

# Analysis of Evaluative Language in Business English Students' Writing

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## ABSTRACT

*The study aims to analyze how Business English Students (BES) express attitudes and opinions, engage readers and measure attitudes in writing. It also attempts to investigate BES' linguistic deficiencies to write for evaluative purposes in business contexts. Seventy-one students at College of Management and Technology (Alexandria) at the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport participated in the study. Applying Martin and White's Appraisal Model (2005) and Deficiency Analysis approach (Allwright 1982; West 1994; Jordan 1997), the study reveals that BES are able to express attitudes with a remarkable preference of verbal forms in contrast to a slighter use of adjectives. Influenced by the direct technical nature of business discourse, BES minimize emotional and figurative expressions in attitudinal contexts. Among all the attitudinal categories, appreciation is mostly realized thanks to the involvement of multiple non-human elements in their discussions. They contract their dialogues rather than expand them, with a nearly equivalent distribution of disclaiming and proclaiming lexis. They frequently personalize their authorial voices while minimally referencing others' opinions, as observable in the minimization of reporting verbs and attribution devices. Vocabulary of higher intensity and scalability are preferred for measuring attitudes, thus disclosing BES' tendency to amplify their attitudes imprecisely. For improving the quality of BES' evaluative writing, it is recommended that BES practice reporting verbs, citation referencing, paraphrasing techniques and figurative language. They should control their use of personal pronouns and avoid excessive repetition. Business English (BE) instructors need to foster a meaning-based instruction, debate teaching methodology and direct their learners to read on business topics to develop an evaluative sense and aptitude for professional writing.*

**Keywords:** appraisal model, appreciation, attitude, BES, engagement, Evaluative Language, graduation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a productive skill that enables learners to express what they believe in their personal space where they may not be overwhelmed by shyness or anxiety as in the speaking skill. In professional settings, business professionals, through writing, can communicate effectively with one another, convey their ideas and concepts persuasively since every business document, whether large or small, reflects the company's image (Ranaut 2018). As such, writing is significant for business specialist students who

may plan for future professional positions and whose command of writing persuasively can shape their future professional excellence. It is also argued that writing is crucial for EFL students to deal with other courses too; it tightens the gap and connects people from different backgrounds and across borders (Kassem 2017).

On investigating how BES employ language to show their reactions, viewpoints, and attitudes through

writing, attention is drawn to *Evaluative Language* (EL). Pounds (2015, 564) defines EL as “the language including resources that can be employed to express language users’ attitude or stance (views or feelings) to entities in the real world”. EL is also conceptualized as “the language used to show opinion and stance towards a person, a thing or any entity” (Hunston 1994, 210). The definitions point out that evaluation is a centric function of language since it is a carrier of thoughts, opinions, and feelings which could be reflected in the writing skill as a resourceful output for expressing BES’ evaluation.

Yet, the analysis of EL generally involves some difficulties since “there is no set of language forms, either grammatical or lexical, that encompass the range of expressions of evaluation” (Hunston 2011, 3). Still, it is uneasy to set a clear distinction between evaluative language and non-evaluative language without understanding the context (Pounds 2015). Hence, Pounds argues that some expressions may have factual meaning in some contexts (e.g., a red car) or evaluative in others (e.g., a red nose or red lips). Most importantly, tackling business contexts is another sort of difficulty. This belief could be supported by Zinukova (2021) who views that business discourse is characterized by strict accuracy and objectivity. These factors could affect the way BES express their opinions and they require looking for a renowned linguistic model to investigate BES’ ability to write for evaluative purposes.

Despite the difficulties, the investigation still sounds crucial since the ability to write clearly and to critique, evaluate, and synthesize information is essential for business success (Kellogg and Whiteford 2009). Moreover, a written word is undoubtedly “unforgiving” and readers can judge individuals and their companies in accordance with the way they express themselves in writing (Talbot 2009, 6). Moreover, writing is considered the lifeblood of business relationships which are apt to damage once the written message is derailed or misunderstood due to the challenges of high-speed, high-demand communication (Gaertner-Johnston 2014). As such, exploring BES’ use of EL would reveal the level of linguistic competency the students have mastered and that which they still need to master when using the language for evaluative purposes. Hence, BES may need to practice self-censorship and have a selective sense of words when they express their attitudes. Hunston and Thompson (2001) set three functions that mark the importance of evaluation: expressing speaker/writer opinions that reflect their value systems and those of their community, constructing relationships between speakers and readers, and organizing discourse.

Employing these functions in business contexts may disclose the common ethics through which students judge business professionals or appreciate business events, crises, or matters. Still, this may explain the students’ dialogic interactions with their putative readers and interpret to what degree they can reflect their personal or others’ views through language. This could also identify the socio-cultural assumptions or backgrounds that direct BES to adopt certain attitudes since “the interpretation of evaluative meanings depends on variations in cultural assumptions and expectations of language users” (Pounds 2015, 564).

Based on the aforementioned account, it sounds important to follow an approach that combines linguistic analysis with a deficiency analysis in a business-centered educational discourse. Here priority is given to Martin and White’s Appraisal Model (2005) and the views on Deficiency Analysis (Allwright 1982; West 1994; Jordan 1997) whereby BES’ ability to express attitudes and engage readers is assessed. Additionally, approaching the common deficiencies that hinder BES’ ability to write for evaluative purposes would give insights for curricular and methodological treatment to improve the quality of their argumentative, evaluative writing.

In light of this background, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How are affect, appreciation, and judgement lexically realized and distributed in BES’ writing?
2. Which options of engagement do BES mostly employ in their writing?
3. Which graduation sub-categories are mostly realized in BES’ writing?
4. What are the problematic areas and linguistic deficiencies noted in BES’ use of the language for evaluative purposes?

In an attempt to answer these questions and address the aim of the study, it is important to elaborate on the theoretical approaches in the context of EL.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This review covers the Appraisal Model by Martin and White (2005) as the theoretical framework of the study and the approaches for analyzing business writing needs to highlight their relevance to the analysis.

## 2.1 Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Model

The Appraisal Model is a comprehensive framework for analyzing EL. It was presented in 2005 by James Martin and Peter White. The framework is extended from Halliday's concept of the interpersonal meta-function in Systemic Functional Grammar (1994). The two scholars theorized the framework to investigate the usability of language for evaluation, analyzing the possible linguistic sources for the expression of attitudes, its degree of intensity or mitigation, and working on the dialogic interactional influence on readers. The model contains three sub-systems: attitude, engagement, and graduation. Each sub-system is divided into a number of categories. They can be illustrated in figure 1 as follows:

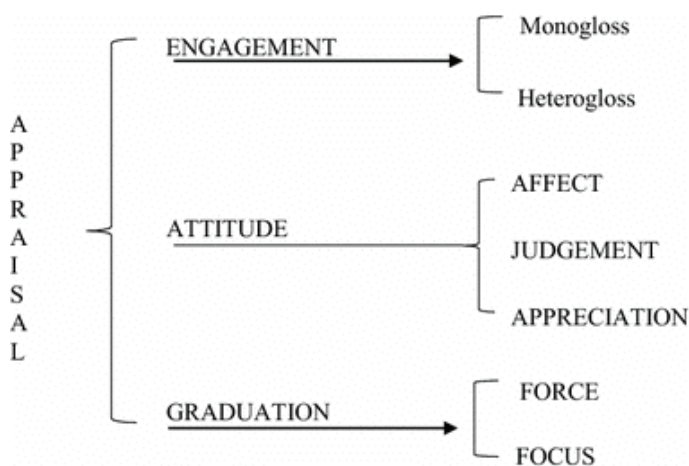


Figure 1: Appraisal sub-systems in Martin and White (2005, 38)

Following is a brief coverage of each appraisal feature including all relevant terms.

### 2.1.1 Attitude

According to White (2015, 2) the term "attitude" is used to "reference the subsystem of evaluative meanings by which addressees are positioned to adopt a positive or negative view vis-à-vis experiential phenomena or propositions about those phenomena". The Attitude system is divided into appreciation, judgement, and affect. Judgement is the evaluation of human characters: their behavior, actions, and deeds in accordance with the standards of ethics and morality. Judgement can be either invoked or inscribed. Judgment-centered attitudes apply to those of social-esteem or those of social sanction. Social esteem is derived from the society's oral culture, stories, chat, gossip, and jokes. In other words, it applies to parameters of 'normality' (how unusual someone is), 'capacity' (how capable they are), and 'tenacity' (how resolute they are). On the

other hand, social sanction is mainly codified in writing, including decrees, edicts, rules, regulations, and laws which determine how to behave in accordance with the religious and legal system of the society. In this regard, it refers to the parameters of veracity (e.g., how honest, or truthful someone is or the human behavior is), and propriety (e.g., how good, ethical, the human behavior is).

Appreciation refers to the evaluation of non-human entities in the sense that it evaluates anything other than people. As such, the evaluation of texts, processes, animals, objects, and phenomena pertains to appreciation. Generally, appreciation can be exemplified in the speakers' or writers' reactions to things (do they catch their attention; do they please us?), their 'composition' (balance and complexity), and their 'value' (how innovative, authentic, timely, etc.).

Affect is the center of attitudinal subsystems. Affect refers to the expression of feelings and emotions. In other words, affect pertains to the positive or negative assessments as emotional reactions (White 2015). In appraisal terms, three sets of affective meanings are elaborated. They include the meanings of un/happiness, in/security, and dis/satisfaction. The set of un/happiness covers the moods of feeling as happy or sad, and the possibility of directing these feelings to a Trigger. The set of in/security refers to the feelings of peace or anxiety. The category of dis/satisfaction applies to our feelings of achievement or frustration in relation to the activities in which addressees are engaged, including their roles as both participants and spectators.

### 2.1.2 Engagement

Engagement covers the sources or origins of attitude, in terms of hetero-glossic and mono-glossic resources. The terms describe where the attitudes come from and if writers or speakers write propositions from their own subjective perspective or others' perspectives. Mono-glossic resources disclose the non-dialogic potential of texts in the sense that writers or speakers propose one authorial viewpoint to be taken as granted by the intended readers. Hence, the writers present the proposition as factual or descriptive, disregarding other viewpoints that may contrast, align with, or support their viewpoints. Hetero-glossic choices, on the other hand, involve a variety of viewpoints that trigger the putative readers or recipients to engage with the texts, by aligning or dis-aligning with the value positions proposed by their texts or utterances, thus establishing a dialogistic relationship. In this dialogistic perspective, hetero-glossic sources can encode

writers' tendency to expand their dialogues or contract them by following certain linguistic choices.

With dialogic contraction, the writer or speaker attempts to restrict the scope of alternative viewpoints. In this sense, the reader's discussion on the propositions is minimized with reference to the writer's or speaker's disclaims or proclamations of viewpoints. With disclaiming wordings, the writer reveals he or she is at odds with the proposed viewpoints or at least he or she is not in complete agreement with what someone says or writes. This can be recognized through the writer's denial of the viewpoint by using negative forms (e.g., *do not*) or the writer's counter (e.g., *yet*) where they give contradictory opinions. The writers' dialogic contraction can also be perceived in proclamation devices whereby the writers manifest their subscription in particular points versus other alternative points. To simplify, they disclose their approval and acceptance of certain viewpoints by using endorsing words (e.g. *show; demonstrate*) or concurring affirmatory words (e.g. *of course; indeed*). Generally, writers with proclamation expressions reflect their tendency to adopt or accept certain positions which finally convey their keen desire to make their stances non-arguable.

With dialogic expansion, Martin and White (2005) handle the writer's or speaker's attempts to open dialogic space for their intended readers. This means they expand their dialogues by ensuing, extending, or calling for discussion and argument of alternative viewpoints or positions. This tendency is realized through entertaining lexis (e.g. *may; must*) whereby the writers or speakers entertain several viewpoints that are not decided on but they may arouse the intended readers' curiosity about them. Furthermore, dialogic expansion can also include writers' attribution of viewpoints.

### 2.1.3 Graduation

Graduation refers to the degree of the attitude. It describes a means through which the evaluator can measure, intensify, amplify or mitigate attitudinal values or engagement positions. The two components of graduation are force and focus. Force encompasses the meanings which express the scalability of attitudes as realized in grading lexis (e.g., *some*), numbering (e.g., *several*), and repetition (e.g., *very, very important*). On the other hand, focus is associated with the meanings by which the boundaries of semantic categories can be sharpened or softened (White 2015). Examples include *sort of, kind of, etc.*

Having summarized each sub-level of the appraisal model, it is significant to highlight the analysis of learners' writing needs to show their relevance to the study.

## 2.2 Investigating Learners' Writing Needs

The outstanding influence of the writing skills has led to the application of research approaches on writing competency and learning needs. Needs Analysis (NA) approaches have emerged especially for supporting the process of curriculum development and design. Richards (2001) defines NA as "procedures used to collect information about learners' needs" (51). The attention has increased due to the crucial employability of English language for professional purposes and its international acceptance as a Lingua Franca, i.e., medium of communication in international commerce and business. Thus, there was a need to assess the linguistic needs of different professions and regard them in tailored courses. Under the umbrella of NA, several approaches have developed in ESP. They include Deficiency Analysis, Strategy Analysis, Means Analysis, Genre Analysis, etc. (Jordan 1997, 22).

Deficiency Analysis, for example, considers learners' present needs/wants in addition to the requirements of the target situation and may be called the analysis of learners' deficiencies or lacks (Allwright 1982, 24; West 1994, 10). Learning deficiencies can be exemplified in the linguistic lacks that affect the desired language competency since "lacks represent the gap between the target proficiency and what the learners already know (Jordan 1997, 25). Utilizing NA, Bonhoc and Aperocho (2023) have investigated the business writing needs of office assistants and discovered that the office assistants still need business writing training for improving their business writing skills in terms of voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Jitpanich, Leong, and Ismail (2022) explored the writing needs of Thai university business administration students as a primary step for developing an ESP writing course, highlighting their perceived writing abilities, writing challenges, requisite writing skills, and learning preferences. They demonstrated that the students had some weaknesses with email and report writing in addition to difficulty with vocabulary and grammar. Yet, it is important to mention some previous studies on EL to identify the research gap the study can fill.

### 2.3 Previous Studies on EL

Numerous studies on EL have been conducted in different discourses. In journalistic discourse, for example, Kiiskilä (2020) studied EL in the early 19th century theatre reviews in the Times newspaper in her master thesis. Applying Martin and White's Appraisal Model (2005), the study revealed that the early 19th century theatre reviews illustrate the effects of the changes in the theatre tradition and they reflect a collective opinion of the audience which can influence the success of the performances. In business discourse, Vogel (2020) studied persuasion in corporate annual reports by limiting his attention to evaluative connotations of vocabulary as linguistic realizations of persuasion. His findings demonstrated a correlation between the degree of persuasiveness of individual text types and the frequency of positively connoted evaluative lexis. Still, the negatively connoted lexis is not preferred and that there is a frequent overlap with a concurrent terminological function or useful contrast with positive lexis, which explains choices of words with negative connotations.

In educational discourse, Fitriat, Solihah and Tusino (2018) investigated attitude in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university students' narrative writings. They noticed that EFL students maximize affect subsystem to convey the feelings of characters and depict events that involve readers. They criticized the students' over-use of basic English words and repetition of same words. Pratumtong, Channuan, and Suksawas (2021) investigated engagement resources used by novice EFL research writers in their literature review. They concluded that the writers strongly prefer to engage readers in the writers' justification of knowledge. The results revealed that entertain, acknowledge, and counter resources were mostly noted in the articles. In contrast, novice research writers, to some extent, maximized bare assertions to persuade their readers.

Despite the variety in investigating EL, there seems to be a research gap when it comes to student-based business writing from an EL perspective, by identifying BES' needs to do effective writing in evaluative contexts which could help with the process of business writing curriculum development. Moreover, the findings of EL studies on student-based writing are not apt to generalize on evaluative business writing due to its peculiarity. Besides, many studies may work on explaining aspects of persuasion with numerous perspectives in students' writing but centering the current study on evaluative devices as one of the aspects of persuasion in an educational-based economic or business contexts could make a contribution.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This section proposes the analytic scope and criteria that are followed in addition to the procedures for implementing the study.

### 3.1 Analytical Approaches

This study follows Martin and White's Appraisal Model (2005) and relies on the principles of Deficiency Analysis (Allwright 1982; West 1994; Jordan 1997). It is thought that the Appraisal Model is useful to address the types of evaluative stances which BES disclose in their writing. The model can help to interpret how far BES are familiar with linguistic strategies for such purposes. It can also elicit BES' potential for establishing dialogic relationships with readers and how they maximize or minimize certain lexis and structures to engage, persuade, and influence them. Moreover, the reputation of the framework and the testimonials of scholars (e.g., Pounds 2015) and its previous investigation in many genres and discourses (as exemplified in 2.3) are motivating enough to study student-based business writing from an EL perspective.

Deficiency Analysis, as one of NA approaches, may sound pertinent for this study. Most systems taking this approach include an inventory of potential target needs expressed in terms of activities and a scale that is used to establish (and subsequently re-establish) the priority for each activity (West 1994, 10). BES are expected to have some linguistic inability or unfamiliarity to express views, attitudes, and opinions in their written discussions. Hence, the analysis would provide an inventory for the commonly employed vocabulary and structures in evaluative contexts in contrast to the insufficiently used lexis and structures that may enrich the attitudinal or dialogic persuasion in the same contexts. Some relevant evaluative lexis may include adjectives, reporting verbs, evaluative verbs, figurative devices, emphatic expressions, transitional markers of opinion and contrast, quantifiers, and intensifiers, etc. Accordingly, the analysis could pinpoint the lexical target needs and suggest activities that improve BES' evaluative competency as optimally required for maintaining clarity of attitudinal meanings, establishing a persuasive dialogic interaction with the imagined readers, and graduating their attitudes appropriately. Thus, the findings of Deficiency Analysis can be considered since the approach "can form the basis of the language syllabus" (Jordan 1997, 25). Furthermore, it should provide data about both the gap between current and target extra-linguistic knowledge, mastery of general English, language skills and learning strategies (Songhori 2008).

### 3.2 Analytic Scope and Criteria

Some criteria were set to specify the analytic scope of the study. First, in terms of attitude, the analytic scope targets the most frequent 30 lexical items and their derivatives, that were believed to carry attitudinal meanings and were divided into appreciation, judgement, and affect. This method is adapted from Wang (2017) who quantified the top 30 appraisal items (attitude, engagement, and graduation) in EFL college essay writing. The current method may help to realize the frequently preferred word classes and interpret their significance. The detected vocabulary also acts as a reference to quantify the distribution of the attitudinal categories in terms of the nature of business discourse.

Second, owing to the small size of the data, the analysis does not track the subsidiaries of each attitudinal sub-system quantitatively (e.g. the division of appreciation into *composition*, *reaction*, and *valuation*). This is also intended to avoid the overlap of the terms which may hinder the practical track of the research. In addition, the analysis does not focus on the positive and negative attitudinal items separately because the two issues (Suez Canal Blockage & E-commerce) are not intended to analyze from a cognitive or ideological perspective.

Third, for investigating engagement options, the scope encompasses all the wordings that can be categorized as dialogic contraction or expansion due to their observable richness in the data. This means all the subsidiaries of dialogic contraction (e.g. disclaim) and dialogic expansion (e.g. entertain) are spotted since they involve no practicality concerns resulting from the overlap of terms. Fourth, for tackling graduation, attention is paid for the sub-categories of graduation: force and focus. Yet, the analytic scope is widened to include the sub-divisions of force into intensification and quantification for their richness in the data. In contrast, it ignores the semantic classification of each sub-feature (e.g., the infused and isolated intensification) for the overlap that might affect the practicality of the study.

Lastly, the analysis targets four major areas which are thought to be problematic: reporting verbs, personal pronouns, figurative language and repetition of lexis. However, side by side with these areas, the investigation of appraisal features is believed to disclose other areas of weakness concerning BES' linguistic competency in evaluative contexts. Accordingly, it sounds motivating to present a well-structured methodology that discloses how the study was implemented.

### 3.3 The Composition Writing Tasks

Before launching the tasks for implementation, the rubrics had been revised to ensure their reliability, validity, and practicality. The writing tasks were designed to be argumentative, opinion based, and persuasive in nature. They are illustrated in the box below:

**IN YOUR OWN WORDS, write 200 to 300 words on ONE of the following topics A or B.**

#### Topic (A)

Suez Canal Blockage by the Ever-Given ship in March 2021 took a massive media attention. In your opinion, did this accident have an impact on the world economy and business? Why? Why not? Are there any lessons to be learnt from the crisis? Give reasons, and examples to support your answer.

#### Topic (B)

During the Coronavirus pandemic, it is said that the world has resorted more to e-commerce and business. Do you agree or disagree that doing business online should be expanded in the future even when the pandemic comes to an end? State your opinion and give reasons, and examples to support your answers.

The tasks were designed to elicit the students' reactions, viewpoints, and attitudes toward one of two economic or business issues that were among the events which the participants had witnessed. They received some attention in the media few years ago. Offering two topics instead of one was intended to provide some freedom for the participants and motivate them to select the topic they found more familiar or interesting to them.

### 3.4 Participants of the Study

The participants were 71 Egyptian students (30 males and 41 females), ranging from 17 to 21 years old. They were enrolled at the College of Management and Technology at AASTMT, Alexandria, Egypt. The students belonged to different sections at the college including finance, accounting, media management, and political science. They all studied English for Business as one of their intersecting academic courses. Thus, they were thought to have developed some knowledge to help with writing in business contexts.

### 3.5 Implementation of the Writing Tasks

The data was sampled during sessions of English for Business (1) and (2) in the period from 2021 to 2022. The participants were provided with hard copies of the writing tasks. They were required to ideally write from

200 to 300 words. However, a number of participants wrote below and from 100 to 200 words and it was necessary to accept their writing samples for the need of flexibility in the study and consider their time restraints, academic pressures, and individual differences. The participants had been invigilated by their instructors and they were assigned a time limit to perform the tasks.

### 3.6 Corpus Processing of Data

At the very beginning, the appraising items were detected manually. However, that was time consuming, and there were some fears that the items would not be counted accurately. Accordingly, it was important to process the data as a corpus. This involved two procedures: corpus compilation and corpus retrieval of data, based on Biber and Reppen (2015). For compiling the corpus, the handwritten data was keyboarded in Microsoft Word format on the computer. It was re-checked by a second party (an EFL teacher) to avoid any inaccuracies on the part of the typist while typing the original words of the student writers. The data was also tested for plagiarism. This step was intended to make sure that the students wrote in their own words. Using duplechecker.com, it was found that only 1.7% of the data were plagiarized. Thus, the plagiarized lines were removed and were not counted among the items to be retrieved. Next, the Microsoft Word data file was changed into plain text format and uploaded into ANTCOCONC software to retrieve the appraising items through its concordance tool. It was also easier to access the data in context and access the qualitative examples accordingly. However, it seemed necessary to correct some misspellings in the qualitative examples proposed for the analysis for clarification and readability.

### 3.7 The Survey Question

The data sheets presented ONE survey question to know if the participants had interest in business writing jobs such as journalists or proofreaders. This would help to develop a positive attitude for professional

evaluative writing to be regarded in BE courses. It was also assumed that students with interest in business writing professions in the future would have a potential for writing, which would accordingly help to analyze the employability of language for the purpose of evaluation in different contexts as illustrated in table 1 below:

TABLE 1. Distribution of BES' interest in business writing jobs

Category	No. of students	Frequency
Interest in business writing jobs	48	67.6%
Non-interest in business writing jobs	21	29.6%
Undecided interest	2	2.8%

About 67,6% of the participants are interested in business writing jobs. This readiness asserts the importance of handling evaluative writing into ESP courses as part of the students' learning and linguistic needs. Most importantly, it was planned to design other survey questions later for collecting additional information about BES' writing needs. Yet, it became obvious that the written data were sufficient to investigate the students' deficiency in writing for evaluative purposes. Here, composition writing was considered an *elicitation technique* whereby information about the learners' linguistic needs would be spontaneously elicited from the students themselves when analyzing their writing performance on the tasks, without preparing any other questionnaires to learn about their problems.

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In light of the quantification of the most frequent attitudinal vocabulary, it is found that BES use different parts of speech and levels of lexis which may interpret the significant impact of business discourse in their writing. This is evident in table 2 which shows how frequently each lexical item is used.

TABLE 2. The common attitudinal lexis, their derivatives, and inflections

Ser.	Rank	Lexis	Verb	Freq.	Noun	Freq.	Adj.	Freq.	Adv.	Freq.	Totalfreq.
1	1	can	can\ cannot	56	-	-	-	-	-	-	56
2	2	should	should	37	-	-	-	-	-	-	37
3	3	will	will	37	-	-	-	-	-	-	37
4	4	easy	-	-	-	-	easy	21	easily	3	24
5	5	save	save	23	-	-	-	-	-	-	23

6	6	increase	increase	22	-	-					22
7	7	help	help	18			helpful	3			20
8	7	benefit	benefit	4	benefit	12	beneficial	2			19
9	8	huge	-	-	-	-	huge	12	-	-	12
10	9	haveto	haveto	11							11
11	10	decrease	decrease	8	decrease	1	decreased	1			10
12	10	want	want	9	want	1					10
13	11	big					big	9			9
14	11	useful	-	-			useful	9			9
15	12	allow	allow	8							8
16	12	long	-				long	8			8
17	12	major	-				major	8			8
18	12	reduce	reduce	8							8
20	13	good	-	-			good	4			7
							best	3			
21	14	important	-	-	importance	1	important	6			7
22	14	lose	lose\lost	5	loss	2					7
23	14	succeed	succeed	1	success	2	successful	2	successfully	2	7
24	15	great	-	-			great	6			6
25	15	massive	-	-	-	-	massive	6			6
26	15	safe	-	-	safety	1	safe	5			6
27	16	advantage	-		advantage	4	advantageous	1			5
28	16	damage	damage	1	damage	4					5
29	16	comfort			comfort	2	comfortable	3			
30	16	fast					fast	5			5
Freq.		15		257	10	30	18	105	2	5	397
%				64.7%		7.5%		26.4%		1.25%	

Table 2 reveals that BES are familiar with attitudinal lexical items in basic and advanced levels. This is observable in the use of basic words such as *big, easy, can, and will* covering about 31.7 % of the top 30 words. Among the advanced vocabulary are *advantage, damage, massive and comfortable* covering about 5.3 % of the top 30 words. BES slightly maximize some parts of speech while minimizing others for expressing attitudes. They are more reliant on verbal style as evident in the frequency of verb recurrences (64.7%) than on adjectival forms (26.4%) or nouns (7.5%) as the lexical items used. This may imply BES' preference to state their attitudes more directly and explicitly since the frequency of verbs could stress

the overwhelming dynamicity of business contexts resulting from the multiple actions of the non-human entities that are appreciated. This finding confirms Nelson (2000) who shows that the key vocabulary of BE are dynamic, action-oriented, non-emotive, and are quite removed from the personal or social matters.

#### 4.1 Distribution of Attitudinal Categories

Taking the most frequent 30 lexis and their derivatives for attitudinal purposes as the criterion of the distribution of attitudinal categories, it is found that BES have different attitudinal preferences. Figure 2



illustrates the percentage of frequency as detected in the data.

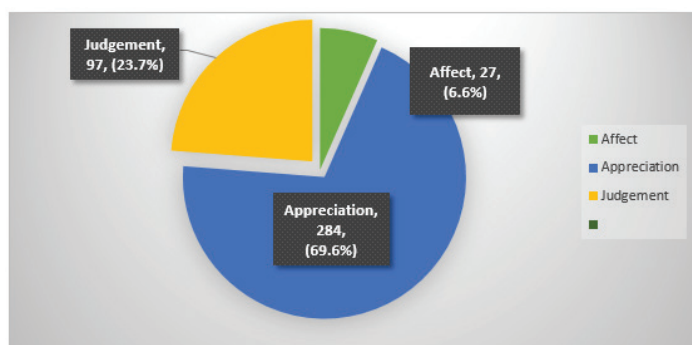


Figure 2: Distribution of attitudinal categories in BES' writing in the top frequent 30 lexis

Figure 2 illustrates that BES prioritize appreciation over judgement and affect as the common attitudinal feature. Appreciation occupies 69.6% while judgement covers a percentage of 23.7% among the detected appraising items. Affect covers 6.6% as the least attitudinal category. This remarkable discrepancy shows BES' tendency to remain centered on evaluating phenomena, issues, and things since they are intensively involved in the business processes and activities handled in business writing. This can be further evidenced as follows:

### Example 1

Nowadays, even after the pandemic is not as frightening (Att: App) as it started off, online business is still very useful (Att: App). Any person can successfully (Att: Judg) do business online, controlling it by the use of the Internet (Participant 32).

Example 1 explains the participant's evaluation of the pandemic as one of the phenomena involved in the expansion of e-commerce being viewed as no longer *frightening* at the present time and online commercial activities being seen as useful. Yet, it illustrates the positive judgement of people's ability to perform online business activities. Furthermore, the data includes some cases where BES express their feelings, in terms of affect, as in example 2:

### Example 2

As corona Virus was spreading the panic (Att: Aff) among people increased, which caused people to stay at home for months terrified of (Att: Aff) being infected (Participant 30).

The two words *panic* and *terrified* describe people's feelings during the outbreak of the virus. This emotional input acts as a persuasive rationale for the vitality

of e-commerce activities during the pandemic. Generally, the scarcity of affective signals may comply with the rigidity and toughness of business discourse. This could be supported by observations of Zinukova (2021) who argues that business discourse is characterized by strict accuracy, objectivity, brevity, lack of imagery and emotionality. In the same context, the data witnesses limited judgement choices which could signify the rarity of human parties involved, encompassing BES who judge themselves and their readers as users of online business in addition to customers and people in general. Accordingly, it can be inferred that business contexts may limit who and what to discuss and who and what to not discuss when interpreting the minimization of affective and judgmental components in writing. Having handled the general aspects of attitude, it is now important to shed light on the students' dialogistic positioning of viewpoints, most particularly on hetero-glossic resources.

## 4.2 Distribution of Hetero-glossic Resources

Hetero-glossic resources pertain to BES' allowance of alternative viewpoints under two dialogistic positioning features: dialogic expansion and dialogic contraction. Table 3 demonstrates how both dialogic options are distributed in BES' writing:

TABLE 3. The frequency of dialogic contraction and dialogic expansion in BES' writing

No. of items in dialogic contraction		No. of items in dialogic expansion	
Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
257	69.27%	114	30.7%

Table 3 demonstrates that BES tend to contract their dialogic space more extensively, covering 69.27% of hetero-glossic resources. On the contrary, they expand their dialogues for 30.7% in the data. This difference asserts BES' massive priority for disclaiming and proclaiming devices which are collectively represented in expressions of negation, contrast, and emphasis. Example 3 illustrates how BES utilize some of such expressions.

### Example 3

Nowadays, even (Eng: hetero: cont: disclaim: counter) after the pandemic isn't (Eng: hetero: cont: disclaim: deny) as frightening as it started off, online business is still (Eng: hetero: cont: disclaim: counter) very useful (Participant 32).

In example 3, the participant is trying to convince their readers that their views are subject to refutation. This is linguistically realized by the use of counter signals such as *even* and *still*, and the denying word *isn't* which obstructs the presumed beliefs of the intended readers. The reader may presumably think that e-business should flourish during the pandemic only. Yet, the participant is persuading them of new alternative beliefs or assumptions to adopt by simply arguing for prolonging e-business activities regardless of the disappearance or inactivity of the pandemic. Generally, the BES' limitation of dialogues could reflect their slighter awareness of discussion opening devices in writing including entertaining, attribution, and acknowledge expressions which are represented in reporting verbs, modals of probability, self-reference expressions, etc.

The analysis illustrates a huge discrepancy in the use of graduation categories: force and focus. This is evident in figure 3.



Figure 3: Distribution of graduation categories: focus and force

Figure 3 reveals an outstanding maximization of force linguistic signals in terms of intensification and quantification. This also indicates BES' significant unfamiliarity with the lexical items that soften and mitigate attitude, termed as focus. Yet, highlighting the most frequent graduation items may interpret the degree of preciseness to which BES measure their attitudes as demonstrated by table 4.

TABLE 4. The five top frequent graduating vocabulary

Vocabulary of intensification	Freq.	Vocabulary of quantification	Freq.
	149 (40%)		194 (60%)
Top five intensifying lexis		Top five quantifying lexis	
More	33	many	40
Increase	24	a lot of / lots of	28
short adjectives (comparative form)	22	huge	12

Very	14	big	8
Most	10	some	8
Freq.	103 (69.1%)	Freq.	96 (42.8%)

Table 4 demonstrates that BES prefer to measure their attitudes through intensifying and quantifying lexical items. However, they are much more interested in employing expressions of higher intensity and scalability as manifested in their remarkable frequency. This could be more clarified in example 4 below:

### Example 4

Yes, the Suez Canal blockage by the ever Given ship in March 2021 took a massive media attention, it did a very large (Grad: Force: inten) impact on world economy, business in *many* (Grad: Force: Quant.) countries *dropped* [Corr: dropped] out because *many* (Grad: Force: Quant.) countries consider their main shipping way is From the suez Canal. It blocked the Suez Canal for *many* (Grad: Force: Quant.) days So *many* (Grad: Force: quant.) ships didn't know how to pass the Canal (Participant 47).

Since the participant repeatedly mentions *many* for 4 times, it can be said there is an obvious lexical poverty which limits their ability to diversify the level of their assessments. Still, they may exaggerate their assessments through using *many* as well. This could interpret the socio-cultural influence which may tend to overgeneralize things.

## 4.2 Areas of Deficiency in BES' Writing

This subsection highlights the four problematic areas which are thought to affect BES' ability to do effective evaluative writing.

### 4.2.1 Repetition of evaluative lexis

Repetition is viewed negatively and positively when it comes to its utilization in writing. Those who support the use of the technique in writing appreciate its persuasive influence for achieving cohesion, highlighting salience, adding impact and creating mnemonic effect in texts (Rinder 2022, 17). According to Martin and White (2005, 144) repetition can function as an intensifying mode either by repeating the same lexical item (e.g., *It's hot, hot, hot*), or by collecting the lists of terms which are closely related semantically (as in *In fact it was probably the most immature, irresponsible, disgraceful, and misleading address, etc.*). Consequently, it can be inferred that repetition may perform an emphatic evaluative function. It can maintain one's attitude and keep the

authorial pace of viewpoint consistent once used concisely and properly utilized.

The other view on repetition may apply to BES' writing situation and is often related to redundancy and wordiness. Fowler (1999) unwelcomes wordiness in writing as an indication of writer's imprecision in the use of language. For Fowler, redundancy is related to wordiness; writers are redundant when they repeat words needlessly. He also argues that redundant vocabulary adds nothing but padding. According to Bailey (2006) repetition and redundancy imply that the writer does not completely control the material. They imply that a writer does not properly understand the language or he is trying to 'pad' the essay by repeating the same point.

In the current situation of writing for evaluation, the redundant use of repetitive items manifests poverty of vocabulary or creates boredom to the imagined addressees who could be waiting for multitude of evaluative lexis that incite their curiosity for argument over the writer's viewpoints, or those which persuade them of the student writers' opinions. This is realizable in the participants' continuous attempts to repeat the same words uncontrollably as in the example below:

#### Example 5

*E-commerce was **usfull** [Corr: useful] during the pandemic. It help [Corr: helps] a lot of people to stay safe [Att: Aff] and away from infections (Att: Jud: ), so in my opinion E-commerce was litirly [ Corr: literally] **usful** [Corr: useful] and it should be expanded in the future however [Corr: whether] the pandemic end [Corr: ends] or not but it was **usfull** [Corr: useful] and **comfortaple** [ Corr: comfortable] and **for me** the most application was **usfull** [Corr: useful] **for me** amazon, talapat and souq.com it's **for me** ,but for another [other] people like businessmen E-banking was **usfol** [Corr: useful] **for them** and **althoe** [Corr: although] **for the old people** E-banking was **usfol** [Corr: useful] **for them** (Participant 5).*

The repetitive words in the example could make a reversal dialogic effect which hinders the readers' interest in the proposed opinions. The excessive use of *useful* discloses the student's lexical poverty especially in adjectives with positive attitudinal meanings to evaluate e-commerce. It also demonstrates an ignorance with semantic word relationships that could transmit the attitudinal stance and relieve the linguistic tension which forces the participant to repeat words and avoid further clarification or evidenced rationale for their stances. In addition to the monotonous feelings which may come from the successive use of

the adjective *useful* and the self-authorial *for me*, the reader might get lost while trying to understand the attitudes especially when reading *but it was usfull and comfotaple* which is a counter engagement to the preceding supportive appreciation of e-commerce as *useful*. Consequently, the reader here may be struggling to negotiate this attitude, being in doubt of the participant's attitudes and their ability to convince since over repetition makes them contradict themselves.

#### 4.2.2 Issues on the personal pronoun choice in evaluative writing

BES employ personal pronouns in their writing to enforce their authority and control over the propositions. They also use them to engage readers by asserting solidarity and making them a central part of their discussions as evident in the examples 6-8.

#### Example 6

*Yes, I totally agree with the expansion of e-commerce in the future of even when the pandemic is over (Participant 12).*

Example 6 manifests the participant's subjective voice. This is reflected in the choice of the pronoun *I* which implies the authority and presence of the participant. Yet, it may initiate the readers' curiosity about the reasons for the participant's personalized stance.

#### Example 7

*We cannot afford another incident that will affect and play a toll on the global economy and business (Participant 16).*

Using *We* affirms the participant's readiness to make their readers central part of the discussion, involving them into a common duty and responsibility. The participant's solidarity incites them to take an immediate action to avoid the occurrence of terrible accidents such as Suez Canal blockage in 2021.

#### Example 8

*Starting online business in a big operatitante [ Corr: opportunity] to a lot of people all around the world [Corr: punc] you can expand your business within 2-3 years and make lots of money in very short time period (Participant 49).*

In example 8, the participant justifies the appreciation of online business, by doing a surprising transition to the reader through the pronoun *you*. This relieves the rigidity and alienation of writing since an interpersonal

relationship is established and the readers' curiosity is aroused. This conception goes with Hyland (2004, 143) who argues that "self-mention plays a crucial role in mediating the relationship between writers' arguments and the expectations of their readers". As such, the use of *you* enables the participant to judge the reader's ability to benefit from online business activities, thus giving a persuasive support or evidence for the appreciative attitude toward electronic business. Simultaneously, the use of the personal pronouns would also affirm the appreciative view of using the personal pronouns in business writing as they arouse a conversation with the reader and they make business sound like a human being not a corporation (Garner 2012).

However, Garner's view of humanizing business through personal pronoun choice may sometimes be unwelcomed in writing about business. The reason is that people may need to alienate themselves from responsibility and view business as a rigid professional activity rather than a humanized activity (Bernoff 2017). If Bernoff's view is applied in evaluative writing, it means that BES will have to support their propositions with external resources to which they ascribe responsibility. In this case, personal pronouns should be minimized to limit the personalization of attitudes. Another issue with the overuse of personal pronouns, in evaluative contexts, is the constriction of the putative readers. This is especially seen when the pronoun *you* is uncontrollably used. The concern here is that the direct addressivity through *you* may not fulfill the communicative goal of persuading the intended readers to share the writer's desired attitude or belief and could divert them from the desired dialogic interaction, creating a reversal effect instead. Examples 9 and 10 add more clarification:

**Example 9**

*Have you ever thought of doing business online without even the presence of the corona virus pandemic? if you answered yes to that question then, you are not alone. In my opinion, doing business online is advantageous to most of the people (participant 15).*

**Example 10**

*The first and major advantage is that you can do your business from home laying on your couch while this business should be actually done abroad which is extraordinary. Besides this, you can also do a business in your country online which will be also a time saver. In my opinion, both reasons are convincing enough to do your business (Participant 15).*

The participant addresses the reader directly as if he or

she is talking to the readers in a real physical situation. Using the pronoun, *you*, for 5 times, and its possessive adjective *your* for 3 times, the participant expects the reader to spontaneously accept their own opinion. Using a rhetorical expository question is intended to force the readers into particular responses to ensure like-mindedness or concurrence of the reader (White 2021). Yet, this pre-supposed agreement realized in saying "*If your answer is yes, you are not alone*" signifies a single non-refusable view and relies on the reader's alignment with the desired response "yes" which may contradict with the reader's own choice. Yet, this restriction of the response into the desired yes violates the reader's right for argument or objections and perhaps makes them unconvinced of the stance of the participant. In addition, the successive repetition of *you* shifts the authorial focus from the participant to the reader whereby the participant -who supports the benefits of e-commerce- is besieging the reader. Thus, the reader, in one way or another, would have no dialogic role due to the dominating value position casted on them. Accordingly, dialogic interaction may not be as successful as required.

**4.2.3 Minimal use of reporting verbs**

The analysis discloses a considerable minimization of reporting verbs. This is observable in table 5.

TABLE 5. The frequent reporting verbs in BES' writing

Ranking	Reporting verbs	Frequency
1	agree\disagree	33
2	Think	8
3	Believe	7
4	see (=think)	7
5	Prove	4
6	Consider	3
6	find (=think)	3
6	Say	3
6	State	3
7	Tell	2
7	Show	2
8	Discuss	1
8	Mention	1
8	Infer	1
<b>Total verbs</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Freq. as per-student</b>		<b>1.09%</b>

According to table 5, there are 78 recurrences for 14 reporting verbs. If the collection of the verbs is dispersed across the 71 participants, as per student, this means each student uses about 1.09 % of the verbs in their writing. Some participants turn out to be unfamiliar with the verbs at all. The dispersion of the verbs may arouse questions over the types of verbs that need to be maximized in BE writing classes or courses for evaluative purposes. Of necessity, reporting verbs can be used to attribute the propositional content to other sources and evaluate them (Hyland 2002). They can be used to entertain, acknowledge, document, and endorse the attitudinal proposition (Martin and White 2005). This evaluative importance of reporting verbs is also highlighted by the proof that a writer of business should present to write persuasive content (Gilling 2013). Such a proof is of course extended from external resources, which can be linguistically expressed through reporting verbs.

The rarity of reporting verbs may also indicate that BES still present their viewpoints with a higher degree of confidence, sourcing opinions from their own subjective perspectives and expecting a spontaneous agreement from the readers. Yet, they alienate themselves from learning the professional liability required when evaluating business matters. In this concern, Jun (2020) thinks that the minimization of reporting verbs is ascribed to the students' unawareness that writing is an interactional activity. Most important, such an unfamiliarity with attempts to cite, endorse, or acknowledge other viewpoints surely asserts non-proven assumptions in BES' writing which weaken the evaluative persuasion and make it difficult to determine their dialogistic positioning. These findings are motivating to explore the incorporation of the grammar of reported speech in BE writing courses to improve the quality of evaluative writing.

#### 4.2.4 Minimization of figurative language

A thorough investigation reveals that there were only 18 attempts for using figurative devices (e.g., metaphor) for evaluative purposes. If this minimal number is distributed as per participant, it means each one uses only 0.25% of figurative devices in the whole data. This tendency may reflect that BES generally use a language which is direct, plain, and free of imagery to express their attitudes. Such a language is evident in examples 11 and 12.

#### Example 11

*Yes, I agree. Business online is very important (Att: App) in the future in anticipation for anything to happen (Participant 12).*

#### Example 12

*Online shopping has proven essential (Att: App) in the past two years whether you have an app for furniture, food, medicine or even terminal items, you will always find yourself in need of (Att: Jud) fast delivery and extended customer service (Participant 19).*

The supportive attitude for e-commerce in examples 11 and 12 is observed through the appreciation of e-commerce as *important* and *essential*. The two adjectives do not imply connotative or hidden or non-literal associations. BES' unawareness of figurative input can be interpreted in light of the impact of business discourse where imagery may not be utilized (Zinukova 2021). It may be also ascribed to the need for clarity as a recommended feature in business writing (Greavu 2019; Gilling 2013).

Despite the restraints that may interpret BES' minimization of figurative clues, it is still claimed that professional writers exploit figurative language for writing about business since "business means not only livelihood but it can be a source of luxury. It is tempting to suggest that business is so dear to the human heart that it is treated like one's own soul and body" (Luczak 2011, 8). Additionally, Martin and White (2005) highlight that attitudes can be intensified or quantified figuratively. For example, on saying *The prices skyrocketed*, the two scholars reveal that the metaphor here implies a higher degree of vigor (148). The findings on figurative language in BES' writing may raise questions over the need to familiarize BES with figures of speech to enrich their attitudinal persuasion and diversify the linguistic expressions in evaluative contexts.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of BES' writing reveals that appreciation is mostly prioritized for attitudes. This signifies the involvement and interactions of non-human entities rather than human personalities in BES' writing. It may be ascribed to the toughness or rigidity of some business discussions, as evident in the rarity of emotive expressions. BES maximize common vocabulary due to the directness of business language, or because of the poverty in the level of lexis which triggers them to write repetitively. They frequently prefer the verbal style to the adjectival and nominal forms to express their attitudes. This may imply the dynamicity resulting from the involved entities that are appreciated. BES turn out to contract their dialogues more often. For this purpose, they utilize negative, contrastive, and emphatic expressions, by which they refute, contrast, or confirm some opinions. They minimize

discussion opening strategies, showing their tendency to disregard the readers' expectations and motivate them to agree with theirs. As for graduation, BES measure their attitudes through overusing the force category in terms of quantification and intensification. Besides, they prefer wordings of higher scalability and intensity which imply their imprecise and exaggerated assessments. Still, they lack knowledge of the language used for sharpening and softening attitudes, termed as focus, which is used at a minimal rate.

The findings of the study reveal that BES face some linguistic problems that affect their evaluative competency. First, repetition of attitudinal vocabulary reveals the poverty in attitudinal lexis (Wang 2017; Fitriat, Solihah and Tusino 2018). Still, it may decrease their ability to diversify the expression of attitude and hinder the readers' attention. It could cause ambiguity in negotiating attitudinal meanings. It also reduces the intended dialogic effect as it creates boredom or transmits offensive attitudes to the imagined readers. Second, reporting verbs are used minimally in BES' writing. This obstructs BES' ability to cite, endorse, document, and attribute other voices in order to engage readers in an effective written communication. This shortage makes them excessively personalize their authorial voices and alternatively rely on monoglossic resources that do not initiate a dialogic interaction or expansion and present their propositions as non-arguable facts. In this sense, rarity of reporting verbs could reflect unawareness that writing is an interactional activity (Jun 2020). Third, using personal pronouns successively and repetitively is, sometimes, not optimally required in business evaluative contexts. It could lead to misinterpretation of the readers' dialogic intension or look constrictive to the imagined readers. Sometimes, it may be inconvenient in case writers want to avoid responsibility over propositions or considering business a professional activity (Bernoff 2017). Fourth, BES still minimize figurative language. This may indicate the need to maximize BES' proficiency in using metaphoric, idiomatic, and non-literal linguistic signals to enrich the attitudinal persuasion rather than relying on a direct language.

To improve BES' writing quality for evaluative purposes, the study recommends incorporating Communicative Approach and Functional- Notional Syllabi where conceptual competency is given priority. This may agree with Fitriat, Solihah and Tusino (2018) who suggest following a meaning-based instruction to improve evaluative writing in narrative writing. Moreover, BE instructors should introduce debate teaching strategies by giving pre-writing or post-writing tasks that require argumentation. Furthermore, BES should maximize advanced vocabulary, to

diversify their expression of attitude and overcome their excessive repetition in writing. Thus, learning about paraphrasing techniques (e.g. synonyms) is significant. They need to master the grammar of reported speech which involves reporting verbs. Additionally, it is necessary to work on the teaching of quantifiers, intensifiers, and gradable adjectives to show vigor and diversify the degree of intensity and precision of attitudes. Still, the BES should be acquainted with figurative devices to add a rhetorical influence for the attitudes intended. In this case, they can read on business topics since those in business should view themselves as professional writers belonging to the same club as journalists, ad agencies, and book authors (Garner 2012).

To conclude, the quality of business writing matters for professional excellence and success (Ranaut 2018; Gaertner-Jonston 2014; Talbot 2009). Therefore, it would be necessary to explore the ability to express opinions and to dialogize with readers in business academic settings to prepare future business writers or professionals who are able to evaluate persuasively and effectively. The findings may open doors for studying the recommendations and maximizing research interests for the applicability of the curricular and methodological solutions in ESP. However, they do not necessarily guarantee a completely sound effectivity or may not be generalizable on other genres of writing due to the probable intersection of different variables. This matter may require an in-depth-research reading and the implementation of further studies on evaluative writing.

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