

An Appraisal Analysis of English Comments on YouTube Educational Videos

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the evaluative language used in English comments on YouTube educational videos as a reflection of viewers' attitudes, emotions, and judgments toward online educational content. The phenomenon of increasing public interaction through digital platforms highlights YouTube not only as a medium for learning but also as a space where users express opinions and construct social meaning through language. The scope of this research focuses on analyzing the linguistic features of appraisal resources, particularly Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation, in selected English comments from educational video channels. Using a qualitative descriptive method based on Martin and White's Appraisal Theory (2005), the study investigates how commenters encode affect, judgment, and appreciation in their responses. The findings reveal that Affect and Appreciation are the most dominant categories, showing that learners frequently employ positive emotional language to express gratitude, motivation, enjoyment, and satisfaction, while also appreciating the quality, clarity, and usefulness of the videos and teachers. Positive expressions such as admiration, thankfulness, and encouragement demonstrate how educational videos foster supportive learner engagement. This study contributes to discourse analysis by highlighting the role of appraisal resources in digital educational communication and offers valuable insights into how emotional and appreciative language strengthens online learning communities and teacher–learner interaction.

Keywords: *appraisal, digital discourse, English education, evaluative language, YouTube comments.*

INTRODUCTION

YouTube is a very crucial tool to search for information, both sound and visual effects. It has developed from a platform mainly used for entertainment into an important tool for learning English independently. Further, in communication, utilizing media provides more effective information. (Megah S. et al., 2023). Many learners now use YouTube to study outside the classroom, accessing lessons on pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and culture from different creators (Kailani et al., 2023; Retnaningsih et al., 2022; Setiawan & Novita, 2024). With millions of users and a wide range of educational content, YouTube allows learners to choose what, when, and how they want to learn. This reflects changes in digital learning, where learners have more control over their learning process and can interact with global communities (Crystal, 2006; Gee, 2014).

Rahmatika et al. (2021) argue that YouTube is a good platform for media in improving students' facility in learning. One important feature that makes YouTube different from other learning platforms is its comment section. Unlike traditional classrooms, in which interaction is usually led by teachers, YouTube allows users to freely share their opinions, ask questions, and respond to others. This creates a more open and less stressful environment for communication. According to Papacharissi (2015), such online spaces form "affective publics," where people connect through shared emotions and discussions. In this context, YouTube comments become a place where learners not only practice language but also express feelings and build social connections.

Research shows that online communication often includes strong emotions, informal language, and active interaction (O'Farrell, 2022; Tagg, 2015). This means learners are not just watching videos passively—they are actively participating. For example, comments like "This lesson helped me so much!" show positive emotional

responses, while questions or disagreements show deeper engagement with the content.

However, although YouTube is widely used for learning, most previous studies focus on video content, technology, or general sentiment analysis rather than the language used in the comments. The Research has examined YouTube comments in areas such as politics, entertainment, beauty, and technology, the studies that focus on how learners use evaluative language in English-learning YouTube comments are still limited.

YouTube as an Informal, Autonomous Learning Environment

YouTube functions as an informal learning platform that supports independent learning. English language learners (ELLs) can control their learning by watching videos at their own pace, repeating explanations, comparing different teaching styles, and choosing content based on their personal needs. The researchers argue that digital platforms like YouTube encourage active participation, where knowledge is built together by users (Crystal, 2006; Gee, 2014). In language learning, it is important because learners can access lessons from both native and non-native speakers, communicate with others globally, and develop their language skills through various types of content.

YouTube also helps learning through its multimodal features, such as visuals, animations, subtitles, and audio cues. These features make it easier for learners to understand the material, especially for those who need visual support (Tagg, 2015). Tools like subtitles and captions provide written text that supports vocabulary learning and listening skills (Aero & Noorman, 2022; Gaikwad et al., 2024).

In addition, YouTube allows learners to interact and form small communities based on shared learning experiences (Chalkias et al., 2023). These communities are often built through shared emotions, such as motivation, encouragement, or frustration. This reflects the idea of “affective publics” (Papacharissi, 2015), where

learning is influenced not only by thinking processes but also by emotional connections.

Digital Discourse, Emotional Expression, and Evaluative Practices

Language is very important for human discourse communication (Ningsih et al., 2021). Communication in digital spaces is different from traditional communication. Online comments are usually more expressive, informal, and emotional. The users often use emojis, punctuation, and strong language to express their feelings clearly. According to O'Farrell (2022), people feel more comfortable expressing strong opinions online because of anonymity and fewer social restrictions.

In educational YouTube videos, comments often show emotions like gratitude, admiration for the teacher, frustration, or relief when learners understand something. These emotional expressions help researchers understand learners' motivation and engagement. Similar patterns have also been found in studies about comments on political, entertainment, and social content (Chairani Siregar et al., 2024; De Mel & de Silva, 2025; Fanani et al., 2025; Lopez & Cuellar, 2025; Wulandari & Khristianto, 2024).

Online comments also show collaboration among learners. Users often answer questions, give explanations, share learning tips, and help each other understand the material. Previous research (Beckles et al., 2025; Kolhatkar et al., 2020) shows that people in online discussions express opinions, agree or disagree with others, and use language to show their position in the conversation.

Appraisal Theory as a Framework for Evaluative Language

Appraisal Theory, developed by Martin and White (2005), provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing how speakers convey evaluation, construct social relationships, and adjust the intensity of meanings in discourse. Rooted in Systemic Functional Linguistics as proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), this theory organizes evaluative language into three interrelated

subsystems, namely Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation, each of which captures a distinct dimension of meaning-making in communication.

The Attitude subsystem focuses on the expression of feelings, ethical evaluations of behavior, and aesthetic assessments of entities or phenomena. It is further categorized into Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation. Affect refers to the expression of emotional responses such as happiness, satisfaction, or frustration, while Judgment evaluates human behavior in terms of social norms and values, such as competence or morality. Appreciation, on the other hand, involves the evaluation of objects, processes, or texts in terms of their quality or significance. In digital learning environments, affective expressions are particularly prominent, as learners frequently articulate emotions such as enjoyment, gratitude, or relief. These expressions not only demonstrate linguistic engagement but also reflect broader motivational and interpersonal dynamics within online learning communities.

The Engagement subsystem addresses how speakers position themselves in relation to other voices, opinions, or perspectives. It distinguishes between monoglossic expressions, which present statements as indisputable facts without acknowledging alternative viewpoints, and heteroglossic expressions, which open up dialogic space by recognizing the presence of other perspectives. In online comment sections, heteroglossic resources are commonly employed as users share personal opinions, anticipate differing views, or respond to others' contributions. Through this subsystem, Engagement analysis reveals how individuals negotiate their epistemic stance and participate in the co-construction of meaning within a community.

The Graduation subsystem concerns the scaling of meanings, particularly how speakers amplify or mitigate the intensity of their evaluations. This subsystem includes Force, which involves the use of intensifiers or quantifiers to strengthen or weaken an expression, and Focus, which adjusts the preciseness or prototypicality

of category boundaries. In the context of YouTube comments and other forms of digital discourse, Graduation resources are highly pervasive, as users often intensify their evaluations to convey strong enthusiasm, admiration, or dissatisfaction. Such linguistic choices highlight the expressive and interpersonal nature of online communication, where emphasis plays a crucial role in capturing attention and conveying stance.

Appraisal in Digital and YouTube Contexts

Recent studies show that Appraisal Theory is useful for analyzing language in online environments. For example, Beckles et al. (2025) created a large dataset of social media comments using Appraisal Theory and showed that it can effectively examine emotions and opinions on different topics. McKeown et al. (2025) also found that YouTube users often express strong emotional and moral judgments when discussing documentary content.

Several studies have applied Appraisal Theory to YouTube comments. Research by Agestaputri (2024), Chaerunnisah (2023), and Nisa (2024) shows that comments on beauty videos, TED Talks, and music content contain rich evaluative language. These studies found that users often express positive and negative judgments, strong emotions (Affect), and use intensifiers (Graduation) to strengthen their opinions. However, only a few studies focus on YouTube comments related to English learning.

Research Gap and Rationale

Although YouTube is widely utilized as a platform for independent English learning, scholarly attention to the linguistic features of learners' comments remains relatively limited. Existing research has predominantly focused on general sentiment analysis, non-educational content, or broad discourse patterns, rather than employing Appraisal Theory as a framework to examine evaluative language in language-learning contexts. As a result, there is still a lack of in-depth understanding of how learners express attitudes, negotiate meanings, and

construct interpersonal relationships through their comments on educational content.

Furthermore, a significant number of prior studies have concentrated on domains such as politics, entertainment, social issues, or beauty-related content (Fanani et al., 2025; Lopez & Cuellar, 2025; O'Farrell, 2022; Wulandari & Khristianto, 2024). Comparatively, limited research has explored how learners utilize evaluative language when engaging with English-learning videos. This gap highlights the need for a more focused investigation into the linguistic and interpersonal dimensions of learner interaction within digital educational environments.

This research would like to explore the appraisal used in English comments on three prominent English-learning YouTube channels, namely YouTube channels English with Lucy, BBC Learning English, and POC English. This study aims to explore the appraisal resources used in learners' comments from linguistic features by examining how far Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation systems are employed. Using Martin and White's Appraisal Theory (2005) as the analytical framework, this qualitative descriptive research analyzes selected English comments to identify patterns of evaluative language. The findings indicate that Attitude is the most dominant appraisal system, particularly through Affect and Appreciation, showing that learners frequently express positive emotions such as gratitude, motivation, and satisfaction while appreciating the quality, clarity, and usefulness of the videos and teachers. Engagement resources demonstrate how commenters negotiate opinions, align with content, and acknowledge alternative perspectives, while Graduation is used to intensify or soften evaluations, emphasizing strong emotional involvement and positive assessment. This research contributes to discourse and digital communication studies by expanding the application of Appraisal Theory to online educational contexts and provides insights into how evaluative language

strengthens learner engagement, audience interaction, and supportive online learning communities.

This research is related to the application of Appraisal Theory, so this research gives positive impacts for psycholinguistics, discourse analysis, and semantics fields. In addition, the findings provide valuable implications for educators and content creators in designing more effective teaching strategies and enhancing online learning experiences.

Overall, examining evaluative language in YouTube comments offers important insights into the dynamics of digital learning, learner identity, and communication in contemporary language education. It underscores the significance of emotional expression and social interaction as integral components of successful independent learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study applies a qualitative descriptive design, which is suitable for analyzing language used in real-life situations, especially in online comments. This approach helps the researcher understand how people express opinions, emotions, and attitudes in digital communication. The descriptive qualitative is used to analyze how people communicate with others (Megah et al., 2024).

This is qualitative research, grounded theory, because you have a main theory used to solve the problem for this research. Unlike quantitative methods that focus on numbers or general sentiment (positive/negative), a qualitative approach allows deeper analysis of language. It looks at how users show feelings, take positions, and strengthen their opinions through specific words and expressions.

In Appraisal Theory studies, researchers usually analyze texts closely to identify types of evaluative language based on the framework by Martin and White (2005). This method considers that online communication is influenced by context,

personal experiences, and interaction between users. Therefore, comments are analyzed as a whole, not just as separate words.

Data Sources

The dataset for this study consists of thirty sanitized user comments collected from three English-learning YouTube channels, selected to represent diverse instructional styles and learner engagement patterns. The first data source is *English with Lucy*, specifically from the video titled “*If You Know These 17 Advanced Words, You Have C2 English Vocabulary.*” This channel is widely recognized for its polished and highly structured instructional approach, primarily targeting intermediate to advanced English learners. The content typically emphasizes vocabulary development, pronunciation, and advanced language use, which attracts learners seeking to refine their proficiency. Using 30 comments because the number is relatively small. In line with Suharsimi (2019), if the population is more than 100, the entire population is used as data.

The second data source is *BBC Learning English*, drawn from the video “*English in a Minute – Ten Lessons in Ten Minutes!*” This channel is characterized by its concise, fast-paced, and professionally produced materials designed to accommodate a broad range of proficiency levels. Its instructional format prioritizes clarity and efficiency, making it particularly accessible to learners with limited time while still maintaining high educational value.

The third data source is *POC English*, based on the video “*Stop Making These 5 Grammar Mistakes in English!*” In contrast to the previous channels, this platform adopts a more conversational and humor-driven style. It focuses on practical grammar correction and simplified explanations, creating an engaging and relatable learning environment. This variation in teaching style provides a useful comparative dimension for analyzing how different forms of content influence the use of evaluative language in learner comments.

Data Collection and Preparation

As previously mentioned, the data-based comments were manually copied from the YouTube interface into a corpus document. All usernames were removed to maintain ethical integrity and ensure confidentiality, aligning with digital ethics guidelines for publicly available data. Minor typographical errors were retained when they did not interfere with evaluation clarity. However, in cases where meaning was obscured, minimal corrections were applied (e.g., punctuation, capitalization). This approach maintains much of the original linguistic character of the comments; however, it also introduces a degree of researcher intervention. Such intervention may influence the identification and categorization of evaluative language, particularly evaluative categories (e.g., Affect, Judgment, and appreciation), which are identified and coded. To ease the understanding of the findings, the researchers will explain in simple clauses the sub-categories of the attitudinal analysis found in this research. In line with Du et al (2026), meaning can be categorized into three categories (e.g., Affect, Judgment, and appreciation).

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis in this study followed the three-level coding framework of Appraisal Theory, enabling a systematic examination of evaluative language across the dataset. At the level of Attitude analysis, each comment was carefully examined to identify expressions of Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation. This involved analyzing how learners conveyed emotional responses, evaluating the behavior or competence of teachers and fellow learners, and assessing the quality or usefulness of the instructional content. Through this process, the study captured the range of interpersonal meanings embedded in learners' comments. Coding Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation generally involves a systematic approach to minimize meaning bias (Du et al., 2026).

Thus, Appraisal Theory involves interpretive analysis, and several steps were taken to enhance objectivity in coding. Clear operational definitions of Affect,

Judgment, and Appreciation were established, supported by a coding guideline to ensure consistency in categorization. A fixed unit of analysis was applied across all data, and ambiguous cases were treated cautiously. To further enhance reliability, coding decisions were reviewed for consistency, and an audit trail of the analytical process was maintained. These measures aim to reduce subjectivity and ensure that the identification of evaluative language is systematic and transparent.

Appraisal Theory offers a robust framework for analyzing evaluative language; its application to informal YouTube comments presents certain limitations. The fragmented, spontaneous, and often ambiguous nature of such comments, frequently characterized by typographical errors and emoji use, may not always reflect deliberate or systematic evaluative choices. As a result, there is a risk of over-interpreting these expressions by imposing structured analytical categories onto discourse that is inherently minimal and context-dependent. Therefore, the findings should be viewed as interpretive approximations of evaluative meaning rather than definitive representations of intentional linguistic behavior. Du et al. (2026) add that in appraisal analytical categories, meaning can be based on the contextual side.

At the level of Engagement analysis, the comments were categorized based on how writers positioned their voices in relation to other perspectives. Specifically, comments were identified as monoglossic when they presented statements as single-voiced assertions without acknowledging alternative viewpoints, or heteroglossic when they incorporated dialogic elements such as modality, questions, or references to other opinions. This analysis provided insight into how learners negotiated stance and interacted with the broader discourse community within the comment sections.

At the level of Graduation analysis, the focus was placed on identifying linguistic resources used to amplify or soften evaluative meanings. This included the examination of intensifiers, quantifiers, and expressions that sharpen or soften

category boundaries. By analyzing these features, the study was able to determine how learners adjusted the strength and emphasis of their evaluations, revealing patterns of enthusiasm, certainty, or mitigation in their responses.

To ensure the reliability and consistency of the coding process, cross-checking procedures were conducted throughout the analysis. In addition, analytical memos were systematically created to document interpretative decisions, providing transparency and supporting the overall rigor of the study.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the linguistic patterns identified in the dataset based on the Appraisal framework. The results reveal how learners emotionally connect with English-learning content, evaluate instructor competence, and construct meaning within online learning communities.

Attitude: Main Type of Evaluation

Attitude is the most common type found in the data, especially **Affect** and **Appreciation**. Learners often use emotional and positive language to respond to the videos and teachers.

Table 1. Attitude in the Data (Simplified)

Type	Subcategory	Example	Meaning
Affect	Joy	"I'm very happy I learned this!"	Strong positive feeling
Affect	Relief	"Now I understand this."	Overcoming difficulty
Affect	Gratitude	"Thank you, this helps a lot."	Appreciation
Judgment	Capacity	"She explains very well."	Teacher ability
Judgment	Tenacity	"I should study more."	Self-evaluation
Appreciation	Value	"Useful for IELTS."	Practical benefit
Appreciation	Quality	"Clear explanation."	Content quality

Affect: Emotional Engagement

Affect emerges as the most dominant type within the dataset, indicating that learners frequently express strong emotional responses in their comments. The verb "understand" is included in the Mental Process, especially the cognition aspect (cognition/thinking), because this verb shows a mental process related to a person's understanding, knowledge, or awareness of something. These emotions include happiness, pride, excitement, and gratitude, which reflect positive engagement with the learning content. Such expressions demonstrate that the process of learning English extends beyond cognitive development and involves significant emotional dimensions. Learners often experience relief and satisfaction when they successfully comprehend challenging material, highlighting the role of affective factors in sustaining motivation and engagement.

Moreover, the prominence of affective expressions suggests that learners are personally invested in their learning journeys. For many individuals, acquiring English proficiency is closely linked to broader aspirations such as educational advancement, career opportunities, and participation in global communication. As a result, YouTube functions not merely as an instructional platform but also as a space that provides emotional reinforcement. The presence of supportive and appreciative language in the comments reflects how digital learning environments can foster both intellectual growth and emotional connection among learners.

Judgment: Evaluating Teacher and Self

Judgment is employed by learners to evaluate both instructors and themselves, reflecting the interpersonal and reflective dimensions of the learning process. In terms of teacher evaluation, learners frequently express positive judgments that highlight qualities such as reliability, professionalism, and clarity of explanation. These evaluations indicate a high level of trust in the instructor and contribute to the development of a strong relational bond between learners and content creators. Such positive judgments also reinforce the perceived credibility

of the instructional material and encourage continued engagement with the learning content.

In addition to evaluating teachers, learners also direct judgment toward themselves, often in the form of self-assessment. Comments that express the need for further practice or improvement demonstrate an awareness of personal limitations and a willingness to develop language proficiency. This form of self-evaluation reflects a reflective learning attitude and aligns with the principles of autonomous learning, where learners take responsibility for their own progress. Overall, the presence of both external and internal judgment highlights how evaluative language functions not only to assess others but also to support self-regulation and continuous improvement in the learning process.

Appreciation: Evaluating Content Quality

Learners also employ Appreciation to evaluate the quality of instructional videos, focusing on aspects such as clarity, usefulness, organization, and relevance. These evaluations reflect how learners perceive and assess the effectiveness of the content in supporting their learning needs. Positive comments frequently highlight how the material is clearly explained, well-structured, and appropriately paced, indicating that learners value both the substance and delivery of the lessons.

Such evaluative language suggests that learners regard YouTube videos as credible and meaningful educational resources rather than merely sources of entertainment. By emphasizing qualities that contribute to comprehension and exam preparation, learners demonstrate a pragmatic orientation toward learning, where content is judged based on its ability to facilitate understanding and achieve specific goals. This pattern reinforces the notion that digital platforms can function as legitimate spaces for structured and purposeful learning.

Engagement: Interaction and Meaning-Making

Table 2. Engagement (Simplified)

Type	Example	Function
Monoglossia	“This is the best explanation.”	Strong opinion
Question	“Is this used in American English?”	Asking, opening discussion
Acknowledgment	“Some people say this is outdated.”	Considering other views
Modal	“I think this helps beginners.”	Less certain opinion

Monoglossia: Strong Statements

Monogloss is a part of the Engagement system that refers to statements that convey only one voice, one opinion, or one position without acknowledging alternative views. Most comments are expressed directly and confidently, reflecting a predominantly monoglossic stance. Learners tend to present their opinions as firm assertions without referencing alternative viewpoints or acknowledging possible disagreement. This type of expression indicates a high level of certainty and alignment with the content, as seen in statements that strongly affirm the accuracy and quality of the explanations provided.

Such confident expressions suggest that learners not only understand the material but also trust the instructor's credibility and the instructional approach. The absence of hedging or dialogic expansion further reinforces the perception that the content is authoritative and reliable. Overall, these patterns highlight how learners position themselves as fully aligned with the knowledge presented, contributing to a sense of shared understanding within the learning community.

Heteroglossia: Open Discussion

Heteroglossia is a part of the Engagement system that refers to statements involving multiple voices, perspectives, or other possible opinions in an utterance. Some comments, however, reflect a more open and dialogic stance, indicating the use of heteroglossic resources. In these instances, learners acknowledge the possibility of alternative perspectives by posing questions or expressing

uncertainty. Such expressions demonstrate a willingness to engage with different viewpoints and invite further clarification or discussion. Rather than presenting knowledge as fixed, these comments position learning as a collaborative and evolving process.

This openness contributes to the creation of an interactive learning environment in which learners can exchange ideas, compare understandings, and build knowledge collectively. By allowing space for multiple perspectives, these comments encourage peer interaction and support a more dynamic form of engagement within the comment section. As a result, heteroglossic expressions play an important role in fostering discussion and enhancing the social dimension of online learning.

Graduation: Strengthening Meaning

Table 3. Graduation (Simplified)

Type	Example	Meaning
Intensification	“Absolutely amazing!”	Strong emotion
Quantity	“A lot of examples.”	Emphasizes amount
Sharpening	“Very advanced lesson.”	Strong category
Softening	“A bit confusing.”	Reduces criticism

Intensification: Strong Emotions

Learners frequently employ intensification resources such as *absolutely*, *really*, *very*, *extremely*, and *super* to strengthen the force of their evaluations. These linguistic choices function as markers of Graduation, specifically within the category of Force, as they amplify the intensity of opinions and emphasize the learners’ positive reactions toward the content. Through such expressions, learners convey strong enthusiasm and certainty, reinforcing the impact of their evaluative statements.

The consistent use of intensifiers also contributes to the creation of a positive and supportive learning atmosphere within the comment sections. By expressing heightened appreciation and encouragement, learners not only validate the

instructional material but also indirectly motivate other viewers. This pattern highlights how amplified language plays a crucial role in shaping an engaging and emotionally supportive digital learning environment.

Discussion

The results show that learners use language in complex ways when commenting on YouTube educational videos. Their comments reflect emotional, cognitive, social, and linguistic engagement. They do not only say “thank you” or “good video,” but also express opinions, feelings, and interact with others. This section explains the findings and connects them to existing theories.

Affect: Emotional Engagement as a Dominant Resource

The findings indicate that Affect constitutes the most dominant category within the Attitude system. Learners frequently express emotions such as excitement (“I’m excited to learn more!”), happiness (“I’m happy I found this video!”), relief (“Now I understand!”), and gratitude (“Thank you for explaining!”). This pattern aligns with Papacharissi’s (2015) concept of *affective publics*, which emphasizes the central role of emotional expression in shaping online communities. In this context, YouTube functions not merely as an informational platform but as a socio-emotional space where learners experience motivation, validation, and support. Furthermore, these affective expressions contribute significantly to the learning process. Positive emotional states, such as satisfaction and pride, are closely associated with increased motivation and sustained engagement, thereby reinforcing the importance of affective dimensions in successful language learning.

Judgment: Evaluating Teacher Credibility and Learner Self-Positioning

Judgment resources are employed to evaluate both instructors and learners themselves. Teacher-directed evaluations, such as “You explain clearly” and “You’re a great teacher,” reflect learners’ recognition of instructional competence and contribute to the construction of teacher credibility. These evaluations also foster a sense of interpersonal connection between learners and instructors. In contrast,

self-directed judgments, exemplified by statements such as “I need to practice more” and “I am still weak in grammar,” demonstrate learners’ reflective awareness of their own abilities. Such self-assessment aligns with the principles of autonomous learning, as learners actively position themselves as responsible agents in their own language development.

Appreciation: Evaluating Pedagogical Quality

Appreciation resources are used by learners to assess the quality of instructional content. Evaluations commonly focus on clarity, structure, usefulness, relevance, and pacing. Comments such as “Very useful for IELTS” and “Clear explanation” indicate that learners apply evaluative criteria typically associated with formal educational contexts. This suggests that YouTube is perceived not merely as a platform for entertainment but as a legitimate and valuable learning environment. Moreover, the frequent reference to academic and professional goals highlights the platform’s role in supporting learners’ broader educational and career aspirations.

Engagement: Negotiating Meaning and Interaction

Although many comments reflect strong, assertive positions, several learners also adopt dialogic strategies by posing questions and acknowledging alternative perspectives. Examples such as “Is this the same in American English?” and “Does this work in IELTS writing?” illustrate learners’ desire for clarification and deeper understanding. These interactional features facilitate knowledge exchange and collaborative meaning-making among users. Consequently, YouTube comment sections can be understood as interactive spaces that support peer-assisted learning and dialogic engagement.

Graduation: Intensification and Expressive Meaning-Making

Graduation resources are widely employed to amplify evaluative meanings. Learners frequently use intensifiers such as “absolutely,” “really,” “very,” and “extremely” to strengthen their expressions. This linguistic pattern contributes to

the creation of an enthusiastic and supportive communicative environment. Such intensification serves multiple social functions, including encouraging content creators, fostering a sense of community, expressing learner identity, and reinforcing perceptions of learning success. At the same time, learners occasionally mitigate criticism through softened expressions (e.g., “a bit confusing”), reflecting politeness strategies that maintain a positive and non-confrontational tone within the community.

Interaction Between Appraisal Systems

The three Appraisal systems—Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation—operate in an integrated and dynamic manner within the dataset. For instance, the combination of Affect and Graduation produces intensified emotional expressions, as seen in “I’m absolutely happy I understood this.” Similarly, the co-occurrence of Judgment and Appreciation enables learners to simultaneously evaluate both instructor competence and content quality, as in “You are a great teacher with clear explanations.” Meanwhile, the interaction of Engagement and softened Graduation facilitates polite and tentative inquiries, such as “I think this might be a bit difficult.” These patterns demonstrate that learners are not only expressing evaluative meanings but also actively managing interpersonal relationships and communicative norms within the digital learning environment.

Implications for Digital Language Learning

The findings of this study highlight several important implications for digital language learning. In line with Rahmatika et al. (2021) YouTube can be used as a learning medium that helps students learn independently. First, teachers should pay close attention to the emotional aspects of learning by maintaining an encouraging tone, understanding learners’ difficulties, and providing continuous support and motivation. Second, YouTube comments can serve as valuable feedback, as they reflect learners’ preferences regarding clarity, usefulness, and content organization, which can help instructors improve their teaching materials.

Third, interaction should be actively encouraged by asking questions in videos, responding to comments, and creating opportunities for discussion, as this fosters a more collaborative learning environment. Additionally, the use of expressive and positive language can enhance learner motivation and engagement, as enthusiastic communication creates a more dynamic and supportive atmosphere. Finally, YouTube plays a significant role in meeting real learning needs, as many learners use it to prepare for exams, support their studies, and improve job-related skills, indicating that it can effectively complement formal education.

CONCLUSION

This study examined thirty evaluative comments drawn from three English-learning YouTube channels through the analytical lens of Appraisal Theory. The findings demonstrate that educational comment sections on YouTube function as rich sites for the construction of interpersonal, emotional, and pedagogical meanings. Learners not only engage cognitively with instructional content but also express emotional connections, evaluate teaching practices, negotiate uncertainty, and intensify meanings to convey enthusiasm and alignment.

A central finding of the study is the prominence of Attitude resources, particularly Affect and Appreciation, which dominate the discourse. Learners frequently articulate feelings such as gratitude, enjoyment, relief, and admiration, indicating a strong emotional investment in the process of learning English. These affective expressions highlight the importance of emotional engagement in sustaining motivation and fostering positive learning experiences in digital environments.

In terms of Engagement, the data reveal a balance between certainty and openness. Monoglossic expressions reflect strong agreement and solidarity with the content, reinforcing the perceived authority and reliability of the instructional material. At the same time, heteroglossic expressions introduce elements of inquiry and dialogue, signaling curiosity and a willingness to consider alternative

perspectives. This interplay supports a collaborative process of meaning-making, where learners actively participate in constructing knowledge within the community.

The analysis of Graduation further shows how learners amplify or soften their evaluations to shape the emotional tone of their comments. The use of intensifiers enhances expressions of enthusiasm and approval, while more moderated language helps maintain politeness and inclusivity. These linguistic strategies contribute to the development of a supportive and engaging learning atmosphere, where positive reinforcement and mutual encouragement are highly visible.

To sum that the interaction of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation constructs YouTube as an affective, interactive, and motivational learning ecosystem. Evaluative language enables learners to express identity, demonstrate progress, support peers, and establish parasocial connections with instructors. These findings underscore the significance of both emotional and social dimensions in shaping effective and meaningful independent learning experiences in contemporary digital contexts.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research may extend the scope of this study by examining larger datasets drawn from a wider range of videos and channels, thereby enabling more comprehensive and generalizable findings. Expanding the dataset would allow researchers to identify broader patterns of evaluative language and better capture variations across different types of instructional content and audience demographics.

In addition, this study accounts for variation in language use, politeness, and emotional expression by adopting a context-sensitive approach to appraisal analysis. Evaluative meanings are interpreted in relation to their immediate linguistic and social context, rather than as fixed categories.

Further research may also incorporate a multimodal perspective by analyzing appraisal resources beyond written text, including emojis, GIFs, and other visual elements commonly used in online communication. This approach would offer a more holistic account of how meaning is constructed and intensified in digital discourse, where visual cues often complement or enhance linguistic expressions. Finally, future studies could explore the role of instructors' responses to learner comments and how these interactions influence engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes. Investigating this dynamic would shed light on the reciprocal nature of communication in online learning environments and highlight strategies for fostering more interactive and supportive educational communities.

Final Reflection

As digital learning continues to expand, YouTube comment sections will remain crucial spaces where learners negotiate meaning, express emotion, and develop language identities. Understanding the evaluative language used in these comments deepens our understanding of digital pedagogy and highlights the importance of emotional and interpersonal dimensions in language learning.

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