

A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF INTERPERSONAL PERSUASIVE WRITING SKILLS OF PAKISTANI ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Ayesha Asghar Gill

Lecturer, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Pakistan

ayesha.asghar@uaf.edu.pk

Ghazala Kausar

Assistant Professor, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan

gkausar@numl.edu.pk

Shahbaz Haider

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of English, Government College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan

shahbazhaider023@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Persuasive writing skills empower English Language Learners (ELLs) to produce, evaluate, and understand ethical, professional, and political discourse. The appraisal system provides lexical and grammatical uses in each stage and phase of argumentative writing to develop prosodies required to construct an authorial voice and enable a writer to confront diverse viewpoints to build a convincing argument and build solidarity with readers. This work investigates the uses of appraisal system choices according to each phase of the argumentative genre schematic structure to achieve persuasion in fifty Pakistani argumentative essays drawn from the International Corpus of Learners English (ICLE). The findings reveal that most undergraduate Pakistani English Learners inappropriately utilized appraisal language choices regarding stage and phase requirements which undermined the persuasiveness of Pakistani learners' arguments. It is likely to deduce that this work can explicitly assist the English language teaching and learning community using evaluative writing skills central to persuasive written discourse.

Keywords: Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Analytical Argumentative Essay Writing, Persuasive Language Patterns, Argumentative Genre Model, Appraisal Theory

INTRODUCTION

The effective use of persuasive language provides an educated person with opportunities to actively participate in democratic societies (Martin, 1989). In the democratic system, educated persons persuade their audience to promote their beliefs or notions on various matters using persuasive language skills (Crowhurst, 1988, 1990; Stapleton & Wu, 2015; To, Thomas, & Thomas, 2020). Emphasizing the vitality of persuasive writing in education, Hess (2009) maintains that the ability to write persuasively nurtures the democratic norms in the education system. The persuasive linguistic features, i.e., deliberate, precise, and sustained language resources of conciseness, accumulation, and causality, can assist English Language Learners in offering a plausible explanation of their viewpoints to be the critical participants of the research world. This research used analytical argumentative essays in which Pakistani learners persuaded their readers to adopt a specific intellectual stance on an important matter, arguing for the credibility of a well-formulated claim or thesis (Martin, 1989). The primary purposes of the study are an analysis of frequencies of interpersonal linguistic choices used within the structural phases of Pakistani argumentative essays and their potential impacts on analytical written discourse.

As indicated above, persuasive writing is an effective medium to sustain the democratic environment in academia. Various researches argue that most Pakistani English Language Learners (PELLs) face two serious difficulties in producing effective argumentative writing (Gill & Janjua, 2020a; Gill & Janjua, 2020b; Haider et al., 2021; Bukhari & Shakir, 2020). First, PELLs do not often satisfy argumentative responses according to their social and cultural demands. The second point is that most Pakistani English Language Teachers (ELT) resort to the grammar-translation method for teaching

the English language.

Pakistani learners need to explicitly learn lexical and grammatical patterns according to generic structures of argumentative essay writing. The researchers selected Martin and Rose's appraisal theory (2005) to examine the persuasiveness of Pakistani learners' essays by exploring persuasive language resources of their argumentative essays. The appraisal theory can equip Pakistani students with a broad spectrum of interpersonal linguistic patterns to adopt a stance on an issue by formulating logically effective arguments. Thus, it is quite likely that the research will illuminate the critical aspects of persuasive language that should be used to assess, adopt positions, and effectively employ interpersonal relationships and positionings. The study contains the following research objectives:

1. To find out interpersonal appraisal linguistic choices used in the Pakistani argumentative essays
2. To identify the academically valued appraisal choices required to enhance the persuasiveness of argumentative essays

Based on the primary research objectives, the present research has responded to the following two research questions (RQs):

RQ1. What types of interpersonal appraisal linguistic choices were predominately used in the Pakistani argumentative essays?

RQ2. Did the interpersonal patterns deployed by Pakistani English Language Learners produce persuasiveness in their argumentative essays?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section has presented an overview of the evaluating language resources prevalent in the proficient writers' academic research and argumentative essays. The mature writers exploit the evaluative linguistic resources of appraisal subsystems, that is, Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. These resources help them attribute their arguments to the propositions, whereas this attribute is a challenge for novice writers to embed the evaluations of crucial points in argumentative essays (Mori, 2017; Chang & Schleppegrell, 2011; Miller et al., 2014). In the discourse, the interpersonal linguistic resources enacted the tenor register variable (i.e., situation-based linguistic variations focusing on roles and relationships) realize the relationships of judgment and attitude between readers and writers (Schleppegrell, 2004).

The review of previous researches (, e.g., Xiaoyu, 2017; Hood, 2005, 2010; Hyland, 2005; Mei & Allison, 2007; Thomas, 2014; Lee, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2015) affirms that Appreciation attitudinal resources are dominant features of argumentative discourse to evaluate things, entities, texts, products, and processes, by not directly assessing human behavior. Appreciation resources in academic texts generate lexically dense structures and causality inside and among the clauses. In the Engagement subsystem, choices such as multiple voices (, e.g., *the researchers argue that...*, *it can be inferred that...*, *I think...*) are included and acknowledged in the high graded argumentative essays. These resources enhance the persuasive power of the position adopted in the argumentative texts (Ryshina-Pankova, 2014). The Attitudinal and Engagement resources are intensified via Graduation appraisal resources to vary the intensity of arguments presented in the written discourse and align readers to the positions (Lam & Crosthwaite, 2018). The use of evoked Graduation resources (, e.g., *definite*, *some kind of*, *few*, and *recently*, etc.) makes the overt claims about the researches to maintain the balance of overall voices (, e.g., *However, few researches of language learning have investigated...*). Graduation resources like *quite* /*more relatively little* attention sharpen or soften the target responses in argumentative response.

The present research has explored the potential impact of evaluative patterns according to phases of Pakistani argumentative essays. Despite identifying the highly valued appraisal linguistic choices for argumentative texts, Pakistani teachers do not pay sufficient attention to teaching these evaluative linguistic resources concerning ELLs. Consequently, they encounter difficulties in meeting the required interpersonal demands of each phase. Accordingly, the likelihood is that the present study will present explicit uses of interpersonal language choices needed to enhance the persuasive power of argumentative discourse.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection and Sampling Method

The present research selected a corpus of fifty Pakistani argumentative essays of university undergraduate learners retrieved from the International Corpus of Learners English (Granger et al., 2009), and each essay in the corpus contains 500 to 1000 words. To conduct a comprehensive analysis of essays, the researchers used purposive random sampling to obtain detailed information of undergraduate Pakistani learners' interpersonal appraisal choices in writing academic argumentative essays.

Research Framework

The researcher divided the analysis into two sub-sections: the argumentative genre model and the appraisal theory of research framework for this research.

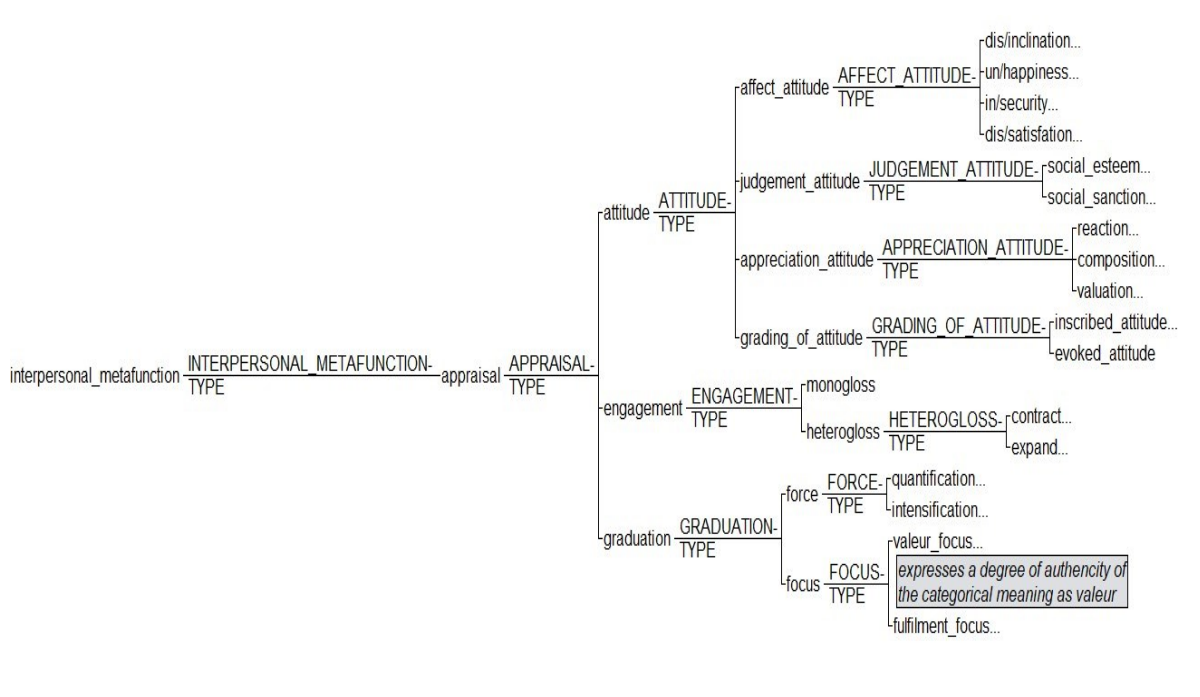
Genre Analysis

Martin and Rose (2008) mentioned the broad stages of analytical, argumentative essays (i.e., thesis, argument, and conclusion). They divided stages into more specific phases, i.e., macro-Theme (, i.e., thesis statement), hyper-Theme (i.e., topic sentence), hyper-Rheme (i.e., concluding sentence), and macro-New (, i.e., Conclusion stage).

Interpersonal Meta-function Realized by Appraisal Theory

The appraisal theory presented by Martin and Rose (2005) focuses on the subjective style of writers or speakers in texts while adopting stances on the presentation of material and communication with others. The three dimensions of evaluative language choices in the appraisal theory are Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. In this research, the researchers deployed a comprehensive appraisal language patterns framework designed by Haider (2020) to investigate the appraisal writing choices of Pakistani learners systematically. The following figure illustrates an overview of the appraisal theory:

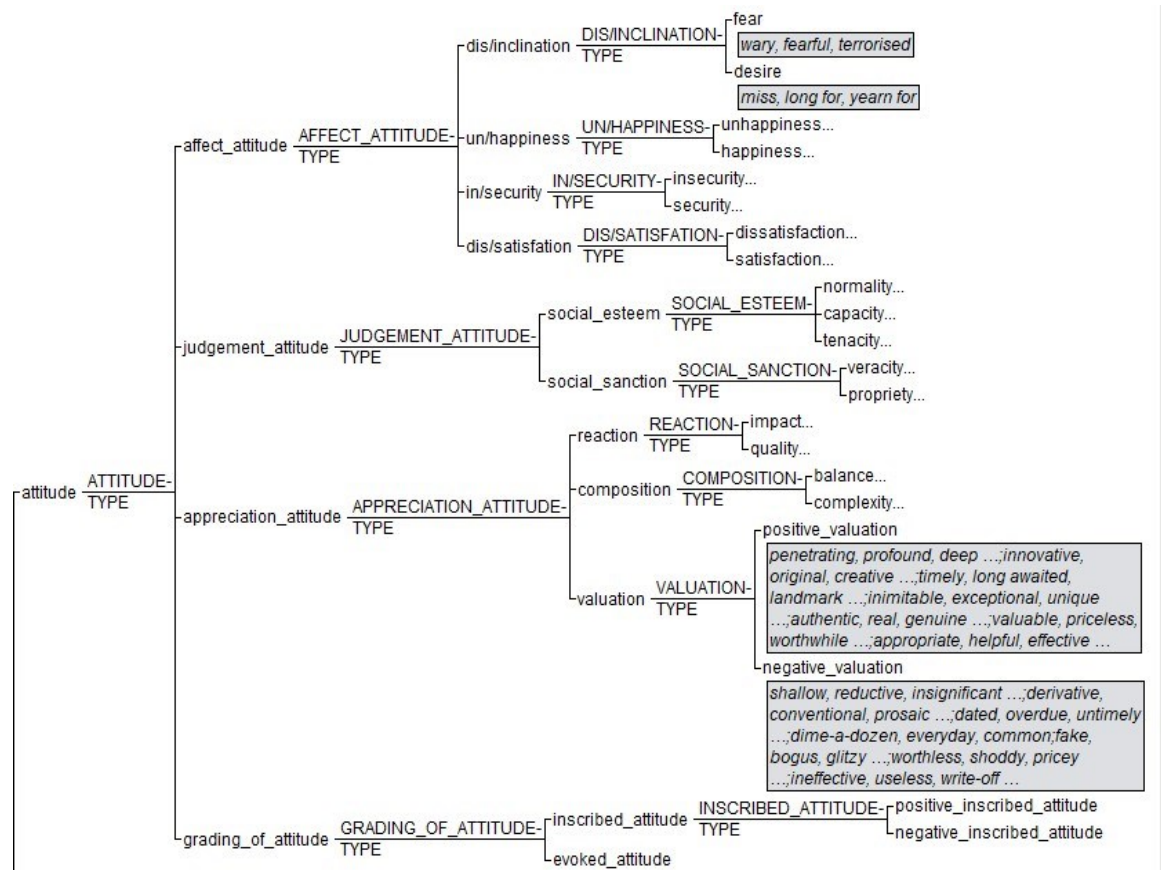
Figure 1 Overview of Appraisal Choices and their Sub-systems



Attitudinal Resources. Attitude resources are concerned with feelings, including emotional reactions, the judgment of behavior, and the evaluation of things (Martin & White, 2005). The three paradigms of feelings in Attitude are *Affect*, *Judgement*, and *Appreciation*. Affect linguistic resources are used to construe the emotional reaction (e.g., we *adore* the colorful flowers.), Then, Judgement resources are used for evaluating the behavior of various normative principles (e.g., She is *beautiful*). Appreciation focuses on resources utilized to assess the value of entities, including a natural phenomenon (e.g., the mountain seems *stunning* from the air.). The following figure presents the

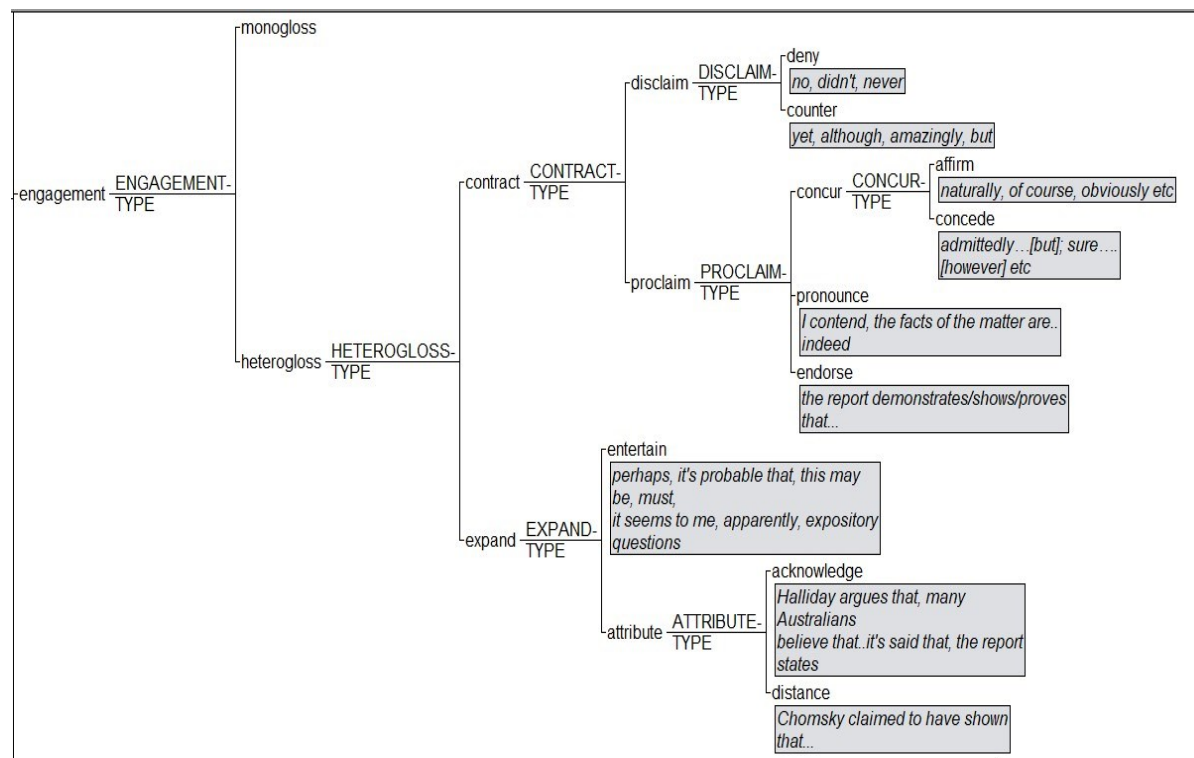
attitudinal resources and their types below:

Figure 2 Types of Attitudinal Resources



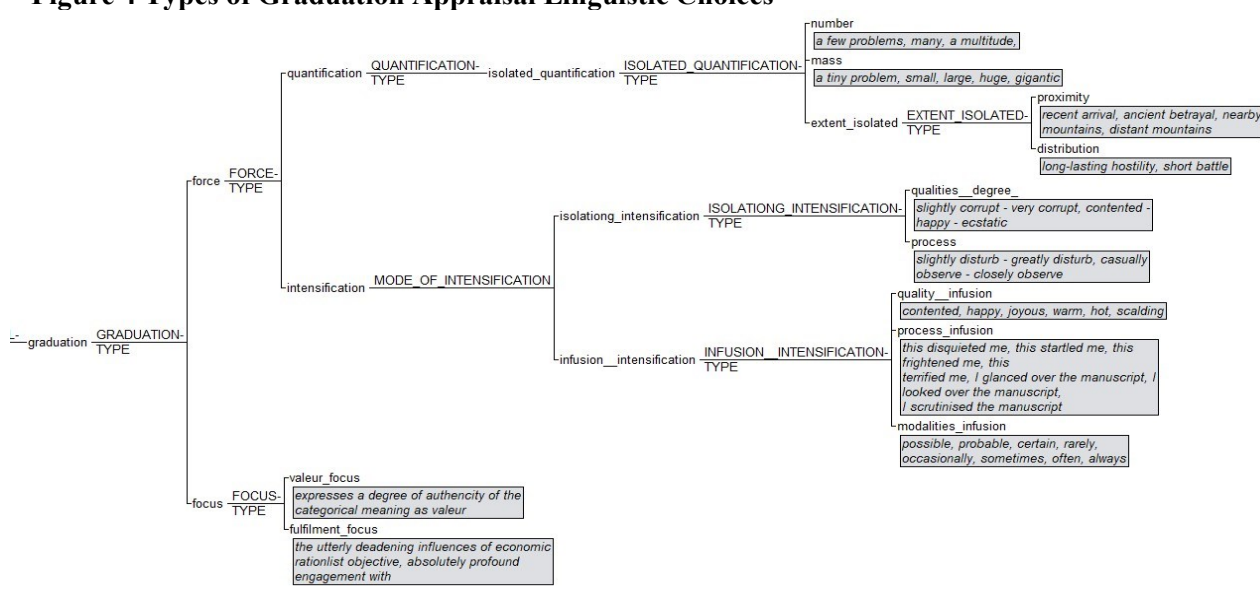
Engagement Appraisal Resources. The next region in Appraisal theory is Engagement appraisal choices consisting of projection (, i.e., reported speeches), modality, polarity, and concession, numerous comment adverbials to position the writers/speakers' stance in the text as depicted below:

Figure 3 Sub-types of Engagement Appraisal Resources



Graduation Appraisal Resources. The final one is Graduation concerned with the gradability of Attitudinal and Engagement resources. The attitudinal resources can be adjusted by intensifying feelings such as *extremely* beautiful, a *little* upset, and *most* dangerous. The following figure presents Graduation appraisal resources:

Figure 4 Types of Graduation Appraisal Linguistic Choices



Procedures Followed in the Analysis of Essays

The following steps were adopted to analyze the appraisal resources of the essays:

- i. Manually dissecting the fifty essays into their respective phases by applying the generic model of the argumentative essay proposed by Martin and Rose (2008)
- ii. Creating fifty folders of each essay having the notepad files of phases
- iii. After manually designing the tagging scheme used in the study of Haider (2020) in the UAM corpus tool (O'Donnell, 2008), fifty folders comprising 340 notepad files were uploaded to the UAM corpus tool to systematically tag and count the frequencies of appraisal choices of essays
- iv. Annotating the possible appraisal choices of the phases within each folder one by one
- v. After computing the frequencies, the appraisal choices were tabulated concerning the phases of the essays.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section consists of three sub-sections: results, findings, and discussion of interpersonal writing choices of Pakistani English Language Learners. The result section will tabulate the frequency of appraisal resources in fifty essays in percentages concerning each argumentative phase. The findings will detail the variations of interpersonal resources deployed in the essays and their pertinent examples. Finally, the discussion section will explain the textual impact of interpersonal language features (i.e., Attitudinal, Engagement, and Graduation interpersonal linguistic patterns) on the persuasiveness of Pakistani argumentative essays.

Results of Interpersonal Resources in Pakistani Argumentative Essays

The following table No 1 provided the majority percentages of appraisal resources used by Pakistani learners in different phases:

Table No. 1 Percentages of Appraisal Patterns in Different Phases of Argumentative Essays

Types of Appraisal Patterns	Sub-types of Appraisal Patterns	Percentages and Frequencies of Appraisal Patterns Within Phases								
		Elaboration	Macro-Theme	Evaluation	Preview	Hyper-Theme	Claim	Support	Hyper-New	Macro-New
Attitude Resources	P. Normality	11%	0	0	8%	0	8%	5%	0	15%
	P. capacity	38%	27%	30%	44%	88%	38%	37%	13%	42%
	P. Propriety	24%	43%	16%	28%	0	23%	17%	75%	19%
	P. Impact	5%	0	5%	4%	0	0	7%	0	0
Engagement Resources	Counter	32%	20%	40%	39%	0	50%	40%	25%	28%
	Entertain	24%	60%	0	44%	0	24%	0	0	60%
	Acknowledge	16%	0	0	0	0	0	21%	0	0
	Distance	12%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Graduation Resources	Number	14%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Prox- Time	12%	0	0	23%	0	0	24%	0	0
	Quality	25%	27%	0	32%	0	33%	33%	0	18%
	Process	21%	0	0	0	0	26%	0	0	18%
	Valeur	0	36%	50%	18 %	0	0	0	0	0
	Fulfilment	20%	18%	0	0	0	24%	0	0	45%

N= Negative; P= Positive; Prox= Proximity

Table No 1 illustrates that ELLs utilized most Judgement resources, Monogloss resources, and Quality resources with Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation resources, respectively.

Findings of Interpersonal Resources in Pakistani Argumentative Essays

Attitude Resources

Within attitude resources, Pakistani learners excessively employed the Judgement subsystem Social Esteem and Capacity resources to portray characters sympathetically. In comparison to the Judgement resources of Social Esteem, the infrequent use of the Social Sanction Judgement resources depicted the ethical perspective of the character depiction, such as *in a polite way*, *both are equally responsible*, and "... *polite and sensitive*, etc. As compared to Judgement resources, the Pakistani argumentative essays

contained a low proportion of the Appreciation resources.

Uses of Engagement Resources

Engagement resources have Monoglossic (i.e., bare assertions) and Heteroglossic resources (i.e., expansive dialogic clauses). ELLs used Heteroglossic resources frequently to contract dialogic space to draw the comparison. However, Heteroglossic resources to expand dialogic space were infrequent in the argumentative essays' phases. The small number of the expansive dialogic choices indicated that Pakistani learners often made allowances for alternative positions and voices.

The researcher analyzed the heteroglossic expanding dialogic resources in the two sub-sections: Entertain and Attribute. To provide dialogical space for the uncommitted readers, the Pakistani learners seldom used the Entertain resources realized by modal verbs, e.g., *We can discuss this topic in these words that ..., we can easily understand*, etc. Secondly, Pakistani learners also used a higher number of Acknowledge resources at the elaboration and support phases by acknowledging the external resources (, i.e., *The Holy Prophet (PBUH) has said...*, *Researches have shown ...*).

Graduation Resources

In the argumentative essays, Pakistani learners mostly used Graduation subsystem Force resources more than Graduation subsystem Focus resources to reinforce attitudinal resources concerning women as better parents. In Quantification resources of Force, Pakistani learners respectively utilized Number linguistic choices (e.g., *Most of the fathers..., Most of the working women...*) and the Proximity of Time resources (e.g., *The woman work day and night...*, etc.) to draw the comparison between mother and father and to evaluate the period of mother at home and father at the job. Through the intensification of qualities realized by adjectives, e.g., more sensible, more patience, more time.

In Graduation subsystem Focus resources, Pakistani learners used Focus resources to target different roles of characters, e.g., "*..... in a very proper way*", "*..... properly*", "*..... equally ... equally responsible*", *especially* and *particularly*, etc.

Discussion of Appraisal Patterns in Pakistani Argumentative Essays

After analyzing appraisal resources, the researchers observed that Pakistani English Language Learners excessively utilized Social Esteem resources (i.e., the subcategory of Judgement resources). The Social Esteem resources, consequently, personalized majority opinions, i.e., *the personality of mothers as the better parents*, in argumentative texts, e.g.,

Example 1

Naturally, they (mothers) have such *a flexible personality* [+Ve Capacity] that they can *easily adapt* [+Ve Capacity] themselves according to the *needs and requirements of their children* [+Ve Reaction; Appreciation] not only in their childhood but also after that. (Preview, Essay PAAM1002)

The high proportion of the explicit Judgement system resources (i.e., *a flexible personality, easily adapt, and needs and requirements of their children*) tended to exhibit the student writers' explicitly emotional and biased position towards the women's character as the mothers. The subjective judgments reduced the persuasiveness of argumentative writing, as also mentioned by Lee (2006, 2008b).

Argumentative essay writing demands the institutionalized social feelings to incorporate formality, objectivity, and impartiality in the academic discourse (Schleppegrell, 2004, 1996, 2001, 2008; Hood 2005; Thomas & To, 2016). The writer can acquire formal and depersonalized style via highly nominalized Appreciation subsystem Valuation and Composition resources. These resources evaluate things and entities in the successful writing constructions (Martin & White, 2005; Lee, 2008b). Using the Appreciation resources, the proficient writers incorporate the implied judgment to enhance neutrality in argumentative writing. However, very few examples of appreciation choices of reaction were used in Pakistani essays as mentioned below:

Example 2

Their positive attitude and behavior *affect* [-Ve Reaction; Appreciation] the children both physically and mentally in a positive way and make them *good people of the society* [+Ve Propriety; Judgement]. (Elaboration Phase, PAGF1092)

The reaction patterns of appreciation resources (,i.e., *affect*) demonstrated the Pakistani learners' emotional stance about the personalities of mother and father that creates a more personalized voice, displaying an ill-constructed academic audience (Lee, 2008b). Pakistani writers used contractive Heterogloss resources to engage readers in all the phases of stages of the essays. They did it to draw a

comparison between the characters' responsibilities. However, the excessive use of concessive resources (, i.e., *but*, *however*, and *on the hand*) was likely to be inappropriate at the thesis and conclusion stage since Hyland (1990) and Lee (2011) confirm that the functions of both stages are to majorly provide the writer's viewpoint rather than accommodating the readers' perceptive.

Apart from the counter-expectancy choices, Pakistani learners used the expanding dialogic space resources to present culture-based and direct citations in their essays. Firstly, writers used Acknowledgement resources mostly incorrectly to cite the culture-based quotations, e.g., "*The Holy Prophet (PBUH) has said,*". The culture-based quotes presented a particular cultural perspective that can only be understood if the readers belong to one specific community. In other words, the assertions provided by the authority of any specific culture cannot convince the international readers belonging to different cultures. Secondly, the direct citation of culture-based quotations indicated the learners' incomplete understanding of the meanings of the citations rather than interpreting the quotes. Promwinai (2010) found that proficient writers interpreted the references in their essays via paraphrasing. Thus, the likelihood is that the more significant proportion of direct quotations ultimately demonstrates the student writers' incapacity of effectively utilizing the references for supporting the claims.

As far as Graduation resources are concerned, most of the Quality resources intensified the motherly qualities in the Pakistani Essays. The intensification of character traits increases argumentative writing persuasiveness. Still, the intensified descriptive adjectives, pointed out by Hyland (2000) and Lee & Deakin (2016), cannot align the readers to the position presented in the argumentative texts. Moreover, Pakistani writers in their argumentative essays intensified a character like a mother through Valeur resources (e.g., *specifically* or *particularly*). These resources specify women's different roles such as housewife, mother, or working lady and Fulfillment resources of Focus (e.g., *in a proper manner*) to describe how mothers perform their duties regarding childcare. The specificity of the motherly roles via Focus resources builds Pakistani writers' controversial claims because of not correctly utilizing the modality to convince the uncommitted readers.

CONCLUSION

The present paper analyzed interpersonal appraisal writing choices in fifty Pakistani argumentative essays to evaluate their effects on analytical, argumentative essays. The analysis demonstrated that Pakistani English Language Learners misused Judgment patterns of Social Esteem to reveal the writers' emotional judgment rather than using standardized social feelings, i.e., impersonality, formality, and objectivity. Pakistani learners used more concessive patterns of Contractive Heterogloss resources at the thesis and conclusion stages to engage the readers in the text. The concessive resources affected the primary function of the thesis and conclusion stages. In these stages, the Pakistani learners need to provide their viewpoint through the skillful utilization of Heterogloss expanding dialogic resources rather than countering the readers' assumptions.

Additionally, Pakistani learners used the Acknowledgement resources in essays for quoting the culture-based direct references. The cultural-based citations inhibited the essays' reading comprehension, specifically for the international audience. Pakistani writers used attitudinal choices and engagement subsystem Force resources to sharpen the attributes. These attributes resultantly converted the argumentative discourse into descriptive text. Furthermore, student writers extended descriptive style via Engagement subsystem Focus resources to categorize different roles of personalities.

Although the research findings comprise the small-scale sampling of 50 essays, the detailed analysis of interpersonal appraisal language choices can furnish English Language Teachers with profound insights into persuasive writing. Consequently, it is likely to be deduced that the inappropriate understanding of Pakistani English Language Learners' interpersonal language choices reduced the persuasive power of the argumentative written discourse.

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