

# Comparative Examination of Attitudinal Language Usage in Academic Writing by English and Persian Authors

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## Abstract

Academic writing frequently incorporates evaluative strategies aimed at conveying the attitudes and perspectives of writers towards individuals, objects, and situations discussed in their texts. This study explores how writers use language to project their attitudinal assessments and establish their presence in academic writing. To do so, we analyzed four texts authored by scholars in applied linguistics – two in Persian and two in English – using the appraisal framework developed, specifically focusing on the category of attitude. Our findings indicate that while writers tended to avoid expressing their feelings and making judgments about people, they preferred to use attitude as appreciation when evaluating objects.

**Keywords:** appraisal framework, attitudinal resources, evaluative language

## 1. Introduction

Textbooks play a pivotal role in education, serving as the primary means for students to acquire knowledge and analytical skills in their chosen discipline (Aminafashar et al.; Jalalian Daghigh & Abdul Rahim, 2021; Jianbin & Fang, 2013; Qian, 2022; White, 2001). They also provide teachers with valuable resources for structuring their courses and facilitating the teaching and learning process. As a result, textbooks have been the subject of extensive academic investigation in various fields, encompassing a wide range of programs such as English as a Second Language (ESL)/English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and institute-specific textbooks (Gunantar, 2017; Habtoor, 2012; Kazem & Fatemeh, 2014; Liu, 2013; Nnamdi-Eruchalu, 2012; Spirovska, 2015; Wang, 2022; Yaghoubi Nezhad et al., 2013).

In recent years, textbooks have evolved beyond their traditional role of conveying information. They have become interactive tools for communication between writers and readers, allowing writers to express their attitudes and engage with readers on an interpersonal level (Bremner, 2008; Gómez-Rodríguez, 2010). This shift towards more interactive academic discourse has led to increased research on the use of evaluative linguistic resources in textbook construction (Banari et al., 2017; Hyland, 2005, 2007; Starostina et al., 2021).

Evaluation in academic writing involves conveying viewpoints, attitudes, feelings, and the subjective presence of writers, as well as employing interactional features to maintain relationships with readers (Gales, 2011; Hyland, 2007; Hyland & Tse, 2004). This study focuses on the concept of evaluation within academic discourse, specifically exploring attitudinal resources in textbooks. The appraisal framework, based on systemic functional linguistics (SFL), offers a typology of evaluative resources, with a focus on the interpersonal meta-function of language (Birjandi et al., 2006; Shekhani, 2022; Vinchristo, 2022). The appraisal framework includes three main categories: attitude, engagement, and graduation. This study concentrates on the category of attitude, which deals with positive and negative evaluations of emotions/feelings, people's behavior, and things. The attitude category further includes three subcategories: affect, judgment, and appreciation. Affect relates to the expression of positive and negative emotional feelings towards people, things, events, or situations. Judgment encompasses ethical evaluations of people's behavior, considering factors such as normality, capacity, tenacity, veracity, and propriety.

Appreciation focuses on positive and negative assessments of objects, processes, forms, appearances, compositions, impacts, etc., rather than human behavior.

Given the increased importance of interpersonal communication in academic discourse and the use of evaluative resources, the current study desires to investigate how the mindset system of the appraisal framework is applied in Persian and English textbooks in the subject area of applied linguistics (Hood, 2010; Hunston, 2002). Specifically, we seek to understand whether both Persian and English academic writers utilize attitudinal resources in the construction of their textbooks. This study concentrates on the following research questions:

- (1) Are there considerable differences between Persian and English writers for the use of attitudinal resources in their textbooks?
- (2) Which subcategories of attitudinal resources are more frequently employed in both English and Persian textbooks and why?
- (3) Are there cross-cultural differences in the use of subcategories of attitudinal resources, and if so, what factors contribute to these differences?

## 2. Literature Review

The study of attitudinal language in academic writing, particularly across different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, such as English and Persian, presents a complex and multifaceted field of inquiry. It also highlights that the Appraisal Framework, integral to systemic functional linguistics (SFL), stands at the forefront of analyzing attitudinal language in texts. Martin and White's framework offers a nuanced approach to understanding how language expresses judgments, affects, and appreciations (Martin & White, 2003; Martin et al., 2005). These categories allow for a detailed dissection of how writers convey their stances and engage with readers, impacting the interpretive process. This framework has been extensively applied in various linguistic analyses, including those by Hyland and Starostina et al., to understand how academic discourse functions beyond the mere transmission of information (Hyland, 2007; Starostina et al., 2021). It delves into the interpersonal relationships between writer and reader, mediated through language. It is noteworthy that Attitude, a central category in the Appraisal Framework, is categorized into affect, judgment, and appreciation. Each subcategory plays a distinct role in academic writing. Affect deals with emotional responses and is crucial in humanizing the academic text, allowing writers to express subtle emotional nuances. Judgment concerns moral assessments of behavior, providing a platform for writers to implicitly or explicitly convey their ethical stance. Appreciation relates to evaluations of entities and events, pivotal in critiquing and valuing academic content. Recent studies by scholars like Gales and Hyland highlight the significant role of these subcategories in constructing an authoritative and engaging academic voice (Gales, 2011; Hyland, 2007). Their research accentuates the necessity for academic writers to navigate the norms of academic discourse, balancing between objectivity and personal evaluation.

### 2.1 Cultural Variation in Academic Writing

The use of attitudinal resources in academic writing is deeply influenced by cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Comparative studies, such as those by Banari et al., have shown that academic writers from different linguistic traditions exhibit varying tendencies in their use of evaluative language (Banari et al., 2017). These differences are often rooted in broader cultural and rhetorical traditions that shape academic writing styles. For example, in some cultures, direct expression of opinion or criticism is frowned upon, which can reflect in the academic writing of that culture, as observed in the work of Hunston and Shekhani (Hunston, 2002; Shekhani, 2022). These studies suggest that the rhetorical strategies employed by writers are closely tied to their cultural and educational backgrounds, affecting their choice and use of attitudinal language. The influence of cultural and linguistic backgrounds on the use of attitudinal resources in academic writing is a subject of considerable depth and complexity. Studies by Banari et al. and others have illuminated how academic writers from diverse linguistic traditions vary significantly in their approach to evaluative language (Banari et al., 2017). This variation is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but is deeply embedded in the broader cultural and rhetorical traditions that shape individual writing styles and preferences. Cultural attitudes towards expression, particularly in academic contexts, greatly influence how writers employ evaluative language. For instance, in some cultures, overt expressions of opinion or criticism might be discouraged or considered inappropriate in formal writing. This cultural nuance is reflected in the academic writing styles of those cultures, leading to a more implicit or subdued use of attitudinal language. Hunston's research provides insight into this aspect, illustrating how academic writers navigate these cultural norms. The study suggests that while some cultures may value directness and explicitness, others might prioritize subtlety and indirectness in conveying evaluations and judgments (Hunston, 2002). Shekhani further explores this cultural influence, highlighting how non-Western academic writers, especially those from collectivist societies, may exhibit different rhetorical strategies from their Western counterparts (Shekhani, 2022). In

collectivist cultures, where group harmony and consensus are valued over individual opinion, academic writers might opt for a more collaborative and less confrontational tone. This approach often leads to a different use of appraisal resources, where emphasis is placed on building agreement and shared understanding rather than asserting individual viewpoints.

Moreover, the educational background and the academic traditions prevalent in a writer's cultural context also play a crucial role. Educational systems that emphasize rote learning and respect for established knowledge may lead to academic writing that is less critical and more descriptive or expository. In contrast, educational systems that encourage critical thinking and individual analysis may produce academic writing that is more argumentative and evaluative. The work of Gómez-Rodríguez provides an interesting perspective on how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks, often used in non-native English contexts, adapt to these cultural variations (Gómez-Rodríguez, 2010). The study examines how these textbooks incorporate or adapt attitudinal language to suit the cultural contexts of the learners, often balancing between the native English standards and the local cultural norms. Furthermore, the advent of globalization and digital communication has begun to blur these cultural boundaries, introducing new complexities to the use of attitudinal language in academic writing. As scholars and students across the globe engage with a broader range of academic texts and discourses, there is a gradual convergence and cross-pollination of writing styles and rhetorical strategies. This phenomenon suggests a dynamic and evolving landscape in academic writing, where cultural variation remains a significant factor but is increasingly influenced by global trends and interactions.

### *2.2 English vs. Persian Academic Writing*

There is a notable distinction in the use of attitudinal language between English and Persian academic writing. English academic writing, as explored by scholars such as Hyland and Vinchristo, demonstrates a preference for using attitudinal language to assert arguments and establish credibility (Hyland, 2007; Vinchristo, 2022). In contrast, Persian academic writing, investigated in studies like those by Farhady & Hedayati, might display different trends in the use of these linguistic resources (Farhady & Hedayati, 2009). These differences could be reflective of the distinct cultural and educational paradigms inherent in Persian academic contexts. The contrast in the rhetorical organization and the employment of evaluative language in English and Persian academic texts provides insight into how different academic communities construct knowledge and authority.

### *2.3 Challenges in Comparative Linguistic Studies*

Comparative analyses across languages, such as English and Persian, involve navigating the complexities of different linguistic structures, academic traditions, and evaluation criteria. Dörnyei highlights the methodological challenges inherent in such comparative studies (Dörnyei, 2007). These challenges include the need for researchers to be culturally sensitive and aware of the potential biases that can influence the interpretation of attitudinal language. The researcher's own linguistic and cultural background can also affect the analysis, making it essential to adopt a rigorous and reflective research approach.

### *2.4 Recent Trends and Evolutions*

The field of academic writing is continually evolving, with recent trends focusing on the dynamic nature of academic discourse. Studies by Starostina et al. and Vinchristo have explored how digital media and globalization are influencing academic communication (Starostina et al., 2021; Vinchristo, 2022). These changes are leading to new patterns in the use of evaluative language, reflecting the shifting paradigms of academic discourse in an increasingly interconnected world. The impact of digital platforms and the global exchange of ideas are reshaping the ways in which academic writers engage with their audiences, necessitating a re-evaluation of traditional academic writing conventions. To recapitulate, this literature review highlights the intricate and diverse nature of attitudinal language in academic writing, shaped by linguistic, cultural, and disciplinary factors. The comparative study of English and Persian academic texts offers valuable insights into the role and application of evaluative language in academic contexts, underscoring the importance of understanding these nuances for a comprehensive grasp of academic discourse.

## **3. Method**

### *3.1 Selection of the Study*

For this study, we selected textbooks from two sub-disciplines within applied linguistics: teaching and testing. We chose these sub-disciplines because they are prevalent in all academic fields and are closely related, sharing similar linguistic resources in their discourse structures.

We randomly selected two textbooks from each sub-discipline, resulting in a total of four textbooks. Two of these textbooks were authored by Persian writers, while the other two were authored by English-language writers who

specialize in applied linguistics. All selected textbooks were published after the year 2000 to ensure their relevance to contemporary academic discourse.

### 3.2 Research Materials

This study delves into two distinct facets of applied linguistics: teaching and testing. To ensure impartiality and minimize potential researcher bias, a random selection process was employed for each sub-discipline. This approach aimed to uphold the study's integrity and prevent any undue influence on the eventual findings. Among the four chosen textbooks – two from each sub-discipline – two were authored by Persian scholars, and the remaining two by English-language experts, who possessed expertise in both English and Persian linguistics. The selected texts were authored by Fenstermacher and Soltis, Pophan, Birjandi, Mossallanejad, and Bgheridoust, and Farhady, Jafarpur, and Birjandi (Birjandi et al., 2006; Farhady & Hedayati, 2009; Fenstermacher et al., 2015; Popham, 2003).

The rationale behind choosing authors from different cultural backgrounds was to contrast the use of evaluative linguistic resources from diverse perspectives. Additionally, this study sought to investigate whether being a native or non-native English speaker had any bearing on the utilization of these resources. By selecting textbooks from the same discipline, the study aimed to explore whether intra-disciplinary disparities influenced the frequency and extent of evaluative resources. Thus, the overarching goal of this study is to conduct a thorough examination of the findings, discerning the impact of cross-cultural and intra-disciplinary variations or commonalities on the deployment of evaluative linguistic resources.

Each of the selected books consists of ten pages, selected systematically – every  $n + 10$  (where  $n=10$ ) pages were chosen for analysis. To minimize the potential impact of temporal factors on textual features, only textbooks published since 2000 were included in the study.

### 3.3 Research Procedure

To explore, analyze, compare, and interpret the impact of evaluative linguistic resources on the content of selected books within the field of applied linguistics, this study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods. This dual-method analysis was chosen because it provides more precise and reliable outcomes. The integration of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, as advocated by Domyei, offers a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Dörnyei, 2007).

Following the selection of the corpus, it was converted into Rich Text format. Subsequently, word count was conducted to estimate the corpus's size. The linguistic resources within the corpus were then meticulously analyzed, and their respective sub-categories were identified. The roles and impact of these sub-categories on attitudes were determined based on their frequencies. Additionally, the study delved into potential explanations for the variation in the frequency of these sub-categories. To standardize and account for disparities in text length across potentially unevenly sized texts, the number of appraisal categories in all discipline blurbs was computed per 1000 words.

To enhance accuracy, both intra-coder and inter-coder procedures were employed. These measures aimed to reduce analytical subjectivity. Inter-coder reliability was assessed by having two additional raters, familiar with the appraisal framework, analyze 25 percent of the corpus. Their results were then compared with those of the researchers, and any minor discrepancies were resolved through discussion and consensus. After one month, 20 percent of the corpus was reanalyzed, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.850. Finally, to identify potential intra-disciplinary differences, the chi-square test was employed.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The analysis of attitudinal resources in the selected textbooks revealed several key findings:

Table 1. Frequency analysis of attitude resources in Birjandi et al. (2005) textbook (Birjandi et al., 2006)

	RAW NO	PER 1000 WORDS	X <sup>2</sup>	SIG	YDF
<b>AFFECT</b>	7	2.703	.143	.705	1
<b>JUDGMENT</b>	9	3.86	3.200	.202	2
<b>APPRECIATION</b>	65	25.1	25.323	.000	2
<b>CRITICAL VALUE: 3.84</b>					

Table 2. Frequency analysis of attitude resources in Farhady et al. (2009) textbook (Farhady &amp; Hedayati, 2009)

	RAW NO	PER 1000 WORDS	X <sup>2</sup>	SIG	DF
<b>AFFECT</b>	5	2.02	.200	.655	1
<b>JUDGMENT</b>	17	6.89	10.529	.015	3
<b>APPRECIATION</b>	79	32.2	9.139	.010	2

**CRITICAL VALUE: 3.84**

Table 3. Frequency analysis of attitude resources in Fenstermacher &amp; Soltis (2004) textbook (Fenstermacher et al., 2015)

	RAW NO	PER 1000 WORDS	X <sup>2</sup>	SIG	DF
<b>AFFECT</b>	7	1.53	.258	.867	2
<b>JUDGMENT</b>	28	6.16	17.357	.002	4
<b>APPRECIATION</b>	125	27.34	32.272	.000	2

**CRITICAL VALUE: 3.84**

Table 4. Frequency analysis of attitude resources in Popham (2003) textbook (Popham, 2003)

	RAW NO	PER 1000 WORDS	X <sup>2</sup>	SIG	DF
<b>AFFECT</b>	7	2.214	.143	.705	1
<b>JUDGMENT</b>	8	2.503	.500	.480	1
<b>APPRECIATION</b>	121	38.27	34.826	.000	2

**CRITICAL VALUE: 3.84**

Upon careful examination of the obtained results, it becomes apparent that Persian writers exhibit a strong inclination towards encoding attitude as appreciation. Both Persian and English writers frequently employ appreciation in comparison to other categories of attitude. Appreciation involves the positive and negative assessment of objects, processes, and text rather than human behavior (Martin, 2000; Martin et al., 2005; White, 2001). It focuses on evaluations of semiotic and natural phenomena (Martin et al., 2005) rather than assessing human behavior by reference to social norms, which is the functional property of judgment (White, 2001).

Given that academic writing predominantly involves the assessment and evaluation of objects and entities, as opposed to human behaviors or emotions, it is unsurprising to find a significant prevalence of appreciation over other attitude categories. Analyzing the results from the tables above, it is evident that affect and judgment are relatively less prominent, while appreciation is favored by both Persian and English writers in textbooks related to the fields of testing and teaching. This lower frequency of affect and judgment suggests that these books prioritize scientific content. When a book primarily addresses human emotions or behaviors rather than objects, items, and phenomena, it runs the risk of compromising its objectivity. When comparing the frequency of appreciation in English and Persian textbooks, it becomes clear that English books in both testing and teaching fields tend to exhibit greater objectivity than their Persian counterparts. This indicates that English writers are more inclined to encode attitude as appreciation. In essence, the results demonstrate that English books maintain a higher level of objectivity, with fewer or no observable subjective markers in their rhetorical organization: "The test itself would yield accurate 'attitude: appreciation' interpretations in one setting..." (Popham, 2003). The significance of these identity inquiries plays a crucial role in the educational journey (Fenstermacher et al., 2015). It is noteworthy that academic disciplines naturally offer valuable material for language instruction (Birjandi et al., 2006). This becomes beneficial in aptitude assessments when the goal is to formulate distinct predictions (Farhady & Hedayati, 2009).

Table 5. Frequency analysis of appreciation in farhady et al. (2009) textbook per 1000 words (Farhady &amp; Hedayati, 2009)

	RAW NO	PER 1000 WORDS
<b>REACTION</b>	14	5.67
<b>COMPOSITION</b>	35	14.1
<b>VALUATION</b>	30	12.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	79	32.2

Table 6. Frequency analysis of appreciation in birjandi et al. (2005) textbook per 1000 words (Birjandi et al., 2006)

	<b>RAW NO</b>	<b>PER 1000 WORDS</b>
<b>REACTION</b>	6	<b>2.31</b>
<b>COMPOSITION</b>	39	<b>15.06</b>
<b>VALUATION</b>	20	<b>7.72</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>25.1</b>

Table 7. Frequency analysis of appreciation in fentermacher &amp; soltis (2004) textbook per 1000 Words (Fenstermacher et al., 2015)

	<b>Raw no</b>	<b>per 1000 words</b>
<b>Reaction</b>	12	<b>2.62</b>
<b>Composition</b>	53	<b>11.59</b>
<b>Valuation</b>	60	<b>13.1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>27.34</b>

Table 8. Frequency analysis of appreciation in popham (2003) textbook per 1000 words (Popham, 2003)

	<b>Raw no</b>	<b>per 1000 words</b>
<b>Reaction</b>	10	<b>3.16</b>
<b>Composition</b>	52	<b>16.45</b>
<b>Valuation</b>	59	<b>17.71</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>38.27</b>

Regarding the utilization of appreciation subcategories, the findings indicate a disparity between English and Persian authors. English writers appear to place greater emphasis on encoding attitude as appreciation, while Persian authors demonstrate a proclivity for composition over valuation. Valuation pertains to the perceived worthiness of the subject matter at hand, whereas composition revolves around how the discussed subject is structured or framed in terms of our perception (Martin & White, 2005). It seems that English books prioritize the worthiness of subjects and issues, capturing the authors' attention, whereas Persian books prioritize the compositional aspect of subjects, objects, and phenomena over their inherent worthiness.

The concept of "reaction" involves the emotional response evoked by things, objects, or phenomena and how the recipient might express their sentiments towards them. Given that academic books typically do not delve into the emotional expressions of writers regarding the impact and quality of the subjects discussed during the writing process, the subcategory of reaction is noticeably less prevalent compared to other appreciation subcategories. The infrequent use of reaction as an appreciation subcategory is observable in both English and Persian academic literature. In essence, both English and Persian author's exhibit limited inclination toward employing reaction in their writing.

## 5. Conclusion

In this study, we have examined the extent to which attitudinal resources are utilized in the construction of English and Persian textbooks in the field of applied disciplines, specifically in the domains of teaching and testing. To conduct this analysis, we employed the attitude system framework proposed by Martin and White (Martin & Rose, 2005; Martin et al., 2005).

When considering the frequency of affect, which encompasses the expression of positive and negative emotions, as well as judgment, which pertains to the evaluation of behavior that is either praised or criticized, our findings reveal that neither English applied linguists nor their Persian counterparts tend to favor these two evaluative dimensions. The limited utilization of these attitudinal strategies can be attributed to the academic nature of textbooks, where authors are required to maintain objectivity and refrain from expressing personal feelings or judgments concerning other writers.

Upon closer examination of both English and Persian textbooks, it becomes evident that writers from both linguistic backgrounds exhibit a strong preference for employing the attitudinal category of "appreciation." This preference can be attributed to the fact that appreciation focuses on making positive or negative assessments of objects, artifacts, processes, and states of affairs, rather than evaluating human behavior. As such, this evaluative strategy proves particularly useful in interpreting and assessing scientifically contentious topics based on their positive or negative aspects. Unlike affect and judgment, which are also part of the attitude category and involve personal feelings and judgments related to human emotions and behavior, appreciation emphasizes personal assessments within intellectual deliberation.

Furthermore, when examining the subcategories of appreciation in both English and Persian applied linguistic textbooks, it is evident that "valuation" and "composition" are employed more frequently than "reaction." This can be attributed to the fact that valuation and composition are concerned with addressing the inherent challenges within the subject matter, rather than expressing the emotions and judgments of the authors toward people's emotions and behaviors.

In summary, our findings suggest that both English and Persian textbook writers employ attitudinal assessments in a similar manner in their textual compositions. Despite English writers showing a somewhat higher interest in utilizing attitudinal resources in both teaching and testing sub-disciplines, cross-cultural differences appear to have a limited impact on the application of these resources. Ultimately, the academic nature of teaching and testing textbooks appears to play a significant role in shaping the use of attitudinal resources.

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