



Attitude in EFL Argumentative Writing: A Corpus-Based Appraisal Analysis of Beginner and Intermediate Learners in AIULEC

Ebtissam Alkishir ^{1*} 

Mostafa Garbaj ² 

^{1,2} Alasmarya Islamic University, Faculty of Arts, Department of English, Libya

*e.alkishir@hum.asmarya.edu.ly

Citation: Alkishir, E., & Garbaj, M. (2026). Attitude in EFL argumentative writing: A corpus-based appraisal analysis of beginner and intermediate learners in AIULEC. *Faculty of Arts Journal – Misurata University*, (22), 276–291. <https://doi.org/10.36602/faj.2026.n22.15>

Received 23- 08 - 2026

Accepted 10- 09 - 2026

Published Online 20- 09 - 2026

Abstract

This study investigates the use of the Appraisal framework (Martin & White, 2005) through a corpus-based analysis of *Alasmarya Islamic University Learner English Corpus* (AIULEC), comparing beginner and intermediate learners' timed argumentative writing. The analysis focused on Attitude resources, including Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation, examining their frequency, distribution, polarity, and explicitness across the two proficiency groups. Chi-square tests and Cramér's V were used to assess differences between the groups, complemented by qualitative analysis of representative examples. Findings indicate that the two groups differ in their use of Attitude resources, with beginners relying more on Judgement and intermediate learners using more Appreciation. However, no statistically significant differences were found in polarity and explicitness, with both groups showing a preference for positive and inscribed evaluative resources. The study highlights the pedagogical relevance of developing learners awareness of evaluative language in academic writing, particularly in argumentative contexts. It suggests that instruction should support EFL learners in using appropriate Attitude resources to construct effective academic arguments.

Key words: *Appraisal framework, Attitude system, Corpus-based analysis, EFL argumentative writing, Libyan Arabic speakers, Undergraduate*

1. Introduction

Second language writing reflects the production of EFL learners, their learning outcomes, and the instruction they receive (Hyland, 2019). Investigating evaluation and stance in EFL writing is therefore important for understanding how learners express feelings, evaluate people and things, and position themselves and their readers. This is particularly relevant for informing teaching practices, especially in addressing the difficulties that students face when using appraisal resources in their writing, as well as in developing genre awareness. For instance, the inappropriate use of evaluative resources in formal writing may indicate a lack of genre awareness, as learners may fail to adjust their language accordingly.

One framework that can be used to examine such evaluative language is Appraisal, which is part of the interpersonal metafunction in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). It is used alongside negotiation and involvement to express interpersonal meaning and construct social relationships (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). More specifically, appraisal refers to the evaluation of emotions, people, and things. The appraisal framework developed by Martin and White (2005) is used to investigate evaluation in language and has been applied in corpus-based studies examining appraisal (Haider et al., 2021; Chung et al., 2021), and Attitude in particular (Zárate, 2023).

To examine such evaluative patterns systematically across learner texts, corpus-based approaches can be particularly useful. Corpus linguistics and Learner Corpus Research (LCR) enable the systematic

investigation of learner language through computerized text collections. By combining quantitative frequency analysis with qualitative interpretation, LCR allows researchers to identify recurring patterns across texts in a systematic and comparable manner (Granger et al., 2015).

Previous research has shown that data are mostly collected from intermediate or advanced learners, with very limited focus on beginner-level argumentative timed writing, especially in the Libyan EFL context. Addressing this gap, this study adopts a comparative perspective by examining both beginner and intermediate learners. Investigating Libyan EFL writing is particularly important because learners differ in terms of culture, language background, proficiency level, motivation, and other factors (Hyland, 2019). This suggests that the use of evaluative language may vary across contexts and proficiency levels.

Therefore, analyzing Attitude resources in argumentative texts allows for a targeted investigation of how learners express stance and evaluation across proficiency levels. Furthermore, timed writing can reveal patterns of language use that are less revised, reflecting more spontaneous learner production. This is particularly relevant for studying Attitude resources, as such writing may show more natural tendencies in learners' evaluation strategies. Thus, this study examines Attitude resources in argumentative writing produced by beginner and intermediate Libyan EFL learners using a corpus-based appraisal framework.

1.1 Research Questions

1. How do beginner and intermediate EFL learners differ in the distribution of Attitude resources (Affect, Judgement, Appreciation)?
2. How do beginner and intermediate EFL learners differ in the polarity of Attitude resources?
3. How do they differ in the use of Inscribed and Invoked Attitude, and what does this reveal about their stance-taking strategies?

1.2 Hypotheses

H0₁: There is no significant difference in the use of Attitude types between beginner and intermediate groups.

H1₁: There is a significant difference in the use of Attitude types between beginner and intermediate groups.

H0₂: There is no significant difference in the use of polarity between beginner and intermediate groups.

H1₂: There is a significant difference in the use of polarity between beginner and intermediate groups.

H0₃: There is no significant difference in the use of explicitness between beginner and intermediate groups.

H1₃: There is a significant difference in the use of explicitness between beginner and intermediate groups.

1.3 Literature Review

This section presents the Appraisal framework, with a particular focus on the Attitude system. It also discusses corpus-based approaches to the analysis of Attitude and their implications for language teaching.

1.3.1 Theoretical Framework

Appraisal is part of the interpersonal metafunction and is one of the three interpersonal discourse semantics systems in SFL that construe interpersonal meaning, alongside negotiation and involvement to construct tenor (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Appraisal provides a system to analyze attitude, evaluation, stance, and degree of certainty that writers or speakers express. It also appears in different grammatical forms. Appraisal allows both categorical distinctions, indicating the type of evaluation (positive or negative), and scalar grading, indicating intensity.

The appraisal framework developed by Martin and White (2005) examines how writers express evaluation and stance and convey these meanings to readers. It is concerned with how language users approve, criticize, and assess ideas, and how they position their readers to do likewise through the use of specific linguistic resources.

The framework is divided into three domains: Attitude, Engagement and Graduation. Attitude is concerned with how writers or speakers express emotions, Judgements, and Appreciation. Engagement is how writers or speakers position themselves with respect to other viewpoints. Graduation deals with amplifying or softening evaluation. This study focuses specifically on the Attitude system, which captures linguistic resources used to express emotions and evaluation of people and things.

According to Martin and White (2005), Attitude is divided into three main subtypes: Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation. Affect

concerns both positive and negative feelings, and Judgement focuses on attitudes toward behavior or character according to social norms, including social esteem and social sanction. Lastly, Appreciation expresses attitudes toward things, places, events, and phenomena (see Figure A1 in Appendix).

Martin and White also explain that Attitude can be either Inscribed (explicit) or Invoked (implicit). In addition to explicitness, Attitude carries polarity (positive or negative) and is often realized through gradable lexis that can vary in intensity. Moreover, it can be expressed via grammatical metaphor, where meanings are conveyed in forms other than the usual lexical items.

Overall, the Attitude system captures how writers express emotions and evaluations. Using this framework provides the basis for examining how EFL learners use evaluative language.

1.3.2 Previous Studies

Previous research has applied corpus linguistics methods and the appraisal framework by Martin and White (2005) to investigate appraisal in EFL writing, examining how learners use attitude resources across genres and proficiency levels. For example, Haider et al. (2021) analyzed undergraduate Pakistani EFL argumentative essays and found that students relied heavily on Judgement, particularly Capacity, and direct emotional evaluations, while the lack of Appreciation resources indicated limited formal, objective evaluation. Similarly, Chung et al. (2021) compared Vietnamese learners' writing in L1 and L2 and found greater use of attitudinal resources and

emotional expression in L1, suggesting that both language background and topic influence resource use, as well as proficiency level. In contrast, Zárate (2023) found Appreciation to be the most commonly used resource across basic, intermediate, and advanced analytical writings, likely reflecting instructional methods.

Other studies that are based on smaller datasets also illustrate the influence of genre and proficiency. For instance, Setyaningsih et al. (2025) reported that fifth-semester linguistics students mainly used Appreciation when writing article reviews, while Harti and Kurniawati (2020) found that second-semester students reflecting on the *pandemic* relied mostly on Affect, reflecting beginners' tendency toward personal expression. In another study by Alramadan (2020), the results showed that native writers used Appreciation most frequently, while EFL and Modern Standard Arabic writers favored Affect or Judgement. Similarly, narrative or reflective tasks often show Affect as the dominant resource (Pasaribu, 2020), whereas classroom discourse studies reveal varied patterns depending on interaction context. For example, Sujatna and Kuswoyo (2023) found that Appreciation was the most frequently used resource in student presentations, while Badklang and Srinon (2018) reported that Judgement was the most common in classroom interaction.

Across these studies, certain patterns emerge: Appreciation tends to dominate academic or analytical writing, Affect is more frequent in narrative genres, and Judgement is commonly used in argumentative contexts or teacher-student interaction. However, most

previous research focuses on intermediate or advanced learners, with little attention to beginner learners' argumentative writings, especially in EFL contexts such as Libya. In addition, timed-writing data, which reflects learners' spontaneous language, remains underexplored.

The present study addresses these gaps by examining beginner and intermediate Libyan EFL students' argumentative compositions across a variety of topics, providing insight into how learners evaluate people, events, and ideas in timed writing.

2. Methodology

This study employed a corpus-based quantitative approach, supplemented by qualitative analysis of textual examples (Callies, 2015). The quantitative analysis identified patterns in learner language, while the textual examples illustrated the realization of Attitude subtypes and the distinction between Inscribed and Invoked Attitude in context.

2.1 Corpus

AIULEC was chosen for this study (Alkishir, 2026). The written samples were collected specifically for this corpus, with students allowed 30-60 minutes to complete their compositions without the use of any devices or dictionaries, ensuring that the texts reflect spontaneous learner language.

The selection of texts was based on several criteria. First, only written compositions ranging from 100-250 words were considered. Although the corpus has around 33.3% errors, reflecting that the general level of the students is beginner, the small sample size required

additional criteria to more precisely classify texts by proficiency level.

Since error analysis of the broader AIULEC showed that most eighth-semester student texts had error rates similar to those of first-semester texts, semester level alone was not considered a reliable indicator of proficiency. This is consistent with broader critiques of institutional criteria as potentially unreliable indicators of language proficiency (Carlsen, 2012). Given the small number of texts in each group, where individual texts could substantially influence group-level patterns, the texts were instead classified according to error percentage. This data-driven, text-internal measure was developed by examining and iteratively adjusting the error-rate thresholds to identify divisions that corresponded to observable differences in textual performance. The resulting thresholds were set at below 10%, 10–20%, and above 20%: texts with error rates below 10% were classified as demonstrating relatively well-formed and fluent performance; those with error rates between 10% and 20% were classified as containing noticeable but generally non-disruptive errors; and those with error rates above 20% were classified as showing errors that substantially affected comprehensibility. Finally, only argumentative texts were selected. The resulting dataset included seven beginner and seven intermediate texts, totaling approximately 2,150 tokens, with the intermediate texts accounting for around 1,213 tokens and the beginner texts for 937 tokens. The difference in token number is attributed to the fact that beginners tend to write shorter texts. Accordingly, the specific token range

mentioned previously was established. The topics for beginners ranged from *eating at the restaurant* to *strengthening family ties*, *self-discipline*, and *philosophy*, while intermediate topics were *marriage age* and *university study*. All student names were anonymized.

2.2 Annotation

The UAM CorpusTool was used for manual annotation of Attitude, covering all subcategories under the main categories of Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation, along with their polarity and realization type.

To ensure reliability, the annotation process was conducted twice with a two-week interval, following the concept of intra-coder reliability (Krippendorff, 2004). While Alramdan (2020) employed a two-month interval, a shorter interval was considered sufficient for maintaining consistency while minimizing coder fatigue.

2.3 Analytical Procedures

The analysis combined both quantitative and qualitative procedures to examine the difference in the use of Attitude resources across the beginner and intermediate groups. First, raw frequencies were extracted. To ensure compatibility across both subsets, occurrences per 1,000 words were also calculated manually. In addition, percentages were calculated to present a proportional overview of category distributions within both groups (Gries, 2015).

Chi-square tests of independence were conducted to assess the association between proficiency level and Attitude use, with χ^2 , df, and p-values reported (Field, 2013; Gries, 2015). Cramér's V was calculated to determine the strength of association (Field,

2013). All analyses were performed using SPSS (Version 27), and qualitative examples were analyzed to illustrate the quantitative findings.

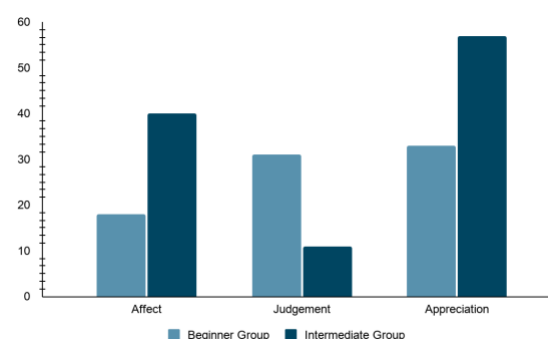
3. Results

3.1 Attitude Types

A total of 82 instances of Attitude resources were identified in the beginner subset, compared to 108 instances in the Intermediate group (see Figure 1).

Fig. 1.

Attitude Distribution in the Beginner and Intermediate Groups



Appreciation was the most frequent Attitude category in both groups. However, within the Beginner group, Judgement was the second most frequent category, followed by Affect, whereas in the intermediate group, Affect ranked second while Judgement was the least frequent.

These patterns are reflected in the descriptive statistics presented in Table 1, which shows raw frequencies, frequencies per 1,000 words, and percentages of each Attitude type in each group.

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics of Attitude Types Across Groups

		Type			
		Affect	Judg.	App.	Tot.
Beg	N	18	31	33	82
	Freq/1k	19.2	33.1	35.2	87.5
	%	22	37.8	40.2	100
Int	N	40	11	57	108
	Freq/1k	33	9	47	89
	%	37	10.2	52.8	100

*Beg: beginner *Int: intermediate

When comparing the total normalized frequencies of Attitude resources between the beginner (Freq/1K = 87.5) and intermediate (Freq/1K = 89) groups, the difference is minimal, suggesting that both groups used a similar number of Attitude resources. Similar to the pattern shown in Figure 1, Judgement and Appreciation are dominant in the beginner group, whereas Appreciation and Affect are more frequent in the intermediate group.

At the individual level, the intermediate group used more Affect resources but fewer Judgement resources than the beginner group. In addition, the intermediate group demonstrated a higher frequency of Appreciation resources than the beginner group.

To test whether there was a difference in the use of Attitude resources between the two groups, a chi-square test was performed, and the results were presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Statistical Differences in Attitude Types Across Groups ($\alpha = 0.05$)

χ^2 (df)	p	Cramér's V	N
21.11 (2)	< .001	.33	190

The overall distribution of Attitude types differed significantly between the two groups ($\chi^2 = 21.11$, $p < .001$, $V = 0.33$), indicating a moderate association between proficiency level and Attitude use. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{0i}) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_{1i}) was supported.

3.1.1 Attitude Subtypes in the Beginner Group

Within the beginner group, Attitude resources were realized through a range of Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation subtypes. The following examples illustrate how these subtypes were expressed in the data.

Affect was realized through expressions of emotional states and desire, using basic lexical items:

“... because we have a time with laughing [+Happiness]...” (Text beg3)

“The students when want [+Inclination] to learn only study subject.” (Text beg5)

“Marry life to continue should be the couples respect and love [+Happiness] each other.” (Text beg13)

In terms of Judgement, beginners expressed evaluations of people's capacity and behavior:

“There's a lot of people older than 21 act like children [-Capacity]...” (Text beg18)

“... but other feel they will be fail [-Capacity]” (Text beg9)

“Marry life to continue should be the couples respect [+Propriety] and...” (Text beg13)

Finally, Appreciation was the most dominant category overall. Within this group, beginner students used this resource to evaluate ideas and situations:

“... and this the beautiful things [+Reaction] and make the life very great [+Reaction]” (Text beg9)

“... it's a bad idea [-Valuation]” (Text beg15)

3.1.2 Attitude Subtypes in the Intermediate Group

Similarly, in the intermediate group, Attitude resources were realized through a variety of subtypes across Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation. The examples below illustrate these realizations.

Affect is expressed through emotional and psychological states. Similar to beginners, intermediate students typically used basic lexical items to express Affect:

“... also makes the person always worried and nervous [-Security] from everything happens.” (Text int10)

“... make you happy and in a good mood [+Happiness]” (Text int9)

Judgement, on the other hand, appears in evaluations of ability and achievement:

“... and never be successful [-Capacity] in anything” (Text int34)

“... that they can be creative [+Capcity] in it.” (Text int1)

Finally, Appreciation was used to evaluate ideas and concepts:

“Eating at restaurants with your family is a good [+Valuation] way to build family ties.” (Text int9)

“in my opinion philosophy is not the right [-Valuation] choice to have a peaceful and happier life” (Text int10)

3.2 Attitude Polarity

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of polarity in the beginner and intermediate groups.

Table 3.
Descriptive Statistics of Polarity Across Groups

		Polarity	
		+	-
Beg	N	66	16
	Freq/1k	70.4	17.1
	%	80.5	19.5
Int	N	83	25
	Freq/1k	68.4	20.6
	%	76.9	23.1

As presented in Table 3, both groups favored positive evaluation, with the intermediate group expressing slightly more negative Attitude than the beginner group. Statistical testing results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.
Statistical Differences in Polarity Across Groups ($\alpha = 0.05$)

χ^2 (df)	p	Cramér's V	N
0.36 (1)	.546	.04	190

These results indicated that the difference in polarity between groups was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 0.36$, $p = 0.546$, $V = 0.04$), rejecting the alternative hypothesis (H1₂) and accepting the null hypothesis (H0₂).

3.3 Attitude Explicitness

Table 5 shows the distribution of Inscribed and Invoked Attitude in both groups.

Table 5.

Descriptive Statistics of Explicitness Across Groups

		Explicitness	
		Inscribed	Invoked
Beg	N	55	27
	Freq/1k	58.7	28.8
	%	67	33
Int	N	85	23
	Freq/1k	70	19
	%	78.7	21.3

Although both groups relied on Inscribed Attitude, the intermediate group used more Inscribed Attitude than the beginner group (see Table 6).

Table 6.

Statistical Significance of Explicitness Across Groups ($\alpha = 0.05$)

$\chi^2(df)$	p	Cramér's V	N
3.25 (1)	.071	.13	190

As presented in Table 6, the difference in use was not statistically significant, although the p-value ($p = .071$) was close to the 0.05 threshold. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis ($H1_3$) was rejected, and the null hypothesis ($H0_3$) was not rejected.

Finally, detailed results by subtype are shown in Table 7. Percentages were calculated within each Attitude category, while frequencies were normalized per 1,000 words in each group.

Table 7.

Descriptive Statistics by Subtype Across Groups

		Type					
		Affect		Judg.		App.	
		Ins.	Inv.	Ins.	Inv.	Ins.	Inv.
Beg	N	13	5	12	19	30	3
	Freq/1k	13.9	5.3	12.8	20.3	32	3.2
	%	72.2	27.8	38.7	61.3	90.9	9.1
Int	N	32	8	8	3	45	12
	Freq/1k	26.4	6.6	6.6	2.5	37	9.9
	%	80	20	72.7	27.3	78.9	21.1

As mentioned previously, intermediate learners generally tended to use more Inscribed Attitude than beginner learners. In terms of Affect and Judgement, beginner learners showed a higher proportion of Invoked Attitude than intermediate learners.

However, in Appreciation, intermediate learners demonstrated a higher proportion of Invoked Attitude than beginners. In terms of normalized frequencies, Inscribed Appreciation was the most frequent in the beginner subset, followed by Invoked Judgement and Inscribed Affect.

In the intermediate subset, the most frequent categories were Inscribed Appreciation, followed by Inscribed Attitude and Invoked Appreciation. This indicates that, in terms of Appreciation, both groups favored Inscribed Attitude, while within Affect, intermediate learners used more Inscribed resources. Within Judgement, beginners used more Invoked resources. However, this comparison should be interpreted with caution, as the number of Judgement resources in the intermediate subset is very small compared to the beginner subset.

3.3.1 Beginner Attitude Realization Types

Within the beginner group, Inscribed Attitude is realized through explicit evaluative language, as illustrated in the following examples:

“In my opinion the best [+Valuation] age for marriage in the age 24” (Text beg15)

“This makes us feel comfortable [+Security].” (Text beg30)

“... it is good idea [+Valuation]” (Text beg5)

In contrast, Invoked Attitude is realized implicitly through descriptions that imply evaluation without directly stating it. Examples include:

“... because they can’t between the life and work [-Capacity]” (Text beg9)

“We help each other [+Propriety]” (Text beg3)

“... playing playstation and sleeping most of time [-Tenacity]” (Text beg18)

In these instances, evaluation is conveyed indirectly through the description of actions or situations rather than through explicit evaluative lexis.

3.3.2 Intermediate Attitude Realization Types

In the intermediate group, Inscribed Attitude is similarly realized through explicit evaluative expressions. Examples include:

“... believe that it is useful and important [+Valuation] to learn about other subjects...” (Text int1)

“Intensive studying is crucial [+Valuation] now days.” (Text int4)

Invoked Attitude is also present, where evaluation is implied rather than directly expressed:

“They give all their time and attention [-Tenacity] to study this.” (Text int3)

“... focusing on this and this and do this and don't do this [-Security]” (Text int34)

4. Discussion

The findings indicate a statistically significant difference in the overall use of Attitude resources between beginner and intermediate learners, which may suggest a possible association between proficiency level and differences in evaluative language use and the construction of interpersonal meaning in argumentative timed writing.

Appreciation was the dominant Attitude type in both groups and was considerably more frequent among intermediate learners, whereas in the beginner group, it occurred at a frequency closer to Judgement. This may reflect a possible shift toward evaluating ideas and abstract concepts, consistent with the characteristics of advanced argumentative writing described by Lam and Crosthwaite (2018), Haider et al. (2021), and Setyaningsih et al. (2025). It also supports Hood (2004a), who found that published academic writers rely more on Appreciation than student writers, who tend to use Judgement and Affect more heavily. Thus, increasing proficiency may involve a shift from interpersonal evaluation toward more abstract, idea-based reasoning.

Affect was also more frequent among intermediate learners, consistent with Zárte (2023). In contrast, Judgement was

significantly more frequent among beginners, with both groups mainly using it to evaluate capacity. The greater reliance on Judgement among beginners may reflect a tendency to evaluate people's competence and behavior rather than ideas and concepts. This is consistent with Haider et al. (2021), who associate heavy reliance on Judgement with weaker argumentation.

Polarity showed no statistically significant difference between the groups. Both groups generally preferred positive Attitude, consistent with Setyaningsih et al. (2025). However, intermediate learners produced slightly more negative Attitude, which may be consistent with a modest increase in argumentative sophistication. One possible explanation is that producing negative evaluation requires greater linguistic and pragmatic control than positive evaluation, since criticism typically needs to be hedged and mitigated to avoid sounding overly blunt. For instance, Nguyen (2008) reported that EFL learners at higher proficiency levels also tend to under-use the mitigation devices needed to soften criticism. This may provide a possible explanation for the present findings, with EFL writers favoring positive evaluation over negative evaluation as the linguistically safer option.

Similarly, no significant difference was found between Inscribed and Invoked Attitude. Both groups relied mainly on Inscribed Attitude, which may reflect the explicit stance-taking characteristic of argumentative academic writing. This is consistent with Hood (2004b), who found that both published academics and student writers rely heavily on explicit evaluative resources.

Although this finding differs somewhat from Zárate (2023), who reported increased use of Invoked Attitude with higher proficiency, the dominance of Inscribed Attitude in the present study may be related to genre, as argumentative essays encourage direct stance marking, whereas literary analysis may favor implicit evaluation.

At the individual level, both groups used more Inscribed than Invoked Affect, with intermediate learners also showing slightly greater lexical variety, which may suggest a possible increase in expressive range. Beginners used more Invoked Judgement than intermediate learners, possibly because their more limited vocabulary encouraged implicit evaluation through descriptions of actions and behaviors rather than explicit evaluative lexical choices. In contrast, intermediate learners used more Invoked Appreciation, consistent with Zárate (2023), which may indicate a possible increase in the use of implicit evaluative strategies among more proficient learners.

Topic may also influence Attitude choices (Chung et al., 2021). To help account for this, one pair of texts on comparable themes (int4 and beg5) was examined. Even within this pair, the intermediate text relied more heavily on Appreciation, while the beginner text produced more Judgement, broadly consistent with the overall group pattern. However, this is only a single matched pair, and topic effects cannot be ruled out on this basis alone. More broadly, beginner texts tended to address interpersonal themes such as marriage, whereas intermediate texts focused more on abstract topics such as university study, philosophy, and self-discipline, and these

thematic differences may themselves have encouraged different evaluative choices. Given the small number of texts and the limited topic control possible in the present sample, the relative contributions of proficiency, genre, and topic to the observed patterns cannot be fully separated and should be examined more systematically in future research with a topic-controlled design.

Overall, the findings show developmental differences in Attitude use, particularly in Judgement and Appreciation. However, polarity and explicitness did not differ significantly between the groups, with both groups relying mainly on positive and Inscribed Attitude.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study focuses on comparing the differences in students' argumentative timed writing between beginner and intermediate learners using a corpus-based approach. It investigated the use of Attitude resources based on the Martin and White (2005) Appraisal framework in a subset of argumentative texts from the AIULEC corpus. A total of 14 texts were analyzed, consisting of 7 texts from beginners and 7 texts from intermediate students. The results showed that beginners generally relied more on Judgement, while intermediate learners focused more on Appreciation resources. Statistical analysis indicated a significant difference in the overall use of Attitude resources. In terms of polarity and explicitness, both groups relied primarily on positive and Inscribed evaluations, with no statistically significant differences.

These findings highlight the importance of providing undergraduate EFL learners with adequate exposure to academic evaluative conventions (Hood, 2004b). Understanding Attitude resources can support learners in developing appropriate evaluative language for expressing arguments in academic writing and may also help facilitate positive L1 transfer (Chung et al., 2021).

Future research may focus on comparing L1 and L2 writing within the same sample, particularly Arabic L1 writers, in order to further investigate the role of L1 transfer and its implications for teaching academic writing.

6. Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting the findings. First, the chi-square tests reported in Section 3 were conducted on individual Attitude instances rather than on the 14 source texts from which they were drawn. Using instance-level frequency counts in this way is standard practice in Appraisal-based corpus research (see Zárte, 2023). However, because several instances were contributed by the same text, these instances are not fully independent of one another, and this should be kept in mind when interpreting the reported significance levels (Gries, 2015). Second, the overall sample was small, consisting of only 14 texts (seven beginner and seven intermediate), a result of the strict selection criteria applied to ensure comparability across groups. The findings should therefore be interpreted with caution and may not be generalizable beyond the AIULEC corpus or similar timed argumentative writing contexts. Third, the

study adopted a cross-sectional design, comparing two different groups of learners at a single point in time rather than tracking the same learners over time. Therefore, the patterns observed across proficiency levels should not be interpreted as direct evidence of developmental change within individual learners, but rather as differences associated with proficiency level in this particular sample. Future research employing a longitudinal design, a larger number of source texts, and mixed-effects modelling would help confirm whether these patterns hold more broadly.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Declaration of AI Use

The authors declare that they used AI tools, such as Chat GPT and Claude AI, solely for language editing and linguistic assistance.

The authors also confirm that no AI tools were used for data collection, analysis, discussion, or conclusions.

References

- Alkishir, E. (2026). *alkishir/AIULEC: Initial release of AIULEC (v1.0)* [Data set]. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18654313>
- Alamadan, M. M. (2020). Authorial stance in English, Arabic and EFL applied linguistics research: An Appraisal study. *Asiatic: IIUM Journal of English Language and Literature*, 14(1), 189–216. <https://doi.org/10.31436/asiatic.v14i1.1844>
- Badklang, C., & Srinon, U. (2018). Analysis of attitudinal resources in an EFL university classroom talk in the Deep South of Thailand: An Appraisal perspective. *The New English Teacher*, 12(2).
- Callies, M. (2015). Learner corpus methodology. In S. Granger, G. Gilquin, & F. Meunier (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of learner corpus research* (pp. 35–55). Cambridge University Press.
- Carlsen, C. (2012). Proficiency level – a fuzzy variable in computer learner corpora. *Applied Linguistics*, 33(2), 161–183. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amr047>
- Chung, T.-T., Bui, L.-T., & Crosthwaite, P. (2021). Evaluative stance in Vietnamese and English writing by the same authors: A corpus-informed appraisal study. *Research in Corpus Linguistics*, 10(1), 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.32714/ricl.10.01.01>
- Field, A. (2013). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Granger, S., Gilquin, G., & Meunier, F. (2015). Introduction: Learner corpus research – past, present and future. In S. Granger, G. Gilquin, & F. Meunier (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of learner corpus research* (pp. 1–5). Cambridge University Press.
- Gries, S. Th. (2015). Statistics for learner corpus research. In S. Granger, G. Gilquin, & F. Meunier (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of learner corpus research* (pp. 159–182). Cambridge University Press.
- Haider, S., Muhammad, A., Mahmood, M., Mahmood, R., & Shakir, A. (2021). A corpus-based analysis of interpersonal Appraisal resources in Pakistani argumentative essays. *Pakistan Journal of Society, Education and Language*, 7(1), 318–333.

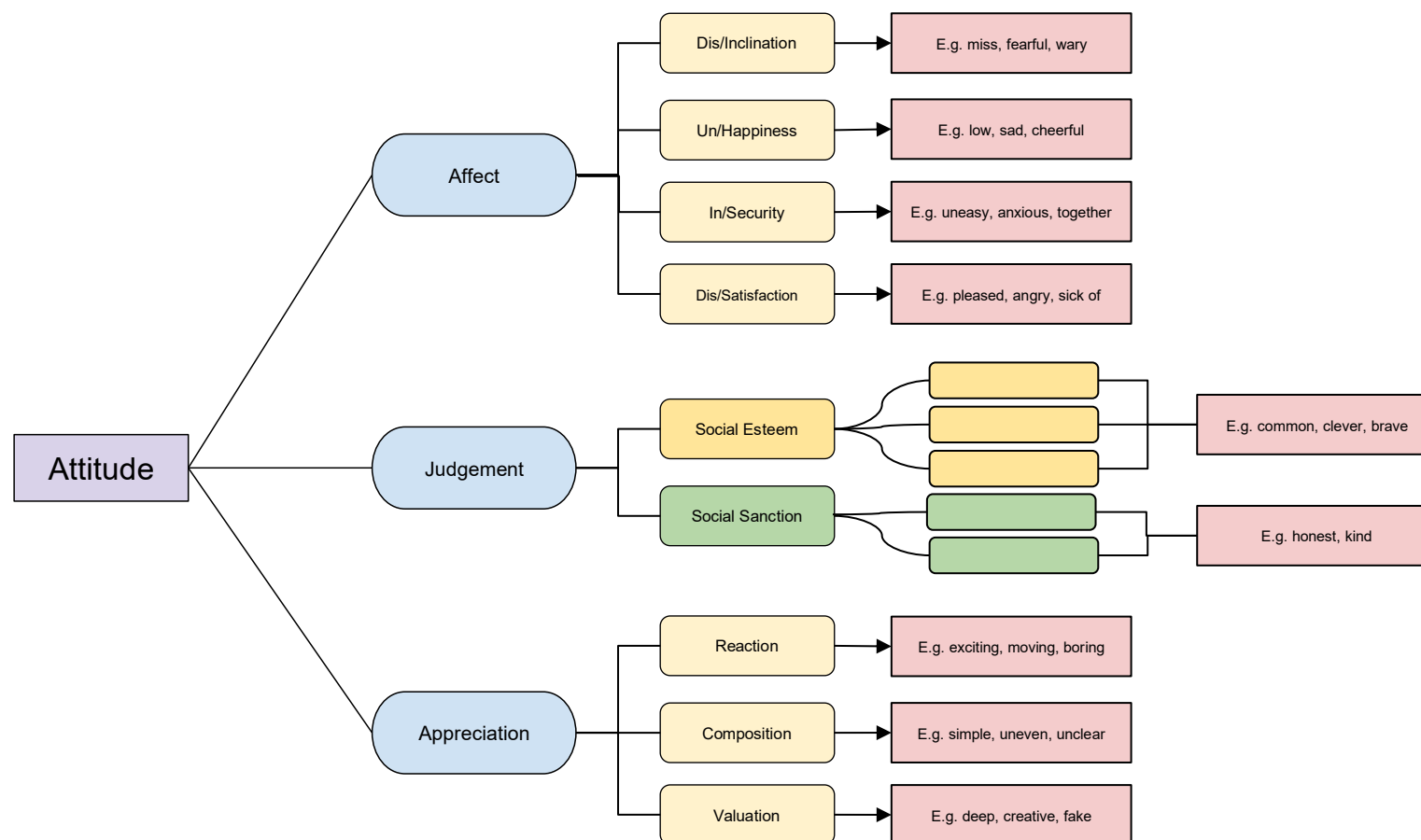
Citation: Alkishir, E., & Garbaj, M. (2026). Attitude in EFL argumentative writing: A corpus-based appraisal analysis of beginner and intermediate learners in AIULEC. *Faculty of Arts Journal – Misurata University*, (22), 276–291. <https://doi.org/10.36602/faj.2026.n22.15>

- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar* (3rd ed.). Arnold.
- Harti, L., & Kurniawati. (2020). Students' expression of attitude on COVID-19-related composition: A study on Martin and White's Appraisal system. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 491, 945–948. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.201201.159>
- Hood, S. (2004a). *Appraising research: Taking a stance in academic writing* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Technology Sydney.
- Hood, S. (2004b). Managing attitude in undergraduate academic writing: A focus on the introductions to research reports. In L. Ravelli & R. Ellis (Eds.), *Analysing academic writing: Contextualized frameworks* (pp. 24–44). Continuum.
- Hyland, K. (2019). *Second language writing*. Cambridge University Press.
- Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Lam, S. L., & Crosthwaite, P. (2018). Appraisal resources in L1 and L2 argumentative essays: A contrastive learner corpus-informed study of evaluative stance. *Journal of Corpora and Discourse Studies*, 1(1), 8–35.
- Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. R. (2005). *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nguyen, T. T. M. (2008). Modifying L2 criticisms: How learners do it? *Journal of Pragmatics*, 40(4), 768–791. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2007.05.008>
- Pasaribu, A. T. (2020). Appraisal framework in analyzing learners' attitudinal resources on performing *Of Mice and Men*. *Indonesian Journal of EFL and Linguistics*, 5(1).
- Setyaningsih, N., Larassati, A., & Cahyono, S. (2025). Expressing attitude in academic writing: Appraisal in students' article reviews. *English Language & Literature International Conference*, 8(1).
- Sujatna, E. T. S., & Kuswoyo, H. (2023). An appraisal perspective on students' use of attitudinal resources in university EFL academic oral presentations. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2023.2195728>
- Zárate, J. C. V. (2023). Evaluative language in undergraduate academic writing: Expressions of attitude as sources of text effectiveness in English as a foreign language. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 63(2), 1139–1168. <https://doi.org/10.1515/iral-2023-0103>

Appendix

The following figure shows the Attitude System in the Appraisal framework.

Fig. A1. Attitude System in the Appraisal Framework (Adapted from Martin & White, 2005)



الاتجاه في الكتابة الجدلية باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية: تحليل تقييمي قائم على مدونة لغوية لدى متعلمي المستويين المبتدئ والمتوسط في كورس AIULEC

مصطفى قرباج² ID

إبتسام الكشر^{1*} ID

^{1,2} الجامعة الأسمرية الإسلامية، كلية الآداب، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، ليبيا

*e.alkishir@hum.asmarya.edu.ly

نشر إلكتروني في: 20-09-2026

تاريخ القبول: 10-09-2026

تاريخ التقديم: 23-08-2026

ملخص البحث

تبحث هذه الدراسة في استخدام إطار التقييم (Appraisal framework) لملرتن ووايت (Martin & White, 2005) من خلال تحليل قائم على الكورس لمدونة متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة الأسمرية الإسلامية (AIULEC)، بالمقارنة بين الكتابة الجدلية المحددة بوقت لدى متعلمي المستويين المبتدئ والمتوسط. وركز التحليل على مورد الموقف (Attitude)، بما في ذلك الوجدان، والحكم، والتقدير، بفحص تكرارها وتوزيعها وقطبيتها ودرجة صراحتها عبر مجموعتي الكفاءة. واستخدمت اختبارات مربع كاي (Chi-square) ومعامل كرامر (Cramér's V) لتقييم الفروق بين المجموعتين، مع تعويضها بتحليل كافي لأمثلة تمثيلية. وتشير النتائج إلى أن المجموعتين تختلفان في استخدامهما مورد الموقف، إذ يعتمد المتعلمون المبتدئون أكثر على الحكم، في حين يستخدم المتعلمون في المستوى المتوسط التقدير أكثر. غير أنه لم توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في القطبية ودرجة الصراحة، إذ أظهرت كلتا المجموعتين تفضيلاً للمورد التقييمية الإيجابية والصريحة. وتبرز الدراسة الأهمية التعليمية لتنمية وعي المتعلمين باللغة التقييمية في الكتابة الأكاديمية، ولا سيما في السياقات الجدلية. وتقرح أن يدعم التدريس متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في استخدام مورد الموقف المناسبة لبناء حجج أكاديمية فعالة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: إطار التقييم؛ نظام الموقف؛ التحليل القائم على الملونات اللغوية؛ الكتابة الجدلية باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية؛ المتحدثون الليبيون بالعربية؛ طلاب المرحلة الجامعية