

# **Constructing Interpersonal Meaning via Teacher Talk in Chinese as a Second Language Classrooms: An Appraisal Analysis**

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## *Abstract*

This paper aims to examine how interpersonal meaning is constructed through the use of attitudinal resources in teacher talk in Chinese as a second language (CSL) classrooms in selected schools in Malaysia; from the perspective of the Appraisal framework proposed by Martin and White (2005). The focus is on how these resources help teachers to establish rapport with students of various races learning CSL; and thus facilitate learning of the target language, Mandarin. The corpus consists of four hours of recording and observation of four national primary schools in the state of Selangor that offer CSL classes. Analysis shows that attitudinal resources realise rapport through teachers' acts of providing encouragement, giving positive feedback, facilitating face-saving and in promoting students' self-esteem during classroom teaching. As not much research has been carried out on analysing attitudinal resources in teacher talk (Zhu, 2015), this study hopes to provide information on how teachers can utilise these resources in building rapport with students and thus enhance language learning in CSL classrooms in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Chinese as a second language (CSL); teacher talk; appraisal analysis; interpersonal meaning; attitudinal resources; rapport.

## **1. Introduction**

This study aims to examine how attitudinal resources in teacher talk help to build teacher-student rapport in Chinese as a second language (CSL) classrooms in selected schools in Malaysia. The CSL course is taught in national primary schools in Malaysia, where students are comprised of the various races in the country; namely Malay, Indian and even Chinese students who are non-native speakers of the target language, Mandarin. Building rapport, a key aspect in teaching (Nguyen, 2007), in this context is thus a challenge for teachers teaching CSL. The appraisal framework as proposed by Martin and White (2005), “a theory of the language of evaluation, developed within the tradition of systemic functional linguistics” (Read, Hope & Carroll, 2007), is the analytical tool adopted to examine how attitudinal resources are used to negotiate interpersonal meaning, namely in rapport building between the interlocutors of this study. According to Martin and White (2005, p. 1), the appraisal framework “is one of three major discourse semantic resources construing interpersonal meaning” (p. 34). However, not much research has adopted the appraisal framework in analyzing teacher talk (Zhu, 2015) and particularly with regard to fostering solidarity in CSL classrooms. Therefore, the present study would like to fill this research gap, by examining how rapport is constructed through the use of attitudinal resources in teaching Mandarin in CSL classrooms in Malaysia.

## **2. Literature Review**

The following section will discuss literature relating to teacher talk, teacher-student rapport building and studies of teacher’s attitude in classroom negotiation; as important aspects of interpersonal meaning construction in language classrooms. These topics are the key elements related to the present study.

## **2.1. Teacher Talk and Building Rapport**

Teacher talk refers to the speech made by the teacher in the process of classroom instruction. Barnes (1974, p. 1) points out that many of the speech functions found in classrooms are interpersonal in nature. This is stated as follows (cited in Cazden, 2001, p. 2):

*Speech unites the cognitive and the social. The actual (as opposed to the intended) curriculum consists in the meanings enacted or realized by a particular teacher and class. In order to learn, students must use what they already know so as to give meaning to what the teacher presents to them. Speech makes available to reflection the processes by which they relate new knowledge to old. But this possibility depends on the social relationships, the communication system, which the teacher set up.*

This statement highlights the importance of rhetorical (the system of contact) and social aspects (participant's power and role relations) of communication set up by the teacher for cognitive development. Considering the dearth of research into these domains, it is therefore necessary to investigate the social relationships and communication system set up by the teacher via classroom discourse; as these aspects of interpersonal meaning have impact on CSL classroom teaching and learning; in particular, the cognitive development of CSL students. According to Ellis (2003), meaning negotiation through language use by teachers in assigning tasks is important in constructing meanings (p. 319). A study on how interpersonal meanings are constructed, particularly in building rapport with students in CSL classroom via teacher talk is thus important.

Holmes (1978) found that role relation is asymmetric between teacher and students, as the teacher is older and more knowledgeable than the students. He or she is considered to be superior in status and is expected to maintain a social distance from the students. Similarly, Hatch and Long (1980) observe that there is a wide power mismatch between participants in classroom discourse, where generally teachers, the authority figures in classrooms, take turns at will, allocate turns to others, interrupt and reallocate turns. This mismatch in power could be a hindrance to learning.

A key aspect of teaching is building teacher-student rapport as a comfortable classroom atmosphere can enhance learning. Therefore, a teacher should aim to create a friendly classroom atmosphere to facilitate learning, as proposed by Krashen and Terrel's Natural Approach (1983). This allows for more learning opportunities and increases students' participation in classrooms which could ultimately lead to higher achievement. Rapport is understood as a positive social relationship characterized by emotional affinity and mutual trust (Nguyen, 2007). Thus, opportunities should be created to allow for rapport to be established, maintained and renewed in classroom talk for learning to take place.

## **2.2. Constructing Interpersonal Meaning in Language Classrooms**

The present study focuses on interpersonal meaning construction in CSL classrooms via teacher talk. Thus far, the literature reviewed does not provide evidence of research studying the construction of interpersonal meanings in CSL classroom discourse within the Malaysian context. Nevertheless, a number of research studies have been carried out in China with regard to analysing interpersonal meaning construction in teacher talk (An, 2006; Li, 2008; Wang, 2008; Ji, 2009; Liu, 2009; Yi, 2010; Li, 2011; Wang, 2011). However, data collected for these studies are from classrooms teaching English and only four studies, namely that of Liu (2009), Yi (2010), Li (2011) and Wang (2011) investigated attitude of interlocutors in classroom negotiation.

Liu (2009) employed Halliday's interpersonal model and Martin's Appraisal framework to analyse interpersonal meaning and the roles of the teacher enacted via teacher talk. The interpersonal meanings negotiated via teacher talk identified by the study include teachers' use of talk to control or emphasize what students should do or not do, to present the teacher's personal viewpoint, to pursue the stance of equal footing and to reduce the level of anxiety in students. Yi (2010) employed the Appraisal framework to examine attitudinal resources used in teacher talk and found that out of the total attitudinal resources, Affect resources were the least used as they accounted for only 16.7% of attitudinal resources while

Appreciation resources represented the most frequently used resources. The study concluded that the teacher's predominant role was that of an instructor.

In another study, Li (2011) investigated evaluation practices in teacher talk from the perspective of the Appraisal framework, using data collected from classrooms of college English teachers; specifically analysing the functions of appraisal resources in classroom interpersonal meaning negotiation. Findings of the study show that despite the availability of abundant appraisal resources in teacher talk for evaluation, Attitude resources accounted for about 50% of the overall appraisal resources. Unlike in Yi's study (2010), there are more Affect than Appreciation resources used in the discourse. Wang (2011) also employed the Appraisal framework to determine how the Attitudinal and Engagement resources were used to promote active learning. From the attitudinal perspective, it was found that English teachers preferred to employ more Judgement resources, as these resources comprised 76.24% of the total attitudinal resources used. They were mainly used to judge students' performance. From the Engagement perspective, the use of dialogic expansion resources was 56.42% while contractive resources made up 43.58% of the resources.

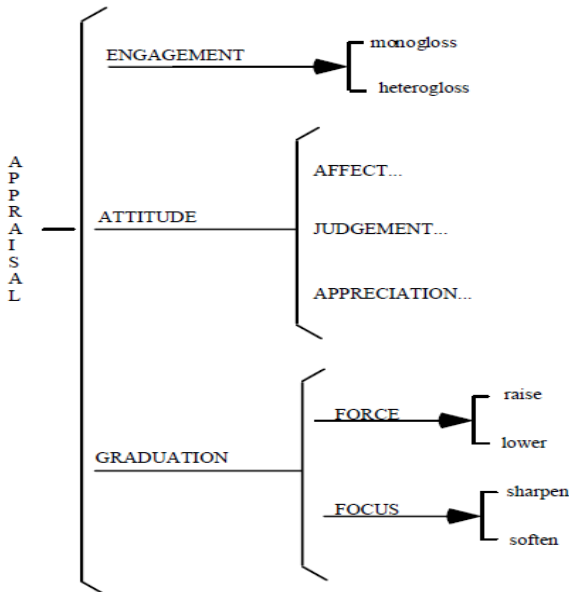
The above discussion shows that research using the Appraisal framework for classroom discourse analysis is still needed, especially in obtaining insights from CSL classrooms in Malaysia. Moreover, exploration of the interpersonal meaning construction that leads to determining how a harmonious classroom teaching and learning atmosphere can be established through building rapport and solidarity is much needed.

### **3. Appraisal Framework within Systemic Functional Linguistics**

The Appraisal framework (Martin and White, 2005) is a development within Systemic Functional Linguistics – SFL (Halliday, 1994) which is concerned with interpersonal meaning, one of the metafunctions in SFL. There are three sub-systems in the Appraisal framework: Attitude, Engagement and Graduation (p. 42). Martin and White (2005, p. 35) explain, “Attitude is concerned with our

feelings, including emotional reactions (affect), judgements of behaviour (judgement) and evaluation of things (Appreciation)". However, Engagement deals with sourcing attitudes and play of voices around opinions in discourse, and Graduation attends to grading phenomena whereby feelings are amplified and categories blurred. Figure 1 shows an overview of Appraisal resources.

Figure 1: An Overview of Appraisal Resources (Reproduced from Martin & White, 2005, p. 38)

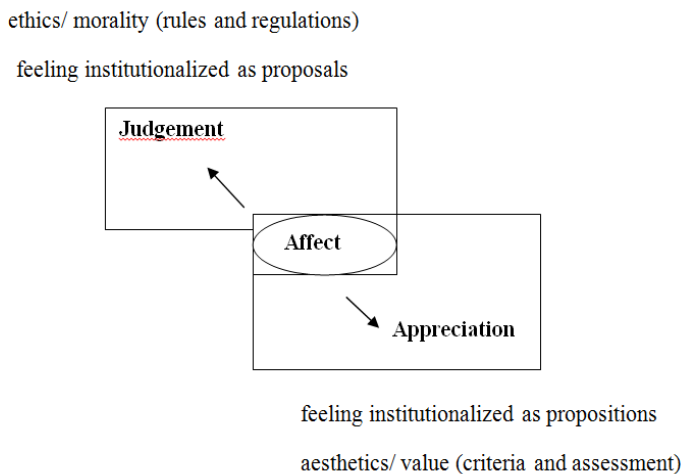


Expressions of attitude, as suggested by Martin and White (2003), play a key role in aligning people in relationships of solidarity, as such, the analysis carried out by this study will therefore only focus on how and where attitude is expressed in classroom discourse in order to establish rapport with the students, which is the aim of this study. The following discussion reviews the notion of the Attitude system only, as Engagement and Gradational resources are not the concern of this study. The analysis of data will focus on the resources of Affect, Judgement and Appreciation, encapsulated within the Attitude system.

### 3.1. Attitude

Attitude, as a system of meaning, is concerned with the mapping of feelings. It covers three regions: emotion, ethics and aesthetics. Emotion is concerned with the reaction to behaviour, text, process, and phenomena; ethics is concerned with the evaluation of behaviour; and aesthetics is concerned with the evaluation of text, process and phenomena. Emotion seems to cover events and things in both of the other two regions because emotion is “at the heart of these regions since it is the expressive resource we are born with and embody physiologically from almost the moment of birth” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 42). Martin and White named the emotive, ethical and aesthetic dimensions of meaning as Affect, Judgement and Appreciation respectively, where Judgement and Appreciation are considered as institutionalized Affect. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between Affect, Judgement and Appreciation, where Affect is situated at the centre, and Judgement and Appreciation situated on two sides of Affect.

Figure 2: Judgement and Appreciation as Institutionalized Affect (reproduced from Martin & White, 2005, p. 45)



The following section discusses the notions of the three sub-systems of Attitude - Affect, Judgement and Appreciation.

### **3.1.1. Affect**

According to Martin and White (2005, p. 49), “Affect can be classified into three major sets having to do with un/happiness, in/security and dis/satisfaction” respectively. “The un/happiness variable covers emotions concerned with ‘affairs of the heart’” – misery, antipathy, happiness, affection; “the in/security variable covers emotions concerned with ecosocial well-being” – disquiet, surprise, confident, trust; and “the dis/satisfaction variable covers emotions concerned with telos (the pursuit of goals) - ennui, displeasure, interest, pleasure” (See Tables 2.3, 2.3 and 2.4 in Martin & White, 2005, pp. 49-51).

### **3.1.2. Judgement**

Judgement is the ethical dimension of attitudinal meaning. Martin and White (2005) categorise the notion of judgement into major groups: social esteem and social sanction. Social esteem judges human behaviour and personality from the aspects of normality, capacity and tenacity. Normality is concerned with how unusual someone is. Capacity deals with how capable people are, while tenacity involves how resolute a person is. On the other hand, social sanction judges human behaviour and personality from the aspects of veracity and propriety. Veracity refers to how truthful someone is and propriety is about how ethical people are. The realisation of social esteem and social sanction is illustrated in Table 2.6 and Table 2.7 respectively in Martin and White (2005, p. 53).

### **3.1.3. Appreciation**

Appreciation is the aesthetic dimension of attitudinal meaning. It is the “meanings construing our evaluation of ‘things’, especially things we make and performances we give, but it also includes natural phenomena – what such things are worth” (Martin and White, 2005, p. 56). Our ‘reaction’ to things and phenomena, the ‘composition’ of them, and their ‘value’, are three aspects of appreciation of things and phenomena. ‘Reaction’ is asking “Do they catch our attention? Do they please us?” ‘Composition’ is asking “Do they balance? Are



they complex?” ‘Value’ is asking about “Were they worthwhile?” (How innovative? authentic? timely?). Illustrative realisations of appreciation are presented in Table 2.8 in Martin and White (2005, p. 56).

In summary, Affect, Judgement and Appreciation resources were analysed in teacher talk of this study to draw elements of Attitude that promote rapport building in class.

#### **4. Methodology and Analytical Approach**

This section describes the data, how data were collected for the study and the procedures of data analysis. The analytical approach is necessarily qualitative in nature as this would allow illustrative examples to be drawn into the discussion on the resources used in teacher talk to bridge the social gap with their students. Patterns of usage of attitudinal resources are illuminated through frequency counts, a quantitative element in the analysis.

##### **4.1. Data**

The corpus consists of four hours of recording and observation of four CSL classrooms in four national primary schools in the state of Selangor that offer CSL classes. A total of four female CSL teachers and sixty-five students were involved in the study. The teachers on average had 5 years of experience teaching CSL at the time their classes were observed. The national primary schools in the state of Selangor were chosen based on convenience sampling; as the researcher had easy access to these schools and as such cannot claim that these schools represent all schools that offer CSL classes. Nevertheless, all national primary schools in Malaysia that offer these courses use the same CSL course syllabus provided by the Ministry of Education (*Bahagian Pembangunan Kurikulum*, 2008). However, as only four teachers and four schools were involved in the study, findings therefore cannot be generalized due to the small sample of the study.

## 4.2. Data Collection

The data of this study were collected through observations and recording of lessons carried out in the CSL classrooms of the four schools. The teaching of a one-hour lesson by each teacher was observed and recorded. For comparison purposes, teachers were requested to teach the same topic during the classroom observation. As agreed by the teachers during the pre-observation meeting, the lesson taught by the CSL teachers during the observation would be 《木兰从军》 (Mulan joins the army).

## 4.3. Data Analysis

The recorded teacher talk and student talk were transcribed verbatim according to the actual sequence of the teacher-student interaction in the class. The interpersonal meaning constructed in teacher talk during the lessons on “Mulan” was analysed based on the attitudinal resources of Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation. Attitude resources are classified as either inscribed or invoked. Inscribed attitude is indicated by a single lexical item that contains the positive or negative value and can be further classified according to the Attitude types. For example, “She *loves* (+ HAP) her father so much.” *Love* is categorized as an inscribed attitude that carries the notion of a ‘happy’ feeling and is thus given a positive value. On the other hand, invoked attitude is not an explicit expression of value indicated by a single lexical item, but rather, it is realised in tokens that invoke a positive or negative evaluation too. For example the expression, “Hands up, and stand up and talk loudly” is categorized as –SAT (negative satisfaction), when the teacher was not satisfied with the student’s response and that she wanted the student to stand up and to answer in a loud voice. The task of determining invoked attitudes is an especially challenging task (Martin, 2003, pp. 172-173). Therefore, in order to ensure validity in classifying the attitudinal resources in terms of types, inscribed/invoked, and positive/negative, a second coder who is well-versed in the Appraisal framework, was employed to undertake the task of assigning the categories of the resources independently. The inter-coder

consistency of the coders (the researcher and the second coder) was obtained to ascertain how frequently the two coders agree in their judgments. Discrepancies in coding were discussed before consensus was reached to label the data accordingly.

The procedures for analyzing appraisal in conversation introduced by Eggins and Slade (1997) were also adopted in this study for analyzing appraisal resources in teacher talk. The four steps are: identifying appraisal items; classifying appraisal items; summarising appraisal choices; and interpretation of the appraisal items (pp. 137-138). Both quantitative statistics and qualitative analysis are adopted for this study.

Table 1 shows some samples of coding of appraisal resources in teacher talk that indicate feelings of happiness (+HAP & -HAP), security (+SEC & -SEC), satisfaction (+SAT & -SAT) and inclination (+DES & -DES) for Affect; quality of normality (+NOR & -NOR), tenacity (+TEN & -TEN), capacity (+CAP & -CAP); propriety (+PROP & -PROP) for Judgement; veracity (+VER & -VER); impact of reaction (+REC & -REC) and valuation (+VAL & -VAL) for Appreciation. These are resources of Appraisal based on Martin and White’s (2005) framework.

Table 1: Coding Samples of Appraisal Resources in Teacher Talk

	Values	Turn/ Speaker	Sample of speech
A F F E C T	+/-HAP	#196A	...她这么 <b>爱</b> (+HAP) 她的爸爸, ... [... She <b>loves</b> (+ HAP) her father so much, ...]
		#172B	她 <b>喜欢</b> (+HAP)骑马, 有没有? ...花木兰很 <b>伤心</b> (-HAP) [She <b>enjoys</b> (+ HAP) riding, doesn't she? ...Mulan feels very <b>sad</b> (-HAP) ]
	+/-SEC	#281A	... 她因为 <b>有信心</b> (+SEC) , 她觉得我 <b>应该可以</b> (+SEC)..., 所以 <b>我可以</b> (+SEC) 代替我爸爸去。... [Because she is <b>confident</b> (+ SEC), she feels that I <b>should be able</b> to do it (+ SEC)... so I <b>can</b> (+SEC) replace my dad to go.]

		#121B	木兰的爸爸这么老了, 又生病, 去打战, ...可能 <b>随时会死掉(-SEC)</b> , 有没有? [Mulan's father is so old, and sick, if he goes to battle, what do you think? He will <b>die in no time (-SEC)</b> , won't he?]	
	+/-SAT	#180B	全部都 <b>对</b> , 啊(+CAP)。很 <b>好</b> 啊(+SAT)。 All the attempts are right, ah (+CAP). Ah, very good (+SAT)	
		#364A	念得零零乱乱的。(-SAT) [Recite <b>disorderly</b> . (-SAT)]	
	+/-DES	#23B	今天呢我 <b>要</b> (+DES)跟你们讲一个故事。 [Today what I <b>want</b> (+DES) to tell you a story]	
		#58B	爸爸 <b>不肯</b> (-DES), <b>不要</b> (-DES)。爸爸讲你是女孩子, 不可以去打战。 [Dad <b>refuses</b> (-DES), and <b>says no</b> (-DES). Dad says, "You are a girl, you can't go to war"]	
	J U D G E M E N T	+/-NOR	#24A:	我不知道你们有没有看过 há. <b>可能</b> 你有看过(+NOR), <b>可能</b> 你没有看过(-NOR)。... [I do not know if you have not read, Oh, you <b>may have seen</b> (+NOR), you <b>may not have seen</b> it (-NOR). ]
			#374A	像有些关键词...刚才我们 <b>有看的</b> (+NOR)。 [Like some keywords... Just now we <b>saw</b> them (+NOR) ...]
		+/-TEN	#220A	...她是女孩子嘛, 她是女中豪杰 (+TEN)。 [She is a girl, she is a heroine (+TEN).]
#194A			...她又 <b>不敢</b> (-TEN) 跟人家一起洗澡。她又 <b>不敢</b> (-TEN) 跟人家一起睡。... [... She does <b>not dare</b> (-TEN) to bathe with others. She does <b>not dare</b> (-TEN) she does not sleep together with others. ...]	
+/-CAP		#25 B	Há? 女孩子. <b>对</b> (+CAP), 女孩子。 [Há? Girl. <b>Right</b> (+CAP), is a girl.]	
		#102 A	因为你 <b>还小</b> (-CAP)。 [because you are <b>still small</b> (-CAP).]	
+/-PROP		#27B	...木兰呢是一个很 <b>孝顺</b> (+PROP) 的女孩子。... [Mulan is a very <b>filial</b> (+PROP) girl.]	
		#155B	大家都 <b>敬佩</b> 她(+PROP)。大家都 <b>尊敬</b> 她(+PROP)。	

			[Everybody <b>admires</b> her (+PROP). Everybody <b>respect</b> her (+PROP)]
A P P R E C I A T I O N	+/-VER	#192A	因为她骗, <b>欺骗(-VER)</b> 对吗? [Because she has lied, <b>deceived (-VER)</b> right?]
		#289A	...是她 <b>冒充</b> 爸爸 (-VER), 代替爸爸去打战。... [It is she who <b>poses</b> as her father (-VER), replaces her father and go to war. ...]
	+/-REAC	#212A	...然后她换上女孩子的衣服。她...很 <b>漂亮(+REAC)</b> 。 [... And then she puts on the girl's clothes. She ... looked very <b>pretty (+ REAC)</b> .]
		#60B - #66B	#60B: 跟其他的人一起去打战。OK 辛苦吗? [Go to war with other people. Ok, is it hard?] #61S: 辛苦。 [It is hard] #62B: 好玩吗? [Is it fun?] #63S: 不好玩。 [No] #65 & #66 Omitted #66B: <b>不好玩。一点都不好玩 (-REAC)</b> 。 [ <b>Not fun. Not at all (-REAC)</b> ]
+/-VAL	#313A	这个生字你要看一下... <b>你要句子重组。没有很难</b> , 你都可以做的。OK <b>你都可以做的。(+VAL)</b> [Look at this vocabulary. You have to restructure the sentences. It is not difficult. You can do the entire task. Ok. <b>You can do the entire task (+VAL)</b> ]	

Notes: 'A' refers to utterance found in Class A.

'B' refers to utterance found in Class B.

'S' refers to student's utterance.

## 5. Results and Discussion

This section focuses on the distribution of Attitudinal resources in teacher talk of the data and the way the attitudinal resources in teacher talk were used to construct interpersonal meaning in CSL classrooms particularly in establishing rapport with the students.

### 5.1. The Distribution of Attitudinal Resources in Teacher Talk of CSL Classrooms

Table 2 shows the Attitudinal resources used by the teachers in their respective classes derived from the data size of 17,189 words recorded from the four classrooms. Out of these resources, 32.3 % are Affect resources, 66% are Judgement and 1.2 % are categorized as Appreciation resources. The frequently used resources are therefore those of Judgement, while Appreciation resources are seldom used in the classrooms observed.

Table 2. The Distribution of Positive and Negative Attitudinal Resources in Each Class

Attitude Resources	Features	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D	Total
Affect	Positive	20	15	9	13	57
	Negative	17	11	0	1	29
Total		37	26	9	14	86/262 (32.8%)
Judgement	Positive	30	46	16	11	103
	Negative	35	20	3	12	70
Total		65	66	19	23	173/262 (66.0%)
Appreciation	Positive	2	0	0	0	2
	Negative	0	1	0	0	1
Total		2	1	0	0	3/262 (1.2%)
Positive attitude resources		52 (50%)	61 (65.6%)	25 (89.3%)	24 (64.9%)	162/262
Negative attitude resources		52 (50%)	32 (34.4%)	3 (10.7%)	13 (35.1%)	100/262
<b>Total</b>		104(100%)	93(100%)	28(100%)	37(100%)	262/262 (100%)

The following discussion will therefore concentrate on describing the positive Attitudinal resources of Affect and Judgement used by teachers in constructing interpersonal meaning in the CSL classrooms in Selangor.

## 5.2. Attitudinal Resources Realised by the Teachers

This section will discuss the Attitudinal resources in teacher talk used to appraise students that contribute toward establishing solidarity with the students. Table 3 provides some samples of Affect and Judgment resources used to appraise students.

In terms of Judgement resources, teachers' reaction to students' capability (+CAP) in answering questions like in turn #196A when Teacher A said "You have answered it correctly"; "All are correct" in turn #180B; "Right" in turn #75B; "Correct, correct" in turn #231B would have given confidence to students. Providing positive feedback on students' progress is one of the strategies in building rapport with students in language classrooms (Brown, 2004).

Apart from appraising students in Mandarin, the target language, positive judgement feedback in English like "very good", "congratulations", "well-done" and in the Malay language, "tahniah" (congratulations) were also evident in the data. Students of these classrooms are of various races, reflecting the multi-racial identity of Malaysia. Thus, using students' familiar languages like English and Malay, the national language, in appraising the students can help to develop affinity and further bridge the social distance between teachers and students.

Table 3. Positive Affect and Judgement Resources Used to Appraise Students

Turn/ Speaker	Sample of speech
#35A	知道站起来讲。对错都没有关系的(+SAT)。 [Stand up and answer if you know (the answer), <b>it doesn't matter if your answers are right or wrong</b> (+SAT)]
#196A	你讲得对啊 (+CAP & +SAT)? 举手, 站起来大大声讲。 [You have answered it <b>correctly</b> , ah (+CAP & +SAT)? Put your hand up, and stand up and speak up.]
#256A	Scroll 是什么? 站起来大大声跟大家讲, 起来讲。什么都好(+SAT)。讲, OK? [What is scroll? Stand up and tell everybody. <b>Anything also can</b> (+SAT), OK?]
#313A	你要句子重组。没有很难, 你都可以做的(+CAP)。OK 你都可以做的(+CAP)。 [You need to rearrange the sentence. Not difficult, you can do it (+CAP). You can do (+CAP).]
#75 B	<i>Puji</i> , 对了(+CAP)。 <i>Puji</i> 称赞他 <i>puji dia</i> (+SAT)。称赞她勇敢。 [ <i>Puji</i> (praised), <b>Right</b> (+CAP). <i>Puji</i> praise her <i>puji dia</i> (praised <b>him</b> ) (+SAT). <b>commend</b> her on her bravery.]
#180 B	全部都对啊(+CAP)。很好啊(+SAT)。 [All are <b>correct</b> (+CAP). <b>Very good</b> , ah (+SAT)]
#231B	对对(+CAP), 木兰很勇敢。还有呢? [Correct, correct (+CAP), <b>Mulan is very brave</b> . What else?]

Positive feedback can also be in the form of non-verbal realisation, like applause given to a student who has answered correctly, as evident in the data of this study. Nevertheless, it is on the teacher’s request like “Give Trabinah a round of applause” in turn #189C (Table 4) that the class applauded the student who had given the correct answer.

Table 4. Example of Positive Affect Feedback in Class C

#189 T	给 Trabinah 一个掌声(+SAT)。 [Give Trabinah a round of applause (+SAT)]
#190 SS	一二, 一二三, 一二三四, 一二。(同学们边数码边鼓掌) [One two, one two three, one two three four, one two. (Students counting while clapping).]
#191 T	哈, 很好。(+SAT) [Ha, very good (+SAT).] (Teacher applauding too)

In the above excerpt, at the teacher’s request, the students applauded the student and in fact the applause (non-verbal act) was accompanied with counting of numbers (verbal act) in Mandarin (#190). This is not only a sign of the students’ acceptance of the teacher’s instruction to applaud the student concerned but also they were happy to have carried it out verbally and non-verbally. Shared activity like applauding and counting together can increase participants’ affiliation and intimacy (Bell, 2007). This is further enhanced by the teacher’s verbal positive feedback (#191) and her act of reciprocating the applause. Thus, it can be said that the teacher has successfully build rapport with her students through providing positive feedback.

Some of the reasons that contribute towards students’ reluctance in responding to questions posed by teachers are that students are afraid of making mistakes and feeling embarrassed or being laughed at by their peers or scolded by the teacher for their mistakes. Therefore, one good approach used by the teachers to encourage students to participate in class is to assure students that “It doesn’t matter if your answers are right or wrong” (#35A in Table 3), “Anything also can” (#256A in Table 3) and that “It is alright to make mistakes” (#228C). These



affective resources realised the fact that teachers are willing to accept wrong answers and that it is all right for students to give incorrect responses. This is a form of assurance that teachers would not reprimand students for giving wrong answers. Developing trust is a characteristic of rapport-building.

Apart from assuring students, teacher's words of encouragement as evident in turn #313A in Table 3, "Not difficult, you can do it. You can do." (+SAT) would give students confidence that it is not a difficult question and that the teacher believes students should attempt it as they can provide the right answer. Another instance of providing encouragement is also evident in the following excerpt from Class C:

Teacher C (#228C)

错。哦，不用紧，我们来试。谁会啊？

[Incorrect (-CAP). But it is okay (+SAT). We'll try again. Who knows the answer?]

In the excerpt, even though the teacher had 'judged' the student's answer as incorrect, she mitigated it with an Affective resource, 'But it is okay' (+SAT), thus assuring the student that it is all right to make mistakes. The following sentence, "We'll try again" provides the encouragement for students to keep trying for the correct answer. The use of inclusive third person pronoun 'we' was an attempt by the teacher to establish or enhance solidarity developed in earlier turns.

With teachers being understanding of students' anxiety about giving wrong answers to questions, which is a form of emotional affinity; and providing students with words of encouragement, solidarity is developed as students would feel comfortable, less anxious and motivated to participate in class. Another instance of the use of the Affect resource in establishing solidarity with students is as follows:

Teacher B (#199B)

。。。好，没关系(+SAT)。现在呢，我要呢，你们用两个字来造句。。。。

[... **Well, it does not matter** (+SAT). Now, I want all of you to use two words to make a sentence]

In this example, Teacher B who realised that the student could not provide the correct answer to an earlier activity, then said “Well, it does not matter” (+SAT), an Affect resource, and quickly moved on to another activity to avoid embarrassment faced by the student concerned if she had insisted on the correct answer. Avoiding embarrassment is a face-saving act such that the student would not feel humiliated when he/she is not able to answer correctly. The teacher’s action in avoiding such a threatening situation ensured that the classroom atmosphere is kept positive for rapport to be maintained between the teacher and students.

Another example of face-saving is also evident in the following question and answer session in Class A. Such sessions are common in the CSL classes, as it is one way of engaging students in learning (Richmond et al., 2008). When a teacher asked a question, at least one student would attempt to answer or be asked to answer the question.

- # 63 T : 她代替她爸爸去打战, 对吗? 为什么她代替她爸爸去打战?  
[She took her father’s place to go to war, right? Why did she replace her father to go to war?]
- # 64 SS : 因为她爸爸病了.  
[Because her father was sick.]
- # 65 T : 因为她爸爸病啊? **你又知道她爸爸病?** 她爸爸老了, 是吗?  
[Because her father was sick ah? **How do you know her father was ill? Her father was old, wasn’t he?**]

In the excerpt given above, when the students were asked why Mulan went to war in place of her father, a few of them answered in turn #64 that it was because of her father’s illness. It can be said that the teacher was thus successful in engaging the class to respond to her question. This signals the close relationship between teacher and students, such that they were not afraid to volunteer an answer, even if their answer might be incorrect.

Indeed the answer given by the students was incorrect but Teacher A did not express her dissatisfaction. Instead, she suggested an alternative answer,

which actually is the answer to the question, by posing a tag question “Her father was old, wasn’t he”, utilising a Judgement resource. This was intended to avoid reprimanding the students for the incorrect response and thus softening the face-threatening instance. Softening face-threatening acts is one way to maintain rapport with students (Nguyen, 2007). Rapport is also evident in the subsequent interaction when Teacher A was checking on the students’ understanding of the answer to her previous question. Not only did the students respond to her question in #66, they managed to provide the correct answer, thus showing that learning has taken place.

- # 66 T : 因为她的爸爸懒惰?  
[Because her father was lazy?]
- # 67 SS : 老了。老了。  
[Old. Old]

Inviting students to express their thoughts and feelings (Brown, 2004) is another strategy in fostering solidarity. In doing so, students feel that their ideas are valued and as such respect is gained from fellow classmates. In the following excerpt, the teacher in Class D adopted this strategy through the use of the Affect resource of + SAT, in efforts to encourage talk among students.

#### Class D

- #8 S : She got no brother (sic). (Student answered in English)
- #9 T : OK. 她没有哥哥。然后?  
[OK (+SAT). She did not have an elder brother. Then?]
- #10 S : 她的弟弟还小。  
[Her younger brother was still very young.]
- #11 T : Ya. (+SAT) 她的弟弟还小。  
[Ya. Her younger brother was still young.]
- #12 T : ...为什么木兰她要去? 为什么她不叫别人去? 木兰有朋友吗?  
[Why did she want to go? Why didn’t she ask someone else to go? Did Mulan have any friends?]
- #13 SS : 没有。

- [No.]
- #14 T : 你怎么知道她没有朋友?  
[How do you know she did not have any friends?]
- #15 SS : (学生笑)  
(Students laugh)

In turn #8 of the above excerpt, the student had given the answer in English even though Mandarin, the target language to be learned, is to be used in class. This is evident that the student was comfortable enough to not answer in Mandarin as she trusted the teacher would not reprimand her for not doing so based on the rapport that has developed between them. Indeed this is so when the teacher herself responded in English with “OK” (an Affect resource) signalling acceptance of the answer despite the fact that the answer given by the student was not in Mandarin. This is a form of encouragement for the students too. when the teacher in Class D did not insist that students answer in Mandarin, but responded in the language initially used by the student, as the focus in that instance was on eliciting their views to encourage talk in class. The teacher further encouraged the student to generate more talk by using the question form “Then?” in turn #9. In turn #10, the student managed to answer her in Mandarin. The Affect resource “Ya” in turn #11 affirmed that the answer given is correct and that the student’s view is accepted when the teacher repeated the student’s answer. Acceptance of ideas not only builds rapport with students but also promotes their self-esteem, thus providing a comfortable space for learning.

To further encourage talk, the teacher probed (#12) on why Mulan did not ask someone else to take her place for it, is it because she did not have any friends. When students answered that Mulan did not have any friends, the teacher asked teasingly how they would know that Mulan did not have any friends then. The students responded with laughter. This joint laughter not only shows that there is a collaborative understanding of what is going on in the classroom, it also provides evidence for the close relationship between the teacher and students.

Thus, even though CSLclasses are focused on teaching the Chinese language where language activities like vocabulary learning and sentence

construction are expected, discussions are also prevalent. Primarily, this is to encourage the use of the target language but incidentally this also helps to promote a closer relationship (Brown, 2004).

As evident in the discussion, Attitudinal resources realise opportunities in which teachers can encourage their students, provide positive feedback on students' efforts, facilitate face-saving and promote student's self-esteem. These are some of the ways in which teachers develop positive social relationships, which in turn can create and maintain rapport with their students in class. This is especially important in the second language classroom, where production of the language learnt should always be encouraged and positive feedback should be provided for every little effort shown towards such an endeavour.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study suggests that the Appraisal resource is useful in building teacher-student rapport in classrooms to facilitate learning. Rapport or solidarity in CSL classrooms of this study is established and maintained through teachers' acts of providing encouragement, giving positive feedback, facilitating face-saving and promoting students' self-esteem. These acts can be realised through the use of Attitudinal resources.

The present study could be one of the first studies to use Martin's Appraisal framework to examine the appraisal practices of teachers via classroom discourse in CSL classes in Malaysia. This study provides insights into practices in CSL classes, as little research has been carried out in these classes. Studies using a similar framework in other classroom contexts can illuminate research in this field. However, only the aspect of Attitudinal resources is examined in this study, where the examination of the other two aspects of the Appraisal framework, namely, Engagement and Graduation resources in interpersonal meaning making, are not included. Another limitation is that data is obtained from only four schools in Selangor, therefore future studies should include a bigger and more representative sample for analysis; such that findings can be generalised. Nonetheless, this study has documented teachers' appraisal practices in utilising

Attitudinal resources to build rapport with students; which can serve as valuable references especially for teachers in CSL classes. In general, it applies to teachers teaching a second language course, providing a method to enhance their effectiveness in teaching the target language.

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