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Proiect Brexit-generated Identity Crises through Text Varieties
ABSTRACT

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The UK's tumultuous relationship with the European Union has been debated worldwide over the past decade and is often held responsible for affecting the British identity by posing a threat to the national interest. The increasing Euroscepticism within the UK led to a referendum questioning its membership in the European Community in 1975, after only two years of membership. Unlike the referendum in 2016, the final decision in the first referendum was postponed as the population attempted to remain a part of the union. The British people's questioning their role in the EU was materialised in two referenda, exposing a clear manifestation of Euroscepticism, though in an incipient phase.

The fact that the British people considered it necessary to hold two referenda on the same issue, respectively, the EU membership, was a clear sign of their questioning their national identity in relation to the European identity.

Against the background of Brexit, the UK was perceived as a country struggling to define its path on the European stage and within the EU, while internally, the British were facing identity crises caused by their vote during the Referendum and by their political views. Brexit was a complex phenomenon that revealed internal fractures between rural and urban areas of the country, among different social categories of citizens, and also between age groups. While sometimes perceived as a question of sovereignty and nationalism, Brexit intensified debates, re-evaluating what it means to be British and re-considering the concept of (national) identity.

Therefore, approaching the identity crises generated by a highly polarising phenomenon such as Brexit provides the research opportunity of exploring several dimensions and facets of identity and of considering its individual, national, institutional, continental, and global implications. The tensions generated by Brexit, both in the UK and on the global stage, have given rise to a diverse range of texts, a selection of which represents the textual evidence of our research. Official texts following the bureaucratic steps of the UK's exit from the union, literary text samples reflecting subjective views on the issue expressed through the words of various characters or fictional projections of the UK's future, in or out of the EU, newspaper articles uncovering personal viewpoints, frequently urging the readers to vote Leave or Remain, online posts on various social media platforms, political figures' speeches and interviews, and many more are texts dealing with Brexit, framing the EU-UK relation during turbulent times.

The wide variety of texts was the main challenge for the present thesis since it required a rigorous selection of the text samples to form the corpus to be investigated, while being aware of the impossibility to comprise all the text varieties illustrative of the research topic.

In the context of Brexit, identity emerges as a fundamental lens through which to analyse the socio-political dynamics, not only within the United Kingdom, but also at a broader, global scale. Identity crises manifest in multifaceted ways, extending beyond the confines of the British national discourse

or the societal divisions precipitated by the EU referendum in 2016. They have rather intensified across Europe and globally, reflecting deeper anxieties surrounding sovereignty, globalisation, and cultural belonging.

While using the national and global context for a better understanding and interpretation of the selected texts, the present research aims to explore the reflection of the Brexit-generated identity crises (BGICs) across various categories of texts. Our approach exposes the multi-faceted issues related to the identity tensions that the Brexit phenomenon generated at individual, national, continental, and global levels, and their projection through text varieties, by analysing the way various categories of text producers chose to employ language to reflect it.

The present thesis does not aim to provide a comprehensive account of the historical and contemporary distinctions between Englishness and Britishness, nor does it offer a socio-political analysis of the implications of the Brexit phenomenon; it explores the manifestation of the phenomena as reflected by language.

Ultimately, this thesis aims to bring a substantial scientific contribution in addressing a challenging topic, generating new information, and contributing to the current body of knowledge. A significant aspect is the timespan of the publication of the selected corpus, namely the first post-Referendum decade, which enables the researcher to explore the linguistic phenomena connected to the UK's exit from the EU and the transformations they entailed at the level of language during the period comprising the Brexit Campaign, the EU Referendum, the negotiations period, and the UK's official Withdrawal from the Union in 2020. The fact that the present thesis is written after a decade since the Referendum enables the researcher to draw insightful conclusions about the evolution of the language reflecting the phenomena under investigation.

Moreover, the fact that the UK and the EU are still negotiating and establishing common norms and regulations allows researchers, scholars, journalists, authors, politicians and ordinary people to write on this complex phenomenon, enlarging the significant body of texts dealing with the issue. Therefore, the field under discussion is far from being limited, and it cannot be encompassed in one single study, as it is continually broadening and being enriched by various categories of texts dealing with the new stages in the EU-UK relation.

As proven by our research, this is a widely addressed theme, given that the status of the UK's relationship with the EU is still uncertain today, a decade after the EU Referendum and after celebrating the seventh anniversary of "Britain's fateful vote", as Ash defined it in The Guardian (2023). The uncertainty and the instability of the Brexit phenomenon and the general socio-political context impacting people's self-perception can be identified across text varieties, in the lexis employed by the authors, whose exploration represents the main objective of the present thesis.

Our study facilitates a deeper understanding of the Brexit phenomenon by exploring how text producers navigate the complexity of the multi-dimensional crises it generated and their linguistic

illustration across the selected text varieties. Consequently, its value can be increased by investigating further sources dealing with this topic and shedding light on extra samples of text varieties using other theoretical frameworks and methodological tools.

Even though our study is mainly circumscribed within the area of language studies, analysing the projection of identity crises in any kind of text variety, regardless of their causes and contextual implications, involves delving into various domains and disciplines. We will explore, generally, the linguistic features of the selected media texts, official texts, literary texts, and non-fictional texts, but the fields of study are very vast and intertwined. Therefore, our interpretative perspective provides multidisciplinary analyses, exploring in depth the selected texts by tapping into social psychology, cultural studies, media studies, and political studies.

Our thesis is structured upon five chapters, four of which are analytical, applicative chapters, taking into consideration the temporal dimension, i.e., the moment when the text samples were produced, published, or when they became public, and the reflection of the theme.

After the introduction of the thesis has presented the research topic and its objectives, as well as the motivation and relevance of the study – emphasizing the importance of both the internal and external context—the first chapter defines the key concepts of the thesis, reviews the scholarly works that have contributed to establishing its theoretical framework, and outlines the methodological instruments employed in each applicative chapter.

Regarding the timespan of our investigation, three Brexit-related temporal stages were initially taken into consideration for the research: the period before the Referendum, the period comprising the day of the Referendum and the UK's official exit, and the post-withdrawal period, considered to have started on the 31st of January 2020. Gallaway (2020: 8) emphasized the distinction between these three moments in the UK's history, reminding us of Aristotle's famous claim according to which there is no time without change. He claims that whatever we refer to when talking about time is nothing but our way of measuring the difference between two dimensions: before and after. Nevertheless, it is easily noticeable that the period before Brexit (in our study labelled as the pre-Brexit period) and the period after the official withdrawal (the post-Brexit period) cannot be established as a fixed period of time, the Brexit moment itself being an ambiguous phrase. Thus, one may consider it as the day of the referendum itself, respectively the 23rd of June 2016 or the 31st of January 2020, the moment when the UK officially ended its EU membership. The thesis explores 150 excerpts from various categories of texts, published pre- and post-Referendum, following the evolution of the EU-UK relation from 2016 to 2025, and insisting on the identity crises Brexit triggered not only in the UK's component countries, but also within the EU, on the global stage, and at an individual level.

While the selected Brexit-related literary texts were mainly published in the 2016-2020 period, the most recent text investigated in the present study is a non-fictional text, a semi-structured interview presented in the final chapter of the thesis, which was conducted by the researcher in 2025.

Chapter 2 focuses on media texts that were published during the long-running Brexit campaign. The thesis provides an indicative analysis, not an exclusive one, as a full account of the projection of the Brexit-generated identity crises through media texts or any other kind of text variety cannot be possibly explored in one single study. The chapter is structured into three subsections. The first subchapter investigates the construction of the linguistic identity of Brexiters vs. Pro-Europeans, more specifically, the way in which the two identities outlined by the EU referendum in the UK were linguistically represented across media texts during the selected timespan. Additionally, it approaches the concept of othering and its connection to the identity crises in the wake of Brexit, as reflected by the selected text samples. The second subchapter explores the emergence of Brexitese, a context-dependent linguistic phenomenon, insisting on the connection between language and the socio-political context and identifying its main features as evidenced in the analysed samples. The third subsection provides an evaluative analysis, a bilingual comparative analysis exploring the linguistic representation of the Brexit-generated identity crises across British and Italian media texts, presenting various examples of positive and negative evaluative expressions and their possible interpretation.

Chapter 3 explores language and identity in EU official texts by investigating the legitimation strategies from a discourse analytical perspective, in the first subchapter, and, in the second subchapter, examines the contrastive framing of identities, role relations, and the identity boundary construction between Europeanness and Britishness. The third subchapter presents a comparative register analysis of official texts and tabloid texts by examining the reflection of identity crises through lexico-grammatical features and their functionality. The two contrastive registers have been selected on the grounds of their reflection of the research theme, but also for the palpable differences referring to the linguistic items and the grammar structures used by the authors that help the researcher emphasized the way the BGIC were rendered through language.

When exploring official texts with the aim of analysing language, one should bear in mind the core nature of the text. Unlike media texts, which abound in emotive language and strongly charged evaluative linguistic items, the official texts use impersonal, objective, formal, and clear language. Nevertheless, beyond the depersonalised language, there are linguistic items and grammar structures which underlie power relations and ideological standpoints, and the main objective of this chapter is to explore the deliberately employed linguistic items and the way they render, shape, or revive identities.

Since the generalisation from one single text is not illustrative enough to define the register under investigation, we propose the examination of three EU official texts, namely “The European Parliament resolution of 28 June 2016 on the decision to leave the EU resulting from the UK

referendum", "The Council Decision authorising the Commission to open the negotiations on an agreement with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland setting out the arrangements for its withdrawal from the European Union", "European Council Decision (EU) 2019/584 taken in agreement with the United Kingdom of 11 April 2019 extending the period under Article 50(3) TEU."

The analysis investigates official texts produced during various stages of the negotiation process, more specifically during the period comprising the 2016 Referendum and the UK's official withdrawal in 2020. Produced by the European Parliament, the first selected text sample presents the Union's taking note of the British citizens' decision to leave the EU.

The second official text is a Council Decision authorising the Commission to open negotiations between the two sides, while the last official text is produced by the European Council and deals with the UK's previous request to extend the period under Article 50 of the Treaty. All these documents are intermediate stages in the process of withdrawal, and they pave the way to the Withdrawal Agreement, as a concluding step in the negotiations between the two sides

The first subchapter approaches the official texts exploring the dynamic of identity construction through legitimation strategies (Van Leeuwen, 2007): Authorisation, Moral Evaluation, Rationalization and Mythopoesis.

The second subchapter provides a qualitative analysis exploring EU official texts in terms of the three concepts described by Halliday: the tenor, the field, and the mode, and their connection with the two contested identities, namely European and British. Our analysis also follows Biber and Conrad's Framework for Situational Analysis, as summarised by Morăraşu (2014: 53). Thus, we start by mentioning the situational context, the participants and the relationship between them (interactiveness, shared knowledge and social roles), we also dwell on the channel and the production circumstances, the setting and the communicative purpose in the selected texts under discussion. Furthermore, the analysis identifies the main features typical of officialese and presents them in a comparative analysis, shedding light on the pervasive linguistic features and their functionality in building or shaping identities.

This chapter argues that the selected official texts do not only employ neutral language, a fundamental feature of the formal register to reflect different stages of the negotiation process, but also naturalize and internalize concepts and beliefs, being instrumental in the (re)construction of the two opposing identities, British vs. European.

Additionally, we consider that, despite avoiding overt emotion or political stance, official texts construct identity positions and manage institutional legitimacy through the employment of specific linguistic choices. Though not as obviously reflected by language, the institutional crisis is rendered through the linguistic means intended to reaffirm the identity of the EU, inevitably affected by one of its member state departure.

In Chapter 4, the corpus used for critical stylistics analysis, based on the framework established by Jeffries (2010), comprises ten literary texts, selected for their thematic relevance: *Autumn* by A. Smith, *Perfidious Albion* by S. Byers, *The Man Who Saw Everything* by D. Levy, *A Stranger City* by L. Grant, *The Cockroach* by J. McEwan, *The Lie of the Land* by A. Craig, *Milkman* by A. Burns, *Agent Running in the Field* by J. LeCarré, *Middle England* by J. Coe, and *William Shakespeare's Brexit- A Political Sh*t Storm in Five Acts* by B. Starling.

This study adopts Jeffries' model (2010) consisting of ten analytical tools, namely: "Naming and describing, Representing actions/Events/States (Simpson's transitivity model from 1993); Equating and Contrasting; Exemplifying and Enumerating; Prioritizing; Implying and Assuming; Negating; Hypothesizing (Modality, as in Simpson, 1993 which is based on Halliday,1985); Presenting Other People's Speech and Thoughts, Representing Time, Space and Society". The framework proposed by Jeffries combines stylistics and critical discourse analysis, aiming to critically analyse texts. These tools have been previously mentioned by the critical discourse analyst Fairclough (1989), and the critical linguists Fowler (1991) and Simpson (1993).

The difference between Jeffries' toolkit and the CDA tools consists in the fact that the tools presented by Jeffries are listed in the form of functions, each of them being represented at the level of language by one or more features. The major accomplishment of critical stylistics is providing a more encompassing and methodical framework of an analytical tool when compared to that of CDA (Olaluwoye, 2015: 88).

Naming and Describing refer to the way language is employed to name the referent ideologically. This analytical device is represented at the level of language by nouns, noun modification, the use of adjectives for detailed descriptions, and nominalisation, the deliberate transformation of verbs into nouns, packing up ideological content. Our study is an attempt to identify the linguistic means the authors under discussion employed to create meaning and build a message where ideas and beliefs are hidden at the level of language.

Representing actions/ events/ states is a tool dealing with the way verbs can be employed and the ideological effect they can produce, taking into consideration the readers' way of perceiving the message. The situation can be described as an action, an event, or simply as a state. Jeffries based his considerations on Simpson's Transitivity Model, and his model detects ideology in a text by combining the fields of CDA and Stylistics. From this perspective, verbs are divided into various categories. The material action verbs based on the type of actor performing the action can be divided into two categories: Material Action Intention, when the doer is animate, and Material Action Events, when the doer is inanimate. Mental process is another category of transitivity with two subcategories, respectively: Mental Cognition, Mental Perception, and Mental Reaction processes. There are also transitivity processes illustrating the existence of a relationship between the participants, the relational

process, which can also be divided into three categories: intensive relation, possessive relation, or circumstantial relations.

The next tool Jeffries introduces is Equating and Contrasting, which deals with the authors' employment of textual equivalence and opposition when depicting the world. In the Brexit context, the device helps uncover ideologies and power relations by scrutinising the author's deliberately selected linguistic items.

Exemplifying and Enumerating is a tool which was not part of the CDA toolkit, so it was introduced by Jeffries. Its aim is to identify linguistic items or to list structures in a text which cover ideologies.

Prioritising is a tool which analyses the position of the focal information in the text. Ideological effects may be produced by placing certain information in a text at a low level of subordination, which makes it less questionable, less debatable or by making particular information more salient.

Implying and Assuming is a tool which identifies in a text the author's attempt to present information as common language by employing assumptions and implications to produce naturalized ideologies which cannot be questioned.

Presenting Other's Speech and Thoughts deals with the authors' exposing other's ideas and considerations which might a have a potential manipulative effect on the reader. According to Leech and Short (1981), there are five types of representation of the speech of others: narrator's report of speech (NRS), narrator's report of speech act (NRSA), free indirect speech (FIS), indirect speech (IS) and direct speech (DS). Aiming to confirm the righteousness of their ideologies hidden at the level of language in a variety of linguistic items and grammar structures, authors cite important personalities with similar views from various domains, determining the reader to accept their standpoint as it is backed by the words of other authors/scholars.

Negating refers to the authors' depiction of an alternative reality which, though not real, is conceptualized by the recipient and thus produces a persuasive effect. Hypothesising reflects the authors' perspective on things which might not be the objective depiction of the world as it is.

Space, Time and Social Representation is a tool dealing with the text producer's depiction of the world. Jeffries mentions the significance of deixis which is reflected by the interpretation of particular utterances in particular contexts. Therefore, personal deictic, place deictic, time deictic and social deictic may provide relevant information regarding the author's hidden ideologies in the text.

Chapter 5, entitled *Revealing Identity Crises in the Wake of Brexit: A Case Study on Personal and National Transformation,* presents the examination of the language employed by a British citizen for constructing self-identity in the context of Brexit and articulating personal perspectives on the Brexit identity crises. The analysis is conducted using theory triangulation, by providing a Narrative Analysis (Riessman, 2008; Bamberg, 2006), investigating how the interviewee narrates personal or

collective transformation pre/post-Brexit, conducted through the lens of the "Nested Identities Theory" (Herrmann et al., 2004), and "the Positioning Theory" (Davies & Harré, 1990).

While encompassing all the categories of text varieties is beyond the scope of the present study, our corpus was selected to illustrate how language reflects the major identity crises fuelled by Brexit, facilitating the development of meaningful conclusions.

Brexit and its connection to identity have generated a growing body of text varieties such as political speeches and interviews, newspaper articles, posts on social media, literary texts, official documents reflecting different stages of the EU-UK relation. Understanding the connection among identity, language and complex socio-political phenomena such as Brexit implies analysing various categories of texts, exploring the lexis employed and uncovering its possible connotations and meanings.

The topic approached in our thesis has attracted interest even before the results of the referendum in 2016 became public. Brexit was an unprecedented event that was not only the consequence of the British people freely expressing their will not to be EU citizens any longer, but also a phenomenon that led to both positive and negative outcomes, setting the tone for other potential exits from the EU. This is the reason why we are widely aware of the responsibility of reflecting this phenomenon by a careful selection and thoughtful qualitative analysis of the corpus of texts, scrutinised in the applicative chapters of our research.

The present investigation aims to contribute to the field under discussion by exploring the projection of the Brexit-generated identity crises (BGICs) through text varieties in a limited corpus consisting in four categories of texts, namely: media texts, official texts, literary texts and a non-fictional text, a one participant- interview.

The study contributes to a deeper understanding of the fundamental role of language in shaping contemporary perceptions of belonging, sovereignty and national identity and paves the way to more expanded studies dealing with the Brexit-generated identity crises and their reflection at the level of language.

The UK's decision to withdraw from the European Union was a complex phenomenon that uncovered ideologies and outlined identities not only through the internal fractures that it generated on the grounds of the vote in the 2016 Referendum, but also through its impact on the European stage. Due to its political repositioning as a non-EU member, the country questioned its national identity and the EU's identity as a strong and powerful institution.

The present study argues that identities and ideologies are reflected through language and enhanced, revived or created by means of linguistic resources. Hence, the key concepts of the present thesis are: identity, identity crises on the background of Brexit, ideology and language, more specifically, the way in which the BGIC were reflected through language.

In the context of an era transformed by technology and marked by constant and intense cultural encounters, Burke (2009) considers that the mere attempt to define the concept of identity is

a challenging task. Moreover, he highlights the impact of the contemporary blend of cultures, defined in his work as a mixture of cultural hybridity and heterogeneity, on identity, a concept he considers "part of the jungle of concepts fighting for survival". Due to this complex background, such concepts as nationality, nationalism, and national identity are often said to be in decline. In 2004, Joseph wrote about what he calls the identity of identity, insisting on the complexity of the concept, its various dimensions and the connection between identity and language. The scholar outlines the fact that our interaction with other people is, most of the time, purely linguistic. This contact enables us "to flesh out the construction of other people's identity" (Joseph, 2004: 2) which involves constructing ours as part of our daily experience. Hence, identity, be it on an individual, institutional, social or national level, is revealed by identity markers and by ideology and reflected through language.

We embrace the perspective adopted by critical linguistics on language as being formed within social contexts and as reflecting and constructing ideologies of that social context (Simpson, 1993). Additionally, we also take into consideration the internal context of each text variety and the recontextualisation process, which are worth investigating as they enrich the text with new meanings.

Ideology is defined as "a set of belief systems of social groups" (Simpsons, 1993). In 2010, Fairclough insisted on the way language can be employed "to depict activities and systems, thus, shape the texts to give a certain image for themselves". (Ahmed, 2022: 6789-6801)

We share Jeffries' (2010) considerations about ideology perceived as being an "unavoidable fact of all discourse." Therefore, when addressing the theme of our thesis, we take into consideration ideologies and their significant role in constructing identities and power relations that are reflected through the linguistic choices of the text producers. The connection between Brexit and the way the British people perceived themselves in relation to the EU can be addressed by exploring such intertwined concepts as nation, nationalism and ideology. While the concept of ideology has already been explained, the concept of nation and the collective identity associated with it requires particular consideration.

Deary (2025: 1) provides a simplified and accessible definition of the concept of nation by comparing humans and their behaviour with sheep: "they gather into flocks of people who live in the same place and share their language and culture. We call these human flocks nations". What the scholar suggests is that a nation is a community of people united by specific values and common manifestations such as language and culture.

The theoretical framework of our investigation is represented by Erikson's statements related to identity and identity crises. Erikson (1968: 94) introduced the concept of identity in the context of psychosocial development. The researcher insisted on the perception of personal identity as "the integration of self-awareness and continuity over time". Moreover, such scholars as Henri Tajfel & John Turner, through The Social Identity Theory (1979), reflected on how people categorise themselves into groups, compare themselves to others, and thus, define themselves. Therefore,

identity encompasses both personal and social aspects, involving characteristics and group affiliations (Erikson, 1968; Jenkins, 2008; Tajfel, 1981; Hall, 1996).

The relation between identity and the internal and external contexts requires understanding identity as shaped through the interaction between the two contexts. What the present study argues is the fact that language is inherently connected to the context and, regardless of the text variety investigated, identity is created, revived and constructed through language

Understanding Brexit implies tapping into the historical dimension of the national identity crises in the UK, investigating the nationalist attitude in the UK and its Euroscepticism as the roots of national identity crises.

Scholars have also examined the multiple dimensions of the identity issues emerged on the Brexit background, including the tensions between Britishness and Europeanness, the linguistic representation of othering of the immigrants, frequently portrayed as threats to the national self, and the polarisation of the British media, which both reflects and shapes public attitudes toward the EU, immigration, and nationalism.

Some authors explored the psychological implication of the Brexit crises. Manners (2018), in his article "Political Psychology of European Integration: The (Re)production of Identity and Difference in the Brexit Debate" explores the theme through the lens of political psychology in order to provide a better understanding of the ways in which emotions such as hate, anger and passion impact identity in the wake of Brexit.

Other authors outlined the linguistic shifts in regional identity in the UK taking into consideration the fact that two of the member states voted to Remain (Scotland and Northern Ireland) while the other two (England and Wales) expressed anti-European views through their vote. "Fractured Union: Politics, Sovereignty and the Fight to Save the UK" (2024) by M. Kenny explores the way language became a means of either maintaining a link with Europe or breaking away from it.

Chapter 2 uses the tools of Discourse Analysis, respectively Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), to investigate the Brexit-generated identity crises across media texts. The criterion of selection of the media texts was their reflection of the theme and the specific moment when they were published. In exploring the linguistic representation of the two identities outlined by the Brexit campaign, respectively, Brexiters and Remainers, we insist on the concept of othering in the wake of Brexit. Furthermore, five media texts published in a widely read British tabloid, the Daily Mail are meticulously analysed using Gee's (1998) Intertextuality Theory and Van Dijk's (1993) Ideological Square to enhance the idea of identity crises emerged within the UK, on the Brexit background that led to fractions within the country. The specific tools employed to conduct our qualitative analysis are the vocabulary tool, the exploration of the linguistic choices of the authors, the contextual factors

in the discourse analysis, and the assumptions and cultural clues, the intertextual references, deixis and polarisation, and passivisation and nominalisation in the critical discourse analysis.

In the second subchapter, building upon Bodle's (2017) findings, the exploration furthers through the approach of a linguistic phenomenon that, though initially derided by the critics, reflected a linguistic identity emerged out of the national identity crises. Thus, the Brexiters created a linguistic code that succeeded in enriching one and the same linguistic item from the standard English by new meanings that best suited their standpoint on the Brexit issue. The subchapter presents a comparative analysis of Brexitese and standard English, the main characteristics of Brexitese as context-bound language using the same linguistic items as standard English but deliberately altering their meaning to appeal to emotions and influence the reader.

In the last subchapter, a bilingual comparative analysis of media texts published in the UK and in Italy is conducted through the prism of The Appraisal Theory introduced by Martin & White (2005), ensuring the theoretical framework for the analysis of the identity crises in the two categories of texts, providing a wider perspective on the way language was employed to describe the turbulent times that the UK was facing and its implications.

The chapter "The Brexit-generated Identity Crises Reflected through EU Official Texts" uses method triangulation and theory triangulation to examine EU official texts and how language employed reflected the tensions between the UK and the EU when the results of the Referendum became public and various official documents related to the negotiation of the withdrawal terms were published. The analysis, which is divided into three subsections, explores the way the EU reaffirms its identity as a powerful and united institution, apparently unshattered by the decision of one of its most significant members to exit, using rigorously selected linguistic resources.

The first subsection analyses the dynamics of identity construction through legitimation strategies, while the second one explores Europeanness vs. Britishness as revealed by the Field, the Tenor, and the Mode of discourse. Furthermore, in the last subsection, the study scrutinises registers contrastively exploring two text varieties belonging to two distinctive registers, respectively, the official register and the journalistic register, insisting on how linguistic features construct identity, establish roles, and build power relations. The study presents a small-scale quantitative analysis to interpret the way the two opposing identities were illustrated through language.

Theory triangulation is based on Martin Joos' theory (1976) regarding register (formal register vs. informal register), Halliday's considerations regarding register analysis in terms of field, tenor and mode, Biber and Conrad's (2009) theoretical framework for register analysis, and van Leeuwen's (2007) framework of legitimation in discourse and communication to demonstrate how identities and legitimation are constructed and reinforced through language.

The chapter entitled *The Brexit-Generated Identity Crises Reflected through Literary Texts* explores the projection of the phenomena through literary texts employing a selection of Critical

Stylistics Devices proposed by Jeffries (2010), and taking into consideration the textual evidence provided by each literary text. The critical stylistic analysis of the ten literary texts outlines the manner in which language is employed, deliberately or not, to build identities and to reflect the Brexit-generated identity crises and their various dimensions.

Lastly, Chapter 5 furthers the investigation by exploring the language employed in a non-fictional text, namely, an interview, by conducting a Frame Analysis and a Narrative Analysis. When selecting the most adequate approach to the applicative part of the thesis, two aspects have been taken into consideration: firstly, the theme, and secondly, the key concepts of the study: language, identity, ideology, Brexit and identity crises. Thus, the three methods of analysis adopted are: Discourse Analysis (DA), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Critical Stylistics Analysis (CSA), three approaches which are closely intertwined and enabling us to draw valuable conclusions.

The general concern of the three categories of analyses is their investigation of the linguistic items employed in various categories of texts, each of them approaching texts from multiple perspectives. Thus, both CDA and CSA are encompassed within the wide field of DA, as they share similarities regarding language exploration. Discourse analysis provides an efficient lens through which language can be explored and decoded by investigating language patterns and choices and their connection to contexts to uncover deeper meanings and implications on the representation, construction, and/or revival of different identities. This is a qualitative research method employed to analyse written or spoken texts, aiming to comprehend how language is used in real-life situations.

The main differences between CDA and CSA consist of their frameworks and purpose. Critical Discourse Analysis is both a method and a theory. As a theory, it describes, interprets, and explains the relationship between language and the issues subjected to analysis (Rogers, 2004: 18). It investigates ideologies and power relations hidden under linguistic items, being an appropriate means of investigating our topic. Fairclough (1989) mentions three stages of CDA: description, interpretation, and explanation. According to Martinez (2007), one of the most remarkable features of CDA is its theoretical and methodological heterogeneity, since it derives from "different theoretical backgrounds and there is no specific methodology considered characteristic" (Martinez, 2007: 125).

In the first analytical chapter of the thesis that approaches media texts both from the UK and the international media, more specifically, Italian media, to analyse how language is employed to construct identities in the wake of the Brexit crises, the text samples were manually selected, taking into consideration their potential to reflect Brexit-generated identity crises.

In Chapter 3, the official texts have been selected based on the publication date in the EU Official journals and platforms in order to reflect various stages of the identity crises the union was facing after the UK voted to withdraw and during the withdrawal negotiation period.

Chapter 4 approaches Brexlit by exploring literary texts that were selected on account of their being published in the immediate post-Referendum period, while others were published at the end of 2019.

Chapter 5 explores the way the Brexit phenomenon was perceived at an individual level. Thus, it presents a one-participant interview analysing the language employed by a British citizen, a pro-Brexit voter, to describe the tumultuous times that the UK was facing in the pre- and post-Referendum period and their impact on the life of ordinary people, and on the nation as a whole.

While analysing language, the interdisciplinary analysis taps into various domains and disciplines such as social psychology, political science, and sociology, employing various methodological tools circumscribed within the area of qualitative research.

In the first applicative chapter, we have analysed the linguistic representation of BGIC through media texts, more specifically of the two dichotomous identities revealed by the 2016 Referendum in the UK, and we have presented our findings on the birth of a new linguistic phenomenon, Brexitese, and its connection with context, by providing a comparative analysis of standard English and Brexitese. The analysis enabled the extraction of the main features of the linguistic phenomenon, namely: intentionality, identical form and meaning alteration, and temporality. Various examples of how linguistic items bearing the same form and employed with a different meaning in Brexitese are provided in the Table "The False Friendship between Standard English an d Brexitese".

Eventually, we furthered the exploration of the identity crises in media texts by addressing text samples from the UK and from Italy, in a comparative bilingual analysis centred on evaluation and the occurrence of both positive and negative evaluative utterances and the way they reflect and construct identities. We analysed 150 excerpts from media texts, and the findings are divided into 4 annexes, two of them exposing the negative and the affirmative utterances identified in the British text samples, while the last two present the results of the research on Italian media texts, respectively, the occurrence of positive and negative utterances.

In the second analytical chapter, we used triangulation to explore the dynamics of identity construction in EU official texts using legitimation strategies, we scrutinised the text samples through the lens of SFL, and we comparatively analysed the official register and the journalistic register. By combining the qualitative and the quantitative approaches, we explained the way language is used in EU official texts to reflect contrastive identities, to establish boundaries and create power relations, and to illustrate the institutional identity crises that the EU was facing in the post-Referendum period. The language used in the official texts under investigation uncovers the EU's attempt to reaffirm its identity, obviously affected by the UK's unprecedented decision to leave. The Union was facing a period of uncertainty, and the authors of the official texts marked it through linguistic items and grammar structures meant to reinforce identity boundaries and to reassure the other member states and the international powers of its unshattered position.

Chapter 4, the third analytical chapter of the thesis, approaches literary texts published between 2016 and 2019. Though varying in their perspectives on the national identity crises related to the Brexit phenomenon, the selected text samples unveil the ideological standpoint of the author.

The analysis outlines the efficiency of conducting research using the tools of Critical Stylistics Analysis, providing thought-provoking observations on the meaning of the texts and underscoring ideological standpoints without compromising objectivity.

This enables us to conclude that the literary texts have a limited ability to shape reality, and language is an efficient tool to suit the ideological positioning of the authors.

The study reflects on the linguistic representation of individual and national identity in the UK's post-Brexit period and on the way linguistic items can be deliberately employed by the authors to expose subjective perspectives on various contemporary issues, in our case, Brexit. It is a starting point to new directions of research, approaching new literary texts or exploring the same as the present study but using other theoretical frameworks and different analytical instruments.

Starling wrote in the introduction to the play about the Brexit outcomes and predicted the fact that, while making history as being the first country to withdraw from the EU, the UK would feel the impact of the phenomenon which, in his view, would take decades to assess. Today, the first decade after the Referendum, various categories of texts are still being written. The question is: can we still talk about Brexlit today, almost a decade after the EU Referendum in the UK or was it a context-bound literary movement which gradually came to an end in time?

Approaching the non-fictional text under investigation through the lens of the Frame Theory and Positioning Theory enabled us to reflect on how language is used to create identities and to build power relations. The interviewee uncovers his sense of belonging to the Brexiteers' group by relating his identity to the past, reflected through his narratives and through his Christian origins deeply rooted in his family's past. Analysing the language that he employs enables us not only to reveal his self-perception but also to uncover his standpoint on the ongoing renewal of the national self in the pre- and post-Brexit period.

Fosum and Menendez (2014: 29) outline the fact that both the concept of identity and the concept of crisis are in a continuous transformation and what seemed coherent a decade ago, during the Brexit Campaign, for instance, may not be perceived as reasonable or meaningful as it seemed at that specific moment in time. "If the crises teach us something it is precisely the need to be wary of the taken-for-granteds – what we thought and had established as truth prior to the crises cannot be relied on as having full purchase today."

Furthermore, the lesson to be learned from such identity crises, considered by the previously mentioned authors a challenge, is to establish with a measure of certainty what remains valid and what has transformed. In the aftermath of Brexit, language, as a fundamental identity marker, has changed.

In 2019, Massolo wrote about the EU's struggle to redefine its identity and the emergence of an updated European project laying focus on the internal dimension of the identity crisis and the necessity to give every member country the chance to be heard: "In redefining its identity, the EU must listen to the different voices coming bottom up, giving everyone the chance to be heard. Only by meeting the needs of its "community" can the EU of today (and tomorrow) successfully address the internal and external challenges it faces." Brexit is, in Massolo's opinion, the most serious symptom of the broader trend within the EU, "the call for the break-up of the EU itself, for the first time in the history of the European bloc".

The UK-EU relation is an open topic that cannot be reduced to the Brexit phenomenon, the way exploring text varieties dealing with the issue cannot be encompassed in one single study. A decade after the UK's exit, texts analysing its outcomes and exploring realistic or fictive scenarios about the future of the European Union and the UK's trajectory in or out of the union are published all over the world.

In 2025, while mentioning the way Brexit affected both the union, by losing a big economy and a crucial military power, and the UK, which is defined as "a far smaller power on the global stage", BBC insisted on the common interests of the two parts and the necessity to revive common values such as peace and cooperation: "These threats to security and to trade revenues have helped remind the EU and the UK of the common values they share in unpredictable times. The EU felt weakened by Brexit in 2016. It meant losing a big economy and its only significant military power apart from France. As for post-Brexit UK, now free from the rules of EU membership, it's also now a far smaller power on the world stage."

Whether a smaller power on the international stage or not, the UK is today reshaping and reconstructing its national identity frequently considered the root cause for Brexit. The Independent defined the year 2025 as an age of divisive nationalism when national identity "is fraught with rabbit holes," and Brexit is defined as "the worst expression of who we aspire to be, an opportunistic, unhinged parody of little-England protest". While uncovering anti-Brexit views, the article reveals significant issues related to the UK's withdrawal and the lesson to be learned from the 2016 Referendum: the country is presented as still in impasse at that specific moment. "The election of Pope Leo XIV is also mentioned as a reminder that the UK was just another country facing crisis, absorbed in that all-important quest for identity". To conclude, the British identity requires investigating, considering the UK's glorious imperial past, the BGICs, and the still uncertain trajectory of the country.

A decade after the UK's historical decision, the analysis of the Brexit-related texts produced both pre- and post- Referendum is a challenging task. While the world is shattered by wars, the common values and interests of the two parties foster dialogue and cooperation aiming for common goals related to peace and security on the continent.

The relation between the UK and the EU is currently established by a set of treaties and agreements negotiated in the years following the EU Referendum. During the First Ever EU-UK Summit in 2025, aiming to overcome the tensions and the wave of mistrust triggered by Brexit, the two parts manifested a willingness to rebuild the connection, partly influenced by the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, a palpable threat to the national security of the whole continent, not only of the UK and the EU.

Given the delicate international context, the British openly expressed their intention to cooperate with other countries from the EU to secure a peaceful atmosphere on the continent by insisting on the sanctions against Russia. It is a decisive step towards rapprochement and cooperation. Additionally, though Prime Minister for a short period of time, Liz Truss, also insisted on the imperative necessity to unite forces for a warless Europe. The multidimensional transformation of the relation between the two sides is reflected by the large number of official documents produced to legitimize various aspects related to the economy, politics, diplomacy, security, etc.

The relation between the two parties evolved, adapting to the international context and reaching a next stage which, though not as vehemently debated as the UK's EU membership and its decision to exit the union, is also reflected through a large number of text varieties.

Investigating language related to the Brexit identity crises in different text varieties is vital for understanding the role of communication in socio-political processes. The crucial role of language is undoubtedly constructed to discuss Brexit and its influence on public opinion, political discourse, and national identity. It also enables the researcher to gain deeper insights into how the linguistic choice of the producer can shape the meaning of events, form political narratives, impact social attitudes, and construct or revive identities. Moreover, the polarising linguistic items deliberately employed by text producers perpetuated a climate of anxiety and confusion, deepening the identity crises both within a fragile EU facing an unprecedented phenomenon and within the UK, torn by the shaping of collective exclusive identities.

In the second chapter of the present thesis, we investigate media texts to identify the linguistic representation of the BGIC. We started by reflecting on the representation of the two emerging identities in the pre-Referendum period, Brexiteers vs. Remainers, insisting on the way language can shape reality and exposing the strategies used by the authors of the selected media texts to construct the two opposing identities: the use of assumptions and cultural clues, intertextual references, deixis and polarisation, passivisation and nominalisation. We also explored the emergence of a new linguistic code, Brexitese, its connection with the context, and the false friendship between Brexitese and standard English. Broadening the corpus of our investigation, we conducted a bilingual analysis dwelling on the representation of the phenomenon in Italian vs British media texts through the lens of evaluation. Identifying evaluative utterances both in English and Italian media texts provided a wider perspective on the conducted theme, enabling the researcher to draw valuable conclusions.

The third chapter of the thesis approaches another dimension of the BGIC, namely the tumultuous relationship between the UK and the EU in the wake of Brexit. Though not as rich in textual evidence as the media texts, the official texts reveal the EU's attempt to reaffirm its identity in a moment of crisis generated by one of its members' freely expressed will to depart. By using triangulation, we analysed the employment of legitimation strategies in the texts, we explored the text excerpts through the prism of SFL, and we extracted the linguistic means through which the authors of the official texts established boundaries and roles in a comparative analysis scrutinising the official register and the journalistic register.

The methodological tools employed enabled us to conclude that the institutional crisis is reflected at the level of language, through verbs expressing actions based on principles and societal norms, nouns building narratives by evoking collective memories and ethical principles, and adjectives describing the EU as a positive participant in the communicative act. The analysis fills the gap in the domain as EU official texts addressing BGIC through the lens of identity and ideology have been underexplored.

The fourth chapter explores literary texts belonging to the Brexlit movement. While most of the texts forming the corpus have been widely investigated through various perspectives and using different methodological tools, our approach covers a gap related to the research method employed, as the literary texts were analysed using the Critical Stylistic Toolkit. We considered the tools proposed by Jeffries (2010) adequate analytical devices for our research since they create a connection between the key concepts of the thesis, identity, ideology, language, and the main objective of the thesis, namely the investigation of the reflection of BGIC. Analysing the author's linguistic choices enabled us to uncover ideologies and power relations.

Brexit-related texts have been widely investigated. Nevertheless, subjective perspectives framed by the general context are most of the time explored to a lesser degree. Scrutinising the linguistic choices of the participant in an interview can contribute to a better understanding of the subjective perspective exposed and of the phenomenon.

The fifth chapter of the thesis approaches a non-fictional text, a semi-structured interview, analysing the language the participant uses to describe his pro-Brexit standpoint, through the lens of the Nested Identity Theory, the Narrative Theory and the Positioning Theory. The investigation helps us uncover his standpoint on the reconstruction of the national self and his sense of belonging to the Brexit supporters group. The Positioning Theory enables us to interpret David's justification of his stance, pro-Brexiteer, through language focusing on the previously mentioned narratives identified in the participant's declarations. Thus, David positions himself as fulfilling a moral debt to his maternal grandfather, a war hero; the EU is presented as an oppressive institution, while the British people are defending their national identity through the pro-Leave vote, becoming thus the first country to leave the EU.

By approaching the identity crises triggered by Brexit and their projection through text varieties, the four analytical chapters broaden the sizeable body of literature in the field, bringing its contribution to a better understanding of the connection among language, identity, and socio-political phenomena.

The limitations and the boundaries of our study are closely connected to the fact that the field under discussion is extremely wide, but researchers can build upon our results both by enriching the text varieties we have examined and by broadening the research area to other text varieties. Further research may be conducted by using other methodological devices, such as quantitative methods and analysing a broader body of text varieties using tools provided by technology. It can also be a challenging task for post-doctoral research work.

We conclude by saying that our thesis presents a multidisciplinary theoretical framework accompanied by a complex analysis of relevant text samples through the prism of various domains, thus bridging the gap between theory and empirical research and bringing its contribution to knowledge in the field of study. Further research could build on our findings by investigating other text categories using diverse theoretical frameworks and methodological tools.

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