

Appraisal System and Affective Stance in Mel Robbins' Podcast Interview on Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

This study examines the realization of the Appraisal System and the construction of affective stance in an expert-layperson podcast interaction, focusing on an episode of The Mel Robbins Podcast featuring a Yale emotional intelligence expert. Adopting a descriptive qualitative design grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics and supported by descriptive quantification of the coded evaluative categories, the analysis integrates the Appraisal framework with the Stance Triangle model to examine how evaluative meaning and affective positioning are enacted across 292 coded evaluative clauses drawn from a 64-minute, approximately 10,932-word transcript. Findings indicate that Judgement (39.4%) was the most frequent Attitude category, surpassing Affect (32.5%) and Appreciation (28.1%), a pattern attributed to the episode's narrative structure built around personal disclosure requiring evaluation of human conduct. Within Affect, Insecurity dominated; within Judgement, Capacity prevailed over Propriety; and within Appreciation, positive Valuation was directed overwhelmingly at emotion-regulation techniques rather than people, suggesting Appreciation functions as an implicit marker of knowledge acceptance in pedagogical talk. Stance analysis identified two recurring patterns: alignment through lexical echo and disalignment followed by collaborative repair, the latter occurring more frequently and demonstrating that the stance-taking process operates iteratively as a mechanism for correcting misjudgement in real time. These results indicate that Judgement functions as an interpretive scaffold through which Affect becomes meaningful to lay audiences in expert-mediated emotion talk. The study contributes provisional theoretical refinements to the integrated appraisal-stance approach and offers practical implications for popular psychology media, emotional education, and interview-based science communication design.

Keywords: *Appraisal System, Affective Stance, Podcast Discourse*

Introduction

The evolution of new digital media in the contemporary era has fundamentally transformed the landscape of mass communication and interpersonal interaction in the public sphere (Habermas, 2022; Seignani, 2022). Audiovisual platforms such as podcasts no longer serve merely as entertainment tools. Instead, they have converted into discursive arenas that facilitate public education, identity construction, and the dissemination of popular psychology discourse. One of the most prominent discursive phenomena in personal development podcasts is the mainstreaming of emotion talk, which is defined as the explicit use of language to express, communicate, and evaluate emotional experiences (Zappettini et al., 2021). In this digital interactional space, emotions are no longer viewed solely as internal psychological symptoms of an individual.

Rather, emotions operate as discursive practices and social semiotic resources that are intersubjectively constructed through specific linguistic choices (Milani & Richardson, 2021).

Spoken discourse within podcasts carries a dual function: it serves as a vehicle for transmitting ideational meaning and acts as an interpersonal tool for establishing social relationships and expressing evaluation (Silaban et al., 2025). As speakers interact in podcasts, they constantly negotiate an affective stance toward the topic under discussion, themselves, and their interlocutors. Emotional expressions delivered through spoken utterances play a crucial role in building audience engagement, facilitating empathy, and cultivating interpersonal affiliation (Glenn, 2022) among interactional participants. Therefore, analyzing discourse surrounding emotional language in new media is essential for understanding how emotional values and social attitudes are produced, negotiated, and consumed in modern society.

To examine the complexity of evaluative language and emotional expressions in spoken interaction, Systemic Functional Linguistics, particularly the Appraisal System developed by Martin and White (2005), provides a comprehensive theoretical and methodological framework. The Appraisal framework focuses on interpersonal semantics and categorizes evaluative language into three main domains, which are Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation (Martin & White, 2005). The domain of Attitude is further divided into three subsystems: Affect, which covers evaluations of feelings and emotions; Judgement, which addresses evaluations of human behavior, ethics, and morality; and Appreciation, which evaluates the aesthetics, composition, and value of objects or phenomena (Hadidi & Mohammadbagheri-Parvin, 2015).

The modeling of Affect in Systemic Functional Linguistics, as updated by Benítez-Castro and Hidalgo-Tenorio (2019), emphasizes that emotional utterances are dynamic and scalar, encompassing positive and negative feelings experienced by speakers or projected onto others. Nevertheless, the expression of Affect in spoken interaction does not operate in isolation. It closely interacts with the framework of stance-taking formulated by Du Bois (2007) stating that a speaker performs three simultaneous discursive acts during interaction: evaluating an object, positioning the self affectively or epistemically, and aligning or disaligning with the interlocutor. Combining the Appraisal System (Martin & White, 2005) with affective stance (Hyland, 2005) allows researchers to analyze not only what specific emotions are expressed in clauses, but also how those emotions are strategically deployed to construct empathy, validate feelings, and direct the dynamics of spoken interaction. In the present study, Hyland's (2005) notion of affective stance is invoked here only as background motivation for treating evaluation as interactionally consequential; the stance model actually operationalized in coding is Du Bois's (2007) Stance Triangle, introduced in the Method.

Although the application of the Appraisal System and Systemic Functional Linguistics has expanded significantly over the past two decades (Phan, 2025), previous studies have predominantly focused on written texts and formal or institutional genres. For instance, research by Kusuma and Darma Laksana (2020) as well as Handoko et al. (2026) applied systemic functional linguistics analysis to political speeches. Other studies have extensively applied this evaluative theory to news texts, literary works, and translation studies (Bednarek, 2009; Q. Y. Liu et al., 2022).

Although recent investigations have begun to explore social media platforms such as X or Twitter and other digital media (Hassani et al., 2024), linguistic research that deeply examines emotional expressions and affective stance in interactive spoken conversations, particularly in psychology podcast interviews, remains relatively scarce.

Podcast discourse presents a rich context of spontaneous spoken language containing dependent clauses, paralinguistic elements, and continuous interpersonal dynamics (Pelttari, 2022).

Specifically, a distinct research gap exists regarding how interaction between an expert and a layperson develops within the discourse of emotional health. While recent studies have begun to examine expert-layperson podcast discourse in adjacent domains, such as science communication (L. Liu & Jiang, 2024), linguistic research specifically addressing affective stance-taking in psychology-focused podcast interviews remains scarce. An interview episode from *The Mel Robbins Podcast* featuring Dr. Mark Brackett, a professor and director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence as well as author of *Permission to Feel*, offers a unique intersection of discourse contexts. On one side, Mel Robbins represents a popular host who utilizes popular psychology expressions, expressive intonation, and high emotional openness. On the other side, Dr. Mark Brackett brings academic expertise that is structured yet required to be approachable, communicative, and emotionally responsive. This interactional dynamic raises an important linguistic question on the way appraisal clause choices are utilized by the host and guest to distribute empathy, convey judgement, and establish affective alignment instantly during public interaction. Building on this gap, the present study synthesizes findings from stance-taking and podcast-discourse research to isolate a specific interactional mechanism, namely how Appraisal resources and stance-taking jointly organize expert-layperson emotional-education talk, that has not yet been systematically documented; it is this mechanism, rather than the general scarcity of research, that constitutes the study's novelty.

To address this research gap, this qualitative linguistic study aims to investigate the realization of the Appraisal System and the construction of affective stance in spoken interaction between Mel Robbins and Dr. Mark Brackett on *The Mel Robbins Podcast*. This study focuses on analyzing clause structures to uncover how interpersonal meaning and affective stance are realized both textually and contextually. It aims to contribute to Appraisal and stance-taking research by examining the interaction between Appraisal resources and stance construction in expert-mediated emotion talk and provides a linguistic perspective on evaluative meaning in popular psychology discourse. Specifically, this study is designed to answer two main research questions:

1. How are the distribution and usage patterns of appraisal categories (affect, judgement, and appreciation) realized within the clause structures of Mel Robbins as host and Dr. Mark Brackett as guest?
2. How do the interactions among these appraisal clause choices construct affective stance, empathy building, and emotional alignment within expert and layperson interactional dynamics?

Method

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative research design grounded in the framework of systemic functional linguistics and discourse analysis. A qualitative approach is particularly suitable for this investigation because the primary objective is to interpret, analyze, and describe how evaluative meanings and affective stances are constructed within spoken interaction rather than measuring variables or testing statistical hypotheses (Schrauf et al., 2020). The analytical framework integrates the Appraisal System developed by Martin and White (2005) with the stance-taking model formulated by Du Bois (2007). Through this integrated semiotic approach, spoken

utterances are examined to uncover the interpersonal choices embedded within clause structures. The researcher serves as the primary instrument for data collection, coding, and qualitative interpretation (Pezalla et al., 2012), ensuring that subtle contextual nuances, conversational dynamics, and interpersonal alignments are thoroughly analyzed within their natural interactional setting.

The data source for this study is a video episode of *The Mel Robbins Podcast* featuring guest speaker Dr. Mark Brackett, entitled *Permission to Feel*, with a total running time of approximately 64 minutes (from 00:00 to 1:04:04). The episode was retrieved from the official YouTube channel of *The Mel Robbins Podcast*. This specific episode was selected because it presents a rich interactional dialogue between a prominent popular psychology host and an established academic expert from the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. Its explicit thematic focus on emotional disclosure was selected in advance using pre-established criteria of narrative density, and was subsequently confirmed during coding to yield, a high density of affect, judgement, and appreciation expressions across both participants.

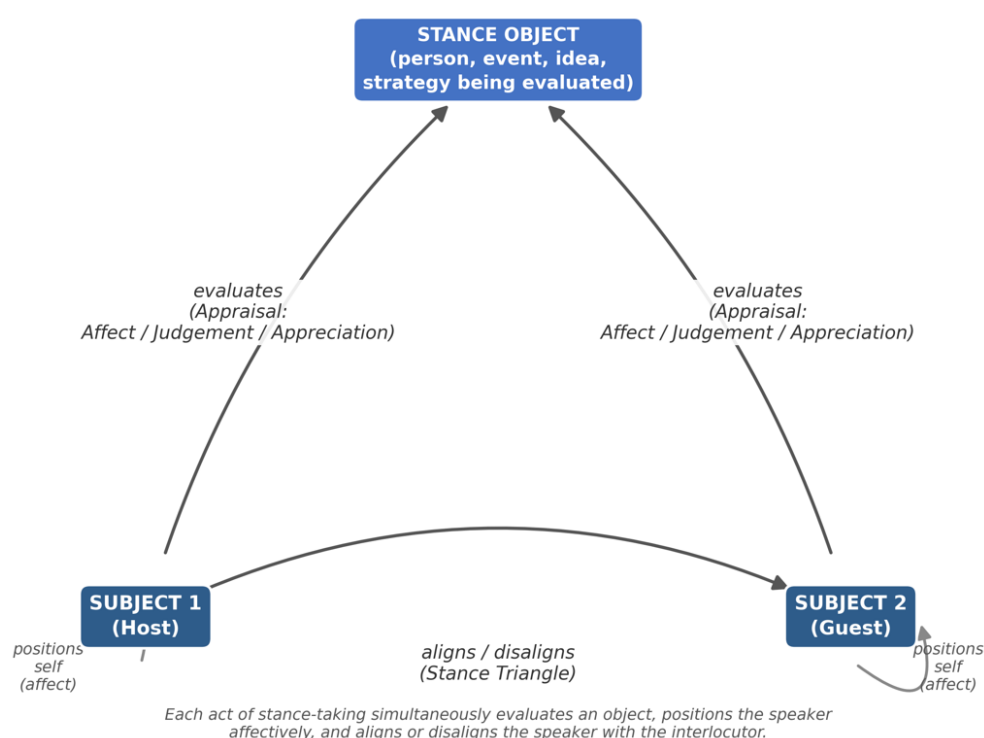
The primary research data consist of verbal utterances produced by both the host and the guest during the podcast interaction. The spoken audio recording was transcribed verbatim into textual form (approximately 10,932 words) and subsequently segmented into clause units, which constitute the fundamental unit of analysis in Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). The complete transcript was estimated to comprise approximately 1,095 clause-level units, based on sentence boundary and coordinating or subordinating conjunction segmentation applied to the full transcript. Of these, 292 clauses were identified as containing explicit or implicit evaluative expressions of affect, judgement, and appreciation, representing approximately 26.7% of all clauses in the transcript. This distribution across the three attitude categories was as follows: Judgement (n = 115, 39.4%), Affect (n = 95, 32.5%), and Appreciation (n = 82, 28.1%). In terms of realization, the majority of coded instances were inscribed (n = 239, 81.8%), with a smaller proportion invoked through co-textually confirmed implicit evaluation (n = 52, 17.8%). Because this heuristic denominator may not correspond precisely to clause-complex boundaries as defined in Systemic Functional Linguistics, a reproducible segmentation rule with illustrative examples should be reported, and clause boundaries should be manually verified for at least the fully coded dataset and a reliability subsample.

To systematically identify and analyze interpersonal meanings, the data were coded according to the Attitude subsystem of the Appraisal framework (Martin & White, 2005). The coding scheme incorporates three major evaluative categories. First, affect evaluates emotional states, reactions, and feelings expressed by the speakers or attributed to others. Affect is classified into subcategories of un/happiness, in/security, and dis/satisfaction, which are further identified by their positive or negative polarities (Bednarek, 2009). Second, judgement assesses human behavior, social character, and moral ethical conduct against established social norms. Judgement is divided into social esteem, which includes normality, capacity, and tenacity, and social sanction, which covers veracity and propriety (Kilpert, 2004). Third, appreciation evaluates nonhuman entities, abstract concepts, processes, or natural phenomena in terms of reaction, composition, and valuation (Hadidi & Mohammadbagheri-Parvin, 2015).

Both explicit (inscribed) and implicit (invoked) appraisal were coded. Inscribed appraisal was identified through the presence of an explicit attitudinal lexical item directly encoding polarity. Invoked appraisal was identified through two operational tests. The first was the presence of ideational content that reliably triggers an attitudinal reading in context, consistent with cultural and co-textual norms shared by the analyst.

The second was confirmability through co-text, meaning the invoked meaning had to be corroborated by an explicit attitudinal token within the same or an adjacent clause. Clauses in which an invoked reading could not be corroborated by either test were excluded from the corpus to reduce coder subjectivity. Additionally, the analysis incorporates the Stance Triangle model (Du Bois, 2007) to examine how Appraisal clause choices establish affective stance as illustrated in Figure 1, where each coded clause is evaluated based on how the speaker simultaneously evaluates an object, positions the self affectively, and aligns or disaligns with the interlocutor during interaction. To further limit interpretive subjectivity, each invoked-appraisal decision was cross-checked against at least one representative inclusion and one exclusion example, and these representative examples are reported alongside the coding scheme.

Figure 1. The Stance Triangle (adapted from Du Bois, 2007)



Data collection and analysis were conducted through a systematic five-stage procedural sequence (Bingham, 2023). The first stage involved transcribing the audiovisual recording of the podcast episode into a comprehensive written transcript. Special attention was paid to capturing verbal expressions accurately while noting relevant paralinguistic markers such as laughter, pauses, and emphatic stress that contribute to affective stance (Zafar & Riaz, 2025). The second stage comprised clause segmentation, following the operational criteria described above. The third stage was the coding and categorization process, in which each of the 292 evaluative clauses was analyzed contextually and assigned appropriate Appraisal tags corresponding to Affect, Judgement, or Appreciation; the affective stance associated with each clause was simultaneously annotated by identifying the evaluative object, speaker positioning, and interactional alignment (Hidalgo-Downing & Pérez-Sobrino, 2024). The fourth stage involved quantitative tabulation of the frequencies and percentages reported above. These numerical data serve strictly as supporting descriptive indicators to illustrate overall distribution patterns across host and guest utterances rather than for statistical

inferencing. The fifth stage was qualitative interpretation and discussion, in which the coded clauses were analyzed contextually to explain how choices in interpersonal semantics construct empathy, facilitate emotion talk, and mediate expert-layperson conversational dynamics (Ansó-Millán, 2025; Bednarek, 2008; Glenn, 2022).

To ensure analytical rigor, this study employed a systematic, transcript-wide, single-coder coding procedure conducted in chronological sequence from the beginning to the end of the episode so that no section of the interaction was excluded from consideration. Every coding decision was accompanied by a written justification specifying whether the evaluative meaning was inscribed or invoked and identifying the co-textual evidence supporting that classification, following the practice recommended for transparent appraisal analysis (Fuoli, 2018). As a limitation, formal inter-coder reliability testing (for example, calculating Cohen's Kappa from a second, independently trained coder) was not conducted in this initial pass; this is acknowledged explicitly as a constraint of the present study, and readers are invited to verify the classification of individual clauses against the representative samples and coding justifications presented in the findings section. Where feasible in a revised version, an independent second coder should annotate a representative sample and report inter-coder agreement (e.g., Cohen's Kappa together with raw percentage agreement); if a second coder cannot be recruited, a delayed intra-coder recoding or an expert audit should be conducted and reported explicitly, since the current transparency measures alone do not substitute for a formal reliability check.

Results

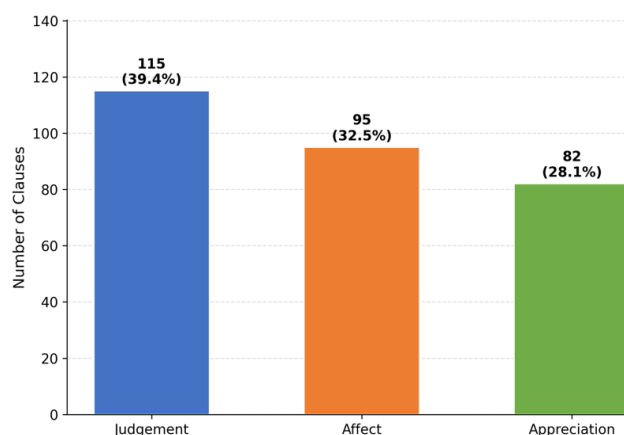
Of the 292 evaluative clauses identified across the 64-minute episode, the following distribution was found.

Table 1. Distribution of Appraisal Categories in the Podcast Corpus

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Judgement	115	39.4%
Affect	95	32.5%
Appreciation	82	28.1%
Total	292	100%

Table 1 shows a pattern that is somewhat different from the initial assumption that a discourse centered on emotion would be dominated by Affect. Instead, Judgement emerged as the most dominant category. This can be explained by the narrative structure of the episode, which is largely built through personal storytelling, including the guest's childhood, parenting patterns, a bullying incident, and marital conflict experienced by the host. Such storytelling inherently invites evaluation of human behavior and character, whether of the self or of others, rather than the simple labeling of feelings. In terms of linguistic realization, the majority of Appraisal instances were inscribed ($n = 239$, 81.8%), while invoked Appraisal was considerably less frequent ($n = 52$, 17.8%). This suggests that within a podcast oriented toward emotional education, both speakers tended to make their evaluations explicit rather than rely on implicature, a pattern consistent with the pedagogical purpose of the discourse: explaining emotional concepts to a lay audience with maximum clarity.

Figure 2. Distribution of Appraisal Categories
 (N = 292 evaluative clauses)



Affect (n = 95) was dominated by the subcategory Insecurity (n = 44, 46.3% of all Affect instances), well ahead of Unhappiness (n = 19) and Happiness (n = 13). This dominance of Insecurity is consistent with the episode's central theme, namely feelings of helplessness, anxiety, and unsafety that recur throughout narratives of the guest's childhood trauma as well as the host's experiences as a parent and spouse. Representative examples include the following.

"I was in fight-or-flight mode all day long" (C111, 12:00, Guest) "I'm not comfortable anymore" (C114, 18:03, Host)

Judgement (n = 115) was dominated by Capacity (n = 54, 47%), followed by Propriety (n = 42, 36.5%). This pattern indicates that evaluation in this episode was directed more toward a person's ability or inability to manage emotion (Capacity) than toward direct violations of moral norms (Propriety), although both remained significant. An example of negative Capacity judgement follows.

"They can't deal with their feelings" (C144, 20:05, Guest)

The particularly salient negative Propriety judgements in the corpus appear in the narratives of abuse and racism, both of which function as pivotal, high-stakes moments in the episode's overall arc.

"The person who was my caretaker was a pedophile" (C011, 5:14, Guest) "you're a different color than your mother, that's disgusting" (C219, 48:59, Guest, reported speech attributed to the bullying perpetrator)

These two clauses represent the highest-intensity negative Judgement in the corpus, and both function as narrative anchors for the subsequent discussion of how negative Judgement experienced in childhood shapes patterns of Affect and negative self-talk in adulthood.

Appreciation (n = 82) was almost entirely realized as Valuation (n = 72, 87.8%), with Reaction occurring far less often (n = 10) and Composition not occurring at all in this dataset. The absence of Composition is linguistically unsurprising, since this subcategory typically appears when evaluating the structure or arrangement of an object (for example "well organized" or "balanced"), a type of evaluation that rarely surfaces in spontaneous spoken discourse centered on personal experience such as this podcast. Appreciation was most frequently directed not at people but at the emotion-regulation strategies and techniques themselves.

"Self-awareness is a gift" (C217, 48:23, Guest).

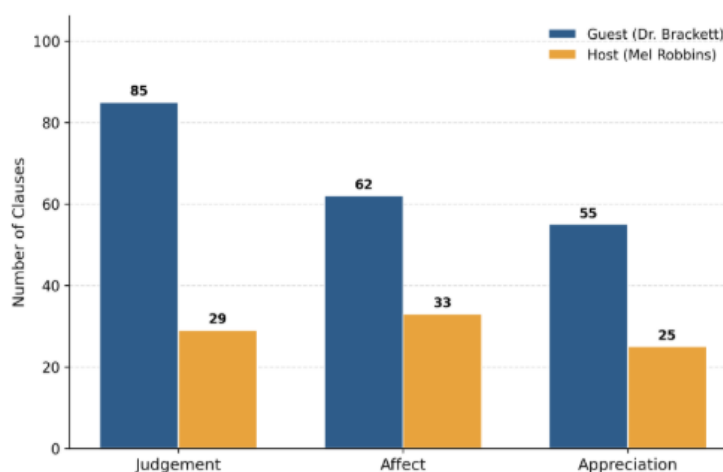
"It's a beautiful technique, it is beautiful" (C265, 56:41, Host)

Table 2. Distribution Across Speakers

Speaker	Total Evaluative Clauses	Affect	Judgement	Appreciation
Guest (Dr. Brackett)	202 (69.2%)	62	85	55
Host (Mel Robbins)	87 (29.8%)	33	29	25

The guest produced a substantially higher absolute number of evaluative clauses, which is consistent with his role as the primary speaker providing expert content. The relative proportion of each category, however, differed between the two speakers, as illustrated in Figure 2. The guest leaned toward Judgement, which accounted for 42% of his total appraisal output, whereas the host distributed her evaluations more evenly between Affect (38%) and Judgement (33%). This pattern points to distinct discursive roles: the guest more frequently explained and evaluated general patterns of human behavior, occupying the position of expert or teacher, while the host more frequently experienced and reported her own affect directly, occupying the position of learner or experiencer. In terms of polarity, both speakers leaned negative overall (Guest: 114 negative versus 73 positive; Host: 49 negative versus 37 positive), confirming that the episode dealt extensively with difficult emotional experiences before arriving at resolution or positive strategy.

Figure 3. Appraisal Category Distribution by Speaker



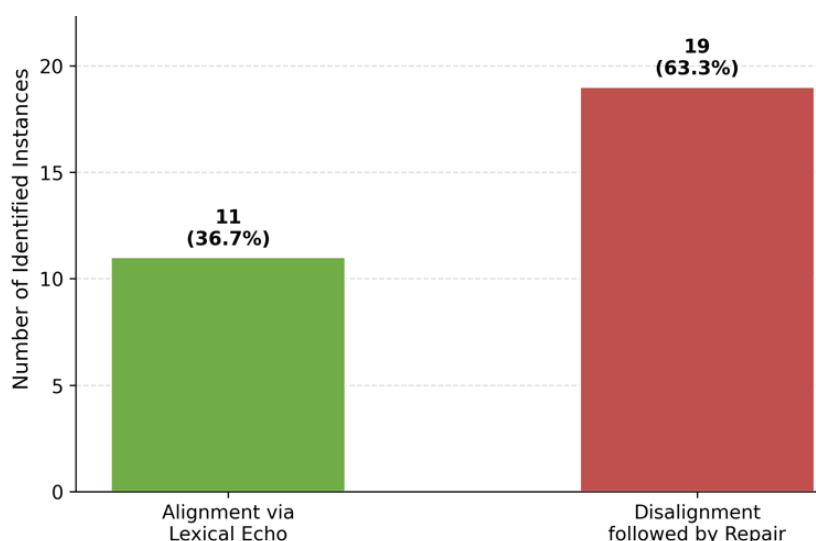
Two dominant stance-taking patterns were identified in the data. The first pattern is alignment through lexical echo. This pattern recurred throughout the episode, in which one speaker repeated an evaluative word or phrase just used by the other speaker rather than offering a new evaluation.

Several examples illustrate this pattern. Guest: "our emotions are guiding us through the day" (C089, 13:33) repeats the host's opening statement (0:36), showing how evaluative lexis introduced early in the episode is echoed later as a marker of thematic coherence. Guest: "All emotions are impermanent" (C198, 40:52) repeats the guest's own

claim from minute 16:31, a form of self-echo that reinforces stance as a pedagogical rhetorical strategy. Host: "me too" (C261, 56:01) functions as the most minimal yet explicit form of alignment, following the guest's affective disclosure about his reaction to news coverage. Host: "that's exactly right" (C101, 15:54) and "it's a beautiful technique, it is beautiful" (C265, 56:41) demonstrate a superlative alignment pattern that reinforces the host's position as an enthusiastic recipient of knowledge. This pattern of lexical echo structurally supports the argument that alignment between the lay host and the academic expert is constructed not through new argumentative elaboration, but through rapid, repetitive evaluative lexical repetition, which functions as an efficient strategy for building epistemic and affective alignment within the accessibility-oriented context of a popular interview format.

The second pattern is temporary disalignment that is quickly repaired, referred to here as misconstrual repair. The clearest example appears at C153 (27:04), when the host directs a negative judgement at herself ("what is the best way to ask somebody as dumb as a question that is?"), which the guest immediately corrects with a positive counter-judgement ("it's not that dumb"). A similar pattern appears in the narratives concerning the host's husband (25:21 to 26:16) and her daughter (24:35 to 25:26), in which an initial mistaken judgement of another person's behavior, interpreted at first as "combative" or as a "power move," is revised through a reflective process guided by the guest into a more accurate and empathetic understanding: the behavior actually reflected fear and a sense of helplessness. This disalignment-repair pattern shows that the Stance Triangle operates not only as a marker of agreement, but also as a collaborative mechanism for revising mistaken judgement in real time within this kind of therapeutic and educational interaction.

Figure 4. Frequency of Stance-Taking Patterns
(N = 30 identified instances)



As illustrated in Figure 4, disalignment followed by repair ($n = 19$) occurred considerably more often than alignment through lexical echo alone ($n = 11$), suggesting that the collaborative construction of understanding in this episode relied as much on correcting misjudgement as on affirming shared evaluation.

Discussion

The finding that Judgement (39.4%) outweighed Affect (32.5%) as the most frequent Attitude category runs counter to a widely held assumption in popular discourse about emotional communication, namely that talk explicitly framed around "emotional intelligence" would be realized primarily through Affect, the category most directly associated with feeling states. This finding is better explained through Bednarek (2008) observation that emotion talk in naturally occurring discourse is rarely purely affective; speakers routinely embed Affect within evaluative frames that simultaneously judge the self or others, particularly when the discourse serves an instructive or corrective function. Because this episode is structured around personal disclosure narratives (childhood abuse, parental conduct, marital conflict, and a bullying incident) rather than abstract emotional description, each narrative act of disclosure inevitably invites a parallel act of Judgement: whose behavior was appropriate, whose was not, and who possessed or lacked the capacity to cope. This is consistent with Martin and Rose's (2007) argument that Judgement operates as the primary linguistic resource for evaluating human conduct against social norms, and it suggests that in expert-mediated emotion talk, Judgement functions as the interpretive scaffold through which Affect is made meaningful to a lay audience, rather than existing as an independent or subordinate category.

Within Affect, the dominance of Insecurity (46.3%) over Unhappiness and Happiness, and within Judgement, the dominance of Capacity (47%) over Propriety, together point to a coherent discursive pattern: this episode is less about naming discrete emotions and more about diagnosing incapacity, the felt and judged inability to manage, predict, or control one's emotional responses. This pattern (Affect frequently co-occurring with Judgement of Capacity) is evident throughout the corpus, where emotional vulnerability is repeatedly reframed not as a fixed trait but as a skill deficit that can, in principle, be remedied. The prominence of Capacity judgements such as "they can't deal with their feelings" (C144) and "we didn't get an emotion education" (C002) supports this reading: incapacity is repeatedly attributed to a lack of learned skill rather than to innate deficiency, a rhetorical move that is central to the show's self-help genre, in which the audience is positioned as capable of change once given the right instruction.

A striking pattern in the Appreciation data is that positive Valuation was directed overwhelmingly at regulation techniques themselves ("self awareness is a gift," C217; "it's a beautiful technique," C265) rather than at people or general concepts. This supports Eggins's (2004) and Hadidi and Mohammadbagheri-Parvin's (2015) framing of Appreciation as a resource for evaluating processes and methods, and extends it to a pedagogical context: in expert-layperson interaction, positive Appreciation of a taught technique appears to function as an implicit endorsement signal, marking the moment at which new knowledge is accepted and validated by the learner. The near-total absence of Composition (0 instances) is theoretically informative rather than a mere gap; it suggests that in spontaneous therapeutic dialogue, structural evaluation of an object's internal arrangement is largely irrelevant compared to its functional value (valuation) or its immediate emotional impact (reaction), a distributional skew that may tentatively be hypothesized as a feature of self-help podcast discourse as a register, worth testing against other podcast corpora in future research.

The two stance-taking patterns identified, lexical echo and misconstrual repair, extend Du Bois's (2007) original formulation of the Stance Triangle in a context-specific way. Du Bois's model was developed primarily to explain how stance is co-constructed through structurally parallel utterances; the present data show that in unscripted,

asymmetrical expert-layperson dialogue, this parallelism is frequently achieved through direct lexical repetition rather than through structurally parallel but lexically distinct evaluations. This is consistent with Du Bois and Kärkkäinen's (2012) emphasis on stance as a resource that is dialogically distributed rather than individually authored, and with evidence from interview discourse that repetition and paraphrase function as economical alignment devices in real-time spoken interaction, where elaborated argumentation is often communicatively costly (Glenn, 2022; Shi et al., 2022). The misconstrual repair pattern, in which an interlocutor's initial Judgement is revised mid-interaction (as in the analysis of the host's husband and daughter, C211 to C240 region), further suggests that the Stance Triangle is not a static, single-pass model but an iterative one in expert-mediated talk: the expert's role includes actively correcting the layperson's stance object, not merely aligning with it. This finding resonates with Glenn's (2022) discussion of stance as an interactionally negotiated, rather than individually fixed, phenomenon, and it suggests a theoretical refinement worth pursuing further: that expert-layperson podcast dialogue may constitute a distinct subgenre of stance-taking in which pedagogical correction and affective alignment are functionally intertwined.

Taken together, these findings suggest three refinements to the integrated appraisal stance framework as applied to expert-mediated emotion talk. These refinements are proposed here as tentative analytical propositions rather than established theoretical modifications; each is linked to the study's two research questions below, distinguishing claims directly supported by the frequency patterns from those that are primarily interpretive. First, Judgement, not Affect, may be the primary organizing category in discourse that frames emotional experience as a skill to be taught, since teaching necessarily requires evaluating conduct against a normative standard. Second, Appreciation in such discourse tends to cluster around the pedagogical object (the strategy, the technique, the reframe) rather than around persons, suggesting that Appreciation functions partly as an endorsement mechanism for transmitted knowledge. Third, the Stance Triangle, when applied to spontaneous, asymmetrical dialogue, benefits from an added analytical distinction between confirmatory alignment (lexical echo) and corrective alignment (misconstrual repair), since these two forms of alignment serve markedly different interactional functions, one affirming shared understanding, the other actively reshaping it.

For practitioners of popular science communication and emotional education media, these findings offer a concrete, though not yet empirically tested, insight: audience engagement with abstract concepts may be facilitated less by extended argumentative elaboration and more by short, repeatable evaluative phrases that both speakers can echo. This has implications for scriptwriting or interview preparation for similar podcast formats, where deliberately introducing a memorable evaluative phrase early (for example, "emotions pile up like a debt") and allowing it to be echoed later may be a more effective engagement strategy than introducing new terminology throughout. For educators and clinicians working in emotional intelligence training, the corpus also illustrates, through the Uncle Marvin narrative and the "five big characteristics" of an emotionally safe adult, how positive judgement of specific, learnable behaviors (warmth, nonjudgment, listening, compassion, and reliability) can be communicated to lay audiences without relying on technical psychological vocabulary, a communicative strategy that may itself be worth replicating in psychoeducational materials.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, this study relies on a single podcast episode as its data source; while the episode was purposively selected for its density of evaluative talk, findings regarding category distribution and stance patterns

cannot be generalized to expert-layperson podcast discourse as a whole without replication across multiple episodes or hosts. Second, the coding was conducted by a single coder in one systematic pass, without a second, independently trained coder computing formal inter-coder reliability (such as Cohen's Kappa); although every coding decision was accompanied by an explicit co-textual justification to support transparency and later verification, this remains a methodological limitation relative to studies employing full dual coder reliability testing. Third, the denominator used to calculate the proportion of evaluative clauses in the transcript (approximately 1,095 clauses) was derived through a computational sentence and conjunction boundary heuristic rather than a fully manual, clause-by-clause systemic functional segmentation of the entire transcript; this proxy is a defensible practical approximation for a transcript of this length, but a manually verified segmentation could yield a modestly different total and should be pursued in future replications. Finally, because the analysis focuses on the Attitude subsystem of Appraisal, other Appraisal resources, particularly Engagement and Graduation were not systematically coded in this study, even though several coded examples (for instance, repeated intensifiers and modal hedges in the host's disclosures) suggest that Graduation in particular may play a significant role in how affective intensity is negotiated across turns, a promising direction for future research building on this corpus.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine how evaluative meaning and affective stance are constructed in an expert-layperson podcast episode, using an integrated Appraisal (Martin & White, 2005) and Stance Triangle (Du Bois, 2007) framework applied to a systematically coded corpus of 292 evaluative clauses drawn from the full 64-minute transcript of *The Mel Robbins Podcast* episode featuring Dr. Mark Brackett. Three main findings emerged. First, contrary to the assumption that emotion-focused talk would be dominated by affect, judgement was the most frequent attitude category (39.4%), driven largely by evaluations of capacity, a pattern consistent with recent corpus evidence that naturally occurring evaluative discourse tends to favor judgement and appreciation over direct emotional expression (Cavasso & Taboada, 2021). Second, Appreciation in this corpus was directed overwhelmingly at emotion-regulation techniques rather than at people, suggesting that positive Valuation functions as an implicit marker of knowledge acceptance in pedagogical talk, a pattern echoed in classroom-based Appraisal research (Sujatna & Kuswoyo, 2023). Third, stance alignment between the host and the guest was achieved primarily through lexical echo, the rapid repetition of an interlocutor's evaluative phrase, and through a recurring pattern of disalignment that was quickly repaired, in which an initial mistaken judgement was revised collaboratively into a more accurate and empathetic understanding. Together, these findings suggest that in expert-mediated emotion talk, Judgement functions as the interpretive scaffold through which Affect becomes meaningful to a lay audience, and that the Stance Triangle, when applied to unscripted asymmetrical dialogue, benefits from distinguishing confirmatory alignment from corrective alignment as two functionally distinct interactional moves. Beyond its contribution to Appraisal and stance-taking theory, the study offers a practical illustration of how popular psychology media builds audience engagement and trust: not primarily through elaborated argument, but through short, repeatable evaluative phrases and through the visible, in-the-moment correction of misjudgement, both of which model the very emotional skills the episode sets out to teach. At the same time, the findings

should be interpreted within the boundaries of the present design. The analysis is based on a single episode coded by a single analyst in one systematic pass, and the total-clause denominator used to calculate the proportion of evaluative language was estimated computationally rather than through fully manual segmentation. These constraints affect the level of confidence and generalizability that can be assigned to the distributional patterns reported here; the findings are best interpreted as case-specific and as requiring replication, rather than as a generalizable claim about podcast discourse as a genre. Future research building on this corpus could pursue at least three directions: replicating the coding with a second, independently trained coder to establish formal inter-coder reliability; extending the analysis to the Engagement and Graduation subsystems of Appraisal, which appear, on the evidence of this corpus, to play a meaningful role in how affective intensity is negotiated across turns; and comparing multiple episodes, hosts, or podcast genres to test whether the Judgement-dominant, technique-oriented pattern of Appreciation observed here is a stable feature of expert-layperson emotional-education media or a property specific to this episode and these two speakers.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to the lecturers of the English Literature Study Program, Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar, for their valuable guidance, support, and constructive suggestions throughout the completion of this research. The author also expresses appreciation to Mel Robbins for providing publicly accessible YouTube video, which served as the data source for this study. Finally, the author would like to thank family and friends for their continuous encouragement, motivation, and support during the research process.

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