*Corresponding author:
Asst. Lect. Salah Hadi Shukur
Wasit Directorate-General of Education, Ministry of Education, Iraq.
Email: salah.shukur@gmail.com

Dr. Baida' Faisal Noori
Professor, Department of English, College of Arts, University of Baghdad, Iraq.
Email:
baydaa.alarajy@coart.uobaghdad.edu.iq

Emotions in Populist Poetry: Sentiment Analysis of Selected English and Arabic Poems

ABSTRACT

The study examines the emotional dimensions of populist poetry in English and Arabic through sentiment analysis and stylistic techniques. It explores the distribution of various emotions within these poetic traditions, investigating how linguistic, cultural, and socio-political factors affect emotional appeal. Through a corpus of selected populist poems, the study employs Natural Language Processing (NLP), Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC), and SPSS-based statistical methods to analyze emotion frequencies in the selected poems. The results highlight significant differences between the two languages. English populist poems show higher diversity in emotions, including Annoyance, Awe/Sublime, and Beauty/Joy, while Arabic poems predominantly prefer Sadness and Uneasiness with a narrower range of emotions. The study also contributes to stylistics and comparative poetics by revealing distinct emotional disparity within the populist discourse**.**

العواطف في الشعر الشعبوي: تحليل المشاعر لقصائد انجليزية وعربية مختارة

م. م. صلاح هادي شكر /المديرية العامة لتربية واسط، وزارة التربية،

أ.د. بيداء فيصل نوري /قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية الآداب، جامعة بغداد، العراق

المستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة الأبعاد العاطفية في الشعر الشعبوي في اللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية من خلال تحليل المشاعر والتقنيات الأسلوبية. وتستكشف الدراسة توزيع المشاعر المختلفة ضمن التقليدين الشعريين مع التركيز على كيفية تأثير العوامل اللغوية والثقافية والاجتماعية والسياسية في الجاذبية العاطفية للنصوص الشعرية. وتعتمد الدراسة على مجموعة مختارة من القصائد الشعبوية فيما تستخدم تقنيات معالجة اللغة الطبيعية (NLP) وأداة تحليل اللغة والنصوص(LIWC) بالإضافة إلى الأساليب الإحصائية المستندة إلى برمجيات SPSS لتحليل تكرار العواطف. وتظهر النتائج وجود فروق دالة إحصائيًا بين اللغتين، إذ تتميز القصائد الإنجليزية بتنوع عاطفي أوسع يشمل مشاعر الانزعاج، والرهبة/السُمو، والجمال/الفرح، في حين أن القصائد العربية تفضّل بشكل ملحوظ مشاعر الحزن والاضطراب. وتسهم هذه الدراسة في مجالي الأسلوبية والشعرية المقارنة من خلال الكشف عن الفروقات العاطفية المتمايزة ضمن الخطاب الشعري الشعبوي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الشعر الشعبوي، تحليل العواطف، تحليل المشاعر، الأسلوبية، معالجة اللغة الطبيعيّة (NLP).

. Introduction

Style refers to the manner of expression in writing and speaking and can be seen as variation in language use, whether literary or non-literary (Mohammed *et al*., 2012, p. 41). Poetry has long been a vehicle for political and social commentary, with emotions pivotal in captivating audiences and reinforcing ideological views. (Moffitt, 2016). Populist poetry stands out among poetic traditions for its deep emotional resonance, frequently targeting elites while inspiring ordinary people (Mudde, 2004). It employs figurative language, rhetorical devices, and emotionally powerful diction to foster solidarity, resistance, or grievance (Ernst et al., 2019). While extensive research has examined populism in political speeches, media, and public discourse, only a few attempts have investigated its manifestations

in poetry. The stylistic and emotional aspects of populist poetry are particularly relevant, as emotions serve both aesthetic and persuasive functions (Stockwell, 2020). Given the centrality of emotions in populist discourse, this study examines how emotional expressions are constructed in English and Arabic populist poetry, with a particular focus on their stylistic implications.

To analyze emotions in populist poetry, the study uses sentiment analysis (SA) within a stylistic framework, using computational methods to quantify and categorize emotional expressions. SA has been widely used in computational linguistics and psychology to measure affect in texts, but its application in stylistics is still developing (Liu, 2015). By integrating SA with stylistic interpretation, this study provides a quantitative and qualitative approach to understanding emotional appeal in populist poetry. The main objective of this study is to compare English and Arabic populist poetry, concentrating on how poets from these two traditions encode emotions based on linguistic and cultural factors. Therefore, this study addresses the following research questions:

1- What are the dominant emotions in English and Arabic populist poetry as identified by SA?

2- How do emotions contribute to ideological positioning in populist poetry?

3- How can SA enhance stylistic interpretations of populist poetry?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Sentiment Analysis (SA)

Natural Language Processing (NLP) is a subfield of computer science and artificial intelligence (AI) that focuses on enabling machines to process and comprehend human language (Hemanth, 2024, p. 61). NLP integrates computational linguistics with statistical and machine-learning techniques to analyze textual data. Some core applications of NLP include sentiment analysis (SA), speech recognition, topic modeling, and text generation (Zhou et al., 2019).

Among the various text analysis methodologies, SA is one of the most widely used approaches for examining emotions in text. SA, also known as opinion mining, involves extracting, quantifying, and classifying subjective information from written text (Liu, 2015, p. 1). The goal of SA is to determine whether the sentiment expressed in a given text is positive, negative, or neutral, as well as to identify the specific emotions conveyed within the text (Liu, 2012, p. 1). SA also suits poetic analysis, as poetry often encodes emotions through figurative language, lexical choices, and rhetorical structures. Most SA research is performed within the field of NLP, influencing various domains such as data mining, information retrieval, and computational stylistics (Liu, 2015, p. 4). Given the subjective and interpretative nature of poetry, SA provides an empirical method to analyze sentimental expressions of poetry systematically.

2.2 Emotions in SA and Stylistics

The study of emotion in text analysis has been widely explored in psychology, social sciences, and computational linguistics (Liu, 2015, p. 31). Unlike traditional psychological studies of emotion, "SA focuses on linguistic expressions of affect, examining how emotions are encoded in written texts" (Liu, 2015, p. 31). Emotions in SA are typically categorized following taxonomies, most of which originate in theories of psychology. Table (1) presents an overview of basic emotion taxonomies, comparing multiple psychological frameworks. Concerning literary studies, Haider et al. (2021) provide a more literature-specific taxonomy, which includes emotions commonly found in poetry such as Annoyance, Awe/Sublime, Beauty/Joy, Humor, Nostalgia, and Sadness.

Table 1: Basic Emotions Taxonomies Adapted from Liu (2015)

Source	Basic Emotions
James (1884)	fear, grief, love, rage
Watson (1930)	fear, love, rage
Mowrer (1960)	pain, pleasure

Izard (1971)	anger, contempt, disgust, distress, fear, guilt, interest, joy, shame, surprise
Plutchik (1980)	acceptance, anger, anticipation, disgust, joy, fear, sadness, surprise
Ekman et al. (1982)	anger, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, surprise
Tomkins (1984)	anger, interest, contempt, disgust, distress, fear, joy, shame, surprise
Oatley and Laird (1987)	anger, disgust, anxiety, happiness, sadness
Parrott (2001)	anger, fear, joy, love, sadness, surprise
Haider et al. (2021)	annoyance, awe/sublime, beauty/joy, humor, nostalgia, sadness, suspense, uneasiness, vitality/energy

Gibbons and Whiteley (2018, p. 268) define emotion as a broad category encompassing various experiential phenomena that involve relatively brief yet intense felt experiences. Emotions differ in intensity and valence, with positively valenced emotions (such as joy) leading to more pleasurable experiences than negatively valenced ones (such as sadness). Additionally, emotions are associated with distinct action tendencies: some involve an inclination toward engagement or approach (e.g., love), while others prompt aversion or withdrawal (e.g., fear).

2.3 Linguistic Expressions of Emotions

Stylistically, emotions can be expressed through various grammatical and lexical choices. Liu (2015, pp. 36-37) identifies six key linguistic strategies used to express emotions in text:

1-**Emotion Words and Phrases**: Direct emotion words (e.g., love, anger, fear) explicitly convey emotions.

2-**Emotion-Related Behaviors**: Descriptions of physical reactions (e.g., "He cried when he saw her") can imply emotions.

3-**Intensifiers and Emphatic Language**: Words such as very, extremely, and dreadfully amplify emotion.

4-Superlatives: Phrases like "This is the best poem I've ever read" add emotional emphasis.

5-Pejorative and Laudatory Expressions: Words like "genius" (praise) and "fascist" (criticism) convey sentiment.

6-Swearing, Cursing, and Insults: Strong emotional reactions are often reflected in intense lexical choices.

While these clues are often sufficient to determine sentiment in non-literary texts, poetic language presents additional challenges, including metaphor, irony, and contextual ambiguity. Computational methods struggle to capture figurative language, requiring manual annotation or hybrid approaches for accurate sentiment detection in poetry (Liu, 2015, p. 36).

2.4 The Role of Sentiment Analysis in Populist Poetry

Applying SA to populist poetry is an attempt to provide a systematic approach to understanding emotional appeals and loads across different poetic traditions represented by poems from English and Arabic. Since populist discourse is predominantly emotional, SA can help identify how poets use emotionally charged discourse and language to enhance stylistic underpinnings and ideological narratives. By integrating NLP-based SA with stylistics, this study is intended to show the dominant emotional structures in English and Arabic populist poetry, offering insights into how language and sentiment shape poetic discourse.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Selection

The study analyzes four populist poems (two in English and two in Arabic) that show populist themes with emotional intensity. The selection criteria of data include:

1) The poems must show evident populist rhetoric, usually themes of oppression, resistance, or political mobilization and crisis.

2)The poems should encompass simple language, a relatively negative depiction of public life, with severe criticism of political, social, and cultural elites.

3)The poems must be from well-known poets whose works are recognized for their populist nature.

Table 2: The English and Arabic Poems Selected for the Study

Language	Poet	Poem Title
English	Benjamin Zephaniah	*The Race Industry*
English	Lawrence Ferlinghetti	*Populist Manifesto*
Arabic	Mudhaffar al-Nawwab	*A Reading in the Notebook of Rain* قراءة في دفتر المطر
Arabic	Muwaffaq Muhammad	Seven Eyes سبع عيون

3.2 Sentiment Analysis and Stylistic Tools

The study employs a mixed-method approach to analyze emotions in the (4) poems, integrating SA with stylistic interpretation. The tools used include:

1) Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC): Used for detecting emotional words and sentiment polarity.

2) Natural Language Processing (NLP) Algorithms: Applied for sentiment classification and emotion analysis, following Liu (2015) and Haider et al. (2021) for emotion classification.

3) SPSS Statistical Analysis: Used to apply chi-square tests and crosstabulations to compare emotion frequencies.

3.3 Sentiment Classification Process

The following steps outline the workflow of emotion classification:

1) Preprocessing: Removing stop words, punctuation, and non-emotive elements.

2) Tokenization: Segmenting poems into meaningful linguistic units (Poetic Sentences)

3) Emotion Tagging: Assigning sentiment scores based on predefined lexicons.

4) Statistical Analysis: Applying chi-square tests to determine significant differences in emotional distribution across languages.

4. Analysis and Findings

4.1 Emotions in English and Arabic Populist Poems

The results show a significant contrast in the emotional distribution between English and Arabic populist poems. English poems exhibit a higher diversity of emotions, while Arabic poems are predominantly marked by sadness and uneasiness. Chart (1) and Table (3) summarize the overall emotion frequencies in the poems analyzed.
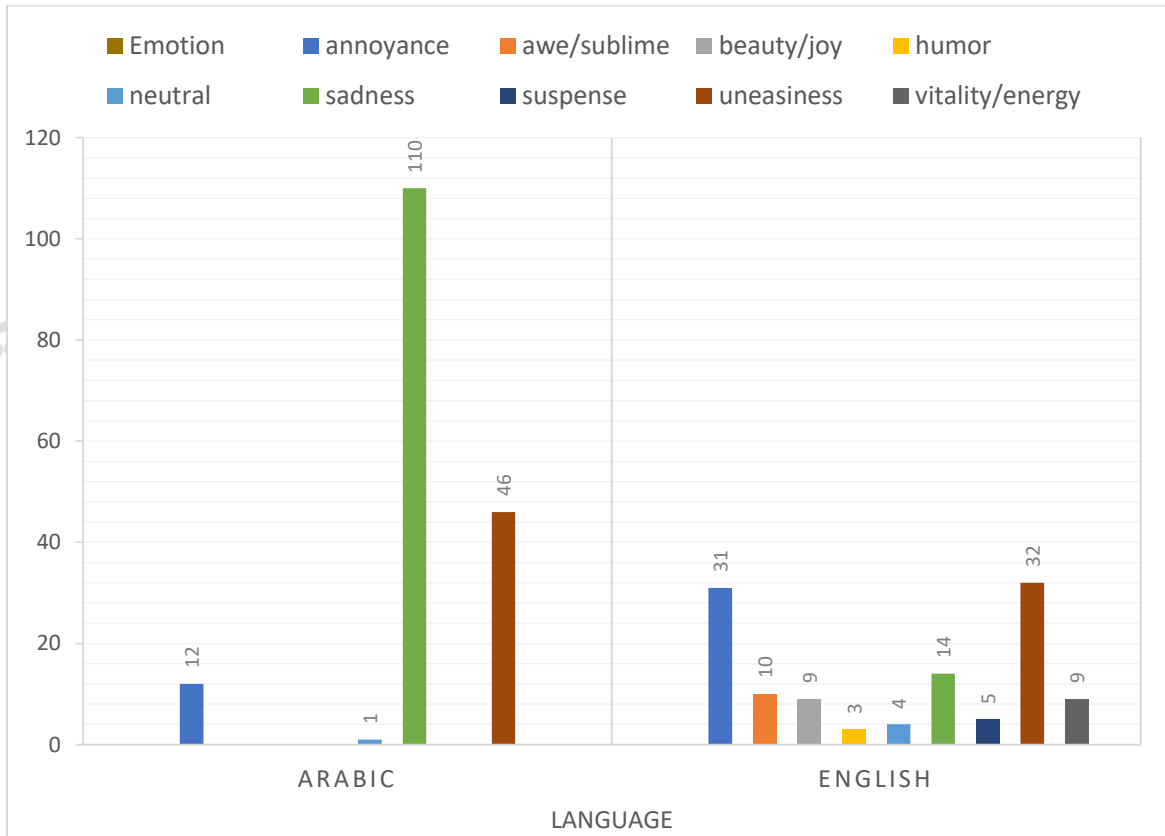

Chart (1) Emotions in English and Arabic Poems

Table 3: Chi-Square Test of Emotions in English and Arabic Populist Poems

Emotion	English (%)	Arabic (%)	Adjusted Residuals
Sadness	12.1%	73.5%	8.9 (significant)
Annoyance	22.1%	5.8%	4.5 (significant)
Awe/Sublime	7.1%	1.1%	3.9 (significant)
Beauty/Joy	6.4%	0.5%	3.7 (significant)
Uneasiness	8.5%	30.3%	6.7 (significant)
Vitality/Energy	6.4%	0.0%	3.7 (significant)

As the Chart (1) and Table (3) summarize, the analysis of the (4) poems show the following results:

1) Sadness dominates Arabic poems: The overwhelming use of sadness (73.5%) in Arabic poems corresponds to political and historical themes of exile, oppression, and nostalgia which are evident in the poems of al.Nawwab and Muwaffaq Muhammad.

2) English poems align with the emotion of annoyance: Annoyance appears in 22.1% of English poems, reinforcing their activist and confrontational stance known in the poetic style of Zephaniah and Ferlinghetti.

3) Aesthetic emotions (Awe, Beauty, Joy) are stronger in English poetry: These emotions rarely appear in Arabic poetry, suggesting that English populist poets employ a wider range of emotional appeal.

The important finding in analyzing the emotions in "*Populist Manifesto*" is the use of emotions of Annoyance and Uneasiness in targeting elites and highlighting the crisis rhetoric. Annoyance emerges basically in poetic sentences with a critical style of cultural elites, evident in instances like:

"No more chanting Hare Krishna while Rome burns"

"All you Groucho Marxist poets and leisure class comrades who lie around all day and talk about the working-class"

In the first example, the lexical juxtaposition of chanting with burning creates a dissonance that emphasizes detachment from real-world issues. On the other hand, Uneasiness is amplified through imagery of crisis, as in:

"The trees are still falling, and we'll to the woods no more"

The progressive verb "*falling*," together with the adverb "still," denotes ongoing destruction, while "we'll to the woods no more" laments the huge loss. This stylistic preference refers to a situation that is characterized by discomfort and essentially loaded with disgust of the causes but does not offer possible solutions. Positive emotions, Vitality/Energy, for instance, counterbalance the negativity of criticism and unease, as in:

"Time now to open your mouths with a new wide-open poetry"

"Open your windows, open your doors"

The repetition of the imperative verb "open" enhances the call for renewal, while the imperative "time now" conveys urgency. Integrating linguistic urgency with hopeful imagery corresponds to one function of populist rhetoric in mobilizing the crowds, transforming emotional frustration into actionable energy. The absence of Humor and Nostalgia may refer to the high seriousness of populist poetry that does not usually employ funny images or necessarily intends to make the readers laugh especially while dealing with political and social issues. As for Nostalgia, the poem offers no hints of sentimental longing for the past or its persons.

In Zephaniah's "*The Race Industry*", the notable stylistic elements that overlay these emotions are declarative sentences, repetitions, passive constructions, and metaphors, as in:

"They represent me without my consent."

The declarative sentence shows frustration at eliminating individual agency within institutional frameworks.

"Steal our souls and make their documentaries."

The metaphoric use of the verb "steal" intensifies the criticism of exploitation as a deeply personal violation.

"Men, women and Brixton are being betrayed."

The passive construction sets a collective feeling of betrayal without showing who the betrayer is.

As far as the emotion of Sadness is concerned, it emerges in the poem's focus on the suffering of Black communities and the commodification of their faculties and experiences, making use of conditional structures and touching metaphors that transform a factual statement into an emotional criticism to the system of exploitation imposed on weak marginalized groups, as in:

"Without Black suffering, they'd have no jobs."

"Without our tears they'd have no drink."

In sum, negative emotions in Zephaniah's poems (Annoyance and Uneasiness) are attributed to poetic sentences tackling elites or semi-elites "Coconuts", leaving only Sadness and some other softening positive emotions for ordinary people that do not predominantly affect the basic emotional style of the two poems. This is explicitly a populist focus that is made to indicate the two poles' struggle, yet it takes some adjusted view within Zephaniah's poetry

In al-Nawwab's "*A Reading in the Notebook of Rain*", the emotion of Sadness dominates the poem very explicitly with (53) instances, then comes Easiness (19) instances, Annoyance (8) instances, and only one instance characterized as expressing no specific emotion underlined by Haider et al, (2021) framework and is given the label Neutral. The dominance of sadness has strongly lexical indicators of emotionally weighted vocabulary related to sorrow and grief in Arabic language and culture, as in:

"أندب كالبوم المجروح على جدران الليل"

The simile of a wounded owl (البوم المجروح) emphasizes vulnerability and loss, evoking feelings of isolation and desolation. Similarly, the juxtaposition of fire and tears highlights destruction and grief, aligning with populist themes of collective suffering in the line:

"يا مدن الناس مدينتنا تبكي"

The general emotion of sadness is enhanced by imagery of ruin and despair by visualizing the homeland as fragmented and betrayed, as in:

"يا وطني ، وكأنك في غربة

وكأنك تبحث في قلبي عن وطن أنت

ليؤويك."

The metaphor and personification of homeland in the first instance draw the readers' attention to the fragmentary image of home, using words like "تبحث", "غربة", and "بلا وطن". In a second instance:

"وأخيرا..

صافح قادتنا الأعداء ونحن نحارب

ورأيناهم ناموا في الجيش الآخر والجيش يحارب"

The theme of betrayal is enhanced by specifying the three parties of the relation: "الجيش" – "الأعداء" – "قادتنا", making a highly populist instance in which elites are betraying an army that is necessarily made of ordinary people.

As for the emotion of Easiness, it shows an explicit overlap with Sadness, yet, it is indicated in themes of anxiety, fear, and instability and in repeated negations, as in:

"لا أعرف كيف يمر الإنسان بدرب الدمع"

The repeated negation ("لا أعرف" / "I do not know") conveys the poet's uncertainty and apprehension about resilience in the face of despair. Uneasiness is also expressed through lexical ambiguity, evoking discomfort, as in:

"الماء طريق الغرباء".

The metaphor of water as a path suggests an unstable journey, emphasizing displacement and alienation.

In "*Seven Eyes*", sadness dominates the poem's exploration of grief and loss, with another use of colloquial language that interacts emotionally with the readers, as in:

"وحشدُ جنائز تبكي وتلوّن خشب التابوت".

"هذا آنه يمه وياك أموت".

The personification of coffins "جنائز تبكي" magnifies the sorrowful tone, transforming a physical object into an emotional subject. Similarly, the explicit imagery of painting the coffin "تلوّن خشب التابوت" further symbolizes the permanence of loss. The other instance represents a surrender to death inspired by the unbelievable amount of grief as the mother is ready to die with her son "وياك أموت".

5. Discussion and Comparative Analysis

The study findings show that the representation of emotions in English and Arabic populist poems is reflected in linguistic, cultural, and ideological factors. The application of (SA) within a stylistic framework provides a quantifiable and systematic approach to analyze these emotional variations. This section discusses the significance of these findings in the context of populist rhetoric, stylistic choices, and socio-political implications.

One of the most evident contrasts between English and Arabic poems is the range and diversity of emotions. English poems show a broader range of emotions, balancing annoyance, awe/sublime, beauty/joy, uneasiness, vitality/energy, sadness, and annoyance. This diversity corresponds to the activist and mobilizing nature of English populist discourse, which often seeks to incite action while maintaining engagement through rhetorical variety. In contrast, Arabic poems overwhelmingly

stick to sadness and uneasiness, reflecting a collective historical consciousness shaped by exile, war, and social injustices.

Besides, the frequent use of Annoyance (22.1%) and Awe/Sublime (7.1%) in English poems suggests that Zephaniah and Ferlinghetti use a provocative tone to challenge the status quo. In reverse, the predominance of Sadness (73.5%) and Uneasiness (30.3%) in Arabic poems reflect a rhetoric of grief and resistance, emphasizing historical suffering and socio-political marginalization. These differences indicate that English populist poems serve a mobilizing function, whereas Arabic poems function as a means of preserving collective memory and expressing deep-rooted feelings of oppression.

The SA results suggest that linguistic structures influence how emotions are expressed and interpreted in different poetic traditions. For instance, English poets tend to use first-person plural pronouns (we, us) to establish collective identity, whereas Arabic poets frequently use first-person singular (I) to personalize suffering. This reflects different rhetorical approaches: a collective mobilization strategy in English vs. individual lamentation in Arabic. Likewise, English poems employ colloquial expressions and direct addresses, enhancing a dialogic relationship with the audience. In contrast, Arabic poetry often uses metaphor and historical allusions to construct a deeper symbolic layer of meaning. The difference also appears in the use of rhetorical Devices. English poems include irony, imperatives, and humor, making the poems engaging and provocative. Arabic poems, on the other hand, rely heavily on repetition, imagery, and religious references, which increases emotional intensity and strengthens the traditional poetic structures.

6. Conclusions

The study shows that English and Arabic populist poetry employ distinct emotional strategies, shaped by stylistic choices, linguistic structures, and socio-political

contexts. Using SA within a stylistic framework, the study provides an empirical approach to quantifying and interpreting emotional expressions in populist poetry. The results show that English populist poetry exhibits a wider emotional spectrum, including annoyance, awe, joy, and vitality to engage, mobilize, and challenge power structures. In contrast, Arabic populist poetry overwhelmingly uses sadness and uneasiness, reflecting historical grievances, political oppression, and collective struggles. These findings indicate that while both traditions use emotion as a persuasive tool, they do so through different linguistic and rhetorical tools and mechanisms.

References

Ernst, N., Engesser, S., Büchel, F., Blassnig, S., & Esser, F. (2019). Populists prefer social media: Comparing populist and non-populist politicians' use of Twitter in five Western democracies. *New Media & Society, 21*(10), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819836108

Ferlinghetti, L. (1976). *Populist manifesto*. City Lights Books.

Gibbons, A., & Whiteley, S. (2018). *Contemporary stylistics: Language, cognition, and text interpretation*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Haider, T., Eger, S., Kim, E., Klinger, R., & Menninghaus, W. (2020). PO-EMO: Conceptualization, annotation, and modeling of aesthetic emotions in German and English poetry. In *Proceedings of the Twelfth Language Resources and Evaluation Conference* (pp. 1652–1663). European Language Resources Association.

Hemanth, P. (2024). *Introduction to NLP and AI linguistics*. Cambridge University Press.

Liu, B. (2012). *Sentiment analysis and opinion mining*. Morgan & Claypool Publishers.

Liu, B. (2015). *Sentiment analysis: Mining opinions, sentiments, and emotions*. Cambridge University Press.

Moffitt, B. (2016). *The global rise of populism: Performance, political style, and representation*. Stanford University Press.

Mohammed, M. A., Hassan, M., & Shamkhi, K. (2012). Sentence length and complexity in Hemingway's short story: *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*: A stylistic study. *LARQ*, (10), 41–57. https://doi.org/10.31185/lark.Vol1.Iss10.876

Mudde, C. (2004). The populist zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition, 39*(4), 541–563. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x

Pang, B., & Lee, L. (2008). Opinion mining and sentiment analysis. *Foundations and Trends in Information Retrieval, 2*(1–2), 1–135. https://doi.org/10.1561/1500000011

Pennebaker, J. W., Boyd, R. L., Jordan, K., & Blackburn, K. (2022). *Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC-22)*. Pennebaker Conglomerates. https://www.liwc.app

Stockwell, P. (2020). *Cognitive poetics: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Suneetha, P., & Row, S. (2023). *Sentiment analysis and text analytics: A computational approach*. Oxford University Press.

Zephaniah, B. (1999). *Too black, too strong*. Bloomsbury.

Zhou, L., Luo, L., & Chen, H. (2019). *Text analytics and NLP: A practical guide*. Wiley.

مجلة لارك للفلسفة واللسانيات والعلوم الاجتماعية