

Expressing Attitude in Academic Writing: Appraisal in Students' Article Reviews

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ABSTRACT

Of the various English skills that are considered challenging for English as Foreign Language (EFL) students, writing an academic text such as article review is one that students need to master. Article review is a critical evaluation of a research article written by academics. Through article review, the attitude of the review writer can be identified. This research investigates the realization of appraisal in the article review written by EFL students majoring in linguistics in the English Department of Universitas Dian Nuswantoro. The focus is limited to the appraisal attitude that includes affect, judgment, and appreciation. The attitude was analyzed by using the appraisal framework proposed by Martin and White (2005). The data were obtained purposively by selecting article reviews that met the criteria. This research was conducted by employing a descriptive qualitative method and content analysis to analyze the data. The results show that appreciation dominates the findings, followed by judgment and affect. The reviews also show that the students mostly give positive attitude to the articles they reviewed. However, negative attitude is also found especially in terms of theoretical framework and the way the article is written, such as inconsistency and the use of symbols. Overall, the students show positive appreciation to the article they reviewed, since they consider that the article is helpful gives insight on the elaboration of appraisal framework in translation studies. This research implies that article review can help students to express their thoughts and ideas critically and apply academic style in the form of written texts in English.

Keywords: appraisal, attitude, review, SFL

INTRODUCTION

English plays an important role as a foreign language. Therefore, the ability to speak and write in English provides greater opportunities even at the international level. In learning English, there are four language skills

that must be mastered, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Rahman, et al., 2019; Nurjanah and Masykuroh, 2021). Grammar is one component of English language knowledge in addition to these four skills. In learning English as a foreign language (EFL), writing often becomes a challenging activity. It is even considered as an obstacle (Cahyono and Setyaningsih, 2019). Many students feel this way because writing requires not only the cohesive and coherent expression of ideas but also a rich vocabulary and grammatical accuracy. English grammar is also seen as difficult, as it is often perceived as a set of formulas or language rules that must be memorized, which ultimately causes students to struggle when they have to write texts in English.

One of text types that becomes a challenge faced by EFL students to deal with is academic text. Academic texts are included in the factual text genre. These texts are supported by facts and research. The types of academic texts or scientific papers can be manifested in many forms. These include books, book reviews, research proposals, research reports, and scientific articles or journals (Salam, et al., 2018). They also have characteristics that distinguish them from other texts. The characteristics of academic texts is that they are objective. It means the texts presenting information based on facts and data, not personal opinions. Academic texts are source-based, because there are valid reference citations and sources to support arguments. Academic texts are technical because they use specific terms that are relevant to a particular field of study. Academic texts are also cohesive and coherent, meaning that ideas are well connected so that the text is easy to understand. In addition, academic texts are formal, because they use formal language and a regular structure.

One type of academic texts that is commonly written by students is a scientific article review. An article review is an author's critical evaluation of a scientific article written by another author. The skill of writing article reviews can train students to think critically. In addition, article reviews can train students to convey opinions or criticisms in writing because through article reviews students can show their attitudes or positions.

In the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), language is seen as a source or tool for creating meaning in a social context (Halliday, 2014). A scientific article review is one form of interpersonal meaning realization. A review contains an evaluation of an object. Evaluation is related to appraisal, which in SFL refers to the attitude negotiated in the text. Appraisal, or the language of evaluation, indicates the speaker's or writer's personal evaluative involvement toward certain phenomena (White, 2015). The use of the appraisal system in the review text is to negotiate social relations by telling the reader what the author feels about the text being reviewed (Martin and Rose, 2007). Furthermore, the appraisal system is divided into three, namely attitude, graduation, and engagement. Attitude deals with a person's feelings, including emotional reactions, judgments of behaviors, and evaluation of things. Engagement is

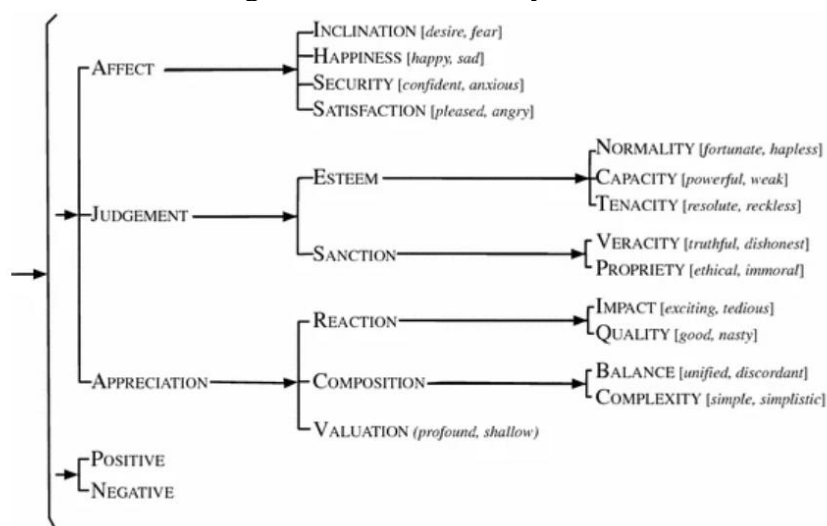
related to the position of speaker's or author's voice in dealing with the various proposition and proposals conveyed by text. Another subsystem, graduation, concerns with grading the phenomena related to a person's feelings (Martin and White, 2005).

As mentioned, attitude concerns with the evaluative meanings by which addressees are positioned to adopt a positive or negative view or feelings. Attitude is broadly categorized into three elements, namely:

1. Affect: positive or negative assessment presented as emotional reactions
2. Judgment: positive or negative assessments of human behavior and character based on ethics, morality, and norms
3. Appreciation: assessments of objects, artefacts, texts, states of affairs, and processes especially on their aesthetic qualities, potential for harm or benefit, social salience, etc.

The attitude subsystem is broken down into subcategories that can be represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Attitude Subsystem



Source: Martin and White (2005)

Studies on attitude realization have been conducted to analyze various text types, among others literary works (Putri, et al., 2023; Hasibuan, et al., 2024), advertisement (Maharani, 2024), and academic texts such as report (Taha, et al., 2014), essay (Liu, 2013), and review (Cahyono, 2021). Putri, et al. (2023) examined the attitude system in Olivia Rodrigo's songs. This study found that affect is mostly used as they reflect the life of the singer who is a teenager and experiences painful love story. Hasibuan, et al. (2024) investigated the attitude in a literary work especially novel, focusing on the novel *The Chameleons among Us*. This research found that attitude is realized by the emotion and feelings of the characters. This facilitates the readers' understanding of the author's experience expressed

in the novel as the novel is inspired from the author's personal experience. Maharani (2024) employed the framework by Martin and White (2005) to analyze taglines of housing advertisement on Instagram. The findings reveal that the advertisement used judgement, affect, and appreciation, and a combination of affect-judgement and affect-appreciation attitudes. Judgment is the mostly employed attitude as it is used to justify the unique and superior characteristics of the products advertised. Taha, et al. (2014) analyzed the attitude in the reports written by students joining *Kampus Mengajar* program. The result shows that positive affect are widely used in the reports. Liu (2013) examined the Chinese university EFL students in writing English argumentative texts. The research found that the high-rated essay successfully used appraisal elements to foreground authorial voice and position readers. This way, the text can manipulate the arguability and build strong persuasion. Meanwhile, Cahyono (2021) analyzes reviews written by sixth semester L2 students after the lecturer applied learning cycles to teach appraisal attitude in the classroom. The result shows that judgment was mostly used by the students in the critical review. Different from the previously mentioned studies, this research focuses on the attitude realization in an academic text type, particularly article reviews written by the fifth semester EFL students. In doing so, the study is expected to reveal how judgment, appreciation, and affect are conveyed in EFL students' academic writing. Furthermore, it is also expected to understand whether students express personal opinion or rely on neutral or objective description through the text the reviewed.

METHOD

This research used a qualitative descriptive method. A qualitative research generates findings which are not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification (Strauss and Corbin, in Snape and Spencer, 2003), while descriptive refers to the description and depiction of a phenomenon under study (Waruwu, 2023). This research investigated the attitude realized by students when writing a journal article review. The data were collected purposively from the article reviews written by the fifth semester students majoring in Linguistics. They were assigned to review a journal article entitled "The Comparison of Translation of Attitude Sources between Analytical and Hortatory Exposition Text: An Appraisal Theory Approach" written by Nazara, et al. (2023). Of the eighteen papers written by the students, ten were selected to be analyzed. This selection was based on the following criteria:

1. The papers obtained minimum 70 score.
2. The papers followed the structure of an article review.
3. The papers displayed range of appraisal resources such as adjectives, modal verbs, and evaluative expressions.

The unit of analysis included words, phrases, or clauses containing

the appraisal resources. The data were then analyzed by identifying these appraisal resources especially Attitude, which included affect, judgment, and appreciation. Content analysis was also used to understand the meaning and the students' intent behind the text. After that, the result was tabulated and interpreted. Next, the conclusion of the research was drawn.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After the data were analyzed, the result was tabulated. Based on the analysis, 241 elements containing attitude were found. They were categorized into their respective category of attitude. The findings presented in Table 1 shows that appreciation dominates the findings, followed by judgment and affect. The analysis also reveals that the students generally give positive attitude to the journal article that they reviewed. Nevertheless, they also gave negative attitude, specifically on the theoretical framework and the way the article is written, for example regarding inconsistency and the use of symbols. A detailed result of the analysis can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Result of Analysis

Attitude Types	Sub-Category	Positive	Negative	Σ	%
Affect	Dis/inclination	7	-	7	2.9
	Un/happiness	2	1	3	1.2
	In/security	-	1	1	0.4
	Dis/satisfaction	2	8	10	4.1
Total of Affect				21	8.7
Judgement	Normality	3	-	3	1.2
	Capacity	19	6	25	10.4
	Tenacity	6	4	10	4.1
	Veracity	2	-	2	0.8
	Propriety	6	3	9	3.7
Total of Judgment				47	20.3
Appreciation	Reaction	19	6	25	10.4
	Composition	65	10	75	31.1
	Valuation	55	16	71	29.5
Total of Appreciation				173	71
Total of Attitude				241	100

Realizations of Attitude in Students' Article Review

This section discusses the explanation of the types of attitude subsystems found in the students' article reviews, provided with examples each.

1. Affect

Affect is the type of Appraisal that deals with emotive element and its positive and negative feelings. In this research, affect is found in the sentences containing the students' feelings about the journal article.

a. Dis/inclination

Inclination involves the writer's intention. In other words, it focuses on the desire or preference of the writer. An example of inclination in the student's review can be seen in the following example:

I highly recommend it even though the contents are very dense and lack explanation, but the method of the research ensures structured and systematic analysis. (RD5-22)

In RD5-22, the student gives positive feelings toward the journal article. The phrase "highly recommend" is categorized as inclination: desire. By writing this sentence, the student considers that the article has a good method and analysis. Therefore, the student really recommends the readers to read the article.

b. Un/happiness

Happiness is the type of affect that involves emotions. In this research, affect: happiness is found in the sentences that tells about the students' positive feelings when reviewing the article. Examples of un/happiness found in the data are provided below.

Moreover, I like the writing style by Nazara et al., because this study is very detailed in terms of describing the research process, which can be seen from the third chapter or method. (RD3-10)

RD3-10 shows that the student uses affect: happiness as indicated by the word "like". The student expresses his/her positive feelings especially on the writing style and the detailed description of the research method.

I even struggled to comprehend the complicated coding because I had to read multiple times just to understand some statements that refer to a reference that was mentioned in the first chapter. (RD3-21)

Despite giving positive assessment on the method, the student also has negative feelings toward the journal article. It is shown by the phrase "struggled to comprehend" which can be included in affect: unhappiness. This indicates that the student finds it

hard to understand the content, especially with the way the journal article author presented the data by using certain coding.

c. Dis/satisfaction

Dis/satisfaction deals with the students' feelings of achievement and frustration related to the article review writing. This includes including their roles as readers. The following examples demonstrate this type of affect.

As I'm writing this review, I learn a lot of things, especially related to the rating system of quality assessment that are very complicated. (RD3-9)

RD3-9 shows that the student satisfied after reading the journal article. When reviewing the article, s/he learns how to rate a translation product and how to do complicated translation assessment. Being a Linguistics major, reviewing journal article on translation gives new insight to the student.

I also have complaints about consistency. (RD8-18)

Dissatisfaction is also found in the review. In RD8-18, the student is not satisfied with the consistency of using Indonesian and English language in the article. This is indicated by the word "complaints". The students has complaint especially on the use of Indonesian language in the categorization of translation techniques that will potentially cause confusion to international readers.

2. Judgment

Judgment deals with meaning construing the students' attitudes to the journal article or authors and the way they behave their character.

a. Normality

Normality is used to evaluate how unusual someone is. In RD2-15, the word "common" is used to refer to the journal article readers who do not have background knowledge in the topic discussed.

As a common reader, every explanation in every topic is very understandable. (RD2-15)

b. Capacity

This judgment category is used by the students to evaluate the capability of the journal article authors in conducting the

research. The following are the examples of judgment: capacity found in the data.

The authors were successful in establishing a solid foundation for their research. (RD1-12)

The fact that the researchers managed to write the second and the third chapter so short yet complete is just mind-blowing to me. (RD3-11)

Examples presented in the data RD1-12 and RD3-11 demonstrate the students' evaluation to the authors' capability. In RD1-12, the student gives positive judgment on how the authors described the literature review in detail. In RD3-11, the student also shows positive judgment: capacity by focusing on the authors' ability to write comprehensive chapters successfully.

A negative evaluation is also given by the students. The example can be seen in RD9-14. In this sentence, the student tells about the weakness of the journal article by pointing out that the authors did not write specific information on the translation techniques and their application to analyze the data.

It can make the lay reader confused about how many translation techniques and how to applying the technique into the data. (RD9-14)

c. Tenacity

Tenacity deals with "how dependable". In this research, tenacity is used by the students to evaluate the conclusion of the journal article. In the example RD1-30, the student gives positive evaluation by using the word "thorough" to describe the tables.

The authors support their conclusions with thorough tables and excellent examples. (RD1-30)

d. Veracity

Judgment: veracity concerns with truth and credibility. This category is found in the data, as can be seen in RD6-29. The example shows that the journal article is credible as the student recommends it to academics, professionals, and common readers.

This journal is recommended for researchers and academics in the field of applied linguistics, professional translators, linguistics or translation students, as well as lay readers interested in the process and quality of translation. (RD6-29)

e. Propriety

Propriety concerns with ethics. In example RD4-31, the student uses judgment: propriety to point out the authors' inconsistency in using of technical terms. The student thinks that it is inappropriate to use the Indonesian terms of translation techniques, as the journal article's main language is English.

The author should have written them in English instead of Indonesian. (RD4-31)

3. Appreciation

Appreciation is the mostly used affect in the students' review. It consists of reaction, composition, and valuation. Some examples on how the students apply these categories are provided below.

a. Reaction

Positive reactions are found in the sentences in which the article catches the students' attention. RD3-11 clearly demonstrates that the way the authors write comprehensive but brief chapters makes the student intensely affected by using the words "mind-blowing". In RD3-8 and RD10-7, using the words "remarkable" and "good", the students also show positive reaction especially in terms of how the authors analyze the linguistic features in their research and that the authors write the article in a structured manner.

The fact that the researchers managed to write the second and the third chapter so short yet complete is just mind-blowing to me. (RD3-11)

Nazara and the other researchers who were involved were remarkable for analyzing linguistic features related to attitudes, which include one of the aspects of appraisal. (RD3-8)

These are the criteria for a good article. (RD10-17)

Negative reaction is also found in the data. In RD4-12, the student points out the weakness of the article as there are inappropriate symbols in the article. Again, this is related to the article's inconsistency issue mentioned in the previous section.

Another weakness of this article is that there are some inappropriate uses of symbols that should not be there. (RD4-12)

b. Composition

Composition is related to the students' perception or their view of order toward the article they reviewed. It also related with whether the text hanged together or whether it was hard to follow. The examples can be seen in RD10-14 and RD9-6. Here, the students consider that the article is useful for other researchers since it is written well and detailed.

Because the content is well thought out and well prepared with all the media, and the resources are also well structured. (RD10-14)

The strengths of this article use a descriptive qualitative which is the article explained very clearly and detailed by the author. (RD9-6)

On the other hand, negative appreciation in terms of the article composition is also found. In the following examples, the students point out that there are too many key words in the article, while usually authors provide three to five keywords only. Similar negative appreciation concerning the composition of the article elements is also found in RD10-11 in which the student talks about the content of abstract.

The keywords of this article are too many. (RD4-14)

This is new to the writer where in this article there are 7 keywords. (RD10-21)

And last but not least, the abstract of the article displays too many results that make it less interesting. (RD10-11)

c. Valuation

In this research, valuation is related to the students' considered opinions. Furthermore, it is related to whether the article is worthwhile or not. The following examples present how the students apply valuation in their review.

In RD10-18, the student gives positive valuation about the article. The phrase "very informative" shows that the article is worth reading because of the informative content. In contrast, negative evaluation given by another student is also found in the review. In RD8-8, the student shows the negative evaluation by

stating that the article is “not enough to satisfy the readers” because s/he thinks the article lacks explanation of the theoretical framework used.

From the content presented, this article is very informative because it conveys the things researched by the researcher of this article. (RD10-18)

But it is also unfortunate that the research produces negative things and is not enough to satisfy readers. (RD8-8)

The analysis of the appraisal in the article review written by the fifth semester students of English Department has presented various categories of attitude. The students use affect, judgment, and appreciation when writing an academic text especially journal article review. This is in line with Liu's (2013), who also found that the three attitude subcategories were used in the argumentative essays. It can also be seen that in general, the students gave positive evaluation to the journal article that they reviewed. Overall, the students highly appreciated the article especially on the composition. In terms of judgment, the students also demonstrated positive evaluation especially on the capacity. The students considered that the authors were capable of analyzing and writing the article. Meanwhile, affect is the least used attitude category. The students apparently did not really show their feelings towards the article. In this research, affect deals with how the students felt and thought after reading the article. Besides the positive evaluations, the students also gave negative attitude, especially on the theoretical framework and the way the article was written, for example regarding inconsistency and the use of symbols.

In addition, some of the findings of this research are in contrast to Putri, et al (2023) and Hasibuan, et al. (2024) who analyzed literary works in which affect is mostly found as the songs and story involve the writers and the characters' personal feelings and emotion. Taha, et al. (2014) also have similar result in that the reports written by students who were involved in *Kampus Mengajar* program show the dominant use of positive affect. A similar research on appraisal of critical review conducted by Cahyono (2021) found that judgment dominate the result. However, this research yields different outcome, as appreciation is widely used in the review. This may be caused by several factors. First, the students are in different level. The fifth semester students may feel somewhat reluctant to give negative evaluation, as they are not of Translation major so they possibly did not feel that they have really mastered the topic or content of the research. Also, their skills and knowledge might not yet be as advanced as the sixth semester students. Second, the lecturer did not give specific material on how to write an article review, as opposite to Cahyono's

research (2021) in which the lecturer implemented a learning cycle to train the sixth semester students to write a critical review.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of this research has presented the use of different appraisal attitude categories in EFL students' journal article reviews. In general, the students demonstrate positive appreciation to the article they reviewed. They consider that the article is helpful and gives insight on the elaboration of appraisal framework in translation studies. This research also implies that article review can help students to express their thoughts and ideas critically and apply academic style in the form of written texts in English. However, several limitations are still present in this study. It is suggested that future research utilize more data for the analysis, and cover other categories of appraisal such as engagement and graduation to give a further insight on how EFL students evaluate texts.

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