Scholar Insight Journal
https://scholarinsightjournal.com/
Volume.4, Issue.3 (July-Sep-2026)
Acceptance Date: 02-07-2026

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

# Constructing Academic Standards in Higher Education: An Appraisal Analysis of Doctoral Assessment Reports

**Fouzia Goreja (Corresponding author)**
Assistant Professor, English Department
National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad.Pakistan
Email: fjgoreja@numl.edu.pk
https://orcid.org/0009-0006-8630-4321

**Prof. Dr Wasima Shehzad**
Dean Social Sciences, Air University Islamabad, Pakistan
Email: profwasima@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7346-9550

**Abstract**

Doctoral assessment reports are a crucial yet understudied form of institutional academic communication, through which examiners not only evaluate doctoral research but also convey judgements about the research. This study investigates how evaluative language is used in doctoral assessment reports in the English departments of two Pakistani universities. Drawing on the Attitude subsystem of Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005), the study examines how examiners use Appreciation, Judgment, and Affect to express approval, critique, and recommendations about the thesis and the candidate within assessment discourse. Qualitative discourse analysis reveals dominant patterns of Appreciation related to research quality, alongside Judgment related to candidates' scholarly abilities, and fewer nuanced occurrences of Affect. The evaluative comments indicate recurring attention to qualities such as originality, methodological adequacy, theoretical grounding, coherence, and contribution to knowledge. These patterns demonstrate how doctoral reports serve as communication tools that extend beyond individual assessment, through discursive practices in which expectations concerning doctoral-level scholarly quality are articulated and communicated. By positioning doctoral assessment in an under-represented national context, the study extends research on evaluative discourse in higher education. It demonstrates how examiner reports contribute to the communication of academic standards within doctoral education.

**Keywords**: doctoral reports; evaluation; academic discourse; higher education; attitude subsystem


© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

## 1. Introduction

The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree is widely regarded as a critical gateway to academic identity and professional legitimacy within a specific discipline (Boud & Lee, 2009; Nerad, 2020). Central to the doctoral journey is the thesis evaluation process, through which novice scholars are assessed for their research competence and scholarly potential. Evaluating a PhD thesis entails the examiner judging "both the potential of the researcher and the quality of the research" (Holbrook et al., 2014, p. 4). Accordingly, reflecting on the mechanisms through which assessment is communicated, particularly examiner discourse, is essential for understanding academic standards and expectations in doctoral education since examiners' assessment reports operate as communicative acts that not only provide academic support to candidates but also grant access to a doctoral qualification (Boud & Falchikov, 2007). These reports include summative comments that assess research against specific academic criteria, as well as formative comments which suggest improvements to meet doctoral standards (Dally et al., 2019). While assessment of learning (AoL) has long been the focus in academia, a growing movement is considering assessment for learning (AfL) and assessment as learning (AaL), which highlight evaluative comments as a formative tool for academic development (Forde-Leaves et al., 2023). In this context, analysing evaluative language in assessment reports will reveal how higher education systems construct and communicate doctoral standards.

Much of the literature on PhD thesis evaluation has focused on the structural and organisational features of examiner reports, identifying literature review, critical appraisal, and rigorous methodology as key components (Afful, 2020; Holbrook et al., 2008). Few studies have examined their linguistic and evaluative patterns, showing how attitudinal markers standardise evaluative force (Kashiha, 2024; Shrestha, 2022; Starfield et al., 2015), while others have examined the criteria used in assessment reports (Chetcuti et al., 2022; Kobayashi & Emmeche, 2023). Nevertheless, evaluative comments in examiner reports remain underexplored as discursive practices through which examiners linguistically realise their expectations and institutional values. This gap is particularly relevant in the Pakistani higher education context, where the discursive construction of academic standards in doctoral assessment warrants further investigation.

In Pakistan, scholarship on doctoral education has primarily focused on students' learning experiences, research journeys, and their academic identities in Western contexts (Batool et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2021; Nausheen & Zulfiqar, 2024). Other studies have highlighted systemic issues such as outdated curricula, inadequate resources, and challenges in academic writing (Ashraf & Zaki, 2019; Rafi & Moghees, 2023; Rehman et al., 2023). Various genres in academia, like dissertation abstracts (Aziz et al., 2021; Fatima et al., 2023), thesis acknowledgements (Rofess & Mahmood, 2015) and introductions to research articles (Bilal & Shehzad, 2019) have also been investigated. Recent research has identified multiple ethical and quality concerns in Pakistani doctoral education, including low-quality teaching, ineffective evaluation processes, and inadequate research supervision (Rehman et al., 2025).


© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

Although these works are valuable, they largely ignore the textual and discursive dimensions of examiner discourse and overlook the evaluative comments in assessment reports, a critical component in shaping doctoral standards. More work is needed in this area, both generally and in contexts like Pakistan, where research, doctoral training, and quality supervision remain under-explored issues in higher education.

To address this gap, the present study analyses doctoral assessment reports from Pakistani universities through the Appraisal framework, focusing on Appreciation, Judgement, and Affect. It examines how examiners use these evaluative resources to assess thesis quality, communicate academic expectations, and enact their evaluative authority in written reports. The study aims to identify the linguistic resources examiners use to construct evaluative meaning in this institutional context and to situate the findings within the broader international conversation on examiner discourse, doctoral assessment practices, and the linguistic construction of academic authority. As doctoral education expands globally and scrutiny of examination practices increases, investigating evaluative language in under-researched contexts such as Pakistan can offer insights relevant to diverse cultural and institutional settings.

The following research question was explored:

- How do examiners linguistically enact evaluative standards in assessment reports to perform the dual functions of gatekeeping and developmental support?

The study provides practical insights into doctoral assessment discourse, illustrating how evaluations are constructed in higher education and how assessment reports function as a communicative bridge, mediating between examiners' evaluative perspectives and institutional decisions concerning the quality of doctoral research. The linguistic patterns reveal how evaluative language is used to communicate academic standards and may support the development of clearer and more consistent assessment guidelines; therefore, the findings have practical implications for examiner training and doctoral supervision. Consistent with the principles of scholarly discourse and communication, these evaluative choices demonstrate how disciplinary communities establish and uphold shared understandings of what constitutes academic research standards.

## 2. Theoretical Foundation

The evaluative comments of PhD examiners in this study were analysed using the Appraisal framework developed by (Martin & White, 2005).The Appraisal framework provides a method to analyse how language conveys evaluation in texts. Since evaluation is inherently interpersonal, appraisal analysis considers how writers and readers construct meanings based on their social and linguistic backgrounds. It focuses on meaning categories that are not part of grammar alone but are realised through different linguistic patterns and interpreted in relation


© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

to their social context. The appraisal framework comprises three interrelated systems—Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation- to analyse evaluative meanings in doctoral assessment reports (Martin & White, 2005). The study restricts its analysis to the Attitude subsystem because focusing on Attitude allows for a more detailed examination, as several previous studies foreground attitude while analysing significant discourses (Liu, 2025; Prastikawati, 2021; Shrestha, 2022; Wang & Ni, 2020). "The systems of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation may be explored either in combination or individually, depending on the nature of the research question and the discourse under investigation" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 38).

### 2.1 Appraisal Framework

Martin and Rose, (2007) defines Appraisal theory as follows "Appraisal is concerned with evaluation - the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and the ways in which values are sourced and readers aligned (p.25)." The centre of the appraisal theory is the "system", and the focus is on "appraisal" (Deng &Xie, 2022). Language is the "means" in this system, through which language is analysed to evaluate the position, opinions, and attitudes of language users toward the state of affairs. Attitude is central to appraisal theory, which focuses on reactions, evaluations, and the assessment of value. The Attitude System can be further divided into Type, Polarity, and Mode, as shown in Figure 1. *Type* consists of three subsystems: Appreciation, Judgement, and Affect. *Polarity* means that attitude language can be Positive (e.g., this study reveals convincing results) or Negative (e.g., this study shows unclear results) in all sub-categories. *Mode* refers to an attitude that can be Inscribed (explicit) or Invoked (implicit). Inscribed attitude relies on direct positive or negative evaluative lexis, such as "this study is promising" for a clear, easy-to-perceive evaluation. On the contrary, to infer an invoked attitude, readers have to rely on textual context and background knowledge to comprehend the evaluative position; for example, "the results of this study differ from other studies", "remember to start with the theme sentence"; the specific co-text will help readers make a correct judgment.

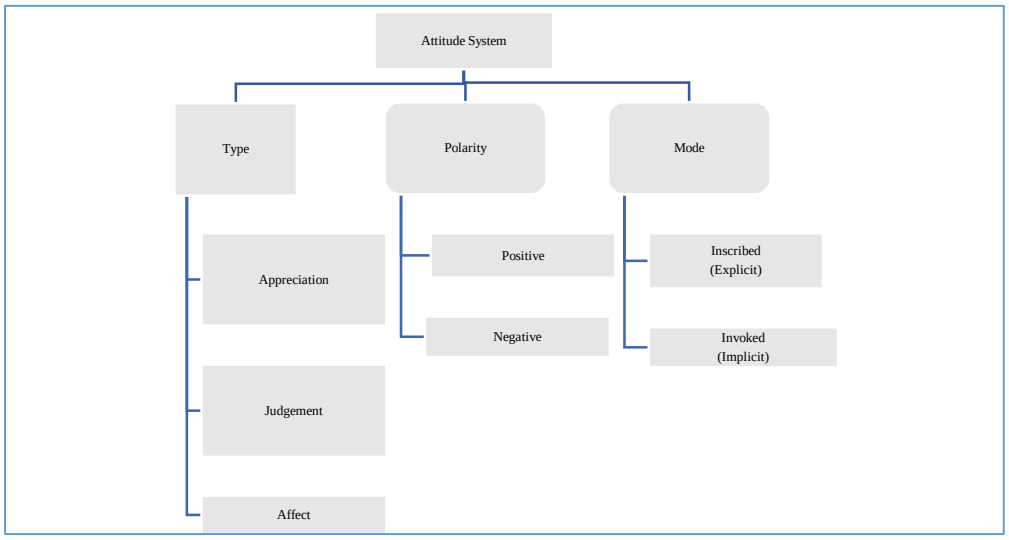

© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

Scholar Insight Journal
https://scholarinsightjournal.com/
Volume.4, Issue.3 (July-Sep-2026)
Acceptance Date: 02-07-2026

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

**Figure 1**

*Categories of attitude system*



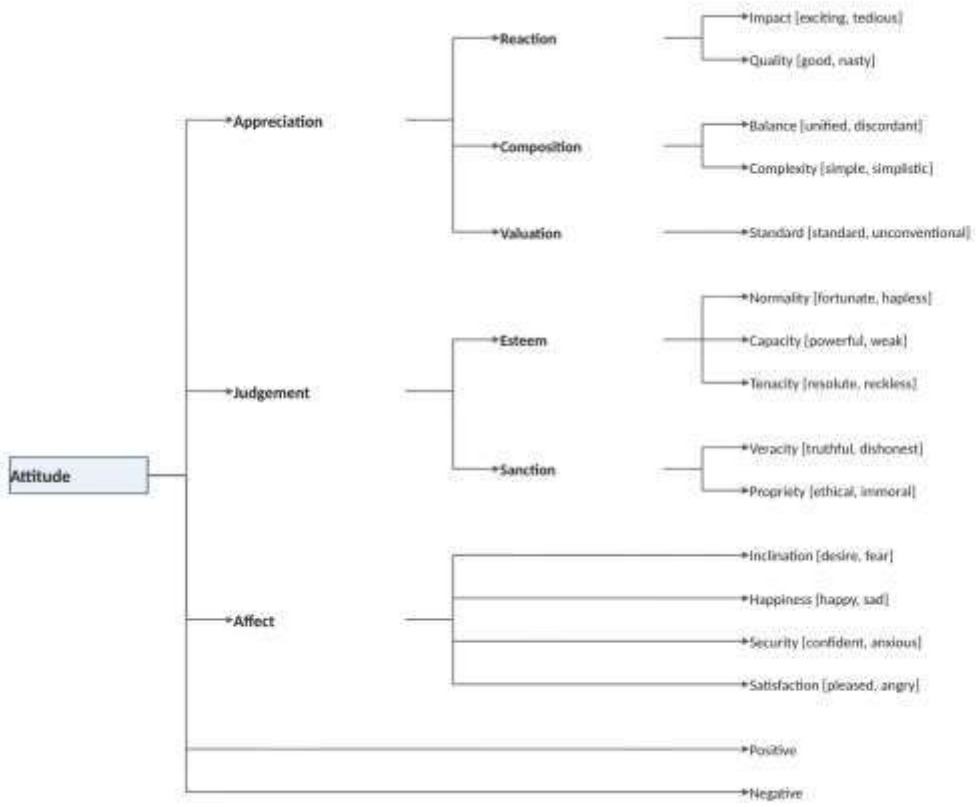

As mentioned earlier, the attitude system has three main types: appreciation, judgment and affect, which are further divided into subcategories in Figure 2. *Appreciation* considers language resources interpreting the value of inanimate things, like the evaluation of entities or the aesthetic assessment of a written text as a social tool for expressing favourable or unfavourable opinions, for instance, 'a well-organised structure', 'this study is promising' etc. Values can be realised as verbs like deceive, triumph, and nouns like cheat, liar, and genius; as well as adverbs like justly, fairly, and virtuously; and adjectives like dishonest, brave, and skilful. The evaluation of inanimate items concerning their reaction (impact or quality), coherence and clarity, composition (balance and complexity), and originality is an aspect of the appreciation category. *Judgment* is concerned with linguistic resources for assessing people and their behaviours according to prescriptive principles in terms of subcategories: social esteem (normality, ability, and persistence) and social sanction (veracity, appropriateness), such as a student writing 'skillfully' following academic conventions (e.g., a leading researcher). *Affect* is linked to the language resources that interpret emotions, predominantly realised as verbs and adjectives, describing positive and negative feelings such as 'disappointing' and 'satisfactory'. Individuals can experience happiness or sadness, insecurity or security, dissatisfaction or satisfaction (Martin & Rose, 2007).


© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

**Figure 2**

*Categories of attitude system*




Source: Martin and White (2005)

The appraisal framework isn't only linguistic; it effectively uncovers implicit meanings in evaluative discourse (Shrestha, 2022; Starfield et al., 2015). Therefore**,** this framework is significant for examining evaluative language in academic discourse, like doctoral assessment reports, where examiners strategically communicate expectations of doctoral standards and candidates' competency within the institutional context.

## 3. Methodology

The study adopts an interpretivist epistemological orientation. Interpretivism holds that social actors understand human social phenomena through the meanings they attribute to them (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) and, in text-based research, through the meanings readers interpret in texts (Crotty, 2020). Interpretivism uses qualitative methods because its techniques and interpretations aim to reveal the meanings, insights, and opinions intrinsic to societal settings (Walter, 2013). Consistent with this orientation, the study does not quantify evaluative


© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

language; rather, it interprets how language functions as a site where institutional values and evaluative practices are enacted, emphasising that meanings are socially constructed. Since doctoral assessment reports are institutional texts where evaluative practices are enacted discursively, a qualitative form of disciplined theoretical inquiry is methodologically appropriate, enabling in-depth investigation of this under-researched genre in Pakistan.

## 4. Data Collection

The study is situated within the Pakistani higher education context, specifically within public-sector universities recognised by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan. Two public sector universities in Islamabad were selected for data collection based on their national rankings and major contributions to doctoral education, especially in the discipline of English language, literature and linguistics within the Faculty of Humanities. The discipline of English was selected for two reasons: first, its doctoral theses are evaluated through interpretation, argumentation, and writing quality, making examiner comments especially rich for Appraisal-based analysis. Second, it offers career prospects in teaching, educational administration and interdisciplinary research, giving the study's findings direct relevance to educational practice beyond the discipline itself. The data for this study consisted of 54 doctoral thesis assessment reports, which were selected using purposive sampling, taking into account their availability and submission to the department for evaluation. The inclusion criteria were that a document had to be a doctoral thesis assessment report, relevant to the discipline of English, fall within the study's specified period (2021–2024), and contain sufficient textual material for analysis. Documents that did not meet these criteria were excluded. These criteria ensured that the selected reports were relevant to the research questions and provided an appropriate documentary corpus for examining assessment practices. Collecting the examiners' assessment reports for investigation involves principal axiological implications, which include obtaining written consent from the concerned higher authorities of the institutions. The reports were obtained through authorised university offices, with due consideration given to ethical requirements.

Following collection, the evaluation reports were organised into a documentary corpus and were saved as a text file in MS Word, keeping the original names of students. The major portion of the text retained the actual format, for instance, the headings and subheadings; the bullet points remained intact, along with written feedback. Later, reports were assigned identification codes (Doctoral Assessment Report) DAR 1– 54 to facilitate systematic analysis and to retain confidentiality.

### 4.1 Data Analysis Procedure

Examiners were provided with university criteria to evaluate the thesis, and these criteria revealed a framework for identifying the types of evaluations examiners are required to make. Moreover, the assessment criteria reveal that appreciation relates to the assessment of the thesis


© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

concerning its originality and investigation of the topic, methodology, materials, presentation of research work, and thorough literature review Table 1. Using the appraisal framework, along with the university's evaluation criteria, links linguistic analysis of evaluative comments to institutional expectations. Appraisal theory offers insights into how examiner discourse reveals evaluative meanings, and university criteria specify the required academic standard of the university. However, the two perspectives provide a more fine-grained analysis of the evaluative language examiners used in the reports and suggest a focused basis for interpretation of evaluative comments in assessment discourse.

**Table 1**

*University criteria for evaluating assessment reports*

| No | **Criteria** | **Appraisal** |
|---|---|---|
| a | The research fills a gap in the body of knowledge and is an original contribution | Appreciation: valuation |
| b | Library and field research carried out for the study meets the requirements | Appreciation: valuation |
| c | Application of a suitable methodological and/or theoretical framework | Appreciation: valuation |
| d | Research work has been handled skillfully and objectives of the research have been achieved | Appreciation: valuation |
| e | The overall presentation of research work is satisfactory | Appreciation: composition: complexity |
| f | Coherent descriptive analysis of data has been carried out with coherent inferences drawn from it. | Appreciation: composition: balance |

For carrying out the analysis, the annotated reports were then read repeatedly to establish familiarity with their content and structure before relevant textual segments were coded using the study's analytical framework. The analysis focused on written individual assessment reports, while the unit of analysis comprised the evaluative expressions and clauses, as in (Starfield et al., 2015), to ensure close engagement with the linguistic and contextual nuances of each doctoral assessment report. The expressions were manually coded based on the Attitude subsystem in Figure 2

*Categories of attitude system* Identifying or coding 'expressions of Appraisal in text is a complex and highly subjective task' (Fuoli, 2018, p 230). However, manual coding adopts a more interpretive and context-sensitive approach that automated tools often overlook, particularly when detecting invoked evaluations spread across clauses. During initial coding, the corpus was examined for recurring structural and evaluative features. Potential attitude markers were identified based on their semantic function (such as expressing feelings, making


© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

judgments about people, or assessing texts and processes) and their grammatical form (adjectives, verbs, adverbs, nominalisations, or passive voice). These instances were recorded in a Microsoft Excel coding sheet (Appendix I), tallying and classifying each item under one of the three Attitude types, with further sub-coding for polarity (positive or negative) and evaluative focus (candidate, thesis, or research process). The study followed the coding convention of Martin and White (2005), keeping all instances of inscribed attitude in bold and their valence (positive or negative) as '+ve' for positive and '-ve' for negative. The appraised is coded in italics and is either the student or the thesis, and evaluation sources are mainly the examiners themselves.

The total word count of the corpus of 54 reports was 62198 words. As the length of examiner reports varied substantially, ranging from 597 to 3606 words, subsequently, the raw frequency count could produce misleading results; therefore, the total instances of every category (appreciation, judgement, affect) were calculated, and the raw frequencies were normalised per 1,000 words to ensure meaningful comparison across all reports.

Certain measures were implemented to improve the trustworthiness of the research. Before analysis, the researcher participated in a theoretical training session on the appraisal framework and a specific coding manual was created outlining rules for distinguishing subcategories, such as judgment from appreciation. To ensure the reliability and validity of the analysis, a second coder qualified in the appraisal framework independently coded 25% of the dataset selected through random sampling. Intercoder agreement was measured using the kappa statistic, and Cohen's kappa value ($\kappa = 0.79$) indicates substantial agreement between the coders. Later, disagreements involving borderline cases like appreciation: impact, covert affect, as well as inscribed and invoked evaluations, were resolved through mutual discussions. The theoretical definitions in the codebook were refined to ensure analytical clarity. Finally, a reconciled coding scheme was employed for analysis and interpretation. To support the analytical claims, representative examples were also selected to demonstrate how Attitude resources functioned in context, making it easier for readers to interpret the textual evidence. These steps collectively ensured the credibility of the findings, establishing that the analysis was systematic, transparent, and theoretically sound**,** thus providing a dependable representation of how evaluative meanings communicated developmental support and standards within doctoral assessment discourse.

## 5. Findings

Linguistic analysis of the evaluative comments in doctoral assessment reports was conducted using the "attitude subsystem" of Appraisal Theory, which is further subdivided into three types: appreciation, judgement, and affect, illustrated in Figure 2. The findings derived from the analysis of the data are presented in

Table **1.**


© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

**Table 1**

*Types of attitude language*

| Attitude Types | Positive | Negative | Total | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Appreciation | 53 | 33 | 86 | 55.1% |
| Judgment | 36 | 25 | 61 | 39.1% |
| Affect | 5 | 4 | 9 | 5.8% |
| **Total** | **94** | **62** | **156** | **100%** |

### 5.1 Appreciation

*Appreciation: valuation* is mainly related to the content of the thesis. An additional category of valuation: 'standard' is possible by adopting an SFL approach, which aids in making comments about the quality of the content, because Johnston's Research (1997, p. 342) suggested that "examiners do have some notion in their heads of the required standard for a doctoral thesis". The standard aspect was related to writing standards, for instance, missing information, data analyses, explanations, discussions, support, or elaborations; material that is (in)appropriate, shallow (1), profound (2), broad, timely (3), innovative, or publishable. The analysis of the doctoral reports revealed a special emphasis on the term standard explicitly, as in (5), where meeting certain standards is appreciated.

1) The data analysis *chapter* is very **unsystematic**, and it does not **meet the doctoral standards.** (-ve appreciation: valuation: standard)
2) Procedural *details* indicate that, according to the standards, **careful statistical methodology** was followed for analysis. (+ve appreciation: valuation: standard)
3) A *standard contemporary summary* of theoretical and conceptual frameworks proves to be **valuable** for the researchers. (+ve appreciation: valuation: standard)
4) The *thesis report* must be written in the **past tense**. (-ve appreciation: valuation: standard)
5) The *thesis* provides **useful and practical insights** of a high standard based on objective approaches. (+ve appreciation: valuation: standard)
*Appreciation: composition* concerns how well elements are linked. It involves *Appreciation: composition: balance, which* refers to the arrangement of information, cohesion, coherence,


© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

paragraphing, and formatting of the doctoral thesis. Examiners assess how effectively the manuscript is developed and how the information is interconnected (6) (7). They also evaluate the organisation of information (8) (9), specifically regarding text development, paragraph connections within sections (10, 11), logical flow (12), and formatting (15, 16). PhD discourses are multimodal, so the subsystems also consider image size, font, and colour, as well as their interpretation (14) (15). *Appreciation: composition: complexity* relates to the clarity, simplicity, detail, and understandability of the text. It also indicates whether the message and information have been communicated clearly. Examiners commented on the clarity (18, 22) and ambiguity (19, 21) in the thesis, as well as on the systematic mode of expression (20), as demonstrated by the examples below.

6) The *thesis* **meets** the accepted practice in *presentation* format and is **coherently organised**. (+ve appreciation: composition: balance)

7) The *thesis* of the candidate is **well-written** and **logical** (+ve appreciation: composition: balance)

8) **Avoid writing** too short or too *long paragraphs* in the introduction and literature review. (-ve appreciation: composition: balance)

9) *Syntax/sentence* mistakes are to be **removed** from the whole thesis. (-ve appreciation: composition: balance)

10) In *section* 1.7, **differentiate** between the limitations and delimitations of the study or **restate** the *section heading* accordingly. (-ve appreciation: composition: balance)

11) There is **less consistency** between and among the *sections of the chapter* on data analysis (-ve appreciation: composition: balance)

12) *Graphs* related to the sample can be **shifted** to Chapter 4, and a row of totals for all the *tables* is **missing**. (-ve appreciation: composition: balance)

13) In the findings section, *figures* are without any **detailed interpretation** (-ve appreciation: composition: balance)

14) The *size of the figures* needs to be **increased**. (-ve appreciation: composition: balance)

15) The *tables and figures* are **clearly formatted**, bringing added value to the study. (+ve appreciation: composition: balance)

16)All *sections* of the thesis **adhere** to the *APA stylistic guidelines*. (+ve appreciation: composition: balance)

17) Multiple *in-text citations* are **not added** in the References section (-ve appreciation: composition: balance)

18*) The author* **has presented** a proposed model driven by her findings, which is a **well-crafted outcome** of her study. (+ve appreciation: composition: complexity)

19) The *term sustainable consciousness* has been **explained abstractly** and **requires clarity** in the research context. (-ve appreciation: composition: complexity)

20) The *interpretation* of all these *tables* is quite **reader-friendly**. (+ve appreciation: composition: complexity)

21) *Mean values* and *p-values* need **more elaborate interpretations** (-ve appreciation: composition: complexity)


© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

22) *Data presentation* in tabular and graphic form **is necessary** as it leads to **clarity**. (+ve appreciation: composition: complexity)

*Appreciation: reaction: quality refers* to how pleasing the text is in terms of its writing. The reports often included words such as well (24), satisfactory (23), and comprehensive (25) to describe the manuscript. A few negative evaluations (26) were given in this regard.

23) The overall quality of work is **satisfactory**. (+ve appreciation: reaction: quality)
24) The thesis **describes very well** how sociogeographical characteristics are associated with psychological well-being. (+ve appreciation: reaction: quality)
25) The methodology chapter/introduction is **written comprehensively**. (+ve appreciation: reaction: quality)
26) The *thesis* is more like a **literature review** than a research thesis.
(-ve appreciation: reaction: quality)

**5.2 Judgement**

This subsystem assesses human writing behaviour in relation to social conventions, determining whether it is acceptable or unacceptable. This type of language directly addresses the student and is not related to the marking criteria. Judgement language was used to indicate: social esteem (Capacity, Tenacity, Normality) and social sanctions (Veracity and Propriety) (Martin & White, 2005).

*Judgement: Social Esteem: Capacity* is about researchers' ability to do something in physical and cognitive terms. Examiners evaluate both the mental capacity of candidates in understanding concepts/writing (27, 28, 29) and physical capacity (30, 31), such as the selection of samples and conducting interviews. The focus was mostly on the candidate's cognitive ability as indicated by verbs and nouns referring to mental capabilities. *Judgement: Social Esteem: Tenacity* is concerned with the student's thoroughness and carefulness in writing (34, 33, 36) and following guidelines (35). There are rare instances of *Judgement: Social Esteem: Normality*, which is about examiners' comments on students' unusual behaviour in writing.
27) *The researcher* **should explain** the reason for studying these two constructs (-ve judgement: capacity: cognitive)
28) *The categories of analysis* prescribed in the framework of Spivak **seem to have been applied rigorously** (+ve judgement: capacity: cognitive)
29) *The researcher* **should add** another subsection of critical analysis (-ve judgement: capacity: cognitive)
30)The *researcher* has **carefully selected** the samples for the experiment. (+ve judgement: capacity: physical)
31)The *researcher* **conducted extensive interviews** with participants over several weeks (+ve judgement: capacity: physical)


© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

32) *The researcher* should **avoid writing** citations at the end of paragraphs; instead, **give** personal critical analyses. (-ve judgement: social esteem: tenacity)
33) The *researcher* has **done thorough research** on relevant literature before writing. (+ve judgement: social esteem: tenacity)
34) The *candidate's* command over discourse conventions of academic research writing is **quite impressive**. (+ve judgement: social esteem: tenacity)
35) The *researcher* must **take a critical stance** and **integrate** discussion into the research objectives of the study. (-ve judgement: social esteem: tenacity)
36) The *researcher* has the credit to **plausibly present** the research coherently.
(+ve judgement: social esteem: tenacity)

*Judgement: Social sanction: Veracity* is concerned with students making (in)valid arguments in writing (37) and providing (in)accurate information (38, 39) in the theses. Although the validity of the argument is to do with the text, the examiners commented on the candidates' behaviour in doing so. *Judgement: Social sanction: Propriety*, the final Judgement sub-category, is about students committing academic misconduct. The candidate is questioned when paraphrased information does not have citations (41), plagiarism has been committed (44), or complete references (42) are not listed in the bibliography. Similarly, the use of misrepresentation and unquoted material is unethical and comes under the category of impropriety (43).

37) The *nature of knowledge* as presented by the *researcher* was **quite appropriate** and **authentic**. (+ve judgement: social sanction: veracity)
38) *References* quoted by the *researcher* were **up to date** and seem **original** (+ve judgement: social sanction: veracity)
39) The *candidate's work* contains **original** scientific and applied contributions (+ve judgement: social sanction: veracity)
40) The presented work is the **need of the hour**, and the *researcher's justification* **proves its originality**. (+ve judgement: social sanction: veracity)
41) **Be careful** while you are writing *references in et al format*, as full credit **should be given** in the *references list*. (–ve judgement: social sanction: propriety)
42) The *researcher* **did not mention** the issue and page number of a few references. (–ve judgement: social sanction: propriety)
43) **Justify** your *points of view* using **authentic** and **sufficient** references. (–ve judgement: social sanction: propriety)
44) The presented *dissertation* is the *candidate's* personal work, and the analysis of the submitted research **reveals no sign of plagiarism** (+ve judgement: social sanction: propriety)

### 5.3 Affect

The subsystem 'affect' is important because it relates to the emotional impact of the text and the sentiments of examiners. *Affect: dis/satisfaction* refers to examiners showing


© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

dis/satisfaction towards the theses or the student regarding their achievement or lack thereof. Language indicating dis/satisfaction appeared quite rarely in the assessment reports. *Affect: un/happiness* reflects examiners being un/happy about the thesis or the student and their writing style. They sometimes used cheerful expressions such as "pleased" (48), but not all instances were positive, also expressing examiners' unhappiness. *Affect: in/security* concerns the expression of in/security (49) regarding students or their theses. There were very few examples of this category. Although not directly related to the criteria of thesis assessment, the affect subsystem was revealed in reports as a scarcely researched area in assessment discourse from a linguistic perspective (Starfield et al., 2015). However, it is common for examiners to express their in/securities, un/happiness, and dis/satisfaction either directly using the first-person pronoun (I) (46,49) or tacitly via the dummy subject (it) (45).

45) *The rationale* of the study is **quite brief**. *It* can be **improved** by highlighting the gaps in the relevant literature. (–ve Affect: dissatisfaction)
46) I must admit that it is a **well-written** document with **balanced** coherence and cohesion (+ve Affect: satisfaction).
47) *The study* does not seem to make a **huge contribution**, as **no new ground** has been broken. (–ve Affect: unhappiness)
48) I am **pleased** to recommend this *research work* up to the mark of the doctoral level (+ve Affect: happiness)
49) I feel **anxious** about the unclear *ethical procedures* described in the study. (–ve Affect: insecurity)

**5.4 Polarity**

Polarity is construed through lexical choices across grammatical categories. This subsystem allows the examiners to construct positive and negative evaluations of the thesis and the candidate. Most of the attitude language instances found were positive in the data, but certain negative evaluations were presented subtly by using adjectives like 'unsatisfactory' in (51) or by making the predicator negative, like 'not written'(52).

50) The *association between teaching styles* is **exceptionally presented** in the discussion section (+ve appreciation: valuation)
51) The overall *structure of the revised thesis* was **unsatisfactory**. (-ve appreciation: valuation)
52) In-text *references and bibliography* are not written in **APA style** (-ve appreciation: valuation: propriety)

**5.5 Invoked Attitude**

Inscribed attitude instances are identifiable in the clauses because the types of appreciation, judgement and affect are explicitly stated. But the recognition of the invoked attitude demands double coding to underline borderline categories. For instance, there are strong links between *Appreciation: reaction: impact, which* is concerned with the emotive effect of the text or writing and *affect*, the emotions someone feels, including derivationally related lexis. Some Appraisal scholars (e.g., Bednarek, 2009; Starfield et al., 2015) have treated this category as *Covert Affect*, given that it invokes emotion. Bednarek (2009) has suggested that the linguistic structure of covert affect involves the use of adjectives in the form of a present participle, such


© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

as "engaging" or "convincing." When adjectives are used in the form of a present participle, the clause can be interpreted as (appreciation: reaction: impact) (53) and as (+ve covert affect: satisfaction) simultaneously; not only does it express appreciation for an object, but it also evokes emotion (54). It can be explicitly stated that the author is affected by the subject of the sentence.

53) An engaging *statement of theoretical assumptions* **connects** with the reader critically (+ve appreciation: reaction: impact)

The theoretical statement engages me (+ve invoked/covert affect: satisfaction)

54) *The conclusion* **aligns** with research findings and is **convincing**. (+ve appreciation: reaction: impact)

The conclusion or results convince me (+ve invoked affect: satisfaction)

Another borderline category is the *invoked judgment*, which can be defined as an implicit statement made about some persons without making them the grammatical subject of the sentence, but s/he is clearly the agent of the action. The two linguistic resources used to create judgment implicitly are the passive voice and nominal groups.

55)The *thesis* is presented in an **academically acceptable** format. (+appreciation: reaction: quality)

The *study* is **represented well** by the researcher. (+ve judgment: covert: capacity: cognitive)

The verb 'is presented' is in the passive voice, and the examiner uses it for the candidate, the agent of this action; the evaluative adverb 'academically' refers to an implicit/invoked judgment of the candidate's capacity.

56) Corpus *linguistic studies* **contribute significantly** to linguistic knowledge and are **well-represented** (+appreciation: reaction: quality)

The *candidate* has **effectively represented** the corpus linguistic studies. (+ve judgment: covert: cognitive capacity)

57) The *research design* is **sound** as the variables are **carefully selected**. (+appreciation: reaction: quality)

The *candidate* has **chosen** the variables **carefully**. (+ve judgment: covert: capacity)

Appreciation is evident in examples (56) and (57), but the candidate's cognitive capacity is also judged tacitly. Another linguistic resource is the use of nominal groups, converting verbs and adjectives into nouns, such as explore to exploration, and precise to precision.

58)An *exploration* into the status of English in Pakistan in the study is **contemporary** (+ve appreciation: reaction: quality)

*You* **explore** the topic, keeping in view the current standards (+ve judgment: capacity: cognitive)

59) The precise methodology section strengthens the thesis. (+ve appreciation: reaction: quality)

*Your* precision in the methodology section is impressive. (+ve judgment: capacity: cognitive)

The agent of the action is mentioned in an implied manner

## 6. Discussion


© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

This study examined 54 doctoral assessment reports from the field of English literature and linguistics collected from two Pakistani universities. The reports provide formative feedback on candidates' research work and offer recommendations for a degree award in accordance with the universities' criteria. The primary aim was to identify how evaluative markers in doctoral assessment reports confer academic standards and reflect institutional norms. The Attitude subsystem of the appraisal framework was employed to explore how examiners employ linguistic resources as potent discursive tools to evaluate and construct academic standards**.**

The three categories of the attitude subsystem- appreciation, judgement and affect and their subcategories were examined. The findings in

Table **1** show that Appreciation is the most frequently occurring Attitude resource (55.1%)**,** followed by Judgement (39.1%)**,** whereas Affect accounts for only 5.8% of the evaluative instances. The analysis of the present dataset reveals the major use of the evaluative markers of appreciation (valuation: standard) and appreciation (composition: balance) more than the other subcategories in the appreciation subsystem, aligning with a recent study on appraisal theory (Firouzi &Farahzad, 2025). In the context of doctoral assessment, the predominance of appreciation indicates that examiners' evaluations are primarily oriented towards the quality and value of the thesis itself**,** in terms of its organisation, complexity, impact and conformity to expected standards of doctoral research. Such evaluations make expectations concerning doctoral-level research visible by identifying qualities such as originality, methodological appropriateness, coherence, complexity and overall research quality. The Appreciation resources used to evaluate the thesis can contribute to gatekeeping when they assess qualities that are relevant to the academic standards required for doctoral approval. The recurrent valuation patterns realised linguistically through appreciation illustrate that examiners provide feedback to scholars on their work, so that they can achieve an institutional standard. The use of both positive and negative appreciation markers reveals a balanced academic tone focusing on both scholarly criticality and constructive feedback. The dominance of positive Appreciation can be interpreted as an objective linguistic preference that exercises evaluative control, which is significant in maintaining academic standards at the tertiary level worldwide.

Although not mentioned in the university criteria, the substantial proportion of Judgment markers (39.1%) (capacity, propriety, tenacity and veracity) indicates that alongside thesis quality, examiners also evaluate the scholarly performance and capabilities of doctoral candidates, as in previous studies (Starfield et al., 2015; Shrestha, 2022). These include capacity, relating to intellectual and research competence; propriety, concerning academic conduct and ethical responsibility; tenacity, reflecting commitment and perseverance; and veracity, relating to truthfulness and credibility. This pattern suggests that examiners assess thesis quality against explicit criteria while also drawing on implicit expectations of doctoral competence, with an objective and impersonal tone through linguistic features like passive constructions (55) and the infrequent use of first-person pronouns (46, 49). The occurrence of positive judgments over negative judgments uncovers the gatekeeping strategy of examiners


© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

and can be inferred as an institutional politeness norm, thereby minimising interpersonal risk. These evaluation markers can serve both gatekeeping and developmental purposes: they may indicate whether the candidates demonstrate the capabilities expected at doctoral level while also identifying areas requiring further scholarly development.

The comparatively low frequency of Affect (5.8%) suggests that explicit affective positioning is less central to the evaluative discourse than evaluations of the thesis and candidate. The findings reveal that affective evaluative expressions are more closely related to the category appreciation reaction: impact, suggesting that the impact of the product is more significant as compared to emotions, which are subdued by the use of objective language, leading to 'covert affect'. The presence of this pattern reveals that examiners mediate their feelings through appreciation of the research work while providing developmental support to the candidates. Similarly, the occurrence of the 'covert judgement' instances in the discourse reveals that examiners maintain a text-friendly stance, focusing on the product while implicitly evaluating the candidates' competence, connecting their personal capacity with broader norms of academic standards enforcement, and positioning them within the broader scholarly community**.** Nevertheless, the presence of Affect indicates that examiner reports can also incorporate interpersonal or affective resources when expressing responses to the research, including positive or negative reactions.

These patterns indicate that doctoral assessment reports simultaneously evaluate the research product and position the candidate as a scholarly agent. The predominance of Appreciation over Judgement and the minimal use of Affect suggests that examiners primarily evaluate the thesis as an academic and textual product rather than the candidate's personal competence or conduct. This pattern is consistent with the emotionally restrained nature of academic evaluation, while also suggesting that institutional and disciplinary conventions may influence how academic judgement is expressed. This dual role aligns with the view of academic discourse as an interactional space where writers perform both epistemic and interpersonal meanings, and with Martin and White's (2005) conception of evaluation as a core mechanism for construing social alignment. In this way, doctoral assessment reports serve not merely as evaluative texts but as sites of academic discourse, where language enacts and sustains the social and communicative practices of higher education (Starfield et al., 2015). By providing evidence from an under-researched Pakistani context, the study adds to the international literature on doctoral assessment and provides a basis for comparative research across disciplines, institutions, and higher education systems. Consequently, the findings suggest that evaluative language in doctoral assessment reports both mirrors and reproduces the educational culture of academia.

## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates how evaluative comments in doctoral assessment reports function as a form of institutional communication, shaping and reflecting academic authority


© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

and standards. By applying Appraisal Theory within a discourse-analytical framework, the findings not only reveal the evaluative standards used by examiners to convey appreciation and quality of the text, but also display their broader role of gatekeeping, thereby providing developmental support to doctoral candidates. This dual focus situates the study at the intersection of discourse studies and educational research, offering insights relevant to scholars interested in both qualitative discourse analysis and the ways communication operates within institutional and academic contexts. Ultimately, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how evaluative discourse constructs academic standards in higher education.

This study has certain limitations, but it has broader implications for doctoral assessment. It is based on a single-institution corpus; however, it provides an in-depth qualitative analysis of one discipline, which can be applied by comparing it with other disciplines and higher education contexts.

Further research could examine whether the dominance of Appreciation and limited use of Affect are characteristic of the genre, specific to particular institutions or disciplines, or more widely shared across doctoral examination systems in other contexts, particularly in South Asia. The focused scope of the study enabled detailed analysis of the Attitude subsystem and helped identify these patterns. Therefore, the study does not claim to represent doctoral examination practices across Pakistan. Rather, it provides a detailed account of one institutional context and offers a basis for comparative research across institutions, disciplines, and national settings. Future studies could also extend the analysis to Engagement and Graduation resources within doctoral assessment reports.

**References**

Afful, J. B. A. (2020). The discourse of thesis assessment reports in a disciplinary community at the University of Cape Coast: An exploratory study. *AFRREV LALIGENS: An International Journal of Language, Literature and Gender Studies*, *9*(1), 117-134. https://doi.org/10.4314/laligens.v9i1.11

Ashraf, A., & Zaki, S. (2019). Language assessment in higher education: Challenges and consequences. *Pakistan Journal of Education, 36*(3), 163–185. https://doi.org/10.30971/pje.v36i3.671

Aziz, A., Mahmood, M., Ahmad, S., & Akbar, N. (2021). A corpus-based study of genre specific discourse: M.A. TEFL thesis abstracts., *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies 17*(2), 884- 898. https://doi.org/10.17263/jlls.904084

Batool, S., Ali, A. F., & Safdar, M. (2022). What Pakistani doctoral students want? A qualitative exploration of their research experiences. *Global Knowledge, Memory and*


© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

*Communication, 71*(4/5), 355–369. https://doi.org/10.1108/gkmc-04-2021-0074

Bednarek, M. (2009). Cognitive and discursive perspectives. *Language and social cognition: Expression of the social mind, 206,* 395. https://doi.org/10.1075/pc.17.1.05bed

Bilal, A., & Shehzad, W. (2019). Genre Analysis: Studying Authorial Stance in the Pakistani Research Articles of Business and Management Sciences. *International Journal of English Linguistics, 9*(1), 455–471. https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v9n1p455

Boud, D., & Falchikov, N. (Eds.). (2007). *Rethinking assessment in higher education: Learning for the longer term*. Routledge. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781134152155

Boud, D., & Lee, A. (Eds.). (2009). *Changing Practices of Doctoral Education*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203870488

Chetcuti, D., Cacciottolo, J., & Vella, N. (2022). What do examiners look for in a PhD thesis? Explicit and implicit criteria used by examiners across disciplines. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 47*, 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2022.2048293

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.

Crotty, M. (2020). *Foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Routledge.

Dally, K., Holbrook, A., Lovat, T., & Budd, J. (2019). Examiner feedback and Australian doctoral examination processes. *The Australian Universities' review*, *61*(2), 31-41. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1228240.pdf

Deng, Z., & Xie, B. (2022). Analysis of Audiences' Attitudes towards Product Placement in Short Videos Based on Appraisal Theory: A Case Study of the Bilibili Platform. *International Journal of Social Science Studies 10*(4), 83–96. https://doi.org/10.11114/ijsss.v10i4.5633

Fatima, N., Raza, A., & Ahmad, M. (2023). Linguistic Variations in the Abstracts of Pakistani Dissertations: A Multidimensional Analysis across Disciplines. *University of Chitral Journal of Linguistics and Literature, 7,* 50–80. https://doi.org/10.33195/btm19817

Firouzi, R., & Farahzad, F. (2025). A Systematic Review of Appraisal Theoretical Research


© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

in Translation Studies Published Between 2017 and 2024. *Iranian Journal of Translation Studies, 22*(88), 44–60. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350447905.0014

Forde-Leaves, N., Walton, J., & Tann, K. (2023). A framework for understanding assessment practice in higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 48*(8), 1076–1091. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2023.2169659

Fuoli, M. (2018). A stepwise method for annotating appraisal. *Functions of language*, *25*(2), 229-258. https://doi.org/10.1075/fol.15016.fuo

Holbrook, A., Bourke, S., Lovat, T., & Fairbairn, H. (2008). Consistency and Inconsistency in PhD Thesis Examination. *Australian Journal of Education*, *52*(1), 36–48. https://doi.org/10.1177/000494410805200103

Holbrook, A., Bourke, S., Fairbairn, H., & Lovat, T. (2014). The focus and substance of formative comment provided by PhD examiners. *Studies in Higher Education*, *39*(6), 983-1000. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2012.750289

Johnston, S. (1997). Examining the examiners: An analysis of examiners' reports on doctoral theses. *Studies in Higher Education, 22*(3), 333–347. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079712331380936

Kashiha, H. (2024). Stance-taking in peer reviewer and thesis examiner feedback on Iranian scholarly contributions. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *68*, 101364. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2024.101364

Khan, I. U., Imtiaz, A., Shahzad, A. K., Khan, S., & Amina, S. (2020). Emerging Academic Identities in a Foreign Context: Pakistani International Doctoral Students' Responses to Supervisory Feedback in New Zealand. *Linguistica Antverpiensia, 1*, 1481–1502.

Kobayashi, S., & Emmeche, C. (2023). What makes a good PhD thesis? Norms of science as reflected in written assessments of PhD theses. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 48*(8), 1310–1324. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2023.2200917

Liu, G. (2025). A positive discourse analysis based on the attitude system in appraisal theory—Taking Chang'an as an example. *Literature, Language and Cultural Studies*, *1*(3), 44-57. https://doi.org/10.63313/llcs.9037

Martin, J. R., & Rose, D. (2007) *Working with Discourse: Meaning beyond the Clause*. (2nd ed.). Continuum.


© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. R. (2005). *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English.* Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.15718/discog.2016.23.2.171

Nausheen, M., & Zulfiqar, A. Z. Z. (2024). Assessment Practices at PhD Level: A Phenomenological Study of the PhD Scholars' Experiences. *Journal of Education and Humanities Research, 17*(1), 50-62. http://jehronline.uob.edu.pk/journal/index.php/jehr/article view/334/314

Nerad M (2020) Governmental Innovation Policies, Globalisation, and Change in Doctoral Education Worldwide: Are Doctoral Programmes Converging? Trends and Tensions. In: Cardoso S, Tavares O, Sin C, et al. (eds) *Structural and Institutional Transformations in Doctoral Education: Social, Political and Student Expectations*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 43–84. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38046-5_3 (accessed 13 November 2025).

Prastikawati, E. F. (2021). Attitude perspective in BBC News' article: An appraisal analysis. *Journal of English Language Studies*, *6*(2), 122-137. https://doi.org/10.30870/jels.v6i2.10280

Rafi, M. S., & Moghees, A. (2023). Writing challenges, causes, and strategies to facilitate the doctoral dissertation-writing process: A qualitative analysis. *International Social Science Journal, 73*(247), 139–156. https://doi.org/10.1111/issj.12367

Rehman, A. U., Khan, M. I., & Waheed, Z. (2023). Academic Reading and Writing Challenges Faced by Doctoral Students in Peshawar, Pakistan: A Qualitative Study. *UMT Education Review, 6*(2), 52-71. https://doi.org/10.32350/uer.62.03

Rehman, A. U., Khan, M. I., & Ahmad, S. M. (2025). Ethical and Quality Concerns in Social Science Doctoral Research Studies: A Case Study in Pakistan. *Journal of Academic Ethics, 23*(3), 389-403. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-024-09573-0

Rofess, S., & Mahmood, M. A. (2015). An Investigation of Generic Structures of Pakistani Doctoral Thesis Acknowledgements. J*ournal of Education and Practice, 6*(28), 128–143. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1081244.pdf

Shrestha, P. N. (2022). Examining evaluative language used in assessment feedback on business students' academic writing. *Assessing Writing*, *54*, 100664. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2022.100664

Starfield, S., Paltridge, B., McMurtrie, R., Holbrook, A., Bourke, S., Fairbairn, H., Kiley, M., & Lovat, T. (2015). Understanding the language of evaluation in examiners' reports on doctoral theses. *Linguistics and Education, 31*, 130–144. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2015.06.004

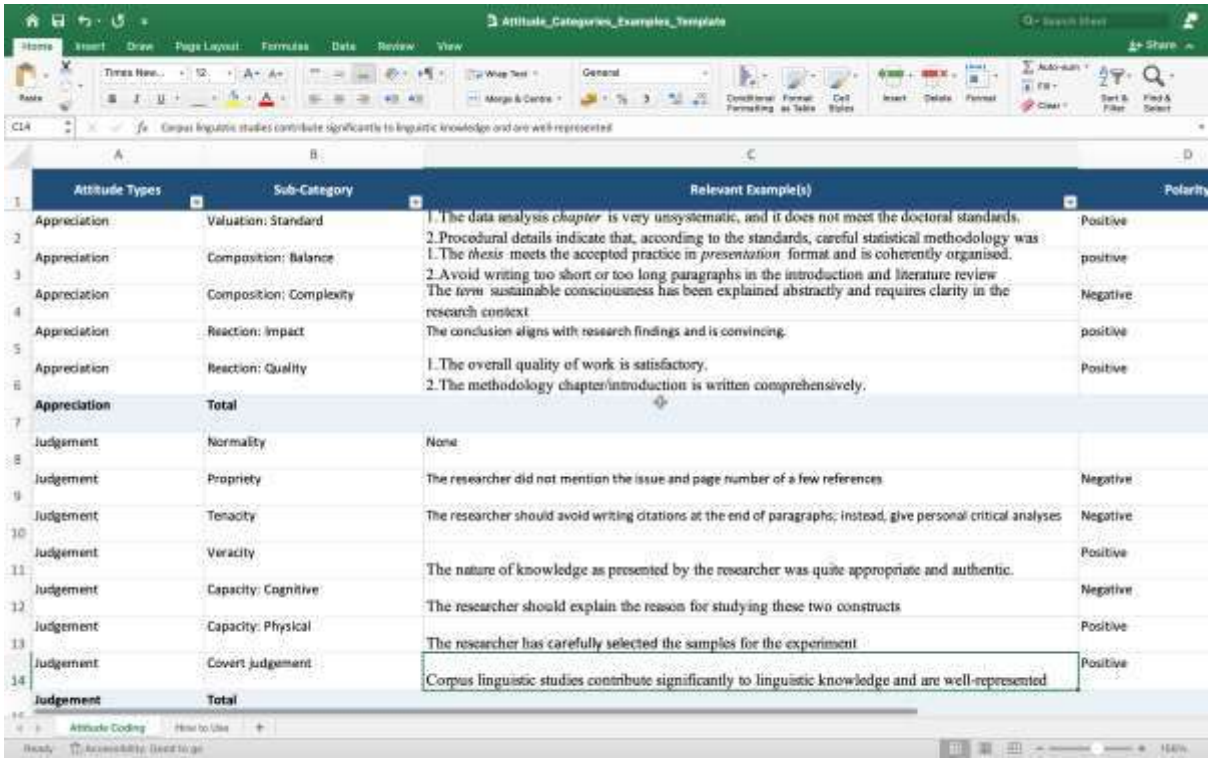

© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.

HEC PAKISTAN Y Category
ONLINE - ISSN- 3006-9785
PRINT - ISSN- 3007-245X
Publication Date: 30-09-2026

Walter, M. (2013). The nature of social science research. In M.Walter (Ed.), *Social research methods* (4th ed, pp. 3–24). Oxford University Press.

Wang, Y., & Ni, J. (2020). Analysis of attitude resources in news headlines of The Economist from the perspective of the appraisal theory. *US-China Foreign Language*, *18*(6), 195–201. https://doi.org/10.17265/1539-8080/2020.06.005

**APPENDIX I**



| Attitude Types | Sub-Category | Relevant Example(s) | Polarity |
|---|---|---|---|
| Appreciation | Valuation: Standard | 1.The data analysis *chapter* is very unsystematic, and it does not meet the doctoral standards.<br>2.Procedural details indicate that, according to the standards, careful statistical methodology was | Positive |
| Appreciation | Composition: Balance | 1.The *thesis* meets the accepted practice in *presentation* format and is coherently organised.<br>2.Avoid writing too short or too long paragraphs in the introduction and literature review | positive |
| Appreciation | Composition: Complexity | The term sustainable consciousness has been explained abstractly and requires clarity in the research context | Negative |
| Appreciation | Reaction: Impact | The conclusion aligns with research findings and is convincing. | positive |
| Appreciation | Reaction: Quality | 1.The overall quality of work is satisfactory.<br>2.The methodology chapter/introduction is written comprehensively. | Positive |
| **Appreciation** | **Total** | | |
| Judgement | Normality | None | |
| Judgement | Propriety | The researcher did not mention the issue and page number of a few references | Negative |
| Judgement | Tenacity | The researcher should avoid writing citations at the end of paragraphs; instead, give personal critical analyses | Negative |
| Judgement | Veracity | The nature of knowledge as presented by the researcher was quite appropriate and authentic. | Positive |
| Judgement | Capacity: Cognitive | The researcher should explain the reason for studying these two constructs | Negative |
| Judgement | Capacity: Physical | The researcher has carefully selected the samples for the experiment | Positive |
| Judgement | Covert judgement | Corpus linguistic studies contribute significantly to linguistic knowledge and are well-represented | Positive |
| **Judgement** | **Total** | | |


© 2026 Fouzia Goreja et al.