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Mapping Emotion and Discourse Staging in *Crazy Rich Asians*

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the construction and distribution of emotions in Kevin Kwan's *Crazy Rich Asians* using the Appraisal framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), focusing specifically on the Affect subsystem and its relation to narrative staging. Narratives are typically structured into orientation, complication, evaluation, and resolution, each fulfilling distinct communicative and emotional roles. By analyzing these stages and their affective elements, the research explores the emotional flow throughout the narrative. Understanding emotional progression is essential for revealing how meanings of affect are constructed and distributed within the text. Employing a qualitative research design, data were derived from the novel and validated through expert discussions. Data collection involved document analysis and focus group discussions. The data were obtained from sources selected based on specific criteria. Meanwhile, data analysis followed four systematic steps: domain, taxonomy, componential, and cultural theme analyses. The findings show that emotions are patterned systematically across the narrative. The orientation is dominated by happiness, accompanied by insecurity and satisfaction, reflecting optimism while hinting at tension. The complication sustains positive affects but introduces fear and desire, intensifying emotional conflict. In the evaluation stage, negative affects such as unhappiness and dissatisfaction emerge, balanced by affection and confidence. The resolution blends admiration and affection with traces of insecurity, suggesting partial closure amid unresolved tensions. Overall, the novel constructs an emotional arc that evolves from positivity to complexity, mirroring the protagonist's negotiation of romance, class, and identity. Emotions function as semiotic resources that shape relationships, narrative progression, and intercultural meaning within the text.

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1. Introduction

Literary works do not merely present a sequence of events; they also encapsulate the complexity of emotions embedded within characters and situations. Emotions conveyed in a text influence how readers interpret events, build connections with characters, and deepen their aesthetic experience^[1,2]. In novels, the depiction of emotion serves as one of the central strategies through which authors create narrative dynamism. Thus, analyzing emotions in literature is essential for understanding how a narrative engages its readers.

One of the most widely adopted linguistic frameworks for examining emotion is the Appraisal System within the domain of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Appraisal focuses on evaluative language and comprises three major subsystems: Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation^[3]. Among these, Affect is fundamental as it represents the expression of feelings—such as joy, sadness, fear, anger, and other emotional states. Martin and Rose categorize Affect into four broad domains: dis/inclination, un/happiness, in/security, and dis/satisfaction, each of which can be expressed either explicitly or implicitly^[4]. Through this framework, researchers are able to map how emotions are constructed and how subtle variations in affective meanings shape the representation of characters.

However, emotions in literary texts do not appear randomly; they are closely tied to discourse structure. Narratives are generally organized into recognizable stages, such as orientation, complication, evaluation, and resolution^[5,6]. Each stage fulfills a distinctive communicative function: orientation introduces characters and settings, complication presents conflicts, evaluation articulates attitudes toward events, and resolution brings closure to the narrative. The placement and intensity of emotions within these stages are crucial for shaping how the story unfolds and how readers are guided to experience tension, empathy, or satisfaction. In other words, the relationship between Affect and narrative staging is central to understanding the narrative strategy as a whole.

Several previous studies have applied Appraisal theory to literary texts. For instance, Khrisna et al. analyzed *The Old Man and The Sea* with a focus on the protagonist^[6]; Sodiq et al. examined *Bumi Manusia* in both Indonesian and its translation^[7]; while Yumrohtun investigated sexist attitudes in the *Buru Island Tetralogy*^[8]. While prior studies have applied the SFL framework to analyze academic interactions and refine corpus annotation, narrative research remains limited, particularly in examining the emotional dimensions of characters^[9–11]. Nonetheless, these studies reveal certain limitations: (1) analyses often emphasize Attitude categories in general rather than providing a detailed account of Affect; (2) the focus tends to be on a single character, thereby overlooking the dynamics between multiple characters; (3) little attention has been given to systematically linking affective patterns with discourse staging; (4) several studies have not worked on narratives to see emotion within stages; and (5) some works have focused on narrative and stages but have not been focusing the emotion within characters. These gaps highlight the need for research that explores the interplay between emotion and discourse structure more comprehensively. The urgency of this research lies in its attempt to bridge two underexplored areas and literary studies: affect and narrative staging. As mentioned, several studies have employed the Appraisal framework; however, the analysis of Affect as a system of emotions within characters and how Affect constructs emotion across narrative stages remains limited. Likewise, narrative analyses have often described story stages in structural terms without addressing how emotions evolve across these stages^[12–14]. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the research question: How is Affect constructed and distributed across the narrative stages of *Crazy Rich Asians*? By integrating Affect and Staging within the SFL framework, this study offers a new perspective on how emotions function to shape narrative progression. Therefore, it contributes theoretically to the expansion of SFL-based literary analysis and practically to a deeper understanding of emotion as a tool of meaning-making in fiction.

Addressing this gap, the present study incorporates a description of Affect that is further categorized into two types—Surge of Behaviour/Verb and Disposition/Adjective—both of which may be realized implicitly or explicitly. This categorization, applied within the Appraisal framework, enables a more fine-grained mapping of emotions while also linking them to the narrative progression. Specifically, the study examines how Affect is distributed across discourse staging in *Crazy Rich Asians*. The novel features two central characters, Nick and Rachel, whose contrasting cultural backgrounds and personalities shape the emotional dynamics of the story. Nick is portrayed as a Chinese-Singaporean man from an affluent family steeped in traditional values, while Rachel is a Chinese-American woman raised in the egalitarian and modern cultural environment of the United States. These divergent identities not only shape their interactions but also give rise to emotional exchanges that are often confrontational, negotiated, and, at times, contradictory.

The juxtaposition of these two characters' backgrounds makes the novel rich in emotional representation. Here, emotions are not merely expressions of personal feeling but also reflections of cultural clashes and social positioning. In this sense, *Crazy Rich Asians* provides an ideal context for investigating how Affect is constructed in literary texts. By analyzing the distribution of Affect across narrative stages, this study aims to generate new insights into how emotions are positioned, manifested, and function within the unfolding of the story. Put differently, emotions do more than animate the plot—they serve as a key to understanding the broader social and cultural dynamics embedded in the narrative. This methodological approach further elucidates the complex interplay between individual subjectivity and collective identity as mediated through emotional discourse. Moreover, it highlights the ways in which Affect operates not only as a narrative device but also as a site where tensions between tradition and modernity, as well as between insider and outsider perspectives, are negotiated. Through this lens, the study contributes to the growing body of scholarship that foregrounds emotion as a critical dimension in literary and cultural analysis, thereby expanding the theoretical and analytical tools available for examining narrative affectivity.

2. Theoretical Framework

The analysis of narrative texts requires attention not only to their structural organization but also to the interpersonal meanings embedded within them. Plot, as Foster defines, is the deliberate arrangement of events by the author to achieve a specific aesthetic effect^[15]. Similarly, Lukens underscores that a plot consists of interconnected sequences of events that highlight character development and sustain reader engagement^[16]. Building on these literary perspectives, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) offers a discourse-oriented approach. Martin and Rose^[4,17] reconceptualize narrative structure in terms of *staging*, identifying four canonical phases: orientation, complication, evaluation, and resolution. Each stage performs distinct communicative functions: orientation introduces participants and settings, complication establishes conflict, evaluation foregrounds attitudes, and resolution brings closure. As Martin and Rose^[4] argue, staging provides the “semiotic scaffolding” that guides readers through both experiential and affective dimensions of a narrative.

To account for the emotional dimension within texts, this study employs the Appraisal framework as a key component of evaluative language in Systemic Functional Linguistics^[5] with a specific focus on Affect. Affect is realized through two principal forms: disposition/adjective, which represents relatively stable emotional states, and surge of behaviour/verb, which reflects dynamic and often situationally triggered responses^[3,18]. These realizations may be explicit (e.g., lexical adjectives such as “joyful” or “anxious”) or implicit, embedded in behavioral processes, metaphors, or contextual cues. Affect is further differentiated into four semantic domains: inclination/disinclination, happiness/unhappiness, security/insecurity, and satisfaction/dissatisfaction^[4]. As Bednarek emphasizes, affective meaning is “systematically patterned in discourse, reflecting narrative progression and interpersonal positioning”^[18].

The integration of staging and Affect thus offers a comprehensive theoretical apparatus for literary analysis. While staging illuminates the macro-organization of narrative events, Affect reveals the micro-level distribution of emotional meanings across those stages. In line with Martin and

Rose^[4], this dual framework allows for the mapping of how emotions are strategically placed within narrative progression, thereby shaping readers’ responses and foregrounding cultural and social tensions. Consequently, this study applies Appraisal theory—focusing on Affect—and narrative staging to examine how *Crazy Rich Asians* encodes emotion not simply as individual expression but as a semiotic resource that reflects intercultural negotiation, social hierarchy, and interpersonal dynamics. Furthermore, this combined approach facilitates a nuanced understanding of how affective meanings function dialogically within the text, revealing underlying power relations and ideological positions.

3. Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a single embedded case study design, as the research focus had been predetermined—namely, the use and distribution of Affect types in *Crazy Rich Asians* by Kevin Kwan. The novel served as the research site, encompassing discourse stages categorized into orientation, complication, evaluation, and resolution. Following Santosa^[19], data sources refer to the origins from which research data are obtained. In this study, the primary data source was the novel itself, containing linguistic realizations of Affect that characterize the two main protagonists. The text was selected using purposive (criterion-based) sampling based on the following criteria: (1) it was written by a well-known author with multiple published works, and (2) it has been successfully adapted into a film. To ensure the credibility of data, three informants were also involved for data validation, selected according to these criteria: (a) expertise in Appraisal theory, (b) possession of at least a master’s degree, and (c) willingness to participate in this research. Data were collected through document analysis and focus

group discussions (FGD). Document analysis was used to identify and classify the raw data of Affect across the narrative stages, while the FGD was conducted with three expert informants to validate the findings. Triangulation of data sources and methods was applied to ensure the validity and reliability of the analysis. Data analysis followed Spradley’s ethnographic model^[20], consisting of four stages: domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, componential analysis, and cultural theme analysis. The process was carried out inductively and systematically to uncover patterns of Affect realization in relation to the staging of the narrative discourse.

4. Results

This section presents the findings derived from the focus group discussion, which are systematically organized into a principal category: the types of Affect realized in the characterization of the main protagonist in the novel *Crazy Rich Asians*. The analysis reveals that distinct types of Affect predominantly characterize each narrative stage, indicating a structured and patterned emotional trajectory that closely aligns with the progression of the story. This distribution of Affect reflects the protagonist’s evolving emotional landscape, which is intricately tied to key plot developments and interpersonal dynamics. Furthermore, the findings suggest that these affective patterns are not randomly distributed but strategically positioned to enhance narrative coherence and reader engagement. By mapping these affective realizations across the discourse stages, the study elucidates how emotion functions as a critical semiotic resource that both shapes and is shaped by the unfolding narrative. This approach underscores the significance of Affect as an integral component in literary characterization and narrative construction, providing valuable insights into the interplay between emotion and storytelling in contemporary fiction (see **Table 1**).

Table 1. The distribution of affects in each stage.

Staging	Types of Affect	Sub-Categories	Total Data
Orientation	Happiness	Cheer	17
		Affection	11
	Insecure	Disquiet	11
		Surprise	4
	Satisfaction	Admiration	7
		Interest	1

Table 1. Cont.

Staging	Types of Affect	Sub-Categories	Total Data
Orientation	Inclination	Desire	7
	Secure	Confident	7
	Unhappiness	Antipathy Misery	3 1
	Dissatisfaction	Ennui	1
Complication	Happiness	Cheer Affection	24 7
	Satisfaction	Admiration Interest	12 1
	Insecure	Disquiet Surprise	10 2
	Disinclination	Fear Displeasure	8 2
	Inclination	Desire	5
	Secure	Confident	5
	Unhappiness	Antipathy	3
	Evaluation	Happiness	Cheer Affection
Unhappiness		Antipathy Misery	4 3
Dissatisfaction		Displeasure Ennui	6 1
Secure		Confident	3
Inclination		Desire	2
Insecure		Disquiet	2
Resolution		Dissatisfaction	Displeasure Ennui
	Happiness	Cheer Affection	6 5
	Insecure	Disquiet Surprise	7 2
	Satisfaction	Interest Admiration	3 3
	Secure	Confident	2
	Insecure	Surprise	2
	Inclination	Desire	1
	Disinclination	Fear	1

4.1. The Distribution of Affects in Each Stage

4.1.1. Orientation

As shown in the table, happiness emerges as the novel's dominant affect, followed by 'insecure' in the second posi-

tion and satisfaction in the third. This distribution is closely related to the progression of the storyline. Orientation, which serves as the opening stage of the narrative^[13], highlights the joyful and exciting moments between Rachel and Nick as they deepen their relationship and prepare to travel together

to Singapore. Nevertheless, instances of insecurity are also present in this stage, reflecting how Nick’s family begins to signal disapproval of their relationship and subtly introduces emotional tension into the narrative. This insecurity indicates an emerging conflict between individual desires and familial expectations, which becomes a significant emotional undercurrent throughout the story. Alongside this, satisfaction appears as both characters draw comfort and reassurance from each other’s presence and mutual support, demonstrating emotional reciprocity and resilience in the face of external pressures. This affect occupies the third position due to its recurring function in maintaining relational stability. Other affect types, such as confident, grateful, and hopeful, are also identified in this stage, although not as frequently as the three dominant categories. The predominance of positive affects in this orientation suggests that the author deliberately constructs Rachel and Nick’s relationship as affectionate, harmonious, and emotionally secure, emphasizing their optimism and shared happiness despite underlying socio-cultural tensions. Such emotional portrayal functions to establish reader empathy and foreshadow future challenges while maintaining an overall tone of warmth and intimacy. The examples below illustrate the representative instances of each affect found in the orientation stage.

Datum 001

“Definitely! We can even stage a reenactment!” Nick **laughed**, slathering jam and clotted cream onto a scone still warm from the oven. (*Happiness-cheer*)

Datum 006

“You’re the only Chinese mom I know who’s actually encouraging her daughter to shack up with a guy.” Rachel **laughed**. (*Insecurity-surprise*)

Datum 011

She tried to go back to reading the State Department’s Southeast Asia travel advisory website. As she sat there in the glow of the laptop, Nick **couldn’t help but marvel at how beautiful his girlfriend looked**, even at the end of a long day. (*Satisfaction-admiration*)

Datum 020

Nick was then to proceed to his grandmother’s by himself and formally **request** permission

to invite Rachel to the customary Friday night dinner that Ah Ma hosted for the extended family. (*Inclination-desire*)

Datum 026

This was the most he had ever talked about his family, and it made her **feel a little more assured**. (*Security-confidence*)

Datum 047

“Colin, don’t you start **scaring** her,” Nick chided. (*Unhappiness-antipathy*)

Datum 007

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. I know the whole story. Instead of an engagement ring, he endowed a scholarship in her name at Stanford,” Rachel said **in a bored tone**. (*Dissatisfaction-ennui*)

Across these data, it is evident that the novel presents a diverse range of affects that collectively construct the emotional portrayal of the main characters in the orientation stage. As illustrated in Datum 001, happiness emerges as the most prominent affect, symbolizing the initial joy and harmony in Rachel and Nick’s relationship. In contrast, insecurity dominates in Datum 006. The difference between these two data lies in how the verb laugh is used to express emotion in different contexts. In Datum 001, laughter conveys joy, as Nick’s laughter reflects his intention to do something enjoyable with Rachel—an interpretation supported by his subsequent action of preparing a cake. Meanwhile, in Datum 006, laugh represents Rachel’s surprise at Nick’s mother’s peculiar behavior. Satisfaction in datum 011 reveals the layered emotional complexity that underpins their interactions, reflecting moments of doubt alongside emotional reassurance. Furthermore, inclination in datum 020 and security in datum 026 demonstrate how the characters navigate personal desires and mutual trust, reinforcing the strength of their emotional bond. Conversely, unhappiness in datum 047 and dissatisfaction in datum 007 introduce elements of conflict and emotional strain, emphasizing the narrative’s attempt to depict a realistic portrayal of romantic relationships. The distribution of these affects substantiates the earlier observation that positive emotions predominantly characterize the orientation, while negative and neutral affects are strategically integrated to enhance narrative tension, emotional depth, and character development, thereby enriching the overall affective dimension of the story.

4.1.2. Complication

In the complication stage, the distribution of affects remains consistent with happiness, satisfaction, and insecurity occupying the top three positions. Happiness continues to dominate the data with the subcategories of cheer and affection. These findings indicate that despite the emerging conflicts, the narrative still emphasizes joyful and affectionate moments between Rachel and Nick. Following this, satisfaction is the second most frequent affect, realized through admiration and interest. The presence of satisfaction in this stage reflects Rachel's growing appreciation of Nick's loyalty and support, which helps her endure the pressures of his family's scrutiny. Meanwhile, insecure is ranked third, with disquiet and surprise. This affect is most visible when Rachel faces gossip, criticism, and exclusion from Nick's relatives, reinforcing her outsider position. In addition to these three dominant affects, several other categories appear and enrich the emotional variation in this stage. Disinclination, represented through fear, surfaces as Rachel anticipates rejection and wrestles with her anxiety over not being accepted into Nick's family. Inclination, classified as desire, highlights Nick's determination to include Rachel in family traditions and his longing for her to be recognized as his partner. Likewise, secure in the form of confidence demonstrates moments of reassurance, particularly when Nick provides emotional support, enabling Rachel to regain composure. Finally, unhappiness, expressed as antipathy, occurs when Nick expresses irritation toward others who threaten Rachel's comfort. The following are examples of the data

Datum 73

"It's stuffed, Rachel." Nick **laughed**. The tiger stood as if about to pounce, mouth open in a ferocious growl. (*Happiness-cheer*)

Datum 72

"You grew up here?" Rachel asked **in surprise**. (*Satisfaction-Admiration*)

Datum 77

"I'm sorry, it looked so real," Rachel said, **recovering herself**. (*Insecure-Surprise*)

Datum 124

She went to the door and found Rachel standing there, **her lips white and her whole body shaking**. (*Disinclination-Fear*)

Datum 112

Nick climbed wearily into one of the tank-like cars, **hoping that Colin's bachelor weekend would proceed without incident**. (*Inclination-Desire*)

Datum 107

"Time's up, girls! The boutique is now closed!" Araminta **declared**. Relieved that the shopping spree was finally over, Rachel went

These data reveal the emotional complexity of the complication stage. While happiness in datum 73 and satisfaction in datum 72 remain central to Rachel and Nick's relationship. Meanwhile, the presence of insecurity in datum 77 and disinclination in datum 124 highlights the emotional vulnerability and fear Rachel experiences. At the same time, inclination in datum 112 and security in datum 107 illustrate moments of desire and regained confidence, balancing the tension with resilience. This combination demonstrates how the author integrates both positive and negative affects to create contrast and sustain the dramatic tension, while ensuring that positive emotions continue to prevail. In search of her room. (Secure-confident). Therefore, it can be concluded that these findings suggest that while happiness remains dominant, the complication stage introduces a broader spectrum of emotional expressions. The interplay between positive affects (happiness, satisfaction, security, inclination) and negative affects (insecurity, disinclination, unhappiness) intensifies the conflict and underscores Rachel and Nick's relationship's resilience. This pattern illustrates how Kevin Kwan constructs a romantic narrative in which joy and admiration consistently outweigh insecurity and fear, keeping the overall tone optimistic despite the challenges faced by the protagonists.

4.1.3. Evaluation

In the evaluation stage, the affect distribution shows continuity and contrast with the previous stages. The data reveal that happiness remains present through cheer and affection. These expressions of joy and intimacy indicate that Rachel and Nick continue to find moments of lightheartedness and emotional closeness, even as the storyline reaches a more reflective phase. However, unlike the earlier stages where positive affects dominated overwhelmingly, the evaluation stage displays a more substantial presence of adverse affects. Unhappiness emerges with notable frequency, particularly in the forms of antipathy and misery. These re-

alizations capture moments of emotional pain, frustration, and rejection, especially tied to Rachel’s ongoing struggles with Nick’s family and the social environment she confronts. Additionally, dissatisfaction becomes another prominent category, represented by displeasure and ennui. These instances highlight the characters’ disappointment and lack of fulfillment, revealing the weariness that emerges after prolonged conflict. Despite these adverse affects, the data also show resilience and determination. Security appears in the form of confidence, pointing to Rachel’s regained composure in the face of challenges. Similarly, inclination is found in the form of desire, underscoring Nick’s persistence in his intention to secure Rachel’s place in his life. At the same time, insecurity is still present, realized as disquiet, reflecting Rachel’s lingering uncertainty about her acceptance within Nick’s world. The examples below show how these types of affects depict the main characters.

Datum 150

Everyone made their way back to the living room, where Nick and Rachel were surrounded by a flurry of dinner guests. **Lorena Lim and Carol Tai shook Rachel’s hand, while Daisy Foo embraced Nick.** (*Happiness-Affection*)

Datum 155

Victoria **shook Rachel’s hand coolly**, while Cassandra kept her spindly arms crossed over her chest, her lips pursed in a tight smile as she assessed Rachel from head to toe. (*Unhappiness-Antipathy*)

Datum 178

“What are you doing?” Nick said **in bafflement** as he entered the bedroom. “What does it look like? I’m getting out of here!” “What? Why?” Nick frowned. (*Dissatisfaction-displeasure*)

Datum 160

“**I’m getting sort of creeped out**,” Rachel said, shaking off a sudden chill. (*Disinclination-fear*)

Datum 176

“**Well, hurry up, lah!**” Colin exclaimed, clapping Nick on the back. (*Secure-confident*)

Datum 184

He approached Rachel slowly **and put his arms around her**. She tried to break away

from him, but he locked his arms around her tightly. (*Happiness-affection*)

Datum 174

“Well, **I’m glad you’ve been with me on this ride**,” Colin said. “I know I haven’t been easy on you the last few days.” (*Insecure-disquiet*)

The evaluation stage demonstrates a more balanced yet conflicted emotional pattern compared to the orientation and complication stages. Positive affects such as happiness, confidence, and desire remain present and continue to characterize the affectionate bond between Rachel and Nick. However, the increasing presence of unhappiness and dissatisfaction introduces emotional tension, suggesting a pivotal shift in the narrative’s tone and the characters’ psychological states.

In Datum 150, Nick and Rachel are warmly welcomed by the dinner guests—Lorena Lim and Carol Tai greet Rachel kindly, and Daisy Foo hugs Nick. This happiness-affection shows social approval and gives the couple a brief sense of comfort and belonging. In contrast, Datum 155 shows unhappiness-antipathy through Victoria’s cold handshake and Cassandra’s judgmental look, revealing hidden hostility and class prejudice that highlight Rachel’s outsider status. The emotional tension increases in Datum 178, when Rachel’s decision to leave confuses and frustrates Nick. His dissatisfaction-displeasure shows the strain in their relationship as outside pressure begins to affect them. Similarly, Datum 160 expresses disinclination-fear when Rachel feels uneasy, showing her growing awareness of danger and alienation in her new environment. Despite these negative feelings, there are still moments of reassurance. Datum 176 shows Colin’s secure-confidence as he encourages Nick, reflecting their strong friendship. Datum 184 depicts Nick hugging Rachel tightly, showing happiness-affection and reaffirming their emotional bond, even though Rachel hesitates at first. Meanwhile, Datum 174 reveals Colin’s insecure-disquiet when he admits his mistakes and appreciates Rachel’s support, showing his vulnerable side. Overall, these examples show that the evaluation stage is a turning point in the story. Positive emotions like love and confidence still exist, but negative ones—fear, frustration, and hostility—start to appear more often. This mix of feelings makes the emotional journey more realistic, showing that Rachel and Nick’s relationship is full of both warmth and conflict.

4.1.4. Resolution

The findings suggest that a complex interplay between negative and positive affects characterizes the resolution. It is reflected by the use of dissatisfaction and insecurity that are dominant in this stage, indicating the lingering struggles of identity, class, and belonging, whereas happiness and satisfaction highlight the enduring strength of the romantic bond between Rachel and Nick. The prominence of dissatisfaction – displeasure and insecure – disquiet suggests that although the narrative moves toward closure, it does not offer an entirely harmonious resolution. Rachel, in particular, continues to struggle with unease and discomfort, which is consistent with her positioning as an outsider negotiating her place in Nick’s elite world. The recurring pattern of displeasure reflects her resistance against the excesses of wealth and the pressures it brings, while disquiet underscores her ongoing vulnerability and self-consciousness when confronted with unfamiliar cultural and social expectations. These two affect types function to remind readers that the characters’ challenges are not fully resolved, but instead leave residual tensions that continue to shape their emotional landscape. This balance underscores the function of the resolution stage: it provides closure not by eliminating conflict, but by showing how characters continue to negotiate and manage emotional tensions while sustaining their relationships. The data below are examples representing each type of affect.

Datum 190

“**Like I care.**” (*Dissatisfaction-displeasure*)

Datum 192

He handed Rachel a still-warm banana-leaf packet tied with a string. “**Try Malaysia’s most popular dish—nasi lemak,**” he said.

(*Happiness-affection*)

Datum 193

“But I haven’t washed my hands, Nick. **I don’t think I can eat like this,**” Rachel said, sounding a little alarmed. (*Insecure-disquiet*)

Datum 196

“You **never cease to amaze me,** Nicholas Young. Why didn’t I know you spoke Malay?”

Rachel said. (*Satisfaction-interest*)

Datum 223

“I might ... I haven’t really decided yet. I just don’t want a reenactment of Apocalypse Now.

I’ll be in the middle of meeting my father for the first time and next thing you know, one of Nick’s relatives will land in the prison yard in a chopper. I’ll be glad if I never have to see another private jet, yacht, or fancy car for the rest of my life,” Rachel **vehemently declared.**

(*Secure-Confident*)

Datum 231

“Oh ... ooh,” Rachel said, **turning crimson** when she realized what her mother meant.

(*Insecurity-Disquiet*)

Datum 198

“Do you think it’s because your family is so wealthy and you had to overcompensate by being super-modest?” Rachel **suggested.**

(*Inclination-desire*)

Datum 234

“My God!” Rachel **clasped her hand to her mouth in horror.** (*Disinclination-Fear*)

In the resolution stage, the affective expressions reveal a complex interplay between positive and negative emotions that shape the story’s closure. Datum 190 reflects dissatisfaction–displeasure, illustrating Rachel’s resistance and rejection toward the pressures she faces. This is contrasted with Datum 192, where Nick’s gesture of offering *nasi lemak* conveys happiness–affection, showing tenderness and intimacy in their relationship. Rachel’s unease in Datum 193 demonstrates insecure–disquiet, capturing her discomfort in an unfamiliar cultural context, while Datum 196 highlights satisfaction–interest, as Rachel admires Nick’s unexpected ability to speak Malay. Confidence begins to surface in Datum 223, where Rachel firmly voices her stance against the ostentatious lifestyle surrounding her, signaling security and confidence. However, insecurity returns in Datum 231 when Rachel blushes with embarrassment, again pointing to disquiet. Datum 198 reveals inclination–desire as Rachel questions Nick about his modesty, indicating her curiosity and continued investment in understanding him. Finally, Datum 234 depicts a moment of disinclination–fear as Rachel reacts in horror, underscoring the lingering anxieties that persist despite the narrative moving toward closure. Altogether, these data suggest that the resolution does not erase conflict but rather balances insecurity and dissatisfaction with affection, admiration, and growing confidence, portraying Rachel

as a character who continues to negotiate her identity and emotions within her relationship.

5. Discussion

The findings show that the distribution of affect in *Crazy Rich Asians* (CRA) follows the story's narrative structure. In the orientation stage, positive affects dominate. Happiness is most frequent, followed by insecurity and satisfaction. This opening stage highlights joyful moments between Rachel and Nick as they prepare to travel to Singapore. The strong presence of happiness aligns with Schmidt et al., who argue that early narrative stages often introduce positive emotions to build reader engagement^[21]. Yet, alongside joy, insecurity already emerges, showing Rachel's tension with Nick's family. This contrast reflects what Öhman et al. describe as the beginning of an emotion arc, where subtle negative cues appear within otherwise optimistic beginnings, forming a foundation for later conflict^[22]. Moreover, as Hogan notes, romantic and social-drama genres often open with optimism and relational warmth before revealing deeper tensions—precisely what occurs in CRA's introduction^[23]. In the complication stage, the emotional texture becomes more complex. Happiness continues through cheer and affection, but negative affects—insecurity, disquiet, and fear—begin to rise. Rachel's experiences of gossip and exclusion bring discomfort and anxiety, while Nick expresses desire and confidence, hoping for her acceptance. This mixture of emotions resonates with the idea of narrative tension described by Watanabe and Fukazawa^[24], who found that middle sections often balance positive and negative emotions to sustain reader engagement. Similarly, Pólya and Csertő, who investigate narrative emotion structure, confirm that negative emotions typically peak in the complication stage, reflecting heightened conflict or challenges^[25]. These contrasts also reflect Vishnubhotla et al., who emphasize that characters may experience diverging emotional arcs within the same narrative phase—seen in Rachel's insecurity versus Nick's confidence^[26].

The evaluation stage marks a clear shift. Although positive affects like happiness and affection remain, negative affects such as unhappiness (misery, antipathy) and dissatisfaction (ennui, displeasure) become stronger. Rachel's misery reflects her growing awareness of exclusion, while

Nick's reassurance signals emotional resilience. This stage illustrates what Schmidt et al. call the “emotional turn,” where deeper conflicts intensify before closure^[21]. It also fits Öhman et al.'s finding that emotional arcs often dip into negativity mid-narrative before recovering^[22]. Furthermore, Wu emphasizes that emotional “tension” generated by social and psychological conflict is crucial in depicting realism and character development^[27]. CRA's evaluation stage reflects this dynamic tension, showing how love and insecurity coexist as Rachel confronts class-based prejudice.

In the resolution stage, dissatisfaction and insecurity remain alongside happiness and satisfaction. Rachel still feels unease as cultural and class barriers persist, while Nick offers support but cannot fully resolve external tensions. Unlike traditional romantic narratives that end harmoniously, CRA concludes with mixed emotions. This aligns with Vishnubhotla et al., who found that character emotions do not always align with narrative closure^[26], and Kurniasih et al., who argue that authors often leave lingering emotions for interpretive depth^[28]. Similarly, Zhao's study highlights that some narratives intentionally avoid full resolution to provoke lasting reader reflection^[29]. CRA's ending—where affection persists amid unresolved conflict—reflects this strategy, leaving the reader with a complex emotional impression.

Across these stages, CRA's affective progression—positive opening, mixed complication, negative peak, and unresolved closure—mirrors the emotion arcs identified in Öhman et al. and supports Hogan's claim that genre shapes emotional rhythm^[18,19]. By combining warmth, conflict, and incomplete resolution, CRA portrays a nuanced emotional landscape rooted in love, class struggle, and cultural tension. This balance between joy and unease confirms CRA's alignment with established emotional arc models while showcasing its unique thematic depth.

6. Conclusions

This study has examined the distribution of affect in *Crazy Rich Asians* across the four narrative stages: orientation, complication, evaluation, and resolution. The analysis shows that the emotional flow of the story follows a clear trajectory. In the orientation, positive emotions such as happiness dominate, giving the narrative an optimistic beginning. In the complication, happiness remains strong but is increas-

ingly challenged by insecurity, fear, and desire, reflecting the growing conflict faced by Rachel and Nick. The evaluation stage presents a significant shift, with unhappiness and dissatisfaction becoming more prominent, showing the weight of social pressure and exclusion. Finally, the resolution combines positive and negative emotions, with dissatisfaction and insecurity standing alongside happiness and satisfaction, suggesting that the story closes with both love and lingering tension. This study proves that the emotion of the characters flows through the stages of narratives. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of staging and affect within narrative analysis will provide a new insight for translation practitioners in their attempts to maintain the staging and affect in the target text.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the novel constructs an emotional arc that moves from positivity toward greater complexity. The balance between joy, insecurity, and dissatisfaction reflects the central themes of romance, class, and belonging. Rather than offering a simple happy ending, the narrative highlights the ongoing negotiation of emotions within relationships and cultural expectations. This shows that *Crazy Rich Asians* portrays romance not only as a source of happiness but also as a site of struggle, resilience, and unresolved tension.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, S.H., M.N., R.S., and D.D.; methodology, S.H., M.N., R.S., and D.D.; validation, S.H., M.N., R.S., and D.D.; formal analysis, S.H. and M.N.; investigation, S.H., M.N., R.S., and D.D.; writing—original draft preparation, S.H. and M.N.; writing—review and editing, R.S. and D.D.; supervision, M.N., R.S., and D.D.; project administration, M.N. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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