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ATTITUDINAL MEANING IN LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION WRITTEN BY SOME LECTURERS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST, CAPE COAST, GHANA

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Abstract: *The main communicative purpose of Letters of Recommendation (LORs) is to share the writer's evaluation of the candidate. Every kind of evaluation draws distinctively on resources of grammar. To this end, Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal System was adopted to examine the mechanisms through which some lecturers of a Ghanaian university express their evaluation in 35 purposively sampled letters. The study concludes that evaluation plays a crucial role in the construal of ideology, voice and stance in the LORs genre, and that the dominance of judgement is a proof of the communicative purpose of the LOR genre.*

Keywords*: appraisal system, attitude, evaluative language, genre, interpersonal meaning, letters of recommendation*

1. Introduction

Over the years, interest in academic discourse has rapidly expanded with the explosion of published research and pedagogical texts. One of the most frequently discussed aspects in studies of academic writing is that of genre. Three major traditions have dominated discussions of genre, namely: New Rhetoric, English for Special Purposes (ESP) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Hyon 1996). The ESP tradition of genre studies has concentrated heavily on text (Hood 2010), resulting in a large amount of work in academic discourse with more or less attention paid to grammar. Genres pay attention to the activities and relationships which characterize the context in which texts are produced, or to the texts themselves. Hyland (2002), for instance, takes note of the expansion of work in the field of genre studies with an attention to the realisation of meanings at the level of discourse. This expansion corresponds to developments in theorising the potential for the expression of interpersonal meaning in the discourse semantics of text. Consideration has been given to the argument function of the evaluation focusing on the notion of genre (e.g. Swales 1990), while the evaluation disjuncts have been argued to play a role in the performance of interpersonal and textual functions in academic texts (Hunston and Thompson 2000). Other studies on the interpersonal dimension of writing under the umbrella term 'evaluation' include models of *stance* (e.g., Biber and Finegan 1988), *meta-discourse* (e.g., Akoto 2020, Akoto and Afful 2020) and *appraisal* (Martin and White 2005). The findings suggest that different genres can well involve evaluation resources in different ways. We can consider, for example, the degree to which the academic text is geared towards instructing, explaining, describing or persuading, and whether it describes particular entities or groups of phenomena, or whether it persuades 'that' or persuading 'to,' (Martin 1985, Martin and Rose 2008).

Within the university, there are written genres which facilitate the work of the institution, one of which is the Letter of Recommendation (LOR). LORs are produced by key members of the institution such as lecturers. They are not necessarily letters that promote teaching and learning because they do not add to the distinctiveness of a particular discipline, but are part of the institutions' processes in getting things done (Afful and Kyei 2020, Kyei and Afful 2021). One of the primary communicative purposes of the Letters of Recommendation (LORs) is to share one's evaluation of the candidate. As accentuated by Bruland (2009), LORs follow a pattern where recommenders describe the candidates in terms of economic resources. The use of language in LORs acknowledges, constructs and negotiates social relations, providing writers with the linguistic means to present their authorial voice and communicate with different perspectives in order to achieve a communicative aim and to create unity with readers. Put differently, the writers of LORs concern themselves with why, when, how and what they evaluate applicants through syntactic and lexical choices. They convey and imply their feelings and values towards social phenomena aimed at persuading, convincing, influencing, or the other different negotiations in social interactions. The present study, hence, makes a significant contribution to the rhetoric on the LORs, describing the various ways of linguistic realisation of interpersonal meanings in language use.

2. Review of related literature

LORs have acquired academic interest, bringing about certain investigations in this field. They have been of considerable interest to scholars such as Afful and Kyei (2020), Bouton (1995), Colarelli, Hechanova-Alampay and Canali (2002), Kyei and Afful (2021), Liu (2007), Madera, Hebl and Martin (2009), Precht (1998), Schmader, Whitehead and Wysocki (2007), and Trix and Psenka (2003). These researchers have studied both generic moves and linguistic features of the LORs genre. Bouton (1995), Precht (1998), and Liu (2007), for example, found that LORs have three main parts (introduction, body, and conclusion). Madera, Hebl and Martin (2009), Schmader, Whitehead and Wysocki (2007), and Trix and Psenka (2003) showed that male recommenders differed greatly from female recommenders, and that LRs for female candidates tended to differ in terms of the linguistic resources employed. Colarelli, Hechanova-Alampay and Canali (2002) also revealed that the cooperative relationship between recommenders and applicants favourably influenced the length of letters. Finally, while Afful and Kyei (2020) found that LORs had five moves (namely, *purpose of writing, context of knowing the applicant, establishing candidate's credentials, providing personal values,* and *closure)*, Kyei and Afful (2021) found a sixth move, *establishing writer's credentials.*

Though studies on LORs abound in the literature, there is another area of challenge that is typically less addressed, that of managing what we can call the interpersonal meaning of academic discourse; that is, how writers negotiate interaction or manage relationship with knowledge. In the words of Hood (2004:25), the available literature has tended to focus on lexico-grammatical resources "while little attention has been paid to the semantics of interpersonal meaning"; that is, how meanings are construed through the use of interpersonal resources in the LORs. Meanwhile, LORs reflect evaluative values to share perspectives that can be analysed by the appraisal system (Bruland 2009). As confirmed by both Afful and Kyei (2020) and Kyei and Afful (2021), the authors of LORs use the personal pronoun "I", evaluative lexis (e.g. "strongly recommend", and "have no doubt"), and boosters (e.g. "without reservation") to show their full commitment to the proposition. To extend the literature on the semantics of interpersonal meaning, the present study analysed the evaluative lexis in the context of LORs written by some lecturers of a Ghanaian university in order to make the nature of the genre more apparent and accessible. Specifically, we investigated how writers of LORs encode attitudinal stance, employing Martin and White's (2005) *Appraisal Theory*.

2.1 The Appraisal Theory

Originally developed during the 1990s at the University of Sydney by Jim Martin and others, the appraisal model is a recent development in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and is part of the broader discourse semantics system. It builds on Halliday's (1985) network of interpersonal meanings and is a means of construing tenor: it concerns the way in which speakers or writers encode their attitudes and feelings and insert their subjectivity into texts. However, it seeks to understand how the texts negotiate relations of solidarity and power with their audiences, positioning them as sympathetic to or dismissive of the opposition, rather than simply describing attitudes and feelings (Zhang 2020). The appraisal system consists of three main frameworks, namely *attitude*, *graduation* and *engagement*, which are distinguished on the basis of semantic criteria rather than structural features. In terms of this theory, three types of meaning are concurrently reflected in every instance of evaluation in discourse: various types of attitudes *(attitude)*; how strongly these attitudes are felt (*graduation* or *amplification*); and where these attitudes come from (*engagement* or *sources*). Our concentration in this study is on attitude; hence, the analysis centred on the attitudinal meaning of the data (Martin and White 2005).

Attitude refers to the resources used to negotiate feelings, judge people's character and behaviour, and evaluate the worth of things (Li 2016). Attitude is itself divided into three domains of feeling, that is, *affect*, *judgment* and *appreciation*. *Affect* is normally realized through reacting to behaviour, text/processes and phenomena (e.g., *It pleases him, The girl hates chocolate, My friend is sad, I'm happy, I am proud of my son's achievements, The woman is frightened of spiders, Her fear was obvious to all)*. These categories of attitude can themselves be sub-categorised (see Martin and White 2005). The system of *affect* is categorised into three major variables, namely *un/happiness, in/security, and dis/satisfaction*. *The un/happiness variable* covers emotions concerned with 'affairs of the heart' such as sadness, anger, happiness, and love; the dis/satisfaction, involves emotions related to displeasure, curiosity, and respect; in/security, involves emotions concerned with anxiety, fear, confidence, and trust. *Judgment* subsystem entails *normality* (how unusual someone is), '*capacity'* (how capable they are), *tenacity* (how resolute they are), *veracity* (how truthful someone is) and *propriety* (how ethical someone is). *Appreciations* can be divided into our *reactions* to things (do they catch our attention; do they please us?), their *composition* (balance and complexity), and their *value* (how innovative, authentic, timely, etc.).

The appraisal framework was chosen for two practical reasons. First, it is widely regarded as the most comprehensive linguistic framework for interpersonal accounts. In the words of Hyland (2005), appraisal is the "most systematic approach" for the study of evaluative language uses because it provides a typology of evaluative resources that are available in English. Lee (2006) agrees that the Appraisal framework is broad and prescriptive enough to capture linguistic accounts of writer identity and voice, and that the theory's various categories are especially useful because they explicitly accommodate linguistic accounts of a writer's identity and voice. The second and final reason is that most previous research on interpersonal features in writing has focused on lexico-grammar analysis, with only a few studies taking a discourse-semantic approach (Liu and McCabe 2018). Discourse-semantic oriented descriptions, as opposed to lexico-grammar oriented descriptions, have the potential to be more specific than general, to be more closely tailored to the communicative concerns of a specific context of situation, or group of related contexts of situation, (White 1998).

3. Methodology

A qualitative research design was employed in this study. We adopted the qualitative research because we undertook an interpretive account of the data, examining how interpersonal meanings are patterned with other meanings in the unfolding discourse. The central characteristic of qualitative research is that it investigates how people make sense of their own concrete, real-life experiences in their own minds and words. As Palmer and Bolderston (2006) put it, qualitative research is an interpretive approach that uses the subjective experiences of participants to gain insights into the specific meanings and behaviours experienced in a particular social phenomenon. The qualitative analysis was supplemented by some descriptive statistics aimed to characterise and identify the frequencies of the attitudinal resources distributed in the texts. The data comprised letters of recommendation written by lecturers for students seeking admission into graduate programmes. All the letters were written by some lecturers from the Department of English (DE) of the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. The data, comprising 35 LORs, were purposively selected, involving those that were written within the period 2014-2019; and those that were attached to applications for graduate programmes (Masters and PhDs). After collecting the data, the LRs were coded as DE 1, DE 2 … DE 35. Coding involves the conscious attempts to put tags, names or labels against pieces of data (Punch 2003). In this study, the coding served a two-fold purpose, namely: (1) the codes acted as labels which aided the researcher's attempts to ensure anonymity and identification of the exemplars; and (2) the use of codes helped to distinguish one data set from the other, making the analysis easier.

4. Findings and discussion

This section of the paper reports and discusses the attitudinal resources (ARs) that characterize the LORs written by some lecturers of the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. The ARs, as put forward by Martin and White (2005), consist of three complementing subsystems, viz., *affect*, *judgement*, and *appreciation*.

4.1. Affect Attitudinal Resources (ARs)

Affect denotes positive and negative feelings or emotional reactions. See examples of Affect ARs found in the data collected as follows:

1. "I am writing **in support of** XXX's application to enter the graduate programme in MSc in Human Resource in your institution. … I **observed** his clear understanding of concepts, high sense of criticality and his communicative ability in both the written and spoken modes. … I **have no hesitation** in **recommending** him to you". – (DE 1)
2. "I **believe** that **he will not disappoint** when he is offered admission into the programme requested. … I therefore **highly recommend** XXX for admission". – (DE 2)
3. "I **have known** XXX since 2009 as a student. … I **recommend** her for admission in any institution and **can assure** with her strong academic performance, she will do well". – (DE 7).
4. "I **am confident** that if she is offered a place, she **will not disappoint** and might do better than your expectation. … In case you have any further queries for which I **must be contacted** please email xxx@ucc.edu.gh". (DE 10)
5. "… whom I **have known** for the past six years, has asked me to say a few words about him, as he seeks employment in your reputable institution. I **do so gladly**". – (DE 12)
6. "I **am sure** that she will be one of your best graduate students". – (DE 7)

In Examples 1-6 above, the expressions in bold print suggest inscriptions of affect resources. The writers showed their own feelings in the evaluation of the applicants. That is, they demonstrated their strong emotional responses for the persons being recommended. The affect

resources were indicated through various lexical items such as verbs of emotion (e.g. "believe," "recommend," "disappoint," "assure," etc.), adverbs (e.g. "gladly") and adjectives of emotion (e.g. "confident," "sure"). In Example 1 above, for instance, the writer expresses an emotional state with the use of "in support of", indicating his strong feeling of inclination for the applicant. The writer's feeling of happiness can also be deduced from "do so gladly" in Example 5. "Have known" also invokes a feeling of security. The writer further demonstrates his/her strong security for the applicant, as in "have no hesitation in recommending" in Example 1, and "can assure" in Example 3. "In support of" suggests the writer's emotion of attachment for the applicant.

Affect can be positive or negative. In the LORs examined, there were no instances of negative affect resources. That is, all the affect resources were generally positive. Similarly, Akoto (2018) found that none of the writers displayed a negative attitude towards the candidate. The absence of negative affect resources is not surprising because negative affect resources tend to damage the applicant and, hence, his/her chances of being granted admission. In the words of Precht (1998), a negative affect resource can be seen as a red flag and can reflect negatively on the applicant. Precht's view can also be appreciated from the view that the primary purpose of the LOR is to share one's evaluation of the applicant, and so one's negative affect resources can negatively affect the applicant. As Akoto (2018) argued, favourable information increases the candidate's chance of being selected. As a result, Range et al. (1991) discovered that writers should not write poor or neutral letters for the applicants.

4.2. Judgement Attitudinal Resources (ARs)

Judgement is the evaluation of human behaviours. Examples of Judgement resources found in the UCC data collected are discussed in Examples 7-11 below:

7. "XXX is **hard working**, **preserving**, and **committed to excellence**. He has **emotional stability** and **optimistic disposition in life**, which **should enable** him to complete his proposed studies **on time**". (DE 2)

In Example 7 above, each of the resources in bold construes different interpersonal meanings that relate to judgement ARs. The writer has assessed the applicant's behaviours in a number of ways. The same can be said of the resources in bold in Examples 8, 9, 10 and 11 below:

8. "In class, she was **diligent** and **serious-minded**; she participated **fully** in discussions".
9. "XXX did **better than average** in these courses and also proved to be **diligent** and **sharply focused** in her studies, which culminated in her graduating with **a second class upper division**". – (DE 12)
10. "She is **reliable, dependable, hardworking,** and **ambitious. …** She is **dedicated** and **extremely pleasant to work with**". – (DE 14)
11. "She is **reliable, dependable, hardworking, courageous, effective, efficient, persistent, humble, respectful** and **ambitious.** XXX is **always willing** to share her ideas with her classmates. She works **very well** as a team player and also performs **tremendously well when she works alone**". – (DE 24)

Judgement resources can be positive or negative. In the LORs analysed, there were instances of negative judgement resources. However, it was observed that, in all instances, the writers did not seem to damage the candidate. The writers quickly employed contrasting words such as *but, while, although*, to evaluate the candidate's strengths, as in Example 12 below:

12. "Based on these encounters with her, I would say that <u>while</u> <u>she was not a particularly exceptional student</u>, she came along as someone with great academic abilities, hardworking, intelligent and always ready to put her mind to challenging tasks before her".

In Example 12 above, "not a particularly exceptional" denotes a negative judgement resource. However, this did not seem to be intended to damage the applicant. As it can be noted,

the writer quickly added other positive judgement resources which were indicative of her current strengths. The intention was not to highlight the applicant's weakness but to show her improvements, hard work, and changes she had accomplished. Stated differently, when the writer mentioned the weakness, a contrasting word, "while" was used, to describe how the applicant overcame the weakness. It has been suggested that noting a weakness in the applicant makes the overall letter seem more credible (Precht 1998).

4.3. Appreciation Attitudinal Resources (ARs)

Appreciation deals with assessing the value of things or phenomena. Examples of Appreciation resources found in the data collected are discussed in Examples 13 – 17 below:

13. "…asked me to say a few words about him, as he seeks to pursue to postgraduate education in your **reputable** institution". – (DE 2)

In Example 13 above, the appreciation resource is "reputable" and the entity evaluated is "institution." The same can be said of Examples 14-17 below, where the appreciation resources are the bold ones and the entities evaluated are underlined:

14. "She passed all these courses with **outstanding** grades". – (DE 5)
15. "I found the thesis **well-conceived, executed** and **presented.** This was followed by a **commendable** performance in his thesis defense." – (DE 13)
16. "Further, his ability to communicate in both written and spoken modes of the English Language is **highly commendable**". (DE 16)
17. "… Her contributions are **original** and **thoughtful. …** She will bring into your university **brilliant** and **diverse** experience, an **impressive** perspective". (DE 24)

Examples 14-17 above illustrate the use of appreciation resources. In Example 14, "outstanding" shows a positive appreciation resource: the recommender has tried to evaluate "grades". In Example 15, the writer assessed the "thesis" of the applicant using "well-conceived", "executed", and "presented." The recommender, in Example 16, employed the resource, "highly commendable" to evaluate the recommendee's ability to communicate. Finally, in Example 17, the writer evaluated entities such as "contributions", "experience" and "perspective" using the resources, "original and thoughtful", "brilliant and diverse", and "impressive" respectively.

4.4. Subcategories of Judgement, Affect and Appreciation Attitudinal Resources (ARs)

This section discusses the subcategories of the judgement, affect, and appreciation ARs. Within the subsystem of *Judgement*, people's behaviours are evaluated in terms of their "normality" (how special someone is), "capacity" (how capable someone is), "tenacity" (how dependable or determined someone is), "veracity" (how honest someone is) and "propriety" (how moral and ethical someone is). An example is presented below:

18. "XXX is hardworking (JUDGEMENT: **capacity**), persevering (JUDGEMENT: **tenacity**), and committed to excellence (JUDGEMENT: **propriety**). He has emotional stability (JUDGEMENT: **propriety**) and optimistic disposition in life (JUDGEMENT: **propriety**), which should enable him to complete his proposed studies on time (JUDGEMENT: **capacity**)". – (DE 2)

In Example 18 above, the writer has assessed the candidate's capacity (e.g. "hard-working" and "on time'), tenacity (e.g. "persevering"), and propriety (e.g. "committed to excellence", "emotional stability," and "optimistic disposition in life").

19. "Added to her academic life, XXX is amiable **(**JUDGEMENT**: propriety)**, passionate **(**JUDGEMENT**: tenacity)**, hardworking **(**JUDGEMENT**: capacity)**, and persevering **(**JUDGEMENT**: tenacity)**. She has emotional stability (JUDGEMENT: **propriety**) and optimistic disposition in life (JUDGEMENT: **propriety**), which should enable her to complete her proposed studies on time **(**JUDGEMENT**: capacity**)". – (DE 3)

20. "As a student, she was honest **(**JUDGEMENT**: veracity)**, respectful **(**JUDGEMENT**: propriety)** and a critical **(**JUDGEMENT**: normality) thinker**. She demonstrated positive qualities **(**JUDGEMENT**: propriety)** in her academic pursuit. She showcased her willingness to be a team player **(**JUDGEMENT**: tenacity)** and also had the initiative **(**JUDGEMENT**: capacity)** of doing independent research".

In Examples 19 and 20 above, the judgement resources are underlined, and the type of judgement resource is in bold. For example, "amiable" in Example 19 is a judgement resource indicating the candidate's *propriety*; "passionate" indicates the candidate's *tenacity*; "hardworking" evaluates the candidate's *capacity;* and "persevering" assesses the candidate's *tenacity*. In Example 20 above, the writer assesses the candidate's *veracity,* using "honest", and *normality,* using "critical".

Within the subsystem of Affect, emotions are evaluated into four sets: "un/happiness", "in/security," "dis/satisfaction" and "dis/inclination". "Un/happiness" involves the feelings of happiness or sadness, and affection (liking) or antipathy (disliking); "in/security" involves feelings that relate to peace, anxiety, fear, confidence and trust; "dis/satisfaction" entails feelings of interest or pleasure towards the activities we are engaged in; "dis/inclination" grades the feelings in terms of a cline of intensity. The following examples are presented:

21. "I am writing **in support of XXX's application** to enter the graduate programme in M.Sc in Human Resource Management in your institution. **(**AFFECT**: inclination)** … I **have known** (AFFECT: security) XXX since 2001 when, in his final academic year he was in three of my courses: Oral Literature, American Literature and Literary Criticism". – (DE 1)
22. "Given **XXX's** academic qualification and abilities, I **believe (**AFFECT**: security)** that he **will not disappoint** (AFFECT: **satisfaction**) when he is offered admission in your institution. I, therefore, **highly recommend (**AFFECT**: inclination) XXX**". – (DE 14)
23. "I **highly recommend** (AFFECT: **inclination**) XXX to you and **do not hesitate** (AFFECT: **security**) to contact me if you need further information on her". – (DE 4)
24. "I am **delighted (**AFFECT**: happiness) t**o act as her referee". (DE 30)

In the examples above (21-24), the affect ARs evaluated different feelings. In Example 21, the writer encoded his/her feeling of attachment (indicating *inclination*), and "have known" also suggested the writer's self-assurance (indicating *security*). In Example 22, the writer encoded his/her feeling of security, indicating his confidence in the applicant ("believe") and his/her feeling that the applicant would not cause any dissatisfaction ("will not disappoint") and his feeling of endorsement for the applicant ("highly recommend"). After the writer projected his/her inclination in Example 23, "do not hesitate" evoked his feeling of self-assurance (indicating *security*). "Delighted" also called to mind the writer's feeling of happiness.

Within the subsystem of appreciation, the value of things or entities may be assessed by our 'reaction' (how we appreciate their quality or what impact they have on us), their 'composition' (balance and complexity) and their 'valuation' (social desirability, significance, reliability, etc.). Examples 25 and 26 showed how the writers evaluated "tertiary institution" in terms of their social significance and "communicative ability" as good in terms of its quality.

25. "I am elated to say a few words about XXX, a former student in my Department, in his bid to seek admission in your **esteemed** (APPRECIATION**: valuation**) tertiary institution". – (DE 26)
26. "His communicative ability was **above average** (APPRECIATION**: valuation**)". (DE 26)

In Examples 27 and 28 below, "with very little or without" suggested the writers' notions of perception, whereas "clear" indicated *composition*.

27. "XXX is a team player, a self-motivated and ready to achieve results young man and can work **with very little or without** (APPRECIATION: **composition**) supervision". – (DE 31)
28. "… she demonstrated **clear (**APPRECIATION**: composition)** understanding of concepts and research approaches as well as critical (APPRECIATION: **composition**) acumen, necessary for undergraduate work". – (DE 35)

Example 29 below indicated the writer's **personal feeling of the applicant's *disposition.***

29. XXX had a **very pleasant** (APPRECIATION: **reaction**) disposition. – (DE 25)

4.5. Distribution of Affect, Judgement and Appreciation in the data set

The study examined the distribution of the three subsystems in the LORs written by some faculty members from the UCC. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Use of Attitudinal Resources (ARs) by the UCC Writers

Data	Judgement	Affect	Appreciation	Total
DE 1	4	4	0	**8**
DE 2	15	8	2	**25**
DE 3	12	5	1	**18**
DE 4	14	4	4	**22**
DE 5	6	3	5	**14**
DE 6	3	3	2	**8**
DE 7	6	3	5	**14**
DE 8	3	3	2	**8**
DE 9	9	3	2	**14**
DE 10	14	5	1	**20**
DE 11	3	3	0	**6**
DE 12	6	4	0	**10**
DE 13	11	7	7	**25**
DE 14	14	5	8	**27**
DE 15	15	5	3	**23**
DE 16	14	8	3	**25**
DE 17	7	2	1	**10**
DE 18	3	3	0	**6**
DE 19	8	3	2	**13**
DE 20	10	6	1	**17**
DE 21	14	6	3	**23**
DE 22	15	6	4	**25**
DE 23	12	5	3	**20**
DE 24	23	6	5	**34**
DE 25	7	3	1	**11**
DE 26	14	5	3	**22**
DE 27	15	3	2	**20**
DE 28	6	4	0	**10**
DE 29	1	3	1	**5**
DE 30	17	9	5	**31**
DE 31	15	7	2	**24**
DE 32	14	4	1	**19**
DE 33	13	6	1	**20**
DE 34	6	7	0	**13**
DE 35	12	5	2	**19**

Total	**361(59.28%)**	**166 (27.26%)**	**82 (13.46%)**	**609**

Table 1 shows that the total usage of attitudinal resources by UCC authors was 609. Out of the number, judgement attitudinal ARs were used most frequently, and had 361 (59.28%) occurrences. Affect ARs had 166 (27.26%) occurrences, and the appreciation ARs had 82 (13.46%) occurrences. The analysis, thus, shows that *judgement* was the governing category and occupied the largest proportion, accounting for 59.28% of the total attitude resources in the data.

A number of reasons could explain the distribution pattern. First, the finding is in agreement with the view that affect is concerned with registering positive and negative feelings. As Hsiao (2019) argued, affect expresses personal emotions and makes the academic texts appear personalized. Therefore, the occurrence of *affect* in the data set is in compliance with the institutionalized nature of academic discourse, the main function of which normally is depersonalized and lacks expression of subjective feelings. Second, the appearance of appreciation is in compliance with the institutionalized nature of academic discourse because appreciation normally denotes the institutionalised effect of objectifying the subjective practice of evaluation in the academic texts.

Third, the dominance of judgement is a proof of the communicative purpose of the LOR genre. A LOR presents the recommended person's virtues such as honesty, diligence, faithfulness, etc. As Nicklin and Roch (2009) argued, a LOR presents the applicant's ability, character or potential for future success. Therefore, it is possible that judgement, which deals with attitudes towards behaviours that the writer admires or criticizes, praises or condemns, will frequently be used. Finally, the writers used significantly more judgement and affect resources than appreciation since human participants are involved and that emotional feelings (affect) and behaviours (judgement) of participants can provide useful insights which can serve the rhetorical purposes in LORs. The implication is that more judgement and affect resources help to position readers attitudinally and provoke their emotional response to actions evaluated by the writer.

4.6. Distribution of the subcategories of Attitude Systems in the data set

The distribution of the subcategories of the Attitude Systems of the LORs written by some faculty members from the UCC is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of the Subcategories of Attitude Systems in the Data Set

Attitude Systems	Subsystems	Frequency	%
Judgement	Normality	36	9.97
	Capacity	137	37.95
	Tenacity	65	18.01
	Veracity	41	11.36
	Propriety	82	22.71
	Total	**361**	**100**
Affect	Un/Happiness	31	18.67
	In/Security	71	42.77
	Dis/Satisfaction	26	15.67
	Dis/Inclination	38	22.89
	Total	**166**	**100**
Appreciation	Valuation	61	74.39
	Composition	8	9.76
	Reaction	13	15.85
	Total	**82**	**100**

As seen in Table 2, analysis of *judgement* subsystems demonstrates that capacity was the most favoured subtype, occupying 37.95% of the total

judgement instantiations, followed by propriety, occupying 22.71%, then *tenacity*, occupying 18.01%. The fourth was *veracity*, occupying 11.36% and finally, *normality* occupying 9.97%. The distribution of the *affect* subsystems presented in Table 2 demonstrates that *in/security* was the most favoured subsystem, occupying 42.77% of the total affect instantiations, followed by *dis/inclination* (22.89%), then *un/happiness* (18.67%) and *dis/satisfaction* (15.67%). The distribution of the *appreciation* subtypes, as presented in Table 2, illustrates that *valuation* was the most favoured subsystem, occupying 74.39% of the total appreciation instantiations, followed by *reaction* (15.85%) and *composition* (9.76%).

5. Conclusion

In this study, we investigated how evaluative language is constructed through the lens of affect, judgement, and appreciation attitudinal resources (ARs) in the LORs written by some faculty members from the Department of English (DE) of the University of Cape Coast (UCC). Because these three subsystems are meaning-based, each subsystem was divided into detailed categories. It has been noted that the writers deployed ARs. *Judgement* was the dominant type of *attitude,* accounting for 59.28% of the total instantiations, followed by *affect* at 27.26%, and then *appreciation* at 13.46%. This finding suggests that the UCC authors preferred judging behaviour to expressing their feelings or evaluating phenomena evaluation. The analysis of *judgement* subtypes demonstrated that capacity was the most favoured subtype, occupying 37.95% of the total judgement instantiations. Among the *affect* subtypes, *in/security* was the most favoured subtype, occupying 42.77% of the total affect instantiations. Within the *appreciation* category, the writers employed *valuation* (79.39%) resources more frequently than the other two subcategories of *reaction* and *composition*. The study concludes that evaluation plays a crucial role in the construal of ideology in the LOR genre and that the dominance of *judgement* is a proof of the communicative purpose of the LOR genre.

This work has implications for EAP/ESP pedagogy. It delved into understandings of voice and stance in the LOR genre, which are critical notions in the construction and discussion of academic texts. The study has shown that the attitude system of the appraisal theory is worth utilising in an investigation of the letters of recommendation (LRs). It also looked at the linguistic constructions of voice and stance before moving on to explain and exemplify the Appraisal framework of analysis that we used in our study. The non-structural aspect of writing LORs was provided by this discourse semantic approach to language analysis, bringing to the fore the ways in which the writers encode attitudinal stance. This analysis will be of great benefit for researchers/writers, in that they will realise how language is used in a real context and, hence, become aware of the linguistic choices to be employed. Faculty members and ESP teachers can use the findings of this study as a basis for developing pedagogical materials to enhance the teaching and learning of how faculty members can construct an effective LR.

In the analysis of the lexico-grammatical features, we focused on the linguistic attitudinal resources. It is, hence, suggested that further studies be conducted based on the analysis of other linguistic properties. Further studies can, for example, be carried out to determine frequency of syntactic properties used in the LR genre such as use of tenses or clause structures.

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