Tracing the Development of Research on Appraisal Theory within Systemic Functional Linguistics (2003-2025): A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract

This study aims to map the main research trends in Appraisal Theory within Systemic Functional Linguistics through a bibliometric analysis. We analyze papers retrieved from Scopus for the period of 2003–2025. Using VOSviewer, 231 articles meeting the inclusion criteria were examined. We analyze citation and co-citation metrics, bibliographic coupling, and keyword co-occurrence to illuminate fluctuations in publication volume, evolving research themes, impacted journals, and prominent authors in Appraisal Theory research. Findings indicate a steady yearly increase in publications. Four overarching trends emerge:(i) Exploring the interpersonal meaning of discourse through Appraisal Theory; (ii) Employing Critical Discourse Analysis via integration of corpus linguistics and Appraisal Theory; (iii) Examining evaluations of language users across specific contexts; (iv) Investigating targeted sub-aspects of Appraisal Theory. Citation analysis identifies Martin & White (2005) and White (2012) as the most cited works and pivotal authors in the field. Together, these insights enhance understanding of the scholarly landscape of Appraisal Theory and highlight promising directions for future research.

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Introduction

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a major branch of functional linguistics that views language as a social semiotic system—that is, a resource for making meaning through grammar in relation to specific contexts of use. Developed by the linguist M. A. K. Halliday, building on the work of his mentor J. R. Firth, SFL emerged from Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday, 1985). At the core of Halliday's approach is the

insight that language operates through three distinct yet interrelated metafunctions, which are activated simultaneously to construe meaning (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014).

Firstly, the Ideational metafunction is concerned with the ideation of how we experience and perceive both our external world and our internal mental world. This function makes it possible to say or write something referring to the actualities, and logical connections between the phenomena (Matthiessen, 1995). The second metafunction, the Interpersonal metafunction concerns language as a medium for interacting with other people. It is the function that enables speakers to express their attitudes, judgments and to negotiate meanings or establish social roles through discourse (Cheng, 2024). The third metafunction - The Textual metafunction - is a mediation between the first and second, as it organizes ideational, interpersonal meaning into coherent texts and is concerned with how language is structured and sequenced to achieve communicative purposes (Forey & Sampson, 2017).

SFL is classified as an empirical theory, with a strong focus on systematic observation and analysis of language in use in its actual contexts (Banks, 2024). It is a 'appliable' linguistics (Fontaine & McCabe, 2023), one that has numerous applications in education, discourse analysis and applied linguistic. Focusing on what meaning is made in particular situational contexts, SFL can be applied to investigate language across a variety of genres and domains: from literary texts and context bound interactions to everyday talk.

Based on this work, Appraisal Theory was expanded by Martin and White (2005) to analyze the ways in which language users convey their emotions, attitudes and evaluations. The theory considers the interpersonal nature of language, concerning how speakers locate themselves and their audiences in a text. Appraisal Theory conceptualizes three key sub-systems: Attitude, which is about feelings towards those represented in the discourse, including people, objects and states of affairs; Engagement, reflecting speakers and readers' including or excluding others in the discourse; Graduation, which refers to strengths of attitude/evaluation.

Appraisal Theory is theoretically rich theory but its practical application for text annotation is not easy. One of challenges is how to identify and categorize evaluative expressions (Zeng et al., 2024). The opaque nature of interpretation and the heterogeneity of linguistic structures contribute to the difficulty in annotating the data. As a result - despite the fact that Appraisal Theory is under intense scrutiny by researchers worldwide - there exists a strong demand to have an overall and systematic in-depth review of research developments over the past two decades (since its beginning) on this thriving field.

This study seeks to highlight the major research trends related with Appraisal Theory within the context of SFL, providing a complete picture of the field's evolution. To achieve this research objective, the following questions will be addressed:

RQ₁: How is the academic output of Appraisal Theory characterized in terms of annual publications, journals, and authors?

RQ₂: What are the key research themes related to Appraisal Theory, and how have they evolved over time?

To answer these questions, this paper will systematically review the existing literature and analyze publication trends to map the landscape of Appraisal Theory research.

The subsequent sections of the paper are organized as follows: the literature review section provides a concise overview of the definitions of Appraisal, its classifications, and pertinent studies that have contributed to its development; the following two sections present the research methodology, results, and discussion of findings; finally, the conclusion summarizes the key points and offers suggestions for future research directions in the realm of Appraisal Theory. By investigating these aspects, this study seeks to enhance the understanding of Appraisal Theory and its applications, providing valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners engaging with this dynamic area of linguistic research.

Literature Review

In the process of communication, expressing human emotions serves as a means to fulfill the Interpersonal metafunction. The Appraisal Theory developed by Martin and White (2005) aids in identifying the speaker's or writer's feelings conveyed through language. According to Goźdź-Roszkowski and Hunston (2016), the term "appraisal" is a linguistic concept that can be used interchangeably with terms such as "sentiment," "stance," and "evaluation," as they share similar meanings. Therefore, it is considered a component of Systemic Functional Linguistics. However, unlike Systemic Functional Linguistics, Appraisal Theory places greater emphasis on lexis when evaluating Interpersonal meanings in discourse rather than focusing solely on sentences (Aloy Mayo & Taboada, 2017). Moreover, it extends beyond clauses based on the Mood and Modality system.

Appraisal Theory consists of three interrelated subsystems: "attitude," "engagement," and "graduation" (see Figure 1). The "attitude" subsystem encompasses three subcategories: Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation, which describe how individuals perceive others through their emotional responses, evaluations of behavior, and assessments of objects. Engagement is further divided into two categories: Heterogloss and Monogloss, encompassing sourcing attitudes and the interplay of voices. Lastly, Graduation employs the subcategories of Force and Focus, as noted by Dai and Zhou (2019), to evaluate occurrences that display heightened or nuanced emotions.

Figure 1

The Summary of the Appraisal Items
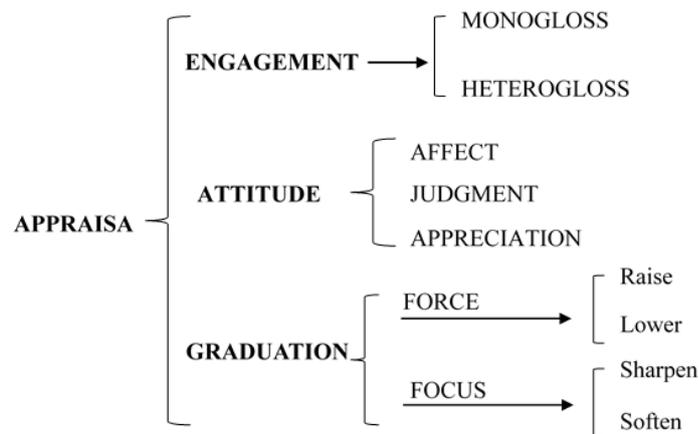
(Source: Martin & White, 2005, p.38)

Attitude

A speaker's attitude is shaped by their feelings, emotions, and evaluations. According to Martin and Rose (2003), attitudes can be strong or vague, implicit or explicit, positive or negative, and can vary in intensity. Additionally, societal standards and ideals significantly influence speakers' attitudes. This subsystem comprises three subcategories: appreciation, judgment, and affect. Expressive vocabulary reflects the speaker's feelings or seeks to appeal to the audience (Pérez, 2019). Judgment, linked to an individual's moral or personal character, can prompt both praise and condemnation based on societal norms or formalized restrictions. Thus, moral judgments can encompass commendation and censure. Martin and Rose (2003) describe appreciation as the assessment of something from an artistic perspective, either positively or negatively. In other words, it relates to the speaker's response to a specific object, event, or person. Furthermore, attitudes may vary according to the cultural contexts of different speakers (Martin & Rose, 2003).

Engagement

"Engagement" describes how a speaker or writer places themselves in relation to an interaction, making use of linguistic tools to take up and express a point of view. It is often sub-divided in to two: monogloss and heterogloss, according to the number of voices sanctioned (Martin & White, 2005). In the latter, monogloss is simply reduced to 'The speaker's own voice' and heterogloss (hereon Lessons exemplified) includes other speakers or perspectives by way of resources like projection, modality, concession. Engagement, in other words, tracks where attitudes come from and how they score up for the speaker on it own language use.

Graduation

Graduation comprises increasing levels of intensification in appraisal and is divided into two subcategories: Focus and Force. Force comprises gradable linguistic features such as

intensification, linguistic repetitions, comparatives, superlatives, as well as morphological and phonological elements. In contrast, Focus addresses non-gradable linguistic aspects, which include terms that sharpen (representing prototypical values) and soften (representing non-prototypical values) concerning the strength of boundaries (Martin & White, 2005).

Methods and Research Data

This article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the research on "appraisal theory" by utilizing chronological research techniques and scientific methodologies, including synthesis and bibliographic review methods. Specifically, English-language documents will be subjected to bibliographic analysis in relation to key domains: citation, co-citation, bibliographic coupling, and co-occurrence.

Bibliometric analysis, defined as the measurement science that employs statistical methods to explore scientific publications within a specific research field, is essential for conducting an in-depth examination (Broadus, 1987). For this purpose, the Scopus database was selected to identify publications relevant to the keyword "appraisal" and "systemic functional". Table 1 presents the criteria for including and excluding relevant English papers from the Scopus database. The keyword "cognitive appraisal" was excluded because it is not relevant to the Appraisal Theory within the framework of linguistics. This theory was developed within the context of psychology. Ultimately, a total of 231 articles met all established criteria and were included in the statistical examination of research outcomes. This analysis will map the knowledge landscape of Appraisal Theory and forecast its trends to guide future research.

Table 1

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for the Selection of Papers

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Language: English	Not connected to the keyword of Appraisal Theory
Publication Type: Articles	Inadequate research or other publications, such as books and reviews
Keyword: appraisal and Systemic Functional	Other articles excluding 'appraisal' or 'Systemic Functional'

With the advent of bibliometrics developed by Alan Pritchard in the 1960s to organize and analyze scholarly literature, studies can track the evolving nature of ideas with the date of their publication. Two major functional areas in this methodology are performance analysis and science mapping (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). Performance analysis uses activity indicators for science mapping, which relies on first- and second-generation relational indicators to describe the structure and dynamics of knowledge within specific research areas (Iwami et al., 2020).

In this article, we use the VOSviewer application (van Eck & Waltman, 2007) to analyze the metrics of academic articles containing the term "Appraisal Theory" in the title,

keywords, or abstract. By examining 231 articles that meet the criteria established above, we generalize research trends in Appraisal Theory through various bibliometric analyses. Bibliographic coupling defines the thematic relationship derived from citation linkages between articles, while the analysis of co-occurring keywords and abstracts helps develop the conceptual structure of the research (Callon et al., 1983). Co-citation analysis identifies the number of times a third document cites two documents simultaneously, indicating conceptual closeness or thematic similarity between those documents (Caputo et al., 2019). This analysis shows that abstracts and keywords form a lexical network that substantially complements the topic's thematic framework (Caputo et al., 2019).

Network and density visualizations were generated with the VOSviewer software to analyze and describe research trends related to Appraisal Theory within SFL. In all network visualizations, each item is represented by a colored circle. Larger circles indicate a higher frequency of publications referencing the keyword, while smaller circles indicate a lower frequency. Van Eck and Waltman (2007) detail the underlying algorithm of these techniques, including how the curves between circles convey the proximity of related keywords.

Findings and Discussion

An Overview of Bibliometric Data

The research on Appraisal Theory has undergone an impressive developmental journey since it was born. A significant turning point occurred in 2005 with the emergence of Appraisal Theory from the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics, developed by Martin & White. This marked the beginning of a solid and systematic theoretical framework, paving the way for subsequent studies. Consequently, over the past 20 years, the volume of research has gradually increased, with notable periods of surge, reaching over 30 publications annually, as illustrated in Figure 2, which shows a remarkable leap from fewer than 5 publications per year.

Figure 2

Number of Reasearch from 2003 to 2025

Documents by year
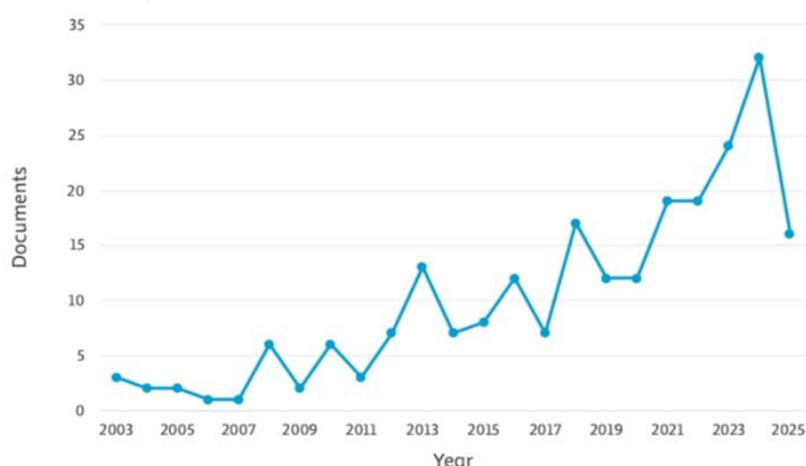
Research on Appraisal Theory primarily focuses on the social sciences, arts, and humanities. As illustrated in Figure 3, various fields, including computer science, psychology, health professions, and medicine, have adopted this theory in their research endeavors. This interdisciplinary application underscores the versatility and relevance of Appraisal Theory beyond linguistic contexts. The diversity of publication fields indicates a growing acknowledgment of the theoretical foundations that empower researchers to apply its principles across different domains, fostering innovative approaches and insights.

Figure 3
Distribution of Articles by Subject Areas from 2003 – 2025
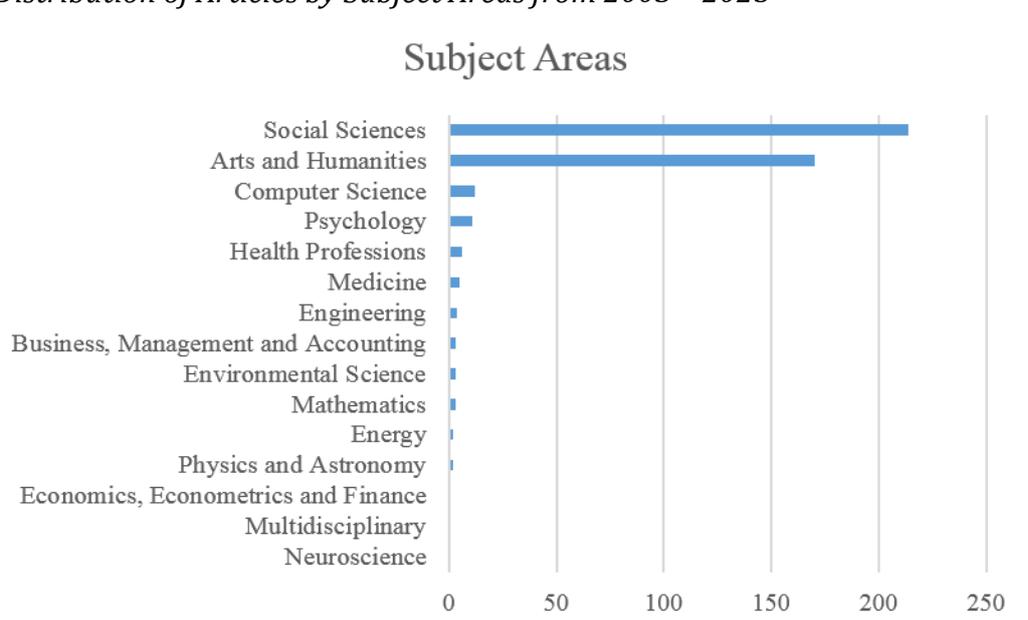
This search for application is first in the humanities, arts, and social sciences. There were over 200 publications in the corpus that studied the theory within the SFL framework. Such a wide application of Appraisal Theory indicates a deep integration of language understanding in social processes. Some 40 articles have been published in computer science, psychology, health professions, and medicine, showing the applicability of the theory beyond language. It attests to the versatile aspects of Appraisal Theory and how it might be used to complement research in many scientific domains.

The Citation, Co-Citation, and Bibliography Coupling Analysis
Productive journals
Systematic methodology was employed in assessing the quality and influence of a reference through citation, co-citation, and bibliographic coupling analysis. It is necessary to understand how research projects published in different journals interrelate. The study focused on finding the best journals and understanding their impact on the fields using citation, co-citation, and bibliographic coupling metrics on 231 articles.

Table 2

List of Journals with the Highest Citation Index

	Cite			Co-Cite			Bibliographic Coupling			
Source	Document	Citations	Total link	Source	Citations	Total Link Strength	Source	Document	Citations	Total Link Strength
Linguistics and Education	5	180	3	The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English	146	990	Linguistics and Education	5	180	298
Journal of English for Academic Purposes	6	137	5	An Introduction to Functional Grammar	129	892	Journal of English for Academic Purposes	6	137	264
Text and Talk	13	134	2	Journal of English for Academic Purposes	115	1573	Text and Talk	13	134	418
Critical Discourse Studies	6	107	2	Discourse & Society	88	523	Critical Discourse Studies	6	107	225
Language, Context and Text	5	8	0	Journal of Second Language Writing	82	1131	Language, Context and Text	5	8	249
Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics	5	4	2	Text	81	703	Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics	5	4	136

Table 2 shows the results of the analysis of the six journals with the most citations. *Linguistics and Education* is the most popular journal, with five articles that have been cited 180 times, an Impact Factor of 2.1, and a CiteScore of 3.6. *Text and Talk* is the most popular journal, with 134 citations and 13 articles. The Impact Factor of this journal is 0.9, and the CiteScore is 2.4. This finding indicates that *Text and Talk* not only receives a considerable number of citations but also wields considerable influence in pertinent research areas. The metrics provided help find the most important sources in today's research world.

The bibliographic coupling analysis highlights the concurrent citation of two previously published articles in subsequent works, revealing a quantitative relationship between them (Jarneving, 2007). This technique facilitates the evaluation of common themes shared by the cited works. Additionally, Table 2 illustrates the six journals with the highest total link strength, indicating that these journals are highly influential when researchers engage with topics related to appraisal studies within SFL. Typically, when other articles cite foundational works, they often reference these prominent journals in their bibliographies, underscoring their significance in academic discourse.

Ultimately, the finding that *Linguistics and Education* stands out not only as the journal with the highest citation count but also as a key figure in bibliographic coupling analyses reinforces its crucial role in the field. This positions the journal as an essential source for understanding prevailing trends and themes in linguistics research.

Prolific authors

To gain a comprehensive understanding of statistical data alongside publication trends, a micro-level performance study focusing on the academic impact of scientists is essential (Bornmann & Daniel, 2007). A critical metric for evaluating scientific performance lies in the correlation between research productivity, measured by the number of publications, and citation impact (Ball, 2005). Consequently, citation counts serve as widely used bibliometric indicators for assessing the quality of research articles (Duque Oliva et al., 2006).

According to Dimensions data, Table 3 lists the top 12 authors on the subject of appraisal theory. With almost 50 citations between them, Hood Susan, Caldwell David, and Llinares Ana are the three authors most frequently cited. The bibliographic coupling analysis, which acknowledges their interrelated influences throughout the subject, also demonstrates their noteworthy contributions. With four papers each, Oteíza Teresa and Noor Siti Noor Fazelah Mohd are the top authors in terms of article creation in addition to their citation metrics. By shedding light on their productivity and influence, their work significantly advances the appraisal theory discourse.

Table 3

List of Authors with the Highest Citation Index

Cite				Co-Cite			Bibliographic Coupling			
Author	Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength	Author	Citations	Total Link Strength	Author	Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
Hood, Susan	3	227	4	Martin J. R.	531	8148	Hood, Susan	3	227	99
Caldwell, David	3	121	1	Halliday M. A. K.	283	4574	Caldwell, David	3	121	128
Llinares, Ana	3	54	0	White P .R. R.	199	3022	Llinares, Ana	3	54	115
Myskow, Gordon	3	32	0	Rose D.	146	2725	Myskow, Gordon	3	32	162
Ormond, Tika	3	24	4	Hood S.	120	2364	Ormond, Tika	3	24	380
Van Dulm, Ondene	3	24	4	Martin J. R.	114	1789	Van Dulm, Ondene	3	24	380
Keegan, Louise C.	3	20	0	Hyland K.	104	2001	Keegan, Louise C.	3	20	81
Zappavigna, Michele	3	20	0	Coffin C.	92	2229	Zappavigna, Michele	3	20	148
Oteíza, Teresa	4	19	0	Thompson G.	87	1554	Oteíza, Teresa	4	19	164
Dreyfus, Shoshana	3	5	2	White P.	83	1291	Dreyfus, Shoshana	3	5	69
Noor, Siti Noor Fazelah Mohd	4	5	0	Fairclough N.	81	1275	Noor, Siti Noor Fazelah Mohd	4	5	68

According to bibliographic coupling analyses, the strongest links anchor the same authors, marking their deep embedding in current scholarly discussions and high degree of centrality in the citation network. Leading the sequence with total link strengths of more than 3,000 and co-citations around 200 are Halliday M. A. K., Martin J. R., and White P. R. R. In this theoretical framework, such esteemed figures are considered the fathers of the movement. Their prominent position in the academic community gives prominence to their valuable contributions in discussing Appraisal Theory in SFL. These measures convey how these authors act as important nodes in the interlacing matrix of academic literature through which they breathe the directions of inquiry.

In brief, citation analysis metrics explain both general trends within particular fields and the peculiarities of individual researcher contributions. Halliday M. A. K., Martin J. R., and White P. R. R. who are three authors hold highly esteemed positions, which shows the relationship between their productivity and influence. This support the idea that a frequently contributing author receives more citations. This meaning should be comprehended to enhance the future research and collaboration among the academic author on Appraisal Theory and related fields.

Highly cited article
A total of 231 papers were evaluated based on bibliometric statistics obtained from the sampled articles. Among them, 42 papers have 21 citations or more. These figures signify increased interest from the academic community in Appraisal Theory within SFL. An increasing number of common citations indicate a strong interest in this theory in recent years. Moreover, co-citation analyses may reveal the references cited in these documents to help explore important insights into the theoretical contributions that have had strong influence thus far on the research development of Appraisal Theory within SFL so far.

Table 4

List of Articles with the Highest Citation Index

Cite			Co-Cite			Bibliographic Coupling		
Document	Citations	Links	Cited Reference	Citations	Total Link Strength	Document	Citations	Total Link Strength
White (2012)	111	0	Martin J.R., White P.R.R., The Language Of Evaluation: Appraisal In English, (2005)	80	67	White (2012)	111	61
Hood (2006)	104	14	Halliday M.A.K., An Introduction To Functional Grammar, (1994)	37	41	Hood (2006)	104	201
Ross (2020)	83	1	Hood S., Appraising Research: Evaluation In Academic Writing, (2010)	30	26	Ross (2020)	83	328
Hood (2008a)	74	3	Martin J.R., Rose D., Working With Discourse: Meaning Beyond The Clause, (2003)	25	25	Hood (2008a)	74	245
Flowerdew (2003)	73	0	Martin J.R., Rose D., Working With Discourse: Meaning Beyond The Clause, (2007)	25	25	Flowerdew (2003)	73	87
Herbel-Eisenmann (2010)	71	0	Halliday M.A.K., Matthiessen C.M.I.M., An Introduction To Functional Grammar, (2004)	23	28	Herbel-Eisenmann (2010)	71	42

The papers that top the citation indexes are listed in Table 4. The names of White, Hood, Ross, and Flowerdew emerged as leading experts in the field. These authors have established themselves as important theoretical authorities in Appraisal Theory by virtue of fully cited works. In addition to providing the basic frameworks for ongoing research, their works further guide the nascent researchers toward additional investigations in this linguistic theory. This search for recognized authors establishes that scholars collaborate to shape knowledge in the application domain of Appraisal Theory. With a high citation count, too, these papers bear very strong influence on others.
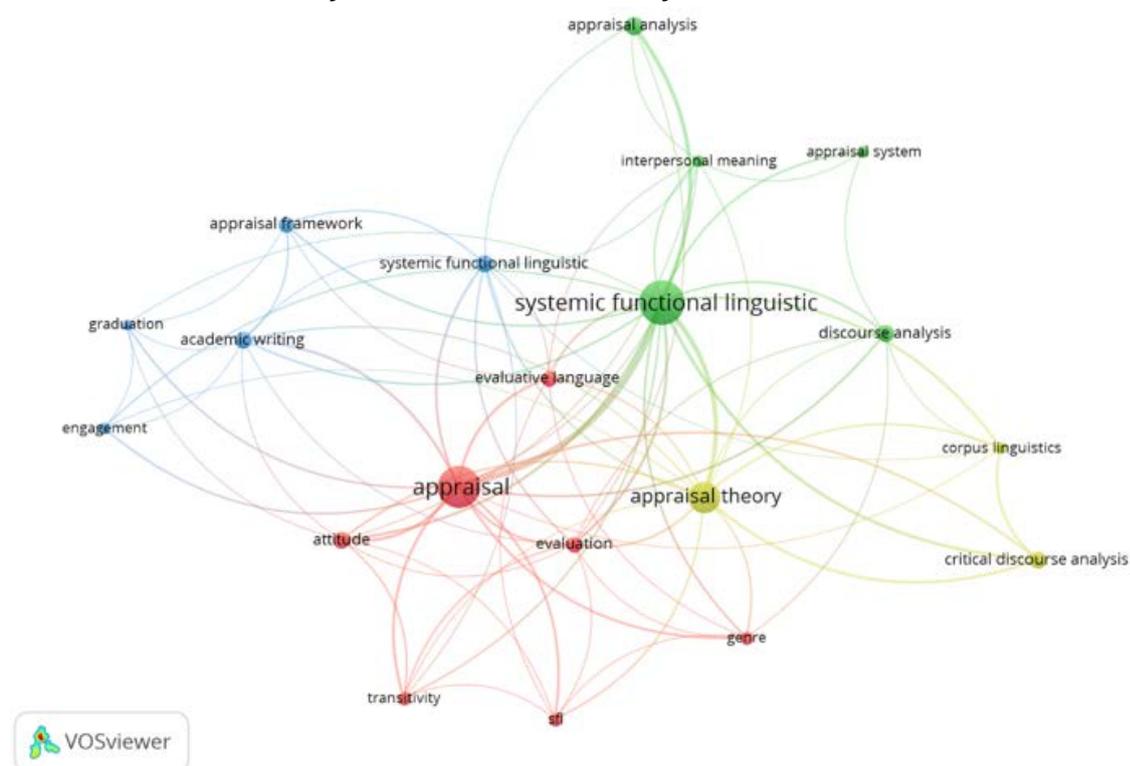
The Co-Occurrence Analysis
Dominant trends

The way any content or methodological analysis co-occurs in literature is central to the analytical tool that locates the most commonly occurring terms in a text, analyzes their relations, and then classifies them into different research streams on the basis of these relations and co-occurrence patterns (Klarin, 2024). Conceptually, Sedighi (2016) outlines how content co-occurrence analysis reveals how ideas couple and change over different subject matters. Co-occurrence analysis of authors' keywords using the application of the VOSviewer gives you the visualization of networks, overlays, and connection-density maps. These measures are incredibly helpful for any researcher attempting to understand or set research trends in an academic context (Agarwal et al., 2016).

Figure 4
Network Visualization of the Co-Occurrence Analysis

The results of co-occurrence analysis show that under the umbrella of SFL, there exist four diverse clusters of research pertaining to Appraisal Theory. These clusters stand for the four main research trajectories, as shown in Figure 4.

(i) Represented by green circles in the top right quadrant is the first research trend- the study of the interpersonal meaning of discourse through Appraisal Theory. Prominent keywords for this trend include discourse analysis, interpersonal meaning, appraisal system, and appraisal analysis.

(ii) The second research trend, colored yellow and positioned on the bottom right quadrant, covers Appraisal-Theory-based studies, which are part of critical discourse analysis, specifically through corpus linguistic methods. The key terms, as illuminated in Figure 4, were appraisal theory, corpus linguistics, and critical discourse analysis.

(iii) The third research trend, indicated by the red circles in the bottom left quadrant, pertains to scholarly inquiries focused on the evaluation of language users, particularly in relation to the transitivity system and genre dynamics.

(iv) The fourth research trend, depicted by the blue circles in the top left quadrant, emphasizes investigations that delve into specific aspects of Appraisal Theory, such as graduation and engagement, with a significant focus on their applications within academic writing.

Overall, these clusters not only illustrate the diverse applications of Appraisal Theory but also highlight the evolving nature of research within the SFL framework.

New research trends in the last five years
Overlay visualizations effectively illustrate research trends over time by utilizing color gradients and other visual indicators to represent the temporal aspects of various research topics (Van Eck & Waltman, 2014). This approach enables researchers to readily identify fields that are either gaining or losing popularity, as well as to observe how research focus has evolved over time. The past five years are represented in yellow in Figure 5. The findings indicate that significant keywords include appraisal framework, graduation, engagement, transitivity, academic writing, and appraisal system. Most of these keywords align with the third and fourth research trends, suggesting that Appraisal Theory continues to be explored in greater theoretical depth. Furthermore, the recent surge in applications of Appraisal Theory is underscored by the prominence of the keyword "academic writing" over the last five years. This suggests that there is a growing interest in the practical applications of this linguistic theory.

Figure 5

Overlay Visualization of the Co-Occurrence Analysis
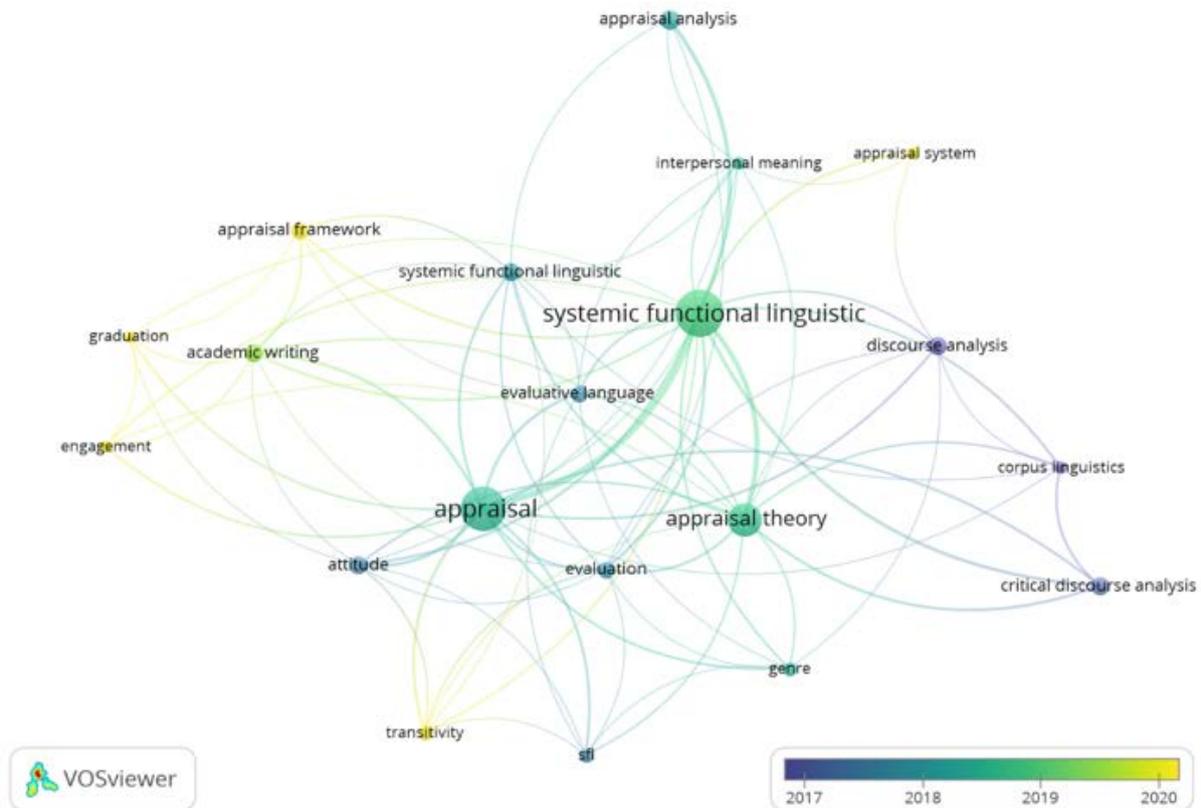
Trend capturing scholarly attention

Density visualizations in bibliometrics serve as powerful tools that illustrate the concentration and distribution of research topics, keywords, or authors within a specific academic field, providing crucial insights into research activity (Hassan & Duarte, 2024). These visualizations not only highlight the significance of prevalent keywords but also aid in identifying clusters of related research areas. In certain instances, they can also reflect the geographic distribution of research activities.

The findings indicate that authors focusing on Appraisal Theory predominantly converge on SFL and the appraisal system within discourse analysis. The deep yellow color in the visualization emphasizes the concentration of publications associated with the three keywords "Systemic Functional Linguistics," "appraisal," and "Appraisal Theory," suggesting a substantial number of publications centered around these terms (Figure 6). This focus can be inferred from the fact that Appraisal Theory is constructed upon the theoretical framework of SFL, which aims to examine interpersonal meaning resources within various discourses. Consequently, scholars studying Appraisal Theory must inevitably engage with the concepts of SFL and the appraisal system.

Figure 6

Density Visualization of the Co-Occurrence Analysis

Discussion

Over the past two decades, research related to Appraisal Theory has seen steady progress, garnering interest from scholars, particularly since Martin and Rose (2003) initially introduced the concept. However, the total of 231 related publications over this more than twenty-year span raises questions about its substantiality, as this figure seems relatively modest given the lengthy timeframe. This observation suggests that Appraisal Theory has yet to attract extensive scholarly attention.

The perspective presented by Lei and Liu (2019) reinforces this notion, stating that "Appraisal" remains an under-explored domain that does not feature among the 165 most frequently discussed topics in applied linguistics. Li et al. (2019) identify several factors contributing to this situation. First, evaluation represents a nascent subfield within discourse analysis compared to more established areas. Second, research in evaluation often encounters theoretical challenges that complicate the establishment of cohesive frameworks.

Despite the notable increase in publications focused on evaluation and Appraisal Theory—evidenced by a growth from fewer than ten articles in 2015 to over thirty in 2024—there has not been a significant breakthrough in its scholarly investigation, even

though the theoretical framework has been developed fairly comprehensively by Martin and White (2005). This stagnation may stem from the complexity of the terminological system associated with evaluation (Pascual-Nebreda et al., 2023), which can be cumbersome compared to traditional grammar. Moreover, evaluation can be expressed through a diverse array of lexical and syntactical tools, making it inherently context-dependent (Hunston, 2011). The implicit and cumulative nature of evaluation complicates analytical efforts and poses challenges for researchers regarding their methodological approaches.

Apparently, these challenges prohibit a thorough Forschungsboom for Appraisal Theory in the last decade. The developmental progress of this theory is evident in the expanding body of knowledge and relevant papers. Nevertheless, the academic community must devote significantly more concerted effort to further developing the theory and its applications, including within the context of diverse discourses. Doing so will ensure that Appraisal Theory receives the attention it deserves and asserts its claim in current linguistic studies. If we devote more attention to it, we can gain deeper insights and a clearer understanding of how meaning resources function across different discourse contexts. Based on the descriptive analysis presented in the findings, we identify three domains with notable research gaps: (1) the theoretical framework of Appraisal in languages other than English, (2) the application of this theory across diverse discourses, and (3) the deployment of this theory within English language education.

First, more research on the appraisal framework across languages should be a top priority to advance linguistic knowledge. Appraisal theory helps analyze interpersonal relationships in discourse (Gales, 2011)—how people interact with one another in communication. This topic has long interested linguists across all languages, not just English (Hays, 1973; Lam & Webster, 2009; Martin, 2018). The Appraisal framework has entirely been described and systematized in English by Martin and White (2005). Nevertheless, there might not be comprehensive Appraisal framework for other languages such as French, Japanese, or Vietnamese. This does not imply that the present article denies research on appraisal in individual languages. Consequently, the analysis of evaluation expressions across different languages has not received sufficient attention. This gap presents a wide-open path for future research on appraisal systems, particularly for linguists studying their own mother tongues. Such work will substantially enrich our understanding of interpersonal interactions among diverse ethnic groups.

Second, the use of Appraisal Theory to examine discourse features is likely to continue drawing many linguists in the coming years. Over the past two decades, discourse studies have attracted substantial scholarly attention. Education discourse has been explored by authors such as Herbel-Eisenmann and Wagner (2010), Fryer (2013), García (2013), and Cavanna et al. (2015). Political discourse has been examined by Zhu and Wang (2020), Oteíza et al. (2021), Mažeikienė (2022), and Cabrejas-Peñuelas (2023). News discourse

features prominently in the work of Bangga (2020), Puspita and Pranoto (2021), Zhang et al. (2022), and Wan (2024). Overall, publications applying Appraisal Theory across different discourse genres dominate the research corpus. However, bibliometric analyses indicate that certain discourse keywords remain underexplored (Figure 4), suggesting notable gaps for future research. More work linking Appraisal Theory with diverse discourse genres is encouraged.

Third, the application of Appraisal Theory to foreign language teaching has garnered notable momentum in recent times. The phrase "academic writing" has featured prominently in numerous studies during the past five years. Scholars such as Li (2025), Vo and Viet Le (2025), and Ndoricimpa and Barad (2024) are excellent examples of this approach. They actively strive to link Appraisal Theory to pedagogical practices. A review of Figure 5 indicates that "academic writing" is an emerging focus in the application of Appraisal Theory to language teaching, particularly regarding writing skills. Terms clustered around this focus— "engagement," "appraisal framework," and "graduation"— have emerged within the past five years, reflecting a recent research emphasis.

Beyond this, the applicability of Appraisal Theory to English language education is evident. Works such as those of McKinley (2018), Zhang and Cheung (2018), Devira and Westin (2021), and Xuan and Chen (2025) suggest implications of this theory in the improvement of pedagogic methods. Collectively, these studies show that the assessment resources described in this framework could be used to significantly improve the competence of learners in writing and in stating their views in academic discourse.

Moreover, data from Scopus suggest that studies employing Appraisal Theory to academic writing in writing instruction remain scarce when examined across national and regional dimensions. For instance, Chung and Crosthwaite (2024) constitute the only group of authors applying this theory to writing pedagogy in Vietnam. These observations imply that there are notable gaps in the literature on the application of Appraisal Theory to language education within national or regional contexts.

Conclusion
This bibliometric analysis has produced significant results regarding Appraisal Theory. We have successfully attained the research objectives set forth in the beginning of this article. The bibliometric entries we examined offer a clear depiction of the current landscape of Appraisal Theory-related research. The findings present valuable insights into future trends, which can be delineated into four primary areas: (i) the interpersonal meaning of discourse through the application of Appraisal Theory; (ii) the employment of Appraisal Theory within the framework of critical discourse analysis through utilizing data-driven methodologies; (iii) inquiries focused on the evaluation of language users, particularly in relation to transitivity systems and genre dynamics; and (iv) detailed

investigations into specific facets of Appraisal Theory, such as graduation and engagement, with a notable emphasis on their applications in academic writing.

However, certain limitations must be taken into consideration. First, bibliometric study holds inherent limitations relating to the scope and content of the keywords used in the study (Zahra et al., 2021). As such, some of the less-popular keywords may not have been sufficiently reflected.

Second, our sample was exclusively on the Scopus database, and this database does not contain monographs and journal articles published in journals that are not included in this repository. It should be explained that it was not an intention to overlook such contributions but rather opted for Scopus as the only data source of this research.

Third, non-cited or exploratory studies might have been inadvertently omitted during the indexation process and therefore a limited number of articles end up being incorporated into the survey (Thelwall, 2018). Finally, screening the data can be time-consuming, and thus some publications may be accidentally left out.

These limitations accentuate the necessity of future research trajectories in the field of bibliometric methods. These activities will enable a deeper and more thorough exploration of Appraisal Theory and its various aspects in the academic arena. It is therefore important to expand research activities to encompass a variegated range of sources of data and techniques of indexing, thereby enabling enhanced accuracy and scope of bibliometric studies in future research.

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The author declares that no generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the preparation, analysis, writing, editing, or visualization processes of this manuscript. All parts of this work, including the conceptualization, data analysis, writing, and revisions, were completed solely by the author without the assistance of any AI-based content generation tools.

Ethics Declarations
World Medical Association (WMA) Declaration of Helsinki–Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Participants
The author declares that the study involving human participants was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined in the World Medical Association (WMA) Declaration of Helsinki.

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The author declares no competing interests.

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No data are available for this study.

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