Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain: A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Study of Labour and Conservative Party Leaders' Speeches, 1900-2014

Abstract: This study examines discursive representations of poverty and social exclusion by the leaders of the two main political parties in the UK (Labour and Conservative) across time. The political context selected for analysis is that of the parties' annual conferences, specifically all the speeches delivered by their leaders between 1900 and 2014 (c. 1 million words). Using a Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies methodology, we identify two recurring discourses of poverty and social exclusion in these speeches: we call these a finance discourse, which represents PSE in terms of economic and business needs, and a hardship discourse, where PSE are represented as various sources of struggle. The Labour Party favours the hardship discourse over the finance discourse; the Conservative Party displays the opposite trend. Notwithstanding this difference, our study primarily reveals commonalities across political party, time and discourse type. These include a tendency to describe poverty and social exclusion in terms of scale and to represent them as inert entities that need to be acted upon. In the party conference speeches we examine, political leaders tend to use third person deixis to distance themselves personally from the responsibility of intervening to alleviate poverty and social exclusion. A partial exception to this trend is observed post-2001. This may reflect the process of securitization that poverty is known to have undergone as a result, in particular, of terrorist attacks on the West in the twenty-first century.

Key words: British Political Party Speeches, Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies, Poverty and Social Exclusion, Conservative Party, Labour Party, Diachronic Analysis

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1.1 Introduction

The impact of poverty and social exclusion (PSE, henceforth) reaches beyond insufficient financial income to meet individuals' basic needs such as nutrition and shelter. As the World Bank Organization (2006) reminds us, PSE also concern women, men and children feeling uncertain about their future, not having access to education and employment, and surviving from day to day. The rise of PSE levels across a number of countries is concerning and the UK, on which this study is based, is no exception. According to a June 2019 report by the UK Office for National Statistics, approximately 4.7 million people in the UK (7.8 per cent of its population) lived in persistent poverty in 2017 – persistent poverty being defined as that which affects individuals whose 'disposable income falls below 60 per cent of the national median' in the year being measured and 'at least two out of the three preceding years.' (UK Office for National Statistics, 2019). The same report states that the UK's poverty rate in 2017 affected approximate 2.4 million *working* people. This resonates with Toolan's (2018: 221) statement that '[t]wenty and more years ago, people in poverty were mostly

unemployed, whereas today they are more often in work, but lowly paid.' Further evidence of rising levels of PSE in the UK comes from 2014-2017 figures from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which situate the UK within the top ten countries in the world for wealth inequality – the top 20 per cent of the country's population earn six times as much as the bottom 20 per cent (OECD 2019). And a 2018 report published by the British think tank E3G highlights that more than 3,000 people are 'needlessly' dying each year in the UK because of 'fuel poverty', that is, they cannot afford to heat their homes properly (E3G 2018).

Given the above, it is perhaps unsurprising that PSE have become the focus of political attention over time. O'Connor (2001) describes this as a 'politicization' of PSE, whereby political party agendas have come to play a progressively more influential role in determining PSE causes, measures and effects. There has also been a considerable rise in academic interest in PSE, in particular within the fields of Politics, Economy and Sociology (see, e.g., Heath et al. 2013, Lansley 2012, Townsend and Gordon 2002, Westergaard 2012). An important body of discourse analytic scholarship into PSE has emerged over time, too, which has primarily examined the semiotic practices that individuals and groups deploy to represent PSE (see Section 1.2). Within this scholarship, however, there are some comparatively under-researched areas, which this study aims to address, specifically the discursive construction of PSE by (British) political elites across time. Using the UK as a case study, this chapter examines the discursive means by which the leaders of the country's two main political parties – Conservative and Labour – have represented PSE across the twentieth and twenty-first century in their party conference speeches.

The chapter is structured as follows. Sections 1.2 and 1.3 respectively review the relevant literature into PSE from a Discourse Analysis perspective and provide a brief

overview of the ideology of the Conservative and Labour Parties, focusing on the political events to be examined in this paper, namely their annual party conferences between 1900 and 2014. Section 4 introduces the data and methodological approach adopted in our study, namely Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS, henceforth). Section 5 reports our key results, identifying similarities and differences in the discursive construction of PSE by political party and across time. In Section 6, we pull together these results, noting the relevance of British political leaders' discursive representations of PSE.

1.2 Representing Poverty and Social Exclusion in Discourse

Research into PSE within the field of Linguistics, and specifically Discourse Analysis, has focused on how these issues are semiotically represented across a range of institutional contexts, especially the mass media. This research broadly agrees that representations of individuals and groups living in PSE are primarily negative, often involving some form of stereotyping (see, e.g. Lacerda 2015, Garcia da Silva 2008, De Melo Resende 2016) in the context of Brazil, Pardo (2013) in Argentina, Pardo-Abril (2008) in Colombia, Summers (2006) in New Zealand, Fairclough (2005) in Romania and Toft (2014) in the USA).

There is also a growing body of research into the discursive representation of PSE in the UK media.[1] The first – to our knowledge – book-length treatment of the discursive representation of poverty in the UK is the edited collection by Meinhof and Richardson (1994), titled *Text, Discourse and Context: Representations of Poverty in Britain.* Only one chapter in this book examines media representations of 'home' (as opposed to 'Third World') poverty by the British media (Street 1994). The analysis reveals that, while regularly using 'supposedly comparable empirical data from other countries in order to highlight features of the home society', the British media mainly downplay poverty as a socio-political issue in the

UK (Street 1994: 50).

More recently, several studies have been published that integrate Corpus Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis in order to find recurring patterns in the language used to represent PSE across UK media. Baker and McEnery (2015), for instance, analyze Twitter responses to the British television show *Benefits Street*. These cluster around three main discourses: the idle poor, the poor as victims and the rich get richer. Van der Bom et al.'s (2018) analysis of Twitter responses to the same television show also reveals that benefits claimants are regularly constructed as social parasites and as morally inadequate and members of a flawed underclass. Focusing on a particular type of state-backed benefit in the UK (i.e., maternity leave), Gómez-Jiménez (2018) shows how representations of maternity leave became monetarized by the British press (*The Times* and *Daily Mail*) in the last thirty years or so of the twentieth century (1971-2001). Two main discourses (or 'macrostructures') emerged during that time: one saw mothers-to-be as facing numerous problems; the other regarded changes in maternity leave policy (three during the period examined) as leading to negative consequences for British society.

Two further corpus and discourse studies of PSE in the UK media across time of direct relevance are Toolan (2016, 2018). In Toolan (2016) the focus is on representations of wealth inequality and social class within television programme reviews published by the *Daily Mail* in 1971 (reviews by Peter Black) and in 2013 (reviews by Christopher Steven). Highlight findings include a disappearance of discussions about class and wealth inequality in the 2013 reviews, when compared to the 1971 reviews. Toolan (2016) warns that the absence of such discussion may become naturalised. In Toolan (2018) a comprehensive analysis of the representation of inequality in the UK media (primarily *The Times* and *Daily Mail*) over a 45 year period (1971-2016) is offered. In addition to confirming stigmatizing portrayals of those

who experience some form of PSE, this analysis confirms the naturalization of wealth inequality, which is constructed as inevitable. As a result, Toolan (2018: 224) further argues, 'the rejection of egalitarian policies and redistribution as unreasonable and unjustified, became considerably more discursively entrenched' over the 45 year period examined. Toolan (2018) continues to call for critical discourse analyses of wealth inequality to gain centrality within an otherwise prolific research agenda focused on other forms of inequality and discrimination.

Analysis of the representation of PSE in British *political* (rather than media) *discourse* is comparatively scarce. This is somewhat surprising, considering that politics is the main social field in which decisions regarding policy, including PSE-related policy, are made – and that those decisions are articulated in and through discourse (e.g. Chilton 2004). Within this literature, several studies are particularly relevant to the work covered in this chapter. Koller and Davidson (2008), for instance, examine the discursive mechanisms used in 2017 UK policy documents about social exclusion and also the 2005 speeches by the then Labour Party leader Ed Miliband. Their analysis shows recurring use of conceptual and grammatical metaphors that portray British society as a physical space offering warmth and shelter to those who are socially excluded. Watt (2008) examines images of benefit claimants in a council housing campaign in the UK. The findings, which show them to be visually rendered as ordinary people, contrast with those from stigmatizing media portrayals of benefits claimants. For their part, Lorenzo-Dus and Marsh (2012) analyse representations of poverty in UK (as well as US and EU) National Security Strategies over a nine-year period (1997-2006). Their analysis finds discursive evidence to support the International Relations thesis that poverty has undergone a process of 'securitization' (Balzacq 2005, Wæver 1995), whereby poverty/the poor are constructed as a security threat in high-level policy documents. This

discursive evidence includes, amongst other, recurrent use of semantic-discursive categories, particularly post 2001, that link poverty to tyranny, terrorism, insecurity, security threat and security challenges.

For their part, McEnery and Baker (2017) use CADS to examine representations of PSE across time – in their case, throughout the seventeenth century – in England. Drawing upon a one billion word corpus of literary texts, and examining the at the time commonly used terms 'beggars and vagrants', the study reveals the individuals thus labelled being systematically evaluated in hostile terms, including as being idle and fools. The study also shows a lack of compassion towards these individuals, whose social circumstances are not taken into consideration. Instead, a strong sense of personal responsibility and, therefore, personal blame, specifically of blaming beggars and vagrants for their own condition, characterizes their literary representation at that point in time.

Last, but not least, one must note the double-edged sword around the grammar of the noun 'poverty' in the English language. As Kress (1994: 29) puts it, in English 'poverty is something that you can be in, or get yourself into'. Poverty happens to individuals – it is grammatically a state of being beyond their control. The corollary of this non-agentive grammar is that individuals may fall into poverty accidentally, rather than intentionally. Yet, 'poverty itself can act agentively – poverty can drive us into despair, poverty causes the breakup of families, and so on' (1994: 29). This may conveniently support the causal connections often drawn in elite discourses of PSE whereby the poor are represented as both passive (idle) and agentive (blameworthy) – something that may enable the 'seeds for demonising poverty and the poor [to be] sown' whilst supposedly freeing political institutions from any agentive responsibility (Lorenzo-Dus and Marsh 2012: 278).

1.3 The British Political Party System: A Focus on the Conservative and the Labour Parties

Although the birth of British political parties dates to the seventeenth century, given space constraints, this section outlines the ideologies of the two main parties – Conservative and Labour – across the period covered by this study (1900-2014). In the early twentieth century, the Conservative Party adopted a right-wing authoritarian ideology, which supported inequality and the survival of the fittest. Under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher in the 1970s-1980s, the Conservatives most explicitly linked a social market economy to authoritarian populism (Pope et al. 1986). This increasingly shifted towards the adoption of a Neo-conservative ideology, which combined Liberalism with Conservatism, and currently embraces global interventionism (Fuchs 2016).

While being considered the most ideologically inclined of all British political parties, the Labour Party has been plagued by ideological struggle since its foundation (Clark 2012). Through most of the twentieth century, the party advocated socialist policies, such as public ownership of industries, government intervention in the economy, redistribution of wealth, and improved protections, healthcare and education for workers. In the late 1990s, the Labour leadership under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown re-modelled the Party's doctrine to create 'New Labour', also referred to as a 'Third Way' (Fairclough 2000: 21), which focused on issues such as minimum wages, health and education spending.

Like other British political parties, the Conservative and Labour Parties hold high profile conferences annually. These conferences are their sovereign policy and decision-making body, as well as formal sources of party policy (Clark 2012). They also 'highlight their [the Parties'] extra-parliamentary existence and allow these organizations to address

voters' (Faucher-King 2005: 11). The speeches delivered at these annual conferences therefore inevitably shape British politics.

From a socio-political perspective, and given the elite position that party leaders hold within their internal party structures, their speeches are the most important event of these annual conferences (Williams 2011). From a discourse perspective, party leaders' speeches illustrate the typical persuasive function of political rhetoric (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012). For instance, Thatcher used her conference party speeches to enthuse and inspire the mass membership and existing Conservative voters by assuring them that she shared many of their ambitions and their anxieties (Finlayson et al. 2016). Party leaders' conference speeches are therefore not 'just' pieces of discourse where policy is verbally announced. They are also the discursive spaces where leaders (re)construct their parties' future in accordance with their agreed content, which is why they have been selected as the dataset for our study, to which we next turn.

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 Data

Our data comprise all the speeches (n=203; overall word count=1,019,328) delivered by 51 different Conservative and Labour Party leaders at their annual party conferences between 1900 and 2014. As shown in Table 1.1, we divide these speeches into three periods for the purposes of the present study. Each period covers significant historical events in relation to PSE.

Table 1.1 Data Composition

Periods	P1: 1900-1948	P2: 1949-2000	P3: 2001-2014

Parties	n =W*	n=L*	n=S*	n=W	n=L	n=S	n=W	n=L	n=S
Conservative	163,276	7	30	244,847	8	48	79,926	3	14
Labour	153,726	25	46	328,163	8	54	85,390	3	11
Total	317,002	32	76	537,010	16	102	165,316	6	25
W*=words, L*=Leaders, S*=Speeches									

Period 1 comprises all the speeches (n=76, number of words = 317,002) delivered by 32 different political leaders (7 Conservative, 25 Labour). The lower number of speeches by Conservative Party leaders during this period owes to war time preventing some conferences from being held and/or leader health issues. Between 1900 and 1948 the UK was involved in two World Wars and affected by massive economic depression (Lambert 2013, Glennerster 2002). In 1911, the British government introduced the National Insurance Act to support health benefit and free medical treatment to workers. However, it was not until 1920 that health benefit policy was extended to those who were unemployed (Dorling et al. 2007). In the 1930s, Britain's trade fell by half and depression spread over all sectors of industry, leading to unprecedented levels of unemployment and PSE more generally (Dimsdale and Hotson 2014). The economy gradually recovered in the 1940s, which also saw PSE reforms, notably the Beveridge Report that led to the foundation of the welfare state in 1942. In 1948, the Labour Government passed the National Assistance Act (NAA) to help citizens whose resources were insufficient to meet their needs (Gazeley 2003).

Period 2 includes all the speeches (n=102; total number of words = 537,010) delivered between 1949 and 2000 by 16 different party leaders (8 Conservative and 8 Labour). During period 2, economic improvements maintained the prosperity of most Britons under the Conservative Governments led by Winston Churchill (1951-55), Anthony Eden (1955-57), and Harold MacMillan (1957-63). Under Conservative and Labour Governments in, respectively, the 1960s and 1970s PSE resurfaced, albeit that with less impact on the public

than in period 1. This relative economic stability ended in the late 1970s under the Conservative Government of Margaret Thatcher. Thatcher's Britain was marked by a severe inflation crisis and an alarming rise in unemployment. Thatcher aimed at reducing public spending by raising the national tax levels on incomes (Glennerster et al. 2003). The policy caused economic deterioration that continued to the mid-1980s. In 1989, Thatcher introduced the very unpopular poll tax bill, which required every adult to pay a single flat-rate per capita tax, at a rate set by their local authority. This bill brought Thatcher's power to an end. In 1997, Labour won the General Elections and Tony Blair became Prime Minister. In 1999, Blair announced the End of Child Poverty Programme, which aimed at increasing financial support to families to end child poverty in 2020 – an objective that will, sadly, not be met.

Period 3 includes all the speeches (n=25; total number of words = 165,316) delivered between 2001 and 2014 by six different party leaders (3 Conservative and 3 Labour). This period was marked by a financial crisis in the UK, and globally. Also, the deadly terrorist attacks in 2001 arguably changed the world's – and the UK's – views on multiple socio-political issues. After the 9/11 attack, PSE received renewed global interest from the world leading countries. In the UK, this led to a number of government initiatives to alleviate PSE. For instance, in 2010 the Labour government enshrined the End Child Poverty Programme in legislation under the Child Poverty Act. In 2013, under the Conservative Government led by David Cameron, over 200 UK organisations teamed up to announce the Enough Food for Everyone campaign, along with the UK's presidency of the 2013 G8 forum.

1.4.2 Framework and procedure

This study uses a CADS methodology that enables synergistic integration of quantitative and qualitative analysis of language use. CADS typically follows a 'serendipitous' journey of

discovery (Partington 2006: 12), whereby corpus linguistics-software enabled searches of datasets are treated as an initial '"map" … pinpointing areas of interest for a subsequent close analysis' (Baker et al 2008: 284). Moreover, CADS encourages conceptual integration across relevant disciplines outside Linguistics.

Our study comprises the following analytic steps:[2]

1. Extracting all the relevant party leader conference speeches from the publicly available repository 'British Political Speech'.[3] In the small number of cases in which the repository did not hold a copy of a given speech, we located it in British public library and national archives. All the speeches were saved as txt files and uploaded – as two distinct corpora (Conservative Party and Labour Party) – to the Corpus Linguistics software SketchEngine (Kilgarriff et al. 2004). We henceforth refer to this data set as our British Political Party Speeches (BPPS) corpus.

2. Using three thesauri (Oxford thesaurus, Merriam-Webster thesaurus and Thesaurus.com) in order to identify synonyms of 'poverty' and 'social exclusion'. This resulted in 649 synonyms – our 'seed words'.

3. Identifying which seed words featured in the BPPS (Conservative and Labour Party) corpus, and selecting those that exhibited frequency levels ≥ 10. This yielded a list of 60 'PSE words' in our corpus.

4. Conducting keyword analyses between the BPPS (Conservative and Labour) corpus and the British National Corpus (BNC)[4] and the Corpus of Political Speeches (CORPS).[5] From the resulting lists, 44 keywords also featured in the list of 60 PSE words identified in step 3. Manual examination of all the

concordance lines containing these 44 words led to a number of them and / or concordance lines being discarded, as their meaning in context was not tied to PSE, such as 'We owe him great debt. We owe much to Heathcoat Amory, whose wisdom, charm and modesty made him both loved and trusted' (Harold Macmillan, 1960, the Conservative Party). A final list of 28 words – to which we henceforth refer as the PSE keywords – and 956 concordances was derived. The PSE keywords were: *poor, debt, deficit, bankruptcy, poverty, bankrupt, famine, low, misery, depressed, shortage, unfortunate, disastrous, terrible, reduction, modest, lowest, inadequate, waste, appalling, difficulty, short, bad, suffering, deprived, need, necessary*, and *want*.

5. Manually categorising contextualised use of the PSE keywords identified in step 4 into PSE discourses within the Conservative and Labour BPPS corpora.

6. Conducting an ideo-textual analysis (Jeffries 2010, 2014) of all the extended concordance lines containing the most frequent PSE keywords (see section 1.5.1) within these discourses. Jeffries' (2010, 2014) framework consists of ten 'Textual Conceptual Functions' (TCFs) that text procedures may use in order to generate ideologically-laden conceptual meaning in different ways. They are: *Naming and Describing*, *Representing Actions and States*, *Equating and Contrasting*, *Exemplifying and Enumerating*, *Prioritising*, *Implying and Assuming*, *Negating*, *Hypothesising*, *Presenting Other's Speech* and *Representing Time*, *Space and Society*.

1.5 Results

1.5.1 PSE Discourses in the BBPS Corpus

Two main PSE discourses were identified in our BPPS corpus, which we labelled 'finance' and 'hardship'. Within the finance discourse, PSE were explicitly represented in terms of economic and business needs, often through the PSE keywords *debt* and *deficit* (see below). For example, 'There is another thing- there is a War *debt* settlement' (Ramsay MacDonald 1930, The Labour Party), and 'I said the paper *deficit* might be over 320,000,000' (Winston Churchill 1949, The Conservative Party). Representation of PSE within the hardship discourse referenced various forms and/or sources of struggle – other than explicitly financial – to live in dignity. Most examples concerned general references to PSE through the keywords *poverty* and *need* (see below), such as 'You must not forget the *poverty* left by war' (Stanley Baldwin 1927, the Conservative Party), 'The worn-out veterans of industry are not only in *need*, but are deserving' (Walter Hudson, 1908, the Labour Party). There was also a third discourse, which we labelled 'other'. This encompassed a mixed bag of representations concerning living standards. The percentage frequency of presence of each of these discourses is shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Frequency of Use (N= number of concordances) of each PSE Discourse in the BBPS Corpus

Discourse	Conservative corpus				Labour corpus			
	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Total/ % of corpus	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Total/ % of corpus
Finance	n=11 (7.14 %)	N=52 (33.76 %)	N=91 (59.09 %)	N=154 (48.58%)	N=25 (13.44%)	N=94 (50.53 %)	N=67 (36.02 %)	N=186 (29.10%)
Hardship	N=27 (20.30 %)	N=19 (14.28 %)	N=87 (65.41 %)	N=133 (41.95%)	N=96 (24.12%)	N=194 (48.74 %)	N=108 (27.13 %)	N=398 (62.30%)
Other	N=6 (20%)	N=13 (43.33	N=11 (33%)	N=30 (9.47%)	N=21 (38.18%)	N=18 (32.72	N=16 (29.09	N=55 (8.60%)

		%)				%)		
Total	N=44	N=84	N=189	N=317	N=142	N=306	N=191	N=639

As can be seen in Table 1.2, the finance discourse covered 48.58 per cent of the PSE Conservative corpus and 29.10 per cent of the Labour corpus. For its part, the hardship discourse covered 41.95 per cent of the PSE Conservative corpus and 62.3 per cent the PSE Labour corpus. Overall, therefore, the Conservative Party leaders, in their party conference speeches, talked about PSE in financial terms more frequently than in hardship terms. The Labour Party leaders, in contrast, favoured discussing PSE in hardship terms over doing so in financial terms.

There were cross-party similarities and differences regarding the PSE keywords through which the finance and hardship PSE discourses were realized, as well as their relative frequencies of use in the corpora. In the Conservative corpus, the finance PSE discourse comprised the words 'debt' (number of occurrences = 79), 'deficit' (n=42), 'bad' (n=10), 'bankruptcy' (n=9), 'lowest' (n=8), 'bankrupt' (n=4) and 'disastrous' (n=2). In the Labour corpus, the same discourse comprised the words 'debt' (57), 'deficit' (n=59), 'low' (n=50), 'lowest' (n=9), 'short' (n=6) and 'modest' (n=4). The words that comprised the hardship discourse in the Conservative Party were 'need' (n=67), 'poverty' (n=43), 'suffering' (n=11), 'want' (n=5), 'deprived' (n=4) and 'unfortunate' (n=3). Within the Labour corpus, they were 'poverty' (n=184), 'poor' (n=85), 'need' (n=81), 'suffering' (n=18), 'misery' (n=16), 'waste' (n=9) and 'want' (n=6).

In the Conservative Party corpus, therefore, 'debt' and 'deficit' accounted for 78.57 per cent of the total number of PSE keywords for the financial PSE discourse (n=154), and 'need' and 'poverty' covered 82.76 per cent total use of hardship discourse (n=133). In the Labour Party corpus, 'debt, 'deficit' and 'low' accounted for 89.24 per cent of all the keywords in the

finance discourse (n=186), and 'need', 'poverty' and 'poor' for 87.93 per cent of the total use of the hardship discourse (n=398). The analysis of ideo-textual functions in these two PSE discourses presented in Section 5.2 encompasses all the extended concordances (n=747) of these particularly frequent words ('debt', 'deficit', 'low', 'need', 'poverty', 'poor').

1.5.2 Ideology within the PSE Discourse of Finance and Hardship

The TCF analysis showed that six of the ten functions in Jeffries' (2010, 2014) framework were used in ≤10 per cent of the concordances selected for analysis, across the three periods by both parties: *Equating and Contrasting*, *Exemplifying and Enumerating*, *Implying and Assuming*, *Negating*, *Hypothesising* and *Presenting Others' Speech*. Owing to space constraints, they are excluded from the analysis that follows, which focuses on the remaining TCFs, namely Naming/Describing, Representing Actions/States, Prioritising and Representing Person/Place/Time. Tables 1.3a and 1.3b (PSE finance discourse) and Tables 1.4a and 1.4b (PSE hardship discourse) provide an overview of their frequency of use in, respectively, the Labour and Conservative BPPS corpora.

Table 1.3a: Percentage of use of the TCFs of 'debt' and 'deficit' in the [...]

TCFs		Period 1: 1900-1948, 6 occurrences			P[...]
1.	Naming and Describing	6 (100%)			
		Locus 3 (50%)	Scale 2 (33.33%)	Misc. 1 (16.66%)	19
2.	Representing Actions and States	Material 3 (50%)	Relational 3 (50%)		
3.	Prioritising	active 6 (100%)	passive 0		
5.	Representing Person/Place/Time	Person	Place 1 (16.66%)	Time	
		Agent 4 (66.66%)	More distal 1 (16.66%)	Present 6 (100%)	3[...]
		Patient 5 (100%)			

Table 1.3b: Percentage of use of the TCFs of 'debt', 'deficit' and 'low [...]

Table 1.4a: Percentage of use of the TCFs of 'need' and 'poverty' i[n]...

TCFs	Period 1: 1900-1948, 16 occurrences		
1. Naming and Describing	Scale 6 (75%)	Misc. 2 (25%)	8 (50%)
2. Representing Actions and States	Material 8 (50%)	Relational 7 (43.75%)	Misc. 1 (6.25%)
3. Prioritising	Active 13 (81.25)	Passive 3 (18.75%)	
4. Representing Person/Place/Time	*Person More distal / Agent 15 (93.75)	Place 2 (12.25%)	Time Present 12 (75%)

1.5.2.1 Naming/Describing PSE[6]

The Conservative and Labour Party described the PSE keywords ('debt', 'deficit', 'low', 'need' 'poverty', and 'poor') in terms of three broad semantic properties: scale, locus and source. Scale refers to representations that concerned the quantity or size of specific PSE issues (e.g., '*huge* debt', '*massive* need' and '*big* deficit'). This category also qualitatively compared PSE with other social challenges (e.g., 'debt and *unemployment'*, 'need and *hunger'* and 'poverty and *crime'*). Locus refers to the geographical location of PSE issues, usually by drawing a distinction between the UK (e.g. '*national* debt') and overseas (e.g. '*overseas* poverty' and '*international* poverty'). Source refers to the origin of the PSE (e.g., '*war* debt' and '*trade* deficit') and those affected by them, i.e., those to whom the PSE is a source of suffering (e.g., '*child* poverty' and '*needs* of the poor').

As Tables 1.3 and 1.4 show, with the exception of the Conservative finance PSE discourse in Period 1 (where the overall numbers are very small), all the political leaders favoured scale-based descriptions of PSE keywords over those linked to their locus or source. Scale-based descriptions often consisted of superlative adjectives, primarily 'large' and 'high'. The locus of PSE was sporadically referenced by both parties, albeit in different periods and in relation to different discourses. The locus of hardship-related PSE was

referenced in Period 2 (Labour Party) and Period 3 (Labour and Conservative Party). Only the Conservative leaders referred to the locus of PSE in Period 1, in relation to financial issues. As for source-based descriptions of PSE, Labour Party leaders used them in their finance discourse only in Period 1, whereas Conservative Party leaders did so throughout the three periods. In the case of the Labour Party, this corresponded to the use of the keyword 'low' (not present in the Conservative corpus as a keyword), which pre-modified different forms of income (e.g. 'low wages', 'low rate' and 'low earning').

Regardless of the broad property being selected to describe PSE, nominalizations containing packaged-up information were used by the leaders of both parties across the three periods and the two discourse types. Packaged-up information hides linguistic values necessary to process the given texts (Simpson 1993, Fowler 1991, Halliday 1985). Linguistically, entities (e.g. 'debt') cannot be directly examined for time, place and agent, in contrast to processes, which extend over time, involve change, and require a subject and a verb (Halliday 1985, Goatly 2007) (see also Edwards and Potter 1992 for the discursive psychology of entities and processes). Halliday and Martin (1993: 39) argue that what justifies the existence of entities is difficult to contest because 'you can argue with a clause but you can't argue with a nominal group.'

In our corpus, packaged-up structures used to describe PSE typically comprised nominal groups that made use of attribute adjectives, as example (1) illustrates.

(1)   What is their defence for all these broken promises, for the blunders, for

the incompetence and for the very high debts? (Edward Heath 1965).

[Period 2; Conservative Party; finance discourse]

In (1) 'high debts' functions as a nominal complement of the final prepositional phrase 'for the very high debts'. The adjective 'high' attributively modifies 'debts', which is also intensified via the adverb 'very'. Heath's description of debt in 'high debts' in example (1) is syntactically a block in that it is presented as an indubitable entity. This is supported by Heath's use of the definite deictic ('the' in 'the very high debts'), which presupposes the existence of the nominal complement ('very high debts'). The utterance leaves the audience without the possibility to question whether or not debt is actually high, as opposed to stating for example:

- Debt must (not) be high (deontic modality);

- Debt will (not) be high (epistemic modality); or

- Debt was (not) high (categorical assertion).

1.5.2.2 Representing States and Actions Linked to PSE

Overall, PSE issues were represented via material action – rather than relational – verbs across parties, periods and discourse types. Relational processes describe a state or being, pointing out the relationship between participants, such as intensive (e.g., someone is), possessive (e.g., someone has), and circumstantial (e.g., something deals). Use of relational processes linked to PSE therefore merely signals that PSE issues exist, rather than indicate the need to take any actions to address them. Nor does use of relational verbs specify whose responsibility these PSE issues are. Material actions verbs, for their part, denote physical doings, such as 'hit', 'fell' and 'rode'. They have two 'inherent participants' associated with them; namely the actor/agent and the goal/patient of the action (Simpson 1993: 82).[7] In our study, PSE issues were primarily represented as the goal of material actions. Consider

example (2):

(2) I believe strongly that we need to reduce the deficit. There will be cuts and there would

have been if we had been in government (Ed Miliband 2010). [Period 3; Labour

Party; finance discourse]

In this example, 'deficit' functions as a direct object of the material action verb 'reduce'. The

actor is first person plural pronoun 'we' – an animate being who is explicitly identified as the

one to perform the action of reducing the deficit. Since engaging in material actions is a

'direct enactment of social or institutional power' (Van Dijk 1995: 21), party leaders' frequent

use of material action verbs in which they - or their parties – appear as subjects/agents in may

contribute to assert their party's political hegemony.

It is worth noting that material actions were more frequently used than relational actions

by the leaders of the two parties in Period 3 for both PSE discourse types. This may be related

to the security crisis after the 9/11 attack, which resulted in tougher security policies,

including around financial issues of 'debt' and 'deficit'. Within the hardship discourse, the

Conservative and Labour Party leaders resorted to 'challenging' verbal actions, such as

'fighting' and 'combating', which entailed combat metaphorical constructions (see, e.g.,

Charteris-Black 2013). This contributed to representing PSE as threats that required

immediate aggressive (combat) action, as they overwhelmingly penetrated many social areas.

Consider example (3):

(3)   Labour still have the arrogance to think that they are the ones who will fight poverty

and deprivation. On Monday, when we announced our plan to Get Britain Working

you know what Labour called it? "Callous." (David Cameron 2009). [Period 3; Conservative Party; hardship discourse]

In the subordinate clause of the first sentence '… that they are the ones who will fight poverty'. Cameron also describes Labour Party members as arrogant individuals, expressing his disbelief in their ability to fight poverty, and referring to them via the substitute pronoun' 'the ones' (Quirk et., al 1985: 387), which marks interpersonal (or, here, inter-group) distance.

Our analysis of processes for representing states and actions linked to PSE also identified some cross-party differences. These concerned the type of material actions verbs most frequently used across the three periods. Simpson (1993) distinguishes between three types of material actions verbs according to the animacy and intention of the participants, namely:

- a Material Action Intention, intentionally performed by a conscious being – e.g. '*We have to cut* the deficit' (John Major, 1993);

- a Material Action Supervention, unintentionally performed by a conscious being – e.g. 'I am certain, unless we can hold our own with the other great nations […] *we shall fall* behind in the industrial race' (Anthony Eden, 1955).

- a Material Action Event, performed by an inanimate actor, e.g. 'Cut taxes or increase spending - these things won't work because *they lead to* more debt (David Cameron, 2011).

In the Conservative Party corpus, the most frequent verbs for representing PSE issues were Material Action Intention verbs, followed by Material Action Event verbs. Material Action

Supervention verbs were not used. The semantic categories of these material actions comprised activities linked to reducing PSE issues, the most frequent ones being 'repay', 'wipe', 'run up', and 'tackle'. In these cases, PSE issues functioned as patients of reduction-aimed actions performed by third person participants. Consider the illustrative example in (4):

(4)   It is necessary to make a beginning in the reduction of our national debt (Bonar Law
        1920). [Period 1; Conservative Party; finance discourse]

In (4), 'debt' functions as a post modifying noun in an adverbial prepositional phrase of a to-infinitive clause 'to make a beginning in the reduction of our national debt'. The example contains a Material Action Intention verb ('make'); the implied subject of the to-infinitive clause can be expressed by 'us', as in 'it is necessary for us to make …' or 'we' as in 'it is necessary that we make …' (see Hampe and Grady 2005). In (4) Law suggests addressing the financial issue of debt by 'making a beginning in [its] reduction'. The suggested actions are nominalized, i.e., '*beginning'* from begin and '*reduction'* from reduce. Nominalizing verbs is a 'process of syntactic reduction' (Fowler et al. 1979: 41) that offers opportunities for deleting information regarding subject, time and modality of the action. In this case, it is not obvious who is going 'to make the beginning in the reduction of debt', because of the absence of the subject of these nominalized verbs. Law thus distances himself and his party from performing the PSE reduction-aimed actions by nominalizing them. This was a recurrent feature of the Conservative Party corpus within the representing states and actions TCF across the three periods and discourse types.

In contrast to the Conservative Party, Material Action Events were the most frequent type of the material action verbs used by Labour Party leaders in Period 1 and 2, albeit that it

changed to Material Action Intention in Period 3. Semantically, most of the material actions in Period 2 were expressed via verbs that denoted general actions (e.g., 'make' and 'use'), and those were performed by third person actors. In contrast – but like in the Conservative Party corpus – in Periods 1 and 3 the material actions represented in the Labour Party corpus tended to highlight reduction activities (e.g. 'relieve' 'cut' and 'eradicate') whose goals were finance and hardship-related issues. Example (5) is typical of this:

(5) That power could be multiplied beyond measure if the structures of security which are now amongst the ambitions of world leaders were established to promote aid, to protect the environment, to relieve debt burdens, to establish fair trade, to spread education, health care and housing in place of ignorance, disease and squalor (Neil Kinnock 1988). [Period 2; Labour Party; finance discourse]

In (5), the conditional clause contains a number of embedded to-infinitive clauses, in which 'debt burden' functions as a direct object of the Material Action Event verb 'relieve' ('to relieve debt burdens'). The subject of those embedded to-infinitive clauses is the inanimate 3rd person actor 'structures of security', which is the same as that of the main clause. Neil Kinnock argues that that relieving debt burdens would be met by structures of security, were these to be established. However, he does not make it clear who will establish them. He relates the activity to an unknown actor. Thus, he distances himself, as well as his political party, from the responsibilities that would fall upon the 'structures of security'. This in turn serves to distance himself and his party also from the task of relieving the 'debt burden'.

It is worth noting that most of the activities in Period 1 and 2 were performed by this type of inanimate 3rd person actor. It is also worthy of note that the majority of the occurrences of 'debt' and 'deficit' (as well as 'low' in Labour corpus) across the three periods

functioned as 'recipient' of the material actions being considered. Thus the PSE keywords were acted-upon entities that played a subordinate role in the texts. Additionally, 'need' and 'poverty' frequently functioned as goals of those material actions across the three periods.

1.5.2.3 Prioritising

When speaking about PSE in finance and hardship terms and across the three periods, the Conservative and Labour Party leaders mostly placed PSE keywords in the final part of the active voice sentences in which they were used. In other words, PSE terms were the focus of the information structures, or sentence 'rhemes'. Rheme is the likely place to introduce new information in human utterances (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004). According to Hart (2014: 128) use of the active voice represents a discourse order in which the audience is 'ego-aligned [rather than] ego-opposed' with the agent's viewpoint. These active voice alternates affect the order of participants relative to the audience, redirecting the audience's orientation such that it may be aligned with the agent. The audience is, therefore, less likely to question whether or not the agent (here, the Conservative and Labour Party leaders) are responsible for the PSE issues being mentioned – their attention being focused instead on the issues themselves. This pattern of use of the prioritising TCF is illustrated in (6):

(6) It is us, the modern compassionate Conservative party, who are the real champions of fighting poverty in Britain today (David Cameron, 2012). [Period 3; Conservative Party; hardship discourse]

In this example, 'poverty' functions as an object of the material action 'fight' – another typical example of the use of combat metaphors in the corpus, especially in Period 3, post

9/11 attacks. The noun 'poverty' is presented in the final position of the relative clause. Placing 'poverty' at the bottom node of the information structure tree reconstructs the term as new information, which in this context answers the question of 'what issue do we face?', rather than for example answering the question of 'who is responsible for the issue?'.

1.5.2.4 Representing Person/Place/Time (Deixis) in PSE

Use of place deixis was comparatively infrequent across the three periods, parties and discourses of PSE in the BPPS corpus. As for time deixis, the present tense dominated representations of PSE by both parties and PSE discourses across the three periods. This may serve to emphasise the relevance of PSE to the here and now of the leaders' speeches – the annual party conferences – and, in turn, to the policies to be ultimately derived from these political events. Rhetorically, use of the present tense may also serve to create a sense of urgency about one's message – here regarding a range of PSE issues. Although less frequently, present tense deictic references were also linked in the corpus to both past events and future consequences, hence presenting PSE as an ever-present challenge to the UK.

Overall, person deixis was most frequently of the more distal third person type across periods, parties and discourses. This type of person deixis creates a separation between writers/speakers and text/speeches (Jeffries 2010), hence distancing party leaders from their responsibility for the PSE issues being thus referenced. It is important to note, nevertheless, that use of proximal (1st person) deictic references by Labour and Conservative party leaders across both the finance and the hardship discourse increased across the three periods examined. This means that the leaders became more personally involved in their own discussion of PSE, as illustrated in example (7):

(7) There are some low-paid workers here paying the price of defeat. Not the rest of us. I

am heartily sick of seeing the victims who pay the price of our defeat (Neil Kinnock

1988). [Period 2; Labour Party; finance discourse]

In this example, Kinnock highlights a current finance-related PSE issue (low wages), linking

it to his Party's (election) defeat. In doing so, he uses present tense narration, in which the

actor is a proximal (first person) 'I' and the patient is third person 'victims' (workers).

Kinnock, as an agent, explicitly states his feelings ('I am heartily sick of seeing') and uses

emotive language, including labelling low-paid workers as 'victims who pay the price'.

Rather than necessarily a sign of genuine commitment to PSE as individuals, or even figure-

heads of political parties, this finding may simply reflect a broader shift towards

personalisation in political discourse in the UK (Langer 2007, Corner 2003) and beyond.

1.6 Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined the discursive mechanisms for representing PSE across time

(1900-2014), and the ideologies that underpin such representations, within the context of

British political leaders' (Conservative and Labour) speeches at their annual party

conferences. Our findings reveal two main PSE discourses: a finance and a hardship

discourse. Although both parties made frequent use of these discourses across time, the

Conservative Party made more use of the finance than of the hardship discourse, whereas the

opposite trend characterised the Labour Party.

In terms of the ideo-textual mechanisms via which these discourses are articulated, and focusing on the most frequent TCFs in our corpus, the analysis has identified more similarities than differences, both cross-party and cross-period. The analysis of the describing TCF shows that the Conservative and Labour Party leaders characterised PSE in ways that sought to raise their audience's awareness of the crippling effect these issues have on British society. Most frequently when doing so, leaders resorted to packaged-up information structures that enabled them to present their propositions as entities to be taken for granted. Party leaders' 'unquestionable' propositions regarding PSE were reinforced by their frequent qualification of the issues as 'huge', 'excessive', and other superlative adjectives. This may have sought to focus people's attention on the sheer size of PSE challenges encountered and, in turn, away from their cause.

Regarding the representing actions/states TCF, the analysis has revealed that the Conservative and Labour Party leaders primarily relied on material actions, which may have helped them to reinforce their Party's political hegemony. Party leaders are known to draw upon challenging and reducing actions as means to exercise social power and control (Van Dijk, 1995). This is what both political parties in our corpus also did, with the effect of representing PSE as posing a series of threats to the country. Most material actions used by the Conservative and Labour Party leaders were MAIs, performed by animate beings who were mainly distal 3rd person participants. In other words, when authoring their speech, party leaders did not overall present themselves as prominent in dealing with PSE. MAEs were relatively frequent in the Labour corpus during Period 1. This impersonalization of the actions being represented in their discourse helped distance Labour leaders from their direct responsibility to deal with PSE issues in early twentieth century. Furthermore, and regarding the prioritizing TCF, PSE terms were frequently presented in active voice sentences and

placed as sentential rhemes. Through this use of the prioritizing TCF, the Conservative and Labour Party leaders sought to focus the audience's attention on the issues being discussed, rather than on whose responsibility it was to resolve them.

Finally, and regarding the use of personal deixis, the Conservative and Labour Party leaders frequently used more distal (third person) agents and patients. The ideological effect was to distance themselves from the suggested actions when discussing PSE. In Period 3, Conservative Party leaders showed increased use of 1st person proximal agents, as an indication of their active involvement in their PSE discourse. The Labour Party leaders, too, appeared as discursively concerned about the financial issues as individuals, via increase in the use of proximal 1st person forms in about one-third of occurrences in Period 2 and 3. Our study did not entail a comparative analysis regarding party leaders' use of person deixis when talking about other issues. However, given the attested personalization of political discourse from approximately the 1950s in the UK, we do not see this finding as indicative of a political leaders' personal commitment to PSE *per se.*

All in all, the Conservative and Labour Party leaders represented PSE as issues to be acted upon, rather than as issues that those suffering from PSE could actively change. In doing this, the stereotype of 'the poor' as idle/passive was perpetuated across time. Political responsibility for combating PSE was often delegated to third-parties, including unspecific ones (such as 'the structures of security', in example 5). In the third period (2001-2014) in particular, party leaders moved towards a more aggressive stance towards PSE, increasing their use of combat metaphors. This lends support to the thesis that PSE has become securitised by political elites. We see in this finding a reason for concern, given that the targets of such combative discourse are the many individuals in PSE who are also passivized and, hence, unable to escape their condition.

Notes

1 Scholarship in Media Studies that, using content analysis and ethnographic methods, has also examined British media constructions of PSE is noteworthy, too. Pioneer and since then influential works therein are the two volumes by the Glasgow Media Group (Beharell and Glasgow University Media Group, 1976, 1980), which showed elitism in British television coverage at the time of economic problems including recession, unemployment and inflation.

2 For further details of the procedure see Almaged (forthcoming).

3 http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org

4 BNC is a 100 million word corpus of general English language use, available online: http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.ukl

5 CORPS is a corpus of political speeches comprising more than 3600 of UK and US presidential speeches (7.9 million words) (Guerini et al 2013).

6 As 'naming' concerns the actual PSE keywords, the analysis offered here concerns the 'describing' part of this TCF.

7 For a detailed review of the main transitivity models see Bartley (2018).

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