

Trump’s populist discourse and affective politics, or on how to move ‘the people’ through emotion

Encarnación Hidalgo-Tenorio, and Miguel-Ángel Benítez-Castro

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# Trump's populist discourse and affective politics, or on how to move 'the people' through emotion

Encarnación Hidalgo-Tenorio<sup>a</sup> and Miguel-Ángel Benítez-Castro<sup>b</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Recursively in history, emotions such as social anger, moral satiety, distrust of the elite and the Establishment, among others, have all contributed to politicians' encouragement and exploitation of a rather emotionally charged discourse (Block, E., and R. Negrine. 2017. "The Populist Communication Style: Toward a Critical Framework." *International Journal of Communication* 11: 178–197). In their self-imposed capacity as mouthpiece for the people, populist leaders have successfully given vent to the expression of some of these emotions. The fact that emotion permeates all levels of linguistic description (Alba-Juez, L., and G. Thompson. 2014. "The Many Faces and Phases of Evaluation." In *Evaluation in Context*, edited by L. Alba-Juez, and G. Thompson, 3–23. Amsterdam, PA: John Benjamins, 10–11) makes its examination a fascinating enterprise. In this paper, we discuss the role played by emotion in the production of populist discourse; to this end, we examine a very well-known example of populist rhetoric, i.e. Donald Trump, under the lens of Appraisal Theory (Martin, J. R., and P. R. R. White. 2005. *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Bednarek, M. 2008. *Emotion Talk Across Corpora*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan). In particular, we employ a refined model of the AFFECT subsystem (i.e. Benítez-Castro, MÁ, and E. Hidalgo-Tenorio. 2019. "Rethinking Martin and White's Affect Taxonomy: A Psychologically-Inspired Approach to the Linguistic Expression of Emotion." In *Emotion in Discourse*, edited by L. Mackenzie, and L. Alba-Juez, 301–332. Amsterdam: John Benjamins) to analyse seven speeches delivered by the US President in the last four years. Our study helps uncover a set of strategies and patterns showing how this unconventional politician's emotion-driven language manages to develop a more inclusive in-group identity uniting the members of an angry, scared, frustrated and unsure audience.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

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## Introduction

As Hidalgo-Tenorio, Benítez-Castro, and De Cesare (2019, 7) argue, populism remains a 'notoriously slippery phenomenon to examine'. This is partly due to the lack of agreement as to its nature, whether as a political strategy, an ideology or a discursive style. Be that as it may, there is little doubt that discourse is key to this phenomenon, as 'it is mainly through discourse that this is enacted' (Benítez-Castro et al. 2017, 6; cf. also, e.g. Kazin 1998; Canovan 1999; Laclau 2005). The success of this polarising, people-centred communicative style is crucially dependent on its ability to stir up emotion. Populist discourse brings to the fore emotions that generally move people to act

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with a view to either redressing inequalities or to maintaining the status quo, something that populist leaders achieve by exploiting their alleged grassroots charisma to forge a closeness with large segments of the population (e.g. De la Torre 1997; Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014; Garlinska 2017). Consequently, as Minogue (1969, 197) asserts, 'to understand the [populist] movement is to discover the feelings which moved people'

Previous research has already touched upon general affective moods such as resentment or malaise, or feelings of fear and anger (e.g. Betz 1994; Taggart 2000; Mudde 2004). Nonetheless, our understanding of the workings of populist discourse can be enhanced if attention be paid to the fine-grained detail whereby the emotions in populist leaders' communication take shape (Rico, Guinjoan, and Anduiza 2017). Thus, we firstly need to bear in mind the differences between right- and left-wing populist discursive styles. Whilst left-wing populism is driven by its bitter anti-capitalist opposition to the elites, represented by banks, governments, big corporations, etc. (e.g. De la Torre 1997), right-wing populism is underpinned by its antagonism towards hybrid societies, leading to a fear of losing social status and a growing hostility towards minorities (e.g. Salmela and von Scheve 2017). Consequently, right-wing populist discourse tends to vilify the other and to celebrate the achievements of significant in-group members that bring back memories of a glorious past. A clear case in point is US President Donald Trump.

In this paper, we apply Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis (henceforth, CADS; e.g. Taylor and Marchi 2018), as inspired by Systemic Functional Linguistics' (henceforth, SFL) Appraisal Theory (Martin and White 2005; Bednarek 2008), to seven speeches by Donald Trump. In line with Coffin and O'Halloran (2005, 2006) and Bednarek (2009a), we combine the automated analysis and interpretation of recurrent patterns and associations from the entire corpus with the close and intensive analysis of one text. Hence, we first examine the frequency lists and keywords extracted from the corpus through Sketch Engine<sup>1</sup> (Kilgarriff et al. 2014) and AntConc (Anthony 2018). The results obtained are subsequently triangulated with the automatic measurement of features related to sentiment, cognition and social order, through use of the Sentiment Analysis tool SEANCE (Crossley, Kyle, and McNamara 2017). This fully automated analysis is complemented with the findings drawn from O'Donnell's (2016) UAM CorpusTool, employed for the manual coding of Trump's first State of the Union Address (henceforth, SUA) through our redefined version of Martin and White's (2005) EMOTION scheme within Appraisal (Benítez-Castro and Hidalgo-Tenorio 2019).

With all of the above in mind, our goals in this paper are twofold. Broadly speaking, we aim to understand the emotional nature of American right-wing populism. More specifically, we intend to uncover the nature of the feelings underlying Trump's rhetorical style following his election victory in November 2016, with particular attention to his first year in office and his first SUA. Thus, our paper first sets the foundations of Trump's populism, his appeal to emotions and our own approach to the analysis of emotion/emotional language in discourse. It then turns to describing the make-up of the corpus under study, and the quantitative and qualitative procedures applied to its analysis. Lastly, it presents and discusses the most remarkable findings obtained in relation to the research hypotheses and questions outlined below.

### **Research hypotheses**

**Q2** As the nationalist and populist leader Trump is claimed to be by scholars (e.g. Pinto 2018; Rowland 2019), journalists (e.g. Molloy 2018), and social media users (just as Wells et al. 2020 explain), Trump's rhetoric is expected to be appealingly populist (Martin and Haberman 2019). This can be translated into the following:

- Populism encourages a plain-speaking approach (Rice-Oxley and Kalia 2018) in a context tending to infantilise the population;

- Populist language is endowed with a sort of impulsive performativity moving those voters rejecting the status quo to participate actively in citizenship (Weber 2013);
- Populist leaders often express emotions explicitly (see 'emotion talk' in Bednarek 2008), which explains why speeches are full of 'eruptions of vitriol' (Landler 2019); and, implicitly, through the (generally negative) opinion-related evaluation of people's behaviour (Ekström, Patrona, and Thornborrow 2018).

### Research questions

With the aforementioned in mind, in the present paper we intend to answer the following:

- How does Donald Trump manage to mobilise his supporters during and after his first year in office?
- Is Trump's angry populism as present in his post-election speeches as in his campaign?
- Does he change any of his previous discursive strategies? If so, what differentiates his first SUA from some speeches delivered before and after? What emotion categories prevail in his first SUA and how are these discursively realised? Using emotion terms or through other linguistic means (e.g. opinion lexis)?

## Populism and emotions

### Donald Trump's populism

US President Donald Trump's lofty promises in his 2017 inaugural address presented him as a warrior, or saviour-like figure, on an almost divine mission to rescue the US from a semi-apocalyptic state, bringing 'the American people' to the forefront of his endeavours (e.g. McAdams 2016; McCallum-Bayliss 2019; Brandt 2020, 309):

(1) This American carnage stops right here and stops right now. [...] I will fight for you with every breath in my body – and I will never, ever let you down. [...] So to all Americans, in every city near and far, small and large, from mountain to mountain, and from ocean to ocean, hear these words: You will never be ignored again. (DT\_200117)<sup>2</sup>

Nearly four years later, amidst the ravages of the Covid-19 pandemic, and various episodes of upsetting racial injustice, US society is more polarised than ever before; this marked division is actually argued to have become 'hard-wired in the American political system' or 'the new normal'<sup>3</sup> (cf. also McIntosh 2020, 1). Even so, Trump, as the Republican nominee for the November 2020 elections, keeps promising a panacea for all these problems inspired by the same images of a 'mythical heartland' (Taggart 2000, 95) whose greatness and heroic struggles will end in victory:

(2) We are a nation of pilgrims, pioneers, adventurers, explorers and trailblazers who refused to be tied down, held back, or reined in. Americans have steel in their spines, grit in their souls, and fire in their hearts. [...] we will make America stronger, we will make America prouder, and we will make America GREATER than ever before! (DT\_280820).

That Donald Trump is the very epitome of right-wing populism is undeniable, as evident in the wide-ranging scholarly and journalistic attention Trumpism has received since 2015. Trump's rhetoric rests primarily upon one of the key tenets of populist communication: The discursive construction of a society plagued with crisis, breakdown and threat (Moffitt and Tormey 2014, 391). His speeches and Twitter outbursts reveal an effort to construct chaos narratives meant to dent US

citizens' ontological security by showing how their welfare and values have been, and may continue to be sold out and destroyed by the lenient attitude to migration of Washington's political Establishment (Skonieczny 2018; Gutiérrez Vidrio 2019; Homolar and Scholz 2019). White working-class US citizens' unease and disenchantment with globalisation and cosmopolitan liberalism lie at the heart of the appeal of Trump's Tea Party American Republicanism (e.g. Ferguson 2016; Greven 2016; Inglehart and Norris 2016; Müller 2016; Oliver and Rahn 2016; Fitzduff 2017; Lamont, Yun Park, and Ayala-Hurtado 2017). Cosmopolitan liberalism, one of the trademarks of the Obama Administration, involved a more multicultural outlook on politics, leading to a rise in immigration and the country's active engagement with international trade. Against this backdrop, coupled with the effects of the 2008 financial crisis, the middle and working classes began to suffer the looming threat, and the grip of unemployment and socio-economic deprivation. This led to major inequalities and precariousness, with many feeling that the political Establishment and the cultural elites were leaving hard-working US citizens behind, favouring instead undeserving immigrants, perceived to be 'cutting the line ahead of them' (Hochschild 2016, 137).

This situation created the perfect breeding ground for the emergence of a populist leader claiming to speak on behalf of the true, honest American people, and against the corrupt, allegedly favouring themselves or the outgroup over US citizens. This populist Manichean outlook (Mudde 2004, 544; cf. also Laclau 2005) ties in with Trump's nativist perspective on politics, shifting the focus from multiculturalism and globalisation to his well-known 'America First' motto. From this standpoint, an urgent need exists to protect 'the interests of the native population' (Brandt 2020, 312), and to rebuild a shattered country, restoring it to an undefined, long-forgotten romantic past when heroic endeavours prevailed (e.g. Anderson 2017; Kazin 2017; Fenger 2018; Homolar and Scholz 2019). Trump's 'strongman populism' (Ross and Rivers 2020, 3), therefore, capitalises on people's powerlessness and discontent with the Establishment by offering himself as a champion acting as the only legitimate spokesperson for the good, common American people, as the only one using their language, and as a martyr ready to endure the onslaught of the 'crooked' and 'fake' Democrats and their media outlets (e.g. Fitzduff 2017, 4; McCallum-Bayliss 2019; Betz 2020; Kelly 2020, 11). This is evident in two statements taken from his acceptance nomination speech for the 2020 elections:

- (3) But I kept my word to the American People. We took the toughest, boldest, strongest, and hardest hitting action against China in American History. (DT\_280820).
- (4) Always remember: They are coming after ME, because I am fighting for YOU. (DT\_280820).

Trump's populism, whilst assigned to the far right of the political spectrum, also seeps through left-right ideological distinctions in offering a style that attracts many aggrieved Americans through its simplicity, informality, abruptness, anti-intellectualism and aversion to the Establishment, which, as they claim, seems to disrespect them, as suggested, for example, by Hilary Clinton's branding of half of Trump's supporters as a 'basket of deplorables'<sup>4</sup> (e.g. Mendes 2016, 70; Sugden 2018; Brandt 2020, 308; Ross and Rivers 2020, 2). Trump's appeal, therefore, stems primarily from his discursive style, which connects with people's feelings and motivations. This is unsurprising in that populism, irrespective of its leanings, achieves its persuasive power through discourse (e.g. Kazin 1998; Laclau 2005; Wodak 2015; Aslanidis 2016; Benítez-Castro et al. 2017; Hidalgo-Tenorio, Benítez-Castro, and De Cesare 2019). The emotional appeal of populist discourse is key to its polarising effects, this being so much so that populism 'would be unintelligible without the affective component' (Laclau 2005, 11; cf. also, e.g. Betz 1993; Block and Negrine 2017). Trump, in particular, exploits Aristotelian *pathos* to the fullest, making him a 'master of emotional persuasion' (Hochschild 2016, 225; Ayala Sánchez 2017, 353). This being the case, the question arises as to how populism taps into emotional persuasion, and, more specifically, what emotions Trump mobilises when bonding with 'his tribe', the good American people, and discrediting the 'corrupt' (Homolar and Scholz 2019, 354). That is the purpose of the following section.

### Donald Trump's affective politics

The three examples below illustrate Trump's highly emotional politics, gaining popularity through a rhetorical style portraying reality as plagued with unfairness, incompetence and perilous conditions (e.g. McAdams 2016; Bolter and Davis 2018; Zembylas 2020).

- (5) For too long, a small group in our nation's Capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost. (DT\_200117)
- (6) In the past, we have foolishly released hundreds of dangerous terrorists, only to meet them again on the battlefield [...] (DT\_310118)
- (7) There is violence and danger in the streets of many democrat-run cities. (DT\_280820)

In this context, truth and objectivity no longer matter; what draws many of his supporters to his cause is the 'deeper emotional truth' (McIntosh 2020, 22) underlying many of his well-known hyperbolic distortions (cf. also Morris and Wen 2015). In the post-truth world, many people are politically swayed not by what something *is* but by what something *feels* like. Trump's populist discourse, through its bluntness, taps into many American citizens' brain limbic systems, activating emotional triggers which replace analytical thinking with more superficial information processing (Rico, Guinjoan, and Anduiza 2017, 447). To better understand Trump's allure, reference must be made to his multifacetedness (as a magnate, entertainer and politician), and to his personal and unmediated use of Twitter. Trump's scathing attacks on his adversaries, his veneration of those he deems as heroes, and his self-congratulatory appraisals of his Cabinet's actions all point to a rhetoric entrenched in the frenzy spawned by celebrities, influencers and reality TV shows (e.g. Mendes 2016; Sugden 2018; Blankenship 2020; Brandt 2020; Ross and Rivers 2020). It is thus little wonder that many of Trump's public appearances become 'spectacular, emotionally-charged events' (Kelly 2020, 9).

Aristotelian *pathos* is typical not just of Trumpian rhetoric; it permeates all instances of populist communication. This is evident in the extensive research on populism (in all its facets), often emphasising its reliance on general feelings of dissatisfaction, disillusionment and aversion (e.g. De la Torre 1997; Canovan 1999; Betz 1993; Lee 2006; Jagers and Walgrave 2007; Block and Negrine 2017). As posited by Demertzis (2006, 2013), whilst most such research has cast light on general feelings and moods, it has not examined fully how precise emotions are construed in populist discourse, and how this may stir people into embracing or averting particular ideas. Over the past few years, the scholarly attention given to Trumpism from sociology, psychology, political science and philosophy, as well as from journalistic coverage, has predominantly highlighted Trump's angry populism (e.g. Morris and Wen 2015; Mendes 2016; Oliver and Rahn 2016; Wahl-Jorgensen 2018; Kelly 2020; McIntosh 2020). Whilst fear appeals also play a key role in his rhetorical style (cf. e.g. Wodak 2015), Trump manages to evoke these emotions in such a way that they will not make people freeze or cower, but mobilise against perceived enemies, driven more by indignant injustice than by paralysing insecurity (e.g. Morris and Wen 2015; Ayala Sánchez 2017, 353). As Rico, Guinjoan, and Anduiza (2017, 456) assert, anger, more so than fear, appears to characterise populism; people feel angry because they feel that others are unfairly depriving them of their rights.

Trump's rise to power has been linked to his skill in stoking many people's latent, ongoing resentment vis-à-vis the political Establishment, globalisation and multiculturalism. Following Scheler (1994 [1915]), this long-term attitude has been labelled as *ressentiment* to distinguish it from more punctual instances of resentment, linked to angry feelings derived from our perception of someone else's blameful actions. This persistent negative feeling originates in people's suppressed fear at losing their social standing (Demertzis 2006; Salmela and von Scheve 2017; Kelly 2020; Schaefer 2020). All this pent-up anxiety is often accompanied by feelings of 'anticipated shame' (Salmela and von Scheve 2017, 579), evoking the loss of social status that would ensue, should they be fired, should their property be repossessed, etc. (cf. also Skonieczny 2018). People end



up giving vent to this brew of fear and shame through ‘aversive affectivity’ (Capelos 2013, 41), aimed at those perceived to be responsible for their plight, i.e. the corrupt and undeserving others. These can be despised and maligned, whilst the good, hard-working common people must be protected and respected. In this sense, Trump becomes the spokesperson for all those feeling humiliated, he stands for a paternalistic figure legitimising outrage and toughness towards ‘our enemies’ as the only possible way to show care for the ‘good people’ (e.g. Anderson 2017; Zembylas 2020). As Schaefer (2020, 8) explains, Trump’s discourse rests on the assumption that ‘We are humiliated. Yet I deliver dignity’, making his constant glorification of America’s past, and his theatrical reverence towards the heroes among the common people a cornerstone of his well-known *MAGA* (*Make America Great Again*) motto (Salmela and von Scheve 2017, 577). The three examples below, taken from Trump’s 2020 acceptance nomination speech, illustrate his ambivalent rhetorical strategy, combining his hyperbolic ranting at the country’s ‘freeloaders’ (as in (8)) with his unbounded love, pride and optimism at the ‘greatness’ of America and its people (as in (9) and (10)).

- (8) [...] they pleaded with me to let China continue stealing our jobs, ripping us off [...] (DT\_280820).
- (9) We are one national family, and we will always protect, love and care for each other. (DT\_280820).
- (10) We will rekindle new faith in our values, new pride in our history, and a new spirit of unity that can ONLY be realised through love for our country. (DT\_280820).

### **Analysing Trump’s emotional discourse**

As already indicated, Trump’s emotional appeal resides in his personal use of language, one that sets him apart from typical politicians, rendering him a sort of ‘super-hero anti-politician celebrity’ (Schneiker 2018, 210). Most research on Trumpian *pathos* has been primarily sociologically and psychologically-oriented. Nonetheless, discourse analysis methodologies have been more sparsely applied. In this regard, we could mention studies drawing on CADS to examine Trump’s use of metadiscourse and engagement strategies (e.g. Quam and Ryshina-Pankova 2016; Novi, Fitriati and Sutopo 2019); his pronoun use and personal naming of his acolytes and enemies (e.g. Donadio 2017); his collocational associations (e.g. Homolar and Scholz 2019); his frequent use of hyperbole and conceptual metaphors (e.g. Abbas 2019; McCallum-Bayliss 2019); the fearsome and mythical discursive frames evoked in his narratives (e.g. Skonieczny 2018; Diaconu 2019; Gutiérrez Vidrio 2019); and the legitimisation strategies exploited when conveying his anti-immigration stance (e.g. Ross and Rivers 2020). A higher degree of analytical automation is evident in research based on Sentiment Analysis (henceforth, SA) techniques. The few SA-driven studies conducted on Trump’s discourse have yielded results that point to either high positivity (mostly joy) or negativity (mostly anger), but leave a large proportion of evaluative language unclassified (e.g. Gross and Johnson 2016; Abdullah and Hadzikadic 2017; Allen, McAleer, and Reid 2018).

In this paper, we triangulate the more automated and large-scale analysis of data inspired by CADS and SA with the exhaustive manual inspection of texts based upon their use of emotional language. Our coding approach rests on the descriptive power offered by Systemic Functional Linguistics’ Appraisal Theory (e.g. Martin and White 2005; Bednarek 2008).

Martin and White’s (2005) Appraisal Theory offers a comprehensive tool for the detection of evaluative discourse. Appraisal assigns evaluative meanings to three domains: *ATTITUDE* deals with opinions and emotions; *GRADUATION*, with the dis/intensification of evaluative responses; *ENGAGEMENT*, with the signalling of writers’ alignment with their messages (Martin and White 2005, 34–37). *ATTITUDE* comprises three types of meaning: *AFFECT*, *JUDGEMENT* and *APPRECIATION* (Martin and White 2005, 42–91). *AFFECT* encompasses emotions such as happiness, fear or anger. *JUDGEMENT* concerns our assessment of human behaviour through a range of ethical norms that are

either praised or frowned upon (e.g. *honest, evil*). APPRECIATION involves our assessments of the qualities (often aesthetic) of things, events, abstractions and people (e.g. *lovely, unimportant*). In line with White (2004) and Bednarek (2009b, 2009c), in Benítez-Castro and Hidalgo-Tenorio (2019), we promote AFFECT to the superordinate node of the taxonomy, thereby discarding the ATTITUDE label and, thus, re-naming the former AFFECT sub-system as EMOTION; and JUDGEMENT and APPRECIATION as falling into OPINION. This is explained on the grounds that affect is everywhere and always active in language (e.g. Barrett 2006; Alba-Juez 2018). Clearly, everything we say, write, hear and read is produced and processed through the filter of our inner affect. Therefore, cognition and emotion constitute two fluid and interconnected systems (e.g. Forgas 2003; Foolen 2012; Schwarz-Friesel 2015; Barrett 2017).

The new EMOTION Appraisal sub-system, therefore, concerns any linguistic exponent denoting or connoting particular emotions, whilst OPINION encodes the linguistic expression of moral-ethical and aesthetic standards. In our analysis of Trump’s discourse, we have focused mainly on EMOTION, as realised explicitly through emotion language (e.g. *love, shocked*) or more implicitly through other OPINION-related linguistic exponents (e.g. *she is very clever, implying I admire her*).

The EMOTION taxonomy employed in our analysis is a redefined version of Martin and White’s (2005) and Bednarek’s (2008) categories (see Benítez-Castro and Hidalgo-Tenorio 2019). Our model aims to offer a more psychologically-inspired classification, which does not rest solely on ad hoc or folk psychological categories. To do so, we draw inspiration from several psychological emotion theories (e.g. Ekman 1999; Ellsworth and Scherer 2003), and, especially, from the view that the mind is a ‘functional, goal-directed system’ (Power and Dalgleish 2008, 131), to propose a threefold division of emotion concepts into Goal-seeking, Goal-achievement and Goal-relation emotions. Goal-seeking emotions concern those states whereby we show our attention and cognitive engagement (or lack thereof) with the world around us. Goal-achievement emotions relate to emotional states linked to our success (or lack) thereof in pursuing or obtaining goals, or needs

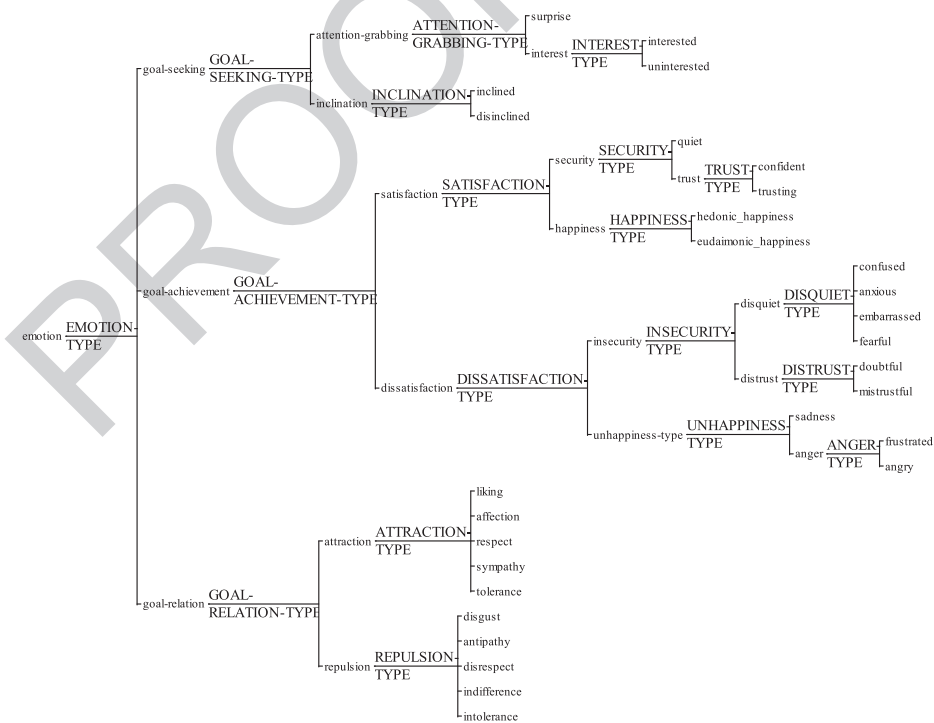


Figure 1. Benítez-Castro and Hidalgo-Tenorio’s (2019) EMOTION system.

relevant to us. Goal-relation emotions signal our generalised attachment (or lack thereof) to particular entities (Figure 1).

## Data and method

On 9 November 2016, despite obtaining almost three million votes less than the Democrat candidate,<sup>5</sup> anti-Establishment Donald Trump exulted at his election victory over Hillary Clinton. Watkins's (2019) explanation in *RedState* can be applied to other populist election success stories in the world. At a certain point, 'Americans got tired of being tired'; they were fed up with politicians' failed and empty promises, and had lost all trust in the traditional type of candidate. It was then that the self-proclaimed outsider, the eccentric showman and businessman (hero to some, amoral charlatan to others) grabbed the opportunity to become the 45th US president, by simply telling Middle America what they needed to hear without attending to political correctness.

After four years in power, the little flowery style of his blunt public statements cannot surprise anyone anymore. Neither do his fiery tweets, key to populist direct democracy, in general (e.g. García-Marín and Luengo 2019), and to Trump's communication strategy, in particular. Donald Trump is the statesman who uses this social media the most. He seems to relish his daily tweets, perhaps because he feels free to speak his mind. This is one of the conclusions of *TweetBinder Blog's* analysis of his over 43.7 K posts in the last 10 years.<sup>6</sup> The media are paramount in his tweets (especially, fake news and particular media channels like CNN and Fox), although some politicians are also the target of his comments (e.g. Barack Obama and Mitt Romney). Since his followers amount to more than 77 million people, his tweets have received so far more than 231 million RTs and 933 million Likes. Actually, his campaign's slogan (i.e. 'Today we make America great again') is one of his supporters' favourite tweets.

Whilst nobody but himself manages Trump's account, some of his more formal speeches have been written, or polished, by often anonymous professional speechwriters. That is the case of his SUA. The President lists the themes he wants to cover, writes some bits, offers input on drafts and, voilà, after rehearsal, the text still looks one hundred percent him, in that 'the writer's voice does not compete with Mr. Trump's' (Rogers 2020). In this paper, we examine his 2018 SUA, following his first year in office, and compare it to some other speeches, from his election night victory onwards. Except for his first 100 days and 2020 nomination speeches, the rest have been selected randomly based upon the topics addressed (namely, finance, international politics and national security strategy), and temporal parameters such as the distance between them. This makes up a small collection of 7 texts comprising a total of 21,374 words (see Table 1). Some of them were retrieved from the White House website; others, from different media channels like CNN or the Washington Post.

In line with this article's corpus-based grounds, we have firstly used Anthony's (2018) AntConc and Kilgariff et al.'s (2014) Sketch Engine to retrieve frequency and keyword lists, useful for

**Table 1.** TRUMP corpus.

Speech	Date	Code	Word count
Donald Trump's 2016 Election Night Victory Speech	9 November 2016	DT_091116	1714
Donald Trump's 2017 Inaugural Address	10 January 2017	DT_100117	1433
In my first 100 days, I kept my promise to Americans	29 April 2017	DT_290417	1004
Remarks by President Trump on the 2017 Administration's National Security Strategy	18 December 2017	DT_181217	3055
Trump's speech to the World Economic Forum	26 January 2018	DT_260118	1929
2018 State of the Union	31 January 2018	DT_310118	5262
2020 Donald Trump Nomination Speech	27 August 2020	DT_270820	6977
Total			21,374

**Table 2.** *AntConc* keywords: 2016 victory speech vs. 2018 SUA.

		#Keyword Types: 13			
		#Keyword Tokens: 235			
Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Effect	Keyword	
405	1	+ 58.37	0.0577	i	
	2	+ 48.9	0.0264	very	
	3	+ 43.87	0.0243	thank	
	4	+ 42.13	0.0463	you	
	5	+ 32.94	0.0133	're	
	6	+ 27.44	0.0111	reince	
	7	+ 24.69	0.01	've	
410	8	+ 23.89	0.0122	me	
	9	+ 21.95	0.0089	really	
	10	+ 21.85	0.0241	great	
	11	+ 19.2	0.0078	say	
	12	+ 19.2	0.0078	unbelievable	
	13	+ 16.45	0.0067	rudy	

estimating textual distinctiveness. Table 2 displays the keywords in Trump's 2016 victory speech, compared to his 2018 SUA.

Apart from the statistical significance of the first-person singular pronoun and the intensifier *very*, the first emotion-related keyword is *thank*. The US President shows not only his strong commitment to his country (as in (11)), but also his gratitude to all those contributing to his victory (as in (12)); predictably, in most statements, he makes this clear by the force of his emphatic nature (as in (13)). After one year in power, the tone of his speeches appears to become more serious, perhaps more sophisticated as well; obviously, the context explains this change.

(11) And I promise you that I will not let you down. (DT\_091116)

(12) This political stuff is nasty and it is tough. So I want to thank my family very much. Really fantastic. (DT\_091116)

(13) [...] what they are calling tonight very, very historic victory. (DT\_091116)

In addition to the aforementioned tools, Crossley, Kyle, and McNamara's (2017) Sentiment Analysis and Cognition Engine (SEANCE) has helped us detect the overall sentiment of the corpus, later confirmed by the results of our manual annotation; in the next section, we will discuss this point in greater length.

Our manual analysis has rested upon UAM CorpusTool (O'Donnell 2016), a piece of software offering in-built annotation schemes and enabling statistical measurements. Our user-generated annotation scheme includes Appraisal Theory's main categories (Martin and White 2005; Bednarek 2008) and its subsequent developments (i.e. Benítez-Castro and Hidalgo-Tenorio 2019), plus the following: Polarity (i.e. distinction between yes and no choices), modality (i.e. modalisation, or degree of likelihood of a proposition, versus modulation, or degree of obligation and readiness of proposals), valence (i.e. degree of un/pleasantness of an emotion), axiology (i.e. gradient between positive and negative opinion), and graduation (i.e. quantification, intensification and enhancement, or degree of intensity of nominal, adjectival and verbal groups, respectively). See the following examples:

- Assertive polarity: 'We have faced challenges we expected' (DT\_310118)
- Non-assertive polarity: 'A nation without borders is not a nation' (DT\_181217)
- Modalisation: 'And perhaps no area did the Washington special interests try harder to stop us than on my policy of pro-American immigration' (DT\_270820)
- Modulation: 'As President of the United States I will always put America first' (DT\_260118)

- Pleasant emotion: '[...] restore the bonds of trust between our citizens and their Government' (DT\_310118)
- Unpleasant emotion: 'The goal of cancel culture is to make decent Americans live in fear of being fired, expelled, shamed, humiliated and driven from society' (DT\_270820)
- 455 • Positive axiology: '[. . .] I'm reaching out to you for your guidance and your help so that we can work together and unify our great country' (DT\_091116)
- Negative axiology: 'And this election will decide whether we will defend the American way of life or whether we will allow a radical movement to completely dismantle and destroy it' (DT\_270820)
- 460 • Quantification: '[...] leaders in business, art, diplomacy and world affairs have gathered for many, many years to discuss how we can advance prosperity' (DT\_260118)
- Intensification: 'Hillary has worked very long and very hard over a long period of time' (DT\_091116)
- 465 • Enhancement: 'It's been an amazing two-year period, and I love this country' (DT\_091116)

For the sake of greater analytical accuracy, we have also indicated whether evaluative meanings are expressed explicitly or implicitly. Following Martin and White (2005, 67–68), we understand that, when someone's actions are regarded as in/appropriate, EMOTION can be invoked indirectly at the same time; thus, if someone is reported to fight for the vulnerable in society, we are likely to infer that the appraiser admires them because of their kindness. Likewise, from the evaluation of an entity's (lack of) quality, we can deduce someone's in/capability in creating the entity itself. This hypothesis operates the other way around, too: OPINION can be deduced from EMOTION; when someone is said to be respected, we understand that this is because that individual's behaviour must be morally appropriate. The examples below show some of the potential realisations of OPINION and EMOTION in our corpus:

- By means of an epithet: '[...] the United States will be the first nation to plant its beautiful flag on Mars' (DT\_270820) [(+) Explicit OPINION-APPRECIATION and (+) Implicit EMOTION]
- 480 • By means of an attribute: '[...] a merit-based immigration system – one that admits people who are skilled' (DT\_310118) [(+) Explicit OPINION-JUDGEMENT and (+) Implicit EMOTION]
- By means of a circumstantial adjunct: '[...] or whether we crush our industries and send millions of these jobs overseas as has foolishly been done for many decades' (DT\_270820) [(-) Explicit OPINION-JUDGEMENT and (-) Implicit EMOTION]
- 485 • By means of a process type: 'Everyone in America is grieving for you' (DT\_310118) [(-) Explicit EMOTION]
- By means of a grammatical metaphor: '[...] filled my life with so much joy' (DT\_270820) [(+) Explicit EMOTION]

Our annotation scheme also covers other EMOTION/OPINION realisations such as lexical metaphor and metonymy. The latter encapsulates physiological reaction, action tendency and motor expression (i.e. vocal, facial and body gestures), which can stand for the emotion itself by association. Generally, most instances are easily classified into one specific category (e.g. *smile* equals Satisfaction); nevertheless, sometimes only contextual information can help the reader adjust their interpretation. For instance, *to bound into* means 'to run with a lot of energy because someone is happy, excited or very scared'; these three are very different emotions. Below Trump uses it when narrating Army Staff Sergeant Justin Peck's reaction after an explosion wounded one of his comrades in Raqqa. The latter information clarifies that its meaning is connected with negative valence rather than with a positive emotion:

- 500 (14) Justin bounded into the booby-trapped building and found Kenton in bad shape. (DT-310118)

Last but not least, given the need to know the specific actors involved in the evaluative process, we also tag EMOTION and OPINION components; namely, the Trigger that causes the EMOTION; the Emoter that experiences such an EMOTION; the Appraised entity assessed through OPINION; and the judging OPINION-oriented Appraiser. Thus, although, in our corpus, the authorial voice is Trump's, our tagging tool can also measure whether the President reports other voices, whose realisation in the end is rather diverse, for example, God, the world, the country, US citizens, immigrants, criminals, victims, the military, politicians or the Government itself.

Up to here, we have described our research goals, our theoretical angle and our analytical method. In the next section we address our research questions in order to better understand Trump's affective rhetoric.

## Findings and discussion

There is wide-ranging research on Trump's linguistic profile, both as the TV star and socialite candidate (see Anderson 2017), and as the anomalous embodiment of Tea Party Republicanism (Mills 2020). For a start, we will mention Block and Negrine (2017, 182), who argue that populist rhetoric in general 'involves adversarial, emotional, patriotic, and abrasive speech'. Ahmadian, Azarshahi, and Paulhus (2017) and Mena García (2018) turn the focus to the main features of Trumpian discourse; according to the former, these are grandiosity, informality and vocal style; according to the latter, simplicity, repetition, parataxis, fixed frames, non-standard and punchy words, deictics, intensifiers, inarticulation and hearsay evidence. Certainly, some of these features have contributed to his success. Among the articles exploring Trump's rhetorical style, we can also mention Chen's (2018) detailed analysis of the modality, transitivity and pronoun patterns in his inaugural speech. The findings reveal how his language reflects the politician's ideology, in that his resolution and closeness are claimed to be useful weapons to reach his audience. His metaphorical expressions lie at the core of McCallum-Bayliss's (2019) cognitive-oriented study, showing how the US President's opinions and attitudes are shaped by his conqueror's construal of the world; interestingly, this view may demonstrate that the populist *demos* is only a means to his goals in his speeches and tweets.

Interestingly, in a co-authored best-seller with journalist Tony Schwartz, Trump already explained one of his key discursive features, namely, the so-called 'truthful hyperbole' to his eye, this is an 'innocent form of exaggeration – and a very effective form of promotion' whose success hinges upon people wanting to believe that 'something is the biggest and the greatest and the most spectacular' (Trump and Schwartz 1987, 58). This statement is directly related to our paper. As indicated above, Donald Trump is the epitome of the 'emotions candidate' (Hochschild 2016, 225), as he pays closer attention to emotion than politics, based on his awareness that people are better mobilised by the interplay between 'emotional appeal' (Wahl-Jorgensen 2018) and 'affective dispositions' (Mühlhoff 2019) than by mere facts. Especially relevant here are anger and fear, as well as love and hope, whose combination Ringrose (2018) calls 'Trump pedagogy' and Peters and Protevi (2017) 'affective ideology'.

Bearing the above in mind, it is surprising that not many discourse-oriented papers study emotion in Trump's speeches or tweets; instead, scholarly attention seems to be mostly geared to his supporters' and adversaries' emotional reactions, as in Abdullah and Hadzikadic (2017). The discursive approach to Trump's affective politics takes centre stage, for instance, in Valentino, Wayne, and Ocen (2018), Brandt (2020), or Caramelo Pérez (2020), who focus on how fear appeals work in his verbal and non-verbal performance. Wahl-Jorgensen (2018, 771), in turn, considers the actualisation of anger as a key emotion in Trump's speeches, resulting in a new kind of 'angry populism' stripped of any ideology and dependent only on how this emotion operates on the politician and his followers.<sup>7</sup> Using data-mining techniques and the R package Sentiment, Allen, McAleer, and Reid (2018) conclude that Trump plays with other emotions, as joy and surprise are the most prevailing categories in the texts under study. Furthermore, in a qualitative analysis of his

narratives and metaphor use, Ariza and Gutiérrez (2020) show how the mixture of hatred and compassion can move individuals very effectively. Likewise, Schaefer (2020) adds another emotion to the list: Shame; from Trump’s standpoint, feeling shameful does not necessarily lead to avoidance; instead, it can evoke feelings of dignity.

In this paper we draw on Appraisal Theory; to our knowledge, Quam and Ryshina-Pankova (2016), Novi, Fitriati and Sutopo (2019), Song (2019), and Ross and Caldwell (2020) are among the few papers approaching the analysis of Trump’s discourse from this perspective. Their focus, however, is not on EMOTION but on OPINION-JUDGEMENT, OPINION-APPRECIATION and ENGAGEMENT. From this point on, we will try to tease out the emotional nature of Trump’s populism in all the speeches comprising the study corpus; and to discuss noteworthy findings drawn from our close analysis of one.

Figure 2 below provides an overview of the sentiment of two speeches from November 2016 to August 2020, plus Trump’s first SUA in January 2018. SEANCE 20 scores measure ethics, cognition and emotional reaction (see Table 3). The highest score is 1; the lowest, -1. The higher the score is, the more it predicts the positivity of a text.

The analysis reveals how, out of all the components, those that prevail in his 2016 victory speech relate to high pleasantness, particularly polarity and positive verbs and nouns (see Table 4). Understandably, it is little wonder that his victory speech is characterised by marked positive valence, instead of negative adjectives of disgust, anger and hostility, which become rare. His two other speeches are also predominantly positive in their valence (see, for example, the high Joy in his 2018 SUA). Actually, there seems to be a recurrent pattern in general: Avoidance of explicit negativity, explicit expression of happiness, and concern with rectitude, ethics and social needs.

Likewise, the keyword lists retrieved with Sketch Engine (Kilgariff et al. 2014) with three different reference corpora (i.e. the English Web 2015, the Written Open American National Corpus and the Spoken Open American National Corpus) are very revealing (see Table 5).

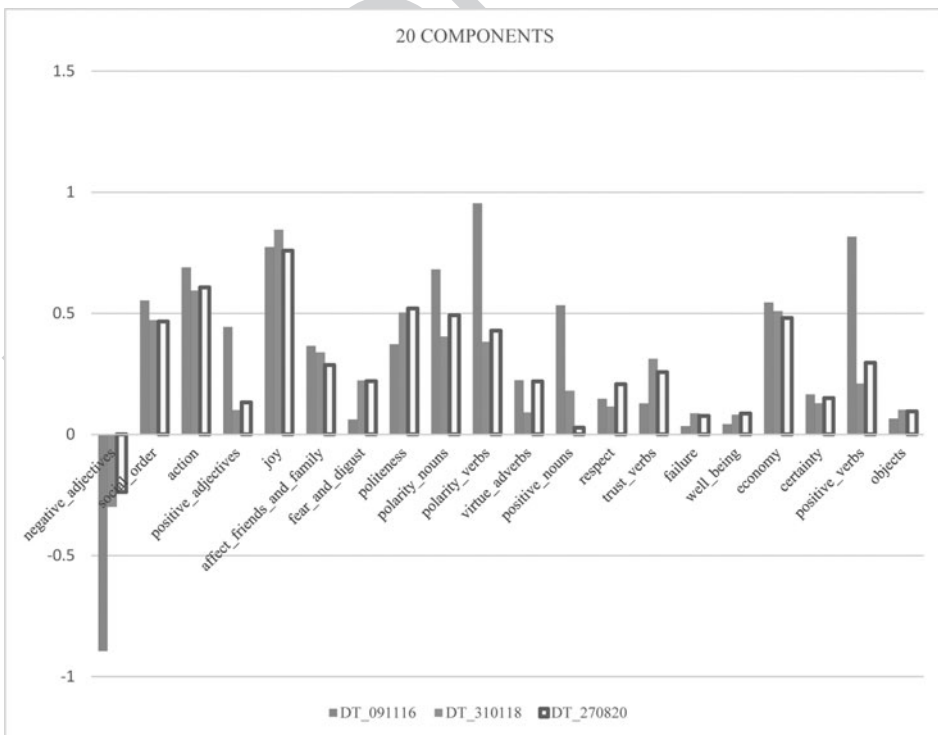


Figure 2. An overview of SEANCE results of 3 speeches: November 2016, January 2018 and August 2020.

**Table 3.** SEANCE 20 components.

		Description of component scores		
Component	Label	Number of indices	Key indices	
605	1	Negative adjectives	18	NRC negative adjectives, NRC disgust adjectives, NRC anger adjectives, GI negative adjectives, Lu Hui negative adjectives
	2	Social order	11	RC ethics verbs, GI need verbs, RC rectitude words
	3	Action	9	GI ought verbs, GI try verbs, GI travel verbs, GI descriptive action verbs
	4	Positive adjectives	9	Lu Hui positive adjectives, Vader positive, GI positive adjectives, Laswell positive affect adjectives
	5	Joy	8	NRC joy adjectives, NRC anticipation adjectives, NRC surprise adjectives
610	6	Affect for friends and family	9	Laswell affect nouns, Laswell participant affect, GI kin noun, GI affiliation nouns
	7	Fear and disgust	8	NRC disgust nouns, NRC negative nouns, NRC fear, NRC anger
	8	Politics	7	GI politics, GI politics nouns, Laswell power
	9	Polarity nouns	7	Polarity nouns, Pleasantness nouns, Aptitude nouns
	10	Polarity verbs	4	Polarity verbs, Aptitude verbs, Pleasantness verbs
615	11	Virtue adverbs	5	Laswell rectitude gain adverbs, GI concerns for hostility adverbs, Laswell sureness adverbs
	12	Positive nouns	4	Lu Hui nouns
	13	Respect	4	Laswell respect nouns
	14	Trust verbs	5	NRC trust verbs, NRC joy verbs, NRC positive verbs
	15	Failure	5	Laswell power loss verbs, GI failure verbs
	16	Well being	4	Laswell well-being physical nouns, Laswell well-being total
620	17	Economy	4	GI names adjectives, GI economy adjectives, GI economy all
	18	Certainty	6	GI quantity, GI overstatement, Laswell if, Laswell sureness nouns
	19	Positive verbs	3	Lu Hui positive verbs
	20	Objects	4	GI objects, GALC being touched

The table above displays lexical items conveying some of his concerns during the campaign and once in office, like morally unacceptable, illegal, violent and unruly actions bound to cause social damage, physical and/or psychological harm, and, in Trump’s view, even the end of the status quo. This all ties in with Trump’s crisis rhetoric and narrative (e.g. Homolar and Scholz 2019):

(15) If the Democrat Party wants to stand with anarchists, agitators, rioters, looters and flag burners, that is up to them. (DT\_270820)

The data in Table 5 allow us to make some general observations. Firstly, despite Trump’s social media negativity, only 56.6% of the keywords in the list are negatively loaded (e.g. *horribly*, *wrongdoer*, *tyranny* vs. *optimism*, *brave*, *decency*); secondly, despite what the populism literature suggests, the most frequent lexical items (72.1%) in these speeches do not belong in the category EMOTION but OPINION-JUDGEMENT (e.g. *radical*, *xenophobic*, *strength*, *brave*); thirdly, again, and given the above, although we expected his speeches to be full of vitriol, the number of positive EMOTION words in this corpus outweighs the negative ones (i.e. 71.7% vs. 28.3%). The examples below illustrate Trump’s view at the start of his political career, as someone who knows that political gain may ensue from his positive hyperbolic use of language to reinforce the values of the past and the pristine qualities of the American people vs. the Other (either the migrant, the elite or the terrorist); this hyperbolic positivity is included by Homolar and Scholz (2019, 355) under the label ‘Trump-speak’

**Table 4.** Main SEANCE scores in the three speeches selected.

	Joy	Social order	Negative adjectives	Positive adjectives	Polarity nouns	Polarity verbs	Positive nouns	Positive verbs
DT_091116	0.773	0.553	-0.894	0.444	0.682	0.954	0.533	0.817
DT_310118	0.845	0.472	-0.299	0.101	0.405	0.383	0.181	0.210
DT_270820	0.759	0.466	-0.238	0.132	0.492	0.428	0.028	0.296



**Table 6.** Wmatrix key semantic domains in Trump's 2018 SUA.

ITEM	01	%1	02	%2	LL	%DIFF	Example
E5+	9	0.18	55	0.01 +	43.58	3088.73	<i>Bravery</i>
E4.2+	9	0.18	178	0.02 +	24.65	885.28	<i>Content</i>
E3-	18	0.36	959	0.10 +	20.35	265.76	<i>Violent/Angry</i>
E6+	7	0.14	292	0.03 +	10.48	367.15	<i>Confident</i>
E4.1-	5	0.10	400	0.04 +	2.99	143.58	<i>Sad</i>
E2+	7	0.14	2255	0.23 -	2.10	-39.51	<i>Like</i>
E4.1+	2	0.04	782	0.08 -	1.24	-50.16	<i>Happy</i>
E5-	3	0.06	398	0.04 +	0.39	46.88	<i>Fear/shock</i>
E1	1	0.02	137	0.01 +	0.11	42.24	Emotional, Actions, States And Processes General
E6-	4	0.08	733	0.07 +	0.01	6.34	<i>Worry</i>
E3+	1	0.02	207	0.02 -	0.00	-5.86	<i>Calm</i>

(16) [...] the American people have always been the true source of American greatness. Our people have promoted our culture and promoted our values. (DT\_181217)

(17) America stands with the people of Iran in their courageous struggle for freedom. (DT\_310118)

Unsurprisingly, the cases of inclusive pronoun *we* in the corpus outnumber second person pronoun *you* (frequency 548 vs. 200) (as in (18)), thereby invoking America's collective imaginary. The high occurrence of this function word is statistically significant when compared to its usage in both the English Web 2015 and the Written Open American National Corpus (score 6.390 and 9.290, respectively). Still, addressing his supporters directly, as in (19), was also an effective propaganda tool of his.

(18) We are not a nation of timid spirits. We are a nation of fierce, proud and independent American patriots. (DT\_270820)

(19) You are determined, you are brave, you are strong, and you are wise. (DT\_181217)

Thus, Trump could deliver a message of hope and admiration for a population, with an excruciating inclusive perception of corruption, aversion towards the Establishment, and a growing sense of insecurity and loss, all of which explains political disaffection (e.g. Mikko and von Scheve 2017). Although this long-standing sense of injustice would have been expected to produce large numbers of negative EMOTION terms for the explicit expression of anger, outrage, spite, indignation, sorrow and annoyance, we have found much more explicit positive EMOTION (as in (20) to (22)). It is our contention that this politician's explicit criticism of others' actions through OPINION indirectly generates social outrage and antipathy (as in (23)).

(20) [...] hopefully, you will be so proud of your president, you will be so proud. (DT\_091116)

(21) A new tide of optimism was already sweeping across our land. (DT\_310118)

(22) Together, let us send our love and gratitude to make them, because they really make our countries run. (DT\_260118)

(23) In recent weeks, two terrorist attacks in New York were made possible by the visa lottery and chain migration. In the age of terrorism, these programs present risks we can no longer afford. (DT\_310118)

At this point, we must draw attention to another statistically significant item in the list, namely, *empathy*. Notwithstanding its originally positive meaning, here this is used not to describe Trump's, or his followers', understanding of other people's feelings and problems, but to condemn what, in his opinion, his current opponent represents (as in (24)). In order to question Biden's sincerity and, subsequently, generate repulsion towards him, Trump employs two discursive devices: The verb *to*

*claim* and the epithet *hollow*, at a stroke, help portray the Democrat candidate as disloyal to the principles of his Party, and as unaware of, and uninterested in, the voters' needs.

(24) Joe Biden claims he has empathy for the vulnerable [...] They didn't want to hear Biden's hollow words of empathy. They wanted their jobs back. (DT\_270820)

Up to here, we have mentioned some of the most distinctive features of the entire corpus and of some speeches. To refine these findings, we will now delve into Trump's 2018 SUA. Before presenting the results of this text's manual coding through UAM CorpusTool, Table 6 displays all the emotional actions, states and processes present in the speech as retrieved from the UCREL Semantic Analysis software tool Wmatrix (Rayson 2008). The log-likelihood statistic employed shows the general tone to be rather constructive, since, among the top four categories, three represent positive emotional reactions and states (i.e. lack of fear and lack of worry).

In line with the aforementioned results, our manual annotation reinforces this speech's marked positivity, or pleasantness (see Figure 3(a)). The highest-ranking positively-valenced EMOTION is Goal-relation Attraction (see Figure 3(b)), followed by Goal-seeking Inclination and Goal-achievement Satisfaction.

The three most recurrent sub-categories are exemplified below. From Trump's words, we can infer the Government's success in working for the citizens' well-being (as in (25)), in a context where the latter are courageous, relentless and impossible to intimidate (as in (26)). Americans' reverential respect towards the nation's most precious values is seen as a natural condition of the whole community that must be rewarded with the same affection (as in (27)). In this text, then, like in most of his speeches, the President combines the businessman's efficiency narrative resulting in his people's desirable tranquillity with a more emotionally charged tenor, which, eventually, reconnects the politician to his voters. The coldness of a mere statesman is replaced, or rather embellished, by the proximity of the man in the street, who, for that very reason, is expected to be more trustworthy.

(25) Our massive tax cuts provide tremendous relief for the middle class [...] (DT\_310118) (Goal-achievement Satisfaction)

(26) A people whose heroes live [...] all around us – defending hope, pride, and the American way. (DT\_310118) (Goal-seeking Inclination)

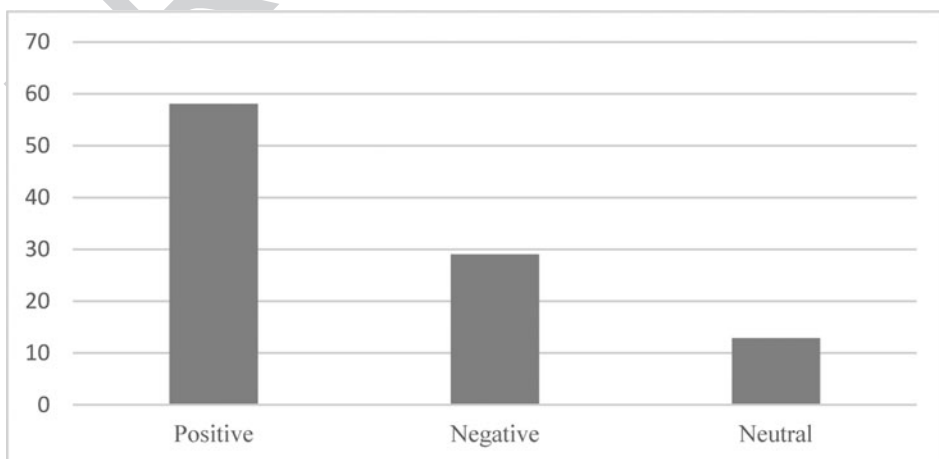


Figure 3. (a) Valence in Trump's 2018 SUA. (b). EMOTION categories in Trump's 2018 SUA.

(27) Americans love their country. And they deserve a Government that shows them the same love and loyalty in return. (DT\_310118) (Goal-relation Attraction)

A highly intricate analytical aspect our manual annotation has forced us to address is the actual instantiation of evaluation, that is, whether the expression of OPINION or EMOTION is denotatively inscribed, as in (28), or connotatively inferred.

(28) [...] ending chain migration and the horrible visa and lottery programs. (DT\_181217)

In the Data and Method section above, we list some of the possible realisations we could tag (e.g. epithets, attributes, adjuncts, process types, etc.). Interestingly, despite general opinion, Trump's use of emotional evaluation is rather inexplicit; in only 32.01% of the cases, EMOTION is tagged as explicit. In Hidalgo-Tenorio and Benítez-Castro (2020), we focus on the OPINION-EMOTION interplay, and in so doing, exemplify how inscribed JUDGEMENT or APPRECIATION can be read simultaneously as invoked EMOTION, and the other way around. The TRUMP corpus has many examples displaying the richness of this multi-layered combination. For instance, in (29), the chamber where the SUA is held is described as *majestic*; from his perspective, this place must be very big, large and/or beautiful; the President will probably think that it is important and impressive; he must therefore admire it in some way; aesthetic OPINION-APPRECIATION can then be implicitly read as Goal-relation EMOTION.

(29) [...] I first stood at this podium, in this majestic chamber [...] (DT\_310118)

Admiration, or its opposite, can also be expressed indirectly through JUDGEMENT-denoting terms. We have annotated (30) below, for instance, as implicit EMOTION Attraction: What is morally good can also be deemed as respectable; apparently, this is what Trump seems to think about their job in the White House (i.e. ethical OPINION-JUDGEMENT read implicitly as Goal-relation EMOTION). Likewise, tenacity is a personality trait or attribute that society also tends to value positively, and so does Trump. In (31), the President talks about the perseverance of the US House of Representatives' Majority Whip; as he reports, despite the seriousness of the gunshot wounds sustained after being attacked during a charity event, Steve Scalise was determined to resume his duties shortly. Again, admiration (i.e. Goal-relation EMOTION) can be inferred from the explicit expression of remarkable ethical behaviours. This is a recurrent pattern in the speech, full of similar instances whereby the politician shows respect through OPINION instead of EMOTION.

(30) [...] we have gone forward with a clear vision and a righteous mission [...] (DT\_310118)

(31) [...] a guy who took a bullet, almost died, and was back to work three and a half months later [...] (DT\_310118)

Example (32) offers an accurate illustration of Trump's intended cognitive effect in his first SUA. This string of metaphorical utterances helps construe the American people in the terms described above. Their firmness is admirable, as they will never be stopped by either geographical or political barriers, or any difficult task discursively portrayed as a wild animal which, through skill and strength, can be domesticated. All these qualities are deeply embedded within American culture, underlying the American-dream narrative (Grusky et al. 2019).

(32) If there is a mountain, we climb it. If there is a frontier, we cross it. If there is a challenge, we tame it. (DT\_310118)

In short, this speech is mainly about admiration and willingness. It revolves around what Americans admire, what Americans long to accomplish, and what Trump himself claims to be ready to do

to help them achieve their goals. It is addressed to the young and to the vulnerable, encouraging them all to keep believing in the American dream (as in (33)). But he also talks about 'every citizen' in general, and 'every child' in particular; in his view, the latter symbolise society's section in most need of protection, making safety (or the lack thereof) then one of the key foundations of an allegedly right-wing populist speech like this (see (34) and (35)). As for the former, they are requested to stand for the most cherished qualities of the country in the American collective mind: Determination, courage, honesty and pride (see (36)).

(33) I want our youth to grow up to achieve great things. I want our poor to have their chance to rise. (DT\_310118)

(34) We want every child to be safe in their home at night. (DT\_310118)

(35) You are powerful witnesses to a menace that threatens our world, and your strength inspires us all. (DT\_310118)

(36) We want every American to know the dignity of a hard day's work [...] And we want every citizen to be proud of this land that we love. (DT\_310118)

Furthermore, this speech is about Satisfaction; there is happiness, calm and trust (as in (37) to (39)), and, interestingly, they are generally expressed explicitly. The manifested state of being happy is due to their past, present and future victories, something everyone should be thankful for; gratitude, therefore, is also another outstanding emotional reaction in this text.

(37) We have shared in the heights of victory and the pains of hardship. (DT\_310118)

(38) We are incredibly grateful for the heroic efforts of the Capitol Police Officers [...] who saved his life. (DT\_310118)

(39) As long as we have confidence in our values, faith in our citizens, and trust in our God, we will not fail. (DT\_310118)

Whilst less frequent, the text also reveals some instances of Dissatisfaction. In the example below, we can see how Trump is able to create, and enhance, an emotional bond between himself and the nation by using a very simple psychological strategy: To invoke the common feeling of sadness caused by loss.

(40) As one nation, we mourn, we grieve [...] (DT\_270820)

Finally, as for Attraction and Repulsion, we proved above that the President prefers the categories Respect, Affection and Sympathy, to Disgust, Antipathy or Indifference. Here, he draws on a powerful strategy such as the 'we' vs. 'other' narrative:

(41) [...] we are with you, we love you, and we will pull through together. (DT\_310118)

(42) We are proud that we do more than any other country to help [...] the underprivileged all over the world. But as President [...], my highest loyalty, my greatest compassion, and my constant concern is for America's children, America's struggling workers, and America's forgotten communities. (DT\_310118)

His depiction of the previous Administration, terrorists and immigrants, and some countries such as China, Russia and North Korea is very remarkable, too. The EMOTION category of Goal-relation Repulsion prevails in these cases, though indirectly. The President does not express his explicit disgust at them; the emotional reaction triggered rests on their questionable behaviour, the bad actions they have taken, or the social principles and moral standards they neither respect nor meet:

- (43) We eliminated an especially cruel tax that fell mostly on Americans making less than \$50,000 a year. (DT\_310118)
- (44) Terrorists who do things like place bombs in civilian hospitals are evil. (DT\_310118)
- (45) But no regime has oppressed its own citizens more totally or brutally than the cruel dictatorship in North Korea. (DT\_310118)

## Concluding remarks

The linguistic evidence gathered in our analysis has shown that Trump's communicative style, at least in his post-2016 public speeches, is not as negatively loaded as his unmediated and histrionic Twitter use reveals. This being the case, Trump still taps into several key indicators of populist rhetoric, as evident, for instance, in his exultant self-satisfaction at his own alleged achievements or the feats yet to come; his veneration of a past when the American nation and its pure values emerged; and his self-portrayal as a benign paternal figure and tough superhero admiring and protecting his people at all costs. Affect (whether more EMOTION- or OPINION-oriented), therefore, remains key to understanding his persuasive appeal after his 2016 election victory, and all the way down to nowadays, when Trump's supporters flock to his rallies to marvel at their leader's resilience following his speedy recovery from Covid-19, which Trump himself praises as a 'blessing from God'<sup>8</sup>. In our analysis of Trump's speeches, the combined contribution of CADS, SA and SFL Appraisal Theory has helped uncover Trump's general tendency to express EMOTION through explicit hyperbolic OPINION; in other words, by emphasising the intensity and magnitude of his manifold appraisals of his friends, foes, events and circumstances, Trump is simultaneously conveying his joy, admiration, outrage, moral disgust, etc. towards the entities reacted to. A clear case in point is his 2018 SUA, when Trump puts on a highly emotional reality TV-style show elaborating on the many lights and peaks of his first year in office. Highly noteworthy in this regard is the dominance of Goal-relation Attraction realisations. This may be explained by his constant reliance on exemplary narratives or exempla for greater *pathos*. In these narratives, Trump turns the spotlight onto a range of good common American citizens who have either faced terrifying ordeals because of illegal migration, who have shown outstanding endurance in tackling problematic situations, or who have achieved great personal and professional success thanks to the legislative actions taken by his Administration. All these citizens exemplify the untainted purity of America, the many tribulations still facing 'the people', and the greatness awaiting the country under Trump's rule. Compassion, admiration, love and pride, therefore, become key ingredients of the emotional atmosphere Trump manages to instil in his audience during his first SUA. This was not an exception, or a one-off; it pushed the boundaries of a serious, fixed genre to turn it into an event that is currently more akin to a theatrical performance or a reality TV show gala; as Graham (2020)<sup>9</sup> argues following Trump's last SUA in February 2020, 'words were secondary and the spectacle was foremost'. All in all, Trump is just one example of how the current post-truth era of '3.0 populism' (Benítez-Castro, De Cesare and Hidalgo-Tenorio 2017) has ushered in a new political rhetoric where hyperbole, simplicity, mass emotions, confrontation and show business have become the new normal. This paper has shown how discourse analysis can help disentangle the many layers under which populist emotion-driven communication operates; only by getting to the roots of its rhetorical strategies can we begin to grasp the reasons behind the success of this brand of unconventional social media-driven politics, as epitomised, among many others, by US President Donald Trump.

Raising awareness of the discursive nuts and bolts of this rhetorical style is key to educational contexts, particularly to upper secondary, sixth-form and university students. Students, as future critical, socially engaged and reflective citizens, may certainly benefit from the close analysis of the communicative intentions behind the melodramatic and overacted spectacles of populist leaders. At the end of the day, it is up to them to decide whether to be swayed or repelled by Trump's

or Maduro's messages; their decisions, though, should be as informed as possible. To help them in this regard, we, educators, need to provide them with strategies whereby they can critically assess and disentangle the emotional underpinnings and intentions of populist-driven political discourse, whether more traditional or social media-oriented (see also, e.g. Ringrose 2018; Zembylas 2020). Discourse analysis and critical literacy, therefore, do have a crucial role to play in this regard; only by looking at language in context, only by engaging students in opportunities for reflective and discovery learning will they start questioning the apparent neutrality of discourse and, in so doing, take their first steps in their ability to discern the often unnoticed, though highly pernicious, social influence exerted by certain kinds of fallacious rhetorical *pathos*. In our attempt to comprehend one supreme exemplar of the populist narrative of populism such as Donald Trump's, we can assist the citizenship of the future, those who will have agency to change the status quo for the better, in deconstructing its ambiguities and falseness, and encouraging a counter-discourse perspective that can make them freer.

## Notes

1. <https://www.sketchengine.eu/>.
2. The code comprises the President's initials, along with the date when the speech was delivered.
3. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/19/opinion/trump-anger-fear.html>.
4. <https://time.com/4486502/hillary-clinton-basket-of-deplorables-transcript/>.
5. 'Presidential Election Results: Donald J. Trump Wins' <https://www.nytimes.com/elections/2016/results/president> (Accessed July 30, 2020).
6. 'Donald Trump on Twitter - 2009 / 2020 analysis' <https://www.tweetbinder.com/blog/trump-twitter/> (Accessed August 31, 2020).
7. See Robinson's (<http://varianceexplained.org/r/trump-tweets/>) Text analysis of Trump's that confirms that 'he writes only the (angrier) Android half.'
8. <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2020/10/07/us/trump-covid-19-live-latest>.
9. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/02/trumps-wildly-theatrical-state-union/606118/>.

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