



## Attitudinal Meanings of Teacher Discourse

### in a College English Reading Class

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#### APA Citation:

Lin, X., & Foley, J. A. (2025). Attitudinal meanings of teacher discourse in a college English reading class.

*Journal of English Language and Linguistics*, 6(1), 36-52. <https://doi.org/10.62819/jel.2025.813>

**Received:** February 6, 2025

**Revised:** March 21, 2025

**Accepted:** March, 21, 2025

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#### Abstract

This study analyzed a sample of teacher discourse from a college English reading class based on the attitude system from Martin's appraisal theory. The objectives were to identify and describe the features of attitudinal resources in teacher discourse, and to investigate how attitudinal meanings contribute to the construction of a harmonious relationship between teachers and students. The participants were a female teacher and 35 undergraduates at Minnan University of Science and Technology (MNUST) in China. The data were based on classroom recordings of the discourse and its transcription. By analyzing and summarizing the distribution features of the three subsystems of the attitudinal resources in the teacher discourse, it was found that all the three kinds of attitudes—*affect*, *judgement* and *appreciation* were expressed and there were more positive rather than negative attitudes. The findings also showed how harmonious classroom relationships between the teacher and students were constructed, providing insights into the role of attitudinal meanings in teacher discourse and its implications, as well as exploring the guiding significance for college English reading teaching.

**Keywords:** appraisal theory, college English, teacher discourse

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## Introduction

To meet the needs of the popularization of higher education and adapt to the adjustment of China's economic structure, application-oriented colleges and universities have emerged as the times require. Such colleges and universities primarily focus on undergraduate education, emphasizing application, practicality, and the connection with local economic and social development needs. They are committed to training applied talents, which plays an important supporting role in local economic and social development (Yang et al. , 2023). In this context, college English, as an essential subject in application-oriented universities, has distinct features. One of the most prominent challenges is that students in application-oriented colleges often have relatively weaker English proficiency. A considerable proportion of students do not have a solid foundation in English knowledge, lack comprehensive ability, and experience varying degrees of study-weariness or feelings of inferiority. Due to the long-term influence of examination-oriented education and traditional educational concepts, in terms of the current situation of English teaching at MNUST, too much emphasis is placed on training and development at the knowledge and skill levels, while not enough attention is paid to students' emotional factors. As a result, the efficiency of college English teaching is relatively low, and students' interest in learning English is generally not high. Nevertheless, for the college students, gaining a good command of English language knowledge is urgently needed, especially after their graduation, which is usually the most convenient tool for interpersonal communication in their future career fields.

Additionally, with the promotion of "Made in China 2025", the demand for application-oriented innovative talents is increasing. This trend puts forward new requirements for teaching, which aims to cultivate applied talents with comprehensive abilities and requires that educational goals be closely aligned with societal needs. Language ability, as one of the core competencies, not only helps students better understand international literature and technical materials in their specialized studies, but also enables effective communication and collaboration in practical work. Based on the concept of OBE (Outcome Based Education), the importance of a student-centered approach should be realized during the cultivation of applied talents (Zhang, 2023). For foreign language learners, classroom teaching is the main place where they are frequently exposed to the target language. The kind of language used by teachers for instruction in the classroom is known as teacher discourse (Santosa et al., 2020), which involves the values, beliefs, and identities that teachers construct and negotiate within their pedagogical practices. During the teaching process, the interpersonal meanings and attitudinal factors of teacher discourse have an obvious influence on teacher-student interaction. Language is considered the fastest and most convenient medium for interpersonal communication. Appropriate and effective teacher discourse can lead to friendly relationships with students, create a harmonious atmosphere in the classroom, and simultaneously enhance teaching

effectiveness, which is beneficial to the development of language teaching. Therefore, teacher discourse attracts our ongoing attention, as it plays a crucial role in English teaching and learning. Moreover, abundant attitudinal resources are distributed in teacher discourse.

Appraisal theory explores how attitudes, judgements, and emotive responses are explicitly presented in discourse, as well as how they may be more indirectly implied, presupposed, or assumed. It is a system of interpersonal meanings that is “concerned with evaluation: the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and the ways in which values are sourced and readers/listeners aligned” (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 25). This is particularly relevant to teacher discourse, as it provides insights into how teachers’ language choices shape classroom interactions and influence students’ engagement and learning motivation, and learning outcomes. Combining appraisal theory with teacher discourse allows for a detailed analysis of the attitudinal and interpersonal meanings conveyed through language in the classroom, ultimately providing valuable insights for enhancing teaching practices. Thus, this study attempted to investigate the distribution features of attitudinal resources in teacher discourse in college English reading classes from the perspective of appraisal theory. It aimed to analyze how these features impact the effectiveness of class teaching and how they can encourage more students, thereby creating a harmonious teacher-student relationship and class atmosphere. It is necessary to improve students’ learning by effectively stimulating positive emotional factors.

## Literature Review

Appraisal theory by Martin, an extension of Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics, was a lexico-grammatical framework developed at the beginning of the 1990s. Halliday (2004) established the interpersonal meaning system of language based on the interpersonal function of language, which is the core of the appraisal theory. Under the overall framework of systemic functional linguistics, the Neo-Halliday School, represented by Martin et al. (2005), established the appraisal theory of interpretive research from the lexical level. It consists of three subsystems: attitude, engagement, and graduation, each composed of several corresponding subcategories. The focus of appraisal theory is the attitude system, which concerns the meaning that embodies feelings and the assessment of people and things. In other words, it deals with attitudinal positioning or evaluative position in terms of three aspects: emotion, ethics, and aesthetics. This study focused exclusively on the attitude system, which is divided into three subsystems: affect, judgement, and appreciation. Concentrating on this system allows us to comprehensively investigate the underlying interactions among these subsystems that shape emotional reactions, evaluative judgements, and expressions of value.

Affect is at the center of the attitude system. As Martin defines, “Affect is concerned with registering positive and negative feelings: do we feel happy or sad, confident or anxious, interested or bored” (Martin, 2000, p. 142). Namely, affect is expressed in the use of mental processes of reaction or attributive relational processes of affect, for example, “like/love, dislike/hate” or “It’s sad that...” (Foley, 2011, p.123). Affect can be grouped into four categories: dis/inclination, in/security, un/happiness, and dis/satisfaction, which correspond to all kinds of psychological experiences and willingness of the emotional person. Each of these can be seen as positive or negative depending on the values of the culture (Foley, 2011, p.124). In different cultures and ethics, the same positive-negative polarity of affect can stand for different meanings. And sometimes in the same cultural or ethic context people may hold different attitudes towards the same emotion.

Judgement is the evaluation of human behavior according to specific norms, which belongs to the category of ethics and consists of social judgement (social esteem) and social restraint (social sanction). The former refers to the admiration or critical evaluation of personal abilities and habits, while the latter refers to people’s psychological and emotional reactions. Both can be achieved by normality, capacity, tenacity and veracity, propriety respectively (Martin & White, 2005, p. 52).

Additionally, appreciation expresses aesthetic assessment of objects valued by society such as works of art, people (but not their behaviour) (Foley, 2011, p.126). It can be categorized into reaction, composition, and valuation. The first two express the evaluation significance at the aesthetic level, while valuation bears the evaluation significance at the social value level (Martin & Rose, 2003, pp. 60-63).

The characteristics of affect, judgement, and appreciation can be shown clearly in the following three sentences:

*She felt happy about my coming.* (emotional response)

*It was silly of her to go there.* (judgement evaluation)

*It was a dishonest examination.* (identifying appreciation)

Martin & White (2005, p. 60) also mention that there are a small number of attitude words (ashamed, contemptuous, embarrassed, envious, guilty, jealous, proud, resentful, etc.) that can express both affect and judgement. For example:

*The student felt ashamed about cheating on the English test.*

Martin & White (2005, p. 61) also point out that some words can combine affect with appreciation or judgement, for example, disgust/revolt:

*The student felt disgusted with his classmate for hurting his feelings.* (affect/ judgement)

*The student felt disgusted with the girl who hurt him.* (affect/appreciation).

With the gradual improvement, appraisal theory has become more and more systematic. Many achievements have been made in its application research. As an analytical tool, appraisal theory has been widely used in discourse analysis of various texts. Engebrecht (2020) analyzes news texts about rhino poaching through the attitude system and found that affect resources in the news would change readers' attitudes toward rhino poaching and would make them more inclined to protect rhinos. Cui (2023) believes that the appraisal theory could provide a systematic analytical framework for the interpretation of dynamic evaluation, from which the pragmatic tendencies of interactive subjects can be reflected. Nguyen & Nguyen (2020) investigate the use of the language in two articles and found that these two texts used quantification in the attitude to emphasize Amazon's destruction. In recent years, ecological discourse analysis has gradually attracted the attention of the academic community. He & Ma (2020) establish a general and feasible ecosophy, namely, the principles of "diversity and harmony, interaction and co-existence" and then prolong the appraisal system in three dimensions. Ren (2023) takes the reading materials in the high school English textbooks as research objects, and through ecological discourse analysis from the perspective of attitude system under the framework of appraisal theory. Sun & Yang (2022) combining appraisal theory with the overall ecological view of "people-oriented", make an ecological discourse analysis of the typical pastoral poem *Return to the Pastoral Residence*.

In a word, appraisal theory is an effective theoretical tool for discourse analysis. In a sense, language teaching itself is text teaching (Zhang et al., 2005, pp. 19-20). In appraisal theory, attitude is employed to express the speaker/writer's feelings and evaluate people's behavior, text, process and phenomena. This study can achieve a deeper understanding of how attitudes are conveyed and perceived in the discourse, with significant implications for both theoretical development and practical applications in language teaching.

## Research Objectives

Since this research focused on attitudinal meaning of teacher discourse in a college English reading class, the objectives were put forward as follows:

1. To identify and describe the features of attitudinal resources in teacher discourse.
2. To investigate how attitudinal meanings contribute to the construction of a harmonious relationship between teachers and students.

## Research Questions

This study demonstrated different resources for attitudinal meaning in a sample of teacher discourse with the hope of finding a significant perspective for college English reading teaching. With this purpose, the following research questions were posed:

1. What are the features of attitudinal resources distributed in teacher discourse?
2. How do attitudinal meanings construct a harmonious relationship between teachers and students effectively?

## Methodology

This study focused on a sample of the teacher discourse at MNUST located in Shishi, Quanzhou, Fujian province, China to explore the attitudinal meanings during the teaching process by employing appraisal theory as a principal tool for analysis.

### *1. Participants and Setting*

In this study, a female teacher with over ten years' English teaching experience and already-formed group of 35 undergraduates who were non-English major were involved. The teacher is very responsible, patient, and enthusiastic, always trying to inspire students to learn English. Regarding the students' backgrounds, the fact that they only used English in class suggested limited opportunities for practice and application, which contributed to their relatively low proficiency levels. The students at the university were required to complete four compulsory English courses, which are College English I, College English II, College English III, and College English IV, each of which focuses on developing students' overall English proficiency at a different level. The course in this research was College English I. The class met once a week, with each session lasting 90 minutes.

### *2. Data Collection*

To analyze the attitudinal resources in the teacher discourse, a series of procedures were established for data collection and analysis. Firstly, the entire college English reading class was video-recorded for 90 minutes to capture the teacher's interactions with students, explanations, and overall classroom dynamics. This comprehensive recording ensured that all relevant discourse elements were preserved for detailed analysis. Secondly, the teacher discourse was meticulously transcribed from the video recording. This transcription focused on capturing not only the spoken words but also the contextual cues and interactive features that might influence attitudinal expressions. Lastly, the transcribed data were analyzed and coded using the appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005). This involved identifying and categorizing attitudinal meanings within the teacher discourse, such as expressions of affect, judgement, and appreciation. The analysis aimed to uncover how the teacher conveyed attitudes through language and how these attitudes might influence classroom interactions and student engagement.

### 3. Data Analysis

Appraisal theory, which emerged from systemic functional linguistics, emphasizes one of its multi-dimensional features focusing on the lexical contextual meaning in appraisal resource analysis. In college English reading teaching, the corpus output of teacher-student interaction must take its communicative background and restrictive premise into account. First, English teaching is an exploratory and creative group activity led by the teacher. The breadth and depth of the process is limited by cultural tradition, way of thinking, target language proficiency of teachers and students (mainly students' English proficiency) and other factors. In addition, foreign language class has the characteristics of high frequency and efficiency, which will make the output of teacher discourse simpler and clearer in terms of structure, which is the need for "simulating real communication" in English teaching class.

During the process of analysis, the author first identified and classified the lexical attitudinal resources in the teacher discourse. Then the total number, frequencies and proportions of the three sub-categories of the system of attitude were calculated by computer mainly in the forms of the words or phrases where attitudinal resources occurred. Finally, the distribution rules of attitudinal resources in the teacher discourse and the different interpersonal purposes corresponding to the various appraisal resources were analyzed and summarized.

## Results and Discussion

**Table 1**

*Distribution of Attitudinal Resources of Teacher Discourse in College English*

Subsystem	Number of Sentences with Attitudinal Resources	Proportion (%)	Positive	Negative
Affect	25	28.74	20	5
Judgement	14	16.09	11	3
Appreciation	48	55.17	43	5
Total Number	87		74	13

Overall, in 90 minutes of class teaching, the total instances of attitudinal resources of teacher discourse showed that 87 instances of the combination of the three categories of attitude were produced. Among them, there were 25 affect resources, accounting for 28.74% of the total attitudinal resources, 14 judgement resources, making up 16.09%, and 48 appreciation resources, constituting 55.17%. In the attitudinal resources of teacher discourse in a non-English major college English reading class, the statistics showed that the number of affect and appreciation in attitudinal resources far exceeded that of judgement, mostly in positive rather than negative ways.



### 1. Evaluation of Linguistic Features in Affect

Affect resources of teacher discourse in class were teacher's self-emotional expression of people/things in the process of teaching, and had a direct or indirect impact on students' emotions or affect. In this lesson, the words that expressed affect in the teacher discourse were mainly verbs, adjectives or adverbs, and occasionally used nouns. Moreover, most of affect resources were positive. From the data, the subcategories of affect used mainly were positive security followed by inclination, satisfaction and happiness respectively.

**Table 2**

*Distribution of Four Subcategories of Affect*

Total Number of Affect	Dis/Inclination Number / %		In/Security Number / %		Un/Happiness Number / %		Dis/Satisfaction Number / %	
25	7	28%	9	36%	4	16%	5	20%

From Table 2: The in/security resources occurred most frequently in affect resources. The teacher employed in/security resources to encourage students and help them become more confident. Usually, teachers always have high expectations of students, trying to motivate and inspire them in class. Meanwhile, to some degree, students try to make the teacher satisfied, which helps to create an effective English class. Additionally, un/happiness resources were sometimes used by the teacher to show her concern for students. Dis/Satisfaction resources were also used to show her satisfaction with students. And dis/inclination resources were utilized to provide references, requests, guidance, etc.

Dis/Inclination resources in the teacher discourse were mostly about the teacher's feelings and thoughts, which demonstrated her expectations and requirements for students and encouraged their participation in class activities, for instance (1) and (2).

(1) *Who **would like** to have a try and show us your answer?* Here is a positive phrase. Students feel more comfortable when teacher gives them choices and encourages active participation, rather than calling them by name. With dis/inclined resources, the teacher asks students to answer questions in a more polite way. Students are willing to give their answers and more likely to take any opportunity to show themselves actively, which helps the teacher get closer to her students.

(2) *Come on. I **can't wait** to see your performance.* The teacher is wise to use "can't wait" to describe her expectation and appreciation of students' performance, which is a good way to promote students' motivation.



In/security resources in the teacher discourse were mainly about teacher's worry, confidence, belief, and care for students. Obviously, the teacher used in/security resources sometimes to relieve students' stress and anxiety.

(3) *Be **confident**; just let us know what you have found.* Here is a positive word in the sentence, which shows the teacher believes in her students' ability and tries to stimulate students. To some extent, it can relax the classroom atmosphere, shorten the distance with students, and inspire their motivation.

(4) *I'm **sure** you have already previewed the text carefully.* Here is also a positive security resource. For some shy students, answering questions in front of many people is not an easy task. So the teacher uses the word "sure" to give the students more encouragement, which also shows the teacher's trust of her students. Thus, students can overcome their shyness and actively participate in class activities, and at the same time, closer relationships will be built.

Un/Happiness resources in the teacher discourse were mainly used to establish a close relationship with students, especially for the greeting at the start of the class. And also sometimes negative happiness resources were used to correct her students politely, with adding a negative word.

(5) ***Glad** to see you again after a **long** week.* Here are positive words in the sentence, expressing the teacher's happiness and expectation of seeing her students again after long national holiday. She makes a warm greeting and shows her happiness and eagerness to see her students like old friends.

(6) ***Sorry**, please repeat what you have said, OK?* Here is a negative word in the sentence. However, the teacher uses "sorry" to interrupt her student politely and give the student another opportunity to correct her answer and encourage the student to speak more clearly, which makes the student feel less awkward.

Dis/Satisfaction resources in the teacher discourse were mainly about the feelings of activities-related achievement and frustration. They were often used to evaluate the student's performance, such as examples (7) and (8).

(7) *I am **really satisfied** with your today's performance.* Here are positive words in the sentence which show the teacher's satisfaction with her students' performance. This can create a harmonious atmosphere in class and inspire students to keep learning.

(8) *I am **enormously grateful** for your help.* Here are positive words in the sentence. The teacher uses "enormously grateful" to show her gratitude and respect to her students. Through the analysis with affect, it showed that the teacher tended to use various attitudinal resources appropriately. The positive affect resources used were much higher than that of negative one. Different affect resources served different functions. The proper using attitudinal resources can shorten the distance between teacher and students and create a harmonious and effective learning environment.

Although it has been influenced by traditional educational ideas for a long time, the concept of modern foreign language teaching is changing. The teacher-centered and examination-oriented teaching method in examination-oriented education is gradually replaced by the English teaching method of “student-oriented, ability-oriented and quality-oriented education”. In the teaching process, teachers should not only have excellent language literacy and teaching ability, understand students’ current level and learning ability, but also be familiar with psychological characteristics and emotional attitudes (non-intellectual factors) of the students. Teachers should communicate with students sincerely and turn their negative emotions into positive emotions so as to improve students’ learning efficiency. Emotional attention in the class is often an essential means to promote a deep teacher-student interaction. “Comprehensible Input” and “Affective Filter” hypotheses put forward by Krashen (1982) are the best explanations for the application of emotional resources. The level of language input in class teaching is generally higher than the students’ current language level. Therefore, learners’ psychological “Anxiety” has become an important factor affecting the depth and frequency of class interaction and learning effectiveness. Thus, teachers should take full account of students’ actual language proficiency, reduce learners’ emotional anxiety as much as possible, balance the quality and quantity of language input, ensure learning effectiveness, and lay a foundation for deep class interaction between the teacher and students.

## 2. Evaluation of Linguistic Features in Judgement

Compared with affect and appreciation resources, there were relatively few judgement resources in teacher discourse in this lesson.

**Table 3**

*Distribution of Four Subcategories of Judgement*

Total Number of Judgement	Normality Number / %	Capacity Number / %	Tenacity Number / %	Veracity Number / %	Propriety Number / %
14	6 42.86%	3 21.43%	2 14.29%	1 7.14%	2 14.29%

As depicted in Table 3, normality resources (more than 42%) ranked the highest, followed by capacity resources (around 21%), tenacity and propriety resources (around 14% respectively), and finally veracity resources (around 7%). Different judgement resources were used for various purposes. The possibilities of using normality and capacity resources were obviously higher than others for normality resources were used to describe how special students were, capacity resources were for assessing the students’ abilities. Tenacity, propriety, and veracity resources were also used to inspire students’ participation or evaluate the teaching contents.

Normality resources in the teacher discourse were mainly about students' state of mind, appearance, and so on.

(9) *I think you must be **familiar** with the writing style of this unit.* Here is a positive word in the sentence. The teacher tries to make sure that most students have mastered the knowledge and hopes students pay more attention to the following content.

Capacity resources in teacher discourse focused on evaluating how capable someone was. The teacher used positive resources such as “experienced, good at, be able to, and smart” to praise students' abilities and skills.

(10) *You are so **smart**.* Here is positive word in the sentence. The teacher uses “smart” to praise the student very directly, which helps the student feel confident in his ability and motivates other students to participate in class activities.

Tenacity resources in teacher discourse were about how dependable someone was. The teacher used positive resources such as “brave, careful, and patient” to praise students. In addition, the teacher also used tenacity resources to evaluate people in the teaching content.

(11) *The old lady tore the present from her daughter. Please listen **carefully**. And describe her feelings.* Here is a positive word in the sentence. The teacher tells students to focus on the task “describe her feelings”, and reminds them to listen carefully, which inspires students' participation. It is also beneficial for the construction of a good teacher-student relationship.

Veracity resources in teacher discourse were about how truthful and honest someone was. Some negative resources in this lesson were used to point out students' shortcomings implicitly. Meanwhile, veracity resources were also used by teacher to evaluate the teaching contents.

(12) ***Certainly**, Myra was so thoughtless for her old mother, right? That's **true**.* Here are positively used in the sentence. After student's presenting his idea towards the topic, the teacher uses “true”, “certainly” to confirm and praise the student in an explicit way, which is helpful for the teacher to communicate with others successfully and beneficial to the construction of friendship with students.

Propriety resources in teacher discourse were about how ethical someone was. Positive propriety resources such as “polite, kind” in this lesson were used to praise how polite and respectful students were. Sometimes propriety resources can also be used in the teaching contents.

(13) *You are a **thoughtful** and **considerate** daughter.* Here are positive words used in the sentence. When the student who acts as one of the daughters of the old lady in the text, the teacher uses “thoughtful” and “considerate” to evaluate his excellent performance in the presentation. It is conducive to creating a harmonious atmosphere in class.

In teacher discourse, the attitudinal resources of judgement were mostly utilized to evaluate students' ability or level, and sometimes evaluated students' character/quality. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) put forward the basic structure of IRF: trigger-response-feedback (Initiation-Response-Feedback), a discourse model of three-stage teacher-student interaction. The

“feedback” of this model includes the use of judgement resources to form clear feedback, which is also beneficial for the construction of a new turn.

Most judgement resources in the class were used by the teacher to bridge the distance with students and create a harmonious atmosphere to motivate students to actively take part in the class activities. The resources containing judgement mostly appeared in imperative sentences, exclamatory sentences or elliptical sentences, with short structure and mainly positive vocabulary, which enabled students to get accurate and clear information feedback and positive emotional experience to ensure that class interaction can be deepened and continuously promoted.

### 3. Evaluation of Linguistic Features in Appreciation

Appreciation is the aesthetic evaluation of things or phenomena, and its object is things or phenomena. In the class, it mainly involved teachers’ feedback evaluation of students or students’ behavior, which included two kinds of positive and negative. The use of appreciation resources should usually match students’ psychological expectations. Students’ ability, language creation, thinking inspiration and moral meaning in the class should be timely and positively affirmed and praised, so that their value in the group can be reflected and recognized. Therefore, adjectives and adverbs that expressed the positive and affirmative meaning of evaluation naturally occupied the dominant position.

**Table 4**

*Distribution of Four Subcategories of Appreciation*

Total Number of Appreciation	Reaction Number / %		Composition Number / %		Valuation Number / %	
48	26	54.17%	15	31.25%	7	14.58%

Table 4 showed the distribution and proportions of the three subcategories of appreciation resources, with reaction resources the highest (more than 54%), followed by composition and valuation resources (around 31% and 14%, respectively).

Reaction resources in teacher discourse indicated how the teacher drew students’ attention to the content that interested them. In this lesson, reaction ranked the highest among appreciation resources. Positive reaction resources were always used by the teacher to praise students’ performance explicitly.

(14) *That’s terrific, thank you.* Here is a positive adjective used explicitly in the sentence by the teacher to praise students’ performance and express her satisfaction. The student feels happy and will study harder, which will create a good learning atmosphere.

(15) *Your English pronunciation is **really very beautiful**.* Here also are positive words used by the teacher to encourage student, which can make student feel confident and inspire motivation. Students often enjoy the teacher's compliments. Even simplified praise language plays dispensable role in creating a positive learning atmosphere.

Composition resources show humans' awareness, and perceptions. In teacher discourse, composition resources were mainly linked with the teaching contents and tasks. The teacher also used composition resources to arrange lesson plan so that students can better understand.

(16) *I don't think it's very **difficult**. I am sure you can make it. Let's get started.* Here is a negative word used by the teacher to explain the difficult degree of a question, which will encourage students and give her students her trust. It is common for a teacher to comment the teaching tasks in this way. It will not have a negative impact on students. But it is a necessary step in classroom teaching and planning.

Valuation resources refer to the evaluation of ideational worth. In teacher discourse, valuation resources were used not only for the comment of the teaching contents, but also for praise of the students' behaviors. The main ideas or points of the teaching contents can be related to valuation resources.

(17) *Review the language points of the text, and understand the **meaningful** use.* Here is a positive valuation resource used by the teacher to evaluate the teaching contents and ask students to be up to her expectation which also can help students understand the requirement of the task and provide them a guideline to study.

#### *4. The Influence of Teacher Discourse*

During the teaching process, teachers should undoubtedly protect students' self-esteem and self-confidence, and use appreciation resources rationally, which plays an essential role in maintaining students' learning enthusiasm and improving class involvement or participation. Teachers should also utilize positive attitude resources to praise students explicitly, with negative attitude resources to criticize them mildly or implicitly. In this way, the students will be encouraged to participate the class activities more actively. Meanwhile, feedback from teachers is an important channel for learners to understand their own learning status (Wang et al., 2020). According to Lee's study (2018), students prefer that the teacher takes into account the emotional aspects of feedback and provide comprehensive evaluations, such as specific solutions and critical comments. Therefore, teacher feedback should be not only in line with the objective facts, but also humanistic in nature, so that students can readily accept the feedback and suggestions from teachers. By providing feedback through appreciation resources, the teacher helped students form a positive emotional experience. This, in turn, facilitated the construction of a democratic and equal discourse negotiation mechanism and enhanced the classroom interaction atmosphere.

Additionally, to make the discourse analysis data more realistic and practical, a survey was also conducted to investigate students' understanding of the attitudinal feedback from the teacher and its impact on their learning enthusiasm. See the following table for details.

**Table 5**

*Influence of Teacher Discourse on Students' Learning Enthusiasm*

Influence degree	Highly / %		Moderately / %		slightly/ %		none/ %	
35 students	20	57.14%	12	34.29%	3	8.57%	0	0%

The statistical results presented in Table 5 revealed that students placed a high level of importance on teacher feedback. Specifically, the attitudinal resources employed by the teacher had a significant impact on both students' learning enthusiasm and their learning effectiveness. This suggested that the way teachers expressed their attitudes through feedback can profoundly influence students' motivation and academic performance. Therefore, it is crucial for the teachers to be mindful of the language they use when providing feedback, as it can shape students' emotional responses. When teachers provide positive and supportive attitudinal feedback, it fosters a sense of encouragement and validation among students. This, in turn, enhances their motivation and engagement in the learning process. Conversely, negative or indifferent attitudinal cues can lead to feelings of discouragement and disengagement.

Therefore, the teacher's attitudinal feedback serves as a vital interpersonal tool that shapes the classroom environment and directly impacts the quality of the teacher-student relationship. In this way, by understanding and optimizing these attitudinal resources, teachers can create a more supportive and harmonious classroom atmosphere, ultimately promoting better learning outcomes for students.

Through the above analysis, the research findings were categorized into following two aspects: To the first question, it was found that attitudinal resources were widely used by the teacher. Particularly and precisely, appreciation presented the highest proportion among the three kinds of attitude. Among the dimensions of appreciation, reaction was much higher than the other, which showed the teacher paid special attention to the impact and quality of teaching process, teaching contents and teaching phenomena. Furthermore, the present study suggested the teacher often used positive attitudes rather than negative one to make students concentrate more and motivate for learning. Consequently, the evaluative attitudinal resources were interesting not only in perceiving speaker's feelings and values but also in revealing speaker's positioning (Martin & White, 2005). The evaluative lexis used by appraisal framework reflected the teacher's attitudes.

As for the second question, it was evident that the various subcategories of attitudinal resources had different interpersonal meanings. Affect resources with the teacher's body language shortened the teacher-student psychological distance. By appraising the capacity, character, and qualities of students, judgement resources gave feedback explicitly and stimulated students to interact with the teacher. To meet the expectations of students, the teacher used appreciation resources to evaluate their performance, appearance, or morality, which made the class smoother and more effective in a harmonious atmosphere. The use of positive attitudinal resources, such as appreciation and positive judgement, has been shown to enhance students' motivation and participation (Thompson, 2014). This study further supported these findings by demonstrating that teachers' positive evaluations of students' performance and classroom contributions can create a supportive learning environment.

## **Recommendations**

### *1. Implications*

This research provided insights for college English teachers, enabling them to gain a deeper understanding of the attitude system within appraisal theory. It highlighted the importance of enhancing teachers' awareness of positive evaluation strategies. By effectively incorporating affect, judgement, and appreciation resources into classroom interactions, teachers can create a more engaging and supportive learning environment. To achieve these goals, teachers should adopt a student-centered approach. Instead of being self-centered, teachers should provide students with as many opportunities as possible and make them central to the class. This, in turn, enhances the overall effectiveness of the teaching and learning processes.

### *2. Further Studies*

The study demonstrated the feasibility of the application of appraisal theory to college EFL teacher discourse. However, several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the study focused on a single teacher in a specific educational context, but every teacher has different teaching styles, objectives, and teaching materials, so the attitudinal resources in their classes may differ. In further research, a larger corpus-based dataset should be included to obtain more convincing conclusions. Secondly, analysis of attitudinal resources is a relatively subjective research approach, and its results are often highly influenced by the subjective experience and judgement of the researcher. Therefore, further analysis of engagement and graduation resources may be necessary to achieve more comprehensive results. Moreover, further research should investigate the role of cultural factors in shaping the use and perception of attitudinal resources, as cultural norms may significantly influence the effectiveness of certain attitudinal cues.



## Conclusion

Teacher discourse plays an essential part in college English teaching. Teachers should better understand the attitude system of appraisal theory and strengthen their awareness of positive evaluation. By properly using affect, judgement, and appreciation resources in class interactions, teachers can make their classes more effective and efficient. This is significant for students to gain knowledge and competence, and for teachers to accomplish their teaching tasks and achieve the desired objectives.

Furthermore, teachers should adopt a student-centered approach and consider the emotional elements and characteristics of college students in application-oriented colleges and universities. They should pay attention to reducing students' psychological anxiety, cultivating positive emotional experiences, stimulating students' motivation to learn English, and fostering an active learning attitude. Establishing a good teacher-student relationship is crucial for creating a harmonious class environment, which is beneficial to teaching.

Understanding appraisal theory, especially the attitudinal meanings, can serve as a guiding reference for college English teachers, particularly those in application-oriented colleges and universities. This understanding will also promote teachers' professional growth.

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