WORD CHOICE REVEALS STANCE OF THE WRITER: AN APPRAISAL ANALYSIS OF TARIQ RAHMAN'S CHARITY

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates Tariq Rahman's short story Charity through the lens of Systemic Functional Linguistics and Appraisal Theory. It examines how Rahman's word choices reveal evaluative stance on socio-economic disparity in Pakistan and how language influences readers' perceptions of poverty and inequality. Employing a qualitative research design, key excerpts from the story were selected and coded for attitude, engagement, and graduation. The analysis shows that Rahman employs negative affect to portray the exhaustion and frustration of the masses, while simultaneously exposing elite detachment. He contrasts traditional and modern symbols to highlight arrogance and pride, and he uses vivid adjectives to evoke disgust and pity in depictions of poverty. Additional passages uncover how cultural continuity continues regardless of deprivation and how elite perspectives are ironically detached from common suffering. The findings confirm that Charity is not merely a thematic portrayal of hardship but a linguistically constructed critique of social inequality. The study contributes by providing a linguistic model for evaluating Pakistani fiction, presenting how appraisal categories systematically reveal stance. It also provides a practical approach for students and teachers who seek to move beyond general thematic readings to evidence-based analysis. Overall, the research shows the power of language to shape empathy, critique social structures, and call attention to the urgent realities of inequality.

Keywords: Socio-economic *disparity, Appraisal framework, Stance.*

Introduction

Pakistani English literature has long engaged with questions of inequality, poverty, and social justice. The works of Bapsi Sidhwa, Mohsin Hamid, Kamila Shamsie, and Nadeem Aslam are writers who have depicted the life of people who are struggling against the lack of economic equality and the political instability. The short stories written by Tariq Rahman who is more of a linguist and historian have a central social critique. Charity

is an exceptionally significant story of his since it provides the striking contrast between the elite detachment and the common suffering. Although the literary critics have observed the themes of the fiction, there has been no effort to articulate in a systematic manner how the diction of his language produces evaluative position and guides reaction of the readers.

The importance of the given work is in the fact that it presents both the literary analysis and the linguistic framework. Systemic Functional Linguistics was created by Halliday (1994) and views language as a social semiotic system that is determined by 3 metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Appraisal Theory, as developed by Martin and White (2005), concentrates on the interpersonal metafunction and provides tools for analyzing evaluation, stance, and alignment. This framework allows researchers to move beyond general thematic readings and to show in detail how affect, judgment, appreciation, engagement, and graduation are realized in wording.

The objectives of this research are threefold: first, to examine how Rahman's choice of words highlights socio-economic disparity; second, to explore the emotional impact of his language on readers; and third, to analyze how his narrative strategies engage readers and influence their perceptions of inequality. These objectives generate three research questions: How does Rahman portray the lives of the rich and poor in *Charity*? What emotional responses are evoked through his language? How does the appraisal framework help explain the impact of the narrative?

By addressing these questions, the study contributes to three areas. It deepens understanding of Rahman's fiction, expands the use of appraisal analysis to South Asian literature, and provides a model for Pakistani students and teachers who need practical procedures for textual analysis. The introduction therefore sets the stage for a study that is not only literary but also linguistic, not only descriptive but also evaluative, and not only academic but also socially relevant.

The aim is to describe the language choices in the text and to explain what those choices do to the reader. The approach is simple but systematic. It follows the Appraisal framework, which comes from Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics and gives a clear set of tools for describing evaluation in texts (Halliday, 1994; Martin & White, 2005; Thompson, 2014). Appraisal divides evaluation into three parts. The first part, attitude, covers affect (feelings), judgment (ethics and behavior), and appreciation (aesthetic value). The second part, engagement, covers how a text opens or closes space for other voices and viewpoints. The third part, graduation, explains how a text turns the volume of meaning up or down so that some lines feel soft and some lines feel strong.

More research in literature has traditionally been based on thematic interpretation and critical theories such as feminism, post colonialism, and Marxism, which provide valuable perspectives on texts (Eagleton, 2002; Said, 1978). These approaches usually emphasize ideology, identity, and power but do not always illustrate in detail how language itself enacts evaluation. The present study is different in that it focuses on a short story and substantiates its claims through the linguistic devices and word choices made by the author. In Pakistan, most classroom practices and student research still

rely on broad summaries of themes like poverty and inequality without systematically showing how textual features produce such effects (Batool. et al, 2023; Khan et. al, 2023; Sati et al., 2025). This study addresses that gap by providing stepwise how appraisal categories such as attitude, engagement, and graduation are encoded in the *Charity* by Rahman. It this way, it emphasizes the need to apply linguistic techniques in analysing literary works. They are not a substitute to thematic/theoretical readings but complementary, disclosing the way in which meaning is built at the word-level.

The social background is relevant, but in this case, it is also only to explain why such an analysis should be relevant to Pakistan. Pakistan inequality is not a new issue. It appears in newspapers, in policy debates, and in many novels and short stories. But for language and literature studies, the important question is methodological: how do we show, with evidence from the text, that a story encourages a certain judgment of events and people? Appraisal is a good tool for this because it keeps the focus on wording while still allowing us to speak about values and society. Earlier scholarship has used appraisal to study media headlines, political speeches, and even Twitter rhetoric, proving that the framework travels well across genres (Bednarek, 2008; Ross & Caldwell, 2020). Literary studies have also used appraisal to explain how narratives guide readers' emotions and positions (Gales, 2011; Page, 2013; Oteíza, 2017; Zaib 2022). In Pakistan, several studies have applied SFL and appraisal to fiction, but much of the work remains descriptive or thematic, with limited stepwise coding of attitude, engagement, and graduation in local texts. This paper answers that need by providing a focused case study with explicit procedures and clear illustrations from *Charity.*

The design of the study is modest and careful. It does not claim to cover the whole of Pakistani fiction or to judge the correctness of any moral view in the story. It limits itself to a set of key passages where the evaluative load is high and where coding can be shown openly. Each example is selected because it makes class difference visible through wording: who is tired, who is impatient, what is called dirty, whose point of view is centered, which voices are included or excluded, and how intensity is raised or lowered at sentence and phrase level. The analysis treats these choices as linguistic facts that can be described and checked. In each case, the coding is explained in plain language so that another reader can follow and agree or disagree with reasons.

The contribution of the study is also practical. First, it shows teachers and students how to move from a general claim like "the story shows inequality" to a specific, evidence-based claim like "the story uses negative affect for the crowd, alignment moves that create elite distance, and strong graduation through accumulative detail to build a stance against normalized poverty." Second, it gives a compact set of steps for doing appraisal analysis in literary texts: identify the scene, list the key wordings, code attitude–engagement–graduation, explain the effect, and relate the pattern back to the social meaning. Third, it claims that such kind of analysis supports national educational goals by fostering critical reading, which is essential in Pakistan for informed public discourse. In simple words, the study is about reading closely and fairly, and about showing your work when you make a claim about meaning (Zaib et al., 2025).

The paper is organized in a way that is easy to use. After this introduction, the literature review presents the main ideas and findings from appraisal studies and from work on Pakistani fiction, defining the research gap that the present study addresses. The methodology section then explains the design, data, and coding procedures in a way that is simple but complete. The analysis and discussion section provides the close reading with appraisal coding and explains how the patterns build stance in *Charity*. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the key points and states what the study adds for teachers, students, and researchers in Pakistan. Throughout, references to standard works in SFL and appraisal (Halliday, 1994; Martin & White, 2005; Thompson, 2014), as well as studies in discourse and literature (Fairclough, 1992; Bednarek, 2008; Gales, 2011; Page, 2013; Oteíza, 2017; Ross & Caldwell, 2020), are used to give authenticity and to make the method reliable and easy to cite. The language of the paper stays clear and simple so that readers at different levels can follow the argument without difficulty. In this way, the study keeps the focus on the text and on the practical steps that any reader in Pakistan can apply when analyzing how word choice reveals stance in literature.

Literature Review

The present study builds on existing scholarship in Systemic Functional Linguistics, appraisal theory, and Pakistani English fiction. It is important to review these strands of research in detail because they provide the foundation for understanding how word choice in a literary text functions as evaluation and stance. The literature review is presented in continuous discussion, not as a list of subheadings, because the aim is to show the flow of ideas and to identify the research gap clearly.

Appraisal theory, developed by Martin and White (2005), extends Halliday's (1994) model of Systemic Functional Linguistics. While Halliday focused on three metafunctions of language— ideational, interpersonal, and textual—appraisal theory zooms in on the interpersonal to describe how evaluation is built in discourse. Attitude, engagement, and graduation are the three dimensions that allow analysts to show how texts create feelings, ethical judgments, and intensity. This framework has been applied in many contexts across the world. Bednarek (2008) examined emotion talk across corpora and showed that appraisal categories give a systematic way to code affect in everyday discourse. Thompson (2014) in Introducing Functional Grammar described how appraisal connects with wider SFL categories and how it can be applied by students learning discourse analysis. Oteíza (2017) examined how appraisal can be used in discourse analysis more broadly, especially in contexts where ideology and stance are central, such as history textbooks. Ross and Caldwell (2020) used appraisal to show how Donald Trump's Twitter language works through negative evaluation, alignment, and intensification. These studies together prove that appraisal is not only a theoretical model but a practical tool for revealing stance in texts.

In the field of literature, appraisal has also been used productively. Gales (2011) analyzed narrative fiction to show how ideological stance is built through evaluative choices. Page (2013) studied young adult fiction and showed how appraisal resources depict teenage emotional worlds and guide readers' empathy. Bednarek's (2008) work

is also relevant here because it shows how emotions can be traced across different genres, including literary texts. Studies of appraisal in fiction outside Pakistan demonstrate that the framework helps uncover not only obvious feelings but also more subtle ideological positions, where authors lead readers to accept or reject certain worldviews.

Pakistani English literature has a strong tradition of dealing with social inequality, class conflict, and cultural identity. Works by authors like Bapsi Sidhwa, Mohsin Hamid, Kamila Shamsie, and Nadeem Aslam frequently underline the conflicts between wealth and poverty, tradition and modernity, and local and global identities. For instance, Shamsie's Home Fire looks at issues of class, migration, and belonging. Hamid's novels, such as How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia and Moth Smoke, examine the social and moral consequences of poverty and greed in urban Pakistan. Aslam's writing often highlights themes of terrorism, war, and the suffering of common people. These examples show that social inequality is a prominent and significant theme in Pakistani English fiction, and Tariq Rahman's short stories, including *Charity*, are part of this broader literary landscape.

Earlier studies such as Ahmad and Khan (2019) have examined *Charity* through postcolonial theory, focusing on cultural clash and power structures. Batool et. Al, (2023) studied Rahman's stories with Halliday's interpersonal meta function, looking at tenor and relationships. Khan et al. (2023) applied the appraisal framework to Pakistani fiction on terrorism, focusing on novels by Nadeem Aslam and Bilal Tanweer. Their main objective was to uncover the authorial stance toward terrorism and terrorists. The findings revealed that Pakistani fiction writers have portrayed American soldiers and the Afghan Taliban in a realistic and impartial manner, without favoring any group. This indicates that the writers have done justice in fulfilling their literary obligations.

 These studies are valuable, but they either stop at thematic discussion or do not provide detailed linguistic coding of Rahman's wording. This leaves a gap: while the themes of Rahman's stories are known, the way in which his specific linguistic choices build stance has not been analyzed in depth with the appraisal model.

International scholarship also gives guidance for how to fill this gap. Eagleton (2002) and Jameson (2013) both insist that literature encodes ideology and class struggle, but they do not show the linguistic details. Fairclough (1992) demonstrates how discourse analysis connects language with social change, which is the approach adopted here: studying the small linguistic choices to reveal the bigger social picture. Bourdieu (1984) reminds us that social power operates through symbols as well as money, and words are part of those symbols. This is why linguistic analysis of fiction is so important: it shows how symbolic resources like adjectives, metaphors, and evaluative terms carry social meanings.

Collectively, these studies make three points. First, appraisal theory is a verified and reliable framework for examining evaluation in texts, including fiction. Second, because Pakistani English literature often deals with socio-economic disparity, it is an ideal subject for appraisal analysis. Third, there is a gap in research since Rahman's *Charity*

has not been closely examined for how its wording constructs stance through affect, engagement, and graduation. The present study aims to fill that gap by presenting a detailed, comprehensive appraisal analysis of selected excerpts from *Charity*. By doing so, it not only contributes to Pakistani literary studies but also denotes how appraisal can be used in classrooms and research to promote more critical, evidence- based reading.

The literature review for the present study serves a dual purpose: it presents a detailed background to Systemic Functional Linguistics and Appraisal Theory, and it places Tariq Rahman's short story *Charity* within Pakistani English literature and the global field of discourse studies. A thorough review is required to show what has already been done, identify the existing research gaps, and explain why this specific research is both timely and essential.

Appraisal theory stems from the broader framework of SFL, developed by Halliday (1994). Halliday's SFL is founded on the principle that language is a social semiotic, meaning it is both influenced by and influences social contexts. Language is not only a System of grammar, but also a resource for making meaning in context. Halliday identified three metafunctions of language: the ideational, the interpersonal, and the textual. The ideational function allows us to represent experience, the interpersonal allows us to negotiate social roles and relationships, and the textual allows us to organize discourse coherently. Building on this foundation, Martin and White (2005) developed Appraisal Theory as a way to focus more directly on the interpersonal dimension, specifically evaluation, stance, and alignment. They introduced three subsystems: attitude, engagement, and graduation. Attitude deals with affect, judgment, and appreciation—essentially feelings, ethics, and aesthetics. Engagement describes how a text opens or closes space for alternative voices. Graduation deals with scaling, that is, the turning up or down of intensity and focus. Collectively, these three subsystems offer a systematic model for analyzing how language encodes evaluation.

Appraisal theory's main strength is its adaptability. It has been used in diverse fields and genres, including media, political speeches, and academic writing. For instance, Bednarek (2008) employed it to examine emotional language in various texts, verifying that appraisal categories are a reliable way to recognize and interpret emotions. Thompson (2014) revealed how appraisal can be incorporated into grammar instruction and classroom discourse analysis. Oteíza (2017) applied it to history textbooks, showing how ideological stances are embedded in what appears to be neutral educational content.

The theory has also been employed to investigate political and fictional texts. Ross and Caldwell (2020) studied Donald Trump's Twitter use, presenting how his political rhetoric relies on negative evaluations and intensification. Gales (2011) examined how threatening discourse in fiction uses evaluative language to construct interpersonal stance. Furthermore, Page (2013) discovered how appraisal resources in young adult fiction are used to portray teenage emotions and influence the reader's empathy.

These examples approve that appraisal theory is a useful tool, effective in any context where evaluative language is at play.

In literary studies, appraisal has gained recognition as a tool for uncovering not only overt emotions but also more subtle ideological positions. Bednarek's study indicates how emotions are embedded across different genres, while Gales and Page provide models for how literary texts can be analyzed through the lens of stance. This body of scholarship recommends that literature is not just a story, but a guided experience where specific word choices invite the reader to feel sympathy, anger, or judgment. Thus, appraisal analysis allows us to move beyond simply summarizing themes to show, step-by-step, how evaluation is linguistically achieved. This is the argument the current study aims to make regarding Pakistani English fiction.

The need for this kind of analysis is also supported by broader critical theories. Scholars like Eagleton (2002) and Jameson (2013) claim that literature encodes ideology and class struggle, but they don't provide a method for showing these processes linguistically. While Bourdieu (1984) and Fairclough (1992) analyze the connection between language and power, they also don't provide a specific, step-by-step model for analyzing it. Appraisal theory, in its turn, is a rich model to the extent that affect, engagement, and graduation can be coded, and we are allowed to observe how minor details of language interact to influence the readers to expect some evaluations.

The gap in the research is thus obvious. Even though the appraisal theory has been extensively utilised in media and politics as well as in certain literary settings, it has not been fully studied when applied to Pakistani fiction in English. Although the stories written by Rahman such as that written by Charity have been analyzed in terms of theme such as poverty and morality, they have not been examined with a critical linguistic eye that determines how choice of words creates stance. The past studies are either too general or apply the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in its form, yet, do not provide a thorough evaluation. The current work bridges this gap by offering a systematic appraisal analysis of some passages picked by Charity. It points to the ways in which linguistic resources generate empathy, critique and contrast, thereby establishing a definite authorial position on the socio-economic inequality. In doing so it not only adds to the Pakistani literature but it also shows how to practically apply appraisal analysis to students and teachers who wish to leave behind thematic summaries and enter into evidence-based discourse analysis. The combination of international and local studies shows both the strength of appraisal theory and the absence of its application to Rahman's *Charity*. By situating the present study in this gap, the review justifies its contribution and highlights its originality.

Methodology

The present study employs a qualitative research method because the focus is not on counting words or measuring frequency but on describing how language constructs evaluation and stance in context. The objective is to provide a careful and in-depth analysis of the short story *Charity* using the Appraisal framework. Qualitative content analysis is appropriate since it allows close reading of the text, systematic identification of evaluative resources, and interpretation of their social and ideological implications.

Unlike quantitative stylistics, which might rely on frequency of adjectives, the present study emphasizes meaning in context and the interaction between wording and stance. The research design is exploratory and descriptive, aiming to show how appraisal categories can reveal linguistic patterns that construct socio-economic critique in Pakistani fiction.

The data for the present study involves selected passages from Tariq Rahman's *Charity*. The whole story was read several times and excerpts were chosen where evaluative language is most intense and where the themes of poverty and inequality are foregrounded. Each passage was copied into an analysis sheet and divided into clauses. The coding process followed Martin and White's (2005) categories of attitude (affect, judgment, appreciation), engagement (monogloss, heterogloss, dialogic contraction and expansion), and graduation (force and focus). The coding was carried out manually and then checked against examples from appraisal studies such as Bednarek (2008), Gales (2011), and Oteíza (2017) to maintain consistency. Tables were used to record each clause, its appraisal category, and the social effect it creates. This systematic process ensures transparency and reliability.

The analysis was carried out in three steps. First, the excerpts were read for affect: how emotions of tiredness, anger, frustration, or arrogance are represented, and how pity and disgust are evoked. Second, engagement resources were identified: how the narrator aligns or distances himself from the ordinary people, how irony and comparison open or close dialogic space, and how the narrative includes or excludes certain voices. Third, graduation was coded: how intensity is raised through accumulation of adjectives, repetition, or exaggeration, and how contrastive phrases intensify social difference. After coding, the results were arranged in tables and figures to show the distribution of appraisal resources. This procedure makes visible how stance is built cumulatively.

The reliability of the analysis comes from three sources. First, the categories are drawn from Martin and White (2005), a widely recognized theoretical framework. Second, examples were cross-checked with earlier studies of appraisal to ensure that the coding matches established practice. Third, the analysis is documented with tables and figures so that readers can see the evidence and evaluate the interpretations. Validity is ensured by selecting passages that are central to the story's theme of socio-economic disparity. Rather than selecting isolated words, the analysis looks at whole scenes that carry the social message of the story. Ethical considerations are minimal as the study deals with a published text, but intellectual honesty is maintained by citing all relevant sources and by presenting data transparently.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the present study is built on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Appraisal Theory. Halliday (1994) presented SFL as a model in which language is a resource for making meaning, shaped by three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The present study focuses on the interpersonal metafunction because it deals with evaluation, stance, and relationships between speakers and listeners or writers and readers. Martin and White (2005) extended this

aspect of SFL into the Appraisal framework, which is designed to describe how evaluation works in language.

Appraisal theory has three subsystems. Attitude refers to expressions of affect (feelings such as happiness, anger, frustration), judgment (evaluations of people's behavior in terms of ethics, morality, and responsibility), and appreciation (evaluations of things, places, and events in terms of quality or aesthetics). Engagement refers to how the text interacts with other voices, either closing down space for alternatives (monogloss, dialogic contraction) or opening up space (heterogloss, dialogic expansion). Graduation refers to how evaluation is intensified or softened, either by increasing the force of an expression or by sharpening/softening its focus. These categories together provide a comprehensive model for analyzing evaluation in discourse.

The conceptual framework for the present study can be represented in a figure that shows the three dimensions of appraisal and their categories.

Figure 1. Appraisal Framework (adapted from Martin & White, 2005)
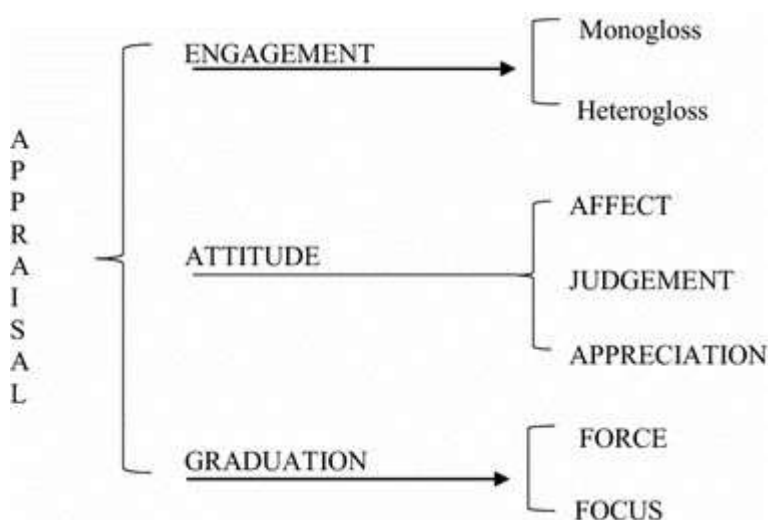
By applying this framework to Rahman's *Charity*, the study links theory with practice. The framework is not kept abstract but is operationalized in the analysis of specific passages.

In sum, the methodology of the present study combines qualitative content analysis with a conceptual framework grounded in SFL and appraisal theory. It provides a systematic way to examine how word choice reveals stance in Pakistani fiction, ensuring that findings are valid, reliable, and replicable.

Data Analysis

The story *Charity* opens with the narrator's candid admission: "I and Rabab belonged to the Westernized elite of Pakistan. We wore jeans, listened to pop music, and were totally out of touch with the real life of the country" (Rahman, 1980, p. 113). This initial self-positioning is essential as it frames the entire narrative within a discourse of distance and privilege. The evaluative phrase "out of touch" constructs an explicit judgment of the elite, who are depicted as culturally alienated from their own society.

According to Bourdieu (1984), such cultural markers—dress, music, education—function as symbolic capital that reinforces social hierarchies. The story begins, then, by establishing the elite as both complicit in and disconnected from the inequality that surrounds them.

The choice of diction also illustrates the appraisal category of engagement, as the narrator admits alienation but does not resist or challenge it. Instead, his statement carries an ironic self- awareness that aligns with what Eagleton (2002) calls as literature's ability to encode ideology subtly, where characters recognize structures of power without dismantling them. This initial positioning directly links to the research objective of exploring how Rahman portrays the lives of the rich and poor through word choice. By identifying privilege as a barrier to understanding, the narrator foregrounds the gap that the story will repeatedly dramatize.

As the protagonists board the bus, Rahman uses sensory and affective language to capture the stark contrast between elite amusement and popular misery: "An unpleasant odour of human perspiration and stale vegetables hung in the air. The window panes were broken. People hung from the door, catching the door handle precariously" (Rahman, 1980, p. 114). The use of appreciation here—"unpleasant odour," "broken panes," "struggling brown bodies"—creates a vivid atmosphere of degradation. Attitude is encoded through affect as the narrator describes disgust, while graduation increases the intensity of suffering by focusing on the precarious, almost violent, overcrowding. This aligns with Bednarek's (2008) point that affect is often foregrounded in narrative to elicit empathy and moral judgment.

Rabab's "innocently happy face" as she enjoys the spectacle of the struggling masses (Rahman, 1980, p. 114) is a prominent example of evaluative contrast. For the ordinary passengers, the overcrowded bus is a site of frustration and exhaustion; for Rabab, it is an exotic adventure. Engagement is evident in this juxtaposition, as the narrator allows both stances—the resentment of the poor and the delight of the elite—to co-exist, asking the reader to identify the moral distance between them. This supports Khan et al., (2023) claim that Pakistani English fiction often encodes stance through irony and contrast, exposing socio-economic divisions.

The narrative continues into Raja Bazaar, where the collision of temporalities is foregrounded: "Japanese cars of the latest make rushed arrogantly past the jogging Tongas. The twentieth century collided with the fifteenth" (Rahman, 1980, p. 114). Here Rahman organizes graduation by exaggerating the temporal metaphor, portraying modernity and tradition as clashing eras. The adverb "arrogantly" encodes judgment of modern affluence, framing cars as symbols of pride and detachment. By contrast, Tongas denote continuity and endurance. As Fairclough (1992) claims, discourse naturalizes social inequality by framing certain practices as modern and others as archaic. Rahman, however, disrupts this by stressing the irony that the persistence of poverty and begging remains unchanged despite political shifts—from Mughal emperors to British rule, to Bhutto's socialism, to military governments (Rahman, 1980, p. 115). This historical layering exposes inequality as structural and enduring.

The restaurant scene strengthens the confrontation between elite and common classes. The narrator recalls, "The coarse brown faces stared at us with unbelieving eyes as the conversation ceased for a moment of intense embarrassment" (Rahman, 1980, p. 115). The lexical choice "coarse" encodes negative appreciation of physical appearance, revealing prejudice. At the same time, "intense embarrassment" conveys affect, signaling the narrator's sudden discomfort. This mirrors Jameson's (2013) observation that realism often surfaces through moments where social contradiction intrudes into everyday encounters. The silence of the restaurant, punctuated by stares, embodies the "tacit cognizance of an unbridgeable gap" (Rahman, 1980, p. 115), a phrase that naturalizes inequality as immovable.

Interestingly, the narrator confesses to nearly using the insult "native," an internalized colonial label he ultimately suppresses (Rahman, 1980, p. 115). This moment encodes engagement by introducing a counter-stance—the thought is entertained but resisted. It reveals how colonial discourse continues to form elite consciousness, echoing Said's (1978) claim that Orientalist categories endure in postcolonial societies. By narrating the unsaid, Rahman highlights both the persistence of prejudice and the fragility of elite moral restraint.

The story's climax occurs in the slums and the clerk's home, described as "the very house of squalor… a mass of impoverished humanity" (Rahman, 1980, p. 117). The use of repetition and accumulation—"gloomy light," "dirty plates," "stained sheets," "pillow almost black with soot" (Rahman, 1980, p. 117)—intensifies graduation, building a vivid picture of poverty. As Ross and Caldwell (2020) argue, such rhetorical amplification draws the reader into an evaluative stance, leaving no neutral ground. The language of disgust is not incidental but systematic, functioning to align the reader emotionally against the conditions of deprivation.

The turning point arrives when the clerk, humiliated by Rabab's gesture of burning his savings, asserts his dignity: "We live like your dogs would never do, Sahib. We live like swine" (Rahman, 1980, p. 118). This is one of the most explicit uses of appraisal in the story. In other words, the metaphors of dogs and swine are used to judge a person's social value. Graduation, in this context, intensifies this judgment, pushing the degradation to its most extreme level. Engagement appears in the direct address "Sahib," which confronts privilege head-on and demands recognition. Here, the poor cease to be silent objects of pity and emerge as speaking subjects of rage, echoing Oteíza's (2017) claim that appraisal resources can mark shifts in power and stance within discourse.

The last scene describes Rabab returning home "small and crestfallen," her hair "disheveled" and shirt "torn" (Rahman, 1980, p. 119). The accumulation of descriptive details encodes appreciation of appearance while signaling effect of shame and defeat. The grandeur of privilege collapses into vulnerability, showing how elite arrogance has failed in the face of poverty. This aligns with Batool, Rubab et. Al's(2023) finding that Rahman often depicts elite characters as vulnerable once exposed to the realities of common life. The evaluative language at the story's end confirms that readers interpret

Rabab not only as an individual who misjudged but as a symbol of an elite class unprepared to confront the consequences of inequality.

To sum up, these episodes reveal that *Charity* is not a mere thematic depiction of poverty but a linguistically constructed critique of class disparity. Through affect, Rahman evokes disgust and pity; through engagement, he stages irony and confrontation; and through graduation, he amplifies the contrasts between privilege and deprivation. The findings ensure that Rahman systematically encodes stance in his word choices, confirming that the narrative aligns readers with the poor and critiques the arrogance of the wealthy. As Eagleton (2002) reminds us, literature both reflects and constructs ideology, and Rahman's story exemplifies how fiction can operate as discourse, shaping empathy and resistance.

Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to investigate how word choice in Tariq Rahman's short story *Charity* reveals evaluative stance and shapes readers' perceptions of socio-economic disparity in Pakistani society. By applying the Appraisal framework of Martin and White (2005), which expands Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, the research pursued to move beyond thematic summaries and to provide a linguistic account of how evaluation is constructed in the text. The objectives were to examine how Rahman's words highlight inequality, to explore the emotional impact of his language, and to analyze how his narrative strategies engage and position readers. The research questions asked how Rahman depicts the lives of the rich and poor, what emotional responses his language evokes, and how the appraisal framework helps uncover the impact of his narrative. The findings have addressed these aims systematically.

The analysis established that Rahman consistently uses evaluative language to build a critique of inequality. In the bus stop scene, negative affect such as "tired, angry and frustrated" captured the collective suffering of the masses, while the phrase "except us" discovered elite detachment.

In Rahman's short story *Charity*, the author uses specific linguistic choices to create a clear stance, aligning the reader with the poor and criticizing the rich. Through vivid descriptions, the narrative creates a sharp contrast between the "arrogant" cars of the rich and the "jogging" Tongas of the poor, stressing the conflict between affluence and tradition. In the same way, the use of vivid adjectives like "rotten" and "dirty" to refer to poverty evokes strong feelings of pity and disgust, making the reader sympathizes with the marginalized. The present study connected these specific word choices to broader theoretical frameworks, confirming that literature can encode ideology, that language mirrors and shapes society, and that symbolic resources are used to maintain social hierarchies. Yet, the study's key contribution was its use of appraisal analysis to demonstrate precisely how these evaluations are built through small, cumulative linguistic choices—a gap that had not been addressed in previous research on Rahman's work. This analysis holds threefold significance: it suggests a new way to examine Rahman's social commentary critically, it expands the application of appraisal scholarship to South Asian fiction, and it offers a practical model for students and

teachers in Pakistan to conduct evidence-based literary analysis. While the study focused on selected excerpts and employed qualitative methods, future research could extend the data set to include more of Rahman's stories, compare his work to other Pakistani authors, or combine appraisal analysis with other linguistic models for a more comprehensive understanding of how stance is built.

To sum up, the study has discovered that Rahman's *Charity* is not only a narrative about poverty but a carefully constructed discourse that uses word choice to reveal stance. By coding affect, engagement, and graduation, the analysis confirmed how language evokes empathy, critiques affluence, and amplifies inequality. The research has addressed its questions and objectives, filled a gap in the literature, and presented a replicable model for appraisal analysis in Pakistani literary studies. Eventually, it highlights the power of words not just to tell stories but to shape perspectives, raise awareness, and call for social change.

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