

EVALUATIVE LANGUAGE AND POWER: APPRAISAL THEORY IN SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL RHETORIC

Sixeko Pakade^a and Zameka Sijadu^b

Abstract: This study examines the re-appropriation of state memorial space into an arena of political resistance through the lens of Systemic Functional Linguistics' Appraisal Theory. Focusing strictly on the Attitude subsystem, it analyses the 2016 funeral address delivered by Dr Siphon Pityana for Reverend Makhenkesi Arnold Stofile (1944-2016). Through a linguistic examination of 142 evaluative clause units across English and isiXhosa in this address, the article demonstrates how evaluative meanings are strategically deployed. The findings reveal that while positive Affect expresses collective grief and veneration for the deceased, negative Judgement morally condemns corruption and state capture among incumbent leaders. Furthermore, Appreciation constructs institutional decline. By isolating Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation, the article illustrates how emotional expression and moral evaluation intersect to challenge political authority in post-apartheid South Africa.

Keywords: *Attitude subsystem, Siphon Pityana, isiXhosa, Makhenkesi Arnold Stofile, post-apartheid South Africa*

Introduction and Contextual Background

The powerful isiXhosa phrase, “Zemk’inkomo magwalandini,” meaning “There go the cattle, you cowards!” was repeatedly used at the funeral of anti-apartheid activist Reverend Makhenkesi Stofile on 25 August 2016. This saying, which carries deep historical weight, was the title of an influential book by Dr Walter Benson Rubusana (Rubusana 1911: 1), a founding member of the Native Education Association who contributed to the formation of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) in 1912, later renamed the African National Congress (ANC) in 1923. The use of this

a Department of African Languages, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa, e-mail: 24082465@sun.ac.za; pakadeson@gmail.com

b Department of African Languages, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa, e-mail: sijadu@sun.ac.za

phrase at the funeral was a clear and forceful political statement, departing from the typical formal decorum of state funerals and highlighting a strong sense of dissatisfaction.

Before examining the linguistic mechanics of the address, it is essential to contextualise the two central actors in this political drama. Reverend Makhenkesi Arnold Stofile (1944–2016) was a prominent anti-apartheid activist, rugby administrator, and liberation stalwart who played a vital role in the United Democratic Front (UDF) during the 1980s. Following South Africa's transition to democracy, Stofile served as the second Premier of the Eastern Cape (1997–2004), Minister of Sport and Recreation (2004–2010), ambassador to Germany, and a long-standing member of the ANC's National Executive Committee (NEC) (News24 2016: 2; Mail and Guardian 2016: 1). His passing triggered an official state funeral, drawing the nation's political elite to the University of Fort Hare in Alice, Eastern Cape.

The speaker, Dr Sipho Pityana, is an influential South African business leader, civil society activist, and former anti-apartheid student leader. Pityana held high-level executive positions in post-apartheid governance, serving as Director-General of the Department of Labour under President Nelson Mandela and Director-General of Foreign Affairs under President Thabo Mbeki. His deep historical roots within the liberation movement provided him with the internal legitimacy and institutional weight required to deliver an uncompromising audit of the ruling executive in front of incumbent party leaders.

During the service, Pityana delivered a stinging critique of the ANC and its leadership under President Jacob Zuma. Pityana's speech addressed numerous controversies, including the disrespect for democratic institutions, the Marikana massacre, the Nkandla scandal, and rampant corruption. By invoking the historical call to action, "Zemk'inkomo magwalandini," Pityana aimed to criticise the government's perceived failure to uphold the values of the liberation movement, suggesting that the "cows" of integrity, democracy, and public trust were being lost or stolen (News24 2016: 3).

The Appraisal framework, developed within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) by Martin and White (2005: 33), provides the analytical tools required to unpack how evaluative language negotiates social relationships and moral positioning. The present article investigates how Pityana strategically deploys attitudinal resources specifically Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation in order to transform a formal funeral oration into a catalyst for political resistance.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Metaphor, Emotive Language, and Political Persuasion

Political discourse relies fundamentally on symbolic, evaluative, and persuasive language to construct social reality, shape public perception, and legitimise or challenge authority (Segal 2008: 341; Yule 2006: 112). Within persuasive communication, emotive language serves as a key rhetorical device that frames political events, invokes normative values, and guides audience interpretation (Macagno and Walton 2014: 45). Emotive words do not merely convey propositional content; they carry affective orientations that invite listeners to adopt specific moral and ideological alignments regarding public figures and state institutions (Macagno and Walton 2014: 48).

Metaphor plays an indispensable cognitive and persuasive role in political rhetoric by rendering complex, abstract institutional dynamics intelligible through concrete, socio-culturally grounded domain mappings (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 14; Dillard and Sopory 2002: 385). In political addresses, the strategic deployment of metaphor alters audience attitudes by saliently highlighting specific characteristics of political actors while suppressing or obscuring others (Ottati and Renstrom 2010: 785). When embedded in public addresses, metaphorical expressions act as high-potency evaluative tokens that bridge conceptual understanding with immediate emotional response, thereby driving political persuasion and collective stance-taking (Dillard and Sopory 2002: 388; Ottati and Renstrom 2010: 789).

Cognitive Appraisals and Emotion in Public Discourse

The relation between evaluative language and emotional reaction is extensively conceptualised in cognitive appraisal theories of emotion (Frijda 1986: 88; Lazarus 1991: 122; Roseman 1991: 163). Cognitive appraisal theorists demonstrate that human emotions are not arbitrary visceral reactions, but structured responses triggered by an individual's cognitive evaluation of events, actions, and social agents in relation to personal and collective moral standards, goals, and social norms (Lazarus 1991: 125; Roseman 1991: 165).

In public and political discourse, when a speaker evaluates an event or institutional action as a violation of established ethical norms or socio-

political expectations, this cognitive appraisal triggers discrete emotional responses such as grief, indignation, or righteous anger across the audience (Frijda 1986: 92; Roseman 1991: 170). In memorial and eulogistic settings, speakers often manipulate these cognitive-evaluative triggers to transform personal mourning into shared moral auditing and political resistance (Lazarus 1991: 130).

The Attitude Subsystem in Systemic Functional Linguistics

To systematically map how evaluative meanings are constructed in a text, this study grounds its analysis in Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 54) and, specifically, the Appraisal framework formulated by Martin and White (2005: 42) (see also Hunston and Thompson 2000: 142; Martin 2000: 145; White 2015: 2). Appraisal Theory provides a comprehensive taxonomy for analysing how language users register feelings, judge human character, evaluate entities, and negotiate intersubjective positions with their audiences (Martin and White 2005: 45; White 2015: 4).

While the overall Appraisal system includes Engagement (positioning speaker stance relative to alternative voices) and Graduation (scaling intensity and focus), this study focuses strictly on the Attitude subsystem to perform an exhaustive linguistic audit of evaluative stance (Martin and Rose 2007: 28; Coffin and O'Halloran 2010: 165).

The Attitude subsystem categorises evaluative language into three distinct semantic domains (Martin and White 2005: 49–53):

1. Affect: The semantic domain concerned with registering positive or negative emotional feelings, psychological states, and visceral reactions (e.g. grief, fear, pride, or moral indignation) (Martin and White 2005: 49).
2. Judgement: The semantic domain concerned with assessing human character, motives, and behaviour against socio-cultural, legal, or ethical norms (Martin and White 2005: 52). Judgement is subdivided into:
 3. 2.1. *Social Esteem*: Normative assessments of normality, capacity, and tenacity (Martin and White 2005: 53).
 4. 2.2. *Social Sanction*: Moral and legal assessments of veracity and propriety (Martin and White 2005: 53).

5. Appreciation: The semantic domain concerned with evaluating non-human entities, processes, institutional systems, and creative performances in terms of aesthetic reaction, structural composition, and social value or significance (Martin and White 2005: 56).

Attitudinal choices are expressed either directly through *inscribed Attitude* (explicit evaluative lexical items) or indirectly through *invoked Attitude* (metaphorical, figurative, or culturally loaded expressions that prompt the audience to formulate an evaluative stance) (Martin and White 2005: 61; Fuoli 2018: 108).

Empirical Applications of Appraisal Theory in Political Discourse

In contemporary discourse analytics, the Attitude subsystem has proven to be an exceptionally versatile framework for uncovering implicit power dynamics, institutional critiques, and covert ideological stances across political and media genres (Coffin and O'Halloran 2010: 168; McKinley 2018: 29). Scholarly applications demonstrate that political addresses rely heavily on strategic configurations of Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation to establish moral authority, construct political in-groups and out-groups, and align public sentiments (Liu 2025: 46; Simanjuntak 2024: 240). For instance, Simanjuntak (2024: 241) and Liu (2025: 48) illustrate how political addresses deploy negative Judgement tokens of Social Sanction (veracity and propriety) to audit state executives and undermine political legitimacy.

Cross-linguistic and translation studies further demonstrate how attitudinal meanings shift or are re-accentuated when moving across different cultural and linguistic paradigms (Jing and Chen 2018: 142; Kholifah and Prasetyoningsih 2024: 50). Applying this framework within qualitative discourse methodologies enables researchers to interpret how localised cultural metaphors and code-switching perform evaluative work in contested socio-political spaces (Guba and Lincoln 1985: 78; Patton 2015: 102; Smith and Sparkes 2020: 1005).

Contested Memory and Eulogistic Subversion in Post-Liberation Africa

In post-colonial African states, state-assisted memorial services and funeral addresses are rarely neutral spaces of grief; rather, they serve as critical sites where official state memory and dominant political narratives are

produced, reinforced, or contested (Zuern 2012: 494; Mbembe 2017: 112). Ruling political elites often utilise eulogies to project institutional solidarity, reassert liberation credentials, and consolidate power (Zuern 2012: 496; Hodgkin and Radstone 2014: 82).

However, when state funerals are subverted by dissident insiders or civil leaders, the traditional genre of eulogy is transformed into a platform for political accountability and moral confrontation (Hodgkin and Radstone 2014: 85; Rubusana 1911: 4). By re-appropriating traditional oral panegyric forms, indigenous rhetorical idioms, and bilingual code-switching, speakers can audit state leaders directly in front of the public (News24 2016: 4; Rubusana 1911: 5). Systemic Functional Linguistics and specifically the Attitude subsystem provides the necessary analytical precision to demonstrate exactly how such rhetorical subversions are constructed word by word.

Methodology and Corpus Description

Data Corpus and Corpus Attributes

This study adopts a qualitative, corpus-assisted discourse analytic design grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics (Guba and Lincoln 1985: 82; Patton 2015: 105; Smith and Sparkes 2020: 1008). The primary corpus consists of the verbatim audio-visual recording and transcript of Dr Siphon Pityana's funeral address delivered during the state funeral of Reverend Makhenkesi Arnold Stofile on 25 August 2016 at the University of Fort Hare in Alice, Eastern Cape (BusinessTech 2016: 1; News24 2016: 1; Pityana 2016: 1).¹

The raw audio-visual recording (32 minutes) was transcribed and cross-verified against published text records (Daily Maverick 2016: 2; News24 2016: 1). The speech is naturally bilingual, featuring fluid code-switching between English and isiXhosa. To ensure analytical integrity, isiXhosa segments were transcribed and translated into English, with cultural idioms preserved in their original form alongside literal and contextual glosses (Rubusana 1911: 12).

A defining attribute of the data is its fluid bilingualism. The text features extensive code-switching between English (the primary language of formal state discourse) and isiXhosa (the native language of both the speaker

1 Here is the link of the video recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19qgDVsa2Q4>.

and the deceased, rich in cultural and historical resonances). Key corpus tokens include historical battle calls, biblical metaphors, and direct political accusations, as summarised in Table 1 below.

Linguistic Feature	Language	Socio-Political/Rhetorical Context
“Zemk’inkomo magwalandini”	isiXhosa	Invocation of Walter Rubusana’s first addition published in 1906 battle cry (“There go the cattle, you cowards!”), functioning as a call to defend the movement against internal decline.
“iingcuka ezambethe iimfele zegusha”	isiXhosa	Biblical and cultural metaphor (“wolves dressed in sheep’s clothing”), referring to corrupt cadres within party ranks.
“full-time thieves and looters” / “amasela nabarhwaphilizi”	English / isiXhosa	Direct attitudinal label targeting state capture and systemic corruption among incumbent leaders.
“cadres with questioning loyalty”	English	Reference to Oliver Tambo’s historic directive, legitimising internal dissent and critical accountability.

Table 1. Cultural and Linguistic Tokens in Pityana’s Address

Data Processing, Translation, and Glossing

Given the bilingual nature of the speech, data processing required rigorous translation and glossing procedures:

- **Literal and Contextual Glossing:** All isiXhosa tone units and clauses were translated into English, placed in square brackets [] immediately following the original expression. For example, “ukufa kusembini maqabane” [the disease is within the body, comrades] and “Mkhuluwa wam, Msholoz, Nxamalala nikezela intambo kunyembelekile” [My elder brother, Msholoz, Nxamalala, hand over the reins, things have broken down].
- **Attitudinal Potential of Cultural Tokens:** Idiomatic and historical tokens such as “Zemk’inkomo magwalandini” were annotated not merely for

literal meaning, but for their invoked attitudinal capacity to express negative Judgement (cowardice/negligence) and elicit collective Affect (indignation) within Xhosa socio-cultural memory.

- Criteria for Inscribed versus Invoked Attitude: Explicit lexical items carrying inherently positive or negative core meanings (e.g. “thieves”, “courageous”) were coded as inscribed Attitude. Figurative expressions ideologically charged metaphors, and cultural proverbs that prompt an evaluative response without explicit attitudinal lexis were coded as invoked Attitude.

Analytical Procedures and Coding Strategy

The attitudinal analysis followed a rigorous four-stage pipeline adapted from Fuoli (2018: 112) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 68):

1. Clause Unit Segmentation: The 1,624-word speech was broken down into 142 distinct evaluative clause units.
2. Attitudinal Categorisation: Each clause unit containing evaluative meaning was coded into one of the three Attitude domains: Affect, Judgement, or Appreciation (Martin and White 2005).
3. Polarity and Target Mapping: Evaluative units were assigned polarity (positive [+] or negative [-]) and mapped to specific targets of evaluation principally contrasting the deceased (Rev. Stofile and historical stalwarts) against the incumbent ANC leadership and state executive.
4. Quantification and Synthesis: The raw frequencies and proportional distributions of Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation tokens were calculated to determine the dominant evaluative mechanism driving the political critique.

Linguistic Analysis

The linguistic analysis of Pityana’s funeral address reveals a total of 142 evaluative clause units containing explicit and invoked attitudinal tokens. Across the corpus, the deployment of Attitude exhibits a pronounced rhetorical polarisation: 67.6% (n = 96) negative attitudinal tokens versus 32.4% (n = 46) positive attitudinal tokens.

Rather than functioning as a conventional eulogy focused on mourning and biographical praise, the address uses positive evaluations selectively to exalt

the deceased, while unleashing a predominant wave of negative evaluations aimed at delegitimising the incumbent African National Congress (ANC) executive and state leadership.

Table 2 details the metaphorical mappings deployed in the text.

Metaphorical Phrase	Literal Meaning / Referent	Function in the Discourse
"Zemk'inkomo magwalandini"	"There go the cattle, you cowards!"	Pityana uses this historical battle cry from Rubusana to frame the current crisis as a loss of the nation's most precious assets (democracy, integrity, public trust), directly blaming the leadership as cowards.
"Died with his boots on"	Rev. Stofile remained a committed and active revolutionary until his death.	Contrasts Stofile, a "true cadre," with "peacetime revolutionaries," implying that the latter are only committed when the struggle is easy or rewarding.
"lingcuka ezambethe iimfele zegusha" (wolves in sheep's clothing)	Wolves in sheep's clothing.	Direct, harsh metaphor for hypocrisy and betrayal, accusing current leaders of hiding corrupt motives behind revolutionary rhetoric.
"Eating through"	Livestock feeding on state resources.	Dehumanises corrupt leaders, reinforcing the idea that they view public office as an opportunity for selfish "looting."
"Plunge parliament into chaos"	Deliberate disruption of democratic institutions.	Vividly describes the destructive force exerted by leaders who disrespect democratic processes to avoid accountability.
"Ceded our moral high ground"	Surrendered ethical authority.	Describes the party's spiritual defeat, implying they willingly gave up their greatest weapon their reputation for integrity.
"Fall on their sword"	Take responsibility and resign from office.	Dramatic demand that the leadership, having accepted "collective responsibility," must follow through with political sacrifice.
"Nikezela intambo"	Surrender the rope/ power.	Localised metaphorical command delivered in isiXhosa for maximum emotional effect, signifying the need to relinquish control.

Table 2. Metaphorical Mapping and Rhetorical Functions in the Eulogy

Affect Analysis

Dr Sipho Pityana began and ended his tribute by creating a profound sense of grief and reverence for Rev. Stofile, a technique central to the Attitude dimension of Appraisal Theory (Martin and White 2005: 33). This strategy was designed to disarm critics and establish the speaker's moral sincerity. By using intimate terms like "a great friend" and "umkhuluwa wam" (my older brother), he personalised the loss, transforming the funeral into a heartfelt testimonial. Pityana deepened this by invoking Stofile's final, painful feelings, referencing his dying anguish through *ingqumbo*, *isingqala*, and *inyembezi* (wrath, deep sorrow, and tears). This shared, deep-seated negative affect of sorrow and disappointment united the audience in communal grief, emotionally preparing them for the critique that followed.

The reverence Pityana holds for Stofile is simultaneously a political act of idealisation. The metaphor, "Stofile is a revolutionary who died with his boots on," elevates the deceased into an untarnished archetype of the selfless, principled ANC cadre, a standard of conduct defined by Judgement values of humility, scrupulousness, and personal sacrifice. This is a crucial rhetorical step because the speaker frames his grief as not just sorrow for a man, but as mourning the loss of the purity and integrity he represented. By dedicating the emotional heart of the tribute to this idealised figure, Pityana establishes an unquestionable moral benchmark. The profound and highly public grief thus serves as a powerful catalyst: it ensures that the audience, having united in mourning the exemplary past (Stofile), is emotionally and morally obligated to respond to the fierce Judgement Pityana then delivers against the living leadership who have betrayed that very past.

The affective stance of disappointment and betrayal serves as the primary engine for Pityana's critique, transforming the eulogy into an urgent political denunciation. This sentiment stems from the chasm Pityana perceives between the historic, self-sacrificing ideals of the ANC and the self-serving reality of its contemporary leadership. The speaker expresses a visceral sense of betrayal that the movement, for which stalwarts like Stofile risked their lives, has allowed its core values to be corrupted. This anguish is most powerfully encapsulated in the repeated use of the isiXhosa battle cry, "*Zemk'inkomo magwalandini*" ("There go the cattle, you cowards!"). By invoking this historic lament, where the "cattle" metaphorically represent the revolutionary gains, moral high ground, and principles won through struggle (Rubusana 1911:1), Pityana channels a collective disappointment and projects it as an existential crisis facing the party. He lays the blame for this betrayal squarely at the feet

of leaders who, instead of upholding the democratic project, ironically “show nothing but disdain and contempt for our Constitution” and are recast as “full-time thieves and looters” (News24 2016:3).

Judgement Analysis

Pityana’s eulogy for Rev. Makhenkesi Stofile was a relentless exercise in negative Judgement, systematically evaluating the character and actions of the ANC leadership under Jacob Zuma and finding them severely wanting. This critique extended beyond personal disapproval to encompass the leadership’s specific consequential actions (News24 2016: 3). Pityana passed harsh negative Judgement (propriety and veracity) on systemic failures, condemning the attacks on Chapter 9 institutions state bodies established under the South African Constitution to protect democracy and hold government accountable. He further highlighted the collective failure during the Nkandla saga and the “great shame” of the Marikana Massacre (BusinessTech 2016: 1). By targeting these high-profile political actions, Pityana elevated his discourse from a personal lament to a structural condemnation, arguing that the leadership was actively destroying the democratic foundations fought for by Stofile and his peers.

This political radicalism was licensed and fuelled by the rhetorical use of Affect, which strategically transitioned from profound grief to militant indignation. Pityana established Stofile as an idealised moral benchmark of “humility and simplicity” (News24 2016: 3), leveraging initial reverence to amplify his subsequent fury over the leadership’s “absolute impunity” and culture of “denial”. The indignation peaked with the historical battle cry, “Zemk’inkomo magwalandini” (“There go the cattle, you cowards!”), which transformed the political crisis into a moral, existential threat (Rubusana 1911: 1). Crucially, Pityana channelled this collective outrage into determined optimism, concluding with a non-negotiable demand for structural change and urgent redemption of the ANC’s principled legacy by urging younger leaders to step up (News24 2016: 3).

Pityana’s critique of the ANC leadership escalated into a severe Judgement of collective responsibility, challenging the sincerity and effectiveness of the party’s internal accountability mechanisms. He dismissed the National Executive Committee’s (NEC) claim of “collective responsibility” as insufficient, arguing that genuine responsibility requires definitive consequences specifically, that leaders must “fall on their sword” through

resignation or political sacrifice. He judged this institutional response as “not good enough” (News24 2016: 2). This negative judgement primarily operates within the domain of Social Sanction (Propriety), contesting the ethical integrity of their actions. He deemed the collective leadership morally lacking for refusing to make concrete sacrifices following the movement’s crisis. Ultimately, he passed a decisive negative judgement on their future capacity, stating that a leadership that failed to sacrifice itself is “not capable of launching us in the new battles” (News24 2016: 2), effectively declaring the current collective unfit for future challenges.

In sharp contrast to his condemnation of current leaders, Pityana employed positive Judgement to strategically elevate past leaders, particularly Rev. Stofile, as the moral and political benchmark the ANC should uphold. This idealisation reinforced the values Pityana argued were betrayed by the incumbents. He utilised high-value positive Judgement across Social Esteem and Social Sanction, praising Stofile’s exceptional fortitude and character with words like “courageous,” “fearless,” “principled,” and “scrupulous” (News24 2016: 3). Crucially, Pityana lauded Stofile for being a leader who “start[ed] with the people and not with himself,” affirming his selfless adherence to the ANC’s core anti-elitist ethos.

Pityana strategically used the positive Judgement of Rev. Stofile’s actions as the essential moral counterpoint to his critique of the incumbent ANC leadership. He employed strong positive Social Sanction, highlighting Stofile’s integrity by noting that he “submitted himself to public scrutiny” and “didn’t play avoidance games” (News24 2016: 3). Pityana praised Stofile for his humility in clearing his name and showing “respect for the law and for the people,” framing this as the definitive right way to act when accused (News24 2016: 3). This detailed positive appraisal functioned as a rhetorical strategy of contrast, using Stofile’s flawless accountability as a mirror to implicitly condemn current leadership for evading scrutiny and lacking propriety and commitment to the rule of law.

Furthermore, Pityana anchored his overall critique in a powerful positive Judgement of past ANC values, establishing a baseline of principled conduct that sharply contrasted with present decay. He praised the historical ANC for its commitment to constitutionalism, specifically for upholding “the independence of the judiciary and separation of powers” (News24 2016: 3), implicitly delivering a crushing negative Judgement against incumbents undermining these safeguards. By invoking leaders like O. R. Tambo as models for “questioning loyalty,” Pityana used positive Judgement to sanction and encourage principled

dissent among current ANC members, asserting that true loyalty requires challenging corrupt leadership (News24 2016: 3). This sustained strategy of moral contrast elevating cadres of Stofile's ilk against corrupt leaders who treat public office as a vehicle for "eating through" state resources compelled the audience to accept the subsequent negative Judgement that the incumbents are fundamentally unfit to lead (BusinessTech 2016: 1; News24 2016: 3).

Appreciation Analysis

Pityana's praise of Rev. Stofile is a foundational rhetorical strategy that establishes Stofile as the idealised moral benchmark against which the current ANC leadership is measured and condemned. Pityana uses highly positive Affect (e.g., "a great friend," "a man of love") and positive Judgement to detail virtues like Stofile's "great humility and simplicity" and his respect for the poor (News24 2016: 2). These specific qualities are strategically chosen because they embody the ANC's core, historic values of selfless service and anti-elitism. By transforming Stofile into a living standard of a true ANC cadre, this sustained evaluation of character serves as a necessary precursor to the critique, allowing Pityana to accuse the incumbent leadership of failing to uphold the movement's highest moral and political ideals.

Pityana uses the positive Judgement of Rev. Stofile's integrity as a crucial rhetorical manoeuvre, establishing Stofile as the ideal model of accountability that the current ANC leadership conspicuously fails to meet. Pityana dedicates a significant portion of his address to commending Stofile's response to corruption allegations, using positive Judgement to highlight that Stofile "didn't play avoidance games" and "submitted himself to public scrutiny" (News24 2016: 2). This emphasis on Stofile's willingness to face scrutiny and his respect for the rule of law is directly juxtaposed with the incumbent leadership's perceived attempts to evade accountability. By praising Stofile's flawless accountability, including how he "humbled himself" and "cleared his name," Pityana creates a moral standard, turning Stofile's past actions into a present, implicit accusation against those who currently refuse to subject themselves to the same scrutiny.

Pityana solidifies Stofile's heroic status and establishes him as the ideal standard of a political leader by praising his revolutionary commitment and practical contributions. Pityana employs high-value positive Judgement, describing Stofile with potent phrases like a "revolutionary who died with his boots on" and a "man of principle" who "never sought to please," which highlights his

moral courage and lifelong, uncompromising dedication (News24 2016: 2). Beyond his revolutionary identity, Pityana also lauded Stofile’s tangible work as a “development activist” who championed education, sports, and culture.

Pityana’s meticulous observance of protocols at the beginning of his speech, specifically acknowledging and naming every dignitary (including Cyril Ramaphosa, Kgalema Motlanthe, Gwede Mantashe, and the Stofile family), is a highly deliberate act of strategic protocol adherence and structural deference (News24 2016: 3). This formal, deferential beginning is rhetorically crucial because it establishes Pityana’s position within the established political and institutional order of the ANC and the state. By following every convention, Pityana signals that he is operating within the system. This formality provides an essential shield of propriety, lending constitutional and institutional weight to his words before he delivers his subsequent, uncompromising Judgement and Warning against the very leaders he has just formally greeted.

Empirical Findings

The linguistic analysis of Pityana’s funeral address reveals a total of 142 evaluative clause units containing explicit and invoked attitudinal tokens. Across the corpus, the deployment of Attitude exhibits a pronounced rhetorical polarisation: 67.6% (n = 96) negative attitudinal tokens versus 32.4% (n = 46) positive attitudinal tokens.

Rather than functioning as a conventional eulogy focused on mourning and biographical praise, the address uses positive evaluations selectively to exalt the deceased, while unleashing a predominant wave of negative evaluations aimed at delegitimising the incumbent African National Congress (ANC) executive and state leadership.

Table 3 provides the quantitative breakdown of the 142 coded clause units across the three domains of the Attitude subsystem.

Attitude Subsystem	Positive (+)	Negative (-)	Total Units	Percentage (%)
Judgement	22	64	86	60.6%
Affect	14	16	30	21.1%
Appreciation	10	16	26	18.3%
Total	46 (32.4%)	96 (67.6%)	142	100.0%

Table 3. Distribution of Attitudinal Tokens in the Speech Corpus

Judgement: Moral Polarity and Ethical Condemnation

Judgement constitutes the dominant attitudinal resource in the address, accounting for 60.6% (n=86) of all coded evaluative units. Pityana constructs a sharp moral binary by deploying positive Judgement to establish an ethical benchmark through Rev. Stofile and historical stalwarts, while using negative Judgement to condemn the contemporary leadership.

Positive Judgement (+propriety, +tenacity, +capacity)

Positive Judgement tokens (n=22) are exclusively assigned to Rev. Stofile, Oliver Tambo, and historical struggle stalwarts. Stofile is evaluated through positive Judgement of propriety (moral integrity), tenacity (unyielding resolve), and capacity (leadership competence):

- Moral Integrity and Tenacity: “He lived his Christian belief in his everyday life... He was courageous, he was fearless, he was daring. He was principled, he was scrupulous”.
- Principled Dissent: “O. R. Tambo encouraged us to be cadres with unquestioned loyalty... [and] questioning loyalty”.

By framing Stofile’s compliance with judicial commissions of inquiry as exemplary respect for public office, Pityana establishes an unquestionable moral standard anchored in the ANC’s historical values.

Negative Judgement (-propriety, -capacity)

Negative Judgement tokens (n=64) form the main engine of Pityana’s critique, targeting the incumbent ANC executive, President Jacob Zuma, and corrupt party cadres. This evaluation is heavily weighted towards negative propriety (ethical violation and lawlessness) and negative capacity (governance incompetence):

- Direct Ethical Branding: “amasela nabarhwaphilizi” [thieves and looters] and “full-time thieves and looters”.
- Constitutional Violations: “[The President] takes every opportunity to show nothing but disdain and contempt for our Constitution”.
- Institutional Subversion: “When the constitutional court makes a finding that you broke your oath of office, what it means is that you are honourable no longer. What it means is that you are untrustworthy”.

- Incapacity to Lead: “[The leadership] is not capable of launching us in the new battles... leadership that has got us to a crisis”.

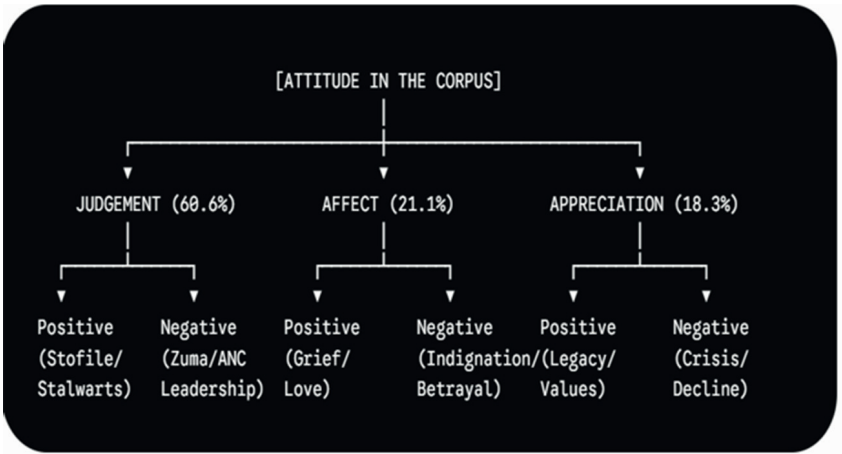


Figure 1. Attitudinal Token Distribution across the Speech Corpus

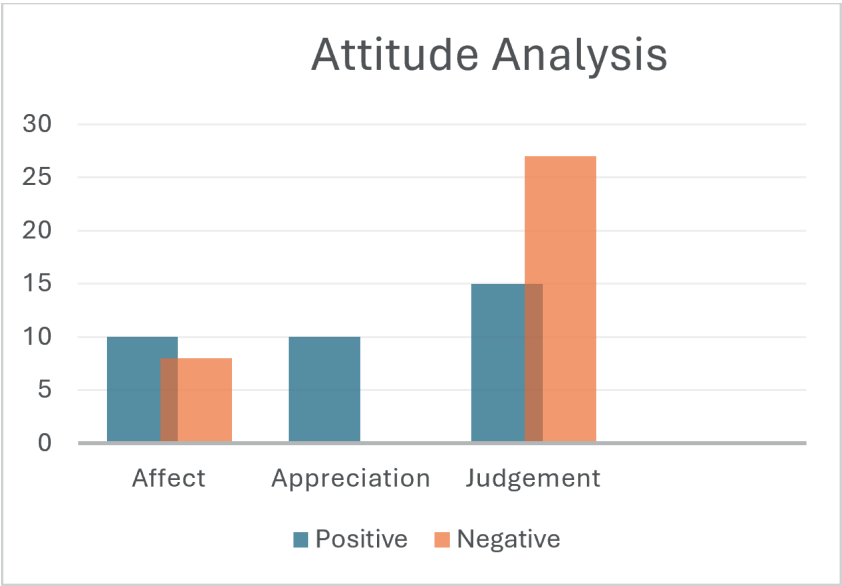


Figure 2. Bar Graph Showing the Attitude Analysis

Affect: Emotion as a Catalyst for Mobilisation

Affect accounts for 21.1% (n=30) of the attitudinal tokens in the corpus. Rather than serving solely as expressions of personal grief, affective choices function strategically to transform sorrow into collective political indignation.

Positive Affect (+security / +affection)

Positive Affect tokens (n=14) are confined to expressions of personal affection, spiritual grounding, and communal warmth surrounding Stofile's personal relationships:

- Personal Affection and Humility: "He was a man of love. He loved his family. He had great humility and simplicity".

Negative Affect (-dissatisfaction /-insecurity) and Invoked Cultural Emotion

Negative Affect tokens (n=16) express collective anxiety, sorrow, and deep political betrayal. Pityana frames Stofile's dying days not merely around physical mortality, but around emotional angst regarding state failure:

- Sorrow over State Failure: "Inyembezi zakhe in his dying days esithi 'zange silwele lento kunyembelekele lungisani maqabane'" [his tears in his dying days saying 'we never fought for this, things have broken down, fix it comrades'].

The emotional core of the speech relies on the repeated, culturally charged isiXhosa invocation:

- Historic Battle Cry: "Zemk'inkomo magwalandini!" [There go the cattle, you cowards!].

In Xhosa socio-cultural memory, this battle cry originally issued by Walter Rubusana in 1906 evokes invoked negative Affect (Indignation/Betrayal) alongside invoked negative Judgement (Cowardice/Dereliction of Duty). It serves as an emotional call, urging the audience to feel the urgency of losing the liberation project.

Appreciation: Evaluating Institutional Crisis and Historical Decay

Appreciation represents 18.3% (n=26) of attitudinal tokens, evaluating the state of the organisation, public institutions, and historical developments.

Positive Appreciation (+valuation)

Positive Appreciation tokens (n=10) evaluate the historical liberation struggle as a noble, valuable endeavour:

- Historical Liberation Values: “These are the solid values that made the revolution an attractive project for him”.

Negative Appreciation (-reaction / -valuation / -composition)

Negative Appreciation tokens (n=16) depict the contemporary condition of the ruling party and state institutions as experiencing profound structural collapse:

- Systemic Decay: “That our movement is in crisis is trite, and it is beyond question”.
- Trajectory of Decline: “Under this leadership what we’ve experienced is a cataclysmic anticlimax... grotesque and unmitigated chaos that prevails”.
- State Capture: “Our movement is captured, and consequently the state is captured. Our revolutionary project is under threat.”

By characterising the state of the organisation through negative Appreciation terms such as “cataclysmic anticlimax” and “unmitigated chaos,” Pityana evaluates the contemporary political era not as a temporary setback, but as a systemic crisis requiring immediate structural intervention.

Rhetorical Implications, Political Reception, and Discussion

The empirical findings demonstrate how Siphso Pityana’s address at the state funeral of Reverend Makhenkesi Arnold Stofile in August 2016 re-appropriated a solemn memorial space into an arena of political contestation. By examining the 142 evaluative clause units exclusively through the Attitude subsystem, this discussion interprets how the strategic deployment of Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation destabilises the ruling elite’s narrative of legitimacy in post-apartheid South Africa.

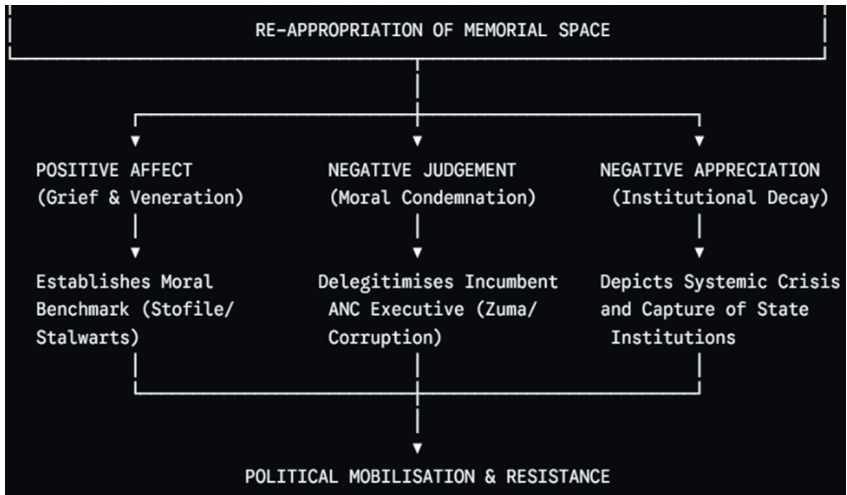


Figure 3. Strategic Re-Appropriation of Memorial Space Through the Attitude Subsystem

Re-Appropriating Eulogistic Space: Memorial Politics as Resistance

Traditional African eulogistic practices and state funerals are conventionally designed to reinforce national unity, perform collective mourning, and consolidate the political legitimacy of the ruling party (Zuern 2012: 495). However, Pityana's address fundamentally subverts this genre by using attitudinal resources to convert a state funeral into a platform for dissent.

The total attitudinal distribution is predominantly negative (67.6%) and reflects a deliberate departure from customary panegyric rhetoric. Rather than sustaining an uncritical eulogy, Pityana partitions the memorial space: positive evaluations are restricted to establishing an ethical benchmark through the deceased, while negative evaluations target the political leadership seated directly before him. In doing so, the speech demonstrates how memorial events in post-liberation African polities can be weaponised to challenge dominant party hegemony from within.

The Interplay of Affect and Judgement: Moral Authority versus Political Corruption

A critical finding of this study is the functional alignment between positive Affect and negative Judgement. While Affect represents 21.1% of attitudinal

choices and Judgement accounts for 60.6%, their interaction generates the speech's rhetorical leverage.

Pityana constructs a stark moral dichotomy:

1. Veneration through Positive Judgement and Affect: Expressions of personal love and veneration (+affect) for Rev. Stofile are coupled with evaluations of moral integrity (+judgement of propriety and tenacity). Stofile is framed as the embodiment of liberation values: scrupulous, principled, and selfless.
2. Condemnation through Negative Judgement: By grounding Stofile's legacy in unassailable moral authority, Pityana creates a normative foundation from which to launch negative evaluations of the incumbent leadership. The executive is evaluated through negative Judgement of Propriety ("amasela nabarhwaphilizi" / [thieves and looters]) and Capacity ("not capable of launching us in the new battles").

This contrast transforms grief from a passive state of sorrow into active moral indignation. By framing the current leadership as having violated constitutional oaths and ethical standards, negative Judgement strips the ruling elite of their claim to the liberation movement's moral heritage.

Institutional Decay and Cultural Resonances: Appreciation and isiXhosa Idioms

Appreciation choices (18.3%) extend the critique from individual politicians to the broader institutional state. By evaluating the condition of the African National Congress and the post-apartheid state as being in "crisis," suffering a "cataclysmic anticlimax," and subject to "state capture," Pityana depicts governance failure not as isolated misconduct, but as systemic institutional decay.

This institutional critique is reinforced through bilingual switching into isiXhosa tropes. The invocation of the historical battle cry "Zemk'inkomo magwalandini!" [There go the cattle, you cowards!] functions as a potent socio-cultural token. Culturally, cattle symbolise wealth, heritage, and collective survival. By equating state capture and corruption with the loss of the collective herd, Pityana triggers invoked negative Affect (collective loss and alarm) and negative Judgement (cowardice and betrayal of the struggle). The deployment of isiXhosa thus bridges formal political discourse with indigenous memory, galvanising the audience toward political action.

Theoretical Implications for Political Rhetoric in Post-Apartheid South Africa

By isolating the Attitude subsystem within Systemic Functional Linguistics' Appraisal framework, this study underscores how emotional expression (Affect), moral sanction (Judgement), and institutional evaluation (Appreciation) operate interdependently in African political rhetoric.

Focusing on Attitude demonstrates that political resistance in post-liberation societies does not rely solely on policy critique or ideological debate; it is deeply rooted in moral evaluation and emotional alignment. In post-apartheid South Africa, where liberation movements derive authority from historic struggle narratives, attitudinal discourse serves as a primary mechanism to audit political legitimacy, condemn corruption, and demand democratic accountability.

Political Reception, Consequences, and Transformative Impact

The transformative impact of Pityana's address extended far beyond the immediate eulogistic context, serving as a watershed moment in post-apartheid political discourse. By breaking the unwritten rule of party deference at state funerals, Pityana's speech triggered immediate national political reverberations:

- **Civil Society Mobilisation:** The speech directly catalysed the formation of the "Save South Africa" (Save SA) campaign, a broad coalition of business leaders, trade unionists, civil society organisations, and anti-apartheid veterans. Led by Pityana, Save SA organised nationwide protests and legal interventions demanding executive accountability and the resignation of President Jacob Zuma.
- **Family and Veteran Endorsement:** Rather than distancing themselves from the political subversion of the funeral, the Stofile family publicly endorsed Pityana's address. They affirmed that remaining silent about state capture would have betrayed Reverend Stofile's lifelong commitment to truth and justice.
- **Internal Party Fractures:** The eulogy empowered the ANC Council of Stalwarts and Veterans to formalise their resistance against party leadership, intensifying internal policy debates and judicial audits that ultimately contributed to executive leadership changes at the 54th ANC National Conference in December 2017.

Conclusion

This study has examined the rhetorical and political mechanics of Dr Siphso Pityana's funeral address for Reverend Makhenkesi Arnold Stofile by applying the Attitude subsystem within the Appraisal framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics. By isolating evaluative choices across Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation, the analysis demonstrates how a state memorial service was re-appropriated into a high-stakes arena of political dissent and ethical auditing within post-apartheid South Africa.

The empirical findings reveal a highly polarised attitudinal distribution, with 67.6% negative evaluative tokens overriding 32.4% positive tokens across 142 coded clause units. Rather than adhering to conventional eulogistic panegyric, Pityana deploys positive judgement (+propriety, +tenacity) and positive affect strategically to venerate the deceased and historic struggle stalwarts. This selective veneration establishes an unassailable moral benchmark rooted in the liberation movement's foundational ideals.

Against this moral baseline, the speech unleashes a dominant wave of negative Judgement (60.6% of all tokens), targeting President Jacob Zuma and the incumbent African National Congress executive for ethical dereliction (-propriety) and governance failure (-capacity). This moral sanction is reinforced by negative Appreciation (18.3%), which constructs contemporary state capture and organisational decay as a systemic crisis. Furthermore, the strategic code-switching into isiXhosa idioms, most notably the historic battle cry "Zemk'inkomo magwalandini!" [There go the cattle, you cowards!], bridges individual grief with collective cultural memory, converting sorrow into political indignation and a call for democratic renewal.

Ultimately, the present article contributes to African political discourse studies by showing that political authority in post-liberation societies is not permanently guaranteed by historical legacy. When formal parliamentary and institutional channels are perceived as compromised, memorial spaces become vital sites of democratic accountability. Through the deliberate deployment of attitudinal resources, political actors can challenge ruling elites, reclaim the moral lineage of the liberation struggle, and demand institutional reform from within.

Limitations of the Study

While this study offers valuable qualitative insights into the strategic deployment of Appraisal resources in South African political eulogies,

several methodological limitations must be acknowledged. First, the analysis is based on a single, albeit highly consequential, speech. Concentrating exclusively on Dr Siphos Pityana's eulogy provides rich qualitative depth, but it inherently limits the direct generalisability of the findings to all political funeral oratory across South Africa or the broader African continent.

Second, qualitative attitudinal coding inherently involves an element of analyst interpretation, particularly when identifying invoked (implicit) Attitude and cultural metaphors such as *Zemk'inkomo magwalandini*. Although this subjectivity was mitigated through systematic categorisation against established Appraisal subcategories and careful contextual grounding, alternative readings of specific attitudinal tokens remain possible.

Directions for Future Research

While this study provides a focused investigation into how attitudinal resources operate within Dr Siphos Pityana's funeral address, its empirical boundaries highlight key avenues for future scholarship:

- By restricting the analytical lens to the Attitude subsystem, this article intentionally set aside Engagement and Graduation. Subsequent research could incorporate Engagement (e.g. dialogic contraction, expansion) and Graduation (e.g. force and focus) to evaluate how political speakers negotiate dialogic space and calibrate the intensity of moral critique during public funeral oratory.
- Future research could extend this attitudinal model comparatively to other post-liberation contexts in Southern Africa such as Namibia, Zimbabwe, or Mozambique where former liberation movements encounter internal factionalism, state capture, and succession disputes (Zuern 2012: 498). Such comparative analyses would assess whether the subversion of official memorial spaces represents a systemic regional trend in African political rhetoric.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest is reported by the authors.

Statement of Ethics

No human participants were involved or interviewed in this study. The empirical data analysed for this article is derived entirely from secondary sources available in the public domain, specifically the audio-visual recording and transcript of Dr. Sipho Pityana's eulogy broadcast on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19qgDVsa2Q4>.

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