

Appraisal Framework Instruction and Its Impact on English Writing: A Study Among Vietnamese University Students

Hong B. Nguyen*

Faculty of English, Thuongmai University, Hanoi, Vietnam

Abstract—This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of applying the Appraisal framework, derived from Systemic Functional Linguistics, to improve English writing skills for Vietnamese university students. The Appraisal framework, developed by Martin and White (2005), provides a tool for analyzing lexical resources to help learners understand and apply expressions of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation in texts. This study uses a quasi-experimental design, pre-testing and post-testing with 60 university students in Vietnam. The experimental group received explicit instruction on the Appraisal resources (Attitude, Graduation) integrated into a writing course for 12 weeks, while the control group followed a regular writing syllabus applied for all students at the university. Results indicated that the experimental group showed statistically significant improvements in more appropriate use of Attitude markers and a wider range of Graduation resources compared to the control group. This consequently helped to improve their writing performance as a whole. Student feedback suggested that the Appraisal instruction enhance their metalinguistic awareness and provide practical tools for producing more evaluative texts, despite some initial challenges with terminology. The pedagogical potential of the Appraisal framework in the context of EFL writing instruction in Vietnam was highlighted to develop students' evaluative and interactive competencies in English writing.

Index Terms—evaluative language, writing, Appraisal framework, Attitude, Graduation

I. INTRODUCTION

Effective writing skills are essential for academic and professional achievement in our increasingly globalized world. Nonetheless, Vietnamese learners learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) encounter considerable obstacles in advancing these skills (Duy & Trang, 2022; Nghi & Truong, 2023; Phuong, 2021; Tran, 2023). In addition to common challenges in vocabulary, grammatical structures, organization of ideas and background knowledge, an important but often overlooked aspect is the ability to express the writer's attitude appropriately. In traditional Vietnamese language training, grammar and vocabulary acquisition is given more weight than the development of higher-order rhetorical and interpersonal skills, which are crucial for creating sophisticated and persuasive writing. In particular, Vietnamese EFL students' writing frequently lacks the capacity to interest the reader through the strategic use of language and to communicate attitude, including assessments, judgments, and emotional reactions. As a result, essays may become inexpressive and fail to convey the desired nuance of meaning, leading to ineffective communication and a lack of connection with the reader. These limitations can hinder students' performance and career prospects in contexts where effective communication in English is essential.

Recognizing the importance of evaluative language in academic writing, a number of studies have used the Appraisal framework (Martin & White, 2005) to examine how evaluative and interpersonal meanings are constructed in particular genres and discourses such as academic articles (Hood, 2004, 2010; Hyland, 2005), student writing (Coffin, 2003; Swain, 2010), and narrative and historical texts (Coffin, 2006; Macken-Horarik, 2003). More relevant to the present research are investigations into the pedagogical possibilities of the Appraisal framework in writing instruction. According to these studies (Lee, 2015; Schleppegrell, 2004), learners' metalinguistic understanding of evaluative language may be improved by examining model texts via an Appraisal lens. Furthermore, studies in L1 and L2/EFL contexts have demonstrated that specific aspects of student writing, including stance-taking, argumentation, critical evaluation, and authorial voice, can be improved through explicit instruction based on the Appraisal framework (Coffin & O'Halloran, 2005; Derewianka, 2007; Wu & Allison, 2007; Yang, 2016). These studies frequently emphasize that providing students with the analytical skills and vocabulary to discuss interpersonal language choices helps them better control these elements in their own writing. Although the Appraisal framework is often applied to complex academic discourse analysis, its potential in supporting students at an intermediate level of English to improve their ability to express attitudes in simple English texts is still underexplored. Equipping students with a basic understanding of attitudinal language choices may help them write more confidently, expressively and communicate more effectively even at this level.

* Corresponding Author.

In Vietnam, some studies have explored the function of evaluative language in specific genres (Nguyen, 2021; Nguyễn & Nguyễn, 2020). Nevertheless, further study is still required to examine the effectiveness of the Appraisal framework as a pedagogical tool in Vietnamese EFL classes. This study attempts to fill this gap by investigating how writing abilities of EFL students at a university in Vietnam may be improved through the instruction of the Appraisal framework in general and the Attitude and Graduation systems in particular. Findings of this study have the potential to make contributions to the field of applied linguistics, EFL pedagogy, and, ultimately, to the development of Vietnamese EFL learners as more confident and proficient writers of English.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The Appraisal Framework

This study is based on the Appraisal framework (Martin & White, 2005), which is part of the school of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). SFL views language as a social semiotic system, which means language is both a resource for meaning-making and a product of social context. Accordingly, language is proposed to fulfil three metafunctions: (a) Ideational metafunction; (b) Interpersonal metafunction; and (c) Textual metafunction.

In order to analyze how language users communicate assessment, commitment, and alignment, Martin and White (2005) systematized the Appraisal framework, which goes further into the interpersonal metafunction (Figure 1). This framework comprises three systems: Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. Attitude addresses how emotions, opinions, and assessments are expressed. Engagement examines how speakers and writers present themselves and their audience in relation to the ideas they are promoting. Graduation deals with the scaling of attitudinal meanings. Within the scope of this study, systems of Attitude and Graduation are the main focus and, therefore, presented in more detail.

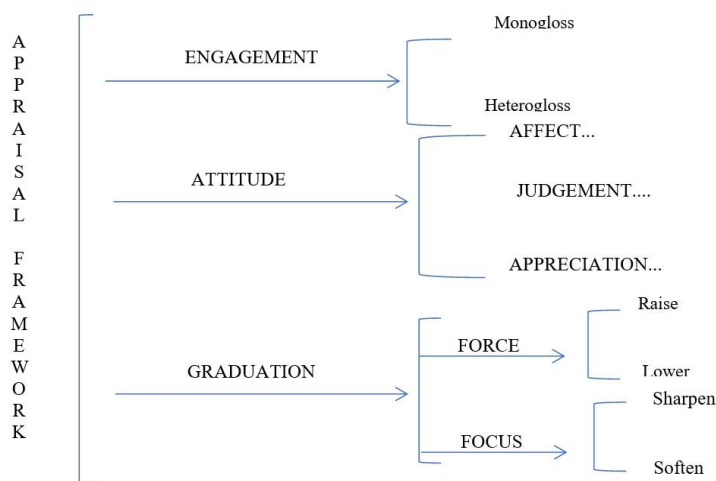


Figure 1. An Overview of the Appraisal Framework (Martin & White, 2005, p. 38)

(a). Attitude System

As a system within the Appraisal framework, Attitude focuses on how speakers or writers express feelings, judgements, or evaluations about people, things, events, or phenomena. Attitude is divided into three main subsystems: Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation (Figure 2).

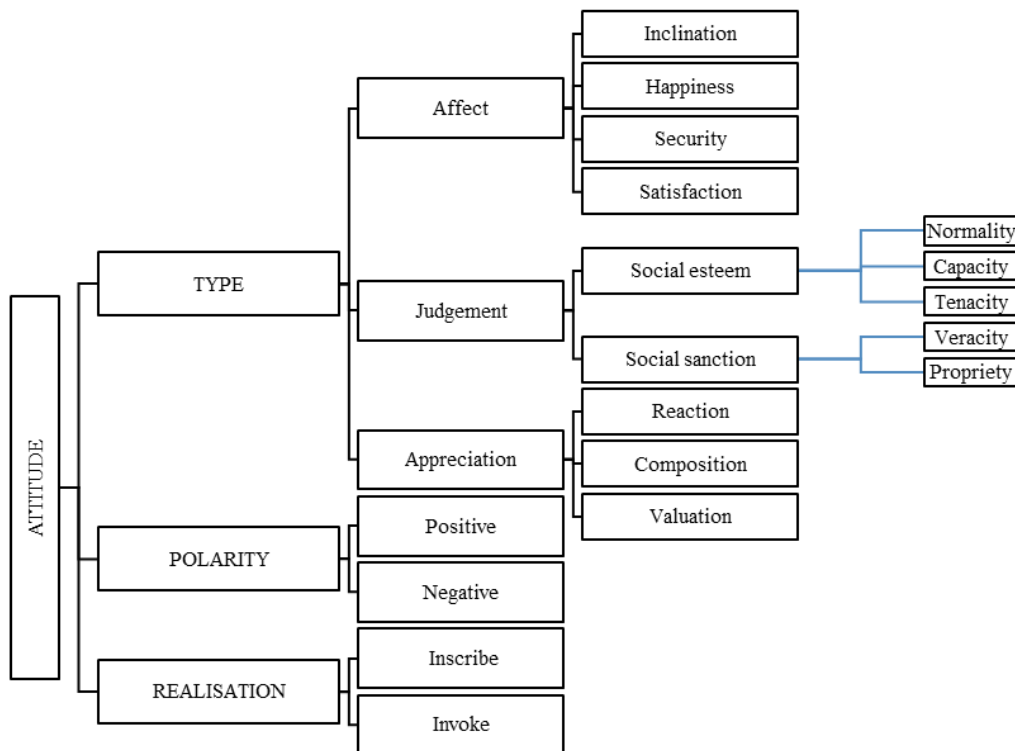


Figure 2. The Attitude System (Martin & White, 2005)

Affect consists of lexical resources for emotional states or emotional reactions to an event, situation, or object. Affect can be classified based on polarity and four emotion pairs (Dis/Inclination, Un/Happiness, In/Security, and Dis/Satisfaction.)

Judgement refers to attitudes toward people and how they behave. Judgement is divided into two main categories: Social esteem and Social sanction.

Social esteem is judged from the following aspects: (a) Normality: how special/different someone is; (b) Capacity: how capable someone is; and (c) Tenacity: how persistent someone is.

Social sanction evaluates people through two factors: (a) Veracity: evaluate someone's level of honesty/trustworthiness; (b) Propriety: evaluate someone's morality based on common values recognized by society.

Appreciation refers to evaluations of things. Appreciation includes three categories: Reaction, Composition and Valuation. Reaction shows the impact of the object being evaluated on the evaluator. Composition is the assessment of the structure of things and phenomena in two aspects: Balance and Complexity. Valuation is the assessment of the value of things and phenomena, answering the question of whether they are valuable or not in terms of innovation, authenticity, timeliness, etc.

(b). Graduation System

Both the Attitude and Engagement systems share the characteristic of gradability. In the Attitude system, gradability refers to the degree of positivity/negativity of evaluations, while in the Engagement system, it refers to the degree of involvement of the speaker/writer in the utterance being made. Therefore, Martin and White (2005) emphasize that Graduation is “the center of the overall system” (p. 136) and Attitude and Engagement are two aspects of Graduation with different natures of the meaning being graded.

Graduation is divided into two subsystems based on the category being evaluated: Force and Focus (Figure 3).

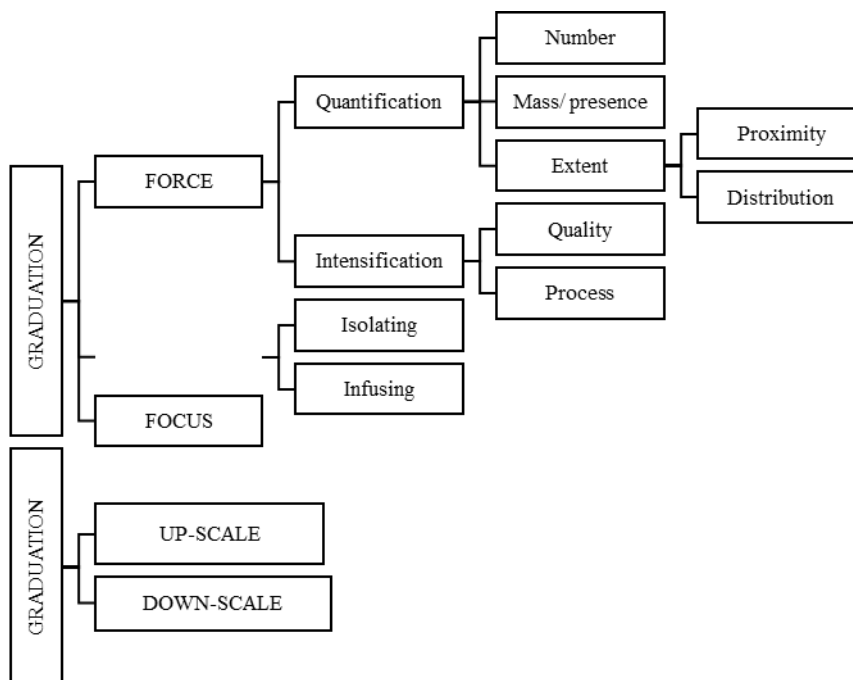


Figure 3. The Graduation System (Martin & White, 2005, p. 154)

Force includes Intensification and Quantification. Intensification refers to the grading of quality and process. Quantification represents an imprecise estimate of quantity, shape, size, and extent of time and space, measured in terms of proximity or distribution.

Focus is mainly applied to categories that are not inherently gradable. Accordingly, Focus is an expression to confirm the degree to which the evaluated object matches the assumed origin such as: upgrading to specify and affirm the characteristics of the prototype or downgrading to describe an object having a peripheral relationship with the category.

The Appraisal framework is of great importance in discourse analysis and linguistics because it provides a systematic tool for deciphering the social values, emotions, and attitudes expressed through language. It helps researchers understand how language is used to construct and maintain social relationships, regulate consensus or debate, and express personal commitments in communication. The framework also supports the analysis of different genres of texts such as journalism, literature, academic essays, and legal texts, contributing to clarifying the role of language in the social construction of meaning.

B. The Appraisal Framework in Writing Analysis and Pedagogy

The Appraisal framework has been extensively applied by scholars worldwide (Coffin, 2003; Hood, 2004, 2010; Hyland, 2005; Macken-Horarik, 2003) to examine a variety of genres, such as student writing, academic papers, media texts, and narratives. Hood (2004) highlighted the importance of Appraisal in explaining the multifunctional roles of texts (especially research proposals), including speaker positioning, politeness expression, and argument construction. Coffin (2003) employed the Appraisal framework to understand how media stories shape reader positioning through the accumulation of evaluative values, hence impacting readers' perceptions and emotions. Meanwhile, Macken-Horarik (2003) concentrated on the function of Appraisal in narratives, examining how the framework's linguistic resources enable readers to empathize with characters and assess their morality while also strengthening the bond between the author and the audience. These studies show that the Appraisal framework is a useful linguistic tool for revealing interpersonal relationships and evaluative aspects in a variety of text genres.

In educational contexts, a number of studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of applying Appraisal analysis in teaching writing skills, particularly in raising students' awareness of evaluative language and enhancing their ability to express stance. Schleppegrell (2004) showed how students can improve their writing skills by identifying and understanding the linguistic resources to express feelings, evaluations, and personal opinions in writing. Lee (2015) used the Appraisal framework to explore how university students express evaluative stances in persuasive essays. The results revealed that students predominantly relied on Reaction, with limited range and intensity, and rarely employed Valuation or Graduation. As a result, their arguments were often simple and unpersuasive, highlighting the need for explicit instruction on the strategic use of evaluative language in academic writing. Other studies also demonstrated positive effects of the Appraisal framework on certain aspects in not only first language (L1) but also second language (L2) contexts, including stance-taking, argumentation, critical evaluation, and the development of authorial voice (Alhuthali, 2024; Coffin & O'Halloran, 2005; Liu, 2013; Swain, 2010; Wu & Allison, 2007). For instance, Alhuthali (2024) used a qualitative discourse analysis to investigate how Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation resources were distributed across two EFL writing genres. Findings showed that genre significantly influenced students' evaluative

choices. Argumentative texts contained more Judgement and Graduation resources to enhance persuasion, whereas descriptive texts relied more on Appreciation, highlighting the role of genre awareness in developing evaluative competence in EFL writing. This study suggested tailored instructional approaches be necessary to develop students' evaluative writing skills. Liu (2013) examined how Chinese EFL university students express evaluation in English argumentative essays. Through qualitative and quantitative discourse analysis, the study found that students tended to rely heavily on Affect and Judgement while underusing Graduation and Engagement, resulting in limited rhetorical sophistication. Based on the results, Liu emphasized that explicit instruction on evaluative language can help EFL learners develop stronger stance-taking and more persuasive academic writing.

In summary, the Appraisal framework can be said to be not only an effective linguistic tool for deeply understanding evaluative dimensions in texts but also a valuable pedagogical resource that helps students improve their writing abilities, especially in expressing stance and engaging readers in a flexible and subtle way.

III. METHODS

A. Research Design

This study applied a quasi-experimental design because of its practicality in educational settings, where random assignment of students to classes is often not feasible. However, this design still allows comparison of changes over time between the group receiving the intervention and the group not receiving the intervention.

Participants were 60 second-year students at Thuongmai university in Vietnam. Two intact classes were selected based on criteria of similarity in entry English proficiency (determined by previous course grades) and class schedule. One class was assigned as the experimental group (EG, $n = 30$) and the other as the control group (CG, $n = 30$). Two classes were taught by the same teacher. The general English proficiency of students was determined at level B1+ according to the Common European Framework of Reference CEFR.

B. Procedures

The study lasted for 12 weeks. In the first week, both the EG and CG groups took a pre-test. From weeks 2 to 11, the intervention phase took place. The experimental group received one hour of instruction per week, in which the concepts and application of the Appraisal framework were integrated into the regular writing syllabus (Appendix A). Activities include explicit explanations of Attitude and Graduation systems using simplified language and concrete examples; analysis of sample essays from an Appraisal perspective; practice exercises from sentence to paragraph level to reinforce the use of Appraisal resources; peer feedback activities between students using Appraisal-based criteria; and guided writing and revising essays consciously using the Appraisal framework. Supporting materials included theory summaries, checklists, sample essays, and questions.

During the same period, the control group attended writing lessons aligned with the general program required to all students at the university, using the coursebook *Life – Intermediate level* (published by National Geographic Learning). In the final week (week 12), both groups took a post-test on the same topic as the pre-test. To ensure the equivalence for comparison between the two groups (EG and CG), students were given clear instructions to compose their writing (about 200 words) in 30 minutes under similar controlled conditions.

Finally, the EG group completed a questionnaire. The questionnaire included Likert-type questions and open-ended questions, focusing on students' perceptions of the usefulness of the Appraisal concepts, their application to writing, difficulties encountered, and reflections on the intervention period.

C. Data Analysis

The collected data were processed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. First, the pre-and post-tests were analyzed carefully to identify and categorize realizations of evaluative language (lexical resources for Attitude and Graduation) employed. The analysis was conducted using a manual coding method by an expert in the Appraisal framework, who has five years of experience in this field. The overall quality of the writing was also assessed using an analytic rubric including 4 specific criteria (Content, Organization, Vocabulary and Grammar) with scores (1-10) (Appendix B).

Then, quantitative analysis, performed using SPSS version 26, was carried out, including calculating the frequency of occurrence (per 100 words) of the realizations of linguistic resources indicating Attitude and Graduation in the pre- and post-intervention essays of both groups. Statistical tests conducted were: (1) an inter-rater reliability test (Intraclass Correlation Coefficient – ICC) to ensure consistency between the two raters in scoring students' writing across all criteria; (2) independent samples t-test to compare the initial similarity between the two groups on the pre-test; (3) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to examine differences between the two groups on multiple categories of Attitude and Graduation; (4) analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to compare the post-test results between the two groups after controlling for the effect of pre-test scores; and (5) Pearson correlation analyses to investigate the relationships between the use of evaluative language (in terms of Attitude and Graduation) and the post-test writing performance of the experimental group. The level of statistical significance (alpha) was set at $p < .05$. Likert data from the questionnaire were summarized using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages). Qualitative results were used to supplement, enrich, and further explain the quantitative results.

IV. RESULTS

A. Inter-Rater Reliability

To ensure the consistency and objectivity of the scoring process, the writing tests were independently rated by two qualified raters using a rubric consisting of 4 criteria (Content, Organization, Vocabulary, and Grammar). Inter-rater reliability was examined for both the pre-test and post-test scores using the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC). The results indicated a high level of agreement between the two raters across all scoring categories (Table 1).

TABLE 1
INTER-RATER RELIABILITY (ICC) OF RUBRIC CRITERIA AND TOTAL SCORES

Criterion	Pre-test				Post-test			
	Intraclass correlation	95% Confidence interval		<i>p</i>	Intraclass correlation	95% Confidence interval		<i>p</i>
		Lower bound	Upper bound			Lower bound	Upper bound	
Content	.860	.766	.917	<.001	.882	.802	.929	<.001
Organization	.834	.721	.901	<.001	.768	.612	.862	<.001
Vocabulary	.850	.749	.911	<.001	.819	.696	.892	<.001
Grammar	.764	.604	.859	<.001	.811	.683	.887	<.001
Overall score	.929	.881	.958	<.001	.912	.852	.947	<.001

For the pre-test, ICC values were .86 for Content, .83 for Organization, .85 for Vocabulary, .76 for Grammar, and .92 for Overall writing. For the post-test, ICC values remained consistently high, with .88 for Content, .76 for Organization, .81 for Vocabulary, .81 for Grammar, and .91 for Overall writing. According to Koo and Li's (2016) benchmarks, these coefficients indicate good to excellent inter-rater reliability ($ICC > .76$) at both testing stages, confirming that the scoring process was consistent and reliable throughout the study, ensuring the validity of the writing assessment results.

B. Initial Equivalence of Groups

Before the intervention process began, independent samples t-tests comparing EG and CG groups on pre-test writing scores and frequencies of Attitude and Graduation realizations had been carried out. According to reports, there were no statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups on overall writing scores or the frequencies of Attitude and Graduation resources in the pre-test (Table 2).

TABLE 2
GROUP STATISTICS AND INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TESTS OF THE PRE-TEST

Pre-test statistics	EG (<i>M</i> ± <i>SD</i>)	CG (<i>M</i> ± <i>SD</i>)	<i>t</i> (<i>df</i>)	<i>p</i> -value
Pre-test scores	6.4583 ± .46463	6.5043 ± .63044	<i>t</i> (53.326) = -.322	.749
Attitude resources	8.6343 ± 2.58501	8.8797 ± 2.53291	<i>t</i> (58) = -.371	.712
Graduation resources	3.0673 ± 1.29684	3.2257 ± 1.92665	<i>t</i> (58) = -.373	.710

Specifically, the mean scores of EG ($M = 6.45$, $SD = .46$) and CG ($M = 6.50$, $SD = .63$) were not significantly different, $t(53.326) = -.322$, $p = .749$. Therefore, there is no statistical evidence to suggest that the two groups differ in terms of their mean scores.

As for frequencies of evaluative resources employed in the pre-test, reports showed similar results. The average frequency of Attitudinal resources employed by the EG and CG groups was 8.63 and 8.87 per 100 words, respectively. The average frequency of Graduation resources was much lower in comparison with Attitude, with $M = 3.06$ among EG students and $M = 3.22$ among CG students. However, the overall Attitude frequency ($t(58) = -.371$, $p = .712$) and Graduation frequency ($t(58) = -.373$, $p = .710$) both showed $p > .05$. These suggest the two groups were reasonably comparable at the outset of the study.

C. Post-Test Results

(a). Effects on Attitude Resources

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to examine the effect of the intervention process on students' use of Attitudinal resources. Results (Table 3) revealed a statistically significant overall difference between the EG and CG groups on the combined dependent variables, $Wilks' \Lambda = .57$, $F(4,55) = 9.992$, $p < .001$. Follow-up analyses indicated significant differences in frequencies of all categories: Affect ($F(1,58) = 8.479$, $p = .005$, partial $\eta^2 = .128$), Judgement ($F(1,58) = 12.579$, $p = .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .178$), Appreciation ($F(1,58) = 28.197$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .327$) and the totality of all Attitudinal resources ($F(1,58) = 22.693$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .281$).

TABLE 3
MANOVA RESULTS FOR ATTITUDE FREQUENCIES (PER 100 WORDS) AT POST-TEST

Category	Group	Mean ± SD	F(1,58)	p-value	Partial η ²
Overall Attitude	EG	11.0923 ± 3.20697	22.693	<.001	.281
	CG	7.9410 ± 1.68641			
Affect	EG	1.9333 ± 1.29247	8.479	.005	.128
	CG	.9807 ± 1.24116			
Judgement	EG	.8570 ± .83523	12.579	.001	.178
	CG	1.8583 ± 1.30138			
Appreciation	EG	8.3027 ± 2.66513	28.197	<.001	.327
	CG	5.1017 ± 1.94907			

These results suggest that the intervention had a significant positive impact on students’ employment of Attitudinal realizations. In general, intervened students use much more emotional expressions in their writing than controlled ones after the intervention period. However, it is noteworthy that CG students particularly employed more Judgement resources than EG students.

Qualitative analysis of students’ writing indicated a significant increase in frequency and variety of realizations of Attitudinal resources between the pre-test and post-test among students in the experimental group (Table 4).

As can be seen from Table 4, the frequency of all Attitudinal resources in the post-test was 11.09%, an increase of 2.46 percentage points compared to the pre-test result (8.63%). Concerning Attitude’s sub-types and categories, it can be seen that students’ use of negative evaluation and Judgement of human behaviors did not show obvious changes between the two tests, or even slightly decreased. This may be explained by the fact that after being introduced about the Appraisal framework and becoming aware of how to use evaluative language, students became more conscious and cautious when employing Judgement to assess people’s behaviors in writing. Meanwhile, those who were not exposed to the framework still tended to make behavior judgements more freely and, therefore, more frequently. However, the employment of Affect and Appreciation reported substantial upward changes. The frequency of Affect dramatically increased from 1.09% to 1.93% whereas that of Appreciation was 6.65% and 8.30%, respectively. Furthermore, positive emotional expressions tended to appear more frequently in the post-test writing.

TABLE 4
ATTITUDE FREQUENCIES IN THE PRE- AND POST-TESTS AMONG EG STUDENTS (PER 100 WORDS)

EG group	Polarity		Sub-types of Attitude			Total
	+	-	Affect	Judgement	Appreciation	
Pre-test	8.31	0.33	1.09	0.89	6.55	8.63
Post-test	10.69	0.40	1.93	0.86	8.30	11.09

Realizations for these emotions also became a lot more diverse after the intervention. For example, to express Inclination, students used *want, hope, wish, desire*, etc. (e.g., *I want to escape from the hustle and bustle of work and study*); Happiness was expressed via such words as *enjoy, excited, prefer, enthusiastic, passionate*, etc. (e.g., *Visitors are also extremely excited about tasty local cuisine such as Pho, bun dau mam tom, com lang Vong, etc.*); realizations of Security included *familiarity, confident, sure, safe*, etc. (e.g., *However, what makes me love my homeland is still the feeling of familiarity and peace every time I return*); Satisfaction was realized via expressions like *satisfied, concern, interest, proud*, etc. (e.g., *Most visitors expressed satisfaction with delicious local food . . .*). This indicates that students have learned how to express their personal emotions more clearly and richly.

More remarkably, students have known how to make their writing more interesting and attractive by employing more Appreciation resources (evaluation of things and entities). Appreciation realizations in the post-test writing were much more varied than those in the pre-test. For instance, to realize Reaction, such adjectives as *pleasing, vibrant, attractive, impressive, surprising*, etc. were frequently employed (e.g., *The rice paddies . . . enable the village to have an impressive background that is actually very pleasing to the eye of the residents and in effect provides an exceptionally tranquil setting for its inhabitants to live their lives to the fullest; . . . local markets are filled with vibrant colors, showcasing traditional crafts and delicious food*); realizations of Composition included *balanced, simple, dynamic, logical, natural*, etc. (e.g., *The town has a dynamic and well-balanced appearance thanks to its pleasant mixture of modern and old buildings; Its rapidly growing economy and modernization are beautifully balanced by the preservation of tradition, offering both tremendous progress and cultural richness . . .*) and realizations of Valuation were really rich with *crucial, significant, valuable, good, rich, effective*, etc. (e.g., *Hanoi is a city with a rich historical background . . . ; . . . the food here is prepared with fresh ingredients and has a unique flavor that reflects the local traditions; Hanoi has a rich history, with many significant sites that still stand today, such as the Thang Long Imperial Citadel*). Thus, an evaluation of a student in the pre-test (e.g., *Thai Nguyen has large tea fields . . . , people are friendly . . .*) turned into a livelier and more attractive one in the post-test (e.g., *Friendly locals, bustling markets and the serene tranquility of tea fields make Thai Nguyen a truly special place, where tradition and progress exist in perfect harmony*.)

In short, after 12-week intervention with the introduction and practice of the Appraisal framework, the quality of students’ writing in terms of Attitudinal expressions improved dramatically, making their writing more interesting and convincing.

(b). *Effects on Graduation Resources*

Beside using realizations to express Attitude, students also learned how to clarify their views by upscaling or downscaling their evaluation with Graduation resources. A MANOVA test, therefore, was also carried out to check how EG and CG students performed their understanding and usage of Graduation in the post-test. According to reports (Table 5), there was a statistically significant overall difference between the EG and CG groups on the combined dependent variables, *Wilks' A* = .588, $F(2,57) = 19.975$, $p < .001$. Follow-up tests on Graduation's categories showed similar results for Force ($F(1,58) = 24.916$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .300$), Focus ($F(1,58) = 20.754$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .264$) and all Graduation resources ($F(1,58) = 39.102$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .403$).

TABLE 5
MANOVA RESULTS FOR GRADUATION FREQUENCIES (PER 100 WORDS) AT POST-TEST

Category	Group	Mean \pm SD	$F(1,58)$	p -value	Partial η^2
Overall Graduation	EG	6.4450 \pm 1.49973	39.102	<.001	.403
	CG	3.9820 \pm 1.55085			
Force	EG	4.6780 \pm 1.41445	24.916	<.001	.300
	CG	3.0420 \pm 1.10540			
Focus	EG	1.7670 \pm .72611	20.754	<.001	.264
	CG	.9400 \pm .67927			

These results suggest that the EG group employed significantly more Graduation resources overall than the CG in the post-test. This difference was evident in both dimensions of Force and Focus.

Deeper qualitative analysis of EG group's writing provides more detailed of how EG students' employment of Graduation resources has changed after the intervention. As can be seen from Table 6, the frequency of Graduation resources reports a dramatic increase by 3.37 percentage points from 3.07% to 6.44%. This increase is observed in both Force and Focus categories, whose frequencies have approximately doubled in the students' post-test.

TABLE 6
GRADUATION FREQUENCIES IN PRE- AND POST-TESTS AMONG EG STUDENTS (PER 100 WORDS)

EG group	Graduation resources		Total
	Force	Focus	
Pre-test	2.31	0.76	3.07
Post-test	4.68	1.77	6.44

This is evidence that students of EG group have acquired knowledge and skills to intensify their evaluations through diverse Graduation realizations. For Force, students could use both Intensifiers (amplify the degree of an emotion, quality, or process) and Quantifiers (amplify quantity) to describe their feelings and judgements in a more vivid and colorful way. Various realizations of Intensifiers and Quantifiers were identified from the post-test essays such as *greatly*, *extremely*, *very*, *immensely*, etc. (Intensifiers) and *various*, *considerable*, *many*, *substantial*, *rich*, etc. (Quantifiers). As such, after the intervention, an EG student would write "*The temples and historical sites are immensely fascinating*", "*The natural surroundings are strikingly beautiful with an extremely aesthetic bay and many gorgeous beaches . . .*", or "*It is a city with a really rich history and is rather well-known for its production of green bean cakes*" instead of "*The city is beautiful*" in the pre-test.

Besides, students' use of Focus has also been improved. To sharpen or soften evaluation of unscalable entities, students knew how to use such words as *actually*, *genuine*, *pure*, *truly*, *kind of*, *somewhat*, etc. For example: "*Thai Nguyen City is a truly unforgettable destination . . .*"; "*. . . the town is somewhat isolated . . .*"

Thus, proper employment of Graduation resources helps students express their Attitude more persuasively and effectively. The intervention did have positive impact on EG students' cognitive understanding and practical use of evaluative lexical resources.

(c). *Effects on Overall Writing Quality*

Concerning the overall writing quality, ANCOVA results (Table 7) revealed a statistically significant difference in overall writing scores on the post-test between the groups, after controlling for pre-test scores ($F(1,57) = 12.292$, $p < .005$, partial $\eta^2 = .177$). The EG achieved significantly higher mean scores than the CG, indicating a clear improvement in general writing quality.

TABLE 7
ANCOVA RESULTS FOR POST-TEST SCORES

Dependent variable	Covariate	Adjusted mean (EG)	Adjusted mean (CG)	$F(1, 57)$	p -value	Partial η^2
Scores (Post-test)	Scores (Pre-test)	7.4667	7.0043	12.292	.001	.177

Students' writings were assessed according to an analytic rubric including specific criteria (Content, Organization, Grammar, and Vocabulary) rated on a 1–10 scale (Appendix B). These criteria were selected to ensure the objectivity and consistency of writing evaluation for both the experimental and control groups. To explore the potential relationships between the use of evaluative language and writing performance, Pearson correlation analyses were

conducted. In particular, two separate correlation analyses were carried out to examine the relationships between frequencies of Attitude and Graduation and the post-test writing scores of the experimental group (Table 8).

TABLE 8
PEARSON CORRELATION BETWEEN FREQUENCIES OF ATTITUDE AND GRADUATION AND POST-TEST SCORES

Variable pair	<i>r</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)	<i>n</i>
Attitude – Scores	.900	<.001	30
Graduation – Scores	.884	<.001	30

As shown in Table 8, there was a strong, positive correlation between the frequency of Attitude resources and post-test writing performance ($r = .90, p < .001$), suggesting that students' writings with more Attitudinal expressions tended to achieve higher post-test scores. Similarly, the frequency of Graduation resources in the writing was strongly correlated with its score ($r = .88, p < .001$), indicating that students with higher overall writing scores also performed better employment of Graduation resources to clarify their personal stance.

It can be concluded that students' writing quality has been much improved with the application of the Appraisal framework. Students know how to express their stance and make their writing impressive with the employment of various evaluative resources.

D. Student Perceptions

A questionnaire consisting of 12 items (with 10 closed-ended and 2 open-ended questions) was administered to assess students' perception of the application of the Appraisal framework in their writing course. The questionnaire was only collected from the EG group ($n = 30$).

Data from the questionnaire (Table 9) indicated generally positive responses towards learning and applying the Appraisal framework in writing lessons. One hundred percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that after studying the Appraisal framework, their understanding of ways to express attitude and stance became very good ($M = 4.46$); they could identify lexical resources to express emotions more clearly ($M = 4.30$); and their writing became livelier and more convincing ($M = 4.23$). Most students agreed or strongly agreed that the Appraisal framework helped them to improve the performance of evaluative vocabulary in their writing ($M = 4.10$) and they became more confident when writing English essays ($M = 4.40$). Meanwhile, the impact of the Appraisal framework in building more logical and coherent essays received a moderately high score ($M = 3.70$), indicating that while students were generally confident in their stance expression and lexical improvement, they did not highly appreciate the effect of the Appraisal framework in organizing their writing.

TABLE 9
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

Items	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Understanding of evaluative expressions in English writing	30	4.00	5.00	4.4667	.50742
Appraisal framework's use in realizing emotional expressions in English writing	30	4.00	5.00	4.3000	.46609
Improvement of evaluative vocabulary usage	30	3.00	5.00	4.1000	.71197
Better and more convincing writing	30	4.00	5.00	4.2333	.43018
More confident in writing English	30	3.00	5.00	4.4000	.62146
More logic and coherent writing	30	3.00	5.00	3.7000	.59596
Difficulty in memorizing and using evaluative expressions	30	1.00	4.00	2.3333	1.12444
Duration of the course	30	1.00	3.00	2.1333	.73030
Overall evaluation on the effectiveness of the course	30	4.00	5.00	4.4333	.50401
Valid <i>N</i> (listwise)	30				

However, a small number of students also acknowledged initial difficulties in memorizing and differentiating the terminology (Table 10). More specifically, some students had difficulty understanding concepts in the Attitude system (16.67%) and Graduation system (20%). Few students (10%) admitted that they found it challenging to apply these evaluative items in their writing and that they need more examples to illustrate. Nearly a third of students (26.27%) reported difficulty practicing the framework and responding to teachers' tasks.

TABLE 10
DIFFICULTIES IN LEARNING AND APPLYING THE APPRAISAL FRAMEWORK

Items	Yes (<i>n</i>)	No (<i>n</i>)	Total	Yes (%)	No (%)
Understanding concepts of Attitude	5	25	30	16.7	83.3
Understanding concepts of Graduation	6	24	30	20.0	80.0
Applying the Appraisal framework	3	27	30	10.0	90.0
Practicing and responding	8	22	30	26.7	73.3
Lack of examples	3	27	30	10.0	90.0

As a result, about 30% of students (Table 9) expressed they needed more time to study the framework as the duration for the framework in the course was not enough. Some students suggested increasing the practice time and providing more specific illustrative examples.

Overall, one hundred percent of students assessed that the framework's impact on English writing skills was Good or Very good ($M = 4.43$), partly indicating the achievement of the intervention period (Table 9).

Qualitative analysis of open-ended responses highlighted several key themes. Being asked to share personal feelings or experience in the process of studying and applying the framework, students tend to have positive feedback. One student shared: "Before, I just wrote what I thought. Now, I think about how to say it . . . Using words like "*significant*" or "*slightly*" makes my point stronger or softer. Appraisal gave me the words for these choices." Another student wrote: "The Appraisal framework helps me better understand how to express emotions and opinions in writing".

Secondly, students recognized the practical application of the framework in constructing arguments, particularly using Attitude for evaluation and guiding the reader. One student noted: "Learning about Attitude, especially Judgement and Appreciation, helped me evaluate the topic better, not just give my feeling." Another student wrote: "I feel my writing is more convincing after learning about the elements of Appraisal".

Thirdly, challenges and the learning curve were also mentioned, mainly related to the initial complexity of the terminology. One student stated: "The names were confusing at first. Affect, Judgement, Appreciation ... and all the small types. It took time. Sometimes in the essay, I wasn't sure if it was Judgement or Appreciation, but the main idea of evaluating was helpful anyway." Some students suggested that there should be more time and practice exercises to help them better memorize and apply the framework.

Overall, despite initial challenges, the majority of EG students found learning the Appraisal framework a valuable and beneficial experience for improving their English writing skills.

V. DISCUSSION

Results of this study provide clear empirical evidence for positive effects of integrating the Appraisal framework into English writing instruction to improve writing skills for Vietnamese university students in the studied context. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses consistently showed that the group of students exposed to explicit instruction on Attitude and Graduation resources demonstrated significant advantages over the control group on several important dimensions after the intervention. Specifically, EG students employed Attitude resources, particularly Affect and Appreciation, more frequently and appropriately, enabling them to make more vivid and persuasive arguments. They also show a more varied and sophisticated use of Graduation resources to modulate the intensity and range of utterances, demonstrating greater control over nuances of meaning. These improvements in the use of Appraisal resources simultaneously led to significantly higher overall writing quality for the EG. In addition, positive feedback from EG students, despite acknowledging initial difficulties, confirmed the cognitive value and practical applicability of learning the Appraisal framework.

Results of this study are consistent with previous studies on the effectiveness of the Appraisal framework in teaching English writing skills (Derewianka, 2007; Hood, 2010; Hu & Choo, 2015; Liu, 2010). EG students' greater use of Appreciation resources appropriately supports observations of the role of these types of Attitudes in constructing arguments and demonstrating critical thinking (Hood, 2010). The significant increase in the use of Graduation shows that students not only learn how to express Attitude but also know how to adjust the level of expression in writing, helping to improve the quality of writing comprehensively. Hu and Choo's (2015) study in Singapore also noted similar improvements in students' writing skills when applying the Appraisal framework, especially in the use of Graduation categories to enhance persuasiveness. Similarly, Liu (2010) found that the Appraisal framework helped Chinese students improve their ability to express emotions and opinions in their essays. Thus, the increased use of evaluation elements makes writing more vivid, convincing, and personalized. This study adds further evidence of the pedagogical application of the Appraisal framework in the specific EFL context of Vietnam, where the development of evaluative and interactive expressive competence in written English remains a challenge.

The effectiveness of the Appraisal framework-based intervention can be attributed to several factors. First, providing students with a framework to discuss language choices related to evaluation appears to have increased their awareness and conscious control over these aspects of their writing. Instead of focusing solely on structure and grammar, students were guided to think about the meaning and effectiveness of word choices in expressing their point of view and connecting with the reader. Second, analyzing sample texts through the lens of the Appraisal framework provided concrete examples and models of how experienced writers effectively use these resources. Third, deliberate practice activities focusing on the application of the concepts of Attitude and Graduation provided opportunities for students to experiment with and reinforce the use of these resources in specific writing contexts.

From the above results and interpretations, some important pedagogical implications can be drawn for the teaching of English writing at tertiary level in Vietnam.

First, considering systematically integrating elements of the Appraisal framework into EFL writing curricula is a potential direction. This does not necessarily mean replacing existing teaching methods but rather adds an important dimension that focuses on interpersonal meaning.

Second, specific teaching activities might include using the Appraisal framework as a tool for analyzing sample texts, designing small exercises that help students practice identifying and producing different Attitude and Graduation expressions, and incorporating Appraisal-related criteria into teacher and peer feedback.

Third, it is also necessary to develop teaching materials that are appropriate to the Vietnamese context, which may use simplified terminology or focus on the core concepts initially.

Last but not least, professional development programs are needed to equip EFL teachers with the knowledge and necessary skills to understand and effectively apply the Appraisal framework in the classroom, overcoming barriers of initial familiarity or apprehension towards SFL-based approaches.

VI. CONCLUSION

Through explicit pedagogical focus on the language of evaluation - especially the systems of Attitude and Graduation - the study demonstrated statistically significant improvements among experimental group students in their ability to express assessments appropriately, producing higher-quality essays compared to the control group receiving traditional instruction. Notwithstanding the observed difficulties in learning, most students thought the framework was a useful resource that improved their metalinguistic awareness.

It is recommended that educators integrate the Appraisal framework into their English writing curriculum systematically, combined with varied practice activities and detailed feedback to optimize learning outcomes. Teachers need to be properly trained on the Appraisal framework to guide students more effectively.

However, this study also has some limitations that should be acknowledged. The quasi-experimental design did not allow for complete control of potential confounding factors due to the lack of random assignment, although ANCOVA was used to control initial differences. The study sample was limited to students at one university, so the generalizability of the results to other student populations in Vietnam should be considered with caution. The intervention period (12 weeks) may not have been long enough to observe long-term effects or complete mastery of the Appraisal resources.

Based on the results and limitations of the study, some directions for further research can be suggested. Longitudinal studies that track the development of students' Appraisal competencies over a longer period of time would provide further insight. Replication of the study in universities and with groups of students with different English proficiency levels in Vietnam would help verify and expand the generalizability of the results. Exploring the application of the Appraisal framework in teaching other genres (e.g., research reports, literature reviews) is also a promising direction. Future research could also delve into teachers' perspectives and challenges when implementing this method in teaching practice in Vietnam.

APPENDIX A. WRITING SYLLABUS INTEGRATING APPRAISAL FRAMEWORK INSTRUCTION

TABLE A
WRITING SYLLABUS INTEGRATING APPRAISAL FRAMEWORK INSTRUCTION

Week	General writing	Appraisal framework
1.	Self-introduction paragraph; Topic sentences & supporting details;	
2.	Descriptive paragraph; Organize descriptive writing	Introduce the Appraisal framework; Attitude – Affect (emotion words)
3.	Short biography; Structure biography	Attitude – Judgement & Appreciation
4.	Prediction essay; Organize logically	Graduation – Force
5.	Report on endangered species	Attitude + Graduation
6.	Narrative; Sequencing words	Affect (emotions in storytelling)
7.	Formal & informal emails; Conventions of email writing	Force (adjusting tone intensity)
8.	Report on spending habits	Focus (precision vs. vagueness)
9.	Cause-effect essay; Structure essay	Attitude + Graduation
10.	Argumentative essay	Attitude + Graduation
11.	Formal letter/request	Attitude + Graduation
12.	Final essay	Apply Attitude + Graduation

APPENDIX B. RUBRIC FOR ESSAY ASSESSMENT

TABLE B
RUBRIC FOR ESSAY ASSESSMENT

Score	Content	Organization	Vocabulary	Grammar
10	Task fully addressed with depth and nuance	Clear organization; wide range of cohesive devices	Wide vocabulary; effective collocations	Very wide range; complex structures used flexibly
9	Rich ideas, well-developed	Logical organization; clear paragraphing; varied linking words	Very good range; mostly precise and appropriate	Very few minor errors; good mix of sentence types
8	Task fully covered; ideas clear, logical	Well-structured; clear paragraphing; cohesive devices mostly appropriate	Good range; limited collocations	Generally accurate; occasional errors do not affect meaning
7	Task addressed with relevant ideas	Adequate structure; limited range of cohesive devices	Adequate vocabulary; some repetition	Attempts at complex sentences, with minor mistakes
6	Cover task with basic ideas	Simple but clear structure; cohesive devices simple	Limited range; noticeable repetition	Limited range; frequent errors in word forms; tense control inconsistent
5	Partial task coverage; ideas vague, little support	Paragraphs poorly separated; few cohesive devices	Restricted vocabulary; frequent errors in word choice	Simple repeated structures; complex structures often incorrect
4	Very limited ideas; mostly underdeveloped	Unclear organization; little paragraph control; minimal linking words	Very limited vocabulary; frequent errors	Very limited control; frequent basic errors; mostly simple sentences
3	Few ideas; hardly address task	Very poor structure; no clear paragraphing	Extremely limited range; many incorrect or inappropriate words	Very poor control of tenses; sentences often incomplete or incorrect
2	Task largely ignored	Almost no structure; no linking words	Almost no usable vocabulary	Rare complete sentences
1	Fail to address task	No organization; incoherent	Irrelevant words	No control of grammar

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Hong B. Nguyen was born in Hanoi (Vietnam) on 7th August 1981. She earned the Bachelor's degree in English language teaching and Master's degree in English from University of Language and International Studies in 2003 and 2009 respectively. She got a degree in Business Administration from Thuongmai University in 2015. She earned her PhD in Contrastive Linguistics in 2023 from Academy of Social Science, Vietnam.

She has been working as a teacher of English at Thuongmai University for 20 years. She has published five research articles in Scopus indexed journals and 16 ones in journals and proceedings of Vietnamese and international conferences, 3 books and 4 research projects at university level. Her main research interests are systemic functional linguistics (especially evaluative language), contrastive analysis and pedagogy. Email: hongnguyen.dhtm@tmu.edu.vn ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-6440-898X>