

A Literature Review of Appraisal Theory in Language Education: Research Developments and Implications for ESL Teaching

This study examines the development of research on the application of Appraisal Theory in language education through a bibliometric approach. Appraisal Theory, developed by Martin and White (2005), provides a framework for analyzing how language users express emotions, attitudes, and evaluations. It is grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), an empirically oriented theory that emphasizes the analysis of language in use within authentic contexts (Banks, 2024). Over the past two decades, a growing body of research has explored the pedagogical potential of this framework.

Drawing on articles indexed in Scopus from 2006 to 2026, this study analyzes publications that meet established inclusion criteria using VOSviewer. The analysis focuses on citation and co-citation metrics, bibliographic coupling, and keyword co-occurrence to map publication trends, identify evolving research themes, and highlight influential journals and leading contributors in the field. Accordingly, the study addresses three research questions: (1) How is the academic output on the application of Appraisal Theory into language education characterized in terms of annual publications, journals, and authors? (2) What are the major research themes associated with its application in language education? and (3) What key pedagogical directions have been proposed for ESL teaching? The findings aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the research landscape and to inform future applications of Appraisal Theory in language education.

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