ПАЛИМПСЕСТ

МЕЃУНАРОДНО СПИСАНИЕ ЗА ЛИНГВИСТИЧКИ, КНИЖЕВНИ
И КУЛТУРОЛОШКИ ИСТРАЖУВАЊА

PALIMPSEST

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR LINGUISTIC, LITERARY
AND CULTURAL RESEARCH

ПАЛИМПСЕСТ

**Меѓународно списание за лингвистички, книжевни
и културолошки истражувања**

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**International Journal for Linguistic, Literary
and Cultural Research**

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ПРЕДГОВОР

Почитувани читатели,

Со објавувањето на деветтиот број на списанието „Палимпсест" се одбележува и потврдува неговото петгодишно постоење. Тековниот број на ова списание обработува теми кои се однесуваат на областите јазик, книжевност, методика на наставата и културологија и тие се напишани на македонски, англиски, италијански и турски јазик. Тематските области што ги покриваат овие статии се доволно разнолики да го привлечат вниманието на нашите колеги, наставници, студенти, но и доволно мотивирачки да го одржат современиот чекор со актуелните феномени на истражување од горенаведените области. Од објавените трудови во овој број како најбројни се јавуваат авторите од Македонија (Милена Саздовска-Пигуловска, Милена Касапоска-Чадловска, Марија Леонтиќ, Виолета Јанушева, Силвана Нешковска, Мери Лазаревска, Марија Ѓорѓиева Димова, Славчо Ковилоски, Маријана Горгиева-Ристевска, Ана Стефановска, Оља Стојкова, Екатерина Намичева, Петар Намичев, Нина Даскаловска, Блерина Нухи, Арбнора Сулејмани, Брикена Цафери, Марија Гркова, Кирил Трајчев, Ранко Младеноски, Софија Иванова), потоа од Словачка Моника Зазривчова (Monika Zázrivcová), од Австрија Мариантониа Трамите (Mariantonia Tramite), од Италија Елеонора Фоа (Eleonora Fois), Кјара Фуско (Chiara Fusco), Мирко Мондило (Mirco Mondillo), Марчела ди Франко (Marcella Di Franco) и од Турција Ѓулшен Јилмаз (Gülşen Yılmaz).

Доминантен јазик на статиите во овој број е македонскиот јазик, што го толкувам како наш стремеж во борбата за негово негување и зачувување како наше најголемо културно наследство, како и желбата и намерата обработените тематски содржини да бидат лесно достапни за сите заинтересирани на територијата на целата наша држава. Сепак, се јавува неопходност и од актуелизација и популаризација и на другите јазици, што укажува на фактот дека светот на јазиците е огромен и дека многу аспекти од јазиците треба да се анализираат и да се објаснат. Тоа ја покажува важноста и значењето на странските јазици во современите емпириски текови во науката за јазикот, во науката за книжевноста, методиката на наставата и во културологијата.

Како резултат на електронската достапност на ова списание и на активностите на Уредувачкиот одбор, Редакцискиот совет, рецензентите, јазичните и техничките уредници, горди сме да истакнеме дека присуството на научноистражувачки статии од различни земји од светот говори за неговата актуелност и популарност. Сите што се вклучени во создавањето на ова списание несебично се ангажираат за неговото подобрување и со своите сугестии и добронамерни критики и дискусии влијаат доволно инспиративно да привлечат современи и модерни истражувачки публикации кои ќе наидат на уште поголема читателска публика во иднина, со што современите истражувања ќе бидат широко достапни и ќе овозможат размена на знаења, идеи, како и на научни и стручни достигнувања.

Биљана Ивановска, уредник на „Палимпсест"

FOREWORD

Dear readers,

The ninth issue of "Palimpsest" marks and confirms the journal's five year existence. The current issue of the journal covers topics related to the fields of language, literature, teaching methodology and culturology, and they are written in Macedonian, English, Italian and Turkish. The thematic areas covered by these articles are diverse enough to attract the attention of our colleagues, teachers and students, and at the same time motivating enough to keep up with the current phenomena of research in the aforementioned areas. From the published articles in this issue, the authors from Macedonia appear as the most numerous, such as Milena Sazdovska-Pigulovska, Milena Kasaposka-Chadlovska, Marija Leontik, Violeta Janusheva, Silvana Neshkovska, Meri Lazarevska, Marija Gjorgjieva Dimova, Slavco Koviloski, Marijana Gorgieva-Ristevska, Ana Stefanovska, Olja Stojkova, Ekaterina Namicheva, Petar Namichev, Nina Daskalovska, Blerina Nuhi, Arbnora Sulejmani, Brikena Xhaferi, Marija Grkova, Kiril Trajcev, Ranko Mladenoski, Sofija Ivanova, then from Slovakia Monika Zázrivcová, from Austria Mariantonina Tramite, from Italy Eleonora Fois, Chiara Fusco, Mirco Mondillo, Marcella Di Franco and from Turkey Gülşen Yılmaz.

The dominant language of the articles in this issue is the Macedonian language, which I recognize as our aspiration in the struggle for its nurturing and preservation of our greatest cultural heritage, as well as the desire and intention to make the thematic contents to be easily accessible to anyone concerned throughout our country. However, there is a need for actualization and popularization of other languages, which points to the fact that the world of languages is vast, therefore, many aspects of languages ought to be analyzed and explained. This actually proves the importance and significance of foreign languages in contemporary empirical currents in the science of language, literature, teaching methodology and culturology.

As a result of the electronic availability of this journal and the activities of the Editorial board, the reviewers, the linguistic and technical editors, we are proud to point out that the presence of scientific research articles written by authors from different countries of the world speaks of its relevance and popularity. Everyone involved in the creation of this journal is selflessly committed to its improvement and with their suggestions, well-intentioned reviews and discussions influence the submission of contemporary and modern research articles that will attract even a larger readership in the future, so that contemporary research will be widely available and will enable the exchange of knowledge, ideas, as well as scientific and professional achievements.

Biljana Ivanovska, Editor of Palimpsest

THE RHETORIC BEHIND POLITICAL RESIGNATION SPEECHES

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Abstract: By means of critical discourse analysis (CDA), the aim of this research is to shed some light on the resignation speeches of the last three British Prime Ministers – Gordon Brown, David Cameron, and Theresa May. The study investigates the topics the three politicians cover in their resignation speeches in light of the socio-political circumstances relevant at the time when each of the resignation speeches was delivered. It also attempts to disclose how these topics assist the politicians in achieving their goals and whether any common pattern in all three speeches occurs. Additionally, the study looks into the rhetorical devices (positive and negative lexis and various figures of speech) politicians employ to make their resignation speeches sound more convincing, reassuring and less detrimental to their political reputation.

The analysis showed that in all three resignation speeches, the politicians dwell on their experiences and achievements as PM and offer a profuse praise for their country. Understandably, positive lexis abounds in tackling these topics. In stating the reasons for their resignation, they only hint at who the 'culprit' for their failure is. This means that no overt criticism and almost no negative lexis is tracked down in the analysed speeches. Additionally, the analysis reveals that although figurative speech is only moderately used, still it is an indispensable part of political resignation speeches which endows them with versatility and effectiveness.

Keywords: *resignation speeches, politicians, lexis, figures of speech*.

Introduction

Political resignation speeches present a special type of political discourse which has been considerably under-researched. Political resignation speeches stand out from all other types of political speeches as their main goal is not to gain or maintain power, but to relinquish power. However, apart from relinquishing power, political resignation speeches perform other key functions as well – they provide legitimization of the politician's decisions and moves, and, consequently, they are intended to save his/her political and professional reputation.

These two functions of resignation speeches (relinquishing power and saving reputation) cannot be easily accomplished as they are not necessarily very compatible. Namely, in stepping down politicians admit that they have failed in delivering what they were elected for. Admitting failure, understandably, does not boost anybody's positive image and reputation; on the contrary, it unveils their weaknesses, and, in all likelihood, it has the potential to damage their prospects for a successful career in politics in the long run. Taking that into consideration, it is little wonder why politicians, overall, are aware of the fact that they should phrase

their resignation speeches with special deliberation by choosing the correct lexis, and using it with moderation and effectiveness.

By means of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this study aims to shed some light on the resignation speeches of the last three British Prime Ministers – Gordon Brown, David Cameron, and Theresa May. These three resignation speeches were all delivered in a relatively quick succession within the last decade, with Gordon Brown resigning in 2010, David Cameron in 2016 and Theresa May in 2019. The study looks into the topics that the three politicians chose to discuss while resigning. It also attempts to disclose how these topics assist the politicians in achieving the goals of "admitting failure" and "saving reputation", and, whether any common pattern in all three speeches occurs, in that respect. Moreover, the rhetorical devices that these three politicians employ to make their resignation speeches sound more convincing, reassuring and less detrimental to their political reputation are also put under scrutiny. More specifically, the study explores the correlation between the usage of positive and negative lexis and the specific topics covered in the resignation speeches. Finally, the study aims at disclosing whether figurative language is used in this specific type of political discourse to embellish it and make it more effective and versatile.

The theoretical part of the study provides an overview of some the distinguishing properties of political speeches and briefly elaborates on the socio-political circumstances underlying the resignation of the three last British Prime ministers. In the research methodology section, the specifics of the research at hand are disclosed, and in the following two sections the results of the research and the conclusions are presented, respectively.

Theoretical background
A) Political speeches and their distinguishing features
Language and politics are intimately linked at a fundamental level (Chilton, 2004). Political activities cannot exist without the use of language, i.e. the doing of politics is predominantly constituted in language.

Political speeches are normally defined as an argument of some kind: an attempt to provide others with reasons for thinking, feeling or acting in some particular way; to motivate them; to invite them to trust one in uncertain conditions; to get them to see situations in a certain light (Carreon & Svetanant, 2017). Since ancient times political speeches have been given for the purpose of influencing others, using rhetoric to persuade, excite, and claim leadership (Klebanov et al., 2008).

Political speeches are not a homogeneous genre (Chilton, 2004). Political speeches differ in length, the occasion (including time and place) on which they are delivered, their topic and function, the speaker, their addressees, their form of presentation and degree of preparedness as well as their style and structure (Reisigl, 2008). Given that they are delivered in formal contexts, they are rarely produced ad hoc or spontaneously. On the contrary, more often than not, political speeches delivered in public are prepared in advance.

Political resignation speeches are a special type of political speech. Unfortunately, few researchers have dealt with this specific type of speeches. One

of them is Reisigl (2008) and he mentions resignation speeches along with inaugural addresses, speeches of appointment, speeches of award, welcoming speeches and farewell speeches, and labels them as speeches with performative, i.e. illocutionary quality, as they, in fact, can easily be recognised as "deeds done in words".

Political speeches, resignation political speeches included, have certain features common to all types of political speeches. Thus for instance, all political speeches make use of *legitimization strategies,* with which politicians attempt to boost their position and repute, and *delegitimisation strategies,* when their purpose is to discredit their political opponents (Chilton, 2004). Political actors seem to be acutely aware of the importance of their language use and of these two strategies (Chilton, 2004). A feature that is particularly notable in political speeches is the frequent use of certain techniques such as *explanation* and *analysis* (Al-Majali, 2015). Another feature of political speeches in general is the usage of *elevated language, full of tropes* and *high-value words* (Reisigl, 2008). The usage of *repetition* (particularly repetition of key theme words), *direct quotation, allusion and metaphorical expressions* (Bird, 2011); *the use of synonymy, antonyms, hyponymy, and collocation*s (Ayeomoni, 2012) are all treated as salient traits of political discourse, recurring on a regular basis in political speeches.

B) The socio-political factors underlying the resignation of the last three British PMs

Considering that the resignation speeches investigated in this study have been delivered by the last three British Prime Ministers within a time span of a single decade, it can be safely assumed that the socio-political circumstances under which the resignation speeches were made have not undergone any major and drastic changes. Nevertheless, in essence, the underlying reasons for the resignation of each of the three PMs is somewhat unique and worth special consideration. Thus, Gordon Brown, who was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and Leader of the Labour Party from 2007 to 2010, fell 'prey' to the 2008 recession which hit the world, the UK included. The recession is deemed to have triggered the decline of popularity of both the Labour Party and Gordon Brown's. That led to poor results in the local and European elections in 2009, as well as the general election the following year, when Labour lost 91 seats in the House of Commons, making the Conservatives the largest party in Parliament. Labour's attempts to retain power failed, and, on 11 May 2010, Gordon Brown officially resigned as Prime Minister and was succeeded as Prime Minister by David Cameron.

Brexit, the UK's decision to leave the EU and strike a deal with the EU that would be acceptable for both sides, was the main reason for the resignation of the other two British PMs. Namely, the then British Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron in 2013 promised to organize a referendum on Brexit, if the Conservative Party won the next general election. Having scored a victory in the general election in 2015, Cameron had to honor his commitment to the referendum on Brexit. The Prime Minister campaigned hard in the divisive referendum on Britain's relationship with the EU, propagating that Brexit would be an act of "economic

self-harm".[1] The results were rather unexpected as the country voted to leave the EU. Shortly after the release of the results, David Cameron announced his resignation.

Theresa May was the second female PM of the UK. Ever since she started negotiating and specifying the terms of the Brexit deal with the EU she was under sustained pressure from British lawmakers. Her deal was rejected three times by Parliament. Her efforts to find a compromise with the opposition, i.e. the Labour Party, also failed. Eventually, as she started making certain concessions to the opposition in a desperate attempt to convince them to vote for her proposed Brexit deal, she lost the support of her own MPs. Despite her striking resilience and determination to deliver Brexit, on 7th May, 2019, she officially announced her resignation.

Research methodology

As mentioned previously, the main aim of this research was to disclose how politicians design their political resignation speeches. More specifically, given that politician's main goals in stepping down are to: "relinguish power", "admit failure" and "save face", the study looked into the linguistic features of these political speeches, i.e. how language is used to arrive at the intended goals of the speaker. Thus, the study sought to investigate: a) what topics are covered in the resignation speeches; b) what lexis (positive vs. negative) is used; c) what the correlation between the topics and the chosen lexis is, and d) whether figurative speech is employed in the resignation speeches.

The analysis in this study is based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as CDA has undoubtedly been extensively employed in exploring political discourse. In more precise terms, CDA is used due to the fact that it is concerned with the production, circulation and interpretation of texts in which relations of domination and control are at stake, and because it treats discourse as a social practice and it analyses the influences of social, political and cultural contexts on discourse (Weiss & Wodak, 2003).

Although, the actual delivery of a political speech combines language with tone, volume, facial expressions, eye contact, pausing, body language, and posture, making political speeches essentially multimodal (Carreon & Svetanant, 2017), still, our research focuses merely on the linguistic properties of political resignation speeches and takes into consideration only the written scripts, i.e. the transcripts of resignation speeches.

The three speeches analyzed here are all relatively short with Gordon Brown's speech[2] being the shortest – it lasted only 3 minutes and contained 459 words. Both David Cameron's speech[3], which contained 1099 words and Theresa

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[1] Extracted from *The Guardian* at https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/24/david-cameron-resigns-after-uk-votes-to-leave-european-union, retrieved on 12th July, 2019.
[2] https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2010/may/11/gordon-brown-resignation-speech
[3] https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/24/david-cameron-announces-his-resignation---full-statement/

May's speech[4], which was made up of 932 words, were about 7 minutes long. This means that in total 17 minutes of oral speech and 2490 words in total were analysed for the purposes of this study.

Results
A) Topic covered in the three resignation speeches

The comparative analysis of the three resignation speeches reveals that the structure of all three speeches is not very clear-cut as the three speakers change the topics rather swiftly and sometimes even 'revisit' the same topic at a later stage again. What all three speeches have in common is the fact that they all touch upon several different topics which, more or less, recur in all three speeches. More precisely, all three speeches encompass the following topics: *the reason for resignation; informing the Queen about the decision; experiences and achievements as PM; praising the UK; statement of resignation* and *expressing gratitude*. The coverage of these topics does not necessarily happen in the same order in the three speeches, though. Also, it is very important to mention that Gordon Brown's speech, which is relatively shorter than the other two speeches, does not include certain topics touched upon in the other two speeches – *foreseeing a bright future for the country*; *reassuring everybody that all will be well*, and *pointing subtly at the culprit who caused the failure of the PMs.*

Mr. Brown, first, explicates **the reason** why he resigns ("*As you know, the general election left no party able to command a majority in the House of Commons.*"), then, he briefly expresses **good wishes** to the next PM ("*I wish the next prime minister well as he makes the important choices for the future.*"). After that, he discusses **his experiences and achievements as PM** ("*Only those that have held the office of prime minister can understand the full weight of its responsibilities and its great capacity for good. I have been privileged to learn much about the very best in human nature and a fair amount too about its frailties, including my own…*"). Finally, he states that he has **informed Her Majesty**, the Queen, and, in that context, makes an overt **reference to his resignation** ("*I have informed the Queen's private secretary that it is my intention to tender my resignation to the Queen*"). After that he singles out and **praises UK's army** ("*I will always admire the courage I have seen in our armed forces. And now that the political season is over, let me stress that having shaken their hands and looked into their eyes, our troops represent all that is best in our country.*"*)*, and **expresses gratitude** to all his collaborators, including his family members (his wife and sons) for their support during his term as PM ("*And in this hour I want to thank all my colleagues, ministers, Members of Parliament. And I want to thank above all my staff, who have been friends as well as brilliant servants of the country. Above all, I want to thank Sarah for her unwavering support as well as her love, and for her own service to our country.*").

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[4] https://www.businessinsider.com/full-text-theresa-may-resignation-speech-2019-5

David Cameron and Theresa May, on the other hand, also disclose their **reasons** for resigning the post of Prime Minister (Cameron: "*But the British people have made a very clear decision to take a different path and as such I think the country requires fresh leadership to take it in this direction.;* May*: "I have done everything I can to convince MPs to back that deal. Sadly, I have not been able to do so. I tried three times"*). They too mention the fact that they have **informed the Queen** about their decision (Cameron: "*And I have spoken to Her Majesty the Queen this morning to advise her of the steps that I am taking.";* May*: "I have kept Her Majesty the Queen fully informed of my intentions, and I will continue to serve as her Prime Minister until the process has concluded."*). They **express gratitude**, but unlike Gordon Brown's, their gratitude is brief and rather general, not targeting anybody in particular (Cameron: "*I want to thank everyone who took part in the campaign on my side of the argument, including all* those *who put aside party differences to speak in what they believe was the national interest."* May*: "I do so with no ill-will, but with enormous and enduring gratitude to have had the opportunity to serve the country I love.")*. Both Cameron and May make a **statement of resignation**, with Cameron mentioning the fact in a very indirect manner, i.e. by means of a metaphoric expression ("*… I don't think it would be right for me to be the captain that steers our country to its next destination*"); whereas, May by being more straightforward and blunt about it ("*… But it is now clear to me that it is in the best interest of the country for a new Prime Minister to lead that effort"*). Ms. May, in fact, makes mention of her resignation and withdrawal on three separate occasions throughout her speech.

Another common topic of these two resignation speeches is **the praise of the UK**. In Cameron's speech this topic is mentioned twice, once at the beginning and once at the end of the speech ("*I am proud to say that in these islands we trust the people for these big decisions*"/ "*Britain is a special country – we have so many advantages ...*"). May praises her country at the end of her speech ("*Because this country is a Union. Not just a family of four nations. But a union of people – all of us*"). In commending Britain, both Prime Ministers **foresee a bright future** for it (Cameron: "*I said before that Britain can survive outside the European Union and indeed we can find a way*"; May: "*We stand together. And together we have a great future*").

In addition, David Cameron, on two occasions, attempts to **reassure** his countrymen living both in the UK and abroad, as well as the world in general, that the effects of the decision to leave the EU will not take effect immediately, and that the country will proceed with its normal functioning on all possible plains. In that context, he also **makes a pledge** that he will be at his country's service in the future, especially, until his successor is found and takes over. May, on the other hand, in her speech also tries to **reassure** everyone, that despite her failure to deliver Brexit, her party, the Conservative Party will manage to reform itself, and as such it will, eventually, be able to deliver Brexit. Also, along with stating the **reason** for their resignation, both Cameron and May very subtly **point at the culprit** who prevented them from succeeding in their respective missions as PMs. In the case of Mr. Cameron that is that part of the population that supported the Leave campaign ("*I was absolutely clear about my belief that Britain is stronger, safer and better off*

inside the European Union ... but the British people have made a very clear decision to take a different path and as such I think the country requires a fresh leadership to take it in this direction"). May, on the other hand, points her finger at the MPs in the House of Commons who three times in a row obstructed her attempts to endorse her Brexit deal by hinting at their uncompromising conduct ("*To succeed, he or she will have to find consensus in Parliament where I have not. Such a consensus can only be reached if those on all sides of the debate are willing to compromise*").

B) Analysis of the lexical choices and their correlation with the topics

Gordon Brown uses words (verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs and collocations) with positive connotations when he talks about ***his experiences and challenges as PM*** ("*I would <u>do all that I could</u> to ensure a strong, <u>stable and principled government</u> was formed, able <u>to tackle</u> Britain's <u>economic and political challenges effectively</u>"/ "I have always <u>strived to serve</u>, <u>to do my best</u> in the interest of Britain, its values and its people"/ "I <u>loved the job</u> for its potential to make this country <u>fairer, more tolerant, more green, more democratic, more prosperous</u> and <u>more just</u> – <u>truly a greater Britain</u>*"). He also presents himself as a well-meaning politician when he ***wishes the next PM well*** ("*I <u>wish</u> the next prime minister <u>well</u>.*") and as a dedicated family man when he ***expresses gratitude*** to his collaborators ("*And I want to thank above all my staff, who have been <u>friends</u> as well as <u>brilliant servants of the country</u>*"), and his family ("*Above all, I want to <u>thank</u> Sarah for her <u>unwavering support</u> as well as her <u>love</u>, and for <u>her own service</u> to our country"/ "I <u>thank</u> my sons John and Fraser for the <u>love</u> and <u>joy</u> they bring to our lives*"). He also uses nouns, adjectives and adjectives plus nouns collocation patterns with positive connotations when he **praises UK's military forces** ("*I will always <u>admire</u> the <u>courage</u> I have seen in our armed forces, our troops represent <u>all that is best</u> in our country*").

All the underlined words and phrases in the examples above such as, for instance, *stable and principled government; fairer, more tolerant, more green, more democratic, more prosperous and more just; a greater Britain; friends; brilliant servants of the country; unwavering support,* etc. are categorized as words and phrases used with a positive connotation as they are intended to create a positive image of the speakers and their achievements and to leave the audience with a favourable impression as far as the speakers themselves are concerned.

Mr. Brown utilizes words and expressions which carry negative connotations only when he talks about ***his experiences and challenges as Prime Minister*** in the context of the financial crisis that hit Britain during his time in office ("*In the face of <u>many challenges</u> in a few short years, challenges up to and including <u>the global financial meltdown</u>*"); and certain other social and political issues of the British society that were still unresolved during his prime-ministership, due to personality imperfections of certain British people ("*I have been privileged to learn much about the very best in human nature and a fair amount too about its <u>frailties, including my own</u>*"), etc. To make the criticism slightly milder he includes himself in that category of people who have certain weaknesses. He also makes a hint at another negative aspect of the British society, i.e. the fact that it allows *the*

loss of lives of military personnel, and he does that in context of **praising UK's army** ("*I will never forget all those who have <u>died</u> in honour and whose families today <u>live in grief</u>*").

Obviously, words and phrases such as *frailties, meltdown, live in grief,* etc. have an inherent negative meaning and in this context they are merely employed to assist the speaker in making a less favourable impression on the audience about other people, not himself.

As to David Cameron's lexical choices, it is evident that in **praising his country** on carrying out the Brexit referendum successfully and in giving the people an opportunity to have their say, despite the fact that the result is not what he hoped for, he employs lexis with clearly positive connotations such as *a giant democratic exercise, a special country, so many great advantages*, etc. ("*Good morning everyone, the country has just taken part in <u>a giant democratic exercise</u>, perhaps <u>the biggest</u> in our history. Over 33 million people from England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Gibraltar have all had their say. We should be <u>proud</u> of the fact that in these islands we <u>trust the people</u> for these <u>big decisions</u>*"/ "*It's why we <u>delivered</u> <u>a fair, legal and decisive referendum</u> in Scotland*"/ "*Britain <u>is a special country</u> - we have <u>so many great advantages</u> ...*").

Positive lexis such as *strong, proud, very honored, great steps, bigger and stronger society,* etc. prevails when he **reassures** the public that essentially nothing will change in the near future *("I would reassure those markets and investors that Britain's economy is <u>fundamentally strong</u> ...")*, and when Cameron talks about his **experiences** as PM ("*I'm very <u>proud</u> and <u>very honoured</u> to have been Prime Minister of this country for six years*") and his **achievements** while in office ("*I believe we've <u>made great steps</u>, with <u>more people in work</u> than ever before in our history, with <u>reforms</u> to welfare and education, <u>increasing people's life chances</u>, building a <u>bigger</u> and <u>stronger society</u>, <u>keeping our promises</u> to the poorest ...*").

Practically, no traces of negative lexis are found in this specific resignation speech, except perhaps, when Mr. Cameron talks about the **referendum results**. There one can sense that while praising the people for having exercised their right to vote and for having reached such a major decision concerning the UK's future, he is also, at the same time, expressing his disapproval of that same decision and the people who reached it ("*The British people have made a choice, that not only needs to be respected but those on <u>the losing side of the argument</u> - myself included - should help to make it work*"). Also, at another point of his speech, while **praising his country**, he openly alludes to the **country's flaws** (*And while we <u>are not perfect</u> I do believe we can be a model for the multi-racial, multi-faith democracy ...*).

Finally, as to Theresa May's lexical choices, the thorough analysis of her speech shows that in describing **her achievements,** she also uses a lot words and collocations with positive connotations. The role of all of these positive lexis is to depict the UK as a prosperous country governed by a valiant and capable leader, who because of some external factors, is now forced to leave the leading position. This can also be interpreted as an attempt to relativize her failure to deliver Brexit and to draw the public's attention to the successful part of her career as PM. In this context, she depicts herself **as a determined and persistent politician** ("*I believe it was right <u>to persevere</u>, even when the odds against success seemed high*"), guided

by ***values*** such as 'security; freedom; opportunity'; ***reasonable individual*** ("*But it is now <u>clear</u> to me that it is <u>in the best interests of</u> the country for a new Prime Minister to lead that effort")*; ***sensitive politician*** ("*It is, and will always remain, <u>a matter of deep regret</u> to me that I have not been able to deliver Brexit"*); ***hard-working person*** ("*I <u>have done everything I can</u> to convince MPs to back that deal*") and ***trustworthy individual*** ("*I <u>have striven</u> to make the United Kingdom a country that works not just for a privileged few, but for everyone. And <u>to honour the result of the EU referendum</u>*").

Theresa May also uses positive lexis when she **praises her homeland** ("*Because this country is a Union. Not just <u>a family</u> of four nations. But <u>a union</u> of people - all of us. Whatever our background, the colour of our skin, or who we love. We <u>stand together</u>. And together we have a <u>great future</u>"*), and **her party and government** ("*This is what a <u>decent</u>, <u>moderate</u> and <u>patriotic</u> Conservative Government, on the common ground of British politics, can achieve - even as we tackle the biggest peacetime challenge any government has faced"/ "I know that the Conservative Party can <u>renew</u> itself in the years ahead"*).

What can be inferred from the analysis so far is that lexis (verbs, nouns and adjectives and collocations) used with positive connotations prevail in May's speech too (e.g. *decent, moderate, patriotic, family, union, great future, stand together*, etc.). In this resignation speech as well, although no open criticism is expressed and no overtly negative lexis is used to 'attack' the political opponents, hints are present that depict political opponents as uncompromising individuals ("*To succeed, he or she will have <u>to find consensus</u> in Parliament <u>where I have not</u>"/ "Never forget that <u>compromise is not a dirty word</u>. <u>Life depends on compromise</u>"/"Our politics may <u>be under strain</u>, but there is so much that is good about this country"*).

C) Figurative language in the resignation speeches

As to the figurative language usage the analysis showed that the three Prime Ministers in their resignation speeches, occasionally, did resort to employing figurative language.

In Gordon Brown's speech, there were several instances of **metaphoric expressions** and **personification**, as well as one instance of **metonymy**. More precisely, when he talks about his experiences as Prime Minister, he uses a metaphor depicting his job as extremely demanding and strenuous ("*Only those who have held the office of prime minister can understand <u>the full weight of its responsibilities, and its capacity for good</u>"*). Mr. Brown uses a particularly interesting metaphor when he talks about the end of his political career as Prime Minister, comparing it with an end of a season ("*And now <u>my political season is over</u>, let me stress that …"*). He completes his speech with two other metaphoric expressions in which the job of Prime Minister is compared to the second most important job and the first most important job stands for being a husband and a father ("*And as I leave <u>the second most important job</u> I could ever hold, I cherish even more <u>the first</u> – a husband and a father"*).

The analysis of this speech also unveiled one instance of metonymy – the term 'human nature' is used as a substitute term for the people he met and worked

with ("*I have been privileged to learn much about the very best in human nature and a fair amount too about its frailties, including my own*"). In that same utterance, personification is also detected, i.e. the term 'human nature' is presented as somebody who has got character flows ("*… and a fair amount too about its frailties, including my own*"). In the subsequent utterance, we come across another instance of personification, as the prime ministerial job is ascribed a major human-like quality – it has a potential to do great things and introduce positive changes ("*I love the job for its potential to make this country I love fairer, more tolerant …*"). Personification is also used when the position of PM is presented as a 'human being' with a capacity to do good ("*Only those who have held the office of prime minister can understand the full weight of its responsibilities, and its capacity for good*").

David Cameron, on his part, commences his speech with a **hyperbole** by describing the referendum on Brexit as "a giant democratic exercise" and 'the biggest in our history'. Nevertheless, his speech is particularly remarkable because various **idiomatic expressions** are dispersed throughout its content. Thus, for he uses the idiomatic expression "*have their say*", when he refers to the huge number of people who have exercised their right to vote and contributed in reaching the Brexit decision ("*Over 33 million people from England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Island and Gibraltar have all their say*"). Also, when he congratulates his opponents on their victory, he makes use of the idiomatic expression "*to make a spirited and passionate case*", meaning coming forth with arguments in favour of leaving the EU with great passion and enthusiasm. "*To take something lightly*" is the idiomatic expression he uses when he talks about his withdrawal from the Prime Ministerial position ("*It was not a decision that was taken lightly…*"). In discussing his achievements as PM, Mr. Cameron uses the idiom "*make a great step*"**,** meaning making very important decisions ("*I believe we have made great steps*").

Instances of **personification, metonymy** and **metaphors** are detected in Cameron's speech as well. When the Prime Minister talks about his accomplishment, he mentions that they "*have restored Britain's strength*", which is a clear case of personification, as the country is depicted as a human being whose strength is sometimes lost but at other times regained. Similarly, when he reassures the public that the Brexit decision will not come into effect immediately, personification is found in the expression "*… our goods can move…*" ("*There will be no initial change in the way our people can travel, in the way our goods can move, or the way our services can be sold*").

Mr. Cameron uses metonomy by employing the expression "*European Union*" to refer to the political leaders with whom British politicians now have to strike a deal ("*We must prepare for a negotiation with the European Union*"). Metonymy is employed when the term "Cabinet" is used to make a reference to the Prime Minister's closest collaborators ("*The Cabinet will meet on Monday…*"); and "Britain" is used to refer to the people living in the UK ("*Across the world people have been watching the choice Britain has made*").

Mr. Cameron very skillfully ingrains metaphors in his resignation speech. Thus, for instance, when he lists his achievements, he uses the metaphor "*to bring the economy back from the brink*" which means to rescue the economy and prevent

the occurrence of dreadful economic consequences. In the same context, he states that he "*fought the campaign ... with my head, heart and soul*", which is another metaphor with which the political campaign is compared to a battle or a war where one must fight and defeat the opponents. In addition, the PM metaphorically states that he invested his entire emotional and intellectual capacity and potential in that same campaign. Then, the metaphors "*to take a different path*" and "*to take it in this new direction*" (in "*But the British people have made a very clear decision to take a different path and as such the country requires fresh leadership to take it in this new direction*"), both are used to refer to leaving the European Union. Still, by far the most interesting metaphors found in this resignation speech are the ones in which the Prime Minister compares Britain to a ship and himself to a captain who is steering that ship ("*I will do everything I can as Prime Minister to steady this ship over the coming weeks and months but I do not think it would be right for me to try to be the captain that steers our country to its next destination*").

In May's speech, there were also quite a few instances of **metaphoric expressions**. Such are, for instance, the expressions "*to give a voice to the voiceless*", meaning to speak on behalf of the underprivileged citizens, and "*to fight the burning injustices that scar our society*", meaning to resolve all the problematic issues in the British society ("*But the unique privilege of this office is to use this platform to give voice to the voiceless, to fight the burning injustices that still scar our society*"). Another similar metaphoric expression is "*to shine a light on inequality*", meaning to draw attention to inequality and to instigate positive changes in that respect ("*It is why the Race Disparity and gender pay reporting are shining light on inequality, so it has nowhere to hide*") The Prime Minister also points out that now it will be her successor's task to find a solution to the situation that has kept the British society in a deadlock for quite some time by using the metaphoric expression "*to seek a way forward*" ("*It will be for my successor to seek a way forward that honours the result of the referendum*"). The final instance of a metaphoric expression May uses is in the context of one of her achievements regarding the assistance that young people get by the government to buy their first home ("*We are building more homes and helping first time-buyers onto the housing ladder...*").

There is also one instance of **metonymy** in the expression "*our politics is under strain*", since the term politics here in fact refers to the current British politicians who cannot come to an agreement regarding issues of major importance for the UK such as the Brexit deal.

Ms. May also resorts towards using ***personification*** on several occasions. When she talks about one of her achievement – ***fighting inequality*** in the British society, inequality is given human-like features and is describes as somebody who wishes to hide and remain unspotted ("*It is why the Race Disparity Audit and gender pay reporting are shining a light on inequality, so it has nowhere to hide*"). The same is the case when she talks about the Conservative party which in May's terms has the ability to renew itself ("*I know that the Conservative party can renew itself in the years ahead*"). Then, the conservative Government is also ascribed qualities typical only of some human beings – decent, moderate and patriotic (*This*

what a <u>decent, moderate and patriotic</u> Conservative Government, on the common ground of British politics, can achieve…”).

The usage of **hyperbole** is spotted only once when May declares that they (her Government) “*tackles <u>the biggest peacetime challenge</u> any government has faced*”, which is a clear exaggeration.

Conclusion

The findings and insights gained from this research, which is of a purely qualitative nature, point to certain commonalities as well as individual preferences on the part of the three last British PMs, in terms of the content, i.e. the topics and linguistic choices included in their resignation speeches.

Regarding the topics that the departing politicians covered in their speeches, the results show that although they did not follow the same order, the three PMs covered essentially the same topics (e.g. the reason why they are resigning; their achievements and accomplishments as PM; predictions about the future of the country, etc.). The topics clearly reflected the specific socio-political circumstances under which the three speeches were produced. In fact, May and Cameron’s speeches showed more similarities in this respect as there was almost a complete overlapping in their choice of topics; whereas Brown’s speech, being considerably shorter than the other two, did not touch upon some of the topics present in the other two speeches.

As far as the choice of lexis is concerned, it is quite evident that the three politicians made use of predominantly positive lexis, i.e. words and collocations used with a positive connotation. This finding is not surprising as the aim of the three departing MP is to leave the office on a positive note. The presence of negative words and collocations, or lexis used with negative connotations was rather limited in all three resignation speeches. Given that the three PMs did not show any tendency towards criticizing their opponents nor towards blaming somebody else for their failure, the meagre presence of negative lexis is perfectly understandable.

What these findings suggest is that the picture that the departing PMs try to create about their leadership and their country, in their resignation speeches, is predominantly a positive one, which, in turn, can be interpreted as making a clear effort towards saving their ‘face’, i.e. preserving their personal and professional integrity and reputation.

As far as the correlation between the topics covered in the three political resignation speeches and the choice of positive and negative lexis is concerned, also the same tendencies were found in all three speeches. Namely, when the politicians stated **the reason for their resignation** and the **resignation** itself as well as when they state they have **informed the Queen**, the language they use is rather neutral and formal and no traces of negative lexis are found. In addition, in discussing their **experiences and challenges as PMs** their speeches were interwoven predominantly with positive lexis. Thus, they try to legitimize their decisions and moves and save their reputation. Nevertheless, when they discuss these topics, here and there, their speeches are also occasionally seasoned with some mildly negative lexis which is intended to only hint at the imperfections of the British society and the domains that

are in need of improvement, including the culprits who brought the doom upon their prime ministership. Solely positive lexis is used when the public is ***reassured*** that all will be well; when they ***express gratitude***; when ***bright future is foreseen for the UK***, and when ***a pledge is made*** to continue to serve the country.

Finally, it is worth noting that these three political resignation speeches also contain a significant number of different figures of speech such as ***idiomatic*** and ***metaphoric expressions***, as well as ***personification***, which are quite more frequent than the instances of ***metonymy*** and ***hyperbole***. Interestingly, there are no traces of irony or sarcasm which are quite common in the other types of political speeches. The moderate presence of figurative language in the analysed resignation speeches points to the fact that politicians try to embellish their speeches; to make them more versatile, and as a consequence, to produce an impression of skillful orators and politicians who failed in their role as PMs merely due to some external factors, beyond their control, and not because of personal flaws and deficiencies. This, in turn, implicitly suggests that not only should their resignation be accepted by the public but also that their reputation should remain intact.

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