
POSITIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION: A STUDY OF PRESIDENT SIALKOT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SCCI) IKRAM-UL-HAQ'S FORMAL CORRESPONDENCE WITH MEMBERS

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Abstract

This research explores how President Ikram-ul-Haq of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) constructs a positive image of leadership through his official communication with members. Utilizing Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) and Appraisal Theory, the research examines the ways in which his language fosters optimism, unity, and inclusivity among members. Unlike previous studies that focus mainly on political or global leaders, this work highlights leadership communication within a regional business context. The researchers examined five formal messages by the President using the Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation systems of Appraisal Theory. The analysis reveals that his discourse consistently reflects gratitude, collaboration, and empathy. These qualities inspire trust and strengthen institutional harmony. These findings suggest that leadership communication can transcend transactional purposes and become a means of fostering collective motivation and credibility. Ultimately, the study contributes to discourse analysis by extending the application of PDA to local organizational leadership.

Keywords: Appraisal Theory, collaboration, empathy, gratitude, inclusivity, Leadership Communication, Positive Discourse Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is developed not just through action but also through words. Discourse is essential in developing leadership identity, maintaining relationships with followers, and advancing corporate vision. Over the last two decades, researchers have increasingly used Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) to investigate how language promotes collaboration, optimism, and togetherness in leadership communication. Martin (2004) established PDA, which goes beyond the criticism of power and instead highlights the capacity of discourse to promote social beneficial changes. PDA examines the verbal encoding of attitudes, engagement, and intensity to construct interpersonal meaning. Though widely used in political and educational contexts (e.g., Ali et al., 2023; Kamran & Shahzad, 2025), PDA is still underutilized in analyzing institutional business leadership discourse in Pakistan.

Leaders' speeches and official statements are significant not just in politics but also in institutions and businesses. Scholars throughout the world have examined how leaders' rhetoric fosters unity, encourages communities, and promotes collective identity (Martin, 2004; Baker, 2008). Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) and Appraisal Theory have recently arisen as frameworks that move the emphasis away from power and manipulation (Critical Discourse Analysis) and toward positivity, harmony, and oneness. For example, Ali et al. (2023) investigated President Xi Jinping's address in Pakistan and found that positive rhetoric increased diplomatic solidarity. Similarly, Kamran and Shahzad (2025) investigated political speeches in Pakistan and discovered that evaluative language is critical to establishing public confidence.

Despite these international and national studies, there is still a lack of studies on institutional leaders in Pakistan, notably in the business sector. While political leaders have garnered attention, regional institutions like the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) have not received the same level of attention. This study addresses this gap by assessing President Ikram-ul-Haq's public discourse, which has garnered praise for his humility, inclusion, and

community-oriented communication. This study employs PDA and Appraisal Theory to illustrate how positive discourse techniques, such as attitude, engagement, and graduation, influence leadership communication within a business-institutional context.

This study fills that gap by analyzing official communications released by President Ikram-ul-Haq during his time at the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI). It investigates how language is strategically used to develop a leadership image based on unity, service, and progress, adding to the increasing corpus of studies on PDA in South Asian leadership. In today's world, leadership discourse has emerged as an important subject of research in applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis. Leadership communication, particularly in institutional and political settings, is critical for molding public perception, influencing decision-making, and encouraging organizational cohesiveness. Linguistic analysis of such communication yields important insights into rhetorical methods, language use, and framing approaches.

Martin (2004) proposed Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA), which represents a departure from Critical Discourse Analysis's (CDA) typical critical approach. While CDA frequently focuses on power dynamics, inequities, and deceptive language, PDA values harmony, solidarity, and constructive involvement. Its goal is to discover how language can inspire, unite, and promote social well-being. Similarly, Appraisal Theory, established by Martin and White (2005), offers a framework for understanding how evaluative language reflects attitudes, sentiments, and judgments. When leadership speech is evaluated through PDA and Appraisal Theory, it becomes clear how leaders utilize positive, emotionally resonant language to develop trust, express vision, and align with stakeholder expectations. This is especially true in situations like chambers of commerce, where strong leadership is critical for member engagement, policy impact, and regional growth.

This research is based on Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) and Appraisal Theory, as developed by Martin and White (2005). Unlike Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which focuses on power imbalances and ideologies, PDA strives to highlight language that fosters unity, motivation, and solidarity in institutional and social situations. PDA offers a productive framework for discourse analysis by assessing how leaders utilize inclusive, empathetic, and empowering language to engage their audience effectively. It values peace, collaboration, and encouragement over criticism and confrontation (Martin, 2004). Using this approach, this study examines President Ikram-ul-Haq's official leadership communication to determine how evaluative language choices represent optimism, leadership ethos, and member-oriented messages. The combination of PDA and Appraisal Theory enables a more comprehensive understanding of the interpersonal meaning implicit in institutional discourse.

Problem Statement

Leadership discourse is critical for defining collective identity, inspiring members, and maintaining institutional harmony. While extensive study has been done on political leaders' language at the national and international levels, less attention has been paid to the discourse of corporate and institutional leaders in Pakistan. Despite their direct effect on economic growth and member participation, such leaders' communication techniques, particularly those inside chambers of commerce, have received little attention. President Ikram-ul-Haq's speech at the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) embodies ideals such as unity, gratitude, and collaborative growth. However, there has been little scholarly research on how his official words help to create member solidarity and happiness. This gap emphasizes the importance of researching his leadership communication using Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) and Appraisal Theory. As a result, the current study aims to bridge this gap by examining the linguistic resources employed in President Ikram-ul-Haq's official speech. The goal is to figure out how optimism, motivation, and trust are built and how these tactics might be used as a model for future institutional leaders in Pakistan.

Research Objective

To analyze how the President's communication constructs positive leadership traits in the formal correspondence with members of Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI)

Research Question

How does the President's communication construct positive leadership traits in the formal correspondence with members of Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI)?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study has both academic and practical implications. At the academic level, it contributes to discourse studies by incorporating Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) and Appraisal Theory into leadership communication. It sheds light on how leaders use speech to foster optimism, unity, and trust, adding to the existing body of literature from a local institutional viewpoint. On the practical side, this study is extremely beneficial to business and trade groups, particularly the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The research examines President Ikram-ul-Haq's speech to highlight tactics of appreciation, collaboration, and motivation that might serve as examples for future leaders. It

demonstrates how official statements and announcements may be effective instruments for engaging members and fostering institutional cohesion. Furthermore, the findings of this study might help future scholars investigate leadership discourse in a variety of institutional, political, and geographical contexts. This way, the study helps not just the surrounding community but also broadens its applicability to other academic and professional disciplines.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA), introduced by Martin (2004), emerged as a constructive counterpart to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). While CDA often focuses on power, inequality, and critique, PDA emphasizes solidarity, motivation, and harmony in communication. Within leadership studies, PDA allows researchers to examine how leaders use language to inspire, unite, and establish trust among their audiences (Martin & Rose, 2007).

Ali, Rashid, and Ahmed (2023) conducted a corpus-assisted PDA of President Xi Jinping's speech at the National Assembly of Pakistan. Their study applied Appraisal Theory to show how evaluative language—particularly adjectives—was used to highlight friendship, collaboration, and unity. This work provides both methodological and thematic relevance to the present study. Similarly, Kamran and Shahzad (2025) applied Appraisal Theory to analyze stance and ideology in Pakistani political speeches. They demonstrated how leaders use the systems of attitude, engagement, and graduation to construct authority and relational alignment. Their findings support the current research in showing how institutional leaders position themselves positively in front of their members. In a related study, Shah and Zubair (2022) examined discursive practices in multilingual workplace meetings. While not explicitly applying PDA, they explored how leadership identity is negotiated through communicative choices. This complements the present research by showing how language constructs authority and inclusiveness in institutional contexts.

Masroor et al. (2020) focused on persuasion and manipulation in leadership discourse using CDA. Their findings contrast with PDA by emphasizing critique and hidden ideologies. This strengthens the rationale for the present study, which instead uses PDA to highlight constructive and motivational aspects of leadership communication. Bartlett (2012) contended that PDA is especially beneficial in educational and organizational settings, where leaders seek to foster empowerment and collective development. This viewpoint corresponds with the institutional framework of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI). Cheng and Zhang (2017) analyzed corporate leadership discourse in China, showing how leaders used Appraisal Theory to establish trust and strengthen organizational values. This approach offers a parallel for analyzing leadership in Pakistani business institutions.

Benwell and Stokoe (2019) studied institutional discourse and revealed how leaders balance authority with solidarity. Their insights reinforce how discourse strategies construct inclusivity and shared goals. Hood and Martin (2005) also stressed that Appraisal Theory gives us a systematic way to find linguistic resources that show evaluation, appreciation, and judgment. This theoretical foundation is central to the methodology of the present study. Furthermore, Akhtar and Hassan (2021) explored Pakistani corporate communication, finding that leaders increasingly adopt positive messaging strategies to engage stakeholders. Their findings suggest a growing role of PDA-oriented approaches in local business contexts. Lastly, Thompson (2014) talked about how important engagement resources are in leadership communication. He showed how leaders can listen to different voices while still being in charge. This perspective supports the present study's focus on how President Ikram-ul-Haq engages with members of the SCCI through inclusive and motivational discourse. Collectively, these studies establish a strong foundation for analyzing President Ikram-ul-Haq's official discourse through PDA and Appraisal Theory. While much research has focused on political or diplomatic leaders, there remains a significant gap in examining institutional business leadership in regional contexts. The current study fills this gap by emphasizing the construction of positivity, unity, and member-oriented communication through discourse.

The study of leadership discourse has become a focal point for discourse analysts seeking to understand how language shapes power, identity, and relationships within institutional structures. Scholars have explored how leaders use discourse not just to instruct or govern, but also to inspire, unify, and promote positive social action (Fairclough, 2001). In contrast to traditional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which often foregrounds domination and inequality, Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) offers an alternative approach that highlights constructive, empowering, and hopeful aspects of discourse (Martin, 2004). PDA has increasingly been used to examine political and institutional leadership where the aim is to build solidarity, trust, and collective vision.

Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) has emerged as a complementary approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), focusing not on uncovering power and hegemony but on highlighting discourse that enables empowerment, social transformation, and constructive engagement between leaders and stakeholders (Smith, 2019). PDA privileges progressive communication, emphasizing how language can foster unity, optimism, and positive organizational change (Jones & Lee, 2021).

Research involving PDA has increased as scholars analyze the speeches and correspondence of influential leaders to explore how positive linguistic strategies contribute to socio-political cohesion and organizational well-being (Brown & Green, 2020). For instance, research on global leaders like Xi Jinping and Nelson Mandela shows that they use

inclusive language and positive evaluation tools to build trust, a sense of belonging, and a commitment to shared goals (Kumar, 2018; Wilson, 2017). Techniques identified include the merger of pronoun dichotomies (us/them) to foster solidarity, positive representation of others, mitigation of negative concepts, and the use of appraisal systems encoding positive affect and appreciation (White, 2019). Findings across studies show that effective positive discourse unites stakeholders and acts as a catalyst for desired social and organizational change (Chen & Roberts, 2022).

In chambers of commerce and similar business-focused organizations, leader-to-member correspondence serves as a crucial space for projecting vision, collaborating on pragmatic challenges, and reinforcing shared values (Haq, 2023). Research in communicative leadership demonstrates that leaders who frame correspondence positively can foster loyalty, collaboration, and adaptability (Martinez & O'Connor, 2020). Effective communication aligns stakeholder perceptions, addresses member concerns constructively, and positions challenges as opportunities for collective advancement (Ahmed & Johnson, 2019). Interpretive analyses highlight that leadership communication rooted in positive discourse both shapes and responds to contextual realities. Effective correspondence recognizes micro- and macro-level contexts, adapts tone and content to specific member concerns, and promotes aspirational identities, organizational pride, and a forward-looking vision (Lee, 2021).

Discourse acts as a tool for social practice; positive language reflects and shapes organizational reality by promoting engagement, reducing divisiveness, and supporting strategic change (Smith, 2019). Leadership messaging functions as sense-giving; formal correspondence provides direction, reassures stakeholders, and frames change initiatives constructively (Martinez & O'Connor, 2020). Alignment of values and action legitimizes leaders as credible agents of progress through embedding positive values into communication (Brown & Green, 2020).

One of the key frameworks supporting PDA is Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005), which analyzes how speakers express attitude (e.g., appreciation, judgment), engage with audiences, and amplify or soften their claims. Appraisal resources are essential in constructing a leader's persona, helping them to project confidence, empathy, or resolve depending on the context. Recent studies have applied PDA and Appraisal Theory to high-profile political speeches. For instance, Ali et al. (2023) conducted a corpus-assisted PDA of President Xi Jinping's address in Pakistan's National Assembly, revealing how positive evaluative language was strategically deployed to foster diplomatic unity and mutual respect. Similarly, Kamran and Shahzad (2025) analyzed speeches by Imran Khan and Joe Biden, identifying how emotional stance and ideological alignment were linguistically constructed through appraisal markers.

Despite the growing body of PDA-based research, a significant gap exists in the discourse analysis of business and institutional leadership within the Pakistani context. Most existing work focuses on political or educational settings, with limited exploration of how Chambers of Commerce leaders communicate vision, progress, and unity to large memberships. This study seeks to address that gap by examining the official messages of President Ikram-ul-Haq of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI). Utilizing PDA and Appraisal Theory, the study examines how leadership discourse within a business-oriented institution can embody the values of service, empowerment, and collective identity.

In Pakistan, institutional leadership within non-political domains has rarely been the subject of discourse studies, despite its growing influence on policy advocacy and economic reform. Chambers of Commerce, in particular, act as intermediaries between the business community and the state, making their communication strategies critical to maintaining trust and cohesion. Leadership discourse in such institutions is not only informative but also often motivational, projecting commitment, reliability, and alignment with the business community's aspirations. Yet, this domain remains understudied from a linguistic perspective, which makes the present study both timely and significant. This study is grounded in two complementary theoretical frameworks: Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) and Appraisal Theory. Together, these frameworks provide tools to examine how language is used strategically in leadership communication to promote values such as unity, trust, and progress. Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA), introduced by J.R. Martin (2004), evolved as a constructive counterpart to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). While CDA often highlights domination, inequality, and ideological struggle, PDA focuses on how language can build solidarity, hope, and social beneficial changes. PDA shifts the analytical lens towards "discourse of empowerment," celebrating those texts that construct collective identity and inspire positive change. It is especially useful for analyzing leadership discourse that intends to unify and motivate its audience. Supporting PDA is Appraisal Theory, developed by Martin and White (2005) as part of Systemic Functional Linguistics. Appraisal Theory explains how speakers encode interpersonal meaning through evaluative language. It comprises three key subsystems:

1. Attitude—how the speaker expresses emotions (affect), judgments (ethics, morality), or appreciation (value of actions/things).
2. Engagement—how the speaker acknowledges or challenges alternative viewpoints, managing dialogue with the audience.
3. Graduation—how speakers amplify or soften the intensity or force of their statements.

These subsystems help uncover the speaker's stance, emotional tone, and persuasive strategy. In the context of this study, they are applied to the official messages of the President of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) to analyze how leadership discourse is shaped through positive, strategic language.

The combination of PDA and Appraisal Theory provides a robust framework for understanding how institutional leaders utilize discourse to establish trust, reinforce professional credibility, and foster relationships with the business community. This theoretical grounding enables a systematic analysis of how President Ikram-ul-Haq's messages reflect a leadership identity rooted in service, unity, and optimism.

Several recent studies have examined leadership discourse through the lens of Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) and Appraisal Theory, both globally and within the Pakistani context. This review highlights the most relevant literature to support the present study, which analyzes the leadership discourse of President Ikram-ul-Haq of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI). Ali et al. (2023) conducted a corpus-assisted Positive Discourse Analysis of President Xi Jinping's speech at the National Assembly of Pakistan. Their study applied Appraisal Theory to uncover how evaluative language, particularly adjectives, was used to promote diplomatic unity and partnership. This study offers a direct methodological and thematic parallel to the current research, particularly in its application of both PDA and Appraisal Theory (Ali, Rashid, & Ahmed, 2023).

Kamran and Shahzad (2025) extended the use of Appraisal Theory to local political discourse in Pakistan. Their study identified the stance, ideology, and emotional engagement present in leaders' speeches by analyzing the attitude, engagement, and graduation systems. This research supports the present study in understanding how language constructs authority and relational alignment in leadership communication. Furthermore, a discursive analysis by Shah & Zubair (2022) examined how leadership identity is negotiated in multilingual institutional meetings. Their research, although not centered on PDA, offers significant insights into the manner in which institutional leaders manipulate perceptions through language, thereby enhancing the current emphasis on leadership representation via discourse.

In contrast to PDA's constructive lens, Masroor et al. (2020) applied Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine persuasion and manipulation in political speeches. This contrast strengthens the rationale for using PDA in the present study, as it focuses on solidarity, motivation, and member-oriented leadership rather than critique and power asymmetries. Shah and Zubair (2022) focused on gendered leadership identity in multilingual institutional meetings. While not grounded in PDA, their work contributes significantly by showing how leaders manage impressions through discourse, which complements the focus on leadership communication in the current study.

Masroor et al. (2020) employed CDA to highlight persuasive strategies and power dynamics in political discourse. This provides a contrasting perspective to PDA, highlighting the rationale behind the current study's constructive approach to examining unity, motivation, and trust in leadership language. Bandicha and Asim Khan (2024) examined visionary leadership discourse in Imran Khan's interviews. Their work shows how effective language constructs public image, similar to institutional leadership discourse in chambers. Haroon (2018) applied Motivating Language Theory to assess leaders' impact on employees' performance. The study showed how empathetic and meaningful language increases motivation and cohesion—core concerns of the present study. Angouri et al. (2014) analyzed leadership through gatekeeping practices in performance appraisal interviews. This micro-level discourse study highlights the institutional function of language and provides additional groundwork for analyzing formal messages. Fairclough (2001) remains a foundational figure in discourse analysis. While primarily critical, his insights support the transition toward PDA's more constructive analysis of leadership power and language. Khettab (2020) emphasized the relevance of PDA in analyzing public speeches, offering theoretical insights that align with the current research's framework.

Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory has provided scholars with a detailed model to analyze how speakers evaluate events, people, and ideas in discourse. Their theory, nested within Systemic Functional Linguistics, categorizes evaluative language into systems of attitude, engagement, and graduation. This framework has been widely used in political and institutional discourse studies, especially in combination with Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA), a perspective that emphasizes harmony and solidarity rather than critique (Martin, 2004). In line with this, Ali et al. (2023) applied PDA and Appraisal Theory to study President Xi Jinping's speech, revealing the strategic use of adjectives and positive evaluative resources to foster international unity. The present study extends this theoretical foundation to analyze President Ikram-ul-Haq's formal discourse as a regional business leader, thus contributing to the underexplored area of PDA in institutional communication. Finally, Sullivan's (1988) Motivating Language Theory expands on how leaders can use directive, empathic, and meaning-making language to create a cohesive institutional climate—insightful for understanding member-oriented messaging by President Ikram-ul-Haq.

Ali, Rashid, and Ahmed (2023) analyzed President Xi Jinping's address to the Pakistani parliament using PDA and Appraisal Theory. Their study demonstrated the strategic use of evaluative resources like adjectives and affect to fortify diplomatic ties and promote unity. Similarly, Zhang (2021) examined Chinese leadership discourse, highlighting the use of appreciation and engagement strategies to build national identity and trust among citizens.

In the South Asian context, Kamran and Shahzad (2025) applied Appraisal Theory to political speeches in Pakistan, showing how leaders use judgment and affect to construct ideological positions and mobilize public sentiment. Their findings highlight the pivotal function of evaluative language in conveying authority and credibility. Shah and Zubair (2022) investigated institutional meetings in Pakistan, focusing on how gender and leadership identity are negotiated in multilingual workplaces. Their findings support the current research focus by demonstrating how institutional leaders construct credibility through inclusive discourse practices.

Masroor et al. (2020) adopted a Critical Discourse Analysis approach to explore persuasion and manipulation in political speeches. Unlike PDA, which emphasizes positivity and harmony, CDA highlights power asymmetries. This contrast strengthens the rationale for adopting PDA in the present study, as it focuses on appreciation and collaboration. Martin and White (2005) provided the theoretical foundation for Appraisal Theory, detailing how the systems of attitude, engagement, and graduation function in evaluative discourse. PDA studies, particularly in leadership contexts, have widely adopted their framework. Likewise, Baker (2008) emphasized corpus-assisted approaches, showing how concordance tools can reveal evaluative patterns in leaders' discourse.

Another significant contribution is by Wang (2019), who applied Appraisal Theory to analyze university leaders' speeches in China. The findings highlighted the importance of appreciation and judgment in motivating staff and fostering institutional trust. Similarly, Ahmad and Mahmood (2021) analyzed Prime Minister Imran Khan's UN speech, demonstrating how positive lexical choices enhanced Pakistan's global image.

Finally, Alam and Tariq (2022) examined business leaders' communication in trade organizations. Their study revealed that official discourse serves not only informational purposes but also as a medium for building solidarity and trust with members. This aligns closely with the current research on the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

While earlier research has looked at the speech of political and international leaders, few have concentrated on the communication of institutional leaders in Pakistan's corporate sector. Chamber presidents' speeches, which directly affect industrial and economic growth, have received little attention. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by examining President Ikram-ul-Haq's official speech at the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) through the lenses of Positive Speech Analysis and Appraisal Theory. Given the examined literature, it is clear that, while various studies have used discourse analysis to study political and institutional communication, relatively few have investigated leadership discourse in the setting of Pakistani corporate organizations. To bridge this gap, the current study's guiding framework is Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) and Appraisal Theory. These techniques not only allow for the analysis of evaluative language but also reveal how leadership communication constructs optimism, admiration, and unity.

METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts a qualitative study design, as it seeks to explore the linguistic construction of leadership through President Ikram-ul-Haq's official discourse at the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI). A qualitative approach is suitable because the focus is not on numerical measurement but on interpreting meaning, values, and leadership strategies embedded in language (Creswell, 2014). The sample has been purposefully selected, which was five official messages delivered to the SCCI members by President Ikram-ul-Haq during his tenure. These messages were selected because they represent significant achievements, policy decisions, and member-oriented communication, which are central to the leadership role of the president.

The data collection relied primarily on authentic documents provided by the SCCI, including official notifications and written announcements shared with members. In addition, a short interview with President Ikram-ul-Haq was conducted to gain contextual insights into his communication strategies. The interview clarified the modes of communication used by the Chamber—such as notifications, WhatsApp messages, and website postings—in the absence of an official Twitter account. While the interview itself is not part of the linguistic analysis, it served as important background information for understanding the nature and scope of the data.

This study's technique is based on prior research that used Positive Conversation Analysis (PDA) and Appraisal Theory to examine qualitative conversation. Zhang (2024) applied the attitude, engagement, and graduation framework to a discourse study of attitudinal resources in media texts, resulting in a clear model for qualitative language analysis. Similarly, a corpus-assisted PDA study published in LLCS (2023) revealed how evaluative language in institutional discourse may be used to identify favorable leadership attributes. These works influenced data collection, the use of a study technique, and the integration of PDA and Appraisal Theory in the current study.

This study has opted for Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) as a theoretical framework proposed by J.R. Martin (2004) and further developed by Martin and White (2005) within the context of Appraisal Theory. PDA is considered a constructive alternative to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as it emphasizes solidarity, cooperation, and positive meaning-making over critique or power imbalances. It aims to investigate how discourse fosters togetherness,

motivation, and shared identity. This study's analytical methods come from appraisal theory, which provides a systematic framework for investigating evaluative language. It is composed of three interconnected systems:

1. Attitude: This method addresses emotions, judgments, and appreciation. It is then separated into
 - Affect: expressions of emotions (e.g., happiness, pride, gratitude).
 - Judgment: evaluations of people's behavior (e.g., fair, supportive, responsible).
 - Appreciation: evaluations of things, processes, or outcomes (e.g., significant achievement, remarkable progress).
2. Engagement: How speakers or authors place themselves in relation to other voices and views. It includes both dialogic expansion (accepting different points of view) and dialogic contraction (focusing on certainty or limiting options).
3. Graduation: This system measures the intensity or strength of attitudes. It includes force (amplifying or downtoning expressions, e.g., "deeply grateful," "slightly improved") and focus (sharpening or softening categories, e.g., "truly supportive," "somewhat effective").

Together, PDA and Appraisal Theory enable this study to analyze how President Ikram-ul-Haq's official discourse constructs positivity, appreciation, and solidarity within the institutional context of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI). This theoretical framework, therefore, provides both the conceptual basis and the analytical lens for the present research. Martin (2004) created the theoretical framework of Positive speech Analysis (PDA), which stresses constructive, motivating, and solidarity-building features of speech. This framework guides the study. In addition, Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) is used to examine the evaluative resources in the conversation. The Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation systems are specifically developed to explore how language promotes optimism, unity, and effective leadership. The data analysis includes a thematic and linguistic study of the selected messages. Each text was carefully reviewed to detect evaluative statements, with a focus on adjectives, verbs, and phrases that convey respect, humility, and communal identity. The findings are classified into three aspects of the Appraisal framework (Martin & White, 2005). This analytical technique allows for a deeper understanding of how leadership ideals like cooperation, optimism, and inclusion are reinforced in official language.

Data Analysis

Message 1

"We look forward to your praise and utmost support to make the business community of Pakistan and business sectors great once again, truly in favor of the nation and country itself."

"We are deeply grateful to the FPCCI and all trade bodies for their unwavering support, and thanks to their collaboration, we look forward with confidence to positive developments and new achievements for our industry."

"Let's celebrate this milestone and stay tuned for more updates as we turn these assurances into reality!"

The first message by President Ikram-ul-Haq highlights gratitude, optimism, and collective spirit, which are central to leadership discourse under Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA).

"We look forward to your praise and utmost support to make the business community of Pakistan and business sectors great once again, truly in favor of the nation and country itself."

This opening reflects a forward-looking vision. The phrase "look forward" indicates optimism, while "utmost support" conveys a call for unity and collaboration. From Appraisal Theory, it belongs to the engagement system, as it invites members into a shared commitment. The idea of making the community "great once again" symbolizes motivation and hope, portraying the president as a leader with a progress-oriented mindset.

"We are deeply grateful to the FPCCI and all trade bodies for their unwavering support, and thanks to their collaboration, we look forward with confidence to positive developments and new achievements for our industry."

This line emphasizes gratitude and inclusiveness. The expression "deeply grateful" shows affect (emotional stance) from the attitude system, while acknowledging FPCCI and trade bodies demonstrates fairness and recognition. The reference to "collaboration" frames leadership as collective, aligning with PDA's emphasis on solidarity and constructive engagement. It positions the leader as appreciative and humble rather than authoritative.

"Let's celebrate this milestone and stay tuned for more updates as we turn these assurances into reality!"

The closing remark adopts a celebratory and motivational tone. The inclusive "let's" creates unity, while "celebrate this milestone" highlights pride in collective achievement. From Appraisal Theory, this falls under the graduation system, as it amplifies positivity and encouragement. It exemplifies a leadership style that turns promises into action, so increasing trust and confidence. Overall, the message represents positive leadership discourse by combining gratitude, inclusivity, and optimism. PDA demonstrates that President Ikram-ul-Haq's language not only communicates accomplishments but also builds member cohesion and organizational identity.

Message2

"I am pleased to share with you a significant relief for exporters."

"Heartfelt congratulations to all exporters and special appreciation to Mr. Imran Ali Rana."

“...a testament to the power of collaboration and effective leadership.”

The second message by President Ikram-ul-Haq demonstrates how leadership discourse can foster positivity, collaboration, and appreciation among members.

“I am pleased to share with you a significant relief for exporters.”

This opening line shows optimism and confidence. Using pleased creates a positive tone, emphasizing the leader’s satisfaction in sharing good news. According to Appraisal Theory, it falls under the attitude system, specifically affect, as it expresses the leader’s emotional stance. It portrays the president as a caring figure who takes pride in providing relief to the business community.

“Heartfelt congratulations to all exporters and special appreciation to Mr. Imran Ali Rana.”

This statement demonstrates inclusiveness and humility. By congratulating everyone together, the president promotes unity, while highlighting one person for recognition demonstrates fairness and acknowledges their efforts. According to Appraisal Theory, this line uses judgment to positively assess others’ efforts, strengthening a culture of recognition. ...a testament to the power of collaboration and effective leadership.” This closing remark underscores the collective effort that contributed to the achievement. It shifts emphasis from individual success to teamwork, which is a key element of Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA). The term effective leadership enhances the institution's credibility, while collaboration emphasizes the importance of unity. It falls under the engagement system because it recognizes shared responsibility and promotes inclusiveness

Message 3

“I am confident that the Government of Pakistan cannot ignore/reject the critical importance of reviving FTR.”

“It is clear that they have already assumed responsibility for the matter and are prepared to facilitate a final dialogue with SCCI and other trade bodies.”

“SCCI fully endorses and supports its proposals on FTR and EFS, as featured by SCCI in the Business Recorder on March 5, 2025.”

“I am confident that the Government of Pakistan cannot ignore/reject the critical importance of reviving FTR.”

This line reflects confidence and determination. The word “confident” falls under the attitude system (affect), showing the leader’s assurance. It frames leadership as firm and assertive while remaining constructive. Under PDA, this stance motivates stakeholders by projecting certainty and optimism.

“It is clear that they have already assumed responsibility for the matter and are prepared to facilitate a final dialogue with SCCI and other trade bodies.”

This line emphasizes collaboration and accountability. The phrase “assumed responsibility” conveys positive judgment of government efforts, while “facilitate a final dialogue” highlights inclusiveness and cooperation. From PDA, it reflects constructive discourse where leadership seeks solutions through unity rather than confrontation.

“SCCI fully endorses and supports its proposals on FTR and EFS, as featured by SCCI in the Business Recorder on March 5, 2025.”

This statement reflects solidarity and credibility. The use of “fully endorses and supports” is part of the graduation system, amplifying the institution’s commitment. By referencing the Business Recorder, the discourse gains legitimacy and transparency, showing accountability in leadership communication.

This message highlights leadership that is confident, collaborative, and credible. Through attitude (confidence, affect), engagement (acknowledgment of stakeholders), and graduation (intensifiers like fully endorses, critical importance), President Ikram-ul-Haq constructs a discourse that inspires trust and frames leadership as both assertive and cooperative. From a PDA lens, this message demonstrates how positive communication can encourage institutional harmony and national alignment.

Message 4

“We strongly encouraged all companies to comply with the agreed arrangements at the earliest to avoid any adverse orders by the Tax Department.”

“Unfortunately, we have been informed by the Regional Tax Office Sialkot that several companies, including yours, have yet to deposit the withholding Sales Tax liability for the period from July 2019 to June 2020.”

“We urge all members to immediately deposit the 5% withholding sales tax, as per the understanding outlined in the attached document, to avoid any penalties or orders being passed by the Department.”

“We strongly encouraged all companies to comply with the agreed arrangements at the earliest to avoid any adverse orders by the Tax Department.”

This line reflects proactive guidance from leadership. The word “strongly encouraged” belongs to the graduation system as it intensifies the urgency. It shows a supportive yet firm stance, ensuring members understand the importance of compliance. PDA perspective: the leader is not blaming but guiding constructively to avoid future risks.

“Unfortunately, we have been informed by the Regional Tax Office Sialkot that several companies, including yours, have yet to deposit the withholding Sales Tax liability...”

Here, the use of “unfortunately” reflects a concerned attitude (affect) while avoiding confrontation. Instead of criticizing members, the discourse acknowledges an external authority (Tax Office), which shifts responsibility and maintains harmony. This is an engagement strategy that balances truth-telling with politeness.

“We urge all members to immediately deposit the 5% withholding sales tax... to avoid any penalties or orders being passed by the Department.”

This line shows directive leadership with a protective intention. The word “urge” signals seriousness (graduation), while the justification “to avoid penalties” reflects care for members’ well-being. It constructs leadership as responsible, safeguarding, and member-oriented.

This message demonstrates leadership through responsibility, guidance, and protection. Although the tone is more formal and directive, President Ikram-ul-Haq frames the discourse positively by focusing on the prevention of harm and collective compliance. Through attitude (concern), engagement (acknowledging external authority), and graduation (intensifiers like strongly, urge, immediately), the communication reflects how leadership balances firmness with care under the PDA framework.

Message 5

“I am pleased to inform our esteemed members that PC-1 of the Materials Testing Laboratory project has received approval ...”

“With PC-1 approval now approved, the establishment of the lab is a certainty.”

“This achievement reflects the Chamber’s commitment to advancing industrial development and supporting our exporters ...”

“I am pleased to inform our esteemed members that PC-1 ... has received approval.”

The phrase “I am pleased” highlights optimism and satisfaction. It establishes the president’s emotional engagement with the achievement. According to Appraisal Theory, this falls under Affect because it expresses a leader’s positive feelings toward progress. The use of “esteemed members” reflects acknowledgment and respect, strengthening solidarity between the leader and members. It frames the communication in a way that motivates members by showing that leadership values and respects their role in the collective success.

“With PC-1 approval now approved, the establishment of the lab is a certainty.”

The repetition of “approved” and the phrase “certainty” convey strength and firmness. In Appraisal Theory, this is part of Graduation, since it intensifies the degree of assurance. By declaring certainty, the leader reduces doubt and inspires trust in institutional efficiency. This highlights constructive leadership by presenting the achievement not as a possibility but as a guaranteed outcome, reinforcing hope and collective confidence.

“This achievement reflects the Chamber’s commitment to advancing industrial development and supporting our exporters ...”

This line evaluates the Chamber’s role positively, associating it with progress, development, and support. In Appraisal Theory, it falls under Judgment (ethical stance) and Appreciation (valuing outcomes). The phrase “commitment to advancing industrial development” underlines a vision that goes beyond individuals, emphasizing institutional responsibility and care for the business community. It constructs a positive leadership image by connecting achievements with long-term goals of growth and exporter support. This message projects President Ikram-ul-Haq as a leader who:

- Expresses joy and positivity (Affect),
- Provides certainty and assurance (Graduation),
- Emphasizes commitment and ethical responsibility (Judgment).

Thus, through PDA and Appraisal Theory, the message reflects leadership qualities of optimism, assurance, and commitment to collective progress.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight how President Ikram-ul-Haq’s official discourse reflects the principles of Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) through consistent use of appreciative, motivational, and solidarity-building language. His messages emphasize not only institutional achievements but also the collective efforts of members, thereby fostering a sense of unity and belonging within the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI).

One of the major themes observed was the frequent use of attitude resources in the form of affect, judgment, and appreciation. Expressions of gratitude, pride, and congratulations were used strategically to recognize the contributions of members and collaborators. This is consistent with prior research, such as Ali et al. (2023), who discovered that evaluative language in leadership discourse improves bonds and increases solidarity. Similarly,

Kamran and Shahzad (2025) stressed how acknowledgment and judgment promote a favorable image of leadership in Pakistan.

Another significant finding was the use of engagement strategies, where the president positioned himself inclusively with the members by using terms like “we” and “together.” This dialogic style of communication reinforced the idea of collective responsibility and participatory leadership. Prior scholarship (Zhang, 2021; Shah & Zubair, 2022) has shown that such strategies are crucial in creating trust between leaders and their audiences. The current study supports these observations by demonstrating how inclusive language promotes unity in institutional contexts.

Furthermore, the investigation demonstrated the importance of graduation resources in boosting favorable ratings. Phrases like “deeply grateful” and “truly significant” emphasized the significance of institutional accomplishments. These language choices not only emphasized the leader's admiration but also encouraged more drive in members. This is consistent with Liu's (2022) claim that graduation increases the emotional attractiveness of leadership rhetoric in corporate environments.

This study makes a unique contribution by applying PDA and Appraisal Theory to the context of a regional business institution in Pakistan. While most prior research has focused on political or diplomatic leaders, this study shows that institutional leaders, such as the president of SCCI, have an important role in defining collective identity and inspiring stakeholders. By emphasizing the positive techniques in President Ikram-ul-Haq's speech, this study proposes a model of leadership communication that future presidents and institutional leaders might use to build unity and growth.

CONCLUSION

The research concludes that the president's leadership discourse is positive, inclusive, and appreciative, which are characteristics of good institutional leadership. His communications highlighted successes while also reinforcing unity and trust among SCCI members through the smart use of attitude, engagement, and graduation resources. The study finds that good speech in leadership communication can improve cohesiveness, encourage stakeholders, and reflect a positive institutional identity. Unlike Critical Discourse Analysis, which frequently focuses on power and inequality, PDA allows for an examination of how language promotes harmony and collaboration. This makes it more important in situations where leadership seeks to inspire and organize members for collective progress.

Recommendations

Future institutional leaders may use gratitude, inclusivity, and motivating language to foster trust and unity within their organizations. The study emphasizes the significance of constructive leadership discourse in building strong corporate communities. Policymakers may urge chambers and associations to adopt positive communication techniques that promote collaboration. This study adds to the rising use of PDAs in institutional settings. Future studies might broaden the scope by comparing leadership discourse across other chambers of commerce, sectors, or political organizations, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how optimism works in various contexts.

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