



Appraisal and ideology in students' argumentative texts: a systemic functional linguistics study

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how students employ evaluative language in argumentative writing using Appraisal theory, specifically the categories of Attitude, Graduation, and Engagement to uncover the connection between evaluative strategies and ideological positioning, a relatively unexplored area in EFL research. Employing a mixed-methods design, the study analysed argumentative essays and survey responses from participants in the 2024 Argumentative Writing Contest. Data were collected from 21 submissions, with four texts selected based on argumentative quality, linguistic richness, and regional representation (Bengkulu, Kotawaringin, Bekasi, and Yogyakarta). A survey questionnaire accompanied the text analysis to gather student insights on their writing experiences. The textual data from students' writings were examined using the Appraisal framework in systemic functional linguistics (SFL), and the survey data from the questionnaire were processed through the interactive analysis model in qualitative research, involving data condensation, display, and verification. Triangulation and member checking ensured data credibility. Findings revealed that students' evaluative language mainly utilized appreciation to represent ideological stance and assessing regional learning environments. Most of the writers used intensifier markers, while students from remote regions used more monoglossic expressions. Cultural norms shaped argumentation styles, with some preferring indirect persuasion. This suggests that evaluative writing is both linguistically and culturally situated. The study's implications advocate for culturally responsive and linguistically targeted instruction to bridge regional disparities in argumentative writing competence.



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INTRODUCTION

In argumentative writing, students do more than just state a position. They carefully select language to evaluate, reason, and persuade. The specific words they choose to praise, criticise, or express feelings are windows into their personal attitudes and judgments. However, these evaluative expressions can reflect a writer's deeper, often unconscious, ideological position, which is shaped by their cultural background and learning environment, and do more than build an argument. While many studies have examined the use of evaluative language in student writing, the direct relationship between these linguistic choices and the ideologies they convey is an understudied topic in EFL research. This study aims to address this gap by investigating how evaluative language in argumentative essays reveals students' ideological positioning on a particular topic.

Appraisal theory's application within the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework has been widely explored in studies analysing argumentative writing. Xinghua and Thompson (2009) conducted a contrastive analysis of Attitude in students' argumentative writing, while Liu (2013) emphasised evaluation in English argumentative essays written by EFL students using Appraisal theory. Fauziah, Warsono, and Widhiyanto (2019) compared the use of appraisal resources in essays by students with varying proficiency levels, and Hendriwanto, Hartini, Nurkamto, and Sharda (2020) provided a functional analysis of university students' argumentative writing. Hood (2010) focused on developing learners' use of Appraisal to enhance their argumentative writing through the SFL approach, and Helen Jenkins and Pico (2006) applied SFL to analyse ESOL argumentative essays. Additionally, Mei and Allison (2003) explored Appraisal in claims within students' argumentative essays, while Lam and Crosthwaite (2018) examined appraisal resources in L1 and L2 essays using a learner corpus-informed perspective. Lancaster (2014) investigated the systemic functional analysis of interpersonal stances in argumentative writing by both L1 and L2 students. These studies collectively highlight the role of appraisal resources, such as Attitude, evaluation, and interpersonal stance, in understanding how students construct arguments, express positions, and develop proficiency in written communication.

Although these studies effectively map out the use of evaluative resources, they often fail to examine the deeper link between assessment and ideology

in students' writing. Argumentative texts are inherently ideological because they require authors to take a position that is built on judgments and perspectives stemming from their personal and cultural belief systems. In this sense, language becomes a medium for conveying ideology because every assessment a writer makes reveals their underlying values. This is precisely where Appraisal theory becomes an essential analytical tool. As a core component of Systemic Functional Linguistics, the Appraisal framework is designed to deconstruct how writers express attitudes and negotiate social relationships through language choices. It provides a systematic method for examining the building blocks of evaluation—ATTITUDE, GRADUATION, and ENGAGEMENT—and is therefore uniquely suited to reveal how ideological stances are linguistically constructed within an argument. This study uses the appraisal framework to analyse not only what students argue but also how their choices of evaluative language reveal their underlying ideologies, a focus largely missing from existing literature.

Therefore, this study was designed with a problem formulation that aims to answer the phenomena in the text, namely as follows: (1) How is Attitude manifested in the text of Student Argumentative Writing? (2) How is Graduation manifested in the text of Student Argumentative Writing? (3) How is Engagement manifested in the text of Student Argumentative Writing? (4) How do the patterns of Appraisal resources used in the texts construct the students' ideological stances? (5) How do the students' perceptions and self-reported challenges from the survey data help explain the variations in their use of evaluative language and ideological expression?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Appraisal Theory

Martin & White (2005) stated that interpersonal relationships are related to negotiating social relationships, how people interact, and the feelings they try to share. In other words, interpersonal is a model of meaning that contributes to how people interact. In interpersonal relations, several discourse systems are involved. One of them is Appraisal. According to Martin & Rose (2003), Appraisal is a system of interpersonal meaning related to evaluation. Evaluation is used to negotiate human social relationships. This is achieved by conveying to listeners or readers the human emotions associated with objects and people. This means that humans evaluate the things and people they talk about and express their feelings towards them. According to Martin & White (2005), Appraisal has three interacting domains: Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation.

In their work on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), entitled "Working with Discourse: Meaning Beyond the Clause," Martin and Rose (2007) explain the Appraisal framework used to analyse evaluative language in texts. The

Appraisal framework is part of the Appraisal Theory within the broader field of SFL, focusing on how language is used to express attitudes, judgments, and evaluations. Below is a detailed explanation of the key components of the appraisal frameworks described by Martin and Rose, which is the main theoretical approach used in this research.

Attitude

The appraisal system analysis framework was chosen as the primary theoretical approach in this research because argumentative texts rely heavily on the use of evaluative language to build their arguments. Not only that, a person's writing ability, including that of students, can be detected from their complexity in composing arguments using evaluation language. The most important thing is the form of evaluation language itself, known as ATTITUDE. ATTITUDE concerns how speakers express their evaluation of something. Something here refers to the three main domains of ATTITUDE, namely regarding the evaluation of feelings (AFFECT), people's behaviour (JUDGMENT), and evaluations of things, phenomena, or events (APPRECIATION). Because Attitude is based on a person's assessment of something, every form of evaluation language, including AFFECT, JUDGMENT, and APPRECIATION, will always be at one of the poles, namely positive or negative.

The first type of ATTITUDE, AFFECT, involves expressing emotions, feelings, or moods. It concerns how individuals or groups feel about something, including emotional responses like happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, etc. According to Martin and Rose (2007), AFFECT can be categorised based on the delivery form, namely directly and indirectly. The statement "I like learning English" is an example of direct positive AFFECT, which is characterised by the evaluative lexicon "like". Meanwhile, the statement "every time I study English, I always smile" is a form of indirect positive AFFECT because instead of saying "like" directly, in this example, it is expressed in the form of a clause "I always smile". Likewise, the negative form can also be expressed directly and indirectly. The simple parameter is to see whether positive or negative feelings are conveyed through the direct evaluative lexicon or described through events that have occurred or are being carried out.

JUDGMENT, the second aspect of ATTITUDE, is concerned with how people evaluate the behaviour or character of others. This can involve personal or MORAL JUDGMENTS. PERSONAL JUDGMENT concerns luck and reasonableness of a person's natural characteristics (NORMALITY), personal competence (CAPACITY), and a person's persistence and resilience (TENACITY). On the MORAL JUDGMENT side, there are assessments of a person's personal Attitude related to honesty (VERACITY), politeness, and

civility (PROPRIETY). Thus, the JUDGMENT taxonomy consists of five aspects: NORMALITY, CAPACITY, TENACITY, VERACITY, and PROPRIETY. Like AFFECT, this aspect can be divided into positive and negative. The use of NORMALITY evaluation language usually uses evaluative lexicons such as lucky, typical, unfortunate, etc. CAPACITY aspects are usually characterised by words, such as strong, experienced, mature, educated, weak, stupid, lack of knowledge, etc. Then, TENACITY can be conveyed using expressions such as careful, conscientious, alert, timid, cowardly, disloyal, etc. For MORAL JUDGMENT, the VERACITY aspect is built on constituents such as honest, sincere, credible, false, deceitful, manipulative, etc. Lastly, the PROPRIETY aspect refers to a person's moral character, so it is typically characterised using the lexicon of civilised, fair, caring, evil, corrupt, immoral, and so on.

The final aspect of Attitude is the evaluation of objects, processes, or phenomena based on aesthetic or value-based criteria, called APPRECIATION. To determine whether ATTITUDE, including APPRECIATION, can be considered through several parameters, including whether the object or phenomenon being assessed is interesting/pleasing, whether it is balanced/complex, and how innovative/authentic/useful the thing being evaluated is. Like AFFECT and JUDGMENT, this aspect also consists of positive and negative evaluations. One important thing to consider is the boundary between JUDGMENT and APPRECIATION. For example, when someone states, "The book he wrote is good, " this expression is included in APPRECIATION. However, when the statement is changed to "he succeeded in writing that book, " it is included in JUDGMENT. So, when determining whether ATTITUDE is APPRECIATION or JUDGMENT, it is necessary to look at which constituent is being evaluated directly, whether the object or the person.

Graduation

The fundamental nature of evaluation language, apart from being able to take the form of a positive or negative assessment, also has a level of emphasis, as each word and expression has more or less emphasis compared to other assessment expressions. In the appraisal system, this configuration is called GRADUATION. Also called amplification, GRADUATION refers to how evaluations are intensified or mitigated. GRADUATION is used as a tool that functions to modify the intensity or strength of an attitude. According to Martin and Rose (2007), GRADUATION is related to two critical points, namely how strongly the evaluation language is amplified (FORCE), or how sharply an experiential category is evaluated (FOCUS).

The evaluative lexicon "happy" in the clause "I am very happy" falls into the ATTITUDE category, which gets FORCE RAISING amplification using the

word “very”. When the word “very” is replaced with the word “less” then what happens is an amplification of FORCE LOWERING. In other words, FORCE strengthens or weakens with the terms RAISING and LOWERING. The example above is a type of FORCE INTENSIFIER amplification, namely the first force aspect. Apart from intensifiers, there is an aspect of force ATTITUDINAL LEXIS, namely strengthening ATTITUDE that are attached directly to the evaluative lexicon; for example, the words happy/delighted/ecstatic have different emphasis, thus the strength of the amplification is also different. In addition, attitude amplification through FORCE can be realised through METAPHORS such as the expression “ice cold,” which can be understood as “extremely cold”. Lastly, SWEARING also often emphasises the evaluative lexicon, such as in the expression “damn cool” to describe that something is very cool.

In contrast to FORCE amplification, which is more concrete, the second type of amplification, namely FOCUS, is more abstract. This is based on Martin and Rose’s statement that FOCUS is about resources for making something inherently non-gradable. For example, the expression “a legend” will feel strange when forcefully amplified to become “a very legend”. This is because the basic nature of the word “legend” cannot be amplified but is absolute. Therefore, to emphasise the evaluative lexicon like this, FOCUS amplification is used, for example, the word “true” to become “a true legend”. The strength of FOCUS amplification is measured in terms of SHARPENING and SOFTENING. Based on that example, SOFTENING can be expressed using the expression “not quite” to become “not quite a legend”.

Engagement

Furthermore, apart from being able to be amplified, every ATTITUDE expressed will always have a source. The source in question is that when expressing evaluation language, there are at least two possibilities: the evaluation is the speaker’s or someone else’s opinion. For example, when someone says “English is good”, that is their own opinion. However, when the statement is changed to “according to my teacher, English is good”, the “good” evaluation no longer comes from the speaker himself, but from their teacher, regardless of whether the speaker agrees. Identifying the source of this Attitude is called ENGAGEMENT. When the ATTITUDE comes from someone who states it themselves, it is called MONOGLOSS, when the ATTITUDE comes from someone else’s opinion, it is called HETEROGLOSS. Apart from that, Martin and Rose also stated that ATTITUDE’s source refers to how speakers include or exclude other voices, perspectives, or opinions in their evaluation. Thus, HETEROGLOSS can be interpreted as citing other people’s opinions as a source of ATTITUDE and related to creating alternative perspectives. Martin and Rose classified these alternative perspectives into

three types. The first is the PROJECTING SOURCE as exemplified above. Furthermore, HETEROGLOSS is also realised through MODALITY. As in the statement “maybe English is good”, the use of “maybe” here becomes a source of ATTITUDE because the speaker positions himself away from the truth of his ATTITUDE. In other words, it is as if the author abdicated responsibility for the statement “English is good”, because of certain things that made the speaker unsure of his own expression.

On the other hand, when someone says “but English is good though,” this is included in the third type of HETEROGLOSS, called CONCESSION. The source of the ATTITUDE in this last HETEROGLOSS aspect lies in the implied perspective resulting from the use of the conjunction of counter-expectancy, such as “but” in this example. When conveying an ATTITUDE through concession, someone is indirectly aware of the existence of a counterargument that was not expressed directly or previously conveyed by the interlocutor.

Argumentative Text

Knapp and Watkins (2005) stated that in argumentative texts, there is an important and influential language process that involves reasoning, evaluation, and persuasion. This genre is correlated with the assessment of something. Furthermore, Knapp & Watkins (2005) added that this genre is mainly related to opinion and persuasion.

Argumentative writing has several grammatical characteristics: mental verbs, conjunctions, shifts from personal to impersonal voice, modality, and nominalisation. Knapp and Watkins (2005) state that argumentative genres can appear in different textual forms. In schools, written arguments tend to focus on two main types: exposition and discussion. Exposition is a type of text that focuses students clearly on the purpose of argumentation. It puts forward a point of view and provides evidence to support it. There are three general structures in an exposition. Namely, thesis, argument and conclusion. The thesis is the first stage. The author’s initial statement is not accompanied by any elaboration or supporting statement in the same sentence. The second stage is the argument. An argument is an elaboration or supporting statement by the author regarding the initial statement. It may only contain one point and an explanation. The final stage is called the closing statement. At this stage, the thesis will be repeated. Sometimes, a summary is also provided for more complex texts. Another genre in the argumentative text is the discussion. This more sophisticated argument involves considering an issue from several perspectives. There are three general structures of discussion texts. The first is the statement of the problem. This is the author’s initial discussion, which is usually limited to statements for and against. This shows the reader that at least two points of view are being considered. Then, in the second stage, arguments will be for and against. Both arguments contain elaboration that

depends on the author's level of understanding and maturity. The final stage is the recommendation. This is the stage where the author states the point of view and summarises the evidence presented.

Ideology in Text

Ideology is part of the social context that states what a person may or may not do as part of a community. According to Eggins (2004), ideology is a value, point of view, position, or perspective that a person has consciously or unconsciously. In addition, Saeedeh Shafiee stated that ideology is a system of ideas that forms a broad power block in community life where language is a medium for conveying ideology (Shafiee in Nahrkhalaji, 2008).

Every text has an ideology, either explicitly or implicitly (Fowler, 1996; Fowler et al., 2018), so whether it is realised or not, ideology greatly influences language. In addition, Lemke (1990) argues that language always has an ideology that is never neutral. Thus, it can be concluded that a text is never free from its ideological context. Based on the above opinion, it can be concluded that the use of text never stands alone without the influence of ideological values, and ideology itself manifests what has been seen, heard, and read before (Lemke, 1990).

Ideology significantly influences a person's actions, way of thinking, and interactions because it encompasses several key topics, including gender, social class, ethnicity, and generation, among others (Martin, 1992). Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that text is a manifestation of ideology, and ideology can be found in the text. Fairclough explains that other things that must be considered in determining ideology are the characteristics, level of language use, and discourse that are ideologically related to Power. This is related to 'meaning', sometimes called 'content', where the meaning only has lexical meaning. Lexical meaning is indeed significant, but what is no less important in understanding ideology is the full range of meaning, encompassing presuppositions, implicatures, metaphors, and coherence (Fairclough, 2001).

Ideology in the text can be seen in real or explicit and real or implicit. Social context and language have a semiotic construal relationship where sometimes the social context determines the text, and the text determines the social context. For example, the situational context in the social context is an element that is directly related to language because the elements of the situational context include content (field), participants/Engagement (tenor), and method (mode). In relation to metafunction, the field is called the ideational function; the tenor is called the interpersonal function, while the method (mode) is called the textual function.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design to analyse the evaluative language in students' argumentative writings. The data consists of words and phrases extracted from student-generated texts, identified and categorised based on the Appraisal framework developed by Martin and Rose (2003, 2007). A qualitative approach was chosen to explore the linguistic and ideological dimensions of student writing, focusing on how evaluative strategies construct meaning and reflect underlying cultural and pedagogical perspectives.

Instruments and Procedures

Instruments

The primary instrument used in this study is the Appraisal framework, developed by Martin and Rose (2003, 2007), which provides a structured approach to examining evaluative language. The framework categorises linguistic features into three main domains:

ATTITUDE: Encompassing AFFECT (emotion), JUDGEMENT (assessment of people), and APPRECIATION (evaluation of objects and phenomena). GRADUATION: Covering FORCE (intensification or mitigation) and FOCUS (sharpening or softening meaning). ENGAGEMENT: Differentiating between MONOGLOSSIA (single-voiced discourse) and HETEROGLOSSIA (multi-voiced discourse incorporating alternative viewpoints).

Additionally, the study utilizes text analysis coding sheets designed based on the Appraisal framework. These coding sheets assist researchers in systematically identifying and categorising evaluative expressions in student essays.

Data Collection

The primary data source comprises argumentative essays submitted for the 2024 Argumentative Writing Contest, which was conducted online between March 25, 2024 until May 25, 2024, via social media. The contest aimed to gather diverse student perspectives on various topics, enabling an in-depth exploration of evaluative strategies in academic argumentation.

A total of 21 submissions were collected, from which four exemplary texts were selected for detailed analysis. The selection criteria included: (1) Argumentative Quality: Clarity of claims, logical reasoning, and persuasiveness. (2) Linguistic Richness: The presence of diverse evaluative strategies. (3) Regional Representation: Ensuring coverage of different

educational and cultural contexts in Indonesia. The four selected texts represent distinct geographic regions: (1) Sumatra (Bengkulu): Represents language learning challenges in a non-metropolitan setting with limited English exposure. (2) Kalimantan (West Kotawaringin): Reflects regional disparities in English learning due to unique linguistic and educational landscapes. (3) Java (Bekasi and Yogyakarta): Java was included due to its status as an educational hub. Bekasi represents an urban setting with strong English exposure, while Yogyakarta is known for its academic culture, allowing for a comparison of different learning environments.

By selecting texts from these diverse regions, the study ensures a comparative analysis of how cultural and educational backgrounds influence evaluative language in argumentative writing.

Survey Questionnaire

To supplement the qualitative text analysis, a survey questionnaire was designed to gather insights from student participants on their writing experiences and evaluative language use. The questionnaire includes:

Demographic Information: (1) Age, (2) Gender, (3) Educational Background, and (4) Region of Residence. Writing Experience: (1) Frequency of writing argumentative essays, (2) Preferred topics for argumentative writing, (3) Perceived challenges in writing persuasively. Language Use and Evaluation: (1) Awareness of evaluative language in writing, (2) Strategies used to strengthen arguments, (3) Influence of cultural and educational background on writing style. Feedback on the Writing Contest: (1) Perceived benefits of participation, (2) Challenges encountered during the writing process, (3) Suggestions for improving future writing programs.

The questionnaire responses provided additional context for interpreting the textual analysis results, offering insight into the cognitive and social factors influencing students' evaluative writing strategies. By combining qualitative text analysis with survey data, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of how evaluative language is used in student argumentative writing and the factors shaping its development. The findings enhance pedagogical strategies for teaching persuasive writing in non-native English contexts.

To connect the linguistic analysis with the authors' personal ideologies, this study used a mixed-methods approach. Alongside analysing the essays with the Appraisal framework, a simple survey was used to capture each author's core ideological stance toward the topic.

The questionnaire asked several direct questions to reveal their underlying perspective: whether they felt optimistic or pessimistic about the situation of English education in their region. This choice was treated as an indicator of their broader ideology. An optimistic view suggests an ideology centred on hope and a belief in the system's capacity for improvement. In contrast, a pessimistic view points to an ideology that is more critical of systemic barriers and deeply-rooted challenges.

The answers to this question were then compared with the linguistic findings from the essays. This allowed the study to check if a student's self-declared optimistic or pessimistic ideology was reflected in their writing style—for example, whether a pessimistic writer used more negative language or fewer expressions of certainty. By combining the essay analysis with this straightforward survey, the research could draw clearer connections between what the students wrote and the ideological lens through which they view their world.

Data Analysis Procedures

The collected texts were analyzed through the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which involves three simultaneous streams of activity: data condensation, data display, and data depiction/verification.

1. Data Condensation: The researchers identified and categorized evaluative language using the Appraisal framework, focusing on ATTITUDE (AFFECT, JUDGEMENT, APPRECIATION), GRADUATION (FORCE, FOCUS), and ENGAGEMENT (MONOGLOSSIA, HETEROGLOSSIA). This process involved selecting linguistic features that contribute to the argumentative stance of each text.

2. Data Display: The findings were organized and systematically presented to illustrate patterns in evaluative strategies across the selected texts. Special attention was given to the distribution of APPRECIATION, the use of intensifiers in graduation, and the presence of alternative perspectives in engagement.

3. Data Depiction/Verification: The final stage involved interpreting the findings within the broader context of language learning, cultural ideology, and pedagogical implications. The study explores how evaluative language in these texts reflects students' perceptions of English learning challenges, their cultural tendencies in argumentation, and the ideological underpinnings of their argumentative styles.

This study provides insights into how cultural norms and educational settings shape linguistic choices by analyzing evaluative language within these texts. The findings contribute to ongoing discussions on argumentative writing pedagogy, particularly in non-native English contexts, and highlight the need for targeted instructional strategies to enhance students' evaluative and critical writing skills.

FINDINGS

Evaluation Strategies in The Four Argumentative Essays

Evaluation Strategies in Text 1: The Problems and Solutions of English Language Learning in Bekasi

The primary strategy employed by the author in conveying evaluative language in the argumentative text, *The Problems and Solutions of English Language Learning in Bekasi*, is the use of the APPRECIATION device. A total of 49 instances (72%) of APPRECIATION were identified, significantly exceeding other aspects, namely JUDGMENT with 12 instances (18%) and AFFECT with only 7 cases (10%). This suggests that the text predominantly focuses on assessing objects rather than individuals. More specifically, as shown in Table 1, the positive and negative APPRECIATION distribution is nearly equal (24 and 25 instances, respectively), indicating a balanced evaluation of objects throughout the text.

Table 1. The use of ATTITUDE in text 1

ATTITUDE						
AFFECT		JUDGEMENT			APPRECIATION	
+direct	-indirect	+capacity	-capacity	+propriety	+appreciation	-appreciation
2	5	6	3	3	24	25
7 (10%)		12 (18%)			49 (72%)	
68						

By maintaining a balanced APPRECIATION evaluation, the author strives to present an impartial analysis, as illustrated in the following examples:

+APPRECIATION: *Indonesia's educational system prioritizes teaching English because it is a crucial language for learning.*

-APPRECIATION: *One of the biggest problems facing English language learning in Bekasi is the lack of qualified teachers to teach the language.*

Regarding JUDGMENT, positive instances are more prevalent, comprising CAPACITY (6 instances) and PROPRIETY (3 instances), while negative judgments are solely related to CAPACITY (3 instances). This suggests that when evaluating people, the author tends to adopt a positive stance, as seen in the following examples:

+CAPACITY: *The Indonesian government has recently **launched several programs to raise the standard of English teaching in the nation.***

+PROPRIETY: *The government and society are **trying to address the problems by continuing to invest in English-language programs.***

AFFECT, the least represented category, pertains to emotional responses and is slightly more negative overall. Notably, negative AFFECT is always expressed indirectly, whereas positive AFFECT is always conveyed directly. This pattern is exemplified in the following data:

+DIRECT: *I am **optimistic** that the problems in learning English in Bekasi can be solved in the long term ...*

-INDIRECT: *Loss of motivation due to understanding affects the learning process because I, as a writer, **felt this way** when I was still in junior high school.*

To reinforce evaluative meaning, the text employs GRADUATION strategies as stated in Table 2, with FORCE being more frequently utilised than FOCUS, emphasising intensification over refinement.

Table 2. The use of GRADUATION in text 1

GRADUATION				
FORCE			FOCUS	
+attlex	+intens	-intens	sharpen	soften
2	10	6	2	1
18 (86%)			3 (14%)	
21				

The most frequently used FORCE element is INTENSIFICATION, as exemplified below:

+INTENS: *English has been used **extensively** in Indonesian education for a considerable time, and writing and speaking the language well are **highly** valued.*

Additionally, evaluative reinforcement through ATTITUDINAL LEXIS is also evident, albeit to a lesser extent:

+ATTLEX: *Indonesia's educational system prioritises teaching English because it is a **crucial** language for learning.*

Moreover, FORCE INTENSIFICATION is occasionally employed to SOFTEN the evaluation, as in the following instance:

-INTENS: *A **common** problem in learning English in Bekasi may be the lack of motivation among students.*

Conversely, FOCUS amplification is minimally present, with only three instances identified (two SHARPEN and one SOFTEN), as shown below:

SHARPEN: *At that time, I felt that learning English was **so** difficult ...*

SOFTEN: *As a result, they employ a **relatively** small number of resources to aid in their instruction*

Regarding ENGAGEMENT, this argumentative text predominantly adopts a MONOGLOSSIC stance, indicating that the author primarily conveys personal viewpoints without extensive reference to alternative perspectives.

Table 3. The use of ENGAGEMENT in text 1

ENGAGEMENT				
MONOGLOSS	MODALITY			
	can	will	might	must
55 (81%)	8	2	2	1
	13 (19%)			
68				

The presence of HETEROGLOSSIC elements is limited to MODALITY, reinforcing the MONOGLOSSIC nature of the text. The use of MODALITY suggests an attempt to moderate assertions while maintaining distance from

absolute claims. However, the reliance on MODALITY alone does not provide a clear external source for validation, as illustrated in the following example:

MODALITY: *For example, changing gadget settings to English **will** slowly develop my learning motivation and supporting factors.*

Evaluation Strategies in Text 2: Struggles in Learning English in Kotawaringin Barat

Similar to the first argumentative text, the most frequently employed ATTITUDE category in this text is APPRECIATION, accounting for nearly the same proportion (70%), followed by JUDGMENT with 23 instances (27%) and AFFECT with only 2 cases (2%), as illustrated in the following table:

Table 4. The use of ATTITUDE in text 2

ATTITUDE					
AFFECT		JUDGEMENT		APPRECIATION	
+direct	-indirect	+capacity	-capacity	+appreciation	-appreciation
1	1	4	19	3	56
2 (2%)		23 (27%)		59 (70%)	
84					

A notable distinction in this text is that the number of negative APPRECIATION instances significantly exceeds the positive ones. This suggests that the argumentative text presents a predominantly negative perspective on the discussed topic—problems in learning English—as exemplified in the following data:

-APPRECIATION: *Students' **lack of** motivation and confidence in learning English is a **significant issue**.*

This negative framing is further reinforced by JUDGMENT instances, which are also predominantly negative, particularly in the CAPACITY category (19 instances), compared to only 4 positive instances. Unlike the first text, this text does not include any instances of PROPRIETY.

-CAPACITY: *Many students in Indonesia, particularly in Kobar, **do not see** the practical benefits of learning English in their daily lives.*

Despite these differences, a similarity with the first text can be observed in the use of AFFECT. Positive AFFECT is conveyed directly, while negative AFFECT is expressed indirectly. The following examples illustrate this pattern:

+DIRECT: *I **believe** that barriers or problems in English language learning in Kota Waringin Barat can be overcome due to the ease of internet access ...*

-INDIRECT: *Students frequently **find the experience of learning English to be unpleasant** because traditional teaching methods do not effectively engage them.*

As in the first argumentative text, GRADUATION is used to amplify evaluative meaning. In this case, the primary strategy is FORCE, particularly RAISING INTENSIFIERS, which appear most frequently (17 instances), followed by LOWERING INTENSIFIERS (5 instances) and ATTITUDINAL LEXIS (1 instance), as shown in the following table:

Table 5. The use of GRADUATION in text 2

GRADUATION		
FORCE		
+attlex	+intens	-intens
1 (4%)	17 (74%)	5 (22%)
23		

Unlike the first text, this second argumentative text does not utilize FOCUS within the GRADUATION framework, relying solely on FORCE. The frequent use of RAISING INTENSIFIERS further strengthens the prominence of negative evaluation in this text, as illustrated by the following examples:

+INTENS: *Another **significant** issue is a lack of English teachers.*

+ATTLEX: *This problem is also **worsened** by a lack of exposure to English outside of the classroom.*

Similar to the first text, this second text is highly MONOGLOSSIC, relying heavily on MODALITY to frame its evaluation:

MODALITY: *Some issues **can** be addressed in the short term ...*

Table 6. The use of ENGAGEMENT in text 2

ENGAGEMENT			
MONOGLOSS	HETEROGLOSS		
	PS	MOD	CON
60 (71%)	2	18	4
	24 (29%)		
84			

What is different is that in the second argumentative text, other HETEROGLOSS aspects are found, such as PROJECTING SOURCE and even CONCESSIONS. Even though it's not much, this is a differentiator, especially the CONCESSION, which indicates that the negative impression built in this second text is also built on several alternative points of view. The following HETEROGLOSS data is utilized in the second text:

PROJECTING SOURCE: *Students frequently find the experience of learning English to be unpleasant because traditional teaching methods do not effectively engage them.*

CONCESSION: *As far as I know, the district government focuses on digitalization in education, but has not yet reached the stage of 'making teaching a second language easier.*

Evaluation Strategies in Text 3: The Problems and Solutions of English Language Learning in Bengkulu

Similar to the first and second argumentative texts, the most frequently employed ATTITUDE resource in this text is APPRECIATION (79%), followed by JUDGEMENT (21%), while AFFECT is entirely absent, as shown in the table below:

Table 7. The use of ATTITUDE in text 3

ATTITUDE						
JUDGEMENT				APPRECIATION		
+tenacity	-tenacity	+propriety	+capacity	-capacity	+appreciation	-appreciation
1	2	2	2	2	21	12
9 (21%)				33 (79%)		

The predominant evaluative aspect in this text is positive APPRECIATION (21 instances), followed by negative APPRECIATION (12 instances). This suggests that the author presents a generally positive stance on the topic. The following examples illustrate this pattern:

+APPRECIATION: *English is a **crucial** global language for communication and academic study ...*

-APPRECIATION: *The new curriculum reforms **further create complication** of the situation ...*

In contrast, JUDGEMENT is less prominent, comprising a balanced mix of both positive and negative evaluations. The categories include +PROPRIETY, +CAPACITY, -CAPACITY, and -TENACITY, each appearing twice, with +TENACITY occurring once:

+PROPRIETY: *To acquire a second or foreign language, a pupil must **continually imitate** the proper models*

+CAPACITY: *Learners that are really motivated to study the English language will be **successful**.*

-CAPACITY: *... many Indonesian students **struggle** with English proficiency due to challenges ...*

-TENACITY: *Students **lack confidence** in using English ...*

The absence of AFFECT in this text suggests that the author focuses primarily on evaluating the problems discussed rather than expressing personal emotions or related feelings.

Similar to Text 1, this text employs both GRADUATION: FORCE and GRADUATION: FOCUS to intensify or soften evaluations. However, compared to the previous two texts, this one contains fewer instances of GRADUATION, with a stronger emphasis on ATTITUDINAL LEXIS (5 instances). The following table summarizes the distribution:

Table 8. The use of GRADUATION in text 3

GRADUATION		
FORCE	FOCUS	
+attlex	+intens	sharp

5 (63%)	2 (25%)	1 (13%)
8		

Examples of GRADUATION strategies found in the text include:

+ATTLEX: *Besides the environment, motivation plays a **significant** role in learning the English language.*

+INTENS: *Without a safe and secure environment, a child's capacity to learn is **greatly** hampered*

SHARPEN: *Learners that are **really** motivated to study the English language will be successful.*

Similar to the previous texts, this text is highly MONOGLOSSIC, indicating that the author primarily presents their own viewpoint rather than engaging with alternative perspectives. MODALITY is frequently used to indicate degrees of certainty in evaluation:

MODALITY: *A pleasant learning environment **may** help all children grow.*

Table 9. The use of ENGAGEMENT in text 3

ENGAGEMENT				
MONOGLOSS	HETEROGLOSS			
	PS	PWC	MOD	CON
25 (61%)	3	1	11	1
			16 (39%)	
41				

Unlike the previous argumentative texts, this one incorporates additional HETEROGLOSSIC resources, including PROJECTING SOURCE, PROJECTING WITHIN CLAUSE, and CONCESSIONS, which introduce alternative viewpoints or sources of authority.

Examples include:

PROJECTING SOURCE: *Learning the English language needs motivation (Ahmed & Labuan, 2015)*

PROJECTING WITHIN CLAUSE: *The new curriculum reforms ... **reinforcing misconceptions that** English is difficult to learn.*

CONCESSIONS: *However, despite early exposure, many Indonesian students struggle with English proficiency due to challenges ...*

These HETEROGLOSSIC elements indicate that, while the author predominantly presents a singular perspective, they also acknowledge external viewpoints and counterarguments to some extent.

Evaluation Strategies in Text 4: Challenges in English Language Learning Among Students in Yogyakarta

Like the previous texts, the most frequently employed ATTITUDE resource in Text 4 is APPRECIATION (75%), followed by JUDGEMENT (25%), while AFFECT is absent, as in Text 3. The complete data is presented in the table below.

Table 10. The use of ATTITUDE in text 4

ATTITUDE			
JUDGEMENT		APPRECIATION	
+tenacity	-capacity	+appreciation	-appreciation
2	4	9	9
6 (25%)		18 (75%)	
24			

Its balanced use of positive and negative APPRECIATION sets Text 4 apart from the previous text. This suggests that the author maintains a neutral stance, presenting both favourable and critical perspectives on English language learning challenges. The following examples illustrate this balance:

+APPRECIATION: *Learning becomes more effective in a setting that encourages active use of English ...*

-APPRECIATION: *A **major obstacle** for ESP students in Yogyakarta is the lack of a supportive environment for practicing English fluency.*

Furthermore, the JUDGEMENT aspect in Text 4 is relatively minimal, comprising only six instances (25%), making it the lowest among the analysed texts. This includes -CAPACITY (4 instances) and +TENACITY (2 instances). The limited presence of JUDGEMENT suggests that the author places greater emphasis on evaluating external conditions rather than assessing individuals' abilities or behaviors.

-CAPACITY: *Many students studying English encounter difficulties in acquiring language skills.*

+TENACITY: *Students should view it as an opportunity to develop verbal and non-verbal communication skills.*

While a lower frequency of ATTITUDE markers may contribute to a more neutral tone, it could also make the argument less persuasive than texts that employ stronger evaluative language.

Not only is the ATTITUDE aspect the least prominent in this text, but GRADUATION is also minimal, with only two instances of INTENSIFICATION, both of which involve raising intensity.

Table 11. The use of GRADUATION in text 4

GRADUATION
FORCE
+intens
2 (100%)

Example:

+INTENS: *The gap between learned and practical language use is a significant obstacle for tour guides.*

Unlike the previous texts, Text 4 is the only one that leans toward HETEROGLOSSIA, indicating that the author incorporates external sources, modality, and concessions to introduce multiple perspectives. The most frequently used HETEROGLOSSIC resources are MODALITY, followed by PROJECTING CLAUSES and CONCESSIONS, as summarised in the table below.

Table 12. The use of ENGAGEMENT in text 4

ENGAGEMENT			
MONOGLOSS	HETEROGLOSS		
	PS	MOD	CON
9 (38%)	3	10	2
	15 (63%)		
24			

Examples of HETEROGLOSSIC strategies in Text 4 include:

MODALITY: *ensuring that educators possess strong English language qualifications **can** help create a more conducive learning atmosphere.*

PROJECTING SOURCE: *Arsayli (2022), an English teacher at a language institution in Yogyakarta, **highlights that** the absence of an immersive English-speaking environment hinders language acquisition*

CONCESSION: *language learning difficulties should not be viewed solely as obstacles **but** also as catalysts for critical thinking and innovation in communication.*

This greater reliance on HETEROGLOSSIC elements suggests that the author presents their argument more openly and dialogically, acknowledging different perspectives rather than asserting a single, authoritative stance.

An Integration of Ideology Built Upon Appraisal Patterns and Survey Data

This analysis integrates findings from both the questionnaire and the textual data to demonstrate how participants' self-reported ideological stances are realized through distinct patterns of evaluative language within the Appraisal framework. The triangulation of these two data sources provides a robust understanding of how regional contexts shape students' worldviews and their corresponding argumentative styles.

The optimistic ideologies reported by participants from Bekasi and Bengkulu are linguistically constructed through evaluative patterns that focus on agency, potential, and the positive valuation of key actors or concepts. The pragmatic optimism in Bekasi is realized through a balanced use of APPRECIATION, yet it assigns positive JUDGEMENT to institutional actors like the 'government and society' for their efforts. In this text, criticism is directed not at people but at abstract systemic issues such as the 'lack of qualified teachers,' thereby constructing an ideology where problems are external hurdles to be overcome by capable institutions. Similarly, the hopeful ideology of the Bengkulu participant is manifested by directing positive APPRECIATION toward the inherent value of English as a 'crucial global language' and positive JUDGEMENT toward 'successful' and motivated learners. This linguistic framing foregrounds success as an attainable outcome, reinforcing a belief in the potential for individual achievement.

In contrast, the pessimistic ideologies articulated by participants from Kotawaringin and Yogyakarta are realized through linguistic choices that emphasize systemic failure, institutional gaps, and negative outcomes. The ideology of systemic critique in Kotawaringin is powerfully constructed through a text dominated by negative APPRECIATION, which frames issues like a 'lack of motivation' as 'significant' problems. Crucially, negative JUDGEMENT is directed at the capacity of students, who are said to 'not see the practical benefits of learning English,' thus linking individual struggles back to a flawed system that fails to provide tangible value. The ideology of disillusionment reported in Yogyakarta is constructed through a more nuanced but critical linguistic stance. Here, the author uses balanced APPRECIATION to identify the 'major obstacle' as the 'lack of a supportive environment,' thereby directing criticism at the systemic gap between theoretical learning and practical application. In both cases, the pessimistic ideologies captured by the questionnaire are substantiated by Appraisal patterns that consistently evaluate the educational system and its outcomes negatively.

DISCUSSION

Evaluative Strategies in Student Argumentative Writing

The findings reveal that all four argumentative texts predominantly rely on APPRECIATION to evaluate the topic of English language learning challenges. This aligns with the nature of the discussion, as the texts focus on assessing language learning as a phenomenon rather than judging individuals. The general absence of AFFECT further reinforces this, suggesting that the authors prefer objective evaluation over emotional expression, a common strategy in non-native academic writing to maintain credibility (Mohamad et al., 2023; Moesarofah & Rahayu, 2023). The emphasis on APPRECIATION over JUDGEMENT also indicates that English language learning challenges are framed as structural and systemic rather than as individual failures. This finding is powerfully contextualized by the questionnaire results, where students across all four regions identified systemic and external issues – such as teacher shortages, resource deficits, and outdated curricula – as their primary hurdles.

A key observation is the dominance of GRADUATION through FORCE, particularly raising intensifiers like significantly and greatly. This reliance on accessible linguistic tools over more nuanced attitudinal lexis suggests that the authors prioritize clarity and amplification over lexical complexity. This aligns with research indicating that non-native writers often

favor direct amplification (Wu & Tissari, 2021; Ningrum et al., 2024; Ardian, 2022) and can be linked to the pedagogical issues highlighted in the survey. Students from regions like Bekasi and Kotawaringin Barat reported that teaching often relies on rote-learning and grammar memorization, which would not typically equip them with a wide range of evaluative vocabulary.

Most of the texts also exhibit MONOGLOSSIC tendencies, relying on the author's personal arguments without extensively incorporating external perspectives. When alternative arguments are introduced, they are often framed using modality (e.g., may, might, can), which lowers the certainty of claims. This suggests a lack of training in engaging with counterarguments, a skill critical for persuasive writing (Shi & Iordanou, 2025; Hutasuhut et al., 2023). In contrast, the heteroglossic nature of Text 4 from Yogyakarta demonstrates a more advanced argumentative style, suggesting that access to a more robust academic environment may foster these skills.

The Linguistic Realization of Ideological Stances

The integration of the survey data with the textual analysis demonstrates how participants' self-reported optimistic or pessimistic ideologies are systematically realised through distinct patterns of evaluative language. The optimistic ideologies reported by participants from Bekasi and Bengkulu are linguistically constructed through patterns that focus on agency, potential, and the positive valuation of key actors or concepts. The pragmatic optimism in Bekasi is realised through a balanced use of APPRECIATION, yet it assigns positive JUDGEMENT to institutional actors like the 'government and society' for their efforts. Here, criticism is directed not at people but at abstract systemic issues like the 'lack of qualified teachers,' thereby constructing an ideology where problems are external hurdles to be overcome by capable institutions. Similarly, the hopeful ideology of the Bengkulu participant is manifested by directing positive APPRECIATION toward the inherent value of English as a 'crucial global language' and positive JUDGEMENT toward 'successful' and motivated learners. This linguistic framing foregrounds success as an attainable outcome, reinforcing a belief in the potential for individual achievement.

In contrast, the pessimistic ideologies articulated by participants from Kotawaringin and Yogyakarta are realised through linguistic choices that emphasise systemic failure, institutional gaps, and negative outcomes. The ideology of systemic critique in Kotawaringin is powerfully constructed through a text dominated by negative APPRECIATION, which frames issues like a 'lack of motivation' as 'significant' problems. Crucially, negative JUDGEMENT is directed at the capacity of students, who are said to 'not see the practical benefits of learning English,' thus linking individual struggles back to a flawed system that fails to provide tangible value. The ideology of

disillusionment reported in Yogyakarta is constructed through a more nuanced but critical linguistic stance. Here, the author uses balanced APPRECIATION to identify the 'major obstacle' as the 'lack of a supportive environment,' thereby directing criticism at the systemic gap between theoretical learning and practical application. In both cases, the pessimistic ideologies captured by the questionnaire are substantiated by Appraisal patterns that consistently evaluate the educational system and its outcomes negatively.

These findings underscore the need for pedagogical interventions that integrate both linguistic awareness and critical reasoning skills. Instructors should not only focus on expanding students' evaluative vocabulary beyond simple intensifiers but also provide explicit instruction on engaging with counter-arguments in an academically appropriate manner. Understanding how evaluative choices construct ideological positions is essential for developing pedagogical frameworks that bridge students' sociocultural positioning with academic writing expectations, ensuring that students are proficient in English and capable of constructing arguments that reflect academic rigour and critical depth.

CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that student argumentative writing predominantly relies on APPRECIATION, framing English language learning challenges as systemic rather than individual failures. The absence of AFFECT and the dominance of GRADUATION through FORCE, particularly intensifiers, suggest that students prioritize clarity over linguistic complexity. Additionally, the monoglossic nature of most texts indicates a lack of Engagement with external perspectives, weakening the persuasiveness of arguments. Only Text 4 demonstrates effective heteroglossic strategies, highlighting the importance of critical Engagement with alternative viewpoints in strengthening argumentation. These patterns align with prior research on non-native academic writing, reinforcing the need for targeted pedagogical support in evaluative language use.

Cultural and regional influences also shape evaluative strategies, as seen in the preference for explicit positive AFFECT but implicit negative AFFECT, reflecting Eastern communicative norms. The stronger negative evaluations in texts from West Kotawaringin and Bengkulu suggest that students in regions with fewer educational resources perceive greater challenges in English learning. The presence of SOCIAL JUDGEMENT in some texts further illustrates differing perspectives, with some framing language learning struggles as moral imperatives while others emphasize practical barriers. These findings highlight the need for improved writing instruction, encouraging students to develop stronger argumentative

positioning, Engagement with counter-arguments, and nuanced evaluative strategies.

Future studies could explore instructional interventions that enhance students' use of heteroglossic strategies and a broader range of evaluative techniques beyond intensifiers. Comparative research across different educational levels and cultural contexts could provide deeper insights into how evaluative writing develops over time. Additionally, investigating regional disparities in English education could inform policies to reduce inequities in access to linguistic resources. Longitudinal studies on the effectiveness of explicit training in evaluative language and argumentation could offer valuable insights into how pedagogical approaches shape students' academic writing skills. Finally, interdisciplinary research combining systemic functional linguistics with cognitive or sociocultural perspectives could provide a more holistic understanding of evaluative discourse in student writing.

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