

Psycholinguistic Functions in War Poetry: A Comparative Study of the Battles of Uhud and Maldon

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ABSTRACT

War poetry functions not only as an aesthetic form but also as a psychological medium that processes trauma, reinforces identity, and motivates communities. Yet, research on classical Arabic and Old English war poetry has focused primarily on historical and rhetorical aspects, with limited attention to psycholinguistic dimensions. This gap restricts a deeper understanding of how poetic language operates as a psychological instrument for coping with war trauma across cultural traditions. This study aims (i) to analyse the emotional, cognitive, and therapeutic dimensions of Ka' b ibn Mālik's poetry on the Battle of Uhud (625 CE) and the anonymous Old English poem The Battle of Maldon (991 CE); (ii) to compare their linguistic strategies; and (iii) to evaluate how poetic discourse shapes collective identity and resilience. A qualitative comparative textual analysis was employed. The findings reveal five dominant themes: trauma and grief, heroism and courage, loyalty and solidarity, collective motivation, and spiritual or feudal honour. Despite differing cultural contexts, both texts transform defeat into resilience through repetition, metaphor, rhythm, and parallelism. Ultimately, this research illuminates how poetic language—ancient or modern—functions as linguistic therapy for communities facing conflict, reaffirming its enduring relevance to both cultural and psychological resilience.

Keywords: Psycholinguistics; War poetry; Comparative literature; The Battle of Uhud; The Battle of Maldon

INTRODUCTION

Language functions not only as a system of communication but also as a mirror of human cognition, emotion, and social experience (Ferreira, 2025a; Field, 2003). Within psycholinguistics, language is viewed as a mechanism linking the mind and verbal expression, revealing internal states through linguistic structures (Ganguly, 2021; Roy, n.d.). Recent developments expand this view, exploring how linguistic forms encode emotion, cognition, and memory (Rasse et al., 2020; Zasiékina et al., 2023; Zhirenov et al., 2023). These studies emphasise that linguistic choices reflect psychological activity and that language operates as a tool of affective regulation and cognitive processing. This framework gains particular relevance when applied to war poetry, where linguistic expression encodes collective trauma and transforms it into cultural resilience.

In literature, the psycholinguistic approach provides a bridge between linguistic theory and human experience. It allows texts to be understood not merely as artistic artefacts but as psychological acts that express, regulate, and reshape emotional states. Through language, poetry can process pain and loss while reaffirming social identity and collective purpose. War poetry, in particular, exemplifies this dynamic: it documents conflict and defeat while simultaneously

enabling psychological recovery. Cognitive mechanisms such as emotional valence, schema activation, and narrative processing play crucial roles in transforming traumatic experiences into meaningful narratives (Gitau et al., 2023; Hugentobler & Lüdtke, 2021; Matlasevych et al., 2023). Thus, war poetry can be examined as a form of linguistic therapy that encodes both affective and cognitive dimensions of communal endurance.

The present study examines two classical war texts: Kaʿb ibn Mālik's poetry on the Battle of Uhud (625 CE) and the Old English epic *The Battle of Maldon* (991 CE). The Battle of Uhud, fought near Medina between the Muslims and the Quraysh of Mecca, ended in defeat that deeply affected the Medinan community. Kaʿb's poems, composed in the aftermath, served not only as historical reflection but also as a linguistic outlet for grief, repentance, and renewed faith (Awad Allah, 2018; B. H. Farhan, 2020;). In contrast, the Battle of Maldon commemorates the Anglo-Saxon defeat against Viking forces in Essex (Brown, 2012). Although the outcome was tragic, the poem celebrates courage, loyalty, and honour as enduring moral values (Clark, 2000; Scragg, 1991). Both works, emerging from distinct cultural and linguistic traditions, reveal how poetic language encodes emotional regulation and cognitive restructuring of trauma.

Although scholars have extensively explored these texts from historical and literary perspectives (Awad Allah, 2018; Clark, 2000; B. H. Farhan, 2020; Qabayli, 2015), psycholinguistic analyses remain limited. Existing studies tend to focus on rhetoric, theme, or narrative without addressing how linguistic features function cognitively and affectively to process trauma and sustain identity. This gap restricts an integrated understanding of the psychological mechanisms embedded in war poetry. By connecting the historical realities of Uhud and Maldon with psycholinguistic theory—particularly emotional valence, cognitive processing, and linguistic therapy—this study situates the discussion within an interdisciplinary framework that unites linguistic, cognitive, and literary analysis.

While classical war poetry provides insight into historical and moral consciousness, it has not been sufficiently examined as a psycholinguistic phenomenon. The absence of such an interdisciplinary perspective leaves unanswered questions about how poetic language mediates emotion, cognition, and collective identity in the aftermath of trauma. This study, therefore, addresses the gap by analysing how linguistic structures in Kaʿb ibn Mālik's Uhud poems and the Old English *Battle of Maldon* perform psychological and communicative functions.

To bridge these theoretical and historical dimensions, the study sets out the following objectives:

1. Analyse the affective, cognitive, and linguistic dimensions of Kaʿb ibn Mālik's poetry on the Battle of Uhud and the Battle of Maldon, identifying how language encodes emotional experience and cognitive processing.
2. Compare cross-cultural similarities and differences in linguistic strategies that express trauma, resilience, and collective motivation; and
3. Evaluate the therapeutic function of poetic discourse in shaping collective memory and reinforcing social cohesion after war.

Through these objectives, the study establishes a closer connection between historical context and psycholinguistic theory, offering a comprehensive model of how poetic language transforms conflict into psychological and cultural resilience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Early linguistic studies emphasised the formal structure of language—phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics—with the primary aim of explaining linguistic rules scientifically (Chomsky, 1965). Language was once viewed as an abstract system detached from users and social context. However, twentieth-century developments saw the rise of psycholinguistics, an interdisciplinary field linking language with cognition and human experience. Psycholinguistics examines how language is produced and comprehended at the neurolinguistic level, while reflecting emotion, identity, and mental state (Fauziati, 2011; Ferreira, 2025b; Ganguly, 2021). Recent studies expand this view, showing that linguistic markers convey emotional valence and cognitive schemas influencing the interpretation of poetic language (Rasse et al., 2020; Zasiékina et al., 2023; Zhirenov et al., 2023). In literary contexts, this perspective enables a dynamic reading of texts—not merely as artistic products but as linguistic acts mediating trauma, memory, and social emotion (Tatliloğlu & Senchylo-Tatliloğlu, 2020). Such an approach supports a psycholinguistic reading of poetry as linguistic therapy, where affective and cognitive mechanisms operate through metaphor, repetition, rhythm, and imagery (Hugentobler & Lüdtke, 2021). This is especially relevant in war poetry, which links personal experience to communal identity and resilience.

Studies on Ka‘b ibn Mālik’s poetry reveal multiple psycholinguistic dimensions often implied but rarely analysed explicitly. His verses express internal conflicts—grief, repentance, and faith restoration—after critical events like the Tabuk expedition. B. H. Farhan (2020) views Ka‘b’s language as a psychological outlet, while Hamka and Safian (2022) interpret his honesty as self-therapy. From the communicative dimension, Ka‘b integrates Qur’anic intertextuality to strengthen communal faith and context. B. H. Farhan (2020), and Al-Ukaydi and Abdulrahman (2019) show how repetition and Qur’anic allusion transform private emotion into collective meaning. His war poems, especially on Badr and Uhud, reinforce communal resilience through spiritual and motivational imagery (Hamka & Safian, 2022; Awad Allah, 2018; Nurul Iman Mohamad Anuar Kamal & Nursafira Lubis Safian, 2022). Biographical and literary studies (Al-'Ani, 1966, 1990; Al-Jarim, n.d.) position Ka‘b as a voice shaping early Muslim identity. Contemporary analyses—ranging from ecocritical (Nurul Iman, Nursafira, & Aida, 2025) to figurative (Nursafira, Nurul Iman, & Abu al-Fadhl, 2024)—confirm his interdisciplinary appeal. Yet, most remain descriptive, focusing on theme and style rather than how linguistic form reflects affective or cognitive processes. This study extends the discussion by analysing how Ka‘b’s poetic language functions psycholinguistically as a medium for emotional processing, schema activation, and communal therapy.

Within the Anglo-Saxon tradition, the Battle of Maldon similarly demonstrates psycholinguistic depth, though scholarship has largely centred on philological or historical dimensions. The poem recounts the 991 CE battle between Anglo-Saxon defenders led by Ealdorman Byrhtnoth and invading Viking forces, resulting in defeat and collective trauma. Scholars agree that the poem serves as both a record of valour and a rhetorical reconstruction of loyalty and faith (Clark, 2000; Scragg, 1991). Linguistically, the poet’s use of formulaic diction, rhythmic repetition, and balanced syntax conveys courage and solidarity (Cavill, 1998; Phillips, 1997). Some lexical and syntactic patterns indicate Norse influence, reflecting intercultural contact (Pons-Sanz, 2008). Pragmatic studies highlight politeness and face-saving strategies that sustain morale (Garcés Conejos & Fernández Cuesta, 1994), while rhetorical analyses emphasise insults and exhortations as performative speech acts that enhance group cohesion (Pakis, 2011; Ryner,

2006). Recent cognitive-poetic work suggests that such stylistic features evoke affective priming and collective identification in the audience (Hugentobler & Lüdtke, 2021), indicating that the poem’s linguistic design triggers both emotional and cognitive responses. Yet, few analyses integrate these findings within an explicit psycholinguistic framework capable of explaining the interaction between language, emotion, and cultural ideology.

A comparative view reveals both convergence and divergence in the psycholinguistic functions of the two texts. Ka‘b ibn Mālik’s war poetry foregrounds individual emotion embedded in communal solidarity, transforming personal trauma into shared faith and motivation. In contrast, the Battle of Maldon highlights collective heroism and feudal loyalty, where the *comitatus* ideal becomes the moral and emotional foundation of Anglo-Saxon resilience. Both traditions, however, demonstrate the therapeutic function of poetic discourse as a medium for emotional regulation, cognitive reframing, and social unification. Despite this overlap, the existing scholarship has not systematically examined how such linguistic mechanisms—repetition, metaphorical framing, rhythm, and pronoun use—operate across cultural contexts to encode trauma and resilience. This study, therefore, addresses this gap by applying a psycholinguistic comparative framework that bridges literary interpretation and cognitive-affective theory.

TABLE 1. Psycholinguistic comparison between Ka‘b ibn Mālik’s Uhud poem (625 CE) and The Battle of Maldon (991 CE)

Aspect	The Battle of Uhud (625 CE)	The Battle of Maldon (991 CE)
Historical Context	Battle between the community of Madinah and the Quraysh of Mecca following the latter’s defeat at Badr. Location: the hills of Uhud near Madinah.	Battle between Anglo-Saxon forces led by Byrhtnoth and Viking raiders at the River Blackwater, Essex.
Outcome of Battle	Defeat with heavy casualties left a deep psychological impact on the community.	Anglo-Saxon defeat; destabilised political and social structures.
Poetic Function	Channels grief, strengthens determination, and unites the community after trauma.	Emphasises bravery, loyalty, and sacrifice as collective moral values.
Linguistic Strategies	Poetic imagery, repetition, intertextual references to the Qur’an, and emotional expressions.	Old English formulaic style, rhetorical repetition, feudal loyalty (<i>comitatus</i>), insults and taunts as motivational strategies.
Psychological Dimension	Focus on individual emotions connected to communal solidarity.	Focus on heroism and feudal loyalty as sources of collective motivation.
Collective Role	Restores the identity and confidence of the community after defeat.	Restores Anglo-Saxon morale and sustains the spirit of resistance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative comparative textual analysis grounded in a psycholinguistic framework that integrates affective, cognitive, and linguistic-therapeutic dimensions (Fauziati, 2011; Ferreira, 2025a; Ganguly, 2021;). The approach views language as both a cognitive process and an emotional outlet, revealing how poetic discourse encodes trauma, constructs identity, and mediates collective memory. This framework was chosen because previous research has largely neglected the psycholinguistic mechanisms that underlie emotional recovery and social cohesion in classical war poetry.

The study is situated within a psycholinguistic framework that conceptualises language as a medium linking emotion, cognition, and identity.

1. The Affective Dimension examines emotional valence through imagery, metaphor, and repetition as expressions of grief and courage (J. Farhan, 2025; Hamka & Safian, 2022;).
2. The Cognitive Dimension analyses schema activation and memory reconstruction, shaping the comprehension of war experiences (Ferreira, 2025a; Ganguly, 2021).
3. The Linguistic-Therapeutic Dimension investigates how language promotes psychological healing through religious imagery, affirmative syntax, and rhythmic closure (Klochek & Foka, 2022; Zhirenov et al., 2023).

These three dimensions were selected based on prior psycholinguistic studies linking emotional processing, cognitive reconstruction, and linguistic therapy, thereby addressing the methodological gap in existing approaches.

The corpus consists of two classical war texts: *Diwan Ka'b ibn Mālik* (Al-'Ani, 1966) and *The Battle of Maldon* (Crossley-Holland & Mitchell, 1967; Gordon, 1937). Ka'b's poem on the Battle of Uhud (625 CE) was translated directly from Arabic since no English version exists. A two-stage translation procedure—literal rendering and stylistic refinement based on philological notes—ensured both semantic precision and retention of stylistic elements such as rhythm and repetition. *The Battle of Maldon* (991 CE) was selected for its parallel psychological themes of heroism, defeat, and loyalty.

Data collection involved identifying verses containing emotional, rhetorical, and psychological elements. The analysis used manual interpretive coding guided by linguistic markers—such as pronoun shifts, negation, repetition, and metaphorical density—and frequency mapping of emotional lexicon to detect recurring affective patterns. Thematic categorisation produced five domains: (1) trauma and recovery, (2) heroism, (3) loyalty, (4) collective motivation, and (5) spiritual (Ka'b) or feudal (Maldon) dimensions. These were analysed through the three psycholinguistic lenses to determine both universal and culture-specific mechanisms of emotional expression.

The analytical process unfolded in three interpretive stages:

1. Close textual reading — identifying stylistic and emotional markers;
2. Psycholinguistic mapping — linking linguistic features to cognitive and affective functions;
3. Cross-cultural synthesis — comparing shared and distinct mechanisms across the Arabic and Anglo-Saxon contexts.

To ensure methodological reliability, expert consultation was conducted with two scholars in Arabic and Anglo-Saxon literature who reviewed the thematic categories and psycholinguistic coding. Inter-coder validation was also performed informally through cross-checking coded data for consistency. The analytical term “therapeutic function” was operationally defined as the linguistic mechanisms through which poetic discourse fosters psychological recovery and social cohesion, such as the use of religious imagery, affirmative syntax, and rhythmic repetition.

The analysis demonstrates that linguistic devices (e.g., repetition, negation, and pronoun shifts) operate as psycholinguistic mechanisms facilitating emotional regulation, collective identity reinforcement, and cultural resilience. Ka'b ibn Mālik transforms spiritual guilt into faith-based recovery, while *The Battle of Maldon* elevates loss into moral valorisation. Thus, poetic language functions as a medium of psychological reconstruction and cultural therapy, bridging individual emotion with collective consciousness.

Figure 1 presents the analytical framework, illustrating the flow from corpus selection and thematic categorisation to psycholinguistic synthesis, demonstrating how poetic language transforms trauma into resilience across two literary traditions.

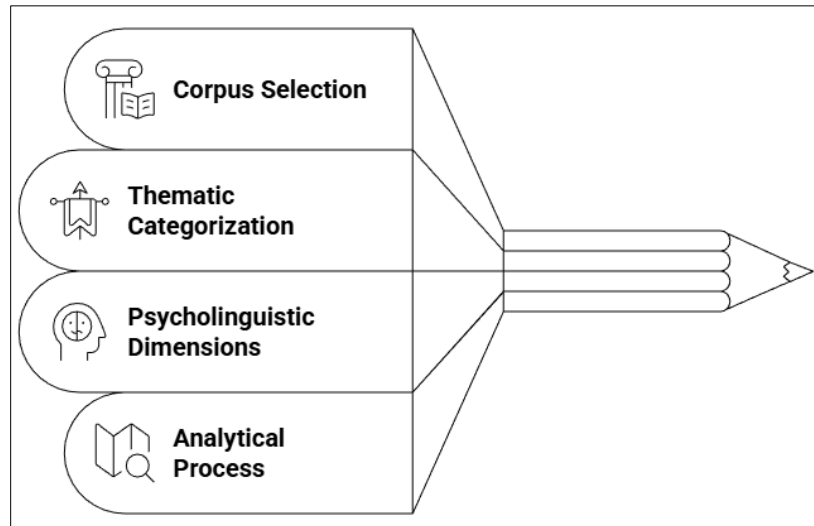


FIGURE 1. Analytical Framework of the Study

FINDINGS

This study compares the psycholinguistic functions of Ka‘b ibn Mālik's poetry on The Battle of Uhud (625 CE) with the anonymous Old English poem The Battle of Maldon (991 CE). Despite emerging from different historical, cultural, and religious contexts, both texts demonstrate the role of war poetry as a collective medium for processing trauma, structuring emotions, and giving moral meaning to defeat. Five dominant themes were identified: trauma and grief, heroism and courage, loyalty and solidarity, collective motivation, and spiritual meaning and honour.

TRAUMA AND GRIEF

Ka‘b ibn Mālik composed poignant verses in the aftermath of the Battle of Uhud (625 CE), where the Medinan community suffered heavy losses at the hands of Quraysh forces. His elegy articulates profound sorrow:

بَكَتْ عَيْنِي وَحَقَّ لَهَا بُكَاءُهَا
وَمَا يُعْنِي الْبُكَاءُ وَلَا الْعَوِيلُ
(Al-'Ani, 1966)

*"My eyes have wept, and rightly they should weep;
Yet tears and lamentations avail nothing."*

The repetition of “wept – weep” (بَكَتْ – بَكَتْ *bakat – bukā*) produces a phonological echo that amplifies emotional intensity, mimicking the cyclical and intrusive quality of grief. The diction “tears and lamentations” (بُكَاءُ *bukā* and عَوِيلُ *awīl*) foregrounds both the futility and depth of mourning. The rhythmic cadence mirrors ritual lamentation, transforming private sorrow into

shared emotional experience. From a psycholinguistic perspective, the verse functions as a mechanism of emotional regulation and collective catharsis, enabling the community to process trauma linguistically and socially (Isma'il, 2019).

Additional evidence from Ka'b reinforces this thematic movement from despair to resilience:

شَرِبَتِ السُّيُوفُ دِمَاءَ الْقَوْمِ صَفًّا
وَسَقَطَ الشُّهَدَاءُ وَأَمْ تُضَعَّفُ عَزَائِمُنَا
(Al-'Ani, 1966)

"The swords drank their fill, and the martyrs fell in ranks;
Yet our resolve did not waver."

Here, the metaphor of swords "drinking" (شَرِبَتِ السُّيُوفُ *sharibat al-suyūf*) human life conveys both the visceral brutality of combat and the sanctification of the fallen as "martyrs" (الشُّهَدَاءُ *al-shuhadā*). The collective noun "in ranks" reorders the chaos of death into the disciplined image of communal sacrifice. From a psycholinguistic angle, this rhetorical shift reframes trauma—redirecting it from devastation toward moral "resolve" (عَزَائِمُنَا *'azā'imunā*) and solidarity. In this way, Ka'b's poetry not only preserves the memory of loss but also provides a linguistic pathway for his audience to reinterpret suffering as endurance and grief as collective strength.

Similarly, the Battle of Maldon crystallises Anglo-Saxon trauma after the death of their leader, Byrhtnoth:

"Byrhtnoth lies slain, our beloved lord."
(Crossley-Holland & Mitchell, 1967)

Here, "slain" conveys irreversible loss, while "beloved" signals deep communal attachment. The brevity of the line mirrors the suddenness of death. Old English stylistic features—particularly *alliteration* and *parataxis*—reinforce rhythm and facilitate collective memory. As Niles (2019) notes, formulaic alliteration in Old English verse was designed to aid oral transmission and collective remembrance. Similarly, Scragg (1991) highlights the use of paratactic structures in The Battle of Maldon as a means of generating immediacy and intensity. Cognitively, the fallen leader becomes a focal point of identity consolidation, transforming grief into a shared narrative of remembrance.

HEROISM AND COURAGE

Ka'b ibn Mālik, reflecting on the early battles of the Medinan community, often reconfigures fear into valour. One vivid metaphor is:

أَسُوداً تُحَامِي عَنِ الْأَشْبَلِ
تُقَاتِلُ عَنْ دِينِهَا وَسَطَّهَا
(Al-'Ani, 1966)

"They were lions on the day of fear, shielding their leader, the Prophet;
In battle, they seemed to play with war."

The image of "lions" (أَسُوداً *'usūdan*) elevates ordinary men into symbols of extraordinary bravery. Structurally, the parallel clauses create rhythm that contrasts fear with action, while metaphorically reframing danger as moral strength. Psycholinguistically, such diction transforms fear into resilience, guiding audiences to admire courage rather than succumb to dread.

Comparable symbolism appears in Western heroic traditions. To be called "lionhearted" was one of the highest compliments a warrior or ruler could receive—most famously epitomised by Richard I of England, known as "Richard the Lionheart," whose epithet represented fearless bravery and moral sovereignty on the battlefield (Spencer, 2017). Medieval heraldry also adopted the lion as a central emblem of nobility and strength, appearing on royal crests to symbolise honour, vigilance, and protection of one's lineage (Harris, 2021; *The Heraldry Society*, 2020). Thus, the lion imagery across both Arabic and Anglo-Saxon cultures transcends linguistic boundaries, functioning as a universal archetype of courage, leadership, and communal integrity.

Another verse intensifies this transformation:

يا عَيْنُ لَا تَبْكِي لِمَنْ مَاتَ مُكْرَمًا
فَقَدْ مَاتَ فِي سَبِيلِ الْهُدَى وَالشَّرَفِ
(Al-'Ani, 1966)
"O eyes, weep not, for those who died,
died upon the path of honour."

Here, the apostrophe (يا عَيْنُ *yā 'ayn*) personifies grief, yet rather than yielding to sorrow, it commands emotional restraint and courage. The imperative (لَا تَبْكِي *lā tabkī*) embodies moral discipline and steadfast faith — an instruction to transform emotion into inner strength. The phrase (فَقَدْ مَاتَ فِي سَبِيلِ الْهُدَى وَالشَّرَفِ *faqad māta fī sabīl al-hudā wa al-sharaf*) sacralises death, presenting it as a voluntary act of devotion in the path of divine guidance (*al-hudā*) and noble honour (*al-sharaf*).

Psycholinguistically, Ka'b's diction reflects the conversion of vulnerability into valour. The rhythmic repetition of "died, died" parallels the Arabic cadence (مَاتَ... مَاتَ *māta... māta*), functioning as a self-reinforcing pattern that replaces fear with conviction. The voice of the poet thus acts as a therapeutic command, reshaping communal grief into spiritual courage. Through this, Ka'b redefines heroism not as the absence of fear, but as the triumph of faith over despair — a linguistic embodiment of resilience and divine trust.

Similarly, the Battle of Maldon elevates courage through triadic parallelism and rhythmic repetition:

"Will shall be the sterner, heart the bolder,
courage the greater, as our strength lessens."
(Crossley-Holland & Mitchell, 1967)

The repetition and triadic structure produce a crescendo-like mantra, transforming collective anxiety into disciplined resolve. The rhythmic pattern reinforces psychological synchrony among warriors, turning language itself into a mechanism of emotional regulation. This formulaic style, characteristic of Old English oral poetry, not only sustains morale and reinforces memory but also converts physical decline into moral fortitude. Psycholinguistically, the verse exemplifies how linguistic rhythm and repetition can reshape fear into unity and endurance, echoing the same therapeutic function observed in Ka'b ibn Mālik's verse.

LOYALTY AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

Ka'b ibn Mālik's poetry also highlights loyalty as a central virtue in moments of crisis. In one verse, he recalls the community's steadfastness during the Prophet's leadership:

وَفِيْنَا رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ نَتَّبِعُ اَمْرَهُ
اِذَا قَالَ فِيْنَا الْقَوْلَ لَا نَتَطَّلَعُ

(Al-'Ani, 1966)

"Among us was the Messenger of God, and we followed his command;
When he spoke among us, we sought no excuses."

The repeated use of collective pronouns — “among us” (فِيْنَا *fīnā*) and “we followed” (نَتَّبِعُ *natba‘u*) — reinforces the sense of shared identity and communal responsibility. Structurally, the syntactic parallelism in “when he spoke among us” (اِذَا قَالَ فِيْنَا الْقَوْلَ *idhā qāla fīnā al-qawl*) creates rhythmic cohesion, while semantically, the negation “we sought no excuses” (لَا نَتَطَّلَعُ *lā nataṭalla‘u*) defines loyalty as unquestioned obedience. From a psycholinguistic perspective, this verse transforms individual uncertainty into collective assurance, regulating emotion through linguistic affirmation. Loyalty here functions not merely as a moral virtue but as a psychological mechanism — a linguistic tool that channels fear into unity and transforms obedience into emotional resilience.

In The Battle of Maldon, loyalty is expressed in stark terms of feudal solidarity after Byrhtnoth’s fall:

“They would not flee, though their leader was fallen.”
(Crossley-Holland & Mitchell, 1967)

The negation “would not flee” eliminates the possibility of retreat, linguistically encoding defiance as moral obligation. The structure transforms fear into honour, making resistance not merely courageous but inevitable. This is reinforced by a subsequent line:

“No man shall call us cowards while our lord lies on the ground.”
(Crossley-Holland & Mitchell, 1967)

Here, external judgment (“no man shall call us cowards”) merges with internalised duty, fusing personal conscience with public expectation. Psycholinguistically, the rhetoric functions as a collective contract, converting vulnerability into cohesion and reaffirming the moral symbiosis between the warrior and his lord. The repetition and negation serve as mechanisms of emotional regulation — transforming grief into defiant loyalty and fear into collective resolve.

Thus, in both Ka‘b ibn Mālik’s elegy and The Battle of Maldon, loyalty transcends its literal sense to become a psychological and linguistic shield, preserving identity and unity in the face of loss. This echoes Alosman’s (2024) comparative analysis of modern war literature, which argues that expressions of grief and remembrance in poetry serve not merely to mourn the dead but to reconstruct communal identity through language and cultural symbolism.

COLLECTIVE MOTIVATION

Ka‘b ibn Mālik reframes loss not as defeat but as fuel for resilience. In one verse, he declares:

سَائِلُ فُرَيْشًا عَدَاةَ السَّفْحِ مِنْ أُخْدٍ
مَادًّا لَفَيْنَا وَمَا لَأَقْوَا مِنَ الْهَرَبِ

(Al-'Ani, 1966)

“Let Quraysh be told, wherever they may be:
Your slain shall never be forgotten.”

The imperative “ask” or “let be told” (سَأَلْ *sa'il*) functions as a performative speech act, extending remembrance beyond the battlefield and projecting communal memory into history. Lexically, the phrase “what they met in flight” (مَا لَاقُوا مِنَ الْهَرَبِ *mā lāqaw mina al-harabi*) conveys defiance, recasting the enemy’s retreat as moral victory. The juxtaposition of “meeting” and “flight” constructs a rhythmic antithesis between endurance and escape.

Psycholinguistically, this verse reorients cognition from grief toward continuity — transforming trauma into a collective narrative of strength. The linguistic assertiveness of the imperative reinforces group identity and moral supremacy. Through this verbal act of remembrance, Ka‘b’s poetry sustains motivation, ensuring that the memory of sacrifice becomes a perpetual source of unity and resolve.

Another verse expands this ethos:

صَبْرُنَا وَرَايَاتُ الْمَنِيِّ تَحْفِقُ
صَبْرُنَا لَهُمْ وَالصَّبْرُ مِنَّا سَجِيَّةٌ
(Al-‘Ani, 1966)

*We endured as the banners of death fluttered; we endured for them,
For endurance was our very nature*

The repetition of “we endured” (صَبْرُنَا *ṣabarnā*) functions as a collective affirmation, transforming individual fear into communal resilience. The image of “the banners of death fluttering” (رَايَاتُ الْمَنِيِّ تَحْفِقُ *rāyātu al-manīyah takhfiq*) conveys imminent danger, yet endurance—“patience is our nature” (الصَّبْرُ مِنَّا سَجِيَّةٌ *al-ṣabru minnā sajiyyah*)—recasts adversity as a virtue. Psycholinguistically, this verse operates as a motivational chant, transforming vulnerability into unity and framing endurance as an inherent part of collective identity.

In The Battle of Maldon, collective motivation similarly emerges through rhythmic escalation:

“Will shall be the sterner, heart the bolder,
courage the greater, as our strength lessens.”
(Crossley-Holland & Mitchell, 1967)

A variant echoes the same mantra:

“Mind must be the firmer, heart the keener,
courage the greater, as our might lessens.”
(Crossley-Holland & Mitchell, 1967)

The triadic parallelism and antithesis between physical decline and inner resolve function as a linguistic chant. Psycholinguistically, the repetition works as a collective mantra, reconfiguring weakness into moral elevation and sustaining communal determination in the face of loss. This rhetorical strategy sustains communal determination, reinforcing the idea that true strength lies not in physical power but in shared conviction.

SPIRITUAL MEANING AND HONOUR

Ka‘b ibn Malik consistently frames sacrifice as transcendent. One verse proclaims:

كُلُّهُمْ فَدَىٰ مَاتُوا أَحْرَارًا بِلَاءِ
 فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَمْ يَتَرَدَّدُوا

(Al-‘Ani, 1966)

“All of them died as free men of trial,
 upon God’s way, without hesitation.”

The phrase “upon God’s way” (الله فِي سَبِيلِ *fi sabīli Allāh*) sacralises the battlefield as a spiritual mission, while “without hesitation” (لَمْ يَتَرَدَّدُوا *lam yataradadū*) removes doubt, portraying unwavering conviction. Psycholinguistically, the verse transforms grief into redemptive meaning, allowing the audience to process trauma through faith and divine purpose (Isma‘il, 2019). Metaphorically, martyrdom is reframed as freedom (أَحْرَارًا *aḥrār balā*), embedding loss within a framework of moral integrity and eternal reward.

By contrast, the Battle of Maldon situates honour within a feudal code:

“Better it is for us all to fall with our lord
 than to live in disgrace.”

(Crossley-Holland & Mitchell, 1967)

Here, the comparative structure (“better ... than ...”) constructs a binary of honour versus shame. Cognitively, it channels fear of death into affirmation of loyalty. Emotionally, the line enforces collective courage by redefining survival as dishonour.

Both Ka‘b ibn Mālik’s poetry and The Battle of Maldon demonstrate that literary devices—repetition, metaphor, collective pronouns, negation, rhythm, and antithesis—function not merely as aesthetic embellishments but as psycholinguistic mechanisms. These devices regulate emotion, reframe cognition, and reinforce social cohesion. In both traditions, poetic language transforms grief into solidarity, vulnerability into resilience, and defeat into moral significance. By encoding trauma within structured verbal art, the poems illustrate the universal role of war poetry as a psychological instrument, transcending cultural and historical boundaries.

TABLE 2. Summary of key psycholinguistic themes, textual evidence, and functions in Ka‘b ibn Mālik’s Battle of Uhud poetry and the Anglo-Saxon Battle of Maldon

Theme	Example Lines (Battle of Uhud / Battle of Maldon)	Poetic Devices	Psycholinguistic Functions
Trauma and Grief	“My eyes have wept... yet tears avail nothing.” / “Byrhtnoth lies slain, our beloved lord.”	Repetition, diction, brevity, and alliteration	Converts personal grief into collective memory; regulates emotion; reinforces identity
Heroism and Courage	“They were lions on the day of fear...” / “Will shall be the sterner, heart the bolder...”	Metaphor, triadic parallelism, rhythm	Reframes fear into courage; sustains morale; builds resilience
Loyalty and Social Solidarity	“Among us was the Messenger... we sought no excuses.” / “No man shall call us cowards while our lord lies on the ground.”	Collective pronouns, negation, imperative	Strengthens communal bonds; transforms trauma into honour
Collective Motivation	“Let Quraysh be told, your slain shall never be forgotten.” / “Mind must be the firmer, heart the keener...”	Imperative, antithesis, repetition	Converts loss into legacy; reframes despair into resilience

Spiritual Meaning and Honour	“All of them died as free men of trial, upon God’s way.” / “Better to fall with our lord than live in disgrace.”	Diction, comparative structure, parallelism	Provides transcendent meaning; reinforces moral and cultural codes
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Table 2 highlights how both Ka‘b ibn Mālik's elegiac verses and the Anglo-Saxon Battle of Maldon employ poetic devices that serve dual aesthetic and psycholinguistic purposes. While repetition, metaphor, and rhythm amplify emotion and memorability, their deeper function lies in regulating trauma, reframing defeat, and reinforcing social cohesion. Across both traditions, language transforms vulnerability into resilience, anchoring grief in collective identity and imbuing sacrifice with transcendent meaning. Ka‘b’s emphasis on spiritual trial situates honour within divine purpose, whereas *Maldon* frames loyalty and death in feudal terms of lordship and dignity. Despite these cultural differences, both converge in using poetic discourse as a psychological instrument for coping with loss and motivating endurance.

In summary, both Ka‘b ibn Mālik's Uhud poetry and the Battle of Maldon function as psycholinguistic instruments that transform language into a medium of emotional expression, motivation, and identity. Through metaphor, repetition, rhythm, and parallelism, the poems channel grief into resilience, fear into courage, and defeat into honour. These findings address the study's objectives by revealing how poetic discourse encodes emotions and cognitive strategies, highlighting linguistic convergences and divergences, and illustrating the therapeutic and social roles of war poetry in trauma. The comparative results illuminate the universal psychological dimensions of poetic discourse while underscoring the cultural specificities that shape its expression.

Building on these findings, the next section examines how the identified themes—trauma and grief, heroism and courage, loyalty and solidarity, and spiritual or feudal honour—function psycholinguistically within their respective frameworks. It evaluates how language simultaneously encodes emotion and collective identity, and how poetic discourse embodies both therapy and cultural logic.

DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis of Ka‘b ibn Mālik's elegiac poetry on the Battle of Uhud (625 CE) and the anonymous Battle of Maldon (991 CE) demonstrates that poetic discourse functions as a psycholinguistic mechanism linking language with cognition, emotion, and social identity. Both texts reveal that language is not simply an aesthetic medium but also an instrument for regulating trauma, fostering motivation, and reinforcing communal solidarity (Hamid & Nordin, 2011). The key similarity lies in the way defeat is reconfigured into a source of collective psychological strength. Yet, the foundation of legitimacy differs: in Ka‘b’s verses, trauma is reframed through a spiritual narrative of faith and divine loyalty, whereas in Maldon it is processed through a feudal ethos of lordship and national honour. This finding affirms the psycholinguistic view that language both reflects and shapes emotional cognition (Fauziati, 2011; Ferreira, 2025b), while showing that cultural frameworks strongly influence how meaning is constructed.

Emotional language is central to both traditions. Ka‘b’s repetition of diction such as “tears” channels private grief into collective mourning, transforming sorrow into a shared experience of the Muslim community. In Maldon, the stark phrase “Byrhtnoth lies slain” anchors the loss of a leader as a symbol of communal identity among the Anglo-Saxons. Both cases highlight how

poetic language converts individual trauma into cultural memory. Yet the difference is significant: Ka‘b interprets grief as a spiritual trial and a test of faith, while Maldon portrays loss as a political and feudal rupture, reframed into secular solidarity. These observations reinforce Palermo and Aydogan’s (1978) argument that linguistic form shapes emotional interpretation and extend Ganguly’s (2021) claim that language mediates affective experience across contexts.

Both texts also reveal similarities in communicative strategies designed to sustain loyalty. Ka‘b employs imperatives and communal pronouns (“we,” “with us”) to strengthen collective identity, while Maldon employs formulaic parallelism and negation (“they would not flee”) to affirm solidarity. The similarity lies in the use of rhetorical repetition as a form of psychological control, ensuring cohesion during crisis. The difference lies in authority: in Ka‘b’s poetry, loyalty is rooted in spiritual and moral obedience, whereas in Maldon loyalty centres on the feudal lord as an embodiment of communal honour. These findings are consistent with Al-Ukaydi and Abdulrahman’s (2019) study of intertextual strategies in early Arabic poetry and Niles’ (2019) observations on *comitatus* in Anglo-Saxon verse. Both show that linguistic strategies transform vulnerability into collective resilience.

Transcendent meaning is another shared function. In Ka‘b’s poetry, sacrifice is framed as moral integrity and a path to divine reward. In Maldon, sacrifice is elevated as dignified courage, where dying with one’s lord is deemed nobler than living in disgrace. Both texts show that poetic discourse converts death into a symbol of values that outlive material defeat. Yet the foundations differ: Ka‘b’s verses root meaning in spirituality, linking trauma to faith, while Maldon roots meaning in feudal values, linking trauma to social honour. These findings corroborate Paz’s (2014) claim that Anglo-Saxon poetry functioned as a vehicle of collective trauma, while reinforcing J. Farhan (2025) and B. H. Farhan (2020) findings that early Islamic poetry promoted psychological resilience through rhetorical means.

Ultimately, this cross-cultural approach fills a significant research gap. Previous studies on Ka‘b ibn Mālik have predominantly focused on historical and aesthetic aspects (Awad Allah, 2018; Qabayli, 2015), whereas research on *The Battle of Maldon* has concentrated on heroic narrative and national ethos (Clark, 2000; Scragg, 1991). By applying a psycholinguistic lens, the present study extends the field beyond linguistic structure to explore the therapeutic and communal functions of poetic discourse. It also enriches comparative literature by showing how Arab-Islamic and Anglo-Saxon traditions, despite distinct worldviews, converge in their use of language to manage trauma and preserve collective resilience.

This observation aligns with broader cross-cultural discourse research, such as Edam et al. (2024), who demonstrate that linguistic framing in English-language representations of Arab identity reveals deeper cultural and ideological distinctions. Similarly, the comparative reading of Ka‘b ibn Mālik and *The Battle of Maldon* underscores how linguistic expression encodes different systems of moral value—spiritual devotion and divine purpose in the Arab-Islamic context, and honour-bound fealty in the Anglo-Saxon. Together, these findings reaffirm that poetic language serves as a universal yet culturally inflected mechanism of emotional regulation, moral construction, and social cohesion.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study compared Ka‘b ibn Mālik’s elegiac poetry on the Battle of Uhud (625 CE) and the Anglo-Saxon Battle of Maldon (991 CE) through a psycholinguistic lens. Both texts reveal the universal function of poetic discourse as a psychological mechanism for processing trauma, reinforcing solidarity, and constructing collective meaning. While both employ repetition, metaphor, rhythm, and parallelism to transform grief into resilience, their cultural frames differ: Ka‘b’s poetry roots honour in spirituality, while Maldon grounds it in feudal loyalty. These findings affirm war poetry as both aesthetic and therapeutic, shaping identity and resilience across cultures.

Theoretically, this research broadens psycholinguistics by highlighting the therapeutic role of language in literature, aligning with Ferreira (2025a) and Tatlıoğlu and Senchylo-Tatlıoğlu’s (2020) views of language as therapeutic communication. For comparative literature, it demonstrates how Arab-Islamic and Anglo-Saxon traditions converge in using language to manage trauma and affirm identity.

Practically, psycholinguistic insights apply beyond classical texts to modern contexts—contemporary war poetry, post-conflict narratives, and digital media similarly employ repetition and reframing to shape collective responses to trauma. Recognising language as a psychological instrument informs trauma studies, social psychology, and communication for conflict-affected communities.

The study has certain limitations. It focuses on two case studies from Arab-Islamic and Anglo-Saxon traditions, which, while rich, do not encompass the full diversity of war poetry across cultures. Future research could expand to Latin, Persian, or Asian epics to examine whether similar psycholinguistic patterns of resilience and solidarity emerge. Another limitation is the reliance on textual analysis without ethnographic data on reception; subsequent studies might integrate audience perspectives to assess how such texts function in lived communal contexts.

In sum, poetic discourse emerges as both aesthetic and psycholinguistic—a means of expressing emotion, motivating communities, and sustaining identity in trauma’s aftermath. By comparing Ka‘b ibn Mālik’s Uhud poetry and *The Battle of Maldon*, this study advances psycholinguistics and comparative literature, reaffirming language as a universal yet culturally inflected mirror of human psychology. Future investigations may extend this framework to broader literary traditions to deepen cross-cultural understanding of language, emotion, and resilience.

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