

# Graduation in Language of The News? The Case of Ghana's TV News Presentations

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## **Abstract**

This article explored graduation resources in major TV news presentations in Ghana. It explained language of primetime news in Ghana and linguistically shed light on professional practices in news presentations for the purpose of meaning in the news. An inquiry into graduation evaluative resources in news presentations is useful for understanding how subjects of primetime news bulletins create, manage, and send reports on local and international happenings using evaluative resources. The focus is on graduation resources in the news. Graduation is the third sub category of Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal theory. In discussing the presence of graduation resources in the news and their relevance, the research is situated within the Graduation category of the Appraisal theory by Martin and White (2005). The data presents reasons to prove the use of expressions that enact graduation meanings in the news presentations.

**Keywords:** Evaluation, Evaluation, Linguistic resources, News presentations, Primetime

## **Introduction**

Broadcast news has been largely spearheaded by Martin and White (2005), Merminod and Burger (2019), Montgomery (2007), and Thompson and Hunston (2006) over the years. These studies have made valuable contributions to the discourse of broadcast news (Montgomery, 2007), evaluation of language in written news (Martin & White, 2005; Thompson & Hunston, 2006) and linguistic narrative experience of the process of broadcast news (Merminod, 2018; Merminod & Burger, 2019). Unlike the pre -20th century, where studies of broadcast news focused on written news, researchers, such as Arackal (2015), Bednarek (2010) and Montgomery (2007) have explored spoken and broadcast news, specifically, radio and television discourses in the European contexts (Merminod, 2018; Merminod & Burger, 2019). In the African context, scholars have investigated language use in both electronic and print media from their various societies. Nwaneri, Mann, Niekerk and Dieperinle (2014) for instance, studied the use of English language in electronic media and how it is used in accordance with South Africa's language policy. It was obvious in this study, like many African countries that English language is the preferred language in presenting news and other information on radio and television broadcasting networks in South Africa, which is contrary to South Africa's language policy.

In Nigeria (arguably the most popular African country), Agu (2015) pays attention to one of the issues that unfortunately, makes Nigeria popular – corruption. Agu (2015) explores linguistic features in three daily newspapers that make journalists in Nigeria nation builders. He investigates linguistic features in the reportage of a 300-million-Naira scandal that had to do with the daughter of Nigeria's former president, Obasanjo. Interestingly, while some journalists reported objectively by distancing themselves, others reported this same scandal story from emotionally biased point of view. Like Agu's (2015) study,

the current study, examines evaluative resources that subjects of news employ in Ghana's primetime news that make them report objectively by distancing themselves. However, unlike Nigeria, as reported in Agu's (2015) study, instances of emotional biases are not used in Ghana's primetime news, which suggest a difference in linguistic choices in electronic and print media within different African countries. In Ghana, studies on language of the news have examined segments of the news. Boamah (2016) analysed language use in Ghana's sports news segment. Other scholars such as Amadu et al. (2018); Davor (2015); Nyarko (2016); Sikanku, (2011) have paid attention to written news in Ghana's print media. These studies (Agu, 2015; Amadu et al. 2018; Nwaneri et al. 2014; Sikanku, 2011), predominantly adopted a narrative ethnographic approach to the study of language of the news at the expense of Appraisal, which reveals how the textual voice positions itself with respect to other voices and other positions in the discourse (Martin & White, 2005). In this light, this research is a contribution to studies on non-native spoken news, concentrating on significance and meaning.

One limitation of studies that have focused on appraisal description of evaluation in news is that such studies do not provide us with information on all the three categories of the appraisal framework. Some appraisal evaluation scholars pay attention to attitudinal description of some aspects of language use in the media (Sobeng, 2016; Bednarek, 2010). Others concentrate on the engagement resources (Afful, 2016), while the others go for graduation resources in news language (Pan, 2015; Martin, 2000). Moreover, the focus of these studies has been on written news and segments of broadcast news bulletins to the neglect of the entire spoken news presentation. The consequence of these limitations is that the explanations provided for linguistic practices in the media are not complete since categories, which were to give a complete meaning is treated separately. This article is one of the steps taken towards this direction. The article presents graduation evaluative resources that give news subjects opportunity to enact interpersonal force on the news lines by indicating degrees of positivity or negativity through expressions that connote graduation. The study is therefore conducted under the guidance of the research question: what graduation evaluative resources are present in primetime TV news presentations in Ghana?

### **Aims of the Study**

The aim of this article is to give a graduation description of Ghana's primetime TV news presentations. By this, the description is geared towards exploring the graduation sub-system of the Appraisal framework by eliciting associated significance and meaning. As I did in my paper on attitudinal presence in the news, this research also pays attention to words, clauses and sentences. This article provides an alternative path to comprehensive and structured descriptions of the language of primetime news presentations in Ghana.

### **Significance of the study**

This research is valuable to media practitioners working with transmitting of news and information to the public, including journalists, editors, broadcasters, and news presenters. The results will hence be useful to scholars in media language, linguistics, and others with interests in language and news value. Thus, implications of the findings of the study will better inform scholars, students, and media practitioners to maintain high quality linguistic choices because they reveal little emotions, frequent attitudes, and ideologies in context.

Theoretically, the study has implication for research on other versions of the English language, as suggested by Martin and White (2005). White (2000) noted that research in this area is an on-going project

which still needs to be extended to other discourse domains and developed through the exploration of many more linguistic domains. In connection with the above, the study contributes to the growing body of studies in Appraisal Theory. Appraisal Theory has increasingly been applied to various genres of discourse such as media discourse, secondary school English critical writing, argumentative writing, narratives, among others. These studies, according to Wei, Wherrity and Zhang (2015), have both theoretical and practical significance.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Appraisal theory (Martin and White, 2005)**

This study discusses evaluation in primetime TV news presentations under the auspices of appraisal theory by Martin and White, (2005). The appraisal theory is a well-established theory within the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework, which deals with the resources of evaluative language (Afful, 2016).

The Appraisal Theory describes language employed in communicating evaluation, explaining how users of English language convey attitude through speakers' emotions, judgement of people and appreciation of objects, engagement (assessment of the evaluations of other people) and how writers modify the strength of their attitude/engagement (Read, Hope & Carroll, 2007). Martin and White developed Appraisal Theory, as a model of evaluation in Australia (Martin, 2000). The theory is useful for tracking the choices speakers/writers (in our case, subjects of the news) make or employ to encode attitudinal meanings, to adjust degrees of evaluations and to contract and expand dialogical space (Lancaster, 2011). Martin and White intimate that the expressions created in a text as a form of evaluation, bring out "the subjective presence of speakers in the text as they adopt stances towards the material they present and those with whom they communicate" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 1). The choice of words and expressions in a particular text could reflect what a speaker or writer says. Thus, a speaker's or writer's intentions could be seen in the choice of words employed (Sobeng, 2016). Martin (2000) explains that appraisal, negotiation, and involvement together construe the register variable, tenor, which is concerned with the ongoing concession of relations of power and solidarity (intimacy or distance) among interlocutors such as news presenters and their viewers

The Appraisal Theory has three interactive subsystems – Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. What this means is that at any instance of appraisal, a text has the capacity of conveying these three important meanings, considered as the subsystems of the Appraisal Theory, as presented in Figure 1 below:

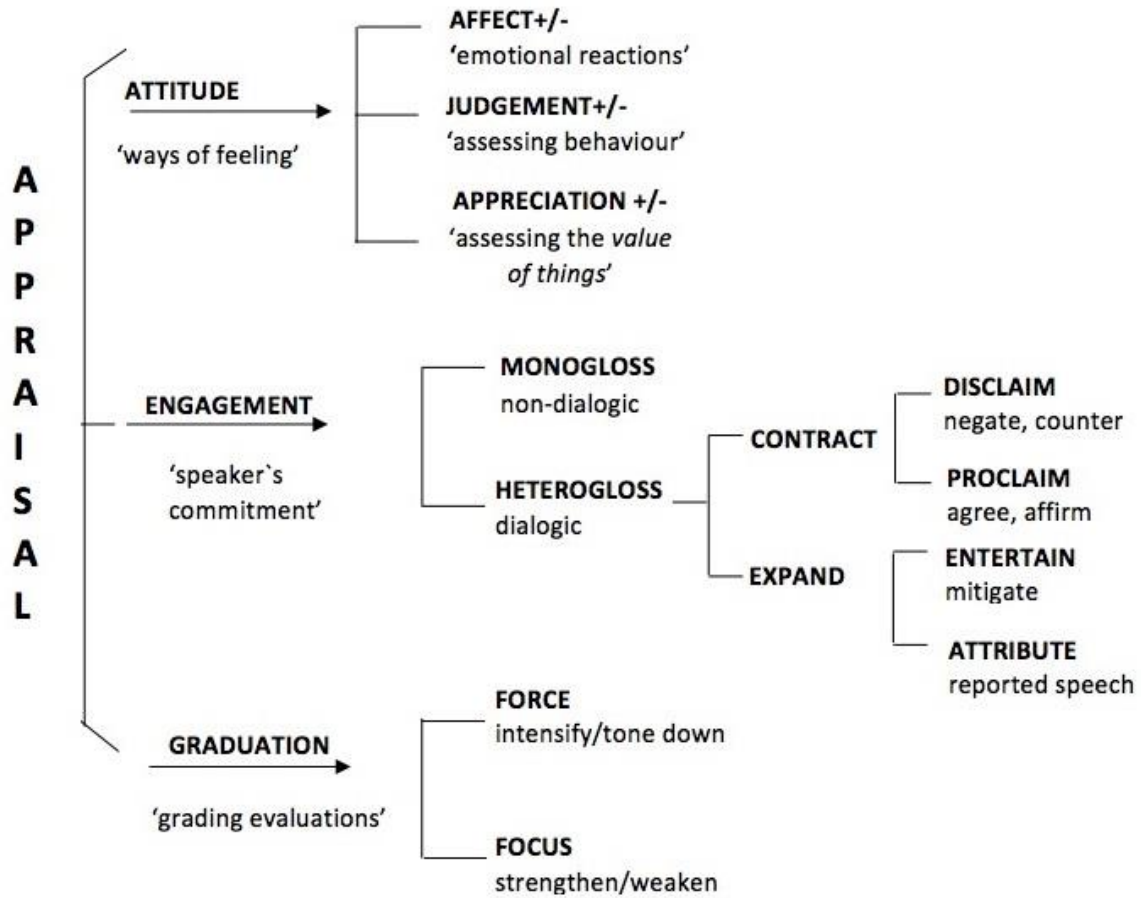


Figure 1: The Appraisal Theory (Adapted from Martin & White, 2005)

Martin and White (2005) present three categories of feelings under Attitude (the first subsystem of appraisal theory): *affect*, *judgement* and *appreciation*. The authors explain that any kind of symbolic meaning derived from a text, due to the source and target in the interaction, depends on the previous knowledge on the context by the audience. The Affect subsystem deals with resources for construing emotional reactions, which Martin and White further categorize into three forms: *un/happiness*, *in/security*, and *dis/satisfaction*. Judgement looks at meaning, clarifying our attitudes to people or entities and the different ways they behave. Under judgement, the emoter's attitude to other people and their behavior is what matters (Sobeng, 2016). Martin and White (2005) consider two major sub- categories that give meaning from the behavior of interactants: *judgements of social esteem* and *judgements of social sanction*. Judgements of social esteem is normality, which is capacity (implying how capable a person is), and tenacity (how brave and determined someone is). Judgements of social sanction explain veracity (how truthful someone is) and propriety (how responsible or ethical someone is). Appreciation, the third category under Attitude subsystem, involves evaluation of objects, process and natural phenomena and state of affairs like abstract 'things.' Martin and White (2005) stress that unlike judgement, appreciation does not have any link with the evaluation of human behavior, but meanings construed that involves "the evaluation of 'things', especially things we make and performances we give, including natural phenomena" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 56). Appreciation, therefore, is for the "appraised" and not the "appraiser".

Engagement connotes linguistic resources such as projection, modality, polarity, concession, and comment of adverbials that positions the speaker or writer to the value position. This position becomes

what the speaker advances, concerning potential responses to that value position, by quoting or reporting, acknowledging a possibility, denying, countering, and affirming (Martin & White, 2005). Additionally, Engagement deals with the linguistic constructions by which authors construe their points of view and the resources used to adopt stances towards the opinions of others. This resource considers how speakers acknowledge alternative positions to their own. Engagement has expansive resources that are heteroglossic in nature. By this, they allow for utterances from the audience and assume that the reader may resist the position. The Engagement subsystem involves those meanings which in various ways explain the text as heteroglossic in nature concerning prior utterances, alternative viewpoints, and anticipated responses (Martin & White, 2005, p.97). Since this research dwells on the graduation category of the Appraisal theory, I will pay attention to the third category of the appraisal theory - Graduation.

The graduation is the last system of the appraisal theory, and it is introduced in order to provide means to measure or at least estimate the orientation and various degrees of intensity associated to affect, appreciations, judgment and engagement. It plays a dialogic role by ensuring that speakers present themselves as strongly associated with the position communicated by the text or news. Graduation therefore shows the extent to which any evaluation is valued along a range of intensity. Graduation is a general property of both *Attitude* and *Engagement*. With attitude, authors can convey greater or lesser degrees of positivity or negativity. Graduation, thus, explains how Engagement scales authors' conviction in their utterance (Read, Hope & Carroll, 2007). The position of authors in utterances is measured under Graduation. Under the Graduation subsystem, the degree of an evaluation, when focused on gradability is adjusted (that is, how strong or weak a feeling is). Martin and White (2005) call this kind of graduation, *force*, which refers to realizations including intensification, comparative and superlative morphology, repetition and various graphological and phonological features alongside the use of intensified lexis. It is the grading of making meaning from low to high intensity. The resources used to realize this subsystem, represent the assessment of meanings as degrees of intensity, quantity, and extent. These resources have implications for ideological positions in the media (Pan, 2015). The grading of making meaning from low to high intensity, in general, are resources for turning the volume up than for turning it down. Thus, "raise so touchy, infinitely more naked, quite clinical, most dangerous, a little upset, somewhat upset, the least information" depict Graduation (Martin & White, 2005, p. 139). In the context of non-gradable resources, graduation has the effect of adjusting the strength of boundaries between categories, constructing core and peripheral types of things; this system is called focus (Martin & White, 2005; Pan, 2015). Focus refers to the grading of meanings as being more or less definite, indicating more or less authoritativeness. The figure below shows the Graduation sub-system of the appraisal theory.



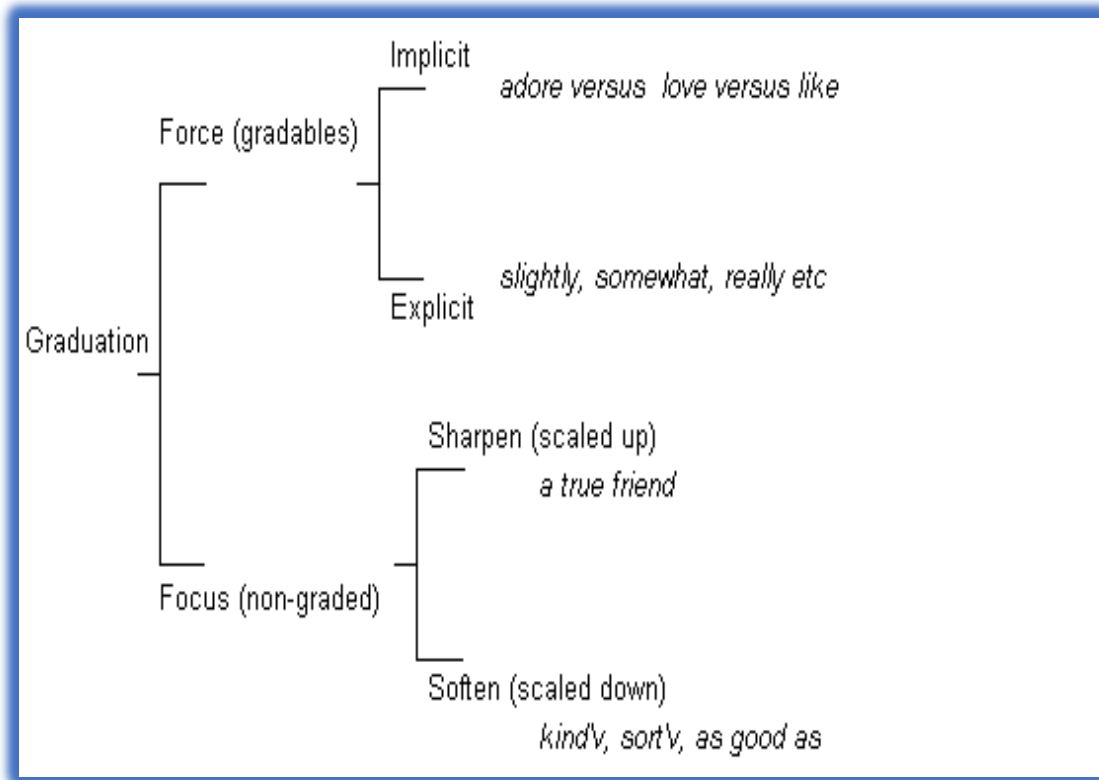


Figure 2: Graduation Sub-System of the Appraisal Theory (Adapted from Martin & White, 2005)

In this article, resources that construe graduation presence in the primetime TV news presentations will be explored and explained.

### Methodology

The research design used for this research is qualitative content analysis since it deals with techniques for systematic texts analysis (Mayring, 2000). Babbie (2001) sees content analysis as “the study of recorded human communication” (p. 304). Major features of content analysis are recording, downloading, and coding, which prominently featured in my data gathering process. To achieve this, I prepared a list of evaluative resources guided by Martin and White’s (2005) Appraisal Theory. Words, clauses, and statements that construe Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation, as evaluative resources, as stipulated in the Appraisal Theory were recorded. Based on the list, content analysis was conducted to establish the use of these linguistic resources in the news language. I used simple counting and frequency of occurrence of key evaluative resources from the news to explain the significance of absence and presence of evaluation, semiotics, and ideological positioning in primetime news presentations in Ghana. Instances of happiness/unhappiness, satisfaction/dissatisfaction, security/insecurity, as “affect” of the Attitude subsystem. Language in news presentations that construe “assessing behavior” was categorized under “judgement” of the Attitude subsystem. Linguistic resources in news presentations that showed assessing the value of things were classified under “appreciation”. These resources express feelings and are termed Attitude (Martin & White, 2005). Instances of linguistic resources in news presentations that expressed disclaim, proclaim, entertain, and attribute were grouped under Engagement. I finally searched for key words, clauses, and statements in news presentations that portrayed quantification, intensification (Force), upscaling and downscaling (Focus) and placed such linguistic resources under Graduation. To ensure reliability and validity in this thesis, frequency of the inter-rater agreement yields a score of 80 to

95%. The units of analysis were words, clauses, and statements. Additionally, I calculated the frequency of the absence or presence of evaluative resources by observing key words, clauses, and sentences in the data. I have ensured that my participants (subjects of the news or news presenters) were protected in this study. I gave newsreaders codes to avoid mentioning their names in the discussions, which is presented in the next session under analysis and discussions.

The data for this study are primetime news presentations from four TV stations in Ghana. The primetime news, constituting the data for this research were selected from Ghana Television (GTV), TV3 Ghana Limited (TV3), JOY NEWS (Joy News) and Citi Newsroom (Citi TV). The TV stations are among the most influential TV stations in Ghana according to GeoPoll research institute, 2019. News items were coded as GTV PR1, PR2 (GTV Presenter One, Two); TV3 PR1, PR2 (TV3 Presenter One, Two); Joy News PR1, PR2 (Joy News Presenter One, Two); Citi PR1, PR2 (Citi Presenter One, Two); MN1 (main news bulletin one), BN (business news segment) for easy referencing and effective discussions of observations from the data.

## Analysis and Discussions

### Graduation Resources in Primetime TV News Presentations

The Appraisal category of graduation is concerned with values by which a speaker raises or lowers the interpersonal impact, force, or volume of his/her utterance, as discussed earlier in this article. In some contexts of the news data, the use of graduation resources, either blurs or sharpens the focus of their semantic implications (Martin & White, 2005). Graduation resources indicate the degree of positivity or negativity associated with a proposition. In the following extracts, I present graduation resources, as used in the data:

#### Extract 1

The National Council meeting at a national delegates' congress of the new patriotic party (NPP) has **formally** endorsed the ticket of president Akufo Addo and vice president Dr. M. Bawumia as the party flagbearer and running mate (.)

At a ceremony to officially close down the camp (.) the commissioner of human rights and administrative justice Mr. Joseph Whittal warned that the commission would **ruthlessly deal** with anyone who subjects another person to inhumane treatment over witchcraft accusation↓ (GTV, 24th December, 2019). In this Extract 1, the graduation resources used are *formally* and *ruthlessly deal*. The use of *formally* indicate the level of positivity associated with the endorsement of *the ticket of president Akufo Addo and his Vice Dr. Bawumia as the party's flagbearer and running mate*. The graduation resource *formally* makes the endorsement of the president's ticket sharply defined as suggested by Hood (2010). In Hood's (2010) view, such a graduation resource amplifies a core value in the text under consideration.

Concerning *ruthlessly deal with*, used in Extract 1 from GTV, what Martin and White (2005) call degree of intensity associated with the said action supposed to take place if *anyone subjects another person to inhumane treatment over witchcraft accusation* is highlighted. The graduation expression *ruthlessly deal with* intensifies the action to be taken when one flouts the human rights rule.

### Extract 2

Ok↑ we will be counting the days and **definitely** (.) So that's Matthew Nyindam deputy majority chief whip member of parliament for Pandai constituency there↓ so next week is what he is talking about (,) we (ideological) will count the days to see if the MP's common fund is indeed↑ paid by next week↓

This is the rate at which the banks trade amongst each other and I always say that it will be **slightly higher** when you visit the forest market↓ (TV3, 12th February, 2020)

In TV3's instances of the use of graduation resources, *definitely* and *slightly higher*, there is a display of a degree of certainty *definitely* and degree of intensity *slightly higher* of the actions to be performed in the news contents. When we take a closer look at the graduation resource, *slightly higher*, we notice that it is used to blur the level of intensity of the rise in the rate at which banks trade in the forex market. In this instance, it was the news presenter who employed it to send a message of caution to viewers who would want to visit the forex market to exchange their foreign currencies. Graduation resources are said to be either "up-scale or down-scale, making them construe greater or lesser degrees of positivity or negativity" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 315). The use of graduation resource *slightly* has a down-scaling effect on the degree of intensity of the forest market rates in the news.

### Extract 3

The national council of PTA and the Catholic Bishops Conference have called for suspension of WASSCE and BECE following the spike in COVID-19 cases in SHS (.) In a statement issued it read the situation is **really grim and deadly** (.) The health minister Kwaku Agyeman Mensah says these cases are as a result of congestion in some SHS (.)

The world is changing ↑very fast and physical contact is becoming a thing of the past **particularly** due to the COVID-19 pandemic (.) Now joining me in the studio for more on this is Hans Siaw (.) He is head of digital banking support from UBA (()) (Joy News, 15th July, 2020).

### Extract 4

In the Bono region more women are contesting in this year's district assembly elections specifically in the Sunyani municipality hhh (.) Now the number has increased **slightly** from three in 2015 to eight in 2019 hhh (.)

Now the parliamentary candidate for NPP and the NDC in the Ejisu constituency have called on security agencies to ↑**seriously** pay attention to some hot spot identified in the area to avert possible instance of violence in the December polls (Citi TV, 30th November, 2020).

In each of these cases, the graduation expressions illustrate the degree of intensity of the actions reported over processes and qualities in their individual contexts of the news. This observation confirms the assertion that graduation covers assessment as to the degree of intensity over qualities and processes or verbal modalities of likelihood and infuses lexical choice that amplifies the core values in a text (Hood, 2010; and Martin & White, 2005). The graduation resources noticed in the data include:

*formally, ruthlessly deal, definitely, slightly higher, really grim and deadly, particularly, and seriously.*

When we take the graduation expression, *grim and deadly* used in Joy News' news content on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 2020 in Extract 3 above, we notice that it is used to enact the degree of intensity of the COVID-19 situation in Ghana's Senior High Schools when they were asked to go back to school. In the news Extract 3, a call is being made by the *national council of PTA and Catholic Bishops Conference... for suspension of WASSCE and BECE following the spike in COVID-19 cases in SHS*. In order to indicate



the degree of seriousness associated with the situation, the council of PTA and the Catholic Bishops Conference in Ghana resorted to the Graduation resource, *grim and deadly* as in “...in a statement issued it read the situation is really *grim and deadly*...”. It is worth noting that while positive graduation (*definitely, higher, formally*) sharpen the events being reported about in the news texts, negative graduation (*grim and deadly, slightly higher, ruthlessly deal*) rather blurs the context within which such resources are featured. It was again observed that in some cases, news content could possess two or sometimes all three evaluative parameters (Bednarek, 2010). Thus, there were some news stories that possessed almost all the parameters (Attitude, Engagement and Graduation) of Appraisal as proposed by Martin and White (2005). The extracts below illustrate instances in the data where two or all three of the evaluative systems were employed:

### Extract 5

**Right** (.) ↑parliament has **unanimously approved** the president’s Chief Justice nominee Justice Anim Yeboah (.) The approval by the house was unanimously approved (.) Mr. Justice Yeboah **underwent** almost a five hour vetting from members of the appointment committee (.) answering questions pertaining to his career as a judge (.) (GTV, 24th December, 2019).

In Extract 5, the news from GTV begins with an engagement resource, *right*. It then proceeds with the graduation resource, *unanimously approved*. These evaluative resources make the news quite meaningful and expressive, because *right* shows an endorsement of what the previous speaker just said while *unanimously approved* illustrate how the approval was done, construing the degree of positivity associated with that approval.

### Extract 6

**According to** Maame Ewurabena Ansah health workers there **felt unsafe** and had to abandon some wards at the hospital (.) On hashtag save the health worker campaign championed by Joy News (.) Henry Kwesi Baidoo spoke to the pharmacist who **blamed** the situation on lack of PPEs (.) Join the hashtag save the health worker now↓ (.) And eh don’t forget **this is being championed by Joy News (.) and the multimedia group** (.) (Joy News, 15th July, 2020)

In this Extract, we observe the use of engagement resources, *according to* and *blamed*, as well as affect insecurity, *felt unsafe*. The engagement resources show or acknowledge the source of the information in the news while the Affect in/security resource illustrates the emotional stance of the health workers as depicted by the insecurity feeling resource, *felt unsafe*. The news line concludes with another attribute expression that acknowledges the source of this news report; thus, ...*this is being championed by Joy News (.) and the multimedia group*. In this news, evaluative resources employed here are engagement (*according to, blamed, this is being championed by Joy News...*) and attitude affect (*felt unsafe*). Other instances of the multiple use of evaluative resources in the data are presented below:

### Extract 7

Now the parliamentary candidate for NPP and the NDC in the Ejisu constituency have **called on** security agencies to ↑**seriously** pay attention to some hot spot identified in the area to avert possible instance of violence in the December polls (.) hh Now as the police have identified 20 hot spot in Ejisu constituency (.) the leading candidates in the race John Kumah and George Kwanozey have **expressed their willingness**

to commit to peace ahead of the 2020 general elections (.) hh Citi news' Edward Oponng Marfo has more on the following report (()) (Citi TV, 30th November, 2020).

In Extract 7 from Citi TV, we observe the illustration of all three evaluative resources being used in one news text. First, engagement resource, *called on*, points viewers to the source of that news. Secondly, graduation resource, *seriously*, shows the degree of intensity associated with the attention the police are supposed to give to some identified hot spot areas in the Ejisu constituency, as presented in the news. Finally, Attitude Affect resource, *expressed their willingness*, is employed to indicate a feeling of satisfaction of measures put in place to handle hot-spot areas and the desire to commit to peace by all parties involved.

When resources of Appraisal function in this manner, they illustrate the evaluative nature of news texts, as seen in the data. In some cases, there is the combination of engagement and attitude resources as we have in Extract 7. There were other instances where engagement and graduation resources featured together in the news stories, as noticed in Extract 6, while in Extract 7, Citi TV presented a news story in which all three Appraisal resources (Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation) were employed. The situation in a text where the evaluative resources interact, as seen here to bring out the meaning in the text is what Martin and White (2005) call "intersubjective positioning". According to the authors, intersubjective positioning involves how evaluative meanings interact with each other and with values of attitude as evaluative orientations are built across the unfolding text. By implication, when the evaluative resources are employed in an unfolding text, they interact to enrich evaluative meanings in that text, as observed in the data. Interestingly, Hyland (2005) sees this as interpersonal metadiscourse where different evaluative resources interact in a text for the purpose of interpersonal stance and engagement.

In Extract 6, the news was on the call by the NPP and NDC parliamentary candidates for Ejisu constituency on the security agencies to pay attention to some hot-spot areas in that constituency to avoid any possible violence. In this news content, Engagement resource, *called on* signals attribute because the *called on* acknowledges the source of that news story, which is "...the NPP and NDC parliamentary candidates of Ejisu constituency" (Citi TV, 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2010).

Furthermore, the graduation resource, *seriously*, evokes the degree of intensity of attention expected from the security agencies in the identified hot-spot areas in the Ejisu constituency. The affect expression *willingness*, an attitude resource, is also employed in the closing report of this news story to construe a feeling of satisfaction of the leading candidate towards commitment to peace ahead of the 2020 general elections.

Evaluation in news contents, as described in this chapter, brings out the intended meaning and exposes viewers to emotional (Attitude), Engaging and Graduating semantic implications associated with each news story, as suggested by Bednarek (2010) and Martin and White (2005). The semantic relevance of Attitude, Engagement and Graduation interacting in the data is to position viewers to comprehend the import of the news stories presented. In the data, we see a level of interaction between the evaluative resources from the news stories in each TV station. The display of the evaluative resources such as *approved, noted, added their voice, threatened, says, claims, said, according to, expressed, reports*, enables journalists to supply viewers with the sources of their news reportage as a major means of evidence; hence, its outstanding presence in the data. In all, fifty-four (54) attribute resources were employed in the data. In the view of Martin and White (2005), such attributes have the semantics of whether the purported source of the proposition is external or internal to the text. Similarly, the attribute resources are mainly external while others are internal, which grant subjects of news the opportunity to

distance themselves from events being reported on by employing positive or negative attributes. Positive attributes such as *added their voice, called, said, reports, hinted, according to, believes, and secures* were used in the data, as can be seen in these news lines:

*...According to the IGP intelligence gathered indicates that the group has lined up a number of activities from 20th to 27th December to create problems for the country (GTV, 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2019)*

*Still in parliament (,) parliamentarians have added their voice to calls for interior minister to assure the house and Ghanaians of security for nurses and essential service workers... (TV3, 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2020)*

*At a virtual annual general meeting of the chairman of the board Albert Essien said the cleanup exercise by the securities and exchange commission played a key role (.) There's more in this report... (Joy News, 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2020)*

*...Diana Nguan reports that out of the 42 electoral areas only three women are contesting the elections... (Citi TV, 2019)*

Positive attributes, as used in the data, illustrated in the instances above, are reporting verbs that make subjects of news acknowledge the source (White, 2000) of the information they are presenting in the news. The semantic implication is that the subjects of the news are positioned as neutral, in terms of authorial voice. As suggested by Martin and White (2005), when speakers opt for acknowledging attributes such as “says, report, believe, according to” (p. 113), the rhetorical effect is that of neutrality in authorial voice, depending on the semantics of the text.

Under Hyland’s (2005) interpersonal model of metadiscourse, such attributes are evidentials, whose presence enables writers or, in this case, speakers to mainly refer to sources of information. In the data, news subjects are positioned in an authorial neutral voice as they present the news because the use of positive attributes (said, reports, according to) does not indicate where a speaker or author stands concerning the news stories being presented. Authorial voice is the stance an author or, in this case, a speaker takes regarding an issue the author or speaker is advancing (Martin & White, 2005). News subjects do not necessarily advance their personal views but those of the broadcasting institution and the viewers, hence, the frequent use of positive attribute for acknowledgement of news source.

Besides positive attributes, few negative attributes were spotted in the news from all four stations. They include *cautioned, rejects, blamed, rejected, dispelled, and threatened*. Such attributes, according to White (2000) and Martin and White (2005), are distancing indicators, such that news bulletins marked by such negative attribute allow news subjects to clearly disassociate or detach themselves from such news stories. Distancing indicators are linguistic resources employed in a text to disassociate speakers from the content of the text. Primetime news is expected to be conveyed to the public without interferences in the flow of facts in the news from subjects of the news, or the broadcasting institutions. In this study, instances of the use of negative attributes corroborate Martin and White’s (2005) view that speakers or news presenters employ negative Attributes to stay away or disassociate themselves from some news contents. Some instances of the use of negative Attributes in the data for the purpose of speaker or authorial distancing or disassociation are illustrated in the news lines:

*...a banking consultant Dr. Richmond Atuaahene has cautioned the bank of Ghana not to force banks into mergers simply because they cannot raise the new minimum capital requirement of 400million cedis by (.) December 31... (TV3, 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2018)*

*...in this package (.) company contracted by government to implement Accra intelligent traffic management project hhh Beijing Everyway traffic and technology ↑threatens to drag Ghana to the London courts of international arbitration following the abrogation of its contract...*

(Citi TV, 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2020)

*The alleged witches' camp at Nabuli in the Northern region has been closed down (0.1) and the 45 inmates reintegrated into society*

(GTV, 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2019)

*...At a ceremony to officially close down the camp (.) the commissioner of human rights and administrative justice Mr. Joseph Whittal warned that the commission would ruthlessly deal with anyone who subjects another person to inhumane treatment over witchcraft accusation↓...*

(GTV, 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2019)

In each instance of the use of negative Attribute in the news lines above, there is a clear distancing of the speaker from the news stories. This is in line with the view that under distancing resources of Attribute, “there is an explicit distancing of the authorial voice from the attributed material” (Martin & White, 2005. p. 113). The negative attributes are typically reported verbs: *cautioned*, *threatens*, *alleged*, and *warned*, which position speakers away from the content of the news. The use of these attributes detaches subjects of the news or speakers from the responsibility of what is being reported. A close look at the news content from GTV with the use of an attribute *warned*, will give an impression of both positive and negative implication of the attribute. This is because *warned* as a word has a negative connotation. However, its usage in the context of the news changes its sharp negativity connotation to a positive one. Hence, in the news, Mr. Whittal is said to have *warned that the commission would ruthlessly deal with anyone who subjects another person to inhumane treatment over witchcraft*. This is a good call to stop all inhumane treatments against aged women in the name of witchcraft. In other words, unlike Martin and White’s (2005) suggestions, some evaluative resources with specific effect in the text may have different contextual meanings which could affect their evaluative roles in the data.

In the data, both positive and negative attributes are used for the purpose of acknowledging source of news. However, while positive attributes depict neutrality of speaker or authorial voice concerning the news being presented, negative attributes explicitly detach speaker or subjects of the news from the responsibility of the content of the news.

Furthermore, as demonstrated earlier, Graduation resources featured quite well in the news from all the four TV stations, suggesting that in the data, besides attributing news content to named sources, there is also the use of gradable lexis to depict the degree of intensity of reported events, as suggested by Martin and White (2005) when they studied graduation resources in the “Haffer text” (p. 158). Graduation resources such as *unanimously*, *formally*, *definitely*, *particularly* and *subsequently* condition the meanings conveyed by the texts in which they are used as increasing degrees of the events they are describing as used in the following news lines:

*...The national council meeting at a national delegates congress of the new patriotic party (NPP) has **formally** endorsed the ticket of president Akufo Addo and vice president Dr. M. Bawumia as the party flagbearer and running mate... (GTV, 2020)*

*Ok↑ we will be counting the days and **definitely** get back to you for some answers if that is not done (.) So that’s Matthew Nyindam deputy majority chief whip member of parliament for Pandai constituency there↓ so next week is what he is talking about (,) we will count the days to see if the MP’s common fund is indeed↑ paid by next week (TV3, 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2020)*



These Graduation resources show degree of intensity in the various contexts in which they are used. As proposed by Martin and White (2005), these Graduation resources construe greater degrees of positivity in the data. On the other hand, there were graduation resources that exhibited a rather lowering or decreasing degree of quality in the events reported on in the news. Such decreasing gradable (Graduation) resources in the news include *ruthlessly deal*, *slightly*, *really grim and deadly*. Graduation resources such as *slightly*, *ruthlessly deal* and *really grim and deadly*, as illustrated in the news lines above, are resources that construe greater degrees of negativity in the data. Once a Graduation resource such as *really grim and deadly*, for instance, is employed, the situation being described in the news receives a scale of negativity. Thus, Graduation resources in the data construe either greater degree of positivity (*formally*, *particularly*, *subsequently*) or greater degree of negativity (*really grim and deadly*, *ruthlessly deal*).

Other evaluative resources like that of Attitude were sparingly employed, depicting where the interest of news subjects lies when it comes to evaluative use of language in news texts. This observation contradicts Sobeng's (2016) findings in a study she conducted on judges' comments in Ghana's Most Beautiful show. In that study, she observed the outstanding use of the Attitudinal resources in judges' comments after each contestant's performance. Thus, as judges used Affect to indicate their feelings (satisfaction/dissatisfaction, happiness/unhappiness, security/insecurity) about contestants' performances, they employed criticism under Judgement to correct contestants' errors while Appreciation resources were used to congratulate contestants whose performances judges rated as faultless. The opposite is the case in this study, since in news presentations, journalists, per their professional code of conducts are to refrain from presenting their feelings. Subjects of news (or news presenters) are rather interested in reporting on factual issues supported by clear evidence; hence, their frequent resort to Attribute expressions under the Engagement resource.

## Findings and Results

The study showed that graduation resources in news are employed to provide means to measure or at least estimate the orientation and various degrees of intensity associated to affect, appreciations, judgment, and engagement. It has been used in the news to adjust the attitude and the intensity of intervention, focusing on the typicality of the category. It also became clear that graduation resources highlight or place emphases on the other evaluative resources.

## Conclusion

In this article, I sought to examine graduation in primetime TV news presentations in Ghana and explain the relevance of graduation resources in the news under the auspices of the graduation sub-system of Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal theory. The study presented how Graduation resources are enacted in the primetime TV news presentations in Ghana.

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