A Longstanding Duality: Discursive Construction of the EU vs the UK in the British Broadsheets' News Discourse of the Brexit Referendum

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union has always been tumultuous and problematic, and European integration has always been a controversial topic in the UK's contemporary politics. However, current research on the Brexit referendum's news discourse hardly addresses this topic directly. Therefore, this paper analyses the discursive construction of the UK versus the EU during the campaign coverage of the Brexit referendum in major British broadsheets. To do so, a corpus of four major British broadsheets along ideological lines (left-right) and Brexit stance (Leave-Remain) was analysed by applying a mixed method approach of Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies (Discursive News Values Analysis along with some Corpus Linguistic tools and techniques). The way news values were adopted in the campaign coverage of the British broadsheets shows a certain continuation of historical discourses around the relationship of the entities. The results show that news values during the campaign coverage were adopted by the pro-leave outlets to construct a highly negative and elite-associated image of the EU in contrast to the UK, while the pro-remain broadsheets mostly focused on a limited, practical and economic argument in favour of the EU, maintaining and highlighting the importance of UK independence.

KEYWORDS: Brexit; European Integration Project; CADS; Corpus Linguistics; News Values; DNVA.

1. INTRODUCTION

> "This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,
> This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
> This other Eden, demi-paradise,
> This fortress built by Nature for herself
> Against infection and the hand of war,

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> This happy breed of men, this little world,
> This precious stone set in the silver sea,
> Which serves it in the office of a wall,
> Or as a moat defensive to a house,
> Against the envy of less happier lands,
> This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England."
> (William Shakespeare, *The Life and Death of Richard the Second, Act 2, Scene 1*)

The relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union has always been tumultuous and problematic. Since the integration project's inception in post-World War II Europe, the political scene of the UK has been a battleground of contradictory world views regarding Europe. That is probably why a label frequently used to describe the UK's position in relation to Europe is 'Reluctant European' (Jones, 2017: 1). The Brexit referendum was indeed only the tip of the iceberg of the longstanding contradictory political and cultural divisions that already existed in the UK. The referendum triggered two campaigns to remain in or leave the EU. As Riedel (2018: 103) puts it, the Brexit referendum was just the embodiment of a "long-lasting war between the competing visions of the UK's relations with the wider world, in this case, Europe".

Pro-European and Euro-sceptic camps have always been present in the UK's political scene (Schweiger, 2006: 3). They, however, showed some distinction from their European counterparts in the rest of the continent. Above all, Britain has always seen itself as more than just another European country (Schweiger, 2006: 14). The UK is said to have "the character of an island nation - independent, forthright, passionate in defence of sovereignty", as David Cameron put it in his famous Bloomberg Speech (Cameron, 2013). This geographic separation has always given British people a sense of being different and instilled into them the self-perception and belief, maybe subconsciously, that they are an exceptional nation (Schweiger, 2006: 14). Therefore, Euroscepticism in the UK has always been a potent political force, albeit dormant sometimes.

On the other hand, pro-European sentiments have always been tenuous (Jones, 2017). A full-blown European movement has been almost non-existent in the UK political scene. The UK never showed an overly enthusiastic European ideology with a deep belief in the European integration process. Indeed, pro-European political figures and forces have always put forward a rather pragmatic argument for the European project, based on economic calculations and political manoeuvres. Both major European referendums (1975 and 2016) were heavily driven by tactical and electoral decisions and manoeuvres (Jones, 2017, p. 16) rather than a strong pro-European agenda. The pro-European campaigns of both referenda were not wholeheartedly into the entire European integration project, and their support was more practical than ideological (Baker & Schnapper, 2015; Jones, 2017; Young, 1993).

The debates around the European integration projects have always been a controversial topic in the UK's contemporary politics. The Brexit referendum was indeed only the tip of the iceberg of the longstanding contradictory political and cultural divides already existing in the UK. As Riedel (2018) puts it, the Brexit referendum was just the embodiment of a "long-lasting war between the competing visions of the UK's relations with the wider world, in this case, Europe" (p. 103). The pro-European discourse historically revolved around the economic benefits of joining a European initiative (Chochia et al., 2018, p. 61; Young, 1993, pp. 1-2), while there has always been a wave of opposition arguing for maintaining Britain's economic independence (Young, 1993, pp. 7-12) in addition to identity and cultural wariness, which has been interestingly shared almost equally by the Conservative and Labour parties due to international and domestic reasons (Baker & Schnapper, 2015, pp. 44-45).

Against this backdrop, the most recent public debate ignited by the 2016 referendum and its press coverage deserves further attention, considering its socio-political context. First of all, the atmosphere surrounding the referendum campaigns was historically noteworthy. The Remain camp was formed by pro-European conservatives such as David Cameron, then Prime Minister, and George Osborne, former Chancellor of the Exchequer; businessmen such as Stuart Rose; and Labour Europhile figures such as Will Straw. The pro-European wings of both major parties came together in defence of remaining in the EU. The conservative party establishment (under Cameron's leadership) officially backed the Remain campaign (although Cameron gave his cabinet a free hand on choosing their side). On the left, Labour In for Britain, founded by former Home Secretary and Labour MP Alan Johnson, campaigned for a Remain vote. Jeremy Corbyn, the newly elected Labour leader, also campaigned for a Remain vote despite his long-held Euro-sceptic views. His leadership, however, was heavily criticised by the pro-Remain wing of his party, who accused him of campaigning half-heartedly and being a "reluctant remainer" who had "a long history of opposition to the EU" (Tominey, 2018); a criticism that finally led to a no-confidence vote for his leadership after the referendum. On the other hand, the Leave campaign made some strange bedfellows. Apart from controversial lifelong right-wing Euro-sceptics such as Nigel Farage, the Leave campaign, under the official name of Vote Leave, brought together conservative Euro-sceptics such as Michael Gove and Boris Johnson, and Labour anti-EU figures such as Gisela Stuart (then La-bour MP) and Graham Stringer (former MP and the leader of Manchester City Council), along with more controversial left-wing Euro-sceptics such as George Galloway. This new political alignment went further than the traditional left-right political division and led to a heated public debate over Europe that was unprecedented in British politics. In addition, for the first time, the media was heavily engaged in the discussion, and many details of the UK-EU relationship were covered extensively.

Considering this context, this paper aims to analyse the discursive construction of the UK versus the EU during the campaign coverage of the Brexit referendum in major British

broadsheets. In the socio-political context of such a critical debate, there are specifically two socio-political factors that should be taken into account: first of all, although the traditional left-right ideological divide is always a relevant factor, in the case of the UK, the debates around Europe and the European project cut through such traditional lines. Any study on these topics should include factors that go beyond traditional political affiliations. Secondly, in this regard, ideological factors such as populism and Euroscepticism would have more relevance in making sense of the discourse surrounding the Brexit referendum. Therefore, a study geared toward the news discourse of the Brexit referendum considering these two factors seems to be a relevant contribution to the existing literature.

In view of above-mentioned, the main objective of this paper is to analyse the ideological differences in the discursive construction of the EU and the UK in British quality press coverage of the referendum campaign. The paper specifically tries to answer the questions: "How were news values adopted during the Brexit referendum by the UK's main broadsheets in the discursive construction of the EU and UK?", and "How does the said discursive construction differ along ideological lines (left-right) and political stance toward Brexit (leave-remain)?". Following the analysis and revision of the historical context, it is hypothesised that a certain degree of historical continuity should be observed in this regard, with the right-wing outlets promoting a Euro-sceptic discourse, while the left-wing and pro-European outlets advocating a tenuous pro-European case in their coverage.

The study specifically adopts a comparative approach and focuses on comparing the differences and similarities along political affiliations (left-right) and ideological stances towards Brexit (Leave-Remain). In the following sections, first, we will see a literature review of the studies on the news discourse of Brexit to situate this research within the state-of-the-art. Then, in the methodology section, the framework and procedures adopted for data collection, corpus completion and cleaning, and data analysis are presented in detail. Finally, the details of the quantitative and qualitative news values analysis are presented in the results and discussion sections to answer the main questions of the study. The paper ends with some concluding remarks, situating the findings in the historical context of the topic.

2. THE NEWS DISCOURSE OF BREXIT

Media discourse in general refers to interactions that occur through a broadcast platform, whether spoken or written, in which communication is oriented to a non-present reader, listener or viewer (O'Keeffe, 2011: 441). Mediated content is produced under a certain cultural condition and then received and interpreted, drawing on cultural context and shared knowledge. In this regard, discourse, is defined as "…a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements, and so on that in some way together produce a particular vision of events (…) surrounding any one object, event, person, etc., there may be a

variety of different discourses, each with a different story to tell about the world, a different way of representing the world" (Burr, 1995: 48). Indeed, discourse involves the process of interaction, a social practice as noted by Fairclough (1995). It is deemed a cultural activity, and the text is the final product of it. Therefore, the study of discourse is the study of the text in its social context, the interaction between different social actors, journalists, and media outlets on the one hand, and the readers and the context in which a text is embedded, on the other (Talbot, 2007: 9-10). This leads to a broader definition of (traditional) media discourse as a more all-encompassing term that is used to refer to a "totality of how reality is represented in broadcast and printed media from television to newspaper" (O'Keeffe, 2006: 1), and, nowadays, also in digital formats.

In the specific case of journalism and linguistics, the terms news discourse, or the discourse of the press, are often used instead of and inter-changeably with media discourse (cf. Bednarek & Caple, 2012). This is mainly because news discourse and discourses of the press are more specific, while media discourse deals with a wide range of discourses containing many genres and diverse sources and styles, such as talk shows and political interviews (O'keeffe, 2006). This broad range of discourses and genres sometimes require their own models of investigation.

Regarding the subject matter of this paper, news discourse of the Brexit referendum has been studied from a variety of approaches and techniques within discourse analysis, focusing on different timelines and central themes. A major distinction that should be made in this regard is that the British press tends to receive much less attention in these studies compared to the foreign press (cf. Ridge-Newman, 2018). Although there are already some studies addressing the British press (Deacon et al., 2016; Levy et al., 2016; Moore & Ramsay, 2017) there is still much left to be done in this regard. This mostly due to the fact that most of these studies adopt a content analysis approach, without a critical reading or contextualisation of the debates in the broader sociopolitical discourse mentioned in the introduction section of this paper.

The studies in literature focus on a number of themes, frames, discourse patterns, and strategies. It seems that the news discourse of the Brexit referendum revolved around certain essential topics. In a discourse historical analysis of the UK press during the Brexit campaign, Maccaferri (2019: 396-397) finds four central interdiscursive topoi in this regard. Her study concludes that the topoi of immigration, economy, EU bureaucracy, and borders are present in the Brexit referendum. Maccaferri's study is a proper starting point for looking at the structure of the press discourse on Brexit as it reveals the general map of interdiscursivity at play. More importantly, it suggests that there is no structural difference between the two camps, namely, Leave and Remain. For example, the simultaneous reference to the topoi of 'borders' and 'immigration' is similarly emphasised in both the Leave and Remain media (Maccaferri, 2019: 397), which goes far from the lexis and enters into the realm of topoi, as evidenced by (Maccaferri, 2019). However, some caution should be taken regarding this specific study as

well. First of all, the analysis is focused on the editorials' text as well and readers' comments sections simultaneously. This might bring about some confusion about the topics covered by the press itself, as opposed to themes that might have appeared in the readers' comments/reactions. Secondly, it does not distinguish tabloids from broadsheets, which have a considerably different readership and follow distinct journalistic styles and conventions. Finally, the analysis only includes a somewhat limited sample of the press, which may further hamper drawing far-reaching conclusions from the findings. All these considered, early results could be expanded, modified and tested vis-à-vis a larger corpus.

Other studies address two rampant frames that seemed to be used to shape the discourse in the press coverage of the referendum. Frames are the shared sense in which participants understand and interpret discourse (Ensink & Sauer, 2003). Frames can have different sources, but specifically related to the subject matter of this study are frames that are found in media discourse. The news media are a major reference for providing such frames for readers and, consequently, public discourse around certain topics (van Dijk, 1993; 2011). Framings related to 'Project Fear', anxiety and uncertainty (cf. Bennett, 2019; Fonn, 2018; Higgins et al., 2018; Krzyżanowski, 2019; León-Solís et al., 2018; Martin & Binet, 2018; McDonald, 2017; Moore & Ramsay, 2017; Samuel-Azran & Galily, 2018; Way, 2018), and populism and Euroscepticism (Alkhammash, 2020; Breeze, 2018; Cere, 2018; Guerra, 2017; Katsambekis & Souvlis, 2018; León-Solís et al., 2018; Martin & Binet 2018; Ruzza & Pejovic, 2019; cf. Schmidt 2017) have already been studied extensively in the literature. However, most of these studies are not on the British press, and therefore, the evidence from the British press is still scant compared to the number of studies carried out on foreign press. In addition, studies on the news discourse of the Brexit referendum tend to address specific topics of interest or prevalence in the discourse, such as leaders and elite figures (Katsambekis & Souvlis, 2018; Kelsey, 2017; Martin & Binet, 2018; Müller, 2018; Simões-Ferreira, 2018; Waddell, 2018), immigration, racism, and xenophobia (Cape, 2017; Fonn. 2018; Katsambekis & Souvlis 2018; León-Solís et al., 2018; Maccaferri, 2019; Moore & Ramsay, 201; Virdee & McGeever 2018; Share, 2018) and economy (Cere, 2018; León-Solís et al., 2018; Martin & Binet, 2018; Samuel-Azran & Galily, 2018; Simões-Ferreira, 2018; Waddell, 2018; Whyman & Petrescu, 2017), while topics and representations regarding the profound ideological confrontation with the broader idea of the European integration project seem to be neglected in the literature. Considering the importance of the clash between the EU and the UK as the fundamental bone of contention in this referendum, and bearing in mind the problematic socio-historical background of this relationship, it seems that no other studies indeed address these two entities and their reflection in the news discourse of the referendum, a gap that this paper aims to fill from a discourse analytic perspective.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The framework adopted for this study is a corpus-assisted approach to Discursive News Values Analysis (Bednarek & Caple 2014, 2017). Following a range of publications reviewing the existing literature on news values (Bednarek & Caple, 2014; Bednarek & Caple, 2017; Caple & Bednarek, 2013; Caple & Bednarek, 2016), Bednarek and Caple (2014; 2017) formulated their approach to news values as "discursively constructed". In their comprehensive research on news values over the past years, these authors have critically appraised extant research in the field and tried to address some considerations in their model of Discourse of News Values Analysis (DNVA). Bednarek and Caple (2017) provide, instead, a comprehensive conceptualisation of different dimensions of news values as material, cognitive, social, and discursive (pp. 42-43). The material aspect is related to the material reality of the potential news event in a specific community. It deals with the question of what an event's potential news values are (p. 42). The cognitive dimension is defined in relation to the news workers and audience members. These individuals have a specific set of beliefs about news values and newsworthiness and define them based on their mental models and schemata. Therefore, the cognitive aspect deals with the beliefs news workers and/or audience members hold about news values. The social aspect of news values concerns the use of news values as selection criteria in journalistic routines and practices. It is related to the more practical question of how news workers apply news values as criteria in choosing what events to cover and publish, and how to produce them as news. Finally, news values have a discursive aspect that had never been mentioned in this sense before Bednarek and Caple (2014; 2017). News values are indeed communicated through discourse. This means that news values are constructed and reconstructed through discourse in the processes of pre-, during, and post-news production and in news products (p. 43). Following such a framework and focusing on the discursive aspect of news values, Bednarek and Caple (2017: 57-64) propose a comprehensive list of news values. The following table (Table 1) shows the nine news values that are constructed in discourse; whenever possible, examples in the original were replaced with examples from the corpus of the present study.

Table 1. The DNVA framework (adapted from Bednarek and Caple 2017, pp. 79-80).

News Value	Linguistic devices and examples
Consonance **([stereo]typical)**	References to stereotypical attributes or preconceptions; assessments of expectedness/ typicality (*typical, famed for*); similarity with past (*yet another, once again*); explicit references to general knowledge/ traditions, and so on (*well- known*)
Eliteness (of high	Various status markers, including role labels (*the Queen, Ministers, Economists*); status- indicating adjectives (*EU commission top analyst*); recognised names (*David Cameron, Boris Johnson*); descriptions of

status or fame)	achievement/ fame (*were selling millions of records a year*); use by news actors/ sources of specialised/ technical terminology, high- status accent or sociolect (esp. in broadcast news)
Impact (having significant effects or consequences)	Assessments of significance (*momentous, historic, crucial*); representation of actual or non- actual significant/ relevant consequences, including abstract, material, or mental effects (*Brexit could mean for the economy, the economic impact of Brexit, the effect on immigration, the outlook after leaving the EU*)
Negativity/ Positivity (negative/ positive)	References to negative/ positive emotion and attitude (*Brexit jitters, fears of Brexit, a safer UK)* negative/ positive evaluative language (*shock, suffer, improve the economy*); negative/ positive lexis (terrorism, economic *damage, favour growth, brighter future*); descriptions of negative (*uncontrolled immigration*) or positive behaviour (*has broken his promise, unveiled a cabinet with an equal number of men and women*)
Personalisation (having a personal/ human face)	References to 'ordinary' people, their emotions, experiences (*domestic risk that our economy faces, people with disabilities and other ordinary people here and across Europe*); use by news actors/ sources of 'everyday' spoken language, accent, sociolect (*esp. in broadcast news*)
Proximity (geographically or culturally near)	Explicit references to place or nationality near the target community (*British people*); references to the nation/ community via deictics, generic place references, adjectives (*here, the nation's capital, home- grown*); inclusive first-person plural pronouns (*our nation's leaders*); use by news actors/ sources of (*geographical*) accent/ dialect (*esp. in broadcast news*); cultural references (*haka, prom*)
Superlativeness (of high intensity/ large scope)	Intensifiers (*severe, dramatically*); quantifiers (millions of jobs, *thousands, huge*); intensified lexis (*panic, smash*); metaphor and simile (*a tsunami of crime, like a World War II battle*); comparison (*the largest economy/market in the world*); repetition (*building after building flattened*); lexis of growth (*a growing list of, scaling up efforts*); *only/ just/ alone/ already* + time/ distance or related lexis (*only hours after*)
Timeliness (recent, ongoing, about to happen, new, current, seasonal)	Temporal references (*amid Brexit debates, After the UK leaves the EU*); present and present perfect (*it is testing our emergency resources*); implicit time references through lexis (*continues, ongoing, have begun to*); reference to current trends, seasonality, change/newness (*its 'word of the year' for 2015, keep their homes well heated this winter, change from GLBT to LGTB, after fresh revelations, for the first time, a new role as*)
Unexpectedness (unexpected)	Evaluations of unexpectedness (*different, astonishing, strange*), references to surprise/ expectations (*the investments will disappear overnight*); comparisons that indicate unusuality (*the first time since 1958*); references to unusual happenings (*British man survives 15- storey plummet*)

The above-mentioned news values and the linguistic devices used to construct them in the discourse offer an appropriate framework for an intercultural/comparative study (Fruttaldo & Venuti, 2017; Maruenda-Bataller, 2021; Venuti & Frut-taldo, 2019), and it is already shown to yield well to to be used in conjunction with corpus linguistics tools and techniques

(Javadinejad, 2024). The ways these news values are used to construct topics of cultural importance gives meaningful clues on the adopted discursive practices, and their underlying ideological and political implications (Bednarek & Caple, 2014; Potts et al., 2015; Bednarek & Caple, 2017). The way in which these news values were operationalized and applied to the present study is explained in the section 4.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Data

For this purpose, a corpus of four major British broadsheets (*The Guardian, The Independent, The Times, and The Daily Telegraph*) was collected using Nexis UK news databases. The search word used for data retrieval was Brexit. The results were down-sampled by limiting search timespan [22nd February to 23rd June 2016], news type [articles], and managing duplicities (i.e., articles repeated in digital and paper editions). The same procedure was used for each daily, resulting in 4 different sub-corpora.

Table 2. Corpus description.

Newspaper	Political Stance	Brexit Stance	Number of Articles	Corpus Tokens
The Guardian	Left	Remain	3584	4,549,153
The Independent	Left	Remain	2272	1,709,259
The Times	Right	Remain	1696	1,071,314
The Daily Telegraph	Right	Leave	1233	814,048
Total			**8785**	**7,329,726**

In the selection of newspapers, several factors were considered for maximum representativeness and accuracy. First of all, newspapers with the most readers and reach according to the readership average issue reach index (Figure 1) were selected. Tabloids and regional press were excluded to ensure the homogeneity of the corpus.

In choosing the broadsheets, two other vital factors were also considered: traditional political affiliation and Brexit stance[i]. Therefore, two prominent left-wing newspapers, The Guardian and The Independent, and two right-wing broadsheets, The Times and The Daily Telegraph, were selected for analysis. As for the Brexit stance, three of the above-mentioned newspapers officially backed a Remain vote, while The Daily Telegraph was the only one supporting a Leave vote. There was no left-wing broadsheet officially backing a Leave vote.

Official figures of the readership average index of all UK's print press are presented in Figure 1.
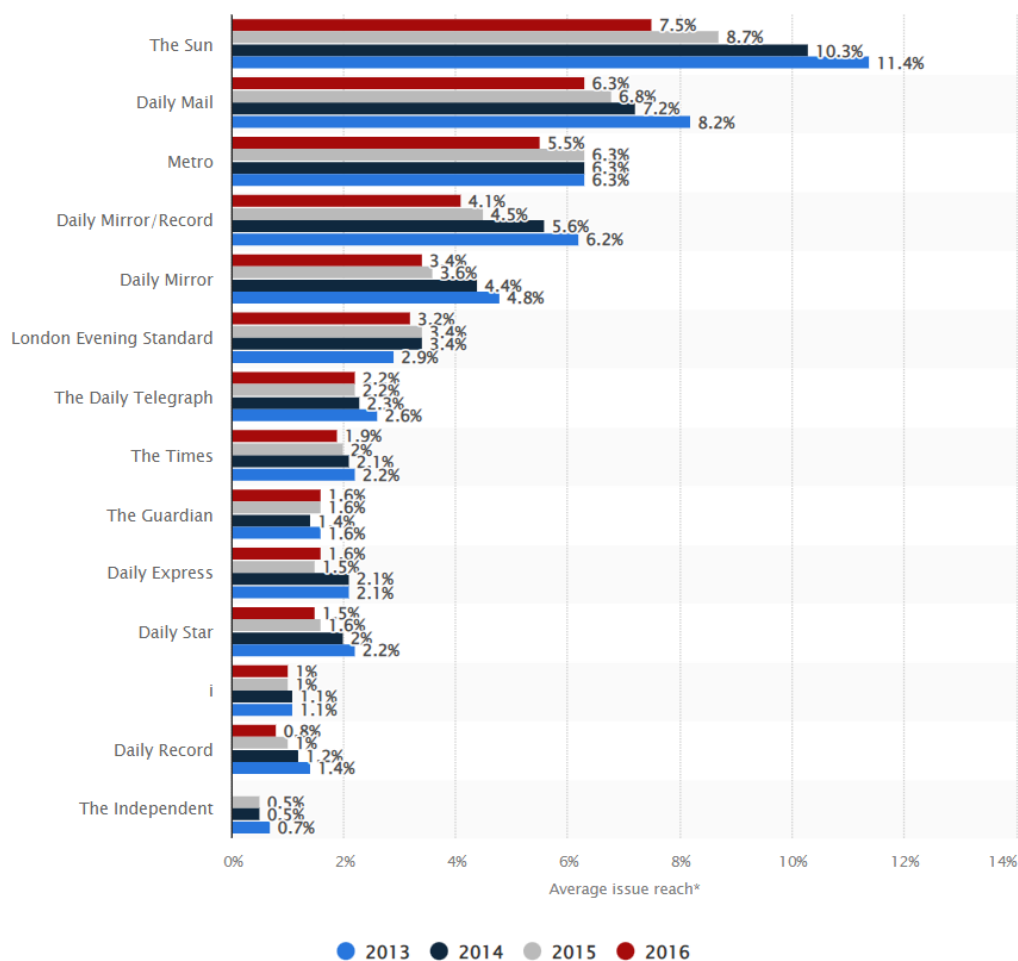

Figure 1. Newspapers ranked by readership average issue reach in the United Kingdom (UK) in 2013 and 2016. Retrieved from Statista webpage. Source: https://www.statista.com/statistics/290086/newspapers-ranked-by-penetration-in-the-united-kingdom/

The coding language R was used to clean and prepare the corpus to manage the textual data with more precision and minimise 'noise' in the corpus that could affect the results. Noise in this context refers to all the non-content text that might appear in corpus, especially when dealing with an automatically generated one (such as section numbers, retrieve dates, machine produced abbreviations etc.). R is mostly known for its statistical capacities and has gained popularity within corpus linguistics in recent years thanks to the introduction of a number of useful packages explicitly designed for this purpose (Gries, 2009). Therefore, after compiling the corpus using *Nexis UK*, the corpus was cleaned using the R software package (R Core Team, 2013) with the help of tm library (Feinerer & Hornik, 2018). Cleaning was performed to get rid of unwanted elements such as page numbers and other features related to the source of the data but not part of the news stories, as well as making textual data compatible with the R language. The code used for cleaning is shown in Figure 2.

```r
    library(clickR)

    # read daily telegraph corpus

# the name of each corpus file in daily telegraph folder
# create a list of the 3 corpus
filelist <-  list.files(path = 'C:/Users/Y3341612W/Desktop/CORPUS_ARASH/Nueva
carpeta/DAILY_TELEGRAPH',
                        pattern = '.*.TXT', full.names = TRUE)
datalist <-  lapply(filelist, function(x) readLines(x))

#Merge all corpus files in one.
Telegraph_raw <-  do.call('rbind', datalist)

    #Cleaning data

#split data by white space
Telegraph_splitted <-  unlist(strsplit(Telegraph_raw, ' '))

#Change to lower case
Telegraph_lower <-  tolower(Telegraph_splitted)

#remove white space
Telegraph_space <- Telegraph_lower[!Telegraph_lower %in% '']

#remove punctuation marks

    library(tm)

    Telegraph_clean <- removePunctuation(Telegraph_space)

# save as a txt file
write.table(Telegraph_clean, file = 'Telegraph_clean.txt', row.names = FALSE)

stoplist <-  scan('stopwords_en.txt', what='character', sep='\n')
stoplist[1] <- 'a'
stoplist

#excluding the stoplist words
Telegraph_cleanstoplist <- Telegraph_clean[!Telegraph_clean %in% stoplist]
```

Figure 2. R code for preparing and cleaning the data.

Once the corpus was cleaned, it was saved in a plain text format (TXT) so that it could also be imported into other corpus linguistics software. The code finally produced an R data frame for creating a plot (used in the following sections for cluster analysis). These clean files were later used for frequency and collocation analysis using other CL tools such as AntConc. There is no requirement to exclusively use Antconc in comparison to other freely available essential corpus analysis tools at this stage of analysis. As stated by Javadinejad (2024) in the original research elaborating and proposing the model, any other CL tool could be used as long as they are able to produce the same statistical metrics for these specific stages. The advantages of using Antconc, however, are that it is a widely used and reliable software, it is open source and freely available, and it counts with a considerable amount of community-driven technical support as an open-source application.

4.2. Procedure

The framework used for this study is CADS (Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies), with a combination of corpus linguistics tools for quantitative analysis and DNVA (Discursive News Values Analysis) for qualitative analysis. The procedure to analyse the data followed Baker et al.'s (2008) model of corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis, which is the one originally used for and adapted to DNVA by Bednarek and Caple (2014; 2017). In applying this procedure to the present study, the specific procedure recently developed and tested in a similar context, and with the specific aim of facilitating comparative studies (Javadinejad, 2024) was used, as follows:

First block: Determining the constituent search terms.

1. A complete frequency list for each data set was extracted using the R package frequency analysis and ggplot option. Then, the list of each sub-corpora was subjected to an R coding language cluster analysis package to determine the statistically meaningful frequent words of each data set.

2. The most frequent words in each data set related to the construction and representation of the two entities were selected for further analysis. The most frequent words in all four data sets were: EU, Europe, European, and UK, Britain, British.

Second block: Determining the distribution of news values across the four datasets.

3. The search terms resulting from step 2 were subjected to collocation analysis. All collocations in and above the threshold of MI=3 were considered statistically significant. An MI=3 means a statistical significance of 99%, which is the generally accepted reference point of significance in quantitative analysis (Brezina, 2018: 69). Following Maruenda-Bataller (2021), the statistically significant collocations were considered as potential linguistic pointers for news values usage in the discourse.

4. Concordance analysis was carried out, and resulting concordances were qualitatively analysed to code potential pointers into their corresponding news values based on their context and co-text. AntConc was used at this stage, as its collocation and concordance analysis tools are more convenient than the existing tools for the R package, while the R package offers no additional precision in this regard (any other concordance tools could be also used at this stage, including lancsbox).

5. Using R coding language, for each newspaper/sub-corpus, the distribution of existing news values was calculated and normalised (per 100) based on the total frequencies of all the pointers coded into a particular news value in the previous step. All the numbers were normalised and tested statistically to ensure the observed differences were statistically significant and, therefore, comparable with each other. Chi-square statistical measure was used for this purpose, as it is the most appropriate measure for the existing type of data (tables with different total numbers). Chi-square uses proportions in its formula and therefore normalises the difference in corpus size automatically. In addition, it is a non-parametric measure, which

means it does not require a normal distribution of data as a presupposition. The result of this block is a table/graph of the overall news value usage across the four data sets, which could be reliably compared (Figures 3 & 4. Tables 3 & 4).

Third block: Comparing News Values across data sets quantitatively and qualitatively.

6. The resulting table and graphs (Figures 3 & 4. Tables 3 & 4) were then considered to analyse differences in the distribution of news values for constructing the two entities across the four datasets.

7. A number of selected pieces of text were further analysed in depth.

5. RESULTS

5.1. Distribution of overall news values

The absolute and normalised frequencies of collocations, as well as statistical tests related to the EU, can be observed in Table 3.

Table 3. News values frequency (absolute and normal) and Chi-square p-value for the semantic field of the EU.

	Guardian		Independent		Times		Telegraph		P-Value
Negativity	182	22%	47	3,88%	12	12%	25	16%	< .001
Eliteness	122	15%	572	47,19%	76	75%	6	4%	< .001
Impact	79	9%	26	2,15%	0	0%	15	9%	< .001
Positivity	325	39%	286	23,60%	14	14%	39	24%	< .001
Proximity	0	0%	281	23,18%	0	0%	58	36%	< .001
Timeliness	131	16%		0,00%	0	0%	18	11%	< .001
Total Collocations	839	100%	1212	100%	102	100%	161	100%	< .001

With all the p-values above the statistically significant threshold (.001), Figure shows the graphic representation of the normalised frequencies:
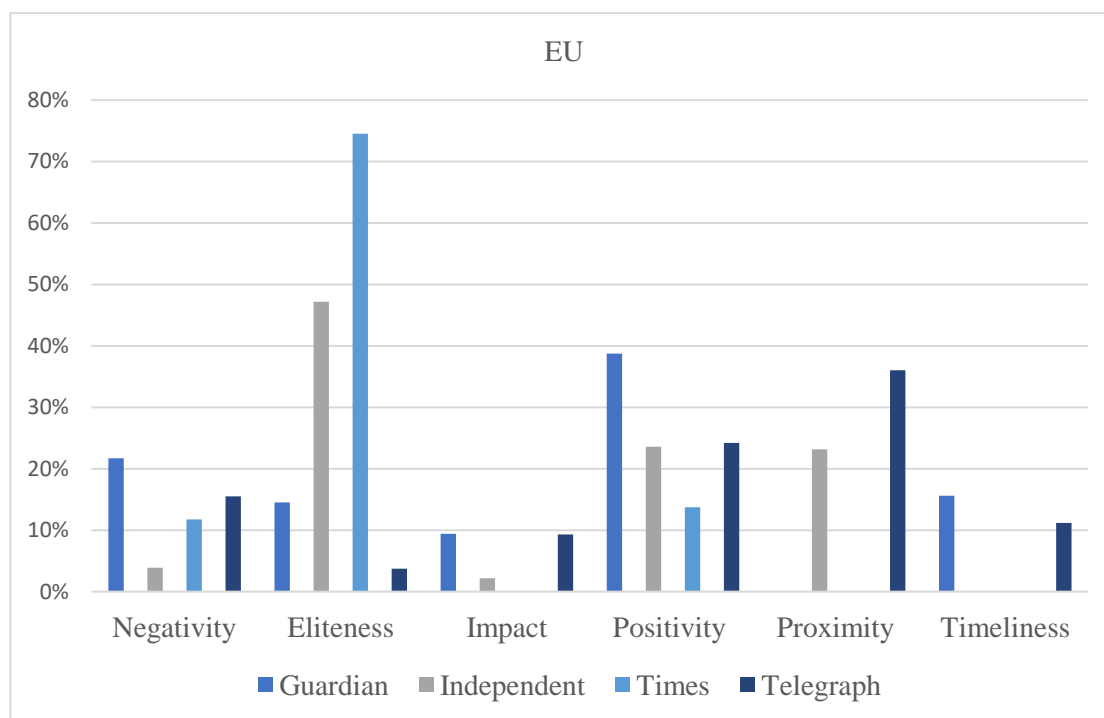

Figure 3. Normalised frequencies of news values for the semantic field of EU.

On the other hand, in Table 4, the absolute and normalised frequencies of news values, as well as statistical tests related to the UK, are presented.

Table 4. News values frequency (absolute and normal) and Chi-square p-value for the semantic field of the UK.

	Guardian		Independent		Times		Telegraph		P-Value
Frequency	Absolute	Normal	Absolute	Normal	Absolute	Normal	Absolute	Normal	< .001
Negativity	554	14%	190	4,72%	116	6%	27	18%	< .001
Eliteness	62	2%	180	4,47%	118	6%	7	5%	< .001
Impact	3239	81%	2989	74,24%	1299	67%	14	9%	< .001
Personalization	85	2%	162	4,02%	351	18%	7	5%	< .001
Positivity	74	2%	505	12,54%	54	3%	99	64%	< .001
Total Collocations	4014	100%	4026	100%	1938	100%	154	100%	< .001

The visual representation of the corresponding numbers is shown in Figure 3:
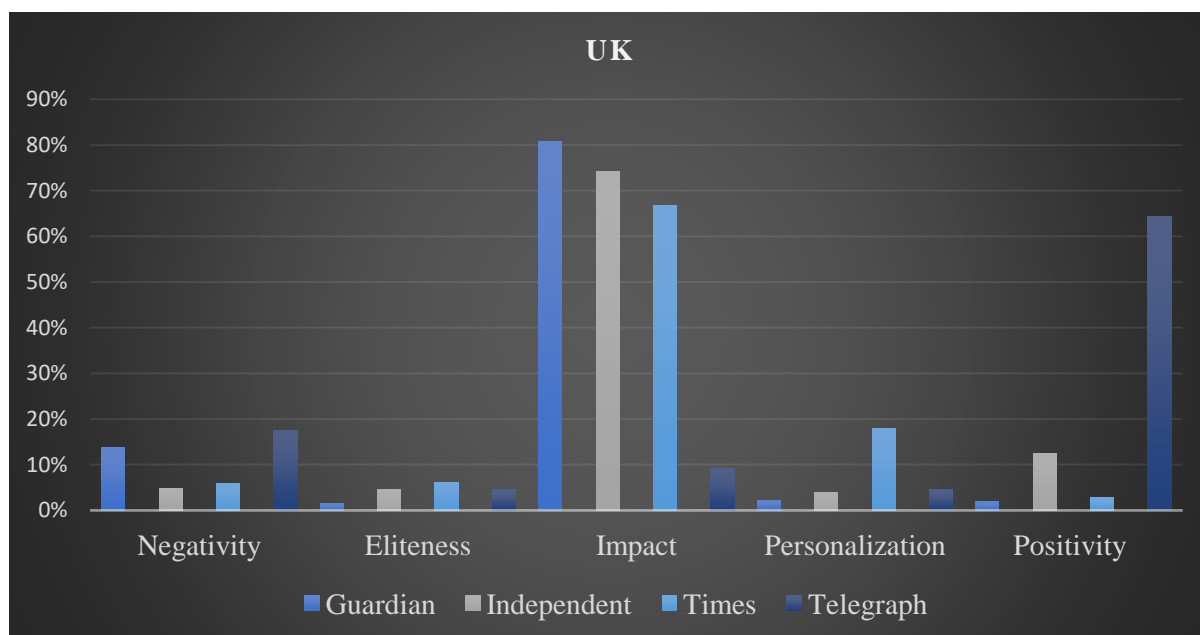

Figure 4. Normalised frequencies of news values for the semantic field of the UK.

As observed in the two graphs, there is a considerable difference in the use of Negativity in the discursive construction of the EU vs the UK. In all newspapers, except for *The Independent*, the EU is constructed much more frequently (almost twice as much) in association with Negativity in comparison with the UK. It is also important to note that the pro-Remain *Guardian* constructed the EU with the highest amount of Negativity, while in the case of the UK, the pro-Leave *Telegraph* uses the news value of Negativity the most frequently. In Eliteness, there is a considerable difference in all three pro-Remain newspapers. All three pro-Remain papers constructed the EU with considerable use of Eliteness (especially *The Independent* and *The Times*), while the normalised frequency of Eliteness in the case of the pro-Leave *Telegraph* is almost negligible in both cases.

There are also considerable differences regarding the news value of Impact. All the pro-Remain newspapers made great use of Impact to construct the UK, while such association with the EU is considerably lower. On the other hand, *The Telegraph* used Impact much less frequently in both cases. As regards Positivity, once again, the three pro-Remain newspapers constructed the UK in much less positive terms compared to the EU, while *The Telegraph* used Positivity for both the UK and the EU, but much more frequently in the construction of the UK. There are also a number of news values present in the construction of one area but not the other: there is a small amount of Personalisation in the case of the UK, while it was not used at all in the case of the EU. Additionally, *The Independent* and *The Telegraph* both used a considerable amount of Proximity for the EU, and *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph* used Timeliness to construct the EU.

5.2 Negativity

A stark difference can be observed between the way the news value of Negativity is used to construct the EU and the UK. The EU is constructed somewhat more negatively in all four datasets compared to the UK in quantitative terms (see Figure). However, delving into the linguistic pointers in each newspaper, it can be seen that in the case of *The Guardian, The Independent,* and *The Times*, Negativity is constructed in a much more salient way for the UK than for the EU. On the other hand, in the case of *The Telegraph*, the situation is reversed; Negativity regarding the UK is less frequent, while it was much more salient for the EU. The pointers for Negativity can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5. Linguistic pointers to Negativity in the UK and the EU.

Newspaper	Pointers to Negativity for the UK	Pointers to Negativity for the EU
The Guardian	Lost, damage, lose, shock, threat, uncertainty, risk, warn, warned, face warning	Lower, dangerous, war, lead
The Independent	Dislike, unemployment, debt, damage, affect, lose	Row, lower
The Times	Lose, risks, warning, warned, making Fears, lowpaid	weaker
The Telegraph	Hurt, chaos, blame, warning, war	Abandon, restrictions, war

In the case of *The Guardian*, most of the negativity associated with the UK follows a noteworthy pattern: the news values of Negativity and Impact typically co-occur (either indirectly or directly) to construe and enhance newsworthiness. For example, in some cases, negative predictions about the Brexit effect on the UK were made by quoting elite figures, hence utilising Eliteness at the same time:

> *Excerpt 1: The Guardian, 25th February 2016.*
> [Donald Tusk: EU deal is 'legally binding and irreversible' - as it happened:]
> "a vote to quit the European Union would **severely damage the UK's growth prospects**".

The excerpt shows how a number of news values are adopted to construct and enhance the Negativity intended by the news writers. The whole news story is clearly constructed using Eliteness. Apart from the direct quote in the headline, the entire text includes multiple mentions of and referrals to other elite figures, such as Cameron and Corbyn[i]. Negativity is

constructed using the word 'damage', but also enhanced and intensified by Superlativeness ('severely'). Although the subject of analysis in this example is the word 'UK' itself, it could be argued that in this case, and in all other cases related to the semantic field of the UK, words such as 'UK', 'Britain', and 'British' also construct Proximity.

On the other hand, when it comes to the EU in the pro-Remain newspapers, Negativity is constructed in a similar way, but showing that Brexit is also dangerous for the EU (not just the UK):

Excerpt 2: The Guardian, 9th March 2016, Wednesday.
[More than 800,000 workers now on zero-hours contracts, ONS says – Politics live] We know **that division in Europe is dangerous** and that we must guard against it in the West, as well as in the East, of our continent. That remains a common endeavour.

This might also be explained by the readership of *The Guardian* and other centre-left newspapers. As they are mostly middle and upper-class liberals with cosmopolitan ideas, Brexit was probably constructed to be devastating and dangerous for Europe as well as the UK. The same pattern can be seen in other pro-Remain newspapers, including the more right-wing *Times*. Although *The Times* readership is perhaps different from *The Guardian*, they are probably the section of the right-leaning audience who share European values[ii]. This becomes clearer by examining the following excerpt from The Times, including the pointer of 'weaker' EU/Europe:

Excerpt 3: The Times (London), 19th May 2016, Thursday, Edition 1; Scotland.
[Hammond tried to court-martial general who blasted defence cuts:]
A **weaker EU** makes Britain less secure.

The news story shows how a weaker EU would also lead to not-so-desirable outcomes for the UK. In many cases, Negativity once again is enhanced by the use of other news values. In the specific case of this example, the whole news story is a summary of Phillipe Hammond's – then-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs – take on the possible future of the UK outside the EU (Eliteness as well as Impact).

However, in the case of the pro-Leave *Telegraph*, a somewhat different take on Negativity can be seen. For example, *The Telegraph* sometimes also reflects the problems that should be considered related to the UK in the debate:

Excerpt 4: The Daily Telegraph (London), Friday 13th May 2016, Edition 1; National Edition.
[Small businesses should '**blame Britain** for tangle of red tape, not Brussels']

Excerpt 5: The Daily Telegraph (London), Thursday 14th April 2016, Edition 1; National Edition.

[Brexiteers must not succumb to fantasy; We can thrive outside the EU but only if we are prepared to embrace real economic change]

...but if we dramatically reduced immigration, we would find businesses short of workers, damaging productivity and competitiveness. This would **hurt British workers** as well as foreign. Immigration isn't the only issue.

In both cases, Negativity and Impact are used in association with 'Britain'/'British'. However, compared to the Remain backing newspapers, it is constructed in a different manner. Although 'would' conveys Impact, it is not to the level of combining news values observed in the previous cases. According to the examples observed so far, it could be said that news values can indeed be used synergistically or otherwise in isolation to underline and enhance views and claims to different degrees in the discourse. In constructing the EU in the discourse, a different tendency can be detected in *The Telegraph.*

Excerpt 6: The Daily Telegraph (London), Thursday 24th March 016, Edition 1; National Edition.
[London Mayor says **EU's restrictions** on deportation and surveillance are no longer in Britain's interests]

In this piece, apart from the Negativity constructed for the EU with the pointer 'restrictions', the whole text enhances the negative representation in multiple ways: Eliteness is constructed by a direct reference to the Mayor of London and the reference to London constructs Proximity. Therefore, contrary to the previous example where *The Telegraph* downplayed Negativity around the UK, in this case, Negativity is markedly enhanced in relation to the EU by the use of other news values.

5.3. Positivity

In Positivity, the results for the EU are mixed. *The Guardian* used Positivity very frequently with the EU, *The Independent* and *The Telegraph* come second with almost the same quantity, and the least frequent use belongs to *The Times*. Regarding the UK, however, *The Telegraph* highlights Positivity around the UK, while the other three newspapers barely construct any news content using this news value for the UK in quantitative terms. However, in terms of pointers, a range of different ones can be seen in the newspapers across the sub-corpora.

Table 6. Linguistic pointers to Positivity in the UK and the EU.

Newspaper	Linguistic Pointers for the UK	Linguistic Pointers for the EU
The Guardian	Enhances, safer	Helped, benefits, prosperity, peace, strong
The Independent	Great, better, benefit, achieve, growth	Health, benefits, stronger, yes, good
The Times	Better, benefits, good	
The Telegraph	Allows, expects, allow	Benefits, peace

It is not much of a surprise to observe that the EU is celebrated in *The Guardian*, especially considering the historical context in many cases:

Excerpt 7: The Guardian, Friday 22nd April 2016.
[Barack Obama: Brexit would put UK 'back of the queue' for trade talks:]
Their [previous EU officials] efforts provided a foundation for democracy, open markets, and the rule of law, while underwriting more **than seven decades of relative peace and prosperity in Europe.**

The praise of the EU in the right-wing and pro-Remain *Times*, however, is slightly different:

Excerpt 8: The Times (London), Saturday 11th June 2016, Edition 2; National Edition.
[Germans tell British voters: we need you]
Only with the British can we make **the EU better** and lead it into a new future.

In Excerpt 8, the angle through which Positivity is constructed is somewhat different, changing the focal point to the role of the UK in the leadership of the EU. However, the fact that the EU could be 'better' still suggests that the EU is already 'good'. This underlining tone is also on a par with the fact that *The Times* made much less use of Positivity in the construction of the EU than *The Guardian* and *The Independent*.

Another noteworthy point in this regard is that in both cases, Positivity is used in association with Eliteness. In

Excerpt 7 from *The Guardian*, the whole news story is about Obama's visit, while in Excerpt 8 from *The Times*, the arguments are all from German authorities and experts. This point is especially important considering the fact that the pro-

Remain newspapers had significantly high usage of Eliteness in quantitative terms in the case of the EU. This suggests that most arguments in favour of the EU were probably constructed from the point of view of Elite figures. The referendum was held amid a highly anti-elite atmosphere. Emphasising Eliteness in such circumstances would be imprudent (at best) on the part of Remainers.

In the pro-Leave *Telegraph*, Positivity is scant in association with Europe, and it is limited to covering some of the Remain-backing points of view, especially about the deal David Cameron made with the EU:

> *Excerpt 9: The Daily Telegraph (London), Monday 28th March 2016, Edition 1; National Edition.*
>
> [Brexit is a gamble we cannot afford to take:]
>
> In his renegotiation, the Prime Minister acquired even stronger powers to exclude or remove those we don't want here, and to ban them from re-entering for even longer. So we have all the **benefits of EU cooperation** to fight crime and terrorism but we retain our own hard border.

On the other hand, the picture is different when it comes to the UK. *The Telegraph* not only outperforms other newspapers in quantitative terms but also creates an emancipatory narrative of Brexit for the UK:

> *Excerpt 10: The Daily Telegraph (London), Thursday 25th February 2016, Edition 1; National Edition.*
>
> [Brexit would set Britain on a global course away from EU insularity]
>
> Brexit **allows the UK** to address directly the areas that the EU has rendered us rudderless in. These include returning sovereignty and having a meaningful immigration target that can be met. We can focus attention on what is needed for small firms and for ordinary workers across the whole country.

In this piece, Brexit is constructed as highly positive for the UK, as mentioned above, insinuating to be even emancipatory. It can be argued that, once again, Impact is also used to enhance Positivity since the news story details all the positive outcomes in the following lines in terms of immigration and the economy. On the other hand, the pro-Remain newspapers, apart from the relative quantitative scarcity in constructing Positivity for the UK, adhered either to the talking points about the economic benefits of remaining, or refuting the narratives of the Leave side:

Excerpt 11: The Independent (United Kingdom), Monday 9th May 2016.

[Chatham House backs EU referendum 'Remain' campaign:]

Free movement of labour is a **benefit for the UK** economy in the aggregate, and a valuable right for British citizens who wish to take up employment in other EU countries.

Excerpt 12: The Times (London), Monday 20th June 2016, Edition 1; National Edition.

[Science superpower:]

Recent survey showed 93 per cent of research scientists and engineers believed the EU is a **"major benefit" to UK research**.

5.4. Impact

As demonstrated previously (Figure 3), and can also be observed in the linguistic pointers (Table 7), the three pro-Remain newspapers used the news value of Impact in their construction of the UK far more frequently than the pro-Leave one. This frequent use of Impact is probably in line with their intended message on the vast and profound consequences that Brexit can bring about for the UK. On the other hand, *The Telegraph* used this news value much less frequently. In addition, and compared with the UK, all newspapers used Impact much less frequently to construct the EU in their discourse.

Table 7. Linguistic pointers to Impact in the UK and the EU.

Newspaper	Linguistic Pointers for the UK	Linguistic Pointers for the EU
The Guardian	Vision, prospect, if, should, influence, could, would, might,	Change, higher
The Independent	Mean, influence, since, if, could, can, might, greater, will, makes Changes, more	Influence
The Times	Keep, if, would, will, should, growth, might, could	
The Telegraph	Expose, retain, if, suggest	Scale, influence

Impact, however, is not used to directly show influence on the UK (a point already illustrated in previous sections). In some cases, it is used to show the impact and influence the UK would or could have on EU related affairs and how such influence would presumably fade away because of Brexit. The following excerpts demonstrate this point:

Excerpt 13: The Guardian, Monday 20th June 2016.

[Sayeeda Warsi: Leave tactics will create more divided and xenophobic UK;]

Remaining **will allow the UK** to retain the influence on which the unique and successful UK automotive sector depends.

Excerpt 14: The Independent (United Kingdom), Friday 17th June 2016.

[Think a post-Brexit 'Norway style' EU deal would work?]

As a Norwegian ex-EU adviser, I can tell you you're wrong: "In short, when it comes to accessing the EU Single Market, the UK can't have its cake and eat it. While I may not personally agree with all UK positions, **British influence** in EU politics is to my mind critical in retaining a balanced EU that can secure our welfare and progress."

5.5. Eliteness

Considering the data related to Eliteness, it can be observed that Europe was constructed in the pro-Remain newspapers much more frequently than the UK (see Figure 2, Figure 3, and Table). This, once again, could be interpreted in relation to the anti-elite impetus mentioned before. In addition, it should be reiterated that Eliteness might be used either to associate with and build support for a certain position or, contrarily, to dissociate from it.

Table 8. Linguistic pointers of Eliteness for the UK and the EU across strategies and newspapers.

Newspaper	Strategies in the News Value of Eliteness	Linguistic Pointers for the UK	Linguistic Pointers for the EU
The Guardian	**Authority roles (social deixis)**	Minister	Leaders, professor, leaders
The Independent	**Proper names**	Obama	Cameron, David
	Institutions	Chambers, chamber, businesses, industry	Court, commission
	Authority roles (social deixis)		Leaders
The Times	**Proper names**		Camerons
	Institutions	Chambers	
	Authority roles (social deixis)	Officials, economist, authority	President, minister, leaders

The Telegraph		Redwood, backing	Professor, commission

The interesting point, in this case, is that there are also references to ***Institutions*** as a way to construct Eliteness. These cases are mainly achieved by mentioning higher institutions such as the EU Commission:

Excerpt 15: The Daily Telegraph (London), Tuesday 1st March 2016, Edition 1; National Edition.
[Brexit scares over jobs and investment are fallacies]
Yet the suggestion that the EU does "not really mean to aim for ever-closer union" is contradicted by the history of the Common Market since we joined in 1973. Those who took the aims of the EU elite at their word have been proved right. Whatever soothing words fellow governments may throw at us in David Cameron's renegotiations, the main power to centralise lies with the European Court, the European Parliament and **the EU Commission.**

Excerpt 16: The Independent, Monday 22nd February 2016.
The European Union as we know it is over. It's time for a new economic alliance based on NATO: "**The EU Commission** estimated that TTIP would boost the EU economy by (EURO)120bn, the US by (EURO)90bn and the rest of the world by (EURO)100bn."

In line with the pattern observed in multiple previous examples, there is a striking difference between how the EU commission is represented in the pro-Leave *Telegraph* and the pro-Remain *Independent*.

Excerpt 15 from *The Telegraph* constructs the EU in terms of an elite club with extensive programs to centralise, putting forward the famous ever-closer union agenda. Eliteness is constructed in very negative terms in relation to the general anti-European discourse. We can say that both Negativity and Impact are implied in the discourse. Furthermore, Eliteness is also invoked and negatively represented.

Excerpt 16, however, has a much more positive tone, adopting Positivity and Impact as well as Eliteness to associate EU membership with growth in the economy, not only in Europe but also in the world by referring to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (a trade agreement between the EU and the US). These two examples again show how using news values with specific references to certain discourses, e.g., anti-European or Pro-European discourse, becomes meaningful, and how they can be used synergistically and hierarchically to serve certain ideological preferences and representations.

6. CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, the way news values were adopted in the campaign coverage of British broadsheets shows a certain continuation of the historical discourses around the relationship between the EU and the UK. Above all and considering the negative tone adopted by pro-Leave outlets, as well as the lacklustre and cautious tone constructed in the pro-Remain outlets, it seems that the term "reluctant European" and the historical discourses surrounding this topic continued during the campaign for the Brexit referendum.

In the pro-Leave outlets, Negativity is used in combination with other news values, above all with Impact and Eliteness, both in the case of the UK and the EU. However, in the specific case of the pro-Leave outlet, a certain tendency to downplay Negativity associated with the UK, and augment it with the EU can be observed, especially through the use (or lack thereof) of Impact and Eliteness. In addition, the pro-Leave *Telegraph* used Positivity combined with other news values for the UK, but strategically avoided the same for the EU.

The results regarding the pro-Remain outlets show the discursive materialisation of the tenuity of pro-European discourse (Jones, 2017). The pro-Remain newspapers used Positivity for the EU in combination with Eliteness, mostly to build support and legitimacy for their position. However, they used Positivity in the case of the UK in combination with Impact, mostly to underline the positive Impact the UK can have inside the European Union. Such strategic use of news values seems to be aligned with the broader narratives and messages these outlets tried to build around the UK and the EU during the campaign coverage. All in all, the data shows a historical continuation of practical (rather than ideological or fundamental) underpinning of the pro-European discourses in the UK (Baker & Schnapper, 2015; Jones, 2017; Young, 1993). Especially in the fact that this advocacy mostly focuses on economic arguments (Chochia et al., 2018, p. 61; Young, 1993, pp. 1-2) while arguing for maintaining Britain's independence (Young, 1993, pp. 7-12)

We can also see a certain continuation of historical discourses around the two entities (the EU vs the UK) reflected in the news discourse of the referendum, especially through the discursive practice of News Values adoption and construction. Previous research showed that the patterns by which news values are used are a beneficial tool in mapping the cultural and ideological discourses around certain topics (cf. Fruttaldo & Venuti, 2017; Maruenda-Bataller, 2021; Venuti & Frut-taldo, 2019), and the findings are in line with the previous research on news values in this regard. However, further research is needed in other contexts, journalism type (such as tabloid journalism, for example, which was excluded from the corpus), to advance this line of research within journalism and discourse analysis studies.

NOTES

[i] The official stance of the mentioned newspapers was explicitly declared in the following editorials:
"Why Remain is best for Britain". The Times. 18 June 2016. p. 29.
The Guardian view on the EU debate: David Cameron makes a serious case". The Guardian. 9 May 2016. Retrieved 30 May 2016. The Guardian will make no apology, between now and 23 June, for making the case for Britain in Europe as clearly, as honestly and as insistently as possible.
"The right choice is to remain". The Independent. 19 June 2016. Retrieved 19 June 2016.
"View, Telegraph (20 June 2016). "Vote leave to benefit from a world of opportunity". The Telegraph. Retrieved 23 June 2016."
[ii] See the entire news story here: https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/feb/24/brexit-could-wipe-20-percent-off-the-pound-warns-hsbc

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