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From *Liberal Conservative* to *Conservative Conservative*: David Cameron's political branding

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MSc in Media and Communications (Research)

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From *Liberal Conservative* to *Conservative Conservative*: David Cameron's political branding

Ignacio José Antonio López Escarcena

ABSTRACT

The main objective of this research was to analyse David Cameron's discourse, particularly his claim about being a liberal Conservative in an interview with BBC News in 2010. For that reason the two research questions that this statement triggered were *How has David Cameron attempted to rebrand himself as a Liberal Conservative in his discourse throughout his political career?* and *Has his strategy increased, decreased, changed completely or not really changed?*

The methods used in this project were Thematic Analysis, in order to find a systematic core code in his speeches, and Norman Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), so as to study the three speeches selected: the ones he gave in 2006, 2009 and 2012 at the Conservative Party Conference.

The key finding that this research suggests is that the current Prime Minister did indeed try to brand himself as a Liberal Conservative, as it can be argued after studying his 2006 speech. However, that does not seem to be the case with the texts from 2009 and 2012, where his previous allusions to the centre and to a notion of Liberal Conservatism are no longer present. Moreover, from an ideological point of view, the three speeches – and especially the ones from 2009 and 2012 – include traditional conservative values such as the importance of family and criticisms toward the prominent role of the state.

INTRODUCTION

“I believe there ... I've always described myself as a Liberal Conservative. I'm Liberal because I believe in freedom and human rights, but Conservative - I'm sceptical of great schemes to remake the world” (BBC News, 2010). The previous declaration of principles was made by Prime Minister David Cameron in an interview with journalist Andrew Marr for BBC News in May, 2010, less than a week after taking office.

The aforementioned statement brings up the following question: is this really who David Cameron is or who he is trying – or was trying – to be? As we shall see in detail in the next section, there is such a concept as political branding that is based precisely on the construction of a certain image (2006). This, as it may be guessed, involves a strategy, a plan. At the same time, and even if it was a tactic, another doubt arises: would Cameron still refer to himself as a Liberal Conservative today? As I already mentioned, his remarks were made just days after becoming Prime Minister; perhaps certain circumstances have caused him to change his approach after that. Thus, not only would it be necessary to assess if this was a strategy, but also, if this discourse persisted.

Nonetheless, I do not pretend to claim to be the first who has been interested by this apparent combination of ideologies that David Cameron attempts to personify. In fact, newspapers such as the Daily Mail have arrived at singular conclusions regarding this subject. The article in question cited a study which states that, based on the names the Prime Minister had given to his children (Nancy, Florence, Arthur and Ivan), his decisions suggested the inner workings of a mind with left wing views (Daily Mail, 2013). My aim, however, is to analyse this alleged mixture of ways of thinking and, in order to do that, it is necessary to apply a systematic analysis that allows us to scrutinize what does Cameron really stand for.

The purpose of this research, therefore, is – in the first place – to analyse David Cameron's way of thinking. As it will be discussed in the following sections, while there has been empirical studies regarding the analysis of discourse in British politics such as Fairclough's (2000) study of New Labour's language, the literature available on Cameron has focused more on his background. Therefore, this project is based on the assumption that, in order to properly analyse Cameron's ideology, it must be done through the examination of material where he clearly expresses what he believes in.

Nevertheless, the idea is not only to examine his way of thinking in a specific point in time and then jump to conclusions. Considering the aforementioned changes that his discourse

may have experimented, it will be fundamental to establish a route by which the Prime Minister's messages will be analysed. For that reason, it will not only be important to examine more than one text, but they will also need to be a part of an interval that will allow us to observe a certain trajectory in Cameron's career. That should give us the theoretical and empirical material to argue what kind of political branding David Cameron has been trying to consolidate along the years.

THEORETICAL CHAPTER

Literary review

In this chapter, I will discuss the concepts of political branding; language, ideology and power; the differences between conservatives and liberals; representation; and the perceptions of David Cameron as a leader. I will start with political branding, since it is this type of strategy which gives way to the rest of the theoretical concepts considered in this section.

Political branding

According to Keller, brands are an intangible concept that relate to associations which get activated in the customer's memory and hold the meaning that is given to a specific product (1993: 3). More specifically, and in terms of what this project aspires to analyse, branding can be applied to politics if we take into account that it "uncovers the underlying strategic concerns of efforts to maintain voter loyalty through communication designed to provide reassurance, uniqueness (clear differentiation from rivals), consistency of values, and emotional connection with voters' values" (Scammell, 2007: 188).

One of the most significant ways to channel these values is through the personality of political leaders, a strategy that varies depending on the levels of allegiance to a given party and the different groups that are formed based on that support (Smith, 2009: 225). Because of that, political branding is closely connected to the politicians who attempt to convey and consolidate those brands; this process involves creating or reshaping the image of these authorities to catch the attention of voters (Busby, 2006: 59). In this sense, Street considers the possibility of understanding political communication as some type of work of art, even a performance (2003: 94). This strategy has to do with a set of skills which involve self-presentation and style, especially the latter, since "[s]tyle matters to politics, just as it does to other cultural forms" (2003: 95).

While this technique has been only used recently in a prominent manner, White and de Chernatony claim that this tendency can be traced back to the period following the Second World War, when countries from North America and Europe began drawing from the experience of the United States. More recent democracies such as South Africa and political parties from Central and Eastern Europe followed their example (2002: 46).

In order for this approach to be transmitted, there is a need for precise messages to be introduced and reintroduced through the media (Bennett, 2003: 143). Moreover, Bennett

argues that “[t]o avoid these precious messages becoming lost in the noise of public communication, candidates and interest organisations actively seek to brand themselves” (2003: 143).

This strategy is not only related to winning an election; it also has to do with the ability to maintain the support of the voters, to extend the trust that these political leaders receive throughout the time they spend in a specific position. This need is expressed through the concept of *permanent campaign*, which “is required not just for election but for governing and policy success as well” (Bennett, 2003: 143). The aforementioned leaders are thus “engaged in an ongoing process to woo public opinion” (Needham, 2005: 345).

However, values and personality are certainly not the only factors that the electorate weigh in when they vote. A decisive reason in this scenario corresponds to the ideology of these political leaders, which – as we will see - also relates to the words used by these politicians and to a form of power which is not necessarily easy to detect.

Language, power and ideology

As it was already stated, the research undertaken in this project will focus on discourse as a specific form of language. In this sense, it is useful to refer to Fairclough’s description of this concept as “language as a form of social practice” (2001b: 16). I will consider three dimensions related to discourse; the first one is its ability to form consciousness (Jäger, 2001: 35). The second dimension has to do with the claim that discourses serve a certain purpose, “namely to exercise power with all its effects” (Jäger, 2001: 34). The third aspect that is important to emphasize is what, according to Fairclough, discourse brings into the relations that make up for what we understand as the social life: meaning and the making of meaning (2010: 3). These three characteristics, as we shall see, allow the speaker – in this case, political leaders – to form consciousness, to exercise power and to build discourses where meaning is relevant in the process of decoding those messages.

The performance of these functions, however, does not depend solely on discourse. As the present subheading announces, language is connected to power and ideology as well. Before focusing on each of these concepts and their relationships, an effective preliminary approach to these connections might come in the form of Fairclough’s description of the Thatcherite political discourse from the 1990s. According to him, this form of speech was built by combining ideas from the conservative, the liberal and the populist sector. Because of this mixture, a struggle for hegemony ensues, first among the Conservative Party and its different members, and then within the field of politics as a whole (1995: 179). In the description of

this scenario, we can observe the relationship between a specific form of political discourse, the ideologies that are part of it, and the consequent clash for domination among the political spectrum of that type of language.

Having mentioned these relationships in a broad manner, I will now focus on these concepts and then I will discuss their connections more thoroughly than in the example given above.

In the case of power, it is rather difficult to avoid mentioning its link to language if one attempts to illustrate where that dominance comes from. That is not to say that this connection is straightforward; in fact, it tends to be subtle (Mooney, 2001: 16). Mooney herself describes this type of power as symbolic:

We can think about this not as physical power, or even institutional power, but as symbolic power. Calling it symbolic power draws our attention to the link between power and symbols – that is, between power and language. To call it symbolic power is not to say that the power is ineffective. If you think about the things that people can do with language, this becomes clear. With language, it is possible to insult, persuade, command, compliment, encourage or make a promise (2001: 17).

This ability to persuade others through language has also been emphasized by van Dijk (1997). Nonetheless, he goes one step further than Mooney in the level of dominance that he mentions, especially when he argues that, despite its subtle manner, text and talk can help to control the minds of others and make them act as we want (1997: 18).

This power, however, is not only difficult to perceive, but it is also not absolute according to Pocock (1984: 31), who depicts a type of authority which is shared and cannot be fully attributed to a single individual. Furthermore, Pocock highlights another aspect of language that is similar to Jäger's claim about words forming consciousness. For Pocock, all speech "is performative in the sense that it does things to people. It redefines them in their own perceptions, in those of others and by restructuring the conceptual universes in which they are perceived" (1984: 39).

More specifically, Fairclough establishes the association between discourse and power from a political point of view. He emphasizes how the power relation between the people who control the state and the rest of the population is "partly discursive" (2010: 4), since the consolidation of the state and its members' legitimacy is mainly achieved through language. Nevertheless, Fairclough clarifies that words are just one expression of state power, which also comprehends physical violence, for instance. Therefore, "power is partly discourse, and

discourse is partly power – they are different but not discrete, they flow into each other; discourse can be internalised in power and vice-versa” (2010: 4).

Finally, we arrive at ideology, a concept that, according to Heywood, has no settled definition; what can be found, instead, is a group of different definitions (1998: 5). Despite this, Heywood attempts to describe this concept as “a more or less coherent set of ideas that provides the basis for organised political action, whether this is intended to preserve, modify or overthrow the existing system of power” (1998: 12). In addition, Fairclough claims that ideologies play a key role in establishing, maintaining, enacting and transforming relations of power (2010: 26).

Even though there may be several definitions of ideology, they tend to share a common notion: it corresponds to a combination of ideas, which can be referred to as “embedded as unspoken, taken-for-granted common-sense assumptions in the publicly mediated discourses of contemporary politics” (Scannell, 1991: 9) or “a set of beliefs and behaviours that are thought of as natural” (Mooney, 2011: 18). Although the terms used may be different, these scholars are all acknowledging that an integral part of ideologies have to do with the collection of assumptions, beliefs, ideas or behaviours.

This same group of elements leads, as it did in the case of language, to a form of symbolic power. Bourdieu states that the role of ideologies is to transform particular interests and present them as universal and shared by the people (1991: 167). In this type of domination, language is also present, since “[w]hat creates power of words and slogans, a power capable of maintaining or subverting the social order, is the belief in legitimacy of words and of those who utter them” (1991: 170). As Mooney puts it, the combination of language and ideology encourages people towards some form of action, which is not triggered by an obligation; on the contrary, people incorporate a set of values that causes them to want to do those things (2011: 17). Thus, Mooney argues, “power, and especially symbolic power, is supported by ideologies. Looking at language closely allows us to map these ideologies” (2011: 18).

We have already established connections between language and power and ideology and power, but it could even be argued that these three concepts are linked to each other. That is precisely what Fairclough claims when he states that “ideology is, first, a relation between texts (in meaning-making) and power, it is, second, a relation between orders of discourse and power, and even languages and power” (2010: 79). Foucault makes this connection as well when he maintains that doctrines limit the types of enunciation available for individuals; only a certain number of options are allowed and the rest are forbidden. On the other hand,

those types of enunciation bring the members of a group together and give them the chance to differentiate themselves from the rest (1984: 123).

There are, however, differences between language and ideology. For instance, van Dijk points out that while people use words to communicate within members of the same group, ideologies are not only used for that; as a matter of fact, it could be stated that their main use is related to the coordination of interaction with participants from other crowds (1997: 26). Nevertheless, as we will see, these boundaries are not always crystal clear and there may be politicians whose discourse borrows from different ideologies. In the next subheading, I will mention the main characteristics of the conservative and the liberal sectors.

Conservatives and liberals

While this is not a research on political science, it is important to discuss the main differences of these ideologies, since the first is the one to which David Cameron has been associated with in his career and the second, the one to which his aspirations could be directed to if we follow his comment about being a Liberal Conservative.

According to Heywood, conservatism presents the following beliefs as its most significant: tradition, human imperfection, an organic society, authority, and property (1998: 69). Many of these same elements can be found in the comparison that Lakoff¹ (2004) makes between conservatives and a strict father, where he depicts this type of ruling as one which believes in a strong moral authority, especially since children “are born bad, in the sense that they just want to do what feels good, not what is right. Therefore, they have to be made good” (2004: 7). Moreover, Lakoff argues that this way of thinking includes everyone pursuing their own profit in a free market capitalism (2004: 8); no meddling from the government/strict father (2004: 8); and the firm conviction in the immorality of social programs, since they might mean giving things to people who have not earned them (2004: 9). Hoffman and Graham, on the other hand, maintain that modern political parties that claim to be conservative do not really belong to this ideology – instead, they bring together different forms of criticism toward the dominant liberal way of thinking (2006: 52).

Speaking of the progressive sector, Heywood identifies its central beliefs as the individual, freedom, reason, justice and toleration (1998: 27). In addition, Lakoff establishes protection;

¹ Even though Lakoff has openly acknowledged his allegiance to the progressive sector and his depiction is oriented towards politics in the United States, he also shows a critical side when it comes to his fellow liberals. Furthermore, after reviewing his descriptions on the matter, I ended up considering them general enough to be included in this section and to add to the other considerations on this subject.

the moral responsibility to be happy; freedom; opportunity and prosperity; fairness; community life; trust; honesty; and a two-way communication as the main values for liberals (2004: 12-13). In this model, and in contraposition to what was described in the previous paragraph, Lakoff compares progressives with nurturant parents, who raise their children in an environment of empathy and responsibility (2004: 12). The emphasis on freedom made by these scholars is also present in Hoffman and Graham's description: 'At the heart of liberalism is the belief that people are naturally free and equal' (2006: 31). That is not to say, however, that we are all equal or have to be treated equally in all aspects of life; whenever there is a departure from equality or freedom, it needs to be justified (2006: 31).

Going back to the particular case of David Cameron, the political brand that he would have attempted to consolidate could have involved some sort of representation, one in which his portrayal of himself might have comprised traces of both ideologies, so as to solidify the notion of a Liberal Conservative leader.

Representation

Fairclough defines this concept as "a process of social construction of practices, including reflexive self-construction – representations enter and shape social processes and practices" (2001a: 123). For the purposes of this research, the act of self-construction is particularly important; what I argue is that what David Cameron has been trying to do for the past several years is precisely that: to build a specific image of himself. This exercise brings together all the other elements we have named before: it pertains to a strategy – political branding -, which can be observed through the use of language, which involves relations of power and the propagation of an ideology.

As a matter of fact, we can find almost all of those ingredients in Fairclough and Wodak's definition of ideologies, which states that they are "particular ways of representing and constructing society which reproduce unequal relations of power, relations of domination and exploitation" (1997: 275). One factor that is not directly acknowledged in the previous quote is language, but we can find its relation to representation in Hall's argument that "[r]epresentation connects meaning and language to culture" (1997: 15).

The effect of speech in this process of construction, however, does not have absolute power by itself. As Lakoff and Johnson point out, words do not have the ability to change realities, but what they can alter is our perception of what is real in the world and how we act because of that (1980: 145-146). Moreover, and keeping with this sense of building a reality, Potter emphasizes the important role discourse plays in the construction of objects and subjects,

since it “links factuality to institutions and issues of power, on the one hand, and to individuals and their practices, on the other, thus making discourse the central dynamic of the system” (1996: 87).

Perceptions of David Cameron as a leader

In *The Meaning of David Cameron*, Richard Seymour (2010) mentions that the Prime Minister’s influences go from Margaret Thatcher to Tony Blair, a mixture that can be observed in the duality of his conservative way of thinking with traces of concerns for the green movement, youth and minorities, among other topics. Seymour even highlights Cameron’s “eagerness to distance himself from his party-base” (2010: 18) as one of his similarities with Blair. However, Seymour analyses the Prime Minister’s ideology on a somewhat broad manner; this research, on the other hand, aims to concentrate on Cameron’s discourse and attempts to detect this alleged distance from the conservatives.

Other authors such as Elliot and Hanning (2012), O’Hara (2007) and Lee and Beech (2009) have also approached the issue of Cameron’s ideology, but their interest tends to be more oriented toward biographical or historical matters regarding what it means and has meant to be a conservative.

Conceptual framework

Having considered the theoretical discussions mentioned above, this research will focus on Busby’s (2006) approach towards political branding, that is, considering this strategy as the act of creating or reshaping the image of a politician in order to capture or maintain their support. This attempt relates to the aforementioned concept of the *permanent campaign* (Bennett, 2003; Needham, 2005). Therefore, this project will depart from other views that concentrate on style (Street, 2003) or the role of the media within this scenario (Bennett, 2003).

Furthermore, and regarding the connection between language, power and ideology, the research at hand will prioritize the first and third concepts. Even though there is a strong association between these two elements and power, the sense of domination is more implicit (Mooney, 2001). Thus, the attention of this project will be centred on the use of words by the Prime Minister and to what extent this relates to a specific ideology, either conservative or liberal.

Finally, and for the same reason stated in the previous paragraph, Fairclough and Wodak’s (1997) definition of representation will not be explored further. What will be taken into

account is Fairclough's (2001a) mention of a process of self-construction and Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) emphasis on how representations can alter our perceptions.

Research questions

With this conceptual framework in mind, and the intention to focus on Cameron's discourse more than his biography, this project will attempt to detect if the Prime Minister has indeed applied a strategy to distance himself from the Conservative sector and present himself as a conservative who could also appeal to the liberals.

In order to achieve this, the research at hand aims to answer the following research questions:

- How has David Cameron attempted to rebrand himself as Liberal Conservative in his discourse throughout his political career?

- Has this strategy increased, decreased, changed completely or not really changed?

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research strategy

This project combines the use of two methods: Thematic Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The former will be utilized in the process of sampling, whereas the latter will be used specifically for the analysis of Cameron's discourse.

In the case of Thematic Analysis, it will serve as a tool to filter the different issues mentioned by the Prime Minister in his speeches. Therefore, the research will involve a process of segmentation within the texts selected, something that is currently done in Applied Thematic Analysis (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012: 50). As Guest, MacQueen and Namey maintain, segmentation facilitates "the exploration of thematic elements and their similarity, dissimilarity and relationships" (2012: 50). For the purposes of this project, it will be useful in order to observe if there is a similar type of political branding in the Prime Minister's speeches that will be studied or not.

Because of what has been already explained, this procedure will involve a form of coding in which certain themes or concepts will be identified (Ezzy, 2002: 86). Through this system, Ezzy argues, what is attempted to achieve is a systematic overview of the data observed (2002: 86). Regarding the process of coding itself, Ezzy identifies three stages: the first one is open coding, which consists of an exploration of the data, the comparison and contrast of events and the breaking of codes into subcategories. The second one is axial coding, which involves the exploration of the already defined codes, their relationship, considering the possibility of new codes, and the comparison with theory. Finally, selective coding has to do with the identification of a core code and its relationship with other codes and with previous theory (2002: 39).

As it was already established, the second method that will be used in this project is Critical Discourse Analysis. If we take into account the prominent role that this research gives to language and ideology, discourse analysis appears as a useful method. This idea gains force if we follow van Dijk, who claims that if we consider that people tend to articulate their ideologies in writing or orally, “a discourse analytical study of ideology is most relevant” (2006: 115).

To be more precise, Critical Discourse Analysis seems to be the most appropriate form of discourse analysis to be used, particularly since “[t]he critical discourse analyst must always be on the lookout for hidden ideological positions since one of the main ways in which CDA achieves its aims is by making explicit those aspects of ideology” (Bloor & Bloor, 2007: 11). Moreover, language has also been recognized as an important factor in CDA; in fact, Griffin states that the key aspect of this method is “the shift in emphasis from language *per se*, even as socially produced, to language as ideologically produced” (2009: 27).

Among the different approaches to CDA², I consider Fairclough’s model to be the most useful, especially since it offers detailed stages of analysis, which will be explained later. In addition, some of his work, such as *Language and Power* (2001), includes recommendations for researchers who are not familiar with this method.

The aforementioned advantages do not mean that these methods do not present certain limitations. For instance, thematic analysis has been criticised for missing nuanced data

² In *Language and Power* (2001), Fairclough identifies his method as Critical Language Study (CLS). Nevertheless, I will refer to it as the more popularly known in order to avoid confusions. What is more, Fairclough spends most of the book’s preface discussing the reaction that CDA – and not CLS - has received among social scientists.

(Guest et al., 2012: 17) and “important cues and layers of meaning” (Guest et al., 2012: 50). In the case of discourse analysis, it has been said to rely too much on the researcher’s point of view, which may lead to over-analysing the data (Rose, 2007: 162). To this apprehension we could add Gill’s list of possible problems caused by this alternative: an alleged impossibility to draw generalizations from the study of a given discourse; the danger that the texts chosen may not be representative; and the amount of effort that comes along with its use (1996: 155-156).

In spite of these warnings, a well-thought procedure should help the researcher in the case of thematic analysis (Ezzy, 2002: 81) and it also allows him or her to identify the appropriate tools for a particular research (Guest et al., 2012: 18). With regard to discourse analysis, it appears as the most fitting method not only because of its abovementioned focus on the study of ideology through language (van Dijk, 2006: 115), but also since it is “committed to an investigation of what that language is used for” (Brown and Yule, 1983: 1). A further contribution that Fairclough’s model offers is that operationalizes “the analysis of particular instances of discourse” (Fairclough, 2001b: 10), unlike other approaches that Fairclough himself deems as limited in the sense that they remain purely theoretical.

Another method that was considered for this research was content analysis. Even though incorporating this alternative might had helped the project to achieve a systematic type of study (Hansen et al., 1998; Krippendorff, 2004) between Cameron’s speeches through the development of codes (Thomas, 1994), it has been linked to a more objective type of analysis (Thomas, 1994), that, furthermore, makes it difficult to draw inferences (Krippendorff, 2004: 13).

Sampling or selection of data and research tools

The first decision that had to be made was which speeches were going to be studied. In order to narrow down these alternatives, the first criterion established was to concentrate on a type of speech that was given each year, so as to properly compare messages given in similar circumstances. In addition, they would need to take place in a situation where the ideology of the leader was expressed, where his beliefs were conveyed and where the strategy for the rest of the year was announced. Those reasons led me to choose the Conservative Party

Conference speeches, since they are delivered each year and they occur in a situation where the conservatives divulge their convictions and goals.

The next choice had to do with how many speeches were going to be analysed and which ones. Regarding the first issue, I arrived at the conclusion that analysing three of them would allow me to establish a proper comparison that included a certain trajectory in Cameron's career. Concerning the second aspect, I decided to establish an interval that would allow me to really observe if there had been a change in Cameron's way of thinking. In this sense, I discovered that by applying a three-year gap between each text, I would be able to study his most recent speech as Prime Minister (2012), the last one he gave before he arrived at Downing Street (2009) and the first one he delivered as Leader of the Opposition and the Conservative Party (2006).

After the selection of those three speeches, Thematic Analysis was applied in order to identify common themes between the texts, which were later analysed through Fairclough's model of CDA. Regarding the latter method, it is important to reiterate that my analysis was based on the process that Fairclough explains in detail in *Language and Power* (2001). This course of action, applied to the case of the Thatcherite discourse, comprised six questions, which – in turn – are related to three different stages: description, interpretation and explanation.

The description phase involves enquiries with regard to the text itself. These textual features may be experiential, which have to do with contents, knowledge and beliefs; relational, which give cues to the social interactions that are present in the discourse; and expressive, which is related to the subjects and their social identities (Fairclough, 2001b: 93). Fairclough, however, argues that this phase is not enough if one wants to detect the social extrapolations of the text and that is where interpretation appears, a term that this scholar uses “both as the name of a stage in the procedure, and for the interpretation of texts by discourse participants” (2001b: 118). This step, therefore, focuses on the process of production of texts and text interpretation as well. Finally, explanation is concerned with the social structures that shape what Fairclough calls the members' resources (MR), a tool that is used for the interpretative procedure (2001b: 138-139). Moreover, this phase attempts to depict how discourse is part of a social process that has situational, institutional and societal levels, and also the struggles that can be observed in these three dimensions.

The six questions, therefore, comprised these three stages: the first four are part of the description process; the fifth, of the interpretation phase; and the sixth, of the explanation part. The questions were:

- 1) What relational values do textual features have?³
- 2) What experiential values do textual features have in terms of the subject position of the producer?⁴
- 3) What values do textual features have with respect to the subject positions of members of the audience?
- 4) What traces are there in the features of the text of struggle between the producer and his opponents?
- 5) What problems arise for David Cameron in the process of production through mismatches between his resources, and his analysis of his situation? And what novel combinations of discourse types does he generate in trying to resolve them?
- 6) What institutional and/or societal processes⁵ does this discourse belong to, and how is it ideologically determined and ideologically determinative?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first process, which consisted of the application of Thematic Analysis to Cameron's speeches, was done following the three types of coding. The experimental stage of exploration first suggested a code that went through all of the speeches: Cameron's self-representation. The next phase of axial coding allowed me to observe a relationship between that code and other sub-codes, such as his beliefs and the most recurrent subjects mentioned in the texts, which led me back to the already mentioned theoretical discussions regarding representation, ideology and the differences between liberalism and conservatism. Finally, the selective coding stage allowed me to realize that, indeed, if there was a central code to the speeches, it was how Cameron portrayed himself as a leader.

My original plan was to ideally separate large portions of the text in order to analyse them instead of short phrases. That, however, proved to be difficult since the clearest expressions of the core code tended to appear in almost every paragraph. Therefore, I decided to use

³ Questions 1, 2 and 3 also had the subquestion *Are there inconsistencies in values which could indicate a new articulation of discourse types?* It was eliminated in this research for two reasons: the first one had to do with the space available to report my findings; the second had to do with the fact that those inconsistencies can be addressed in the form of mismatches in question 5.

⁴ In the case study of Margaret Thatcher's discourse, Fairclough does not specify that the second question is directly addressed to the experiential values. In fact, he seems to disregard the experiential and expressive values to some extent. Nevertheless, taking into account the assumption that Cameron is trying to position himself as a liberal conservative, the subject position he would try to consolidate would be based on beliefs, which connects this attempt to the experiential values. That is the reason why they were added here.

⁵ This question was originally divided into 6a) institutional and 6b) societal in Fairclough's case study, but I decided to combine them for reasons of space.

Fairclough's questionnaire not only as a tool for analysis, but also as an instrument that would help me separate the sections of the speeches useful for this research from those that were not.

First speech: We stand for social responsibility - David Cameron, Sunday, October 1, 2006.

What relational values do textual features have?

We: Cameron uses this pronoun both in an inclusive and exclusive way. The relational significance of the former is that it serves to unite Cameron and the rest of Britain; it depicts them as having the same needs and, thus, the same goals. With regard to *we* as an inclusive pronoun, Cameron uses it with the apparent intention of illustrating the potential of Britain. Nevertheless, he also uses it to point out the aspects where there is work to be done.

A very clear example of the exclusive *we* can be found where he highlights the percentage with which the Conservative Party won the local elections. Moreover, Cameron talks about what they will do and, in this sense, the use of *we* is prominent, especially when he announces what the party stands for from an ideological point of view.

You: This pronoun is mainly used to engage with the audience as a whole. As Fairclough explains (2001b: 149) the relational value of *you* is significant because it means having chosen this option instead of the more impersonal *one*. As a matter of fact, Cameron does not use that indefinite pronoun, not even once, in his speech.

What experiential values do textual features have in terms of the subject position of the producer?

Subject position: a liberal conservative leader

Modality: Cameron tends to use modal auxiliaries that convey "the personal authority of the speaker" (Fairclough, 2001b: 151), such as *We must learn, we must show, we must stand up or the state must play its part*.

Another relational meaning of obligation (Fairclough, 2001b: 151) that is present is *have to*, which Cameron uses when he talks about what the government has to do regarding health services and schools.

The relevance of the centre and social responsibility: Cameron is quite clear in this respect when he states that his party's history tells them that the centre ground is where political success lies. In fact, he goes as far as saying that it is there where the dreams, hopes and concerns of most people in the UK can be found. After that, Cameron claims that a sensible centre-right party is what the country needed, where they have moved to, and where they will stay.

However, when Cameron's strategy turns most evident is when he describes social responsibility, in contraposition to state responsibility, as the essence of liberal Conservatism. In effect, he depicts social responsibility not only as what they stand for, but also as the Britain they want to build.

Distance from Margaret Thatcher: In what appears to be a very telling sign of Cameron's strategy to distance himself from the more traditional conservative sector, he emphasises how the former Prime Minister offered to tame the unions, rescue the economy and restore the country's pride in the late 1970s. Immediately after, however, he concludes that modern people want different things: safer streets, schools that actually teach, quality of life and a better treatment for carers.

The importance of family: Even though Cameron's mentions of this concept are not really frequent in this speech, he does send a powerful message regarding his beliefs when he claims that there is nothing more important for him than the safety and happiness of his family. The significance of this statement is that commitment to family is one of the main values identified with conservatism (Fairclough, 2001b: 158).

What values do textual features have with respect to the subject positions of members of the audience?

Subject position: the people

To answer this question, Fairclough suggests focusing on *coordination*, a term that comprises sentences linked with *and*, *or* or *but* and also lists, which are useful to connect different elements (2001b: 153).

An example of the first case can be found where Cameron claims that they trust in people's 'knowledge and commitment'. A similar use of 'and' appears where he states that *people* expect more from health services *and* schools *and* that government has to respond to that.

With regard to lists, Cameron highlights what people can expect from a conservative government: an administration that asks what the people can do, what society can do and where British people realize that we are all in this together.

What traces are there in the features of the text of struggle between the producer and his opponents?

Negative sentences: Cameron engages in overt attacks to his political adversaries, the Labour Party. As a matter of fact, near the beginning of the speech, he has already referred to then Prime Minister Tony Blair in a negative manner ('What a nerve the man has got'). In his own words, the only real achievement that Labour has accomplished is their education reforms, but immediately after he claims that the only reason – and he repeats this phrase – that it happened was because the conservatives took the legislation through the House of Commons. Moreover, Cameron makes fun of the inner conflicts of Labour and accuses them of worrying more about their jobs than about the NHS, crime and the troops abroad. He even uses irony when he remembers that Labour spoke of a stable and orderly transition by using the expression 'Yeah right' as a reaction to that statement.

Criticism of state responsibility: Among Cameron's negative remarks towards Labour, there is a subject that is prominent through his speech: his criticism regarding what he calls Labour's 'outdated state responsibility'. He explains his disapproval with more detail when he maintains that Labour instinctively believes that 'everything is the state's responsibility', a point of view that he strongly disagrees with, since – according to him – it is impossible for the state to be everywhere and it should not try to.

What problems arise for David Cameron in the process of production through mismatches between his resources, and his analysis of his situation? And what novel combinations of discourse types does he generate in trying to resolve them?

In the relations stage, the main mismatch can be observed between the traditional conservative way of addressing the public and Cameron's strategy. Cameron appears to move away from the traditional relationship between previous Conservative leaders (Churchill, Eden, etc.) and the public, which were more distant and marked by a sense of authority from the leader (Fairclough, 2001b: 157). His approach could be closer to what Thatcher tries to achieve in the case study presented by Fairclough, but there she also presented some authoritative traits (2001b: 157). The novel discourse type that he generates seems to be that

of a more sympathetic leader, an intention that is connected with the next aspect of his speech.

With regard to Cameron's subject position as a producer, the main mismatch is his persuasive allusions to the centre and his mention of a liberal Conservatism. From an ideological point of view, what Cameron seems to try to do, albeit acknowledging a predecessor such as Thatcher, is to try to move away to a new reality. As a way to do this, he appears to try to consolidate a new discourse type that not only appeals to the right, but also the aforementioned centre.

In the case of the subject position of the audience, Cameron refers to aspects that coincide with what Fairclough (2001b: 158) identifies as traditional Conservative values (the already mentioned concept of family, patriotism) and neoliberal convictions (criticism of state interference). The mismatch here is that those beliefs clash with the trust that Cameron claims have to in the people, which puts him closer to the nurturant parents described by Lakoff. The new discourse type that seems to be formed here is, again, that of an understanding leader, but with a combination of the ideology that characterizes the more authoritative sector.

What institutional and/or societal processes does this discourse belong to, and how is it ideologically determined and ideologically determinative?

As Fairclough explains, politics as an institutional matrix covers different institutions, such as political parties, political and governmental institutions (2001b: 158-159). He also mentions the media, but its role and reaction is not directly connected to the purposes of this research. Within this political matrix, it could be argued that we are witnessing Cameron's notion (or brand, if we go back to the concept of political branding) of what it means to be conservative struggling for ascendancy. His discourse, as it has already been stated, is ideologically determined by some aspects of traditional Conservatism and neoliberalism, but also seems to aspire to be determinative in offering a new alternative, closer to the centre. From a social point of view, Cameron's engagement with the public is also determined by his ideological roots (the importance of family, patriotism and criticism of state interference), but again seems to attempt to be determinative in his representation of himself as a leader that trusts his people and has faith in their capacities.

Second speech: Putting Britain back on her feet – David Cameron, Thursday, October 8, 2009

What relational values do textual features have?

We: Cameron repeats the use of this pronoun both in the inclusive as in the exclusive manner. An example of the first case can be seen when he talks about responsibility and how it is 'about what we all do and the way we live'.

On the other hand, an instance in which he opts for the exclusive alternative is when he talks about the protection that people who cannot work will receive ('we'll look after you'). Even then, although he does it exclusively, what he is promising is protection; therefore, he seems to be positioning himself as a concerned and compassionate leader.

You: This pronoun is present once more and, in fact, is featured in the last sentence of Cameron's 2009 speech, where he states that when Britain overcomes the hard times at hand - i.e. the effects of the subprime crisis - it will not be the government that will responsible for that; it will be said that 'you made it happen'.

The same strategy can be noticed when Cameron assures protection, support and rewards to the British people, using again the pronoun 'you' to address them.

What experiential values do textual features have in terms of the subject position of the producer?

Subject position: a leader who believes in family and responsibility

Modality: The modal auxiliary *must* is used when Cameron points out the importance of winning in Afghanistan and bringing the soldiers back home, with the solution being that it 'must start at the top'. A similar situation arises when he says that they *must pay* their national debt. Moreover, Cameron states that the people from the UK *must be* the ones who release their entrepreneurial potential.

In addition, we can note the use of 'have got to' in the passage where he criticises the welfare system and claims that they 'have got to turn it around'. In this sense, Cameron seems to opt for an alternative that conveys an 'obligation based upon some external compulsion' (Fairclough, 2001b: 151).

Family and responsibility: Regarding the first of these aspects, Cameron is quite unambiguous about how he feels: he explains that family is not only what is most important to him, but also what he believes is most important to the country. This value is connected to responsibility since, according to Cameron, both society and responsibility begin at home. In the case of the latter, his diagnosis is that responsibility has eroded and needs to be rebuilt. What is more, responsibility gains prominence in his speech particularly when Cameron argues that the more society takes responsibility, the less government will need to do it.

What values do textual features have with respect to the subject positions of members of the audience?

Subject position: the people

There are cases of coordination such as the use of 'and' with regard to the subject position of the people. For instance, when Cameron predicts that the country will be tested, he assures that he will be ready 'and' the people from Britain will be ready too. Furthermore, 'and' is present again when – speaking about the significance of family once more – he claims that, for him, what is most important is that the people he loves are 'healthy and well'. Even though that statement may seem as a way of expressing his personal beliefs, it is said during a passage of his speech where he is speaking about the relevance of the NHS. Therefore, although it might be seen as declaration of principles at first, it could also be as an extrapolation of what he wishes for the people of the UK in general.

What traces are there in the features of the text of struggle between the producer and his opponents?

Criticism towards big government: As it was already mentioned, Cameron paints a rather grim picture near the start of his speech. He describes a reality where there is political disillusionment, a social breakdown, and the highest budget deficit and deepest recession since the war. Cameron then criticises the fact that Labour's solution to these problems is more government, when it is 'more government that got us into this mess'. An example of this is his claim concerning the economic crisis; in Cameron's words, 'government got too big, spent too much and doubled the national debt'. He reaches similar conclusions, using almost the same words, when he alludes to what he depicts as a broken society and broken politics. Cameron even clearly expresses his personal belief regarding this matter when he says that 'the state is your servant, never your master'. There are, however, some initiatives developed

by Labour that Cameron praises, such as devolution, the minimum wage and civil partnerships.

What problems arise for David Cameron in the process of production through mismatches between his resources, and his analysis of his situation? And what novel combinations of discourse types does he generate in trying to resolve them?

In the relations level, Cameron seems to maintain a different approach concerning his engagement with the public than his more traditional conservative predecessors, which means that there is a mismatch between the two once more. In this sense, it could be argued that he does not make use of his resources (the conservative way to address the public) and, after analysing the situation, chooses to – once again - portray himself as leader who tries to appear as being close to the people.

With regard to the subject position of Cameron as a producer, there does not seem to be a mismatch, since he uses the modal auxiliaries that convey obligation and claims that family is what is important to him and what should be most relevant for the country. As we have mentioned, both the use of authoritative modalities and the focus on family are part of the conservative discourse (Fairclough, 2001b; Lakoff, 2004). In contrast to what happened in his 2006 speech, here there are no references to the centre and no mentions of liberal Conservatism; thus, the mismatch that took place in that message is not present there.

Finally, the subject position of the audience is one that Cameron depicts as having been affected by state interference (as we have seen, a quintessential conservative form of criticism) and where the leader emphasises the importance of family. At the same time, and similarly to his 2006 speech, the mismatch we can detect here has to do with the clash between those values and Cameron's claim that he believes in the British people; specifically, that they will be ready to face the tests that come. For that reason, the new discourse type of a sympathetic leader with conservative principles seems to remain.

What institutional and/or societal processes does this discourse belong to, and how is it ideologically determined and ideologically determinative?

From an institutional point of view, Cameron's discourse appears to be almost completely ideologically determined, especially in his already mentioned emphasis in family values and his repeated attacks towards the prominent role of the state in Labour's government. Moreover, he does not seem to be trying to appeal to the centre anymore, or at least he does

not mention it. The only aspect in which his discourse may be trying to be ideologically determinative is his apparent positioning as a leader that is closer to the people.

Essentially the same can be said for the societal process: there is a mixture of what is ideologically determined by the conservative way of thinking, perhaps in a clearer manner than in the 2006 speech, and Cameron's desire to come off as a leader that believes in the public's capacities, which could be seen as ideologically determinative. The former, however, is far more prominent in the text than the latter.

Third speech: Conference 2012: David Cameron, Wednesday, October 10, 2012

What relational values do textual features have?

We: Cameron uses this pronoun yet again in its inclusive and exclusive form.

In the first case, he does it when he refers to Britain's high chances of remaining as a major industrial country. Also, to claim that '[w]e are in a global race today' and 'we will rise to the challenge'. In addition, it is used to highlight the idea that 'Britain can deliver' and that '[w]e can do big things'. In a similar, manner, it is present when Cameron mentions what they, as British people, can do in order to get the country on the rise.

On the other hand, the exclusive use of this pronoun can be seen in the form of allusions to either the government or the Conservative Party, such as 'we must have confidence in ourselves... confidence as a party. We've been in office two and a half years now or [w]e're doing big, Conservative things'.

You: Similarly to what happens with the previous pronoun, the use of *you* appears to be once more aimed to achieve a direct engagement with the audience, especially through phrases such as 'you know what, here is the crucial thing you need to know, [h]ere's two facts for you or [l]et me explain you how it works'.

However, *you* is also used in a less general way when Cameron claims: 'You, the Conservative party helped do that, and you should be proud of what you've done'. Clearly, the relational value there is established just between members of the party and not the public in general.

What experiential values do textual features have in terms of the subject position of the producer?

Subject position: the leader of a rising Britain

Modality: Cameron goes back to what seems to be his most frequently used modal auxiliary, *must*, which – as we already know – brings a sense of obligation to his ideas. This is what happens in sentences like 'we must have confidence in ourselves... confidence as a party. We've been in office two and a half years now or [t]o help people to rise, to help Britain rise, there's a third - crucial - thing we must do. Educate all our children'. Another example can be observed when he states that 'we must tackle welfare'. It is something that *must* be done; it is not a suggestion or a desire.

Furthermore, this modal auxiliary is also present to convey what must not happen, as in 'we mustn't let that warm glow give us a false sense of security'.

A leader of a Britain on the rise, that still needs to grow more: If the adjective used by Cameron to criticise the role of the state in Labour's government was *big* government, he uses the same device, but now in an apparently positive light when he claims that his administration has delivered '[b]ig, Conservative things'. But there is still a major challenge at hand – in fact, he claims that nothing is more important - and that is to make sure that Britain is on the rise. The significance of this goal can be observed when Cameron explains that every decision, every battle fought and every plan made goes in that direction.

Moreover, he claims that the way to achieve this rise is by everyone being better together. He also states that the British people are showing that they can do it, that Britain is indeed on the rise, but that it must continue doing so.

Work/family/country: In a similar way to what he did in his 2009 speech, Cameron sums up his main beliefs: working hard, caring for his family and serving his country. Even if family does not take the preponderant role it did in the text from three years before, it is still counted as one of his main principles.

What values do textual features have with respect to the subject positions of members of the audience?

Subject position: the people

The cases of *coordination* that can be found in this speech are present in the form of the use of 'and' and also of lists. A simple example of the former is when Cameron claims that 'we're

better together and we'll rise together'. Thus, he needs everyone's effort in order to keep rising as a country.

Regarding the use of lists, he gives one of them when he argues that the three fundamental aspects to helping their people rise are a strong private sector, welfare that works and schools that teach. In other words, that is what the people need, and also what the country requires.

What traces are there in the features of the text of struggle between the producer and his opponents?

The state after Labour's governments: One of Cameron's main criticisms towards Labour has to do with what they did when they governed. For example, he claims that Labour left them (the Conservatives) with one of the highest deficits in the world. Continuing with the economic subject, he also disapproves of Labour's plan to borrow more money while they were in office and now after their period in charge. He even goes as far as saying: 'I honestly think Labour haven't learned a single thing'.

Furthermore, Cameron accuses Labour of having sold the country's gold, busted its banks, smothered their business, wracked up their debts, wrecked their economy, ruined their reputation and risked their future.

Labour's role as the opposition: Even though there is not as much mention of Labour being the opposition as there is of what they did while they were in office, Cameron predicts that, when it comes to the essential aspects that will allow British people to rise, Labour will fight those projects *all the way*.

What problems arise for David Cameron in the process of production through mismatches between his resources, and his analysis of his situation? And what novel combinations of discourse types does he generate in trying to resolve them?

Firstly, in the relations stage, the approach that Cameron chooses continues to be one where he addresses the public directly and, in spite of using the exclusive pronoun *we* at times, it does not seem to be with the intention to put himself too far from the public. For that reason, it could be argued that his analysis of the situation leads him to continue portraying himself as a leader that does not talk to the audience from a remote place of power.

Regarding the subject position of Cameron as a leader, he appears to maintain his departure from what he seemed to be trying to achieve in his 2006 speech: once again, there are no mentions of the centre or a type of liberal Conservatism. In fact, his message – from an ideological point of view - is similar to the 2009 speech, even in his mentions of family as an important value for him. Therefore, and as it happened with that text, there does not seem to be a mismatch in this level.

Finally, referring to the subject position of the audience, Cameron yet again puts himself at a similar level than the people, claiming that they are better together and that they will rise together. As it was already mentioned, he not only values the people's effort; it could even be argued that his words give us the sense that he needs that contribution from them in order to achieve his government's goals. Thus, the mismatch in this area keeps being the same: a leader that attempts to come off as close to the people, even if some his values belong to the Conservative tradition, (e.g. family, patriotism).

What institutional and/or societal processes does this discourse belong to, and how is it ideologically determined and ideologically determinative?

In a similar way to what happened in the previous question, the parallels between the speeches from 2009 and 2012 leads us to basically the same conclusions from an institutional and a societal perspective. In both cases, his discourse is far more ideologically determined than determinative, perhaps because – unlike what he seemed to be attempting to do in 2006 – his message appears to be more identified with what is commonly regarded as a traditional conservative way of thinking. The exception we could point is, once more, Cameron's effort to be perceived as a sympathetic leader instead of an authoritative one.

Going back to the first research question, as it has been argued along the continued analysis of Cameron's three speeches, the current Prime Minister appears to have attempted to rebrand what it meant to be conservative at one point of his career. At least in 2006 he was certainly engaging the centre, promising that the Conservative Party would stay there and speaking about a liberal Conservatism. He also talked about a different reality than the one Margaret Thatcher had to face, and also of people wanting different things. However, the ways he seems to brand himself from a political perspective is different in the following two speeches. In both of them, the political brand at hand is far more similar to what one would expect from the common conservative politician. Gone are the mentions of the centre or the concept of being a liberal Conservative.

In this sense, we could say that there are two distinct brands in these three texts: the first is the brand of a leader who tries to move away from being merely a conservative leader. He seems to want to be more than that. He gives the impression of wanting to incorporate the centre as supporters; he speaks about liberal Conservatism as if that was part of what he stands for. Then there is the second brand, one where his beliefs have not really changed (he still values family and patriotism and criticises state interference), but the absence of allusions to the centre makes it hard to differentiate him from other conservatives. Perhaps one aspect where Cameron still departs from the traditional notion of other politicians from his sector is what I have referred to as his similarity to what Lakoff calls the nurturant parent/liberal politician, where he appears as an understanding authority that trusts in his children/people.

Regarding the second research question, I already argued that Cameron's strategy seems to have changed completely if we compare his 2006 speech with the other two. Perhaps, once he became Prime Minister, he realized that he needed the full support of his party and not just from those who also claimed to be liberal conservatives, therefore he had to end the allusions to the centre. That, however, is just a conjecture at this point and would have to be properly researched. Unfortunately, that enquiry escapes from the scope of this research, since it would necessarily involve the analysis of more speeches and maybe an additional examination of, for instance, press coverage that would provide an insight to the inner workings of the Conservative Party and British politics in general.

CONCLUSION

The first theoretical implication that can be obtained from this research is that Busby's (2006) notion of political branding has a lot to do with Fairclough's (2001a) mention of a self-construction process within representation. After all, what Cameron does is to build an image of himself, which is the basis of his political branding strategy, as I was able to observe during the process of establishing the core code of the Thematic Analysis and while applying Fairclough's CDA model.

The second theoretical insight that this project proposes is that, from an ideological point of view, most of the traditional conservative values are present in Cameron's discourse. Among them, we can name the importance of family, patriotism and his disapproval of what he calls state interference (Fairclough, 2001b; Lakoff, 2004). Thus, Cameron's brand of conservatism, even after he stops referring to the centre and liberal Conservatism, seems to move away

from that sector only in aspects such as how he addresses the public. In other words, they are not significant ideological differences.

From a methodological and empirical point of view, a consideration important to point out is that even though Fairclough's model proved to be quite helpful for a researcher with limited experience in discourse analysis – which was my case – further similar projects could move on to different analytic alternatives. In fact, a study with enough length to discuss its findings could even use Fairclough's model and compare it with another type of CDA or discourse analysis in general; that exercise could reinforce the validity of the results at hand or perhaps propose necessary reflections as to why the findings varied.

Furthermore, another interesting continuation of this research would be to focus on the reasons that may explain why Cameron's strategy of branding changed, as I already suggested in the previous section. Besides of the aforementioned possibility of analysing press coverage, maybe another method would be to interview members of the Conservative Party, who perhaps could shed some light on the reason why the current Prime Minister's branding changed the way it did. What is more, the BBC interview that I mentioned in the introduction dates from 2010, but his 2009 speech analysed here already shows him avoiding allusions to the centre or liberal Conservatism; another attractive piece of research could be to ask if this is due to a simple inconsistency or if the interview was one of Cameron's last attempts to consolidate that brand.

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