

Constructing Cultural Representation through Appraisal: An Interpersonal Analysis of I Am Malala

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ABSTRACT

Autobiographical narratives do more than recount personal experience: through evaluation, selection, and narrative positioning, they also construct identities and representations of social life. This article examines how interpersonal meanings and cultural representations are linguistically produced in I Am Malala (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013). Drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistics and Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal framework, it focuses on Attitude, particularly the distinction between inscribed and evoked evaluation, while attending to relevant resources of Graduation and Engagement. The study adopts qualitative close textual analysis of selected passages concerning honour, gender, social class, religious discourse, political authority, violence, and education. The findings show that explicit evaluative adjectives, intensifiers, superlatives, contrastive structures, reported voices, and contextually charged lexical items repeatedly position readers toward particular moral and emotional interpretations. The memoir combines negative Judgement of coercive practices and violent actors with positive Judgement of educational agency, dissent, and familial support. At the same time, evaluative contrasts distinguish the narrator and her family from practices represented as restrictive or unjust. These patterns create solidarity with a transnational readership, but they do not justify treating the memoir as a comprehensive sociological account of Pakistan. The article therefore argues for a balanced interpretation: I Am Malala should be read as a situated, co-authored autobiographical discourse whose cultural representations are shaped by lived experience, advocacy, global circulation, and evaluative language. The study contributes to research on Appraisal, life writing, and the linguistic mediation of culture by demonstrating how local experience is made morally intelligible to heterogeneous audiences.

Keywords: Appraisal Theory; Systemic Functional Linguistics; interpersonal meaning; autobiography; cultural representation; evaluative language; I Am Malala

INTRODUCTION

Language is a social resource through which speakers and writers represent experience, negotiate relationships, and position audiences. In Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), these functions are described through the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The interpersonal metafunction is especially important to autobiographical discourse because life writing

does not merely report events. It assigns value, constructs moral identities, invites sympathy, and establishes relations of trust between narrator and reader.

Autobiography is commonly associated with an expectation of referential sincerity. Lejeune's (1989) concept of the autobiographical pact describes the reader's expectation that the named author, narrator, and principal subject correspond. This expectation, however, does not make autobiography a transparent record. Memories are selected, ordered, interpreted, and expressed for particular audiences. Smith and Watson (2010) therefore treat autobiographical narration as a situated practice through which subjects construct versions of the self in relation to available cultural discourses. The question is not simply whether an autobiographical statement is true or false, but how linguistic and narrative choices make a particular account credible, affective, and culturally meaningful.

This issue becomes particularly consequential when a memoir circulates internationally and is read as a window onto a society. *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban* was published in 2013 under the joint authorship of Malala Yousafzai and journalist Christina Lamb. The memoir recounts Malala's childhood in Pakistan's Swat Valley, her family's commitment to education, the rise of Taliban militancy, her public advocacy, the attack on her school bus, and her medical treatment abroad. Its global prominence has made it both a personal testimony and a widely consumed cultural text. As a result, its descriptions of gender, religion, politics, education, and Pashtun social life can influence how diverse readers imagine Pakistan and Muslim societies.

Such circulation must be approached carefully. Said's (1978) critique of Orientalism showed how Western knowledge often constructed "the East" as backward, irrational, and inferior. Later scholarship has complicated any simple West-East opposition by examining how postcolonial writers, publishers, and global markets negotiate representation. Lau's (2009) account of re-Orientalism is useful here because it draws attention to the possibility that authors from formerly colonised societies may reproduce familiar stereotypes for metropolitan audiences. Yet the concept should not be used as a predetermined verdict. A memoir's criticism of violence, patriarchy, or state failure is not automatically Orientalist, nor does international recognition invalidate lived experience. The analytical task is to examine how representations are linguistically produced, what evaluative positions they invite, and where interpretive caution is required.

Appraisal Theory provides a principled method for this task. Developed within SFL, Appraisal maps the linguistic resources through which writers express emotion, evaluate behaviour and phenomena, manage alternative voices, and adjust the force of evaluation (Martin & White, 2005). Its Attitude system comprises Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation. Affect concerns emotional response; Judgement evaluates human behaviour against social or ethical norms; and Appreciation evaluates things, processes, and states of affairs. Attitudes may be inscribed explicitly through evaluative vocabulary or evoked indirectly through descriptions that invite readers to supply an evaluation. Engagement concerns the management of dialogic alternatives, while Graduation scales intensity and categorical sharpness.

Previous commentary on *I Am Malala* has often centred on education, feminism, activism, media reception, postcolonial representation, and political symbolism. Linguistic research on the memoir has more often foregrounded experiential meaning or broad thematic patterns than the fine-grained interpersonal work performed by evaluative lexis. The present study addresses this gap by examining how selected passages position readers toward cultural practices, actors, and institutions.

The article asks two questions:

1. How are interpersonal meanings realised through Appraisal resources in *I Am Malala*?

2. How do inscribed and evoked attitudes contribute to representations of gender, culture, religion, politics, and national identity?

The study does not seek to determine whether the memoir offers a definitive account of Pakistan. Nor does it begin from the assumption that the narrative is either wholly emancipatory or inherently biased. It treats the memoir as a situated, co-authored text in which personal testimony, advocacy, publishing context, and cultural translation intersect. This stance allows evaluative patterns to be identified without converting linguistic analysis into either celebration or denunciation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Autobiography, positioning, and cultural authority

Autobiographical discourse is shaped by a tension between referential claim and narrative construction. Lejeune's (1989) autobiographical pact explains why readers normally approach life writing with an expectation of sincerity, whereas contemporary life-writing scholarship emphasises that narration is selective and performative (Smith & Watson, 2010). The autobiographical subject is not simply recovered from memory; it is constructed through narrative choices, genre conventions, and relations with imagined audiences.

Narrative positioning is central to this process. Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) show that narrators position characters within the story world, position themselves in relation to interlocutors, and position their accounts in relation to broader cultural narratives. In internationally circulated memoir, these levels interact. A narrator may present herself as a child, daughter, student, believer, survivor, citizen, or activist while simultaneously addressing readers who possess unequal knowledge of the represented culture. Explanations of local customs therefore perform both informational and evaluative work.

The cultural authority of testimony can be especially powerful when the narrator has experienced violence. Personal experience grants moral and experiential authority, yet it does not erase the limits of individual perspective. A memoir may validly describe coercive practices or political failures without representing every member of a national or religious community. Critical analysis must therefore distinguish between the narrator's situated experience, the text's generalising tendencies, and interpretations imposed by readers or markets.

Cultural representation, Orientalism, and re-Orientalism

Said (1978) described Orientalism as a system of representation through which European and later Western institutions constructed Eastern societies as passive, irrational, sensual, despotic, and inferior. The concept remains influential because it directs attention to the relation between discourse and geopolitical power. Nevertheless, contemporary cultural circulation is more complex than a one-way production of images by Western authors. Writers from postcolonial societies participate in global publishing, translate local experiences, and may contest or reproduce established representational patterns.

Lau (2009) uses the term re-Orientalism to describe forms of representation in which writers associated with "the East" reproduce essentialising images that are legible and marketable to Western audiences. This framework is relevant to *I Am Malala* because the memoir is co-authored, written for an international readership, and mediated by a major publishing institution. Yet re-Orientalism should remain an interpretive possibility rather than an a priori classification. Negative representations of militant violence or coercive marriage cannot be dismissed merely because they correspond with concerns familiar to Western readers. The more defensible question is whether linguistic patterns reduce heterogeneous communities to fixed

cultural essences, or whether the narrative preserves distinctions among family, local custom, religion, militant ideology, state institutions, and individual agency.

Abu-Lughod (2013) similarly warns against rescue narratives that treat Muslim women as a homogeneous group awaiting liberation by outsiders. Her critique is useful for interpreting the memoir's global reception, particularly when readers detach Malala's educational activism from local histories and turn it into evidence of an undifferentiated conflict between Western freedom and Muslim oppression. The memoir itself, however, also depicts local forms of agency, especially through Malala, her father, teachers, classmates, political figures, and community members. A careful analysis must therefore identify both binaries and internal complexity.

Interpersonal meaning and Appraisal

SFL conceptualises grammar as a meaning-making resource rather than a set of isolated forms (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The interpersonal metafunction concerns the enactment of social relations, the expression of stance, and the negotiation of roles. Mood and modality are central grammatical resources, but evaluation also operates across lexis, clause structure, metaphor, and discourse organisation (Thompson, 2014).

Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal framework elaborates this evaluative domain. Attitude includes Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation. Judgement may evaluate behaviour in terms of normality, capacity, tenacity, veracity, or propriety; Appreciation may evaluate reaction, composition, and social valuation. Engagement distinguishes monoglossic assertions from heteroglossic formulations that acknowledge, attribute, deny, counter, or entertain alternatives. Graduation adjusts the force of evaluation or the focus of category boundaries.

The distinction between inscribed and evoked attitude is especially relevant to memoir. Inscribed attitude is overtly encoded in items such as "terrible," "strong," or "crazy." Evoked attitude arises where ostensibly descriptive wording activates culturally available moral or emotional responses. A reference to an acid attack, for example, need not contain an evaluative adjective to evoke fear and condemnation. Because evoked meanings depend on context and reader knowledge, coding them requires interpretive transparency and attention to co-text (Bednarek, 2006).

Appraisal analysis also has limitations. Coding is not mechanically objective, and a lexical item may realise different categories in different contexts. Analysts may overinterpret metaphor, infer a target audience without evidence, or treat their own moral response as a textual property. These risks are reduced by identifying the specific linguistic trigger, considering alternative readings, and distinguishing a text's evaluative invitation from the analyst's broader ideological judgement.

Research gap

Existing approaches to *I Am Malala* have established the importance of gender, education, activism, conflict, and global representation. Less attention has been paid to the local linguistic mechanisms by which the narrative assigns value and aligns readers. This study contributes by integrating close textual analysis with Appraisal categories, focusing on how explicit and implicit evaluation constructs cultural meaning. It also responds to a methodological need for balanced analysis: rather than treating every criticism of Pakistani society as proof of cultural denigration, it asks how the text differentiates among coercive practices, militant actors, family relationships, state institutions, and religious belief.

METHODOLOGY

Research design and data

The study uses qualitative textual analysis. The primary data consist of selected passages from *I Am Malala* (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013) that were identified in the source manuscript as relevant to cultural representation. The extracts address honour and shame, swara, acid violence, women's autonomy, purdah, social class, military rule, religious extremism, international assistance, conspiracy discourse, and prayer. The analysis is selective rather than corpus-exhaustive: it aims to provide close interpretation of recurrent evaluative mechanisms, not a complete frequency profile of the memoir.

Selection was guided by three criteria. First, the passage had to contain an identifiable evaluative trigger, such as an adjective, intensifier, superlative, contrastive conjunction, attributed voice, or contextually charged event description. Second, the passage had to contribute to a representation of a social actor, practice, institution, or cultural value. Third, the set of extracts had to include both explicit and implicit evaluation so that inscribed and evoked attitude could be compared.

Analytical framework

Each extract was examined using Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal framework. The principal coding categories were:

- **Affect:** linguistic resources construing emotion, including fear, admiration, and distress.
- **Judgement:** evaluation of human behaviour in terms of capacity, tenacity, veracity, normality, or propriety.
- **Appreciation:** evaluation of objects, practices, events, and states of affairs.
- **Engagement:** acknowledgement or exclusion of alternative voices, especially through attribution, counter-expectancy, and rhetorical questioning.
- **Graduation:** amplification or attenuation through intensifiers, superlatives, quantification, and categorical sharpening.

The analysis also distinguished inscribed attitude from evoked attitude. An evaluation was treated as inscribed when the wording directly encoded a positive or negative value. It was treated as evoked when the passage prompted evaluation through contextual implication without explicit attitudinal labelling. This distinction was applied cautiously: not every noun was classified as metaphor, and contextual associations were discussed only when supported by the surrounding proposition.

Coding procedure

The passages were read repeatedly and coded in four stages. First, the immediate evaluative trigger was identified. Second, the Appraisal category and target of evaluation were specified. Third, the interpersonal effect was considered: whether the wording intensified emotion, invited moral alignment, contrasted voices, or positioned the narrator. Fourth, the cultural implication was interpreted with attention to alternative readings.

For example, in “Shame is a very terrible thing for a Pashtun man,” “terrible” is an explicit negative valuation and “very” amplifies force. The passage can therefore be discussed without claiming that the single sentence proves a wholesale rejection of Pashtun culture. Similarly, the reference to an acid attack evokes fear and negative Judgement of the threatened perpetrators, but it should not be generalised to Pakistani culture as a whole because the sentence specifically attributes the anticipated violence to the Taliban and compares it with attacks in Afghanistan.

Reflexivity and limitations

Because Appraisal coding is interpretive, the analysis avoids presenting culturally contested inferences as purely linguistic facts. The co-authored status of the memoir also limits claims about a single authorial voice: the published wording results from collaboration between Malala Yousafzai and Christina Lamb as well as editorial mediation. Page numbers correspond to the edition cited in the source manuscript and should be checked against the exact edition submitted with the article. The study does not include inter-coder reliability or corpus frequencies, so its findings are analytical propositions grounded in selected examples rather than statistical generalisations.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The statement “Shame is a very terrible thing for a Pashtun man” (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 51) combines explicit evaluation and Graduation. “Terrible” inscribes negative Appreciation of shame as a social force, while “very” amplifies the evaluation. The target is not simply an individual emotion; the phrase “for a Pashtun man” places the feeling within a culturally marked system of masculine reputation. The sentence invites readers to understand shame as socially consequential and potentially coercive.

The wording is generalising: the generic singular “a Pashtun man” can be read as presenting the value as culturally typical. However, the evaluation should not be reduced to a simple claim that Pashtun culture is “terrible.” Grammatically, “terrible” evaluates shame, not Pashtun people. The distinction matters because the passage criticises the force of an honour code while still acknowledging its cultural significance. The interpersonal effect is to align readers against the harmful consequences of shame, especially where reputation governs family decisions.

A more intense representation appears in the account of a jirga decision: “The jirga decided that the widower’s family should be punished by handing over their most beautiful girl to be married to the least eligible man of the rival clan” (p. 52). “Most beautiful” and “least eligible” realise Graduation through superlative comparison. Their opposition maximises the perceived injustice: the girl is framed as the family’s most valued female member, while the proposed husband is positioned at the lowest end of desirability. The passive construction “should be punished by handing over” also depicts the girl as the means through which male or family conflict is resolved.

The passage evokes negative Judgement of the decision-makers on grounds of propriety. It also evokes Affect, sympathy for the girl and indignation at her instrumentalisation. The moral force comes not from a direct statement that the jirga is unjust but from the arrangement of participants and the intensified contrast. This is a strong example of how experiential description and interpersonal evaluation interact.

The cultural representation is sharply negative, but its scope is specific: it concerns a described dispute-resolution practice, not every Pakistani or Pashtun marriage. A journal-level interpretation should therefore avoid turning the extract into evidence that the memoir condemns an entire nation. What can be demonstrated is that the narrator selects and linguistically intensifies an example that makes coercive customary authority morally legible to readers unfamiliar with the practice.

The memoir frequently constructs gendered meaning through contrast between positively evaluated women and restrictive social conditions. “Maryam was a strong, educated woman but in our society, she could not live on her own and come to work” (p. 26) begins with positive Judgement of capacity. “Strong” and “educated” represent Maryam as competent, while “but” introduces counter-expectancy: the social outcome conflicts with what her qualities would normally predict.

The phrase “in our society” broadens the frame beyond Maryam’s individual circumstances. Nevertheless, the sentence does not state that all women are unable to live independently; it presents social convention as an obstacle in this case. The contrast invites readers to judge the restriction, not Maryam, negatively. It also constructs the narrator as an evaluator capable of distinguishing personal merit from structural limitation.

A related passage states, “In our culture speeches are usually written by our fathers, uncles or teachers” (p. 59). “Usually” is a resource of usuality and Graduation that normalises the distribution of authorship. The list “fathers, uncles or teachers” combines family and institutional authority. Because two of the three role categories are explicitly male kinship roles, the sentence can evoke a gendered distribution of discursive power. “Speeches” are not a lexical metaphor in themselves; rather, the practice of having authority figures compose a child’s public words symbolises dependence and mediated voice in the broader narrative.

The interpersonal significance lies in the memoir’s contrast between inherited speech and self-authorship. Malala’s later public voice becomes meaningful because it departs from the described norm. Yet the passage also leaves room for a less exclusively gendered interpretation: teachers may be male or female, and adults commonly assist children with speeches in many societies. The stronger claim is therefore that the memoir represents public expression as institutionally supervised and then uses Malala’s increasing authorship to construct agency.

The burqa passages combine Appreciation, simile, and embodied Affect. “Wearing a burqa is like walking inside [a] big fabric shuttlecock with only a grille to see through, and on hot days it’s like an oven” (p. 51) evaluates the garment through two concrete comparisons. “Shuttlecock” evokes restricted shape and limited vision; “oven” evokes heat and physical discomfort. “Big” adds scale, while “only” constricts the available visual field. The negative evaluation is therefore experiential and embodied rather than abstractly theological.

The passage can align readers against enforced veiling, particularly readers who recognise an “oven” as intolerably hot. However, the extract describes the narrator’s sensory experience and should not automatically be treated as a universal judgement on every form of veiling. The text’s critical force emerges from the chosen similes and their placement within a narrative of constrained female mobility.

By contrast, “I wore more fashionable clothes and didn’t cover my face” (p. 51) assigns positive Appreciation to clothing through “fashionable” and coordinates it with the refusal to cover the face. The clause constructs self-presentation as a field of agency. Yet “fashionable” does not inherently mean Western; its ideological force comes from the contrast with the preceding account of the burqa. The pair of passages creates a scale between restriction and chosen appearance, positioning the narrator toward individual preference.

Another example states, “She disapproves of dancing because she says God would not like it ... but I love to dance behind closed doors with my school friends” (p. 74). The attributed clause “she says” introduces another moral voice, making the sentence heteroglossic. “But” counters that voice, and “I love” explicitly inscribes positive Affect. “Behind closed doors” signals negotiated rather than unrestricted agency: the activity is pleasurable but spatially concealed. The passage therefore constructs a tension among religious

interpretation, social respectability, friendship, and private enjoyment. It does not simply oppose religion and freedom; it dramatises how a young narrator manages competing norms.

The sentence “I was scared that if the Taliban caught me going to school, they would throw acid in my face as they had done to girls in Afghanistan” (p. 119) explicitly inscribes Affect through “scared.” The anticipated act evokes severe negative Judgement of the Taliban on grounds of propriety. The conditional structure presents the violence as feared rather than already experienced, while the comparative clause supplies a precedent that makes the fear plausible within the narrative.

The passage positions schooling as morally innocent and the threatened punishment as extreme. This asymmetry strongly aligns readers with the narrator. It is important, however, not to recode “acid” as a metaphor for Pakistani culture. In the sentence, acid is a literal threatened weapon, and the agents are specifically the Taliban. Treating the act as representative of all Pakistani people would reproduce the very overgeneralisation that critical analysis seeks to identify.

Intertextual comparison contributes to the narrator’s heroic positioning in “Please God make Malala like Benazir Bhutto but do not give her Benazir’s short life” (p. 120). The quoted prayer is attributed to another voice, which reduces the grounds for treating it as direct self-aggrandisement. The comparison positively Judges Bhutto’s public stature while “short life” evokes the risk associated with female political visibility. The prayer simultaneously elevates Malala’s potential and registers fear of martyrdom.

The passage is dialogically complex. The narrator reports a comparison made by someone else, allowing an exceptional identity to enter the memoir without being asserted monoglossically by Malala. This is an Engagement strategy: attributed praise can contribute to self-construction while preserving modest distance. It also links the educational activist to a national rather than exclusively Western genealogy of female public leadership.

Class is constructed through negatively valued material description. “We lived in a shabby shack of two rooms opposite the school” (p. 17) contains the explicit negative Appreciation “shabby,” while “shack” itself carries connotations of poor construction and limited resources. The alliteration of “shabby shack” intensifies the memorability of the phrase. At the same time, “opposite the school” connects material scarcity with proximity to education, a contrast that supports the memoir’s broader account of aspiration.

This representation encourages sympathy, but it also contributes to a moral identity based on modest origins. The narrator is positioned as someone whose later global prominence emerged despite constrained resources. Such self-positioning is common in public life narratives and does not necessarily imply criticism of an entire society.

A later exchange, “Who will pay? ... We don’t have any money.” “Don’t worry, your government will pay” (p. 204)—inscribes financial anxiety and introduces an institutional response. The first-person plural constructs family vulnerability; the reply attributes responsibility to the Pakistani state. Contrary to an interpretation that the memoir simply erases state support, this extract explicitly acknowledges government payment. The evaluative pattern is therefore mixed: fear about affordability coexists with reassurance and institutional provision.

This example demonstrates why analysis should attend to dialogic structure rather than isolate a single clause. The question evokes insecurity, but the response modifies the evaluative trajectory. The government is represented as capable of assuming financial responsibility, even if broader passages elsewhere criticise state institutions.

Political authority, dissent, and international assistance

“My father’s college held a heated debate in a packed room ... ‘respond with our own book,’ he suggested” (p. 36) constructs debate as intense through “heated” and highly attended through “packed.” Neither adjective proves extremism. Instead, they scale the public significance of the controversy. The attributed proposal to answer a book with another book positively Judges the father’s commitment to argument rather than violence.

The passage positions the father as a model of reasoned dissent and establishes a local, Muslim, Pakistani voice defending discursive response. This complicates any binary in which liberal speech is exclusively Western and intolerance exclusively Eastern. The memoir’s positive values are embodied within the narrator’s family and community as well as in international institutions.

Similarly, the phrase “controversial themes such as honour killing and women’s rights” (p. 64) uses “controversial” to mark contested public issues. The adjective does not itself specify whether the themes are good or bad; it construes them as socially disputed. Their pairing, however, places violence against women and claims for rights within a shared field of debate, foregrounding the father’s willingness to address them.

Political disappointment is expressed in “But my father cried when he heard the news. He had thought we were done with military dictatorship” (p. 57). “Cried” realises Affect, while “military dictatorship” carries explicit negative political valuation. “Had thought” encodes a prior expectation, and “but” orients the event as a reversal. The target of criticism is a form of government, not Pakistani culture as an undifferentiated whole.

International assistance appears in the juxtaposition “Respected ambassador, I request you, please help us girls to get an education” and “We have pledged billions of dollars in economic aid” (p. 137). “Respected” is a politeness resource rather than unqualified admiration. “Please” and “request” construct a lower-power petition, whereas “billions” amplifies the scale of the institutional response. The exchange can support a rescue reading because assistance is sought from a foreign representative, but it also shows Malala acting as an advocate rather than a passive recipient. Her agency consists in publicly demanding that promised resources address girls’ education.

The interpersonal configuration is therefore asymmetrical but not simply submissive. The narrator uses deference strategically while articulating a specific political claim. A balanced postcolonial reading should recognise both the unequal global structure and the local speaker’s rhetorical agency.

Extremism, religion, and contested Muslim identity

The rhetorical question “We were now garlanding murderers? Our country was going crazy” (p. 154) contains explicit negative Judgement. “Murderers” condemns the honoured actors, while “crazy” negatively evaluates the national situation. The first-person plural “we” and possessive “our” include the narrator within the criticised collective rather than placing her wholly outside it. The question mark invites reader agreement and signals incredulity.

This sentence is among the manuscript’s clearest generalisations. “Our country” extends evaluation from a specific act of public honouring to a national condition. Yet the metaphorical “going crazy” is temporal and processual rather than essentialist: it depicts a society as entering an alarming state, not as inherently irrational. The distinction does not remove the broadness of the claim, but it moderates its implications.

Religious motivation is evaluated in “So, heaven with its seventy-two virgins sounded attractive” (p. 27). The numerical phrase does not itself constitute Attitude, but “attractive” positively appreciates the imagined reward from the perspective being represented. In context, the wording may carry irony because it explains how a promise can recruit young men into violence. The analysis should therefore distinguish the narrator’s reported explanation from endorsement. The sentence frames extremist persuasion as dependent on desire and simplification.

The passage about the shopkeeper, he “got scared thinking we might be suicide bombers as many suicide bombers wore the burqa” (p. 117) contains explicit Affect in “scared” and quantification in “many.” It represents the burqa as a sign that has become associated with militant violence. The anecdote can reinforce a stereotype, but it also depicts that stereotype as the shopkeeper’s fearful inference. Attribution matters: the memoir reports a social association rather than directly declaring that veiled women are dangerous.

“They think their greatest concern is defending Islam” (p. 164) is heteroglossic through “they think.” “Greatest” amplifies the attributed priority, while the reporting frame distances the narrator from it. The sentence critiques a particular group’s claim to religious defence and opens a distinction between Islam and actions undertaken in its name. Such passages can be interpreted as internal religious contestation rather than rejection of Islam.

The line referring to “Pakistan’s Mother Teresa” (p. 194) uses a culturally recognisable comparison to praise humanitarian care. The reference can contribute to a saviour discourse by making virtue legible through a famous Christian and Western-associated figure. However, the expression is attributed to a speaker within the narrative and may also function pragmatically as shorthand for extraordinary service.

The phrase “the white woman” explicitly marks race and foreignness. Its presence shows awareness that blame, responsibility, and media attention are unevenly distributed across national and racial lines. Rather than simply celebrating Western rescue, the passage reveals anxiety about what would happen if a foreign caregiver were associated with harm to Malala. This makes the episode more ambivalent than a straightforward West-as-saviour binary.

The aphorism “When you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you achieve it” (p. 123) personifies the universe and amplifies individual aspiration. “Conspires” is metaphorical, but it is positively revalued: a word normally associated with secrecy and harm becomes a force of support. The sentence aligns with a global inspirational register in which determination attracts assistance. Within the memoir, it helps transform educational advocacy into a universal moral project.

“While some papers described me as a ‘peace icon’, others carried the usual conspiracy theories” (p. 196) explicitly contrasts two media evaluations. “Peace icon” is attributed praise rather than direct self-description, and quotation marks may signal awareness of the label’s constructed quality. “Usual” negatively appreciates the conspiracy theories as repetitive and predictable. The clause is strongly heteroglossic: it stages competing public voices and positions the narrator between admiration and suspicion.

The contrast also resists a simple claim that Pakistani reception was uniformly hostile. “Some” and “others” divide the press into different positions. At the same time, the lexical asymmetry encourages readers to regard the positive description as credible and the conspiratorial response as formulaic. Engagement resources therefore manage controversy by acknowledging opposition while limiting its legitimacy.

The passages concerning prayer require particular caution because informal address to God is not inherently Western. “Dear God ... I know you see everything, but there are so many things that maybe, sometimes,

things get missed” (p. 67) combines certainty, concession, and attenuation. “I know” expresses high commitment to divine omniscience. “But” introduces a childlike problem, while “maybe” and “sometimes” soften the apparent challenge. “So many” amplifies the volume of suffering.

The resulting voice is intimate and youthful. It can be interpreted as a child adapting the form of a letter to prayer, but there is insufficient linguistic evidence to classify it as a Westernised theology. Direct, personal address to God occurs across religious traditions. The stronger conclusion is that the memoir translates private devotion into an accessible epistolary register for readers.

“We believe Allah listens more closely to the white-haired” (p. 183) uses “we believe” to mark a culturally shared proposition while retaining dialogic distance. “More closely” grades divine attention, and “white-haired” metonymically denotes older people. The sentence represents respect for elders and a belief in the efficacy of their prayers. Depending on co-text, it may be affectionate, humorous, or critical; the wording alone does not justify describing it as mockery.

“He told God, ‘This is unacceptable’” (p. 67) portrays the father’s grief through reported speech. “Unacceptable” is a forceful negative Judgement of the situation, not necessarily an attempt to command God. The formulation may indicate lament, protest, and intimacy under trauma. Religious traditions contain extensive forms of lament in which believers address God directly. Reading the sentence only through a West–East binary would therefore flatten its theological and emotional complexity.

Across the extracts, inscribed Attitude is frequently realised through adjectives such as “terrible,” “strong,” “educated,” “shabby,” “heated,” “controversial,” “crazy,” and “usual.” Graduation intensifies evaluation through “very,” superlatives such as “most” and “least,” quantifiers such as “many” and “billions,” and contrastive formulations. Evoked Attitude emerges through descriptions of coerced marriage, acid violence, restricted visibility, financial anxiety, and political reversal.

The narrative’s principal interpersonal strategy is moral alignment. Readers are invited to condemn coercion, militant violence, political authoritarianism, and restrictions on education. They are invited to admire courage, learning, reasoned debate, family support, and humanitarian care. These values are not distributed neatly between Pakistan and the West. Positive figures include Malala, her father, Maryam, teachers, and local advocates; negative targets include the Taliban, coercive decision-makers, military dictatorship, and celebrations of convicted killers. International institutions are represented as potential sources of assistance, but the narrator is often an active petitioner and political speaker rather than a passive object of rescue.

A second pattern is contrastive self-positioning. Malala and her family are repeatedly differentiated from practices represented as restrictive, violent, or unquestioned. This can create discursive distance from portions of the surrounding society and can make the narrative compatible with liberal global values. In some passages, generic expressions such as “our society,” “our culture,” or “our country” broaden the scope of criticism. These generalisations deserve scrutiny because international readers may treat local or contested practices as national essences.

Nevertheless, the evidence does not support describing the entire memoir as a simple denunciation of Pakistan or Islam. The narrator’s use of “we” and “our” often maintains identification with the nation and community. The text portrays Pakistani agents of education, dissent, care, and democratic aspiration. It also differentiates militant claims to defend Islam from the narrator’s own religious belief. The cultural representation is therefore selective and evaluative, but internally heterogeneous.

From a re-Orientalist perspective, some descriptions may resonate with established global narratives of oppressed Muslim women, irrational publics, and rescue through international intervention. Yet resonance is not proof of fabrication. The more defensible conclusion is that the memoir translates specific experiences into evaluative forms that are readily intelligible to transnational audiences. This translation can both expose genuine injustice and simplify cultural complexity.

The findings confirm the value of Appraisal analysis for separating linguistic evidence from ideological inference. An adjective can be shown to inscribe evaluation; an intensifier can be shown to amplify it; an attributed voice can be shown to manage dialogic responsibility. Broader claims about cultural cringe, Orientalism, or market alignment require an additional interpretive step and should be presented as contextual readings rather than grammatical facts.

CONCLUSION

This article examined how interpersonal meanings and cultural representations are constructed in selected passages from *I Am Malala* through the resources described by Appraisal Theory. The analysis demonstrates that evaluation is central to the memoir's rhetorical and autobiographical work. Explicit adjectives, intensifiers, superlatives, quantifiers, contrastive conjunctions, rhetorical questions, reported speech, and contextually charged descriptions guide readers toward particular emotional and moral responses.

The first research question concerned the realisation of interpersonal meaning. The findings show that inscribed Affect communicates fear, admiration, grief, and pleasure; Judgement evaluates violence, coercion, capacity, courage, and political conduct; and Appreciation assigns value to practices, material conditions, clothing, public debate, and media narratives. Graduation strengthens these evaluations, while Engagement allows the memoir to introduce praise, suspicion, religious claims, and political opinions through attributed voices. The narrative therefore positions readers not only through what is represented but through how strongly, whose voice is invoked, and what alternatives are acknowledged or countered.

The second research question concerned cultural representation. The selected passages construct coercive marriage, militant violence, authoritarian politics, and restrictions on female autonomy negatively, while education, reasoned dissent, courage, and care are constructed positively. In several instances, generic expressions broaden a local observation into "our society," "our culture," or "our country," increasing the possibility that international readers will interpret contested practices as nationally representative. At the same time, the memoir portrays substantial agency within Pakistan and within Muslim family life. Malala's father, teachers, classmates, and other local figures embody the values of education, debate, and resistance. The text therefore cannot be adequately described through a simple opposition between an oppressive East and a liberating West.

The study supports a balanced account of autobiographical cultural discourse. *I Am Malala* is neither a neutral ethnography nor merely an externally imposed stereotype. It is a situated and co-authored memoir shaped by personal experience, trauma, advocacy, cultural translation, and global publication. Its evaluative language makes particular experiences morally intelligible to heterogeneous readers, but those representations should not be treated as exhaustive accounts of Pakistan, Pashtun culture, or Islam.

The analysis also identifies a methodological lesson. Claims about ideological bias must follow from demonstrable textual patterns rather than precede them. Appraisal categories can establish that a passage evaluates, intensifies, attributes, or contrasts; they cannot by themselves prove authorial motive. Concepts such as Orientalism and re-Orientalism are most useful when they contextualise recurrent patterns while preserving alternative interpretations.

The study is limited by its qualitative and selective design. It analyses passages retained from the source manuscript rather than every evaluative item in the memoir, does not provide frequency counts, and does not use multiple coders. The co-authored and edited nature of the text also makes it inappropriate to attribute every lexical decision exclusively to Malala Yousafzai. Future research could use corpus-assisted Appraisal coding across the full memoir, compare editions or translations, examine reader reception, and contrast *I Am Malala* with other conflict memoirs by Pakistani and Muslim women.

Despite these limitations, the study demonstrates that Appraisal Theory offers a productive framework for analysing life writing. It shows how cultural meaning is built through local linguistic choices and how autobiographical authority is negotiated through evaluation. Such analysis encourages a form of criticism that is attentive both to the realities of gendered and political violence and to the risks of converting individual testimony into a totalising cultural narrative.

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