

# An Exploratory Investigation into the Use of Scaling Expressions in Students' Essays

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Evaluative language is widely recognized as contributing to the quality of written argumentation, although investigation in this area is more prevalent in professional academic writing (e.g., Hunston, 1989; Hyland, 2002) than in student texts. This study investigates one aspect of evaluative expressions in argumentative essays written by first year undergraduates in the discipline of English Language at the National University of Singapore. Aspects of the Appraisal framework (White, 2002), especially the graduation and engagement systems, were used to analyze expressions of scaling in arguments in a set of high and low-rated essays. The analysis revealed that high-rated and low-rated essays differ in the patterns of use of such resources. Generally, the high-rated scripts seem to present more use of such resources appropriately in the context of their respective arguments to comment on the significance of factors discussed in the essay prompts.

## ■ Introduction

The idea that academic writing is persuasive in nature has become widely accepted amongst text linguists as investigations into the interpersonal element of meaning continue to bring into focus how such meanings are embedded in texts. This perspective of academic writing provides another angle from which to view how meaning other than the ideational is made, as communication is sometimes more than just the exchange of information or goods and services and analysis focused on just this dimension tends to overlook the importance of what Martin (2000) calls the “semantics of evaluation—how the interlocutors are feeling, the judgments they make and the value they place on the various phenomena of their experience” (p.144).

It is, nonetheless, difficult to specify what constitutes the semantics of evaluation and to clearly differentiate evaluative from non-evaluative meaning. The myriad approaches to investigating, describing and illustrating the way language is used to evaluate, to adopt stances, to construct textual personas and to manage interpersonal positioning and relationship attests to the complexity involved in the delineation and characterisation of such meanings. A whole class of studies that approach the analysis of such meanings through categories of lexical items include work on metadiscourse (van Kopple, 1985), stance (Conrad & Biber, 2000), and evidentials and epistemic meanings (Barton, 1983). Each of these aspects that purport to capture evaluative meaning from yet another angle has progressively developed to provide wider contextual understanding to account for the construal of such meanings in texts.

The definition of the writer's opinion used in the

Hunston & Thompson's (2000) volume *Evaluation in Text* is especially useful in providing a broad cover term for the inclusion of different aspects of evaluative meanings in the term. The writer's opinion broadly covers both the writer's judgment of good or bad towards an entity and his/her judgment on the likelihood of the entity discussed (Hunston, 2000). The judgment of good or bad towards a multitude of entities is possible in evaluative comments. Also, there can be a range of degrees of possible likelihood. As such, the Appraisal framework (White, 2002) which Martin (2000: 145) defines as “semantic resources used to negotiate emotions, judgments, and valuations, alongside resources for amplifying and engaging with these evaluations,” provides broad categories of entities that can be assessed in evaluative comments. Very briefly, the expression of attitude towards people, places, things, happenings and states of affairs are categorized into the sub-systems of affect, judgment and appreciation. Affect corresponds with emotive evaluation, judgment with ethical judgments and appreciation with valuation of significance. The diagrammatic representation of the Appraisal framework is presented below (Figure 1).

In addition to the attitude system that categorizes the possible entities assessable, the engagement system in the Appraisal framework presents a range of options pertinent to judgments of likelihood. However, what is of more interest in this paper is the other system of graduation which involves the semantics of scaling, the moderation of intensity of attitudinal meaning. In fact, in the Appraisal framework, these language items are referred to as graduation resources which scale a range of attitudinal resources that evaluate behavior (e.g., very naughty boy), express feelings (somewhat sad)

and valuing entities (*extremely porous paper*). In other words, scaling words are often observed in the context of other evaluative words that reflect the writers' attitudes. Attitude resources can be scaled in their intensity through the graduation systems of force and focus. They scale meanings "along two possible parameters—either locating them on a scale from high to low intensity [force], or from core to marginal membership of a category [focus]" (White, 2002: 21). Force operates on gradable categories emphasizing the degree of some basic core meaning such as in 'extremely fast' and 'a little tired'. Force is commonly realized by adverbs of intensification such as 'very', 'slightly' or 'completely'. It can also be part of the meaning of a lexical item carrying the ideational meaning as in 'His level of enthusiasm plunged when he saw the audience leaving the hall.'

This research focuses mainly upon resources in the graduation system, as these were by far the most widely attested in the data but references are made to the engagement and attitudinal systems where relevant. Some aspects of evaluative meanings have also been investigated more thoroughly than others. For instance, adverbials of stance, hedges and metadiscourse items such as validity markers have been investigated in a range of professionally written texts. However, the aspect of evaluative meaning which concerns scaling or intensity has received relatively less emphasis. One of the reasons could be that such items are not easily identified and categorized. In fact, earlier references to language items similar to those presented in this paper include terms such as vague language (Channell, 1994). Channell (1994) uses the term *vague additives* to refer to a class of word or phrase that is added to what otherwise would be a precise statement (e.g., *few landlords can afford to let their flats empty*). She points out that other than the scalar quality of such words, they are rather weak quantifiers. Channell's vague additives cover much wider grounds than the intensifying words considered in this paper. Such words have also been referred to as boosters and downtoners in discussions on hedging (Crompton, 1997). However, these terms again refer to

much wider sets of words beyond those which signal a scalar function.

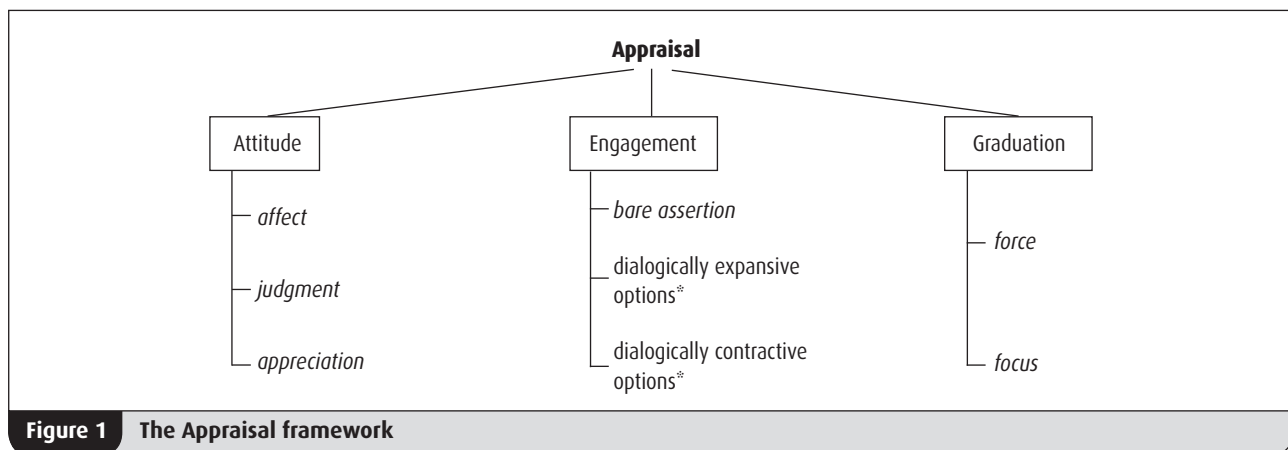
The Appraisal framework also provides a platform for analyzing the dialogic quality of such evaluative expressions. In certain contexts, aspects of the engagement system are used with graduation resources to construe a certain stance in a proposition. Very briefly, the engagement system recognizes that "all utterances to some degree take into account or respond to prior utterances and to some degree anticipate or acknowledge likely responses, reactions and objections from actual or potential dialogic partners" (White, 2002: 2). An utterance represents one option amongst a diversity of socio-semiotic realities. Those utterances that employ engagement resources openly acknowledge the dialogic potential of the utterance, while those that do not do so thereby suppress or ignore the dialogic nature of the utterance inherent in the communicative social context. Table 1 in the Appendix provides a list of options with varying dialogic potential.

To summarize, when a writer introduces a proposition into a text, dialogic diversity can be:

- ignored or denied altogether (bare assertion),
- contracted in a number of ways (denying or countering a 'disclaim' opposite, or concurring, pronouncing or endorsing a point in order to 'proclaim' it)
- expanded in a number of ways (entertaining a point, attributing it with acknowledgement, attributing it with indication of distance)

These options represent different degrees of acknowledgment of dialogic diversity. Bare assertions deny dialogic diversity. Utterances to which the writer expresses commitment tend to reduce or 'contract' dialogic space to varying degrees. Utterances that are 'extravocalized' (assigned in some manner to another source, without the writer's endorsement) are most open to such diversity.

Much research on interpersonal meanings has been done on professional texts. Researchers have shown how the manipulative use of modality, hedges or reporting verbs, amongst others, helps academic writers achieve



**Figure 1** The Appraisal framework

an appropriate level of interaction with readers while maintaining an objective front necessary for such writing (e.g., Hyland, 1994; Markkanen & Schröder, 1989; Myers 1989; Salager-Meyer, 1994; Thomas & Hawes, 1995; Thompson & Ye, 1991). Many of these studies analyze the writer's orientation reflected by a set of linguistic cues identified as evaluative. Some focus on particular grammatical structures (e.g., reporting verbs) while others, especially work involving the use of hedges, involve a mixed bag of various grammatical and lexical items. Recently, Hood (2006) investigates the use of attitudinal and graduation resources in construction of stance in the introductions to academic research papers.

The relative paucity of similar work done on student writing accounts for the focus adopted in the present paper. Although students may not have the professional content or discourse knowledge that experts do, assignments often require them to learn how to analyze and evaluate content knowledge, how to position themselves in disciplinary debates and to articulate that positioning in a congruent manner. As such, the need to understand aspects of interpersonal meaning in student writing is just as important.

The focus in this paper is mainly in the area of evaluative meaning that relates to scaling or intensity (e.g., very, a sort of, a flood of). Drawing on aspects of the Appraisal system, it qualitatively explores the role of such items in contributing to the evaluative meaning of propositions made in student written texts by analyzing samples of such usage and then drawing instructive implications from them. More specifically, it investigates the role of such items of intensification in revealing the writer's assessment of the significance of certain factors or the importance of certain issues in an argumentative topic where such judgments contribute to the crux of written piece. It seeks to answer these questions:

- How do resources of intensification contribute to the construal of the student writer's evaluation of relevant issues?
- What are some similar and different patterns of use of intensifying resources between high and low-rated essay writers?

## ■ Methodology

The examples analyzed are drawn from assignments written by first year undergraduates at the National University of Singapore reading English Language (hereafter EL). These essays are taken from a larger data set of 225 EL essays collected as part of the author's doctoral research in evaluative expressions in argumentative essays. The students are non-native speakers of English who have all scored at least a B3 grade in their General Paper<sup>1</sup> or its equivalent. These essays were graded by four English language tutors teaching the course who are non-native speakers but who are highly proficient in the language, having been trained in native speaking universities.

General aspects of the marking criteria such as the need to present original arguments and provide evidence for position taken were agreed upon amongst the markers. Basic organizational details such as the presentation of an introduction with a well-defined scope and argument or a conclusion which summarizes main arguments were also looked for. Only essays scoring grades A and C/D were analyzed as the aim was to compare and contrast evaluative expressions that may have contributed to the two ends of the grade scale. The large majority of essays received grades in the middle of the range; from B+ to B-. The composition of EL essays is as follows: 13 high-rated essays (A range) and 14 low-rated essays (C and D range). The EL assignment topic is reproduced below:

*"One compelling reason for change is the need for language to adapt itself to the needs and realities of the speakers". Discuss the above statement by focusing on changes to the English Language in either the Middle English period or the context of the USA.*

The unit of analysis is the grammatical unit of an independent clause rather than each proposition based on semantic criteria, as such an analysis would be detailed and would in many cases subsume important meanings made grammatically salient in the independent clause.

## ■ Analysis

### Measuring change and impact of factors through graduation resources

The question prompt centers around the issue of English language change and the significance of different factors in causing the change during the Middle English period. In fact, the specific task is for the writer to evaluate if one of the compelling factors for change is "the need [for the English language] to adapt itself to the needs and realities of the speakers". There are statements describing the nature of language change which are not accompanied by Appraisal resources of any form as in example 1:

*Example 1*

- The pronunciation of the consonants also changed during this period. (S9 20)*
- A third change occurred with the loss of inflectional n. (S9 23)*

In the original scripts, these statements are followed by other statements which cite examples from language data illustrating the change described. However, there are also many other instances where descriptions of changes are given more elaborate evaluation. The section below outlines a description of the various ways of appraising change found in the high-rated essays.

One of the most common descriptions of change is through the use of graduation resources to estimate the extent of change. These writers use the sub-system of force more frequently than focus. This could be because the

<sup>1</sup> The General Paper is an English paper offered at the General Certificate of Education, 'AO' level.

<sup>2</sup> Graduation options are underlined.

former is more appropriate for the expression of the 'amount' of change that took place in the language. Examples 2a and 2b show the occurrence of force and focus respectively:

*Example 2*

- (a) *The Norman Conquest in 1066 was an event that had a great<sup>2</sup> (force) effect on the English language. (S7 5)*
- (b) *The borrowings from Latin were rather (focus) substantial as well. (S11 26)*

The extent of change is also conveyed through the use of both adverbs of intensification and lexical items that encompass some sort of "scaling" in the meaning (White, 2002: 6). Example 2b is an example of such adverbs. Lexical items are shown in examples 3a to 3c:

*Example 3*

- (a) *However, these Normans find the English language to be largely inadequate for many of the descriptions that they required so they borrowed such words from French which in turn led to a major influx of French borrowings. (S5 34)*
- (b) *Thus, the trickle of French borrowings now became a flood, leading English to establish itself in arenas earlier almost exclusively occupied by French. (S1 14)*
- (c) *There was a surge of changes made to make the language live up to its expectations. (S11 38)*

Example 3b best illustrates the intensity inherent in these words as the extent of French borrowings is described as growing from a 'trickle' to a 'flood'. These graduation resources are used to describe the force of change on the language in the following ways:

Firstly, the strength of certain factors contributing to changes in the English language is described through certain graduation resources.

*Example 4*

- (a) *This reality is that the slaves did not have any social power or say in America and thus it is inevitable their language too had little say in influencing American English. (S6 25)*
- (b) *Although the Scandinavian influence on English was great but the changes were not particularly dramatic as the words taken were ordinary words. (S1 21)*

The description of the degree of influence these factors had simultaneously conveys the meaning of the level of change experienced by the English language.

Secondly, the impact of change on the English language is measured through certain graduation resources and attitude resources to describe the extent of change as well.

*Example 5*

- (a) *In fact, the effect of French on Middle English was so strong that approximately 10000 words came into this language between 1250 and 1450. (S1 100)*
- (b) *The Old English prefix with- (meaning against) provided Middle English with words like withdraw and withhold, but most of the words have been replaced by Latin borrowings. (S2 48)*
- (c) *This helped the English language to accumulate a more refined<sup>3</sup> vocabulary for different situations. (S10 24)*
- (d) *They too brought along many diverse and unique phrases and words (such as "pizza" and "rendezvous"), which were quickly absorbed by the earlier settlers, and collectively formed part of American English. (S12 29)*

In examples 5a and 5b, a sense of the extent of change comes from the words "approximately 10000 words" and "most of the words" respectively. In 5c and 5d, the extent of change is not only estimated through force but is also described in terms of attitude resources. Thus, for example, 'refine' has these positive Appraisal elements: attitude:appreciation:+ve quality, which essentially describe a positive impact on English language change.

Thirdly, graduation resources are used to measure the pace of change in the English language.

*Example 6*

*Although the influx of French words was brought about by the victory of the Conqueror, it began very slowly and continued with varying tempo for a long time. (S7 30)*

In example 6, the pace of language change is elaborated on to show the process involved in the change. The pace of change is described by the various elements of force.

Table 2 in the Appendix provides more examples to show how change is described using the Appraisal resources mentioned above in all the high-rated essays. Where a certain word is used twice in two separate instances in a similar fashion, only one occurrence of that word is listed. High-rated EL writers commonly used graduation resources to indicate the magnitude of the impact of certain factors on language change or the pace of change in the English language. These expressions of evaluation through graduation resources further add to the communication of the writer's opinion as writers scale the impact of various factors—a key issue addressed in the question prompt. The range of graduation resources in the high-rated EL scripts is also wider compared to the weaker scripts (see Table 3 in the Appendix).

<sup>3</sup> Attitude resources are in bold to differentiate them from graduation resources which are underlined.

### Attributing measurements of change through engagement resources

As can be seen from Table 2 in the Appendix, appraising the notion of change is one element of evaluation found in the high-rated EL essays. The Appraisal of change is also commonly set in a dialogic context using different options in the engagement system for various purposes. In effect, aspects of change such as the extent of change or the relative impact of different factors effecting change are debated on within the texts. The strategic employment of engagement resources within the debate functions in the following ways:

Firstly, propositions about the extent of change are attributed to authoritative sources and this attribution could be to validate the proposition made.

#### Example 7

- (a) *The most noticeable and momentous changes in the English language occurred during the Middle English period (1100-1500) where 'changes more extensive and fundamental than those that have taken place at any time before or since.'* (Baugh 1978: 158) (S12 15)
- (b) *A point to note, however, is that these French borrowings are relatively little since English still 'continues to do its own things in its own low-level arenas' (lecturer's name).* (S9 20)
- (c) *Many critics have also agreed that the language of Black English has permeated the American Language in a big way.* (S5 54)

Examples 7a and 7b both appeal to a specified authoritative source to validate the extent and nature of language change respectively. The only difference between the two is that in 7a, the writer's voice describes the change as "momentous" and "noticeable" and the source voice provides further descriptions of the change as "more extensive and fundamental" as support. However, in 7b, the source voice provides the explanation for why the writer assesses the French borrowings as relatively little rather than describing the changes. Also, in 7b, the writer appeals to a lecturer who taught the course. In 7c, the writer appeals to a non-specified source for validation but the use of the reporting verb "agreed" represents a reclaim of responsibility by the writer to show that the writer aligns himself/herself with the attribution. Also the fact that "critics" have come to a consensus implies that all have conceded to the proposition and therefore it is a well-substantiated one.

Secondly, propositions on the extent of language change are attributed to sources as it may be important to reflect the debate on the relative impact of factors of change. In different instances, the essay writer may align himself/herself to or contradict the position of the attributed source. This results in a simulated argument over an issue—the issue being the extent of language change. This is illustrated in example 8:

#### Example 8a

- (i) *A suggestion made by many is that contact between Old English (OE) and Old Norse*

*(ON) might have resulted in the loss of many inflexions.*

- (ii) *Due to the difference between OE and ON inflexions which makes it difficult for OE and ON speakers to communicate, such inflexions were believed to have been dropped on purpose so as to facilitate communication (lecturer's name).* (S5 12-13)

#### Example 8b

- (i) *Contrary to the belief that English in America would be radically changed to the extent that it could become another language, American English still shares similar "grammatical structure and syntax—essentially the operational machinery of the language" (A.H. Marckwardt).*
- (ii) *The extent of change can also be explained by fact that reality did not match with the ideal of English as a separate entity.*
- (iii) *USA, being newly formed, had yet attained political and social solidarity and economic stability.*
- (iv) *The official language must be one that is recognised both nationally and internationally.*
- (v) *American English was thus prevented from deviating much, with the standardisation of the educated class' language.* (S4 22-26)

In example 8a, the proposition is attributed to an unspecified group of "many" who suggested that the loss of many inflexions was due to a certain reason. Responsibility is delegated in that the writer does not indicate alignment to this position. The suggested reason for the loss is affirmed in the subsequent clause through the attribution of that clause to an authoritative source. There is a degree of ambiguity in this case. The proposition that the difference between Old English and Old Norse caused the loss of inflexions is both attributed to the source (indicated by 'lecturer's name') and an unspecified source who 'believed'. Besides, we can only speculate that the writer aligns himself/herself with the source voice because there is no explicit indication on the writer's position. What is significant here, however, is the fact that the issue of the extent of change and its accompanying reason is deliberated upon using different voices and this 'conversation in text' captures the rhetorical effect of contradiction in argument and its subsequent resolution.

In example 8b, within the attribution is a disclaimer of the belief that the extent of change in American English has resulted in it being radically different from British English. Thus, the disclaimer is attributed to the source. The writer's voice is apparent in the subsequent clause to explain why the belief on extensive changes in American English is not plausible. Here we again see the deliberation on the topic of extent of language change using engagement resources strategically to clarify positions on the issue.

Thirdly, the engagement resource of disclaimer is a frequent option to assert the writer's counter-claim related to the extent of change. This is shown in examples

9a to 9d taken from the high-rated EL scripts.

*Example 9*

- (a) *Although the Scandinavian influence on English was great but the changes were not particularly dramatic as the words taken were ordinary words. (S1 21)*
- (b) *However, other equally important endings like the abstract suffix -lock [OE lac] survived only in wedlock, -red [OE roe] only in hatred and kindred. (S7 48)*
- (c) *However, American English has not totally assimilated Black English. (S12 23)*
- (d) *It is interesting that even with the influx of immigrants, who speak vastly different languages, there is no distinct patchwork-like dialectal diversification in America. (S12 30)*

In example 9a, the writer concedes that Scandinavian influence was great but counterclaims that it was not particularly dramatic because of the given reason. Hunston (2000) discusses the use of concessions in bringing in another source voice. In terms of engagement, the proposition in the concession is rejected or disclaimed prior to the statement of the writer's position.

In example 9b, the use of "however" and "only" indicates a disclaimer of the proposition that other equally important endings might have survived more extensively than in those instances asserted by the writer. In example 9c, the use of "however" and the negative "has not" counters the position that American English might have totally assimilated Black English. In 9d, the writer disclaims the expectation that immigrants to a community speaking vastly different languages will result in the formation of a patchwork-like dialect. In each of these instances, using the engagement resource of disclaim, the writer pitches himself/herself against potential claims that may be/may have been made about the extent of changes to the English language in their respective contexts.

Fourthly, descriptions of change may be set in a proclaim:pronounce option to assert certain propositions. Here, the writer emphasizes his/her position on the extent of language change through words like "definitely", "in fact" or "undoubtedly" (see examples 10a and 10b).

*Example 10*

- (a) *In fact, the effect of French on Middle English was so strong that approximately 10000 words came into this language between 1250 and 1450. (S1 100)*
- (b) *Undoubtedly, the wealth of the easily acquired new words weakens the English habits of word formation. (S7 45)*

## Discussion

With reference to the question of how scaling items contribute to the student writer's evaluative propositions, the examples presented describe a variety of ways in which the nature of language change as well as the

magnitude of factors motivating these changes are discussed. Such propositions of evaluation address the essay prompt directly as writers deliberate on the strength of certain factors and the extent and pace of change in the English language attributable to these factors. These statements that quantify the significance of relevant factors reveal the stance of the writers through a varied choice of scalar words in the context of other attitudinal lexis that further capture that stance. However, the role of these scaling resources is not often as much emphasized as their attitudinal counterpart. Martin (1995) describes the use of judgment resources positioning while Rothery & Stenglin (2000) show how literature students use attitudinal resources to interpret the role of various characters in literary essays. Though not as extensively used as attitudinal resources, the use of appropriate graduation resources to quantify the impact of respective factors is an area that can be given more consideration in the writing of argumentation similar to the one discussed in this paper. It is not uncommon that argumentative prompts require students to deliberate on the extent and degree of the significance of certain relevant factors or phenomena in the context of respective topics set. Students' awareness on tackling such task requirements could be sharpened as the writing class outlines the key requirements of such prompts. Consequently, related pedagogical input may involve a discussion on the range and variety of lexical items used to indicate the measurement of strength of relevant impact, significance, the extent of change or nature of change. The gradation of lexical items that captures different degrees of force would itself be interesting aspects of writing to consider. As the list in the Appendix, Table 2 shows, the high-rated script writers tend to provide consistent commentary in their propositions that is related to the measurement of strength of impact, pace of change or extent of influence. Though a definitive statement cannot be made about the contribution of these statements with scalar resources on the overall quality of the argument, in the context of this essay prompt, the strategic use of these resources is important as student writers deliberate on the impact of various factors.

The use of respective scaling devices is also expressed in propositions reflecting varied dialogic potential, as seen in the analysis above. The need to acknowledge and respond to prior assumptions or assertions in the relevant area of discussion is a skill that is very necessary in argumentation. Arguments, essentially, are made in response to propositions that need reconsideration and further deliberation. It is inevitable, then, that these propositions need to be represented textually and then responded to dialogically. The range of ways in which prior propositions can be represented is another aspect of writing that is worth considering. The Appraisal framework provides a systematic classification of ways that can both extend or contract the dialogic quality of the propositions. In the engagement system, the expression of writer's opinion is not necessarily about conveying an individual's positioning towards a proposition but an expression of a willingness to recognize and negotiate

alternative socio-semiotic positions.

To the learner writers, the awareness and the subsequent practice in the crafting of propositions of different dialogic potential would prove helpful. The strategic use of attributive devices in the engagement system to signal alignment or opposition to source voice is generally helpful to learner writers at tertiary level. Beyond that, students can be made aware of the linguistic range they can tap on to disclaim propositions by countering or denying it, depending on the rhetorical effect intended and perhaps the availability of sufficient evidence to do so. Likewise, in the process of affirming one's alignment with prior utterance, the management of the degree dialogic potential is an area that learner writers may not be altogether confident about. The portrayal of a stance that is adequately agreeable and yet not subservient may not come naturally without some form of instruction. It is also the case that the high-rated script writers tend to display a higher level of awareness in using these strategies more frequently, although no quantitative counts have been made. The examples of such use presented in the analysis tend to be scoured from the high-rated scripts rather than the low-rated ones. Whether this indicates a deliberate choice and mastery by the former group of writers needs further investigation but in the context of this essay prompt, the use of such engagement device seems to have enhanced the quality of arguments presented by the high-rated script writers. The rather narrow focus in this paper and its qualitative emphasis can be partially explained by the nature of the framework used. Although the Appraisal framework and its categorical subsystems provide a more concrete platform for investigations into specific aspects of evaluative meanings, which have mostly been described as amorphous, there still remain areas of difficulties in its application. One such area involves the differentiation between terms including force and focus and between the attitude system and the graduation system. A word

such as 'main' as in the phrase 'main factor' has both a gradable quality (force) as well as a comment on the inclusion of the factor as central in its effect (focus). The lack of clear criteria for the differentiation between these two classes of evaluative meanings may hinder more specific investigations into correlations between the types of entities evaluated and the choice of appropriate scaling resources. As such, the quantification of the use of such resources may not be possible at this point, thus explaining the qualitative focus in this paper. The other perceived lack of criteria for differentiation involves words such as 'prime' as in the phrase 'prime example'. Here, 'prime' could be analyzed as an appreciation resource evaluating the significance of the role of the respective factor. It also has the shade of meaning of including the factor as the central core factor, signaling the use of the scaling resource of focus. Again, the criteria for differentiation between resources in these two sub classes need to be clearer if any quantitative investigation is desired.

### **Conclusion**

The expression of the writer's evaluation as manifested in the formulation of proposition with graduation resources could have contributed in some degree to the final argumentative stance of the high and low-rated scripts in this study. However, the use of these devices constitutes only part of a more complex system of other evaluative resources including the expression of attitude and appreciation that contribute to the construal of the evaluative texture of the text. Evaluative meanings can be expressed in multifaceted ways. But rather than waiting for comprehensive definitive research findings, it would be best to highlight the role of language which signals the writer's opinion as we understand its manifestation progressively.

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**APPENDIX**

**Table 1: Dialogic Options**

<p><b>Denying Dialogic Diversity</b></p>	<p><i>Bare assertion:</i> An utterance which does not employ any value of <i>engagement</i>. Such an utterance ignores the dialogic potential in an utterance. Example: Language change stems from various phenomena.<sup>4</sup></p>
<p><b>Contracting Dialogistic Diversity</b></p>	<p><i>Disclaim:deny:</i> An utterance which invokes a contrary position but which at the same time rejects it directly. The contrary position is hence given very little dialogic space. Example: Language change <i>does not</i> stem from one phenomenon.</p> <p><i>Disclaim:counter:</i> An utterance which invokes a particular expectation but does not reject it directly, as in the case of the <i>disclaim:deny</i>. Instead, an alternative is provided to counter the expectation. Example: Undoubtedly, the cultural factor is important in the process of change <i>but</i> language change stems from various phenomena rather than from just one factor.</p> <p><i>Proclaim:concur:</i> An utterance which does not invoke an alternative position but expresses a strong level of writer commitment. The direct expression of commitment results in the utterance becoming somewhat less than absolute. The strength of the commitment derives partially from the notion that the proposition is generally known as accepted. Thus, it allows little space for negotiation for an alternative position. Example: <i>Of course</i> language change stems from various phenomena.</p> <p><i>Proclaim:pronounce:</i> An utterance which also expresses a strong level of writer commitment and thus results in it being seen as less than absolute. However, it allows more dialogic space than <i>proclaim:concur</i> as the commitment is attributed to self and not to people generally. Example: <i>I am therefore convinced</i> that language change stems from various phenomena.</p> <p><i>Proclaim:endorse:</i> An utterance which expresses the writer's alignment with and endorsement of an attributed proposition. As such, the dialogic space is somewhat narrowed. Example: Linguists <i>agree</i> that language change stems from various phenomena.</p>
<p><b>Expanding Dialogistic Diversity</b></p>	<p><i>Entertain:</i> An utterance which acknowledges a proposition as one possibility amongst others through the use of modals. Example: It <i>seems</i> that language change stems from various phenomena.</p> <p><i>Attribute:acknowledge:</i> An utterance which signifies dialogic space as the writer attributes the proposition to a source but maintains neutrality to the proposition stated. Example: <i>Some linguists say</i> that language change stems from various phenomena.</p> <p><i>Attribute:distance:</i> An utterance which signifies maximum dialogic space as the writer attributes the proposition to a source and distances himself/ herself from the source. Example: <i>Some linguists claim</i> that language change stems from various phenomena.</p>

<sup>4</sup> Examples are my own, adapted from the present data set.

Table 2: Graduation Resources (High-rated EL scripts)

<p><b>S1</b> Scandinavian influence was <u>great</u> but the effect was not <u>particularly dramatic</u>, <u>many</u> of the words taken were homely everyday ones, <u>trickle</u> of French borrowings now became a <u>flood</u>, <u>massive</u> alteration of the nature of English wordstock, lost its fundamental <u>all-encompassing</u> Germanic character for the first time, a <u>profound</u> influence on Middle English, a <u>trickle</u> of French borrowing, massive influence of Scandinavian languages, the effect was <u>so strong</u>, led to <u>some</u> 10000 French words borrowed, <u>over</u> 1800 words were introduced</p>
<p><b>S2</b> <u>Momentous</u> changes <u>more extensive</u> and fundamental, <u>all encompassing</u> changes, <u>intricate</u> changes, <u>sharp</u> rise in French adoption, <u>visible</u> decline in this tendency, French borrowing reached its <u>peak</u>, <u>most</u> of the words have been replaced by Latin borrowings, climaxing with <u>about</u> 280 adoptions in 1375</p>
<p><b>S3</b> <u>restricted</u> influence, <u>limited</u> impact, <u>distinct</u> German influence, a <u>large</u> number have survived, Influence of Italian words are <u>primarily limited</u>, <u>a whole range</u> of words, <u>a whole host</u> of new words and phrases <u>many</u> of which are, constant reminder of the <u>strong</u> influence, a <u>large</u> number are in good usage</p>
<p><b>S4</b> From a <u>language essentially the same</u> to a variety with <u>considerable</u> difference, <u>trickle</u> of new words, thus prevented from deviating <u>much</u>, took phrases from a <u>wide</u> variety of immigrants, extent of borrowing depends on, <u>explosion</u> of nuclear words, <u>myriad</u> changes</p>
<p><b>S5</b> <u>massive</u> influence, <u>small amount</u> of French borrowings, borrowings were <u>relatively little</u>, <u>major influx</u> of French borrowings</p>
<p><b>S6</b> Borrowings from African languages are <u>few in number</u>, reality of the situation called for <u>minimal</u> language, their language had <u>little say</u> in influencing American language, his ultimate influence on American spelling was <u>enormous</u>, the <u>greatest</u> source on new words, cultural contact with the great French empire also left <u>traces</u>, Spain left their <u>mark</u></p>
<p><b>S7</b> The Norman conquest had a <u>great</u> effect on the language, <u>highly</u> inflected language to an <u>extremely</u> analytical one, leveling forms had <u>even greater</u> consequences, impact of French was <u>more direct and observable</u>, <u>largest</u> single group of words that came, <u>massive</u> French words made their way, English carried over <u>an astonishing number</u> of French words, transferred <u>much</u> of their government and administrative vocabulary, <u>peak</u> of borrowing when, prefix <u>occasionally</u> used in new word formation, <u>none</u> of these new formations lived long, prefixes <u>fast disappearing</u>, French borrowing reached a <u>maximum</u>, <u>wealth</u> of easily acquired words, similar decline in certain suffixes, some new formation, most did not prove permanent, that <u>somewhat</u> weakens into self-interpreting compounds, <u>in many cases</u> a French word was borrowed, self-interpreting compounds are employed <u>to a lesser extent</u>, <u>wealth</u> of these newly borrowed words, This <u>eventually</u> results in..., enlarges its vocabulary mainly by a <u>liberal</u> use of prefixes, influx of French words began <u>slowly</u> with <u>varying</u> tempo, <u>eventually</u> led to weakening,</p>
<p><b>S8</b> Simplification of consonant cluster were <u>often</u> implemented, such names were <u>mostly</u> evaluative words, could have brought in <u>some</u> aspects of the French language, especially the <u>massive</u> borrowing of French words, resulted in the inclusion of <u>about</u> 2500 words</p>
<p><b>S9</b> <u>prodigious</u> changes, <u>most</u> noticeable and <u>momentous</u> changes, changes <u>more fundamental</u> and <u>extensive</u>, effect on English was <u>profound</u>, would be seen in changes in a <u>multitude</u> of aspects, <u>largely</u> influenced by French, adjectives lost <u>all</u> inflections, <u>highly</u> inflecting language to an analytical one chiefly due to changes in pronunciation, for English to change <u>drastically</u>, borrowings from French were <u>limited</u>, <u>inundation</u> of French words, <u>much</u> of their governmental and administrative vocabulary</p>
<p><b>S10</b> <u>Tremendous</u> changes, <u>some</u> changes, <u>almost all</u> the basic word, some English words..., <u>great influx</u> of French and Latin borrowings, Old English borrowed <u>almost</u> 10000 words, <u>gradually</u> led to English words displacing...</p>
<p><b>S11</b> <u>heaviest</u> French borrowing, <u>not so much</u> a part of everyday vocabulary, borrowings from Latin were <u>rather substantial</u>, <u>a lot</u> of borrowings, <u>surge</u> of changes</p>
<p><b>S12</b> Permeated English <u>in a big way</u>, much of their vocabulary, borrowing from <u>at least</u> 50 other languages</p>
<p><b>S13</b> English has evolved in <u>one way or other</u>, one of the <u>greatest</u> source of new words, borrowed terms <u>largely</u> from, <u>obvious</u> divergence, Black English has seen <u>many</u> changes, one of <u>the more obvious</u> influences, vast borrowing of words, <u>various</u> changes in American English have not taken place <u>randomly</u>, <u>recognizably</u> distinct</p>

Table 3: Graduation Resources (Low-rated EL scripts)

<p><b>S15</b> Middle English is said to be the <u>most unstable</u> form of English as it was <u>constantly</u> undergoing changes, <u>heavy</u> borrowings from other languages, Middle English is perhaps <u>nothing much</u> but the base of Old English with a <u>bit</u> of Celtic, Old Norse, Latin and French borrowings, Middle English had in it <u>more</u> borrowings from Old Norse than Old English, the borrowings were <u>mostly</u> that of core words, There were <u>not enough</u> sophisticated and non-native words</p>
<p><b>S16</b> the influence of pre-colonial languages on American English has been surprisingly <u>slight</u></p>
<p><b>S17</b> English language in America has <u>come a long way</u>, this influence of the original indigenous languages on the English language was <u>slight</u></p>
<p><b>S18</b> The change in American English is rather <u>slight</u>, change is not <u>obvious</u> or <u>drastic</u>, <u>many</u> features have been <u>largely</u> retained, <u>largely</u> adopted from English Language of that time, a <u>lot</u> of adapting and extending is brought about, the change in language as seen from the above is <u>very much</u> a two-way process</p>
<p><b>S19</b> The English language has adapted and absorbed <u>many</u> different languages</p>
<p><b>S20</b> large <u>influx</u> of French words</p>
<p><b>S21</b> one can observe <u>many</u> changes, which were <u>widespread</u>, many changes occurred, There was a <u>massive</u> importing of French words into the English vocabulary, with two <u>waves</u> of importation in the Middle English period</p>
<p><b>S23</b> The English language itself however, was <u>not very much</u> influenced by French, the amount of French borrowings increased <u>tremendously</u>, The <u>peak</u> borrowing period being around 1375AD.</p>
<p><b>S26</b> This period in time was marked by <u>great instability</u> in the English language due to the <u>large</u> amounts of borrowings</p>
<p><b>S27</b> <u>Striking</u> dialectal differences, distinct inflectional endings in English was <u>drastically</u> reduced</p>

