field of picture book stories in children’s lives and education. In the context of a research monograph we refer to this as the field of the object of study.

In h-Th (2) which follows shortly after in the opening chapter the entity Children’s picture book stories is implicit (and bracketed above) as it is assumed retrievable from the preceding co-text. In Theme position and so more prominent is the thing entity writers. This along with the semiotic entity relationships and the occurrence taxonomize contribute to the construal of a different field one of research practice. The h-Th (2) in fact predicts two fields for the phase: research practice and the object of study — the latter realised in the thing entities word and image and the co-textually retrieved (bracketed) picture book stories. However the field of research practice is dominant in that the object of study is construed through the gaze of research (Hood 2010) as evident in:

research: other writers have attempted to taxonomize...relationships...between

obj. of study: word and image in picture books

research: Agosto (1999) distinguishes

obj. of study: ‘parallel storytelling’...from ‘interdependent storytelling’ in picture books.

research: Schwarcz (1982) offering one of the earliest analyses of relationships between

---

2 Occurrence is a unit of IDEATION that construes a dynamic perspective on field (see Hao 2020)

3 An interpretation of projection is justified here in that ‘other writers’ had completed the activity of taxonomizing hence ‘attempted to’ is interpreted as ‘attempted to show/claim that they had taxonomized...’.
2.3 How graduation varies with field

Identified differences in the fields construed in (1) and (2) are found to couple with differences in the patterns of graduation deployed and the kinds of interpersonal meanings enacted as shown in (1’) and (2’). Instances of isolating graduation in italics scale inscriptions of attitude in bold as in highly valued. Instances of infusing graduation integrate bold and italics as in essential. Where graduation scales an ideational meaning to invoke attitude instances are in italics and underlined as in ‘several’ and ‘more recently’. ⑤

(1’) sourced with permission from Painter Martin & Unsworth 2013: l

Children’s picture book stories play a foundational role in the lives and education of young children in several ways. There is first and foremost the sheer delight that children take in them whether reading or being read to and the fact that these activities are generally regarded as an essential preparation for the child’s transition into literacy and future school success. As well picture books in narrative form arguably

④ Note that had the expression been for several reasons a different genre (an argument) would have been predicted.

⑤ As noted in the introduction this process of analysis can present a number of challenges (see Martin 2017). With respect to graduation the major challenge is to determine a basis for interpreting the scaling of ideational meanings as purely ideational or as enacting an evaluative meaning. Key to determining this is the identification of a Target or Trigger for potential invoked evaluation. This may be sought beyond the immediate co-text to account for the prosodic patterning of interpersonal meaning in discourse (Hood 2010). This consideration underpins analyses presented in (1’) and (2’).
provide the beginning reader with an entry into the highly valued realm of literature (Meek 1988) giving these books additional value which is capitalised on in ‘literature based’ reading programs in primary schools. Finally picture books most obviously those in narrative form constitute a significant instrument of socialisation as a source of both overt and covert ‘ideological’ messages about the world and about social values (Stephens 1992). Chapter 5 of this book will provide an alternative approach based on (...) .

(2’) sourced with permission from Painter Martin & Unsworth 2013: 5 – 6)

Other writers have attempted to taxonomize the specific relationships possible between word and image with Schwartz (1982) offering one of the earliest analyses suggesting ‘congruency’ and ‘deviation’ as the major types each having a number of subcategories (cf. Golden 1990: ch. 6). More recently picture books themselves have been classified into types according to the relations between images and words. For example Agosto (1999) distinguishes ‘parallel storytelling’ (visual and verbal redundancy) from interdependent storytelling suggesting eight subcategories of the latter grouped within two main types that recall those of Schwartz ‘augmentation’ and ‘contradiction’ (...). While the diversity of picture books is brought into focus in these classification schemes a general problem with them is that they allow for only one possible kind of relationship between any image and the words it accompanies and/or propose that a single kind of relationship will hold throughout the text. (...)

At a glance each coded phase reveals a markedly different evaluative strategy. Phase (1’) displays a strong preference for graduation which up-scales inscriptions of attitude in ↑ force: intensity (essential; highly valued) and ↑ force: quantity (additional value). An instance of ↑ focus: completion: maximise is also maximally sharpened in sheer delight. The kind of attitude up-scaled as ↑ force and ↑ focus is dominantly appreciation but also affect (in sheer delight). It is positive in all instances and distributed across the text. Instances of graduation invoking attitude in (1’) are primarily ↑ force: quantification functioning to compile a set of ‘roles’ of picture books in several first as well finally.

In (1’) the field which is being evaluated is that of the object of study i.e. children’s picture book stories. It is charged with overt upscaled positive attitude across the phase. Rather than a direct coupling of upscaled positive attitude with the entity picture book stories the value radiates from a sequence of couplings in which the targets are the foundational roles of picture book stories. This positive prosody incorporates all three kinds of attitude as in:

- ↑ affect in ↑ sheer delight + activities of reading or being read to;
- ↑ appreciation in ↓ essential + preparation for the child’s transition into literacy in ↓ highly valued + realm of literature and in ↓ significant + instrument of socialization
- and ↓ judgement in ↓ success + school.

In (2’) the field of research practice is evaluated in quite a different manner. Graduation is not deployed to upscale attitude but to invoke it. Instances select for both ↓ force and ↓ focus (see Figure 1) but a strong preference is for graduation as ↓ force: quantification that couples with choices of ideation construing a field of research practice. The scaling of quantification may be up ↓ or down ↓ as in:

↑ quantification: amount: volume in:
- ↓ major + types of relations; ↓ two main + types of subcategories
Plus quantity generally implies a default positive charge in most fields of research (regardless of whether a study identifies as quantitative). The contrast in \( \uparrow \) extent: distance in time \( \downarrow \) in one of the earliest and \( \downarrow \) extent distance in time \( \uparrow \) in more recently may invoke different values. Longevity of interest in a particular field of study may invoke a positive interpretation but a lack of currency may also imply a lack of relevance. This is expected to be resolved in the co-text. Unfolding instances across phase (2') establish a prosody of implicit positive appreciation of detail in research studies. A similar implication follows from sharpened focus in:

\( \uparrow \) focus: specificity:
- specific + relationships between word and image\[; \]
- brought into focus + diversity of picture books\[;
\]

In the consolidating hyper-New\[ the final clause complex in (2')\] the concessive connector while flips the prosody from positive to negative. Negative value is inscribed in problem\[ and invoked thereafter in
\( \downarrow \) force: quantification: amount
- one + kind of (word-image) relationship\[; \]
- a single + kind of (word-image) relationship\[,
\]
What might appear to be a rather sudden shift in stance at this point can be better understood if we consider earlier instances of \( \downarrow \) focus: fulfilment\[ in the phase:
\( \downarrow \) focus: fulfilment: completion: finish
- attempted to + taxonomize the specific relationships...
- focus: fulfilment: actualisation
- offering + Schwarzc (1982) (proposed) one of the earliest analyses
- suggesting + Schwarzc (1982) (proposed) ... major types\[.\]

These instances of \( \downarrow \) focus\[ as \( \downarrow \) fulfilment\[ invoke a degree of reservation in relation to the targeted research practices and claims. If we review the earlier instances graduation as \( \downarrow \) force\[ which invoked a positive appreciation of other studies\[ we can now see them as already positioned within this overriding prosody of reservation invoked through softened \( \downarrow \) focus\[. This reservation is finally inscribed in problem where it fulfils the essential task of creating space for new knowledge.

2.4 Fields evaluation and affiliation in academic research writing

The contrasting couplings of \( \downarrow \) graduation + ideation\[ in (1) and (2) are typical of phases in
introductions to research reports. In phase (1) the function is to affiliate readers around the worthiness of the object of study. Multiple instances of GRADUATION upscale inscribed positive ATTITUDE couple with IDEATION choices that construe the field of children’s picture book stories in relatively commonsense everyday terms. Together they configure a complex of bonds which are proffered to a putative academic readership. Because inscribed attitude is either overtly positive or negative it has the potential to dichotomise and promote either affiliation and disaffiliation. However in the context of evaluating the object of study (here children’s picture book stories) especially in relatively everyday terms there is a relatively low risk of reader rejection or disaffiliation.

In phase (2) the function is to affiliate readers around the proposition that there is space for new research and knowledge. Choices in IDEATION construe a field of research practices and claims. In the evaluation of this field GRADUATION invoking an attitudinal position is strongly favoured over inscribed ATTITUDE. The strategy recognises the greater risks associated with the binary of explicit positive or negative evaluation in a context in which a diversity of reader positions on theory and method might be expected. Resources of GRADUATION are preferred. They enable implicit evaluations of research practices to be relatively positioned along clines of [force] or [focus] and so for academic authors to maintain a general affiliation with broad research community while establishing degrees of difference that generate space for further research. An awareness of these challenges and the resources to be drawn on is surely of support to novice academic research writers and their mentors.

III. Study 2: The coupling of GRADUATION in the language and paralanguage of live lectures

A second study retains a focus on the function of GRADUATION in academic discourse but focuses on its intermodal expression in live lectures in video data that records lecturers’ spoken language and body language. The research focuses on how interpersonal meaning is made in the couplings of expressions of PARALINGUISTIC GRADUATION with features in convergent spoken language and how these couplings can support students to recognise and affiliate with the values of their disciplines.

3.1 GRADUATION in language and paralanguage

The discourse semantic system of GRADUATION is introduced in Section 2 and Figure 1. The system of PARALINGUISTIC GRADUATION is introduced below and in Figure 2.

A systemic functional social semiotic theory of body language as paralanguage takes a metafunctional perspective identifying its potential to express ideational interpersonal and textual meaning. This theorisation is extensively presented and modelled in Ngo et al. (in press) and builds from earlier contributions (e.g. in Zappavigna et al. 2010; Hood 2011; Martin & Zappavigna 2016; Hao & Hood 2019). Paralanguage is modelled in Ngo et al. (in press) as two systems each para to language in different ways.

Sonovergent (sound-dependent) paralanguage is dependent on the immediate co-presence of the prosodic phonology of speech. The system can compose textual meaning by assigning prominence to certain words through rhythmic body movements (typically hand beats) that synchronise with the rhythm of speech. Sonovergence can also mean interpersonally through body movements which spatially track a tone profile (e.g. a raising of the eyebrows in sync with a rising Tone 2). Sonovergent paralanguage cannot express ideational meaning.

29
A second system, semovergent paralanguage, is meaning-dependent. Embodied expressions are meaningful in ways that are dependent on the flow of meaning in accompanying discourse. Speech may be immediately co-present or not in semovergent paralanguage. If immediately co-present, semovergent paralanguage will also be sonovergent. When considering semovergence we focus on the discourse semantics of language (Martin 1992b; Martin & Rose 2007) rather than the lexicogrammar. After all it is clear that while languages have different grammatical systems they apparently share very many systems of paralanguage. Semovergent paralanguage has the potential to express all three metafunctions. Interpersonally, it can enact options in the three systems of PARALINGUISTIC APPRAISAL i.e., as ATTITUDE, GRADUATION and ENGAGEMENT. However, in each case the paralinguistic systems are able to commit fewer options than related linguistic systems. For example, expressions of PARALINGUISTIC ATTITUDE are limited to the facial expression of affect (see Painter, Martin & Unsworth 2013: 31–32 and Ngo et al. in press on facial affect in images). The system of PARALINGUISTIC ENGAGEMENT is similarly restricted in options (see Ngo et al.: ch. 5). The potential for PARALINGUISTIC GRADUATION to scale meanings by degree is somewhat more elaborated but still limited compared to the potential of language. Options and indicative realisations are presented in Figure 2.

Interpretations of meaning in expressions of paralanguage or in the inter-semiosis of language and paralanguage are not made intuitively. The relational theory of meaning based on Saussure’s (1966) concept of valeur is foundational in SFL and applies equally to the theorising of meaning in other modalities. Essentially selections from systems of meaning are meaningful in relation to what could have been selected but was not. The network of meaning potential for PARALINGUISTIC GRADUATION proposed in Figure 2 is built from analyses of multiple sets of data in which researchers shunt between the modalities of language and paralanguage analysing semantic convergences (or divergences) in convergent expressions.

Reference to the network as ‘emergent’ acknowledges that ongoing analyses of more and more diverse data may propose elaborations.

Figure 2: Emergent system network for PARALINGUISTIC GRADUATION

Paralanguage does not include the relatively small set of what are referred to as emblems. These are explained in Martin & Zappavigna (2018) and Ngo et al. (in press) as signs and constitute part of language itself.
3.2 The study

The data constitute videos of live lectures in disciplinary fields of Health Science and Law. The general aim is to consider how expressions of PARALINGUISTIC GRADUATION in this context can support students in building the values of their disciplinary fields alongside the knowledge. To this end we identify ways in which expressions of PARALINGUISTIC GRADUATION couple with meaning in the spoken language of the lecture. This is approached by shunting between two perspectives on the data. One identifies expressions of GRADUATION and ATTITUDE in the spoken discourse and then considers convergent expressions in paralanguage. The other identifies expressions of PARALINGUISTIC GRADUATION with reference the system network in Figure 2 and considers their convergence with meanings in the spoken discourse. Together they enable us to address the question of how meanings are made in the inter-semiosis of language and paralanguage.

3.3 Analysing inter-semiotic couplings

In all following examples the spoken language that couples with gestural expressions of GRADUATION is transcribed. Inscribed ATTITUDE is coded in bold and GRADUATION is in italics. Underlining indicates verbiage that is synchronous with the gestural expression. The kinds of GRADUATION and ATTITUDE expressed are also identified. Arrows (↑ / ↓) indicate upscaled or downscaled [force] or [focus]. Expressions of PARALINGUISTIC GRADUATION are captured in the images with superimposed arrows indicating direction or extent of movement. Descriptions and interpretations accompany each image.

3.3.1 PARALINGUISTIC GRADUATION: evaluating in the field of the discipline

A first set of instances (1) and (2) express PARALINGUISTIC GRADUATION as [force] in sync with GRADUATION upscaled [appreciation] in language.

In example (1) from a Health Science lecture on urine formation the lecturer is explaining what can happen if nutrients in the filtrate are not returned to the blood before the filtrate becomes urine. In spoken language the inscribed ATTITUDE good evaluates the nutrients. It is upscaled with GRADUATION as [force]: quantification in everything. In sync with the underlined verbiage the lecturer’s right hand sweeps out from his body as indicated in the superimposed arrow. The expression is one of paralinguistic [force] as ↓ [quantify: extent]. In the intersemiosis the two expressions of upscaled quantity enhance each other [amplifying [force] in the expression of ATTITUDE.

(1) (2)

It is important to note that more than one paralinguistic system can be instantiated in the one gesture. In instance (1) the upscaled paralinguistic expression co-instantiates with a paralinguistic expression of an ideational occurrence (a happening) verbally expressed in pee out. Effectively there is a coupling of
upscaled "force" in language and in paralanguage which additionally couples with an ideational occurrence in the field of Health Science.

Example (2) comes from a Commercial Law lecture in which the lecturer enacts the roles of participants in a trial. In the role of the plaintiff in a legal case he reports the negative impact of the actions of others on his life. The inscribed negative "appreciation" in mucked up is upscaled with GRADUATION as "force" as "quantification: amount".

Synchronous with ‘everything’ in the transcribed speech is a paralinguistic expression of "force" as ↑ quantify: number. The latter is expressed in the two cupped hands that depict entities in PARALINGUISTIC IDEATION (see Ngo et al.: ch 4). With just two hands available the lecturer increases the number of paralinguistic entities by moving each hand around twice as shown in the arrows. Again the expression of upscaled "force" in language is enhanced in its inter-semiotic coupling with an expression of "force" in paralanguage. These expressions further couple with an ideational Target — an event in a legal process that construes the disciplinary field of Commercial Law.

In examples (3) and (4) the paralanguage expresses GRADUATION as "focus". In (3) the lecturer is discussing the concept of ‘judicial review’ in the Australian legal system (to do with the potential for the judicial system to review legislation from government) and restrictions that apply. In this instance there is an absence of inscribed ATTITUDE in the verbiage but there are instances of sharpened "focus" as ↑ specificity in "limits" to ... be limited ... and excluded totally. The multiple instances of ↑ specificity propagate a prosody of invoked "appreciation" as "composition" that couples with the legal concept of judicial review.

Synchronous with the verbal expression of "focus" as ↑ specificity is an expression of paralinguistic "focus". Here the lecturer’s right hand forms a pinching gesture with thumb and forefinger coming together to configure a tight closure. The gesture is maintained for the duration of the underlined speech mirroring the verbal prosody of ↑ specificity. The coupling of sharpened focus in language and paralanguage further couples with the ideational concept of judicial review in the field of Administrative Law further sharpening "focus" in their invocation of the importance of its defined boundaries.

In example (4) we return to the Health Science lecture. The lecturer is discussing the composition of the plasma found in filtrate at a certain stage in its transition into urine. Multiple wordings realise the meaning of an incomplete state: not pure, bits missing, generally not there, a little bit of. The multiple instances of softened "focus" as ↓ completion establish a verbal prosody that foregrounds a lack of clear boundaries.

In sync with the underlined wordings in the transcription the lecturer repeatedly hunches his right
shoulder and tilts his head to the right decentring his body in a shrug. The structurally unbalanced gesture expresses softened paralinguistic focus. The expression is repeated in sync with the four underlined wordings in the verbiage. The softened focus expressed in the verbal–visual couplings adds semantic weight to the significance of the incomplete composition of the technical entity plasma in the field of Health Science.

3.3.2 PARALINGUISTIC GRADUATION: evaluating in the field of pedagogy

The two examples (5) and (6) display a different language–paralanguage relation from those above. In example 5 from the Health Science lecture the lecturer is describing a step in the process of urine formation. There are neither expressions of inscribed nor invoked attitude in the spoken language it the blood drains into another arteriole. The spoken language expresses ideation only. However co-instantiated with the verbiage are expressions of upscaled paralinguistic graduation as force which invoke attitude. The challenge is how to explain an apparent intermodal relationship and the Target of this invocation in the verbiage. Here we need briefly to turn to the paralinguistic system of sonovergence (sound dependency) mentioned in Section 3.1. There is no space here to elaborate on the phonological rhythms of English nor the method of transcription other than to note that in the verbiage rhythmic (foot-timed) beats fall on the italicised syllables in the phonological transcription in example (5). The phonological rhythm assigns a particular prominence to the bolded and italicised syllable the Tonic which carries the tone profile. The notation signals a silent beat which maintains the rhythm without sound. (see Halliday & Greaves 2008; Smith & Greaves 2014; and Ngo et al. in press for further explanations).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>spoken language</th>
<th>It drains into another arteriole (ideation only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>prosodic phonology</td>
<td>// *it / drains / into a- another arteriole //</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paralanguage</td>
<td>PARALINGUISTIC GRADUATION: force: intensity in muscle tension in each of 4 hand beats</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>spoken language</th>
<th>So that’s the first thing [[that is unusual about this capillary bed]]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>prosodic phonology</td>
<td>// *so that’s the / first thing that is unusual / about this capillary bed //</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paralanguage</td>
<td>PARALINGUISTIC GRADUATION: force: intensity: duration in the holding of the complete beat for a duration equivalent to the length of the convergent utterance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In synchrony with the phonological rhythm the lecturer beats his left hand four times. In doing so the hand falls on the underlined ideational meanings in the transcription. This in itself does not express semovergent (meaning related) paralinguistic graduation as force. That is realised in the upscaled energy applied in the hand beats. The lecture tenses his arm and hand muscles to forcefully express each beat as indicated in the arrow. Here the expression of paralinguistic force as ↑ intensity invokes appreciation not of the significance of a particular activity in the field of Health Science (i.e. not that of blood is draining from an arteriole) but rather of an activity in the field of pedagogy; the paralinguistic expression is interpreted as meaning ‘take note of what I am saying’.

A final example in (6) shows a variation on this. Here the Health Science lecturer is summing up a phase of the lecture with So that’s the first thing that is unusual about this capillary bed. We note that the inscribed attitude in ‘unusual’ qualifies ‘the first thing’ which is made phonological prominent.
In his paralanguage the lecturer beats down on first with the supine hand shown in the image, then holds that hand position for four silent beats beyond speech (in this case for a period in time equivalent to that of the preceding talk). The energy extended in the lengthy hold is interpreted as a further realisation of the option of force as ↑ intensify. Importantly the intensifying expression is not invoking an evaluation of the capillary bed that is an entity construing the field of Health Science but rather the significance of the whole proposition as a figure construing the field of pedagogy. Where we interpreted the sequence of energised beats in (5) as ‘take note of what I am saying’ here the lingering duration of the expression is interpreted as meaning ‘take note of what I just said’ or perhaps ‘remember that!’.

3.4 Implications

In this study expressions of PARALINGUISTIC GRADUATION have been shown to couple with expressions of inscribed or invoked ATTITUDE in the spoken language of the lectures. In doing so values intrinsic to disciplinary knowledge are verbally expressed and visually supported in movements of the body; they are made doubly available and noticeable to students with the potential to supports learning. But learning is also supported where PARALINGUISTIC GRADUATION couples not with disciplinary field knowledge but with propositional claims about the significance of knowledge for the students in other words claims proposed in the field of pedagogy. In both cases expressions of PARALINGUISTIC GRADUATION in live lectures play a critical role in affiliating students into the knowledge and values of their fields.

Ⅳ. Study 3: Negotiating GRADUATION in Khorchin Mongolian

Study 3 shifts our focus on GRADUATION from academic discourse to casual conversation and from English to Khorchin Mongolian a dialect of Mongolian spoken in eastern Inner Mongolia China. The study first explores the GRADUATION system in Khorchin Mongolian based on the negotiation of grading in a piece of conversation. It then examines the way GRADUATION interacts with the other systems in APPRAISAL and the system of IDEATION.

4.1 The data

The data we will examine for this study are elements of an extract of conversation between family members (⑦ below). The interactants are discussing the dialects from three local administrative units or ‘banners’ in Inner Mongolia — Jalaid Banner, South Banner and Middle Banner. Together they constitute the administrative region of Hinggan League (mentioned in move (7.4)). The family members participating in the conversation all live in Jalaid Banner. The conversation concerns their views on the dialects spoken in these banners. The daughter (D) and the son-in-law (S) believe that the Jalaid Banner dialect is the worst among the three in that it borrows heavily from Chinese. The father (F) and the mother (M) on the other hand argue that the dialects from all the three banners are equally bad in that regard.

A transcribed and translated segment of the conversation is presented below. Moves in the exchange are numbered and will be referred to accordingly. ⑦ Since the transcription is shown in italics by
convention the relevant GRADUATION items are shown in boxes ( contrary to the notations used above ). The GRADUATION items in the translation lines are shown in italics . The inscribed instances of attitude are shown in bold . We will focus on the boxed items in the next section to establish the GRADUATION system in Khorchin Mongolian .

(7) D = daughter F = father M = mother S = son in law

1. D: tšlele pol xemek c: mar e:
   Jalaid TOP most serious EMP
   'Jalaid is the most serious.'

2. F: tšlele xua ne ju
   Jalaid banner GEN IP
   '(The dialect) of Jalaid Banner?'

3. D: m :
   INTJ
   'Yes.'

4. M: pi ut,š-žl šímmay ne xem mišm e :
   1SG sec-COND Hinggan.League GEN all like.that EMP
   'I think (dialects in) Hinggan League are all like that.'

5. F: lčor lčizn,šži lčun,šži xš mišim pe : ŋe te xš
   DIST South.Banner Middle.Banner all like.that COP-NPST MP CONC
   'But [obviously] South Banner and Middle Banner are all like that.'

6. M: ø :
   INTJ
   'Yes.'

7. S: kš i ku yš-e tšek e :
   mild do-PFV CONC EMP
   'Even though they are like that, (they are) mild.'

8. D: jšk tšukar øsl
   seem better like
   '(They) seem better.'

9. S: tšiu man ne man tšžši ne
   FOC 1PL GEN PROX Jalaid.Banner GEN
   'It is our Jalaid Banner's (dialect that is the worst).'

10. F: mš-xi kas nekl tši e : ŋe uke pe
    here-POSSABL one small better NEG MP
    '[It seems] (they are not a bit better than here.'

11. D: m :
    INTJ
    'They are.'
    *falling rising intonation

4.2 GRADUATION in Khorchin Mongolian

The exchange in (7) involves two lines of negotiation — one to do with intensity and the other with particularity. Moves (7.1) (7.7) (7.8) and (7.10) negotiate the intensity of 'contamination' of the dialects while moves (7.4) (7.5) and (7.9) negotiate whether the intensity of 'contamination'
is particular to Jalaid Banner or is general across Hinggan League. The relevant discourse semantic resources of \textit{GRADUATION} are $\mathbb{I}_\text{force}$ and $\mathbb{I}_\text{focus}$. In beginning to build a system network of \textit{GRADUATION} in Khorchin Mongolian we first describe $\mathbb{I}_\text{force}$ then shift our gaze to $\mathbb{I}_\text{focus}$.

The negotiation of $\mathbb{I}_\text{force}$ in (7) involves the degree to which the varieties spoken in Hinggan League are ‘contaminated’. The instances of $\mathbb{I}_\text{force}$ used in the exchange are listed below.

\begin{align*}
(7.1) \text{xumg} & \varepsilon : m\text{gr} \text{ ‘most serious’} \\
(7.7) k\varepsilon & : ku \text{ ‘mild’} \\
(7.8) t\text{/s}k\varphi r & \text{ ‘better’} \\
(7.10) n\text{g}k & t\text{g}n \text{ to} : r \text{ ‘a bit better’}
\end{align*}

One notable distinction among these instances of \textit{GRADUATION} is that between $\mathbb{I}_\text{isolated}$ and $\mathbb{I}_\text{infused}$ grading. When \textit{GRADUATION} is $\mathbb{I}_\text{isolated}$ the grading and the attitude being graded are realised by separate lexical items as in (7.1) $\text{xumg}k$ ‘most’ and (7.10) $n\text{g}k$ $t\text{g}n$ ‘a bit’. On the other hand when \textit{GRADUATION} is $\mathbb{I}_\text{infused}$ the grading and the graded attitude are realised in one lexical item as in (7.7) $k\varepsilon : ku$ ‘mild’ and (7.8) $t\text{/s}k\varphi r$ ‘better’.

In a complimentary relation the instances also differ with respect to the degree of intensity. The exchange in (7) starts with the daughter’s upscaled negative evaluation of the dialect they speak i.e. (7.1) $\text{xumg}k$ $\varepsilon : m\text{gr}$ ‘most serious’. When challenged by the parents in moves (7.4) to (7.6) $k\varepsilon$ the daughter and the son-in-law downscaled the intensity of their evaluation in moves (7.7) and (7.8) through $k\varepsilon : ku$ ‘mild’ and $t\text{/s}k\varphi r$ ‘better’. This downscaling is further challenged by the father in move (7.10). There he reformulates the son-in-law and the daughter’s downscaling as $n\text{g}k$ $t\text{g}n$ $\varepsilon : r$ ‘a bit better’. The upscaling raises the $\mathbb{I}_\text{force}$ of \textit{GRADUATION} while the downscaling lowers it in relative terms (Martin & White 2005: 135 – 136). The instances of \textit{GRADUATION} in (7) can thus be categorised along two parameters $\mathbb{I}_\text{infused}$ vs. $\mathbb{I}_\text{isolated}$ and $\mathbb{I}_\text{raised}$ vs. $\mathbb{I}_\text{lowered}$. The instances of $\mathbb{I}_\text{force}$ in (7) is summarised according to these parameters in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>infused</th>
<th>isolated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>raised</td>
<td>$x\text{umg}k$ $\varepsilon : m\text{gr}$ ‘most serious’</td>
<td>$n\text{g}k$ $t\text{g}n$ $\varepsilon : r$ ‘a bit better’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lowered</td>
<td>$k\varepsilon : ku$ ‘mild’ and $t\text{/s}k\varphi r$ ‘better’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The negotiation of $\mathbb{I}_\text{focus}$ in (7) on the other hand involves degrees of particularity. What is particularised by degree is the Chinese influence on the varieties of Mongolian spoken in Hinggan League. The instances that are related to the negotiation of $\mathbb{I}_\text{focus}$ around this figure are listed below.

\begin{align*}
(7.4) t\text{/s}k\varphi r n\text{e} x\varphi u & \text{ ‘Hinggan League all’} \\
(7.5) t\text{/s}k\varphi r n\text{e} x\varphi u & \text{ ‘South Banner and Middle Banner all’} \\
(7.9) t\text{f}u & \text{ ‘It is our Jalaid Banner’s that’}
\end{align*}

The words $x\varphi u$ (7.4) and $\varphi u$ (7.5) soften the $\mathbb{I}_\text{focus}$ so that the evaluation is generalised across a set of entities (i.e. Hinggan League comprising Jalaid Banner\textbullet\ South Banner\textbullet\ and Middle Banner\textbullet). The word $t\text{f}u$ (7.9) on the other hand sharpens the $\mathbb{I}_\text{focus}$ to one entity within a set (e.g. Jalaid Banner). In other words what is at stake here is boundedness of entities. When the boundary is softened the point of attention is broadened to all the dialects in Hinggan League; when the boundary is

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{⑧} This word is probably borrowed from Mandarin Chinese jiù (.segment).}
sharpened, the point of attention is narrowed to the Jalaid dialect only.

The system of GRADUATION explored so far based on the interaction in (7) is summarised as a system network in Figure 3.

Figure 3: GRADUATION in Khorchin Mongolian: primary delicacy

Figure 3 by no means represent a comprehensive account of the GRADUATION resources available to speakers of Khorchin Mongolian. It is nonetheless a principled first step towards such an account based on the way grading is negotiated in real life exchanges. In reference grammars (Bayancogtu 2002: 369 – 370) the GRADUATION items described in this section are termed ‘degree adverbs’. Their distinctions are typically characterised notionally based on isolated clause examples. The systemic and discourse-based approach presented in this section is a useful heuristic for making their distinctions explicit.

4.3 Coupling: GRADUATION, ATTITUDE, ENGAGEMENT, and IDEATION

In this section we explore the coupling of GRADUATION with choices in the other APPRAISAL systems — ATTITUDE and ENGAGEMENT — and the system of IDEATION as the interaction unfolds.

The GRADUATION of [force] in (7) is primarily coupled with [appreciation] (‘app’ for short). In move (7.1) the daughter raises the intensity of her negative [appreciation] of the Jalaid variety (‘Jalaid is the most serious’) [↑ force + - app]. This is challenged in moves (7.4) and (7.5) via the broadening of the point of attention to all the varieties spoken in Hinggan League i.e. softening the [focus]. The coupling here is between the softening of [↓ focus] and the figure that construes the Hinggan dialects as ‘contaminated’ by Chinese i.e. [↓ focus + figure]. In response to this moves (7.7) and (7.8) positively evaluate the other varieties with infused lowered intensity (‘Even though they are like that they are mild’ [↓ focus + app]. Move (7.9) further reinforces the negative [appreciation] of the Jalaid dialect by narrowing the point of attention to the Jalaid dialect i.e. sharpening the [focus] (‘It is our Jalaid Banner’s (dialect that is the worst)’) [↑ focus + figure]. Instead of responding to the softened [focus] in move (7.9) the father directly negates the lowered positive [appreciation] in move (7.10) (‘It seems (they) are not a bit better than here’) [↓ force + - app].

The father’s negation in move (7.10) shows that the coupling analysis from GRADUATION and ATTITUDE [↓ force + - app] is not sufficient to make explicit the flow of negotiation in the conversation. To address this issue we bring in ENGAGEMENT below.

In moves (7.4) and (7.5) [app] which challenge the evaluation in (7.1) the speakers mediate their
softening of focus with contrasting ENGAGEMENT strategies. The mother’s challenge acknowledges alternative viewpoints by grounding her proposition in her own subjectivity through pi ut f’ul ‘I think’ i.e. ‘expanding’ the dialogic space for alternative viewpoints (Martin & White 2005; White 2003) expand + focus + figure. In contrast the father closes down the dialogic space by both countering the daughter’s appreciation through CONC ‘obviously’ i.e. contracting the dialogic space for alternative viewpoints contract + focus + figure.

Instead of directly challenging the propositions in move (7.4) and (7.5) the son-in-law concedes with ηt- tʃʃk ‘even though’ in move (7.7) which acknowledges the previous proposition so as to refute it. The lowered force of the positive appreciation in move (7.7) is thus coupled with contraction of the dialogic space contract + force + appreciation. In contrast to this strategy the daughter’s lowered force of the positive appreciation is coupled with expansion of the dialogic space realised through jɔ k etʃ ʃl ‘seem like’ expand + force + appreciation.

The father challenges the positive appreciation in (7.7) and (7.8) by directly negating it through uke. From the perspective of ENGAGEMENT the negation realises contraction of the dialogic space since it refutes the proposition presented in the previous move. At the same time the father grounds the negated proposition in his own subjectivity through the modal particle pə. This particle (realised on a high tone) modalises the proposition in terms of high probability. The scope of the expansion over the contraction is indicated by a bracket expand (contract) + force + appreciation.

The coupling of choices in the logogenesis of the text is summarised in Table 2. The IDEATION column includes entities of different dialects that are coupled with ATTITUDE (positive or negative appreciation) and figures describing the qualities of the dialects that are coupled with focus. Only the pertinent moves are included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>move</th>
<th>speaker</th>
<th>GRADUATION</th>
<th>ATTITUDE</th>
<th>IDEATION*</th>
<th>ENGAGEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td>↑ force</td>
<td>-app</td>
<td>entity</td>
<td>- ⑨</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>↓ focus</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>figure 1</td>
<td>expand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>father</td>
<td>↓ focus</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>figure 1</td>
<td>contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>son-in-law</td>
<td>↓ force</td>
<td>+ app</td>
<td>entities</td>
<td>contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td>↓ force</td>
<td>+ app</td>
<td>entities</td>
<td>expand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>son-in-law</td>
<td>↑ focus</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>figure 2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>father</td>
<td>↓ force</td>
<td>+ app</td>
<td>entities</td>
<td>expand (contract)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* entity = Jalaid dialect;
entities = Middle and South Banner dialects;
figure 1 = ‘The dialects in Hinggan League are contaminated’;

⑨ Technically the moves that do not involve expand and contract are monoglossic — presenting propositions as if there is no alternative viewpoint.
Study 3 shows the way interactants affiliate around the negotiation of GRADUATION. It contributes to the extant studies on evaluative meaning in conversation the primary focus of which has been the way interactants affiliate around shared feelings with the dominating concern for the kind of ATTITUDE involved and the evaluated Target and Trigger (Eggins & Slade 1997; Knight 2010, 2013; Martin 2000, 2019; Zappavigna & Martin 2018).

V. Conclusion

In this paper we provide accounts of three studies that make the system of GRADUATION in APPRAISAL the focus of attention. Each applies this interpersonal lens to distinctive data varying in register as field and mode as well as in modalities and language. The studies foreground how resources of GRADUATION in the respective discourses couple with choices from other systems of meaning and how such couplings are intrinsic to interpreting the role of GRADUATION in enacting social relations. Our starting point has been an appreciation of the interpersonal potential of GRADUATION either in scaling inscribed ATTITUDE to adjust the force or focus of the values expressed or in scaling choices in IDEATION to invoke an attitudinal interpretation. IDEATION is also always implicated as the Trigger or Target of the evaluation. Study 1 focuses on how choices in IDEATION construe distinct fields within one written text and how GRADUATION plays a different role with respect to each proposing different grounds for affiliation with the same readership. Study 2 shows the potential to express meaning by degree in embodied paralanguage in lectures and how expressions of PARALINGUISTIC GRADUATION cooperate with spoken language to support students’ affiliation into their academic disciplines. Study 3 explores how GRADUATION through its coupling with choices in ATTITUDE IDEATION and ENGAGEMENT can constitute the grounds for affiliation in conversation. It is hoped that in presenting this small set of diverse studies others might be encouraged to consider the significance of meaning by degree in their own research on evaluative meaning in the enactment of social relations.

Acknowledgement: For Study 2 we would like to acknowledge the generosity of the lecturers in allowing us to video their lectures and publish extracts in research accounts such as this. For Study 3 we are grateful to our informants for allowing us to record their conversations and use them in publications.

References:


Received: 04 – 20 – 2020

Bio-notes:

Susan Hood is an Honorary Associate Professor in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Sydney. Her research interests focus on academic discourses in their different modes and the disciplinary fields they construe. Email: susan.hood@sydney.edu.au

Dongbing Zhang (张冬冰) is a Lecturer in the School of International Studies at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing following his Postgraduate Teaching Fellowship and his doctorate in Linguistics at The University of Sydney. His main research interest lies in the systemic description of Khorchin Mongolian and the study of social interactions in general. Email: dongbing.zhang@uibe.edu.cn

ISBN: 978-7-5446-6131-7