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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract			
<p>Tarkastelin tutkielmassa Britannian kansallisen identiteetin rakentumista brexit-prosessin alussa vuosina 2017-2018. Tavoitteenani oli selvittää, näkyikö maan tuolloisen pääministerin Theresa Mayn puheissa jonkinlainen uusi, Euroopan unionin ulkopuolinen Britannia ja millaisilla kielellisillä keinoilla tämä mahdollisesti tapahtui. Näitä kysymyksiä lähestyn tutkielmassa kaksivaiheisella trianguloivalla analyysillä: ensin määrällisellä ja sitten laadullisella. Metodeiltaan tutkielma kuuluu kriittisen diskurssianalyysin piiriin.</p> <p>Tutkimusaineistona olivat Mayn kolmen puheen kirjalliset versiot. Ensimmäisen hän piti Lontoossa tammikuussa 2017, toisen Firenzessä syyskuussa 2017 ja kolmannen maaliskuussa 2018 jälleen Lontoossa myrskyn estettyä häntä matkustamasta Manchesteriin. Analyysissä huomioitiin myös kunkin puheen ajankohdan, paikan ja kuvitellun yleisön mahdollinen merkitys.</p> <p>Määrällisessä analyysissä lähestyn aineistoa Martinin ja Whiten kehittämällä Appraisal-mallilla, jonka avulla tekstistä voidaan tunnistaa arvoasetelmia sisältäviä lausumia. Malli pohjautuu muun muassa systeemisen-funktionaaliseen kieliteoriaan ja Bakhtinin ajatuksiin kielen dialogisuudesta. Malli siis käsittää kielen vuorovaikutuksessa rakentuvana merkijärjestelmänä ja samalla katsoo, että sen merkit viittaavat aina toisiin merkkeihin. Sovelsin mallin osaa, joka pureutuu nimenomaan dialogisuuteen ja poimin puheista dialogiset lausumat. Nämä muiden kuin tekstin tekijän arvoasetelmia sisältävät lausumat sijoitin mallin neljään kategoriaan.</p> <p>Laadullisessa analyysissä hyödynsin useita yleensä yhteiskuntatieteellisiksi luettuja teorioita ja käsitteitä lähinnä kansainvälisten suhteiden tutkimuksen alalta. Keskeisiä tulokulmiani olivat sosiaalisen identiteetin teoriat sekä mm. Andersonin ajatus kansasta kuviteltuna yhteisönä ja Wendtin näkemys valtioista sosiaalisina konstruktioina sekä kolmeen eri tyyppiin jakautuva kuvaus kansainvälisten suhteiden anarkisuudesta.</p> <p>Keskeisenä tuloksena voidaan yhtäältä todeta, että Appraisal-mallin läpi katsottuna dialogiset lausumat, joissa May esitti implisiittisellä viitteellä oman tai Britannian kannan muita mahdollisia implisiittisesti ilmaistuja parempana vähenivät valitulla aikavälillä. Toisaalta myös vähenivät sellaiset lausumat, joissa hän sulki ehdottomasti pois muita näkökohtia. Ajan kuluessa yleistyivät toteavat, eksplisiittisen viitteen lähteeseen sisältävät lausumat.</p> <p>Kansallisen identiteetin voidaan ajatella olevan ydinkäsite, kun valtio pyrkii aiempaa löyhempään kansainväliseen yhteistyöhön, etenkin jos pyrkimysten perusteena on kansallisen suvereniteetin palauttaminen. Näyttää kuitenkin siltä, etteivät Mayn puheet sisältäneet sellaisia elementtejä, että niiden varaan olisi voinut rakentua Britannialle jonkinlainen uusi kansallinen identiteetti. Tutkimuskirjallisuuden valossa se olisi edellyttänyt voimakkaampaa, tunteisiin vetoavaa kieltä.</p>			
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Brenagement

Identity construction through dialogic
language in Theresa May's Brexit speeches

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1 Introduction

Great Britain took a step out of the European Union in June 2016 after more than 40 years of membership in a dramatic and controversial referendum. Leaving the EU was an unprecedented event, thus it seems necessary to examine more closely how a member state's future outside the union would be presented in the political discourse following the referendum.

This study aims to illustrate the wants and desires Britain may have expressed in the early and mid-stages of the process by examining the prime minister's public statements of the country's expectations. As Theresa May was the prime minister at the time, her speeches offered relevant data for the study. In this thesis, I approach her perceived Brexit¹ views from both linguistic and social scientific angles.

In order to see how May's tone might have changed during the Brexit process, I compared three of her speeches from the years 2016–2018. I first conducted a quantitative analysis by applying the Appraisal Framework developed by Martin and White (2005). This approach is based on systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and views language as a social semiotic system, i.e. considers meanings to be constructed socially. The framework provided me with tools to extract evaluative utterances from May's speeches and to see whether her positions changed over the speeches.

The second, qualitative part of my thesis is in great debt to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Even though CDA partly or even mostly derives from the Marxist tradition of critical theory, I have positioned myself in a more general field of critical studies. In other words, I have not examined these speeches so much as discourse of a class conflict or as vehicles for creating a false consciousness, but I have rather tried to deconstruct the discourse and see whether it seeks to, for example, reinforce a certain ideology or create a new one. I have pursued this question by selecting pivotal social scientific concepts that are concerned with social identities, groups and nations and by applying them in a post-structuralist manner.

¹ 'Brexit' became the popular nickname for Britain's exit from the European Union. More on this in Section 2.1.

1.1 The Origins of the Study

The spark for this study was a speech which Theresa May gave in September 2017 in Florence, Italy. As one can assume from the setting, the speech was probably meant to be a grandiose gesture with which she was supposed to project her vision onto the European screen. The speech was more or less deemed a flop in the British press, as well as in the international media.

This lacklustre reaction seems noteworthy: Would a prime minister actually travel all the way from London to Florence and give a vapid speech in one of the so-called hearts of European culture? Marina Hyde, a prominent columnist for the Guardian newspaper (which is generally viewed as left-leaning and thus of course expected to be rather critical of a Conservative prime minister), analysed the speech under the headline: “May made Brexit sound magical – if you’re drinking Bacardi”. In other words, one would need to be drunk on Cuban rum to believe that May's speech made any difference.

One could argue that Hyde's interpretation is spot-on: the contents of the speech did not seem earth-shatteringly historic by any means. However, the prime minister herself probably wanted her speech to be regarded as important and potentially transformative.

The topic of this thesis is quite important for several reasons. Firstly, May's pro-Brexit stance, which she adopted after the referendum, verged on being unprecedented for a British prime minister. In the 1950s and the 1960s, Britain had already aspired to enter the EU (or European Communities, as the entity was then called), but could not because France was opposed to it. Moreover, as Vernon Bogdanor pointed out in his lecture series on Britain and Europe, since the 1960s, “every single British Prime Minister has believed that our future lay with the European Community or European Union” (2014, at 11:24). In fact, no British prime minister before May had said that Britain ought to leave the EU. Even Margaret Thatcher, who became widely known for her doubts about Britain's continental neighbours, saved expressing a similar stance until after her premiership.

Secondly, as I mentioned before, May's speech was swiftly brushed aside in the media, as she did not seem to deliver what she had promised. Her other speeches on the topic were likewise received with equally low enthusiasm. However, as a politician who wanted Britain to remain in the EU and who almost by default became the foremost pilot on the country's way out of it, May's choice of words ought to have been of great interest.

Her main audience for the Florence speech were continental Europeans, which can be deduced from the fact that she chose to speak in Italy. Nevertheless, this is not the whole picture. While the other British main party, Labour, managed to succeed in the snap election May called in spring 2017 hoping to strengthen her mandate, she obviously needed to speak to her compatriots, as well.

The speeches of state leaders can be transformative acts, and in the international realm they gain new significance. It is still common in everyday parlance to readily accept the utterances of a head of state or government – especially a foreign one – as expressing the will of the nation associated with that state. What the British Prime Minister says, is in that moment what Britain says. In this aspect, we may have yet only slightly and on a national level broken the pattern that was followed to more or less up until the French Revolution. Until then, the ruler of a community was often the absolute leader and their word was the law. In practice they could be seen as synonymous with the area and the community that they ruled over. As the quote famously attributed to the French king Louis XIV states: “I am the state” – Louis XIV *was* France. The head of state could claim the ultimate power in a state to the extent of being the exclusive representative of its mentality. This association between the leader and the will of the nation seems to affect our notions of international politics even today, even if at least in a European context we tend to think of democracy as the winning formula.

Many people – even though it is perhaps allowed openly in liberal democracies – may question the legitimacy of power in their own political system when they do not agree with the way that it is being wielded. However, when we consider other less familiar political systems – unless we have a specific reason to do so – we might often refrain from questioning, whether, for example, the Brexit that Prime Minister

May was pursuing actually was the Brexit that even the narrow majority of the British population voted for.

I see this evident struggle to legitimise the government's decisions as a central factor in the Brexit process. In Britain, as well as elsewhere in Western and Northern Europe, the political field in the 20th century was typically dominated by two distinct political movements: The left, in Britain the Labour Party, traditionally wanted one thing and the right, in Britain the Conservative Party in Britain, wanted the other. In this political framework, the government has been able to lean on the party's traditional policies of which the voters have been aware. In other words and roughly simplified, the voters could expect that left-wing policies should improve working conditions and social security and right-wing policies should restrict changes to these issues.

However, both increasing globalisation and European integration has complicated this left-right division in many European countries and it is not clear whether social challenges and policies to tackle the challenges presented by these developments can be mapped out along that particular dichotomy. Moreover, a decision to leave the European Union is not a question of quotidian domestic politics. It is a thick blend of international financial, security and social issues all rolled into one. This means that the British voters could not possibly foresee what a Conservative-led Brexit or a Labour-led Brexit would actually look like – or what any Brexit would look like, for that matter. They were offered a simple choice of yes or no, without a lot of elaboration on the latter.

During Britain's EU membership, globalisation has accelerated and Britain's foreign, economic and security policies have been constructed in multilateral interaction with several actors at the same time. Now Britain sought to leave a political and cultural union to become something else and an originally reluctant prime minister was left with the task of defining a new future ever more dependent on other actors on the international scene.

The two latter speeches analysed in this thesis took place after May had lost the snap election which she called herself. The data for this study was collected in the spring of 2018, which means I have neither examined any later statements nor political

developments in detail. This might be seen as a shortcoming, but it can be argued that this timeframe allows us to see how May launched her bid and whether the tone changed when parliamentary circumstances became unfavourable to the Conservative party.

In order to demonstrate what types of arguments May calls upon to convince her audience, I harvested the utterances in which significant actors with an interest in Brexit and their arguments entered the discourse either explicitly or implicitly. I conducted the first part of my study by applying Martin and White's Appraisal framework which I present in the Background chapter.

In further analysis, I dissected these utterances to understand how these actors were presented in linguistic choices and how May employed them to both reproduce current and construct new group identities for both Britain and the EU, thus attempting to buttress her message. This analysis illustrates how May attempted to argue for the Brexit in her discourse.

My two research questions were:

1. What types of dialogic utterances (explained in chapter 2) did the British Prime Minister use in her speeches to introduce arguments for and against Brexit?
2. How did Theresa May present the British national identity outside the EU with the aid of aforementioned arguments and did this vary over the 18-month period according to the political context and the audience?

My hypothesis was as follows: May would not succeed in constructing a distinct British identity which would seem apparently and absolutely superior to the identity she constructs for the EU. Here, the concept of construction does not mean any kind of active manipulation, but performative description of group identities which can be analysed with a constructivist approach, i.e. by seeing this construction as a social process. I elaborate on this in the Background chapter.

I expected to find her attempting to present an array of possible future developments as specifically British endeavours and goals, but not being able to demonstrate how these could not be pursued as a part of the European Union. Nevertheless, this study takes neither a pro- or anti-Brexit stance and I did not aim to discern whether this

was a case of inability or refusal, but rather to observe how May built her case and whether she succeeded.

2 Background

Just like any human communication, political speeches do not emerge from a pristine vacuum waiting for the audience to interpret them. They are always bound to be discursive, i.e. both consciously and unconsciously impregnated with meanings that evolve *and* devolve in the process. Political speeches are produced and reproduced in the social consciousness of the possible writer(s), the speaker and the audience. This is inevitable, as words, concepts or even gestures are bound to have at least slightly different connotations for a prime minister and for someone in any other position. In this study, I concentrate on the speaker and what she² chooses to include in her conception of social reality. In order to illustrate the context in which the speeches were given, it is necessary to examine key aspects of the political backdrop of these particular speeches. The first sections of this chapter discuss the necessary political and historical context.

The second part of this chapter consists of the theoretical approaches and concepts that I have employed to analyse the speeches. Moreover, due to the cross-disciplinary nature of my thesis, that part is divided into two sections. I first present the linguistic theoretical approach, the Appraisal Framework, and how I applied it in the first stage of the analysis.

I have widened my perspective considering that this thesis is mainly interested in the social and shared aspects of language. Thus, in the last section of this chapter, I introduce a variety of concepts more common in the realm of social sciences which I applied to help tackle the social dimensions of the speeches in the second phase of my analysis.

² It may be useful to note at this stage that I will use the pronoun 'they' when I am referring to a 3rd person in a general manner instead of 'he' or 'she'. However, when referring to actual persons, I will use the traditional gender pronouns if the person is generally perceived to represent the respective gender and he or she has not been known to challenge this perception. In Theresa May's case, the choice to use 'she' seemed unproblematic.

2.1 Political and Historical Background

David Cameron, Theresa May's predecessor as prime minister (2010–2016) and as the chairperson of the Conservative party (2005–2016), had struggled with the increasing opposition to EU membership within the party's constituency. In 2013, he promised to arrange a referendum on Britain's membership in the European Union if his party would win the next general election. Cameron set the stage for the Brexit³ process by promising a clear choice between in and out, even though the voters could not be offered a clear picture of what the *out* would actually entail. Regardless of this obscurity, voters had their say on Thursday June 23, 2016, and the result was considered binding.

The campaigning was heated and after an eventful night of counting, the final results appeared in the early hours of Friday, June 24: 51,89% wanted to Leave and 48,11% wanted to Remain (as the options and the campaigns for them were officially named). Having wanted to Remain, Cameron decided to resign immediately after the referendum leaving his party reeling. One of the most prominent Leave campaigners and the former mayor of London, Boris Johnson was widely expected to take charge, but as he at this stage declined, Theresa May became more or less the default leader of the Conservative party.

Although these events were unexpected, Britain's EU membership was hardly ever unproblematic. Both the popular opinion and the main parties were ambivalent on the issue throughout the era. However, as in 2016 both main parties officially supported remaining in the EU, the voting result was considered astonishing at the time.

As a result, Britain initiated its separation from the European Union in March 2016 and a year later, Britain and the EU had agreed on "guidelines" for their new relationship and by 2018, they had come to an agreement on how the resignation would proceed. The view to the future was hardly clear in the beginning, but no-one could have been able to see how eventful the process would actually turn out to be.

³ The honour of coining this term (a portmanteau of Britain's exit) has been generally given in Britain to Peter Wilding who in 2012 wrote about the possibility of the country leaving the EU in a blog called EURACTIV. (Moseley, 2016)

What was clear was that the public discussion on the conditions of the departure and on Britain's new position in Europe and in the world were seen as too vague at least for the largest part of the process. It had started to seem that Britain could not form a solid, coherent stance or did not want to yield to the conditions set by the EU.

2.1.1 Theresa May and the Conservative Party

It is safe to say that the British Conservative Party fell into its own trap with the Brexit referendum. At least in retrospect, it would seem clear that David Cameron was trying to contain the simmering anti-EU sentiment in Britain by arranging the referendum. The result was probably unforeseeable for both Cameron and the rest of the party establishment, including Theresa May, who served as the Home Secretary at the time.

Furthermore, apart from being a surprise, the result must also have been a disappointment for May, as only two months earlier she argued strongly for Britain to remain. For example, in her speech at the Institute of Mechanical Engineers in London, she said she believed that “it is clearly in our national interest to remain a member of the European Union” (Home Office and May, 2016). This is noteworthy in comparison to her later views, as she at times presented herself as a vocal advocate even for a so-called hard Brexit. At its hardest, this would have meant that Britain would leave the EU without any agreement on future relations.

Whatever May's true attitude towards the EU membership during her premiership may have been, Britain did not manage to agree on the terms of the separation under her leadership. In the summer of 2019, it eventually became clear that the Parliament would not accept May's Brexit deal and she decided to resign. The next prime minister, decidedly pro-Brexit Boris Johnson, was not more successful in pushing a revised deal through the Parliament. Johnson resorted to the same tactic as May and called a snap election. Although May had already taken a pragmatic approach to the issue, Johnson was on his own level: He declared that Britain had to “get Brexit done”, as if it was already clear to everyone what Brexit would specifically and in detail mean. Whatever it would later become to mean, Johnson's pragmatism was

more successful than May's and the Conservative party won a majority in the parliament.

Even though the new parliament accepted the Brexit deal which took Britain out of the union on January 31, 2020, the EU made it clear that the transition period until the end of that year would not be long enough to negotiate about and agree on the terms of Euro-British co-operation in the future. The deal ensured that trade relations and immigration rules, for example, would remain more or less the same until the end of 2020, but as this thesis was already in preparation in the spring of that year, there were no detailed plans for the permanent future arrangements and the negotiations actually were more or less put on hold because of the global coronavirus pandemic which erupted in early 2020. This means that almost four years after the referendum, no-one still knew what kind of a relationship the new Britain would have with the EU after the Brexit process.

2.1.2 Britain and the EU

The relations between Britain and continental Europe have been politically and culturally vivid throughout known history. Britain is an island and this geographical fact has been laden with political significance on many occasions from both sides of the English Channel. Without excavating deeper into the colonial race of the European great powers or their economic and military rivalry that led to many bloody battles, an overall estimate that these relations have been repeatedly strained, broken and mended over the past centuries would not be an exaggeration. Thus, one might consider it a small miracle that Britain actually joined the European Communities (which later evolved into the EU) upon the organisation's first enlargement in 1973. It is worth remembering once again, however, that Britain was willing to join even earlier, but Charles de Gaulle, the French president, had prevented it.

Euroscepticism has been a recurring theme in British politics ever since the country's accession in the EU in 1973. Already two years after joining, the membership was questioned in a referendum, but supported by the majority of voters. Under the fiercely Eurosceptic prime minister Margaret Thatcher, the 1980s were also a rather

turbulent time in Euro-British relations. The Channel was calmer during the 1990s, as the fall of the Berlin Wall suddenly drew different corners of Europe closer together. Decades of ideological conflict was deemed to be over, as the post-communist Eastern Europe was seen migrating towards the Western ideological haven of liberal democracy. However, the ideological migration soon also took more concrete, possibly partly unexpected forms.

After the EU accession of eight former so-called Eastern bloc countries in 2004 immigration to the UK increased significantly and quickly. Ortensi (2017) states that almost 930,000 people from these countries registered for work in the UK between May 1, 2004 and December 31, 2008. Britain did not try stop them either: it was one of three EU member states who did not impose any limits on the free movement from the new member states. Moreover, it is safe to say that the migration crisis of 2015–2016 which saw millions of people travel through the EU did not alleviate British worries about EU’s immigration policy. In an Ipsos poll before the referendum (2016), one in four Britons believed that immigration along with the economy would be the most important issue in the upcoming referendum. In terms of economy, the financial crisis in the early 2010s and especially the turbulent events in the Eurozone may also well have acted as a repellent for Britain.

All in all, British reluctance is not a new factor in the history of European co-operation. History tells us that Europe most certainly has been an increasingly controversial – although in reverse decreasingly violence-inducing – issue in British politics. It has even been proposed that the question of belonging to Europe may have been the fundamental conflict in British politics since the Second World War. According to Bogdanor (2013, at 5:09), it divides Britain because it evokes “the most fundamental issue of politics, the basic attitude toward national identity, about what it is to be British”. On the surface, the main bone of contention has been the concept of national sovereignty, but we need to look deeper: In a network of nation-states, national sovereignty will inevitably involve questions of national identity. Otherwise it would be impossible to define whose sovereignty is in question. One would expect this constant construction of identity to manifest itself in May’s speeches, as well. Nevertheless, all these concepts involving nation can be defined in a variety of manners. I present the definitions applied in this thesis in section 2.4.

2.2 Dialogism

To clarify the philosophical basis of my study, I must first address Bakhtin's ideas (1981) on the dialogic nature of language. Although Bakhtin studied literary novels, his ideas can to a certain extent be applied to all linguistic manifestations. I share his view that there can be no utterances that would contain only the speaker's ideas and intentions. Language is a shared cultural construction which means that in everything we say, write, hear or read, there are multiple voices present. We may create original structures from this linguistic common property, but the perceived meaning is never purely our own work. As we combine various voices from the past and the present in each utterance, the reader or the hearer does the same and the meaning is constructed in this intricate interaction. This view is called dialogism.

Before it is possible to comprehend how Appraisal Framework and especially its category of Engagement approaches language, one needs to grasp the principles of dialogism. Mikhail Bakhtin sees language as thoroughly dialogic, as heteroglossia, the multitude of socio-ideological languages is inherent in everything we say or write. In his essay *Discourse in the Novel* (1981, p. 272), he states that:

Every utterance participates in the “unitary language” (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia [the centrifugal, stratifying forces].

In other words, the speaker has to present their ideas in a “unitary language”, so that all receivers who have obtained the capacity to comprehend the given language will understand the message. However, I believe this unitary impression may and will often in practice disguise the socio-ideological layers that history has crammed into the lexicon.

As noted earlier, Bakhtin studied mainly literary texts, but he claimed that “dialogic orientation of discourse is a phenomenon that is, of course, a property of *any* discourse”, as words come together in new combinations and contexts (1981, p. 279). Hence, if a certain linguistic approach can be applied to literary texts, it surely can be applied to all other types of texts, as well. After all, it might in a purely philosophical context even be debatable whether political speeches are fact or fiction in the sense

that they may seek to alter the reality or the conception of it instead of merely describing or reporting on it.

However, even if a political speech was a politician's deliberate attempt to distort a shared concept of reality, it could never be simply an encoded message which the audience as a receiver could then decode. In a dialogistic view, meanings are not solid enough to be transferred in an immutable form. The dialogic nature of language is something that both the speaker and the receiver need to acknowledge. As Bakhtin states:

The linguistic significance of a given utterance is understood against the background of language, while its actual meaning is understood against the background of other concrete utterances on the same theme, a background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view and value judgments... (1981, p. 281)

This means that as an utterance emerges, there is a simultaneous process of both the speaker merging not only their own opinions, points of view and value judgments, but also composing and applying a selection of everything they have previously encountered – and the receiver performing similar cognitive actions simultaneously.

2.3 Appraisal Framework

As described previously, there are various dynamics at work when utterances are being produced by the author and their meanings sometimes instantly reproduced by the receiver. Because of the perplexing stratification this interplay can be difficult to tackle. In this study, I employ for this purpose Appraisal Framework, developed by J. R. Martin and P. R. R. White (2005).

Martin and White's (2005) framework builds on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). In other words, it considers language to be a system where language is seen in a semiotic way as a system of signs from which speakers build a linguistic structure. Halliday is generally considered to have originated SFL and has explored the concept of semiotic language even further:

“language is a semogenic system: a system that creates meaning [...] the meaning potential of a language is openended: new meanings always can be, and often are being, created.” (Halliday 2009, p. 60)

In semiotic terms, language users construct a syntagma from various paradigms. Martin and White's framework is designed to organise words and phrases into different categories for different kinds of evaluation, i.e. utterances that encase a value position. This allows us to map out the paradigm beyond the utterance at hand. Moreover, it offers a tool with which to recognise the creation of new meanings.

This framework has been used to analyse political discourses before. For example, Ponton (2010) has applied the framework as a supportive tool in his analysis of the construction of gender identity in the discourse of Margaret Thatcher. D. J. Martin (2011) employed the framework to analyse the value position in the speeches of four American political leaders to discern common linguistic resources. However, to my knowledge there seems to be no relevant comparison in previous research to the way I have applied Appraisal Framework in this study.

Martin and White's framework includes three main categories: *Attitude*, *Engagement* and *Graduation*. *Attitude* would probably have been the obvious choice in analysing a political speech, as it is concerned with the speaker's own value positions, i.e. how the speaker seems to express their own personal opinion. However, as I was more interested in other value positions than the speaker's own, I generally ignored *Attitude* which Martin and White use to categorise the terms where we can detect the speaker's own emotions or judgments.

Moreover, I did not look at *Graduation*, the concept that Martin and White use to determine the degree of *Attitude* or *Engagement*. However, I refer to these two concepts in my analysis, as well, if it is necessary in order to clarify my perceptions.

As I stated previously, Martin and White base their framework on SFL and although this influence is a strong undercurrent in my study, I concentrate on the part they have derived from Bakhtin's ideas, i.e. *Engagement*. Bakhtin's idea of dialogism is a key element in *Engagement*. As Martin and White themselves formulate:

Engagement deals with sourcing attitudes and the play of voices around opinions in discourse. (Martin & White, 2005: 35)

This concept can thus be used to identify evaluative utterances where we can detect non-authorial voices, i.e. other voices than the writer/speaker themselves. For example, the writer/speaker could refer to an expert's view on the matter at hand.

Collecting the utterances containing *Engagement* offers us a view into the socio-ideological mindset of the speaker at least in the given context and regarding the given topic. As we take note of what kinds of sources the speaker endorses or dismisses or what kind of sources they seem to omit, we can tell quite a few things about their social background and worldview. I would also argue that concentrating on *Engagement* brings forth those arguments that may often seem neutral but have nevertheless been preferred by the speaker over other arguments and are chosen to support a political aim.

One should, however, bear in mind that this mindset might be discourse-specific. In other words, a speaker can resort to one selection of socio-ideological positions on a particular topic and to a different selection on another topic.

Martin and White's framework provides various categories for the evaluative utterances depending on whether the writer/speaker seems to, for example, allow for other voices or to restrict their influence on their message. As the framework is highly detailed, I have simplified their model to some extent to fit the scope of this study. At the crudest level, *Engagement* is divided into four categories (examples from the Lancaster speech, operative items underlined):

1. Disclaim: the textual voice rejects some contrary position
e.g. "Nobody wants to return to the borders of the past."
2. Proclaim: the textual voice presents itself as highly warrantable to suppress or rule out alternative positions
e.g. "Fairness demands that we deal with another issue"
3. Entertain: the textual voice presents other positions as possible or plausible
e.g. "it is reasonable that we should make an appropriate contribution"
4. Attribute: the textual voice states explicitly an external voice whose position is presented as one of a range of possible positions
e.g. "European leaders have said many times that membership means"

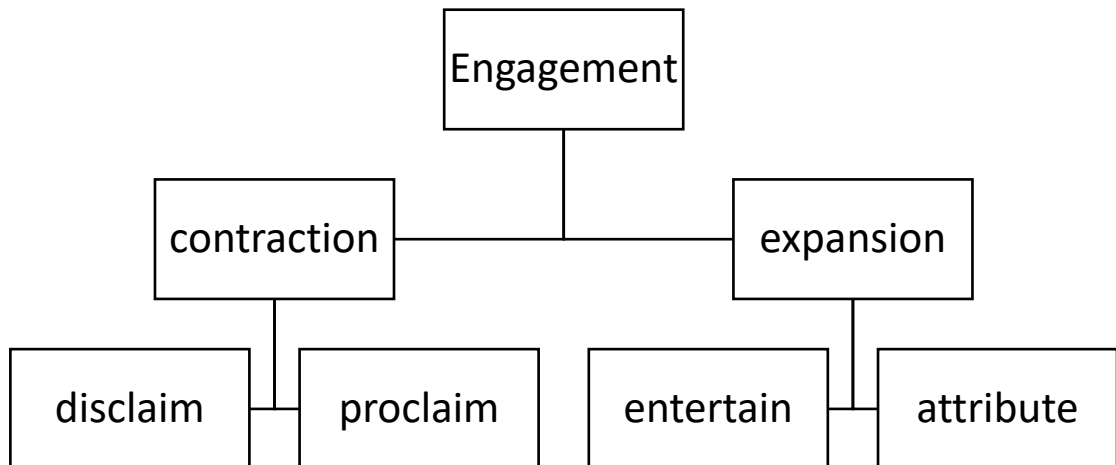


Figure 1. Engagement framework (Martin & White, 2005, p. 134)

As can be seen in Figure 1, the categories listed above are actually sub-categories for Martin and White’s main categories of dialogic contraction and dialogic expansion. However, for the purpose of this study, I chose to limit my analysis to the second level of the categories for *Engagement*. I would argue that it is rather clear that the categories ‘disclaim’ and ‘proclaim’ contain contractive utterances and the other two consist of expansive utterances. Martin and White have developed the framework further and divided each sub-category into various sub-sub-categories, but the scope of this study did not allow for including them in the analysis.

I believe that my modifications make the method more easily comprehensible and illustrate better the dialogic linguistic elements Prime Minister May has selected to feature in her speeches. Just like Martin and White describe their ideas of *Engagement*, I am also interested in:

“whether they present themselves as standing with, as standing against, as undecided, or as neutral with respect to these other speakers and their value positions” (Martin & White, 2005: 93)

2.4 Society and Nation

As I mentioned in the introduction, this study is in great debt to the tradition of critical theory. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) has traditionally concentrated on the linguistic construction of power relations with its focus on the discriminated, disadvantaged and suppressed. This seems to reflect the Marxist basis of critical theory. Instead of analysing a potential class conflict, I am leaning lightly on the discourse-historical approach the relevance of which in the field of politics Wodak describes as follows:

“If we take politicians, for example, as specific and not at all homogeneous groups of elites, then they are best seen both as shapers of specific public opinions and interests and as seismographs, that reflect and react to the atmospheric anticipation of changes in public opinion and to the articulation of changing interests of specific social groups and affected parties.” (2001, p. 64)

In Wodak’s view making this complex web of meanings transparent calls for an interdisciplinary approach which focuses on not only discursive, but also material and semiotic practices. The discourse-historical approach demands the analyst to exceed the “purely textual or discourse internal sphere. She or he makes use of her or his background and contextual knowledge and embeds the communicative or interactional structures of a discursive event in a wider frame of social and political relations, processes and circumstances” (ibid., p. 65)

In this study, this means that I attempt to consider the social, cultural and temporal context in my analysis of May’s speeches while being self-reflective and transparent about my own position in the interdisciplinary realm between linguistics and political sciences.

Combining my knowledge in different fields, I have tried to recognise the norms and performances in a political speech of an established politician that we might ridicule but nevertheless take for a self-evident given and to discern the substance from them: Was something specific and potentially transformative being said, even if the speech seems repetitive of established political culture?

In Bakhtinian terms: examining the dialogism (the simultaneous presence of different voices) and the stratification in the language of the powers that be might dilute this discourse and reduce its impermeability to those whom the linguistic power measures

are inflicted upon. As I stated above, power is a constant factor in politics, may its use or abuse in the political discourse be obvious or not.

This approach led me to incorporate post-structuralist ideas about international relations in my study. Post-structuralist approaches tend to explore how our view of the world is constituted through language and how key concepts like identity and sovereignty are shaped by it. Thus, I wanted to see how the national identity of Britain and the “national” identity of the EU and the concept of sovereignty were reproduced in Theresa May’s Brexit discourse.

2.4.1 Social Identity – the Prerequisite of Nationalism

Although people tend to speak about “nation” quite comfortably in the public sphere, let alone in more private discussions, the meaning of the concept is neither self-evident nor fixed. We may talk about, say, our fellow citizens’ success in a sporting event as empowering our “national identity”, but were we asked to describe our national identity in detail, many of us might be at a loss for words. We might start to list things that we think our nation does or to describe ways how we think it does them. More importantly, we might start by comparing our nation to other nations and define ours through negation: What does, or will our nation not do or what has it allegedly never done? This construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of a national identity takes place everywhere the entity called nation is present. The scope and complexity of this process cannot be exaggerated: identities, especially social identities perceived common to a group, change only slowly.

The late 19th and early 20th century saw the rise of romantic nationalist ideas and that is also the era where one can place the origin of today’s social identity theory (SIT), as well. In 1906, Graham Sumner wrote a book titled *Folkways* which has been questioned and contested in more recent times. Yet many of his ideas, such as the concept of “ethnocentrism”, an idea of one’s own ethnic group as the centre of everything, live on.

Sumner also laid out principles of human social organisation, which Brewer (2001) sums up in four phase-like categories. Human social groups are organised into

ingroup-outgroup categories, where the ingroup can be referred to as “we/us” and the outgroup consists of “they/them”. The individuals maintain positive relationships and cooperation within the ingroup (ingroup positivity) and evaluate it superior to the outgroup. This is called the intergroup comparison principle.

Sumner’s next step in human social organisation is called outgroup hostility and this is where later research has disagreed. According to Sumner, relationships between ingroup and outgroups are characterized by antagonism, conflict and mutual contempt, but it has also been suggested that this phase can also be preceded by intergroup competition (Demmers 2017), which would not have to evolve into hostility at all.

Without delving deeper into peace and conflict theories, in regard to the scope of this thesis it might suffice to say that this categorisation is rather relevant in understanding the Brexit process and the discourse surrounding it. If an actor wants to detach itself from a cooperative framework, it may be necessary for it to present itself as an ingroup (in this case Britain) which is superior to the outgroup (in this case the EU) and capable of competing with it. However, the SIT would suggest that there may be a fine line between competition and hostility along which one must tread quite carefully when making statements on the intergroup relationship. A political leader, such as Theresa May at the time, cannot avoid treading this line in public statements when attempting to define the border of sovereignty. By observing these endeavours in a discourse, we may gain insight into how committed the speaker is to the cause of ingroup positivity and intergroup comparison.

2.4.2 Nation as an Imagined Community

Becoming a nation is not an easy feat for a group. Historically, it seems to require that the group undergoes the aforementioned process and that the presented results of the process are to some extent acknowledged by other groups that have established themselves as nations. There has been quite a wide array of definitions for ‘nation’, but one of the most fertile in humanities and social sciences – and in terms of this thesis – has been Benedict Anderson’s. Anderson defines ‘nation’ as “an imagined political community as both inherently limited and sovereign” (1991, p. 6).

Here it is important to separate the two different meanings of the word ‘imagine’. In everyday language, speaking of “imagined” communities or audiences is quite challenging, while ‘imagine’ often strongly connotes a sense of inexistence or falseness. For Anderson (and many others) ‘imagined’ means that the entity at question does not exist as such, people in groups that might be called nations are never physically close enough to form a family-like, tightly woven community:

“the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members [...] yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”
(Anderson, 1991, p. 6)

Anderson also stresses that nations are limited because they are bound to draw boundaries that are perceived as separating them from other nations. This supports the argument that nations are constructed and not born, and their attributes need to be agreed on in communion, while they are not just simply there for the members to list. Moreover, these attributes constitute to something that is often referred to as “national identity”. On the basis of SIT, this can be argued to be constituted through ingroup-positivity and in intergroup comparison/competition.

The concept of sovereignty which is so often attached to nations and to nation-states, in particular, is for Anderson more than anything a product of the historical transition from mostly absolutist states to other forms of government. When a religious organ or the king was no longer the extension of a divine ruler, the authority in society needed to be established in some other way. The beginning of this intricate process can be dated back to the age of Enlightenment in the 17th century. By the late 19th century, nation had already become an essential component of a European state.

In the case of this study, while Britain most certainly can be defined as a nation-state and the British can in everyday parlance be called a nation, we must not forget that the meaning of the concept of ‘nation’ is neither self-evident nor fixed – it is constructed. While a political leader can take the current idea of this imagined community and talk about it, as soon as they start moulding the manifestations of it, they are bound to influence the idea, as well. In other words, during political speeches, political leaders and the public can be seen as chiselling at the ‘nation’, or the imagined political community, in a dialogic discourse.

2.4.3 Nation-State and Sovereignty

The rise of the modern nation-state is usually considered to have begun with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. In 300 years, it became an unignorable staple in the international realm. It is a rather important concept in this thesis, as well. A ‘nation-state’ has been defined in various ways, but generally it is viewed as a geographical area where political boundaries tend to coincide with cultural boundaries. There are obviously plenty of exceptions, but for the case at hand, this description of a sovereign nation-state is a workable definition.

As a matter of fact, the form of government is at the heart of Brexit. Throughout the referendum campaign and thereafter, Brexit presented itself as a struggle between different ideas of sovereignty. On one hand, those wanting to leave argued that Britain had lost her national sovereignty and her only way back was to exit the union and “take back control”, as one of the Brexit slogans urged. On the other, those wanting to remain argued that Britain has exerted its national sovereignty by transferring some of its competences to the EU and that this had not diminished its sovereignty. Both sides may have a point, but it seems to indisputable that conception of sovereignty is the overarching question in a member state’s relationship to the European Union.

Walker (1993) writes about sovereignty as being the actual frontier between domestic and international. He also refers to these realms as ‘inside’ and ‘outside’. In other words, a state’s sovereignty is limited by the extent of its authority. Walker also reminds us of the difference between power and authority: Although a state may possess authority, it has been difficult to determine how it obtains its power.

Thus attention shifts to other dilemmas, notably those concerning the cultural or national content of the space within state boundaries... (Walker 1993, p. 170)

The problem of power and authority and the above-mentioned dilemmas have often been solved through “unitary claims to national identity” (ibid.). This process constructs a seemingly coherent and harmonious ‘inside’ which has conventionally been portrayed as a realm of order and trust. The ‘outside’ is often portrayed as the opposite, a realm of conflict and suspicion, where states are presumed to act in a “pursuit of some mystical national interest as an assertion of power and will” (ibid., p. 172).

2.4.4 I Am the British and Britain Is Me?

Another tool that I have borrowed in a cross-disciplinary manner comes from social psychology: the ‘I’ and ‘me’ dichotomy by George Herbert Mead (1950). He suggests that the self of a person is divided into two intertwined social entities: The ‘I’ can be described as the lived experience of the self and the ‘me’ as the self that is perceived by others. In Mead’s words:

The “I” is the response of the organism to the attitudes of others, the “me” is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes. The attitudes of other constitute the organized “me”, and then one reacts towards that as an “I”. (Mead 1950, p. 175)

My application of Mead owes to Alexander Wendt who applied Mead’s ideas to international relations in a constructivist fashion. Wendt (1992) notes that the roles which people and states assume (he has also argued that states actually possess similar properties as individual persons) are socially constituted. As the British Prime Minister is undeniably a person, and in everyday language also almost synonymous with Britain⁴, their position is quite complicated in these terms.

A prime minister will always remain privately and publicly an *I*, but in public, their *me* will always contain Britain in all its diversity, as well. Moreover, their *me* may also refer to the government or the prime minister’s own political party. After all, in most political parties at least in the Global North (sometimes referred to as the West or developed countries), there is a single chairperson who is widely expected to accept responsibility for everything that the party or its member may partake in. In reverse, the chairperson is usually given a strong mandate to speak for party members and supporters.

As British politics still is to a great extent a two-party system, the leader of the largest party can at least plausibly claim to represent “Britain”. Hence, as I demonstrate in the Results chapter, it can be argued that not only Theresa May’s *me* but even her *I* may at times refer to the whole of Britain. It may be impossible to

⁴ In international media, ‘Britain’ and ‘the British’ are commonly used to refer to a imagined will of the nation. It is also not seldom that ‘London’ or ‘prime minister X’ is used interchangeably as a metonymy for ‘Britain’ in media.

keep the self, the collective self and the other from overlapping, if one intends to maintain co-operative relations with the other without alienating them. The difficulty of the task is magnified both by the multitude of social identities that will be activated and brought to public in this context, and by the array of conceptions of British national identity and its importance and national sovereignty at play.

Moreover, if we agree with Wendt (1992) in that states possess qualities usually associated with individual persons because they consist of several people, it is evident that this idea of self extends from the individual level to *we* and *us* and by the same logic to *they* and *them*. This is also supported by the social identity theory presented previously: It can well be argued that one's personal identity can extend to a social identity of a group, of a nation and eventually of a nation-state and this makes the members of this imagined community consider their ingroup as *we* and the respective outgroups as *they*. This distinction is something that a political leader can and may tap into when attempting to shift the shape of the imagined national identity.

3 Material and Methods

My research material consists of three oral presentations by Theresa May who served as the Prime Minister of Britain during the first part of the Brexit process from July 2016 to July 2019. I first looked at the speech where May outlined the negotiating objectives of the British government in January 2017 at Lancaster House in London. As the speech is commonly spoken of as “the Lancaster House speech”, I refer to this speech later in this paper as ‘Lancaster’. Secondly, I examined the speech she gave in Florence, Italy, in September 2017. This speech is referred to as ‘Florence’ later on in the text. My third exhibit is the speech which May gave in London in March 2018 after Britain reached a preliminary agreement with EU officials. Hereafter, I refer to this speech as ‘Mansion’, as the speech was given at Mansion House in London. It is also worth mentioning that May was supposed to travel to Manchester for the speech but had to relocate because of a storm.

I printed out the transcripts of the speeches from the website of the British government.⁵ The subheading on the webpage stated that the transcripts were written exactly as the speeches were delivered, so I did not deem it necessary to include the filmed deliveries in my material. That would have been useful and even necessary had I employed a different kind of approach, but I chose to concentrate on the verbal content and not, say, prosodic aspects. I conducted a close reading of each speech and marked utterances with four different colours according to the categories in Appraisal Framework: proclaim, disclaim, attribute and entertain.

The speeches differ in length: the word counts in the transcripts are 6,430 (Lancaster), 5,333 (Florence) and 6,820 (Mansion). To make them comparable, I normalised the word count to 10,000 words. I chose 10,000 rather than 1,000, as a text of 10,000 words resembles the length of a political speech closer than 1,000 words. I used the following equation used commonly in corpus linguistics, where x is the frequency per 10,000 words used in my analysis:

$$x = \text{occurrences} * 10,000 / \text{word count}$$

⁵ I chose not to include the transcriptions of the speeches to this thesis as appendices because of their length. The transcriptions can be found on the website of the British government and I have provided the respective URL addresses for each speech in the References.

In order to interpret political speeches in their social and political contexts, the linguistic choices must be scrutinised in great detail. I did this by categorising May's words and expressions along the lines of *Engagement* as laid out in Martin and White's Appraisal Framework to see how she engages with her audience, fellow politicians, fellow Britons, other Europeans, etc., and what types of arguments can be extracted from the dialogic utterances.

I thus recognized the items containing dialogism and placed them in the categories of *Engagement* defined by Martin and White. As already described, I decided to limit the grouping to four categories of utterances with *Engagement* which I considered the most central in the framework:

1. Disclaim: the textual voice rejects some contrary position
2. Proclaim: the textual voice presents itself as highly warrantable to suppress or rule out alternative positions
3. Entertain: the textual voice presents other positions as possible or plausible
4. Attribute: the textual voice states explicitly an external voice whose position is presented as one of a range of possible positions

As stated previously, the framework also provides various sub-categories for the categories I have chosen, but the scope of this study was not wide enough for me to conduct the analysis in such depth.

4 Results and Analysis

In this chapter I present the occurrences of different types of engagement in the three speeches in one table and provide an overall analysis of engagement in this three-speech discourse. After that, I will examine the speeches respectively and illustrate their differences through prominent features of engagement.

For the quantitative analysis, I extracted the items expressing *Engagement* from the speeches, placed them in the four categories and assessed what type of engagement is most prominent in May's speeches. This is followed by qualitative analysis where I employ a generally critical, post-structuralist approach and scrutinize the linguistic resources present in the speeches. I have included illustrative examples from each speech in the second part of the analysis.

In Figure 2 and Table 1, I present the results of my analysis. In the simplest cases, the findings consisted of subject+verb combinations. In others, it was important to include as much as a whole paragraph in the utterance. In these cases, Engagement remained similar over various sentences. As the length of the utterances varied greatly and the total number of them varied according to the length of the speech, I did not find that the overall word count of the speech made a great difference in regard to the overall frequency of engagement.

Figure 2. Utterances with Engagement (word count normalised per 10,000 words)

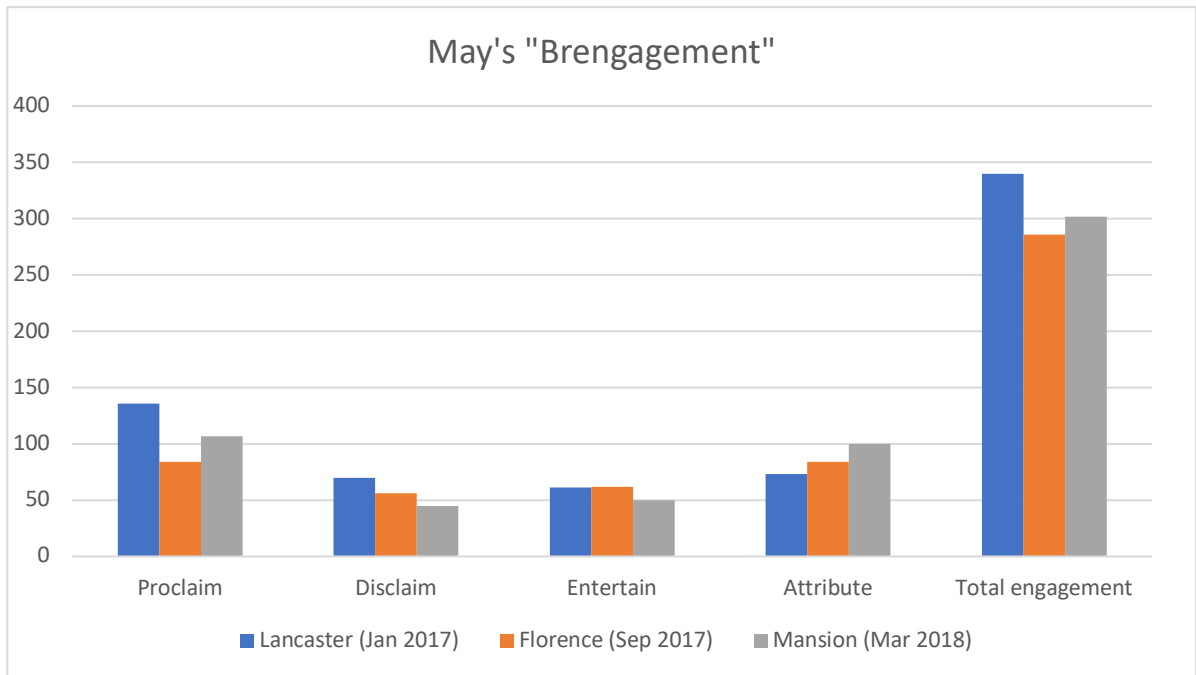


Table 1. Utterances with Engagement, word count normalised per 10,000 words

	Lancaster (Jan 2017)	Florence (Sep 2017)	Mansion (Mar 2018)
Proclaim	136	84	107
Disclaim	70	56	45
Entertain	61	62	50
Attribute	73	84	100
Total Engagement	340	286	302

4.1 Overview

There are some clear tendencies which Figure 1 illustrates. The number of the most defiant, i.e. proclamatory and disclamatory utterances seems to reduce as the Brexit process continues with little success. The numbers would also suggest that there was a significant change in May's tone when she spoke in Florence to a mostly continental audience. Especially the frequency of proclamatory utterances is considerably smaller. These number increase again when she speaks to the public at home in the Mansion speech, but the disclamatory utterances decrease further.

The data also implies that May adopted a more neutral tone in the Mansion speech than in the previous one, as the number of attributive utterances is slightly higher. This might be due to the subject, as economy was often presented as the main argument for Britain to remain in the EU. However, the frequency of attributive utterances was already lower in the Florence speech than in the Lancaster speech.

The numbers for entertaining utterances are the smallest and their frequency remained rather stable over the three speeches. Thus, these utterances do not seem to be crucial from the quantitative perspective. However, I return to them, as well, in the following sub-chapters in which I undertake a closer examination of the findings in each speech respectively. I have taken only utterances containing engagement into consideration, but I took the liberty to refer to the wider context if it was necessary to illustrate the significance of the utterance in question.

4.2 The Lancaster speech (February 22, 2017)

Overall, the first speech proceeds as one would expect from a statement which is supposed to present the objectives of a party in the upcoming negotiations. Theresa May starts by explaining why Britain wants and needs to leave the European Union. In terms of *Engagement*, this means mostly proclamatory and disclamatory utterances. However, in these categories of the framework, the source of the evaluation is not clear, which is why one needs to take a closer look at the semantics.

May begins the Lancaster speech by stating that “the British people voted for change”. In Martin and White’s terms this is attributive engagement. She is not taking a stance on whether this should have happened or not, she is merely attributing this attitude to “the British people”. However, there is room for differing interpretation.

This could also be seen as disclaiming engagement regarding the close results of the referendum. There were plenty of people who did not vote for change and in this context May’s wording implies that they are somehow not “British”.

Here we can also already see identity work in progress. There is a shared idea of a nation called “the British people” who have performed a common action. This can also be interpreted as drawing a community boundary. In terms of social identity theory: Those who voted for change are the ingroup, those who did not are the outgroup. The attributes of the ingroup are nevertheless quite vague and possibly all-inclusive – May does not offer a detailed view what the “change” will entail. Thus, it does not seem too late to join “the British people” even if one has not voted for a change.

What is also noteworthy, is that May does not use the pronoun *we* here. On a related note, the following sentences in the speech are quite interesting: May refers to the British people who voted for change with the pronoun *they*.

“They voted to shape a brighter future for our country.”

“They voted to leave the European Union and embrace the world.”

“And they did so with their eyes open: accepting that the road ahead will be uncertain at times, but believing that it leads towards a brighter future for their children – and their grandchildren too.”

In these examples, it becomes clear that May leaves room for the interpretation that she herself may be perceived as someone not belonging to this group of people, but nevertheless as someone who respects this group’s decision. As we remember from the Background chapter, she was actually against Britain leaving the EU. As May’s pronouns carry multiple connotations over the three speeches, this is a significant nuance.

Next we meet *we* in the form of *our*. At this stage, May brings in herself to ponder with the audience over “what kind of country we want to be”. As the “people who voted for change” have been portrayed as quite sensible people prior to this, it is fair to assume that the whole audience would be inclined or at least invited to belong to this *us*.

In the following passage *we* refers clearly to the government (“we continue to bring the deficit down”) which offers the prime minister an opportunity to align herself with the Brexit supporters and try to unify them, the Remain supporters, the Scottish, the Welsh and the Northern Irish (by referring to “our precious Union”) and herself under the same *we*.

“It’s why we will put the preservation of our precious Union at the heart of everything we do. Because it is only by coming together as one great union of nations and people that we can make the most of the opportunities ahead.”

Considering the social identity theories, an interesting process can be seen unfolding here. May is clearly trying to construct an ingroup of the “nations”, i.e. various groups of people living within the borders of the United Kingdom and to evoke positivity within the ingroup. She does not, however, offer a clear vision how the possible outgroup (in this context apparently the EU) would be inferior to Britain or pale in comparison to it.

She does, however, start a passage impregnated with disclamatory, but also proclamatory utterances, which is titled “A message from Britain to the rest of Europe” and begins with a grand statement:

“June the 23rd was not the moment Britain chose to step back from the world. It was the moment we chose to build a truly Global Britain.”

This presupposes that the audience would now hear what this “truly Global Britain” would look and act like and how this goal will be achieved. Instead, May presents various arguments for Britain’s fundamental difference from the European Union and she wants to “address the people of Europe directly”.

The division is clear: May personalises Britain and evokes an idea of national identity by referring to the country as *we*. As opposed to the *we* above where *we* had done something, here *we are* something: it is a question of identity. May presents

various aspects of British history as something static by referring to non-specific sources.

“our history and culture is profoundly internationalist”

“Many in Britain have always felt”

“The public expect to hold their governments to account [...] as a result supranational institutions [...] sit very uneasily”

These statements are used to set Britain apart from the EU. However, May continues by saying that she does “not believe that these things apply uniquely to Britain” and believes that there is a lesson in Brexit for the EU itself. One of the most important properties of a clear national identity is uniqueness, but May literally says here that Britain is not unique in this context.

May also uses plenty of disclamatory utterances to fend off mostly accusatory reasoning for Britain’s desire to leave the EU. The audience is not given any sources for these arguments, but they are presented in such detail that there is strong reason to believe that they have been collected from the public discussion on Brexit. May ends this passage with an assertive disclamation of what Britain does not seek:

“Not partial membership of the European Union, associate membership of the European Union, or anything that leaves us half in, half out. We do not seek to adopt a model already enjoyed by other countries. We do not seek to hold on to bits of membership as we leave.”

As assertive as it is, these few sentences are not very substantial in terms of semantics. There is technically no “partial membership” or “a model already enjoyed by other countries”, so these options were not available to reject. Thus, the audience is offered a dramatic vision of what Britain does not want in the separation, but little knowledge of what it does.

This is important because the audience has just been explicitly told that Britain wants to maintain close relations with the EU. In other words, this closeness to Europe must be seen as a property of “truly Global Britain” and consequently as an aspect of its national identity. One would expect that this boundary between being close to the EU and a membership of the EU would need to be marked clearly, but May’s speech takes a rather vague turn – in both lexical and semantic terms.

Even though she states “certainty and clarity” as the first and crucial objective for Britain, there is not much of either in this passage. There are several utterances with entertaining engagement which, as we saw in Figure 2, is not a frequent aspect in these three speeches. May does not only say that “we will provide certainty wherever we can”, but also “where we can offer that certainty, we will do so”.

This uncertain and unclear statement is followed by a short glimpse of Britain’s future national identity. May says that Britain will be stronger, it will “take back control of our own laws” and it will be an “open, successful trading nation”. May also demands everyone to stand behind this unified identity, as she expresses hope to see “the same spirit of unity” in Northern Ireland. As a reward, she promises again to “empower the UK as an open, trading nation to strike the best deals around the world”.

The audience also hears of a “fairer Britain” which according to May means controlled immigration. Immigration issues were generally considered to be the most crucial factor in the Brexit process. May acknowledges this with not only a proclamatory utterance stating that “we”, meaning the British collectively, “will get control of the number of people coming to Britain from the EU”, but also with a strongly disclamatory utterance:

“Brexit must mean control of the number of people who come to Britain from Europe.”

This is a quite typical sequence in May’s speech and as a matter of fact in any discourse where objectives are laid out. It is often clever to state what the objective rules out. Unequivocal, however, it is not.

The latter utterance is disclamatory in the sense that it rules out several other meanings of Brexit in terms of immigration. It rejects an assumed position that Brexit could mean no control of the number of people coming to Britain from Europe. Nevertheless, that is all it does. Even in the wider context of this passage, the audience is not offered any details how the new fairness of Britain would affect the immigration policy and its effect on immigration numbers. Another point May emphasises about fairness is workers’ rights which she promises to improve in an unspecified way.

May returns to the idea of “truly Global Britain” which she describes as “the great prize” that Brexit offers. She presents a multitude of disclamatory utterances about what kinds of trade relations Britain does *not* want with the EU. This also seems to be a question of identity, as it is “we” who does not, for example, “seek membership of the single market”. Here May again disclaims an assumed position and says that what she is proposing “cannot mean membership of the single market”.

The problem is that she does not offer a clear proposition. The audience hears that “both sides in the referendum campaign” assessed that leaving the EU would mean leaving the single market and that “European leaders” have been clear about their position. May also claims to be clear about her position. However, even though the audience is offered a dialogic sub-discourse with explicit references, it is once again not given a detailed view of May’s position. Not being a member of the single market hardly says much about the relation, considering that quite different countries – like Russia and Brunei, if you will – are not members of the European single market. Moreover, as this is as detailed as May’s description of “truly Global Britain” gets, hence it is impossible what else would define its identity apart from not being a member of the European Union.

Possibly the most interesting part of this speech in terms of national identity is the last fourth where May stresses the importance of negotiating “the right deal for Britain” and concludes her speech with conciliatory remarks aimed at her core audience. She first returns to the divisive nature of the issue and praises the “hard work of many in this room today”⁶ and accuses:

“those who urge us to reveal more [...] will not be acting in the national interest”

This example is a compact combination of attributive and disclamatory engagement, which also serves as an example of the complicated nature of the *Appraisal* framework. The framework is designed to focus on single lexical items, but in this case, it is vital to assess the phrase as a whole. It is not only important to note that we see a non-authorial voice (those) attempting to influence (urge) another non-authorial voice (us). In terms of the framework, this can be labelled as attributive engagement,

⁶ I could not find a record of the exact composition of the audience at Lancaster House, but various online news sources write about “officials” and “British and foreign diplomats”. It is also safe to assume that senior members of May’s government and of the Conservative party, as this is common in events of this kind.

as there is a named source in the text. The latter part can also be quite easily placed in category of disclaim, as it rejects a position where “those” could be seen as acting in the national interest. However, analysing these two separately would not increase our knowledge of what May considers to be in the national interest. This supports my decision to extend the notion of utterance to cover as much as several sentences.

Once again, as assertive as May’s statements may be, they still do not offer many concrete examples of what exactly Britain aspires to be outside the EU. In the end of the Lancaster speech, she proclaims that “we are a great, global nation” in another example of pleading to a national identity. She mentions “the strength and support of 65 million people” who want Britain to succeed and sees the country coming together. She promises future generations (in attributive engagement) that they can judge “us not only by the decision that we made, but by what we made of that decision”. She concludes the speech by proclaiming that the future will be “brighter” and Britain “better”.

All in all, in the Lancaster speech, Britain’s national identity can be seen as constructed in all categories of engagement. This identity work is, as one would expect, at its clearest in the proclamatory and disclamatory utterances where May says what Britain will be and what it will not do. These boundary markers are technically the cornerstones of identity work, but as we can see from the analysis above, May’s utterances in this first speech seem to lack the kind of emotive substance which would encourage the wider British audience to join her in this effort to construct a new national identity for a stronger, fairer and better ingroup. Moreover, the Lancaster speech does not offer many reasons to assume that the membership in the EU, the outgroup, would be an undesirable affiliation for reasons other than national identity.

4.3 The Florence speech (September 22, 2017)

While the Lancaster speech was the first of these three, it was predictably full of various British entities. There are, for example, ‘they’ who voted for Brexit, ‘we’ the government and ‘we’ the inhabitants of Great Britain as a whole. In contrast, the Florence speech presents a whole array of factors that have their own effect on the

process and thus on the discourse. In a stark contrast to the Lancaster speech, May starts the speech with plenty of attributive and entertaining engagement.

As one would expect in front of a mostly European imagined audience, “we” includes here possibly not only Britain and the European Union, but the whole respective political and cultural spheres that can be described as Europe. May positions herself as a part of the European “we”, but only few sentences later, she positions herself as a part of the British “we”, as well. Overall, there are strong aspirations for a mutual reconsideration and a consensual reboot of the Euro-British relationship, even though they are structurally presented as established facts of the discourse. Here are some examples to illustrate this point:

“we [Europeans] come together in a spirit of ambition and innovation”

“we [Europeans] open our minds to new thinking”

“we [Britain] use this moment to change not just our relationship with Europe, but also the way we do things at home”

“European Union is beginning a new chapter”

“President Juncker [of the European Commission] set out his ambitions”

May even employs a disclamatory utterance to underline Britain co-operative attitude: “We don’t want to stand in the way of that”. Whereas in the Lancaster speech, disclamatory engagement was mainly used to fend off imagined allegations of Britain’s motives in a defiant manner, in this context, the utterance bears more resemblance to an explanation or even an absolution. This could also be seen as a vehicle for national identity: May could be portraying Britain as a decisive, but liberal and relaxed nation which is willing to “forge a better, brighter future for all our peoples”. This is line with post-WWII European values which cherish peaceful competition instead of belligerent rivalry, but begs a question: Are such amicable circumstances fertile ground for a boundary marker that would evoke a national identity that May seems to wish to revive?

May continues this line of thought with listing Britain’s and Europe’s common enemies. These are also introduced through attributive engagement. The audience hears about British and Italian forces who are working to “save lives in the Mediterranean and crack down on the evil traffickers who are exploiting desperate

men, women and children”. Here the ingroup-outgroup division leaves no doubt: Britain, Europeans and “desperate” migrants are the ingroup, “evil traffickers” are the outgroup.

A more implicit and fascinating passage follows:

“Here on our own continent, we see territorial aggression to the east; and from the South threats from instability and civil war; terrorism, crime and other challenges which respect no borders.”

Here the Europeans, the British included, have their own continent which Britain technically is not a part of. Nevertheless, May positions Britain in the imagined united coalition where Northern, Western and Southern Europe stand together. The perceived threats come from somewhere else.

Even though the non-authorial source is highly implicit, I would suggest Martin and White would still call this entertaining engagement. There is an eastern aggressor and a southern threat whose identities are seemingly clear to May’s audience. May can rely on a European consensus, as she presents evaluations as facts, as real-world phenomena, even though the audience is not being offered any information on who the aggressor from the east is or where exactly in the general “South” instability, civil war, terrorism and crime are being generated. This also serves to construct the European identity through negation: according to May, these are activities that Europe can become a victim of, not something that Europe or Europeans should engage in themselves.

In terms of pronouns, *we* is something quite else in Florence than in the Lancaster speech. May launches her presentation again by mentioning “the British people” who have decided to leave the EU, but here it is *our* decision, i.e. May’s as well. We might be seeing a former Breainer coming to terms and getting accustomed to her new role as the prime minister of Brexit Britain. However, soon enough, *we* includes other Europeans, as well:

“For as we look ahead, we see shared challenges and opportunities in common.”

May goes on to define the European mindset using the European ‘we’, until suddenly *we* contracts to include only Britain again.

“And we will do all this as a sovereign nation in which the British people are in control.”

Martin and White would call this proclaiming engagement. May takes an abrupt re-definitive turn by reverting to the British *we* and by using future tense, she linguistically rules out other alternatives. Moreover, to her Britain will do this as “a sovereign nation” and its people will be “in control” which would seem to imply that other EU member states are not sovereign, and their respective people are not in control.

In the quantitative analysis, the Florence speech seemed to be more reconciliatory than the Lancaster speech. However, in close reading it can be viewed against social identity theories and interpreted as quite aggressive (in the mildest sense of the word) ingroup-outgroup comparison, as we see in the example above. There is still a slight disconnection between *we* and “the British people”. May’s *we* is here the “sovereign nation” which will achieve the goals she has just stated. But who are “the British people” that will be in control? Are they the same British people who voted for change in the beginning of the Lancaster speech and may not have included May herself? After all, she could have just said, for example, “we will do this as a sovereign nation” and ended there. Adding that “in which the British people are in control” was apparently meant to clarify the composition of this sovereign nation, but it also serves to complicate the matter.

In her next sentences, May returns to the idea of British idea of sovereignty being different from that of the rest of Europe. She explicitly refers to national identity by saying that “the European Union never felt to us like an integral part of our national story”. This proclamatory engagement implies that there are certain entities that consider European Union to be an integral part of their story. May only refers to these entities as “so many”. Considering 20th century European history, she must refer to Germany and France whose tense relations were the main drive for the European project. However, it is debatable whether the EU is an integral part of the national story in these countries to the extent that it would surmount whatever features the respective nations consider integral parts of their identity. Can a supranational structure even be a part of the national story?

Directly after laying out the differences she sees in British and European mindsets, she once again refers to a hostile outgroup, a common enemy. She insists that Euro-British negotiations must succeed or “the only beneficiaries would be those who reject our values and oppose our interests”. She does not tell the audience who they exactly are but offers a rather stark opposition between this hostile group and Europe, including Britain. In other words, as common values and interests can be considered to be the core constituents of a group and as the audience is not given more information on them or the threat to these values and interests, May can be seen to place Britain and the EU in the same ingroup which needs to prosper in comparison to the outgroup with less desirable values and interests.

She proceeds even further later in the speech, when she states, referring to Britain and the EU, that “we share the same set of fundamental beliefs”. Although she is thereafter speaking about economic principles, this strong proclamatory utterance leaves no room for doubt. One can assume that if two entities are claimed to share the same set of fundamental beliefs, the audience may ask themselves: Are the superficial disagreements of these two entities then divisive enough for them to belong to fundamentally different groups? After all, May also says that “we [Britain and the EU] want to achieve the same goals in the same ways” and that the UK has a “genuine commitment to promoting our shares values across the world”.

She briefly touches upon the characteristics of post-Brexit Britain again towards the end of the speech by promoting it as a country that “will always be a champion of economic openness; we will always be a country whose pitch to the world is high standards at home”. Here one must again observe what is being negated. Britain wants to leave the EU and position itself as not only separate but different entity. However, before this the audience has just heard that in the economic context, Britain and the EU have common values, interests and goals. The audience is expected to accept the idea that Britain needs to leave the EU because it wants to not only exercise its political sovereignty but also its economic openness to its full potential and that the EU and Britain share the same set of fundamental beliefs. These can be true at the same time, but as an argument for leaving the union, they may fail to convince.

4.4 The Mansion speech (March 2, 2018)

This speech was given to the domestic audience by a Prime Minister of 18 months who had lost an election which she thought would strengthen her mandate. She says herself that this speech sets out her vision for the future economic partnership between the United Kingdom and the European Union. It is also worth noting that she was supposed to give the speech in Manchester, but because of harsh weather conditions she had to stay in London and speak at the Mansion House. This planned gesture of transporting the display of power to the North of England can be interpreted as an effort to de-elitise the Brexit negotiations, to bring them closer to the public.

Interestingly enough, the imagined dialogism of the discourse becomes literal in the beginning of the speech. May tells her audience that there are “many different voices and views in the debate” and that she has “listened carefully to them all”. Later in the speech, she also mentions that this speech builds on her Lancaster House and Florence speeches. I chose to examine the speeches from the dialogist angle regardless of these admissions, but it does for its part support my approach.

As one would expect from the political and the intended geographical and demographical context, the tone is more familiar and persuasive than in the two other speeches. Let us look at the pronouns. May starts by defining *us* and *you*. *You*, i.e. the immediate British audience, are invited to identify with the emergency services, public healthcare staff and volunteers that are working to overcome the weather-related problems and inconveniences of the day. These are matters that the public is allowed and expected to voice their opinion on. *We* are the British government which – in a rather colloquial manner – will “take the big calls”.

In terms of national identity, post-Brexit Britain emerges in this speech as a group of people who “will forge a new positive role for ourselves in the world and we will make Britain a country that works not for a privileged few, but for every one of us”. Here we can see how different categories of engagement intertwined. There is an element of proclaim in “we will forge” and “we will make”, a disclamation in “that works not” and finally attributive engagement in “for a privileged few”. To dissect this composition: in May’s discourse there is “a privileged few” who might enjoy

certain prerogatives in a version of Britain, but she rules out that this could be possible in her post-Brexit Britain and claims that she is the one to deliver this preferable version of Britain if supported by the British people. This observation underlines the importance of keeping the length and composition of the utterance under examination flexible when analysing political speeches. In my view, engagement can occur both over a long passage of text and in multiple categories in the same single lexical item.

May continues to describe the desired future identity for Britain in more detail: “a modern, open, outward-looking, tolerant, European democracy” that “celebrates our history and diversity, confident of our place in the world”. This would seem to invite everyone in Britain to join the ingroup. Who would prefer to live in a dated, closed, inward-looking, bigoted dictatorship that ridicules its history and celebrates its one-dimensionality, insecure about its place in the world? This drastically exaggerated juxtaposition illustrated the problem here. May’s sanguine vision of Britain finally liberated from the European Union is so vague that it evokes questions: Why is this not possible within the EU? As it is obvious from the context that May does not suggest that the EU represents the opposite of Britain in these respects, the future national identity remains in the mist.

However, it is plain to see that in this speech, May is attempting to create a discourse of unity within Britain and a simplified model of representative democracy: The people and the government may be separate entities with different duties, but they have a common goal – and see, the government can “take the big calls” and even speak just like you do!

We must bring our country back together, taking into account the views of everyone who cares about this issue, from both sides of the debate.

Here we see both entertaining and disclaiming engagement taking place simultaneously. “The views of everyone who cares about this issue, from both sides of the debate”, will be taken into account. May acknowledges that there are differing opinions on the issue and does not attach a value position on either of these – either being the key word. She acknowledges only two sides of the debate, while at this point there are at least those who would prefer the so-called hard Brexit, those for the so-called soft Brexit, those who would like to cancel the Brexit altogether and

everyone in-between. Thus, May seems to suggest that opposing the government's version of Brexit means support for remaining in the EU, a cause that is all but lost.

She expresses a promise to represent the whole United Kingdom. *We* seems to resemble Mead's *I*: there is a group of actors including May who feel an urgency to reunify Britain. However, it is far from clear who these *we* are. It clearly does not include everyone in Britain, since there are people whose views will simply be taken into account. In addition, her re-unification process will concern only those who "care about this issue". The audience is not being told what counts as caring and will this taking into account have any impact on the re-unification. As such, May's linguistic choices still suggest a stance that could be colloquially described as the government's way or the highway.

In other words, Brexit is portrayed as a national project in which one needs to partake, and in which one has to choose one of the two perceived sides if one is interested in "bringing the country back together". Which is a debatable aim in itself and does not still offer much insight into the future of Britain, its place in the world, let alone Euro-British relations.

The middle part and the majority of the speech consists of Britain's aims in the future economic relationship with the European Union. Whereas the Lancaster speech was quite assertive and fanned out Britain's wants, needs, desires and aspirations, the Mansion speech is laden with modal verbs: what Britain may, would or could do and what the EU should do. This is partly logical, as the negotiations have proceeded, and the time has come to inevitably compromise. Partly it may also be due to the fact that the negotiations have born little success, clarity or certainty for Britain and May has lost her majority in the parliament in-between.

Halfway through the speech, May approaches boundary-marking by describing EU citizens resident in the UK. They "are an integral part of the economic, cultural and social fabric of our country". She also states that EU communities have the same view of UK nationals. This is another example of an argument contradictory to the aim expressed in the speech. If both UK nationals and nationals of the EU countries are an integral part of the economic, cultural and social fabric in the respective territories, it is difficult to interpret this view as supporting the idea of separation.

May does not even entertain other positions to the question, but offers this mutual integration as attributive engagement, as a sourced fact. The abundance of explicit sources is a prominent feature of this speech: the frequency of attributive engagement was higher than in the other two speeches. Moreover, in the Mansion speech there were more specifically named sources. All in all, the middle part of the speech presents Britain as a sensible, considerate and logical actor with whom negotiations ought to be orderly and smooth.

The speech ends with a section titled “Post-Brexit Britain”, so the audience should expect May to crystallise her vision. She says that it is “a cradle for innovation, a leader in the industries of the future, a champion of free trade, based on high standards” and repeats her aspirations for modernity and tolerance etc. from before. Albeit a speech about the economic aspects of the future Euro-British relationship, she began it by addressing the general public and rallying it behind her cause. Pledging to cherish “the stability and continuity of centuries of self-government, our commitment to freedom under the rule of law, our belief in enterprise and innovation” are hardly immediately recognisable as properties of a national ingroup, especially when the EU has been said to share the same set of fundamental beliefs.

May promises that her approach would honour the referendum result and “bring out country together by commanding the confidence of those who voted Leave and those who voted Remain. This is the first time that the latter group is directly addressed in these three speeches and elaborates the definition of *we*. She manages to envision a positive image for this *we* that now seems to include everyone in Britain. This reflects the obvious pragmatic approach that May assumed early on in the process. She famously said “Brexit means Brexit”⁷ already as a candidate for the leadership of the Conservative party in July 2016, even though no-one could foresee what it could mean in practice. These three speeches did not make the future any clearer. Still, May ends her speech with: “So let’s get on with it.”

⁷ The speech can be viewed on the BBC News website: <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-politics-36764525/no-second-eu-referendum-if-theresa-may-becomes-pm>

5 Discussion

Before embarking on the deeper journey to the semantics of May's discourse, it is important to note that analysing dialogic language is a dialogic process itself, referring back to the principles of Wodak's discourse-historical approach (2001). As the analyst is a social individual, as well, the analysis will – Wodak would even say that it must – inevitably reflect their own socio-cultural background.

I have stated above that this study has not adopted a pro-Brexit or pro-EU stance, but it may not be completely irrelevant that I literally came of age in the same year as my native country joined the EU. The union was at the time represented as a tremendous opportunity especially for young people and like many others, I have taken advantage of these opportunities. Personally, I would tend to see European co-operation as a good thing, even though the current union may not be the perfect manifestation of it. However, I would still argue that I have been able to examine May's speeches in a reasonably objective manner.

Overall, it seems rather clear that these three speeches did not produce ingredients for a new national identity for Britain outside of the European Union. As social identity theories argue, if a group wants to distance itself from another, it needs to mark its boundaries. In Theresa May's discourse, the aims and the methods did not seem to coincide in this respect. My aim in this chapter is to draw a synthesis of the previous analysis.

Pronouns are the linguistic devices that we use to refer to both people and things. One could well argue that they are the basic building blocks of identities. In the context of national identities, the most important pronouns are *we/us* and *they/them*. May uses them quite eclectically in her speeches: *we* can mean the government, the British, the European Union including Britain or even the whole so-called Western value community.

Rephrasing George Herbert Mead's ideas (1950), May seems to invite the audience and herself to imagine a common future for a *we*. Moreover, this appears to be a personally experienced *we* and not an externally perceived *us*. These aspirations of a *we* are a recurrent element in the speech. The speech also aims to generate a sense of togetherness and agency: This is something *we* do, not something that happens to *us*.

The problem in terms of national identity is that she also invites her audience to imagine a common future for a European *we*. Moreover, at times it is not even clear if she herself belongs to the *we*, even when it refers to the British. This elusive definition of *we* is in my view one of the reasons why May's attempts to construct a social group identity for the British did not bear fruit. Her pronoun use does not fulfil the task of marking the boundary for the ingroup.

Another, arguably more important constituent of a national identity are the imagined common value positions. In the Lancaster speech, the audience was given a few tools to construct a national identity for Britain. May promised a stronger, fairer and truly global Britain. In the Florence speech, future Britain appears as a decisive, but relaxed business partner who maybe surprisingly shares the same set of fundamental beliefs and common adversaries with the European Union. However, in a rather contradictory way, May states the European Union was never an integral part of Britain's national story. In the Mansion speech, aspects of the new British identity were more pronounced, but still harking back to the common values shared by the European Union. Post-Brexit Britain was to be "modern, outward-looking, tolerant" and "proud of our values and confident of our place in the world".

If these attributes are examined through negation, it would then mean that as an EU member state Britain was not as strong, as fair or if not falsely, at least not as truly global as the nation's future incarnation. It could also be interpreted as meaning that even though Britain was first quite eager to join the European Union, influenced its development greatly and aligned its policies for decades accordingly, it somehow avoided integrating into it. Moreover, it would mean that modernity, openness and tolerance were somehow not possible in the European community. Yet it is difficult to interpret May's speeches in a way that would suggest she would hold the EU inferior to Britain in any way. I believe that in this lack of significant indifferenciation is the main reason for the lacklustre impression that May's speeches gave many observers.

I re-introduce Wodak and her CDA approach here to illustrate my point. Her definition on national identity (2009) is partly based on Mead and Anderson whom I also introduced in the Background chapter.

National identity is a complex of common or similar beliefs or opinions internalised in the course of socialisation [...] and of common or similar emotional attitudes with regard to these aspects and outgroups, as well as common or similar behavioural dispositions, including inclusive, solidarity-oriented and exclusive, distinguishing dispositions and also in many cases linguistic dispositions. (p. 28)

It is safe to say that Theresa May's aim had to be to reform British national identity to correspond to the perceived will of the British public: Britain needed to be represented as a country which begins to flourish the very moment it leaves the EU for the separation to make sense.

Through Wodak's lenses it is difficult to see how such goal could be reached in the given context. Half of the voters had not wanted to leave the EU, the instigator of the referendum, David Cameron, had apparently no plan for a no-result and the next prime minister, May, had not wanted to leave the union in the first place.

Judging by the speeches, it would seem that May tried to solve a rather irrational problem by "hyperrational" methods. Hence, one could say she tried to rationalise the question of nation.

In other words, problem with May's imagined national identity seems to be that it does not evoke emotional attitudes which Wodak sees as an important constituent of a national identity. It is difficult to imagine a group of people experiencing solidarity among themselves and competitiveness towards others without a vivid image of what this group can achieve by combining its collective forces against the imagined outgroup. In addition, it must be quite difficult to portray the European Union as a definite outgroup after almost 40 years of integration.

In fact, instead of marking the ingroup-outgroup boundary between Britain and the EU, in Florence, May positioned the two in the same ingroup against other outgroups. I would argue that one of the most important passages in all three speeches in terms of group identities is the one where May describes common adversaries. The perceived threats and enemy representations tend to be quite stable: May does not have to mention Russia when she talks about "territorial aggression to the east". "The South" has also had a perpetuated position as the source of various perceived threats to Europe. If Europe still shares a similar view of them and Britain wishes to exclude itself from the ingroup of Europe, where does it stand in relation to "the east" and "the South"? Would portraying Europe as an outgroup entail that

Britain became the outgroup for Europe and lost possible benefits of belonging to a socio-cultural sphere which according to the motto of the EU is at least supposed to be “United in Diversity?”

This passage may also be the most obvious example of the inside/outside dichotomy which Walker has described (1993). In May’s discourse, undesirable phenomena are taking place in the international realm, i.e. in the undefined East and South. May seems to suggest that as Britain and Europe share an identity and the same set of fundamental beliefs, these entities can also understand what these threats mean, even if they are not explicitly put into words.

By defining the “outside” as a serious threat, this passage paints a picture of the “inside”, i.e. Europe including Britain as something quite different: a coherent society that will defend itself from the “outside” as one. At this point, one needs to remind oneself that this speech is allegedly supposed to convince the European audience of Britain’s need for a separate identity. As territorial security can be considered one of the most important issues for a modern state, May’s vision of a united Europe hardly succeeds at explaining what Britain would gain from leaving the European Union.

Wendt (1992) wrote of three types of anarchies in international relations: the first one considers the states to be enemies, the second sees them as competitors and in the third type of anarchy the relations resemble friendships. European history provides us with enough evidence that it is possible to argue that at least in the core of the EU, states have proceeded from the first at least close to the third. The phases of social identity theories (SIT), ingroup positivity, intergroup comparison and outgroup hostility, also support this argument. The development and integration of the European Union seems to suggest that the phases can also be reversed. Outgroup hostility can be diluted into intergroup comparison and ingroup positivity, once established between the first former enemies, can be extended to new layers of the group. If this is true, then it is plausible to argue that a state would need to follow the phases of SIT to move back to the competitive anarchy, i.e. create ingroup positivity by evoking, Wodak’s words, common or similar emotional attitudes towards the outgroups and exclusive, distinguishing dispositions.

Through these lenses, Theresa May's task was to retract Britain from the amicable anarchy to the competitive one. After all, she had interpreted the referendum result to mean that Britain ought not to live in a shared household with the EU, but to compete against it in a global environment. At the same time, May needed to avoid veering into hostile territory. In the light of this study, this task would have called for a more detailed description of the ingroup as an imagined community and as the inside (Britain) and a more disadvantageous representation of the outgroup as the outside (the EU).

Against this backdrop, it seems that Theresa May took a pragmatic approach to surmount the challenge sketched above. In retrospect, possibly even an impossibly pragmatic no-nonsense approach: She famously explained her idea of the process by saying that "Brexit means Brexit". She also expressed a belief in that Brexit is what Britain wants and needs and she seemed to consider herself as the right and even only person to lead the process in a responsible and orderly manner. Why else would anyone of opposed views take on a bewildering project which its instigator has just refused to take on? Even after the proposed Brexit deal which she negotiated with the EU and personally took responsibility for, was voted down by the British parliament, May proclaimed that she had been elected to deliver an orderly Brexit and would proceed to do so. In addition to these displays of conviction, the unenthusiastic response to her speeches would suggest that they would also imply a sense of duty, rather than a burning desire to leave the EU.

I do not think it would be imprudent to assume that May's eclectic discourse consisting of identity work, co-operational spirit and alleged common-sense pragmatism could have also influenced her successor's, Boris Johnson's even more pragmatic approach. After the next snap election in December 2019, there was not much more detailed information on the future relationship between Britain and the European Union. That did not stop Johnson from saying after having won majority in parliament: "Let's get Brexit done!"

6 Conclusions

I began this research from the following hypothesis: May would not succeed in constructing a distinct British identity which would seem apparently and absolutely superior to the identity she constructs for the EU. I have displayed in this thesis that if May's intention was to construct a new British national identity in order to convince her audiences that Britain would not only survive, but also prosper on an unprecedented scale, she did not succeed.

During the research it became clear to me that this perceived "apparent and absolute superiority" would have required an emotion-laden representation of a specifically British social identity – in Martin and White's terms, more proclamatory utterances about the superiority of Britain. This would identity have had to overshadow any positive aspects of Europeanness, which would in turn also have to be defined in some way so that imagined audience could be expected to choose between the identities. In Martin and White's terms, May could have done this by employing disclamatory utterances concerning the EU.

However, I could not find that many such proclamatory or disclamatory utterances and thus no palpable British or European identities that would invite the audience to latch on to. The reason for their absence may have been May's lack of will or ability to construct them or something else, but that is a question for further study.

From an academic viewpoint, I would argue that the approaches employed in this study were appropriate and able to produce adequate answers to my research questions. As expected with political speeches, dialogic language and thus engagement were abundant and almost omnipresent in the data. The adapted Appraisal Framework proved to be a suitable tool to discern the utterances containing dialogic language and the quantitative analysis produced a useful subset of data for the qualitative analysis.

However, it also became clear that the Appraisal Framework would not have sufficed to answer my research questions. While it does provide the numerical evidence of the frequency of dialogic language, it does not take context into consideration, which is crucial in a political discourse. This is why it was absolutely necessary to conduct an even more thorough close-reading of the data.

I applied Critical Discourse Analysis in the close-reading and it has proven to be a suitable approach to tackle questions of nation and national identity in this study, as well. As the political discussion seems once again to navigate towards the axis of universalism and particularism, it is vital to recognise how concepts of nation and national identity are being simultaneously deconstructed and reproduced in slightly tuned forms. In these discourses, CDA can help us see who may hold the power of definition at a given time.

When it comes to the research topic, it was a work in progress both during the research process and at the time the thesis was finished. On one hand, this may have affected the analysis somewhat, as it is impossible to completely ignore events that have occurred after the data had been recorded and to eliminate any effect of this knowledge on the analysis. On the other hand, this incompleteness of the process offers a vast array of possibilities for further study on the matter.

There are quite a few new directions where this study could encourage further research. An obvious topic would be Theresa May's successor's speeches on Brexit. Boris Johnson has so far adopted a more confrontational stance and it seems to have worked: At least Britain is no longer a member of the European Union. The approaches used here could easily be applied to Johnson's public statements.

Another closely related topic would be the coronavirus pandemic which rushed over the globe in early 2020. As this was being written, it seemed to have the ability and the capacity to upset not only the medical, but also the wider social and economic systems in the whole world. It would be rather intriguing to examine how Johnson, or his successor handles the European question in a situation which may and can in the following months and years demand closer co-operation between European nations than anything before. It might even occur to them that it may be easier to respond to a common threat as a part of a tight community and share the idea of truly global sovereignty with entities who share the same set of fundamental beliefs.

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