

HOW TO ACHIEVE SYNERGY EMPLOYING POSITIVE DISCOURSE IN ECONOMIC CRISIS : THE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH RISHI SUNAK (FIRST SPEECH) AS AN EXAMPLE

Assist Lecturer. Teejan Waheed AL-Khazali¹, Prof. Dr. Hussain Hameed Mayuuf (Ph.D.)²

¹Babylon University/ Iraq, College of Education for Human Sciences

²Babylon University/ Iraq, College of Education for Human Sciences

hum421.tejan.waheed@student.uobabylon.edu.iq¹

hum.hussain.hameed@uobybelon.edu.iq²

Abstract

This study examines the linguistic strategies used by Mr Sunak in his first speech to gain audience's support and build synergy. Precisely, it explores how Sunak employs positive discourse which focuses on highlighting solidarity, positive emotions, and achievements to foster support during the economic crisis. It's worth noting that most of the discourse studies shed light towards power, hegemony and criticism. Thus, there's a need for a study which considers how positive discourse serves the purpose of the speech and how the visualising of good things can make a change in the ideologies of the audience.

Consequently, this study aims to highlight the essential role of discourse in gaining synergism regarding political crisis, identifying how linguistic strategies employed in discourse positively and analysing a particular speech- Sunak's speech- the way in which he gains synergism by discourse linguistically.

The researcher adopts two theories to form the model of analysis, which are Martin and White's Appraisal Theory (2005) and Hyland's model of Meta-discourse (2007). The study combines qualitative and quantitative approaches in selecting and analysing the data. The results are divided into two parts: the general and specific. Generally speaking, politicians employed activates judgment, affect and appreciation in their speech along with their use of linguistic tactics to support reassurances and to be in solidarity with the audience. Specifically, Sunak employed linguistic strategies in creating hope and unity and gaining synergism during uncertain times, especially crisis.

Keywords: positive discourse analysis, synergism, crisis issues, Appraisal Theory, Meta-discourse model.

Introduction

In the study of the analysis of discourse, many issues have their importance to be taken into account, one of them is the economic crisis. These crises are sometimes used by the politicians as tools to reveal social, political and economic needs. However, the way in which politicians talk is crucial since it shifts the audience's attention towards a certain goal/ goals (Fairclough, 2010). Thus, the study and analysis of speech from a CDA lens is not enough due to many other strategies that need to be examined (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Additionally, as explained by Martin (2004) that PDA presents an opinion that focuses on the way in which language is used to reveal unity, hope and problem-solving as well as fostering them by discourse. In the same sense, PDA depends on the idea of recognising and analysing how the speakers use language to reveal good things and make society better. Therefore, this field changes the direction of analysis from CD to more positive and empowerment (Bertlett, 2012). Likewise, in times of crisis, the politicians deliver their speeches by certain linguistics strategies to make an impact and strengthen confidence in their governments as well as to improve unity. Thus, the use of emotional phrases, evaluative language and other linguistics strategies can change the audience's opinions and gain synergism (Bedbarek & Caple, 2017).

It's worth noting that the use of positive discourse produces a speech with specific characteristics, such as flexibility and hopefulness, in order to increase social unity and economic recovery. This study presents how the UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's first speech employed PD in dealing with the economic crisis by revealing positive engagement and fostering confidence and solidarity.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA)

(PDA) is a newly emerging method of discourse analysis. It concentrates its study on examining the linguistic strategies used in discourse. It also highlights the central role of language in transforming discourse into constructive and positive speech (Bertlett, 2017). Gao (2024) indicated that Martin in 1999 was the first to establish the foundations of the positive discourse approach. It is worth noting that PD, as an approach, compares with the traditional emphasis of CDA. CDA highlights the use of language to focus on domination, injustice, and unfairness (Hughes, 2017). Furthermore, positive discourse analysis focuses on language in discourse to promote agency, social transformation, and solidarity (Jiaqi, 2019). Rogers and Wetzel (2013) noted that positive discourse analysis draws its roots from similar philosophical traditions to critical discourse analysis. However, there is a shift in analytical perspective through using language to achieve solidarity. Therefore, PDA is a significant technique for discourse analysis and is connected to many arenas of study and analysis (Hammad, 2024).

2.2 The Emergence of Positive Discourse Analysis

The overview of PDA indicates a distinguished transformation in discourse studies, shifting the highlighting towards the identification and improvement of positive descriptions, rather than just criticizing negative ones. This change displays how flexible PDA is, subsequently it is now used to examine speeches, news objects, and political debates. This expressions how important it is in today's communication. Martin and Rose (2003) maintained this shift, saying that PDA is a worthy addition to CDA. PDA emphasizes textual strengths as discerned through our analysis, thereby establishing a foundation for recent advancements in the field.

Moreover, critical approaches to discourse studies have influenced the field for thirty years, leading to the development of various methodologies. PDA (Martin & Rose, 2003) has recently become a major approach. This approach shares the belief with critical approaches that analysis shapes the social realm, but its main difference is that it is dedicated to studying and promoting positive discourse. However, media analysts emphasize this by observing that different news sources frequently report on issues or events in similar ways (Gamson & Modigliani, 2011).

2.3 The Strategies of Positive Discourse Analysis

PDA highlights the response and elevation of positive narratives in numerous discourses, while CDA frequently examines power dynamics and inequalities. The policies engaged in PDA are tactics that highlight positive elements within discourse, are noticeable in several contexts, and contain motivational discourses, political discourse, and media representations.

1. Reframing Counter-Discourse

Macgilchrist (2007) noted that positive discourse is a new field of discourse analysis that involves reframing and challenging prevailing negative narratives, highlighting positive alternatives, and making discourse challenge oppressive frameworks.

2. Nomination/Prediction and Argumentation

Nomination is the linguistic labeling used by speakers in their discourse to highlight certain individuals or aspects over others. Prediction is the attribution of attributes to serve a specific purpose. Moreover, argumentation also contributes to the construction of positive collective identities. All of these strategies contribute to building and strengthening solidarity and optimism (Abdul-ajid, 2014).

3. Perspective Setting and Framing

Speakers construct their discourses according to specific orientations. Therefore, (PDA) examines the way discourse is constructed and the linguistic strategies used to encourage unity, understanding, and empathy. In this regard, discourse is constructed in several ways, including the use of personal pronouns, similes, or metaphors, to foster collective action (Ernanda, 2023).

4. Intensification and Attenuation

Ernanda (2023) states that speakers use language for various purposes, depending on their specific goals. These linguistic strategies can be observed intensifying positive messages to encourage the audience to interact positively with the speaker. Furthermore, the use of attenuation in discourse reduces negative signals to reinforce the positive direction of the discourse, which is a characteristic of positive discourse. The supporting and decreasing use of language is to raise confidence and positivity by decreasing responsibility, fear, and separation.

5. Metadiscourse and Interaction Indicators

Hammad (2024) proposes that examining positive discourse improves the use of language. This is termed metadiscourse, which emphasizes on the use of rhetorical questions or direct speech, considered indicators of positive communication between the speaker and the audience, thus strengthening relational links and fostering accepting.

6. Focus on the Ability to Influence and Resist

The approach to positive discourse is to demonstrate the speaker's ability and potential through effective language use. Therefore, one of the strategies of this approach is to study the influence of discourse by adopting specific linguistic methods. From this perspective, we find that most discourses use crises and problems as an opportunity to highlight a specific goal and present alternative approaches for positive change (Roger & Wetzal, 2013).

7. Constructive Lexical Choices and Storytelling

Positive discourse focuses on choosing vocabulary that promotes a positive spirit, cooperation, and appreciation to achieve the intended objectives of the discourse. Therefore, we find that some speakers use stories, real personal events, or repetition as a method to gain interaction and empathy and to provide a positive example that reinforces a particular idea. This, in turn, increases audience inspiration and fosters a spirit of cooperation (Ernanda & Nartey, 2024).

2.4 Discourse analysis (D A), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA)

The exploration of the way in which language generates meaning especially in social contexts is in the study of discourse, this study can be used for spoken and non-spoken texts, in which the speakers or writers deliver their texts for certain goal or practice of communication. It comprises procedures such as CDA that studies power relations and social injustices. DA is being used more and more in different arenas to help in the understanding complex social issues,

with an emphasis on how cultural and historical contexts affect speech (Weinstein, 2024; Stefanouskaya, 2024).

As explained by Wodak (2024), CDA is a field of studying discourse which investigates the linguistics elements in the text that reveal ideology, power, hegemony and other discursive elements of injustice. Thus, this field of study deals with the political, historical and economic factors that have an effect on society (Salive, 2024). However, AL-Wahedi (2024) mentioned that CDA is a field of discourse analysis in multiple situations to explore how speech forms the view of the public and social reality. It also focuses on the power of speech and how it can be analysed linguistically to visualise the social injustice. Furthermore, CDA can be described as a tool of social change (Doshi, 2024). In the same regard, there is another field in DA which is characterised as a field of analysis discourse that shifts the direction from critical to more positive. PDA investigates how important language is for getting people encouraged and attracted. For instance, it is marked in the analysis of beginning speeches that raise flexibility and empathy (Hammad, 2024).

2.5 The Shift from Critical to Positive Discourse

Instead of concentrating on criticism, this new technique of looking at negotiations emphasises on reassurance and cooperative messages. Therefore, we can find this change in public speeches, talks with migrants, and news stories, wherever the aim is to inspire positive change and get people involved in their communities.

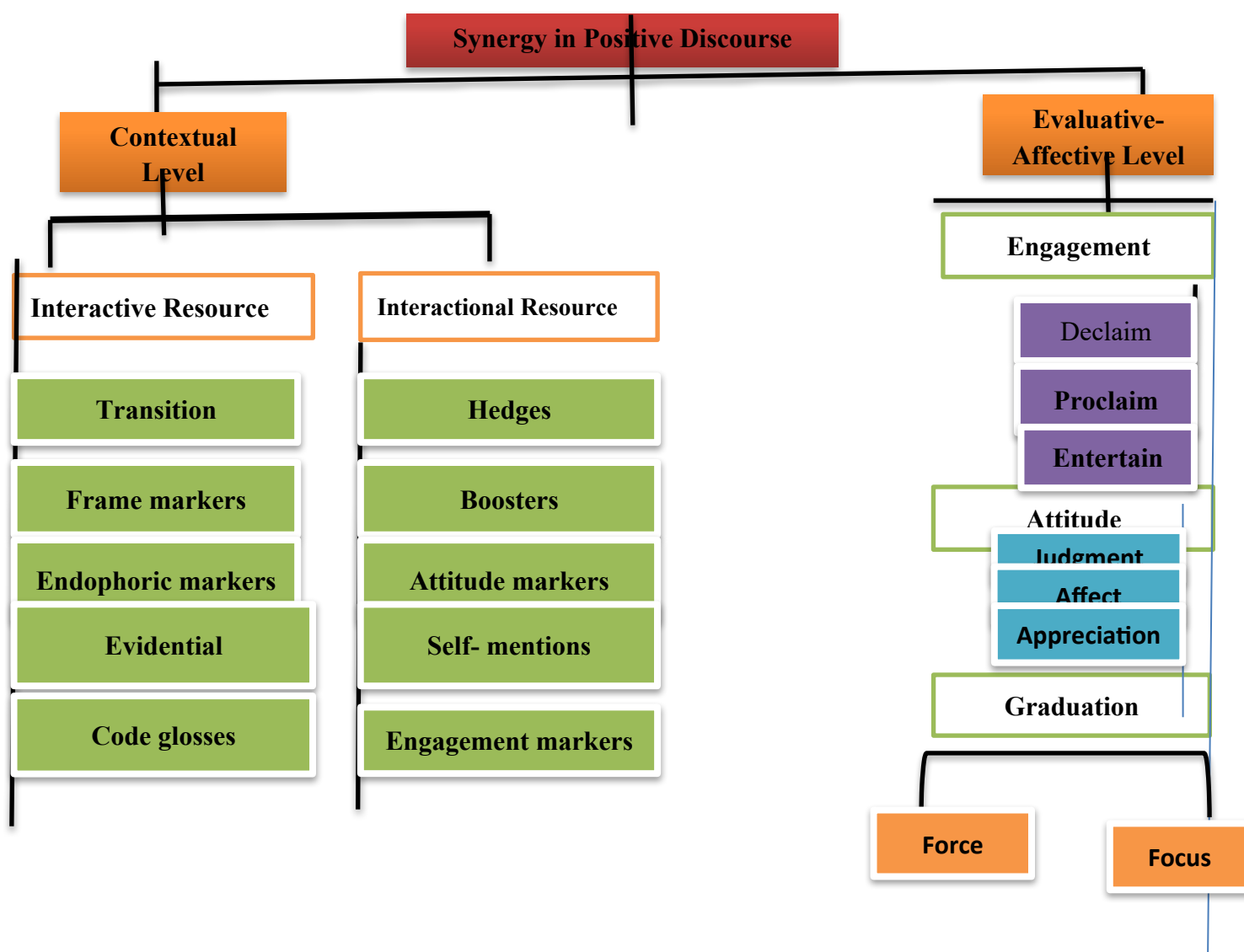
PDA reveals how to talk in techniques that make people feel good and encourage change. On the other hand, (CDA) frequently looks at injustice. Individuals use PDA in places like schools, the media, political speeches and community work to get people to do things (Mahboob, 2023).

3. Methodology

This paper examines (PDA) within the framework of the UK Prime Minister's 2022 speech. It try to find to exemplify how the politician employs positive discourse to highlight events and secure audience support. The analysis exploits two principal theories to found its framework: Appraisal Theory, as expressed by Martin and White (2005), and the Hyland Framework (2007). The study employs a mixture of qualitative and quantitative procedures for data collection and analysis, thus supplementing objectivity, reliability, and consistency.

The Theoretical Framework

The Theoretical Framework adopts from Appraisal Theory by Martin and White (2005), and Hyland's Framework (2007).



1. Contextual Level

a. Interactive Resources

➤ Transition

Sunak's *extensive* use of criticism appears to be aimed at logically *organizing* the speech and *contrasting* the mistakes or blunders committed in the past by his predecessors in the prime minister ship " *some mistakes were made...*" with his current role as a corrector of those mistakes " *And I was elected to fix them*". In doing so, he moves the public from acknowledging the problem to *affirming* his mandate. The contrasting phrase " *but*" is a crucial marker in speeches

related to crises, as it highlights two key aspects: first, acknowledging the *difficulties* and *simultaneously* proposing a solution. This sequence in presenting the situations enables the public to follow the progression from failure to renewal.

➤ **Frame Markers**

Signs of a framework were evident in Mr. Sunak's speech. He outlined the temporal and structural phases of his message, stating, "*Right now our country is facing a profound economic crisis.*" This anchored his statement in the current context—the time of the speech. The subsequent phrases, "*I will unite our country... not in words but with action,*" signaled a shift in the speaker's vision of governance. These signals highlight issues that enable the audience to understand and clearly distinguish between the crisis, the response, and the underlying values.

➤ **Endophoric Markers**

Sunak's speech shows signs of *self-reliance*, drawing on shared national experiences, particularly during the coronavirus pandemic. He reminds citizens, "*You saw me during Covid doing my best to protect people...*" He thus links the current crisis to a previous difficult period, and this strategy relies on self-reliance, *reinforcing* the public's desire for the speaker to continue in leadership.

➤ **The Evidential**

The hint is a main characteristics of Mr. Sunak's discourse, as he mentions numerous actions tied to economic uncertainty, attributing them to outside influences corresponding Putin's war in Ukraine and the continuing special effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through referencing universally recognized events, he classifies them as important contributors to the situation. This estates his assertions in extensively conventional evidence and shifts accountability for the crisis beyond national politics. Notably, Sunak avoids specific terms such as "*difficult decisions to come,*" a vague phrase that could imply tax increases or spending cuts, leaving the issue open to interpretation and framing it as essential for stability.

➤ **Code Glosses**

The use of linguistic explanations in speeches is important. They are rhetorical tools that help the audience arrive at the true interpretations of the speech's content. These clarifications are reached by providing an explanation. The speaker might provide explanatory instances, restate vague phrases, or explain a specific idea.

However, Mr. Sunak engaged both obvious and understood linguistic justifications to simplify several issues. He focused particularly on economic problems. After addressing the term "*crisis,*" he directly linked it linguistically to specific causes and symptoms. He said, "*The aftermath of COVID still lingers*". "*Putin's war in Ukraine has destabilised energy...*". These explanations bridge the gap between the language used to describe the economic crisis and the audience's understanding. The crisis—the focus of the speech—becomes comprehensible to the audience without requiring specialized terminology.

The speaker also used the phrase "*protect people and businesses*" when discussing the goal to "*do my best.*" This reference allows the speaker to recount a specific prior experience and share it with the audience, thereby strengthening their position. Thus, the speech more addressed preceding failures by clarifying they were not because of "*ill will.*" Which demonstrates respect for others after referencing past mistakes and strengthens the speaker's future role.

Table 1: The Statistical Analysis of Interactive Elements

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage	Examples
Transitions	Additive	12	14.2	And/ also
	Adversative	8	9.4	But/ however
	Causal	6	7.1	After/ because
Frame Markers	Sequencing	4	4.7	Right now/ immediately
	Goal announcing	7	8.3	I will deliver/ I will work
	Topic shifting	3	3.5	It is only/ right
Endophoric Markers	Reference	2	2.4	That work/ this government
Evidential	Attribution	3	3.5	You saw me/ during Covid
Code Glosses	Reformulation	5	5.9	In fact/ quite/ the opposition

b. Interactional Resources

➤ **Hedges**

Sunak's speech included several hedging cues when addressing uncertain or future outcomes, including critical decisions. *"This will mean difficult decisions to come."* These hedging cues do not weaken the strength of his claims but rather emphasize his commitment to engaging with the public when making important decisions. These hedging cues are crucial in the speech, as they prepare the public for what's to come, signaling that some policy actions may be challenging, and protecting the speaker from being accused of overpromising. *"The aftermath of Covid still lingers."*

➤ **Boosters**

The use of reinforcement phrases in Sunak's speech demonstrated certainty and confidence when needed to instill a sense of reassurance among the public, as seen in phrases such as *"I will place economic stability and confidence at the heart of this government's agenda"* and *"I will unite our country, not with words but with action."* These reinforcements leave no room for doubt, and through them the speaker reinforces his commitments, instilling public confidence in his ability to deliver on promises and that he has the determination and plans necessary to find solutions to these crises.

➤ **Attitude Markers**

Behavioral cues dominate Mr. Sunak's accountability speech, spotlighting his emotional stance and the ethical principles he promotes. In doing so, Sunak positions himself as a problem solver and principled leader who navigates decisions with responsibility and fairness.

➤ **Self-Mention**

Mr. Sunak's references to himself, both directly and indirectly, personalize responsibility and present him as accountable for fulfilling promises and tackling problems. *"I was elected... to fix them."* They also demonstrate his self-assurance and competence: *"I will work hard and diligently to achieve your goals."* This positions him as a guarantor of national stability and personalizes the required response.

➤ Engagement Markers

Participatory cues in Mr. Sunak's speech directly foster solidarity, as seen in phrases such as "You saw me..." and "I will earn yours..." He draws on collective experiences and invites the audience to participate. These direct appeals are vital, as they cultivate cooperation and a shared sense of purpose in national progress and crisis recovery. They emphasize partnership between the government and citizens in overcoming challenges.

Table 2: The Statistical Analysis of Interactional Elements

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage	Examples
Hedge	Epistemic	8	9.4	Some mistakes/ I
	Modality	4	4.7	understand
Boosters	Probability			Can achieve/ will mean
	Certainty	15	17.7	I will/ I promise/ fully
Attitude	markers	6	7.3	Incredible/ profound
	Emphasis			
Self-mentions	Evaluation	9	10.6	Noble aim/ difficult/
	Emotional	4	4.7	grateful
Engagement Markers	stance			Admired/ treasure
	First pronoun	18	21.2	I/my/ me
Engagement Markers	Reader pronouns	12	14.1	You/ your/ our
	Directions	3	3.5	You cannot
	Questions	0	0.0	Non person

2. Evaluative Level

The Prime Minister employs attitudinal resource tactics to convey responsibility, optimism, and stability, with a specific focus on global economic issues affecting the UK. He shows empathy by stating, "*I fully appreciate how hard things are,*" which demonstrates unity and an emotional connection. The phrase "*I am not daunted*" underscores his resolve, leadership, and commitment to fostering resilience. By underscoring accountability, the Prime Minister demonstrates integrity and responsibility. "Trust is earned, and I will earn yours." He portrays the leader as trustworthy and ethical. "*This government... at every level.*" When the Prime Minister alludes to earlier leadership during COVID-19, he stresses his moral obligation and care for residents: "*You saw me during COVID-19.*"

The Prime Minister acknowledges predecessors by commending Liz Truss's "*noble aim*" and Boris Johnson's "*incredible achievements*." By offering favorable assessments, he preserves party cohesion. He also subtly distances himself from previous shortcomings. He positions stability as an essential virtue and a means to bolster faith in leadership. He states, "*economic stability... at the core of this government agenda.*" The Prime Minister ascribes the economic problem to foreign forces. Putin's conflict in Ukraine has destabilized energy markets. The lingering effects of COVID persist. This constrains alternate perspectives by limiting the space for divergent interpretations related to domestic policy. His statement "*difficult decisions to come*" positions upcoming measures as essential and deters dissent.

He accepts blunders, stating, "*Some mistakes were made not out of ill will or bad intentions.*" He acknowledges past mistakes while maintaining a favorable attitude toward his

political colleagues. Inclusive language such as *"Together we can achieve incredible things"* and *"We will create a future worthy...have made"* encourages public collaboration and shared accountability. The word *"incredible"* amplifies the potential for success and collective achievement. Graduation significantly influences the economic crisis in Sunak's speech, increasing leadership credibility. He accentuates some elements while downplaying others to influence perceptions of crisis and leadership. His speech uses *"Profound economic crisis"* to highlight the gravity of the situation. The term "Profound" underscores severity. He also stresses the war's devastating effect and the need for perseverance: *"A terrible war that must be seen... its conclusion."* The moral responsibility argument is reinforced by the phrase *"too weak,"* which alludes to the consequences of inaction. The statement *"I will work incessantly ..."* amplifies commitment by suggesting unwavering diligence.

The speaker sharpens positive traits of leadership and softens potential points of conflict or criticism. He lists particular values to reinforce ethical leadership: *"Integrity, professionalism, and accountability at every level."* He avoids direct criticism of Li Truss, saying, *"She was not wrong to want to improve growth."* In reference to Boris Johnson, he highlights the positive personal traits rather than the political controversy: *"I treasure his warmth and generosity of spirit."* Sunak's address recognises the deep economic crisis, The focus is not on despair, but on possible answers, when he mentioned that he will establish an economic agenda. Thus, the speaker does not assign fault; instead, he emphasises building a good future for recovery.

Finally, Sunak empowers both the populace and the government by emphasizing active roles in powerful positive change. In his address, he says that he will work day in and day out, by which he emphasized his commitment to his responsibilities. He also enables individuals with the message, *"We will create a future worthy...have made"*, connecting past adversities, such as during the Covid-19 pandemic, with future successes. He inspires national reconstruction that goes beyond mere political promises.

Table 3: Statistical Analysis of Evaluative Affective Level

System	Category	Frequency	% of total	Examples
Engagement	Disclaim	18	11.4%	Not wrong/ not daunted / cannot question I promise you this/ I will deliver I hope/ I understand / can achieve
	Proclaim	24	15.2%	
	Entertain	25	15.8%	
Attitude	Judgment	47	29.7%	Incredible/achievement / professionalism Grateful/ confidence/ stability/ trust Incredible things/ stronger NHS/ better
	Affect	52	32.9%	
	Appreciation	43	27.2%	
Graduation	Force	65	41.1%	Fully/ incredible/ profound/ everything Some/ quiet/ rather
	Raise /Force	48	30.4%	
	Lower/Force	17	10.8%	
	Focus	8	5.1%	Only/ right/ property/ exactly Kind of/ somewhat
	Sharpen/Focus	6	3.8%	
	Soften /Focus	2	1.3%	

Discussion

Sunak's address as Prime Minister of the UK exemplifies how political leaders use positive discourse to foster unity and trust, especially during a crisis. The main argument is that

Sunak deliberately constructs his language to promote togetherness, optimism, and confidence in his leadership, positioning himself as a source of empowerment and constructive action amid economic challenges. This focus on empowerment recurs throughout his address. Empowerment is a central theme, with Sunak highlighting both individual and collective agency. Through the use of "I" in statements such as "I will work day in and day out," he presents himself as a proactive leader. The inclusion of "We," as seen in "Together we can...," underscores that national recovery is a shared public responsibility. Building on this inclusive tone, Sunak avoids assigning responsibility for past mistakes and focuses on a united response to the economic crisis.

Affirmatively, Sunak does not assign responsibility to former prime ministers or their mistakes. Instead, he uses the economic crisis to restore faith in the government and bolster public confidence. He pledges to address this problem with "actions" rather than just "words," reinforcing his earlier focus on collective resilience and constructive leadership.

Conclusion

An analysis of British Prime Minister Sunak's speech reveals the role of language in describing crises, particularly the economic crisis, and in constructing a collaborative discourse with citizens. Using Hyland (2007) and Martin and White (2005) as analytical frameworks, the study found that Mr. Sunak's speech is meticulously organized and employs various positive interactive linguistic resources, such as criticisms, evidence, framing markers, logical discourse, and verbal explanations.

The analysis identified the following main findings: (1) The speech highlights responsibility by placing the crisis in an international context; (2) It achieves a balance between reassurance and caution by referencing moral guidance; (3) It fosters clarity, credibility, and consistency, promoting positive audience engagement and solidarity; (4) The speech embodies two main dimensions—emotional and evaluative—according to Martin and White; (5) The speaker acknowledges previous mistakes and his ability to correct them, while recognizing the difficulty and affirming his commitment to act; (6) The speech reinforces solidarity as a fundamental government resource in crisis; (7) It positions government and public as active, cooperating partners with a relationship based on credibility and cooperation.

In conclusion, Mr. Sunak's speech emphasizes the importance of cooperation, participation, resilience, and collective problem-solving. Effective political communication in crises, when employing optimal language strategies, can foster unity and enhance resilience for collective action against economic challenges.

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