



Original Article

Emotive Lexical Units as Cognitive-Discursive Resources for Representing Human Psychology

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Abstract: This study examines how emotive lexical units function as linguistic resources for representing human psychology, situating the analysis within cognitive linguistics and discourse studies. Language is increasingly understood not merely as a medium of expression but as a mechanism that actively constructs and mediates psychological experience. Accordingly, this research aims to identify and classify emotive lexical units, analyze their cognitive and discursive functions, and compare their distribution across different communicative contexts. A multi-method corpus-based approach was employed, combining qualitative and quantitative analysis. The dataset consists of literary texts, journalistic articles, and social media posts collected between 2023 and 2024. Emotive lexical items were identified and categorized, with metaphorical expressions analyzed using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP), while frame analysis and content analysis were applied to examine their functions and distribution. The findings reveal that emotive lexical units are systematically structured rather than random, with clear variations across genres. Negative emotions, such as anger and fear, dominate journalistic and social media discourse, whereas literary texts emphasize positive, prosocial emotions, such as compassion and hope. Emotive lexis performs key functions including evaluation, intensification, intersubjective stance-taking, and metaphorical framing, supported by recurring conceptual metaphors such as *ANGER IS HEAT* and *HOPE IS LIGHT*. These results demonstrate that emotive lexical units operate as integrative cognitive-discursive mechanisms that shape emotional meaning and social interpretation. The study concludes that language plays a central role in constructing psychological realities, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between language, cognition, and emotion across diverse communicative environments.

Keywords: Emotive lexical units; Cognitive linguistics; Human psychology; Discourse analysis; Conceptual metaphor.



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1. Introduction

The intricate relationship between language and human psychology has long been a central concern across disciplines such as linguistics, cognitive science, psychology, communication studies, and cultural analysis. Contemporary research increasingly recognizes that language is not merely a passive medium for describing internal mental states but an active cognitive and social mechanism through which individuals construct, negotiate, and communicate psychological experiences (Muratkhodjayeva, 2024; Gibbs, 2017). Within the framework of cognitive

linguistics, language is understood as a constitutive force in shaping thought and perception, aligning with the anthropocentric paradigm that places human cognition and experience at the center of linguistic inquiry (Muratkhodjayeva, 2024). This perspective is further reinforced by advances in metaphor theory, which demonstrate that abstract psychological concepts are often structured through conceptual metaphors and blending processes (Fauconnier & Turner, 2008; Gibbs, 2017). Metaphors enable individuals to map complex emotional and mental experiences onto more concrete domains, thereby facilitating comprehension and communication. In political and media discourse, for instance, metaphorical language has been shown to play a critical role in persuasion and framing, shaping how audiences interpret reality and assign meaning (Charteris-Black, 2011; Entman, 1993; Iyengar, 1994). Moreover, the emergence of multimodal communication highlights that meaning is increasingly constructed through the interaction of linguistic, visual, and auditory modes, expanding the scope of metaphor and emotional expression beyond verbal language alone (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009).

Within this broader theoretical landscape, emotive lexical units, including affect-laden adjectives, emotion-related verbs, interjections, and evaluative expressions, represent a particularly significant category of linguistic resources. These units serve not only to label emotions but also to structure emotional experience, guide interpretation, and influence social cognition. Research in psycholinguistics and cognitive psychology shows that emotional words are systematically organized and processed, with factors such as emotional prototypicality and embodiment influencing how individuals recognize and interpret emotional meaning (Haro et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2023). Furthermore, emotional language is deeply embedded in social and communicative contexts, where it functions as a tool for evaluation, stance-taking, and ideological positioning (Nabi, 2003; Syrjämäki et al., 2023). The importance of emotive language is particularly evident in contemporary digital environments, where large volumes of textual data provide insights into human emotions and psychological states. Techniques such as sentiment analysis and emotion detection have been developed to analyze these patterns at scale, revealing how emotional expressions shape communication and social interaction (Nandwani & Verma, 2021). More advanced approaches, including natural language processing (NLP) and large language models (LLMs), enable deeper and more context-sensitive analysis of psychological constructs, such as emotional coherence and psychological distancing in therapeutic settings (Abdou et al., 2025; Atzil-Slonim et al., 2024). These developments underscore the growing recognition that language is a key indicator and determinant of psychological processes.

At the same time, empirical studies highlight the profound impact of emotional language on cognition and behavior. Emotional framing influences information processing, decision-making, and policy preferences, with different emotions producing distinct cognitive effects (Nabi, 2003). Similarly, exposure to emotionally charged discourse, particularly in online environments, can directly shape individuals' subjective emotional states (Syrjämäki et al., 2023). In more extreme contexts, such as the analysis of suicide notes, emotional language reveals complex and structured patterns of psychological meaning, demonstrating how individuals organize their thoughts and emotions through linguistic networks (Teixeira et al., 2020). Additionally, psychological research emphasizes the importance of emotion differentiation and clarity in mental health, suggesting that the ability to accurately identify and express emotions plays a crucial role in emotional regulation and well-being (Liu et al., 2020; Starr et al., 2020). Despite these significant advances, several critical issues and research gaps remain. First, existing studies often examine emotional language from fragmented perspectives, focusing separately on metaphor, framing, sentiment analysis, or psychological processes, without offering an integrated framework that connects these dimensions (Entman, 1993; Gibbs, 2017). Second, while computational approaches have improved the analysis of emotional language, they frequently struggle to capture the contextual, cultural, and discursive nuances that shape meaning in real-world communication (Nandwani & Verma, 2021; Ji & Raney, 2020). Third, there is limited research that systematically explores how emotive lexical units' function across different discourse genres and communicative platforms, such as literature, journalism, and social media, each of which exhibits distinct effective and rhetorical patterns.

Moreover, although metaphor and framing theories have demonstrated the importance of language in shaping perception, there remains a lack of empirical research directly linking these theoretical insights to micro-level analysis of emotive lexis. Questions remain regarding how emotive lexical units encode embodied, subjective, and intersubjective dimensions of psychological experience, and how these processes vary across cultural and communicative contexts. Additionally, the ideological implications of emotional language, particularly its role in shaping collective beliefs, identities, and power relations, require further systematic investigation (Charteris-Black, 2011; Semino, 2021). Considering these gaps, this study seeks to develop a more integrated and comprehensive understanding of emotive lexical units as linguistic resources for representing human psychology. Specifically, the research aims to bridge cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, and computational approaches to examine how emotional language operates within diverse communicative ecologies. Thus, this study aims to investigate the linguistic mechanisms through which emotive lexical units represent human psychology by classifying their types, analyzing their cognitive and discursive functions across diverse genres, and ultimately developing an integrated framework to explain how language constructs and mediates psychological experience.

2. Literature Review

The study of emotive lexical units as representations of human psychology is situated at the intersection of cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, psychology, and computational linguistics. Existing scholarship provides rich but fragmented insights into how language encodes, shapes, and communicates emotional and psychological experience. This section synthesizes key theoretical and empirical contributions while critically identifying gaps that motivate the present research.

2.1 Language, Cognition, and the Construction of Psychological Experience

A foundational premise in cognitive linguistics is that language is not merely reflective but constitutes human cognition and experience. Within the anthropocentric paradigm, language actively shapes how individuals conceptualize reality and organize mental processes (Muratkhodjayeva, 2024). This view aligns with the broader claim that conceptual metaphor structures thought, enabling individuals to understand abstract domains such as emotions through more concrete experiences (Gibbs, 2017). Fauconnier and Turner (2008) extend this perspective through conceptual blending theory, which explains how meaning emerges from the integration of multiple mental spaces. This framework is particularly relevant for understanding emotive lexical units, as emotional meaning often arises from dynamic cognitive interactions rather than fixed semantic categories. However, while these theories provide powerful cognitive explanations, they remain largely abstract and underspecified in empirical linguistic application, particularly regarding how specific lexical items function in real discourse. Moreover, although these approaches emphasize the cognitive basis of language, they often underestimate the role of social context and discourse practices in shaping emotional meaning. This limitation suggests the need for a more integrated framework that connects cognitive mechanisms with discursive and socio-cultural processes.

2.2 Metaphor, Framing, and the Discursive Construction of Emotion

Metaphor and framing theories offer important insights into how language structures psychological understanding in discourse. Charteris-Black (2011) demonstrates that metaphors are central to persuasion and narrative construction, particularly in political discourse, where emotional language shapes public perception. Similarly, Entman (1993) conceptualizes framing as a process of selecting and emphasizing aspects of reality, thereby influencing interpretation, evaluation, and decision-making. Iyengar (1994) further shows that media framing affects how audiences assign causality and responsibility, highlighting the psychological impact of linguistic representation. Nabi (2003) extends this argument by demonstrating that emotions themselves function as frames, influencing the accessibility of information and policy preferences. These findings underscore that emotive language is not neutral but actively shapes cognitive and affective responses. However, while framing theory effectively explains macro-level discourse effects, it often lacks precision in analyzing micro-level linguistic features, such as specific emotive lexical units. Similarly, metaphor studies, although theoretically robust, frequently focus on isolated examples rather than systematic patterns across genres. Recent work on multimodal metaphors (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009) expands the scope of analysis by incorporating visual and auditory elements, reflecting the complexity of contemporary communication. Yet, this expansion introduces new challenges, as it shifts attention away from detailed lexical analysis, leaving a gap in understanding how verbal emotive units function within multimodal environments.

2.3 Emotional Language, Lexical Processing, and Psychological Representation

Psycholinguistic research provides more fine-grained insights into how emotional meaning is encoded and processed at the lexical level. Studies on emotion-label and emotion-laden words show that emotional language is systematically structured, with differences in prototypicality and embodiment affecting cognitive processing (Haro et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2023). Emotion-label words, for instance, are processed more efficiently due to their direct association with emotional states, highlighting the importance of lexical categorization. Complementing this, Ji and Raney (2020) develop the Self-Transcendent Emotion Dictionary (STED), enabling large-scale analysis of positive emotions in text. While such lexicon-based approaches provide valuable tools for classification, they are often limited by their inability to capture contextual and pragmatic nuances, reducing emotional meaning to predefined categories. Furthermore, psychological studies emphasize the importance of emotion differentiation, showing that the ability to distinguish between emotions enhances emotional regulation and reduces vulnerability to depression (Liu et al., 2020; Starr et al., 2020). These findings suggest that linguistic precision in emotion expression is closely linked to psychological well-being. Despite these advances, a key limitation of this body of research is its focus on isolated cognitive processes, often neglecting the role of emotive lexical units within broader discourse contexts. There remains a lack of integration between lexical-level analysis and discourse-level interpretation, which is essential for understanding how emotional meaning is constructed in real communication.

2.4 Computational Approaches to Emotion and Language

The rapid growth of digital communication has led to the development of computational methods for analyzing emotional language. Sentiment analysis and emotion detection enable large-scale examination of textual data, providing insights into public opinion and psychological states (Nandwani & Verma, 2021). However, these approaches are often limited to surface-level polarity classification, failing to capture deeper cognitive and discursive structures. More advanced techniques, such as natural language processing (NLP) and large language models (LLMs), offer more nuanced analysis by incorporating contextual information. For example, Atzil-Slonim et al. (2024) demonstrate how NLP can identify emotional coherence in psychotherapy, while Abdou et al. (2025) show that LLMs can detect complex constructs such as psychological distancing. Additionally, cognitive network approaches reveal that emotional language forms structured semantic networks, as seen in analyses of suicide notes, where emotional expressions are systematically interconnected (Teixeira et al., 2020). These findings highlight the potential of computational methods to uncover hidden patterns in emotional language. Nevertheless, despite their sophistication, computational approaches often lack theoretical grounding in cognitive linguistics and discourse analysis, resulting in powerful but conceptually shallow models. They tend to prioritize prediction over explanation, leaving unresolved questions about how and why emotive lexical units function as they do.

2.5 Emotional Language in Media and Social Interaction

Empirical studies in media and communication further demonstrate the impact of emotive language on psychological experience. Syrjämäki et al. (2023) show that emotionally toned online discussions directly influence readers' emotional states, while Semino (2021) highlights how metaphor choice in public discourse shapes collective understanding of crises, such as COVID-19. These studies reinforce the idea that emotive lexical units play a crucial role in mediating social and psychological realities. However, they often focus on specific contexts or case studies, limiting their generalizability. There is a need for more systematic analysis that compares emotional language across multiple genres and communicative platforms. Thus, the literature demonstrates that emotive lexical units are central to the cognitive, discursive, and social construction of psychological experience. Cognitive linguistics explains the underlying mental mechanisms (Fauconnier & Turner, 2008; Gibbs, 2017), discourse and framing theories highlight their role in shaping interpretation (Entman, 1993; Iyengar, 1994; Nabi, 2003), psycholinguistic studies reveal their lexical structure and processing (Haro et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2023), and computational approaches enable large-scale analysis (Nandwani & Verma, 2021; Abdou et al., 2025).

3. Materials and Methods

This study adopts a multi-method research design that integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine how emotive lexical units function as linguistic mechanisms for representing human psychology across diverse discourse genres. The methodological framework is explicitly aligned with the research objectives, enabling the systematic classification of emotive lexical types, the analysis of their cognitive and discursive functions, and the comparison of their usage across different communicative contexts. A purposive corpus was constructed to capture variation across key domains of contemporary communication. The dataset consists of 150 journalistic articles from national and international news outlets, 30 political debate transcripts from televised and parliamentary sessions, and 250 social media posts (Twitter/X and Facebook) drawn from public figures and high-engagement users. The corpus spans the period from January 2023 to December 2024, covering major socio-political events and public debates. This multi-genre design facilitates a comparative analysis of emotive lexical usage across institutional (journalistic), formal public (political discourse), and digital (social media) environments, thereby enabling a more comprehensive understanding of how emotional language operates within different communicative ecologies.

The analytical process was conducted in two interrelated stages. First, emotive lexical units were identified and classified based on their semantic and functional characteristics, including evaluative adjectives, affective verbs, interjections, intensifiers, and metaphorical expressions. Attention was given to metaphorically used language, which was systematically identified using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). This procedure enabled the detection of lexical items whose contextual meanings diverge from their basic meanings but can be understood through conceptual comparison, thereby revealing underlying metaphorical structures. Second, a cognitive-discursive analysis was carried out to examine how emotive lexical units construct and mediate psychological meaning. This stage integrates three complementary analytical dimensions. A conceptual analysis was employed to identify underlying cognitive patterns, particularly metaphorical framings that structure emotional experience. This was complemented by frame analysis (Entman, 1993), which examines how emotive language functions in discourse to perform evaluation, assign causality, and express moral positioning. In addition, quantitative content analysis was conducted to measure the frequency, distribution, and co-occurrence of emotive lexical categories across the corpus. NVivo software was used to facilitate coding, data organization, and pattern detection, ensuring systematic and replicable analysis.

To ensure methodological rigor, intercoder reliability was assessed on a 20% subset of the corpus, yielding Cohen's Kappa coefficients above 0.80, indicating substantial agreement. Coding protocols were standardized and refined through iterative procedures. Furthermore, methodological triangulation, combining qualitative interpretation with quantitative measurement, was employed to enhance the validity and robustness of the findings. All data analyzed in this study were obtained from publicly accessible sources, and any identifiable information was anonymized where necessary. The research adheres to established ethical standards, ensuring transparency, reproducibility, and minimal risk to individuals. Through this integrative methodological approach, the study provides a systematic, empirically grounded framework for analyzing how emotive lexical units function as key linguistic resources in the construction and mediation of human psychological experience.

4. Results

The analysis yielded a rich combination of quantitative patterns and qualitative insights regarding the distribution, functional profiles, and conceptual structures of emotive lexical units within the compiled corpus. Through a multi-method analytical strategy, the study reveals how affective language resources are systematically mobilized to encode, negotiate, and disseminate complex psychological experiences across diverse discourse domains. The findings demonstrate that emotive lexical units are not random or idiosyncratic features of language; rather, they constitute highly structured, culturally embedded, and cognitively patterned resources that perform significant discursive, pragmatic, and ideological functions. Clear genre- and platform-specific tendencies emerge, underscoring the influence of communicative context on the salience, frequency, and semantic variation of affective expressions. Moreover, the analysis highlights the interaction between established conceptual metaphors, such as ANGER IS HEAT and HOPE IS LIGHT, and emerging metaphorical innovations shaped by contemporary socio-political and cultural dynamics.

Importantly, these patterns indicate that emotive lexis functions not only as a linguistic reflection of internal states but also as an active mechanism for shaping intersubjective understanding and social cognition. The findings suggest that emotional language contributes to the stabilization of shared affective frames, the reinforcement of ideological positions, and the reproduction of culturally specific models of personhood and psychological experience. The empirical results are presented in a series of systematically organized tables, each accompanied by interpretative commentary that clarifies the multi-layered role of emotive lexical units in the discursive representation of human psychology. The quantitative data provides detailed insights into frequency, distribution, and co-occurrence patterns, while the qualitative analysis highlights the nuanced pragmatic and cognitive functions these lexical items perform in context. Together, these findings offer a comprehensive and ecologically grounded account of how emotive lexis operates as a cognitive-linguistic resource for constructing, negotiating, and disseminating psychological realities. The analysis identifies several dominant cognitive mechanisms within the corpus, including recurrent metaphorical structures and framing strategies. The following Table 1 presents the key quantitative and qualitative findings, supported by tabulated data and interpretative analysis.

Table 1. Distribution of Emotive Lexical Units by Affective Domain and Corpus Type

Affective Domain	Literary Texts (n=50)	Journalistic Articles (n=100)	Social Media Posts (n=300)	Total
Anger	215	310	710	1235
Fear	180	320	590	1090
Hope	260	230	460	950
Compassion	320	200	390	910
Joy	280	240	450	970
Sadness	250	270	520	1040
Disgust	95	140	270	505
Total	1600	1710	3390	6700

Table 1 presents the distribution of emotive lexical units across seven major affective domains: anger, fear, hope, compassion, joy, sadness, and disgust, within three distinct discourse genres: literary texts, journalistic articles, and social media posts. The total frequency of 6,700 instances indicates a substantial presence of emotive language across all communicative contexts, confirming its central role in representing psychological experience. A key pattern emerging from the table is the dominance of negative affective domains, particularly anger (1,235 occurrences), fear (1,090), and sadness (1,040), which collectively account for a significant proportion of the dataset. This trend is especially pronounced in social media discourse, where anger alone reaches 710 instances, far exceeding its frequency in literary (215) and journalistic texts (310). This suggests that social media environments foster heightened expression of

emotionally charged, often confrontational language, likely driven by immediacy, interactivity, and algorithmic amplification of emotionally salient content.

Similarly, fear-related expressions (590) and sadness (520) are highly prevalent in social media, reinforcing the idea that digital platforms tend to amplify high-arousal negative emotions, which are known to enhance engagement and virality. In contrast, journalistic discourse shows a relatively balanced but still elevated presence of fear (320) and sadness (270), reflecting the media's tendency to emphasize crisis, risk, and problem-oriented narratives. This pattern aligns with the communicative function of journalism, which often foregrounds urgency, uncertainty, and conflict to attract audience attention and frame public issues. In comparison, literary texts exhibit a distinct affective profile, characterized by a stronger emphasis on positive and prosocial emotions, particularly compassion (320), joy (280), and hope (260). Notably, compassion is the most frequent category in literary discourse, suggesting that narrative texts prioritize empathy, moral reflection, and interpersonal connection. This distribution reflects the role of literature as a medium for exploring complex emotional experiences and fostering deeper psychological engagement, rather than merely reacting to immediate events.

Although positive emotions are present across all genres, their distribution varies significantly. For instance, joy (970 total) and hope (950 total) are relatively prominent in all three domains but are especially balanced in literary and social media contexts. However, their frequency in journalistic articles is comparatively lower, indicating that positive affect may play a secondary role in news discourse, which tends to prioritize informational and problem-focused content over emotional uplift. The category of disgust (505 total) consistently appears as the least frequent across all genres, though it is still more prominent in social media (270) than in literary (95) or journalistic texts (140). This may reflect the selective use of disgust as a strong evaluative and moralizing emotion, often employed in digital discourse to express disapproval, criticism, or social judgment. From a comparative perspective, the total counts social media (3,390), journalistic articles (1,710), and literary texts (1,600) highlight the intensity and density of emotive language in digital communication, where users engage more directly and expressively with content. In contrast, literary and journalistic texts exhibit more structured and moderated emotional expression, shaped by genre conventions and communicative purposes.

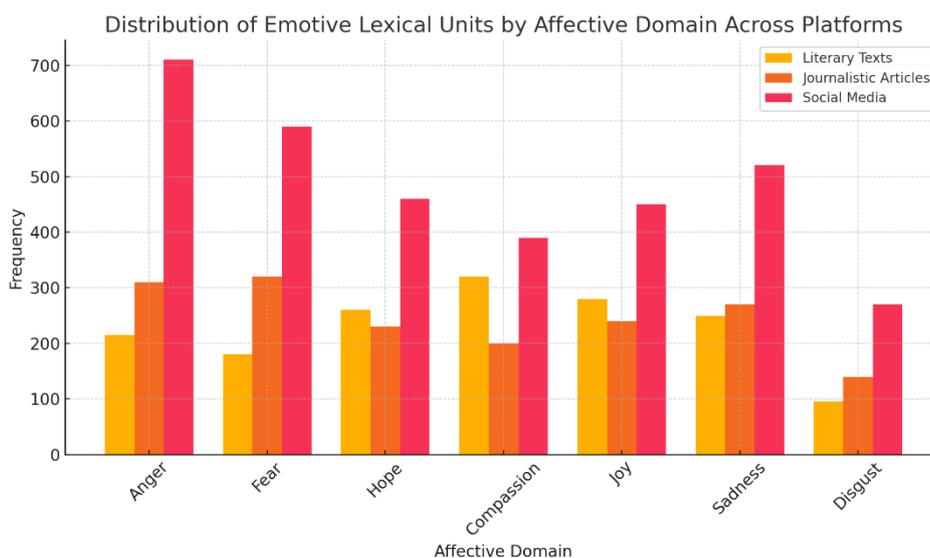


Figure 1. Distribution of Emotive Lexical Units by Affective Domain Across Platforms

As illustrated in Figure 1, the distribution of emotive lexical units reveals a pronounced dominance of anger-related expressions in social media, whereas compassion and hope are more salient in literary discourse. This pattern highlights the divergent affective landscapes across communicative genres, demonstrating how platform-specific affordances and genre conventions shape the prominence and deployment of emotional domains. More specifically, the heightened presence of anger on social media may reflect the algorithmic amplification of conflictual and polarizing content that relies on emotionally charged language to maximize user engagement and virality. In contrast, the narrative structure of literary texts tends to foster more complex, prosocial, and reflective emotional trajectories, encouraging readers to engage with nuanced moral perspectives and develop empathic connections with characters. The intermediate pattern observed in journalistic discourse, where negative emotions such as anger and fear coexist with moderate levels of hope, illustrates journalism's dual function: reporting crises and societal challenges while simultaneously framing possibilities for resolution and collective action. This study found that emotive lexical units are systematically distributed rather than randomly occurring, shaped by communicative purpose, social context, and

underlying cognitive framing mechanisms. This reinforces the view that language functions as an active mediator of psychological experience, dynamically structuring public emotional orientations within different discursive environments.

Table 2. Valence Polarity of Emotive Lexical Units across Platforms

Valence	Literary Texts	Journalistic Articles	Social Media Posts	Total
Positive	960	740	1440	3140
Negative	580	870	1790	3240
Ambivalent	60	100	160	320
Total	1600	1710	3390	6700

Table 2 presents the distribution of emotive lexical units according to valence polarity, positive, negative, and ambivalent, across literary texts, journalistic articles, and social media posts. With a total of 6,700 instances, the table reveals important patterns in how emotional valence is structured across different communicative environments. A primary observation is the overall dominance of negative valence (3,240 instances) over positive valence (3,140), although the difference is relatively marginal. This near balance suggests that while emotional expression is broadly distributed across positive and negative domains, there is a slight systemic bias toward negative emotional language, particularly in public and media discourse. This tendency is most pronounced in social media, where negative emotive lexical units reach 1,790 occurrences, significantly exceeding positive ones (1,440). This pattern reflects the communicative dynamics of digital platforms, where high-arousal negative emotions such as anger, fear, and outrage are more likely to capture attention, stimulate interaction, and spread rapidly.

In journalistic discourse, a similar but more moderate trend is observed, with negative valence (870) also surpassing positive valence (740). This distribution aligns with the institutional function of journalism, which often prioritizes problem-oriented reporting, including crises, conflicts, and risks. The prominence of negative emotional framing in news texts can be understood as part of a broader agenda-setting and framing process in which emotionally salient issues are highlighted to shape public awareness and concern. In contrast, literary texts exhibit a reversed pattern, with a strong predominance of positive valence (960) over negative valence (580). This suggests that literary discourse tends to emphasize constructive, empathetic, and morally reflective emotional experiences, such as hope, joy, and compassion. The higher proportion of positive emotive lexis reflects the narrative function of literature, which often explores themes of growth, redemption, and human connection, offering a more balanced and nuanced representation of psychological states.

The ambivalent valence category, although comparatively small (320 total instances), provides important insight into the complexity of emotional expression. Journalistic articles (100) and social media posts (160) show slightly higher frequencies of ambivalent expressions than literary texts (60), indicating that real-world discourse, especially in media and digital contexts, often involves mixed or conflicting emotional evaluations. These ambivalent expressions may reflect uncertainty, irony, or the coexistence of positive and negative perspectives within a single communicative act. From a comparative perspective, the total counts across platforms, social media (3,390), journalistic articles (1,710), and literary texts (1,600), reinforce earlier findings that digital communication is characterized by a higher density of emotive language, particularly in its negative form. This suggests that the intensity and immediacy of online interaction contribute to a more emotionally charged communicative environment.

Table 3. Pragmatic-Discursive Functions of Emotive Lexical Units

Function	Literary Texts	Journalistic Articles	Social Media Posts	Total
Evaluation	550	690	960	2200
Intensification	420	380	780	1580
Intersubjective stance	350	320	600	1270
Narrative framing	380	210	410	1000
Metaphorical affective frame	360	310	640	1310
Total	2060	1910	3390	7360

Table 3 presents the distribution of emotive lexical units by pragmatic-discursive function across literary texts, journalistic articles, and social media posts. With a total of 7,360 functional instances, the table highlights the multifunctional nature of emotive lexis and its central role in structuring meaning, interaction, and interpretation across discourse types. The most dominant function across all platforms is evaluation (2,200 instances), indicating that emotive lexical units are primarily used to assign value, express judgment, and position events, actors, or situations within a normative framework. This function is especially prominent in social media (960) and journalistic discourse (690), where language is frequently used to evaluate political actors, social issues, and public events. In these contexts, evaluation

often serves an ideological function, guiding audience interpretation and reinforcing particular viewpoints. While also present in literary texts (550), evaluation in this genre tends to be more nuanced and embedded within narrative development rather than explicit judgment.

The second most prominent function is intensification (1,580 instances), which reflects the role of emotive lexis in amplifying emotional force and rhetorical impact. Social media again shows the highest frequency (780), suggesting that digital communication encourages the use of intensified expressions to enhance visibility, engagement, and emotional resonance. In contrast, literary texts (420) and journalistic articles (380) demonstrate more moderated use of intensification, likely due to genre conventions that prioritize stylistic balance and informational clarity. The function of the intersubjective stance (1,270 instances) further underscores the social dimension of emotive language. This category captures how speakers or writers use emotive lexical units to express attitudes, align with audiences, and negotiate relational positioning. The high frequency in social media (600) reflects the interactive nature of online discourse, where users actively signal agreement, empathy, or opposition. Literary texts (350) also exhibit significant use of intersubjective stance, often through character dialogue and narrative voice, while journalistic texts (320) tend to employ it more cautiously to maintain a perception of objectivity.

Metaphorical affective framing (1,310 instances) represents another key function, highlighting the importance of conceptual metaphors in structuring emotional meaning. The prevalence of this function across all genres, particularly in social media (640), indicates that metaphor remains a fundamental cognitive mechanism for expressing and interpreting emotions. Literary texts (360) and journalistic articles (310) also rely on metaphorical framing, though often in more conventionalized or genre-specific forms. This pattern confirms that metaphor is not merely decorative but serves as a core cognitive-discursive tool for simplifying and communicating complex psychological experiences. The function of narrative framing (1,000 instances), while comparatively less frequent, is particularly significant in literary discourse (380), where emotive lexical units contribute to story development, character construction, and thematic coherence. In social media (410), narrative framing often appears as personal storytelling or anecdotal expression, whereas in journalistic discourse (210), it is more constrained and typically linked to issue framing rather than extended narrative structures.

From a cross-genre perspective, social media consistently exhibits the highest frequency across all functional categories (3,390 total instances), reflecting its highly expressive, interactive, and emotionally driven nature. Literary texts (2,060) emphasize narrative and empathetic functions, while journalistic articles (1,910) demonstrate a more balanced distribution, shaped by institutional norms of reporting and framing. Thus, this study found that emotive lexical units are not limited to expressing emotions, but function as versatile discursive tools that perform evaluation, intensification, stance-taking, and cognitive framing. These functions operate in combination to shape how psychological experiences are constructed, interpreted, and communicated. The systematic variation across genres further reinforces the argument that emotive lexis is context-dependent, adapting to the communicative purposes, audience expectations, and structural constraints of each discourse type.

Table 4. Conceptual Metaphors Identified in Emotive Lexis (Aggregated)

Conceptual Metaphor	Frequency	Example Expressions
ANGER IS HEAT	320	"boiling with rage", "heated argument"
HOPE IS LIGHT	210	"a ray of hope", "illuminating prospects"
FEAR IS AN ENEMY	280	"fighting fear", "battling anxiety"
COMPASSION IS A RESOURCE	190	"sharing kindness", "giving comfort"
SADNESS IS A WEIGHT	260	"crushed by sorrow", "heavy-hearted"
JOY IS A JOURNEY	230	"on cloud nine", "riding high"
Total	1490	

Table 4 presents the aggregated distribution of conceptual metaphors identified in emotive lexical units, revealing how abstract psychological states are systematically structured through metaphorical mappings. With a total of 1,490 instances, the findings confirm that metaphor is a central cognitive mechanism through which emotional experience is conceptualized, communicated, and socially shared. The most dominant metaphor is ANGER IS HEAT (320 instances), indicating that anger is frequently conceptualized in terms of temperature and physical intensity (e.g., "boiling with rage," "heated argument"). This mapping reflects strong embodied grounding, as physiological responses associated with anger, such as increased body temperature and heightened arousal, are translated into linguistic expressions. The high frequency of this metaphor suggests that it is deeply entrenched across discourse types, functioning as a default cognitive schema for representing anger.

The metaphor FEAR IS AN ENEMY (280 instances) is also highly prominent, framing fear as an external adversary that must be confronted or overcome (e.g., "fighting fear," "battling anxiety"). This conceptualization aligns with action-oriented discourse, particularly in media and public communication, where emotional states are often framed in terms

of conflict and resistance. By externalizing fear, this metaphor enables individuals to distance themselves from internal experiences, thereby making them more manageable and actionable. Similarly, *SADNESS IS A WEIGHT* (260 instances) conceptualizes sadness as a physical burden (e.g., “heavy-hearted,” “crushed by sorrow”). This metaphor emphasizes the oppressive and enduring nature of negative emotions, drawing on embodied experiences of heaviness and pressure. Its prevalence suggests that sadness is commonly understood in terms of spatial and physical constraints, reinforcing its association with limitation and reduced agency.

In contrast, positive emotional states are predominantly structured through light, movement, and resource-based metaphors. The metaphor *HOPE IS LIGHT* (210 instances) frames hope as a source of illumination and guidance (e.g., “a ray of hope,” “illuminating prospects”), reflecting its role in reducing uncertainty and providing direction. This mapping highlights the cognitive tendency to associate positive emotions with visibility, clarity, and forward orientation. The metaphor *JOY IS A JOURNEY* (230 instances) conceptualizes joy as a dynamic and upward movement through space (e.g., “on cloud nine,” “riding high”). This suggests that joy is experienced as a process rather than a static state, emphasizing progression, elevation, and continuity. Such metaphors contribute to the perception of joy as an expansive and energizing experience, often linked to personal growth and positive transformation.

The metaphor *COMPASSION IS A RESOURCE* (190 instances) introduces a more socially oriented conceptualization, framing compassion as something that can be shared, distributed, or given (e.g., “sharing kindness,” “giving comfort”). This reflects contemporary discourses that emphasize prosocial behavior, empathy, and collective well-being, positioning compassion as an actionable and transferable emotional resource. From a comparative perspective, negative emotion metaphors (*ANGER*, *FEAR*, *SADNESS*) collectively exhibit higher frequencies than positive ones, suggesting that negative emotional experiences are more consistently structured through strong, embodied metaphorical schemas. These metaphors tend to emphasize intensity, conflict, and constraint, making them particularly effective for conveying urgency and emotional impact. In contrast, positive metaphors (*HOPE*, *JOY*, *COMPASSION*) highlight movement, light, and relational exchange, reflecting a more constructive and socially integrative orientation.

Importantly, the findings demonstrate that conceptual metaphors are not merely stylistic devices but function as cognitive-discursive frameworks that shape how emotions are understood and communicated. They provide shared interpretative structures that enable individuals to make sense of complex psychological states, facilitating both individual cognition and collective meaning-making. Thus, the central role of metaphor in linking embodied experience, cognitive processing, and linguistic expression. The systematic distribution of these metaphorical patterns supports the argument that emotive lexical units operate within deeply entrenched conceptual systems, which structure not only how emotions are expressed but also how they are perceived, interpreted, and socially negotiated across different communicative contexts.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the view that emotive lexical unit's function as structured cognitive-discursive mechanisms through which human psychology is represented, interpreted, and socially negotiated. By integrating quantitative distributional patterns with qualitative analysis, the results extend existing theoretical frameworks in cognitive linguistics, discourse studies, and psychology, while also addressing key gaps identified in the literature. First, the observed systematic distribution of emotive lexical units across affective domains and discourse genres reinforces the argument that language actively constructs, rather than merely reflects, psychological experience. This aligns with the anthropocentric perspective in cognitive linguistics, which posits that language is central to shaping cognition and perception (Muratkhodjayeva, 2024). The dominance of negative emotions, particularly anger, fear, and sadness, across journalistic and social media discourse supports prior findings on negativity bias, where emotionally intense and negative stimuli are more salient and communicatively effective (Nabi, 2003; Syrjämäki et al., 2023). At the same time, the prominence of positive emotions such as compassion, hope, and joy in literary texts highlights the role of narrative discourse in fostering empathetic engagement and moral reflection, thereby offering a more nuanced representation of psychological states.

Second, the analysis of valence polarity demonstrates that emotional language is not evenly distributed but strategically deployed according to communicative purpose. The predominance of negative valence in media and digital discourse reflects established theories of framing and agenda-setting, where emotionally charged language is used to capture attention and shape public interpretation (Entman, 1993; Iyengar, 1994). These findings also support the argument that emotions themselves can function as frames, influencing how information is processed and evaluated (Nabi, 2003). However, the relatively balanced distribution between positive and negative valence suggests that emotional communication is not purely polarized but involves a dynamic interplay of contrasting affective orientations. Third, the results highlight the multifunctionality of emotive lexical units, particularly their roles in evaluation, intensification, intersubjective stance-taking, and narrative framing. The dominance of evaluative functions confirms that emotive language is a key resource for normative positioning and ideological alignment, consistent with findings in political discourse analysis (Charteris-Black, 2011). Similarly, the high frequency of intensification and stance-taking,

especially on social media, reflects the interactive and performative nature of digital communication, in which users actively negotiate identity and affiliation through emotional expression. These findings extend prior research by demonstrating how emotive lexis operates simultaneously at cognitive, interpersonal, and ideological levels, bridging micro-level linguistic features with macro-level social meaning-making.

The analysis of conceptual metaphors further underscores their fundamental role in structuring emotional experience. The prevalence of metaphors such as ANGER IS HEAT, SADNESS IS A WEIGHT, and HOPE IS LIGHT confirms the central claims of conceptual metaphor theory, which argues that abstract domains are understood through embodied experience (Gibbs, 2017). Moreover, the identification of metaphors such as COMPASSION IS A RESOURCE suggests the emergence of context-sensitive and socially oriented metaphorical patterns, reflecting evolving cultural values. These findings also resonate with conceptual blending theory, which emphasizes the dynamic integration of multiple cognitive domains in meaning construction (Fauconnier & Turner, 2008). Importantly, the results demonstrate that metaphor is not merely a stylistic feature, but a core cognitive mechanism embedded in everyday language use. In addition, the study contributes to ongoing discussions in computational and psycholinguistic research by highlighting the structured and context-dependent nature of emotional language. While sentiment analysis and emotion detection provide valuable tools for large-scale analysis (Nandwani & Verma, 2021; Ji & Raney, 2020), the findings reveal that emotive lexical units cannot be fully understood without considering their discursive functions and conceptual frameworks. This aligns with recent work using NLP and LLMs, which emphasizes the importance of context-sensitive analysis for capturing psychological constructs such as emotional coherence and distancing (Abdou et al., 2025; Atzil-Slonim et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the distinction between emotion-label and emotion-laden words (Haro et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2023) is reflected in the varying functional roles of emotive lexis across genres, suggesting that lexical type and contextual usage jointly shape emotional meaning. The findings also have important implications for understanding the relationship between language and psychological processes. The observed patterns of emotional differentiation and distribution resonate with psychological research showing that the ability to identify and articulate emotions is linked to emotional regulation and well-being (Liu et al., 2020; Starr et al., 2020). Moreover, the structured co-occurrence of emotional expressions, as evidenced in the data, aligns with cognitive network approaches that view emotional language as part of interconnected semantic systems (Teixeira et al., 2020). This suggests that emotive lexical units play a crucial role in organizing psychological experience at both individual and collective levels.

6. Conclusions

This seeks to investigate how emotive lexical units function as linguistic mechanisms for representing human psychology, with particular emphasis on their classification, cognitive foundations, and discursive roles across diverse communicative contexts. Drawing on a multi-method corpus-based approach, the findings demonstrate that emotive lexis is not merely expressive but constitutes a systematic and structured resource that shapes how psychological experiences are constructed, interpreted, and communicated. The results reveal that emotive lexical units are distributed non-randomly across affective domains, valence polarity, and discourse genres, reflecting the influence of communicative purpose, platform affordances, and socio-cultural context. Negative emotions such as anger, fear, and sadness are particularly prevalent in journalistic and social media discourse, whereas literary texts place greater emphasis on positive and prosocial emotions, such as compassion and hope. These patterns confirm that emotional language is deeply embedded in discursive ecologies, where it performs not only descriptive but also evaluative, persuasive, and ideological functions. Furthermore, the study highlights the multifunctionality of emotive lexis, demonstrating its roles in evaluation, intensification, intersubjective stance-taking, narrative construction, and metaphorical framing. The identification of recurring conceptual metaphors, such as ANGER IS HEAT and HOPE IS LIGHT. It provides strong evidence for the cognitive-linguistic foundations of emotional expression while also revealing the dynamic, context-sensitive nature of metaphor use. Collectively, these findings support the argument that emotive lexical units serve as integrative links between cognition, language, and social interaction, enabling individuals and communities to organize and negotiate psychological meaning.

6.1. Research Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study is subject to several limitations. First, the corpus is limited to three discourse genres (literary, journalistic, and social media) within a specific temporal frame, which may not fully capture the diversity of emotive language across different cultural, linguistic, or historical contexts. Second, although the study integrates qualitative and quantitative methods, the analysis remains primarily text-based, without incorporating multimodal elements such as images, audio, or visual metaphors, which are increasingly important in contemporary communication. Third, while the use of corpus and coding techniques ensures systematic analysis, some degree of interpretive subjectivity is inherent in identifying and categorizing emotive lexical units and metaphorical expressions.

6.2. Research Implications

The findings of this study offer several important implications. Theoretically, the research contributes to the development of an integrated cognitive-discursive framework that bridges gaps among cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, and computational approaches. It advances the understanding of emotive lexis as a core mechanism of meaning-making, rather than a peripheral or purely stylistic feature of language. Methodologically, the study demonstrates the value of combining corpus-based analysis, metaphor identification procedures, and frame analysis, providing a replicable approach for future research on emotional language. Practically, the results have implications for fields such as media communication, political discourse, education, and mental health. Understanding how emotional language shapes perception and behavior can inform strategies for responsible communication, critical media literacy, and therapeutic interventions, particularly in contexts where emotional framing influences public opinion and psychological well-being.

6.3. Future Research Directions

Future research should expand on this study in several ways. First, there is a need for cross-cultural and cross-linguistic investigations to examine whether similar patterns of emotive lexical usage and metaphorical structuring exist across different languages and cultural contexts. Second, integrating multimodal analysis would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how emotions are communicated through the interaction of language, visuals, and other semiotic resources. Third, future studies could incorporate advanced computational techniques, such as machine learning and large language models, to analyze larger and more diverse datasets while maintaining sensitivity to contextual and discursive nuances. Fourth, longitudinal research could explore how emotive lexical patterns evolve over time, particularly in response to major social, political, or technological changes. Finally, further research is needed to examine the psychological and behavioral effects of emotive language and to more directly link linguistic patterns to outcomes such as decision-making, emotional regulation, and social interaction.

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