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AN AFFECT VALUE ANALYSIS OF COMMENTS GIVEN BY JUDGES IN AMERICAN IDOL IN THE LIGHT OF APPRAISAL THEORY

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ABSTRACT

The paper focused on investigating the language of Affect in comments given by judges in American Idol in the view of Appraisal Theory by Martin and White (2005). The paper is theoretically based on Appraisal, specifically Affect and its subtypes namely Un/Happiness, Dis/ Inclination, In/ Security, Dis/ Satisfaction. In addition, it is about the data and methods applied. The findings reveal that all sub-types of Affect used in the language of judges in American Idol and they had the differences in the values realized Affect.

Keywords: Appraisal Theory, affect, comments, American Idol.

TÓM TẮT

Phân tích giá trị cảm xúc của những lời bình luận bởi giám khảo trong Thần tượng âm nhạc Mĩ theo Thuyết đánh giá

Bài báo tập trung nghiên cứu ngôn ngữ cảm xúc trong những lời bình luận của những giám khảo trong thần tượng âm nhạc Mĩ theo Thuyết đánh giá của Martin và White năm 2005. Bài báo dựa trên lí thuyết của Thuyết đánh giá, cụ thể là giá trị cảm xúc và các tiểu loại như Un/Happiness, Dis/ Inclination, In/ Security, Dis/ Satisfaction. Thêm vào đó, bài báo trình bày dữ liệu và phương pháp nghiên cứu được áp dụng. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy tất cả các tiểu loại của giá trị cảm xúc đều được sử dụng trong ngôn ngữ của giám khảo tại Thần tượng âm nhạc Mĩ và có nhiều điểm khác trong việc nhận ra giá trị cảm xúc.

Từ khóa: Thuyết đánh giá, cảm xúc, bình luận, Thần tượng âm nhạc Mĩ.

1. Introduction

American Idol, a reality television singing competition, was aired in America on June 11, 2002 and quickly became the most popular entertainment series with viewers in the hundreds for launching the career of many artists as bona fide stars. The conversation interaction between judges and contestants provides a key platform for analyzing communication through a commentary lens. In judges' comments on contestants' performance, the judges use linguistics resources to interact, to evaluate the contestants or comments after their performances. Whereas, Appraisal theory, which is linguistically considered as a further development of the Halliday's framework on Functional Grammar

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to understand more comprehensively the sophisticated means through which we express our personal viewpoints and respond to the viewpoints of others, has shown to be a useful tool for analysis. In addition, in Vietnam, the study of comments given by judges in American Idol has not received much concern from researchers. Only Phan [15] conducted her study to analyze the Appraisal of mood adjuncts expressing assurance and concession in discourse of American Idol and Vietnam Idol. Besides, Tran [17] drew on cross-cultural similarities and differences in giving comments on contestants' performance by judges in Vietnam Idol and American Idol. It might, therefore, be considered as a potential framework to carry out this research. This paper aims at examining Affect values in the language of judges in the game show American Idol.

2. Theoretical framework of Appraisal Theory

Appraisal Theory is a framework for the exploration of speakers', writers' style in their positive or negative assessment of people, places, things, happenings and states of affairs. Appraisal itself is regionalized as three interacting domains namely *Attitude*, *Engagement and Graduation. Attitude* is concerned with our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgments of behavior and evaluation of things. *Engagement* deals with sourcing attitudes and the play of voices around opinions in discourse. *Graduation* attends to grading phenomena whereby feelings are amplified and categories blurred. Attitude is itself divided into three regions of feeling, *Affect, Judgement and Appreciation*.

Judgement: the evaluation of human behaviour with respect to social norm (e.g. right, wrong, ethical, responsible, etc).

Appreciation: the evaluation of objects and products (rather than human behavior) by reference to aesthetic principles and other systems of social values (e.g. beautiful, unattractive, yummy, simple, lovely, dramatic, etc.).

Affect: the characterization of phenomena by reference to emotion (e.g. shining with joy, nasty, sad, happy).

Specifically, Affect is concerned with registering positive and negative feelings: do we feel happy or sad, confident or anxious, interested or bored?. Besides, Martin and White (2005) mentioned that the evaluation carried out through Affect values can be *Authorial Affect* (involves the writer/ speaker indicating how they have responded emotionally to the person, thing, happening or situation being evaluated) or *Non-Authorial Affect* (describes the emotions of other individuals). In addition, Affect is indicated through various lexical items as:

- Verbs of emotion with Mental Process such as *to like/to dislike, to love/to hate, to interest/ to bore, to please/ to displease*

- Adverbs with Circumstance of Manner such as happily/ sadly, delightfully/ disappointedly

- Adjectives of emotion such as *satisfied/ glad/ happy/ worried/ confident, keen/uninterested, frightened/ confident*

- Nominalization such as *insecurity/ confidence, happiness/ worry*

The variable in the typology of Affect group emotions is categorized into four major sets having to do with *Un/Happiness, In/Security/ Dis/ Satisfaction, Dis/ Inclination.*

- Un/Happiness: involves the moods of feeling happy or sad such as *cheerful*, *love*, *adore*, *miserable*...

- In/Security: covers our feelings of peace and anxiety in relation to our environs, including of course the people sharing them with us- *anxious, confident, trusting, startled*...

- Dis/ Satisfaction: deals with our feelings of achievement and frustration in relation to the activities in which we are engaged, including our roles as both participants and spectators, for instance, *angry, fed up with, jaded*...

- Dis/Inclination: is concerned with fear or desire with the words *like suggest, request, want, demand, long for, wary, fearful...*

3. Appraisal studies

There have been several studies carried out over a range of fields based on the Appraisal Theory such as writing in secondary school history (Coffin, 1997), casual conversation (Eggins &Slade, 1997), popular science (Fuller, 1998), narrative in secondary school (Rothery & Stenglin, 2000), teaching reading at tertiary level (Liu, 2010), or media discourse (White, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2002b, 2004a). For example, Birot (2008) has an investigation into evaluation in media reporting. Pascual & Unger (2010) focus on using Appraisal to evaluate Argentinean researchers' writing for grant proposals while Hai-bi Wu (2013) uses the Appraisal Framwork to analyze the attitudinal meaning of public advertising discourse service. Moreover, Painter (2003) investigates the early child's language using Appraisal Theory.

In Vietnam, a number of researches on the Appraisal Theory have been carried out. Regarding the use of political language, Nguyen (2010) studies stylistic devices in political speeches by US Presidents by using the model of Appraisal Theory by Martin. In the domain of bussiness English, Vo (2011) employed Appraisal for the analysis od style in English and Vietnamese bussiness hard new reporiting. As for the language of sport commentaries, Nguyen (2014) compares evaluative language used in football commentaries in English English and Vietnamese online newspapers. There are several other studies conducted in the light of Appraisal such as expansion resources in English and Vietnamese political editorials (Nguyen, 2014), modes of expression of attitude in commentaries about Panama profiles, social attitude in news reports towards president Obama's visit to Vietnam (Nguyen, 2016). These studies focused on a variety domains of the evaluative language in both English and Vietnamese. However, there have been no reseachers applying the Appraisal theory in analysis of Affect expressions in comments given by judges in American Idol. Therefore, it is expected that the paper is an effort to bridge this gap, contributing the recommendation of Vietnamese learners of English, a reliable source of the usage of Affect in order to understand what the language of Affect is and how to use it clearly.

4. Research Methodology

The data of the study was collected in American Idol season 15 with 50 comments from the reliable website such as American Idol website, American Idol official on YouTube. The data was from the transcripts of American Idol in the websites. The study employs a combination of qualitative, quantitative and descriptive method. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are used to find out the semantics of Affect in giving comments by judges in American Idol. In addition, the descriptive method is used for describe and give a detailed description of the samples.

5. Findings and discussion

5.1. General finding of occurrence frequency of Affect values

Table 5.1. Sub-categories of Affect values in comments given by judges in American Idol

Un/Happiness	52	53,06%
In/Security	15	15,30%
Dis/Satisfaction	13	13,26%
Dis/Inclination	18	18,38%
Total	98	100%

As shown in Table 5.1, all the four sub-types of Affect values are employed in comments given by judges in American Idol. In total, 98 instances of Affect are found in 50 comments given by judges in American Idol. The table also reveals that sub-categories of Affect including Un/Happiness, In/Security, Dis/ Satisfaction or Dis/ Inclination are found with different occurrence of frequency. Un/Happiness was the most frequently used with 53,08% while the Dis/Satisfaction Affect appears the least frequently at 13,26% with 13 instances of all American Affectual expression in American Idol. The Dis/Inclination sub-type accounts for 18,38% with 18 instances and followed by the In/ Security at 15, 30%. This result means that the judges in American Idol express attitude toward the moods of feeling happy or sad. Whereas, they seem to be less focused on expressing emotional state of dis/satisfaction, which express feeling with the pursuit of goals.

5.1.1. Un/Happiness

a. Positive Happiness Affect

Let's take an instance of this kind of Affect found in the language of judges in American Idol as example: Jennifer Lopzer: You know, I <u>felt like</u>[Affect- Happiness- Positive- Authorial]. I lost Shelbie in that a little bit. You know, I <u>love</u> that song [Affect- Happiness- Authorial-Positive]. And it's very theatrical. And I understand Constantine doing that. I don't understand you doing that. So it, for me, as much as I <u>love</u> what you do [Affect- Happiness-Positive- Authorial]. I lost Shebie in all of that for me.

(SHELBIE Z AND CONSTANTINE)

The hightlighted and underlined words are the explicit Happiness Affect. In these words, "*like*", "*love*", we can understand apparently the happiness by inferring the meaning of the words. These words are in the kind of cheerful, which are the words show Happiness Affect according to Martin and White (2005). Those are the enjoyable emotion of the judge Jennifer Lopzer, who expresses her feeling for the performance of the contestant. The emoter is "I" who describes the emotion of the speaker (Jannifer Lopzer), so it is called Authorial Affect.

b. Negative Unhappiness Affect

Let's look at the example below:

Keith Urban: Yeah I mean. I'm just going to be straight. I <u>hated</u> the arrangement [Affect- Unhappiness- Authorial- Negative]. I really did. I think when you pick a song like that, you've either got to do it like the thing that it's written for or you've got to strip it way down. And for me, you ended up right in the middle, which was sort of nowhere. It was like a maudlin kind of energy and you're a killer singer, man, and you connect with the audience. So I like you. I just <u>didn't like</u> the arrangement [Affect- Unhappiness- Authorial- Negative]. (MACKENZIE BOURGE TOP 4)

We can see that in the example, the verbs *"hated"*, and *"didn't like"* express the emotional state of antipathy with the emoter is the judge Keith Urban, who found that the arrangement of the song makes him dislike. It is thus presented here as Authorial Affect.

Here is an example of Non-Authorial Un/ Happiness Affect:

Jennifer Lopez: Hey, Tristan. Listen, I felt like towards the end [Affect - Happiness-Authorial- Positive]. That really kind of picked up steam. The beginning looked to me like you were really thinking a lot [Affect- Insecurity- Non-Authorial- Negative]. The end felt like you were feeling more [Affect- Security- Non-authorial- Positive], and that's when it got good.

(TRISTAN MCINTOSH- TOP 24)

Exception of expressing the feeling *"like"* towards the end of the song which is performed by the contestant Tristan Macintosh, the judge Jennifer Lopez also observes and conveys the emotional responses of the contestant in the performance expressed by Tristan Macintosh.

5.1.2. In/Security

a. Positive Security Affect

Let's take the examples below:

(1)Harry Connick Jr.: As you can tell by the audience's reaction. That's what you needed to come out and do. When you're in your comfort zone, there's nobody like you, in this competition, Avalon. And I really, really <u>believed</u> [Affect- Security- Authorial-Positive] that was what you needed to do right now. We have to see the other, but that was a great, great performance.

(AVALON YOUNG TOP 8)

(2) Jennifer Lopez: It's really cool, what's good is that you know what you do and who you are, and what feels right and fluid and <u>comfortable</u> for you [Affect- Security-Authorial- Positive]. That was really, really good. I also the fact that the falsetto. The high falsetto hook is hard to do, so you didn't do it. You did your own take on it. That's really clever, that's the way to do it, and you make it your own. It's good.

(AVALON YOUNG TOP 8)

In two examples above, in expressing feeling of trust, the judges might use the words such as *believe, comfortable*... In particular, in (1) the performance of the contestant was not deeply impressed to the judge. The contestant always keeps in his comfort zone without attracting the audiences, which makes the judge Harry Connick, Jr believe Alvalon Yong to be able to come out and do. So Harry Connick Jr expresses his feeling of trust by saying "*I really, really believed that was what you needed to do right now*". In (2), it is seem that the adjective "*comfortable*" was used to evaluate the emotion of the contestant when performing. The emoter in (1) is "*I*" so it is Authorial Affect while the emoter in (2) is "*you*" so it is called Non-Authorial Affect.

b. Negative InSecurity Affect

Let's look at the following examples below:

(3)Keith Urban: When I was 16 I did a show in Australia. A singing tv show, just like this. And I was terrified and trying to reign the nervesin is so hard to do and it effects, the first thing it does it effects pitch and breathing and everything. And I sensed a lot of that going on tonight. So all I can say is, your tone is gorgeous, <u>don't worry</u> about all that stuff [Affect- Insecurity- Non-authorial- Negative] you've got plenty of time to work on all that.

(LEE JEAN TOP 6)

In (3) the judge Keith Urban realized that the young contestant performed a song with a little anxious, which had an effect on performance of Lee Jean. Thus, Keith Urban encourages him in making good this point in the next performance. The emoter is Lee Jean so we call it Non-Authorial Affect.

(4) Jennifer Lopez: Listen, You have so much going for you. You know, you have amazing style, a great personality, you have a beautiful voice you have so much going for you. And I like this performance for you. Is it gonna be enough? I'm not sure because I feel like there has to be a little more composure when it comes to the "do or die" moments and I just felt maybe it was a tiny bit shake. [Affect-Insecurity-Non-authorial-Negative]

(LEE JEAN TOP 6)

We can see from this example that it is in emotional state of disquiet meaning with the word *"shake"*, which the judge Jennifer Lopez coveys emotion of contestant through performance so that audiences and viewers exactly recognize the contestant Lee Jean in the show top 6 of American Idol and the emoter is the contestant who doesn't involve the judges so it is Non-Authorial Affect.

5.1.3. Dis/Satisfaction

a. Positive Satisfaction Affect

Look at the examples in comments given by American judges below:

(5) Harry Connick, Jr: It's hard to do what you did. When she sang the first eight bars, she was saying everything pretty much on the beat. And she held notes out for a very long time. And she's a very gifted vocalist and she's able to do that. I thought it was lovely. Let me just say that. I was <u>captivated</u>. [Affect - Satisfaction- Authorial- Positive]. It looked like you guys were falling in love in front of my eyes. But I just wanted to make a suggestion. I've heard you take risks before. I don't think you have to sing so on the beat. I think you can accommodate those words to your creativity which I've seen you do before. But all in all, I thought it was really sweet man.

(ADAM LASHER AND HALEY REINHART- TOP 24)

(6) Harry Connick Jr: I agree, Mckenzie and the thing that was really <u>cool</u> for me [Affect- Satisfaction- Authorial- Positive] was it almost seemed like you've come completely "full circle" because that performance was very similar to the feeling that we had.

(MCKENZIE BOURG TOP 3)

In American Idol, the judges express their feeling of interest by using the possible terms such as interested, captivated, cool... In the example (5), the judge Harry Connick, Jr expressed his feeling of interest by saying "*I was captivated*" after a successful performance with a beautiful song performed by honoured guest and candidate. Similarly, in (6), Harry Connick, Jr also expressed emotional state of interest after seeing a good performance of the contestant.

b. Negative Dissatisfaction Affect

Let's see some examples:

(7) Keith Urban: I agree with them. It's and I... this is like, one of the... I love this song. And I'm sure you guys do too. And it's not meant to be a duet. So I get it. It was just-it just kind of. I don't know. It was... I got a little scared. It didn't pull me in, Shelbie [Affect - Dissatisfaction - Authorial- Negative]. And I agree with Jen. I kind of lost of you a little bit [Affect- Dissatisfaction - Authorial- Negative]. But nothing about the performance pulled me in[Affect- Dissatisfaction – Authorial - Negative]. I kept waiting to come in. And it was kind of doing this to me the whole time.

(SHELBIE Z AND CONSTANTINE)

(8) Keith Urban: I liked it, and I don't differ that much from what Jenny said, too. It felt a little bit <u>Piece-meal</u> to me [Affect - Dissatisfaction- Authorial- Negative]. Sometimes you were smiling, sometimes you weren't Sometimes you were moving, sometimes you weren't. And to me, it's all, about the lyrics. Thank you.

(MANNY TORRES TOP 24)

We can see from this example (7) the judge found that the performance of Shelbie was not fascinated, the judge Keith Urban therefore expressed his feeling of displeasure by saying "*It didn't pull me in, Shelbie. And I agree with Jen. I kind of lost of you a little bit. But nothing about the performance pulled me in*". In (8) the judge Keith Urban also evaluated the performance of Manny Torres disconnected to him. This brings the negative meaning and expresses the emotional state of displeasure.

5.1.4. Dis/Inclination

a. Positive Inclination Affect

Look at these examples:

(9) Harry Connick, Jr: So I knew that you had it in you. I had a problem with the way you sang 'My Funny Valentine" last week. Because I <u>hoped</u> [Affect - Inclination-Authorial- Positive] that you would have sung. It like you sang this. And in my opinion, that was a flaw less lyric delivery.

(JENN BLOSIL TOP 14)

(10) Jennifer Lopez: Hey, Tristan. Listen, I felt like towards the. That really kind of picked up steam. The beginning looked to me like you were really thinking a lot. The end felt like you were feeling, and that's when it got good. And I think you <u>need</u> to concentrate on doing that. [Affect - Inclination – Non - Authorial - Positive].

(TRISTAN MCINTOSH- TOP 24)

In (9) the judge made his desire by using the verb "hoped" to say things he wanted the candidate to do as the previous round because the performance of Jenn Blosil had a problem with a flaw less lyric delivery. It is extremely easy to know that the emotion gives us the positive meaning and it describes the emotion of the judge- Harry Connick, Jr so it is Authorial Affect. In (10) the contestant didn't make the emotional connection between the beginning and the end of the song. Thus the judges wanted the contestant to concentrate on doing that. Like the example (9), the judge showed his desire of being good connection by using the "need" and the emoter is "you", so we call it Non-Authorial Affect.

b. Negative Inclination Affect

Here are some instances about this type of Affect:

(11) Keith Urban: I agree with them. It's and I... this is like, one of the... I love this song. And I'm sure you guys do too. And it's not meant to be a duet. So I get it. It was just-it just kind of. I don't know. It was... I got a little <u>scared</u> [Affect- Disclination- Authorial-Negative]. It didn't pull me in, Shelbie. And I agree with Jen. I kind of lost of you a little bit. But nothing about the performance pulled me in. I kept waiting to come in. And it was kind of doing this to me the whole time.

(SHELBIE Z AND CONSTANTINE)

(12) Keith Urban: When I was 16 I did a show in Australia. A singing TV show, just like this. And I was <u>terrified</u> [Affect - Disclination - Authorial- Negative] and trying to reign the nerves in is so hard to do and it effects, the first thing it does it effects pitch and breathing and everything and I sensed a lot of that going on tonight.

(LEE JEAN TOP 6)

In (11) "scared" expressed the meaning of the judge's fear toward a duet performance of honored guest and contestant. In this sentence, the emotion gives us the negative meaning and it describes the emotional state of the judge Keith Urban so it is Authorial Affect. Like the instance (11), the emotion in (12) also brings us the negative meaning and it is in the emotional state of being scared. In particular, the judge Keith Urban expressed his feeling of scared in a sing TV show when he first performed on the stage.

6. Conclusion, limitation and suggestion for futher research

In general, Affect values in comments given by judges in American Idol were analyzed in the view of mainly Appraisal Theory of Martin and White (2005). Relating to Appraisal, Affect is evaluated and categorized into four major sub-types based on its meaning including Un/Happiness, In/Security, Dis/ Satisfaction and Dis/ Inclination all of which are used in comments by American judges. Of the four sub-types, the Un/Happiness Affect appears in comments the highest frequently and Dis/ Satisfaction has the least frequency.

Although the study has produced significant findings with respect to comments given by judges in American Idol in terms of Affect in the light of Appraisal Theory, an important issue that requires further explication has been identified. That is, the study is limited to the contrastive analysis between English and Vietnamese. It is suggested that further research in relation to Affect value should be conducted to have an overall picture of investigating into emotion in judges' language in American Idol and Vietnam Idol which merit further studies.

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CÁC SỐ TẠP CHÍ KHOA HỌC SẮP TỚI:

- Tập 15, Số 6 (2018): Khoa học tự nhiên và công nghệ
- Tập 15, Số 7 (2018): Khoa học giáo dục
- Tập 15, Số 8 (2018): Khoa học xã hội và nhân văn.

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