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# The post-referendum representation of Brexit in two British newspapers: a critical discourse analysis

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## **Abstract**

Brexit is an issue of major concern both for the United Kingdom and the European Union given the political, economic and social dimensions that it carries. Throughout this study, we tried to investigate the discursive representation of Brexit in two British newspapers – *The Times* and *The Guardian* - on the 25<sup>th</sup> June 2016, two days after the British referendum took place, through a critical discourse analysis. We examined the linguistic features employed for the expression of certain attitudes towards Brexit from these two newspapers and answered the question whether these features serve in supporting or challenging the dominant discourses on Brexit in a wider social context. The analysis of our data resulted in the identification of certain representations of Brexit (Brexit is consistently represented as a negative definite fact that expresses the rise of populism globally, threatens the unity of Europe and is the result of a fundamental breach of trust between institutions and people), revealed the predominance of the national identity discourse in the representation of Brexit and highlighted the differences between the discursive practices of the two broadsheets.

## 1 Introduction and aim

Brexit (the exit of Britain from the European Union) is an issue of major concern both for the United Kingdom and the European Union given the political, economic and social dimensions that it carries. It is the first time that a member state is leaving the European Union since its creation, rising doubts about the effectiveness and the integrity of this Union in various domains and bringing fundamental changes in the interactions between Britain and European Union regarding the free movement of people, goods and capital. The decision for the Brexit was taken through a referendum, which took place on the 23<sup>th</sup> June 2016 in the United Kingdom. The aim of this thesis is to investigate the discursive representation of Brexit in two British newspapers on the 25<sup>th</sup> June 2016, two days after the British referendum took place, in order to highlight the immediate reactions to Brexit result. The main research questions addressed are:

1. How is Brexit linguistically represented in the newspaper articles analyzed?
2. What are the differences/similarities in the discourse strategies employed in the representation of Brexit and its voters in the newspapers examined?
3. How is national identity constructed in the newspapers' discourses on Brexit?

The newspapers included in our research contain two broadsheets newspapers that do not share the same socio-political ideology – one is liberal, the other conservative - in order to unravel ideologically invested 'naturalized' linguistic strategies as well as reveal how stereotypes are expressed in discourse and power structures are constructed in the articles investigated.

In order to analyze the linguistic realizations of power in these articles, a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to discourse is used. Through CDA, language is considered as a means of social construction, which shapes and is shaped by the society (Simpson P. et al., 2010). CDA typically analyzes newspaper articles as they are texts ideologically shaped by power relations and focuses on the linguistic structures, which are attributed a crucial factor in the social production of inequality, power and ideology (Richardson J. E., 2007). An important approach in CDA is Fairclough's (1992a) three-tiered model for the analysis of discourse, which is designed as a first step towards the analysis of language and power in different types of text. The model conceives discourse as text, as discourse practice and as social

practice. This means that in order to fully understand what discourse is and how it works, apart from the text dimension, which involves the analysis of the language of a text (text), we need to analyze the way this text relates to the way it is produced, distributed and consumed (discourse practice) and its relation to the wider society in which it takes place (social practice).

In our case, it is important to consider the immediate situational as well as the wider sociocultural background in which the articles were produced in order to be able to investigate the discursive construction of Brexit. It should be mentioned here that the texts were written right after the Brexit referendum of the 23<sup>th</sup> of June 2016 took place when the whole British society was shocked by the unexpected result in favor of the exit of Britain from the European Union and they are expected to reflect this climate of panic and urgency towards the idea of Britain leaving the European Union.

## **2. Background**

### **2.1. Brexit**

The term *Brexit* is a *portmanteau* word, a linguistic blend of the words *British* and *exit*, in which the part of the word *British* – ‘Br’ – and the word *exit* are combined into one word that represents the withdrawal of Britain from the European Union (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2000). The decision for the Brexit was taken through a referendum, which took place on the 23<sup>th</sup> June 2016 in the United Kingdom, in which 52% of the voters expressed their will to leave the European Union. Through referendums, the voice of the people can be heard as the whole electorate can vote on a particular proposal or question. In the United Kingdom, referendums are not legally binding, they are advisory, due to the sovereignty of the Parliament and it is the Parliament that decides whether or not to implement a referendum’s result (House of Lords, 2010).

The decision for the Brexit is about to bring fundamental changes in the interactions between Britain and the European Union regarding the free movement of people, goods, services and capital and carries significant political, economic and social consequences for both Britain and the European Union. At the political level,

the result of the British referendum in favor of Brexit brought the resignation of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, David Cameron – who supported Britain’s membership in the European Union – and his succession by Theresa May as leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister of the country (Stewart et al., 2016). Theresa May promised to invoke Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union, which points out the formal procedure by which a member state can withdraw from the European Union, by the end of March 2017 and actively turn Brexit into practice (Lechner et al., 2011).

At the economic level, according to a policy paper released by the OECD (2016), Brexit is about to have a major negative effect on Britain’s economic prosperity both in the short and in the long run lowering the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by over 3% by 2020 and over 5% by 2030. In the long run, the restrictions in the free movement of capital and people could result in lower labour productivity from the drop in foreign direct investment and labour skills (OECD, 2016). Brexit would also influence in a negative way other European economies mainly due to the high uncertainty that it creates regarding the future of the European Union (OECD, 2016).

Regarding the European Union, Britain’s withdrawal could bring a fundamental change in European integration, threatening the future of the ‘edifice’ of the European Union itself (Tim, 2013). Apart from this, Brexit would mean that the European Union loses its second-largest economy, the country with the third-largest population and its second-largest net contributor to the European Union budget (after Germany).

Brexit represents a crucial point for the ‘edifice’ of the European Union as it is the first time that a member state is leaving it since its creation. The European Union (then called the European Economic Community) was established in 1957 by the Treaty of Rome and signed by Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Germany. The Treaty of Rome established the common European market, which removed the physical (borders), technical (standards) and fiscal (taxes) barriers between the member states of the European Union, enabling the free movement of goods, services, capital and people (Europa). Britain entered the European Union in 1973, but never signed the later Maastricht Treaty (1992), which led to the creation of

euro, a common currency for the member States of the European Union (Europa). Throughout Britain's membership, various referendums took place regarding the continuation of the membership of the country in the European Union reflecting the criticism and opposition to the European Union by a significant part of the British society (Butler et al, 1976).

Britain is considered the 'home' of Euroscepticism, the criticism and strong opposition to the European Union based on the argument that European integration weakens the nation state, the cultural and ethnic identity of a state (Spiering, (2004), Gulmez, 2013, Connor, 1987). Euroscepticism is common in all populist right-wing parties across Europe and in Britain it is represented by the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), which had a significant rise between 2010 and 2015 and actively participated in the Pre-Brexit campaign in favor of Brexit (Werts et al., 2013, Pareschi et al., 2016). Right-wing populism is a political ideology that focuses on ethnocentrism, on the judgement and rejection of different ethnic and cultural identities and in Europe it is expressed by the opposition to immigration and to the European Union (Betz, 1993).

Both immigration and Euroscepticism have become predominant in the British discourse on Europe since 2013, representing negatively Britain's integration to the European Union and implying a threat to national identity (Todd, 2014). We could argue that these issues in addition to the financial crisis in the Eurozone have served as a 'vehicle' for the spreading of anti-immigration and anti-European rhetoric within Britain, establishing a negative other-presentation of the immigrants and Europe and a positive self-presentation of Britain. These discursive representations had a major effect in the commitment for the Brexit referendum and the rise of UKIP, which employs right-wing populist rhetoric towards immigrants and their influence on British national identity.

## **2.2. Theoretical background**

### **2.2.1 The construction of national identity**

Brexit can be strongly connected to the British national identity and the threat from the inclusion of Britain in the European Union so the discursive construction of

national identities is primary in our study. From a sociological perspective, national identity is a social construction, defined as people's sense of belonging to one nation that has its own traditions, culture and language (Turner J. C. and Tajfel H., 1986). According to Turner J. C. and Tajfel H. (1986), the formation of national identity includes two elements: self-categorization (the identification of oneself with a nation) and affect (the emotion coming from this feeling of belonging to a nation and from the identification with it). Wodak et al. (2009) investigated how the Austrian national identity was constructed in various discursive contexts and their research concluded in some key assumptions that could be used in our analysis: 1) 'nations are primarily mental constructs, in the sense that they exist as discrete political communities in the imagination of their members', 2) national identity is created through 'a set of dispositions, attitudes and conventions that are largely internalized through socialization' and 3) 'nationhood as a form of social identity is produced, transformed, maintained and dismantled through discourse' (Wodak et al. 2009, 3-4).

According to Wodak (2016), the analysis of the discursive construction of national identity could focus on five axes: 1) the linguistic representations of persons, objects, events, processes and actions, 2) the attribution of specific characteristics, qualities and features to social actors, events and processes, 3) the argumentation of the discursive strategies employed, 4) the perspective from which these nominations, attributions and arguments derive and 5) the way these utterances are expressed (whether they are naturalized or expressed overtly).

Apart from the national identity discourse, Brexit has an ethnocentric perspective and is strongly connected to the legitimation of immigration control between Britain and the European Union. It is, therefore, worthwhile to review here the discursive construction of race and ethnicity and the way racial and ethnical minorities are represented in media. Racial or ethnic difference of minorities and the differentiation of ourselves from others, the 'othering', is central in the representation of minorities by the media. Stuart Hall (1997) presents some possible explanations for the reasons why 'othering' is predominant in the representation of minorities and he concludes that 'on the one hand, difference is necessary for establishing meaning, language and culture, social identities and a sense of self; on the other hand, it is a site of negativity, aggression and hostility towards the 'Other''.



Various linguistic strategies are employed in order to construct ‘othering’, which may seem naturalized, but are ideologically invested. Negative other-presentation and positive self-presentation are examples of discourse strategies employed by elite groups (groups that hold the socio-political power) in order to ‘naturalize’ racial thinking and racial discourses (van Dijk, 1993). Lexical choice as well as the use of the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘they’, which establish particular groups and create a social distance between them are important means for the construction of linguistic othering (van Dijk, 1997). Relevant to the linguistic representation of othering is the Social Actor Model developed by Machin et al. (2005a), which offers a set of possible ‘socio-semantic’ choices to represent people who are categorized in terms of their occupation or social activity or ‘classified’ in terms of age, gender, class, race or religion. In our study, the people (‘social actors’) were categorized by their decision regarding Brexit vote in Brexit and non-Brexit voters. They were also ‘classified’ in terms of their ethnicity (Britons – Non-Britons) and their class (working-class Britons - elite). In ‘Social Actor Analysis’, discourse strategies of negative other-presentation and positive other-presentation are common, as emphasis is given to the superiority or inferiority of certain groups of people or nations, to ethnic or racial inequality.

### **2.2.2 Critical discourse analysis**

Given the fact that we are going to investigate the post-referendum discursive representation of Brexit in two British newspapers through a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach, it is worthwhile to explore the theory and some previous work on the subject. CDA implies a systematic methodology that examines the relationship of a text to its ‘social conditions, ideologies and power relations’ (Wodak R., 1996). It is widely used for the analysis of newspaper articles as they are texts ideologically shaped by power relations and contain linguistic structures, which are attributed a crucial factor in the social production of inequality, power, ideology and manipulation (Richardson J. E., 2007).

A fundamental characteristic of CDA is that it is ‘engaged and committed’ in addressing social problems and aims to influence social practice and social

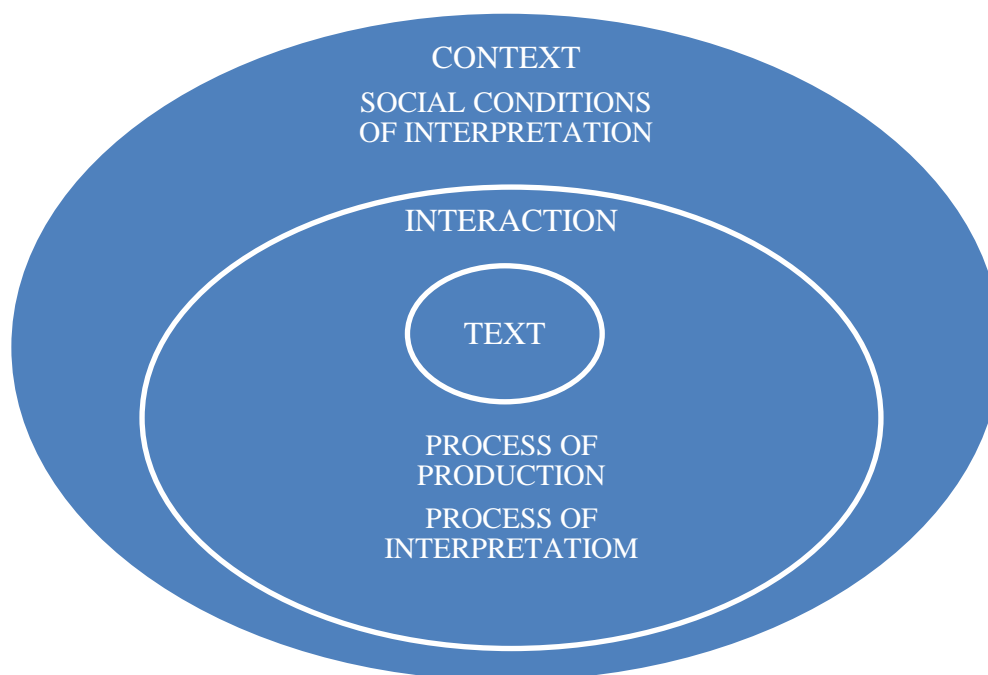
relationships forming a bond between linguistic analysis and social analysis (Richardson J. E., 2007). The critical objective of CDA 'is not only to identify and analyze the roots of social problems, but also to discern feasible ways of alleviating or resolving them' (Wodak R., 1996). Through CDA, language is considered as a means of social construction, which shapes and is shaped by the society (Simpson P. et al., 2010). This means that all texts are strongly influenced by ideology, 'by a web of political beliefs and socio-cultural practices that often works 'silently' or 'invisibly' to reproduce relationships of power and dominance' (Simpson P. et al., 2010). It is through language that the dominant or mainstream ideology (the ideology of dominant forces in society) is mediated and presented as 'natural' or 'common sense' to the subordinated groups that 'consent to the existing social order because it is effectively presented by the state and its institutions as being universally beneficial and commonsensical' (Gramsci, 1971).

The term 'Brexit' is itself a nominalization, a conversion of a clause into a noun, which 'carries' significant ideological functions as it deletes the agency of the clause and 'turns processes and activities into states and objects, and concretes into abstracts' (Fairclough, 1992, p. 181). According to Fowler (1991), 'nominalization is a radical syntactic transformation of a clause, which has extensive structural consequences, and offers substantial ideological opportunities' (p. 85). Apart from the deletion of agents, the indication of time is absent, through nominalization, as there is no verb that has a tense or modality (Fairclough, 1992). In this way, valuable information towards an event or procedure is missing and an abstract process like Brexit can be turned into a concrete state. Moreover, nominalization makes possible the 'subjectification' of a process (like Brexit) and the attribution of various qualities and features to it.

Although critical discourse analysts mention the 'deficiencies' of nominalization in discourse and the important ideological functions that it carries (deleting agency, turning processes into entities), they have been criticized for using nominalization in their own writing (Billig M., 2008). Billig M. (2008) observed that nominalization and passivization are widely employed in critical discourse analysis and he suggested that critical discourse analysts should change their way of writing (use simpler prose) if they want their ideological warnings about nominalization to be

taken seriously. In his reply to Michael Billig, Fairclough N. (2008) supported that nominalization could be useful when we want to generalize or classify actions and events, ‘when the agents of actions and other participants in processes, and temporal, spatial, and modal adjuncts and operators can be deleted’ (p. 813), but it should be employed carefully avoiding ‘overgeneralizations’ or ‘bad’ classifications that might result in ‘hiding’ valuable information on people or events.

A very important approach in CDA is the Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA) of Norman Fairclough, a CDA approach that focuses on the social practice of discourse (Fairclough, 2009). Fairclough et al. (2004) prefers the use of the term ‘semiosis’ when referring to the meaning-making sense of discourse as an element of the social process, as this ‘has the further advantage of suggesting that discourse analysis is concerned with various ‘semiotic modalities’, of which language is only one’ (others are visual images and body language) (Fairclough, 2012, p. 11). He conceives CDA as ‘the analysis of the dialectical relationships between semiosis (including language) and other elements of social practices’, like social relations, social identities and cultural values (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 27). Fairclough's (1989) model for CDA conceives discourse as text, interaction (processes of production and interpretation of the text) and context (social conditions of interpretation of the text) and can be seen in the following figure (see fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Discourse as text, interaction and context (Fairclough, 1989).

In other words, Fairclough's (1992a) model of CDA distinguishes three dimensions of discourse that all inter-relate and interact: 1) the text, 2) the discursive practice (the processes of production, distribution and interpretation of the text) and 3) the social practice (the immediate situational as well as the broader socio-political context of the text). According to Fairclough (1992a), all these dimensions need to be analyzed in a different way and follow three stages of critical discourse analysis: 1) description (the analysis of the language of the text, including the choice of words, the grammar, the transitivity patterns and the cohesion devices), 2) interpretation (the relationship of the text with the processes of its production, distribution and consumption) and 3) explanation (the relationship between the discursive practice and the social context of the text).

Another fundamental method of CDA is the discourse-historical approach (DHA), which demonstrates a research interest in identity construction and unjustified discrimination and ‘focuses on the historical dimensions of discourse formation and on [national, local, transnational, and global] identity politics’ (Wodak R., 2001, p.63). In this method, the principle of triangulation is essential: in order to analyze, understand, and explain the complexity of the discourses under investigation, we have to take into account ‘a whole range of empirical observations, theories, and methods—as well as background information, all dealing with the phenomenon under investigation’ (Wodak R., 2001, p.63). The principle of triangulation includes four levels of discourse analysis: 1. the analysis of the immediate language of a text, 2. “the intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between utterances, texts, genres, and discourses”, 3. ‘the extralinguistic social variables and institutional frames of the specific ‘context of situation’’, 4. the broader social, political and historical context to which the text is related (Wodak R., 2016). We could argue that Wodak’s levels of triangulation are similar to the stages of discourse analysis developed by Fairclough; the main difference relies on the fact that Wodak’s model includes various methods and data types in contrast to Fairclough, who focuses on newspapers. The fact that our study includes only newspaper articles suggests that Fairclough’s model is more relevant for the analysis of our data. However, the discourse-historical approach of Wodak could be valuable for the relation of our texts to their political and historical

context, as they refer to a political issue – Brexit – that is strongly influenced and shaped by its historical background.

Taking into account that the aim of our study is to investigate the discursive representation of Brexit in British newspapers, it is worthwhile to refer here to the discursive practices of journalism. According to Richardson (2007), ‘there is a dialectical relationship between the consumption of journalistic texts and social practices’, which means that readers ‘decode the meanings of texts’ using their ideology (political beliefs and socio-cultural practices) and these texts, in their turn, shape (support or challenge) these readers’ ideologies. In other words, ‘discourses are historical’ and their meaning can only be produced in relation to their situational and sociocultural context, which is one of the general principles of CDA (Wodak R., 1996). Moreover, the decoding of the meaning of the texts is related to intertextuality, the relationship among texts that focuses on the way texts are produced in relation to prior texts and the way current texts are going to influence the production of new texts (Fairclough, 1992). Intertextuality is a literary discourse strategy that builds on the readers’ prior knowledge and understanding of relevant texts and is largely employed in the newspaper articles, as many of them interrelate between them, shaping their readers’ opinions on various issues. In our study, intertextuality is used for the discursive representation of Brexit, as it is a political issue of major concern and numerous articles were written in the British press, influencing and shaping the public opinion.

### **2.3 Previous works**

Coming to previous works related to the aim of this thesis, the discursive representation of Brexit in British newspapers, Wodak (2016) made a discourse-historical analysis of David Cameron’s Bloomberg Speech of the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2013 on the relationship of Britain with the European Union. This speech could be considered as the starting point for the referendum of the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016 as it was the first time that David Cameron announced his intention to hold an in/out referendum on Europe in 2017 and many arguments of the ‘remain and leave campaigns’ can be found in this speech. Employing the three-dimensional discourse-historical approach

(DHA), Wodak identified the broader and narrower socio-political context within which the Bloomberg speech took place, examined the discursive practices and analyzed the ‘context-dependent linguistic realizations’ of this speech. Of particular importance to Wodak’s study is the linguistic representation and discursive construction of the self-presentation ‘we’ (Britain, ‘the island nation’) and the other-presentation ‘they’ (European Union, ‘the continent’) in the Bloomberg speech, as these linguistic realizations naturalize racial discourses, create distance between Britain and the European Union, but also presuppose that Britain is a separate entity that does not belong to Europe. However, the discursive practices of urgency and threat are used regarding the economic consequences of Brexit for both sides: David Cameron warns the European Union that it is going to ‘suffer under the loss of the United Kingdom’, but also British voters that ‘Brexit would damage their future and prosperity’ (Wodak R., 2016).

Another previous work relevant to our study is the discourse analysis of the United Kingdom’s relationship with Europe: ‘The British Self and the Continental Other’ (Todd J., 2014). In his study, Todd (2014) examined the evolution of the British discourse on Europe over the past forty years and analyzed the discursive construction of ‘a British self’ and ‘Continental other’. He found that it was consistent all over this period and strongly reinforced by the increasing anti-immigration rhetoric within the British discourse on Europe. In his conclusions, he notes that the impact of the ‘Eurosceptic’ British discourse is likely to have a great influence on the results of a British referendum regarding the relationship of Britain with the European Union.

Related to the above previous work is the study of Pareschi et al. (2016), which focuses on the great rise of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) between 2010 and 2015 and makes a qualitative analysis of the five keynote speeches of Nigel Farage (leader of the UKIP) at the party conferences in the period 2011-2015 in order to identify the reasons for this substantial rise. According to Pareschi et al. (2016), the reason why UKIP is closely related to Brexit is that it is the most representative form of populism and Euroscepticism in Britain establishing its argumentation on anti-European Union, anti-immigration and anti-elite rhetoric, all threatening the British national identity. The authors used four criteria throughout

their qualitative analysis: 1) the positive representations of people, who are ‘native British people’ and form a unity against the political ‘elite’ and the ‘dangerous’ European Union and mass immigration, 2) the negative representations of the ‘corrupt elite’ that includes the mainstream parties, 3) the negative representations of the European Union and mass immigration as ‘dangerous others’ and 4) the use of notions like crisis or threat, crisis within the European Union or threats to British culture and identity. The study concluded in the identification of the main elements that represent the wider discourse of UKIP and the different approaches of populism – political, ethnic and regionalist – that are employed in its public discourse.

Musolff (2016) studied the discursive function of the slogan ‘Britain at the heart of Europe’, which was predominant in the British discourse on Europe over the past 25 years. Even though this key metaphor initially carried a positive semantic and pragmatic value, its meaning gradually changed ending up in a negative connotation. According to the author, ‘the conventional connotations of the source domain concept ‘heart’, such as central importance and good state of health, are implied or expressly stated in the early uses but are increasingly put in question or negated over time’. Musolff (2016) argues that these conventional connotations of a sick, dying heart and body of the European Union associated with the continued provision of financial help to the European Union from the United Kingdom as well as immigration and political control issues influenced deeply the voting preferences of the British public and ended up, along with other statements and scenarios, in the victory of the Brexit campaign in the British referendum.

A critical discourse analysis relevant to the legitimization of immigration control was made by Leeuwen T.V. and Wodak R. (1999). The authors analyzed in detail a sample of official letters from the Austrian immigration authorities, which were notifying immigration workers of the rejection of their family reunion applications. The discourse-historical method was used in order to analyze the linguistic realizations of these letters in relation to other relevant genres of discourse as well as the broader context of immigration in Austria after the second World War. The analysis focused on the discursive construction of ‘we’ (local population) and ‘they’ (applicants, foreign fellow citizens) groups in the letters, which implied ‘identification and solidarity with the ‘we’ group and at the same time distance and

marginalization of the ‘they’ group’. Leeuwen T.V. and Wodak R. (1999) paid special attention to the strategies of justification in the rejection letters, as their legitimation was primarily based on the threat imposed by immigration to the national identity along with some ‘objective’ judgements regarding the applicants’ future integration into Austrian society.

Given the fact that the aim of this study is to examine the discursive construction of Brexit (the exit of Britain from the European Union), it is worthwhile to refer here to previous critical discourse analysis used for the investigation of the discursive structure of debates at the social, cultural and economic level within the European Union. The European Union - a regulatory body with responsibilities at both national and international level - holds wide-ranging legislative and executive powers towards the management and implementation of European Union policies. Goodwin I. and Spittle S. (2002) investigated the discursive structure of the debate on the overall impact of the ‘information society’ within the European Union. Throughout their paper, they wanted to emphasize ‘the importance of language use itself as a form of social action’ and they used the Fairclough’s model (Fairclough, 1992) in their analysis, which ‘focuses upon a particular view of the relationship between language and society, where language use is seen as a form of social practice, rather than being ‘a purely individual activity or a reflex of situational variables’’ (Fairclough, 1992, p. 63). Our analysis uses the same methodological tool with the study of Goodwin I. and Spittle S. (2002), Fairclough’s three-tiered model (1992a) for CDA, which is going to be described in the next section.

### **3 Design of the present study**

#### **3.1 Method**

In our study, we are going to use the Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA) of Norman Fairclough, a CDA approach that focuses on the social practice of discourse (Fairclough, 2009). Fairclough's (1992a) model of CDA distinguishes three dimensions of discourse that all inter-relate and interact: 1) the text, 2) the discursive practice (the processes of production, distribution and interpretation of the text) and 3) the social practice (the immediate situational as well as the broader socio-political



context of the text). According to Fairclough (1992a), all these dimensions need to be analyzed in a different way and follow three stages of critical discourse analysis: 1) description (the analysis of the language of the text, including the choice of words, the grammar, the transitivity patterns and the cohesion devices), 2) interpretation (the relationship of the text with the processes of its production, distribution and consumption) and 3) explanation (the relationship between the discursive practice and the social context of the text).

Fairclough's approach to CDA is useful in our study as we are going to analyze newspaper articles, which are texts ideologically situated, deeply influenced by the discursive practices of journals in which they are published and the social context in which they are produced. What is mainly important in Fairclough's model of CDA – consequently in our study – is the analysis of the relationships and the interactions between these three dimensions of the discourse, which are mutually explanatory and provide interesting patterns to investigate (Janks, 1997). Throughout our study, we are going to use this three-dimensional model for the analysis of the texts.

Regarding the analysis of discourse as a text, there are some textual analysis tools that could usefully form the basis of a preliminary investigation. First of all, vocabulary is one of the most obvious means to express ideological opinions about people and events. Special attention is given in the choice of words, the use of evaluative adjectives and metaphors for the representation of Brexit. The use of pronouns is worth looking at in a CDA of texts, especially the use of 'we' and 'they' that establish particular groups in the texts and serve in the positive self-presentation and the negative other-presentation. Another important means to make ideological meanings in texts is the types of verbs used: the verbs that describe states in the present tense can be used to present as facts what are essentially the author's opinions, the verbs of action may serve as a reassurance or a threat to the reader that something is actually being done. The classification of the Brexit voters as a means of creating 'othering' in the texts is investigated. Intertextuality that 'builds' on the readers' prior knowledge and understanding of relevant texts is largely employed in the newspaper articles analyzed, as many of them interrelate between them, shaping their readers' opinions on Brexit. The discursive construction of national identity,

developed by Wodak (2006), was analyzed in our texts focusing on the linguistic representations of Brexit and its voters and the attribution of specific characteristics to them. Moreover, the discursive strategies of negative other-presentation and positive self-presentation for the construction of linguistic othering, developed by Van Dijk (1993), were investigated. These are only a few among the various ‘naturalized’ linguistic features employed in the articles analyzed, which do ‘ideological work’ and serve in reproducing ‘unequal relations of power’, in our case ethnocentric stereotypes and ideologies.

### **3.2 Data**

The data of our research consist of 6 newspaper articles, published in *The Guardian* and *The Times* on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 2016, two days after the Brexit referendum took place in a general climate of panic regarding the idea of Britain leaving the European Union. The particular date was chosen in order to capture the immediate reactions of the institutions – reflected through the journalistic practices – towards this unexpected result and investigate the discursive representation of Brexit within this situational background. These two broadsheet newspapers do not share the same socio-political ideology – *The Guardian* is a liberal newspaper, *The Times* is a conservative one – and this distinction serves in the identification of ideologically invested naturalized linguistic and discursive strategies employed in the articles investigated. Both *The Guardian* and *The Times* newspapers share a large daily circulation in Britain and are considered representative of their genre. Various sections of both broadsheets were included in our data (features, business and opinion pieces from *The Times* / politics, features and opinion pieces from *The Guardian*) in order to have a concrete and holistic view of the discursive construction of Brexit in all types of the newspapers’ publications.

## **4 Results and discussion**

Starting the analysis of our data, we pointed out that both *The Guardian* and *The Times* have a negative attitude towards Brexit’s result and they employ various linguistic strategies for the ‘negative’ representation of Brexit and the support of their

ideological position. We distinguished the creation of certain discourses on Brexit throughout the analysis of our texts and then focused on the different discursive strategies employed in *The Times* (conservative broadsheet) and *The Guardian* (liberal broadsheet): 1) Brexit is a negative unavoidable fact, 2) Brexit is a dramatic expression of a global wave of populism, 3) Brexit is the result of a fundamental breach of trust between institutions and people, 4) Brexit is an act of careless, spiteful abandon of the weakest after being ignored by the establishment for years, 5) Brexit is a wake-up call: save Europe.

#### 4.1 Brexit is a negative unavoidable fact

Both *The Times* and *The Guardian* consider that Brexit is going to have negative consequences for Britain and Europe, but it is now happening and cannot be avoided or reversed. *The Times* uses verbs in present perfect tense *people have spoken, their decision has split* in order to demonstrate that the decision on Brexit has already been made and has to be respected even by those who disagree as well as present continuous *Brexit is happening, a divorce is coming* regarding the fact that Brexit is now happening:

(1) *The people have spoken. Their decision has split the nation* but it is stunningly clear. Democracy demands that Britain's choice to withdraw from the European Union be respected by those who disagree with it and implemented by parliament. *The die is cast. Brexit is happening. [...] A divorce is coming*, and it must be handled deftly. Mr Johnson is right that Article 50, which provides for EU withdrawal, does not have to be invoked at once. [...] World markets struggled yesterday *to shake off the shock of Brexit*, but there is stoicism among the anxiety. (*The Times*)

The modality plays a significant role in the example (1) as it represents Brexit as a definite unquestionable fact. In addition, the use of the metaphor *the die is cast* enforces this statement mentioning that the decision is already taken, it cannot be reversed. The metaphor *a divorce is coming* is used for the representation of Brexit

as a fact that will bring the separation of Britain from the European Union. *The Times* also uses the idiomatic expression *to shake off the shock* underlying the fact that world markets have to make great efforts in order to avoid the influence of Brexit in their function. The word *shock* is chosen in order to emphasize that Brexit was an unexpected negative result that could lead to the disorganization of the world markets.

In the same mood, in example (2) *The Guardian* points out that Brexit's result needs to be respected, but it is about to bring *many, profound* and *dangerous* consequences:

(2) [...] *the vote is in*, now we must face the consequences - *A prime minister is gone, but that is of nothing compared to the fallout for the economy, our union and Europe*. [...] The British people have spoken and it is no use dismissing what they have said. But there is no use, either, in wishing away *the many, profound and* – in some cases – *dangerous consequences* of the vote to leave the European Union. (*The Guardian*)

*The Guardian* uses in the headline of its article the idiomatic expression *the vote is in* with the intention to communicate the fact that Brexit has already been decided, the result cannot be changed and we have to deal with the consequences that it carries. *The Guardian* makes a brief description of these consequences in its headline *A prime minister is gone, but that is of nothing compared to the fallout for the economy, our union and Europe* employing the discursive strategy of justification: the prime minister is already gone – this is a fact – but other more serious consequences from Brexit are on the way *fallout for the economy, our union and Europe*. Vocabulary is one of the most obvious means to express ideological opinions about people and events and in our example (2) it is chosen in order to have maximum effect. The choice of the negative adjective *dangerous* in addition to the quantity adjective *many* and the quantitative adjective *profound* are associated with the negative evaluation of the vote for Brexit, which is expected to have great negative consequences. Moreover, the linguistic strategy of presupposition is used to present as fact what is

essentially the author's opinion, that Brexit is going to bring catastrophic consequences.

*The Guardian* also uses the metaphors *divorce* and *shock* in the example (3) for the representation of Brexit and its consequences implying that it is going to result in the separation of Britain from the European Union and it is about to challenge deeply the effort for the unification of Europe, *the European project*:

(3) The British vote has dealt *an irreparable blow* to *the European project*, and the *shock* is hard to exaggerate. [...] The British *divorce* will be messy and drawn out. It will divert energy needed to address other *challenges* like security, *unemployment*, migration, and the geopolitical *chaos* in the EU's neighbouring regions. It could make it even harder to address the gap that increasingly divides the political elites from the public mood across the continent. (*The Guardian*)

The effect of Brexit is represented as *an irreparable blow* to the European Union as it is conceived as a definite irreversible fact that will 'hurt' the unity of Europe in a permanent way and its impact cannot be minimized or disregarded. *The Guardian* makes use of the word *chaos* communicating a discourse of panic and urgency regarding the impact that Brexit will have on the geopolitical stability of Europe's neighbour countries. The newspaper emphasizes the negative consequences from Brexit using the nouns *challenges*, *unemployment*, *chaos* for the representation of Brexit's impact in various domains.

#### **4.2 Brexit is a dramatic expression of a global wave of populism**

*The Times* approaches Brexit as an expression of populism that is gaining power all over the world underlying its 'wrong' political ideology by the use of the superlative of the evaluative adjective *dramatic* and employing the negative-other presentation of this political position:

(4) Britain's rejection of the EU is the most *dramatic* expression yet of a global *wave* of populism that has upended political establishments from Rome and Athens to Washington DC. Nigel Farage called his win *a victory for ordinary people*. [...] (*The Times*)

The use of the metaphor *wave* is essential for the communication of the fact that populism is ‘moving’, is influencing more and more countries at international level and people are unwillingly being swept up by this movement. Intertextuality is employed in the example (4) as the article refers to the impact of populism in Rome, Athens and Washington and the readers are expected to have previous knowledge on the subject in order to understand the meaning of the text. The same is presumed for Nigel Farage, the leader of the British Eurosceptic party: the readers are supposed to know about him having already read relative newspaper articles. *The Times* refers to the way with which populist forces face Brexit through the statement of Nigel Farage, *a victory for ordinary people* as he is representative of this political ideology in Britain. The populist forces conceive Brexit as a ‘victory’, a ‘win’ of the ‘ordinary’, simple people against the ‘elites’ and it is evident that the discursive strategies of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation play a primary role in their political discourse.

*The Guardian* also presents the attitude of populist forces towards Brexit in example (5):

(5) and yet, at the same time, there is also *potential* for geopolitical instability well beyond these shores as well, as a *gleeful* Nigel Farage lost no time in highlighting at a dawn press conference, in which he *excitedly* talked about the prospect of *inspiring* Denmark, Netherlands and other EU member states to beat an *exit*. (*The Guardian*)

The use of words that attribute a positive evaluation on Brexit serve in communicating a discourse of victory and excitement regarding the benefits that Brexit brings. The noun *potential* and verb *inspire* help in constructing an expectation that Brexit's example will be followed by other countries as they could also manage an *exit* from the European Union and all the problems that come with it. The adjective *gleeful* and the adverb *excitedly* highlight the fact that Brexit is very welcomed by the populist forces that are thrilled with the result of the Brexit referendum.

### **4.3 Brexit is the result of a fundamental breach of trust between institutions and people**

Regarding the causes of Brexit, the two broadsheets share similar opinions focusing on the great 'distance' between the institutions and the ordinary people, which led to the vote for Brexit. However, they approach this distance from different perspectives: the conservative *Times* accuses the political class of allowing *unchecked immigration* to change the national British identity while the liberal *Guardian* puts the blame on the lost confidence among European citizens on the benefits of solidarity and other values that the European Union represents.

In the following (6) example from *The Times*, the ethnocentric discourse on Brexit is enforced by the presupposition *a conviction felt everywhere that the unchecked immigration changed the very fabric and identity of Britain* and resulted in the vote for Brexit:

(6) Brexit is born of a glaring disconnect between council estates and leafy London terraces; between farmers and fishermen and bankers and estate agents; between solid country folk and bearded hipsters; between Scottish nationalists who feel the EU speaks for them, and English nationalists who don't. This disconnect was never bridged. Project Fear failed to frighten. Experts' dire economic warnings were trumped by something deeper and more visceral — *a conviction felt everywhere*, except in London and Scotland, that

the political class has allowed *unchecked immigration to change the very fabric and identity of Britain*. (*The Times*)

The use of the phrase *unchecked immigration* underlines the fact that the institutions were not capable to control the movement of people coming to Britain and it was this ‘weakness’ that led to the alteration of the British identity. Moreover, the expression *the very fabric and identity of Britain* is another linguistic tool used in order to mention that the alteration of Britain is not superficial and it concerns both the structure and the identity of the nation.

*The Guardian* puts the ‘distance’ between the voters and the institutions in a wider European framework *the breakdown of the link connecting British voters to elites and institutions – who all argued for remain – and the rapidly fading connection between citizens across the continent and EU institutions*, noticing that it is not only in Britain but in the whole Europe that citizens question the elites in their countries along with the European Union institutions:

(7) *Twin* dynamics have been brutally exposed: *the breakdown of the link connecting British voters to elites and institutions – who all argued for remain – and the rapidly fading connection between citizens across the continent and EU institutions*. It puts the cohesion and strength of western liberal democracies at stake in a global environment plagued with uncertainties. *Picking up the pieces of this wreckage* will require clear-headed decisions and a new approach across Europe. (*The Guardian*)

Vocabulary is chosen in example (7) in order to express the ideological opinion that Brexit is going to influence widely other European countries and their relation to European institutions. The use of the word *twin* underlines this relation and it is followed by the *breakdown* of the link between British voters and elites, meaning that in the case of Britain this link is ruined and it cannot be avoided. However, for the rest of the continent the connection between citizens and institutions is *rapidly fading*, which means that the situation could be reversed if effective action is taken immediately. The use of the idiomatic expression *picking up the pieces of this*



*wreckage* emphasizes the fact that it is not easy to change the current situation and it requires a lot of effort.

(8) Diplomatic choreography won't be enough to restore what has been shattered, and what the Brexit vote has starkly reflected: there is no longer confidence among European citizens that a collective endeavour of solidarity and values can deliver what they need and want. The confidence of the lower and middle classes is now closer to zero than it ever has been. *Remember recent surveys: only 38% of the French view the EU positively today (the same poll said it was 44% of the British).* (*The Guardian*)

In example (8), *The Guardian* relies on justification to support the opinion that citizens' confidence on the benefits of solidarity and other European values has been lost. The author presents the results of recent surveys that demonstrate people's view on the European Union *Remember recent surveys: only 38% of the French view the EU positively today (the same poll said it was 44% of the British)*, where the French people seem to be more negative towards European Union than the British (who voted for Brexit) implying that a relevant referendum in France would probably result in a similar vote.

#### **4.4 Brexit is an act of careless, spiteful abandon of the 'weakest' after being ignored by the establishment for years**

Another opinion shared by both *The Times* and *The Guardian* has to do with the social class of the people, who voted for Brexit. There is a conviction that it was the working class – the poorest and the weakest – that wanted Britain's exit from the European Union, mainly because of their bad financial and social situation for which they accused immigration and elitism. Both broadsheets, however, underline that this decision of the weakest in favor of Brexit is going to bring them in an even worse economic situation and the effect of Brexit on them will be larger than the middle and upper-class Britons.

*The Times* employs the discursive strategy of classification of the Brexit voters using the adjective *working-class* in order to distinguish them from the rest of the British society (example 9):

(9) *Working-class* Britons have treated this *momentous referendum* as a *protest vote to register their anger with globalisation, immigration and elitism*. The consequence of their decision will *rock* establishments across the world and in Europe in particular, which has been so connivingly smug for years that it should take a large share of the blame. But it will be *the less well-off for whom the decision will reverberate financially, the same people who voted to leave*. No one realised quite how angry they were. (*The Times*)

Throughout this classification of British people, negative other-presentation of Brexit voters is taking place emphasizing the negative and wrong motives that led them to this *careless, spontaneous* decision that is going to ‘cost’ them a lot *the less well-off for whom the decision will reverberate financially, the same people who voted to leave*. The use of the adjective *momentous* underlines the importance of the Brexit referendum that the working-class Britons did not take seriously enough voting based on their anger with what European Union represents: globalization, immigration and elitism *have treated this momentous referendum as a protest vote to register their anger*. The word *anger* is chosen in order to have the maximum effect and express the ideological opinion of the author that the Brexit vote was wrong as well as the motives behind it. The verb *rock* serves in communicating a discourse of panic and urgency regarding the profound consequences of the Brexit vote on the European establishments *The consequence of their decision will rock establishments*. Throughout this example, *The Times* employs the discourse strategies of negative other-presentation and positive self-presentation creating a distance between ‘the others’ and ‘us’ and emphasizing the wrong decision of the working-class Britons in favor of Brexit (in contrast to our right decision) in order to communicate the inferiority of ‘others’ compared to us. We have to mention here the fact that both *The Times* and *The Guardian* are broadsheets widely read by the upper or middle-class Britons and they are expected to write ‘on their behalf’ instead of the working-class.

(10) *The poorest voted for Brexit, now they will bear the brunt of the cost [...]*  
*The National Institute for Economic and Social Research has shown that societies' poorest will suffer the most. It always is. Again, the weakest will suffer the most. Yet they voted for it. Perhaps it was an act of careless, spiteful abandon after being ignored by the establishment for years. Perhaps, those who voted out will glow in a certain stubborn, screw-you pride for a while. (The Times)*

It is worthwhile to include in our analysis the headlines of some articles referring to the *careless* decision of the *weakest* to vote for Brexit. According to Simpson (2010), headlines often reflect the newspaper's socio-political ideology and the analysis of their vocabulary and syntactic structures can give us valuable information on the ideological values and attitudes communicated in the respective articles. In the example (10) the discursive strategy of categorization is used as the Brexit voters are referred to by the superlative of the evaluative adjective *poor* and *weak* resulting in their objectification and their depersonalization *The poorest voted for Brexit, the weakest will suffer the most*. They are presented as the 'lowest' class of the British society that acts uniformly without deep thinking as it is this part of the society that is going to 'suffer' the most from Brexit. The use of the verb *suffer* maximizes the effect that Brexit is going to have in poorest people life and serves in communicating a discourse of panic regarding their situation after Brexit takes place. *The Times* relies on justification to support the opinion that the weakest Britons will suffer the most referring to the outcome of the National Institute for Economic and Social Research *The National Institute for Economic and Social Research has shown that societies' poorest will suffer the most*. Moreover, the repetition of the modal verb *will* is used to present as fact what is essentially the author's opinion, that the weakest are going to suffer the most from Brexit *they will bear the brunt of the cost, societies' poorest will suffer the most, the weakest will suffer the most*. Another interesting discursive strategy employed in this example is the use of the adverbs *always, again*

that serve in presenting as common sense or natural fact the opinion that the consequences of Brexit will be worse for the poorest people *It always is, Again, the weakest will suffer the most*. The syntactic structure in the sentences beginning with the adverb *perhaps* serves in presuming that these reasons might have been the ones that led Brexit voters to their decision, once more presenting this opinion as common sense *Perhaps it was an act of careless, spiteful abandon after being ignored by the establishment for years*.

As we can see in example (11), *The Guardian's* headline supports the opinion of *The Times* – that the poor people voted for Brexit - including in direct quotation the phrase of a woman who argued that those who have money voted *in* in the Brexit referendum while those who do not have money voted *out*:

(11) 'If you've got money, you vote in... if you haven't got money, you vote out' - *Brexit is about more than the EU: it's about class, inequality, and voters feeling excluded from politics*. [...] “If you’ve got money, you vote in,” she said, with a bracing certainty. “If you haven’t got money, you vote out.” We were in Collyhurst, the hard-pressed neighbourhood on the northern edge of Manchester city centre last Wednesday, *and I had yet to find a remain voter*. The woman I was talking to spoke of the lack of a local park, or playground, and her sense that all the good stuff went to the regenerated wonderland of big city Manchester, 10 minutes down the road. Only an hour earlier, I had been in Manchester at a graduate recruitment fair, where *nine out of 10 of our interviewees were supporting remain*, and some voices spoke about leave voters with a cold superiority. “In the end, this is the 21st century,” said one twentysomething. “Get with it.” Not for the first time, the atmosphere around the referendum had the sulphurous whiff not just of inequality, but a kind of misshapen class war. (*The Guardian*)

However, *The Guardian* holds a neutral position presenting both sides equally and giving explanations for the Brexit vote, without accusing the Brexit voters for their decision but putting the blame on their lower class and their exclusion from politics

*Brexit is about more than the EU: it's about class, inequality, and voters feeling excluded from politics.* The newspaper's ideological opinion is based on the fact that Brexit is about class, inequality and exclusion from politics and it is communicated in this article through the presentation of two different perspectives: the case of a woman living in a low-income area of Manchester who voted for Brexit and the case of a young man living in the center of Manchester who supported the remaining of Britain in the European Union. The narrative of the two persons are presumed to be representative of the areas in which they live: the woman lives in an area where it was really difficult to find a remain voter *and I had yet to find a remain voter* while the young man lives in the center of Manchester where *nine out of 10 of the interviewees were supporting remain* and serves in communicating a discourse of inequality and class war playing a primary role for the decision on Brexit.

In the example (12) *The Guardian* supports further its ideological position towards Brexit voters presenting them as *reasonable voters* that took their decision based on *reasonable* motives that had to do with their low income, their problem with housing and finally their concern for the preservation of the British national identity:

(12) Many of the people who voted leave are *reasonable voters* moved by *reasonable* anxieties – about wages, housing *and, yes, the frailty of identity too.* (*The Guardian*)

The use of the adjective *reasonable* for the representation of Brexit voters and their anxieties serves in communicating a positive image of these voters and a sufficient explanation of the motives that led to their decision. The newspaper focuses on the fact that it was the lower class of the Brexit voters that played a primary role in their decision, but also admits that immigration and its threat to British national identity had a certain influence on them. By using the expression *and, yes, the frailty of identity too*, *The Guardian* highlights its ideological opinion on Brexit - that Brexit is about class and inequality – putting the national identity discourse in a second place without denying, though, its existence.

#### 4.5 Brexit is a wake-up call: save Europe

Both the conservative *Times* and the liberal *Guardian* use various linguistic strategies for the negative discursive construction of Brexit in relation to the future of Europe communicating a discourse of panic and urgency. They argue that Brexit is not a British phenomenon, it is going to influence other European countries enforcing the populist Eurosceptic parties and confirming their political ideology. The main difference among the discursive strategies employed by the two broadsheets resides in their attitude towards Europe: *The Times* makes a distinction between ‘us’, ‘Britons’ and Europe and addresses to the British people focusing on their national identity whereas *The Guardian* presents Britain as part of Europe and calls in action for the rescue of our common good ‘Europe’. In the example (13) *The Times* focuses on the Britain’s strategic national interest, which presupposes stability in Europe as it is Britain’s closest neighbor:

(13) The union itself is now shaken to the core. Other states may demand referendums of their own and Brussels cannot quash these yearnings. They are appeals for more accountability and less interference which the EU *must* heed for its own sake. *Britain should find a way to help this process from the outside*, because whatever else *will* change in the coming months and years, geography *will* not. We *must* strive for new trade deals with emerging economies and the anchor nations of the Commonwealth, but *Europe will remain our closest neighbour. Its stability will always be in Britain's strategic national interest.* (*The Times*)

The use of the pronouns ‘they’ and ‘we’ serves in differentiating and creating a distance between Britain and Europe implying that Britain does not belong in Europe, it is a separate entity *Britain should find a way to help this process from the outside*. The modal verbs *will*, *must*, *should* are used to present as fact what is essentially the author’s opinion, that Britain should help Europe maintain its stability, as it is strongly associated with its national interest.

In the example (14), the use of the metaphor *Brussels must shake itself from its stupor* for the representation of the situation of the European Union constitutes a discourse strategy for the negative other-representation of European institutions as they are conceived as ‘elites’ having lost their connection with the ‘outside world’ that need to ‘wake up’ and take action.

(14) *Brussels must shake itself from its stupor. Its project is either over or needs to be remade. Across Europe, there will be a groundswell of sympathy for what Britain has just done. Popular eurosceptic parties in France, Italy, Denmark and the Netherlands have already called for referendums. [...] In Athens, it was austerity. In Britain, it was about managing EU migration. Letting eastern European countries join in 2004 without adjusting the treaties was the moment Brussels sealed its fate. Until then, free movement of labour had been a laudable ideal between countries of similar economic stature to raise prosperity by ensuring that people could find work and companies could find workers. [...] Yesterday's vote was a reaction to the 100,000 increase in annual EU migration that began a decade ago. Europe will need to find a new path if this vast single market is to prosper. (The Times)*

Another metaphor used in the example (14) for the representation of the European Union is *project*, implying that it needs to be well-designed in order to work and it does not have its definite form yet, it is under construction. According to *The Times*, it was the increase in European Union migration of the last decade that led to Brexit and Europe has to find a solution to this problem in order to survive *Yesterday's vote was a reaction to the 100,000 increase in annual EU migration that began a decade ago*. The opinion of the author is presented as common sense and natural through the use of expressions introduced with the verb ‘to be’ in the present, future and past tense *its project is either over or ..., there will be a groundswell of sympathy ..., in Britain, it was about managing EU migration, yesterday's vote was a reaction .....*

*The Guardian* in the example (15), in contrast to ‘the Times’ conceives Britain as part of Europe and focuses on the fact that Europe must be saved and this cannot be accomplished if the European leaders continue to deny and overlook the

‘destroyed’ connection between citizens and institutions *The link between citizens and institutions across Europe is eroded and Brussels can no longer deny it.*

(15) *Brexit is a wake-up call: save Europe - The link between citizens and institutions across Europe is eroded and Brussels can no longer deny it. [...]* Yet if there is one mistake EU leaders should avoid now, it would be to think that the forces at play represent a strictly British phenomenon. [...] The first thing to avoid is going into denial about the *magnitude* of what has happened. *Now populist, far-right and anti-western forces will push forward in the belief that a precedent has been set for other “exits”.* Look at the statements from *Marine Le Pen*, the head of France’s Front National, and the Dutch far-right leader *Geert Wilders* – and the messaging from *the Kremlin’s propaganda machine.* [...] *The very survival of the EU* is now in peril, and not just because a country representing its second largest economy and a key pillar of its security is set to withdraw. Surely, that much is clear to all. (*The Guardian*)

A very interesting discourse strategy employed by *The Guardian* in this direction is the identification of Europe with the European Union *Brexit is a wake-up call: save Europe*, implying that the European Union unites the Europe as a whole and this unification has to be saved. The ‘adjectification’ of the verb *wake-up* in *The Guardian’s* headline serves in communicating a discourse of panic and urgency regarding the rescue of Europe that can only be managed if the European ‘elite’ takes action immediately. The author uses the metaphor *magnitude* for the representation of the influence that Brexit is going to have to other European countries, as it is conceived as a ‘European’ phenomenon that will ‘attract’ the populist forces across Europe. The metaphorical use of the word *exits* is also employed for the representation of other countries leaving – ‘exiting’ - the European Union *Now populist, far-right and anti-western forces will push forward in the belief that a precedent has been set for other “exits”*, following the Brexit example. Various qualitative adjectives are used for the categorization and the negative other-presentation of the Eurosceptic forces followed by respective examples: populist



forces are represented by Marine Le Pen, the head of France's Front National, far-right forces are represented by the Dutch far-right leader Geert Wilders and anti-western forces are represented by the Kremlin's propaganda machine. In this example (15) *The Guardian* makes use of intertextuality as the readers are supposed to know in advance what Marine Le Pen, Geert Wilders and the Kremlin's propaganda machine stand for and to have a clue regarding their statements on Brexit. The expression *the very survival of the EU* is another linguistic tool used in order to underline the fact that the existence of the European Union is in danger.

## 5 Further discussion

The analysis of the articles has demonstrated that Brexit is consistently represented as a negative definite fact that expresses the rise of populism globally, threatens the unity of Europe and is the result of a fundamental breach of trust between institutions and ordinary people. The articles also created discourses on Brexit voters, who are the 'weakest' part of the society that made its decision based on its 'low' social position and bad financial situation and, in the same time, are those who will suffer most from Brexit. The national identity discourse is central in the representation of Brexit in the articles establishing particular groups and creating distance between them. The difference between the conservative broadsheet *The Times* and the liberal newspaper *The Guardian* has to do with the formation of these groups: *The Times* make a separation between 'us - Britain' and 'them - Europe', while for *The Guardian* 'we' is 'Europe' and 'they' is 'the rest of the world'. Both broadsheets separate British society in 'Brexit voters' and 'non-Brexit voters', they identify themselves with the second group and they create a distance from the people who voted for Brexit. It could be argued, though, that *The Times* marginalizes the Brexit voters and reproduces the negative attitudes towards them (poor, weak people that make careless decisions on crucial matters), while *The Guardian* is more creative and avoids reproducing these stereotypes openly (he considers their reaction reasonable given their bad financial situation and low social position).

The discursive strategies employed for the creation of the national identity discourse in both broadsheets are the positive self-presentation and the negative

other-presentation in favor of ‘non-Brexit’: *The Times* focuses on the benefit for Britain if the country remained in Europe (speaks for Britain), while *The Guardian* shares a ‘more’ European perspective linking the British benefit to the European one and presenting Britain as part of Europe. Justification is another discursive strategy used by both broadsheets for the support and reproduction of the existing stereotypes towards Brexit, strongly supporting the fact that Britain should remain in the European Union and using various arguments for the justification of their ideological position. We could argue that *The Guardian* is more innovative in the use of these discursive practices avoiding the reproduction of prejudiced negative presentation of Brexit and its voters, while *The Times* openly reproduces negative attitudes towards Brexit and explicitly communicates a discourse of accusation of Brexit voters.

The discourses on Brexit identified in our analysis verify the findings of previous studies. In the discourse-historical analysis of David Cameron’s Bloomberg Speech of the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2013 on the relationship of Britain with the European Union, Wodak (2016) analyzed the ‘context-dependent linguistic realizations’ of this speech and concluded that the linguistic representation and discursive construction of the self-presentation ‘we’ (Britain, ‘the island nation’) and the other-presentation ‘they’ (European Union, ‘the continent’) in the Bloomberg speech are of particular importance, as these linguistic realizations create distance between Britain and the European Union, but also presuppose that Britain is a separate entity that does not belong to Europe.

Our findings regarding the representation of Brexit as an expression of the rise of populism verify the outcome of the discourse analysis on the United Kingdom’s relationship with Europe by Todd (2014), who examined the discursive construction of ‘a British self’ and ‘Continental other’ over the past forty years and found that it was consistent all over this period and strongly reinforced by the increasing anti-immigration rhetoric within the British discourse on Europe. In his conclusions, he notes that the impact of the ‘Eurosceptic’ British discourse is likely to have a great influence on the results of a British referendum regarding the relationship of Britain with the European Union. The findings of Pareschi et al. (2016), which focus on the great rise of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) between 2010 and 2015 and the identification of the reasons for this substantial rise are also relevant to the

outcome of our study that strongly relates Brexit to the rise of populism and Euroscepticism and the United Kingdom Independence Party's rhetoric argumentation on anti-European Union, anti-immigration and anti-elite rhetoric, all threatening the British national identity.

After having analyzed the various linguistic and discursive strategies employed by *The Times* and *The Guardian* for the representation of Brexit, its consequences and its voters, we can make some valuable conclusions on the 'messages' transferred through the texts. In order to understand these messages, we need to take into account the way these articles were produced, distributed and consumed. Regarding their production and distribution, some of the articles were published in the conservative British broadsheet *The Times* and the rest of them were published in the liberal *The Guardian*. We can expect that they reflect the newspapers' socio-political ideology – either conservative or liberal - and respective ideological meanings are encoded in them. The articles address to a specific audience, who is familiar with the discourse practices of each newspaper and is able to decode the messages communicated in the articles linking the texts to their social and historical context. In addition, we have to mention that both *The Times* and *The Guardian* are broadsheets widely read by the upper or middle-class Britons and they are expected to write 'on their behalf' instead of the working-class.

According to Richardson (2007), 'there is a dialectical relationship between the consumption of journalistic texts and social practices', which means that readers decode the meanings of texts using their ideology (political beliefs and socio-cultural practices) and these texts, in their turn, shape (support or challenge) these readers' ideology. In other words, 'discourses are historical' and their meaning can only be produced in relation to their situational and sociocultural context (Wodak R., 1996). In this context, it is important to consider the immediate situational as well as the wider sociocultural background in which these texts were produced and answer the question whether the article support or challenge the dominant ideologies regarding Brexit. It should be mentioned here that the articles were written right after the Brexit referendum of the 23th of June 2016 took place when the whole British society was shocked by the unexpected result in favor of the exit of Britain from the European Union. The articles were published in a general climate which was rather hostile to

the idea of Britain leaving the European Union and they are deeply influenced and shaped by this situational parameter. They communicate a discourse of panic and urgency regarding the significant political, economic and social consequences that Brexit will bring for both Britain and the European Union. Given the fact that the articles address to different audience that shares different sociopolitical ideology – either liberal or conservative – they approach Brexit from different perspectives: the conservative *Times* focus on the British national interest that is threatened by Brexit, while *The Guardian* shares a more European perspective and refers to Brexit as a crucial point for the ‘edifice’ of the European Union. We could argue that the linguistic and discursive features employed in these articles do “ideological work” and serve in reproducing stereotypes and dominant ideologies.

## **6 Concluding remarks**

Throughout this study, we tried to investigate the discursive representation of Brexit in two British newspapers – *The Times* and *The Guardian* - on the 25<sup>th</sup> June 2016, two days after the British referendum took place through a critical discourse analysis. We examined the linguistic features employed for the expression of certain attitudes towards Brexit from the newspapers examined and answer the question whether these features serve in supporting or challenging the dominant ideologies towards Brexit. The background section of the study included the situational context of the articles as well as the theoretical background and the previous works that were relevant to Brexit or the methodological tool employed in our analysis. Throughout the analysis of our texts, certain representations of Brexit were identified: 1) Brexit is a negative unavoidable fact, 2) Brexit is a dramatic expression of a global wave of populism, 3) Brexit is the result of a fundamental breach of trust between institutions and people, 4) Brexit is an act of careless, spiteful abandon of the ‘weakest’ after being ignored by the establishment for years, 5) Brexit is a wake-up call: save Europe. Moreover, the study revealed the predominance of the national identity discourse in the representation of Brexit in the articles establishing particular groups (Britain - Europe, Brexit voters – non-Brexit voters) and creating distance between them. Another interesting finding has to do with the identification of the differences between the discursive practices of the two broadsheets: *The Guardian* is found to be

more innovative in the use of negative other-presentation avoiding the reproduction of prejudiced negative presentation of Brexit and its voters, while *The Times* openly reproduce negative attitudes towards Brexit and explicitly communicates a discourse of accusation of Brexit voters.

Given the fact that the data of our study include articles published two days after the Brexit referendum took place, in a general climate of panic, it is worthwhile to investigate the discursive representation of Brexit in articles written long after the British referendum took place (e.g. after two months or a year) and compare the findings. This comparison could reveal valuable information on Brexit discursive representation in the long run and focus on the differences between the immediate reactions of the institutions – reflected through the journalistic practices – and the more ‘mature’ reactions towards Brexit communicated in future articles. A future research could also include more broadsheets as well as tabloids that use entirely different ‘writing style’ offering a more representative and concrete image of the discursive representation of Brexit in the British press.

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## **Appendix: List of the articles used in the analysis**

- Text 1: 'Brexit is a wake-up call: save Europe - The link between citizens and institutions across Europe is eroded and Brussels can no longer deny it. The usual rituals of the EU simply won't do'. Retrieved from <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.proxy.mah.se/resources/doc/nb/news/15DB9ACBE1657810?p=AWNB>
- Text 2: 'Don't panic, the future's bright with Brexit - The lower pound will help business, trade deals are in the pipeline and there won't be a bonfire of workers' rights'. Retrieved from <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.proxy.mah.se/resources/doc/nb/news/15DBAAE1E6AD1F80?p=AWNB>
- Text 3: 'Forward Without Rancour - Brexit's full impact on Britain's identity and role in the world will take years to gauge, but there is no turning back'. Retrieved from <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.proxy.mah.se/resources/doc/nb/news/15DBAB3E3B371690?p=AWNB>
- Text 4: 'If you've got money, you vote in... if you haven't got money, you vote out' - Brexit is about more than the EU: it's about class, inequality, and voters feeling excluded from politics. So how do we even begin to put Britain the right way up?'. Retrieved from <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.proxy.mah.se/resources/doc/nb/news/15DB702FF206A018?p=AWNB>
- Text 5: 'The Guardian view on the EU referendum: the vote is in, now we must face the consequences - A prime minister is gone, but that is of nothing compared to the fallout for the economy, our union and Europe. It will all have to be grappled with, and so too will the economic neglect and the social alienation which have driven Britain to the exit door'. Retrieved from <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.proxy.mah.se/resources/doc/nb/news/15DB70201E60E2D0?p=AWNB>

Text 6: 'The poorest voted for Brexit, now they will bear the brunt of the cost'.

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