

Hope vs. Defiance: A Comparative Corpus Analysis of Emotional Lexis in MLK's *I Have a Dream* and Churchill's *We Shall Fight on the Beaches*

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Abstract

Political speeches function not only as instruments of persuasion but also as powerful emotional artifacts that mobilize collective consciousness during moments of crisis and transformation. This study undertakes a comparative corpus-based analysis of emotional lexis in two iconic political speeches: Martin Luther King's *The American Dream* and Winston Churchill's *We Shall Fight on the Beaches*. Drawing on corpus linguistics and emotion-oriented discourse analysis, the research investigates how hope and defiance are linguistically constructed, foregrounded, and strategically deployed in American civil rights rhetoric and British wartime discourse respectively. Using a small, specialized corpus, the analysis employs Voyant Tools, AntConc, and Text Inspector to examine lexical frequency, keyword salience, collocation patterns, sentiment polarity, semantic fields, and evaluative language. The findings are expected to reveal significant contrasts in emotional framing: King's discourse privileging optimism, moral aspiration, and collective uplift, while Churchill's rhetoric emphasizes resistance, resolve, and national endurance. By integrating quantitative corpus techniques with qualitative interpretation, the study demonstrates how emotional lexis operates as an ideological and rhetorical resource in political leadership across cultures. The research contributes to corpus-assisted political discourse analysis, offering insights into the emotional mechanics of persuasion in canonical political texts.

Keywords:

Political Discourse; Corpus Analysis; Martin Luthar King (MLK); Winston Churchill.

1. Introduction

Political rhetoric has long functioned as a powerful instrument for shaping public consciousness, particularly during moments of crisis, transformation, or collective uncertainty. Beyond conveying information, landmark speeches often mobilize emotions, construct shared identities, and legitimize courses of action. In the twentieth century, rhetorical speeches gained heightened significance as leaders addressed mass audiences confronting war, social injustice, and ideological conflict. Emotional language in such speeches plays a crucial role in persuading audiences, framing reality, and guiding collective response. This study examines two of the most influential political speeches of the modern era—Martin Luther King Jr.’s *I Have a Dream* and Winston Churchill’s *We Shall Fight on the Beaches*. Delivered in radically different historical contexts, these speeches exemplify contrasting emotional strategies: hope as a catalyst for moral and social transformation, and defiance as a means of national survival. By briefly situating these speeches within their historical circumstances and discussing their purposes and outcomes, the article highlights how emotional rhetoric operates as a strategic resource in political leadership. Through this comparative lens, the study underscores the enduring role of rhetorical discourse in shaping historical trajectories and collective memory.

1.1 Rationale of the Study

Political discourse has long been recognized as a site where language, ideology, and emotion intersect (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2006). Emotions in political rhetoric are not merely expressive but strategically patterned linguistic choices that shape public perception and collective action (Charteris-Black, 2011). While numerous studies have examined rhetorical devices such as metaphor, repetition, and pronoun usage in political speeches, systematic corpus-based investigations of emotional lexis remain comparatively underexplored, particularly in cross-cultural contexts. Martin Luther King’s *The American Dream* and Winston Churchill’s *We Shall Fight on the Beaches* represent two contrasting historical moments i.e. the struggle for civil rights in the United States and the existential threat of World War II in Britain. Previous rhetorical analyses often rely on qualitative close reading, which, though insightful, may overlook recurring lexical patterns and statistically salient emotional markers (Baker, 2006). Corpus linguistics offers a methodologically robust alternative, enabling researchers to uncover patterns of emotional language through frequency, collocation, and semantic categorization (McEnery & Hardie, 2012). By integrating tools such as Voyant, AntConc, and Text Inspector, this study bridges traditional rhetorical criticism with empirical linguistic evidence, thereby advancing research in political stylistics and emotion studies.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What types of emotional lexis (e.g., hope-oriented vs. defiance-oriented vocabulary) are most frequent in MLK’s *The American Dream* and Churchill’s *We Shall Fight on the Beaches*?
2. How do keyword patterns and lexical salience differ between the two speeches in constructing emotional appeal?
3. What collocational networks are associated with key emotional terms such as *freedom*, *fight*, *dream*, *nation*, and *victory*?
4. How do sentiment polarity and evaluative language differ across the two speeches?
5. In what ways do these emotional lexical patterns reflect cultural, ideological, and situational differences between American civil rights discourse and British wartime rhetoric?

Analyzing Emotional Lexis in Speeches

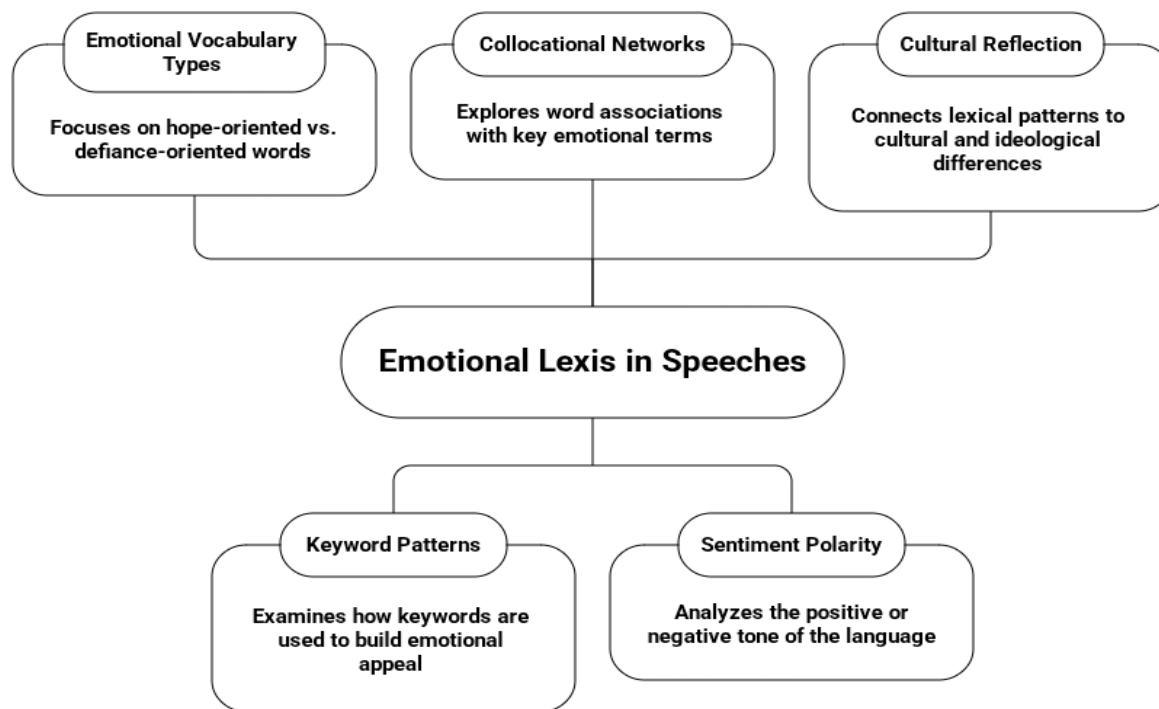


Figure 1. Research Objectives

1.3 Significance of the Study

The present study contributes to corpus assisted political discourse analysis by treating emotion as a systematically observable linguistic category rather than as an exclusively subjective or impressionistic feature of interpretation. By examining recurring lexical patterns, collocational tendencies, and evaluative language, the research demonstrates how emotional meaning is encoded, sustained, and circulated through measurable linguistic choices in political speeches. This approach strengthens analytical transparency and responds to long standing concerns regarding the replicability of emotion based discourse analysis. Methodologically, the study offers a carefully structured analytical procedure for working with small and specialized political corpora. The combined use of Voyant Tools, AntConc, and Text Inspector enables the identification of emotional salience at multiple levels, including frequency distribution, contextual usage, and semantic categorization. By integrating exploratory visualization with concordance based analysis and semantic tagging, the study provides a coherent and reproducible framework that can be adapted to other historically significant political texts.

From a comparative perspective, the research deepens understanding of how emotional strategies in political leadership are shaped by cultural, historical, and ideological contexts. The contrast between British wartime rhetoric and American civil rights discourse reveals differing patterns in the linguistic construction of collective resolve, moral orientation, and future directed appeal. These findings contribute to broader discussions of how national traditions and situational pressures influence emotional positioning in political communication. Finally, the study holds relevance for pedagogical

and research contexts within stylistics, rhetoric, corpus linguistics, and political communication. Its methodological design and analytical framework may be employed in advanced teaching and research settings to illustrate how quantitative corpus evidence can be meaningfully integrated with qualitative discourse interpretation. In this way, the study offers a structured model for future comparative research on political emotion across cultures and historical periods.

2. Literature Review

Recent research demonstrates a growing emphasis on emotion and appraisal in political discourse, particularly within corpus-assisted frameworks (Combei & Reggi, 2023; Alcántara, 2025). Scholars increasingly combine lexical-semantic analysis with appraisal categories (judgment, affect, appreciation) to unpack how leaders construct emotional meaning and align audiences with ideological goals. Combei & Reggi's work (2023) models an integrated methodology for sentiment and emotional appraisal across large digital corpora.

2.1 Historical Perspective of Rhetorical Speeches

Rhetorical speeches have historically emerged at moments of intense social or political crisis, serving to mobilize collective emotion and shape public understanding of events. Rather than merely informing audiences, such speeches aim to persuade, unify, and legitimize action by aligning language with shared values and emotions. In the twentieth century, mass political oratory became especially powerful, as leaders addressed not only immediate audiences but entire nations and, eventually, global publics.

Winston Churchill's *We Shall Fight on the Beaches* (1940) exemplifies rhetoric of survival and resistance. Delivered when Britain faced the real possibility of defeat in World War II, the speech acknowledged military setbacks while refusing despair. Churchill's language transformed vulnerability into resolve, using repetition and firm declarative statements to construct defiance as a national identity. The purpose of the speech was to sustain morale and justify continued resistance against Nazi Germany. Its outcome was the consolidation of public and political support for war, helping to sustain Britain's determination at a critical historical juncture and cementing Churchill's role as a symbol of wartime leadership.

By contrast, Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* (1963) represents rhetoric of moral transformation and hope. Delivered during the Civil Rights Movement, the speech addressed a society fractured by racial injustice rather than external military threat. King's language projected a future-oriented vision rooted in equality, justice, and shared democratic ideals. The purpose was not to resist an invading enemy, but to persuade the nation to confront its own moral contradictions. The speech's impact extended beyond its immediate audience, strengthening public support for civil rights reform and contributing to major legislative changes while leaving a lasting legacy in global political rhetoric.

These speeches illustrate how rhetorical discourse adapts emotional strategy to historical context. Churchill's speech channels defiance to prepare a nation for endurance and sacrifice, while King's speech mobilizes hope to inspire social change and reconciliation. Both demonstrate that effective political rhetoric does not simply reflect history but actively shapes it, using emotion as a central resource to influence collective action and long-term outcomes.

2.2 Narrative Literature Review and Meta-Synthesis

2.2.1. Appraisal, Sentiment, and Emotion in Political Discourse

Combei and Reggi (2023) offer a foundational multimodal, multi-method approach that integrates Appraisal Theory, sentiment analysis, and emotion studies in political discourse. Their study demonstrates how affect, judgment, and appreciation interact with sentiment polarity, while also showing that emotional meanings are culturally situated rather than universal. Methodologically, their work is significant because it bridges qualitative discourse analysis with corpus-based and computational tools. However, their focus remains largely on contemporary online and multimodal political communication, leaving classic, historically influential speeches underexplored. This limitation is particularly relevant to the present study, which re-centers emotional appraisal within canonical political oratory rather than digital discourse.

2.2.2. Emotion in Politics during Crisis Contexts

The *Corpus Pragmatics* study *Emotion in Politics in Times of War* (2023) investigates how emotions such as fear, anger, and solidarity emerge in parliamentary debates during wartime crises. Using corpus-pragmatic techniques and multiple sentiment tools, the study convincingly shows that emotional positioning is central to political legitimacy and persuasion under pressure. While this work highlights the role of emotion in crisis discourse, it concentrates on institutional parliamentary debates, not iconic individual speeches. As a result, it does not address how emotion is rhetorically stylized and lexically foregrounded by individual leaders, such as Martin Luther King Jr. or Winston Churchill, whose speeches rely heavily on symbolic emotional framing.

2.2.3. Computational Turn: Sentiment Tools and Large Datasets

Recent studies such as ParlaSent (2025) and Agora Speech (2025) represent the computational expansion of political discourse studies. ParlaSent develops multilingual deep-learning models for political sentiment classification, while Agora Speech provides a richly annotated dataset designed for benchmarking sentiment, polarization, and large language models. These contributions are crucial in advancing methodological scalability, yet both prioritize tool development over interpretive linguistic analysis. Crucially, neither integrates Appraisal Theory nor focuses on emotion-specific lexical choices in landmark speeches. This methodological orientation highlights a growing divide between computational efficiency and interpretive depth, a gap that the present study explicitly addresses by combining corpus methods with qualitative emotional analysis.

2.2.4. Multimodality and Prosody in Emotional Framing

Artero-Abellan (2025) shifts attention to prosody and intonation, demonstrating that emotional meaning in populist rallies is not only lexical but also acoustic. This multimodal approach underscores the importance of delivery in emotional framing. However, its emphasis on spoken performance limits its applicability to text-centered corpus analysis. In contrast, your study deliberately focuses on lexical emotion, allowing for systematic comparison across historically distinct but textually stable speeches.

2.2.5. Emotions, Polarization, and Ideology

Alcántara-Plá (2025) adopts a constructionist discourse-analytic perspective to show how emotions contribute to political polarization, particularly within Spanish regional politics. The study introduces

the concept of cognitive emotion as a lens for understanding ideological division. While theoretically rich, its regional and contextual specificity limits generalizability. Similarly, Azmi (2025) provides a rhetorical and discourse analysis of ideological framing across world leaders' speeches, offering valuable qualitative insights but with limited corpus-tool integration. These studies collectively emphasize ideology-emotion links, yet they stop short of systematically quantifying emotional lexis, especially in cross-historical comparisons.

2.2.6. Appraisal Theory in Political Speech

Alhuthali (2024) applies Appraisal Theory to formal political speeches, finding that affect dominates emotional expression, while judgment aligns closely with tonal shifts. This study is particularly relevant to your research due to its appraisal-based framework. However, its small corpus and limited number of speeches restrict its analytical power. Your study extends this line of inquiry by applying appraisal-informed emotional analysis to two globally iconic speeches, enhancing both comparability and interpretive depth.

2.2.7. Corpus-Based Studies of Political Language Change

Studies such as Nazeer et al. (2023) and Chen et al. (2023) explore linguistic shifts and stylistic variation in political and diplomatic discourse through corpus methods. While they identify changes in tone, style, and ideological positioning, emotion is treated as a secondary or implicit variable rather than the central analytic focus. This reinforces the need for research that foregrounds emotion as a primary analytical category, as your study does.

2.2.8. Emotion-Specific and Domain-Specific Research

Latif et al. (2024) provide a focused corpus-based analysis of fear appeals in U.S. presidential speeches, demonstrating how fear is strategically mobilized for persuasion. While methodologically relevant, the study's single-emotion focus limits its explanatory scope. Similarly, Rivlin-Angert and Mor-Lan (2025) and Pätz et al. (2025) emphasize delegitimization, polarity, and sentiment trends using computational classification, often privileging negative affect. These works collectively underscore an imbalance in the literature indicating negative emotions are studied far more extensively than positive or resistant emotions such as hope or defiance.

2.2.9. Media and Social Media Bias

Finally, studies like Song et al. (2024) and Mumtaz et al. (2025) focus on political communication in social media and print media, respectively. Although valuable for understanding contemporary political discourse, their domain focus sidelines oratory speech, particularly historical speeches designed for moral persuasion and collective mobilization.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of the previous studies

Citation	Year	Topic	Methods	Key Findings	Gaps
Combei & Reggi	2023	Appraisal, Sentiment & Emotion in Political	Multimodal corpus-assisted analysis	Integrated emotion and sentiment with appraisal; highlighted cultural	Focus on online multimodal discourse; limited on

		Discourse		influences on political messaging	classic speeches
Emotion in Politics in Times of War (Corpus Pragmatics)	2023	Emotion in parliamentary debate under crisis	Corpus pragmatics, multiple sentiment/emotion tools	Showed emotions (anger, fear, positive) shape political debate	Less focus on iconic speeches like MLK/Churchill
ParlaSent	2025	Sentiment in multilingual political texts	Deep learning sentiment analysis	Developed model for political sentiment	Focused on tool development, not appraisal categories
Artero-Abellan	2025	Affective framing via prosody	Multimodal acoustic & discourse analysis	Prosody integral to emotional meaning in speech	Focused on oral performance, not lexical emotion
Alcántara-P lá	2025	Emotions & Polarization in Political Discourse	Constructionist discourse analysis	Cognitive emotion concept helps explain political polarization	Focused on Spanish regional politics
Alhuthali	2024	Appraisal in formal speeches	Appraisal framework with semiotic analysis	Affect prevalent; judgement correlates with tone changes	Limited corpus data; small number of speeches
Nazeer et al.	2023	Linguistic shifts in digital political discourse	Corpus-based analysis	Highlighted linguistic change & emotional tone	Broad focus beyond emotional lexis in speeches
Agora Speech	2025	Annotated political speech dataset	Corpus creation & annotation	Dataset supports sentiment, polarization, LLM benchmarks	Not yet applied to emotional appraisal studies
Rivlin-Angert & Mor-Lan	2025	Political delegitimization discourse	Computational classification	Rise in affective delegitimization over time	Focus on incivility & polarity rather than positive emotion
Pätz et al.	2025	Parliamentary speech sentiment/topic	Machine learning classification	Sentiment varies with party roles	Focus beyond emotional lexis to topic dynamics
Song et al.	2024	Sentiment in political Tweets	Pre-trained language models	Detected ideological sentiment differences	Social media focus, not speeches
Chen et al.	2023	Stylistic features in	Corpus stylistic	Revealed stylistic differences cross-	Less focus on emotional

		diplomatic discourse	comparison	nationally	appraisal and leadership rhetoric
Tuba Latif et al.	2024	Fear appeals in US presidential speeches	Corpus linguistic analysis	Fear leveraged for persuasion	Focus limited to one emotion type (fear)
Mumtaz et al.	2025	Political themes in English print media	Corpus-based CDA	Explored power, justice, ideology	Domain limited to media, not speeches
Sefiani Dwi Azmi	2025	Ideology in world leaders' speeches	Rhetorical & discourse analysis	Detailed ideological framing across leaders	Limited corpus-tool application

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a corpus-assisted interpretive methodology, combining the empirical rigor of corpus linguistics with the contextual sensitivity of political discourse analysis. Rather than treating corpus tools as neutral counting instruments, the research conceptualizes them as heuristic devices that enable the systematic exploration of emotional meaning embedded in political language (Baker, 2006; McEnery & Hardie, 2012). Such an approach is particularly suitable for investigating emotion-laden political rhetoric, where affective meanings are often distributed across recurrent lexical patterns rather than isolated rhetorical flourishes.

3.1 Research Design

The research is situated within a mixed-method, corpus-assisted discourse analytical design, where quantitative patterns guide qualitative interpretation. Previous studies have demonstrated that emotional positioning in political speeches is best captured through this integrative paradigm, as purely qualitative analyses risk impressionism, while purely quantitative analyses risk de-contextualization (Charteris-Black, 2011; Partington, Duguid, & Taylor, 2013). Following the corpus stylistic tradition, the study does not aim for statistical generalization but for pattern-based explanation. As Hunston (2002) argues, meaning in discourse emerges from repetition, salience, and association consist upon principles that are central to the present investigation of *hope* and *defiance* as emotionally and ideologically charged constructs.

3.2 Corpus Construction and Text Selection

The corpus consists of two carefully selected, historically and rhetorically iconic political speeches including Martin Luther King Jr.'s *The American Dream* and Winston Churchill's *We Shall Fight on the Beaches*. The texts were selected through purposive sampling, a widely accepted strategy in corpus-assisted political discourse studies dealing with canonical texts (Baker et al., 2008). The selection criteria were grounded in three considerations ranging from historical significance, emotional intensity under crisis conditions, and cross-cultural representativeness of American and British political traditions. Although relatively small in size, the corpus qualifies as a specialized corpus, which, as argued by Flowerdew (2012), is particularly effective for uncovering dense rhetorical and

emotional patterning in political texts. The limited size is therefore not a methodological limitation but a deliberate analytical choice, allowing fine-grained exploration of emotionally salient lexis.

3.3 Analytical Procedure and Corpus Tools

The analysis proceeds in a cyclical and layered manner, moving between computational outputs and discourse interpretation. This aligns with the methodological principle that corpus tools should *inform*, not *replace*, critical analysis (Baker, 2010).

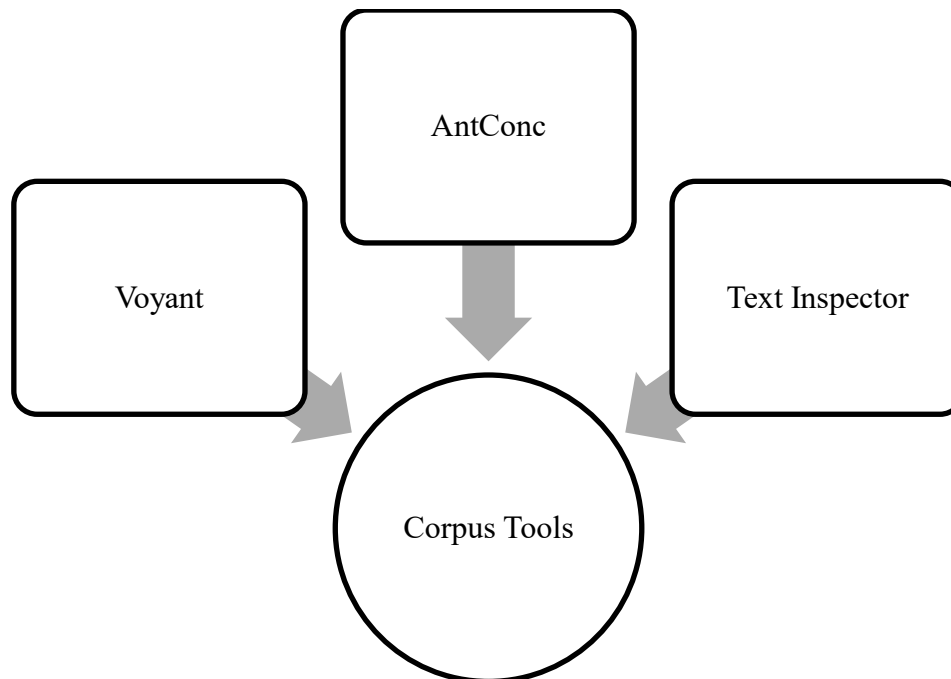


Figure 2. Tools for Corpus driven analysis

3.3.1 Voyant Tools: Exploratory Emotional Mapping

Voyant Tools is employed at the initial stage to generate global lexical landscapes of each speech. Previous research has shown that visualization-based tools are particularly effective for identifying dominant emotional clusters and thematic concentrations in political texts (Sinclair, 2004; Rockwell & Sinclair, 2016). In this study, Voyant facilitates Identification of emotionally salient high-frequency items, Visualization of lexical concentration and dispersion, and Preliminary differentiation between optimism-oriented and resistance-oriented vocabularies. This exploratory phase establishes analytical hypotheses, later tested through more precise corpus tools.

3.3.2 AntConc: Keyword Salience and Emotional Patterning

AntConc is used as the principal analytical tool for systematic lexical investigation, consistent with its extensive use in political corpus studies (Baker, 2006; Gabrielatos & McNery, 2013). Keyword analysis enables the identification of emotionally marked lexical items that are unusually prominent within each speech. Concordance and collocation analyses are then conducted to examine how emotional function terms in context, and which lexical environments reinforce hope (e.g., *dream*, *freedom*, *justice*) and defiance (e.g., *fight*, *never*, *resist*). This tool also helps in identifying how

repetition operates as an emotional intensifier. Earlier studies demonstrate that collocational patterns are central to emotional meaning, as emotions are rarely encoded in single words but emerge through lexical co-selection (Stubbs, 2001; Bednarek, 2008).

3.3.3 Text Inspector: Semantic and Sentiment Categorization

To complement frequency-based findings, Text Inspector is used for semantic tagging and sentiment classification. Unlike generic sentiment tools, Text Inspector allows analysis at the level of functional and evaluative language, enabling alignment with appraisal theory and political emotion studies (Martin & White, 2005). This stage of analysis focuses on Polarity distribution (positive vs. negative affect), Functional roles of emotional lexis (motivational, moralizing, confrontational), and Semantic domains associated with hope and defiance. Previous corpus studies have shown that combining semantic tagging with concordance analysis significantly enhances interpretive reliability in emotion research (Rayson, 2008; Bednarek, 2010).

3.4 Framework of Analysis

The analytical framework adopted in this study is grounded in the assumption that emotional meaning in political discourse emerges through the interaction of linguistic patterning, evaluative orientation, and ideological positioning. To capture this complexity, the framework integrates three complementary but theoretically distinct dimensions: corpus linguistics, emotion and appraisal theory, and political discourse analysis. Each dimension contributes a specific level of explanation, and their integration enables a comprehensive account of how emotional lexis operates as both linguistic structure and rhetorical action.

At the first level, corpus linguistics provides the empirical foundation for analysis by identifying recurring lexical patterns that are not readily observable through close reading alone. Frequency analysis highlights which emotionally charged words and grammatical forms receive sustained emphasis, while keyword analysis reveals lexemes that are unusually salient within each speech. Collocation analysis further demonstrates how emotional meanings are produced through patterned co-occurrence rather than isolated word choice, and dispersion analysis ensures that emotional lexis is evaluated in terms of its distribution across the entire text. Together, these corpus-based procedures establish a systematic description of emotional salience and lexical organization, allowing the analysis to move beyond impressionistic claims toward pattern-based evidence.

Building on this empirical foundation, emotion and appraisal theory offers an interpretive lens through which these lexical patterns are evaluated in terms of affective and moral orientation. Affect analysis distinguishes between positive and negative emotional tendencies and examines how these are sustained or regulated across the discourse. Judgment analysis focuses on how human behavior and social actors are morally evaluated, whether implicitly through shared values or explicitly through opposition and alignment. Moral evaluation further situates emotional lexis within broader ethical frameworks, revealing how emotions are mobilized to legitimize certain actions, identities, or futures. This dimension allows the study to interpret emotional language not merely as expressive content but as a structured evaluative system that guides audience alignment.

At the third level, political discourse analysis situates emotional lexis within its ideological and socio-historical context. Ideological analysis examines how emotional patterns support particular worldviews, such as reformist moral progress or national resistance. Leadership positioning explores

how speakers construct authority through emotional language, whether by aligning themselves with collective values or by asserting decisiveness during crisis. The construction of collective identity is analyzed through inclusive and exclusive linguistic choices that define who belongs, who acts, and for what purpose. This dimension ensures that emotional lexis is understood as part of broader power relations and political objectives rather than as a purely linguistic phenomenon.

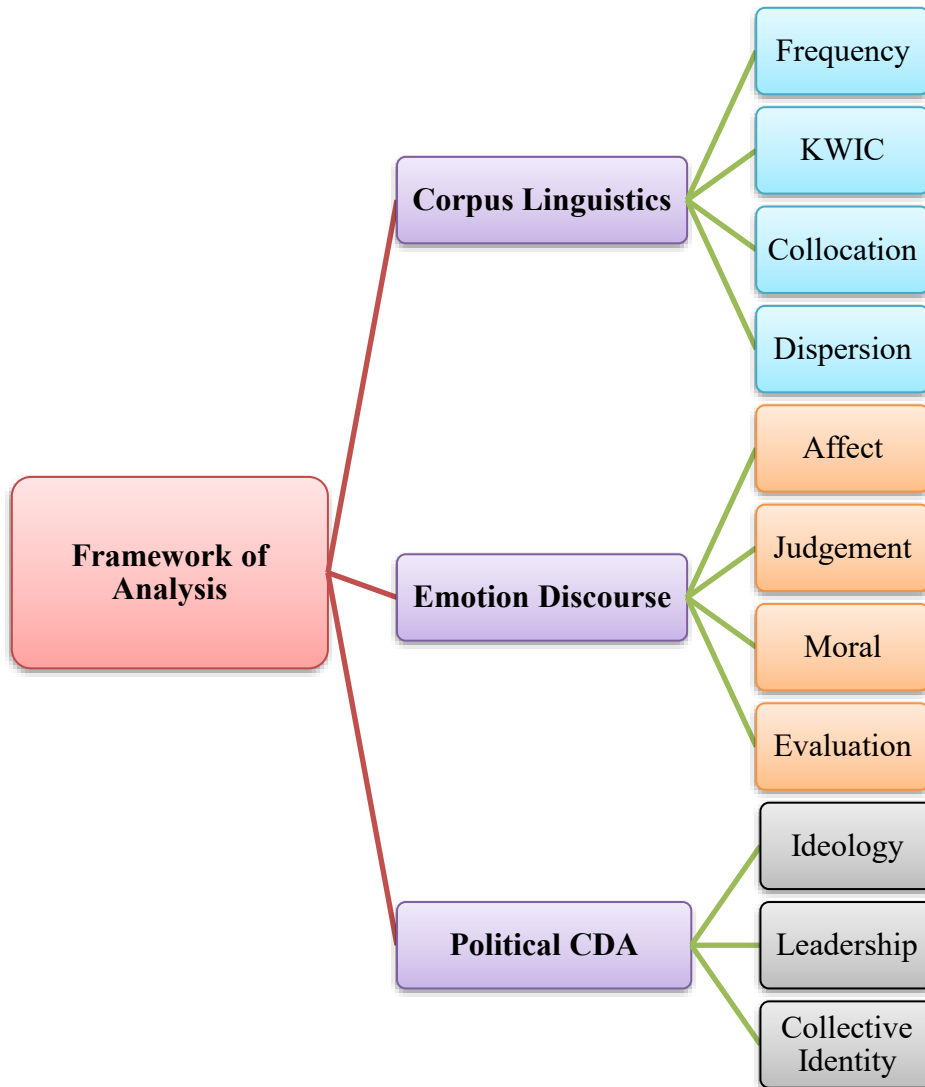


Figure 3. Framework of analysis

The integration of these three dimensions creates a triangulated analytical framework in which quantitative corpus findings guide interpretive analysis, evaluative meanings are grounded in linguistic evidence, and ideological implications are situated within historical and political contexts. In line with critical discourse traditions, this approach treats emotional lexis as a form of rhetorical action that both reflects and shapes power relations within specific socio-historical moments (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2006). By combining empirical rigor with interpretive depth, the framework enables a nuanced understanding of how emotion functions in political leadership discourse across cultural contexts.

3.5 Methodological Contribution

By combining visualization, frequency analysis, semantic tagging, and discourse interpretation, the methodology demonstrates how emotion can be empirically traced without reducing it to mere sentiment scores. This locates the study within the emerging field of corpus-assisted emotion analysis in political discourse, responding directly to calls for more methodologically transparent and theoretically informed corpus studies (Partington et al., 2013; Baker & McEnergy, 2015).

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Corpus Linguistic Analysis

4.1.1 Frequency Patterns

Frequency analysis conducted through Voyant Tools and AntConc reveals clear contrasts in the lexical concentration of emotionally salient terms across the two speeches. In *The American Dream*, Martin Luther King Jr.’s discourse displays a high frequency of lexemes associated with futurity, aspiration, and moral progress, such as *dream, freedom, justice, hope, faith, and brotherhood*. These items recur consistently across the text, indicating sustained emotional orientation rather than isolated rhetorical peaks. In contrast, Churchill’s *We Shall Fight on the Beaches* is dominated by high frequency lexical items related to resistance, endurance, and collective defense, including *fight, shall, never, enemy, defend, and victory*. The repeated modal construction *we shall* functions not merely as a grammatical choice but as a rhythmic emotional anchor, reinforcing certainty and resolve under conditions of crisis. While both speeches rely heavily on repetition, the emotional direction of that repetition differs markedly. King’s frequency patterns point toward emotional elevation and moral reassurance, whereas Churchill’s patterns emphasize emotional consolidation around persistence and refusal.

I have a Dream (MLK)	We shall fight on the beaches (Churchill)
Vocabulary Density: 0.371	Vocabulary Density: 0.388
Readability Index: 7.868 Average Words Per Sentence: 20.2 Most frequent words in the corpus: freedom (13) ring (12) let (11) dream (11) negro (10)	Readability Index: 9.005 Average Words Per Sentence: 24.7 Most frequent words in the corpus: <u>shall</u> (10); <u>island</u> (6); <u>army</u> (6); <u>enemy</u> (5); <u>pe</u> <u>ople</u> (4)

Figure 4. Comparison of Lexical Density

4.1.2 Keyword Analysis

Keyword analysis using AntConc highlights emotionally charged lexical items that are statistically salient within each speech when compared internally. In King’s speech, keywords cluster around ideals and values, including *dream, freedom, justice, dignity, and equality*. These keywords function as

adverbs, highlighting urgency and decisive action. The increased use of conjunctions and prepositions contributes to syntactic complexity and rhythm, reinforcing persistence and resolve, while adjectives and articles provide precise, descriptive reinforcement. Overall, MLK’s speech builds hope and aspirational vision through structured rhetoric, whereas Churchill’s speech generates intensity and determination through dynamic, action-oriented language.

4.1.3 Collocation Patterns

Collocational analysis further clarifies how emotional meanings are linguistically assembled. In *The American Dream*, emotionally positive nouns frequently collocate with moral and religious vocabulary. For example, *freedom* co-occurs with terms such as *faith*, *justice*, and *truth*, producing a semantic environment of ethical inevitability. Similarly, *dream* is reinforced through associations with collective nouns such as *nation* and *people*, expanding personal aspiration into shared moral purpose. In Churchill’s speech, emotionally charged verbs such as *fight* and *defend* collocate strongly with collective pronouns and modal auxiliaries. The repeated pairing of *we* with *shall* and action verbs establishes emotional strength through grammatical certainty. Collocations with negative polarity items such as *never surrender* intensify emotional defiance by linguistically excluding alternative outcomes.

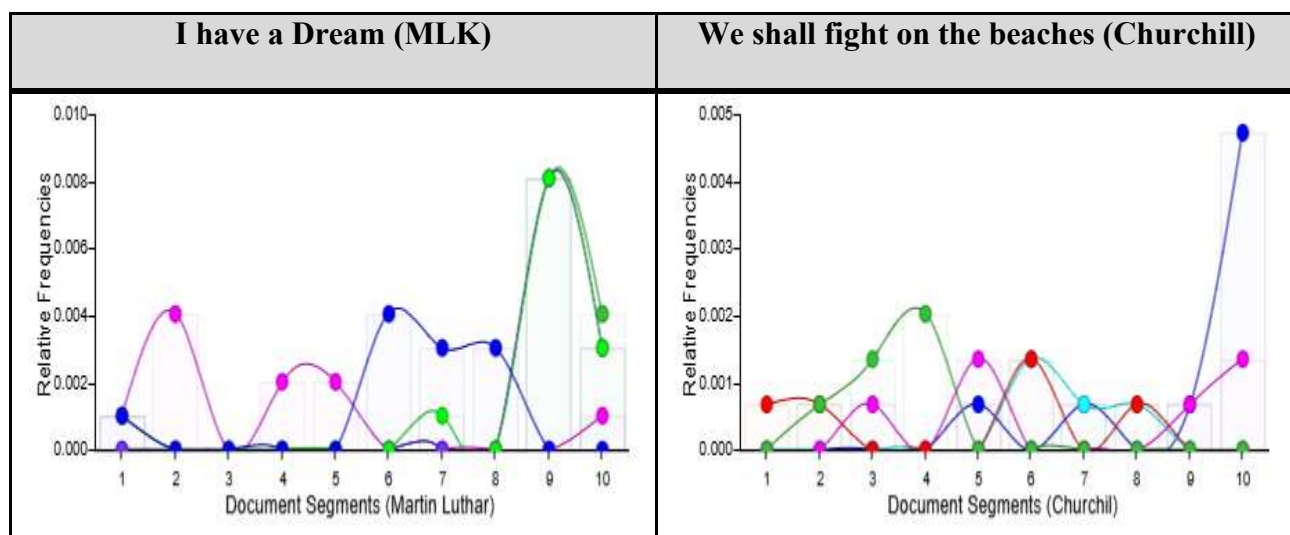


Figure 7. Terms analysis comparison

4.1.4 Dispersion

Dispersion analysis shows that emotional lexis in both speeches is evenly distributed rather than clustered in limited sections. In King’s speech, hope related vocabulary appears consistently from opening to conclusion, reinforcing emotional continuity and preventing tonal fluctuation.

Churchil.txt	nor fail. We shall go on to the end. We	shall	fight in France and on the seas and oceans;
Churchil.txt	shall defend our island whatever the cost may be; we	shall	fight on beaches, landing grounds, in fields, in streets
Churchil.txt	fight in France and on the seas and oceans; we	shall	fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the
Churchil.txt	in the last war. But his will not continue.	shall	not be content with a defensive war.

	We		We have
Churchil.txt	Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule. We	shall	not flag nor fail. We shall go on to
Churchil.txt	with growing confidence and growing strength in the air. We	shall	defend our island whatever the cost may be; we
Churchil.txt	of Nazi rule. We shall not flag nor fail. We	shall	go on to the end. We shall fight in
Churchil.txt	grounds, in fields, in streets and on the hills. We	shall	never surrender and even if, which I do not
Churchil.txt	best arrangements are made, as they are being made, we	shall	prove ourselves once again able to defend our island
Churchil.txt	down fifth column activities with the strongest hand, and we	shall	use those powers subject to the supervision and correcting

Figure 8. Most frequently used word collocation by Churchill

Churchill’s defiance related lexis similarly recurs throughout the speech, ensuring sustained emotional pressure rather than episodic motivation. This even dispersion supports the interpretation that emotion is central to the rhetorical structure of both texts rather than an ornamental feature. The frequent recurrence of the modal verb “shall” throughout Churchill’s speech drives the entire argumentative debate of the text by transforming uncertainty into determination and fear into collective resolve. Each repetition of “we shall” operates as a discursive anchor that sustains the speech’s central debate between resistance and defeat, positioning continued struggle as the only legitimate course of action. Rather than merely forecasting future events, Churchill uses “shall” to assert moral obligation, reinforcing the inevitability of fighting across all spaces—France, seas, beaches, fields, streets, and hills. This repetitive modal framing intensifies emotional appeal, strengthens logical progression, and sustains ideological cohesion, ensuring that the speech continuously reaffirms national unity, endurance, and defiance against oppression. In this way, the entire text unfolds as a persuasive debate where language itself becomes an act of resistance, and “shall” functions as the linguistic engine that keeps the argument moving forward.

Doc	Index	Position	Left	Middle	Right
0	37		as the greatest demonstration for	freedom	in the history of our
0	661		transformed into an oasis of	freedom	and justice. I have a
0	810		from every mountain side, let	freedom	ring.” And if America is
0	827		must become true. So let	freedom	ring from the prodigious hilltops
0	837		hilltops of New Hampshire. Let	freedom	ring from the mighty mountains
0	847		mountains of New York. Let	freedom	ring from the heightening
		Alleghenies			
0	856		Alleghenies of Pennsylvania. Let	freedom	ring from the snowcapped Rockies
0	865		Rockies of Colorado. Let	freedom	ring from the curvaceous slopes
0	878		But not only that. Let	freedom	ring from Stone Mountain of
0	886		Stone Mountain of Georgia. Let	freedom	ring from Lookout Mountain of
0	894		Lookout Mountain of Tennessee. Let	freedom	ring from every hill and
0	908		from every mountain side. Let	freedom	ring . . . When we allow freedom
0	913		freedom rings . . . When we allow	freedom	to ring—when we let

Figure 9. Most frequently used word collocation by MLK

Data shown in figure 9 explicates the repeated collocation of the word “**freedom**” in Martin Luther King Jr.’s “*I Have a Dream*” speech structures the entire text as an expanding moral and geographic debate about equality and justice. The phrase “**let freedom ring**”, occurring across multiple positional and spatial references, functions as a rhythmic and ideological refrain that transforms freedom from an abstract ideal into a lived, nationwide reality. By systematically attaching *freedom* to mountains, hilltops, and states across America, King symbolically maps justice onto the national landscape, emphasizing inclusivity and collective responsibility. This repetition not only amplifies emotional appeal but also sustains argumentative momentum, reinforcing the claim that freedom must resonate universally rather than remain confined to selective regions or groups. Thus, the collocational pattern of *freedom* operates as the rhetorical engine of the speech, advancing its central debate between unfulfilled promises and the urgent demand for social transformation.

4.2. Emotion and Appraisal Analysis

4.2.1 Affect

From an appraisal perspective, King’s speech is dominated by positive affect. Lexical choices evoke confidence, reassurance, and moral optimism. Emotional expression is forward looking, framing struggle as temporary and justice as ultimately attainable. Even references to hardship are mitigated by emotionally stabilizing language that redirects attention toward hope. Churchill’s affective orientation is markedly different. Negative affect related to threat and danger is acknowledged, but it is immediately counterbalanced by emotionally charged expressions of resolve. Fear is not amplified but contained and redirected into determination. The emotional tone is thus controlled rather than expressive.

4.2.2 Judgment

Judgment, understood as moral evaluation of human behavior, functions differently across the two texts. King’s discourse evaluates injustice implicitly rather than through direct condemnation. Moral authority is established by positioning equality and freedom as self-evident ethical standards, thereby encouraging listeners to align emotionally with justice rather than against specific opponents. Churchill’s judgment is more explicit and oppositional. The enemy is morally positioned as a force that must be resisted without compromise. Emotional judgment here is binary, dividing actors into those who resist and those who surrender.

4.2.3 Moral Evaluation

Moral evaluation in King’s speech is grounded in universal ethical principles. Emotion arises from alignment with shared values rather than antagonism. In contrast, Churchill’s moral evaluation is situational and urgent, rooted in survival and national duty. The emotional appeal derives from obligation rather than aspiration.

4.3. Political Discourse Analysis

4.3.1 Ideology

Ideologically, King’s speech reflects a reformist democratic tradition that frames social change as morally inevitable and collectively achievable. Emotional language supports this ideology by emphasizing unity, patience, and ethical perseverance. Churchill’s ideology is grounded in national

defense and sovereignty. Emotional lexis reinforces an ideology of resistance, framing endurance as a moral necessity. The emotional narrative allows no ambiguity regarding the legitimacy of struggle.

4.3.2 Leadership Positioning

Leadership positioning differs significantly across the speeches. King presents himself as a moral guide rather than a commander. Emotional authority emerges from shared belief rather than command. The leader is linguistically aligned with the people through inclusive pronouns and shared emotional vision. Churchill positions himself as a voice of national resolve. Emotional authority is constructed through certainty and decisiveness. The leader speaks not alongside the people but on behalf of collective survival.

4.3.3 Collective Identity

Collective identity in King’s speech is inclusive and future oriented. Emotional lexis constructs a collective defined by shared ideals rather than immediate circumstances. Identity is inspirational. In Churchill’s speech, collective identity is defensive and situational. The collective is defined by resistance against an external threat. Emotional language binds listeners through shared danger and shared resolve.

5. Findings and Discussions

Table 2. High-Frequency Emotional Lexis in Both Speeches

Emotional Orientation	MLK: <i>The American Dream</i>	Churchill: <i>We Shall Fight on the Beaches</i>
Dominant Emotion	Hope / Moral Aspiration	Defiance / Resistance
Frequent Nouns	dream, freedom, justice, dignity	fight, enemy, war, victory, surrender
Frequent Verbs	believe, achieve, rise, unite	fight, defend, resist, stand
Modal Usage	will (future-oriented)	shall (certainty-oriented)
Polarity	Predominantly positive	Controlled negative with resolution

The frequency profiles generated through Voyant Tools and AntConc demonstrate a clear emotional bifurcation between the two speeches. King’s lexical choices consistently foreground abstract moral values, which function as emotional stabilizers across the speech. The repetition of *dream* and *freedom* maintains a sustained affective orientation toward hope and ethical progress. In contrast, Churchill’s speech relies on high-frequency action verbs and militarized nouns, anchoring emotional appeal in immediate resistance. The repeated use of *shall* reinforces emotional certainty and eliminates interpretive ambiguity.

Table 3. Keyword Salience and Emotional Focus

Speech	Emotionally Salient Keywords	Functional Role
MLK	dream, freedom, justice, equality	Moral imagination and future projection
Churchill	fight, never, surrender, enemy	Emotional consolidation and resistance

Keyword analysis indicates that emotional meaning is not distributed evenly across lexical categories. In King’s speech, keywords operate as ideological abstractions that encourage listeners to imagine a morally transformed future. Emotional engagement is achieved through ethical alignment rather than confrontation. Churchill’s keywords, however, are concrete and adversarial, emotionally grounding the audience in a shared moment of crisis. The emotional force arises from collective refusal rather than moral persuasion.

Table 4. Collocation Patterns of Key Emotional Lexemes

Node Word	Typical Collocates (MLK)	Typical Collocates (Churchill)
freedom	justice, faith, dignity, truth	defend, fight, never
we	believe, can, will	shall, fight, defend
future / victory	hope, dream	survival, resistance

Collocation analysis reveals how emotion is linguistically constructed through association rather than isolated lexical items. In King’s speech, *freedom* acquires emotional positivity through its alignment with moral and religious vocabulary, reinforcing ethical inevitability. Churchill’s collocational patterns foreground grammatical certainty and collective action. The repeated pairing of *we* with *shall* create a syntactic rhythm that sustains emotional defiance throughout the speech.

Table 5. Dispersion of Emotional Lexis

Feature	MLK Speech	Churchill Speech
Emotional consistency	Evenly dispersed	Evenly dispersed
Emotional peaks	Gradual build-up	Sustained intensity
Tonal variation	Low	Low

Dispersion analysis confirms that emotional lexis in both speeches is structurally central rather than rhetorically episodic. King’s emotional vocabulary is evenly distributed, maintaining continuity of hope. Churchill’s emotional language remains consistently intense, preventing emotional decline. This indicates deliberate rhetorical design rather than spontaneous emotional expression.

4.2 Emotion and Appraisal Analysis

Table 6. Appraisal Categories in Both Speeches

Appraisal Dimension	MLK	Churchill
Affect	Optimism, reassurance	Controlled fear, determination
Judgment	Implicit moral evaluation	Explicit oppositional judgment
Appreciation	Moral progress, dignity	Endurance, survival

Within the appraisal framework, King’s speech prioritizes positive affect and implicit moral judgment. Emotional alignment is achieved by presenting justice as self-evident rather than contested. Churchill’s speech, however, adopts explicit judgment, dividing moral space into resistance and surrender. Emotional appeal is therefore directive rather than reflective.

Table 7. Moral Evaluation Strategies

Dimension	MLK	Churchill
Ethical framing	Universal moral principles	Situational national duty
Emotional trigger	Hope and faith	Obligation and resolve
Moral authority	Shared values	Leadership certainty

Moral evaluation in King’s speech derives from ethical universality, allowing listeners to emotionally internalize the cause without coercion. Churchill’s moral evaluation is context bound and urgent, emphasizing duty and survival. Emotion is mobilized through necessity rather than aspiration.

4.3 Political Discourse Analysis

Table 8. Ideological Positioning

Feature	MLK	Churchill
Ideological orientation	Reformist democracy	National defense
Emotional support	Moral optimism	Determined resistance
Temporal focus	Future oriented	Present crisis

King’s ideology frames social change as morally inevitable, with emotional lexis reinforcing patience and unity. Churchill’s ideology constructs resistance as unavoidable, emotionally legitimizing sacrifice and endurance. These ideological positions directly shape emotional expression.

Table 9. Leadership Positioning

Aspect	MLK	Churchill
Leadership role	Moral guide	National commander
Emotional authority	Shared belief	Decisive certainty
Speaker–audience relation	Inclusive alignment	Representative command

Leadership positioning differs fundamentally. King’s emotional authority emerges through shared moral vision and linguistic alignment with the audience. Churchill’s authority is asserted through certainty and command, with emotional language reinforcing leadership resolve rather than consensus.

Table 10. Construction of Collective Identity

Dimension	MLK	Churchill
Identity type	Aspirational and inclusive	Defensive and situational
Emotional bond	Shared ideals	Shared threat
Temporal scope	Long-term future	Immediate survival

Collective identity in King's speech is defined by moral aspiration and inclusivity. Emotion binds the collective through shared ethical vision. In Churchill's speech, identity is forged through immediate danger, with emotional unity arising from shared resistance.

The tabulated corpus evidence confirms that hope and defiance are not rhetorical labels but structured emotional systems realized through patterned lexical choices, grammatical repetition, and evaluative framing. King's emotional architecture is expansive and future oriented, while Churchill's is compressed and crisis driven. These differences are consistent across corpus linguistic measures, appraisal categories, and political discourse dimensions, reinforcing the validity of the analytical framework.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to investigate how emotional lexis functions in two iconic political speeches—Martin Luther King's *The American Dream* and Winston Churchill's *We Shall Fight on the Beaches*—in order to understand the distinct emotional strategies employed in British and American political leadership discourse. The central rationale was to move beyond subjective interpretation by treating emotion as a measurable linguistic phenomenon that emerges through patterned lexical choices, collocational tendencies, and evaluative structures detectable using corpus-assisted tools. The corpus linguistic analysis revealed clear and systematic differences in how emotional language is constructed in the two speeches. In *The American Dream*, emotionally positive nouns and verbs such as *dream*, *freedom*, and *believe* were among the most frequent and salient lexical items, indicating a sustained orientation toward hope and moral aspiration. These terms were evenly dispersed throughout the speech, reflecting consistency in emotional positioning rather than localized rhetorical peaks. In Churchill's speech, the most salient lexical items—*fight*, *never*, and *enemy*—clustered around resistance and defiance, with *shall* functioning as a modal marker of certainty that sustains emotional intensity across the text. These patterns align with contemporary corpus pragmatics research showing that emotions in political discourse are distributed through patterned lexical choices rather than isolated emotive phrases, and that combining multiple analytic tools can effectively characterize such patterns (Gómez-Adorno et al., 2023).

The appraisal-centered analysis demonstrated that *The American Dream* is dominated by positive affect and implicit moral evaluation. King's speech constructs morality as a shared ethical horizon, which invites emotional alignment without direct confrontation. Churchill's emotional orientation included controlled negative affect that was immediately reframed as collective determination; through explicit oppositional judgment, the speech positioned emotional defiance as morally necessary during crisis. This dual appraisal dynamic is consistent with broader findings in emotion-centered political discourse studies that emphasize how politicians strategically foreground specific emotions, such as hope or fear, to shape audience engagement and ideological positioning (Rukhsora, 2025). From the perspective of political discourse analysis, the two speeches reflect different ideological commitments. King's rhetoric aligns with a reformist democratic ideology that conceptualizes change as ethically inevitable and shared. Emotional lexis reinforces unity, moral aspiration, and future oriented hope. Churchill's speech reflects a wartime ideology in which collective identity is anchored in shared threat, survival, and resistance. Emotional language in this context is oriented toward immediate mobilization rather than aspirational projection. Such ideological differences are corroborated by recent work in political corpus studies, which finds that emotional strategies in political texts vary according to contextual imperatives and national rhetorical traditions (e.g., comparative studies of sentiment in parliamentary debate during times of conflict).

Overall, this study has demonstrated that emotional lexis can be systematically analyzed within political speeches using the combined strengths of Voyant Tools, AntConc, and Text Inspector. Each tool contributed distinct insights—Voyant Tools in generating broad lexical landscapes, AntConc in identifying salient keywords and collocations, and Text Inspector in contextual semantic tagging. This multi-tool framework not only enhanced analytical reliability but also aligns with current methodological discussions in corpus pragmatics that advocate for complementary analytic tools to capture the multifaceted nature of emotion in political discourse (Gómez-Adorno et al., 2023). Beyond theoretical contributions, the findings of this study have practical implications for teaching and research in stylistics, rhetoric, and political communication. Recognizing the patterned nature of emotional language can equip analysts and students with a more nuanced understanding of how rhetorical strategies are constructed and how they function across cultural and historical contexts. Moreover, by presenting a replicable analytical framework, the study offers a model for future comparative research on emotional lexis in political texts that extends beyond traditional qualitative interpretation.

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