

Original Paper

Evaluation of Textbook “The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English” from the Perspectives of Thai EFL Students: Implications of Systemic Functional Linguistics and Appraisal

Theory

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Abstract

The purposes of this case study were to explore Thai EFL students' levels of satisfactions regarding the implication of the book “The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English”, and to explore their comments and recommendations on the use of the course book in the Subject of Selected Topics in English based on appraisal theory developed by Martin and White (2005). The study employed the appraisal theory to teach three undergraduate students who enrolled in the Course of Selected Topics in English Curriculum at the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University, Thailand, in the 2019 academic year. A questionnaire was used to collect data of students' level of satisfaction towards the course. Analysis of the study shows that for all sections of evaluation: the book, the lecturer and student's learning and evaluation, the students evaluated the lecturer at the “good” level (mean=4.27) followed by the book (mean=3.394) and student's learning and reflection (mean=3.53). In this regard, they evaluated the book from an overall perspective at the “good” level (mean=3.94). In more detail, the chapter they rated as the first rank is Chapter 1 Introduction which has the highest mean of 4.13 followed by Chapter 2 Attitude: Ways of feeling (mean=4.07), Chapter 3 Engagement and graduation: Alignment, solidarity and the construed reader (mean=3.93), Chapter 4 Evaluative key: Taking a stance (mean=3.93) and Chapter 5 Enacting Appraisal: Text Analysis (mean=3.60) respectively. For the section of student's learning and reflection, they evaluated their learning at the “good” level (mean=3.53) which is the least mean of all sections. The students advised that some chapters of the book were difficult for them to understand since they were not familiar with terms used. The analysis

also shows that the students mainly suggest that the book should be integrated into the course continuously every semester which would be beneficial for students in understanding how to evaluate language use in different contexts. However, more easy examples should be included in the book.

Keywords

Language evaluation, appraisal in English, systemic functional linguistics, appraisal theory, Thai EFL students

1. Introduction and Significance of Study

Appraisal in English is one of the sub systems of Systemic Functional Linguistics which has gained much attention from linguists and English language researchers around the world. In this regard, Language Evaluation: Appraisal in English developed by Martin and White (2005) is a book that has gained interest with implications for language researchers and functional systemic linguists. The book has been introduced to language and linguistics programs and courses in universities around the world. Therefore, it is challenging that the book should be applied to the EFL setting in Thailand. In this regard, Kasetsart University, one of the leading universities in Thailand, offers a variety of different programs to students including a comprehensive English program. At the Department of English, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University, Khamphaeng Saen campus, the English program has been offered to students since 1990. The program has produced more than a thousand of English graduates to serve communities both nationally and internationally since 1995. The program structure and courses have been updated from time to time to meet ongoing situations and changes. Currently, the program provides particular courses which include a range of selected topics in English for second, third and fourth-year students before they finish their studies. The course offers students a chance to choose a language topic or an issue to study as a research course. Therefore, the researcher as one of the program lecturers decided to open this course for the students. In the first launch of the course, one fourth year and two third year students with some background of English skills from previous courses in the program enrolled in the course. The outline of the course as identified in the program offers students a choice of any English topic to study on consultation with the lecturer.

Therefore, the researcher decided to use the book Evaluation: Appraisal in English by Martin and White (2005) as the main course material to align with the course objectives and for the purpose of helping students become effective language learners and appraisers when analyzing texts in social contexts. As argued by Martin and Rose (2010, p. 7), the appraisal is related to the SFL model of language in social context which recognizes three general social functions that we use the language for; (i) to enact our social relationships; (ii) to represent our experience to each other; and (iii) to organize our enactments and representations as meaningful text. Therefore, the overall purpose of this study was to develop a suitable teaching material for prospective students who will enroll in the course in the coming semester.

2. Literature Review

Course evaluation is considered as one of the most significant factors in language learning and outcomes of learners. The book *Evaluation: Appraisal in English* by Martin and White (2005) has gained in popularity with people studying in the areas of systemic functional linguistics and language evaluation. It has been used as a tool to evaluate texts and media texts in academic and professional settings (Hood, 2004; Pho, 2008; Srinon, 2017; Badklang & Srinon, 2018). The book consists of five chapters; Chapter 1 Introduction, Chapter 2 Attitude: Ways of Feeling, Chapter 3 Engagement and Graduation: Alignment, Solidarity and the Construed Reader, Chapter 4 Evaluative Key: Taking a stance, and Chapter 5 Enacting Appraisal: Text Analysis. However, it is observed that although the book has been used around the world, no studies have attempted to analyse the effectiveness of the book apart from the applications of the appraisal framework as a research tool. Therefore, this study has attempted to bridge this gap by introducing the book to the course of Selected Topics in English in the 2018-2019 academic year at the Department of English, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University, Kamphaeng Saen Campus, Nakhon Pathom Province, Thailand.

Other studies (Hood, 2004; Pho, 2008; Srinon, 2017; Badklang & Srinon, 2018) have investigated the use of appraisal theory in different EFL contexts around the world. To understand this phenomenon, some studies related are reviewed.

Srinon (2017) analysed the written texts produced by two Thai postgraduate students whose authorial voices are projected in their research proposals. It highlights how the students project themselves in the introductions and final parts of their proposals at the beginning of their candidature in an EIL PhD program. The study uses the SFL Appraisal framework developed by Martin and White (2005) as a tool to analyse the students' writing. Two students' texts are analysed within the particular "Engagement" system; heterogloss, which is of the larger appraisal framework. The preliminary results of the analysis indicate the students use more dialogic expansion (entertaining and attributing resources) to project their voices and positions at the beginning and ending of their writing than the contracting resources. This trend could be seen as a result of receiving some instructions from their other previous courses or their writing background. It is argued that further development of the students' writing is needed for when they are required to counter other people's opinions in their fields logically and effectively. However, it is suggested that if students are supervised systematically and frequently, they could develop their own ways of writing clearly when making a position or an argumentation more effectively by being concerned with the audience and the ways that they are engaged in the community discourse. The paper also suggests some pedagogical applications for the further development of effective and explicit authorial stance in academic writing.

In a study by Badklang and Srinon (2018), they analysed a sample of a classroom discourse from an "English language for communication and learning" class in a Thai university in southern Thailand. The analysis of resources in this paper is based on the Appraisal theory (Martin, 1992, 2000; Martin & Rose, 2010; Martin & White, 2005). The Appraisal theory was developed from the Systemic Functional

Linguistics (SFL) theory originated by Michael Halliday (Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). The objective of this study is to investigate the linguistic resources within the classroom talk, especially while the teacher and students are interacting and expressing their attitudinal meanings. The participants in the study were a Muslim male teacher and 32 undergraduates. The data were taken from classroom recordings of the discourse, and transcription of the same discourse. This paper used functional analysis taken from the Attitude system of the Appraisal theory which provides three types of attitudes (affect, judgement, and appreciation). The findings show that the teacher and students expressed all three kinds of attitudes, judgement, appreciation, and affect and they expressed positive rather than negative attitudes which conform to the literature and the appraisal framework. This indicates that using the framework works well in some degree to analyze the context of the classroom talk which leads to better understanding and how we may apply it to the context of language teaching and learning development by ways of critical classroom discourse. The analysis also illustrates how the classroom relationships between the teacher and students are constructed. The study provides and suggests some insights into how the Appraisal theory plays out in the sample of classroom discourse and its implications.

Agata (2016) investigated the occurrence and frequency of use of attitudinal judgement in British advertisement texts. Judgement, as one of the main attitudinal categories in the discourse-semantic appraisal model (Martin & White, 2005), is concerned with the evaluation of human character and behaviour. The article focuses on the judgement categories of capability and propriety, as the research described concludes that they are the most frequently occurring of the judgement categories. Some typical instances encoding capability and propriety are discussed in terms of explicit and implicit manifestation. The article demonstrates that capability and propriety often participate in attitudinal double-coding due to the brevity of advertising texts and the creativity of advertising language. It is argued that capability and propriety are strongly socially motivated: they impose values upon the potential consumer, and hence upon society, and through them create social roles for the participants in the advertising interaction.

According to Martin and White (2005) as mentioned by Agata (2016), appraisal is “[a] particular approach to exploring, describing and explaining the way language is used to evaluate, to adopt stances, to construct textual personas and to manage interpersonal positioning and relationships”.

From the review, it can be considered that the appraisal theory is significant in linguistics and language studies. Therefore, this study has attempted to promote this theory by investigating students’ levels of satisfaction on the use of the book concerned. It is anticipated that this study would provide some guidelines for those people who are in the fields of systemic functional linguistics and appraisal theory to further develop materials related in order to expand practices and implications of the framework in various contexts around the world.

3. Research Questions

1. What are the students' levels of satisfaction of the use of the book 'Evaluation: Appraisal in English' in the course of Selected Topics in English in the Department of English, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University, Kamphaeng Saen Campus in the 2019 academic year?
2. What are the students' comments and recommendations on the use of the book 'Evaluation: Appraisal in English' in the course of selected topics in English in the Department of English, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University, Kamphaeng Saen Campus in the 2019 academic year?

4. Methodology

In this current study, the researcher introduced the book 'Evaluation: Appraisal in English' to the course of Selected Topics in English in the 2018-2019 academic year at the Department of English, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University, Kamphaeng Saen Campus. Three students enrolled in the course. Two students were from the third year of studies and one student from the fourth year. For the teaching and learning plan, the researcher used chapters 1-3 for the first half of the course leading to the midterm and chapters 4-5 for the final session. The process of teaching and learning were of the following;

1. The lecturer briefed the earlier chapters and then assigned the students to prepare for their study course by asking them to make presentations on the topics of each chapter to the class for everyone to discuss the issues related. In this regard, the students discussed the topics of the units after each session.
2. After a number of weeks of the teaching and learning, the lecturer assigned a task to the students. It was to write a critique as a short English text regarding the death of King Phumipol Adulayadech of Thailand by using the framework of Attitude; ways of feelings.
3. The students worked individually and then each presented their text to the class. In week eight, the students had the midterm examination which was mainly about "The King's Life in the book of Power of the Land" published by Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) in 2016. The students analyzed the text using the three domains of appraisal system: attitude, engagement and graduation. Their analysis could not be less than 500 words.
4. In the final session of the teaching and learning, the lecturer gave a talk on Chapters 4-5 to the students. The process of teaching and learning was similar to the first session and different critiques were provided.
5. For the final examination, the students were asked to write an essay about Jacinda Ardern's speech at the Christchurch memorial which was taken from the Guardian Newspaper (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/29/jacinda-arderns-speech-at-christchurch-memorial-full-transcript>). In this regard, the students had to analyse the text in terms of the engagement identified in the appraisal theory which involves the following key points; 1) interpersonal relationship of the speaker and the audience, 2) the position of the speaker (the intersubjective positioning), 3) the

resources of dialogic contraction (disclaim and proclaim) of the speaker and 4) their positioning (viewpoints) towards the speaker. In so doing, they were required to set up an analysis into three main parts; introduction (background), body and conclusion. Their analysis could not be less than 1,500 words. (30 points)

6. At the end of the course, the researcher constructed a questionnaire regarding the course and then asked three language lecturers in the department to check for content validity. Then the researcher asked three students to respond to the survey of the course. The topics of the survey covered 5 main categories as shown in the table in section of 5.1. The survey was constructed based on the standard scale. It consisted of five sections; objective, topic arrangement, analysis/discussion/argumentation, summary and application. These topics are surveys for all five chapters of the book; Chapter 1 Introduction, Chapter 2 Attitude: ways of feeling, Chapter 3 Engagement and graduation: Alignment, solidarity and the construed reader, Chapter 4 Evaluative key: Taking a stance and Chapter 5 Enacting appraisal: Text analysis. Regarding the qualitative data, students' opinions about the course were also analyzed.

7. All three students responded to the questionnaire after the end of the course. Then the researcher analyzed data in terms of frequency in each category. Then all data was presented in terms of description and discussion.

5. Analysis and Findings

From the analysis of the students' evaluation regarding the course concerned, the results are presented in the following sections respectively.

5.1 Evaluation of the Book

Evaluation of the Course of Selected Topics in English based on the Book "The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English".

Table 1. The Students' Evaluation of the Book

Chapter	Content	μ	σ	Results
Chapter 1 Introduction	1. Objective	4.00	0	Good
	2. Topic arrangement	4.00	0	Good
	3. Analysis/Discussion/Argumentation	4.33	0.47	Good
	4. Summary	4.33	0.47	Good
	5. Application	4.00	0	Good
Chapter 1 Introduction		4.13	0.35	Good
Chapter 2 Attitude: Ways of feeling	1. Objective	4.00	0	Good
	2. Topic arrangement	4.00	0.82	Good
	3. Analysis/Discussion/Argumentation	4.33	0.47	Good

	4. Summary	4.00	0.82	Good
	5. Application	4.00	0	Good
Chapter 2 Attitude: Ways of feeling		4.07	0.59	Good
Chapter 3 Engagement	1. Objective	4.00	0	Good
and graduation:	2. Topic arrangement	4.00	0	Good
Alignment, solidarity and	3. Analysis/Discussion/Argumentation	3.67	0.82	Good
the construed reader	4. Summary	4.00	0	Good
	5. Application	4.00	0.47	Good
Chapter 3 Engagement and graduation: Alignment, solidarity and the construed reader		3.93	0.46	Good
Chapter 4 Evaluative key:	1. Objective	4.00	0	Good
Taking a stance	2. Topic arrangement	3.67	0.47	Good
	3. Analysis/Discussion/Argumentation	4.33	0.47	Good
	4. Summary	3.67	0.47	Good
	5. Application	4.00	0	Good
Chapter 4 Evaluative key: Taking a stance		3.93	0.46	Good
Chapter 5 Enacting	1. Objective	3.33	0.47	Fair
Appraisal: Text Analysis	2. Topic arrangement	3.67	0.47	Good
	3. Analysis/Discussion/Argumentation	3.67	0.47	Good
	4. Summary	4.00	0.82	Good
	5. Application	3.33	0.47	Fair
Chapter 5 Enacting Appraisal: Text Analysis		3.60	0.63	Good
Total evaluation of the book		3.94	0.53	Good

From Table 1, it shows that for all sections of evaluation; the book, the lecturer and student's learning and evaluation, the students evaluated the lecturer at the "good" level (mean= 4.27) followed by the book (mean=3.394) and student's learning and reflection (mean=3.53). In this regard, they evaluated the book in overall perspective at the "good" level (mean=3.94). In more detail, the chapter they rated as the first rank is Chapter 1 Introduction which has the highest mean of 4.13 followed by Chapter 2 Attitude: Ways of feeling (mean=4.07), chapter 3 Engagement and graduation: Alignment, solidarity and the construed reader (mean=3.93), chapter 4 Evaluative key: Taking a stance (mean=3.93) and Chapter 5 Enacting Appraisal: Text Analysis (mean=3.60) respectively. The table also shows that the overall mean of evaluation of the book by the students is 3.94 ($\sigma=0.53$) which is at "good level".

5.2 Evaluation about the Course Lecturer

Table 2. The Students' Evaluation of the Lecturer

Content	μ	σ	Results
1. Teaching Preparation	3.33	0.47	Fair
2. Teaching style	3.67	0.47	Good
3. Demonstration	3.67	0.47	Good
4. Critical reflection on teaching and learning for students	4.00	0.82	Good
5. Challenge on students' learning/motivation	3.33	0.47	Fair
Total evaluation of the lecturer	4.27	0.46	Good

From Table 2, it shows that the students evaluated the lecturer's teaching at the good level in which the overall average mean is 4.27 ($\sigma=0.46$). When looking at the detail, it is found that the section of critical reflection on teaching and learning for students was evaluated as the highest mean of 4.00 ($\sigma=0.82$) which is at the "good" level.

5.3 Evaluation of Student's Learning/Reflection

Table 3. Evaluation of Student's Learning/Reflection

Content	μ	σ	Results
1. Accumulation of knowledge in SFL and appraisal theory	3.67	0.47	Good
2. Accumulation of comprehension in SFL and appraisal theory	4.00	0	Good
3. Ability of language analysis/appraisal	3.33	0.47	Fair
4. Accumulation of critical thinking ability	3.33	0.47	Fair
5. Applications of SFL and appraisal theory in other contexts	3.33	0.47	Fair
Total evaluation of Student's Learning/Reflection	3.53	0.52	Good

From Table 3, it shows that the students evaluated their learning and reflection at the 'good' level in which the overall average mean is 3.53 ($\sigma=0.52$). When looking at the details, it is found that the section of accumulation of comprehension in SFL and appraisal theory was evaluated as the highest mean of 4.00 ($\sigma=0$) which is at the "good" level. This means they had better understanding in systemic functional linguistics and appraisal theory.

5.4 Analysis of Students' Comments

From the analysis, the students gave some comments in the questionnaire to improve the course material as shown in the following sections;

5.4.1 Comments about the Book

From the analysis, the students gave some comments about the book used in the course as follows.

1. One of the students commented that the textbook is worth studying but it is also somehow hard to understand because of the technical terms. This indicates that the student needs the lecturer to simplify

the contents of the material, especially with brief summaries or explanations on difficult technical terms used in the book.

2. One of the students commented, “For me, I am the beginner in SFL area. This textbook is quite hard to understand for the beginners. Because it has many special words”. This is in the same line as commented by the student in the previous topic in which difficult SFL technical terms should be explained with simple definitions.

3. One of the students commented, “The text is hard to understand if the learners are not proficient in English. Need more examples to help students understand the text”. This also indicates that according to the student’s view point, the book is hard to understand. It is argued that it would be useful if the authors of the book or the lecturer could add more examples of text analysis into the book.

5.4.2 Comments about the Lecturer

From the analysis, the students gave some comments about the lecturer of the course as follows.

1. One of the students commented that more examples in each function might be very useful. This indicates that the lecturer should give more separated examples related to different sections in the book to the students so that the students can understand the chapters in an easier mode.

2. One of the students commented that the text needs to be simplified if possible if it is to be used in the future with a large group of students. This is interpreted to mean that the lecturer might use more examples of texts which might be similar to Thai contexts.

5.4.3 Comments about Student’s Learning and Reflection

From the analysis, the students gave some comments about the section of student’s learning and reflection as follows.

1. One of the students reflected that she needs more practice in order to be able to apply the theoretical framework to other contexts. This shows that the teaching and learning in the course should provide students an opportunity to practice more on the analysis of the texts related in the book and in other contexts. This might help them to be able to apply the theory to other contexts of learning.

2. One of the students reflected that she understands how to interpret people’s discourse in different situations and contexts. This demonstrates the fact that the content in the book is useful for the students to learn language in a new way which encompasses context of culture and of situation as highlighted in the theory in the book.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

1. It is seen that all students in the course rated the book and its chapters on average in a good way. It is argued that the students were satisfied with the book, the teaching and learning, and the lecturer. This can be further seen in the fact that the book provides a clear concept about the appraisal theory and its applications. That is, the book is constructed quite well in terms of organization based on the appraisal theory. However, it is argued that from the findings of the analysis, the students need the lecturer to adjust or simplify the contents in the book because it is rather difficult for the students to understand.

That is, more easy examples of texts should be added to the book.

2. From the study, it is discussed that the students rated all parts of the questionnaire in a good evaluation. That is, the students reflected that the book is good in overall picture. This indicates that the book has quality and can be implemented in the course although some chapters are difficult as rated by the students.

3. According to the suggestions of the students, it is discussed that the book is very difficult for students. Therefore, developments and simplification of the book by creating more easy-to-understand texts are needed for the course. The course lecturer may add more easy examples of the texts related to each chapter. And it is argued that some parts of the texts in each chapter might be simplified. This might make the students comprehend the texts more when they study in the class.

4. One of key findings from the study is that the students reflected that they gained comprehension in SFL and appraisal theory which was at the highest mean of 4 ($\sigma = 0$) which was at good level. This can be discussed that the teaching and learning process helped boost the students' learning in a more degree. Since the number of the students was only three, the lecturer can focus on each student' learning thoroughly. Time was devoted to all students effectively. Therefore, the result of the survey on this topic came out with highest mean.

5. Accordingly, it is concluded that the students were satisfied with the course and the book used in the course. They were satisfied with the teaching and learning process and they reflected their learning in a good way. Although the book is rather difficult for the students, they attempted hard to understand the appraisal theory and its applications. This resulted in their presenting of effective pieces of writing for both first and final sessions in which they showed they can construct more evaluative and convincing essays.

7. Recommendations and Implications

From the analysis of the data, it is found that all three students recommended some good points for further development of the course as follows.

1. First, one of the students recommended that the lecturer needs to simplify the text to be used in an easy way for students (if possible). In this regard, it is considered that the student needs the lecturer to simplify the text as far as possible. The researcher quite agrees upon this point and may adjust the text to be more suitable for all students as recommended by digesting and simplifying the text for them. Therefore, it is recommended that further study should focus on material developments of the appraisal theory and its implications to suit different contexts.

2. It is recommended that the lecturer of the course needs to simplify the text be used in an easy way for students (if possible). This could help all levels of students to understand the appraisal theory and its implications and to analyse the texts more effectively. Therefore, further research should focus on the construction of different texts which are appropriate for different levels of students who will register in the course.

3. It is recommended that the lecturer might add more examples of each part of the units separated from the textbook itself. This could help students to understand more about the appraisal theory and its implications.
4. It is recommended that the teaching and learning process of the book applications should be done in a slow pace, because the book is new for students who do not have any background in SFL and Appraisal theory.
5. Further study should focus on applications of the book with a large group of students which would help expand some understanding on students' learning ability as well as the course.
6. Implications on the findings of this study should be made carefully since the sample is small and is based on the reality and nature of the sample. Therefore, in further study, researchers should focus on larger groups of students which would help determine more validity of research findings.
7. Further study should focus on analysis of students' written texts which would help reflect on how effectively the course helps students write their essays. It is also recommended that the analysis should have a close look at how students construct their written texts resulting from the implications of the book concerned.

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Appendix A. Questionnaire

Directions: Please evaluate the following sections by putting ✓ in each box provided according to levels of your agreement.

1. The book

Chapter	Content	Excellent (5)	Good (4)	Fair (3)	Poor (2)	Bad (1)
Chapter1 Introduction	Objective					
	Topic arrangement					
	Analysis/Discussion/Argumentation					
	Summary					
	Application					
Chapter 2 Attitude: Ways of feeling	Objective					
	Topic arrangement					
	Analysis/Discussion/Argumentation					
	Summary					
	Application					
Chapter 3 Engagement and graduation: Alignment, solidarity and the construed reader	Objective					
	Topic arrangement					
	Analysis/Discussion/Argumentation					
	Summary					
	Application					

Chapter 4 Evaluative key: Taking a stance	Objective					
	Topic arrangement					
	Analysis/Discussion/Argumentation					
	Summary					
	Application					
Chapter 5 Enacting Appraisal: Text Analysis	Objective					
	Topic arrangement					
	Analysis/Discussion/Argumentation					
	Summary					
	Application					

Other comments:

2. Lecturer

Lecturer	Content	Excellent (5)	Good (4)	Fair (3)	Poor (2)	Bad (1)
	Teaching Preparation					
	Teaching style					
	Demonstration					
	Critical reflection on teaching and learning for students					
	Challenge on students' learning/motivation					

Other comments:

3. Student's Learning/Reflection

Student's Learning/ Reflection	Content	Excellent (5)	Good (4)	Fair (3)	Poor (2)	Bad (1)
	Accumulation of knowledge in SFL and appraisal theory					
	Accumulation of comprehension in SFL and appraisal theory					
	Ability of language analysis/appraisal					
	Accumulation of critical thinking ability					
	Applications of SFL and appraisal theory in other contexts					

Other comments:
