



# ***A Sociocognitive Approach to Agency Framing in David Cameron's 2010 Pre-election Discourse***

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## **Abstract**

*Drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis as an approach to the analysis of discourses, this paper explores the concept of agency in a corpus of David Cameron's 2010 pre-election speeches. The analysis attempts to unveil the social representations present in the discourse of the British Conservative Party leader by focusing on the discourse-cognition-society interface. The study uses Van Dijk's sociocognitive approach and Systemic Functional Linguistics as a methodological framework. The focus is on the discourse structures of personal pronouns, transitivity and nominalisation as discourse structures framing agency. The study uses qualitative as well as quantitative tools and takes into account the context of the speeches. The analysis reveals that by means of interacting with the audience on common knowledge and attitudes, Cameron constructs a collective agency to win votes and define a Conservative ideology.*

**Key words:** critical discourse analysis, Van Dijk's sociocognitive approach, systemic functional linguistics, agency, social representations

## **1. Introduction**

Situated within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the general theoretical and analytical framework, the purpose of this paper is to provide a sociocognitive (SC) analysis of agency in the political discourse (PD) of David Cameron during the elections year (2010). This particular approach to discourse analysis adopted Van Dijk's SC framework, builds on the analysis of discourse structures to make explicit the relations between discourse, cognition and society. Van Dijk's stresses the role cognition plays in the mediation between discourse structures and social structures:

[T]o explain how real language users go about producing and understanding discourse, how their personal and socially shared beliefs affect discourse production and how these are in turn affected by discourse. No critical account of discourse is theoretically complete without such a cognitive interface. (Van Dijk 2009: 79)

In this study the combination between the sociocognitive approach to CDA and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is one example of interesting combinations of the two frameworks. In spite of their specificities,

both frameworks share a concern for analysing language use. The SFL connection to CDA goes back to Fairclough's three-step methodology (Fairclough [1989] [1992] 2010). Research on the CDA and SFL relationship includes Young and Harrison (2004) and Reisigl (2013). This study relies on CDA's methodological openness to use SFL in approaches other than those using or building on Fairclough's model. The given paper explores the connection between the SC approach and SFL through the analysis of agency construction in political discourse. While the SC approach and SFL have their respective perspectives in the analysis of discourse<sup>1</sup>, both could be combined when SFL toolkits of discourse structures analysis are used. In fact agency is a notion found in SFL in the analysis of language use which can reflect the speaker's choice of assuming or evading responsibility.

Agency construction in PD has been the focus of many CDA and critical linguistics studies (such as Fairclough 1992; Chilton and Schäffner 2011; Fowler 1996, 1998; Oktar 2001; Dunmire 2005). CDA studies focus on the analysis of agency from particular perspectives. For instance, Fairclough's (1992) analysis of agency falls within the analysis of the discourse strategies that sheds light on the relationship between discourse and society. Studies that are interested in the cognitive interface between discourse and society, analyse agency in, for example, parliamentary debates (Van Dijk 2002) and media discourse (Oktar 2001). However, a few studies have attempted to focus on agency in the political discourse of the British Conservative Party (BCP) under the leadership of David Cameron before becoming the UK's PM as a result of the 2010 General Elections. Critical discourse studies of Conservative leaders' discourse include Fairclough, Mulderrig and Wodak (2011) and Chilton and Schäffner (2011). The first analysed Thatcher's discourse and the latter Major's discourse.

The aim of this study is to unveil agency framing in the corpus through the focus on the discursive strategies of personal pronoun usage, transitivity patterns and nominalisation as well as the analysis of social representations. The aim of this study is approached by addressing the following research questions:

- Who are the participants present in the corpus and who are those absent?
- How are they referred to in terms of Us and Them?
- What process types and participants predominate?
- How does nominalisation frame agency?
- What social representations of Us and Them does agency framing reveal?

This paper is made of three sections in addition to the introduction and the conclusion. The following section provides a review of literature about the framework used and related concepts. The third section provides details about the corpus analysed. The quantitative analysis section is followed by the in-depth analysis of social representations (SR).

## **2. Theoretical Background**

Critical Discourse Analysis is ‘a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context’ (Van Dijk 2001a: 352). CDA also ‘subsumes a variety of approaches towards the social analysis of discourse ... which differ in theory, methodology, and the type of research issues to which they tend to give prominence’ (Fairclough 2005: 1). This study builds on the non-exclusive association between CDA and other approaches to the analysis of discourse. In this respect, the SC approach is used with SFL in analysing PD.

### **2.1 Van Dijk’s sociocognitive approach**

Working within the general framework of CDA, Van Dijk advances cognition as the interface between discourse and society. According to Van Dijk, the cognitive interface plays a mediating role in understanding and interpreting the relation between discourse structures and social structures. Social cognition is are ‘the beliefs or *social representations* that they [people] share with others of their groups or community’ (Van Dijk 2009: 78). Social cognition then is defined as the shared social representations which include knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, values and norms.

Knowledge is defined as ‘the organized mental structure consisting of shared factual beliefs of a group or culture, which are or may be ‘verified’ by the (historically variable) truth criteria of that group or culture’ (Van Dijk 2002: 208). Noting that ‘what may be ‘knowledge’ for one group (period or culture) may be deemed mere ‘beliefs’ or ‘opinions’ by other groups’ (ibid), Van Dijk distinguishes between knowledge shared by one specific group and Common Ground Knowledge. Common Ground Knowledge is also called knowledge in society and it is ‘the basis of all interaction and communication in society and is generally presupposed in discourse’ (Van Dijk 2002: 218).

Opinions, on the other hand, are defined as ‘sets of belief in social memory that are not dealt with in terms of truth criteria, but shared on the basis of evaluative criteria (good vs. bad, etc.)’ (Van Dijk 2002: 220). Attitudes are the larger structures within which socially shared opinions are situated. The common feature between opinions and attitudes is that due to their evaluative nature they are not part of cultural Common Ground as they are not taken for granted, uncontroversial and undisputed (ibid).

Ideologies, however, are approached as being social cognition as well as SR. Within a multidisciplinary approach, Van Dijk’s theory of ideology (Van Dijk 1998a: 4-5) does not only define the notion, but also its structure. Examples of ideological structures include (Van Dijk 2001b: 14):

- Membership devices (gender, ethnicity, appearance, origin, etc.): Who are we?
- Actions: What do we do?
- Aims: Why do we do this?
- Norms and Values: What is good or bad?
- Position: What is our position in society, and how we relate to other groups?

- Resources: What is ours? What do we want to have/keep at all costs?

The pattern resulting from Van Dijk's approach to ideology, cognition and discourse is an ideological square. The two strategies of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation characterise interaction within and between groups in terms of presenting oneself and the others. The resulting pattern is (Van Dijk 1998b: 44):

- Emphasize positive things about Us.
- Emphasize negative things about Them.
- De-emphasize negative things about Us.
- De-emphasize positive things about Them.

The analysis of the ideological square in PD is carried out in this study though the analysis of agency in the selected speeches.

## 2.2 Agency

Agency (also called agentivity) is a common concern in CDA studies such as Fairclough (1992), Chilton and Schäffner (2011), Oktar (2001) and Dunmire (2005). Gunn (2009) defines the concept of agency as the ability to act and to bring about change. The agent then is the person or the entity who/which stands behind change and causes it. Among the discourse structures that are used to frame<sup>2</sup> agency are personal pronouns, nominalisation and transitivity. Fairclough (1992), analysing power in discourse, stresses the fact that how agency is handled in a discourse reflects hidden power and manipulation work. Pronouns are one of the 'grammatical features of texts which have relational values' (Fairclough 1992: 125) in addition to categorising the speaker, the audience and the others. The personal pronouns analysis in the current corpus will serve to find out how Us and Them are referred to and to identify the transitivity choices associated with each of them. In terms of foregrounding and backgrounding, the transitivity choices of whose agency have 'a potential ideological function' (Oktar 2001: 336) in the sense that they foreground or demystify the responsibility of the agent.

In Halliday's SFL, language is used in constructing experience and representations of the world, in constructing social interactions and in enacting interpersonal relations. These three modes of meaning correspond to three aspects of the clause: the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual aspects. Transitivity<sup>3</sup> as a notion from SFL falls within the ideational metafunction and more precisely within the experiential function (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 29). The ideational function 'concerns the 'cognitive' dimension of language, the way language provides structures for the representation of speaker's experience' (Fowler 1996: 77). This function also highlights the fact that 'language is of great importance in shaping speakers' classification of experience' (Fowler 1996: 210).

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 281) transitivity analysis is based on the process as the central element in the clause, the participants involved in the process and the circumstances associated with the process. In SFL there are three main process types: material, mental and relational in addition to three other process subtypes. Material clause are 'concerned with

our experience of the material world' (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 197). Material processes are concerned with doing in the physical world. In addition to the circumstances they require two types of participants: the Actor which is obligatory and the Goal which is the optional element affected by the process.

Mental clauses from their part are clauses 'concerned with our experience of the world, of our own consciousness' (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 197). The two participants which are associated with mental processes are the Senser who is the participant involved in conscious processing of sensing and the Phenomenon which can be things, acts or facts sensed.

Relational clauses, however 'serve to characterize and to identify' (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 210) and they construe being in two modes: attribution and identification. These two different relational clause types have different sets of participant roles: attributive clauses have Carrier and Attribute and identifying clauses have Token and Value.

Processes located at the boundaries between the three main process types are behavioural processes which are processes of typical human behaviour (physiological and psychological). The participant associated with behavioural processes is the Behaver. Verbal clauses are clauses of saying and the participants associated with them are the Sayer (and it can be human or human-like) and the addressee of the Verbiage the Receiver. Existential processes are located between material and relational process and have the Existent as participant.

In CDA studies, the importance of transitivity analysis lies in 'the fact that agency, state, process, and so on seem to be the basic categories in terms of which human beings present the world to themselves through language' (Fowler 1996: 74). Language use is also revealing when using verbs as nouns. The second notion drawn from SFL is nominalisation. Citing Kress (1995), Dunmire sheds light on the role of nominalisation in transforming agency (Dunmire 2005: 490). The result of nominalisation is 'an 'elision' or 'displacement of agency' as agentivity no longer resides with animate agents taking specific action at specific times and places ... [r]ather, it resides with abstract, reified processes acting in unspecified, ambiguous material and temporal contexts' (Dunmire 2005: 491). Nominalisation is also analysed for its impact on 'the transitivity structure of the text, on its representation of agents, actions, and process' (ibid) and it 'results in a (re)classification process that redirects transitivity structures away from characterizing 'reality' in terms of actions taken by animate actors against specific participants and/or objects and toward inanimate agents and nondirected actions' (Dunmire 2005: 491 citing Kress 1995). Fowler (1998: 80) draws attention to the ideological weight carried by nominalisation as it 'is a radical syntactic transformation of a clause, which has extensive structural consequences, and offers substantial ideological opportunities'.

### ***3. Corpus Description***

The present study is based on the analysis of sixteen speeches (S) delivered by David Cameron and accessed from the BCP's official website: [www.conservatives.com](http://www.conservatives.com). The sixteen speeches are selected relying on quota

sampling among the forty speeches delivered by David Cameron. The number of speeches selected for each month corresponds to the average number of speeches delivered that month. Table 1 contains details about each of the sixteen speeches.

Code of the speeches	Titles of the speeches	Setting		Number of Words
		Place (when mentioned in the speech)	Date	
S 1	We can't go on like this.	-	January 2, 2010	1 636
S 2	Our whole country is crying out for change.	30 Millbank, London, SW 1P, 4DP	January 25, 2010	1 167
S 3	Rebuilding trust in politics.	The University of East London	February 8, 2010	4 234
S 4	The real choice in British politics.	Perth	February 12, 2010	4 058
S 5	Join us help bring the change Britain needs.	-	February 15, 2010	1 732
S 6	From central power to people power.	The Sunlight Centre in Gillingham, Kent.	February 22, 2010	2 725
S 7	Let's win it for Britain.	Brighton	February 28, 2010	5 935
S 8	Getting our country moving again.	30 Millbank, London, SW1P, 4DP	March 23, 2010	1 517
S 9	Our 'Big Society' plan.	-	March 31, 2010	2 921
S 10	Your invitation to join the Government of Britain.	-	April 13, 2010	3 062
S 11	Big Society versus Big Government.	-	April 19, 2010	1 911
S 12	Change our political system to put people back in control.	-	April 21, 2010	2 396
S 13	Big ideas to give Britain Real Change.	Thurrock	April 24, 2010	2 307
S 14	Let's mend our broken society.	-	April 27, 2010	3 705
S 15	Vote Conservative for guaranteed change on Friday.	East Renfrewshire	May 4, 2010	1 956
S 16	We need change so together we can build a stronger, better country.	Bristol	May 5, 2010	945
<b>Total number of words</b>				<b>42 207</b>

**Table 1:** The corpus in detail

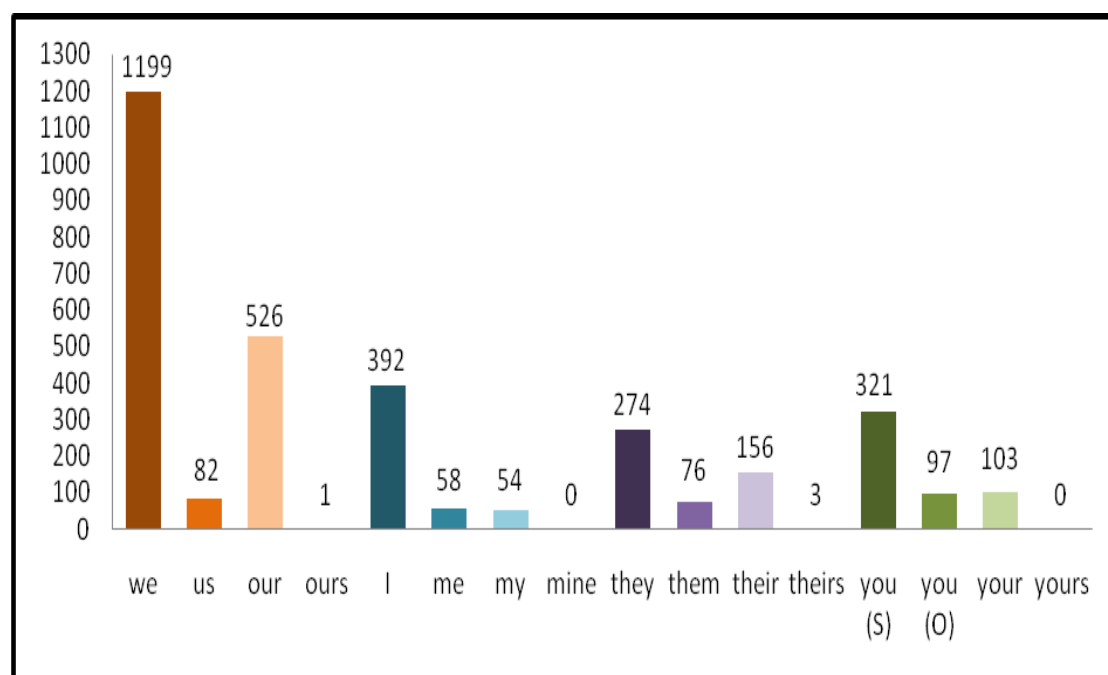
The speeches extend from January 2, 2010 to May 5, 2010 since this research focuses on pre-election discourse. The speeches not only cover the election campaign period, but also extend over the 2010 months before the Election Day. This selection pertains to the focus of the study; the pre-election discourse, rather than the election campaign discourse. In order to meet the objective of the study and to answer the research questions, a corpus analysis is conducted through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. In the quantitative analysis, the computer software Textanz is used for its

concordance and word-in-context features. The objective behind the latter analysis is to back the qualitative analysis of the targeted discourse structures.

## 4. Findings and Analysis

### 4.1 Constructing agency

The first step in analysing how agency is constructed in the selected speeches is the analysis of the personal pronouns and pronominals. Personal pronouns analysis seeks to find out how the different participants in the speeches are referred to. The analysis of the transitivity patterns covers the processes associated with Us and Them. Figure 1 below shows that *we*, the most frequent word in the corpus, is the most used personal pronoun with 1199 occurrences ahead of *our* with 526 occurrences, *you* with 418 occurrences, *I* with 392 occurrences and *they* with 274 occurrences. A detailed distribution of the personal pronouns in each of the sixteen speeches is presented in Appendix A.



**Figure 1:** The distribution of personal pronouns and pronominals in the corpus

The use of these personal pronouns and pronominals in each speech and in the whole corpus reveals the speaker's awareness of the context of the speeches. In S 4 and S 7, for example, exclusive *we* is used more frequently than inclusive *we* seen the fact that the speaker addresses the participants while taking into account their role as Conservative MPs, Conservative Party (CP) delegates and Conservatives in general. Participants who are *we* are those who attended, in S 7 for example, the CP Spring Forum in Bristol. Hence, in S 7, the use of *we* means that the speaker is concerned with communicating with the audience as members of the same ideological group (Conservatives) and of the same political party.

The categorisation resulting from personal pronouns use in the corpus is also revealing at the level of the correlation between the agents and the processes associated with them. Table 2 systematises the number of occurrences of each process type in the clauses of the sample analysed. Transitivity analysis in the speeches is carried on sample paragraphs from each of the sixteen speeches. SFL terminology and coding for transitivity analysis are used (as seen in the quoted examples).

Table 2 reveals that the six process types are used although with different frequencies. The numbers in Table 2 show that the most used process types are mental processes (62 occurrences) followed by material processes (51 occurrences), relational processes (42 occurrences), then verbal processes (21 occurrences), behavioural and existential processes are used only once. Besides, the classification of the six process types into their sub-types shows that the speaker relies on material and cognitive mental processes more than the other process types.

In terms of process types, Table 2 shows that most of the processes are mental processes. In terms of participants, while the Labour Party (LP) is the Senser in four clauses, *we* are the Senser in the other fifty-nine clauses. Such pattern of attribution of participants' roles can be interpreted in two ways. First, associating particular participants with the participant role of Senser means that the speaker is concerned with portraying them as experiencers and not as agents while he is the agent who reports their state of mind. Therefore, the Labour Government (and Gordon Brown in particular) being the Senser sheds light on what is happening *inside* the Government (and the LP) and the effect of its actions:

**E1: S 2:** [Senser:] The Government's promise to halve the deficit in four years has failed [Process:mental:cognitive:] to convince [Phenomenon:] all those who we need to have confidence in Britain's economic future.

The second interpretation of the use of mental processes is that when the first personal pronoun *I* is the Senser it is associated with the mental processes 'believe', 'want' and 'think'. The speaker focuses on emphasizing *Our* good understanding of the economic condition as seen in example 2 (E2) from S6:

**E2: S 6:** [Senser:] I [Process:mental:cognitive:] don't believe [Phenomenon:] turning this round means putting our entire faith in the free market - we have seen how a lack of starting capital locks millions of people out from the opportunity of owning something that is theirs.



	Material	Mental			Relational		Verbal	Behavioural	Existential	Line total	
	perceptive	cognitive	desiderative	emotive	Attributive	Identifying					
S1	1	0	8	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	<b>11</b>
S2	2	0	4	0	0	1	1	3	0	0	<b>11</b>
S3	3	0	4	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	<b>11</b>
S4	5	0	2	0	0	2	1	2	0	0	<b>12</b>
S5	4	2	2	0	0	1	3	4	0	0	<b>16</b>
S6	2	0	4	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	<b>10</b>
S7	2	0	0	6	0	4	0	0	0	0	<b>12</b>
S8	7	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	<b>10</b>
S9	3	0	3	0	0	1	0	3	0	1	<b>11</b>
S10	2	0	0	0	0	4	2	0	0	0	<b>8</b>
S11	2	0	4	1	0	1	1	5	0	0	<b>14</b>
S12	4	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>10</b>
S13	3	0	0	0	0	7	0	1	0	0	<b>11</b>
S14	3	0	3	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	<b>10</b>
S15	8	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	<b>10</b>
S16	0	0	9	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	<b>11</b>
<b>Column total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>178</b>

Table 2: Representation and transitivity

The conclusion that can be drawn from the speaker's use of mental processes is the speaker is concerned with the CP and people's experience of the Labour Government's actions. The speaker focuses on what *we* 'think', what *we* 'believe', what *we* 'need' and what *we* 'want'. Hence, the systematic pattern noticed in the analysis of personal pronouns referring to the CP and to people is also present in the use of mental processes. *I* and *we* (the Conservatives) do not differ much in their experience and vision from what people think the CP can do for them:

**E3: S 3:** [Senser:] People are [Process:mental:cognitive:] fed up [Phenomenon:] with politicians hiding behind the cloak of independent inquiries and endless reviews. [Senser:] They [Process:mental:desiderative:] want [Phenomenon:] us to stand up, grasp this issue by the scruff of the neck and start dealing with it. And [Actor:] I want [Process:material:] to make [Goal:] something very clear: || [Senser:] I [Process:mental:cognitive:] believe [Phenomenon:] Gordon Brown has proved he is just not capable of doing that.

The Others appear mainly in material processes. E4 from S3 are examples of material clauses in which the Labour Government is summed in the figure of Gordon Brown. The focus is on showing that his actions are 'bad':

**E4: S 3:** Look how [Actor:] he [Process:material:] tried [Goal:] to block the publication of expenses. Look at his [Phenomenon:] disastrous interventions - from the YouTube fiasco when [Actor:] he [Process:material:] proposed paying [Goal:] MPs just to turn up - to his own failure to turn up and vote to ban the John Lewis list.

On the other hand, when 'we' (people) and 'they' (the Labour Government) appear in the same material clause it is clear that Our actions are affected by Theirs:

**E5: S 2:** If [Actor:] we are going to have [Process:material:] to wait [Location:time:] until May [Goal:] for an election - || and if there is going to be a budget in March - [Actor:] they need [Process:material:] to show [Goal:] how they are going to start [Location:time:] now.

Furthermore, the speaker's focus on who the Others are and the results of their actions is carried out through foregrounding the moral background of *our* actions. Therefore, what 'we' are 'fighting for' is 'right' since 'we' are fighting to 'win it' (the election) not for themselves (the Conservatives), but for the 'people'. Winning is for the 'people who do the right thing, who work hard, who save, who play by the rules':

**E6: S 15:** But [Carrier:] we [ Process:relational:attributive:]'re not [Attribute:], we are not fighting these other parties what we are fighting is disadvantage, is poverty, is unfairness, is the fact that opportunity is blocked in our country. [Actor:] We [ Process:material:] 're fighting [Goal:] the fact that people who do the right thing, who work hard, who save, who play by the rules get hit by the system rather than hurt by the system. [Actor:] We in this election [Process:material:] are fighting [Goal:] for people, we are fighting for the children growing up in homes where nobody works.

Since relational processes serve to classify, to judge (Oktar, 2001: 326), to give information and to describe, their use reveals the speaker's judgment of the participants. A close look at the Carrier/Token associated with Us and those

associated with Them shows that there is a pattern of identification and description of each group. The following examples illustrate this case:

**E7: S 1:**We are all in this together.

**E8: S 5:**We are a party for the mainstream majority in our country

**E9: S10:**We stand for the working people that Labour have abandoned, with their jobs tax and their waste.

**E10: S 2:**The government's approach - to coin a phrase is to do nothing.

**E11: S 10:**The Liberals have little to say.

The interpretation of the description of Us and Them through attributing positive values to Us (being cooperative and standing for the needy) and negative values to Them (lacking political vision) reflect a struggle for power seen at the level of Our good actions Vs. Their bad actions. The relational processes associated with *we* defines the LP as misusing power since it is the party in Government. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is presented as having little to say in the country's social, political and economic situation. Since the corpus analysed is made up of speeches during the election campaign period and others before it, the examples from S1 and S2 and those from S10 show the consistency in presenting Them.

The use of relational processes also shows that the speaker does neither background the judgment of the Others nor does he background the systematic difference between who are Us and who are Them. The speaker's term for the difference is 'choice'. The following examples from S 4 show that there are differences. These differences turn into a choice between Us and Them. For each adjective attributed to the Government there is a CP counterpart and for each Labour Government social and economic policy there is a Conservative alternative:

a weak and divided Government	a strong, united Conservative team
broken politics with a centralising, secretive, unaccountable state	a new politics of openness, accountability and power to people.
high debt and wasteful spending that puts the recovery at risk.	lower debt, efficient spending so we create jobs and get the economy moving
a broken society with the crime it brings	a strong society where we support families, rebuild community and back responsibility.

In sum, the analysis of transitivity patterns reveals how the use of process types depicts the participants in terms of agency. First, since David Cameron delivers the speeches, he has control over who the participants present in the speeches are and with what processes they are associated. Therefore, the way participants are presented in the speeches and the kind of relationships between them falls within the speaker's power in the distribution of responsibility. Second, agency attribution or evasion is linked to who We are (the inclusive *we* or the exclusive *we*) and *what* the speaker (de)emphasises about Us and Them.

In addition to transitivity analysis of the process types associated with *we* and *them*, the analysis of nominalisation is revealing concerning the characteristics of 'change' and what they mean in terms of the Us vs. Them

schema. Table 3 sums the number of occurrences of the word ‘change’ in the sixteen speeches:

	S 1	S 2	S 3	S 4	S 5	S 6	S 7	S 8	S 9	S 10	S 11	S 12	S 13	S 14	S 15	S 16	Line total
Total use of ‘change’	23	6	19	27	6	10	30	3	15	17	29	7	53	3	10	17	275
‘change’ used as a noun	21	5	17	15	6	10	26	2	14	9	26	2	51	1	9	17	231

**Table 3:** Use and distribution of ‘change’

With 275 occurrences, the word ‘change’ ranks eighth on the scale of word frequency in the corpus. In S 13 ‘change’ is the second most used word after *you* and in S 11 and S 16 ‘change’ ranks fourth in a list headed by *we*. In terms of quantity, the presence of ‘change’ in each of the sixteen speeches and its ranking as the third most used content word is one proof that its use is meaningful as one of the discourse structures used in the construction of agency.

The second reason behind the choice of the analysis of the nominalisation construction ‘change’ is the concept of *change* in the CP’s rhetoric. Defining Conservatism, O’Hara (2005, 2007) advances the ‘change principle’ as the first tenet of Conservatism. O’Hara writes about the Conservatives’ behaviour towards the change principle, how they define it, how they abide by it and what their attitudes toward *change(s)* are. In sum, O’Hara sheds light on those conservative politicians who prefer *change* and those who oppose it (2007: 124). The first group wants to preserve the status quo at all costs and the second is concerned with the challenges of a *change* initiated by the CP or by the other parties.

In another analysis of the concept of *change* in BCP’s ideology and development of thought, Chilton and Schäffner (2011) focus on the concept of *change* in the BCP’s rhetoric. They conclude that, in general, the traditional conservative ideology ‘gravitates around the concept of *change*’ (Chilton and Schäffner 1997: 225). They also distinguish between those who oppose ‘planned attempts to alter the status quo and impose preconceived models’ (Chilton and Schäffner 1997: 225) and other forms of Conservatism which ‘have not opposed certain forms of change and have represented themselves as dynamic’ (ibid). Thus, in addition to the philosophical and ideological ‘dilemma’, the Conservatives have a ‘discourse problem’ (Chilton and Schäffner 1997: 225) to ‘reconcile the opposites of change and tradition, movement and stability’ (ibid).

The analysis of how the use of the nominalisation change affects agency framing is related to the analysis of personal pronouns and transitivity. One of the patterns noticed in personal pronouns and transitivity analysis is that when ‘change’ is used it is associated with *we*:

**E12: S 5:** [Carrier:] We [Process:relational:attributive:] ‘ve got [Attribute:] big problems in this country, || and [Actor:] we need [Process:material:] to make

[Goal:] big changes to solve them - || and that's why [Sayer:] we  
 [Process:verbal:] 're saying [Verbiage:] to people who have never voted  
 Conservative before: || [Token:] 'We [Process:relational:identifying:] are not  
 [Value:] the same old Conservative Party. [Actor:] We have [Process:material:]  
 changed. [Token:] We [Process:relational:identifying:] are [Value:] a party for  
 the mainstream majority in our country, || and [Senser:] we  
 [Process:mental:cognitive:] need [Phenomenon:] your help to stop five more  
 years of Gordon Brown and to make the changes we need to get the country  
 back on its feet.'

The *change* that the speaker refers to has the following characteristics. First, *change* is not something absurd and unknown, it is rather well defined. The speaker details types of *change*. These examples show that *change* touches upon the political, economic and social sides:

**E13: S 1:** ECONOMIC CHANGE, SOCIAL CHANGE, POLITICAL CHANGE

**E14: S 3:** CONSERVATIVE CHANGE, CULTURE CHANGE

**E15: S 6:** We should instead search for new and creative ways to achieve social change.

**E16: S 10:** PARTY CHANGE

E13, E14, E15 and E16 show that there is something called 'Conservative change' and this *change* covers economic, political and social issues as well as the CP itself. The speaker explains that what happens to the CP reflects what happens to the UK to favour an understanding that *change* is not imposed by the CP on the country.

In addition to presenting *change* as being well defined and stemming from people themselves, the speaker asserts that it is feasible:

**E17: S 7:** And this change that we talk about, it's not some airy fairy concept, it's not undefined, it is based on some very clear and conservative values.

The change we need in our society, it's not some sort of vague change, it's based on a very clear principle, a very clear value of responsibility.

That's the change we've got to bring in this party, that's the value that we aspire to.

The second characteristic of *change* is that its condition of happening is tied to *our* actions. With reference to the global context of the speeches, *change* is put at stake and explicitly linked to the outcome of May 6, 2010 elections as the example E18 illustrates:

**E18: S 11:** It has taken off, it has become more exciting, and I welcome that, because the British people are crying out for change, and they are going to make us work hard to deliver that change, but in the end, it is only a refreshed and revived Conservative Party and a decisive Conservative victory that can bring the change our country needs.

In example E18 from S11, the speaker makes it clear that those responsible for *change* are those who need it; 'the British people'. Once again, the speaker focuses on the participants' role. People are linked with 'vote' and are held responsible for *change* if they vote for others than the CP.

The third characteristic of *change* is that like 'choice' (as referred to in the transitivity analysis) it is another term for difference. In fact, among the differences between the CP and the other political parties (and the LP in

particular) the speaker foregrounds one-to-one differences such as in these examples:

**E19: S 4:** A choice between change to get the country back on its feet and five more years of Gordon Brown

**E20: S 7:** It is a choice between five more years of Gordon Brown or change with the Conservative Party that has got the energy, that has got the leadership, that has got the values to really get this country going.

**E21: S 9:** This election is about big choices.  
Five more years of Gordon Brown.  
Or change with the Conservatives.

The fourth characteristic of *change* then is that there is a *change* for the better and a *change* for the worse. We is associated with positive *change* while, as the analysis of personal pronouns and transitivity showed, They do not stand behind positive ideas and actions including *change*. The examples E22, E23 and E24 show that this pattern of representation is not linked to the election campaign speeches, it is rather a strategy also used in early 2010 speeches:

**E22: S 4:** I promise you: if we achieve even half of our ambitions, it will be the biggest change in how the country is run for more than a generation.

**E23: S 13:** Now is that a change for the better?  
Of course not, it's a change for the worse.

**E24: S 15:** A vote for the Liberal Democrats is not a vote for the change for the better it is a vote for change<sup>2</sup> for the worse.

The positive image David Cameron draws of the CP's *change* reveals his awareness of those (Conservatives and others) who 'fear' *change* and radical *change* in particular. Therefore, he turns the radical into something positive and replies to those who see the CP as timid and fearful of *change*:

E25: S 4: RADICAL

Because after thirteen years of a Labour government that has spent too much, centralised too much, bureaucratised too much, legislated too much, regulated too much, bossed everyone around too much, a Labour government that has done too much of everything except the one thing they were supposed to do which was bring this country economic efficiency combined with social justice, after thirteen years of all that, turning things around will require radical change from what has gone before.

To sum up, the use of nominalisation foregrounds *change* as an unavoidable process and outcome. For David Cameron, *change* is inevitable with reference to how the Labour Government is leading the UK. Accordingly, *change* is a force toward the future and it cannot be resisted even by the CP. Those who resist and refuse *change* are categorised on the same group as Gordon Brown depicted in E26 as 'the roadblock to reform' because of his opposition to *change*:

**E26: S 3:** That's why when we say that we are the reformers and Gordon Brown is the roadblock to reform, it is a claim based not just on his record of opposition to change and our consistent calls for change, not just on his weak leadership and our strong leadership, but on character, values and philosophy: the things that really matter in politics.

Hence, We are those who favour *change* and Them are those who oppose it. The LP and the LDP are campaigning for a *change* for the worst whereas the CP is campaigning for a *change* for the better. Keeping with the image that Us

is one united and homogeneous group, what is said of the CP also applies to the people since both share the same experience of the LP's governing years. Accordingly, We are not only participants in shaping *change* but are also those who claim the credit for it. The speaker emphasises that the outcome of *change* for the country would be positive as it is for the CP. Because the need for *change* and how it would be carried out emanates from *inside Us*, *change* is presented as a shared project and responsibility i.e. a collective agency.

## 4.2 Social representations

The knowledge the speaker presents to his audience is of two types. The first is knowledge they do not have due to the Government's control of access to information. The second is knowledge about what the CP has become. As seen in the analysis of relational clauses and the nominalisation construction *change*, the speaker asserts that something happened inside the CP; something he calls 'change'. *Change* also touches upon the ideological foundations of the CP. Examples E26 and E27 show the speaker's concern to foreground the positive image of the CP:

**E27: S 5:** 'We are not the same old Conservative Party. We have changed. We are a party for the mainstream majority in our country, and we need your help to stop five more years of Gordon Brown and to make the changes we need to get the country back on its feet.'

**E28: S 10:** This manifesto brings together all the work we have done over the past five years as we have changed into a modern, progressive Conservative Party.

Other than knowledge about the CP in David Cameron's speeches which make up the corpus of this study, there is also knowledge about the other political parties. Examples of the knowledge that people have about the LP is common knowledge about what the Labour Government has done throughout thirteen years, knowledge such as:

**E29: S 9:** For the past thirteen years we've had a government that has increased the power, role and size of the state.

**E30: S 10:** We've had thirteen years of it.

Thirteen years of them going on television and never talking about what's actually happened...

... or what real people have actually done.

All they talk about is what they, the government, have done.

Such knowledge about the Labour Government occurs in the Labour failure section and leads to an understanding that there is not much good in what the Labour Government has done in thirteen years.

Introducing objective knowledge about the Labour Government is significant for the speaker as he associates his opinion concerning its policies with this knowledge. Sections of the corpus entitled 'GORDON BROWN' (S 3), 'SORTING OUT LABOUR'S MESS' (S 4) and 'LABOUR FAILURE' (S 5, S 9) reflect the speaker's constant pattern of positive self-presentation through negative other-presentation.

This strategy is also clear in Cameron's positive presentation of himself and the CP by presenting their good qualities in relation to economic, social and political issues. The use of mental process 'need' shows Cameron's knowledge

of the challenges facing the economy (recession, the economic deficit, the taxation system, unemployment...):

**E31: S 1:** Britain needs responsible economic policies that deal with our debts, so we have stability to create jobs and keep mortgage rates and taxes lower.

If we win this year's election Britain will be under new economic management.

The speaker states knowledge that backs his argument in order to advance a plan for dealing with social problems (seen in the use of verbal processes: *did talk, have been addressing, say*). Knowledge about, for example, schools, families, crime, violence and poverty justifies Cameron's speaking of 'the broken society':

**E32: S 7:** And some people say to me that I'm wrong to talk about the broken society, but I say when you've got the highest rate of family breakdown in Europe, when you've got one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy, when there are a million violent crimes committed every year, when there are 100 knife crimes committed every day, when a seven years old child starves to death in Birmingham, our second biggest city, and no one does anything about it, which bit of broken society don't these people understand?

What Cameron judges positive in the big society plan, is that it is not only a social policy, but also a policy that informs on his economic and political ideology. The big society plan is presented as the holistic plan that 'runs consistently through our whole policy programme - our plans to reform the public service, mend our broken society, and rebuild trust in politics' (S 9).

In terms of the ideological square, David Cameron's positive self-presentation as a man who understands what people need downgrades his opponent's status as a PM. In fact, Gordon Brown is presented as an inexperienced man. One example of such presentation is how he dealt with the economy. Despite his ten years occupation as the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Brown is judged as unable to sustain the same economic boom and to deal with economic recession and the national debt crisis among other economic issues such as the taxation system and unemployment:

**E33: S 1:** We can't go on with the same irresponsible economic policies that gave us the biggest boom, the biggest bust.....and now threatens our recovery with higher debts, higher instability, higher taxes, higher interest rates and higher unemployment.

The analysis of the 'we can't go on...' pattern of mental processes has shown that We have a negative attitude towards the Labour government and behind it the LP's policies. For Cameron, what is wrong in the LP's policies is proof that their causes go back to the roots of the LP's ideology. Explicitly expressing his attitude towards Labours' policies, David Cameron asserts (using 'is') that Labours' spin style and association with scandals presents them as a threat to democracy:

**E34: S 3:** How Gordon Brown can claim to be a reformer with a straight face, I just don't know. He can't reform the institution because he is the institution. The character of his Government – secretive, power-hoarding, controlling – is his character. Just as he's the roadblock to public service reform, he's the roadblock to political reform. We cannot have five more years of his old politics. For the health of our democracy it is now essential that this shameless defender of the old elite goes as soon as possible.



Cameron depicts Brown as being ambiguous regarding many issues in the same way as the other political parties that are associated with the LP: the LDP and the Scottish National Party. Alex Salmond is depicted as a politician working not for the whole of the UK but for personal ends and a separatist agenda:

**E35: S 4:** And here's a quick word for the man who thinks this election is all about him. No, I'm not talking about Gordon Brown. I'm talking about someone you're going to see all over the TV and radio over the next few months, plugging himself at every opportunity.  
So let me say this to Alex Salmond: This election that's coming - it will be a British general election. It's about the future this United Kingdom must build together. It's not about you and your separatist agenda.

Likewise, Nick Clegg is presented as having a record of backing the Labour Government and not people. Besides having little to say, Clegg is presented as a weak and confused leader reflecting a confused and 'a nauseating aspiration':

**E36: S 13:** 'Think about the need to reform our immigration system where it's only the Conservatives who are saying we need to have a cap on immigration, we need to grip this problem. In a hung Parliament you could have a situation where you've got a Labour Government that has failed to do this for thirteen years backed up by Liberal Democrats saying it's time for an amnesty on illegal immigration that would make the system even worse. That's not change for the better that is change for the worse.'

The examples show that the way Them are presented is not specific for the election campaign speeches and does not only focus on Their (and the Government in particular) responsibility for what goes wrong. Cameron's presentation of Us vs. Them is carried out through emphasising a one-to-one ideological difference between Us and Them. The following examples show some of the differences between, on the first side, 'what we believe' and on the other what Gordon Brown 'believes':

<b>E37: S 1:</b> We are determined to forge a new direction.	A decade of big government and blunt, bureaucratic control has undermined responsibility and made our social problems worse, not better.
<b>E38: S 3:</b> This is what we believe	It's not what Gordon Brown believes
<b>E39: S3:</b> we believe in social responsibility	He believes in state control
<b>E40: S3:</b> we are a new generation at ease with openness and trust	He represents the dying days of secrecy and suspicion

First, what can be deduced from such examples is that the ideological differences are at the economic, social and political level. Second, the differences are between Us and Gordon Brown. The relational clauses present a positive image of Us (Conservatives) and *our* ideology while the material and mental clauses point to the Labours' style: bureaucracy. Accordingly, Cameron defines the LP's ideology as based on 'state control' to run the economy, to deal with social problems and to keep people's trust on politics. Through

enumerating the phenomena which ‘we [people] can’t go on’ living with, Cameron shows people’s rejection of the LP’s policies and government style:

**E41: S 1:** We can’t go on with the same irresponsible economic policies that gave us the biggest boom, the biggest bust.....and now threatens our recovery with higher debts, higher instability, higher taxes, higher interest rates and higher unemployment.

We can’t go on with an old-fashioned left-wing class war on aspiration from a government that has seen the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

## **5. Conclusion**

In this study, the analysis of how agency is framed in the corpus revealed that Us and Them are identified according to their beliefs. For example, in the analysis of the nominalisation construction change, Us are those who believe in *change* and Them are those who reject it. The analysis of Our and Their ideologies shows that Us includes not only the Conservatives but also all British citizens regardless of their political affiliations. Such definition of Us favours an understanding that the Conservatives’ ideology can become the nation’s. The speaker’s strategy of foregrounding applies to SR. Since Cameron speaks about the CP it seems obvious that he does not mention his or the party’s negative image and does so for the Others. But, including negative attitudes about Us serves Cameron to show a ‘normal’ image of himself and the CP since like people they are judged positively and negatively. Besides, such use is be an occasion to ‘correct’ such negative attitudes.

The analysis of Our and Their economic, social and political ideology has also revealed the speaker’s concern with the ideology that dominates the British political scene. The speaker presents the Conservative way as the ideology taking the place of the Third Way. In fact, the presence of New Labour in the Labour failure section (S 9) shows that it is the ideology that Cameron attacks. The New Labour Cameron refers to is an ideology coming to an end since it can no longer sustain economic growth, provide social equality and present the Labour Government as the government of the people. Hence, Our conclusion is that the Third Way which started with Tony Blair in 1997 is coming to an end with Gordon Brown.

At the level of methodology, SFL is used in the analysis of the targeted discourse structures along with the SC approach. Such association explores CDA’s methodological openness. The analysis of the structures Cameron uses to assume, assign or evade responsibility unveils the reasons standing behind making such choices. Within the SC approach, the analysis of ‘choice’, which is a basic idea in SFL, is valuable in unrevealing the manner in which power is exercised through discourse.

## **Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> This article does not detail the similarities and differences between the SC approach and SFL. However, they were taken into account in carrying this research. Concerning the notion of context, it is Van Dijk’s definition of context which is followed (Van Dijk 2008). Context is approached in its use not only in analysing the discourse structures, but also in the interpretations of the quantitative analysis.

- 2 Framing is a term used in this study in the sense of the way agency is construed in the analysed corpus since agency is analysed as a structure containing SR.
- 3 In this study, the analysis of transitivity patterns as one of the discourse structures framing agency, focuses on the transitive interpretation and its related concepts. Hence, the definition of the agent and agency followed in this study is different from agency as defined within the AGENCY system (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 173). The agent is the doer of the action that affects the other participants. It is called Actor in material clauses, Senser in mental clauses or any other participant functions in the transitivity mode.

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## Appendix A

Classification of personal pronouns and pronominals used in the corpus

	We	us	our	ours	I	me	my	mine	they	them	Their	theirs	you (S)	you (O)	your	yours
<b>S 1</b>	72	4	25	0	7	0	2	0	5	0	6	0	3	4	2	0
<b>S 2</b>	38	1	19	0	6	4	2	0	8	2	2	0	2	1	2	0
<b>S 3</b>	123	2	38	0	36	0	2	0	34	7	10	0	7	7	6	0
<b>S 4</b>	92	11	49	0	50	4	3	0	26	8	10	0	17	8	6	0
<b>S 5</b>	46	7	22	0	11	2	0	0	21	5	7	0	13	3	6	0
<b>S 6</b>	57	7	23	0	14	1	0	0	18	6	19	3	13	0	2	0
<b>S 7</b>	202	9	93	0	109	21	16	0	30	9	15	0	51	18	7	0
<b>S 8</b>	47	4	10	0	10	1	1	0	3	1	2	0	3	3	6	0
<b>S 9</b>	62	0	40	0	26	5	8	0	17	11	6	0	13	1	3	0
<b>S 10</b>	83	5	28	0	6	4	1	0	19	4	15	0	18	13	30	0
<b>S 11</b>	80	6	25	1	13	4	0	0	9	0	4	0	27	5	6	0
<b>S 12</b>	50	5	30	0	36	3	7	0	40	9	8	0	38	9	7	0
<b>S 13</b>	65	5	41	0	13	1	5	0	11	3	1	0	57	13	8	0
<b>S 14</b>	61	5	49	0	29	6	3	0	15	6	33	0	18	8	7	0
<b>S 15</b>	65	5	22	0	18	1	3	0	13	4	12	0	37	3	5	0
<b>S 16</b>	56	6	12	0	8	1	1	0	5	1	6	0	4	1	0	0
<b>Line Total</b>	1199	82	526	1	392	58	54	0	274	76	156	3	321	97	103	0