

EXAMINING THE CLARITY OF EXPRESSIONS IN DESCRIBING THE BLACK WOMAN'S OPPRESSION IN KENNEDY'S "FUNNYHOUSE OF A NEGRO"

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Article History: Received on 18th May 2019, Revised on 27th August 2019, Published on 20th September 2019

Abstract

Purpose of study: This study tries to figure out whether Adrienne Kennedy's play "Funnyhouse of a Negro" was direct and clear or indirect and implicit when she expresses a black woman's struggle with identity.

Methodology: This study adopts a mix mode approach of Martin and White (2005) attitudinal category of Appraisal theory so as to analyze, frame, and to answer the research questions by which is proposed for this full research paper.

Main Findings: The inscribed instances have exceeded the invoked ones in the whole corpus of "Funnyhouse of a Negro", concerning how did Sarah; the protagonist, as well as her split figures, have portrayed her white mother and a black father. The outcomes suggest that Kennedy was very clear and direct to deliver her moral judgment to her audiences/readers regarding the status of African American women in American based on analyzing the discourses of the main characters in the play.

Implications/Applications: Therefore, this play has gained very much respect and admiration from critics, readers, and audiences because of the playwright's direct descriptions of Sarah and her parents in the American arena as well as her attempt to form new status as an individual human being who have a right to live such as any white American civilian.

Originality/Novelty of Study: The appraisal approach is a fairly new extension in the area of Systemic Functional Linguistics. It has been applied mainly to non-fictional discourse, particularly to certain texts with an argumentative task such as journalistic and political speeches. There is an increasing interest in the utilization of this theory to the analysis of literary texts, involving narrative fiction (Alsanafi & Mohd Noor, 2019). The researcher does not find any study employs Appraisal category to discover the clearness of expressions to describe woman's oppression in Adrienne Kennedy's "Funnyhouse of a Negro".

Keywords: Appraisal, clarity of expression, black woman, oppression, attitude, Funnyhouse.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of black American with identity is not a new regarded matter; rather this issue has caught the awareness and the attention of many researchers for decades. Americans with African origin and race were brought to the New Land; (America), as slaves, and those people were not allowed to practice their cultural activities (Alsanafi & Mohd Noor, 2018a). They used to do their activities back home like dancing, singing or using drums but for racial and political reasons, they have assimilated to a new religion, language, and culture (Nowrouzi & Faghfori, 2015). The practical problem of this article is not merely concerned with the issue of the race only. African American women are doubly victimized in the United States because of their race as well as their gender (Das, 2012). This paper tries to figure out how Adrienne Kennedy successfully delivered black woman exploitation in explicit language to her audiences and the way this woman gains her dignity in the United States. The reason for that investigation is to obtain precise insight into the linguistic resources and the evaluative discourse of Sarah the protagonist as well as her split figures in the play. Play's characters have adapted to draw the figure of the disturbed identity of Sarah to the putative readers/audiences.

The current article is utilizing Australian scholars; Martin and White (2005) Appraisal Theory. The researchers for this paper are adopting this framework to reveal unconventional elements that are embedded in the styles and the structures of the language used. This theory, and particularly the Attitudinal category; (the adopted category in this paper), is really a substantial tool to figure out whether the playwright was clear or not in portraying the agony of the African American woman. The results are gained statistically and scientifically by examining all discourses that Sarah, her split personalities, and other characters who impacted to construct her identity in the text and neglect all other exterior factors. 1964 was the year for publishing the proposed play for this paper. This era had witnessed the impact of the emerging many social and political movements such as the Civil Rights Movements, Black Arts Movement, and Black Theater Movement. These movements had fostered many literary writers and particularly playwrights to strive rampant segregation as well as to create esteemed statuses for African American people and especially women within the subjugated hostile society in the United States (Bell, 2015). Moreover, Adrienne Kennedy was inspired too by the literary pieces of the first phase of feminists such as Woolf and Beauvoir with the great influence of the wake of WWII. All the aforementioned aspects had supported the playwright to directly address his audiences and discover the oppression of her protagonist Sarah.

This current paper proposes to approach the following objectives to be the scope of this article:

- 1- To examine the frequencies of Attitudes instances for all types; (Affect, Judgement, Appreciation).
- 2- To investigate the Strategy of the Realization of the Attitudinal resources in the whole corpus.

The present paper consists of seven portions, involving the existing one. The current portion contains a general background of the paper, the problem statement, and finally the research objectives. The second portion is dedicated to the research questions for this paper which need to be answered in the discussion part. The third portion is to review all the related materials in order to indicate the gap for this study. The fourth part of this article is to give a brief summary of the plot and the main characters that influenced to form Sarah's disturbing identity. The fifth part of this paper is devoted to the illustration of the methodology which is relevant for this study as well as the data sets proposed to be examined in this article. The sixth portion is devoted to findings and discussions on the selected data sets. The final port is to draw the conclusion and the outcomes.

RESEARCH QUESTION

- 1- What are the Attitudinal resources of each type in the play regarding; (Appreciation, Judgment, and Affect).
- 2- What are the frequencies of possible Strategy; (Invoked and Inscribed) in the whole instances of the corpus?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reporting the prior related literature is a very essential part of each research paper because this section aims to gather connected studies so as to recognize the weaknesses or gaps of other scholars' works. All reviewed articles have 1964 Adrienne Kennedy's "*The Funnyhouse of a Negro*" as their data sets. This play was written by one of the most subjective and innovative American playwrights in the 1960s. The playwright created a theatrical nightmare world that removed from ordinary perceptions of space and time. When the play first produced it was highly applauded by many critics and audiences (Curb, 1980). That is why when the researchers started the query they found hundreds of articles had been written to discuss this drama. The researchers later made many filtering processes and focused only on the papers that concentrated on the subject of identity struggle for the last ten years and neglected the others in order to start when the other scholars end. The researchers establish Table 1 for the connected literature with chronological order to indicate the gap in the present study.

Table 1: Indicating gap

N	Author & year	Theory/ technique	Gap	Method	Strengths & weaknesses
1	(Ramón, 2011)	'Womanism' kind of black Feminist theory	Gender is the major issue of woman's oppression	Quali.	St. Adequate analysis for each character in this play. We. Focused on the aspect of gender and neglected other aspects such as class and race.
2	(Tóth, 2013)	Marxist theory	Struggle within the parent-child relationship	Quali.	St. Struggle against apartheid. We. Gave more attention to the capitalist system and considered it the main reason for destroying a woman's identity
3	(Jeffries, R & Jeffries, D, 2014)	Critical race theory	Black woman identity is intrinsically related to our relationship with hair.	Quali.	St. Proved that appearances are a very important concept to determine human identity. We. Concentred on hairstyle and neglected the other physical aspects of a human being.
4	(Rapoo & Bonno, 2015)	Theory of black consciousness	Individual identity is connected to his social and political status	Quali.	St. the paper gave a good background regarding all issues that black American faced in the USA. We. Neglected the gender, race, and class issues and focused on political aspect only.
5	(Balaji, 2015)	Du Bois's theory	Obsession of European values	Quali.	St. Presented perfectly the double consciousness of the protagonist. We. This paper concluded that black should not be proud of their African heritage.
6	(Gale, 2016)	Narration theory	Pride on blacks' identity	Quali.	St. Drew a comparative with other play. We. The paper recognized Kennedy's play as assimilationist to the white American values

7	My current paper	Appraisal theory, Attitude	Adopting the Appraisal Theory to construe the data sets.	Mix method	<p>St. Scientific way of analysis depends on the discourse inside the text and neglecting other aspects.</p> <p>We. It is more interesting to adopt all three tools of Appraisal framework.</p>
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The above Table 1 may summarise the following results:

1. All the prior articles involved qualitative research method, the current paper is conducted a mix mode method.
2. All the studies have adopted certain literary frameworks to indicate the struggle of the protagonist Sarah, while this study utilized appraisal theory.
3. The interest of all the prior studies is to investigate the oppression of the main character, while in current paper the researcher aims to figure out whether the playwright was direct or not in describing the black woman's oppression.

A BRIEF PLOT REVIEW

"*The Funnyhouse of a Negro*" 1964 is Adrienne Kennedy's first published drama. Many critics and audiences have celebrated the significance of that literary work since its debut. This play was granted an Obie Award from The Village Voice for her distinctive plot and continued to be performed in the USA and abroad in the late 1960s (Ramón, 2011). This one-act play focused around a young African American student, called Sarah, she was in her mid-twenties and has mixed racial heritage (Tóth, 2013). The protagonist, Sarah uncovered her disability to reform her status as a black lady in America with four fragmented selves as well as many connected roles. Sarah presented her personal conflict and instability to the audiences throughout those split figures, who are: Duchess of Hapsburg, Queen Victoria ;(Mother); Jesus, and Patrice Lumumba ;(Father); who displayed Sarah's disturbing identity (Jeffries, R & Jeffries, D, 2014). The setting for this drama was Sarah's room but, as in most of Kennedy's literary works, all the incidents took place inside her head. "*Funnyhouse of a Negro*" was saturated with many subtexts that reflects the horrible circumstances that surrounded Sarah, such as incest, sexual violence, and rape. In this play, the protagonist Sarah, as well as her 'selves', recounted the African American history with violence and trauma. Sarah's parents sustained a loveless life and marriage; her white mother was harmfully raped by her black father, and the mother later became depressed, mad, and eventually died (Jeffries, R & Jeffries, D, 2014). Sarah was born as a result of that intercourse.

Adrienne Kennedy's literary play displayed frightening images of a black woman in her society. Consequently, the playwright described African American woman's quest for identity throughout a very hard relationship with her African father (Toth, 2013). Sarah incarnated several cultural and historical character to represent her strives with mixed-race identity in white American standards. Furthermore, the playwright adopted these historical figures to reinforce her portraying and to confirm a certain relationship between Kennedy herself and African political, social, and cultural landscapes (Rapoo&Bonno, 2015). It is highly significant for the analyzing tool to consider Kennedy's "*Funnyhouse of a Negro*" is an act of communication that effectively adopted verbal and visual rhetorical and linguistic elements to convey powerful messages to Kennedy's audiences (Jeffries, R & Jeffries, D, 2014). Moreover, this literary piece was considered as being autobiographical play. The playwright herself was biracial, she had got the motivation to prescribe the black women's issue with identity in this playthrough her short visit to Ghana in the 1950s.

METHODOLOGY

The fundamental design of this paper is a mix research method. Kennedy's drama is descriptive and interpretive in nature and the result of Table 4 in the discussion section proves that the playwright paid more attention to describe his characters and their actions in the play. The researchers aim to investigate Sarah's speeches as well as other characters that involve ideologies, beliefs, and messages transmitted to audiences and the community. This paper centers to construe the discourses revolved around Sarah, her split selves, and other characters who impacted to form her identity(i.e father, mother). The outcomes of that analysis can figure out whether these adopted expressions were clear or not to portray black woman oppression. The adopted theory (Appraisal) is not a new tool to analyze literary works. This theory has been adopted by many scholars to analyze their data sets such as (Peng, 2008; Hadidi & Mohammad Bagheri-Parvin, 2015; Alsina, Espunya & Naro, 2017; Dong & Lin, 2018; Alsanafi & Mohd Noor, 2018b). The Appraisal is connected to evaluation, or the kinds of emotions, feelings, and attitudes that any text may express. Appraisal framework is a new derived theory from M.A.K Halliday Systemic Functional Linguistics (Martin & White, 2005). An appraisal is "the subjective presence of writers/speakers in texts as they adopt stances towards both the material they present and those with whom they communicate" (Martin & White 2005, p.14). This theory supplies instruments for construing writers/speakers' propositions so as to convey their semantic interpersonal meanings.

Appraisal framework involves three major categories: Attitude (the assessing people, things, and actions), Engagement (the position of the writers/speakers with their readers/hearers, supported by the content given), and finally, the third category is Graduation which is connected with 'up-scaling' or 'down-scaling' the previous two sources (attitude and engagement)(Mohd

Noor, 2015). This article is adopting the attitude category as the only device to analyze data sets. Attitude is the gist and the essence of the appraisal theory that involves certain propositions by which speakers or writers express their passionate responses towards participants, processes, and phenomena so as to judge individual actions or to assess things (Li & Gao, 2013). Attitude involves three considerable subtypes: Affect, which is highly considered the essence of the attitude category. This type can be expressed by the writers/speakers to indicate positive or negative connotations towards individuals, processes, and phenomena. The effect is further divided into four systems which are: In/security instances which include emotions connected with disquiet, panic, and trust. Un/happiness propositions refer to feelings or anything to do with “affairs of the heart” such as hatred and love (Bock, 2007, p. 78). Dis/satisfaction instances that involve the emotions connected to humans’ goals and ambitions (Ferris, 2010). Finally, Dis/inclination resources that indicate the unrealistic effect, that connected to the disposition and behavior (Alsanafi&Mohd Noor, 2018b).

The second type of Attitude category is Judgement that involves two important forms. The first form is called ‘Social Esteem’. It deals with the manners that people’s behaviors are corresponding to culturally favourable models. Social esteem is also subdivided into three dimensions, which are; Normality: means how someone is unique and special; Capacity: means how someone is qualified for something; and finally, Tenacity: means can someone’s actions is dependable and resolute (Martin & White, 2005). The second form of Judgemental system is named ‘Social Sanction’. That form involves two dimensions which are; Veracity: means that how much someone is faithful and truthful in his actions or behaviors. The second type of social sanction is Propriety: It assesses the morals ethics that someone’s behaviours must have (Ferris, 2010). The third type of attitude category is Appreciation; this type assesses and evaluates objects, processes, as well as natural phenomena, mostly in aesthetic standards (Li & Gao, 2013). Figure:1 below is to show the attitudinal subtypes.

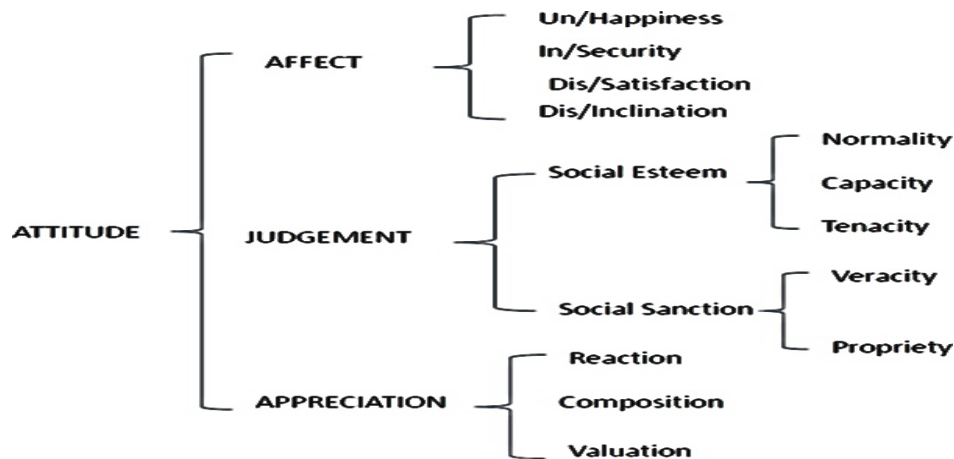


Figure 1: Overview of attitude subsystems (Martin & White, 2005)

Invoked and inscribed attitude

Attitudinal resources can be recognized either implicitly or explicitly (Ferris, 2010). Direct attitude includes evaluations which are explicitly delivering negative or positive connotations. Invoked resources are indicated implicitly by estimating the general meaning of the sentence. Moreover, the implicit dimension does not include any attitudinal resources but is indicated through their meanings within their context (Mohd Noor, 2015).

Table 2: Symbols of Attitude Analysis

+	Positive	Inv.	Invoked
-	Negative	Ins.	Inscribed
Judgment			
Normality	Norm.	Tenacity	Ten.
Veracity	Ver.	Propriety	Prop.
Capacity	Cap.		
Affect			
Satisfaction	Sat.	Happiness	Hap.
Inclination	Inc.	Security	Sec.
Appreciation			
Composition	Comp.	Reaction	Rea.
Valuation	Val.		

Breakdown of play

The following step is to distribute Kennedy’s play into statements, indicate the discourse of Sarah, her split figures as well as other characters in the text. These statements are further separated into instances that contain the standard linguistic unit of measurement in SFL. The final step is to count all the resources in the spreadsheet to figure out whether the playwright by her characters’ assistance was clear or not to describe woman’s oppression.

Table 3: Presents some statements in the spreadsheet

ATTITUDE						
Play “ <i>Funnyhouse of a Negro</i> ”	Instances	Appraised	Appraiser	Appreciation	Affect	Judgment
He is a black negro.	He is a <u>black negro</u> .	Father	Duchess			(-) Norm; Ins
Mother loved my father before her hair fell out.	Mother loved my father <u>before her hair fell out</u> .	Mother	Negro	(-) Valu; Ins		
A loving relationship exists between myself and Queen Victoria	<u>A loving relationship</u>	Victoria	Negro		(+) Hap; Ins	

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Attitude involves certain resources or linguistic items by which Sarah and other characters in the play utilized to deliver their emotional responses towards people, objects, and phenomena (Li & Gao, 2013). This paper aims to gather all the statistical data sets of the attitudinal types, including the occurrences of; (Judgment, Appreciation, Affect). The results are offered in Tables and Figures which involve a comprehensive explanation of all the attitudinal resources and the percentages of each system. We may make a comparison among these attitudinal systems in order to give a vivid image regarding ‘Sarah’ the protagonist and her parents to figure out her persecution in the play.

Table 4: Classification of attitude resources

Cases	Affe	App	Jud	Total
Resources	32	65	228	325
Percentages	9.84%	20 %	70.15%	100%

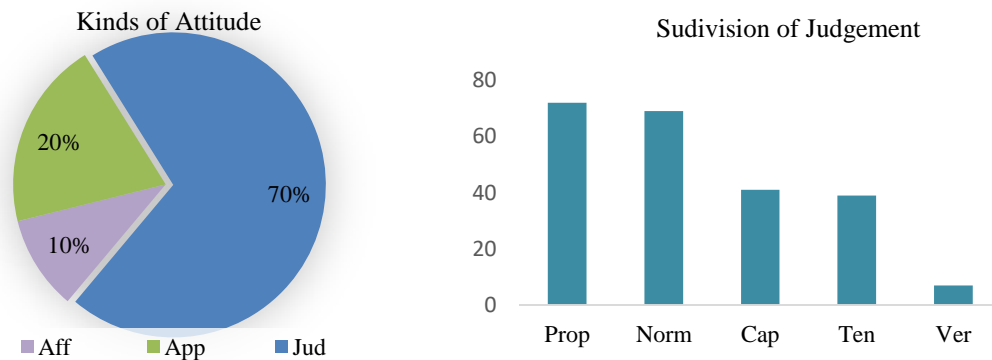


Figure 2: Kinds of attitude category (judgemental subsystems)

Table 4 presents that the judgment category has exceeded the other types with a big margin in the whole corpus regarding Sarah’s discourses, her split figures, and other characters whom they interact with her in the text. The judgemental category got almost 70 % of attitudinal instances in the analyzing process of Kennedy’s play. The second position after a judgment is occupied by an appreciation with 20 % of attitudinal resources, and the last position is to affect that covers only 10 % of

attitudinal cases in the complete body of the spreadsheet. Some models are written below represent the attitudinal kinds from the text (Kennedy, 2011):

- ... *He is very black...* judgment (Inscribed, Negative)
- ...*her crinkly hair...* Appreciation (Inscribed, Negative)
- .. *my mother loves him.* Affect (Inscribed, positive)

The outcomes of the analyzing process have met the prior anticipations regarding the playwright’s tendencies in the “*Funnyhouse of a Negro*”. Speaking about the current play, Judgment instances must be emphasized to occupy the first place. If any writer and in particular playwright wants to deliver his/her message clearly and successfully, she/he must pay more attention to judgment resources because this type pays more attention to describe human behaviors as well as his action in the play. Kennedy has considered this type as a medium to communicate her evaluations to readers/audiences in the play. The main target of Kennedy’s literary work is of portraying a black traditional consciousness to the theatre by adopting the signs of culture (Balaji, 2015). No way to accomplish that goal unless she needs to adopt many linguistic choices (Judgment), for portraying Sarah’s behaviors, physical appearances, and activities, all of that is labeled under the Judgemental system. The analysis also presents out that second position is occupied for appreciation choices with 20%, the result is reasonable for many reasons. This text is taken place in Sarah’s room but, as in many of Kennedy’s literary works, it happens inside Sarah’s mind (Barnett, 1997). The final position is occupied by affect resources. Regarding the content of the text, it is really fair to occupy that place for many reasons. First of all, the heavy use of affect resources can make the play or any literary piece improper, very personalized, and less persuasive (Wu, 2013). Second, the protagonist does not require to reveal her emotions explicitly to the audiences and that may not add to the major plot of the text. Finally, Sarah in this play is unable or unwilling to indicate her emotion as such (Balaji, 2015). For all these details, affect has occupied the final place in Table 4.

Figure 2 displays the exceeding of both Normality and Propriety resources upon the other kind of judicial system. This play is filled with many subplots connected with child murder, sexual violence, miscarriage, and rape (Balaji, 2015). All these subjects are classified under Propriety. Moreover, Kennedy’s drama has symbolized the struggle between the white mother and the black father, the most significant two figures who construct her disturbing identity the mulatto Sarah (Rapoo&Bonno, 2015).

Table 5: Classification attitudinal resources, concerning the strategy realization

Cases	Inscribed	Invoked	Total
Resources	207	118	325
Percentages	63.69 %	36.30 %	100%

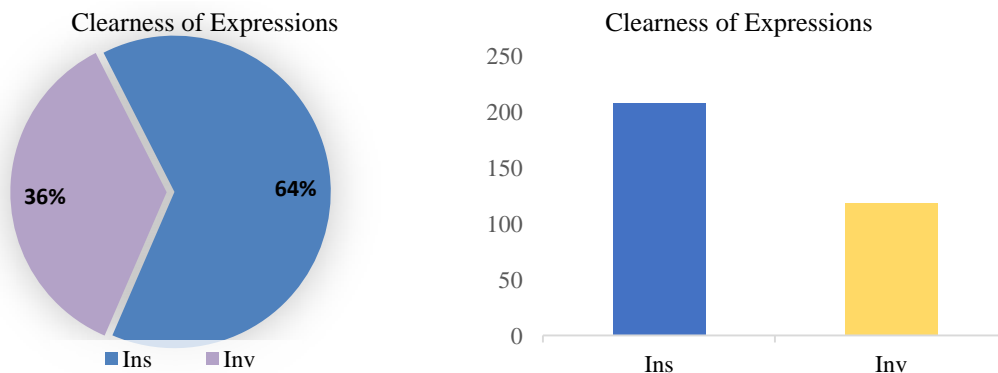


Figure 3: Clearness of expressions

Table 5 shows a big difference in the attitudinal resources of strategies in the complete analyzing of the play. Almost 64% of resources have been recounted clearly (Inscribed), while only 36% of the resources have been expressed indirectly (Invoked). Some models are written below represent the attitudinal kinds from the text (Kennedy, 2011):

- ... “*How dare he enter the castle*” ... (p. 6) Implicit (Negative, Judgment)
- .. “*he who is the darkest of them all*”, (p. 6) Explicit (Negative, Judgment)

Table 5 Indicates exceeding in the inscribed choices upon the invoked cases based on the numeral data sets. It is crystal clear that Kennedy was very clear and direct in portraying Sarah to her audiences and readers. The result may justify the absolute

success of that literary piece at that time. The high percentage of words' and expressions' explicitness in Kennedy's play comes out because of two aspects. First "Funnyhouse of a Negro" is published during and after the appearances of the Civil Rights Movements, the race-dominated, and the Black Art Movement era. It was the time when black Americans were starting to determine their African roots (Rapoo&Bonno, 2015). The second aspect of clearness based on the play's setting. "Funnyhouse of a Negro" is taken place in Sarah's bedroom, which was at the heart of the theatre that enabled the audiences to focus on one scene that all the incidents were revolved around that spot (Barnett, 1997). The playwright aimed in her drama to convey the new African American cultural attitudes and consciousness to the stage by using the symbols of western and African cultures.

Limitations and recommendations for future studies

last but not least, this study was restricted to analyze the discourses of the main characters in a play which was written in 1964. The researcher has adopted one system only of attitude category; it is worthwhile if we use all the three systems in this play so as to increase the reliability and validity of results.

The highest percentages of inscribed instances may tell the readers about the circumstances which were surrounded by the playwright. Though, she was very brave and courageous that she explicitly criticized the white American values. The researchers are recommending for future work to conduct the same tool with any literary work which is written in the 1950s. That period is very important in the history of racism in America. We need to discover whether the writers at that time were clear or not in describing the agony of black people.

The theoretical and practical contribution of this study

As this study has declared earlier that this paper is adopting Martin and White (2005) of appraisal theory. The adopted framework is utilized to non-fictional texts, such as political as well as journalistic speeches. Utilizing that theory to literary work is very interesting due to the fact that all the outcomes we got are scientific and systematic. The study aims to give a new way of understanding this literary text, depending on the discourses inside the text and neglecting other exterior factors that most of the literary theories are concerned with.

CONCLUSION

Utilizing the attitude category has qualified this paper to discover the following:

1. The type of Kennedy's play by revealing that the playwright has adopted more Judgemental resources that focus on describing Sarah's disturbing identity as well as her actions in the play.
2. Most of these resources; (Judgement, Appreciation, Affect), were recounted explicitly in the play to portray African American women.

One of the most significant features that any literary piece should be very clear and direct in describing or narrating human's behaviors, physical appearances, and actions to easily convey the messages to the readers/audiences. The literary writers need to have clear semantic options and explicit portraying of his characters or figures in general (Hadidi & Mohammadbagheri-Parvin, 2015). Normally, in our daily conversation, people are practically clear to deliver their thoughts, feelings, and attitude. Though, this play is a part of the Postmodern American era that reflected the circumstances and environment of the people in that time. Naturally, the number of inscribed choices must be greater than the invoked ones. Though, the playwright aimed to convey the oppression of African American woman to her audiences.

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