

‘Ruled Britannia’: Metaphorical construction of the EU as enemy in UKIP campaign posters

Introduction

We are currently witnessing a rising tide of populism in various political contexts. It spreads across both the political left and right, as evidenced by victories such as Podemos in Spain for the left, and, on the right by the election of Donald Trump for the Presidency of the United States, as well as the surprising outcome of the Brexit Referendum in the UK (Wahl-Jorgensen 2018). In fact, it is the Euroscepticism that surrounds Brexit (Bale 2018) that forms the focus of the current study, with a specific focus on the UK Independence Party (UKIP).

Populism has traditionally been understood as a political philosophy focused on uniting the interests of the citizenry, often revolving around an opposition to shared enemies seen to challenge sovereignty (see Laclau 2005). However, more contemporary iterations of populism have emerged, which Wahl-Jorgensen (2018: 767) describes as being based on “discursively generating collective identities based on oppositions between ‘the pure people’ and ‘the corrupt elite’”. Further, Weyland (2001) has indicated that another characteristic of contemporary populism is how populist parties tend to be organized around, and demonstrate allegiance to, charismatic leaders. Contemporary leaders that would fall into such a category would include Donald Trump or, in other recent examples, Nicolás Maduro (Venezuela), Boris Johnson (current UK Prime Minister), or Nigel Farage (founder and former UKIP leader; current Brexit Party leader).

Further ingrained in this understanding of populist philosophy is the discursive representation of policies and ideologies by parties and followers. Breeze (2019a: 26) alludes to this as discourses involved in “context-dependent semiotic practices”, that act as vehicles for the communication and dissemination of political messages. Moffitt (2016) draws attention to the critical role of discourse and related self-presentation and performance, which

work in unison in order to provide a method of presenting claims. In line with traditional populist logic, these also work together to establish and maintain a strong connection with ‘the people’, whose interests and desires are shared (Taggart 2000). An essential strategy in successfully maintaining this relationship is ensuring a sense of in-group loyalty and allegiance which positions out-groups as either veritable threats to way of life and security, or as social groups who have betrayed the people through corruption (i.e. ‘corrupt elites’) (Breeze 2019b).

To draw together these understandings of populism and to establish and clarify the theoretical backdrop of our study, we orient to Mudde and Kaltwasser’s (2017) attestation that populism is a ‘thin-centred ideology’, which they define as one which “considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté general* (general will) of the people” (p. 5). A key feature of thin ideologies, they argue, is a focus on a small selection of issues (e.g. issues such as immigration). Connected to this is the model presented by Moffitt and Tormey (2014) suggesting that populism should be considered a ‘political style’ that revolves around the appeal to the people as mentioned above, the perception of crisis or threat from outside, and then what the authors term ‘bad manners’. These bad manners relate to the behavior of populist politicians who neglect to follow ‘appropriate’ models of behavior.

It is this position that forms the basis of the current study of UKIP campaign posters. We undertake a multimodal analysis of the visually-oriented campaign and party advertisements of UKIP. In doing so, we are guided by Bhatia’s (2015) multi-perspective analytical framework for the discourse of illusion and utilize it to explore how discursive illusions are established and perpetuated by UKIP discourse in their posters.

Literature Review

Euroscepticism and Brexit

UKIP emerged in the early 1990s and has progressed to a position of significance through its hardened Eurosceptic rhetoric and ideology (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2004). However, it was not until the European Parliament elections of 2004 and 2009 that the party truly gained traction. Success in local elections took significantly longer, with UKIP only winning its first seat in the UK Parliament in 2014. However, it progressed to become, for a time, the third-ranked national party in popular support and until 2018 remained Britain's largest representative party in the European Parliament (Evans and Mellon 2019). By this time, what the party stood for had been firmly established, with Bale (2018: 268) explaining that "UKIP was from the outset utterly opposed to Britain's continued membership in the EU" due to a perception of national sovereignty being over-ridden and member state liberties being "crushed".

From this foundation, Nigel Farage, the leader of the party from 2006-2009 and 2010-2016, pushed for a focus beyond mere Euroscepticism. This included advocating for the restoration of traditional grammar schools, climate change denial, and most significantly, the vital need to reduce immigration (Bale 2018). Although a more expansive collection of core issues than Euroscepticism alone, it can still be argued that the list is limited in nature, which aligns Farage and UKIP with Mudde and Kaltwasser's (2017) view of populism as a thin ideology. In particular, Farage can be said to have fused immigration concerns with EU membership in order to create an impending threat. This has been an effective strategy since traditionally EU membership was not an issue of great salience for the British people, but the issue of immigration had long been a major concern (Dennison and Goodwin 2015). In pursuing this strategy, UKIP reflected Moffitt and Tormey's (2014) notion of populism as political style, evidenced by the targeted emphasis on representing the people against the

corrupt elite, and the discursive construction of immanent crises or threats. As such, EU membership began to be seen more negatively, particularly as economic and cultural threats from migrant workers coming from EU member states were highlighted, with the only solution being an exit from the EU. This culminated in the party's united position in relation to the 'Leave' campaign during the Brexit Referendum of 2016 (Hughes 2019), with UKIP being championed as the party aligned with those who supported Brexit. Ultimately, although UKIP were not the party that won the day in relation to Brexit, it did lay some significant groundwork for this victory to be achieved by the Conservative Party.

Beyond immigration, UKIP also continued to align with populist ideology through an auxiliary focus on those citizens who have been 'left-behind' by globalization, who are typically working-class, older, and with a low level of education and skills (Ford and Goodwin 2014). In other words, the anti-elite sentiment that often typifies populist politics and rhetoric held a core place for UKIP as well and, together with anti-EU and anti-immigration rhetoric, is evident in much of the UKIP literature.

Within populist discourse, 'the people' are a central component (Laclau 2005). Breeze (2019b) recently explored through a corpus-assisted approach how the 'people' are positioned in UKIP discourse and discovered they were constructed as 'British people' across contexts such as workers, citizens, and businesspeople. Unsurprisingly, 'the British people' was the most frequent collocation, with Britishness "assumed as an unproblematic shared value" (Breeze 2019b: 94). Most notably, the people were also positioned within the context of the Other, who were threats to the British way of life, primarily the "treacherous elites" and immigrants. In a separate but related study, Breeze (2019a) also explored how UKIP's populism is communicated through affective-discursive practices. In other words, how the language of affect is used to enhance or strengthen a message, revealing that UKIP's language tended towards expressions of violence and anger, and in general utilizing affect

more effectively than Labour, the party against which it was compared. It appears then that the positioning of the people was combined with affective language in order to communicate UKIP's core values and beliefs.

The exploration of these Eurosceptic, anti-immigration and anti-elite views in such studies establishes a clear link with UKIP's strong Brexit rhetoric. However, as campaign and party literature are not limited to purely textual formats, there is a need to explore conceptualizations of reality as expressed multimodally through combinations of text and image that come to represent powerful symbolizations of ideological positioning, which Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) argue is a key characteristic of most political discourse.

Significant research has been conducted on campaign posters of far-right populist parties (e.g. Forchtner et al. 2013; Wodak et al. 2013), and a general finding is that the posters of radical opposition parties – such as UKIP – almost always tend to utilize visuals to “create a strong impact, and they are especially effective at giving voters a vivid impression of an alternative reality that may materialize in the near future, presented as desirable or, in most cases, deplorable” (Novelli 2017: 98). With a specific focus on right-wing populist parties and their visual communication, Doerr (2017a) points out that these parties frequently share and spread controversial posters in relation to core issues such as immigration, which then spread beyond campaign level to more extremist parties via online networks. Doerr (2017a: 4), for instance, states that “the election posters of far-right political parties construct a narrative of threat with anti-intellectual appeals to ‘common sense’” and an alignment with the parties' own conceptualizations of reality. Doerr (2017b) has further outlined how populist parties position immigrants and refugees as threats and ‘criminal foreigners’, and thus express through their discourse a desire to protect the nation from such threats. A greater understanding of the visual elements of party posters and communication is important as it provides a more nuanced perspective of the ideological and political position of parties than

what can be gleaned from purely textual or oral means. In the following section, we outline the core theoretical framework for our study in order to foreground the analysis that follows.

Discourse of Illusion: A Theoretical Framework

The realities in which individuals exist can inevitably be interpreted in various ways due to their subjective nature. One's reality is influenced by varying factors including familial relationships, friendships, employment status and experiences, political ideologies, education, and broader societal expectations. In line with the evolving nature of these factors, then, one's reality is never a completed process and must, therefore, be seen as a *conceptualization* or version of reality .

The progression from the range of socio-historical influences that impact an individual's reality can perhaps best be understood through the work of Bourdieu (1990), and especially the notion of *habitus* which helps explain the connection between these influences and the cognitive development of a conceptualization of reality. Specifically, Ross and Bhatia (2019: 2226) describe habitus as “the individual and collective practices that emerge from socialization and historical experience”. Being guided by prior life experiences in this way highlights the link between an individual's habitus and their values, beliefs and ideological positions.

Following on from this discussion of habitus, the concept of ‘discursive illusions’ has been proposed by Bhatia (2015). According to Ross and Bhatia (2019: 2226), a discursive illusion develops from “the power invested in the *subjective* nature of reality conceptualisations” [italics in original]. Bhatia (2015) posits that within public discourse, and especially in the political context, discursive illusions reveal themselves when there is broad acceptance of, and participation in, the belief that an individual's ideologically-guided and subjective interpretation is the *only* socially acceptable possibility or conclusion. This leads to

the illusion being integrated with our habitus, and our ideologies and beliefs being communicated through it. In order to illuminate this further, we take the UKIP campaign posters that form the focus of the current study. UKIP's conceptualization of Brexit as a release from servitude to the EU, and more generally, the reinstatement of the British way of life, gives rise to powerful discursive illusions laced through a nativist narrative that highlights the threat of denigration of British sovereignty, and conflation of migration and national security concerns, in its pursuit of inherently isolationist policies. Such rhetoric warrants a closer look at how the Discourse of Illusion can reveal the cultural, political and social tensions underlying inherently ideological discourses. It is anticipated that the campaign posters of populist parties such as UKIP will present a conceptualization of reality that resembles aspects of Mudde and Kaltwasser's (2017) thin-centered ideology and adheres to the appeals to 'the people' and nativist sentiments inherent in populist politics.

Analytical Framework and Methodology

The framework of the Discourse of Illusion is founded on the belief that gatekeepers of powerful proliferative media create illusions through public discourse, with the aim of legitimating certain versions of reality over others, through use of a range of linguistic and semiotic resources. As audiences consent to these versions of reality, collective illusions are formed, becoming a challenge to negate because they start to represent 'the truth'. Thus, we can argue that discursive illusions are a result of a group's subjective representation of reality, emerging from a historical repository of experiences, embodying various linguistic and semiotic actions, and often leading to the creation of delineating sociocultural categories of various people/groups. Analysis conducted using this framework aims to demystify how different narratives of 'the truth' or versions of reality are discursively constructed by attempting to reveal the manner in which history contributes to formation of current

understanding and beliefs; how these are beliefs are most noticeably communicated through powerful, emotive metaphors; and ultimately how these narratives are responsible for stratifying groups and individuals into divisive categories and classes. For our analysis, we draw on Bhatia's (2015) framework and its interrelated components of (1) historicity, (2) linguistic and semiotic action, and (3) social impact, with a focus on processes of categorization. Previous studies utilizing the framework have tended to focus on language-based texts and instances of discourse, but it is equally applicable to visual communication and multimodal discourse, and it is this approach we take in the current study. An overview of each component is provided below and applied to analysis in a similar three-step manner:

1. Historicity: habitus is fundamental to the Discourse of Illusion as it involves recontextualizing past experience into current reality. To analyze this the framework draws on 'structured immediacy' (Leudar and Nekvapil 2011: 66), focusing on "how participants enrich the here-and-now of action by connecting it to the past", and which can be further specified as "the unconscious or conscious reconceptualization of historical antecedents in an attempt to situate and present specific instances of current reality, often in relation to the future" (Bhatia 2015: 52). In doing so, the framework extends Bourdieu's notion of habitus beyond individual practice to include practices of larger discursive entities (e.g. newspapers, political parties etc.), forming a collective habitus. Analysis at this level will draw on temporal references, invocation of socio-political history, and recontextualizations that revolve around the visual elements of the UKIP posters with textual, language-based support. That is, without the visual component, the recontextualization and historical evocation taking place would be ineffectual. In doing this, we discover how situating current activities in history through reference to the past "thicken" the descriptions of people and activities – providing them with meanings they

would not have had otherwise” (Leudar and Nekvapil 2011: 80).

2. Linguistic and semiotic action: subjective representations of the world generate significant metaphorical rhetoric, to analyze which the framework draws from Charteris-Black’s (2004, 2005) approach to critical metaphor analysis. This approach “aims to identify the intentions and ideologies underlying language use” (Charteris-Black 2005: 26). The emphasis here is on the speaker or writer’s intention in the creation and diffusion of representational metaphors by blending both cognitive and pragmatic perspectives, recognizing that metaphor is not just a linguistic phenomenon but also a persuasive tool. This is typically achieved through the creation of conceptual metaphors, where the locus of metaphor resides in “the way we conceptualise one mental domain in terms of another” Lakoff (1993: 203). This relies on the language of a *source domain* being transferred to a *target domain*.

In this paper, we move beyond simply textual instances of metaphor, embracing visual examples as well, and explore how metaphors can function multimodally in the UKIP posters. As Blair (2004: 50) argues, “visual arguments constitute the species of visual persuasion in which the visual elements overlie, accentuate, render vivid and immediate, and otherwise elevate in forcefulness a reason or set of reasons for modifying a belief, an attitude or one’s conduct”. Metaphors themselves introduce to the discourse of illusion the paradoxical combination of clarity and ambiguity necessary to present a subjective representation of the world as impartial, invoking the appropriate emotional responses in target audiences. In the context of an emotionally charged political campaign, for instance, the integration of colour associations, skewed history and symbolism, amongst other modes create a visual narrative that invokes an immediate emotional and lasting response.

3. Social impact: ideological language often gives rise to delineating categories and stereotypes, which can be usefully analyzed through Jayyusi's (1984: 183) concept of 'categorization' that elucidates how people "organize their moral positions and commitments round certain category identities". Analysis here involves identifying three classes of membership categories: self-organized groups (united by common beliefs, and goals); type categorization (predicting actions believed to be "embedded in the features of that categorization" [Jayyusi 1984: 24]); and individual descriptor designators (assigning labels with both an ascriptive and descriptive function to 'types' of people in those groups). In the UKIP posters of our study, the visual images of the posters are crucial to the communication of the sociopolitical categorizations taking place.

Data Collection

The data for the project were collected in September, 2019. This was two months after Boris Johnson had replaced Teresa May as Conservative Party leader and thus UK Prime Minister, and two months before he was democratically elected as Prime Minister in the general election, so populist politics was very present in the mainstream media. We canvassed the UKIP social media accounts inclusive of Instagram, Facebook, Twitter as well as their own website for campaign posters, and particularly those related to Brexit or that reflected the party's Eurosceptic views. An additional criterion was an emphasis on visual, multimodal posters as opposed to purely textual examples. We further conducted a Google Images search using a range of search terms such as 'UKIP campaign posters and flyers', 'UKIP Brexit posters and flyers', and 'UKIP posters EU'. From this process we accumulated a total of 26 posters, many of which were related to prior European Parliament elections, where UKIP promoted the 'leave' sentiment that it continued through to Brexit. Once the posters had been

collected, each author independently coded the images (as well as image-text relations) for whether they reflected any component, or combination of components, of Bhatia's (2015) framework for the discourse of illusion (or, indeed, if they did not reflect the framework at all). The independent codes were then compared against each other for inter-rater reliability, and almost 100% was attained. There were only three images that presented differences in that one researcher coded them as reflecting two different components, and the other researcher only one. This difference was addressed through discussion and explanation of the various interpretations, which in the end resulted in agreement between the researchers that they should be coded to reflect two components – thus, ultimately, there was 100% agreement on the coding of the images.

From the 26 posters, 15 were interpreted as most clearly reflecting historicity, 14 as most clearly reflecting metaphor use as part of linguistic and semiotic action, and 18 as most clearly reflecting social impact through categorization (note that due to posters often having more than one interpretation, the total is greater than the 26 collected). Only three posters were agreed to not align with any category.

For the purpose of our analysis, we present a selection of representative posters of each of the components of the Discourse of Illusion framework. The decision on which posters to present was based on those that demonstrated clearest evidence of the respective components of the Discourse of Illusion framework. Thus, we were guided by the following questions in our final selections:

- Historicity – Which posters most clearly and explicitly evoke and recontextualize historical events?
- Linguistic and semiotic action – Which posters most clearly demonstrate the multimodal use of metaphor?

- Social impact – Which posters most clearly demonstrate ‘us’ and ‘them’ categorizations?

Each researcher individually selected five posters from the dataset for each category that best reflected these guiding questions, and then compared the selections. We found that there was overlap with some, but not all, and these are the posters that have ultimately been presented in the analysis as we were in agreement about them providing the strongest evidence of discursive illusions in the UKIP posters.

It was necessary to make a decision on a smaller selection for presentation and analysis as even though our dataset is relatively small overall, it was not possible to discuss in detail the themes and emphases of each poster given the space limitations of the paper. For the posters we have included, we discuss them in relation to how they represent UKIP’s conceptualization of reality, reinforcing certain discursive illusions.

Analysis

Historicity

The subjective representation of reality constructed by the UKIP underpins the ideological position communicated through their campaign posters, flyers and other party-related public discourse. The notion of ideology in this context can be best understood as the varying beliefs and thoughts that serve to either uphold or contest “power relations arising in class societies characterized by relations of domination” (Fairclough 1995: 82). These ideological perceptions eventually lose their origins over time, reconstructed and reenacted in different linguistic and semiotic forms, becoming naturalized and commonsensical, and it is this quality that makes them particularly difficult to fight through. And, in the age of social media, discursive illusions are proliferated extensively and rapidly, offering definitions of issues and events that, although remaining subjective, are positioned as dominant and

normative. That is, these versions of issues and events have become somewhat naturalized into social consciousness and therefore ingrained in the habitus of the public. Within Bhatia's (2015) framework, analysis at this level is conducted through the component of historicity.

Historicity, with its emphasis on recontextualization, permits the framing of contemporary events in light of past experiences. In this way, a reimagining of history can be said to occur, or a reconstruction, in an attempt to "grasp human history as a seamless, unbroken whole" (Graham et al. 2004: 216). This results in historical moments surfacing in the context of a current reality, such as the present socio-political climate in the UK and EU, and specifically in relation to UKIP and its socio-political ideology. With regard to the specific focus of the present study, there were instances in the campaign posters of UKIP where the historicity of the presented ideological values was particularly evident and was expressed through both the text as well visual metaphors at the same time. The first of these can be seen in Figure 1.

[Figure 1 about here]

On first inspection, there are several clues which suggest a recontextualization of historical events from the period of the Roman Empire. First among these is a reference to the UK as 'Britannia'. This title was used for Great Britain following the Roman conquest in 43AD; thus, by adopting 'Britannia' here, the threatening notions of invasion and conquest are imposed on the present context. Of course, here the implication is that it is the EU doing the conquering as opposed to the Romans. The collision of the past and present is evident also in the juxtaposition of Roman weaponry, notably the legion helmet resting on the ground, the trident held by the European 'ruler', and the circular *clipeus* emblazoned with the EU flag, with the volumes of legislation forming a conquering mountaintop. Euro currency littered

across the ground further intensifies the insinuation that the EU is plundering British land to feed its own might.

The vector of the subject's gaze is directed over the viewer in what can be interpreted as a sense of superiority, analogous with being ruled. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 89) state that "the gaze of represented participants directly addresses the viewers and so establishes an imaginary relationship with them"; what is interesting here is that the gaze of the participant does not meet that of the viewer, so the viewer is being *indirectly* addressed in a subordinate manner. Here, of course, that viewer is the ordinary UK citizen, positioned as being *beneath* the powerful EU rulers. Interestingly, while the recontextualization of Roman rule is made clear through the military weapons and helmet, the business suit worn by the ruler is representative of a more contemporary uniform, implying economic rule and power (further supported by the money littered across the ground), and supporting the visual metaphor of power and conquest through this historic-contemporary juxtaposition. The power of the metaphor here (and others in our study) emerges from the utilization of the historical context of the Roman empire as the source domain of this conceptual metaphor in order to transfer these meanings and implications onto the target domain of contemporary European politics.

The illusion of the UK being conquered that is presented visually in the image of the poster is reinforced when the poster's primary text is considered holistically, with 'Ruled Britannia' not only recontextualizing Roman conquest and rule, but also the patriotic British song 'Rule Britannia!', long associated with the British military, particularly the Royal Navy. However, in this instance the imperative verb 'rule' is altered to the participle 'ruled' to imply a loss of independence and being subservient to a higher power. Breaking free from this subservience is at the core of UKIP's message, textualized in the phrase 'take back control' on UKIP's purple and yellow insignia (yellow often seen as denoting wealth and

purple denoting royalty), insinuating the reinstatement of British sovereignty, presenting a sharp visual contrast to EU's signature blue color. The populist instructive 'take back' placing control firmly in the hands of the voters. Thus, the powerful combination of gaze, historical visual motifs representing both historical and contemporary contexts, and the accompanying text work together to communicate UKIP's ideology.

The recontextualization occurring here and in other images can be better understood when viewed alongside Wodak's (2000) explication of the four contradictory tendencies of recontextualization, which are staticity versus dynamicity, simplicity versus complexity, precision versus vagueness, and argumentation versus statement and generalization of claims. What these tendencies enable is an evolving meaning-making process where meaning can be shifted "either within one genre – as in different versions of a specific written text – or across semiotic dimensions" (Wodak 2000: 192). In other words, every change of context establishes a new meaning and communicates new messages. In the context of this poster, the visual depiction of elements of the Roman Empire juxtaposed with the suited subject merges the notions of ancient imperial and contemporary economic power, and carries with it the recontextualized notion of conquered citizenry.

The posters generated by UKIP also create historical recontextualization of the effects of WWII, particularly in relation to the flow of migrants from Eastern Europe to Western Europe post-1945. The UKIP poster that references this can be seen in Figure 2.

[Figure 2 about here]

Figure 2 depicts a long line of refugees walking towards EU countries following German Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision to open the borders to refugees escaping the war in Syria. The large volume of refugees curves around the text of the poster, which reads

‘Breaking Point: The EU has failed us all’, implying the threat of open borders. The image supports the commonly observed water metaphor in migration discourse which symbolizes “the loss of control over immigration” (van der Valk 2000: 234) through depiction of asylum-seekers as literally flooding into the country (cf. Gabrielatos and Baker 2008); the inference here being that the dam wall is about to break. In other words, the metaphor of water is invoked with water acting as the source domain (e.g. flooding, drowning etc.), and the target domain being immigration. The metaphor gains further weight through the shape of the line of the flow of people, resembling the bends of a river.

The recontextualization of past events and occurrences is arguably more subtle here, but can still draw comparison with Figure 3 which depicts a screen shot from a 2005 BBC documentary involving Nazi propaganda footage of migrants walking towards Western European host countries (cf. Stewart and Mason 2016).

[Figure 3 about here]

Most noticeable in both images is the vector denoting the same striking curve, proceeding in the same direction, of both refugee lines with farmland on either side. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 52) would argue that this vector engages in an “active process of communication” where the viewer is urged to think of the origin of the refugees as an undesirable, dangerous place, elements of which they now carry towards the viewer (i.e. towards the UK and Europe). This can most effectively be communicated by visual means, giving the viewer a stronger sense of elements, such as number of people, ethnicity or cultural background and gender, than can be delivered through purely textual means. It can be argued that the seemingly intentional correlation between both Figure 2 and Figure 3 has two possible effects: first, UKIP can be seen as using the footage to achieve a similar effect

of fearmongering among the British people, as what was occurring with the original image. Second, and perhaps less intentional, is the unforeseen negative impact on UKIP of the fascist overtones in Figure 3, which unfortunately, seems to condone the treatment of innocent people during WWII, by advocating a similar conceptualization of refugees in present times. Overall, these images (Figures 1-3) give an insight into the manner in which historical events and understandings are recontextualized contemporarily in an attempt to communicate UKIP's anti-immigration and insular economic beliefs.

Linguistic and Semiotic Action

Subjective conceptualizations of reality are often expressed through representational metaphors that help make “infeasible or overly-imaginative correlations feasible ... provid[ing] some means of comprehension when dealing with complex issues” (Bhatia 2015: 19). Metaphors expressed through visual means are especially effective in reframing issues and events as they “activate unconscious emotional associations” (Charteris-Black 2005: 13), including fear, threat, defence, in a more immediate manner. In this way, metaphorical meaning is inferred through the associated connotations of various multimodalities, including words, signs, colours, or a combination of them, enabling our interpretations of sociocultural and political experiences. New, creative metaphors are especially effective for arresting meaning in chaotic contexts, creating “coherent structure, highlighting some things and hiding others” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 139), in their bid to “sanction actions, justify inferences, and help us set goals” (142). The most significant metaphors emerging from UKIP campaign posters seem to draw on the historical notion of ruthless invaders and conquerors plundering sovereign land, and depleting the British nation of its resources, ideals and values.

[Figure 4 about here]

[Figure 5 about here]

Figures 4 and 5 both illustrate a similar idea through combination of text and image – namely the tenuous connection between British livelihood and EU migrants. Extending the message in previous posters, the images here correlate the power of the people’s vote with a loaf of bread (“use your loaf”) or a “great idea” (vote UKIP). In other words, the loaf and light bulb become metonymic visual symbols for a vote in the direction of exiting the EU. In addition, the rallying slogan, ‘Take back control’ invokes protectionist instincts and “positive feelings towards the family and local community [which] activates the ‘Sovereign Nation’ scenario, based on the Care, Loyalty, Authority and Sanctity moral foundations”, while the threat of *others* can be seen to “activate the emotionally more intense ‘Invaded Nation’ scenario based on Harm, Disloyalty, Subversion and Degradation moral foundations” (Charteris-Black 2019: 110). While, the cleverly chosen images in the posters may act as simple cues for the viewer, they become a powerful vehicle for the communication of UKIP’s message.

The message is further bolstered by use of statistics (e.g. ‘food bill £400 cheaper’, ‘fuel bill £112 cheaper’) which create an illusion about the objectivity of the stated facts, adding weight to the visual element of the posters. The figures make an immediate impact, by breaking down complex constructs and systems into palatable facts relevant to the average member of the British public. In this way, through supposedly concrete facts the UKIP discourse creates on behalf of ‘the people’ a shared history of repression, legitimizing their cause for liberation from the repressor, the EU. As Charteris-Black (2019) argues, the “covert nature of the trope ‘taking back control’ – with its subtle implication of foreign occupation-

proved to be one of the great successes of political marketing – partly because it resisted accusations of racism ... this more innocuous phrase summarized deep-seated fears of loss of control” (110-111). Any vote to leave the EU through support of a party that advocates protection from foreign invaders, is transformed into a patriotic duty necessitating extreme action.

Social Impact

The Discourse of Illusion framework posits that our linguistic and semiotic actions have consequences, most notable in the form of metaphorical rhetoric, bringing to light the emotions and ideologies behind their creation and diffusion. However, metaphors also serve the function of creating ideologically-charged categories and stereotypes. Further, it is through such categorization that individuals and groups can position themselves against others, structuring communal relationships, this practice of social calibration “a matter of both human experience and imagination – of perception, motor activity, and culture on the one hand, and of metaphor, metonymy, and mental imagery on the other” (Lakoff 1987: 8). And, often tied up in various categories is the – be it conscious or unconscious – desire to set standards for normative behavior, usually by emphasizing the negative aspects of the out-group, often depicted as enemies or alien Others, to promote in-group unity.

In the context of UKIP’s campaign discourse, we noticed multiple delineating categories, revolving primarily around ‘us’ (UK) and ‘them’ (EU) demarcations (Ross and Bhatia 2019). It can be argued then, that the various social categories that emerge from discourses such as the UKIP posters, act as a lens through which UKIP aims its target audiences to view the world, one aligned with their own socio-political agenda. In this way, the purpose of categorization extends beyond mere demarcation of people into groups, to also “provide grounds for assessment [and] help gain moral superiority and retain legitimate

power over others” (Bhatia 2015: 60). Again, in this case, within the broader divide between Us and Them, several other category-pairings emerge, namely, invader-invaded, conquered-conquered, and oppressor-oppressed.

[Figure 6 about here]

[Figure 7 about here]

[Figure 8 about here]

Figures 6-8 proceed to elaborate on the social categorization proliferated through the previous posters, ones which personify the European Union into an invader, desiccating resources and oppressing the British people, “essentialized and imagined as homogeneous” (Gal and Irvine 1995: 975). All three figures now also put a face and name to the metonym ‘British people’, that of a soldier, a fisherman - ‘Tony’, and a laborer. The discursive strategy to personalize ‘the people’ who are suffering, allows them to be “humanized and made sympathetic through their harrowing stories of victimization” (Steimel 2010: 227), invoking an equally emotional reaction in voters, that of guilt and betrayal. It also allows ‘the people’ to be both heard and empowered by giving them an opportunity to share their narrative. Thus, what we see in these posters is the positioning of audiences to a narrative or group of people through “repetition of particular ways of handling causality and agency” (Fairclough 1989: 54).

Within these images, an attempt is made to engage with the emotions of the viewer – the voting public. For instance, in both Figures 6 and 8, the implication is that due to the actions of the EU, British service men and women, and blue-collar workers, are reduced to

‘begging’, with the military helmet being held out for donations, or the male worker sitting alongside a cup for collecting change, much like a homeless person. This affective approach is compounded by the facial expressions of the subjects of Figures 7 and 8, with both men looking dejected and conveying a sense of hopelessness, set against equally drab and depressing backgrounds.

The use of blue-collar workers serves to enforce the perception that the EU is elite, representing an establishment against interests of ‘the people’, which very much adheres to UKIP’s populist ideology. Furthermore, the actions attributed to them fall largely into the semantic category depicting conquest and oppression: ‘hit hard’, ‘ripped apart’, no respect or support’, ‘beg for more’, ‘gut’, fleece. Such labelling does not just provide a description of certain ‘types’ of people but also carries with it an ascriptive function that serves to either deny grounds for explanation, or in this case predict future actions. The textual description of the actions is juxtaposed with the visual presentation of muted backgrounds (grey brick walls, cloudy skies and droughted land) implying a sense of melancholy and imprisonment.

In contrast, the British people, who form the other part of the category-pairings of invader-invaded, conquered-conquered, or oppressor-oppressed are by default represented as vulnerable, victims, weakened and exploited. In fact, Figures 6 and 7 go further in distinguishing ‘the people’ between members of the public and UKIP, presenting a positive self-presentation of UKIP as a party that will ‘give respect and support’ and ‘stand up for you’, in this way the posters convey a direct dialogue with their viewers, explicitly aligning UKIP with ‘the people’ and against the establishment. Control is also placed in the hands of the voter, and as well as the moral responsibility to vote for UKIP, otherwise the public should shoulder the blame for the deteriorating conditions of workers in the UK through the emotional appeal in the phrase ‘Don’t make our heroes beg for more’. This appeal insinuates that to not vote UKIP would be to acquiesce to EU’s oppression. Such a illusive

conceptualization of ‘the people’ places UKIP in alignment with Jagers and Walgrave’s (2007) notion of ‘complete populists’ through combining appeals to the people (e.g. through references such as ‘common sense’ or ‘the average citizen’) with anti-elite appeals (e.g. focusing on the wealthy or established political figures) and processes of Othering (language differentiating in-groups and out-groups, particularly British vs. foreigners and immigrants) (Hughes 2019).

[Figure 9 about here]

The asymmetric category set (Jayyusi 1984) that presents the mighty EU against the wronged British people is, perhaps, most explicitly depicted in Figure 9 that purports an “ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus the ‘the corrupt elite’, [and] which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people” (Mudde 2004: 541). Figure 9 presents a series of visual and textual parallelisms positioned on the page in the form of a reductive equation - Union Jack vs EU flag + ‘daily grind vs celebrity lifestyle = oppression = ‘Take back control-Vote UKIP’. The parallel between the British people and Eurocrats is textually represented in the form of a broken sentence completed through use of ellipses: the first part, ‘your daily grind’, makes a direct appeal to the viewer through the text and gaze of the woman on an overcrowded bus (highlighting the plight of ‘the people’) and the second part, ‘funds his celebrity lifestyle’, uses the pronoun ‘his’ and a suited Eurocrat with an averted gaze in a comfortable car (highlighting the luxuries availed by the EU) to *other* the EU from Britain. This assumption is then made objective through use of the statistic ‘UK pays £55million a day’, persuasive because it reframes a complex political and economic union into a palatable figure. As previously, in distinguishing between ‘the people’ and the

elite, and offering themselves as a solution, UKIP aligns itself with the weaker but positively represented group. In this way, “[t]he people are the target of populist movements that fight in order to bring back the excluded into politics... they claim a grassroots origin and the ability to listen to the people and understand their needs” (Conoscenti 2018: 72).

Conclusion

This paper explored the populist sentiment proliferated through UKIP’s campaign discourse, namely election posters, in a bid to align the party with ‘the British people’, working for their interests and against the will of elite Eurocrats. To do so, we drew on Bhatia’s (2015) Discourse of Illusion framework for critical analysis of ideological narratives. UKIP’s subjective conceptualization of Britain’s European alliance as a form of oppression that ‘the people’ can only be liberated from through electing UKIP or exiting the EU generates powerful discursive illusions about the threat to national sovereignty and security, as well as the othering of immigrants and Europeans. This necessitates a closer investigation of how such nativist and hegemonic narratives issues occur. Thus, the paper offers three key insights in the context of existing work on populist discourse more generally, and Brexit discourse more specifically.

Firstly, the analysis revealed that UKIP’s campaign narrative drew significantly on the war and invasion trope to create a version of reality within which there Britain struggled for sovereignty against the EU (Charteris-Black 2019). Through use of recontextualization, reframing, metaphorical parallelisms, amongst other lexical, semantic, and pragmatic devices, UKIP created a powerful narrative about the importance of returning Britain to its nativist roots to preserve the sanctity of the British way of life. This has extended current work on Brexit by positioning an EU withdrawal not simply in terms of ‘the people’ vs the

‘the elite’ but also, touching on more deeply-rooted sentiment in British sociocultural history, reframing the British people in social servitude of the EU.

In this way, the Discourse of Illusion proved to be a relevant framework for our study, as it seeks to demystify ideological discourses by focusing on recontextualization of the past in conditioning the present, made significant through metaphorical rhetoric, which results in the creation of dichotomizing categories. This, we see, as the second key insight of the paper. The framework allows us to take a multi-perspective approach to critical discourse analysis, going beyond linguistic devices to deconstruct in more detail the impact of sociocultural and historical sentiment on argumentation. The approach enabled us to look at categories such as ‘the people’ in terms of populist and nationalist modes of identity formation and to identify “the distinct practices of differentiation and Othering through which such subjectivities come into being in the first place” (Wojczewski 2019: 2). We argue that such a framework can provide a new lens into investigating sociocultural and political issues that society is currently riddled with. Given as world politics today stands, pendulating between globalization, isolationism and populism, such theoretical insights are more crucial than ever before for confronting the discursive construction of complex issues like immigration, racism, nativism etc., that can encourage discrimination and ignorance.

Lastly, the paper contributes to existing knowledge of the discursive construction of populism and populist ideology, primarily by bringing to light the importance of social and cultural context in creating a narrative that appeals to the sentiments and emotions of the society addressed. In this way, effective populist discourse needs to be affective, in that it cannot employ generic linguistic strategies to persuade audiences, but must curate discourse based on shared collective history and heightened emotions.

Limitations

We acknowledge that our study is not without limitations, the most significant being that our study targeted purely visually-oriented, multimodal posters (for the purpose of the thematic focus of the Special Issue). While we believe these posters do accurately reflect the values and ideology undergirding UKIP, the study did not take into account purely textual posters. The language used and ideas expressed in such posters and advertisements would add to the understanding in our study and provide a more holistic depiction of UKIP ideology. Another factor to be considered is that the study is interpretive in nature, and although much can be learned from such an analysis, exploring more deeply the discourse around posters such as those in our study by engaging with those who produce and consume them would also be beneficial.

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FIGURES AND IMAGES:



Figure 1: UKIP campaign poster - historicity



Figure 2: Anti-immigration poster unveiled by Nigel Farage in 2016 campaigning for Brexit



Figure 3: Screenshot of 2005 BBC documentary, '*Auschwitz: The Nazis and The Final Solution*'



Figure 4: UKIP campaign poster – linguistic and semiotic action



Figure 5: UKIP campaign poster – linguistic and semiotic action



Figure 6: UKIP campaign poster – social impact



Figure 7: UKIP campaign poster – social impact



Figure 8: UKIP campaign poster – social impact



Figure 9: UKIP campaign poster – social impact