

Evaluative Language and Ideological Meaning in Poetry for Children: An Analytical Perspective

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Abstract

Poetry for children is often considered simple and entertaining, yet it is quite significant in influencing the emotional, moral, and ideological development of young readers. This research explores the utilization of evaluative language in English poetry for children in the perspective Appraisal Theory. The qualitative analysis of the poems selected from Pakistani school textbooks (Grades 6-8) illustrates how the subsystems of attitude, engagement, and graduation encode emotional reactions, moral evaluations, and ideological stances. The results exhibit that poetry for children ensures promotion of moral lessons, regulation of emotions, presentation of an idealized childhood, and cultivation of ethics. In essence, these ideologies are built mainly through monoglossic positioning that considers them as natural and unquestionable. The research reveals that poetry for children is not only an artistic medium but also pedagogical and ideological instrument that engages young readers with dominant moral and cultural aspects.

Keywords: appraisal theory, children's poetry, ideology, evaluative language, perspective

Introduction

Though children's poetry is seen as enjoyable and has a playful tone, it is seen to be imbued with elements of ideology that affect children's viewpoints about themselves and their world (Halliday, 1978; Scheiding, 2019). Through storytelling and poetic structures, children are introduced to cultural values, norms, and practices. Poetry is seen as a unique segment of children's literature owing to its brevity and musicality. "Children's literature is a complex of story, language, ideology, and expectations that provides children with a linguistic and cultural toolkit," Hunt (1994, p.12). As Styles (1997) puts it, "Poetry offers young readers an accessible way into complex emotional and moral experiences, often expressed through simple language and engaging rhythms." (p. 47). The rhythm, rhymes, and imagery that are a part of children's poetry not only facilitate learning but also play an important role in promoting empathy and critical thinking skills among children. Great interest has been shown to children's literature around the world, while very few details are known about aspects of ideology that choices might convey in Pakistani literature.

In this ever-changing world, children's literature and poetry, in general, are no longer just tools for teaching and entertaining children but also for engaging children critically with societal is-

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sues such as inclusiveness, justice, and hardiness (Nikolajeva, 2014, p. 88). This underlines the need for an analysis of not just literature but also language construction so that we are able to comprehend how this literature conveys these values to children. In children's poetry, language features such as vocabulary used, syntax used, judgment or assessment carried out, and literary devices used assume a prominent role. The poems created for children are made with an awareness of linguistic simplicity and depth. Hunt (1994) states that "children's literature is constructed through the deliberate simplification and stylization of language to accommodate developmental stages while still conveying deep meanings" (p. 13).

Rationale of the Study

Although ideological analysis of children's literature has gained attention globally (Stephens, 1992; McGillis, 2000), there remains a lack of Appraisal-based analysis of evaluative stance in children's poetry in Pakistan. Most existing studies emphasize prose or general textbook content but do not systematically analyze how evaluative language functions to encode ideology in poetic texts. This study focuses on evaluative linguistic strategies through which ideologies and norms are communicated to children. Children's literature, particular poetry, has not been much studied through the lens of evaluative meaning that explores how attitudes, judgments and affect are constructed and communicated to children.

This study adopts Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) as a framework to analyze how attitude, engagement and graduation resources operate in English poems for children. This study offers a more fine-grained understanding of how children's poetry positions young readers emotionally, morally, and socially within specific value systems in the Pakistani curricular context.

Purpose of the Study

The main aim of the present research is to understand the role of evaluative linguistic choices in English children's poems in terms of ideological framing. The study examines the rhetorical devices, stylistic elements, and the word choices in selected poems to demonstrate how language is used to implicitly define social rules and cultural values. Drawing on Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005), the study focuses on how Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation operate in children's poetry to promote and convey moral values and social norms. Alongside these, the examination of recurrent features such as metaphor, rhyme and repetition aims to determine how children's poetry promotes and conveys moral values and social ideals. This paper is also intended to contribute to the wider discussion of the interplay between language, ideology, and education in children's literature. The results of the paper would also be of use in literary and educational studies and policy in highlighting the ways in which poetry represents ideological meaning.

Significance of the Study

The study has theoretical and practical importance for the disciplines of applied linguistics, literary studies, and education. Theoretically, it is an addition to existing literature on the interaction between language and ideology in children's literature. It emphasizes the role played by linguistic choices used in poetry not only as aesthetic devices but also as a means to convey an ideology that reflects the belief system and worldview of the young reader (Entman, 1993; Bednarek, 2006).

The practical application is that the study promotes critically reading educational literature to discover the underlying messages and ideologies expressed in these texts. The findings are also useful in guiding educators, curriculum theorists, and even parents in decision-making with regard to the types of literary materials that could be used with a view to create an inclusive, balanced, and socially informed representation of identity, morality, and emotion.

Research Objectives

1. To examine how values and emotions are expressed through language in children's poetry.
2. To identify and interpret the implicit ideologies produced through evaluative language in children's poetry.

Research Questions

1. How are values and emotions expressed through language in children's poetry?
2. What implicit ideologies are produced through evaluative language in children's poetry?

Literature review

Poetry and Its Role in Children's Development

Poetry, like other genres of literature, can play a significant role in the grooming of the children. Various aspects of this regard are discussed in the following:

Literary and Cognitive Role of Poetry

Poetry is an essential component of early childhood literacy and cognitive development and is both aesthetically and pedagogically important. Poetry gives children experiences with beautiful and rhythmic language that can focus their growing awareness of the phonemes in words and add to their growing vocabulary. According to Cullinan and Galda, "Poetry appeals to children's love of rhythm, rhyme, and word play. It helps them develop a sensitivity to language and supports their oral language development" (p. 209). The auditory and performative aspects of poetry engage young readers more actively than many other text types, involving them in active participation and interpretation.

Moreover, it helps children explore the emotional richness of language. Most of the time, it seems to represent big ideas or emotions in forms that children have access to, enabling them to have and explore strong emotional responses like happiness, sad feelings, fear, surprises, etc. Vardell (2014) affirms, "Reading and hearing poetry aloud fosters fluency and oral reading skills, providing children with meaningful experiences with sound and rhythm" (p. 15).

Emotional and Social Dimensions of Poetry

Contemporary children's poetry, and especially the one employed in educational circles, tends to adopt themes that would tackle elements such as environmental awareness, diversity, and emotionality combined with intelligence. Metaphors, repetition, and personification are mere tools that allow for this ideology to be instilled within the subconscious level of a child. The very nature of children's poetry that incorporates both morality and creativity serves as a potent tool for literary and ideological enjoyment. According to Hollindale (1988), "Ideology is not something

that simply appears in children's literature it is inherent to it" (p. 34). Therefore, a critical analysis of children's poetry from a linguistic standpoint reveals not just literary creativity but also a wide range of political influences that serve as ideological tools for children's minds.

It helps promote memorization skills as well. Children can recite their favorite poems over and over again. Rasinski (2003) argues, "Poetry's rhythmic patterns and predictable structures support the development of reading fluency and comprehension" (pp. 72). These characteristics of poetry make them very important, especially when developing literacy in children.

Historical and Pedagogical Functions of Children's Poetry

The historical antecedents of children's poetry were characterized by their dual role of entertainment and moral instruction. Traditionally, children's poetry developed from oral literature such as children's rhymes and folk songs. As such, it was mainly used to impart moral values and behavior. As noted by Meek, "The earliest poetry for children was didactic in purpose, aimed at instructing young minds in both morals and manners" (p. 67). Later, children's poetry developed into a literature of imagination, fantasies, and playfulness.

Yet, poetry is still one of today's educative media within the curriculum. For Hunt (1994), children's literature-or poetry for that matter-is "a cultural product that reflects and reinforces societal values" (p. 3). So, it appears that poetry is at that critical juncture where language development and cultural socialization meet. One good case where this is evident is that most teachers often use poetry to teach students about literary devices such as metaphors, similes, etc. Poetry also offers teachers opportunities to socialize with students by teaching them morality that emphasizes nature, being nice to others, being brave, and socially tolerant. Poetry is compact and easily used for this purpose.

Ideology, Framing, and Representation in Children's Literature

Literature in general and poetry in particular can play important roles in inculcating particular ideologies and identities among children. Some salient features are highlighted in the following:

Framing and Discursive Construction of Reality

Children's literature, and poetry in particular, is of importance in the ideological and social development of their readers. Central to it is the power of language: through linguistic choices, values and beliefs, worldviews are built up, transferred, and legitimized. A long-standing argument among scholars has been that children's literature cannot be ideologically neutral; it is a site where social norms and cultural ideologies are encoded and communicated (Stephens, 1992, p. 8). Poets and authors select words, metaphors, and rhetorical structures that frame versions of reality, molding the ways in which children come to understand themselves and the world around them.

Halliday states that the language is a 'social semiotic' that "refers both to the way in which language reflects, asserts, or constructs social reality, as well as to the way in which it ... constructs it" (1978, p. 2). In children's poetry books, this can be seen through the apparent simple language used, which conforms to dominant cultural discourses. For instance, the apparent ubiquity of family-based metaphors, as well as heroic portrayals in English-language poems, not only entertains the child but also educates them on roles, behaviors, and cultural values in relation to our

societies. As Stephens states, "Texts for children, far from being innocent or objective, are shaped by and shape ideologies" (1992, p. 9).

The concept of framing is also central to the comprehension of how such an ideological task is accomplished. According to Entman (1993), framing entails the "selective accentuation of certain aspects of perceived reality to create a specific interpretation in a text in communication" (p. 52). For instance, in children's poetry, some books may be framed in such a way that they emphasize children to be obedient, hardworking, etc., thus promoting some ideologies at the expense of others while ignoring others completely. For instance, some children's poetry may be framed in such a way that it praises the bravery and nationalism of the country without criticizing the war and the atrocities being committed in the country (Lukens, 2007, p. 38).

Representation and Identity Formation

In addition to this, another aspect is the role that language plays in the construction of an individual's identity. Gee (2011) asserts that the construction of an individual's identity is discursive; this is to say that there is a discursive construction of who one is based on how one is spoken to or spoken about (p. 111). Girls' poems, among other things, serve to provide children with discursive constructions that they internalize and emulate. Internalization and emulation of discursive constructions such as girls being docile or more caring while boys being daring and courageous serve to perpetuate or create similar identities. These discursive constructions further go beyond the aspect of gender to class, race, nationality, and the concept of evil and good.

Fairclough's (1995) widely accepted premise for Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is highly appropriable at this juncture. Fairclough contends that discourse is one form of practice that not only constitutes power but is also constituted by power in society. The poetry for children, as a form of discourse, might be understood as an apparatus through which certain values are normalized through repeated exposure. Likewise, Christian values are seen as being subtly enacted through theological ideologies functionally embedded as reward or divine symbolisms (Fairclough, 1995, p. 73). Similarly, Western individualism and competition values are subtly conveyed through poetry that impacts children's values and practice to more closely align with neoliberal values (Nodelman, 2008, p. 204).

Ideological influence is not always explicit. Underlying ideologies can also lie in what is left unsaid in the silences and omissions. As Luke (1997) explains: "Curriculum texts, including children's books, do ideological work by what they include and exclude" (p. 23). Using this example, children's poems that illustrate only physically capable and light-skinned children engaging in narrative success imply that other identity markers are marginal. A lack of diversity in representation leaves children with low self-esteem or a poor image of others and tends to exclude and create current social stratification.

Hence, representation is not just a simple reflection of reality; rather, it is an active construction. According to Hall (1997): "representation involves the production of meaning... through language and symbols, and this in turn is connected to the construction of cultural identities" (p. 16). Within poetry, even a harmless rhyme about families, seasons, and school can have inherent messages that inform a child about what is normal, acceptable, and desirable. As a curriculum incorporates poetry that represents a particular dominant culture or worldview, it becomes a form of constructing that one worldview as normal (Botelho & Rudman, 2009, p. 68).

Critical Engagement with Ideological Structures

Recent studies have emphasized that to uncover the hidden features of such an ideological construct, it has become imperative that children's literature be analyzed from a critical perspective. As Hunt (1994) puts it, "critical reading of children's texts enables us to uncover the underlying codes and assumptions that govern what children are taught to value" (p. 60). This issue becomes significant for a postcolonial/multicultural society in which the readings used in a classroom may be based on an agenda that is not in line with the experiences of the students in the class.

The ideological analysis of children's poetry is also relevant to the socialization theory, which finds its place within educational psychology. Bandura's (1977) theory of social learning asserts that human behavior, norms, and attitudes are learned through imitational tendencies. Hence, the increased amount of ideological content being observed whether it is gender, morality, or nationalism, might have a greater influence on child social behavior. The rationale is that the ideological material being presented by the poem, being more interesting and easier to memorize, will help reinforce social behavior.

In short, children's poetry performs ideological work in many dimensions. It works on linguistic framing, representational choices, discursive patterns, and omissions. Through foregrounding some values and silencing others, poetry has a role to play in socializing children, in making them have a moral compass, a cultural identity, and a worldview. This not only makes the study of language in children's literature a concern of language or literature but a very social and political issue.

In children's poetry, ideology is considered to be implicit and evaluative, which makes it important to examine the evaluative language rather than content alone. There are multiple approaches for this purpose, among those Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) provides a framework for uncovering the ideological meanings and implicit values, which are encoded through linguistic choices in children's poetry.

Appraisal Theory and Its Relevance to Children's Poetry

Appraisal Theory within the framework of systemic functional linguistics offers a nuanced approach to analyzing how language conveys attitude, judgment and appreciation (Martin and White, 2005). The theory is especially valuable when analyzing works of literature because it allows one to take a closer look at how the language of evaluation shapes the feelings, ethical orientation, and aesthetics. In children's literature, particularly in poetry, Appraisal Theory demonstrates how writers influence young readers to take up values and attitudes implicitly (Martin & White, 2005, pp. 35-36).

The structure consists of three major systems, namely: *attitude*, *engagement*, and *graduation*. Attitude is further broken into *affect* (emotions), *judgment* (ethics or behavior) and *appreciation* (aesthetic evaluations). According to Martin and White (2005, pp. 42-45), these categories assist in unpacking the way authors place readers to feel, judge, and appreciate characters, events, and themes. Examples of this are when a poet uses words such as kind-hearted or brave to describe a character, they are using *judgment* resources to influence the moral meaning of that poem on the reader. On the same note, phrases such as a joyful day or terrible storm make use of *affect* and *appreciation* to produce emotional and sensory responses. Such language selections are particu-

larly powerful in children's texts, where emotional and moral framing is a focus of pedagogical outcomes.

Application to Literary and Children's Texts

Appraisal Theory has been a common tool in literary analysis to discuss the effects of a text on the perceptions of the readers. Coffin and Donohue (2014, p. 7) argue that the theory enables the researcher to track the emergence of evaluative meanings in the stories and how they determine the affiliation of the reader with the characters or ideologies. Appraisal Theory can reveal, e.g. in children's poetry, how poems encourage values like empathy, cooperation or courage. Through the repetition of similar patterns of *affect* (e.g., happiness, fear), *judgment* (e.g., generosity, obedience), and *appreciation* (e.g., beauty, simplicity), researchers will be able to determine the ideological messages that are implicit in these simple sounding verses.

Applied to children literature, research has indicated that Appraisal Theory in the analysis of children's literature promotes not only literary knowledge but also critical literacy. According to Macken-Horarik (2003, p. 291), such a practice enables young readers to become more aware of the way texts place them in emotional and moral relations, which empowers them. When learning about poetry, this framework can be used by educators to guide students in explaining why a poem is uplifting or sorrowful, and which values it presents by constructing itself linguistically.

Ideological and Pedagogical Implications

Moreover, Appraisal Theory enables a critical examination of the ideological implications in children's texts. Literature far from being neutral in terms of values, as underlined by Martin and Rose (2007, p. 6768), and tends to have the potential of being a cultural instrument that maintains societal norms. By looking at the choices, one could easily determine whether it unwittingly promotes conformity, shatters stereotypes, and fosters inclusiveness. As an example, a poem which constantly extols obedience or condemns disobedience by means of *judgment* markers is engaging with a wider cultural discourse of authority and discipline.

Research Methodology

This study is carried out through qualitative analysis where Appraisal Theory identifies the evaluative language and identifies as well as interprets the ideological and emotional meanings. Since children's literature intertwines emotions and ideology, this approach ensures both linguistic precision and ideological depth. This approach identifies how language in children's poems reflects cultural and moral ideologies. The poems are selected from textbooks of grade six to eight of the school systems of Pakistan. The schools are part public, private and federal school systems.

Appraisal Theory Analysis

The theory of Appraisal as elaborated by Martin and White (2005) will be used to evaluate how the linguistic features in the poems for children are used to form interpersonal meaning and communicate emotional values in the poems. Appraisal theory offers a formal means of comprehending how language can be used to convey attitudes, judgments, and emotions and how these conveyances add to the social and ideological aspects of a text.

Attitude

This subsystem concerns the identification and classification of lexical items which are used to denote affect (emotions), judgment (evaluation of behavior) and appreciation (evaluation of things or qualities). According to Martin and White (2005), Appraisal offers a framework of exploring, explaining and describing how language is used to evaluate, to take a position, to construct a relationship between people and to manage solidarity (p. 3). It is in this subsystem that the way the poems evoke emotional reactions in the reader and the way they express the attitudes and values constructed through language, are to be understood. Affect, judgment, and appreciation are not mutually exclusive categories, and a single word may convey the elements of more than one category. The analysis will therefore involve careful consideration of the context in which each word appears, to determine its primary function in the expression of attitude. This subsystem is most central as it connects to emotions, morality, and aesthetics.

Engagement

Though the emphasis here is on language choice, due consideration will also be given to ways in which this context in which these words are encountered contributes towards the overall engagement of the poem with the reader. This includes recognizing sections wherein the engagement of the reader is encouraged or discouraged through the language choice. Engagement refers to how the reader is represented in relation to the presented proposals or ideas.

While the dominant concern is with linguistic choice, there will also be an awareness of ways in which the surrounding context in which these words are used plays a role in the general engagement of the poem with the reader. This includes an awareness of those areas where the linguistic choice may encourage or discourage other forms of interpretation. Engagement is the way in which the text positions the reader in relation to the propositions it is making. It analyzes the resources that are employed in recognizing or denying the alternative perspectives, negotiating the level of surety or commitment and controlling the information flow. Although lexical items do not individually convey the meanings of engagement in the first place, their context may affect the interpretations of these meanings. These engagement resources are examined through monoglossic and heteroglossic positioning. Although engagement is less central it contributes to interpreting how certainty and stance are constructed in poems.

Graduation

Graduation is examined through force and focus. This subsystem studies the role of adverbs of degree (e.g., very, slightly), adjectives that denote intensity (e.g., tremendous, faint), in scaling the intensity of the expressed attitudes. According to Hood (2004), the graduation resources enable the speakers/writers to increase or decrease the intensity or thrust of their appraisals and engagements (p. 53). Graduation contributes to the interpretation of how the poems establish accent and subtlety in the expression of attitude. It enables the poet to adjust the emotional strength of his language, to render it stronger or weaker or subtle. It entails careful reading of poems including highlighting moments of adjectives and adverbs that bear the meaning of appraisal. This is going to be an iterative and careful process since the appraisal meaning of a word may differ according to its context. Every case is coded by the appraisal subsystem and category. This coding entails formulation of an elaborate coding scheme, which is founded on the Appraisal Theory

framework and use of this scheme to code the linguistic choices. This process enhances the transparency and consistency of coding.

Data Analysis

Appraisal Theory in Children's Poetry

The Appraisal Theory is used to explore the role of language in representing evaluations and judgments and the influence it has on the emotional connection of the readers to a text. Martin and White (2005) argue that Appraisal Theory has three main parts: Attitude, Engagement and Graduation. All these aspects enable us to examine how the poetry written for children triggers an emotional response, evaluates values, and engages the reader in the text.

Attitude

Attitude, as used by Appraisal Theory, refers to the expression of emotions, judgments, and evaluations through language use. The use of adjectives, adverbs, as well as nouns and their resulting utterances, is vital for this concept as these create an expression that represents emotions, judgment through evaluations of human behavior, as well as appreciation through evaluations of things/phenomena (Martin & White, 2005). The emotional landscape created by these through children's poetry, together with moral aspects, significantly affect children as they create an understanding of their world around them. One can therefore understand how children's poetry works as an emotional, moral, and aesthetic engagement of children as readers.

Affect (Emotions)

Language selection that is pertinent to Affect in children's poetry illustrates the emotional language that the poet is attempting to bring out in the reader. Adjectives and adverbs play a very central role in communicating the feeling and setting the tone as Martin and White (2005) assert. As an example, the adjective happy functions as an Affect resource, constructing positive emotional states such as joy and contentment. The intensity of the emotion is depicted by the fact that in the line, "For when you are happy you are so happy to write, all that bubbles out is senseless and hackneyed," happiness dominates the subject. Likewise, the word lovely has the meaning of beauty, propriety and charm. Terms such as a lovely sight or a lovely place help to encourage readers to appreciate nature and develop a sense of gratitude in a subtle way. In even less agreeable situations, such as the calling of a mosquito a lovely one, the word soothes the image, encouraging tenderness and positive interaction with the world.

The word "mad" brings out an emotional level of irrationality and chaos as observed in, "You may think at first I am as mad as a hater." The madness here is associated with unpredictability, which is contrasted with sweetness that brings the feeling of warmth and tenderness. In the poem, there are no words more simply sweet than home and love, the word sweet is used to imply comfort and joy, delivering an emotionally comfortable feeling to the reader. On the other hand, words such as frantic and free are adjectives which remind us of urgency and freedom. The word frantic, as in "In a mad expostulation with the deaf and frantic fire," brings forth emotional agitation, and free, as in "But the free creatures come and walk with you," signifies strength and independence. The combination of these options creates the emotional world of children's poetry

through repeated Affect resources, as a whole range of emotions from calmness to chaos and liberation.

Judgment (Moral Evaluation of Behavior)

Along with being emotional, poetic expressions by children also involve a moral assessment of the language used. As Fairclough (2013) notes, judgment involves assessing behaviors, often related to ethics, virtues, and flaws. Within Appraisal theory, such constructions realize negative judgment by evaluating human behavior against ethical expectations. The word human, used as an adjective in lines such as “The name that no human research can find”, implies a limitation in human knowledge and behavior as also reflected in the line “Mother Earth gives us what we need, yet she cannot satisfy human greed all the time”. These moral evaluations position the reader to evaluate human behavior morally (Van Dijk, 2008).

Conversely, the word good is an important adjective to indicate moral virtues of kindness, honesty and integrity. The word good as used in the line, do all the good you can, is in line with the altruism ideals, making it stronger that the person should assist others without looking at the reward. Likewise, people will easily forget the good you do today. “Do good anyway” emphasizes the importance of ethical actions despite a lack of acknowledgment, promoting intrinsic moral value (Roseman & Smith, 2021). The adjective bad, which can refer to negative qualities or immoral actions, appears in such lines as, if you have two animal crackers, one good and one bad, and creates a moral dilemma between good and bad and the reader is given the opportunity to think about his/her choices and the outcomes of it.

The use of the adjective old in the poems of children also signifies wisdom, experience and respect for the elderly. As Fairclough (2013) suggests, the representation of "old" often conveys respect and moral authority. In such lines as in the example above, the adjective underlines the worthiness of the aged and their life experience, compelling the reader to value and respect the older generation. In a similar way, the terms used in the phrase old woman in the sweeping broom, show older characters as the ones who are wise and responsible, which underlines the moral necessity to respect the course of life and the things that it teaches.

Appreciation (Evaluations of Objects, Nature, and Experiences)

Appreciation in Appraisal Theory (Martin and White, 2005) explains the concerns of evaluations of objects, experiences, and phenomena, guiding how we perceive the world around us. Poems that are directed to children often make use of adjectives such as rich and poor to make a commentary about wealth, virtue, and social status. The line “And now grown rich with plundered store” is a satire of morally dubious methods of acquiring wealth, and the poor characters are usually virtuous, implying a moral critique of materialism. These lexical choices function as Appreciation resources, evaluating social conditions, physical qualities, and experiences rather than human behavior directly.

The word young frequently represents innocence, purity, and potential, which positions readers to reflect on the moral duty of preserving and directing the younger generation. In the poem, “A lovely young maiden named Carol”, youth is portrayed as a period of innocence and the line, “The flexible and awkward energy of young eager hands”, creates the feeling that the young should be nurtured and directed to be on the right course. In the same way, the word hard in the

phrase by hard vows, the falcon is steeled, is a symbol of toughness, strength, and the virtue of perseverance thereby positioning the reader to value perseverance and commitment.

Finally, the term free is still used as a sign of individuality and ethical freedom, where personal freedom is introduced as one of the fundamental human rights. “There are no cages. No zoo. But the free creatures come and walk with you.” the adjective reflects the idea of moral liberty that depicts the freedom to live without restriction as a personal and moral ideal. The word busy, as in the ruddy housemaid twirls the busy mop, is used to stress the idea of hard work and the moral merit of being productive in society. It makes busyness a virtue that encourages social contribution through hard work.

Linguistic decisions within children’s poetry provide emotional content, moral and social judgments that can influence the readers in their response. These components of Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation interact, as Appraisal Theory would indicate, in determining the way we are emotionally attached to a text, how we develop our moral views and perceptions of the world. The examination of these elements helps us understand how language used in children’s poems can help us feel emotional, ethical, and aesthetically involved, that, in the end, leads the young reader to an understanding of complex values and lived experiences.

Engagement

In this analysis, Engagement is examined through dialogic positioning, focusing on how certainty, alignment, and alternative viewpoints are implied through lexical and grammatical choices.

Monoglossic (one voice, one opinion)

Monoglossic language in the poems presents a singular, unified perspective that asserts the authority of one voice. In the context of the selected poems, this is evident in the use of specific determiners and demonstratives. Words such as *all*, *some*, *such*, *this*, and *that* serve to create a sense of certainty and to exclude alternative views. As Martin and White (2005) highlight, monoglossic language excludes the possibility of multiple interpretations, reinforcing the poet’s perspective as the definitive one.

For example, phrases like “all things were joyful on that day” create an irrefutable reality of the existence of joy, with no room for other possible readings. Likewise, “all the birds that sing” calls the reader’s attention to birds. Here, the poet’s unique perspective on their existence is stressed. The word *some* also functions to solidify the poet’s singular view, as in “some deserted city stands,” where the poet offers a definitive image, excluding other possibilities.

Words like *such* and *that* further reinforce a monoglossic voice. In the line “such as Plato, Admetus, Electra,” the poet provides a fixed sense of identity, positioning these figures as examples of a singular idea. The use of *that* similarly ties the meaning directly to the poet’s perspective, as in “that mouse” or “that fair-haired youth,” pointing to a singular truth, shaped by the poet’s intent.

In addition, the word *this* serves to assert specific moments or ideas, as in “this is what I need you to do,” which leaves no room for alternative actions or interpretations. Through these determiners and demonstratives, the poems establish voice as singular and authoritative; the poet’s perspective is the only one that is valid. These constructions reduce the dialogic space significantly.

Heteroglossic (Multiple voices, different opinions)

Monoglossic texts possess a single voice that represents authority, but a heteroglossic text has many voices, and this would indicate that there are different opinions within the text. The words *other*, *another*, *anyway*, and *never* have a connotation of difference, parallels, and contrasts in terms of ideas and views that capture the pluralities in a sense in the poem.

Opposing opinions introduce others. For instance, "One had a mouse, and the other had none" comparison points to the possessions of the two characters showing contrast to each other, hence developing different desires and opinions. Similarly, "That's the way the quarrel begun" exemplifies how *other* can evoke a sense of conflict and differing perspectives. The word *another* introduces further alternatives, as seen in "I'll bring another one next week," where a shift in action or perspective is indicated, showing that more than one path or choice exists (Martin & White, 2005).

Words like *anyway* and *never* provide additional layers of complexity. *Anyway* introduces a sense of persistence, as seen in "Do good anyway," where the speaker continues their action despite external objections. *Never*, on the other hand, undercuts other options as in "*Never the least stir made the listeners*," where silence becomes the most appropriate action compared to other alternatives. Such elements of Heteroglossia evoke a multi-voiced text that calls upon the reader to make sense of the text's intricacies. Despite them being outside of canonical *engagement* markers, their functional role is to establish dialogic potential.

Graduation

In Appraisal Theory, *graduation* is concerned with the way language modulates the intensity and precision of meaning. It serves to "amplify" or "tone down" evaluative expressions and thus, affectively and interpretatively modulates the reader's engagement (Martin & White, 2005). Graduation in poems plays the central role of heightening descriptive imagery, intensifying affective engagement, and framing moral lessons. The system is divided into two main subsystems: Force, which scales strength or quantity, and Focus, which sharpens or softens the boundaries of categories. Both are evident in the selected children's poems, often working together to produce a vivid and memorable reading experience.

Force

The Force subsystem emerged strongly by intensification and quantification. Intensification often operates via adverbs and adjectives that heighten the emotional or sensory quality of an expression. The use of phrases such as, "She was very beautiful" or, "A very small mouse" is used to enhance the magnitude of things and put imagery into a sharper focus in the mind of the young readers. Likewise, the intensification of positive moral evaluation is performed by the adjective "Very good", which strengthens the worth of the praiseworthy behavior. Too is frequently used to extend a good or comfortable quality to the point of being undesirable: He was too tired to work, He is too sweet, too strong, etc. Quantifiers such as *much* have the effect of emphasizing abundance or magnitude, as in *too much noise*, *sensory overload*, *so much joy*, *heightened happiness*, *much better* and *marked improvement*. Likewise, the adverb *really* expresses sincerity and emotional genuineness, such as in *I really like this book* or *really good* which helps to support genuine approval. Other markers include *always*, *quite* and *more* which scale frequency or

comparative degree: *always* denotes habitual discipline, *quite big* implies considerable size and *more beautiful* implies a high level of aesthetic appreciation. With the help of these lexical devices, Force in the poems does not only enhance sensory images but it also enhances the moral and emotional touch of the story.

Focus

The *focus* subsystem operates differently, by adjusting the precision of category boundaries rather than amplifying magnitude. In the selected poems, *focus* is often sharpened to emphasize uniqueness, finality, or categorical certainty. For example, “*First I ate an apple*” sharpens the sequence of events, while “*The last leaf fell*” signals the definitive end of a season or moment. The phrase “*He was the only one*” highlights exclusivity, and “*It was simply wonderful*” offers an unqualified, clear judgment. Similarly, “*Just amazing*” conveys straightforward and emphatic praise, and “*I have enough money to buy a toy*” marks sufficiency in a concrete, relatable way for children. Habitual actions and absolutes are also sharpened through words like “*She always smiles at strangers*”, indicating consistency, and “*Completely silent*”, which pushes the concept of silence to its extreme. Moral imperatives such as “*Never give up*” rely on sharp *focus* to draw categorical boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

Force and *focus* go hand in hand in most cases, producing compound effects. A sentence like “The only tree tall enough to touch the sky” combines the special quality of *focus* (only) with the vertical quality of *force* (tall enough), constituting a striking and evocative picture. Likewise, “Always very quiet in the mornings” combines certainty with qualification to create an image that invokes a serene quality. This blending of sub-systems allows poets to not only create more vivid imagery, but it allows them to do this with varying levels of emotional depth and categorical certainty as well.

Overall, it can be said that the *graduation* resources that have been found are not accidentally stylistic ornaments but rather a planned pedagogical approach. Poets can create language that is emotionally and ideologically effective to young readers by paying attention to intensity and by making categorical boundaries sharp or soft. By means of *force*, they enhance features that make events, characters and moral teachings memorable; by means of *focus*, they make the meanings crystal clear or in a way open to interpretation. Collectively, these tactics help to increase the vividness, didactic effect, and aesthetic value of the children’s poetry, strengthening their status as the art and educational form of expression.

Discussion: Ideological Construction in Children’s Poetry

Moral Didacticism

The analysis reveals a strong ideology of moral didacticism in children’s poetry, constructed through consistent patterns of evaluative language. The *judgment* resources, for example, good, bad, greedy, and old, continually judge behavior in a moral light and make a distinction between appropriate and inappropriate behavior. This is primarily signaled through monoglossic kinds of *engagement*, which filters out ambiguity and offers a valuative priority that cannot be challenged. The *graduation* resources further enhance the distinction by introducing categorization forms like *never* and *only*. The overall build-up of *appraisal* resources places the child readers in

a position where they will learn to embrace values like kindness, perseverance, respect, and self-discipline, which points to the function of children's poetry beyond aesthetics.

Social Conformity and Emotional Regulation

In addition to moral guidance, in these poems an ideology of emotional control and social submission is built. *Affect* resources repeatedly privilege emotions of happiness, calmness, and sweetness while emotions associated with chaos or turmoil are either softened or framed as transient. Gradation: Force makes positive emotions stronger through expressions such as so happy or so joyful, stabilizing emotional positivity as a regulative ideal for desirability. These emotional tropes are positioned as stable and natural by the monoglossic voicing that invites children to modulate their feelings in socially acceptable ways. Children's poetry therefore represents not only emotions but also delivers young readers to emotional discipline and social order.

Idealized Childhood and Innocence

These results also point to an idealized childhood ideology, whereby the childhood is constructed as innocent, emotionally protected and morally malleable. The appreciation resources of young, sweet, lovely and free positively evaluate childhood as a precious and fragile age of life. *Affect* still in favor of this ideology instantiates warmth, safety and emotional comfort towards childhood, while discouraging prolongation of negative emotional states. Through largely monoglossic *engagement*, this idealized portrayal is presented as natural and unquestionable, reinforcing dominant social views of children as beings who require guidance and moral shaping rather than autonomy.

Human–Nature Ethics and Environmental Responsibility

Finally, the analysis reveals an ideology of human–nature ethics, where nature is constructed as valuable and deserving of respect. Positive *appreciation resources* such as beautiful and free attribute worth and harmony to natural elements, encouraging emotional attachment to the environment. By contrast, resources in *judgment* texts evaluate human actions negatively, using terms like greed and excess. Judgment resources position human exploitation of the environment in a negative moral light. *Graduation* resources accentuate the adoration of nature. The moral distinction between care and exploitation is outlined in clearer terms. *Graduation* also tends to promote shared moral expectations toward environmental responsibility through monoglossic discourse.

Conclusion

This study sets out to examine how evaluative language in children's poetry constructs meaning and influences young readers, using Appraisal Theory as an analytical framework. By also focusing on the three main systems of *attitude*, *engagement*, and *graduation*, the analysis showed that children's poetry is not neutral in terms of ideology but is, rather, characterized by specific patterns of evaluation.

The results demonstrate that moral values of kindness, perseverance, respect, and responsibility are always encouraged and promoted in children's poetry through *judgment* resources, while *affect* and *appreciation* influence emotional responses and perception of aesthetic qualities. *En-*

gagement features, especially monoglossic positioning, represent values as natural and beyond question, offering no alternative perspectives, while *graduation* makes these representations more intensive and sharper.

Ultimately, this research suggests that children's poetry is not merely an art for art's sake but also an instrument through which pedagogy and ideology can be wielded. By employing subtle linguistic features, it inculcates children with dominant moral codes, emotional discourses, culturally constructed images of childhood innocence, and ethical dispositions towards society and nature. By employing Appraisal Theory to analyze children's poetry in particular, this research hopes to add to our understanding of how evaluations in language contribute to values and subjectivities in texts intended for children. It is possible that future studies might extend similar research to other texts or genres to verify the pedagogic potential of evaluations in language.

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