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A Critical Discourse Analysis of Selected Speeches by Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May

Le Thi Thuy Duong¹ 

¹ Ho Chi Minh City University of Industry and Trade, Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

*Corresponding author: Le Thi Thuy Duong — e-mail: anastasia.318@gmail.com

Abstract

This study compares how Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May use language to construct political authority, represent national problems, and align audiences with Conservative policy positions. A qualitative-dominant critical discourse analysis was conducted on a purposive corpus of ten public speeches, five by each politician. The analysis follows Fairclough's three-stage model of description, interpretation, and explanation and examines vocabulary, transitivity, voice, sentence mood, modality, pronouns, metaphor, and macrostructure. The findings show that both speakers rely on topic-specific lexical fields, formal registers, evaluative classification, material processes, active voice, and inclusive pronouns to present political action as necessary and collectively supported. Active constructions dominate the corpus, ranging from 77% to 96% in May's speeches and from 84% to 92% in Thatcher's. However, the two speakers differ in emphasis. Thatcher more often frames policy through ideological contrast, national resolve, and the moral vocabulary of freedom and responsibility, whereas May more often organizes authority around administrative competence, security, negotiation, and collective obligation. These differences are best explained by the distinct crises and communicative situations in which the speeches were produced rather than by gender alone. The study demonstrates how linguistic form contributes to political legitimacy and provides a replicable framework for comparative analysis of leadership discourse.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis; political discourse; ideology; power; modality; political leadership

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1. Introduction

Political leadership is exercised not only through institutions, laws, and policy decisions but also through language. Speeches identify problems, assign responsibility, establish relations between leaders and citizens, and present some courses of action as more reasonable or legitimate than others. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is therefore especially useful for studying political communication because it treats linguistic choices as socially situated practices rather than as neutral containers of information. Fairclough's account of language and power emphasizes that apparently ordinary choices of vocabulary and grammar may reproduce unequal relations or make a particular political order appear natural (Fairclough, 1989, 1995).

Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May offer a productive comparison. They were the first and second women to serve as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, represented the same political party, and addressed audiences during periods of significant national and international pressure. Yet their political contexts differed sharply. Thatcher's public rhetoric developed

around economic restructuring, the Cold War, European integration, enterprise, and national sovereignty. May's discourse was shaped by Brexit, counterterrorism, immigration, economic globalization, and the demand for stable government. A comparison of their speeches can therefore reveal both continuity in Conservative political language and context-sensitive variation in how authority is performed.

Existing discussions of political discourse frequently describe isolated rhetorical devices or focus on a single leader. Such work is valuable, but it can understate the relationship among lexical choice, grammatical agency, audience alignment, and the wider social conditions of a speech. A comparative CDA addresses this limitation by connecting textual features to processes of production and reception and then to broader structures of ideology and power. It also avoids treating female leadership as a homogeneous style. Similarities between Thatcher and May may arise from shared institutional roles and party traditions, while differences may reflect historical context, policy agenda, audience, genre, or individual political identity.

The present study analyzes a balanced corpus of ten speeches, five by each politician. It focuses on three linked levels: vocabulary, grammar, and textual organization. At the lexical level, the study examines experiential, relational, and expressive values, including over-lexicalization, formality, euphemism, evaluative classification, and metaphor. At the grammatical level, it considers transitivity, active and passive voice, sentence mood, pronoun selection, and modality. At the discourse level, it examines how speeches move from problem definition to evaluation and proposed action. These categories make it possible to compare not merely what the speakers discuss, but how their language positions political actors and audiences.

The study addresses three research questions:

- How are experiential, relational, and expressive meanings realized through vocabulary, grammar, and textual structure in the selected speeches?
- What similarities and differences characterize Thatcher's and May's construction of ideology, authority, responsibility, and audience alignment?
- What do these patterns imply for the study of language, power, and female political leadership?

By answering these questions, the article contributes a transparent comparative framework and a more cautious interpretation of political style. It argues that linguistic evidence should be related to institutional position and communicative context before broader claims are made about leadership or gender.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA investigates the relationship between discourse and social power. It is "critical" not because it assumes that every text contains deliberate manipulation, but because it asks how meanings become naturalized, whose interests they serve, and what alternatives they exclude. Fairclough (1995) defines discourse as a form of social practice and proposes that analysis should connect textual form with processes of production and interpretation and with wider social structures. Van Dijk (1998) similarly treats ideology as an organized system of social

beliefs that shapes group identity, knowledge, and evaluation. Wodak and Meyer (2001) emphasize that CDA is problem-oriented and interdisciplinary, drawing on linguistic analysis while remaining attentive to history and institutions.

Fairclough's three-stage procedure provides the organizing framework for this study. Description identifies formal properties of a text, including vocabulary, grammatical structures, cohesion, and organization. Interpretation considers the interactional resources used by speakers and audiences, such as shared knowledge, genre expectations, and assumptions about political roles. Explanation links these processes to the social conditions and consequences of discourse. The three stages are analytically distinct but interdependent: a lexical pattern becomes politically meaningful only when it is interpreted within its communicative situation and connected to a broader struggle over legitimacy or policy.

2.2. Power, Ideology, and Political Authority

Power in discourse can be visible in direct commands, but it also operates through agenda setting, classification, presupposition, and the distribution of agency. Fairclough (1989) describes power as a contested social relation rather than a permanent possession. Foucault (1972) likewise stresses that power circulates through practices and is accompanied by possibilities of resistance. Political speeches illustrate both points: leaders speak from institutionally privileged positions, yet they must continually justify decisions, manage opposition, and renew public consent.

Ideology is relevant at both structural and textual levels. Lexical labels divide social actors into legitimate and illegitimate groups; metaphors organize complex policy issues through familiar images; modal verbs grade certainty and obligation; and pronouns define who is included in a political "we." Ideological meaning is not confined to explicitly evaluative words. It may also be embedded in assumptions about what counts as a problem, which actors are named as responsible, and whether an event is represented as a deliberate action, an unavoidable process, or a shared national task. Kress and Hodge's (1979) treatment of language as ideology underscores the importance of grammatical form alongside lexical content.

2.3. Analytical Categories for Political Speeches

The first analytical domain is vocabulary. Experiential value concerns how words classify experience and represent social reality. Repetition and over-lexicalization can signal an area of ideological concern, while synonymy, antonymy, and hyponymy organize political concepts into networks. Relational value concerns the social relationship enacted through choices such as formal address, technical terminology, euphemism, and inclusive or exclusive naming. Expressive value concerns evaluation: positive and negative descriptions, intensification, and metaphor indicate the speaker's position toward events and participants.

The second domain is grammar. Halliday's (1994) functional approach treats clauses as representations of experience in which process types and participant roles distribute agency. Material processes represent actions and events; mental processes represent perception or cognition; relational processes define states and identities. Voice is especially relevant in political discourse because active clauses generally make agency explicit, whereas passive constructions can foreground an affected entity or leave the actor unexpressed. Sentence mood

distinguishes declaratives, interrogatives, and imperatives, while modality allows speakers to express certainty, probability, willingness, prediction, necessity, and obligation.

The third domain is textual structure. Political speeches rarely consist of isolated claims; they arrange claims into recognizable rhetorical sequences. Hoey's (1983) work on discourse organization shows how relations such as problem–response, situation–evaluation, and claim–support guide interpretation. Martin and Rothery (1986) likewise demonstrate that macrostructure reflects communicative purpose. In political addresses, a common sequence moves from a description of crisis, through moral or causal evaluation, to a policy response and a call for unity. The organization of this sequence affects which alternatives appear available and which actors seem capable of action.

2.4. Comparative Political Discourse and the Research Gap

Prior CDA research has shown that political speakers use transitivity, modality, pronouns, and evaluative language to construct favorable identities and legitimize policy. Wang's (2010) analysis of Barack Obama's speeches, for example, illustrates how linguistic choices can combine accessibility with authority. Studies of discourse and power in multilingual and institutional settings further show that authority is negotiated across audiences and contexts rather than simply transmitted from speaker to listener (Blackledge, 2005). Vietnamese scholarship has also applied CDA to presidential speeches, policy addresses, and persuasive public texts (Hang, 2007; Tham, 2017; Thuong, 2015).

Nevertheless, a focused comparison of Thatcher and May remains useful for three reasons. First, shared party affiliation controls, to a limited extent, for broad ideological tradition. Second, their different historical contexts make it possible to examine how that tradition is rearticulated around different crises. Third, their status as female leaders in a male-dominated institution raises important questions, but the corpus also cautions against attributing every rhetorical difference to gender. The present study therefore prioritizes textually supported, context-sensitive comparison.

Methodology

3. Methodology

The study uses a qualitative-dominant mixed approach. Qualitative analysis identifies the function of lexical, grammatical, and structural choices in context. Descriptive quantitative evidence is used where counts clarify a pattern, particularly in the comparison of active and passive voice. The design is comparative rather than experimental: it does not claim that a linguistic feature is caused by the speaker's gender, party, or historical period. Instead, it examines recurring patterns and interprets them against the communicative purpose of each speech.

3.2. Corpus and Sampling

The corpus contains ten publicly available speeches, five attributed to Theresa May and five to Margaret Thatcher. Purposive sampling was used to include domestic and international audiences and to cover leadership, security, Europe, economic policy, enterprise, and national responsibility. The texts range from approximately 1,075 to 4,193 words. Table 1 lists the

corpus metadata retained from the source dataset, with a duplicated May entry removed and the date of the Bruges speech normalized to 1988. Because several Thatcher speeches were delivered after her premiership, the analysis refers to speeches by the two politicians rather than describing every item as a prime-ministerial address.

Table 1. Corpus of selected speeches

Speech	Speaker	Date	Words	Audience
Conservative Party Conference, Manchester	Theresa May	10/2015	4,157	National
Strong leadership speech	Theresa May	06/2017	3,223	National
Speech on terrorism and extremism	Theresa May	09/2014	3,848	International
Statement on the London Bridge attack	Theresa May	06/2017	1,075	National
World Economic Forum, Davos	Theresa May	01/2017	3,187	International
‘The Lady’s Not for Turning’	Margaret Thatcher	10/1980	4,193	National
Bruges speech, College of Europe	Margaret Thatcher	09/1988	3,130	International
Speech to Bromley Conservatives	Margaret Thatcher	07/2001	1,637	National
Speech on Japanese youth	Margaret Thatcher	09/1991	3,457	International
International Free Enterprise dinner	Margaret Thatcher	04/1999	3,460	International

3.3. Analytical Procedure

Analysis proceeded in four stages. First, each text was read in full and segmented into clauses and rhetorical units. Second, salient lexical features were coded under experiential, relational, and expressive values. Coding recorded topic-specific lexical fields, repetition, lexical contrast, formal or technical vocabulary, euphemistic expressions, evaluation, and metaphor. Third, grammatical analysis identified process types, voice, sentence mood, personal pronouns, and modal auxiliaries. Active and passive constructions were compared within each speech; the reported ranges summarize the minimum and maximum proportions observed in the source analysis.

Fourth, each speech was examined for macrostructural movement: opening orientation, problem definition, evaluation, attribution of responsibility, proposed response, and closing appeal. The two speaker groups were then compared to identify features that were shared across the corpus and features that differed in frequency, prominence, or rhetorical function. Interpretation followed Fairclough’s distinction among description, interpretation, and explanation. Textual evidence was first described, then related to the speaker–audience interaction, and finally explained in relation to institutional position and historical context.

To improve analytic transparency, claims were retained only when they could be tied to an identifiable lexical example, grammatical pattern, or structural tendency in the source material. Quantitative ranges were not treated as inferential statistics because the corpus is small and purposively sampled. The study therefore reports tendencies rather than universal properties of either speaker's discourse.

3.4. Ethical and Methodological Considerations

The materials are public political speeches and do not involve private participants, intervention, or sensitive personal data. Formal human-subject ethics approval was therefore not required. The main methodological risks are interpretive overreach, uneven speech genres, and uncertain metadata in secondary web copies. These risks were addressed by using a common coding framework, distinguishing textual observations from contextual interpretation, and explicitly identifying corrections to the corpus list. Future replication should archive stable versions of every speech and, ideally, conduct independent coding by more than one analyst.

4. Results

4.1. Experiential Value and Lexical Fields

Both speakers organize political reality through dense, topic-specific lexical fields. May's leadership discourse repeatedly uses terms such as leadership, leader, team, strong and stable leadership, negotiations, and European leaders. The repetition builds a chain in which successful government is associated with managerial steadiness and coordinated action. In her security discourse, terrorism, extremism, illegal, police, crime, terrorist threats, and terrorist planning construct a field of danger, enforcement, and prevention. These choices identify both a threat and the institutions authorized to respond to it.

Thatcher's lexical fields more frequently connect policy with national development and ideological principle. In the speech on Japanese youth, generation, opportunity, development, national greatness, responsibility, and society frame young people as agents of collective progress. In the Bruges speech, Europe, freedom, defence, nation, cooperation, and sovereignty position European policy within a moral and historical argument. The vocabulary does more than name topics: it classifies political choices according to a contrast between freedom and constraint, responsibility and dependency, or national initiative and external direction.

Over-lexicalization reinforces these areas of concern. Thatcher's repeated references to Europe's defence and the defence of freedom bind strategic security to an ideological value. May's use of refugee, resettlement scheme, and immigration differentiates categories within a politically contested policy field. Antonymic constructions are also prominent. May contrasts against/for, extended/cut back, downgraded and discarded/strengthened, half-in/half-out, and a good soundbite/a disastrous policy. Such pairings narrow the interpretive field by associating one side with weakness or incoherence and the preferred side with decisiveness.

The two speakers therefore share a preference for lexical clustering and contrast, but the clusters serve somewhat different political identities. May's clusters commonly present governance as practical coordination under pressure. Thatcher's more often place policy within an explicit ideological contest. This is a difference of emphasis rather than an absolute division: both

speakers combine administrative and ideological vocabulary, and the dominant pattern changes with topic and audience.

4.2. Relational and Expressive Values

Relational value is realized primarily through formality, controlled euphemism, and the management of social distance. Both speakers use a formal register appropriate to party conferences, government statements, and international forums. May's vocabulary includes gratitude, deliberately, envisage, jurisdiction, vital, legitimate, professionalism, tolerance, cease, and underpinning. Thatcher uses items such as exhilarating, magnificent, incentives, convergence, dismantle, immensely, and repentant. The register presents the speaker as competent and institutionally authorized while treating the audience as capable of following complex political argument.

Euphemistic or mitigated formulations allow sensitive issues to be discussed without fully activating their most alarming implications. In the source analysis, Thatcher's phrase "more at stake" replaces a more explicit representation of danger. Such phrasing does not erase urgency; rather, it regulates emotional intensity and maintains the decorum of authoritative speech. May similarly combines grave security vocabulary with procedural language about policing, planning, and institutional response. The relational effect is to acknowledge risk while reassuring the audience that responsible actors remain in control.

Expressive value appears through positive and negative classification, intensification, and metaphor. May's expressions "overwhelmingly positive impact" and "momentous change" evaluate political transition as opportunity and encourage confidence in a future-oriented programme. Thatcher's "bastions of freedom" conceptualizes Britain and allied institutions as protective structures. The metaphor fuses physical strength with a moral value and places political resistance within a historical narrative of defence. Across the corpus, positive self-presentation is regularly paired with negative or cautionary representation of opposing policies, threats, or institutional drift.

These choices are persuasive because they coordinate evaluation with identity. Audiences are not only told that a policy is necessary; they are invited to recognize themselves as responsible citizens, defenders of freedom, participants in national renewal, or members of a stable political community. Expressive vocabulary thus connects policy judgment to a preferred collective self-image.

4.3. Transitivity and Voice

Material processes are central to both speakers' representation of leadership. Clauses built around action verbs allow political programmes to be presented as concrete interventions rather than abstract intentions. Actors such as the government, Britain, we, the police, businesses, or citizens are associated with goals such as protecting the public, negotiating agreements, creating opportunity, defending freedom, or changing institutions. This distribution of agency supports a practical image of leadership: legitimate authority is represented as the capacity to act.

Active voice is dominant in every speech examined. In May's speeches, active constructions range from 77% to 96%, while passive constructions range from 4% to 23%. In Thatcher's speeches, active voice ranges from 84% to 92%, with passive voice between 8% and 16%. The

consistently high active proportions suggest that both speakers generally prefer explicit agency and direct propositions. Such grammar is well suited to declarations of responsibility, policy commitment, and political contrast.

Passive voice remains functionally important even though it is less frequent. It enables speakers to foreground an event, consequence, or affected group when the actor is unknown, obvious, institutionally diffuse, or rhetorically inconvenient. In security discourse, for example, the impact of violence may be foregrounded before perpetrators are named. In policy discourse, passive constructions can present a change as a condition to be addressed rather than as the decision of a particular actor. The contrast between active and passive voice should therefore be interpreted functionally, not as a simple contrast between clarity and evasion.

4.4. Sentence Mood, Modality, and Pronouns

Declarative clauses predominate because political speeches must define situations and establish propositions as publicly relevant facts. Imperatives and obligation statements are used more selectively to move from diagnosis to action. Direct imperatives can be face-threatening, so political leaders often distribute obligation through modalized declaratives: “we must,” “government must,” or “this must be done.” The grammatical form combines direction with an appearance of shared necessity.

May frequently uses will, can, and must; Thatcher frequently uses will, may, can, must, and would. Will supports prediction and commitment, can presents capacity or possibility, and must encodes strong necessity. May is particularly associated in the corpus with the language of collective obligation and stable delivery, while Thatcher’s wider modal repertoire accommodates prediction, principle, possibility, and counterfactual contrast. In both cases, modality positions the speaker as an evaluator of what is possible and as an authority capable of defining what is required.

Pronouns are equally consequential. Inclusive we reduces distance between leader and audience and represents policy as collective action. Institutional we can also refer more narrowly to the government or party, allowing a speaker to claim responsibility while speaking with the authority of an organization. I marks personal commitment and accountability, especially at moments of decision, whereas you directly identifies an audience or assigns civic agency. The movement among I, we, and you allows both politicians to shift between personal leadership, institutional authority, and national solidarity.

4.5. Textual and Rhetorical Structure

At the macrostructural level, the speeches commonly follow a problem–evaluation–response sequence. An opening establishes the occasion and identifies a challenge. Subsequent sections explain why the challenge matters, classify responsible or threatened actors, and evaluate available options. The speaker then presents a policy response and closes by linking that response to national values or collective action. This sequence transforms a potentially contested programme into the apparent answer to an already established problem.

Direct statements are most prominent when the speaker defines the problem or announces action. Euphemism, metaphor, and historical reference become more visible when the speech must manage uncertainty, preserve diplomatic relations, or connect a specific policy to a larger

value system. May's speeches tend to emphasize procedural sequencing: the nature of the problem, the institutions responsible, the steps required, and the expected outcome. Thatcher's tend to develop stronger ideological contrasts and historical narratives before returning to a call for resolve. Genre matters, however: a security statement encourages compression, whereas a conference or international address permits broader exposition.

4.6. Comparative Synthesis

Table 2 summarizes the principal comparative tendencies. The categories are interpretive patterns grounded in the preceding analysis, not claims that every occurrence belongs exclusively to one speaker.

Table 2. Comparative discourse tendencies

Dimension	Margaret Thatcher	Theresa May	Shared function
Lexical emphasis	Freedom, enterprise, sovereignty, responsibility, national resolve	Leadership, stability, security, negotiation, institutional delivery	Defines the central political problem and preferred response
Evaluation	Stronger ideological and historical contrasts	Stronger managerial and procedural contrasts	Legitimizes policy and delegitimizes alternatives
Agency	Active clauses foreground conviction and decisive national action	Active clauses foreground government capacity and coordinated action	Presents leaders and institutions as capable actors
Modality	Broad repertoire for commitment, possibility, principle, and contrast	Frequent will, can, and must for commitment, capacity, and obligation	Grades certainty and necessity
Audience relation	Solidarity through principle, resolve, and shared national history	Solidarity through security, fairness, stability, and collective responsibility	Aligns the audience with an institutional "we"
Macrostructure	Historical or ideological frame leading to policy resolve	Problem diagnosis leading to procedural response	Makes the proposed action appear coherent and necessary

5. Discussion

5.1. Language, Power, and Legitimacy

The results support the central CDA proposition that language participates in the construction and maintenance of power. Neither speaker relies on command alone. Authority is produced through a coordinated set of choices: lexical fields define what the political world contains, transitivity assigns agency, modality grades necessity, pronouns align speaker and audience, and macrostructure makes the preferred response appear to follow logically from the problem. Power is therefore visible not only in what the leaders demand but also in how they shape the conditions under which a demand becomes reasonable.

Active voice and material processes are particularly important to this legitimacy. Their dominance supports an image of government as capable of intervention and of the speaker as willing to accept responsibility. At the same time, the selective use of passive voice shows that

political agency is strategically variable. Affected groups or outcomes may be foregrounded when empathy, caution, or institutional complexity is more important than naming an actor. This functional account is more useful than treating passive voice as inherently deceptive.

The results also illustrate how ideology operates through classification. Thatcher's freedom/constraint and responsibility/dependency contrasts organize policy around a moralized vision of individual and national agency. May's stability/instability, security/threat, and effective/ineffective contrasts organize policy around competent administration under uncertainty. Both sets of classifications favor Conservative authority, but they do so through different repertoires. The continuity lies in the representation of disciplined action as legitimate; the variation lies in what kind of action the context requires.

5.2. Context, Leadership Style, and Gender

The comparison cautions against a simple gender explanation. Thatcher and May share formal register, active agency, strong modality, and inclusive pronouns, features associated with institutional leadership rather than with women as a category. Their differences correspond more directly to political context and speech genre. Thatcher's ideological polarization fits addresses concerned with economic doctrine, national sovereignty, and Europe. May's managerial language fits speeches shaped by Brexit negotiations, terrorism, and demands for stable government.

This does not mean that gender is irrelevant. Both speakers operated within conventions historically coded as masculine, including decisiveness, command, and control. Their language demonstrates how women leaders can appropriate those conventions while combining them with relational strategies such as inclusive pronouns, reassurance, and collective responsibility. However, the present corpus does not compare male leaders or systematically code gendered evaluation. It can therefore identify questions about gendered leadership performance but cannot establish that a feature is caused by gender.

5.3. Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, the study shows the value of linking micro-level form to macro-level interpretation. A list of formal words or modal verbs becomes analytically useful only when their distribution is related to agency, audience, genre, and historical circumstance. The three-stage CDA model helps maintain this connection: description prevents interpretation from drifting away from the text, while explanation prevents linguistic analysis from treating political choices as context-free.

Methodologically, comparative CDA benefits from a balanced corpus and explicit analytic categories. The present framework can be replicated with other leaders, parties, or crises. Researchers should retain full source metadata, distinguish normalized counts from raw frequency, and report coding decisions. Where possible, they should combine qualitative close reading with corpus tools and independent coder agreement. Such measures would make claims about difference more robust without reducing discourse to frequency alone.

Practically, the findings can support critical language education and media literacy. Readers can be taught to ask who is represented as acting, which alternatives are excluded by lexical contrasts, whose interests are included in *we*, and whether necessity is presented as natural

rather than politically chosen. These questions do not require audiences to reject political speech; they enable them to evaluate how persuasion is organized.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research

The study has four principal limitations. First, the small purposive corpus cannot represent the full rhetorical careers of either speaker. Second, the speeches differ in date, genre, topic, audience, and political status; several Thatcher texts were delivered after her premiership. Third, the analysis is based on written transcripts and cannot account for prosody, gesture, facial expression, audience response, or broadcast editing. Fourth, the available source analysis provides percentage ranges for voice but not a complete table of normalized frequencies for every linguistic category.

Future work should use verified archival transcripts, document precise access dates, and construct matched subcorpora by genre and topic. A larger study could compare conference speeches with conference speeches, crisis statements with crisis statements, and domestic audiences with international audiences. Corpus-assisted measures of keywords, collocation, semantic preference, and pronoun distribution could complement close reading. Multimodal analysis could examine how vocal delivery and visual performance reinforce or complicate the meanings of the written text. A gender-focused extension should include comparable male Conservative leaders so that institutional, historical, and gender effects can be more carefully separated.

6. Conclusion

This study examined how Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May use vocabulary, grammar, and textual organization to construct political authority. Both speakers employ topic-specific lexical fields, formal vocabulary, evaluative contrasts, material processes, active voice, modality, and inclusive pronouns. These features represent political problems, assign agency, define relations with audiences, and make preferred courses of action appear necessary and legitimate. The predominance of active voice in all ten speeches reinforces a shared image of decisive leadership, while passive constructions remain available for foregrounding events or consequences.

The principal difference concerns rhetorical emphasis. Thatcher more often constructs authority through ideological contrast, historical narrative, national resolve, freedom, and responsibility. May more often constructs it through administrative competence, security, negotiation, stability, and collective obligation. These tendencies reflect the interaction among political identity, institutional role, topic, genre, and historical crisis. They should not be reduced to gender or treated as fixed properties of either speaker.

The article's broader contribution is methodological. By integrating experiential, relational, and expressive vocabulary with transitivity, voice, modality, pronouns, and macrostructure, it demonstrates how textual description can support a context-sensitive explanation of political power. CDA is most persuasive when it makes its evidential path visible: from a linguistic form, to its function in interaction, to its role in a wider political order.

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Author Contributions

Conceptualization, methodology, data curation, formal analysis, writing—original draft, and writing—review and editing: Le Thi Thuy Duong. The author has read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Ethics Statement

Ethical approval was not required because the study analyzes publicly available political speeches and does not involve human participants, animals, intervention, or private personal data.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

The analyzed materials are publicly available speech transcripts. The working copies were obtained from margareththatcher.org and secondary news or commentary sites identified in the source dataset. Because the original file did not preserve a stable URL for every item, the author should verify and archive the exact transcript links before submission.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

OpenAI Codex was used to support English-language editing, structural revision, and document formatting. The author reviewed the revised manuscript and remains responsible for the accuracy of the analysis, citations, interpretations, and final text.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

The authors declare that no generative AI or AI-assisted technology was used in the preparation of this manuscript.

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