

**A contrastive study of metaphors in Brexit discourse,
in communications produced by Theresa May and
Boris Johnson, and in parliamentary debates during
their premierships**

Chengyan Li

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The chapters of the thesis based on work from jointly authored publication are Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 7. The publication is titled *Comparative studies on metaphor variation in Brexit discourse across social media, government speeches, and parliamentary statements: A genre and register-based perspective*, authored by Chengyan Li and Dongman Cai. This work has been submitted as a chapter to the book *Power, Persuasion, and Identity in Political and Medical Discourse: An Interdisciplinary Analysis* and is currently under peer review.

My contribution to the publication included data collection, corpus compilation, data analysis, and drafting the manuscript. My co-author's contribution consisted of revising the draft.

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This thesis is dedicated to my mother.

Zhang Shumei (1964–2022).

I carry your strength with me in everything I do.

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Abstract

Metaphors have been shown to play an important role in persuasion in political communication. The interest of this study lies in a comparative perspective of Brexit-related metaphors produced in institutional contexts during the premierships of Theresa May and Boris Johnson. While Brexit has attracted a substantial body of research due to its political significance, particularly during the referendum campaign stage, the development of metaphor use in post-referendum government discourse across different leaderships warrants further exploration through comparative analysis. This allows an examination of both continuity and variation in the metaphorical portrayal of key Brexit-related topics. In doing so, it also sheds light on how metaphors appear to encode speakers' evaluations in Brexit discourse. This thesis draws on the analytical tools of systematic metaphor and metaphor scenario to analyse metaphors and their associated evaluative stances. Methodologically, it employs corpus linguistics to determine key topics within the two corpora and to examine the frequency and significant collocates of the metaphors identified.

The findings show that both pro-Brexit and anti-Brexit actors frequently used metaphors to construct arguments aligned with their respective stances throughout the Brexit process under the leaderships of the two Prime Ministers. The presence of shared frequent metaphors, systematic metaphors, and metaphor scenarios points to a degree of commonality in metaphorical framings and related narratives and ideological constructions across the two governments, as illustrated by examples such as the systematic metaphor *BREXIT IS AN INVESTMENT* and the metaphorical depiction of "Global Britain". Meanwhile, differences in metaphor lemmas and their frequencies within certain systematic metaphors, metaphor scenarios, and key topics reflect shifts in the thematic emphasis of Brexit discourse across the two administrations, shaped by the distinct stages of the Brexit process confronting each government.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Context and significance of the research

Brexit refers to the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, a major political event with significant implications for both European and global politics. Britain joined the European Economic Community (EEC)—now known as the European Union—in 1973. Over the past 43 years from that point up to 2016, and beyond, there was a continuous strand of political and public debate on “Euroscepticism,” a term introduced by politician Tony Benn to describe British opposition to European integration (Davis, 2017). As European countries moved towards deeper integration within the EU, Euroscepticism remained a persistent undercurrent across the continent (Usherwood & Startin, 2013). Before the Brexit referendum, several EU-related referendums across Europe had already indicated public resistance to aspects of European integration. Norway voted against joining the European Communities/EU twice, in 1972 and 1994. France and the Netherlands rejected the proposed EU Constitution in 2005, leading to its replacement by the Lisbon Treaty. Denmark and Sweden voted against adopting the euro in 2000 and 2003, respectively. Nevertheless, the 2016 Brexit referendum was the first time a full EU member state held a formal, democratic vote to decide whether to leave the Union.

When the referendum took place on 23 June 2016, 52% of voters chose to leave the EU, giving the Leave campaign a slim majority. The outcome attracted significant attention from the British public, the media, and the global community, as the decision would have profound implications for the country's future relationship with Europe and the wider world. During the subsequent administrations of Theresa May and Boris Johnson, Brexit was regarded as the overriding issue for the government (Brusenbauch Meislová & Bujard, 2024, p.269). Inspired by the earlier term *Grexit* (Fontaine, 2017, p.2), “*Brexit*”—a blend of the words *Britain* and *exit*—was first coined by Peter Wilding in his Euractiv blog article *Stumbling towards the Brexit* on 15 May 2012 (Hyde et al., 2016, p.161). Fontaine (2017), working within the theoretical framework of System Functional Linguistics (SFL), regarded it as an example of grammatical metaphor, as the original action or process meaning, Britain leaving the EU, has been metaphorically re-expressed through nominalisation as a noun serving to convey “an event-oriented meaning” instead of being realised in the expected verb form (p.13). This view is further supported by corpus evidence

showing that news texts frequently present *Brexit* in apposition with explanatory phrases (p.14). The term *Brexit* has also given rise to numerous other neologisms, such as *regrexit* (Lalić-Krstin & Silaški, 2019, p. 222), a blend of *regret* and *Brexit* referring to the phenomenon of individuals who regret supporting or voting for Brexit. Such terms serve pragmatic functions by creating humorous effects, particularly when expressing criticism of Brexit supporters (p. 230).

In ancient western societies, especially in Classical Greece, rhetoric is closely linked to public debates and decision-making in assemblies (Kennedy, 2008). Aristotle (1939) noted that rhetoric pertains to all possible ways of persuading on any given subject (translated by Freese, Book I, p.15), a capacity that, as Ricoeur (2004, p.10) later explained, enables one to influence people through the skilful manipulation of language, independently of the things themselves. Given this persuasive power, modern political communication relies heavily on rhetoric, within which metaphor constitutes a key rhetorical resource. Operating across both cognitive and linguistic levels, metaphor plays a crucial role in shaping ideology, persuasion, and emotional appeal (Fairclough, 1989; Charteris-Black, 2011; Musolff, 2017), a point that will be discussed further in Section 2.3. In relation to Brexit, Sun and Xiong (2022) argued that Britain's separation from the EU can be metaphorically interpreted through personification, in which the UK is conceptualised as a person leaving a bounded space (p.2).

The period surrounding the Brexit process constitutes a highly dynamic and contested socio-political context. Following the referendum, Theresa May's premiership (July 2016–July 2019) involved attempts to secure a withdrawal agreement amid deep divisions within Parliament, while Boris Johnson's tenure (July 2019–September 2022) began with a commitment to "get Brexit done," reflecting a more completion-oriented approach to Brexit and ultimately leading to the UK's withdrawal from the EU in January 2020. These differing political circumstances, alongside ongoing negotiations, repeated parliamentary impasses, and broader political turbulence, created a communicative environment characterised by conflict and institutional pressure. This renders the period particularly significant for metaphor analysis, as the complexity and uncertainty surrounding Brexit made it especially susceptible to metaphorical framing. In this context, political actors drew on metaphor to strategically simplify and interpret unfolding events, frame complex political processes, legitimise positions, and shape public understanding.

Analysing the metaphor use in Brexit discourse therefore provides an important perspective for understanding how this complex political event is framed and communicated. In particular, a comparative examination of the metaphors employed in political communications produced by Theresa May and Boris Johnson, alongside those used in parliamentary debates during their premierships, offers valuable insights into how key political actors construct and convey meanings surrounding Brexit. Such an analysis allows us to identify the metaphorical patterns through which Brexit is framed, as well as the underlying ideologies and evaluative stances that these metaphors encode. By investigating how Brexit-related issues are metaphorically represented and described, we can gain a clearer understanding of the role metaphors play in constructing political arguments and influence public perceptions and evaluations of Brexit.

1.2 Outline of the thesis

The thesis is organised into seven chapters, comprising an introduction, two literature reviews, a methodology chapter, a results chapter, a discussion chapter, and a conclusion. This chapter has introduced the context in which the study is situated, outlining the background and progression of Brexit, as well as the trajectory of the term itself, from its coinage and linguistic development to its subsequent lexical influence and the creation of related neologisms. It has also illustrated the significance of examining metaphor use in Brexit discourse during the two Prime Ministers' tenures, highlighting that it can help deepen our understanding of metaphor's functions in political communication and the ways in which it shapes the interpretation and evaluation of major political events such as Brexit.

Chapters 2 and 3 provide a review of the previous literature relevant to the focus of this study. Chapter 2 focuses on metaphor and lays out the theoretical, methodological, and analytical foundations required for examining metaphor in political discourse. It brings together key theoretical frameworks, approaches to metaphor identification, and previous research that link metaphor to ideology and political communication. Chapter 3 focuses on existing studies of Brexit discourse, moving from broader analyses of the driving forces behind Brexit to more focused examinations of how Brexit is linguistically represented. Particular emphasis is placed on research within the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) tradition, such as studies on identity, populism, and legitimation strategies, as well as metaphor-oriented studies, such as analyses of specific metaphors related to Brexit. This

synthesis highlights existing insights and aspects that require further attention, which inform the study's research questions.

Chapter 4 demonstrates the methodological framework of the study, which adopts a corpus-based approach. It introduces the principles of corpus linguistics and explains how its tools are applied to discourse and metaphor analysis. The chapter also describes the data collection and corpus compilation processes, before detailing the procedures used for metaphor identification and coding, as well as the corpus-based methods for determining central terms and analysing metaphors in their concordance lines. Following the data analysis steps, Chapter 5 presents the results for both topic-related and vehicle-related central terms in each step, highlighting the process of identifying key metaphors from significant collocates. It then reports quantitative results on the number of metaphors and vehicle groupings, alongside qualitative findings of novel metaphors and idiomatic expressions identified in the two corpora.

Chapter 6 discusses the results of the metaphor analysis, focusing on shared patterns, particularly systematic metaphors and metaphor scenarios, as well as continuities and differences in metaphor use in Brexit discourse under Theresa May and Boris Johnson. It interprets how these metaphors connect with key topics, encode ideological entailments, and reflect the differing stages of Brexit. Chapter 7 summarises the main findings on the similarities and differences in Brexit-related metaphor use across the two Prime Ministers' tenures, discusses the implications of these findings, acknowledges the study's limitations, and outlines possibilities for further exploration.

Chapter 2 Theories, approaches, and uses of metaphor in discourse

Recent research in linguistics, psychology, and philosophy has increasingly recognised the importance of metaphor in “social and political conceptualisation,” particularly through cognitive metaphor theory developed by Lakoff and Johnson in their work *Metaphor We Live By* (Musolff, 2004, p.1). As a “cognitive device” that serves pragmatic functions (Otieno et al., 2016, p.22), metaphor is widely used as a “linguistic strategy” in political discourse across different global contexts (p.21), shaping how complex socio-political issues, such as elections (Burnes, 2011), wars (Lakoff, 1992), economic crises (Cardini, 2014), and terrorism (Hülse & Spencer, 2008), are conceptualised, communicated, and evaluated. For example, Howe (1988) noted that contemporary American campaign rhetoric and the language of political professionals draw heavily on metaphors derived from sports and warfare. Existing studies have shown that, in political contexts, metaphor plays an important role in simplifying complex issues, influencing public understanding and attitudes, supporting persuasion, and revealing underlying ideological positions (Charteris-Black, 2004, 2011; Musolff, 2004, 2016; Mio, 2018). As such, metaphor research is considered an important area of inquiry for scholars seeking to examine how language reflects and shapes political realities. At the same time, it raises questions about how metaphor should be analysed, particularly with regard to the relationship between cognition and discourse.

Cognitive linguistics was initially criticised for decontextualising and naturalising “ideologically loaded phenomena” (Wei, 2016, as cited in Agbo, 2018, p.95) due to its neglect of the “socio-cultural” context of cognition and its connection to discourse; however, more recent developments have increasingly incorporated these socio-cultural dimensions into analyses of language use. Chilton and Ilyin (1993) noted that analysing political discourse requires a “not only cognitive but discourse-related” approach to metaphor (p.8), which emphasise the dynamic and context-dependent nature of metaphor use. Accordingly, the first section of this chapter introduces the theoretical basis for metaphor research, including Conceptual Metaphor Theory and the discourse dynamics approach to metaphor, which together account for both the cognitive and discourse dimensions of metaphor use. It then emphasises the empirical focus of metaphor analysis and discusses the analytical tools applied in this study: systematic metaphor, which identifies the systems established by metaphors in discourse, and metaphor scenario, which provides a tool for the

consideration of evaluation and ideology behind metaphor use. The second section addresses issues related to metaphor identification, focusing on methods used to identify linguistic metaphors in discourse, including the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) and MIPVU (Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit). The last section reviews studies on the use of metaphor in political discourse, emphasising its inseparable relationship with ideology and power, its role in evaluation, and its communicative and persuasive functions. It also introduces Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) as an important methodological framework, integrating cognitive and discourse perspectives to examine how metaphors reflect speakers' intentions and ideological positions.

2.1 Theoretical background on metaphor

2.1.1 Conceptual metaphor and linguistic metaphor

The classical perspective on metaphor views it as a rhetorical device. Aristotle defined metaphor as “giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference...or on grounds of analogy” (translated by Bywater, 2022, p.56). Burke (1941) described metaphor as “a device for seeing something in terms of something else” (p.241). Grace (1965, as cited in Thwala et al., 2018, p.37) characterised metaphor as “a term is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable...suggest a resemblance”. These definitions emphasise metaphor as a figure of speech that serves rhetorical purposes by making figurative comparisons between different things.

From a cognitive perspective, Lakoff and Johnson (2008) argued that the nature of metaphor is “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (p.5). For example, people use ontological metaphors to perceive “events, activities, emotions, ideas” as “entities and substances” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008, p.26). Kövecses (2016) gave the definition of conceptual metaphor in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) as “a systematic set of mappings” (p.14) from the concrete domain of experience, which is the source domain, to the abstract domain of experience, which is the target domain. Koller (2020) summarised the features of this kind of cross-domain mapping, describing it as omnipresent, “unidirectional,” “invariant,” systematic, and “selective” (p.79). This mapping also triggers specific “metaphoric entailments” and is rooted in “both physical and socio-cultural experiences” (Koller, 2020, p.80). Within CMT, conceptual metaphors function at the cognitive level,

relating to the way we “organize and interpret experience” (Traugott, 1985, p.49), while linguistic metaphors are the actual expressions in language that realise the underlying cross-domain mappings (Deignan, 2005, p.34).

Steen (2008) noted a paradox in metaphor studies: while Conceptual Metaphor Theory proposes that metaphor works by cross-domain mapping, psycholinguistic studies show that most metaphors in everyday language are not actually processed through active comparison (p. 213). He argued that distinguishing the dimensions of metaphor as language, thought, and communication allows us to recognise the “autonomy” of metaphor in both language and thought (p. 238), emphasising that these dimensions should not be assumed to correspond directly, but should instead be treated as analytically distinct levels that operate both independently and interactively. Cameron (1999, 2003) noted that within a discourse approach to metaphor, researchers should be clear about whether their studies focus on metaphor as a linguistic phenomenon or as a cognitive activity when establishing analytical frameworks. In applied linguistics, metaphor should be understood as “a phenomenon of language in use” (Cameron, 1999, p.4). Accordingly, linguistic metaphors, that is, surface-level metaphorical expressions identified in actual language use as opposed to underlying conceptual metaphors, serve as the primary data for analysis (Cameron, 2003, p.25). The term metaphor, as discussed in this study, refers to linguistic metaphor as described here. This study employs systematic metaphors and metaphor scenarios to analyse linguistic metaphors that emerge from naturally occurring discourse, which will be discussed in Section 2.1.4. Systematic metaphors and metaphor scenarios are written in *italic capitals* to distinguish them from conceptual metaphors, which are presented in uppercase letters following accepted practice.

2.1.2 Classification of linguistic metaphors

Linguistic metaphors can be classified according to their perceived level of metaphoricality, ranging from innovative to conventionalised, dead, and historical metaphors (Deignan, 2005, p.35). Before discussing these categories, it is helpful to briefly introduce Conceptual Metaphor Theory’s description of different metaphor types at the level of conceptual processing. According to Lakoff and Turner (2009), novel metaphor goes beyond conventional use by extending an existing metaphor to “include elements otherwise not mapped,” imaginatively specifying details, and combining two or more conventional metaphors in a creative way to form “a richer

and more complex set of metaphorical connections” (2009, p.72). Based on this view, Birdsell (2018) described two mechanisms for the creation of novel metaphors: first, by extending a conventional conceptual metaphor through the novel application of the vehicle’s elements or by drawing on its previously unused aspects (p.60); second, by establishing a completely new conceptual mapping between a topic and a new or uncommon source or vehicle (p.61). Deignan et al. (2013) discussed examples of linguistic metaphors used to talk about cancer, indicating that expressions such as “*counterattack*” and “*land mines*” illustrate creative extensions of the conventional mapping between physical struggle and war, whereas describing cancer as “*beautiful planets*” demonstrates novelty by introducing a new conceptual mapping with positive connotations (p.18).

Based on a review of studies on metaphor creativity, Pérez-Sobrino et al. (2022) noted that creative metaphors arise not only from conceptual mappings or blending processes, but also involve creativity at the “lexical and textual levels” in language realisation, and are shaped by contextual aspects of communication, including “physical, social, and cultural settings” and discourse participants (p.131). Drawing on creative verbal and multimodal metaphors from the #ReframeCovid campaign on Twitter, they identified three types of metaphor creativity. First, creative extensions of conventional source domains involve novel elaborations of domains such as JOURNEY and FIRE (p.132). The second type is “creative exploitation of one-off source domains,” such as the use of a hedgehog to represent “heroic behaviour” during COVID-19, which emphasises endurance and self-restraint in contrast to more typical associations of heroism with strength and aggression (p.135). Third, metaphorical creativity can involve source domains specific to particular discourse communities; for instance, a simile comparing social distancing to a string section playing *pianissimo* highlights the need for collective coordination, but relies on specialised musical knowledge, illustrating how metaphor interpretation depends on audience-specific expertise (p.137).

Turner and Littlemore (2023) further explored the link between metaphor creativity and synaesthesia, suggesting that both metaphorical mappings and synaesthesia are “embodied, pre-linguistic and automatic,” (p.9) and that the interconnections between synaesthesia, metaphor and creativity are influenced by emotion and evaluation (p.15). Based on experimental data comparing responses from synaesthetes and non-synaesthetes in describing positive/negative sensory experiences, they found that synaesthetes tend to produce more novel and

“conceptually distant” responses, often engaging in a more “personal” and “embodied” way, whereas non-synaesthetes favour more conventional and directly related associations with the prompts (p.73).

Conventional metaphor, as claimed by Lakoff and Johnson (2008), shapes the everyday conceptual system of a culture (p.140) and is typically used unconsciously and automatically (Lakoff, 1993, p.245). This view has since been supported by psycholinguistic research; for example, Keysar et al. (2000) show through reading-time experiments that readers do not rely on conceptual mappings when processing conventional expressions, suggesting that they are understood automatically rather than through active comparison, although such mappings may be used for nonconventional metaphors. Lakoff and Turner (2009) argued that the traditional notion of dead metaphor does not distinguish between conventional metaphors that are still active within our conceptual system and historical metaphors that have fallen out of use (pp.129–130). The term dead metaphor is more appropriately applied to cases such as *pedigree*, where both the conceptual and linguistic mappings have disappeared, as the source image and terminology are no longer present (Lakoff, 1987, p.144). Traugott (1985) noted that conventional and dead metaphors have historically played an important role in semantic change theories, as conventional metaphors were once creative expressions, and dead metaphors were once alive (p.18). She further argued that metaphors aligning with existing cognitive schemas (e.g., spatial, container) are more likely to become conventionalised and “frozen” as dead metaphors (1985, p.50). Birdsell (2018) indicated that, within cognitive linguistics, metaphor is increasingly recognised as existing along a “continuum” (p. 304) varying in degree from conventional to creative, with conventional metaphors being more prevalent than creative ones in language.

The model developed by Goatly (1997) on the classification of metaphors emphasises the “linguistic realizations” of metaphors rather than their cognitive processing (Deignan, 2005, p.38). Goatly (1997) distinguished dead, inactive, and active metaphors based on how they vary in terms of topic, vehicle (metaphorical term), grounds (shared properties or similarities between topic and vehicle), and lexicon (p.32). Based on his description, dead metaphors refer to cases lexically treated as homonyms, where the topic is understood through a “fixed meaning” of the vehicle; the vehicle’s literal meaning is difficult to evoke; and the grounds for the metaphorical connection are rarely noticed (1997, p.32). In contrast, active metaphors are those where the topic is “indirectly” referenced through the vehicle,

which does not have a fixed or predictable meaning; the vehicle is “more strongly evoked than the topic”; and the grounds for comparison are readily perceived and vary depending on context (1997, p.32). Inactive metaphors refer to cases where the topic is referred to through the vehicle’s “second conventional and fixed meaning”; the vehicle remains “available” and can be processed “in parallel” with the topic, allowing its literal meaning to still be evoked; and the grounds for the metaphor may still be noticed in certain contexts but are mostly “incorporated into the topic concept” (1997, p.32). Goatly further subdivided inactive metaphors into buried, sleeping, and tired metaphors (1997, pp.31-32). For instance, the word *clew*, whose metaphorical meaning has been obscured due to changes in form so that its metaphorical connection is not visible to most language users, is classified as a buried metaphor (1997, p.31).

Deignan (2005) argued that Goatly’s classification of linguistic metaphors treats etymology inconsistently and relies heavily on assumptions about how speakers process metaphor that are hard to confirm without extensive participant testing, making it difficult to apply in practice (pp.38-39). She (2005) used corpus evidence to describe the four types of linguistic metaphor introduced at the start of this section. A linguistic metaphor could be classified as innovative if its metaphorical use occurs less than once per thousand instances of the word in a general corpus, or all instances come from a single source (2005, p.47). This study will identify novel metaphors according to this corpus-based criterion. Corpus data also provide important evidence for determining the notions of “coreness” and “dependency” (2005, p.42), which Deignan suggested can help distinguish conventional and dead metaphors. If a word’s literal meaning is seen as more “core,” its metaphorical use is considered as conventional; however, if there is no clear core-dependent relationship between the metaphorical and literal meanings of a word, it is classified as a dead metaphor (2005, p.42). For example, she noted that corpus data can show how a word’s metaphorical meaning, such as *mouth* in *mouth of the river*, an example originally from Cruse (1986, as cited in Deignan, 2005, p.42), is always modified by certain target-domain terms, suggesting that this metaphorical meaning remains dependent on the literal meaning and is therefore conventionalised. In the case of historical metaphors, their original literal meanings are either absent from the corpus or have changed so much that they are perceived homonyms by current speakers (2005, p.47).

2.1.3 The discourse dynamics approach to metaphor

As noted by various studies (Kövecses, 2008; Cameron et al., 2009; Demjén & Semino, 2016), Conceptual Metaphor Theory has inspired a large body of academic studies while also facing extensive criticism. Kövecses (2008) summarised that criticisms of CMT focus on its emphasis on concepts over words, its top-down methodology, the claim that metaphors are formed at a superordinate level, and its emphasis on the universal aspect of the embodiment while neglecting its interactions with different contexts and cultures (pp.181-182). Demjén and Semino (2016) also noted that CMT prioritises metaphor in thought over metaphor in language, lacks consideration of variation in register or genre, and displays a “cavalier” handling of methods and data (p.3). As Cameron et al. (2009) pointed out, the cognitive perspective of metaphor underemphasises the importance of language and specific situational context in which metaphor is used (p.63), thereby overlooking the “linguistic restrictions,” as well as evaluative and pragmatic meanings of metaphor in context (Cameron & Deignan, 2006, p.688).

In contrast to the cognitive perspective, Cameron and Deignan (2006) argued that metaphor emerges from the “two-way” dynamic interaction between language and thought, rather than being “a systematic web of mental connections” realised through language in a one-way process (p. 674). By proposing a “discourse dynamics approach” to metaphor based on a “complexity/dynamic systems perspective” (p. 63), Cameron et al. (2009) further emphasised the dynamic changes and “connectedness” within social and cognitive systems (p. 64). From this dynamic systems perspective, metaphor is viewed as a “temporary stability” arising from the interconnection between socially situated language use and cognitive processes (2009, p.64). Within this interconnected system, both linguistic and conceptual metaphors are “processual,” getting stabilised in ongoing use through “self-organization and emergence” while remaining dynamically flexible and “open to further change” (2009, p.67). During this process, language and conceptual content mutually adapt (Cameron & Deignan, 2006, p.680), forming a set of “stabilizing linguistic, semantic, pragmatic, and affective patterns” (p.679) associated with a word’s metaphorical use, along with potential variations in its use.

As part of the discourse dynamics approach, Cameron et al. (2009) developed a method of “metaphor-led discourse analysis” to examine patterns of interconnected linguistic metaphors in discourse data, aiming to explain the links between people’s

ideas and attitudes, and their language use (p.69). This method argues that the metaphors used leave a “trace” within the broader “landscape” of the discourse system, and that these metaphor trajectories, as part of an ongoing process of thought and language use, connect to other “timescales” and “levels of social organization” (p.66). Metaphor analysis within the discourse dynamics approach, by tracing connections embodied in metaphors found in data, enables researchers to observe metaphor use across different levels, such as the “microlevel” of an individual metaphor, the “mesolevels” of topical strands, or the “macrolevel” of the overall discourse (p.69).

Cameron and Stelma (2004) examined the phenomenon of metaphor clustering in reconciliation talk, where metaphors do not occur evenly throughout discourse but instead appear in clusters within specific stretches of discourse. They argued that, from a complex and dynamic systems perspective, metaphor clusters can be viewed as “emergent outcomes of the system” of two speakers interacting, and that these clusters occur at multiple discourse levels, from a few utterances to episodes and full conversations (2004, p.110). Metaphor clusters may shed light on speakers’ or writers’ “conceptualisation and thinking processes” (2004, p.108). Different types of metaphor clusters have been further studied. For example, mixed metaphors are clusters that do not exhibit coherence derived from a single conceptual metaphor (Kimmel, 2010, p.97).

Gibbs (2016) argued that the dynamic perspective of metaphor recognises the interplay of multiple forces that shape “human metaphorical action” (p.67), rather than attributing it to an “overarching mechanism” that governs the explanation of metaphorical meanings (Gibbs, 2011, p.553). Compared with Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the discourse dynamics approach to metaphor emphasises that the use and understanding of metaphor in context are affected simultaneously by “cognitive, linguistic, social and cultural forces” (Gibbs & Cameron, 2008, p.74). This perspective has been supported by many studies on metaphor. Low (2010) noted that the “real-world metaphor research,” which focuses on metaphor use in social interactions and its practical implications, maintains that metaphor is shaped by social factors (e.g., communicative purpose) and the linguistic resources available to the user in a given context, alongside cognitive factors (p.viii). Maslen (2016) indicated that an increasing body of research has demonstrated that factors such as “culture, embodied process, and affect” significantly influence the use of metaphor (p.91). With the acknowledgment of metaphor as a dynamic system shaped by

multiple factors, this discourse dynamics approach, as argued by Gibbs (2011), can provide empirical explanations of aspects such as how interactions between different conceptual metaphors create specific metaphors in particular contexts (p.554), as well as how various “constraints” concurrently influence the use and interpretation of metaphors (p.555).

2.1.4 Analytical tools: systematic metaphor and metaphor scenarios

Based on the discussion of the discourse dynamics approach to metaphor in the previous section, this section introduces the analytical tools applied in the present study: systematic metaphor and metaphor scenario. While the discourse dynamics perspective emphasises metaphor as an ongoing and dynamic process rather than a fixed stored mapping, these analytical tools provide a more specific framework for identifying the forms of metaphorical patterns that emerge through interactions within the discourse system and for examining how they encode evaluative and ideological meanings. The section therefore explains how metaphor can be analysed as part of broader interconnected systems of meaning within the discourse.

From the perspective of discourse dynamics, linguistic metaphor emerges in the “microgenetic” timescale—that is, through the construction of utterances and discourse episodes in real time over seconds and minutes—and is constituted by “vehicle words or phrases” and their explicit or implicit “referent or topic” (Cameron, 2010, p.85). As the discourse develops, linguistic metaphors may experience “shift” (Cameron, 2010, p.88), acting as a “key mechanism” that propels the dynamics of the system and “the emergence of patterns in metaphor use” (p.89). Among the shifts in metaphor that drive the dynamics, the vehicle, which is the “actual words and phrases used metaphorically” (Maslen, 2016, p.88), can be “repeated,” “relexicalized,” “explicated,” or “contrasted,” and systematic metaphor is one of the outcomes in discourse arising from this “vehicle development” (Cameron, 2010, p.90). Systematic metaphor refers to a group of semantically interrelated metaphor vehicles used by discourse participants to talk about a specific topic or closely related topics (2010, pp.91-92). As Maslen (2016) noted, the systematicity of metaphor develops as a result of recurring and coherent connections between topics and vehicles found within the text (p.90).

Cameron et al. (2010) identified several systematic metaphors in a section of conversation about terrorism: *GAME* metaphor vehicles were used to express the

systematic metaphors “*VIOLENT CONFLICT IS A GAME WITH RULES*” and “*TERRORISTS BREAK THE RULES*” (p.131); *VIOLENT ACTION* metaphor vehicles were used to establish “*TERRORISM IS A VIOLENT ACTION*” (p.131); and *MOVEMENT* and *SOCIAL LANDSCAPE* metaphor vehicles contributed to “*TERRORISM AS MOVEMENT*” (p.133). Maslen (2016) found that, within a part of the religious document *Evangelii Gaudium*, metaphor vehicles of “*PREY-HUNT*” constructed the financial system as “*A STEALTHY PREDATOR WITHOUT MORALS*,” while metaphor vehicles of *BODY*, *HEALTH*, and *VIOLENCE* built the systematic metaphor “*NOT BENEFITING FROM THE SYSTEM IS PHYSICAL HARM*” (p.98). Finding systematic metaphor, as a key component of metaphor-led discourse analysis, enables researchers to infer the “ideas, attitudes, and values” of the discourse participants from the language they use (Cameron et al., 2010, p.117). Maslen (2016) explained that, by analysing how the systematic connections between metaphor vehicles and their topics “vary, expand, overlap or sharpen in contrast” (p.89), it is possible to gain insights into how individuals “conceptualise the world” (p.88).

Determining systematic metaphors is not the end of the analysis but a starting point for further investigation (Maslen, 2016, p.90). Based on the metaphor vehicle-topic systems identified within the discourse, Cameron et al. (2010) further illustrated two types of systematicity, which are metaphor framing and metaphor scenario, to facilitate a deeper analysis of metaphor use (pp.137-144). Metaphor scenarios were proposed by Musolff (2004, 2006, 2016). He (2004) described scenarios as certain typical assumptions made by a discourse community about “the ‘prototypical’ content aspects (participants, roles, ‘dramatic’ story-lines) and social/ethical evaluations” (p.17). Scenarios provide the “main storylines or perspectives” in discourse, through which the dominant aspects of a metaphorical mapping that shape public discourse on a specific topic are elaborated and extended (2004, p.18). As the analogy between source and target concepts entails not only the “the transfer of semantic structures” but also the dimensions of “emotive and evaluative” (2004, p.182), the dominant mappings and scenarios in discourse will further reveal “attitudinal and argumentative” patterns characterising a specific discourse community (p.28). Through scenario, speakers could not merely “apply source to target concepts,” but also construct “narrative frames” to conceptualise and evaluate social and political issues (Musolff, 2006, p.36).

In Musolff's (2004, 2006) comparative analysis of the public debate between Britain and Germany on the European Union using the COBUILD "Bank of English" and COSMAS corpora, he found that mappings related to "LOVE, MARRIAGE and FAMILY LIFE" (2004, p.28) were widely used in the two samples. However, unique metaphor scenarios were created in each discourse, which provide different explanations for the conceptualisation of the target topic. For instance, in the "*MARRIAGE CRISIS*" (2006, p.34) scenario, or to say within the "whole mininarrative" of "*MARRIED LIFE*" (p.26), the German press perceives the metaphorical marital struggles of the French-German partnership as a serious problem that must be dealt with and prevented, while British media often expresses apparent delight on it, suggesting their marriage could lead to a breakup whereby Britain gets the opportunity to start a love triangle with the two partners (2004, p.28). British media also frequently emphasises the *SEPARATION* scenario to imply the possibility of Britain's departure from the EU (2006, p.33). Musolff (2004) argued that the persuasive strength of metaphors in "analogical arguments" relies on their underlying "scenario structure," which presents "a minimal but coherent scene" that represents "standard situations" drawn from the "shared cultural knowledge" familiar to the community members (p.38). Kimmel's (2009) study supported this argument. He analysed 675 news articles about the EU constitutional debates from British newspapers *The Sun* and *The Guardian* and found that the EU as the topic target was described by a set of common conceptual metaphors, such as THE EU IS A MACHINE/CONTAINER/BODY (pp.57-59). Metaphors deriving from different source domains can form coherent conceptual relations, as metaphor scenarios and "narrative connections" are central to the weaving of discourse coherence (2009, p.49). For example, different scenarios of "THE CONSTITUTION IS A LIVING BEING" (2009, p.89), such as those drawing on damage, illness, and death, allow speakers to "juxtapose and compare" alternative states and to evaluate them within a shared conceptual metaphor (p.90). Kimmel (2009) argued that metaphor scenarios have great effect in building "a common ground for diverse opinions" (p.89) and allow "events, agency, causality, and states" (p.90) complement each other.

Musolff (2016) summarised that metaphor scenarios are "discourse-based, culturally and historically mediated" (p.41), involving specific situations, scenes, events, goals and actions which are connected to the prevalent "social attitudes" and "emotional stances" (p.42) in the discourse community. The concept of scenarios demonstrates that the "framing power" of metaphor not only lies in the repeated use of certain "source concepts," but also the extent metaphor entrenched in their sociocultural

contexts and their “argumentative plausibility and interactional appeal” perceived by the audiences (2016, p.155). Musolff (2016) argued that scenario analysis is an effective approach for examining political metaphors based on a detailed analysis of several frequent scenarios in political discourse, such as *NATION AS A FAMILY* (p.36), *NATION AS A BODY* (p.70), and *IMMIGRANTS AS PARASITES* (p.105). Being “packaged” within “default narrative and argumentative scenarios,” which provide “conceptual platforms” for adopting ideological stances, political metaphors can be “meaningfully changed” by developing varied scenario versions (2016, p.159). Musolff (2016) stated that scenario analysis accounts for the “multifunctionality and discourse-historical situatedness” of metaphor (p.155), and recognises its dual role in cognition, serving both as an outcome of and as a mechanism for shaping “thought, emotion and social perception” (p.160).

Cameron et al. (2010) developed the idea of metaphorical story based on metaphor scenario, which operates at the level of a specific discourse segment rather than that of sociocultural communities (p.138). A metaphorical story is described as “recounting normally within a single text or discourse event, actions involving one or more participants in settings” (2010, p.139). Cameron et al. (2010) argued that the interaction between story and scenarios occurs when a metaphorical story and its target event do not explicitly connect, as the speakers normally tend to sketch out the story to help audiences recognise it (p.144). At this time, metaphor scenarios, as “culturally entrenched schemas” featured by conventional norms and shared evaluations, could help audiences link and explain the events or actions with the progressing story (p.144).

In this study, Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) serves as a background theoretical foundation, offering a cognitive account of how metaphor structures underlying thought. As this study focuses on linguistic metaphors in political discourse, Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA), discussed in Section 2.3.2.3, is adopted as an appropriate methodological framework, as it seeks to uncover how speakers’ intentions, evaluations, and ideological meanings are constructed and communicated through metaphor and incorporates corpus methods (to be discussed in the methodology chapter). Within the CMA, a complex and dynamic perspective on metaphor, together with a coherent set of analytical artefacts, including systematic metaphors and metaphor scenarios, allows this study to include discourse purpose, cognitive factors and sociocultural context into the interpretation of metaphor (Cameron, 2007), while also considering the attitudes and evaluations of the

discourse participants as reflected in their metaphor use. Accordingly, systematic metaphors are identified as recurring patterns in metaphor use at the level of vehicle–topic relations that allow inferences about evaluations but do not, in themselves present narrative structures, while metaphor scenarios are analysed as narrative and evaluative frames organising these patterns into storylines that often involve roles, actions, or outcomes. The notion of metaphor story is applied to instances occurring within a single discourse event; an example in this study is *THE BACKSTOP IS A DANGEROUS BUILDING* (see Section 6.2.9.2).

2.2 Metaphor identification

2.2.1 Two approaches to metaphor identification

As previously noted, conceptual metaphors represent the cognitive mapping from one domain to another, while linguistic metaphors are the metaphorical expressions of these mappings in discourse. Beginning with a conceptual metaphor or a specific source or target domain and then identifying linguistic expressions related to it is what Krennmayr (2013) referred to as the “top-down” approach to metaphor identification, which was common in early metaphor research within the cognitive perspective (p.8). She (2013) argued that this approach is useful for studies seeking to replenish “details of proposed underlying mappings” and may be more appropriate for research with large-scale datasets. (p.33). However, as it starts with assumed conceptual metaphors instead of allowing patterns to emerge from the data, the top-down approach has certain limitations. Low (1999) noted that the top-down approach lacks reliable identification criteria, which can easily cause analysts’ “heightened sensitivity to metaphors” (p. 49) and potentially lead to over-interpretation, as well as to “under-identifying” (p. 50) other metaphorical expressions. Based on a review of previous studies, Krennmayr (2013) summarised that the top-down approach may lead researchers to focus selectively on evidence that fits their pre-assumed conceptual metaphors (p.8). However, a single linguistic expression can often be interpreted as supporting multiple possible conceptual metaphors, rather than corresponding with just one conceptual metaphor (2013, p.9). Furthermore, top-down analyses tend to emphasise well-established metaphors while possibly overlooking less conventional or unexpected mappings uncovered by metaphorical expressions (2013, pp. 9–10).

By contrast, the bottom-up approach is an inductive process that first identifies linguistic metaphors in the text and then constructs the underlying conceptual structures based on them (Krennmayr, 2013, p.10). This approach limits the tendency of finding only metaphorical expressions that correspond to “preconceived mappings” (2013, p. 11), thereby helping to reduce researchers’ biases and subjective judgments. Krennmayr (2013) noted that it is suitable for research that seeks to identify all instances of metaphorical language in a dataset (p.11). Being data-driven, the bottom-up approach is well suited to corpus-based methods and aligns with the need for linguistic evidence in empirical metaphor research. For both approaches, previous studies have noted that metaphorical patterns observed in language use cannot always be adequately explained solely by conceptual domains (Semino, 2008, p. 9), and, in turn, the relationships between concepts in people’s “non-linguistic mental representations” cannot be reliably inferred only from these linguistic patterns without experimental evidence (Casasanto, 2009, p. 142).

Within the bottom-up approach, Steen (2009) proposed a five-step method to guide the analysis from linguistic metaphors to conceptual metaphors. These five steps involve the identification of “metaphor-related words” using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (Pragglejaz Group, 2007), as well as “propositions,” “open comparisons,” and “analogical structures,” and ultimately determining cross-domain mappings (Steen, 2009, p. 202). The first step involves the methods for identifying linguistic metaphors, which will be discussed later in Section 2.2.3. The second step transforms the metaphorical expressions identified into “conceptual structures” or “text bases” that capture the propositions of the text (2009, p.203), while the third step converts these propositions into an open comparison between two conceptual domains, highlighting the similarity between the source domain and target domain (pp.203-204). The fourth step transforms the open comparison into a “closed comparison” with the “formal structure of an analogy,” in which the analyst sometimes needs to fill in the “conceptual substance” to complete the analogy (2009, p. 204). The last step turns the “analogical structure” into a detailed mapping between the two conceptual domains, making explicit the “precise correspondences” between elements of the source and target domains (2009, p.204).

2.2.2 Finding potential metaphors in discourse

When it comes to identifying linguistic metaphors, some earlier research focused on discourse markers or cues that indicate a lexical unit as metaphorical. Fraser (1993)

noted three ways to signal a metaphor in discourse: explicitly stating it, using a “semantically anomalous” sentence, and using a “meaningful sentence” that is “false” or “irrelevant” in context (p.334). The first two ways are clearly instances of the speaker signalling a metaphorical intent which alerts the listener that a literal reading won’t work, while the third way may signal metaphor if it is neither irony nor hyperbole (1993, p.335). Goatly (1997) illustrated a series of “co-textual markers” of a metaphor (p.172): “explicit markers” (e.g., *metaphor, metaphorically*), “intensifiers” (e.g., *literally, indeed*) (p.173), “hedges or downtoners” (e.g., *a bit of, more or less*), “semantic metalanguage” (e.g., *in more than one sense*) (p.176), “symbolism terms” (e.g., *instance, symbolically*) (p.178), “superordinate terms” (e.g., *sort of, kind of*) (p.179), and “similes and comparisons” (p.184).

Based on a corpus consisting of large and small corpora, Cameron and Deignan (2003) identified a range of “tuning devices” that frequently appear alongside metaphors in spoken discourse, such as *actually, kind of, imagine, and sort of* (p.152). These turning devices serve pragmatic functions, such as moderating the intensity of a metaphor or guiding listeners towards a metaphorical interpretation (2003, p.153). Partington (2006) also used corpus evidence to examine the frequency of the hedges *kind of* and *sort of* in metaphorical and non-metaphorical statements. He found that both hedges occurred significantly more frequently in metaphorical statements in a corpus of business journalism than in a corpus of White House briefing texts, suggesting a difference in “figurative density” between the two types of discourse (2006, p.275).

In addition to discourse markers that signal potential metaphors in discourse, early studies such as Charteris-Black (2004) described how Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) locates potential metaphors and verifies them using corpus evidence (pp.35-37). The process begins by reading through the text to determine candidate metaphors, which are expressions that show “semantic tension” at the linguistic, pragmatic, or cognitive level, suggesting a possible conceptual domain shift. These candidates are then marked as “metaphor keywords” (2004, p.35). The second stage examines the context of each metaphor keywords appears in the corpus to determine whether it is being used metaphorically (2004, p.36). During this process, the proportion of metaphorical versus literal uses for each metaphor keyword can be compared, and the literal occurrences can be excluded from the analysis (2004, p.37).

2.2.3 MIP (Metaphor Identification Procedure) and MIPVU (Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit)

Steen et al. (2010) argued that metaphor identification belongs to the field of “scientific measurement” and should therefore meet generally recognised “standards of methodological quality” (p.2). It requires a credible and consistent instrument for use in metaphor studies (Steen, 2016, p.73). Krennmayr (2013) also noted that metaphor identification should rely on a clearly defined procedure that helps “control the process of formulating conceptual mappings” and “determining concepts that are involved” (p.33). Two commonly used methods for identifying linguistic metaphors are discussed in this section. The first is the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP), a procedure developed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007) to identify metaphorical words and phrases in discourse. The MIP has four steps as shown in Figure 2.1:

Figure 2.1 Four steps of the MIP (Pragglejaz Group, 2007, p.3)

1	Read the entire text—discourse to establish a general understanding of the meaning.
2	Determine the lexical units in the text—discourse.
3	<p>(a) For each lexical unit in the text, establish its meaning in context, that is, how it applies to an entity, relation, or attribute in the situation evoked by the text (contextual meaning). Take into account what comes before and after the lexical unit.</p> <p>(b) For each lexical unit, determine if it has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the one in the given context. For our purposes, basic meanings tend to be</p> <p>—More concrete; what they evoke is easier to imagine, see, hear, feel, smell, and taste.</p> <p>—Related to bodily action.</p> <p>—More precise (as opposed to vague)</p> <p>—Historically older.</p> <p>Basic meanings are not necessarily the most frequent meanings of the lexical unit.</p> <p>(c) If the lexical unit has a more basic current—contemporary meaning in other contexts than the given context, decide whether the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with it.</p>
4	If yes, mark the lexical unit as metaphorical.

As shown in Figure 2.1, the MIP identifies metaphors at the level of lexical units (Pragglejaz Group, 2007, p.2). Steen et al. (2010) argued that lexical units represent “the level of linguistic organization that is most closely related to the level of conceptual structures” in the process of cross domain mapping (p.167). In using the MIP, researchers rely on dictionary definitions to compare a word’s basic meaning with its contextual meaning. The MIP selects *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* as the resource of metaphor identification. Deignan (2015) noted that the ideal way to analyse word meaning is based on “direct” and “unfiltered” corpora (p.145); however, this approach is sometimes impractical for metaphor analysts due to a lack of time or training to conduct a concordance analysis, and a

corpus-based dictionary compiled by trained lexicographers can be a suitable alternative (p.151). Krennmayr (2013) argued that the MIP enables a more “systematized and controlled” identification of linguistic metaphor by emphasizing the importance of “transparent data collection” guided by a defined protocol (p.11). Wu (2016) wrote that using the MIP to identify linguistic metaphors can help researchers reduce reliance on intuition, as the basic and contextual meanings of words are relatively clear (p.79). It also helps reduce the problem of over-identification of metaphor by specifically analysing each lexical unit (2016, p.79).

Based on the MIP, Steen et al. (2010) further developed the Metaphor Identification Procedure at Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU), which has six steps (p.25-26). Aiming to identify metaphor-related words (MRWs), the first two steps of the MIPVU follow the MIP to determine the “boundaries of lexical units” (2010, p. 27) and to mark whether each lexical unit is an MRW. The third and fourth steps further mark these metaphor-related words into “direct” or “implicit” metaphor (2010, p.39). Direct metaphors refer to lexical units that are explicitly present in the text and whose meanings can be directly explained through cross-domain mapping, such as *village* in “*the campsite was like a holiday village,*” whereas implicit metaphors occur when metaphorical meaning is conveyed indirectly through “substitution” or “ellipsis” without any apparently “incongruous word” (2010, p.39). The fifth step involves identifying “metaphor flags” (2010, p. 26) as another type of metaphor-related words, such as *like* and *analogy*, which signal the presence of a contrast or comparison between domains (p. 40). The sixth step is about the metaphor identification of newly coined words, whose different components are examined individually following the above steps (2010, p. 26). Steen et al. (2010) explained several differences between the MIP and MIPVU, including: (1) the MIPVU identifies lexical units by word class rather than lemma, so it distinguishes between parts of speech while the MIP does not; (2) when comparing the basic and contextual meanings of words, the MIPVU, in addition to the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, also refers to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* and the *Oxford English Dictionary*; and (3) for words whose basic meaning cannot be determined from the dictionary, the MIPVU marks them as “WIDLII” (when in doubt, leave it in) (p. 59).

The MIP and MIPVU, both follow a bottom-up approach, comparing the basic and contextual meanings of lexical units to identify metaphor. In both methods, a reference corpus can be used to provide evidence for determining a word’s literal and figurative meanings, thereby improving the objectivity of the analysis. Both

procedures can meet the requirement of identifying linguistic metaphors in naturally occurring discourse. This study adopted the MIP, because it provides flexibility in including which metaphor-related words to analyse according to the focus of the research and allows for the identification of metaphor across word classes.

2.3 Metaphor in political discourse

2.3.1 Political discourse and Critical Discourse Analysis

From the perspective that political interaction relies on language usage and that linguistic behaviour inherently reflects patterns of “domination and legitimation,” all discourse can be considered political (Gastil, 1992, p.469). Under a narrower definition, both Van Dijk (1997, p.12) and Beard (2000, p.2) defined political discourse as language produced by professional politicians and political institutions. However, Van Dijk (1997) also emphasised that, from an interactional discourse analysis perspective, political discourse should also include various participants in political communication, such as the public, especially when it is situated in the public sphere (p.13). McNair (2017) broadly defined political communication as “purposeful communication about politics” (p.4). This definition includes all types of communication initiated by political actors with the aim of fulfilling specific goals, messages directed at them by non-political individuals such as voters and journalists, and public discourse about their actions, as found in different forms of media discussions of politics (2017, p.4).

Drawing on previous definitions, this study categorises political discourse into three types, following Van Dijk’s (1997) argument that political discourse could be described by “the nature of the activities or practices it performs” rather than solely by who participates in it (p.13). First, political discourse conveys politicians’ statements about political matters based on their political objectives, tendencies, values, and motivations. In this sense, the speakers, occasions, and the content of the discourse are all political. This category of political discourse includes all forms of communication started by politicians, such as official speeches, parliamentary debates, and political interviews. Second, media coverage is an important part of political discourse. Political news reports, editorials, and commentary communicated through print, broadcast, and digital platforms act as a “crucial link” (Chilton & Schäffner, 2002, p.18) in shaping public understanding and engagement with the political process. Third, discourse about political matters and activities by non-

political actors, such as that of the general public on the social media, forums, and other public platforms, can also be considered a form of political discourse, as its content and context remain inherently political. As Chilton and Schäffner (2002) suggested, it is helpful to distinguish between institutional politics, expressed through macro-level institutional discourse genres such as parliamentary debates, and everyday politics, represented through informal communicative practices (p.6). By examining the Brexit discourse of the two Prime Ministers during their respective tenures, this study focuses on metaphors used within the first type of political discourse.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a framework to analyse political discourse. As one of the most prominent and widely recognised domains of discourse analysis (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, p.447), CDA gives priority to relevant topics within political discourse (p.450). CDA offers a critical paradigm of language studies, with specific emphasis on discourse and its relations to other social factors, such as “power relations, ideologies, institutions, and social identities” (Fairclough, 2013, p.9). The critique dimension comes from revealing how social structures influence “discourse patterns, relations, and models” and problematising these relations (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, p.449). Wodak (2014) described CDA as “a problem-orientated interdisciplinary research programme” that encompasses various approaches carrying different “theoretical models, research methods, and agendas,” yet all sharing a common focus on “semiotic dimensions of power, injustice, and political-economic, social, or cultural change in society” (p.302).

Aligning with Wodak’s definition (2014), CDA adopts a “trans-disciplinary research methodology” (Fairclough, 2013, p.12), with varied approaches “loosely interconnected” (p.19) to address different research questions. Driven by the objectives of CDA, researchers have developed various theoretical and methodological frameworks to explore the power relations and ideological impacts expressed through language, such as Van Leeuwen’s (2008) research on legitimation strategies of discourse. Wodak (2014) noted that introducing cognitive science approaches is an important research agenda in CDA (p.307), with one example being the integration of conceptual metaphor-related theories into its analyses (p.308). Critical Metaphor Analysis, developed by Charteris-Black (2004), is an important approach that integrates conceptual metaphor with CDA, which will be discussed in the following section. Musolff (2012) argued that the “argumentative advantage” of metaphor in discourse, along with its social and emotional values that

affect how utterances are interpreted, makes it relevant in CDA (p.303). Meanwhile, Hart (2008) noted that Conceptual Metaphor Theory's tendency to focus only on the cognitive dimensions of metaphor is inconsistent with CDA's framework and may limit the analysis of metaphor within it (pp. 93–94). "Discursive-pragmatic factors" and "sociolinguistic variation" need to be considered to strengthen the empirical and social relevance of cognitive analyses (Musolff, 2012, p.301).

2.3.2 Metaphor and political discourse

2.3.2.1 Metaphor, evaluation, and ideology

Moon (1994) noted that figurative fixed expressions provide insight into the strategies used by speakers or writers to communicate (p.151). These expressions can serve various textual functions, such as informing, evaluating, modalising, and organising the texts by functioning as signals (1994, p.141). The evaluations and connotations they convey can also be linked to the "overall patterns in the text and its other lexical and grammatical choices" (1994, p.151). Moon (2011) further noted that corpus can be used to reveal "the regularity of evaluative orientations" (p.272) of idioms. For example, based on corpus evidence, she observed that the idiom *looking for a needle in a haystack* is often used to evaluate situations positively by highlighting the effort and determination involved, rather than always implying that the task is futile due to its difficulty (2011, p.272). Philip (2016) noted that Moon's work provides important evidence that metaphorical meaning is not merely figurative in semantics, but also carries pragmatic, evaluative, and/or epistemic weight (p.224). Deignan (2010, 2012), drawing on corpus evidence, demonstrated that idiomatic expressions not only encode evaluations in political discourse, but also in everyday language through mechanisms such as exploiting entailments and evaluative connotations, selecting source domains that resonate with audiences, and creating metaphorical scenarios (2012, p.444). She (2010) noted that figurative expressions conveying negative evaluations tend to be used more frequently than the positive ones, possibly because they allow speakers to express criticism and negative judgements indirectly, acting as an "off-record" and "face-saving" strategy (p.444). Fuoli et al. (2022) resonate with this observation, further noting a bias towards negative evaluations in both creative and conventional metaphors, with creative metaphors being particularly effective at conveying evaluation in a "vivid and compact" way (p.100). They also argued that conventional metaphors are more likely to express "inscribed" evaluation, where the evaluation meaning is explicitly encoded in the words or phrases themselves, while creative metaphors can convey both inscribed and "invoked" evaluation, the latter

being more implicit and relying on the reader to interpret the multiple meanings and implications of the metaphor (p.100).

Fairclough (1989) noted that a word or expression's "metaphorical transfer" is a way for language to carry ideological meaning in texts (p.114). For instance, representing social problems metaphorically as diseases frames the "dominant interests" as aligned with the society's well-being, while portraying "non-dominant interests" as harmful to societal health (p.120), thereby influencing how people understand and evaluate these issues. Charteris-Black (2004) argued that metaphors, when used strategically to convey speakers' evaluations, constitute part of the text's ideology (p.28). He further claimed that using metaphor is a "persuasive discourse act" (p.13), and this persuasive function underpins the "ideological and rhetorical basis" of metaphors (p.41). Mio's (2018) study provided experimental evidence that metaphors function as a persuasive device. For example, metaphors often need to "extend opponents' metaphors" to achieve persuasive effect in debates (2018, p.144). Thompson (2018) wrote that politics needs metaphor in the same way that fish need water to live (p.185). Politicians often use metaphors to express their attitudes or evaluative stances towards a matter in their speeches (Charteris-Black, 2004, 2011). For instance, the conceptual metaphor POLITICS IS CONFLICT is widely used to represent the ideological struggle against socialism during Margaret Thatcher's time as Prime Minister (Charteris-Black, 2011, p.176).

Lakoff and Johnson (2008) proposed that metaphor is an essential part of power discourse. They (2008) analysed the metaphors used in Jimmy Carter's speech about the 1979 American oil crisis and found that a series of metaphorical expressions presided by the conceptual metaphor "ENERGY CRISIS IS THE MORAL EQUIVALENT OF WAR" served to "highlight certain realities and hide others" (p.157). This rhetorical strategy empowers the authorities to "define reality" (2008, p.157), thereby formulating policies and related actions. Goatly (2007) analysed a range of common conceptual metaphors in daily language use that carry significant ideological implications, such as "IMPORTANCE/STATUS IS HIGH" (p.35), "ACTIVITY IS MOVEMENT FORWARD" (p.51), and "TIME IS COMMODITY" (p.68). For instance, in the metaphor IMPORTANCE/STATUS IS HIGH, upward height symbolises "power, success, achievement and importance" (p. 36), while losing these qualities is conceptualised as downward movement (p.38). As Papatsiba and Koller (2025) pointed out, metaphors possess intrinsically social and political features,

as they both represent individual cognitive processes and act as tools for shaping social meanings that carry ideological power (p.6).

2.3.2.2 The functions of metaphor in political discourse

As previously noted, politicians frequently rely on metaphors to persuade audiences. Charteris-Black (2004) noted that metaphor can evoke an “emotional response” from listeners in communication (p.28), making it particularly effective in persuasion. He (2011) further illustrated four functions of metaphor in political speeches through his discussion of three persuasive appeals proposed by Aristotle, which are “establishing the politicians’ ethos,” (p.318) “heightening the pathos,” (p.320) articulating political policies (p.321), and communicating ideologies by creating political myth (p.323). As Musolff (2016) noted, alongside shaping conceptual understanding, metaphors often carry “pragmatic added value” (p.14) in political speeches, including “affective,” “argumentative,” and “entertaining” appeal (Musolff, 2017, p.653). Metaphor can also help speakers convey connotations, strengthen specific viewpoints, and “elicit absurd images” to disparage political opponents (Wilson, 1990, p.104). For example, in an analysis of metaphors used in the manifestos of the Labour Party and the Conservative Party, Charteris-Black (2004) found that the Conservative Party frequently portrays the Labour Party as “an aggressor” and itself as “a defender” through conflict metaphors (p.70).

In addition to the persuasive function metaphors provide politicians, some studies have identified further advantages of their use in politics. Chilton and Ilyin (1993) claimed that metaphor helps speakers promote new policies through different ways, such as creating common ground between addressers and audiences, serving as “heuristic devices,” and bypassing sensitive political divergences (p.9). Charteris-Black’s (2006) study demonstrated that metaphors can be used to legitimise or delegitimise policies. He identified two main metaphors in right-wing political communication of immigration policy—natural disaster and container (2006, p.569)—and argued that they helped legitimise framing “immigration as excessive” (p.571) and, in turn, delegitimise the immigration policy (p.575). Empirical evidence from Mio et al. (2005) demonstrated that metaphor is a powerful tool for political leaders to galvanise voters and show their leadership and personal charisma (p.292), based on an analysis of 36 inaugural speeches from U.S. presidents. Iliev (2020) argued that the need for justification when politicians create a metaphor is minimal, as the similarities it indicates are often implied rather than explicitly stated (p.189).

2.3.2.3 Critical Metaphor Analysis

Combining the research perspectives of CDA, corpus analysis, pragmatics, and cognitive linguistics (Charteris-Black, 2004, p.xiii), Critical Metaphor Analysis seeks to explore the underlying intentions and ideologies conveyed through metaphorical language (p.34). In Charteris-Black's opinion, metaphor is a "prime example" for understanding how pragmatics, which reflects the linguistic choices speakers make depending on context, can influence semantics, understood as the linguistic system by which meaning is realised (2004, p.1). In line with the idea that metaphor is shaped by multiple factors, as discussed in Section 2.1, he (2004) also argued that both "individual resources," encompassing cognitive, affective, pragmatic, and linguistic aspects, and "social resources," including cultural, ideological, and historical dimensions, affect people's choice of metaphors in discourse, which he proposed as the "discourse model of metaphor" (p.248).

Charteris-Black (2011) applied Critical Metaphor Analysis to investigate seven politicians' political speeches, with emphasis on how persuasion is achieved by choosing and adopting specific metaphors in political oration, combined with other rhetorical strategies (p.49). He examined the types of metaphors represented, their frequencies, and the specific contexts in which they occur within each politician's selected speeches. In his analysis, journey and personification metaphors were used by all the politicians analysed, with the former appearing significantly more often among American politicians, whereas the latter occurred more frequently among British politicians (2011, p.313). These specific types of metaphors were argued to serve the persuasive functions in political communication, as illustrated in the previous section, such as building or repairing a politician's image (2011, p.319). Through analysing Bill Clinton's and Tony Blair's speeches, Charteris-Black (2011) found that both use metaphor to portray themselves as ordinary people, helping to shorten the psychological distance and establish a closer connection with their audiences (p.220). Bill Clinton used some sports metaphors to build a "laddish" image of himself (2011, p.219), while Tony Blair used some "colloquial phrases" to create "an informal register" (p.227).

2.3.3 Metaphor in institutional and media political discourse

As discussed in Section 2.3.1, this study classifies political discourse into three types: institutionalised discourse on politics, media discourse on politics, and individual

discourse on politics. Given that the first two types of political discourse, encompassing traditional genres such as political speeches, policy documents, parliamentary debates, political news, and interviews (Cap & Okulska, 2013, pp.7–8), have been the focus of research, this section reviews studies on metaphors within these discourses.

Within political discourse situated in institutional context, some studies focus on the metaphors used by specific political parties. Lakoff's (1996) notable study introduced two moral models associated with the two major political parties in the U.S. and inspired subsequent research. Lakoff (1996) argued that "political perspectives are derived from systems of moral concepts" (p.41). He emphasised that the moral values of the two main U.S. political parties differ, based on the hypothesis that the American political system is structured around two opposing models of "family values" (1996, p.33). The Republican Party follows the "Strict Father (SF) model," while the Democratic Party follows the "Nurturant Parent (NP) model" (1996, p.65–108). In the Strict Father model, the father bears primary responsibility for the family's well-being (Lakoff, 2004, p.7); politically, this model, represented by the Republican Party, stresses state authority and citizens' obedience (p.13). By contrast, the Nurturant Parent model holds that both parents share equal responsibility for raising children (p.17) and as represented by the Democratic Party, emphasises values such as "freedom," "prosperity," and "opportunity" (pp.18–19). Accordingly, the conceptual metaphor MORALITY AS STRENGTH lies at the core of Strict Father morality (Lakoff, 2016, p.71), while MORALITY AS EMPATHY/NURTURANCE is central to Nurturant Parent morality (pp.155–157).

Several empirical studies have evaluated Lakoff's theory about the moral model of the two political parties, with findings supporting some of his claims. Cienki (2003) investigated the Strict Father and Nurturant Parent models using a corpus from the 2000 presidential debates between George W. Bush and Albert Gore Jr. He found that Bush used more metaphorical expressions associated with the SF model, while Gore used more expressions associated with the NP model's (2003, p.244). Deason and Gonzales (2012) argued that Democratic and Republican politicians strategically employ Strict Father and Nurturant Parent themes to mobilise their base and influence undecided voters (p.263). For example, both Republican and Democratic politicians drew on NP morality but focused on different aspects: Democrats emphasised themes such as "helpfulness" and "providing services," while Republicans tended to discuss "nurturance" and supporting the goals and welfare of

their constituents (p.263). By analysing presidential television advertisements from 1980 to 2012, Moses and Gonzales (2015) further confirmed that Republican and Democratic language respectively reflected the moral orientations of the SF and NP models (p.390), with more significant differences in Nurturant Parent themes than in Strict Father themes (p.391).

In political media discourse, several studies have shown that metaphors are commonly employed in political news (Burnes, 2011; Franssila, 2013). Burnes (2011) compared metaphors in British and French news reports on the 2008 parliamentary election in Pakistan and the 2008 Obama campaign. She found that coverage of the Pakistan elections was framed almost exclusively through conflict metaphors, which conveyed negative evaluations of Musharraf, whereas U.S. reports used a wider range of metaphorical domains, such as religion, dreams, stories, and history, that produced more positive portrayals of Obama (2011, p.2173). Burnes further noted that the dominance of conflict metaphors in political reporting risks reinforcing the under-representation of women in politics, as conflict is commonly regarded as a masculine activity (p.2174). Franssila (2013) analysed sell metaphors in American news discourse in the 1990s and 2000s and found them appear more frequently in political coverage, particularly in relation to elections (p.423).

Moullagaliev and Khismatullina (2017) analysed British, American, and Russian news reports on immigration and found that metaphors related to water, the military, and illness were the most frequently used (pp.134–136). These metaphors shared themes of “anxiety, despair, threats to life situations,” carrying “negative conceptual potential” (p.137). Hu and Xu (2017) examined war metaphors in economic articles from *China Daily* and argued that these metaphors reinforced the distinctions between “us” and “enemies,” which emphasised the concept of competition (p.105). By analysing texts from German news and political journals on Angela Merkel, Tameryan et al. (2018) argued that her political image is constructed through “metaphorical expansions” into various professional domains (p.379). For instance, service metaphors portray her as unpretentious, while medical metaphors represent her leadership as comparable to that of an average professional (2018, p.380).

Chapter 3 Review of studies on Brexit discourse

Following the previous chapter on metaphor-related theories and approaches, this chapter reviews studies about use of metaphor in Brexit discourse, the central topic of this study. Zappettini and Krzyżanowski (2019) noted that Brexit has attracted attention from various academic disciplines due to its intricate nature and impact, particularly in research intersecting sociology, politics, and communication (p.381). Given this complexity, this chapter begins with an overview of studies exploring the driving forces behind Brexit that shaped the outcome of the 2016 referendum. The findings from these studies provide insight into the key ideologies that shaped Brexit, and these ideologies are expressed in the discourse examined in this study. It then reviews key discussions on Brexit within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, before examining research analysing Brexit discourse through the lens of metaphor. Based on this review, the chapter concludes by outlining the research questions of the present study.

3.1 Studies on the driving factors of Brexit

Clarke et al. (2017) conducted an individual-level analysis to investigate the factors that determined voter decisions in the referendum. They noted that the vote to leave was strongly influenced by the cost-benefit considerations of both the economic-impact and “immigration-terrorism” (2017, p.452), in addition to concerns over the perceived loss of economic autonomy and national identity (p.460). Vasilopoulou’s study (2016) supports the view that voting decisions were likely to be influenced by practical considerations about the costs and benefits of European integration, along with attitudes towards EU free movement (p.226). It is also evident in discursive strategies, with both Leave and Remain campaigns often relying on economic and political arguments to justify or challenge the legitimacy of Brexit (Zappettini, 2019a, p.143). Clarke et al. (2017) noted that the images of key leaders with different stances on Brexit, such as Nigel Farage, Boris Johnson, and David Cameron, had direct or indirect effects on voters (p.460).

It is widely recognised that immigration and free movement were key factors in Britain’s decision to exit the EU (Dennison & Geddes, 2018, p.1139). Sovereignty and anti-immigration are the key political demands associated with Brexit (Freedon, 2017, p.8). Goodwin and Milazzo (2017) conducted an aggregate-level analysis to investigate the role of immigration in the Brexit referendum. Their evidence supports

that immigration and the ethnic changes within communities resulted from it are central to understand the outcome of the referendum (2017, p.462). The unexpectedly high levels of EU citizen migration to the UK triggered the latent and comparatively strong Euroscepticism in Britain and ultimately led David Cameron to commit to holding the referendum (Dennison & Geddes, 2018, p.1139). The strong concern about immigration was interwoven with the general desire to “take back control” (Goodwin & Milazzo, 2017, p.452), which, as the main slogan of the Leave campaign, successfully expressed sentiments of neglect, abandonment, and loss (Clarke & Newman, 2017, p.108).

The split between Leave and Remain supporters reflected deeper divisions in terms of class, education, geography, and generation (Hobolt, 2016; Goodwin & Heath, 2016; Vasilopoulou, 2016; Clarke & Newman, 2017). Well-educated young people who benefited from globalisation and people living in urban areas were more supportive of “open borders” and international collaboration, and often voted to remain in the EU (Hobolt, 2016, p.1265). In contrast, less-educated working-class people, older people, and those who feel marginalised by “the forces of globalization” (Hobolt, 2016, p.1272) were more likely to support leaving the EU. Similarly, people who felt “left behind” by economic and cultural transformations, marginalised from the “mainstream consensus” (Goodwin & Heath, 2016, p.331), and betrayed by the “metropolitan–cosmopolitan liberal elite” (Clarke & Newman, 2017, p.107) were more inclined to back Brexit. Vasilopoulou (2016) also argued that support for restrictions on EU free movement is more common among older people, those who opposed to ethnic diversity and multiculturalism, and people with right-leaning political views (p.225).

Various studies noted that Euroscepticism has consistently been a contentious ideological issue in UK politics and has persisted throughout Britain’s interactions with the EU (Đurović & Silaški, 2018; Islentyeva, 2019; Bennett, 2019; Mik & Angouri, 2021). Islentyeva (2019) argued that Britain has historically been only partially convinced by the concept of the single EU market and currency, a stance notably evident during Margaret Thatcher’s leadership (pp.210-211). Both the Conservative Party and Labour Party have faced internal dissent from Eurosceptic MPs (Bennett, 2019, p.451). The UK-EU relationship has been primarily framed as an economic arrangement rather than a broader political alliance (Mik & Angouri, 2021, p.70). The cultural concerns also fuelled Euroscepticism, manifested in the “traditional resentment” (Đurović & Silaški, 2018, p.26) over decisions made by the EU,

particularly in response to what was termed the European migrant crisis since 2015. Schnapper (2022) claimed that Britain's Euroscepticism and English nationalism led to its "weak socialisation" into European institutions, despite over four decades of membership (p.11).

Euroscepticism has also been strongly represented in the British media. Daddow (2012) argued that the UK press, particularly British tabloids, have undergone a pervasive change from a stance of "permissive consensus" to one of "destructive dissent" on European issues since the first referendum in 1975 (p.1219). Zappettini (2021a) noted that most British broadsheets have shifted from a Europositive to a mildly Eurosceptic perspective on the UK-EU relationship, whereas most tabloids have generally endorsed "hard Eurosceptic to Europhobic" stances (p.282). Studies such as Berry (2016) and Zappettini (2021a, p.298) argued that the British press, particularly tabloids with their longstanding anti-EU and populist narratives, significantly primed the public to adopt views, normalising Brexit well before the referendum campaign began. Meanwhile, although hard Eurosceptics or Brexiters in the Conservative Party were a small minority, they were "well-organised" (Dorey, 2023, p.234) and outspoken, which enabled them to gain significant media attention and influence.

Studies by Hobolt (2016), Virdee and McGeever (2018), and Browning (2023) have all mentioned the role of nationalist populism and anti-establishment sentiments in shaping the Brexit crisis. For example, Virdee and McGeever (2018) noted that Leave campaign leaders, such as Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage, either harnessed people's yearning of imperial nostalgia (p.1805) and envisioned a Global Britain, or adopted a more "insular and Powellite" narrative of British nationalism, emphasising "Britain for the British" (p.1806). Both narratives, as Browning (2023) claimed, resonated with the public's desire for "ontological security," which relied on common emotions of reclaimed "control," "sovereignty," and "nationhood" (p.27). Nevertheless, research such as Saunders (2020), while acknowledging that imperial nostalgia existed within the Leave coalition, cautioned against elevating it into a totalising explanation for the Leave vote. One reason is that the concept itself is "polemical," as it pathologises the Leave vote by framing it as an irrational psychological state through the metaphorical term *nostalgia* (p.1141). Moreover, this interpretation is largely promoted by Remain supporters and often aligns with their political preferences (pp.1141-1142).

Based on the findings of these previous studies, Brexit can be understood as the result of the convergence of entrenched Euroscepticism, escalating concerns about immigration, sociodemographic disparities within the UK, and the widespread dissemination of populist narratives worldwide. As Zappettini and Krzyżanowski (2019) summarised, Brexit is a “critical juncture” shaped by historical, political, and media influences (p.387).

3.2 Critical discourse analysis of Brexit discourse

Zappettini and Krzyżanowski (2019) identified three discursive trajectories around Brexit, each gathering a series of intersecting ideologies: discourse driven by ideologies, discourse constructing legitimacy for Brexit, and discourse framing Brexit as a crisis (pp.385-386). This section reviews CDA-led studies that investigate how key ideological issues are reflected in Brexit discourse, how authorities construct realities around Brexit through various legitimisation strategies, and how the EU frames Brexit with the concept of crisis as a central perspective.

3.2.1 Identity concerns and populism manifested in Brexit discourse

Brexit has drawn extensive debates on its underpinning ideological matters. In CDA-led studies on Brexit, ideologies related to identity and populism have been widely examined. Through a corpus analysis of Conservative MPs’ parliamentary debates from both the Leave and Remain sides, Wenzl (2020) observed that the opposing sides surprisingly drew on similar notions of national identity to shape their respective national brands (p.86). The uniqueness of British identity, characterised by the nation’s “privileged position, and its exceptional status” (Brusenbauch Meislová, 2021, p.179) and its “inherently Eurosceptic” character (Wenzl, 2020, p.82), emerges as a consistent emphasis in the discourse of both Leave and Remain politicians (p.85). However, as Wenzl (2021) argued, compared with Conservative MPs on the Remain side, only those on the Leave side managed to construct a “vision of Britishness” (p.99) to support their arguments, achieved by emphasising British exceptionalism and invoking the nation’s past glory (p.116). Wenzl (2019) argued that Remain-supporting Conservatives, due to their underlying Euroscepticism, neither have rejected the narrative that Britain is exceptional, nor rebranded Britain as globally engaged and strongly pro-European in parliamentary debates (p.44).

Several studies analysing the discourse of the UK's newspapers argued that scepticism towards the EU establishment is expressed not only by the Leave side but also by the Remain side (Alkhamash, 2020; Glass, 2022). Glaas (2022) analysed the Brexit referendum campaign coverage by the pro-EU newspaper *The Guardian* and found that its pro-Remain stance was weakened by its focus on three interrelated themes: "conflict" among the EU member states, "disparity," referring to the unequal experiences of citizens across member states, and "risk," posed by issues related to EU integration and the Eurozone for the UK (pp. 233–234). The notion of British identity in contrast to a European "other" is reinforced in both Leave and Remain campaigns, through a "nation-centric" position (Zappettini, 2019b, p.417) and an emphasis on British exceptionalism (Maccaferri, 2019, p.398). For example, David Cameron, as leader of the Remain campaign, demonstrated recurring discursive patterns in his speeches to highlight the distinction between the "national own and the European other" (Mölder, 2018, p.163), reflecting an "exclusive view of Europe" (p.168). From the perspective of the Leave side, Zappettini (2019b) argued that the prevalent narrative of "taking back control" among Brexit supporters represents a divisive "(inter)national logic" that excludes outsiders (p.417).

Media played an important role in "(re)producing and framing" discourse related to Brexit (Zappettini & Krzyżanowski, 2019, p.386). Through an analysis of the Brexit corpus in Sketch Engine, Alkhamash (2020) argued that Brexit media discourses may have been shaped by the rise of populism in British media (p.88). Whether it is the slogan "*the will of the people*," used by Brexit supporters to exclude those who supported remaining from "the will," or the pro-Brexit media's labelling of judges as "Enemies of the People" through a "populist dichotomy" (Freedon, 2017, p.7), both instances manifest populist narratives. Through the analysis of British tabloid press coverage of Brexit, Zappettini (2021a, b) found that newspapers, such *The Daily Mail*, *The Sun*, and *The Daily Express*, employed emotion mobilisation rooted in "fear, resentment, and empowerment," (2021a, p.298) and "moral reasoning of a 'heroic emancipation from bullying'" (2021b, p.656). These strategies frame the antagonism between groups of people (e.g., the British people versus immigrants; or versus the establishment) and reinforce the dichotomy narrative of us versus them (2021a, p.298). Similarly, Parnell's (2023) study highlighted how pro-Brexit newspapers constructed a populist narrative, portraying Britain as "humiliated and divided," fuelling tensions between politicians and the public and simplifying complex positions into a binary divide between "elites" and "ordinary people" by using the labels "Remainers" and "Brexiteers" (p.66).

The populist narratives found in the discourse of pro-Brexit politicians during the Brexit referendum campaign depict the EU as a failure or oppressor, while also expressing anti-establishment anger (Brusenbauch Meislová, 2021, p.176-178). In contrast, the discourse from the Remain side adopted “technocratic narratives” that portray the EU as a tool, emphasising the advantages of the single market and the economic consequences of leaving (2021, p.168). These narratives, Brusenbauch Meislová argued, exhibited less “narrative consistency” compared to the better managed populist narratives of the Leave campaign (2021, p.180). Both Hansson (2019) and May (2024) observed the populist narratives of division commonly found in pro-Brexit politicians’ rhetoric of blame. Like the tabloid representation of Brexit as emancipation, May (2024) argued that these divisive narratives can be summarised as a cultural tale contrasting virtuous British heroes with villainous Europeans (p.497). She (2021) also noted that blaming the EU played a significant part in demonising it and in fostering polarisation against both the institution and its supporters (p.354). Likewise, Hansson (2019) found that the politicians leading the Brexit campaigns relied on metaphors to frame themselves as heroes and others as villains to avoid blame (p.194). Tolson (2019) argued that frequently used phrases in the post-referendum Brexit discourse, such as “*Brexit means Brexit*” (used by Theresa May) and “*the will of the people*,” which originally emerged as populist, peripheral, and non-elite discourse forms, were later accepted by the official discourse and became widely circulated in public discussion during the Brexit negotiation phase (p.430). These expressions helped to legitimise the Leave campaign and populist narratives (Zappettini & Krzyżanowski, 2019, p.386).

3.2.2 Discursive strategies of legitimation in Brexit discourse

Van Dijk (1998) noted that legitimation is a significant dimension of the “expression and (re)production” of underlying ideologies, both in social interaction and in discourse (p.191). As a key social function of ideologies (Van Dijk, 1998, p.255), legitimation is typically conveyed through political discourse (p.256). He (1998) described several key characteristics of legitimation: firstly, it is “interactive,” as a response to anticipated opposition or critique (p.255); secondly, it typically is an “ongoing discursive practice” encompassing interconnected narratives or arguments (p.255); thirdly, it normally occurs in institutional settings and serves to justify official decisions or actions (pp.255-256); fourthly, it assumes “institutional restrictions of social power,” the discourse of which, either implicitly or explicitly, affirms a particular

action or policy as legitimate within the existing legal, political, or moral framework (p.256). Research grounded in CDA has highlighted the important role of discursive practices and strategies in the process of legitimation (Vaara, 2014, p.503). For example, Van Leeuwen (2008) identified four legitimation strategies: “authorization,” “moral evaluation,” “rationalization,” and “mythopoesis,” which may appear independently or in combination: 1) authorisation refers to legitimation achieved through appeals to authority (e.g., law or tradition); 2) moral evaluation involves legitimation based on value systems, often expressed indirectly; 3) rationalisation refers to legitimation through reference to the purposes and functions of social practices; and 4) mythopoesis involves legitimation through narratives that depict legitimate actions as rewarded and illegitimate actions as punished (p. 113). These strategies can not only be used to legitimise ideas or actions but also to delegitimise them (2008, p.113). As discussed, Brexit is seen as a critical juncture, and legitimation discourse becomes essential during such times of crisis (Van Dijk, 1998, p.257).

Studies on the legitimation discourse of Brexit investigate the strategies employed by political actors, such as institutions and politicians, to justify Brexit and influence public opinion. Zappettini (2019b) investigated how the issues related to Brexit are (de)legitimised in two important “semi-institutional actors” (p.403): the VL (Vote Leave) and BSE (Britain Stronger in Europe) websites. The analysis found that BSE primarily focused on the negative effects Brexit would bring on economy, whereas VL’s strategies were primarily aimed at delegitimising the EU as restricting the UK’s trading potential and interfering with its sovereignty (p.416). This aligns with Hobolt’s (2016) observation that the campaign of each side distinctly emphasised its opposing principal focus: the economy versus immigration, with each side’s rhetoric being predominantly negative (p.1262). As immigration became an increasingly central topic in VL’s discourse, its discursive strategies effectively contributed to creating a “moral panic” (Zappettini, 2019b, p.416) around mass migration.

Based on the analysis of two public documents issued by the Department for Exiting the European Union (DExEU), Zappettini (2019a) found a discursive framework that presents Brexit as simultaneously “rupturing and continuing international narratives,” underlying how global free trade serve as mechanisms to legitimise post-Brexit Britain (p.145). For example, when constructing the argument of “further trade liberalisation,” (p.146) Brexit is framed to position the UK as a “global Britain” and promote economic liberalisation (p.147). Hansson and Page (2023) analysed the

legitimation strategies across all tweets and retweets published by the DExEU account, and identified six appeals used to legitimate Brexit: “the personal authority of individual policymakers,” (p.367) “the collective authority of institutions,” (p.368) “the authority of rules or documents,” (p.369) “the goals or effects of government policy,” (p.369) the mandate of people’s will (p.370), and the urgency due to time limits (p.371).

Among studies examining the legitimation strategies used by politicians during Brexit, Angouri et al. (2018) analysed David Cameron’s tweets about the StrongerIn campaign and identified strategies like emotional appeals, the use of first-person pronouns (e.g., *our...*), references to authority, and a future-oriented perspective to reinforce his pro-Remain stance. Hansson and Kröger (2021) analysed the post-referendum debates of leading British politicians and argued that they engaged in deceptive communication about Brexit. By claiming that their policies had “overwhelming popular support,” distorting power relations between the UK and the EU, and oversimplifying the complexities of the negotiations (p.622), the politicians legitimised their Brexit policies and misled the public. Zappettini (2022) analysed how Labour MPs with differing ideological views (de)legitimised Brexit and argued that Jeremy Corbyn adopted a strategy of “ambivalent de/legitimation,” carefully balancing polarised perspectives on Brexit and the EU by downplaying explicit ideological evaluations and framing both sides of the debate in a hyperbolic manner (p.337).

Hansson (2019) noted that, when faced with the blame arising from Brexit, government officials employed argumentation to imply that its outcome occurred “unintentionally,” thereby denying their own agency for negative consequences. Similarly, Herrero (2020) analysed Theresa May’s use of the pronouns *I* and *we* in agentive positions across three Brexit-related speeches. The use of *we* was far more frequent than *I*, which could be a strategy to align her actions with those of all UK citizens, further downplaying her individual responsibility (2020, p.118). Brusenbauch Meislová (2019) further analysed Theresa May’s discursive strategies on Brexit, including deliberate silence on its negative consequences, minimising the challenges of the withdrawal process (p.683), employing strategic ambiguity on certain issues, hyperbolising the UK’s unity (p.684), and framing the EU as a “different out-group” (p.685). She further argued that Theresa May’s Brexit discourse was strategic and situational, rather than coherent, reflecting the complex and multifaceted nature of the Brexit process she faced (p.687). For example, her repeated use of the phrase

“Brexit means Brexit” has been discussed in various studies (Adler-Nissen et al., 2017; Jeffries & McIntyre, 2018; Parnell, 2024) to illustrate how the multiple, often contradictory representations of Brexit reflect its role as an “empty signifier” (Parnell, 2024, p.179) or a malleable concept (Adler-Nissen et al., 2017, p.573) with undefined referent and entailment (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2018, p.114). This discursive ambiguity allows for it to be interpreted and adapted to align with different political agendas or contexts.

3.2.3 Discursive representations of Brexit as a crisis

Brexit, which represents one of the most significant crises imposed on UK–EU relations, alongside other internal crises such as the Euro crisis, has created serious challenges to European integration (Rosamond, 2016, p.865). Meanwhile, it reflects a series of deep domestic crises within the UK, such as long-standing divisions within the political establishment over Europe, a “representational crisis” within the party system, and an increasing loss of authority and legitimacy among political elites (Jessop, 2017, p.134). Zappettini and Krzyżanowski (2019) argued that the concept of crisis provides a compelling lens through which Brexit discourse can be examined both within and beyond the UK (p.386). The analysis of how Brexit is represented as a crisis is important not only for exploring the Brexit discourse and ideological conflicts within the UK, but also for investigating the discourse from the EU perspective (2019, p.386).

In the UK’s domestic Brexit discourse, Bennett (2019) analysed the televised EU referendum debate held two days before the referendum, with three MPs representing the Leave side and three MPs representing the Remain side. The study found that both sides used “crisis frames” (2019, p.460) to construct arguments, which held clear persuasive power in motivating people to vote: for the Leave side, the crisis was already happening and needed to be resolved by voting to leave, whereas for the Remain side, a crisis would emerge if the UK chose to leave the EU (p.450). The Leave side also portrayed EU membership as a crisis by intertextually referring to other crises, such as immigration, in a manner similar to UKIP’s populist and exclusionary discourse (2019, p.461).

In the EU’s discourse on Brexit, Krzyżanowski (2019) investigated how Brexit was constructed as the concept of a crisis in the newspapers of four European countries: Austria, Poland, Germany, and Sweden. Six topics associated with Brexit were

identified in the newspaper discourse, such as “a UK socio-political and economic crisis,” “a constitutional and democratic crisis,” and “a European political and identity crisis” (2019, p.473). These topics constituted a specific semantic domain for Brexit that shaped the “imaginary” of Brexit as crisis (2019, p.487). Brusenbauch Meislová and Szent-Iványi (2023) examined how Brexit, constructed as a “distant crisis” (p.55) in the official discourse of the Czech Republic and Hungary, which serves as a tool for both governments to justify their domestic and EU policies (p.63). Their analysis found that, within the crisis frame, Brexit was used to portray both governments as “capable actors” (2023, p.59), to place blame onto the EU, often accompanied by moral judgements (p.61), and to strongly advocate for EU reforms (p.62).

3.3 Studies of metaphors in Brexit discourse

As discussed in Section 2.3, metaphor is an important analytical dimension in Critical Discourse Analysis, as it deepens our understanding of how meaning is constructed within social contexts (Musolff, 2012, p.301). Studies on metaphors in Brexit discourse examine how different forms of metaphors (e.g., verbal and multimodal) are used to convey the attitudes, evaluations, and ideological stances of discourse participants. These studies draw on a range of related theoretical and analytical orientations discussed in the previous chapter. For example, some adopt Conceptual Metaphor Theory to analyse the underlying conceptual structures in metaphorical expressions, while others focus on identifying metaphor scenarios that carry argumentative and evaluative meanings in discourse. Moreover, reflecting different research questions, some studies examine specific metaphorical conceptualisations or scenarios, while others identify various metaphorical expressions. This section also discusses the metaphors used by Theresa May and Boris Johnson during their tenures, highlighting how political leaders employ metaphor to describe Brexit.

3.3.1 Analysis of a specific metaphor in Brexit discourse

Musolff (2017) conducted a diachronic analysis of a widely used metaphor scenario in British press discourse from 1991 to 2016 – “*Britain at the heart of Europe*” (p.641). This metaphor experienced a “semantic and pragmatic deterioration,” as its implications were increasingly questioned and dismissed over time, moving away from its original positive meaning as an “optimistic promise” (2017, p.649). The conceptualisation of the EU as a BODY or a PERSON fits the rhetoric of Eurosceptics that characterises Europe’s metaphorical body as sick, hardened, rotten, or

dysfunctional (2017, p.650). The diachronic development of this metaphor illustrates variations in the use of metaphors, ranging from “background usage” to the creation of an “intertextually productive scenario” that carries “strong evaluative biases” and “narrative structure” (Musolff, 2016, p.52).

Musolff (2019) also analysed the frequently used proverb *you cannot have your cake and eat it* in Brexit discourse, which implies that Brexit is a “contradictory” (p.208) expectation: retaining the advantages of EU membership without accepting its responsibilities. He argued that this proverb undergoes a “pragmatic drift,” transforming into a marker of political positions and an intertextual reference showcasing rhetorical skills (e.g., irony, criticism) that help foster common ground with audiences (2019, p.218). A typical example is Boris Johnson’s adaptation of the proverb into *have our cake and eat it*, which he used to assert that his government’s policy aimed to retain the benefits of EU membership even after the UK’s departure from the EU (Milizia, 2023, p.802). As Godioli and Pedrazzini (2019) noted, political crises such as Brexit can spark “self-reflection and renewal” in figurative language, leading to the re-functionalisation of old metaphors (p.321). Musolff (2021) further used this proverb to illustrate how metaphor, combined with hyperbole, can evoke, answer, and amplify different emotions (p.640). While this approach may serve the purpose of emotional engagement in the short run, the exaggerated promise would gradually lose its pragmatic impact and require more escalation on hyperbole (2021, p.639).

Based on metaphors such as *bind*, *escape*, *hamstring*, *free*, and *trap* identified in parliamentary debates in 2019, Koller (2020) noted that the conceptual metaphor “AFFILIATION WITH THE EU IS RESTRAINT” was used to discuss the UK–EU relationship (p.88). These RESTRAINT-related metaphors created a scenario with a negative evaluation. In this scenario, the UK’s freedom is restrained by the EU, while the opposite scenario often portrays the UK as a “self-confident actor” (2020, p.91). Similarly, Wenzl (2021) noted that metaphors related to entrapment (e.g., *locked into*, *bound*, *trapped*) and metaphors depicting the EU as a prison were frequently observed in the statements from Leave-supporting Conservative MPs and right-wing newspaper reports about the EU (p.111). By adopting Critical Metaphor Analysis, Islentyeva’s (2019) work also found a metaphorical mapping that frames the EU’s free movement as a “BURDEN, CAPTIVITY, and LOSS OF CONTROL” of the UK’s borders (p.227).

Charteris-Black (2019a) noted that numerous FOOD-related metaphors appeared throughout Brexit discourse, such as the proverb *have your cake and eat it, cherry picking*, and its extended variant “*European cherry tree*” (p.4), which portrays the EU as a fruitful, lovingly cultivated project. He (2019) claimed that these metaphors effectively activate the voters’ moral intuitions (p.63). Eaton (2020) discussed how the conceptual metaphor of the Commonwealth as a “family of nations” supported the political myth of “Global Britain” (p.326). The metaphor specifically contributed to the idea that Britain and its people belong to a broader global community, particularly among “like-minded” nations of Britain’s former colonial empire, rather than being anchored only to Europe (2020, p.342). It serves to inspire a reimagined global identity and direction for the UK, rooted in its imperial past (2019, p.332).

Silaški and Đurović (2019) examined multimodal metaphors related to the *JOURNEY* metaphor scenario in political cartoons about Brexit. They identified four related scenarios and metonyms in 48 political cartoons: *SHIP*, *DOUBLE-DECK BUS*, *AIRPLANE*, and *CROSSROADS* (2019, p.4). The *JOURNEY* scenario, with its related visual elements, was argued to be an effective instrument for simplifying complex concepts like Brexit, reducing processing time, communicating evaluative stance, and strengthening persuasive impacts (2019, pp.8-9). For example, scenarios involving transportation steering emphasise that the EU is heading in the wrong direction, thereby legitimising the decision to leave the EU (2019, p.9). Studies such as Greavu (2018) and Rodet (2020) also identified *JOURNEY*-related conceptual metaphors. Instances include verbal metaphors portraying Brexit as “*THE BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY*,” and the UK/EU as a “*SHIP/PLANE/LAND VEHICLE*” (Greavu, 2018, p.114), as well as visual metaphors depicting the EU as an *ABANDONED SHIP* (Rodet, 2020, p.14).

As Landmann and Ganz (2024) argued, the *MARRIAGE/DIVORCE* metaphor scenario has become deeply ingrained within the Brexit discourse community (p.150), with its wide presence in public discussions on Brexit being confirmed by numerous studies (Morozova, 2017; Berberović & Mujagić, 2017; Đurović & Silaški, 2018; Tincheva, 2019a, b). Đurović and Silaški (2018) argued that the scenario of married partners is a key metaphor scenario for representing and interpreting Britain’s relationship with the EU, as well as its ties to Germany and France as EU core nations (p.31). In their analysis of the metaphorical expressions in British news media texts that exemplified this scenario, the *MARRIAGE* metaphors were prevalent with negative evaluations, depicting the UK-EU relationship as a “troubled marriage”

based on political and economic interests rather than love (2018, p.33). The *DIVORCE* metaphors further reinforced this negative depiction by portraying Britain's parting from the EU as painful and likely to have serious consequences for both parties (2018, p.36). The metaphorical cases that portray Britain and the EU as wife and husband reflect the distinctly "gendered character" of family-related scenarios in Brexit discourse, which Đurović and Silaški argued also contributes to perceptions of the UK's "outsider-role" (2018, p.37).

Berberović and Mujagić (2017) analysed the creative figurative expressions derived from this metaphor in British media discourse, such as "*marriage counsellor*" and "*loveless marriage of convenience*" (p.11). They applied blending theory to explain how the conventional mapping of MARRIAGE/DIVORCE can be expanded to produce more creative expressions by "recruiting marginal facets of the source concept" that are rarely used metaphorically (2017, p.20). The recurring use and creative expansion of the MARRIAGE/DIVORCE metaphor, at the intertextual level, establish a "microtradition" to discuss Brexit, where different texts are "intertextually connected" by reusing, modifying, alluding to, or contesting by discourse participants (2017, p.14). At the intratextual level, the repeated and combined use of creative and conventional MARRIAGE/DIVORCE metaphorical expressions exerts a "text-organizing force," contributing to coherence across stretches of text and entire texts (2017, p.16).

3.3.2 Various metaphorical representations related to Brexit

Brexit provides an exceptionally complicated target domain, allowing for a diverse range of metaphorical expressions to be used in discourse (Dancygier, 2021, p.676). Among the metaphorical representations of Brexit itself, various studies (Morozova, 2017; Greavu, 2018; Sun & Xiong, 2022) identified metaphors related to SPORTS, WAR, or CONTAINER that conceptualise Brexit as a "CONFRONTATION" (Greavu, 2018, p.118), which strengthen the notion of competition and conflict between the UK and the EU. Based on newspaper data collected from COCA, Bilyk and Pyliachyk (2018) identified conceptual metaphors such as "BREXIT IS A DISEASE" (p.122) and "BREXIT IS A NATURAL PHENOMENON" (p.124). Tincheva (2019a) identified 14 conceptual mappings in online media discourse during the three days following the referendum, with Brexit most significantly framed as a DIVORCE, NATURAL DISASTER, or PART OF A JOURNEY (pp.272-273). Landmann and Ganz (2024) analysed the metaphors used in the pro-Remain newspaper *Financial Times* about

Brexit, which were mostly negatively framed (p.149), including those related to MARRIAGE/DIVORCE, CLIFF EDGE, and depictions of Brexit as a “SHIP IN A STORM” (p. 151). Parnell (2024) found that Brexit was conceptualised as “a panacea for British political ills” and a “national crisis” in pro-Brexit newspapers; similarly, it was framed as both an “onward movement” and “a return to the past” in the government documents (p.179).

Among the multimodal representations of Brexit, Morozova (2017) identified a wide variety of metaphors in Brexit-related memes, such as comparisons of Brexit to a fragile chocolate orange or a strawberry pudding (p.269). Negro Alousque (2020) identified two metaphor scenarios in the Brexit political cartoons: *FAMILY* and *JOURNEY*, activated by metaphors from six conceptual domains, such as BODY, HEALTH/ILLNESS, BUILDING, and MOVEMENT (p.6). These two scenarios share certain elements, such as the participants involved and the results, but they carry different evaluative functions (2020, p.9). The *FAMILY* scenario emphasises Brexit’s negative consequences, while the *JOURNEY* scenario conveys either positive evaluations, highlighting benefits of withdrawing from the EU (e.g., a sea voyage with the EU ship approaching an iceberg), or negative ones, depicting the journey as dangerous and aimless (2020, p.8).

The metaphorical portrayals of the UK or the EU as a PERSON were also identified in various studies (Bilyk & Pyliachyk, 2018; Islentyeva, 2019; Rodet, 2020). Among the metaphors regarding the UK or the EU, Morozova (2017) found two memes, captioned “The EU now has 1 GB of free space,” used a pun to portray the EU as COMPUTER MEMORY with the UK as INFORMATION (2017, p.271). Islentyeva (2019), in her analysis of how the concept of Europe was metaphorically represented in the right-wing British press between 2016 and 2018, identified a series of conceptual mappings, such as EUROPE AS A COMMODITY/CONTAINER/FORTRESS/KINGDOM/ENTITY/UNION, and “DEATH OF EUROPE” (p.226). These metaphorical mappings contribute to a negative representation of Europe, supporting the construction of a political myth that depicts Europe as both dangerous and inferior to Britain (2019, p227).

Tincheva (2019b) compared online media discourse from the UK and EU following the referendum and found that metaphors were used more frequently in UK media texts, as evident in those related to JOURNEY, NATURAL DISASTER, and WAR, with the DIVORCE metaphors also referring to internal division. In contrast, EU

media texts more frequently employed the “MECHANICAL FAILURE” metaphor, characterised by “inanimate agency,” which corresponds with previous research indicating the lack of a shared vibrant European identity (p.866). Similarly, Godioli and Pedrazzini (2019), in their analysis of 119 political cartoons on the causes and consequences of Brexit, found that the EU was personified far less frequently than the UK and was more commonly portrayed as an “inanimate object or a building” (p.317). Metaphors describing the EU often highlight its “plural character” or “composite identity,” for instance, as “a vehicle with many passengers,” which makes it difficult to represent through a single “cohesive” metonymy or symbol (2019, p.318). Meanwhile, Remain-supporting cartoonists frequently depicted Brexit as an act of self-inflicted destruction, often illustrated through scenarios where the UK causes harm to itself, such as a “shipwreck” (2019, p.315). Compared to the severe and irreversible consequences for the UK, often represented through imagery of “death” and “destruction,” the EU was depicted as experiencing relatively mild effects, most commonly “dysfunction” (2019, p. 318).

Some studies have investigated metaphors used to describe specific topics in Brexit discourse. In their analysis of British newspapers and opinion pieces after the 2016 referendum, Koller and Ryan (2019) found that ontological metaphors are largely used to represent the division within and between the electorate and the UK political elites, including spatial distance metaphors indicating unequal power relations, vertical spatial metaphors signifying hierarchy (pp.147-150), and metaphors drawing from the source domains of “LANDMASS, BODY, FABRIC, and WAR/VIOLENCE” (p.151). The division was specified as the cause of conflict through WAR/VIOLENCE metaphors, which prompts a “conceptually rich and complex” military-related scenario (2019, p.154).

Ross and Bhatia (2021) examined how multimodal metaphors contained in its campaign posters were used by the right-wing Brexiteer party UKIP to engage the concept of “the people” and evoke “nativist sentiments” ingrained in populist politics (p.192). For instance, by implying a link between “British livelihoods and EU migrants,” the images of a “loaf” and a “light bulb” in the posters function as “metonymic visual symbols” representing a vote to leave the EU (2021, p.200), with the loaf referencing the slogan “*use your loaf*” and the light bulb suggesting that voting UKIP is a “*great idea*” (p.201). Aimed at resonating with the average British citizen, these multimodal metaphors convey that every vote is crucial in safeguarding “the sanctity of the British way of life” (2021, p. 205), which is framed as being threatened by an invasive EU.

Papatsiba and Koller (2025) approached the evaluative function of metaphors in discourse about higher education by investigating the metaphors used by leaders and stakeholders from 12 British universities to interpret Brexit and its potential effects for the university sector. They (2025) analysed the metaphor scenarios built around 5 metaphorical words, including *access*, *network*, *stream*, *link*, and *barrier* (p.8). These metaphor scenarios convey a mix of loss and hope in their evaluations (2025, p.19), with the loss coming from narratives about “losing access to networks,” and the hope arising from the concept of “relational agency,” marked by flexible and spontaneous collaboration in higher education (p.20).

3.3.3 Rhetoric and metaphor use by the two Prime Ministers in Brexit discourse

As noted by various studies (Charteris-Black, 2019b; Musolff, 2021; Abramicheva, 2022; Čatipović, 2023), Boris Johnson’s political rhetoric on Brexit is considered to embody a populist style. Through analysing the metaphors used by Boris Johnson (before he became Prime Minister) in his newspaper articles and political speeches, Charteris-Black (2019b) argued that the frequent use of metaphorical concepts related to constraint and liberation reinforced traditional frameworks such as “war and invasion,” resulting in an “allegory of unjust entrapment” (p.191). He further argued that Boris Johnson’s use of metaphors seems to rely more on moral intuitions than on elaborate arguments, which echoes the rhetoric style of populism (2019, p.180). Musolff (2021) identified several metaphorical expressions in Boris Johnson’s discourse that construct a *WAR* scenario, framing Brexit as a national battle against enslavement and a moral struggle between good and evil (p.637). He argued that these metaphors, highlighting “contrasting evaluations,” reflected Boris Johnson and his supporters’ intention to intensify and rally the emotions of their followers (2021, p.639). Similarly, Leggett (2020) identified a range of military metaphors used in a parliamentary debate on Brexit between Boris Johnson and Opposition MPs, such as *the Dunkirk spirit* (p.49), *collusion* (p.51), *traitor/betrayal* (p.52), and *strategy* (p.55). He speculated that these metaphors were part of an electoral strategy to emphasise the negative aspects of Remainers’ arguments and actions through using vocabularies that are historically and emotionally charged (2020, p.63).

Abramicheva (2022) argued that the key feature of Boris Johnson’s discursive style is “evasiveness,” which manifests through “sophistry, circumlocution, and populism”

(p.9). Čatipović (2023) also noted populist elements, such as hyperbole, in his analysis of Boris Johnson's political statements about Brexit, which were also manifested linguistically through repetition, epithets, slogans, metaphors, comparisons, rhetorical questions, and use of the future tense (p.102). Exemplified by his adaptation of the proverb "*have your cake and eat it,*" as discussed in Section 3.3.1, Boris Johnson's use of metaphors illustrates his creativity and versatility in rhetoric. Berberović and Mujagić (2017) discussed another example of his creative use of metaphor, where he compared Britain's relationship with the EU to an arranged marriage (p.19). This was depicted through an allegorical story in which Britain, portrayed as the wife, seeks to leave her increasingly controlling and demanding husband, representing the EU (2017, p.19). Eriksson (2022) identified two conceptual metaphors used by Boris Johnson to address the UK-EU relationship: "AUTONOMY IS FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT" and "THE EU IS A MACHINE" (p.16), the latter of which implies that the EU is a cold, impersonal entity, incapable of fostering a sense of belonging (p.27).

In Theresa May's Brexit speeches, Stefanowitsch (2019) also identified certain populist language patterns through keyword analysis and distinctive collocate analysis of terms such as *people*, *N of the people*, *past*, and *future*. For example, she framed leaving the EU as the "*will of the people*" (2019, p.260). However, Stefanowitsch argued that her image as a genuine populist was doubted, as some key populist narratives (e.g., evoking a nostalgia for past glory) rarely appeared in her speeches (2019, p.261-262). Instead, Theresa May typically framed Brexit as a product or service that she was merely delivering to the people (2019, p.261). Marlow-Stevens and Hayton (2021) argued that Theresa May's arguments on Brexit relied on appealing to ethos, which presents herself as ordinary, dutiful, and determined, while also conveying a sense of "sacrifice and weakness" (p.873). Her appeals to pathos focused on the "grievances of working-class voters," the positive vision of post-Brexit Britain, and negative depictions of Remainers (2021, p.877). Her appeals to logos highlights "pragmatism, withdrawal, change and the urgent present and heroism" (2021, p.880). Atkins and Gaffney (2020) argued that Theresa May managed to construct a "One Nation" (p.299) narrative before the general election and appealed to "the healer archetype" (p.301), positioning herself as a leader capable of mending the division within the nation. Atkins (2022) further noted recurring themes in her statements about Britishness, including references to key institutions such as the NHS and BBC (p.221), and the notion of being "stronger together" (p.222).

Zakiah and Wahyudi (2022) analysed the language Theresa May used in her tweets over the last six months of her time as Prime Minister. They argued that her language is neither overly feminine nor overly masculine (p.358), with her word choices reflecting a balance between topics typically associated with female politicians (e.g., gender, education) and those linked to male politicians (e.g., politics, sport). Meanwhile, some of her tweets employed WAR metaphors or were used to attack her opponents, which are actions stereotypically associated with male leaders (p.357). Denis and Yana (2019) argued that Theresa May tends to project her image of either a gender-neutral or male politician (p.48). According to them, her political discourse, appears to align more closely with what they classified as male-associated discourse, drawing on metaphors such as CONSTRUCTION, MONEY, and WAR, while seemingly avoiding domains they described as more typically female, such as HEALTH (p.43). Yang (2018) compared speeches by Theresa May and David Cameron and found that both Prime Ministers used similar conceptual metaphors, such as NATION IS A BUILDING (p.78). However, each Prime Minister realised the metaphor through a distinct scenario, conveying different evaluations: David Cameron aimed to position Britain as secure within the EU building, while Theresa May emphasised the need to reconstruct and strengthen its foundations to better protect Britain's interests (2018, p.82). Additionally, Theresa May used metaphors such as "NEGOTIATION IS A VOYAGE" (p.81) and "DIPLOMACY IS BUSINESS" (p.82) in her speech.

Some studies take a comparative perspective on the Brexit rhetoric and metaphor use of Theresa May and Boris Johnson. Analysing speeches by leading politicians in the Leave and Remain campaigns, Rodet (2020) observed that politicians use metaphors in ways that align with their endorsed stance on Brexit. He found that Theresa May repeatedly used metaphors likening the EU and the UK as friends to present herself as committed to maintaining collaboration between the two, whereas Boris Johnson frequently employed VIOLENCE-related metaphors, which reflect his oppositional position to the EU (2020, pp.15–16). Jamet and Rodet (2021) investigated how Brexit was constructed in the speeches of three Prime Ministers: David Cameron, Theresa May, and Boris Johnson. Based on lexical analyses, including frequency lists, keywords and their collocates, and an analysis of the semantic domains most frequently used by each Prime Minister using the UCREL Semantic Analysis System in WMatrix, they found that the significant differences among the speeches of the three Prime Ministers lie mainly at the lexical level rather

than the semantic level (2021, p.49). The semantic fields generated by WMatrix show that “Geographical Names, Location and Direction, and General Actions” (2021, p.46) are shared by the speeches of all three Prime Ministers, which conceptualise Brexit as a JOURNEY and a “dynamic process” (p.47).

Jamet and Rodet (2022) further noted that, of the metaphor BREXIT IS A JOURNEY used by the three Prime Ministers, Theresa May’s speeches contain slightly more related scenarios than those of the other two Prime Ministers (p.140). Most of the JOURNEY metaphors in all three leaders’ speeches are lexicalised, indicating that they are primarily conventionalised, such as ontological and orientational metaphors (2022, p.141). However, the evaluations conveyed by these JOURNEY metaphors vary across the three Prime Ministers’ speeches, aligning with their distinct stances on Brexit: David Cameron’s metaphors reflect a negative evaluation; Theresa May’s metaphors express a positive evaluation during her tenure but shift to neutral or negative after her resignation; and Boris Johnson’s metaphors strongly emphasise a positive evaluation, portraying Brexit not only as forward movement but as an opportunity (2022, p.142-146).

3.4 Overview of Brexit discourse studies and research questions

This section provides an overview of existing studies on Brexit discourse across three dimensions, identifies key research patterns and gaps in the literature, and, on this basis, formulates the research questions guiding the present study. Based on the literature reviewed in this chapter, a total of 69 relevant studies were identified. Each study was coded according to three dimensions: discourse genre, time period, and stance towards Brexit. The categories within each dimension were developed inductively during the review process, allowing most studies to be classified accordingly. The coding of the first two dimensions was based on the data collection and methodology sections of each study, which typically report the types of data analysed and their temporal scope. The final dimension was coded based on the main focus of each study, generally indicated in the title or abstract. For example, Zappettini’s (2021a) study, titled “*The tabloidization of the Brexit campaign: Power to the (British) people?*”, which examines Brexit campaign discourse, was classified as pro-Brexit. Some studies do not fit neatly into any single category or may span two or more sub-categories (see examples below). However, the aim of this summary is to capture the overall trends in previous research on Brexit discourse across the three dimensions and to identify potential research gaps. These cases therefore do

not affect the overall patterns observed. The three dimensions, along with the proportion of studies reviewed within each category and representative studies of each, are presented in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 Summary of studies on Brexit discourse categorised across three dimensions

Dimension 1: Discourse genre		
Sub-category	Proportion	Representative study
Media discourse	47.8% (33/69)	Koller & Ryan (2019), Krzyżanowski (2019)
Politician speech	50.7% (35/69)	Herrero (2020), Jamet & Rodet (2021)
institutional discourse	8.6% (6/69)	Hansson & Page (2023), Wenzl (2019)
Dimension 2: Time period		
Pre-referendum	24.6% (16/69)	Brusenbauch Meislová (2021), Bennett (2019)
After-Referendum	52.2% (36/69)	Tincheva (2019a), Cooper & Cooper (2020)
Pre- and After-referendum	18.8% (13/69)	Charteris-Black (2019a), Godioli & Pedrazzini (2019)
Dimension 3: Stance towards Brexit		
Pro-Brexit	36.2% (25/69)	Ross & Bhatia (2021), Zappettini (2021a)
Anti-Brexit	7.25% (5/69)	Zappettini (2022), Landmann & Ganz (2024)

As shown in the table, Dimension 1 covers a wide range of discourse genres analysed in the existing literature, including media discourse from both the UK and EU sides (e.g., newspapers, social media texts, television debates), politicians' speeches, and official and semi-official institutional discourse (e.g., parliamentary debates, policy documents, official statements). Percentages exceed 100% because some studies analysed multiple discourse types, such as Wenzl (2021) and Greavu (2018), and are therefore counted in more than one category. 47.8% of these studies have investigated representations of Brexit in media discourse, with newspapers frequently used as data sources, particularly in studies adopting a CDA-oriented analytical framework. Given that legitimisation involves the discursive justification of government actions, research examining legitimisation in Brexit discourse typically examined politicians' communications and institutional discourse. Studies on institutional Brexit discourse, for example, official Twitter accounts (Hansson & Page, 2023) and parliamentary debates (Wenzl, 2019), mainly analysed discourse during the campaign period and the post-referendum phase under Theresa May's premiership. Only one study (Leggett, 2020) addressed parliamentary debates during Boris Johnson's time in office. Overall, 50.7% of studies include analysis of

politicians' Brexit discourse. Of these, 33.3% (12/35) focused specifically on Theresa May, 25.0% (9/35) on Boris Johnson, and 13.9% (5/36) conducted comparative analyses of different Prime Ministers, including comparisons between David Cameron, Theresa May, and Boris Johnson; between Cameron and May; and between May and Johnson.

Under Dimension 2, from a chronological perspective, 24.6% of these studies investigated discourse produced prior to the referendum, particularly during the Leave/Remain campaign, aiming to interpret how such discourse motivated Leave or Remain stance among the public and shaped the outcome of the vote. 52.2% examined discourse produced after the referendum, while 18.3% analysed discourse spanning both the pre- and post-referendum periods. Percentages do not add up to 100% because a few studies could not be assigned to any of the three categories due to insufficient information regarding their temporal coverage; for example, Bilyk and Pyliachyk (2018) drew on data from the COCA corpus, for which the relevant timeline was not specified. Among studies examining post-referendum Brexit discourse, 69.4% (25/36) analysed discourse during Theresa May's premiership, whereas only 16.7% (6/36) examined discourse from Boris Johnson's time in office.

Under Dimension 3, in terms of stance, 36.2% of studies focused exclusively on Leave-side discourse, whereas only 7.25% examined pro-Remain discourse. The greater research attention to Leave-side discourse is unsurprising, given that the UK's withdrawal from the EU shifted from a political possibility to an enacted reality. Beyond these three dimensions, methodologically, a total of 11 studies (15.9%) employed corpus-based approaches to support discourse analysis. From these perspectives, it is evident that Brexit-related discourse produced during Boris Johnson's premiership, particularly within institutional contexts, remains relatively underexplored compared to that of Theresa May. Following the 2016 referendum, Brexit discourse has continued to develop throughout the negotiation and transition phases, officially concluding on December 31, 2020, yet persisting beyond due to its huge impact. Therefore, institutional discourse under both Theresa May and Boris Johnson, encompassing the complex negotiation phases and the official completion of Brexit, warrants further investigation and analysis.

Previous studies on metaphors in Brexit discourse have shown that certain metaphors are widely used in discussions of Brexit-related topics, particularly those of MARRIAGE/DIVORCE, JOURNEY, WAR, VEHICLE, PERSONIFICATION and

NATURAL DISASTER. The analytical tool of metaphor scenario, adopted in multiple studies, has also proven useful for examining evaluative stances and ideologies encoded in such metaphors, for example in representations that portray the EU negatively. However, as the overview in Table 3.1 and the summary above demonstrate, existing research is unevenly distributed. In particular, there is a strong focus on discourse produced during Theresa May's premiership, while comparatively little attention has been paid to Boris Johnson's period in office. Although some studies, such as Jamet and Rodet (2022), have compared metaphor use by the two Prime Ministers and identified some shared metaphors (e.g., JOURNEY, WAR), such comparisons remain limited in scope and do not systematically examine how metaphor use develops across their respective tenures within comparable institutional contexts. This gap matters because Brexit discourse evolved across distinct political phases, from negotiation to implementation, during which leadership change may have influenced not only rhetorical strategies but also the evaluative and ideological framing of Brexit. Without a systematic comparison, it remains unclear whether shared metaphorical patterns are used in similar ways, whether they carry different evaluative meanings and functions across political leaderships, or how variations in their use relate to the evolving political phases of Brexit.

To address this gap, the present study systematically compares metaphor use in Brexit-related institutional discourse across the tenures of Theresa May and Boris Johnson, based on their social media posts, official speeches, and parliamentary debates, thereby responding to the relative lack of attention to metaphor use during Boris Johnson's premiership and the later stages of the Brexit process under his government. In addition, by including parliamentary debates, which involve contributions from MPs with differing stances on Brexit, the study extends existing research by examining how metaphor use reflects broader political contestation over Brexit and how it persists or shifts across leadership phases. It further contributes to the literature by not only identifying metaphorical patterns but also analysing how these patterns develop into systematic metaphors and metaphor scenarios, and how they convey evaluative and ideological meanings across changing political contexts. In doing so, it offers a more detailed account of the close relationship between metaphor, evaluation, and political discourse over time. To achieve these aims, the study addresses the following three research questions:

RQ1. What metaphors are used to describe topics related to Brexit in the political discourse of each Prime Minister and other MPs during each Prime Minister's tenure?

RQ2. What systematic metaphors and metaphor scenarios are constructed through metaphors related to Brexit in the political discourse during the tenures of the two Prime Ministers?

RQ3. What evaluative stances or ideologies related to Brexit appear to be conveyed through metaphors in the political discourse during the tenures of the two Prime Ministers?

Chapter 4 Methodology

The methodology chapter begins by introducing corpus linguistics, its key tools, and its application to discourse and metaphor analysis. It then explains the processes of data collection, particularly the composition of the data, and the steps involved in building the corpora. In the metaphor analysis section, the chapter details the steps of using the MIP to identify linguistic metaphors, followed by the procedures for coding metaphor vehicles and their groupings, supported by a co-rating process to ensure reliability. In the corpus data analysis section, the chapter concludes by explaining how central terms were determined within the corpora and outlining the steps taken to analyse the metaphors occurring in the concordance lines.

4.1 Corpus linguistic research

4.1.1 Corpus linguistics and its key tools

The use of corpora is an “empirical approach to the description of language use,” situated within Firth’s “contextual and functional theory of meaning” (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001, p.2), which views the contextual pattern of a word or expression as essential for determining its meaning (p.4). Research in corpus linguistics typically entails collecting a large amount of “naturally occurring language” and using “specialised software” to analyse it for patterns such as frequency, co-occurrence, and meaning (Hunston, 2022, p.1). Different types of corpora are compiled to serve specific purposes (Hunston, 2022, p.43). For example, the purpose of specialised corpora is to represent specific genres or language varieties within particular contexts and/or time periods (McEnery & Brookes, 2022, p.36). Reppen and Simpson-Vlach (2019) noted that corpus linguistics contributes to the exploration of patterns of natural language use and their variations across different situations (p.91). It allows for the combination of quantitative methods, which provide a reliable description of “macro-level” patterns, and qualitative methods, which offer a complementary view of “micro-level” features (Reppen & Simpson-Vlach, 2019, p.92). Brookes and McEnery (2022) summarised the advantages of corpus linguistics as follows: (1) large-scale and carefully designed corpora can provide a more representative sample of a language variety than individual texts, enabling findings to be more “generalisable”; (2) corpus linguistics allows for faster and more reliable analysis using specialised software, whose objective frequency counts and statistical measures help reduce researcher subjectivity and selective use of examples, while also detecting linguistic patterns that might not be captured through manual analysis (p.379).

Tognini-Bonelli (2001) distinguished two approaches within corpus linguistics: the corpus-based approach, which is grounded in established theoretical premises and uses corpus data to “expound, test or exemplify” assumptions or existing theories, thereby possibly refining them (p.65); and the corpus-driven approach, which emphasises the principle of “the integrity of the data as a whole,” ensuring that theoretical claims are “fully consistent with, and reflect directly, the evidence provided by the corpus” (p.84). McEnery and Hardie (2012) noted the binary nature of this distinction and its vagueness in practice (p.150), suggesting that rather than forming a clear-cut division, the two approaches exist on a “sliding scale” (p.151). They argued that the term “corpus-based” could be broadly applied to encompass both approaches (2012, p.151). When applying corpus linguistics to metaphor research, Deignan (2005), citing Partington, noted that the corpus-based approach and corpus-driven approach can be used interactively (p.90). Researchers may start with established categories from existing theories, such as Conceptual Metaphor Theory, while remaining flexible in re-categorising the data and developing new descriptive frameworks if the data challenge the original assumptions (2005, p.90).

This study adopts corpus linguistic methods, making use of key analytical outputs from corpus tools (concordance, frequency, and collocation) to support the analysis of the collected data. Concordance analysis provides insights into words and their meanings, highlighting the importance of collocation and phraseology (Wiegand & Mahlberg, 2019, p.1). Frequency is an important measure used to generate wordlists and keyword lists and calculate the collocational strength or dispersion data (Baker et al., 2006, p.76). Gries (2009) argued that corpus-linguistic studies always rely on the assessment of different kinds of frequency data (p.1226). McEnery and Hardie (2012) noted that concordance lines and frequency data respectively demonstrate qualitative and quantitative analyses (p.150). Many corpus studies begin with a quantitative analysis, such as generating word frequency lists, and often conclude with a qualitative examination of specific words or phrases using concordance analysis (Hunston, 2022, p.47). Normalised frequency is used when comparing how frequently the same word appears across corpora of varying sizes to calculate keywords. A keyword is a word that appears with “unusual frequency” in a target text compared to its frequency in a reference corpus, which reflects the underlying notion of “outstandingness” (Scott, 1997, p.236). Typically, keywords appear more frequently in the target corpus than in the reference corpus, but this difference must be “statistically significant” and considered in relation to the overall size of both

corpora being compared (Baker et al., 2013, p.72). Keywords are usually found in proper nouns, function words that signal a “particular stylistic profile” (Baker et al, 2006, p.97), and lexical items that indicate the “aboutness” of a text (p.98).

Determining keywords requires the statistical analysis of keyness (Rayson and Chapelle, 2019, p.321), which is measured using an “effect-size metric” (Gabrielatos, 2018, p.231) that indicates the degree of difference in the normalised frequencies of words between two texts (p.227). It can serve as a clear “pointer” (Bondi, 2010, p.7) for identifying the “main concepts, topics or attitudes” (Gabrielatos, 2018, p.225) of a corpus or text, without being influenced by minor and irrelevant details (Scott & Tribble, 2006, p.56). Thus, a keyword list can guide researchers in observing “significant lexical differences” between texts (Baker, 2004, p.347) and highlighting content related to the topics and concerns of the given texts (Hunston, 2022, p.82). For example, Gerbig (2010) examined a corpus of travel writing from the 16th to the 21st century. By grouping the 100 most frequent keywords from each century into semantically related categories, she (2010) found that in the earlier three centuries, the keywords predominantly reflected information about direction and spatial positioning, whereas in the later three centuries, there was a greater emphasis on travel destinations and changes in modes of transportation (p.154). Culpeper and Demmen (2015) noted that a potential drawback of keyword analysis is it may be conducted somewhat mechanically, lacking adequate “critical awareness” of both the findings and the processes by which they are produced (p.96). They argued that careful consideration of factors such as selecting an appropriately large reference corpus, setting a suitable minimum frequency cut-off point, choosing the proper significance test for keyness, and addressing uneven word dispersion can help generate more meaningful and useful keyword lists (2015, pp.96–99).

Collocation, as another important analytical output in corpus linguistics, is defined by Sinclair et al. (2004) as “the co-occurrence of two items” within a span: one item is the node, the word whose pattern of co-occurrence is analysed, and the other is the collocater, any word that occurs alongside the node within that span (p.10). Hunston (2022) argued that the concept of collocation in corpus linguistic analysis centres on the frequency with which two words occur together, relative to their overall frequencies (p.94). As Clear (1993) wrote, a corpus-based approach to collocation typically involves examining wordforms, their frequencies, how frequently they co-occur with other wordforms, and the statistical evaluation of the significance of those co-occurrences (p.273). Xiao (2015) noted that, compared to “simple frequency

counts,” which are commonly used in the neo-Firthian approach of “collocation via concordance” (McEnery & Hardie, 2012, p.126), applying statistical significance measures (e.g., MI, t-score, log-likelihood) to evaluate the strength of association between a node and its collocates involves “more rigorous inferential statistical tests” and has become widely adopted in collocation analysis (p.108). Lists of collocates, especially those containing items with statistically significant associations to the node that reflect “regularly recurring patterns” (Sinclair et al., 2004, p.72), are important for identifying key themes within a corpus (Hunston, 2022, p.98). Milizia (2010) also argued that key phrases, which are the “phraseological combinations” formed by keywords (p.129), are more effective than individual words in indicating the “ofness” of a text (p.143).

Collocation analysis is also useful for examining the connotation or potential bias associated with a particular word (Baker et al., 2006: 38), which is closely related to the concept of semantic prosody. Collocation leads to the creation of meaning that is shared between words and between phrases (Sinclair, 2004, p.29). Sinclair (1996) argued that semantic prosody plays a key role in the “meaningful relations” (p.76) a word forms with its surrounding words by signalling how it should be “interpreted functionally” (p.87). Stubbs (1996) described semantic prosody as a “particular collocational phenomenon” (p.176), whereby some words tend to carry predominantly negative or positive prosodies, which extend to their collocates within the “same lexical frame” (p.188). Partington (1998) viewed semantic prosody as an aspect of a lexical item’s “expressive connotations” (p.66). He (1998) defined it as “the spreading of connotational colouring beyond single word boundaries” (p.68) and noted that a word’s prosody is conveyed through its association with favourable, unfavourable, or neutral collocates (p. 67). Xiao (2015) further explained that a word tends to acquire affective meaning through its common collocates (p.112). As Philip (2003) summarised, meaning operates beyond the level of the individual word and extends to its colligates and collocates, which reflect its tendency to co-occur with “certain semantic groups” in context and realise its pragmatic meaning through semantic prosody (p.90). Previous studies (Partington, 1998, 2003; McEnery & Hardie, 2012) have also shown that semantic prosody reflects the speaker’s underlying attitudes, intentions, or evaluative stances. Both collocation and semantic prosody are difficult for speakers to reflect on consciously (Xiao & McEnery, 2006, p.106). However, the development of large-scale corpora and statistical measures has greatly enhanced the identification of collocational patterns and semantic prosody (Xiao, 2015, p.116).

4.1.2 Corpus linguistics applied in discourse analysis

Both discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis have faced criticism, particularly regarding their methodological rigour. Stubbs (1994) illustrated several limitations of discourse analysis, including its unclear representation of the relationship between discourse and grammar, its reliance on insufficient linguistic evidence in cultural and ideological interpretations, and its tendency to analyse only a limited amount of data (p.202). Cheng (2013) summarised that a key weakness of critical discourse analysis is that its qualitative methods often lead to fragmented and selectively illustrative text samples, making the data analysis prone to reflecting the researcher's prior assumptions (p.1353). Previous studies (Baker et al., 2008; Gabrielatos & Duguid, 2014; Mahlberg, 2014) have explored the potential and practicality of methodological collaboration and complementarity between (critical) discourse analysis and corpus linguistics. Their shared focus on language in use and the social aspects of linguistic patterns (Mahlberg, 2014, p.232) provides a good basis for corpus linguistics to engage with discourse analysis by examining lexical patterns as well as textual structure and organisation (p.229). Corpus linguistics can support CDA by quantifying discourse elements (e.g., topics, strategies, metaphors) that have been identified (Baker et al., 2008, p.285), expanding access to contextual information, highlighting salient contextual features, and identifying systematic patterns in text presentation (Gabrielatos & Duguid, 2014, pp.9–11). As Stubbs (1997) noted, computational and statistical techniques applied to large corpora can help identify the underlying language patterns or characteristics that are not easily visible in the analysis of small-scale texts (p.111).

As part of the methodological synergy between (critical) discourse analysis and corpus linguistics, the corpus tools discussed in the previous section are widely used to support CDA studies (Nartey & Mwinlaaru, 2019, p.224). Partington (2003) illustrated that concordance analysis can help to reveal a speaker's attitudes by examining relevant linguistic indicators such as modality, techniques for hiding or creating vagueness in information (e.g., nominalization), and semantic prosody (pp.26-33). Xiao (2015) also noted that the analysis of collocation can help discourse analysts interpret meaning and associated ideology more rigorously by showing patterns of word association and how a word takes on contextual meanings that may differ from or even oppose its literal sense (p.115). In turn, CDA contributes interpretive depth to the descriptive findings from corpus analysis, potentially leading

to their refinement or the development of new analytical categories (Baker et al., 2008, p.295). Upon reviewing this methodological synergy, studies such as Gabrielatos and Duguid (2014), Marchi and Taylor (2018), and Mautner (2022) emphasised the importance of discarding the dichotomous view that regards discourse analysis as primarily qualitative and corpus linguistics as primarily quantitative. Marchi and Taylor (2018) noted that discourse analysis possesses an inherent quantitative dimension, just as corpus linguistics inevitably involves a qualitative aspect, and neither represents a “standardised” set of analytical procedures (p.2). Mautner (2022) also indicated that a corpus-based approach to discourse is not intended to replace qualitative methods, but to ground them more firmly in empirical evidence (p.252).

Using corpus techniques to support discourse analysis, Orpin (2005) examined eight nouns related to the meaning of corruption, such as *sleaze*, *bribery*, and *nepotism*, within four sub-corpora comprising texts from British newspapers from 1990 to 1996 in the Bank of English corpus (pp.40–41). Based on the frequencies, distributions, concordances, and the top 50 collocates of these terms, she found that the British press tended to use words with stronger negative connotations when describing events abroad, such as *bribery* and *corruption* (2005, p.58). Less negatively loaded words, such as *sleaze* or *malpractice*, were rarely or never used for countries like South Korea, Malaysia, or China, indicating that word choice within a particular context can reflect ideological stances (2005, p.58). By comparing the first 2,500 items in the keyword lists of three corpora—SiBol 93, SiBol 05, and Port 2010, which comprise articles from the main UK broadsheets published in 1993, 2005, and since 2010, respectively—Partington et al. (2013) observed a growing trend towards informalisation and an increase in hyperbolic evaluative expressions (pp.271–272), which were previously more typical of tabloid and promotional discourse (p.281).

Based on a self-compiled corpus containing British newspaper articles about Muslims and Islam published between 1998 and 2009, Baker et al. (2013) examined the high-frequency collocates of search terms like *Muslim(s)*, along with frequency analysis of topic-indicating tokens (pp.41–63). They found that Muslims were predominantly represented in the context of conflict in these articles (2013, p.65). Brindle (2016) compared the discourse found on the official website of the English Defence League (EDL), a far-right, anti-Islam protest organisation, with that produced by its supporters on Facebook. Based on the examination of wordlists, keyword lists, and collocations, he identified an ideological difference between the

two types of discourse: the official website targeted extremism within Islam specifically, while the Facebook posts conveyed a general opposition to Islam, without differentiating between its radical and non-radical forms (2016, p.458). This study is situated within corpus-based discourse analysis, viewing metaphor as an important linguistic resource that construct social meanings and reproduce or challenge ideological stances. Corpus techniques constitute the primary method in this study: they are used to identify salient metaphorical patterns and provide the empirical foundation for their interpretation.

4.1.3 A corpus-based approach to metaphor analysis

Metaphor research has made growing use of computer-assisted methods from corpus linguistics to support bottom-up analyses, applying them in various ways for multiple purposes (Semino, 2017, p.463). For example, researchers often use self-compiled small corpora, combining corpus and discourse methods to study metaphor in specific genres and registers (Deignan, 2016, p.104), with such datasets also particularly useful for testing new approaches to metaphor analysis (Tissari, 2016, p.127). Corpus methods benefit metaphor research by enabling faster analysis of large datasets, allowing analyses to be replicated, and providing quantitative evidence of linguistic patterns (Demjén & Semino, 2016, p.4). Previous studies (Deignan, 2008; Philip, 2016; Semino, 2017) have also highlighted that corpus analysis yields important theoretical insights into metaphor through detailed linguistic evidence. Deignan (2008) noted that the varied patterns of metaphor use observed in corpus data indicate that metaphor is shaped not only by conceptual mapping but also by linguistic context, genre, cultural influences, and ideological factors (p.287). The corpus perspective also demonstrated the dynamic nature of metaphor, manifested in the grammatical differences between source and target domains and in its interaction with metonymy (2008, p.291). As discussed in section 2.1.2, Deignan (2005) demonstrated how corpus evidence can be employed to determine and characterise different types of metaphors, such as conventional and novel ones. Philip (2016) further noted that authentic corpus data is important for identifying the conventionality or novelty of a metaphor, as they provide evidence of its “frequency of occurrence, typical phraseology and the range of context use” (p.223). Both Deignan (2008) and Philip (2010) emphasised the value of corpus methods in identifying and analysing conventional metaphors, which are often overlooked more easily than innovative ones.

Semino (2017) noted that corpus linguistics both provides evidence of conventional metaphorical expressions that support the existence of underlying conceptual metaphors and challenges certain claims of Conceptual Metaphor Theory by uncovering linguistic patterns that are difficult to explain within its framework (pp.468-470). On the first aspect, Stefanowitsch (2005), by comparing the significant collocates (referred to as distinctive collexemes) of literal and metaphorical variants of five grammatical patterns, provided empirical evidence for the cognitive function of metaphor, demonstrating that metaphor is not merely decorative but provides “conceptual support” in understanding complex ideas (p.169). For example, the literal pattern *increase in NP* tends to co-occur with collexemes from the economic domain that are more directly shaped by human agency (e.g., *taxation*), as well as with quantifiable terms (e.g., *density*); whereas the metaphorical patterns *grow/rise in NP* are more often associated with collexemes representing economic processes less influenced by human actions (e.g., *interest rates*) and rarely occur with scientific or measurable terms (pp.183–185). This supports Stefanowitsch’s assumption that literal forms are used to indicate “individually attributable” processes, whereas metaphorical forms describe “non-attributable” or more abstract processes (p.170). As Deignan (2016) argued, corpus-based metaphor analyses can provide evidence for conceptual metaphors by identifying “patterns in the meaning, semantic domains, and form” of linguistic metaphors (p.103), with a greater number of linguistic metaphors from the same source domain offering more “corroborating” evidence for the proposed conceptual metaphor (p.110). On the second aspect, Semino (2017) noted that corpus methods can facilitate research on variations in metaphor use across time, languages, cultures, and text types (pp.470), the results of which may not align with CMT’s propositions. For example, studies of metaphor in distinct languages show that similarities in metaphor use support the idea of some shared embodied experience, while differences highlight the influence of cultural variation, particularly in views of the human body (2017, p.471).

Searching for metaphors in corpora usually starts from either a source or a target domain (Tissari, 2016; Semino, 2017). In both cases, the analysis should closely examine the context of each instance to assess whether the search term or nearby words are used metaphorically and to identify patterns relevant to the research questions (Semino, 2017, p.466). Starting from the source domain, Deignan (2006) used a subset of the Bank of English corpus to generate concordances for key lexical items from the source domains like ANIMALS, PLANTS, and FIRE. Analysis of the concordances for central ANIMAL words demonstrated that when animal words are

used metaphorically to describe human traits, they more frequently appear as verbs than nouns (2006, p.111), a tendency that is even more evident in the concordance lines of key PLANT-related lexis (p.114). Additionally, the metaphorical use of the word *flame* from the FIRE domain exhibited variations in semantic prosody based on its singular or plural form: the singular *flame* typically carries positive connotations, while the plural *flames* tends to be associated with negative events, especially in the phrase *flames of...* (pp.115–117). These findings challenged the invariance hypothesis in Conceptual Metaphor Theory regarding source–target mappings, highlighting that metaphorical meanings often appear in expressions that are lexically and grammatically fixed (pp. 119–120). Deignan (2016) argued that the frequency and variety of metaphorical uses from a source domain, as demonstrated by corpus examples, can help establish conceptual mappings and illustrate the entailments of different possible expressions of those mappings (p.112). Demjén and Semino (2016) used Wmatrix to identify semantic fields and metaphorical expressions related to potential source domains in a corpus consisting of interviews and online forum discussions involving patients, carers, and healthcare professionals, exploring how patients use JOURNEY and VIOLENCE metaphors to describe their experiences with cancer (p.394). Their findings indicate that VIOLENCE metaphors can serve empowering and positive functions, while JOURNEY metaphors may also be used to disempower patients (2016, p.395).

Stefanowitsch (2006) illustrated an approach that begins with the target domain, which involves selecting a target lexical item, extracting a sample of its occurrences from the corpus, and organising all related metaphorical expressions into “coherent groups” (p.64) corresponding to general conceptual mapping. He (2006) selected five basic emotion terms: *anger*, *fear*, *happiness*, *sadness*, and *disgust*, as target domains, and retrieved a random sample of 1,000 concordance lines for each term (p.71). He (2006) identified numerous metaphorical mappings not previously proposed in introspection-based studies (p.90), such as FEAR IS A BARRIER (p.81). Furthermore, the frequency of each metaphorical pattern observed in the corpus enabled the use of statistical analyses to assess the relative significance of each mapping for the associated emotion concept. For example, ANGER IS HEATED LIQUID and ANGER IS A FIERCE/CAPTIVE ANIMAL emerged as the most significant mappings to anger (2006, p.92). Through searching the term *hope*, both as a verb and a noun, along with its derivatives in two Early Modern and two Present-Day English corpora, Tissari (2016) identified eight main metaphor categories associated with *hope* and compared their frequencies across the corpora (pp.124-

126). For example, the only metaphor that appeared more frequently in the Present-Day English data than in the Early Modern data was “HOPE IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER” (2016, p.126). She argued that hope can be seen as a “peripheral emotion,” since it does not exhibit all the metaphorical conceptualisations typically associated with emotions, particularly the metaphor “EMOTIONS ARE FORCES” (2016, p.126).

In addition to beginning with a specific source or target domain, some studies have also attempted to find metaphors through search terms or high-frequency lemmas in a corpus. Partington et al. (2013) analysed a self-compiled corpus (HO) consisting of opinion columns from British newspapers, comparing it with a reference corpus (TLS) containing more serious and restrained evaluative texts from the *Times Literary Supplement* (pp.153-154). By examining concordance lines of turning devices that signal figurative language (Cameron & Deignan, 2003), they found that the HO corpus shows higher keyness values for the words *like* and *if*, suggesting more frequent use of similes (2013, p.158), as well as higher frequencies of intensifiers such as *every* and *all*, reflecting a stronger tendency towards hyperbolic expression (2013, p.159). Deignan et al. (2019) compared metaphor use in three corpora—academic articles, pedagogical materials, and interviews of students aged between 11 to 16—to investigate how students understand climate change. They set a minimum frequency threshold to wordlists generated for each corpus to identify the most frequent lemmas (2019, p.386), and by examining the concordance lines of these lemmas, they ultimately obtained the most frequent domain-specific metaphorical lemmas in each corpus (pp.387-388). The qualitative analysis of these frequent metaphorical lemmas in the interview corpus, such as *greenhouse* and *band*, demonstrated that students often rely heavily on their understanding of the literal meanings of these lemmas (2019, p.398), which may carry technical meanings within scientific contexts. Although students’ creative metaphor use reflected their attempts to construct understanding, it often exhibited inaccuracies and vagueness (2019, p.399).

Drawing on these methodological insights, the study’s procedures are designed based on the corpus methods reviewed here and serve several interconnected purposes. Using the corpora and various statistical measures, the analysis begins with high-frequency keywords that denote target-domain concepts as well as vocabulary potentially associated with source domains in both corpora (see Section 4.4). The corpora also facilitate the observation and comparison of linguistic

metaphor patterns relevant to the research questions through the examination of their frequency, concordance lines, and collocates, allowing the study to provide additional instances for existing conceptual metaphors. In addition, the reference corpus is used to support the identification of novel metaphors, as discussed in Section 2.1.2. Together, these interconnected procedures implement the corpus-based approach to metaphor analysis used in this study.

4.2 Data collection

4.2.1 Corpus data sources

Political texts related to Brexit during the tenures of Theresa May and Boris Johnson were collected from three public sources to build the corpora. *Brexit* was selected as the primary search term for data collection. While alternative or related terms, such as *UK*, *EU* or *Brussels*, were considered and tested during the initial stages, these tended to retrieve a much broader range of texts that were not always directly relevant to the Brexit process. By contrast, *Brexit* consistently yielded texts that were explicitly focused on the issue, while also capturing discourse in which related concepts were embedded. It was therefore adopted as the principal search term to ensure both relevance and adequate coverage of Brexit-related discourse.

The first data source consists of the two Prime Ministers' social media posts related to Brexit, including posts from their official Facebook and Twitter (now known as "X") accounts. Using the advanced search function to set the time range of each Prime Minister's tenure, I retrieved all posts containing the term *Brexit* from their accounts on both social media platforms during their respective times in office. As an "organ of public opinion" (Anstead & O'Loughlin, 2015, p.205), social media has been widely and strategically used by politicians to promote their campaigns (Sobieraj et al., 2020, p.1647), to explain and advocate policies to voters in an unmediated space (Haryono, 2022, pp.6717-6718), and to construct their political identities (Kreiss et al., 2020). Both Theresa May and Boris Johnson frequently posted about Brexit on their official social media accounts during their time in office. These posts communicated Brexit policies, provided updates on the negotiation process, and were used to rally support during general elections—for example, through campaign slogans like "*Get Brexit Done*" employed by Boris Johnson.

The second type of data was collected from the official website of the UK government (<https://www.gov.uk/>) as well as from unofficial websites that archive Prime Ministers' speeches, including British Political Speech (<http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/>) and Political Speech Archive (<https://www.ukpol.co.uk/>). Using the search terms *Brexit Theresa May* and *Brexit Boris Johnson* on these websites, I retrieved webpages that contain both the name of each Prime Minister and the term *Brexit* at the same time. Upon reviewing the search results, the Brexit-related political texts by the two Prime Ministers can be classified into four categories: (1) speeches delivered by them at different political events and conferences, such as EU council meetings, election campaign events, and Conservative Party conferences; (2) their official statements, such as official letters or messages; (3) press releases or government reports directly quoting them; and (4) newspaper articles authored by them.

The third data source comprises parliamentary debates related to Brexit, including statements and discussions involving the two Prime Ministers and other Members of Parliament, collected from Hansard (<https://hansard.parliament.uk/>). Hansard offers word-for-word transcription of spoken statements made during parliamentary debates (Slembrouck, 1992, p.104). During the tenures of these two Prime Ministers, issues related to Brexit, such as Brexit negotiations and the Brexit deal, were extensively debated, reviewed, and voted on in the UK Parliament. Using the "Find MPs" function to locate all parliamentary contributions by the two Prime Ministers during their respective tenures, and applying *Brexit* as the search term, I retrieved all transcripts of parliamentary debates containing their Brexit-related spoken and written statements from Hansard. Mollin (2007) noted concerns about the accuracy of using Hansard as a source for spoken corpus data, as it tends to omit "certain interpersonal and situational references" (p.208) and to avoid using certain words and structures, resulting in a specific "house style" that is more formal and written (p.199). Since this study does not focus on interpersonal language use, I judged that these inaccuracies have little impact on the validity of the data or the subsequent metaphor analysis.

The political texts collected from the three sources include Brexit-related discourse by the two Prime Ministers and other Members of Parliament during parliamentary debates held within their respective tenures. The inclusion of parliamentary contributions from other MPs is motivated by two considerations. First, parliamentary discourse is dialogic and highly context-dependent, with the Prime Ministers' contributions often responding directly to preceding or surrounding interventions by

other MPs. Analysing these contributions in isolation would risk decontextualising the discourse and limiting the understanding of the Brexit-related topics being discussed and the interpretation of metaphor use. Including the full debate therefore ensures that sufficient contextual information is available for a more accurate analysis. Second, this decision aligns with the scope of the study as defined in the research questions, which aim to examine metaphor use not only in the communications of Theresa May and Boris Johnson but also within the broader parliamentary context during their premierships. It enables the analysis to capture both pro- and anti-Brexit stances, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how metaphor is used to convey different evaluative positions across political actors and to persuade audiences in line with those positions.

The texts collected carry different genre and register characteristics. Chilton and Schäffner (2008) noted that parliamentary debates represent traditional, institutional political discourse, while social media posts reflect newly evolving public-sphere political genres (pp.21-22). The genre pattern of texts on social media tends to be more unstable, dynamic and informal, which is related to the “deinstitutionalized/de-professionalized space” that social media creates (Lomborg, 2011, p.66). In contrast, parliamentary discourse typically follows “institutionalized discursive features” (Ilie, 2006, p.189) and largely relies on conventionalised language. Given these differences, the inclusion of multiple genres raises an important methodological consideration, particularly as metaphor use is sensitive to discursive context and audience. While genre-specific features may shape how metaphors are deployed, the present study is not primarily concerned with comparing the effects of genre on metaphor use. Rather, its focus lies in identifying and analysing the metaphorical patterns that emerge across different forms of Brexit-related institutional discourse. Drawing on a range of genres therefore enables the study to capture a broader spectrum of metaphor use and to examine whether certain metaphors are consistently used across different communicative contexts. At the same time, the inclusion of multiple genres highlights the potential for future research to explore more explicitly how genre and register shape metaphor use.

4.2.2 Building corpora

4.2.2.1 Number of files for each corpus

As noted by previous research (Reppen, 2022; Koester, 2022; Clancy, 2022), representativeness is a key consideration in the design and construction of a corpus.

It is essential that the corpus appropriately represents the variety of language being studied (Reppen, 2022, p.14). Koester (2022) noted that there is no ideal corpus size, as it varies based on the content of the corpus and research objectives (p.50). Researchers should design the corpus according to its intended purposes and the specific research questions it aims to address (Clancy, 2022, p.64). This study aims to investigate the use of metaphor in Brexit-related political discourse during the premierships of Theresa May and Boris Johnson. By gathering publicly available Brexit-related texts produced during the tenures of the two Prime Ministers, namely their social media posts, official speeches, and parliamentary debates with other MPs, this study adopts an “opportunistic approach,” which focuses on collecting all accessible data relevant to the research purpose, rather than attempting to address concerns related to “balance or skew” (McEnery & Brookes, 2022, p.41).

I created Word documents for the original data and classified them into three categories based on their sources, as shown in Tables 4.1 and 4.2. The number of social media files of the two Prime Ministers is approximately the same. However, the number of files from Theresa May in the government and Hansard categories is roughly twice that of Boris Johnson. The likely reason for the imbalance in the number of Brexit-related texts between the two Prime Ministers is that, although both were tasked with delivering Brexit as post-referendum leaders, the issue dominated the entirety of Theresa May’s premiership. By contrast, under Boris Johnson, Brexit (formally completed about six months into his tenure) was not the only prevailing concern, as other issues, most notably the Covid-19 pandemic, soon became central to his government.

Table 4.1 Text files of Theresa May

Prime Minister	Category	Sub-category	Quantity
Theresa May	Social media	Facebook	48
		Twitter	47
	UK government	-	124
	Hansard	-	110

Table 4.2 Text files of Boris Johnson

Prime Minister	Category	Sub-category	Quantity
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	Social media	Facebook	48
		Twitter	43
Boris Johnson	UK	-	46
	government	-	57
	Hansard	-	57

Reppen (2022) noted that one convention of naming the data files is to involve the information of the texts that are pertinent for analysis within the files names and abbreviate them to keep the file names transparent and of reasonable length (p.15). I named the files by linking each to the Prime Minister’s initials and its category. For example, files collected from Facebook and Twitter in Theresa May’s dataset were labelled as “tm_f_text_number” and “tm_t_text_number.” Similarly, files of government speeches and Hansard record in Boris Johnson’s dataset were labelled as “bj_g_text_number” and “bj_h_text_number.”

4.2.2.2 Metadata of each file in the corpus

Recording metadata is necessary when building a corpus (McEnery & Brookes, 2022, p.44). Metadata provides contextual information about a text, such as its genre, author, and publication date (Baker et al., 2006, pp.48-49), which can simplify the process of searching for specific features (Reppen, 2022, p.15), help interpret the data, and assist in identifying areas for further analysis (Partington et al., 2013, p.10). Two Excel spreadsheets were created to record the relevant parameters for each data file of the two Prime Ministers, with screenshots of both included in Appendix A. These parameters are listed below:

(1) Date.

(2) Token count. Both Prime Ministers often included images, posters, videos, or articles in their social media posts. While many visual materials content contain abundant multimodal metaphors, this study focuses solely on verbal metaphors. For attached visual content, only the textual elements were extracted—for instance, texts like *“Labour would take us all back to square one on Brexit”* (see Figure 4.1). For attached videos, I transcribed the spoken content based on the subtitles. The tokens from both the poster texts and video transcriptions were included in the word count.

Figure 4.1 Theresa May's Facebook post (24/09/2018)



(3) Field. Drawing on Halliday's (1978) model of register, which identifies three variables of the situational context, field refers to what is happening, that is, the subject matter of the text. In the categories of government speeches and Hansard records, the field of some files is indicated by the topic information, typically taken from webpage headlines, which helps clarify the subject matter of the speech or the issues under debate. For example, file *bj_g_text_23* is titled "PM pledges Brexit Freedoms Bill to cut EU red tape," which indicates the field of the speech is related to Brexit legislation and regulatory changes. For the category of social media posts, the field of some attached videos is indicated by their title, such as *tm_t_text_9*, which is titled "Brexit deal for workers' rights and environment," suggesting that the field is about the impacts or benefits of Brexit.

(4) Tenor. Tenor describes "the role relationship involved" (p.110). The political texts collected can generally be classified into three types based on the intended audience: communications from the Prime Minister to the general public, to politicians (e.g., Members of Parliament, Conservative Party members), and to the press. Some texts address specific audiences; for instance, during Theresa May's premiership, two official letters on Brexit were issued: one addressed to EU citizens residing in the UK (*tm_g_text_82*), and the other to UK nationals living in the EU (*tm_g_text_83*).

(5) Mode and sub-mode. Mode refers to "the symbolic or rhetorical channel" of communication (Halliday, 1978, p.110). The collected texts include both written and spoken communications. Spoken communications are further divided into three sub-modes: monological (e.g., standalone speeches at political events), dialogic (e.g., parliamentary debates, political interviews), and hybrid (i.e., press conference statements with Q&A sessions).

(6) Context. Unlike social media posts and parliamentary debates, government speeches are delivered at different public events. These events are recorded under

the variable “context” to show the specific setting of each speech, including Conservative Party conference speeches, election campaign addresses, official public statements and correspondence, press conference speeches, EU Council speeches, and speeches delivered at special events (e.g., Lord Mayor’s Banquet, CBI Conference, G20 Summit). This context variable can also provide information about aspects of tenor and mode.

Some duplicate data were identified in the original files, falling into three cases. First, some tweets or Facebook posts of different dates contain the same texts in Boris Johnson’s file (e.g., bj_t_text_22 and bj_t_text_23). In such cases, I kept the version with additional material, for example, bj_t_text_23, which included a video. Similarly, Facebook posts including bj_f_text_5/13/15/16/19/26 all promote the election campaign with identical content and videos; I retained the first and deleted the rest. Second, some statements of the two Prime Ministers provided by the UK government website overlap with Hansard parliamentary debates, such as tm_g_text_104 and tm_h_text_19 in Theresa May’s file. In these cases, I removed the overlapping statements from the category of government speeches and kept the Hansard version, which provide the full debate. Third, two files collected from separate webpages with different headlines in Boris Johnson’s file, bj_g_text_23 and bj_g_text_37, were found to contain the identical texts of the same speech; one was deleted. In total, 28 files (41,390 tokens) were deleted from Theresa May’s original dataset, and 17 duplicate files (17,692 tokens) were removed from Boris Johnson’s.

4.2.2.3 Corpus compilation and tools for analysis

This study used Sketch Engine and LancsBox 6.0 to compile and analyse the corpora. Sketch Engine, as both a corpus query tool and a web-based corpus platform (Kilgarriff et al., 2014, pp.29-30), offers a wide range of functions that can be applied to either preloaded corpora or user-built corpora. LancsBox 6.0, in addition to the common functions of corpus analysis tools, includes the program Whelk for dispersion analysis and offers various statistical measures that enable easy comparison of multiple corpora (Brezina & Gablasova, 2018, p.597). Files from the three categories for each Prime Minister’s corpus were respectively uploaded onto the Sketch Engine and LancsBox 6.0. Sketch Engine was primarily used for concordance and collocation analysis, while LancsBox 6.0 was specifically used to generate wordlists and keyword lists, based on the measure and reference corpus this study selected for keyword analysis. Although Sketch Engine and LancsBox

produce slightly different token counts and frequencies due to their distinct tokenisation procedures, the overall frequency patterns remain highly consistent across both tools, and these minor discrepancies do not affect the analysis. Details of the compiled corpora—“Theresa May data” (hereafter “TM data”) and “Boris Johnson data” (hereafter “BJ data”)—are provided in Tables 4.3 and 4.4.

Table 4.3 Information for TM data

Corpus	Sub-corpus	Size (tokens)
TM data	TM-social media	25,606
	TM-government	159,979
	TM-Hansard	1,637,200
Total	-	1,822,785

Table 4.4 Information for BJ data

Corpus	Sub-corpus	Size (tokens)
BJ data	BJ-social media	10,865
	BJ-government	88,483
	BJ-Hansard	984,429
Total	-	1,083,777

4.3 Metaphor identification, coding, and co-rating

4.3.1 Identifying linguistic metaphors

As noted in Section 2.2.3, this study used the MIP to identify linguistic metaphors that emerge in the discourse, as it enables metaphor to be identified across word classes and allows the selection of metaphor-related lexical items tailored to the research questions. The former is particularly useful for labelling vehicle groupings and assigning vehicles to appropriate categories, a process that will be elaborated on in the next section. For example, the metaphorical lexical units *back* (as a verb) and *on the back of* differ in word class, yet both instantiate the same source domain of physical support in spatial terms and are therefore considered appropriate for grouping under *PHYSICAL SUPPORTING*. In addition, metaphorical meaning is often realised through creative shifts across word classes, which the MIP can capture; for example, Zawada (2006) noted the verb *to hamster*, derived from the noun *hamster*, which was creatively used during the Second World War to mean to hoard food and other supplies (p.240). By contrast, MIPVU, which identifies metaphors

based on part of speech, may not consistently capture such uses. While MIPVU offers a more fine-grained categorisation of metaphor types, such distinctions are not central to the present study, and implicit metaphor is difficult to identify in spoken data, where pronoun reference is often ambiguous.

There are four steps in the MIP (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) to identify whether a word is a metaphor in the extracted concordance lines. To illustrate the specific identification procedure, an example concordance line of the term *Brexit* from BJ data is provided below:

Just as we got Brexit done, so with this Queen's Speech we finish the job of unleashing the benefits of Brexit to grow our economy and cut the cost of living.

First, read the whole text to understand its general meaning. In this study, the standard MIP step of reading the entire text was adapted to reading sufficient surrounding context from concordance lines, ranging from the standard 80-character width to several lines, which provided an adequate understanding of each lexical unit's meaning. This excerpt comes from the file *bj_h_text_20*, which documents a parliamentary debate on the Queen's speech on 10th May 2022. During the debate, Boris Johnson addressed how the Energy Bill proposed by his government and the Brexit Freedoms Bill would benefit the UK. As this excerpt shows, he claimed that economic growth and a reduction in the cost of living are important advantages that Brexit would bring to the UK.

Second, determine the lexical units (Pragglejaz Group, 2007, p.3). In the MIP, lexical units are not limited to single words but also include multi-word expressions, particularly in cases where the meaning of the whole expression is not fully compositional (2007, p.4). The treatment of such expressions as either single or separate lexical units depends on their "decomposability," for example, polywords and phrasal verbs are generally treated as single lexical units in the MIP (2007, p.26). This study takes multi-word units (MWU), including phrasal verbs, idioms, and polywords, as one lexical unit in metaphor identification. It is worth noting that, while MIP identifies metaphor at the level of individual lexical units, this does not preclude the analysis of metaphorical patterns across discourse. In this study, metaphorically used lexical units are subsequently grouped according to shared source domains, which will be discussed in the next section, forming the basis for identifying systematic metaphors and metaphor scenarios, where recurring and related

metaphorical expressions contribute to a coherent conceptual link between topics and vehicles, and form scenarios or narrative structures.

In the target sentence, there are 31 lexical units, which are: *Just / as / we / got / Brexit / done, so / with / this / Queen's / Speech / we / finish / the / job / of / unleashing / the / benefits / of / Brexit / to / grow / our / economy / and / cut / the cost of living*. As a noun phrase, *the cost of living* is regarded as one lexical unit as it is listed as a separate entry in the dictionary.

Third, identify the contextual meaning of each lexical unit. Then, assess whether the unit has a more basic meaning, typically one that is more “concrete,” “precise,” or “related to bodily action” (Pragglejaz Group, 2007, p.3). Finally, determine whether the contextual meaning can be understood in comparison with this more basic meaning. In this process, the MIP treats words with the same base form as a single lexical unit, without considering word class, thereby avoiding missing metaphorical connections that might otherwise be ignored due to changes in grammatical form (Pragglejaz Group, 2007, pp.27–28). *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (LDOCE) and *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (OALD) were used as references for the basic meanings of the lexical units. Citations for all dictionary definitions used in this study are provided in the Dictionary Sources.

This study focuses on domain specific metaphors, therefore, function words including *just, we, done, so, with, this, we, the, of, to, our, and* in this sentence will not be identified in this procedure. Other lexical units were identified one after another. Below are examples illustrating how the units *Brexit, finish, unleashing, benefits, grow, cut, and the cost of living* were identified.

Brexit The word *Brexit* is a proper noun that was coined to refer to the process of the United Kingdom's proposed withdrawal from the European Union and the related political processes. Both the basic meaning and contextual meaning of *Brexit* refer to the same political event.

finish In the context, *finish* refers to completing the process of Brexit. The basic meaning of *finish* is “when an event, activity, or period of time finishes, it ends, especially at a particular time” (LDOCE). The contextual meaning of *finish* aligns with its basic meaning.

unleashing The word *unleashing* in this context implies that Brexit holds great opportunities that can be released to benefit the UK's future. The basic meaning of *unleash* is "to let a dog run free after it has been held on a leash" (LDOCE). The contextual meaning can be interpreted by comparing with its basic meaning, as both share the connotation of removing restrictions and setting something free to release its energy. *Unleashing the benefits of Brexit* refers to lifting EU constraints on the UK in areas such as legislation and trade policy, similar to taking off a harness that controls a dog.

benefits The word *benefits* in the context refers to the profits or advantages that Brexit could bring to United Kingdom. The basic meaning of *benefit* is "an advantage that something gives you" (OALD). The contextual meaning of *benefits* is on par with its basic meaning.

grow In the context, *grow* refers to taking Brexit as an opportunity to boost the scale and efficiency of the UK economy. The basic meaning of *grow* is "(of person/animal) to become bigger or taller and develop into an adult; (of plant) to exist and develop in a particular place" (OALD). Comparing its contextual meaning with its basic meaning allows for an understanding of economic development in terms of the physical growth of a body or a plant.

cut The word *cut* in the context indicates leveraging Brexit to reduce living expenses. The basic meaning of *cut* is "to divide something or separate something from its main part, using scissors, a knife etc." (LDOCE). When comparing the contextual meaning and basic meaning of *cut*, reducing the money that people spend on daily necessities can be understood as cutting something from its main part and decreasing its size.

the cost of living In the context, this phrase refers to the amount of money or financial resources required to sustain a certain standard of living, which is same with its basic meaning: "the amount of money that people need to pay for food, clothing and somewhere to live" (OALD).

Four, mark words *unleashing*, *grow*, *cut* as metaphorical and *got*, *Brexit*, *Queen's*, *Speech*, *finish*, *job*, *benefits*, *economy*, *the cost of living* as non-metaphorical.

4.3.2 Coding metaphor vehicles and vehicle groupings

As outlined in the research questions, this study aims to examine systematic metaphors and metaphor scenarios constructed through the metaphors identified in the two corpora. Cameron et al. (2010, pp.118-127) and Maslen (2016, pp.92-96) explained that systematic metaphors can be progressively and dynamically found through the following steps: (1) collecting data and transcribing it; (2) coding the various interconnected vehicle terms of metaphors; (3) flexibly labelling vehicle grouping candidates for these metaphor vehicles; and (4) identifying the same topic targeted by a specific set of related metaphors, either from a particular vehicle grouping or across multiple groupings. Using the example sentence from the previous section, the three metaphors identified—*unleashing*, *grow*, and *cut*—were treated as metaphor vehicles. Based on their semantic characteristics (Maslen, 2016, p.93), three corresponding vehicle grouping candidates were established: *ANIMAL*, *ORGANISM GROWTH*, and *REMOVING*.

Following the discourse dynamics approach to metaphor (Cameron et al., 2009), the analysis coded the metaphor vehicles, their groupings, and target topics in Excel. For example, a vehicle grouping of *JOURNEY* was established when analysing the concordance lines of the term *deal* in TM data. Metaphor vehicles, such as *leave*, *remain*, *approach*, *progress*, *set out*, *route*, *on course*, *stepping stone*, *move forward/towards/on*, and *go/step/way forward* were placed in this group. As shown in Figure 4.2, for each metaphor vehicle, the speaker and their party affiliation, the context in which the vehicle occurred, and its corresponding target topic were coded in an Excel spreadsheet.

Figure 4.2 Screenshot of *JOURNEY* grouping in the concordances of *deal* in TM data

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Vehicle grouping	Metaphor vehicle	Speaker	Party affiliation	Intonation unit	Targeted topic
2	JOURNEY	leave	Theresa May	Conservative	A majority of MPs are against <i>leaving</i> without a deal;...	1
3	JOURNEY	remain, leave	Caroline Flint	Labour	in this House there are people on the <i>remain</i> and the <i>leave side</i> for whom no deal will ever be good enough.	1
4	JOURNEY	approach	TheresaMay	Conservative	... <i>clear</i> that the best deal—the best <i>approach</i> that <i>delivers</i> on the referendum...	1
5	JOURNEY	way forward	Oliver Heald	Conservative	...—does she agree that voting for the deal is the <i>way forward</i> ?	1
6	JOURNEY	progress	Theresa May	Conservative	The best Brexit deal In the Brexit negotiations, we continue to make good <i>progress</i> .	1
7	JOURNEY	set out	Tom Brake	LibDem	...we will secure a legal deal <i>setting out</i> our future relationship with the EU by December 2022...	1
8	JOURNEY	move forward	Theresa May	Conservative	...we can indeed <i>move forward</i> when we have agreed a deal across the House.	1
9	JOURNEY	move toward	Theresa May	Conservative	...only if it was <i>clear</i> that there was a plan that was <i>moving toward</i> an agreed deal.	1
10	JOURNEY	move on	Alex Burghart	Conservative	I will vote for the deal for tonight, and let us <i>move on</i> .	1
11	JOURNEY	on course	Theresa May	Conservative	They want a good deal that sets us <i>on course</i> for a <i>brighter</i> future.	1
12	JOURNEY	go forward	Theresa May	Conservative	...or not we <i>go forward</i> with the deal will be one that this Parliament will take.	1
13	JOURNEY	stepping stone, reach	Theresa May	Conservative	This deal is not the final word...it is a <i>stepping stone</i> to <i>reach</i> that future.	1
14	JOURNEY	route	Theresa May	Conservative	I continue to believe that the best route for this country is to leave with a deal...	1
15	JOURNEY	step forward	Wendy Morton	Conservative	...this is a vital <i>step forward</i> , so will she confirm that she remains absolutely committed to <i>delivering</i> the best deal for the whole of the UK?	1

As indicated by the concordance analysis, these *JOURNEY* metaphor vehicles were consistently used to describe the progress of Brexit negotiations, which was coded as Topic 1. Cameron (2009) noted that assigning specific topics to each metaphor vehicle is often unfeasible and can instead be addressed by creating a limited collection of “key discourse topics” aligned with the focus of research and its research questions (p.74). Other key topics identified through the concordance analysis in this study, such as the relationship between the UK and the EU, the benefits and consequences of Brexit, and the risks of the Northern Ireland backstop, can also link metaphor vehicles within the same or across different vehicle groupings. When coding each metaphor’s vehicle term and classifying it into an appropriate grouping, it is important to keep the groupings flexible as more concordance lines are examined, which often requires recoding, regrouping, subdividing, or combining (Cameron & Maslen, 2010). For example, I initially placed metaphor vehicles such as *road*, *path*, and *bump* under the *ROAD/PATH* grouping, which I later merged into the *JOURNEY* category. I also subdivided the *MOVEMENT* grouping to create new categories such as *BODY MOVEMENT* (e.g., *walk away*, *step away*, and *hand back*) and *DELIVERING* (e.g., *deliver*, *delivery*).

4.3.3 Co-rating the data

Categorising data often relies on analysts’ judgments in discourse analysis studies, and its reliability should be evaluated through inter-rater agreement measures (Brezina, 2018, p.270). Maslen (2016) suggested that part of an individual’s work should be cross-checked by another analyst during the process of metaphor identification and vehicle coding to guarantee reliability as a “balance of imagination” (p.94). With input from a co-rater, ambiguous cases could be identified and discussed. With reference to the reliability test of Steen et al. (2010, pp.149–165), this study used Cohen’s Kappa (κ) as a reliability indicator, as it accounts for agreement due to random chance and thus provides a more nuanced evaluation (Cohen, 1960).

Two sets of 200 randomly selected concordance lines of the term *Brexit* in TM data and BJ data were extracted for the inter-rater agreement and examined by the author and a second analyst, who is also a researcher in metaphor from a linguistic perspective. Before rating, both raters followed the same set of instructions: (1) identifying metaphors using the MIP (Pragglejaz Group, 2007); (2) treating multi-word units as single lexical units; (3) considering only content words; and (4)

reporting borderline cases. The first task of co-rating is to test the level of agreement between the two raters on whether a lexical unit is metaphorical or not. In total, 287 tokens of metaphorically used lexical units were identified across the two raters, including cases where both raters agreed and cases where only one rater marked a unit as metaphorical. Two columns were built in SPSS, respectively containing two raters' identification results. Each lexical unit identified as a metaphor was coded as 1, while those not considered metaphors were coded as 0. As the result of agreement shown in Table 4.5, the value of Cohen's Kappa is 0.812, which could be interpreted as a substantial level of agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977, p.165).

Table 4.5 Agreement result of metaphors between two raters

		Symmetric Measures			
		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	.813	.016	137.836	<.001
N of Valid Cases		287			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Among the inconsistent cases, first, some lexical units used metaphorically in the context were initially missed by either rater, such as *level up*, *dividend*, *orderly*, *end*, and *area*. Upon review, both raters agreed to revise these from non-metaphors to metaphors. Second, some inconsistencies involved the identification of multi-word units. For example, one rater treated *over the line* as a single lexical unit while the other did not, and a prepositional verb (*focus on*) and a phrasal verb (*knock...through*) were identified as metaphors by one rater but not the other. After discussion, the two raters reached agreement both on the determination of lexical units that were initially disagreed upon and on considering all these cases as metaphors. Third, some words appeared to have initially been over-interpreted as metaphors. After discussion, both raters agreed to revise *maximise*, *develop*, *chaotic*, and *dynamic* as non-metaphors, because their contextual meanings were judged not to differ sufficiently from their basic senses to count as metaphors.

Fourth, some inconsistent cases remained debatable after discussion, but this study follows the suggestions of one rater. These borderline cases include *deliver*, *secure*,

and *change*. One rater identified *deliver* as metaphors, while the other treated *deliver* as metaphorical only in contexts where its basic meaning—“to take goods, letters, packages etc. to a particular place or person” (LDOCE)—could be sufficiently compared with its contextual meaning. For example, in *deliver Brexit*, Brexit is depicted as a tangible object that can be handed over or brought to a recipient or endpoint, making it comparable to the basic meaning of deliver. However, in *deliver the change that people voted for*, the noun *change* is more abstract and does not readily fit the basic sense of transferring a concrete entity to a destination, so this instance was judged non-metaphorical. After discussion, it was decided that all instances of *deliver* would be coded consistently as metaphorical. For *secure and change*, one rater considered them metaphorical and related to the concepts of ATTACHMENT and JOURNEY, while the other did not; in this study, these instances are not regarded as metaphorical.

The second task of co-rating is to assess the level of agreement between the two raters on the vehicle groupings assigned to each metaphor vehicle. After excluding non-metaphorical cases and skipping borderline cases (except for certain instances of *deliver*, which both raters agreed were metaphorical), the remaining 249 metaphorically used tokens were selected for the second co-rating. 29 vehicle grouping candidates were established based on these metaphor vehicles, which are listed in the box below:

<i>BUILDING</i>	<i>DELIVERING</i>	<i>PHYSICAL</i>	<i>DAMAGE</i>	<i>SPORTS/GAME</i>	<i>JOURNEY</i>
<i>LIGHT/DARKNESS</i>	<i>FOOD</i>	<i>MOVEMENT</i>	<i>MACHINE</i>	<i>SEEING</i>	<i>DISTANCE</i>
<i>INVESTMENT</i>	<i>DISASTER</i>	<i>BODILY</i>	<i>ACTION</i>	<i>TEXTURE</i>	<i>PHYSICAL</i>
<i>HEALTH/ILLNESS</i>	<i>VIOLENT</i>	<i>ACTION</i>	<i>DIRECTION</i>	<i>PERSONIFICATION</i>	<i>VEHICLE</i>
<i>PHYSICAL</i>	<i>SEPARATION</i>	<i>ANIMAL</i>	<i>FIGHT/WAR</i>	<i>BARRIER</i>	<i>REMOVING</i>
<i>TIDINESS</i>				<i>AREA/PLACE</i>	

Following the same procedure, 29 vehicle grouping candidates were coded as numeric from 1 to 29 in SPSS. After assigning numeric codes to the vehicle groupings of all 249 metaphor tokens, SPSS was used to calculate Cohen’s kappa, which indicated an 82.6% agreement between the raters, as shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Agreement result of vehicle groupings between two coders

		Symmetric Measures			
		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	.826	.018	78.639	<.001
N of Valid Cases		249			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

The inconsistencies mainly occurred in the following cases. First, the two co-raters sometimes differed in how they interpreted the contextual meanings of the metaphorical expressions and how these meanings related to the semantic domains of their basic meanings. For example, in the sentence “...our wonderful United Kingdom, which he seeks to break up,” *break up* was labelled as *PHYSICAL SEPARATION* by one rater and *BODILY ACTION* by the other. Similar cases include *break* (*MACHINE* versus *PHYSICAL DAMAGE*) and *pass* (*BODILY ACTION* versus *SPORTS /GAME*). After discussion, these cases were resolved case by case, with both raters agreeing on a primary grouping and recording the alternative grouping as a secondary candidate. For instance, in the example above, both raters agreed to assign *PHYSICAL SEPARATION* as the primary grouping for *break up*, while *BODILY ACTION* was noted as a secondary possible grouping. This practice ensures that the analytical process remains flexible and dynamic, as discussed in the previous section, allowing for potential refinement of groupings if systematic metaphor cues emerge in later stages of analysis.

Second, the vehicle groupings *MOVEMENT* and *JOURNEY* both seem to be acceptable for certain metaphor vehicles, while one rater choosing *MOVEMENT* and the other choosing *JOURNEY* for words such as *step* and *progress*. After discussion, both raters agreed to label the metaphor vehicle as *JOURNEY* when it involves movement along a path towards or away from a destination (e.g., arriving at, advancing towards, or leaving a point); whereas instances that describe movement without a clear path, destination, or directional progression, such as bodily movement or changes in position, were categorised under *MOVEMENT*. These two metaphors were then placed under *JOURNEY*. A similar case applies to *deliver*: one rater

labelled it as *DELIVERING*, while the other labelled it as *MOVEMENT*; after discussion, both raters agreed to classify it as *DELIVERING*, because it represents a targeted transfer of something towards a goal, which is semantically more specific than general movement and therefore fits more appropriately within the *DELIVERING* grouping.

Third, both raters showed some inconsistencies when assigning a vehicle grouping to *control*, which was sometimes classified as *MACHINE* and at other times as *VEHICLE*. After discussion, both raters agreed to place *control* in the *MACHINE* group, as its metaphorical use aligns more consistently with the idea of operating or regulating a mechanism, despite the semantic relatedness of *VEHICLE* and *MACHINE*. Fourth, metaphor vehicles including *cuts* and *beat* were initially labelled as *VIOLENT ACTIONS* by both raters. However, after re-examining the contexts in which they appeared, both raters agreed to reclassify them as *REMOVING* and *SPORTS/GAME*, respectively. Fifth, for metaphor vehicles such as *win* and *concede*, both raters agreed that they could be put in either the *FIGHT/WAR* or the *SPORTS/GAME* grouping, as both groupings provide acceptable comparisons between these words' basic and their contextual meanings.

4.4 Procedures for data analysis

4.4.1 Determining central terms

Due to the corpora size and time limits, it is not possible to manually examine the entire corpora to search for metaphors. This study used both wordlists and keyword lists to decide on the central terms, which help locate texts that are most pertinent to the key subjects in the collected Brexit discourse. The concordance lines of these central terms were then analysed to determine whether they and the lexical items appearing in their surrounding context were used metaphorically. As noted in Section 4.1.1, wordlists consider high-frequency words, while keyword lists can highlight the key topics in the target texts by identifying words that are statistically significant by comparison to a reference corpus. Some words overlap between the wordlist and the keyword list; the two lists can also complement each other. For the keyword analysis, this study selected the BNC 2014-baby+ (CASS, n.d.) as the reference corpus. As a balanced subset of the BNC 2014 embedded within LancsBox 6.0, it is a representative reference corpus for contemporary general British English in both spoken and written contexts (Deignan et al., 2022, pp.114–115). Compared with the

full 100-million-token BNC2014, Baby+, with a manageable size (approximately five million tokens), is more appropriate for keyword analysis against the two relatively small target corpora in this study. Meanwhile, Cohen's *d* was chosen as the statistical measure. Compared with the commonly used log-likelihood statistic, which often produces an excessive number of keywords, Cohen's *d* also accounts for dispersion, which weights words according to how evenly they are distributed across texts, helping to avoid the inflated significance of words that occur frequently but unevenly (Brezina, 2018, p.85).

Upon examining the wordlists and keyword lists generated for each corpus, it became clear that some key Brexit-related words, either thematically relevant or potentially metaphorical, were excluded under the threshold of 100. For example, *referendum*, *deliver*, and *customs* were absent from the TM wordlist, while *negotiation*, *Britain*, and *leave* were excluded from the BJ keyword list. Therefore, this study considered the top 200 words from both lists in each corpus to reduce the possibility of missing frequently used terms that capture key topics, while keeping the analysis manageable.

Three types of words were removed during the examination of both lists for each corpus. First, function words and Arabic numerals were removed from the wordlists and keyword lists. Second, general words with elementary meanings that lack clear relevance to Brexit-related topics were excluded. The top 200 words in the New General Service List (Brezina & Gablasova, 2015) were referred to identify and remove the function words and "general, non-topic-specific words" (Deignan et al., 2022, p.117). At the same time, concordance data was used to examine the contexts of these general words to confirm whether they were indeed irrelevant to Brexit-related discussions. For example, general words unrelated to Brexit topics, such as *want* (ranks 106 in the new-GSL), *get* (55), *say* (32), *know* (61), *good* (73), *tell* (111), *thing* (119), *think* (91), and *week* (184), were removed from the wordlists of both the TM data and BJ data. Conversely, some general words were retained in the wordlists of both corpora, because they were contextually relevant to Brexit, such as *people* (92), *world* (152), *need* (117), *country* (194); or were potentially used metaphorically in relevant contexts, such as *way* (82), *leave* (123), *part* (124), *take* (46), *see* (57), *give* (74), *back* (112), and *bring* (167).

Third, other topic-unrelated words identified through examining KWIC were also excluded from the lists. A few examples are provided here to illustrate this. (1) Lexical

items associated with parliamentary conventions appearing in Hansard records were removed. These included address terms such as *Hon.*, *Right*, *Mr.*, *Gentleman*, *Lady*, *Sir*, *Speaker*, and *Learned*; terms related to debate procedures like *order* and *interruption*; names of MPs, such as *Ian*, *Corbyn*, and *Keir*; Abbreviated party labels, such as *Con*, *Lab*, and *SNP*; and localisers such as *North*, *West*, and *East*, which upon examination, were found to refer to specific constituencies (e.g., *North Shropshire*). (2) Terms used to refer to certain government positions, locations, or departments were deleted, such as *Secretary*, *Chancellor*, *Deputy*, *council*, *chamber*, and *housing* (as in *the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities*). (3) Terms clearly linked to other topics were excluded, such as *Covid*, *pandemic*, *vaccine*, and *zero* (as in *net zero emissions*). (4) Other terms that were found to be irrelevant to Brexit after examining their concordance lines, such as *thank*, *welcome*, *congratulate*, *tribute*, and *gracious*.

The exclusion of terms not directly related to Brexit was also applied in the removal of topic-unrelated significant collocates of the central term in the subsequent chapter. It is important to note, however, that some of these terms still appear within Brexit-related contexts—for example, in references to the pandemic, particularly during the tenure of Boris Johnson. The rationale for excluding these terms, or for not including more central terms is twofold. First, including more central terms would generate a substantially larger dataset, much of which would be irrelevant to Brexit discourse. It may also lead to the pre-selection of specific topics and introduce bias into the analysis. Second, the study follows the approach adopted in previous corpus-assisted critical discourse studies. As mentioned in Section 4.1.2, Baker et al. (2013) used a limited set of search terms, including *Muslim*, *Muslims*, *Islam*, and *Islamic*, in their analysis of how Muslims, as an identity associated with Islam, are represented in the British press (p.31). Similarly, Taylor (2021), in her study of metaphorical framings of immigration in *The Times*, used a set of 15 terms that foreground migrant status rather than other identity labels in order to capture relevant discourse while maintaining control over data relevance (p. 468). These studies highlight the importance of using a deliberately defined set of search terms to ensure analytical focus while avoiding overly broad or loosely related data.

In TM data, the wordlist excluded 96 function words and 21 general words, and 12 topic-unrelated words, and the keyword list excluded nine function words, three Arabic numerals, three general words, and 24 topic-unrelated words. In BJ data, the wordlist excluded 98 function words, 26 general words, and 10 topic-unrelated words,

and the keyword list excluded nine function words, two Arabic numerals, three general words, and 36 unrelated words. These excluded words are listed in Appendix B. Ultimately, 71 words from the wordlist and 161 words from the keyword list in TM data, as well as 66 words from the wordlist and 150 words from the keyword list in BJ data, were retained and are listed in Appendix C. There are 52 shared and 128 non-shared words between the wordlist and keyword list in TM data, and 48 shared and 120 non-shared words between the two lists in BJ data. After lemmatising these words, 155 central terms were determined for TM data and 151 central terms for BJ data, as shown in the boxes below.

155 central terms for TM data

prime minister union deal brexit european eu agreement kingdom government withdrawal trade parliament vote backstop ensure referendum friend down negotiation ireland country member customs house northern deliver united agree future job continue clear leave economy relationship labour uk party britain scotland british support important absolutely forward believe people across able public out way up take new back see put place give world come free look set control move end constituent opposition citizen constituency business border conservative corbyn recognise right(s) face declaration interest negotiate amendment statement debate election article commitment partnership relation scottish no-deal discussion nhs remain leader confirm majority billion access extension bill speech build security legal position issue mp implementation funding opportunity worker policy certainty motion proposal commit market prosperity accept indeed service bench result period standard million seek legislation national progress co-operation protect side membership decision secure political meaningful parliamentary europe arrangement compromise economic health raise devolved concern assure rule exit state school

151 central terms for BJ data

prime minister brexit government deal country parliament bill eu union election queen ireland northern speech constituent friend member kingdom vote opposition conservative agreement referendum trade european scotland house party labour agree economy leader uk united support forward future people care health british public leave across clear believe up out new way need back take see world put free place come control hope down look important constituency nhs legislation scottish debate job billion withdrawal ensure business move customs standard right(s) opportunity nation bench democracy investment worker tory law crisis commitment no-deal proposal level million majority confidence border mandate manifesto sector parliamentary corbyn community respect delay britain protect growth funding continue leadership issue tax committee arrangement away motion service build remain indeed poverty regulatory negotiation elect protocol promise mp liberal climate national tackle democratic proud democrat priority infrastructure policy measure citizen

*regulation amendment act consent agenda address deliver campaign economic goods
scrutiny result*

4.4.2 Classifying and selecting central terms

The central terms, based on their word meanings and semantic connection with the topic of Brexit, can be grouped into three categories. (1) Topic-related central terms. Central terms within this category include four situations. First, some terms refer directly to Brexit (e.g., *Brexit*) or to significant events and agendas related to it, such as *referendum*, *withdrawal*, *agreement*, *backstop*, and *Article (50)*. Second, some terms reflect various issues involved and discussed throughout the process of Brexit, such as *negotiation*, *vote*, *deal*, *no-deal*, *customs*, *border*, *trade*, *market*, *extension*, and *membership*. Third, some terms represent key stakeholders involved in the Brexit negotiations, such as *United Kingdom*, *UK*, *Britain*, *EU*, *European Union*, *Northern*, and *Ireland*. Fourth, some terms are frequently used by the two Prime Ministers to convey specific arguments surrounding Brexit. For instance, Boris Johnson repeatedly used the term *priority* to emphasise the urgency of completing Brexit and to shift the government's focus towards domestic concerns that matter to the public. Other examples include *certainty*, *co-operation*, *interest*, and *compromise* in TM data, and *delay* in BJ data. In this group, TM data contains 38 central terms and BJ data contains 33, with 25 terms shared by both corpora.

(2) Vehicle-related central terms. Some central terms are potentially used as metaphor vehicles to describe topics related to Brexit. An initial examination of their concordance lines suggests that their contextual meanings seem to be derived from more basic, tangible, and concrete meanings. At this stage of the analytical process, these terms were categorised as potential vehicle terms. Whether they were truly used metaphorically in the relevant context will be identified using the MIP, following a more detailed examination of their concordance lines, with additional contexts where necessary to determine contextual meaning. Among the central terms in this group, 21 are shared by both corpora, such as *remain*, *leave*, *deliver*, *clear*, *forward*, *move*, *build*, *back*, *support*, and *control*. Eight terms were exclusive to TM data: *give*, *end*, *face*, *position*, *progress*, *side*, *access*, and *exit*; and four were unique to BJ data: *stand*, *level*, *growth*, and *away*.

(3) General central terms. The remaining central terms, including 60 shared by both corpora, 28 unique to TM data, and 33 unique to BJ data, were classified as general

central terms. These terms were not explicitly linked to Brexit-related topics but rather represented general vocabulary commonly used in UK politics. These terms can be separated into several types: (1) Terms indicating political parties, such as *Labour*, *Tory*, *Conservative*, *Democrat*, *Opposition*, and *party*. (2) Terms related to political institutions and positions, such as *Parliament*, *government*, *MP*, *member*, *Prime Minister*, *bench*, and *House*. (3) Terms referring to the constituent nations of the UK, such as *Scotland and Scottish*. (4) Common political terms, such as *democracy*, *economy*, *mandate*, *constituency*, *citizen*, *election*, *manifesto*, *motion*, *NHS*, and *infrastructure*. (5) Other general terms that are not specific to Brexit-related topics, such as *people*, *country*, *future*, *job*, *rule*, *speech*, *important*, *seek*, *decision*, *agree*, *believe*, *world*, and *service*.

The data analysis of this study focused on the central terms in the first two categories. For the topic-related central terms, the analysis set a cut-off point, only analysing terms with a normalised frequency exceeding 500 per million tokens. The rationale for setting this cut-off point was that, within the lists of topic-related central terms in both corpora, terms with normalised frequencies above and below the value of 500 show a significant difference in frequency. In TM data, the last word exceeding 500 in frequency (*customs*) and the first word falling below it (*article*) respectively have frequencies of 589.76 and 494.85. In BJ data, terms at the corresponding position (*britain* and *act*) have frequencies of 621.94 and 465.30, showing an even greater difference than in TM data. With 500 as the boundary, the frequencies of central terms above and below this threshold in the discussed lists of both corpora decrease gradually, with no significant drops between consecutive terms. As shown in Tables 4.7 and 4.8, 25 central terms in TM data and 18 in BJ data met the cut-off point, respectively accounting for 65.8% and 54.5% of the total topic-related terms. Among these top-frequency topic-related terms, only *negotiate* in TM data was not shared by both corpora.

Table 4.7 Topic-related terms for analysis in TM data

Central term	Normalised freq. per million	Shared with BJ data (Y/N)
<i>deal</i>	4483.80	Y
<i>european</i>	2974.57	Y
<i>union</i>	2732.63	Y
<i>vote</i>	2704.10	Y
<i>eu</i>	2569.69	Y

<i>brexit</i>	1948.67	Y
<i>uk</i>	1926.17	Y
<i>agreement</i>	1824.68	Y
<i>trade</i>	1570.12	Y
<i>united</i>	1277.72	Y
<i>ireland</i>	1112.03	Y
<i>kingdom</i>	1097.22	Y
<i>referendum</i>	1000.67	Y
<i>business</i>	951.84	Y
<i>northern</i>	922.76	Y
<i>withdrawal</i>	886.01	Y
<i>negotiation</i>	882.72	Y
<i>backstop</i>	743.37	Y
<i>negotiate</i>	720.33	N
<i>interest</i>	706.06	Y
<i>britain</i>	668.21	Y
<i>market</i>	664.92	Y
<i>border</i>	638.58	Y
<i>arrangement</i>	607.86	Y
<i>customs</i>	589.76	Y

Table 4.8 Topic-related terms for analysis in BJ data

Central term	Normalised freq. per million	Shared with BJ data (Y/N)
<i>deal</i>	2655.52	Y
<i>vote</i>	1857.47	Y
<i>brexit</i>	1815.76	Y
<i>uk</i>	1680.44	Y
<i>eu</i>	1407.01	Y
<i>bill</i>	1288.37	Y
<i>union</i>	1131.72	Y
<i>ireland</i>	1106.70	Y
<i>northern</i>	1072.40	Y
<i>european</i>	1053.87	Y
<i>trade</i>	865.71	Y
<i>business</i>	818.44	Y
<i>agreement</i>	753.56	Y
<i>united</i>	730.38	Y
<i>referendum</i>	671.99	Y
<i>law</i>	632.13	Y
<i>kingdom</i>	625.65	Y
<i>britain</i>	621.94	Y

Some central terms commonly co-occur to form specific proper nouns, including *Northern Ireland, European Union, United Kingdom, Withdrawal Agreement, and Customs Union*. Therefore, each proper noun was searched and analysed as one central term. The total 23 topic-related central terms are *deal, vote, Brexit, UK, Northern Ireland, EU, bill, trade, business, European Union, referendum, law, United Kingdom, Britain, market, border, Withdrawal Agreement, interest, negotiation, backstop, Customs Union, arrangement, and negotiate*.

4.4.3 Analysing concordance lines

With the central terms of the two corpora determined, their concordance lines were generated in Sketch Engine. A meaningful and continuous context for metaphor analysis requires a sufficient number of words co-occurring with the central terms in the concordance lines. As the corpora consist of discourse from different registers, the required length of context in concordance analysis may vary. For instance, social media texts are typically brief, with short sentences that normally provide the full context. In contrast, government speeches and parliamentary debates tend to use longer sentences and sometimes require wider context beyond the sentence boundary to fully understand the discussion around the central terms. In particular, the parliamentary debates involving exchanges between Prime Ministers and other MPs often demand extended context, as relevant contextual information may be conveyed through others' utterances in the dialogue.

The concordance analysis of both topic-related and vehicle-related central terms involved examining their collocates. This study chose LogDice as the association measure to examine the collocational strength between the central terms and their collocates. LogDice performs consistently and stably across corpora of varying sizes and produces values within a reasonable range (Rychlý, 2008, p.9). By contrast, the T-score tends to overlook the "co-occurrences that occur less than would be expected" (Weeds & Weir, 2005, p.447), while MI favours "sparse words against common words" resulting in an unbalanced ranking (Alrabiah et al., 2014, p.6). Frankenberg-Garcia (2018) noted that, on a standardised scale with a maximum value of 14, a LogDice score of 3 or higher with at least five co-occurrences signifies a typical collocation (p.98). Berry-Rogghe (1973) pointed out that the threshold for determining the significance of collocations ultimately depends on the researcher's discretion and the objectives of their study.

The analysis set a LogDice score of 8 as the threshold for determining significant collocates of a central term, for three reasons. First, previous studies (Öksüz et al., 2021, Pinto et al., 2021, Wongkhan & Thienthong, 2021) have demonstrated that collocates with LogDice score exceeding 7 indicate statistical significance and typicality of the associations. Second, in both corpora, collocates of the central terms with a LogDice score of 8 or higher meet the criterion of co-occurring at least five times. Third, the purpose of determining significant collocates in the analysis is to specify the key topics associated with the central terms and potential key metaphors, rather than to produce an exhaustive list. As Philip (2010) argued, examining the interaction between keywords and metaphors can help explain why certain words are central to a text, given the evaluative function of metaphor in discourse (p.186). Meanwhile, by analysing collocational patterns, particularly the downward collocates of keywords, source domain lexis that significantly interact with target domain keywords can be classified as key metaphors (2010, p.196). Analysing significant collocates and their contexts helps identify the key topics related to Brexit within the two corpora, as well as whether these collocates are used as key metaphors and their recurrent associations with topic-related central terms.

4.4.4 Steps for analysing central terms and metaphors

The data analysis process focused on two main aims. The first was to identify central terms that reflect key Brexit-related topics in the two corpora. This provided the concordance lines needed for the second aim of identifying metaphors in the contexts of these central terms, thereby capturing metaphors closely related to Brexit discourse during the tenures of the two Prime Ministers.

As illustrated in Section 4.4.2, 23 topic-related central terms and 33 vehicle-related central terms were identified across the two corpora. To achieve the second aim, the analysis of topic-related terms proceeded in three steps. First, their significant collocates were examined, and potential metaphors were marked. Second, the MIP was applied to determine whether these potential metaphors were indeed used metaphorically in their concordance lines and to identify any other lexical units used metaphorically within those contexts. Third, 200 random concordance samples were extracted for each central term to provide complementary examples of metaphor use.

For the vehicle-related terms, the analysis involved two steps. First, a sample of 100 concordance lines for each term was reviewed to gain a general understanding of how these terms semantically engage in Brexit discussions. This stage allowed for a preliminary observation of whether the terms were potentially used as metaphor vehicles and whether they appeared as part of a systematic metaphor. Second, the significant collocates of these terms and their concordance lines were analysed. During this process, the MIP was applied to determine whether the terms were used metaphorically and to identify other potential metaphors in the context. This step provided insight into the Brexit-related topics conveyed through these key metaphors.

Following the coding procedure illustrated in Section 4.3.2, the metaphors identified from the concordance lines of the topic- and vehicle-related central terms and their significant collocates were recorded in spreadsheets, including information on the speaker, surrounding context, the coded topic associated with each metaphor vehicle, and its vehicle grouping. During this coding process, systematic links between individual metaphors, or groups of related metaphors within the same or across different vehicle groupings, and specific topics began to emerge. These recurring associations were identified as systematic metaphors. Where such systematic patterns exhibited narrative features (e.g. participants, events, actions), they were further identified as metaphor scenarios or metaphor stories, depending on the level of discourse at which they occur, as discussed in Section 2.1.3.

Chapter 5 Data analysis and results

The last section in the Methodology chapter described the steps for analysing the central terms determined in this study. Following on from that, this chapter demonstrates the process of identifying metaphors in the concordance lines of topic-related and vehicle-related central terms. The results are then presented in three parts: the metaphors that were identified and their related vehicle groupings, the novel metaphors that were identified among them, and the idiomatic expressions that were found in the two corpora.

5.1 Metaphors identified from the context of topic-related terms

5.1.1 The term *referendum* as an illustration of the analytical process

Following the three steps described in Section 4.4.4, I began by examining significant collocates of the 23 topic-related central terms determined for the two corpora. For example, the term *referendum* has 37 lemmatised significant collocates (after excluding function words) in TM data and 36 in BJ data, 22 of which are shared by both corpora. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 display the co-occurrences and LogDice values of these collocates. The tables also show that several of these significant collocates constituted semi-fixed phrases with the node *referendum*, which frequently appeared in the concordance lines, such as *second (EU/independence) referendum*, *respect (the result of) the referendum*, and *deliver on the (2016) referendum (result)*. For example, among 398 concordance lines of *referendum* filtered by *second*, only three instances showed *second* occurring outside the phraseological structure with *referendum*; in all other cases, they formed the semi-fixed phrase *second (EU/independence) referendum*. As Sinclair et al. (2004) noted, significant collocates demonstrate “a considerable amount of position-dependence,” (p.81) often appearing in positions immediately adjacent to the node. Their collocational patterns with the nodes are limited by “word order or grammatical form and function” (2004, p.81), such as idiomatic phrases.

Table 5.1 Significant collocates of *referendum* in TM data

Collocate	Cooccurrences	LogDice	Frequent semi-fixed phrase
<i>second</i>	399	12.30	<i>second (EU/independence) referendum</i>
<i>result</i>	403	12.21	<i>the result of the referendum, referendum result</i>

<i>honour</i>	118	10.79	<i>honour (the result of) the referendum (mandate)</i>
<i>respect</i>	96	10.31	<i>respect (the result of) the referendum</i>
<i>vote</i>	251	10.126	-
<i>deliver</i>	141	10.14	<i>deliver on the (2016) referendum (result), deliver the result of the referendum</i>
<i>independence</i>	55	9.82	<i>independence referendum</i>
<i>another</i>	60	9.69	<i>another referendum</i>
<i>hold</i>	61	9.66	<i>hold a (second) referendum</i>
<i>people</i>	169	9.25	-
<i>campaign</i>	40	9.18	<i>referendum campaign</i>
<i>British</i>	47	8.78	-
<i>first</i>	41	8.75	<i>first referendum</i>
<i>take</i>	72	8.69	-
<i>rule</i>	34	8.67	<i>rule out a second referendum</i>
<i>leave</i>	71	8.65	-
<i>year</i>	55	8.61	-
<i>out</i>	57	8.57	<i>rule out a second referendum, in/out referendum</i>
<i>decision</i>	35	8.55	-
<i>want</i>	69	8.55	<i>want a second/another referendum</i>
<i>Scottish</i>	29	8.51	<i>Scottish (independence) referendum</i>
<i>promise</i>	26	8.48	-
<i>EU</i>	69	8.44	<i>EU referendum</i>
<i>election</i>	29	8.42	<i>a general election</i>
<i>Scotland</i>	31	8.40	-
<i>Brexit</i>	55	8.39	-
<i>call</i>	25	8.38	<i>call for a second/another referendum</i>
<i>believe</i>	34	8.35	-
<i>place</i>	34	8.31	<i>referendum (that) took place</i>
<i>think</i>	37	8.28	-
<i>remain</i>	28	8.25	-
<i>accept</i>	23	8.19	<i>accept the (result of the) referendum</i>
<i>have</i>	225	8.08	<i>have a second/another referendum</i>
<i>manifesto</i>	17	8.06	-
<i>back</i>	30	8.05	-
<i>divisive</i>	15	8.03	-
<i>month</i>	20	8.02	-

Table 5.2 Significant collocates of *referendum* in BJ data

Collocate	Cooccurrences	LogDice	Frequent semi-fixed phrase
<i>result</i>	106	11.51	<i>the result of the referendum, referendum result</i>
<i>second</i>	90	11.39	<i>second referendum</i>
<i>independence</i>	55	10.97	<i>independence referendum</i>
<i>another</i>	45	10.34	<i>another referendum</i>
<i>respect</i>	47	10.31	<i>respect (the result of) the referendum</i>
<i>vote</i>	67	9.66	-
<i>mandate</i>	21	9.54	-
<i>honour</i>	19	9.41	<i>honour the referendum (result/mandate)</i>
<i>promise</i>	25	9.31	-
<i>two</i>	24	9.24	<i>two (more/chaotic) referendums</i>
<i>Scotland</i>	35	9.20	-
<i>campaign</i>	20	9.16	-
<i>hold</i>	17	9.09	<i>hold a referendum, hold an independence referendum</i>
<i>referendum</i>	24	9.08	-
<i>deliver</i>	30	9.08	<i>deliver on the referendum result</i>
<i>confirmatory</i>	12	9.03	<i>confirmatory referendum</i>
<i>Brexit</i>	40	8.93	<i>Brexit referendum</i>
<i>want</i>	41	8.78	<i>want a second referendum</i>
<i>Scottish</i>	17	8.78	-
<i>call</i>	16	8.73	<i>call for a (second) referendum</i>
<i>remain</i>	15	8.69	-
<i>argue</i>	9	8.47	-
<i>EU</i>	24	8.45	-
<i>one</i>	29	8.44	-
<i>election</i>	20	8.41	-
<i>implement</i>	9	8.39	<i>implement the referendum result, implement the result of the referendum</i>
<i>membership</i>	8	8.37	<i>referendum on (its/our) membership</i>
<i>first</i>	14	8.28	<i>first referendum</i>
<i>revoke</i>	7	8.25	-
<i>have</i>	145	8.22	<i>have a second/another referendum</i>
<i>leave</i>	17	8.10	-
<i>now</i>	23	8.10	-
<i>once-in-a-generation</i>	6	8.05	<i>once-in-a-generation referendum</i>
<i>let</i>	13	8.04	-
<i>outcome</i>	7	8.04	<i>outcome of the (2016) referendum</i>

<i>cancel</i>	6	8.01	<i>cancel the (result of the) referendum</i>
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As shown in the tables, some semi-fixed phrases are shared by both corpora, such as *respect/honour (the result of) the referendum* and *call for/want/have a second referendum*, while others are unique to one corpus, such as *rule out a second referendum* in TM data and *cancel the (result of the) referendum* in BJ data. Additionally, words such as *deliver*, *campaign*, *Brexit*, and *result*, which create phraseological combinations with *referendum* and are also central terms in either corpus, are particularly useful for highlighting key Brexit-related information (Milizia, 2010). Among the significant collocates that did not constitute semi-fixed phrases, such as *people*, *divisive*, *promise*, *mandate*, and *revoke*, the concordance analysis allowed for the examination of other possible related topics and metaphors used in the discourse about the referendum. For instance, concordance lines of *referendum* filtered by *divisive* indicated that Brexit-supporting MPs considered a second referendum to be a divisive option, whereas MPs who supported Remain argued that the 2016 referendum had already proved divisive. Meanwhile, collocates such as *Scotland*, *Scottish*, *independence*, and *once-in-a-generation* refer to the Scottish independence referendum held in 2014, which is not relevant to this study and was therefore excluded from the analysis. Based on the concordance analysis, the significant collocates—*deliver*, *take* (as in *take back...* and *take ... out of*), *leave*, *out* (as in *in/out referendum*), *remain*, and *back* (as in *take back...* and *back a...*)—were identified as metaphors.

5.1.2 Significant collocates identified as metaphors

Following the same procedures used to identify metaphors from the significant collocates of the term *referendum*, I analysed the significant collocates of all 23 topic-related central terms in each corpus. A total of 1,028 significant collocates of these central terms were found in TM data, and 867 were found in BJ data. As expected, many significant collocates of these central terms overlapped between TM data and BJ data. The shared significant collocates are listed in Appendix D. Terms including *deal*, *vote*, *Brexit*, *EU*, *trade*, *business*, *referendum*, *United Kingdom*, *market*, and *border* each have at least 50% overlap in their significant collocates across the two corpora. For example, *deal* has 66 significant collocates in TM data and 56 in BJ data, of which 45 are shared, making up more than 50% of the collocates in both lists. For another group of terms including *interest*, *backstop*, and *arrangement*, the proportion of shared collocates is relatively low in both corpora, below 40%. Overall,

69.6% (16/23) of the central terms in TM data and 82.6% (19/23) in BJ data share more than 40% of their significant collocates across the two corpora.

Like *referendum*, some significant collocates of the remaining 22 central terms were excluded from the analysis after examining a sample of their concordance lines, as they were not relevant to the key topics of Brexit. A total of 114 irrelevant collocates were removed: 42 from TM data, 72 from BJ data, and 17 appearing in both corpora. Among these collocates, terms such as *Secretary* (with *Brexit*); *Executive*, *Assembly*, and *State* (with *Northern Ireland*); *Strategy*, *Energy*, *Industrial*, and *Department* (with *business*); *State* (with *European Union*) were excluded, as these collocates, when combined with the central terms, refer to specific positions, institutions, or departments, such as *Brexit Secretary*, *Northern Ireland Assembly* and *the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy*. Some collocates referring to specific names of MPs, constituencies, locations, or parliamentary procedures were also excluded, such as *Grant*, *Carrick*, and *Ayr* (with *bill*) in TM data; *Rory*, *Stewart*, *Penrith*, and *Berwick* (with *border*); and *emergency* and *statement* (with *business*) in BJ data. In addition, some collocates clearly pertain to topics unrelated to Brexit in their concordance lines. Examples include *Agriculture* and *violence* (with *bill*); *electoral*, *criminal*, *justice*, and *humanitarian* (with *law*); and *modern* (with *Britain*) in TM data; as well as *energy*, *environment*, *sentencing*, *employment*, *online*, *safety*, and *abuse* (with *bill*); *digital*, *US*, *Australia*, and *Trump* (with *trade*); and *capitalism*, *insurance*, *consumer*, and *housing* (with *market*) in BJ data.

After excluding unrelated significant collocates, it is clear that many relevant collocates are shared by both corpora. These shared collocates, particularly those constituting semi-fixed phrases with the central term, suggests that many key topics associated with these central terms are common across Brexit discourse during both Prime Ministers' tenures. For example, for the central term *Brexit*, shared semi-fixed phrases such as *deliver (on) a/the Brexit*, *no-deal Brexit*, *hard Brexit*, *vote for Brexit*, and *stop Brexit* reflect the common topics discussed in both corpora. Moreover, the shared collocates used metaphorically represent specific key metaphors (Phillip, 2010) related to Brexit that may have persisted throughout both tenures. The concordance analysis of all retained significant collocates in the two corpora identified collocates that were used metaphorically in context. It also showed frequent semi-fixed phrases that these collocates constituted with the central terms, which are presented in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Significant collocates used metaphorically and their semi-fixed phrases

Corpus	metaphorical collocate	semi-fixed phrase
TM data	lose, orderly, approach, soft, smooth, clear, blindfold, treat, separate, exit, withdrawal, divorce, area, freely, operate, freedom, regain, build, strong, bright, turn, full, movement, friction, return, seamless, set (out), side, enter, together, hand, look, trap, bespoke	<u>deliver</u> on the vote (of the British people), <u>approach</u> to Brexit, <u>soft</u> Brexit, <u>smooth</u> and <u>orderly</u> Brexit, <u>blindfold</u> Brexit, <u>treat</u> Northern Ireland differently, Northern Ireland's <u>position</u> , <u>exit/withdrawal</u> from the EU, <u>divorce</u> bill, trade <u>freely</u> , <u>operate</u> within the single/European market, <u>freedom</u> to trade/ <u>strike</u> new trade deals, in/ <u>out</u> referendum, <u>regain</u> <u>control</u> of our law, <u>build</u> the better/ <u>stronger</u> , fairer Britain, <u>bright</u> future for Britain, <u>full</u> <u>access</u> to/member(ship) of the single market/customs union, <u>strong</u> single market (deal), <u>free/freedom</u> of <u>movement</u> , <u>frictionless</u> border, <u>return</u> to a <u>hard</u> border/ the border of the part, <u>seamless</u> border, <u>friction</u> at the borders, <u>support/pass/set out</u> in the withdrawal agreement, the interests of both <u>sides</u> , <u>come together</u> in the national interest, <u>go into</u> the negotiations, ... <u>hand</u> in the negotiations, <u>exit</u> from / <u>trap</u> in/ <u>enter</u> the backstop, <u>bespoke</u> arrangement, negotiating <u>hand</u>
BJ data	see, unleash, up, retain, friend, partner, further, surrender, reach, burden, red, tape, cut, break (up), drag, divide, stand, vision, remove, defend, wide, undermine, rid, team	<u>move</u> (this country) <u>on/forward</u> , <u>unleash</u> the benefits of Brexit, <u>level up</u> the UK/United Kingdom, <u>retained</u> EU law, our <u>friends</u> in the EU, EU <u>friends</u> , <u>go further</u> than the EU, <u>surrender</u> bill, <u>reach</u> a (free) trade agreement, <u>give</u> business the confidence, <u>burden/red tape</u> for/on (British) business, <u>drag...out of</u> the European Union, <u>break up</u> the/our United Kingdom, <u>unleash</u> Britain's potential, single market <u>alignment</u> , <u>remove</u> from the withdrawal agreement, <u>stand up for</u> the interest, <u>wide</u> interest, <u>undermine</u> the negotiations, <u>get rid of/remove</u> the backstop, negotiating <u>team</u>
Shared	leave, support, deliver, back, out, table, off, take, put, free, end, bring, way, come, give, trigger, hard, go, part, lead, access, outside, place, move, forward, remain, stay, pass, frictionless, open, barrier, strike, grow, control, force, break,	<u>leave</u> without a deal/with no deal, <u>back</u> the/this (Brexit) deal, <u>crash out</u> without a deal/with no deal, <u>take</u> no deal <u>off the table</u> , <u>free</u> trade deal, vote to <u>leave/remain</u> , <u>trigger</u> article 50, <u>deliver</u> (on) Brexit, <u>hard</u> Brexit, <u>leave/remain in/stay in</u> the EU/ European Union/the single market/the customs union, <u>outside</u> the EU/European Union/the customs union, <u>take.../come out of</u> the EU (European Union), <u>pass/support</u> the/this bill, <u>frictionless</u> trade, <u>barriers</u> to trade, <u>strike</u> free trade

	<i>position, role, internal, reopen, stage, progress, alignment</i>	<i>deal, <u>give</u> certainty to businesses, <u>deliver</u> on the referendum, <u>take back control</u> of our..., <u>break</u> the law, <u>access</u> to the EU (single) market, <u>internal</u> market, <u>open up</u> (new) markets, <u>hard/open</u> border, <u>reopen</u> the withdrawal agreement, <u>stage</u> of the negotiation, negotiating <u>position</u></i>
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As shown in the table, 34 significant collocates exclusive to TM data, 23 exclusive to BJ data, and 43 shared across both corpora were identified as metaphors. The concordance lines showed that some collocates functioned as a component of multi-word units which, taken as a whole, were identified as metaphors. For instance, *set* (with *withdrawal agreement*) in TM data typically appeared in the phrasal verb *set out*; *break* (with *United Kingdom*) and *up* (with *UK*) in BJ data occurred in the phrasal verbs *break up* and *level up*; while *red* and *tape* (with *business*) in BJ data, and *off* and *table* (with *deal*) in both corpora, appeared in the idiomatic expressions *red tape* and *take ... off the table*.

5.2 Vehicle-related central terms as metaphors

As discussed in Section 4.4.2, there are 29 vehicle-related central terms in TM data and 25 in BJ data, with 21 shared by both corpora. Following the two-step procedure for analysing vehicle-related terms outlined in Section 4.4.4, all these terms in the two corpora were found to be used metaphorically in context. Most of these terms are also used as significant collocates of the topic-related central terms listed in the previous section. Similar to the analysis of topic-related terms, in examining these terms' significant collocates, some were excluded from the concordance analysis due to their irrelevance to Brexit, such as *pressure* (with *put*) in TM data, and *forecast* and *G20* (with *growth*) in BJ data. Meanwhile, each vehicle-related term also constituted Brexit-related semi-fixed phrases with their significant collocates or functioned as part of multi-word units that were identified as metaphors. Table 5.4 below presents these terms and their semi-fixed phrases. The shared terms *leave*, *remain*, and *deliver*, whose semi-fixed phrases were already listed in Table 5.3, are therefore omitted from this table. In each column of TM data and BJ data, the semi-fixed phrases or multi-word units are divided into two parts: (1) those constituted by vehicle-related terms that are exclusive to each corpus, and (2) those constituted by vehicle-related terms shared by both corpora.

Table 5.4 Vehicle-related central term and their semi-fixed phrases

Corpus	Vehicle-related term	Semi-fixed phrase/multi-word unit
TM data	<i>position, access, give, end, side, progress, face, exit</i>	<p>(1) <i>sedentary/negotiating/UK's/default/legal/EU's/Labour party's/Government's/position, free/unfettered/ continue/ frictionless/barrier-free access, maintain/retain access, give...the opportunity/an assurance/ certainty/a mandate /that commitment /the decision/the choice/, bring an end to..., end the/this uncertainty, come to an end, on both sides, make...progress (on), sufficient/a little more/ significant /rapid/further/historic progress, unilateral exit mechanism /clause, no-deal/smooth and orderly exit</i></p> <p>(2) <i>take...through..., (smooth and) orderly way, step up, put down, go back (to), turn...back on, turning back, move ahead/into, run down the clock, go down the road/route, lay/break down, build a brighter future, build support, control of our destiny, lost/regain control of...</i></p>
BJ data	<i>stand, level, growth. away</i>	<p>(1) <i>stand on a manifesto/mandate, stand side by side, stand ready to..., level up/down, level playing field, drive/boost (economic) growth, walk/sweep/strip/step away (from)...</i></p> <p>(2) <i>way through, build back better, Northern Ireland's /Britain's place, get back (to), hand/give back, held back (by), place/put one's trust in, shut down, run...down, hand back/over control, complete control</i></p>
Shared	<i>leave, remain, see, clear, deliver, support, look, way, move, place control, build, take, out, up, forward, come, back, put, bring, down,</i>	<i>look at, find a way, the best way, move forward/towards/on /away from, take/bring back control, control immigration, full/sovereign control, build a consensus, build new partnership/relationship with..., take steps (to), take... forward, take...out of, take...off the table, take...away from, take.../get/come out (of), reach out, way out of, crash out, stand up for/against, up and down, put up, break up, open up, way/go/step forward, come together, bring...back, put...back (to), put...in place, put together, bring...together, kick the can down the road</i>

As the table shows, terms such as *up, out, down, place, forward, and bring*, which are shared by both corpora, as well as *stand, level, and away* in BJ data, all contribute to certain metaphorical multi-word lexical units in context, such as *level up/down,*

crash out, put...in place, take.../move a way forward, and stand up for/against. The shared and different semi-fixed phrases and multi-word units highlight, on the one hand, metaphors consistently used to describe the same key Brexit topics across both Prime Ministers' tenures, and on the other hand, distinct metaphors associated with either the same or different Brexit-related topics during each tenure.

5.3 Results of the corpus and metaphor analysis

5.3.1 The number of metaphors and vehicle groupings

All metaphor vehicles identified from the analysis of both topic- and vehicle-related central terms are counted in terms of metaphor tokens, with each token representing an occurrence of a metaphor vehicle, and metaphor lemmas, with each lemma grouping together the morphological variants of the same metaphorical lexical unit. Table 5.5 presents the total number of metaphor tokens and lemmas in each corpus, along with their normalised frequencies per million tokens (pmt) for comparison, following standard practice in corpus linguistics (Baker, 2006; McEnery & Harddie, 2012) and being appropriate for the size of the two corpora in this study. Since the two corpora also contain parliamentary statements from various MPs during the tenures of the two Prime Ministers, the metaphor tokens and lemmas used by each Prime Minister were calculated separately.

Table 5.5 The number of metaphor tokens and types in the two corpora

	TM data	BJ data
Total metaphor tokens	5,051 (2,772.56 pmt)	2,900 (2,687.69 pmt)
Total metaphor lemmas	427 (234.34 pmt)	448 (413.48 pmt)
Metaphor tokens of each PM	3,282 (1800.54 pmt)	1,976 (1823.25 pmt)
Metaphor lemmas of each PM	279 (153.06 pmt)	301 (277.73 pmt)

As the table shows, although the number of metaphor tokens in TM data is almost twice as high as in BJ data, their normalised metaphor frequencies differ only slightly. Likewise, while the raw counts of metaphor lemmas are similar across the two corpora, BJ data shows a substantially higher normalised frequency than TM data. Among the metaphor lemmas identified in the two corpora, 279 out of 427 are used by Theresa May in TM data, and 301 out of 448 are used by Boris Johnson in BJ data. The proportion of these metaphor lemmas relative to the total in each corpus is similar, with BJ data showing a slightly higher percentage (67.19%) than TM data

(65.3%). At the level of metaphor tokens and lemmas each Prime Minister used, the normalised frequency of metaphor tokens also does not differ greatly between the two corpora, whereas the normalised frequency of metaphor lemmas is considerably higher in Boris Johnson's Brexit discourse than in Theresa May's.

A total of 74 vehicle groupings were established for the metaphor lemmas identified in TM data, and 77 for those in BJ data. 68 of these groupings are shared by both corpora, accounting for 91.9% of the total in TM data and 88.3% in BJ data. Among the ten most frequently used vehicle groupings in each corpus, nine are shared by both corpora: *JOURNEY*, *MOVEMENT*, *MACHINE*, *DELIVERING*, *BUILDING*, *SEEING*, *PHYSICAL SUPPORT*, *BODILY ACTION*, and *ACCESS*. The six non-shared vehicle groupings in TM data are *TRANSPORTATION*, *SLEEPING*, *SIZE*, *COSMETICS*, *HEIGHT*, and *TEXTILE*; while the nine non-shared vehicle groupings in BJ data *SHARPNESS*, *TOOL*, *COMPANY*, *CONQUEST*, *GIFT*, *MUSIC*, *WEIGHT*, *BROADCASTING/TELEVISION*, and *DANCING*. All non-shared groupings appear at the lowest frequencies in each corpus, with the highest being the grouping *TRANSPORTATION* in TM data, where its single metaphor lemma *hub* occurs four times. Only one non-shared grouping in the two corpora contains three metaphor lemmas (*SLEEPING* in TM data), while all other groupings contain just one.

Among the metaphor lemmas in TM data and BJ data, 199 are shared by both corpora, representing 46.6% of the total in TM data and 44.4% in BJ data. In terms of frequency, the shared lemmas account for 86.9% of all metaphor lemma occurrences in TM data and 83.7% in BJ data. Among the top 100 most frequent metaphor lemmas in each corpus, where the minimum token frequency is 13 in TM data and 6 in BJ data, only eight in TM data (e.g., *seamless*, *stand behind*, *turn back on*) and ten in the BJ data (e.g., *level up*, *shut down*, *oven-ready*) are not shared between the two corpora. That is to say, the metaphor lemmas that occur most frequently in each corpus are largely shared, reflecting common Brexit related topics discussed in government discourse during the tenures of both Prime Ministers. The shared metaphor lemmas and their vehicle groupings are presented in Table 5.6, while the complete list of vehicle groupings with corresponding metaphor lemma examples for each corpus is provided in Appendix E.

Table 5.6 Shared metaphor lemmas and their vehicle groupings

Vehicle grouping	Shared metaphor lemmas
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ACCESS	<i>open up, open, access, reopen, bridge</i>
ANIMAL	<i>unleash, harness</i>
AREA/PLACE	<i>area, place, side</i>
ATTACHMENT	<i>tie, lock, bind</i>
BARRIER	<i>barrier, obstacle, block</i>
BODILY ACTION	<i>reach out, stand, seize, break, duck, hold, overturn, strike, sit, lift, give</i>
BODY PART	<i>hand, heart</i>
BUILDING	<i>build, way out of..., exit, rebuild, put up, enter, blueprint</i>
CONSTRAINT	<i>hold by, hold back</i>
DELIVERING	<i>deliver, delivery</i>
DIRECTION	<i>outward, direction, face (verbal)</i>
DISASTER	<i>disaster, disastrous, devastating, catastrophic, destructive, calamity, destroy</i>
DISTANCE	<i>close, breadth</i>
FIGHT/WAR	<i>defend, fight, withdrawal, mission</i>
FILM/PLAY	<i>stage, role</i>
FIRE	<i>bonfire, fuel</i>
FOOD	<i>half-baked, preserve</i>
FRICTION	<i>frictionless, friction</i>
GAME	<i>merry-go-round</i>
GROUPING	<i>bring...together, come together, put...together</i>
HEALTH/ILLNESS	<i>paralysis, exacerbate, paralyse</i>
INSURANCE	<i>insurance policy</i>
INVESTMENT	<i>dividend, bonanza, prospectus, stake</i>
JOURNEY	<i>return, way, move on/forward, approach, take steps (to), way/go/step forward, go back, stay, leave, remain, on course, avenue, set out, path, departure, destination, carry on, lead</i>
LANDSCAPE	<i>cliff edge</i>
LIGHT/DARKNESS	<i>looming, bright</i>
LIQUID	<i>flow, dilute, bubble</i>
MACHINE	<i>trigger, control, mechanism, system</i>
MARRIAGE/FAMILY	<i>partner, divorce</i>
MEDICINE	<i>heal</i>
MIND	<i>mind, nightmare</i>
MOVEMENT	<i>take...forward, take/move away from..., take.../come/get out of, bring...back, put...back (to), stuck, take back..., rise, shift momentum, deadlock</i>
NARRATIVES/BOOK	<i>chapter, mark, story</i>
PERSONIFICATION	<i>friend, neighbour, blind, pioneer</i>
PHOTO/PICTURE	<i>image</i>

<i>PHYSICAL DAMAGE</i>	<i>damage, damaging, broken</i>
<i>PHYSICAL HARM/ INJURY</i>	<i>harm, cut</i>
<i>PHYSICAL OBJECT</i>	<i>safety net, blindfold, mark, forge, red tape</i>
<i>PHYSICAL PAIN</i>	<i>suffer</i>
<i>PHYSICAL SEPARATION</i>	<i>break up, division, divide, split, carve</i>
<i>PHYSICAL STRENGTH</i>	<i>strong, force, powerful, strength</i>
<i>PHYSICAL SUPPORT</i>	<i>support, back, on the back of</i>
<i>POSITION</i>	<i>position, (put)...in place, outside</i>
<i>PRISON</i>	<i>trap, capture, hostage, escape, escape route</i>
<i>RELIGION</i>	<i>salvation</i>
<i>REMOVING</i>	<i>remove</i>
<i>REPAIRING</i>	<i>restore</i>
<i>SEEING</i>	<i>see, clear, look at, vision, focus on, sight</i>
<i>SOUND</i>	<i>voice</i>
<i>SPORTS</i>	<i>crash out, prize, sideline, win, stalemate, beat</i>
<i>TEXTURE</i>	<i>hard, soft, smooth</i>
<i>TIDINESS</i>	<i>orderly, mess, shambles, clean up</i>
<i>TRAFFIC</i>	<i>gridlock</i>
<i>VEHICLE</i>	<i>reverse, drive</i>
<i>VERBAL ACTION</i>	<i>rhetoric, translate</i>
<i>VIOLENT ACTION</i>	<i>rip up, tear up, slash, drag (...out of), threat, threaten, attack</i>

Among the shared metaphor lemmas, some are not specifically related to Brexit topics but are instead widely used in everyday language and thus not central to the analysis—for example, *see, clear, look at* in *SEEING*; *face* (verbal) in *DIRECTION*; *way* in *JOURNEY*; *strong, powerful* in *PHYSICAL STRENGTH*; and *heart* in *BODY PART*. In contrast, other shared metaphor lemmas, though some may also be common in everyday language, are closely linked to key topics and discursive patterns, and are therefore more Brexit-specific and salient in the discourse. For instance, *give* from the *BODILY ACTION* grouping is consistently used to express the need to complete Brexit in order to provide certainty for people and businesses, and *take back (control)* from the *MOVEMENT* grouping—one of the most frequently used metaphor lemmas in both corpora (ranking fourth in TM data and seventh in BJ data)—represents one of the most prevalent narratives among Brexit supporters (Zappettini, 2019b).

Among the vehicle groupings that contain shared Brexit-specific metaphor lemmas, the connections between groupings and topics can be classified into two types. First, certain groupings correspond to specific key topics, including *JOURNEY*,

INVESTMENT, *INSURANCE*, and *PHYSICAL SEPARATION*. Second, different groupings are linked by a particular key topic, as follows: (1) groupings of *ACCESS*, *BARRIER*, and *FRICTION* describe the border arrangement between the UK and the EU; (2) groupings of *DISASTER*, *HEALTH/ILLNESS*, *PHYSICAL DAMAGE*, and *VIOLENT ACTION* convey the negative impacts of Brexit on various aspects of the UK. (3) groupings of *ATTACHMENT*, *CONSTRAINT* and *PRISON* are associated with the UK-EU relationship, especially the limitations of EU membership for the UK; and (4) groupings of *TEXTURE* and *TIDINESS* describe the manner in which Brexit is conducted. The systematic metaphors constructed through the metaphor vehicles in these groupings will be illustrated in the next chapter.

The shared metaphor lemmas between the two corpora involve 56 vehicle groupings, accounting for 76.7% of the total groupings in TM data and 72.7% in BJ data, respectively. The vehicle groupings that share the highest numbers of metaphor lemmas are *JOURNEY* (21), *MOVEMENT* (14), *BODILY ACTION* (11), *BUILDING* (8), *VIOLENT ACTION* (7), and *DISASTER* (7). Among these, the first four also appear among the top ten vehicle groupings in each corpus with the highest number of metaphor lemmas, as presented in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7 Top vehicle groupings by number of metaphor lemmas in the two corpora

TM data		BJ data	
Vehicle grouping	Number of metaphor lemmas	Vehicle grouping	Number of metaphor lemmas
<i>JOURNEY</i>	42	<i>JOURNEY</i>	30
<i>MOVEMENT</i>	27	<i>MOVEMENT</i>	28
<i>BODILY ACTION</i>	22	<i>PERSONIFICATION</i>	26
<i>PERSONIFICATION</i>	18	<i>FIGHT/WAR</i>	19
<i>MACHINE</i>	16	<i>FOOD</i>	18
<i>FIGHT/WAR</i>	15	<i>BODILY ACTION</i>	17
<i>BUILDING</i>	14	<i>BUILDING</i>	12
<i>VIOLENT ACTION</i>	13	<i>MACHINE</i>	12
<i>SPORTS</i>	12	<i>VIOLENT ACTION</i>	12
<i>ACCESS</i>	11	<i>PHYSICAL OBJECT</i>	12

Among the eight groupings that are shared across both corpora, with the exception of the *JOURNEY* grouping in TM data, which contains noticeably more metaphor lemmas (42) than in BJ data (30), the other shared groupings exhibit little to no

differences in the number of metaphor lemmas they include. Other groupings that exhibit clear differences between the two corpora include *ACCESS* (eleven in TM data versus five in BJ data), *BARRIER* (eight in BJ data versus three in TM data), *INSURANCE* (five in TM data versus one in BJ data), *FOOD* (eighteen in BJ data versus six in TM data), *REMOVING* (eleven in BJ data versus three in TM data), and *CONSTRAINT* (nine in BJ data versus two in TM data). Vehicle groupings with a larger variety of metaphor lemmas may suggest that the topics associated with them are more richly represented from multiple perspectives through metaphors. In comparison, vehicle groupings with fewer metaphor lemmas, particularly high-frequency ones such as *DELIVERING* and *PHYSICAL SUPPORT*, appear to exhibit a relatively narrow range of metaphorical usage in framing the topic. For instance, within the *DELIVERING* grouping, the only two metaphor lemmas *deliver* and *delivery* are consistently linked to the metaphorical meaning of completing Brexit.

5.3.2 Novel metaphors identified in the two corpora

As noted in Section 2.1.2, this study adopts Deignan's (2005) corpus-based criterion for identifying novel metaphor use: a metaphor is regarded as novel if its metaphorical use occurs fewer than once in every thousand instances of the word in a general corpus, or if all instances are drawn from a single source (p.47). As this is a rather basic measure, its result should be interpreted with caution. This study chose the Sketch Engine enTenTen21 corpus (Updated English Web 2021 Corpus) as the general reference corpus, encompassing a wide range of genres and text types (Jakubíček et al., 2013). On this basis, token frequency in the two Brexit corpora was used only as a heuristic to locate potential novel metaphors, which were then analysed to determine whether they are used in a novel way according to Deignan's (2005) criterion. A total of 23 metaphor lemmas were identified as novel; each of these occurred only once in either TM data or BJ data. Eighteen resulted from the creative linguistic realisation of an existing conceptual mapping, while the remaining five were created through the establishment of a new mapping between a topic and a vehicle (Birdsell, 2018). These two mechanisms for producing novel metaphors are explained in the following sections.

Among the 23 novel metaphor lemmas identified in the two corpora, none were used by Theresa May, while eleven were used by Boris Johnson; the remaining metaphors were produced by other MPs in parliamentary debates. This aligns with the view of Boris Johnson as a highly skilful and creative user of metaphor, reflecting his "ludic"

style of political communication, as noted by Charteris-Black (2019b, p.164). In contrast, Theresa May has generally been known as a more cautious and reserved speaker, sometimes described as “robotic” (Brusenbauch Meislová, 2019, p.686). Most of the potential creative metaphors in TM data were excluded for not meeting the criteria of novelty based on corpus evidence. For instance, metaphor lemmas such as *jump the queue* and *queue jumper* were initially considered as potential creative uses. However, examples from enTenTen21 show that these expressions are commonly used in the context of immigration discourse. As noted by Pérez-Sobrinó et al. (2022) in Section 2.1.2, this case, referring to EU citizens within the British immigration system, could be considered a creative use, as it involves a highly specific reference and a form of contextual repurposing. The reason this study does not classify such cases as novel metaphors is that it relies primarily on corpus evidence, which shows that *queue jumper* is a relatively conventional expression in immigration discourse.

5.3.2.1 Novel metaphors created through the first mechanism

TM data contains three novel metaphors created through the first mechanism, while BJ data includes fifteen, as shown in the box below:

TM data: *excess, pay for the other driver’s policy, (political) sorcery*

BJ data: *lubrication, super-masticated, ping off, (Boris) island, oven-ready, burnt (deal), convenience food, place...in the microwave, pierce...plastic covering, slam...in the oven, virus in a vial, break the vial, chlorinated chicken, waddle, hencoop*

The metaphor lemma *lubrication* from the *MACHINE* grouping in BJ data serves as an example to illustrate this mechanism.

- a. *...in the event of a no deal outcome, we will have the extra lubrication of the £39 bn, and whatever deal we do, we will prepare this autumn for an economic package...* (Boris Johnson, first public speech as PM, 24/07/2019)

As shown in example A, Boris Johnson metaphorically referred to the UK’s £39 billion financial settlement with the EU, also known as the “divorce bill” (BBC News, 2022), as *extra lubrication*. This suggests that the money could be withheld in a no-deal scenario and instead used to ease potential economic difficulties, just as lubrication reduces friction and enables machines to operate more smoothly.

Within the 1,000 random concordance lines of the term *lubrication* from the corpus enTenTen21, six instances were found to be used metaphorically in context, while the others referred to its literal meaning: either in the context of machinery, where it reduces friction between moving parts of a machine, or in biological contexts, where it refers to body fluids that ease movement or prevent friction between tissues. Among the six instances of *lubrication* used metaphorically, four are related to the broader conceptual metaphor HUMAN BODY IS A MACHINE (Glebkin, 2013).

- b. *...the yoga positions are considered as the best practices for...lubrication of the joints, and massaging of the body...* (yogawiz.com)
- c. *Since the poisons and toxins in our bodies are in solid form, we need lubrication to carry them out. Fats provide this lubrication, ...* (thegreattao.com)

As illustrated in examples B and C, bodily functions such as eliminating toxins and joint movement are described through machine imagery. In these contexts, fats are likened to lubricants that help move out the solid waste, while yoga is depicted as oiling the joints to promote physical flexibility. The other two examples of the metaphorical use of *lubrication* are as follows.

- d. *Eating for nourishment and pleasure and social lubrication has been around a long time.* (enneagramcentral.com)
- e. *The gears of the film's plot grind along slowly at first, but get their necessary lubrication when a sweaty crone...* (brooklynrail.org)

In example D, it is used to describe how food helps to facilitate smoother communication in social gatherings, while in example E, it refers to a moment in the film's narration that catalyses and accelerates the storyline. These cases demonstrate the existence of a conventional mapping between the source and target domains of *lubrication*. However, since the specific context of *lubrication* found in the BJ data does not appear in the random samples from enTenTen21, it can be considered a creative extension of this conventional mapping. A more conventional expression conveying a similar meaning is "oil the wheels," which is widely used to express the idea of helping things run smoothly.

Following the same analysis, the novel metaphors *sorcery*, *super-masticated*, *ping off*, and *island*, along with their contexts in the corpora and occurrences in

enTenTen21, are summarised in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8 Selected novel metaphors of the first mechanism with corpus evidence

Metaphor lemma	Vehicle grouping	Corpus evidence (enTenTen21)	Contextual use in TM/BJ data
<i>sorcery</i>	MYTHOLOGY	No instance of it used metaphorically in political context	... <u>deployed</u> all kinds of political <u>sorcery</u> ...to <u>win</u> the referendum?
<i>super-masticated</i>	FOOD	All three instances of it are cited from Boris Johnson's words	...leave...–old, <u>desiccated</u> , tired, <u>super-masticated</u> arguments–behind...
<i>ping off</i>	REMOVING	No instance of it used metaphorically	...we are going to <u>rise</u> and <u>ping off</u> the <u>guy ropes</u> of self-doubt and negativity. ...a choice between Boris <u>island</u> –
<i>island</i>	LANDSCAPE	No instance of it used metaphorically	this <u>broken spectacle</u> of Westminster little Britain under Brexit...

As shown in the table, metaphor lemmas such as *island* and *sorcery* are related to conventional conceptual mappings—for example, the association between island and isolation/insularity (Eriksen, 1993, pp.133–134). However, their novelty in the corpora lies in the absence of comparable metaphorical instances in the randomly sampled concordance lines, particularly in political contexts, which highlight the creativity of their contextual use. For *ping off*, instances found in enTenTen21 show that it denotes either the physical action of something bouncing away with a “short, high ringing sound” or the act of transmitting a signal (OALD). Its collocate, *guy rope*, literally refers to “a rope used to keep a pole or tent in a secure position” (OALD). In this context, the collocation does not produce a familiar or coherent literal scenario, and this semantic incongruity contributes to the metaphor’s novelty.

Some of these novel metaphors are grounded in specific creative scenarios. In BJ data, six metaphor lemmas, including *oven-ready*, *burnt (deal)*, *convenience food*, *place...in the microwave*, *pierce...plastic covering*, and *slam...in the oven*, contribute to constructing the scenario of the Brexit deal as a type of ready-made or convenience food, suggesting that the deal was fully prepared (further illustrated in Section 6.5.2). Rodet (2023) argued that the *oven ready* metaphor is not lexicalised

and does not derive from any previously established mapping (p.110). However, I contend that a conceptual mapping between political action and food preparation/cooking can be traced through expressions such as *half-baked (Brexit) deal* and *cook up a deal*, which appear in both corpora. Therefore, the metaphor lemmas related to this scenario were classified as “extending the boundaries” of an existing metaphorical mapping (Birdsell, 2018, p.55). The use of these metaphors in political discourse can also be interpreted as a form of contextual repurposing, whereby a familiar domain (cooking/food) is applied to a specific political context (the Brexit deal) with a clear rhetorical purpose. They were classified as novel metaphors because they meet the criteria on the basis of corpus evidence.

Corpus evidence shows that, out of 793 concordance lines containing *oven-ready* in enTenTen21, 88 instances involve metaphorical use, as illustrated in example A. However, all of these occur after Boris Johnson’s initial use of the metaphor on 11 December 2019 during his election campaign, when he compared the Brexit deal to an oven-ready pie in a video posted on his Facebook page (see example B). This suggests that Boris Johnson’s use was creative, and the subsequent instances in enTenTen21 reflect adoption or repetition of his metaphor.

- a. *The Government promised an oven-ready deal, but their incompetence is plain to see.* (dailybusinessgroup.co.uk)
- b. *Or you can go with us, get Brexit done with our deal, which is ready to go, oven-ready...* (Boris Johnson, Facebook, 11/12/2019)

Among the 1,000 randomly sampled concordance lines for the terms *convenience food* and *burnt* in enTenTen21, no instances were found that correspond to the metaphorical uses observed in BJ data. Instead, both terms appear in literal contexts, as shown in examples C and D, where their meanings are restricted to culinary senses.

- c. *It looks like takeaway and convenience food, which I’ve never been a fan of anyway, will slip even further down the menu...* (dw.com)
- d. *That’s so you can scrape burnt food from the curved sloping edges of different kinds of pots and pans.* (kk.org)

This contrasts with their metaphorical use in BJ data, as shown in examples E and F, where the expressions are used to criticise the Brexit deal as lacking benefit or

value.

- e. ... *living on oven-ready convenience food is not particularly good for our health...*
(Geraint Davies, Lab/Co-op)
- f. *On the one hand, we have the Prime Minister's thin, terrible, burnt oven-ready deal.* (Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi, Lab)

For the metaphorical expressions *slam...in the oven*, *pierce...plastic covering*, and *place...in the microwave*, CQL queries in Sketch Engine, which allow flexible searching of multiple-word sequences, were used to retrieve instances of these expressions in enTenTen21. For example, the query “[lemma="place"] [{}0,5] [word="in"] [word="the"] [lemma="microwave]” searches for occurrences of the lemma *place* followed, within up to five intervening words, by the sequence *in the microwave*. For the expression *pierce...plastic covering*, no instances were retrieved using a CQL query. Therefore, this study searched for the lemma *pierce* and filtered the results for cases containing *plastic covering*.

All 1,000 randomly sampled concordance lines of *place...in the microwave*, 19 concordance lines of *slam...in the oven*, and six concordance lines of *pierce...plastic covering* were found to be used in their literal meanings. As shown in examples G, H, and I, the first two expressions refer directly to food preparation, such as cooking frozen pizza in an oven, while the last one refers to the physical action of piercing the plastic covering of a ready-to-heat meal. All of these are used literally rather than metaphorically.

- g. *Place the mug of milk in the microwave and microwave on high for 2 minutes.*
(kipkis.com)
- h. *Cousins post about gourmet dinners, we slam frozen pizza in the oven, again feeling guilty.* (edventureproject.com)
- i. *...a little better than a microwave instant meal...with the clear plastic covering still awaiting being pierced.* (geomblog.org)

However, in BJ data, these expressions are used metaphorically, as illustrated in examples J and K, to convey that the Brexit deal can be quickly and easily implemented, just like a ready-made meal.

- j. *You put it in, slam it in the oven, take it out, there it is-get Brexit done...* (Boris

Johnson, Facebook, 12/11/2019)

- k. *That oven-ready deal...already had its plastic covering pierced and been placed in the microwave.* (Boris Johnson, PM's New Year message, 31/12/2019)

Other metaphor lemmas related to this scenario in BJ data, such as *thin* (example F) and *pre-cooked*, were not classified as novel metaphors, as comparable instances of their metaphorical use were found in enTenTen21. For instance, the metaphorical use of *pre-cooked* in Example L conveys a similar meaning to Example M, both suggesting that the deal is already prepared and requires little additional work.

- l. *We're going to get Brexit done with a deal that is pre-cooked, ready to go, oven-ready...* (Boris Johnson, Conservative Party conference speech, 24/11/2019)
- m. *...he had his lucrative transportation deal pre-cooked in the oven with transport company Cazaly Mills & Co...* (forix.com)

Another case of novel metaphors in BJ data, linked to a specific scenario, involves *virus in a vial* and *break the vial* from the *ILLNESS* grouping. As illustrated in example N, these expressions, together with other metaphor vehicles, create a scenario describing how Brexit, as a persistent and harmful problem (*virus*) within the Conservative Party that was initially controlled (*in a vial*) but eventually released (*break the vial*) through the referendum, spreading division (*catch the cold*) throughout the country.

- n. *Brexit has been a virus in a vial in a nightstand by the Tory party bed for 40 years. Occasionally, it would break and infect the Conservative party, which would catch a cold... You unleashed a referendum and broke the vial across the country, and we have all caught the cold.* (Mike Kane, Lab)

Although the scenario and framing constructed are creative, the two metaphorical expressions still build on the well-established mapping of viruses as representing danger or threats (Lupton, 1994), though it is typically used in medical and cybersecurity contexts (Glabus, 1998, p.196). In enTenTen21, all 12 instances of the expression *virus in a vial* and 121 instances of *break the vial* occur in literal contexts. Therefore, these two expressions in BJ data were identified as a creative exploitation of an established metaphorical mapping. Meanwhile, *nightstand* and *bed* in the context were also identified as novel metaphors but operating through the second mechanism of establishing a new mapping, which will be explained in the next

section. In this scenario, these two metaphors situate the “virus” (Brexit) within the Conservative Party as part of a household environment: *nightstand* metaphorically represents a place where the Brexit “virus” is stored and contained, while *bed* stands for the Conservative party itself, as if in close proximity to the virus, like a nightstand next to a bed.

In example O, the metaphor vehicle *chlorinated chickens* can be seen as a metonym for lowered food standards, and it appears to be used in a sarcastic and dismissive manner to mock the Labour Party’s leader Jeremy Corbyn as an unappealing candidate for Prime Minister during the election campaign. The vehicle *waddle* may imply Labour’s slow and hesitant action on Brexit, resembling the clumsy way some chickens move; and *hencoop*, as a place where chickens are kept, can be interpreted as metaphorically portraying the opposition as avoiding the responsibility or challenge of Brexit.

- o. ...*finally screw their courage to the sticking point and agree to have an election when the chlorinated chickens waddle from the hencoop where they are hiding...*
(Boris Johnson, Conservative Party conference speech, 02/10/2019)

Out of the total 800 concordance lines for *chlorinated chicken* in enTenTen21, 13 instances metaphorically compare it to the opposition leader, all drawn from Boris Johnson’s own usage, as shown in example P. Among the 1,000 random concordance lines of *waddle*, more than half of the examples use it literally to describe someone’s way of walking; however, none was found to be associated with political actors exhibiting clumsiness or hesitation in their actions. A total of 192 concordance lines of *hencoop* were found, all of which are used in its literal meaning. It is widely recognised that chickens symbolise cowardice (De la Cruz Cabanillas & Tejedor Martínez, 2006, p.349). These three metaphor lemmas extend this pre-existing mapping by linking the behaviour of a chicken and the actions of the opposition party in the political arena.

- p. ...*Boris Johnson branded the Labour leader a “gigantic chlorinated chicken” in the House of Commons on Wednesday.* (news.sky.com)

A similar example in TM data is provided by *excess* and *pay for the other driver’s policy*, both of which contribute to the systematic metaphor depicting the backstop as an insurance policy, further discussed in Section 6.2.9.3.

- q. *is the Prime Minister seriously suggesting...sign up for an insurance policy...not know how much the excess will cost...?* (Kevin Brennan, Lab)
- r. *...no one would even take out a car insurance policy that would leave them vulnerable, so whose insurance is it, and has she agreed to pay for the other driver's policy?* (Lisa Cameron, SNP)

In examples Q and R, the speakers allude to a common experience with insurance that is familiar to most adults, using it as an analogy to discuss aspects of the backstop agreement. While these metaphorical expressions draw on a familiar experience—for example, *pay for the other driver's policy* might suggest that the backstop arrangement could be seen as placing an additional burden on the UK, akin to covering another driver's insurance—the exact correspondence between the insurance scenario and the backstop arrangement is unclear. Among the 1,000 randomly sampled concordance lines for *excess*, no instances reflected its metaphorical use in the context of the backstop as an insurance policy. For the expression *pay for the other driver's policy*, a total of 302 instances with comparable forms, such as *pay for the other driver's expenses/health costs/car repairs/injuries*, were identified in enTenTen21, all of which were used literally.

5.3.2.2 Novel metaphors created through the second mechanism

As shown in the box below, one novel metaphor created through the second mechanism is found in TM data, while four are identified in BJ data.

TM data: *the Titanic vote for the iceberg to get out of the way*

BJ data: *nightstand, bed, send...into orbit, guy rope*

This mechanism is illustrated using the metaphor lemma *send...into orbit* from the *DISTANCE* grouping in BJ data. Example A shows Boris Johnson using this metaphorical expression to imply that the Labour Party's leader, Jeremy Corbyn, should be sidelined from the current Brexit discussions, as if he were thrown or expelled far away into orbit.

- a. *...and figuratively if not literally let us send Jeremy Corbyn into orbit where he belongs.* (Boris Johnson, Conservative Party conference speech, 02/10/2019)

Among the 1,000 random concordance lines of this phrase from enTenTen21, a total of 21 instances are used figuratively, while the remaining examples, as shown in example B, convey its literal meaning, which is launching an object like satellites, spacecraft, or rockets into space.

- b. *...the first private company in history to send a spacecraft into orbit and return it safely to Earth.* (sen.com)

An examination of all 21 instances shows that this phrase is typically used figuratively in three contexts. The first context involves intense emotional or sensory responses. As shown in examples C and D, *send...into orbit* describes a state of extreme happiness brought about by bright sunshine, and an intense positive taste experience triggered by the flavours of food. There are also instances in which this phrase is used to describe intense negative emotions or feelings.

- c. *...accompanied by bright sunshine, sent some of us into orbit with pleasure...* (akonthego.com)
- d. *Everywhere I looked and every recipe that I reviewed sent my taste buds into orbit.* (thruthebugsonmywindshield.com)

The second context of this phrase, when used figuratively, occurs in ball sports, where it exaggerates a ball flying extremely high or far after being hit or kicked with great force by a player, as shown in example E. Since it does not involve cross-domain mapping, this expression functions as hyperbole rather than metaphor.

- e. *I have never seen so many mishits and balls sent into orbit.* (tennisplayer.net)

The third context in which this phrase is used metaphorically involves expressions such as *send your idea into orbit* or *send a skillful artist like Giles into orbit*, all of which convey the idea of someone or something rising to success or fame. Excepting the hyperbolic use, none of the metaphorical uses foreground distance or remoteness as the primary element in the mapping. This contrasts with Boris Johnson's use of the phrase, where distance appears to be a central feature in the mapping. Thus, *send...into orbit* demonstrates its novelty by creatively drawing on the source domain of DISTANCE and introducing an unconventional mapping between this domain and the topic of political marginalisation.

In TM data, as shown in example F, *the Titanic vote for the iceberg to get out of the way* compares the UK voting for a no deal Brexit to the Titanic expecting the iceberg to change course, creating a specific mapping between a well-known historical disaster and a political choice. This is a one-shot, highly contextual mapping, in which the Titanic represents the Conservative Party, and the unmovable iceberg representing the unavoidable threat of a no-deal Brexit. No instance of this metaphorical expression was found in enTenTen21.

f. *...a decision to vote for no deal was “like the Titanic voting for the iceberg to get out of the way”.* (Stephen Gethins, SNP)

As for the metaphor lemma *guy rope* in BJ data, whose context was provided in Table 5.8 in the previous section, it represents a different case from *ping off*, which is created through the first mechanism. In its randomly sampled concordance lines, no instances were found in which *guy rope* was used metaphorically; all occurrences refer to its literal meaning as tent support ropes. Therefore, *guy rope* was considered to establish a new mapping between a physical supporting tool and the topic of constraint imposed on the UK, which, in this context, refers to self-doubt and negativity.

5.3.3 Idiomatic expressions identified in the two corpora

The idiomatic expressions found in the two corpora were categorised separately from the metaphor vehicles. Their meanings were determined with reference to the OALD and LDOCE, as well as to examples from the enTenTen21 corpus. As discussed in Section 2.3.2.1, idiomatic expressions can serve pragmatic and ideological functions in discourse, with their impact driven by the underlying metaphoricality that entails evaluative and emotional connotations. Although all expressions are related to conceptual mappings, this study does not focus on the extent to which these idiomatic expressions have become dead metaphors, where the metaphorical connections are no longer active for current speakers (Deignan, 2005, pp. 36–38), or whether they exist in an “intermediate state” (Billig & MacMillan, 2005, p.461), in which the underlying metaphorical thought remains somewhat active in shaping meaning comprehension (Gibbs et al., 1997). Instead, the analysis focused on their contextual meanings and the positive or negative semantic prosodies they convey, which reflect speakers’ attitudes and evaluations (as discussed in Section 4.1.1), as well as their connections with the key topics. It should be noted that the classification

of idiomatic expressions by semantic prosody is based solely on the evidence from their concordance lines within TM data and BJ data, without consulting additional examples from a general corpus.

A total of 27 idiomatic expression lemmas were identified in TM data and 41 in BJ data, with 197 and 149 tokens in the analysed concordance lines, respectively. 14 of these idiomatic expression lemmas are shared between both corpora, including *kick the can down the road/route*, *take...off the table*, *up and down*, *red line*, *over the line*, *run down the clock*, *throw...under the bus*, *through/by the back door*, *for the birds*, *square the circle*, *race to the bottom*, *hold...to ransom*, *it takes two to tango*, and *you can't have your cake and eat it too*. The shared expression lemmas *take...off the table*, *up and down*, *red line*, *over the line*, *run down the clock*, *race to the bottom*, and *kick the can down the road* are the most frequently used across both corpora, accounting for 76.6% of all idiomatic expression tokens in TM data and 69.3% in BJ data.

Among the 52 idiomatic expression lemmas identified in the two corpora, 37 (71.2%) consistently conveyed negative semantic prosodies in their contexts; Ten (19.2%) consistently conveyed positive semantic prosodies; three (5.8%) arguably show no strong positive or negative semantic prosody; and two (3.8%) varied between positive and negative depending on the context. Most of the idiomatic expressions identified carry negative semantic prosody, which aligns with the observation discussed in Section 2.3.2.1, that figurative expressions, including both conventional and creative metaphors, tends to convey negative evaluations more frequently, since they allow criticism to be expressed in an indirect manner (Deignan, 2012; Fuoli et al., 2022). These idiomatic expressions, classified according to their semantic prosodies, are listed in the box below.

Idiomatic expressions with negative semantic prosody

kick the can down the road, *race to the bottom*, *fed up to the back teeth*, *through/by the back door*, *for the birds*, *hit the wall*, *throw...under the bus*, *fool's gold*, *snatch defeat out of the jaws of victory*, *dead in the water*, *level playing field*, *a leopard does not change its spots*, *cave in on bended knee*, *the Goldilocks (deal)*, *either too hot or too cold*, *wing-and-a-prayer*, *ride roughshod over*, *play hardball*, *every trick in the book*, *put a sock in the megaphone*, *hold...to ransom*, *dance on the head of a pin*, *over a barrel*, *paint...into a corner*, *circle around (someone's) head*, *the thin end of the wedge*, *an uphill struggle*, *the elephant in the room*, *sword of Damocles*, *clasp on to any passing straw*, *screw their courage to the sticking point*,

<i>chop the legs out from under, rearrange the mics on the Titanic, run down the clock, stand aloof, up and down, square the circle, go down the road/route</i>
Idiomatic expressions with positive semantic prosody
<i>philosopher's stone, the jewel in the crown, jot and tittle, round the clock, the buck stops here, take a leaf out of the British Army engineers' book, over the line, hand in glove, keep the ace up my sleeve, in the air</i>
Idiomatic expressions with no strong leaning in semantic prosody
<i>take...off the table, twist and turn, it takes two to tango</i>
Idiomatic expressions with variable semantic prosody
<i>you can't have your cake and eat it too, red line</i>

Despite their “lexicogrammatical fixedness” (Moon, 1998, p.7), idiomatic expressions are not completely “frozen” (p.104), as they can undergo various “transformations” and “variations” in context (p.7). As shown above, some idiomatic expressions differ from their original forms as defined in the OALD and LDOCE. *Cave in on bended knee* combines *cave in* with *on bended knee*. Through this combination, the expression exemplifies an idiom’s association with other colligating structures (Moon, 1998, p.116) and demonstrates systematic variation, involving changes at both syntactic and lexical levels (p.139). In *put a sock in the megaphone*, *it* in the colloquial phrase *put a sock in it* is replaced with *the megaphone*, reflecting lexical variation in idiomatic expressions, specifically noun variation (Moon, 1998, pp.126–127).

Chop the legs out from under and *rearrange the mics on the Titanic* appear as variants of *cut the legs out from under* and *rearrange the deckchairs on the Titanic*, respectively, based on the referenced dictionaries and instances found in the enTenTen21 corpus. These two instances reflect verb variation (pp.124–125) and noun variation, respectively. Both *rearrange the mics on the Titanic* and *the Titanic vote for the iceberg to get out of the way*, as discussed in the previous section, evoke an allegory between the UK and a “sinking ship” and potentially engage listeners by stirring fear and recalling the well-known Titanic disaster (Charteris-Black, 2019a, p.8). These expressions are conventional when used in their original forms. However, the adapted forms can be regarded as specific creative uses, as evidence from enTenTen21 shows that, with the exception of *chop the legs out from under*, none of the other three expressions occur in the corpus.

Several idiomatic expressions shared by both corpora convey negative evaluations in context. *Up and down* (example A) typically appears in the collocation *up and down the country*. Across 41 instances in TM data and 33 in BJ data, the phrase highlights the widespread impact of Brexit across the nation, particularly its negative consequences.

- a. *...will she commit to extending article 50 so that we do not...threatening jobs right up and down this country?* (Luciana Berger, Lab/Co-op)

Run down the clock (example B) was frequently used by Opposition MPs, with 12 instances in TM data and five in BJ data, to criticise the Prime Ministers for deliberately stalling to pressure Parliament into accepting the government's deal or a no-deal Brexit; the collocate *cynically* reinforces the disapproving evaluation of the Prime Minister's tactics.

- b. *The Prime Minister has cynically run down the clock, trying to manoeuvre Parliament into a choice between...her deal or no deal.* (Jeremy Corbyn, Lab)

Kick the can down the road, with six instances in TM data and four in BJ data, is used in TM data to criticise the government for delaying difficult decisions on Brexit. In BJ data, however, it targets Parliament and Opposition MPs for refusing to approve Brexit legislation, as shown in example C.

- c. *...if this House fails to back this deal today, or seeks to kick the can down the road again, we will create more uncertainty, not less?* (Vicky Ford, Con)

Through/by the back door (example D), with two instances in TM data and three in BJ data, warns that a no-deal Brexit could happen covertly, with the presence of *risk* in its co-text emphasising the danger and undesirable outcome associated with such actions. *Throw...under the bus* (example E), occurring once in TM data and twice in BJ data, conveys that the Prime Minister's commitment to Brexit will betray or sacrifice the economic benefits of Scotland or Northern Ireland, thus carrying a distinctly negative semantic prosody.

- d. *...there is a very real risk of a no-deal Brexit by the back door.* (Ian Blackford, SNP)
- e. *This Tory Government have just thrown Scottish farmers and crofters under their*

Brexit bus... (Ian Blackford, SNP)

Among idiomatic expressions conveying positive prosody, only *over the line* is shared by both corpora. With 11 occurrences in TM data and five in BJ data, both Prime Ministers used this expression to emphasise their commitment to completing Brexit, as show in examples F and G. Drawing on imagery from the source domain of SPORTS, where crossing the finish line represents completing a race, the expression carries a positive semantic prosody in context, highlighting the achievement of concluding the Brexit process.

- f. *But the way to get this done is of course to get Brexit over the line, ...and then remove the uncertainty...*(Boris Johnson, Facebook, 08/11/2019)
- g. *... what people want is for their politicians to come together in the national interest and get Brexit over the line.* (Theresa May, Twitter, 05/05/2019)

Of the other nine idiomatic expressions with positive semantic prosody, only *in the air* appears in TM data, while the remaining expressions occur exclusively in BJ data, each occurring just once in the corpus. For example, *the philosopher's stone* (example H) was used to suggest that the negotiators had achieved an almost miraculous solution in the Brexit negotiations, conveying a positive evaluation of their success. Similarly, *take a leaf out of the British Army engineers' book* (example I) was used to praise the Prime Minister's perseverance in overcoming Brexit-related challenges, likening his efforts to the resilience of British Army engineers.

- h. *...for finding the philosopher's stone that's enabled us to do this...this deal above all means certainty.* (Boris Johnson, official public speech, 24/12/2020)
- i. *I think that what he has done is take a leaf out of the British Army engineers' book.* (Rachel Maclean, Con)

Of the three idiomatic expressions that exhibit a relatively neutral semantic prosody, *take...off the table* (example J) refers specifically to removing the possibility of a no-deal Brexit, which is a factual action. *It takes two to tango* (example K) highlights the shared positions and interests between the UK and the EU, indicating the conditions for successful negotiations. *Twist and turn* (example L) was used by Theresa May to convey that the Brexit negotiations would be complex and unpredictable, with potential obstacles and sudden changes, highlighting the process's dynamic nature. All three expressions describe specific situations without expressing strong positive

or negative evaluations or emotions.

- j. *If he wants to take no deal off the table, I hope that when the deal is back, he will vote for that deal.* (Theresa May, Hansard, 26/02/2019)
- k. *It takes two to tango. Both sides...given their common starting positions, ...that they will negotiate a good trade deal.* (John Baron, Con)
- l. *It's not to provide a running commentary on every twist and turn, but to acknowledge that businesses and others need some clarity...* (Theresa May, CBI conference speech, 21/11/2016)

Two idiomatic expressions whose semantic prosody shifts depending on context are *you can't have your cake and eat it too* and *red line*. As a commonly used proverb discussed in Section 3.3.1, *you can't have your cake and eat it* shows variation in semantic prosody that is closely linked to the evaluative stance of different sides on Brexit, which will be examined in the next chapter. *Red line*, in the Brexit negotiations, typically refers to non-negotiable conditions set by the UK or the EU, drawing on "Punishment" and "Send-A-Signal" metaphors rooted in the idea of a literal line in the sand, where crossing it leads to reprisal (Lakoff, 2013, p.2). Out of 1,000 random concordance lines of *red line* from enTenTen21, 914 (91.4%) instances exhibit its metaphorical use, indicating that its figurative meaning appears to be more frequently used than its literal meaning.

As shown in example M, *red line* refers to non-negotiable positions that impede the progress of the negotiations, such as the government's refusal to remain in the EU single market and customs union, while *rub out* suggests softening these positions and seeking broader cooperation, aligning with the literal idea that drawn lines can be erased. In this context, *red line* is framed negatively as an obstacle to a practical solution.

- m. *If she wants to get Brexit sorted and deliver it, she has to change her deal, rub out her red lines and work with everybody.* (Anna Soubry, Con)

By contrast, example N presents *red line* as a set of clear principles that honour the democratic decision of the referendum, thereby portraying Theresa May's position in a positive light. Nevertheless, in the two corpora, *red line* conveys a negative semantic prosody more frequently (12 of 16 instances).

n. ...*the previous Prime Minister set out her red lines and brought back a deal, which respected the promises...before the referendum.* (Kevin Hollinrake, Con)

Eleven idiomatic expressions, including *square the circle*, *a leopard can't change its spots*, *jot and tittle*, *the Goldilocks deal*, *on a wing and a prayer*, *the jewel in the crown*, *the buck stops here*, *sword of Damocles*, *screw...courage to the sticking point*, and *dance on the head of a pin*, have specific origins, such as in the Bible, mythology, and storytelling. In addition to the LDOCE, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) was consulted, as it provides historical usage and etymology for these expressions. The dictionary definitions of the eleven idiomatic expressions are provided in Appendix F. Except for *square the circle*, which occurs in both corpora, and *dance on the head of a pin*, used by an Opposition MP in TM data, all idiomatic expressions with specific origins were found exclusively in the BJ data, five of which were employed by Boris Johnson himself. Abramicheva (2022) argued that drawing from his background, such as his education at Eton and Oxford (where he studied classics) and his career in journalism, Boris Johnson has shown expertise in using classical rhetoric (p.5). His exploitation of literary and historical references in political discourse is closely related to a theatrical style of self-presentation and a projection of superiority (2022, pp.7-8).

The results presented in this chapter show that, among the metaphor lemmas identified in the two corpora, the shared lemmas constitute nearly 50% of all metaphor lemmas in each corpus. Their tokens account for over 80% of all metaphor occurrences, and the shared vehicle groupings for different metaphor vehicles represent approximately 90% in each corpus. Compared with Theresa May, Boris Johnson used a greater number of novel metaphors and idiomatic expressions, especially those rooted in literature and history. Based on the metaphor vehicles identified in each corpus, the next chapter will discuss the similarities and differences in the metaphors used to describe Brexit during the tenures of the two Prime Ministers.

Chapter 6 Discussion

This chapter discusses the key findings by comparing the metaphors identified in the Brexit-related discourse of the two Prime Ministers and other MPs during their respective premierships. The discussion is structured around the similarities and differences observed across the two corpora, demonstrating how metaphor use both reflected and responded to the evolving political context of Brexit. Sections 6.1 to 6.4 explore the shared tendencies in metaphor use across the two Prime Ministers' tenures, as illustrated by, for example, the recurrence of shared systematic metaphors and metaphor scenarios (Section 6.2) and the ideological commonalities embedded in metaphor use (Section 6.4). Section 6.5 turns to the differences in metaphor use, which reflect the distinct stages of the Brexit process led by each Prime Minister. Through this comparison, the chapter demonstrates how metaphor can help construct ideological narratives related to Brexit and persuade audiences in line with the speakers' stances across different phases of the Brexit process.

6.1 Similarity 1: Consistent use of common metaphors in key topics across both Prime Ministers' tenures

Many of the most frequently occurring metaphor lemmas shared by both corpora, relative to the overall frequency of metaphor lemmas in each corpus, consistently connect with the specific topics they describe. These topics represent some of the most common Brexit-related narratives during the premierships of Theresa May and Boris Johnson.

First, some of these frequently shared metaphor lemmas come from a single vehicle grouping with a small number of metaphor lemmas, such as *TEXTURE*, *DELIVERING*, *FRICTION*, and *PHYSICAL SUPPORT*. In the *TEXTURE* grouping, *hard* and *soft* are used to refer to the two different approaches to the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. According to Menon and Fowler (2016, p.R8), the distinction between hard and soft Brexit depends on the "UK's relationship with the EU Single Market": a hard Brexit refers to the UK leaving the single market and trading under WTO rules, while a soft Brexit involves continued access through EEA membership. A metaphorical interpretation of *hard Brexit* and *soft Brexit* comes from the idea of aircraft landing (Schmidt, 2020), where a hard, abrupt landing could cause damage, while a soft landing refers to a controlled and smooth touchdown.

Hard is also used to describe the central term *border*. A hard border refers to the reinstatement of customs checks and controls between Northern Ireland and Ireland. As shown in example A, Theresa May tweeted that a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland would unravel the framework established by the Belfast Agreement, similar to pulling stitches out of fabric.

- a. ...a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland that unpicks the historic Belfast Agreement. (Theresa May, Twitter, 15/07/2018)

In the *DELIVERING* grouping, drawing on the physical action of handing something over, *deliver (on)* refers to successfully achieving objectives related to Brexit, as seen in example B and collocations such as *deliver (on) Brexit/the will of people/the democratic decision/frictionless trade* in TM data. This metaphor turns the government commitments into tangible objects and emphasises the action of bringing them to completion, framing the fulfilment of Brexit as a successful delivery.

- b. ...get Brexit done and deliver the change that people voted for. (Boris Johnson, Twitter, 18/12/2019)

In a post-Brexit context, UK firms would experience considerably more trade friction with the EU compared to existing arrangements (Conefrey & Walsh, 2020, p.7). *Friction (FRICTION)* refers to the resistance that hinders trade, such as tariffs, customs checks, and regulatory differences. By contrast, *frictionless trade* (example C) or *frictionless border* is used to represent a priority to be achieved during the Brexit negotiations (Somai, 2018, p.114). These expressions indicate trading without any obstacles, allowing goods and services to move freely without delays, and are often metaphorically described in terms of *flow (LIQUID)*. In TM data, *seamless (SEWING)*, as shown in example D, is also used to highlight the desire to maintain the frictionless movement between Northern Ireland and Ireland.

- c. There will be frictionless trade at the frontier—there will be no borders and no customs checks at the frontier. (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 03/10/2019)
- d. That is what I believe delivers on the seamless border...underpin the Belfast/Good Friday agreement. (Theresa May, Hansard, 10/12/2018)

In the *PHYSICAL SUPPORT* grouping, *support* and *back* are used where the government seeks endorsement for specific actions related to Brexit. These include

gaining Parliament's approval of a proposed Brexit deal, asking for backing from the public to strengthen the government's leverage during Brexit negotiations, or calling for people to vote so as to win the general election (example E).

e. *Back me to get Brexit done.* (Boris Johnson, Twitter, 11/12/2019)

Second, centred on specific topics, some frequently shared metaphor lemmas come from different vehicle groupings. The most common metaphor used to describe the UK's decision on its EU membership are *leave* and *remain* from the *JOURNEY* grouping, representing the two options. Other commonly used metaphors, as shown in examples F and G, for leaving the EU include *departure* (*JOURNEY*), *exit* (*BUILDING*), *withdraw* and *withdrawal* (*FIGHT/WAR*), while remaining in the EU is often expressed through *stay* (*JOURNEY*).

f. *...what our exit from the EU means to them.* (Theresa May, official speech to local farmers, 29/03/2018)

g. *Nothing in withdrawal from the EU stop...* (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 29/01/2020)

Metaphor lemmas including *take...out of* (example H), *get out of*, and *come out of* from the *MOVEMENT* grouping are also used to describe the UK withdrawal from the EU or its affiliated institutions, which portray the UK as an object in motion, exiting a container that represents the EU.

h. *The deal takes us out of the CAP [referring to Common Fisheries Policy]...* (Theresa May, official public speech, 08/03/2019)

When discussing the Brexit referendum, both *reverse* (*VEHICLE*) and *overturn* (*BODILY ACTION, POSITION*) are used to describe cancelling or invalidating the result of the first referendum through holding a second referendum or by revoking Article 50, as examples I and J illustrate.

i. *... they have schemed to overturn the verdict of the British people...* (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 09/09/2019)

j. *...use parliamentary procedure to try to reverse the vote of the British people...* (Theresa May, Hansard, 19/10/2017)

Both *crash out* (*SPORTS*) and *cliff edge* (*LANDSCAPE*) are used to refer to the UK

leaving the European Union abruptly without a formal agreement, that is, a no-deal Brexit. *Crash out*, as shown in example K, which typically appears in the collocations of *crash out of the EU* and *crash out with no deal*. It originally refers to a team or player unexpectedly losing a game and being eliminated from a competition and conveys a sense of sudden failure.

k. *Would she really want to see this country crash out of the EU, with all the losses of jobs and business...* (Mark Hendrick, Lab/Co-op)

Cliff edge, which is usually expressed as *off a/the cliff edge* in context, draws on the image of physically falling off of a cliff suddenly. Both metaphors frame a no-deal Brexit as uncontrolled, chaotic, and dangerous, likely to cause disruptions to jobs and business. Variations of the phrase *off a/the cliff edge*, such as *drive/leap/dragged /push/fall off a/the cliff (edge)*, as shown in Example L, intensify this sense of recklessness and stand in clear contrast to the slogan of a “*smooth and orderly Brexit*” promoted by Theresa May’s government. A relevant topic regarding the government’s allegedly reckless way of handling Brexit, will be discussed further in Section 6.2.2.

l. *...to prevent the UK from being dragged off a cliff by voting against a no-deal Brexit.* (Ian Blackford, SNP)

Metaphor lemmas from the *PERSONIFICATION* grouping, such as *friend* and *neighbour*, from the *MARRIAGE* grouping, including *partner* and *divorce*, and from the *DISTANCE* grouping, such as *close*, are used to characterise the UK’s relationship with the EU. As shown in example M, these metaphors emphasise the closeness and ongoing ties between the UK and the EU, despite Brexit.

m. *After Brexit, Britain wants to be a good friend and neighbour in every way...* (Theresa May, official public speech, 03/02/2017)

As previous studies have demonstrated (Morozova, 2017; Greavu, 2018), *partner* and *divorce* describe the UK’s relationship with the EU as a once committed union that has now ended. The frequent collocations associated with *divorce* in both corpora, such as *divorce bill/settlement/deal* (example N), further highlight the negative evaluation this metaphor typically conveys in Brexit discourse, emphasising the complex emotions and challenges surrounding the UK’s separation from the EU

(Đurović & Silaški, 2018; Landmann & Ganz, 2024).

n. At the heart of any divorce deal is a fair financial settlement. (Angela Smith. Lab)

As a central issue and one of the most prevalent slogans in the political debate on Brexit, *take back control* reflects the close link between Brexit and the broader desire of reacquiring control (Goodwin & Milazzo, 2017, p.452). In this context, *control (MACHINE)* represents a view of sovereignty linked to Enoch Powell, which emphasises the people's right to decide how the country is governed and its role on the global stage (Gamble, 2021a, p.128). *Take back (MOVEMENT)* evokes an image of somebody attempting to regain possession of something that supposedly belongs to them. Across the two Prime Ministers' Brexit discourse, the significant collocates of *take back control*, including *borders* (end free movement), *laws, money, water, fisheries, trade policy, tariffs* and *customs*, demonstrate the desire to regain full authority over key areas of governance related to sovereignty and autonomy. This metaphorical expression portrays the UK as a person deprived of power by EU integration, with control over policymaking in key areas constructed as entities that the UK is reaching out to seize back. *Bring back (MOVEMENT) control* in TM data conveys the same notion, while in BJ data, it refers to the Prime Minister reintroducing a negotiated agreement to Parliament.

Another metaphor lemma frequently used to represent the regaining of control is *restore (REPAIRING)*. It frames sovereignty as a tangible thing, such as a building, that has been damaged and can be repaired to its former state through Brexit. Significant collocates of *restore* include *sovereignty* (example O), *(sovereign/full) control, democracy*, and *free market* in both corpora, as well as *supremacy (of British Courts/to this Parliament)* in TM data and *the UK's status and independence* in BJ data, all referring to the UK's autonomy. It also frequently collocates with phrases such as *faith/trust/confidence in politics*, implying that people's trust in political actors has been eroded as well.

o. Will Brexit restore sovereignty? ...Brexit means that we take back control of our entire legal system. (Boris Johnson, Twitter, 28/01/2020)

Metaphors can be used by politicians to positively depict future scenarios, framing them as potential solutions to current issues (Charteris-Black, 2011, p.32). In addressing the post-Brexit future in both Prime Ministers' discourse, metaphor

lemmas such as *build* (*BUILDING*), *bright* (*LIGHT/DARKENSS*), and *vison* (*SEEING*) are commonly used to depict a positive post-Brexit future. *BODILY ACTION* metaphor lemmas, such as *seize* and *grasp*, as shown in example P, represent the determination to take hold of the potential opportunities that Brexit could bring and making the most of the UK's new position outside the EU.

p. We will seize the incredible opportunities...use them to build back better than ever before... (Boris Johnson, official public speech, 31/01/2022)

Concerning the advantages the UK could gain in the future, *strike* (*BODILY ACTION*), shared by both corpora, frequently collocates with phrases such as *new/free/our own trade deal* (example Q) to express the UK's ambition to establish independent trade agreements with other countries outside the EU.

q. The freedom to strike new trade deals around the world. (Theresa May, Facebook, 30/11/2018)

The outlook of strengthening the connection with the wider world or building a "Global Britain" is often conveyed through *FILM/PLAY* metaphor lemmas such as *role* and *stage* (example R), which claim that the UK would more actively participate in international trade and global affairs after Brexit.

r. We will play a full and active role on trade on the global stage... (Theresa May, G20 summit speech, 30/11/2018)

The metaphor lemmas discussed in this section represent those most frequently employed in Brexit discourse, with some consistently drawn from a single vehicle grouping for a given topic and others spanning across multiple groupings to address the same topic. A series of central Brexit topics, including the approach and completion of Brexit, potential trade barriers with the EU, the decision on EU membership, resistance to the referendum outcome, the situation of a no-deal Brexit, the UK–EU relationship, the reclaiming of control, and the post-Brexit outlook, were consistently framed through these shared metaphors across the two corpora.

6.2 Similarity 2: Shared systematic metaphors and metaphor scenarios across both Prime Ministers' tenures

The second similarity in Brexit-related metaphors across the two corpora lies in the use of shared systematic metaphors and metaphor scenarios, constructed through either the same or different metaphor lemmas in TM data and BJ data. This section first focuses on the systematic metaphors centred on the term *Brexit* that are common to both corpora (sections 6.2.1 to 6.2.4) and then examines the shared systematic metaphors and metaphor scenarios related to other key topics of Brexit (sections 6.2.5 to 6.2.9), such as the NHS, the nation itself, and the backstop.

6.2.1 BREXIT IS A PERSON or AN ENTITY

The metaphor lemmas identified in this study that portray Brexit as an *ENTITY* can be classified as ontological metaphors. *PERSONIFICATION* metaphors, as “extensions” of ontological metaphors, help people understand phenomena by relating them to human traits, motivations, and actions (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008, p.34). Dorst (2011) noted that the linguistic realisation of personification can be created through “entity-to-entity mappings expressed by nouns,” such as *friend* or *neighbour* as illustrated in the previous section, or through the “argument structure of verbs or adjectives” (p,121). The shared metaphorical adjectives *blind* and *blindfold* (*PHYSICAL OBJECT*) frequently occur as modifiers of the term *Brexit*, contributing to its personification as a human-like agent. These metaphors are used to convey that the government’s decisions have led to the possibility of a no-deal or hard Brexit. In the concordance lines of *Brexit* with its significant collocate *blindfold*, additional metaphor lemmas are used to reinforce criticism of the perceived lack of foresight and clarity in the Brexit process.

- a. ... vote for a blindfold Brexit and sleepwalk into the future... (Alan Brown, SNP)
- b. ...blindfold Brexit does not deliver the sunlit uplands... (Caroline Lucas, Green)
- c. ...the Brexit blindfold is tightening, too. (Paul Blomfield, Lab)

As shown in example A, *sleepwalk* (*SLEEPING*) is used to argue that the government was reckless to hold an EU referendum without preparing for the possibility of a leave victory, further emphasising the frame of Brexit as a process lacking preparation. In Example B, *sunlit uplands* (*LANDSCAPE*) signifies a prosperous future. Corpus evidence from enTenTen21 shows that this phrase frequently occurs in political

contexts to denote optimistic outcomes, often juxtaposed with unfulfilled promises or obstacles. In this context, its use in contrast to a blindfold Brexit highlights the argument that such a future cannot be achieved through an unclear or poorly guided Brexit process. Example C uses *tighten* (*ATTACHMENT*) to suggest that the government's Brexit decisions further obscure or limit Parliament's and the public's understanding of the process.

Metaphor lemmas that portray the process of Brexit or the Brexit deal as an *ENTITY* include *smooth* (*TEXTURE*), *orderly* (*TIDINESS*), *shambles* (*AREA/PLACE*), *disorderly* (*TIDINESS*), *mess* (*TIDINESS*), and *half-baked* (*FOOD*), which are shared by both corpora; *sort out* (*TIDINESS*) in TM data; and *roll forward* (*MOVEMENT*), and *hammer... through* (*VIOLENT ACTION*) in BJ data.

- d. *...to the country, which is tiring of this Brexit shambles...* (Ben Bradshaw, Lab)
- e. *A botched and half-baked Brexit deal such as the one before us today would only deepen those problems and divisions.* (Jeremy Corbyn, Lab)
- f. *...and hammer Brexit through on the back of a few slogans such as "get Brexit done"...* (Geraint Davies, Lab/Co-op)

Through metaphors related to *TIDINESS* and *shambles*, Brexit is described as if it were a cluttered space requiring organisation or a messy place, as shown in example D. In example E, *half-baked* portrays the Brexit deal as an undercooked dish, which also conveys the chaos, disorder, and lack of preparation surrounding Brexit. Through metaphors *roll forward* and *hammer...through* (example F), the Brexit process is depicted as an object being pushed forward or forcefully driven into a surface. The phrase *hammer Brexit through* conveys the sense that the Brexit deal is being pushed forward quickly and forcefully, with the populist slogan employed to justify the rapid action.

Within the topic of a disorderly Brexit, Opposition MPs employed certain shared metaphor lemmas to convey the desire to put an end to the chaos of the Brexit process, such as *get out of*, *take...out of* (*MOVEMENT*), *way out of* (*BUILDING*), and *escape route* (*BUILDING*), as shown in example G.

- g. *We have an escape route from the chaos of Brexit: an independent Scotland.*
(Ian Blackford, SNP)

The expression *clean up the mess* (*TIDINESS*), shared by both corpora, was used to express the committed effort to resolve the issues caused by Brexit and restore order.

6.2.2 BREXIT IS A DISASTER or A VIOLENT ACTION

Some metaphor lemmas depict Brexit as a *DISASTER*, either natural or man-made, particularly in the context of a no-deal Brexit. These metaphors include *disaster*, *disastrous*, *devastating*, *catastrophic*, *destructive*, *calamity*, and *shock* (*DISASTER*); *damage and damaging* (*PHYSICAL DAMAGE*); *bombshell* (*FIGHT/WAR*); *harm* (*PHYSICAL HARM/INJURY*); *turbulence* (*MOVEMENT*), and *hit* (*VIOLENT ACTION*). This is consistent with Tincheva's (2019a, b) findings that Brexit is frequently depicted as a NATURAL DISASTER in online media discourse following the referendum.

- a. ...this Brexit bombshell, inflicting unprecedented socioeconomic and political harm. (Ian Blackford, SNP)
- b. ...past few years have numbed many of us to the looming disaster of a no-deal Brexit... (Ian Blackford, SNP)
- c. Brexit has cast the politics of Westminster into a landscape of crumbling certainties. (Ian Blackford, SNP)

As shown in the above examples, these metaphor lemmas collectively emphasise the serious impacts that Brexit, especially a no-deal Brexit, would have on the economy, public sector, jobs, living standards, and other areas of society. The risk of a no-deal Brexit is also conveyed through *trapdoor* (*BUILDING*), used by MP Caroline Lucas to suggest that it represents a hidden and central danger embedded within the Brexit deal. Example B also uses *looming* (*LIGHT/DARKNESS*) to portray the possibility of a no-deal Brexit as a large, threatening presence drawing near. In example C, the metaphorical expression *landscape* (*LANDSCAPE*) of *crumbling* (*PHYSICAL SEPARATION*), through evoking the picture of a piece of land which is falling apart, conveys that Brexit has destabilised the predictable aspects of Westminster politics.

Roodt (2019) noted that when an action or situation is metaphorically described as a form of violence, it often serves as a quick way to condemn what is being referred to (p.3). Metaphor lemmas such as *threat* and *threaten*, which represents forms of verbal violence, also emphasise the severe economic and social dangers linked to

Brexit, as illustrated in example D. Similarly, the expression *blackmail Brexit*, used in example E, portrays Theresa May's Brexit negotiation strategy as a *VIOLENT ACTION* that coerced MPs into supporting her deal out of fear of an even worse no-deal outcome.

- d. *In every scenario, Brexit threatens jobs...* (Patricia Gibson, SNP)
- e. *...not ruling out no deal, her blackmail Brexit has cost...* (Rupa Huq, Lab)

Certain metaphor lemmas are specifically used to depict Brexit (or the Conservatives' actions) as a *VIOLENT ACTION* against workers' rights, consumer protections, and environmental regulations, emphasising the potential detrimental impacts of Brexit on these areas.

- f. *...give the Government the power to tear up workers' rights and damage environmental protections and consumer safeguards.* (Jeremy Corbyn, Lab)
- g. *...why have they slashed every level playing field commitment in the withdrawal agreement?* (Rebecca Long-Bailey, Lab)
- h. *...an extensive Conservative assault on workers' rights...* (Jo Swinson, LD)

As shown in example F, *tear up* (shared), as well as *rip up* (shared) and *trample* (TM data), suggest an entire disregard for workers' rights or environment protections, akin to tearing a paper into pieces or physically stomping on something. *Slash* (shared), as in example G, along with *strip away* (also labelled *REMOVING* in BJ data) implies a drastic reduction of the level playing field commitments in the withdrawal agreement, suggesting the commitments to fairness in these areas were intentionally weakened during the UK's negotiation with the EU. The idiom *race to the bottom*, shared by both corpora, also indicates that standards related to areas such as workers' rights would be lowered as a consequence of Brexit. In example H, *assault*, as well as *attack* (both in BJ data), are used to criticise the Conservative Party's deliberate attempts to undermine workers' rights. In addition, metaphor lemmas such as *damage*, *catastrophic*, *destroy*, and *bonfire (of regulations)* convey a similar notion of threat or destruction.

6.2.3 BREXIT or ENACTING THE REFERENDUM RESULT IS A JOURNEY

As previous studies have shown, JOURNEY metaphor is one of the most common metaphors in the metaphorical framing of Brexit (Greavu, 2018; Silaški & Đurović,

2019; Rodet, 2020; Negro Alousque, 2020; Jamet & Rodet, 2022). Similarly, in this study, evidenced by the highest number of the metaphor lemmas within the *JOURNEY* grouping and their top frequencies in both corpora, *BREXIT IS A JOURNEY WITH DIFFERENT WAYS*, emerges as the most prevalent scenario in the two Prime Ministers' Brexit discourse. These metaphor lemmas have helped shape this coherent scenario throughout the Brexit agenda, portraying Brexit as a progression with different paths and options (e.g., hard Brexit or soft Brexit) rather than a single decision. Lakoff and Johnson (2008) noted that the complex metaphorical entailments of the *JOURNEY* conceptual domain explain the "internal systematicity" of the various *JOURNEY*-related metaphor vehicles involved in this scenario (p. 91).

The shared metaphor lemmas including, *way* (example A), *approach*, *path*, *avenue*, and *route*; as well as *road ahead* and *track* in TM data, and *route map* in BJ data, symbolise different methods or approaches for achieving Brexit. The shared metaphor lemmas including *set out*, *take steps (to)*, *move forward/towards/on* (example B), *on course*, *go/step forward*, and *carry on*; along with *progress*, *advance*, *sail*, *embark*, *cut through*, *chart*, and *march* in TM data, and *go ahead*, *look ahead*, and *stride* in BJ data, represent the actions of the traveller, emphasising the government's movement and effort to navigate the Brexit journey. Finally, the shared metaphor lemmas including *end* and *destination*; *reach* (example C) in TM data; and *arrival* in BJ data, signify the final stage of the Brexit negotiations or Brexit process, highlighting the government's expectation of the journey's completion. As Moragas-Fernández (2018) summarised, political goals are often represented metaphorically as destinations to be reached, the means to achieve them as paths, and obstacles as impediments to progress (p.4).

- a. *Two years on, MPs have been unable to agree on a way to implement the UK's withdrawal.* (Theresa May, Facebook, 20/03/2019)
- b. *We got it done and we are going to move forward.* (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 17/06/2020)
- c. *...we are able to reach the end of our negotiations this autumn* (Theresa May, Hansard, 09/07/2018)

Among the concordance lines of the term *referendum*, a central argument conveyed by both Prime Ministers is to respect, honour, and deliver on the result of the Brexit referendum. In both corpora, metaphor lemmas related to *JOURNEY* are also used

to describe the process of navigating and implementing the referendum outcome, conceptualising it as a journey or path that must be followed to reach a destination. For example, *set out*, *move on*, and *go/step forward* highlight the actions of beginning and progressing the process to fulfil the referendum result. The nuance of the *JOURNEY* scenario constructed by the two Prime Ministers lies in the destination: Theresa May aims to move beyond the debates to implement the referendum result, while Boris Johnson focuses on moving towards a post-Brexit future, ensuring Brexit no longer dominate the political agenda.

Koller and Semino (2009) explained that metaphors related to the *JOURNEY* source domain, which originate from the conceptual metaphor “PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS,” are widely employed in political discourse (p.19). Aligning with people’s innate understanding of movement towards a goal, the *JOURNEY* metaphor is intuitive and easy to grasp, and is also a highly “productive” metaphor (2009, p.20). Meanwhile, it is typically associated with favourable change and achievement, thereby contributing to the positive evaluation of government policies (Silaški & Đurović, 2019, p.4). These features make the *JOURNEY* metaphor particularly effective in political discourse.

6.2.4 BREXIT IS AN INVESTMENT

A recurring argument in both Prime Ministers’ Brexit discourse is the suggestion that funds saved by Brexit could be invested in the NHS, education, and other public services (BBC News, 2018; Asthana & Stewart, 2018). In the two corpora, the term *Brexit dividend* is frequently used to refer to the perceived economic benefits resulting from the UK no longer being a member of the EU. As shown in examples A and B, the Prime Ministers and Brexit supporters claimed that the savings from no longer having to pay into the EU budget would go to support domestic priorities.

- a. *It puts an end to the vast...pay to Brussels, delivering a Brexit dividend to support...long-term plan for the NHS. (Theresa May, Twitter, 15/07/2018)*
- b. *...it will create a Union dividend worth £300 million. (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 07/09/2021)*

This term frames Brexit as an *INVESTMENT* that yields returns in the form of financial dividend, or more straightforwardly, money. The word *dividend* is from the domains of finance and investment, which are typically abstract and complex. These

domains seem hard to align with the description of a basic meaning as defined by Pragglejaz Group (2007, p.3), which is more tangible, precise, and often associated with bodily actions. Nevertheless, *dividend* remains a lexical unit with a “concrete meaning that is specialized,” as it is limited to a specific subject and can be contrasted with its contextual meaning (Steen et al, 2019, p.34).

As Wolff and Gentner (2011) noted, metaphor operates as a “directional process,” with a “stable, familiar base” domain providing a framework to comprehend a less defined target domain (p.1456). The complexity and dynamics of the Brexit negotiations can be captured by the analogy with *INVESTMENT*, which inherently involves the allocation of resources with the expectation of generating a potential return, while also carrying an element of risk. This term, however, simplifies the complexities in the Brexit negotiation process for the public’s understanding, as do the strategies adopted by many politicians to manage the crisis (Penninck, 2014). As previously noted in Section 2.3, metaphor is a vehicle for ideology (Goatly, 2006, p.25). The term *Brexit dividend* emphasises only the profits of the investment, while evading the risks and uncertainties inherent in it, which can create a perception that Brexit is a guaranteed, sure-win deal.

The claimed benefits of Brexit were vaguely explained by Theresa May’s government and provoked controversy in public discussions, reflecting what Brusenbauch Meislová (2019, pp.683–684) described as her discursive strategy on Brexit, marked by intentional silence and ambiguity. Through the metaphor of the *Brexit dividend*, the abstract and intricate aspects of explaining the benefits are backgrounded and blurred. A specific point, namely, the purported increase in funding, is distilled and became the focus, framed by a domain that is more concrete and relatable to the public. Furthermore, the *Brexit dividend* appears to function as a concept that could constantly develop. For instance, Caliendo (2022) noted that Boris Johnson’s government portrayed the claimed success of the vaccination campaign as a form of Brexit dividend and employed it as a new argument to support the decision of exiting the EU.

Aside from *Brexit dividend*, *prospectus*, as illustrated in example C, compares the government’s plan or promises of Brexit to a prospectus: a document outlining the details and benefits of a proposed investment project. In this metaphor, Paul Blomfield implied that the government is leading the country based on misleading and deceptive claims about the benefits of Brexit.

- c. ... lead this country to a damaging Brexit on a false prospectus... (Paul Blomfield, Lab)

In addition, metaphor lemmas including *bonanza* and *prize*, which appear in both corpora, jointly depict Brexit as a means of gaining rewards, whether through a profitable investment or by winning a competition.

- d. ... get the *Brexit bonanza* and level-up that we so deserve? (Alexander Stafford, Con)
- e. ...we must take the first step of achieving the prize of Brexit. (Leo Docherty, Con)

The word *bonanza*, borrowed from Spanish, literally means “nice weather” or “affluence” (Landmann, 2018, p.127). According to the LDOCE, in English, it metaphorically refers to a substantial and unexpected windfall. As shown in example C, *Brexit bonanza* suggests that Brexit will bring significant rewards to the country. Example E uses *prize* (*SPORTS*) to frame Brexit as a desired reward in a competition, indicating that specific benefits can be gained if certain actions, such as passing the withdrawal agreement in Parliament, are accomplished.

6.2.5 THE NHS IS A BODY IN PAIN

Through the metaphor lemmas within the groupings of *HEALTH/ILLNESS*, *PHYSICAL HARM/INJURY*, and *PHYSICAL PAIN*, Opposition MPs criticise the negative consequences of Brexit brought to the NHS, particularly emphasising the instability it has caused.

- a. We can ill afford to lose 5,000 EU nurses...it will plunge our NHS into deep crisis, haemorrhaging vital staff and threatening access to medicines... (Jo Swinson, LD)
- b. ...exposing us to medicine and staff shortages...by hurtling us towards a no-deal Brexit? (Stephen Morgan, Lab)
- c. Our public services will suffer. (Lilian Greenwood, Lab)

As shown in the above examples, *plunge* (*MOVEMENT*) implies that the NHS is being overwhelmed by the abrupt chaos caused by Brexit. *Haemorrhage* likens the loss of EU nurses to blood loss, suggesting an ongoing drain of the vital resources to the NHS. *Expose*, *ill*, and *suffer* further emphasise the vulnerable and deteriorating

state of the NHS, as it faces sudden risks of staff and medication shortages resulting from Brexit.

Metaphor is deeply grounded in how human bodies function (Johnson, 1987). Findings from cognitive psychology support the claim that “a significant aspect of metaphoric language is motivated by embodied experience” (Gibbs et al., 2004, p.1208). This aligns with Grady’s (1997) concept of primary metaphor, which indicates that such metaphors are closely linked to “our subjective responses” to the body’s “sensori-motor experiences in the world” (p.6). Physical sensations, particularly those related to pain, are among the most immediate and instinctive experiences of the human body. Consequently, *ILLNESS*-related metaphors can effectively evoke people’s emotion and imagery of bodily pain, thereby strengthening the opposition’s argument that the NHS is enduring immense hardship due to staff departures and shortages of medical supply, just like a body is tolerating enormous pain. In addition, the scenario *THE NHS IS A BODY IN PAIN* reinforces the portrayal of the NHS as a “powerful unifying national symbol” in need of safeguarding (Antosa & Demata, 2021, p.47) by emphasising its current exposure to danger caused by Brexit to its functioning.

6.2.6 THE NATION IS DIVIDED and DIVISIONS IMMOBILISE PARTIES AND PARLIAMENT

Several previous studies on Brexit discourse (Koller & Ryan, 2019; Atkins & Gaffney, 2020; Parnell, 2023) have noted a key theme in the discourse: Brexit both stems from and contributes to political and social division within the nation. As Gamble (2021b) noted, Brexit emerged as “a new English national cause and a new dividing line” (p.464). Reflected in the metaphor lemmas identified in the two corpora, those related to *PHYSICAL SEPARATION*, such as *split (off)*, *carve (off)*, *rip up* (also labelled *VIOLENT ACTION*), *break up*, *divide*, and *division* (shared by both corpora), *crack* and *polarise* (TM data); and *fault line* and *rift* (BJ data), are used to describe the ongoing division following the referendum.

- a. ...*there is a much bigger split on the Labour benches on the issue of a so-called ‘people’s vote’* (Theresa May, Twitter, 19/05/2018)
- b. ...*yet it barely papered over the cracks in her own party.* (Jeremy Corbyn, Lab)

Examples A and B illustrate the internal conflicts over Brexit experienced by both the

Conservative and Labour parties. As Bennett (2019) noted, the ideological stance of Euroscepticism transcends party preferences. Both parties were divided into Leave and Remain factions, which led to mutual criticism, with each party accusing the other of failing to coordinate the conflicting voices within their ranks.

- c. *...a deal that can heal the rift in British politics.* (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 19/10/2019)
- d. *Brexit reveals some of the deep fault lines in our society.* (Judith Cummins, Lab)
- e. *The EU is threatening to carve tariff borders across our country, to divide our land...* (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 14/09/2020)

In examples C and D, metaphors are used to express the divide between Brexit supporters and Remain supporters within parliament and across the nation. The division between MPs backing Leave and those supporting Remain led to a parliamentary deadlock, exemplified by the three-time rejection of Theresa May's Brexit deal and Boris Johnson's controversial five-week suspension of Parliament, which attempted to avoid opposition to a no-deal Brexit (Marshall et al., 2020, p.31). Regarding the social division across the nation, example E highlights concerns over the potential economic split within the United Kingdom caused by a hard Brexit, affecting trade and movement, particularly at the Northern Ireland border.

This systematic metaphor also gives rise to a related scenario—*DIVISIONS IMMOBLISE PARTIES AND PARLIAMENT*—in which metaphor lemmas from various groupings portray political actors as being trapped or dominated by ideological conflicts. Examples include *capture*, *hostage*, *held hostage* (shared by both corpora), *imprison* (TM data), and *cuff* (BJ data). Semantically, these metaphors all relate to the action of forcefully restraining someone's movements and keeping them as prisoners. As Charteris-Black (2019a) noted, many Brexit-related metaphors evoke imagery of "physical entrapment and ensnarement" (p.22).

- f. *...he has been... captured and held hostage by those who wish to convert the Labour party into the party of revoke...* (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 19/10/2019)
- g. *...the apparatus of government has been hijacked by the Vote Leave campaign* (Caroline Lucas, Green)

As examples F and G show, *capture*, *imprison*, *held hostage* (*PRISON*), and *hijack* (*CONTROL*) convey that factions within the Conservative Party strongly advocating

for a hard Brexit, and those within the Labour Party supporting the revocation of Brexit, were attempting to take control of the government processes and steer them for their own purposes.

- h. *Because our parliament is paralyzed. It has been stuck in a rut for three and a half years.* (Boris Johnson, election campaign speech, 06/11/2019)
- i. *...not simply another few weeks of the same parliamentary merry-go-round.* (Pat McFadden, Lab)
- j. *...if our hands were still being cuffed by a House of Commons determined to inflict defeat on the Government...* (Bernard Jenkin, Con)

In examples H and I, *paralyse (ILLNESS)*, *stuck in a rut (MOVEMENT)*, and *merry-go-round (GAME)* describe how political disagreements prevented Parliament from taking actions and making real progress on Brexit. *Cuff (PRISON)* in example J regards parliamentary opposition as an obstacle to the government's effort to deliver Brexit. Collectively, these metaphors demonstrate how internal and cross-party divisions obstructed consensus in Parliament, further delaying the process of Brexit. In BJ data, MP Kevin Hollinrake also argued that the divisions between hard Brexiters and Remainers prevented the UK from reaching a Brexit deal with a proper balance, which he referred as a *Goldilocks deal*, whereas the deal under discussion was either overly ambitious pursuing a clean break from the EU (*too hot*), or too compromising to meet the expectations (*too cold*).

6.2.7 FREE TRADE IS ACCESS WITHOUR BARRIERS

Anderson (2020) argued that the movement of people and goods across the UK-EU border, particularly between Northern Ireland and Ireland, was the centre of argumentation during the Brexit negotiations (p.159). Trade is closely linked to border concerns. As noted by Owen et al. (2017), the UK is likely to encounter "significant barriers to trade" (p.6) after reclaiming control of its borders from Brussels. These include tariffs on goods and a series of "border operations," such as customs checks and other regulatory procedures (Owen et al., 2017, p.9).

Manifested in Brexit discourse, the issues of trade and borders are closely intertwined as a key topic of debate. The connection between them in the discourse lies on a crucial systematic metaphor regarding access: *FREE TRADE IS ACCESS WITHOUT BARRIERS*. It frames the free market as an open space where trade can

flow smoothly, unhindered by restrictions such as tariffs or quotas.

- a. *...the sort of free and open access...will be good for the rest of the EU as well.*
(Theresa May, Hansard, 14/03/2017)
- b. *...new trade deals around the world and open up new markets...* (Theresa May, press conference speech, 25/11/2018)

Among the ACCESS-related metaphor lemmas, *access* in example A expresses the UK's government's desire to maintain trade with EU member states with minimal restrictions after Brexit. Following the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol under Boris Johnson's government, the term *access* occurs more frequently in contexts referring to Northern Ireland's continued free access to the UK internal market. In example B, *open up* conveys the idea of making the domestic markets more accessible and inviting new trade opportunities with countries outside the EU. BARRIER metaphors such as *barriers*, *palisade*, and *thicket* refer to the barriers that would restrict trade and impede economic interactions. They are all rooted in the concept of trade as open pathways between different markets.

6.2.8 THE EU CONSTRAINS THE UK

In line with the study of Koller (2020), which identified the use of RESTRAINT metaphors, this study also found metaphor vehicles from groupings of CONSTRAINT, ATTACHMENT, CONTROL, and PRISON depicting the UK's relationship with the EU as THE EU CONSTRAINS THE UK. These metaphor lemmas are *hold back*, *free off/from*, *let go* (example A), and *break free* (CONSTRAINT); *lock*, *tie*, *anchor*, and *detach* (ATTACHMENT); *orbit* and *ensnare* (CONTROL); *uncouple* and *untangle* (PHYSICAL SEPARATION); *remove* and *jettison* (REMOVING); and *dragnet* (ANIMAL). Except for *tie*, *hold back* and *lock*, which are shared by both corpora, the remaining 13 metaphor lemmas were only found in BJ data. A few examples of these metaphors are provided below:

- a. *...want to lock Scottish fishermen into the CFP forever.* (Theresa May, Conservative Party conference speech, 03/10/2018)
- b. *...permanently anchored the UK within the orbit of EU regulation and customs arrangements...*(Boris Johnson, Hansard, 03/10/2019)
- c. *It plans to ensnare Scotland's fishing fleet in the dragnets of the common fisheries policy...* (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 30/12/2020)

- d. *The United Kingdom's uncoupling from the rules, regulations...Untangling ourselves from 40 years of EU membership...* (Boris Johnson, official public speech, 31/01/2022)
- e. *...not only jettisoning the EU rules we don't need any more...* (Boris Johnson, Conservative Party conference speech, 06/10/2021)

These examples illustrate how various metaphors are used to describe the perceived limitations faced by different areas of the UK, including EU laws and standards, fisheries, and its bureaucratic inefficiencies. Example B uses *anchored* and *orbit* to depict the UK as firmly tied to EU rules, while example C uses *ensnare* and *dragnet* to suggest that the EU actively traps or restricts Scotland's resources, reinforcing a sense of entrapment. In contrast, Examples D and E use *uncoupling*, *untangling*, and *jettison* to convey the UK's effort to disentangle itself from long-standing EU obligations, emphasising separation and the discarding of burdensome constraints. *PRISON* metaphor lemmas identified in both corpora, such as *trap* and *escape*, further emphasise the portrayal of restrictions imposed by the EU and the UK's attempts to seek more autonomy in trading decisions.

Although relatively few metaphor lemmas were identified for this scenario, differences in both their number and token frequency across the two corpora may suggest a stronger emphasis on negatively evaluating the UK-EU relationship in Boris Johnson's Brexit discourse compared to Theresa May's. Another illustration of this emphasis contrast can be seen in the metaphor *tie* (*ATTACHMENT*), which in TM data refers not only to the UK's binding relationship with the EU (four tokens) but also to the economic and cultural connections between them (11 tokens), whereas in BJ data it is used exclusively to depict the UK's development as being held back by the EU (five tokens). As noted in Section 3.3.3, Charteris-Black's (2019b) study highlighted Boris Johnson's use of metaphors that portray the EU as an "external constraint" (p.163) by means of an allegorical representation of confinement.

6.2.9 Systematic metaphors and scenarios regarding the backstop

6.2.9.1 THE BACKSTOP IS A PHYSICAL OBJECT or A MACHINE

Across the two corpora, various metaphor lemmas appearing in the context of the term *backstop* describe it as different kinds of entities. For example, the frequent use of metaphor lemmas such as *(put)...in place* (*POSITION*) and *remove* (*REMOVING*), depict the backstop as a tangible object.

- a. ...*backstop cannot be in place indefinitely.* (Theresa May, Hansard, 17/12/2018)

As shown in example A, in TM data, *(put) in place* draws on the idea of positioning an object to describe the implementation of the backstop. It is also used to refer to the implementation of alternative arrangements and the establishment of a future UK-EU relationship that would make the backstop unnecessary.

- b. *It removes the backstop, which would have held us against our will in the customs union* (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 19/10/2019)
- c. *...by scrapping the previous backstop, we stand more chance of achieving it.*
(John Baron, Con)

In BJ data, *remove* and *scrape*, as shown in examples B and C, are used to express the intention of eliminating the backstop entirely. The hard Brexiter MP John Baron also used the idiom *the elephant in the room* to represent the backstop, expressing his desire to resolve this significant yet overlooked issue by removing it once for all. Boris Johnson was also vocal in his opposition to the backstop arrangement (Heffer, 2019), undermining its legitimacy by labelling it as *anti-democratic backstop* and *so-called backstop* (significant collocates of *backstop* in BJ data). His government ultimately replaced it with the Northern Ireland Protocol during the renegotiation of the Withdrawal Agreement.

Conceptualising the backstop as a physical object, through an ontological metaphor, echoes its basic meaning. According to the OED, *backstop* literally refers to an object “placed at the back to serve as a barrier,” often installed in various types of sports (e.g., baseball, cricket) fields to ensure the smooth conduct of competitions. In randomly sampled concordance lines of *backstop* from enTenTen21, frequent collocates such as *dugouts*, *bleachers*, and *fencing* also confirm its concrete meaning derived from the SPORTS domain.

This study also identified several *MACHINE*-related metaphor lemmas in TM data that depict the backstop as a *MACHINE*, including *trigger*, *turn off*, *part*, and *mechanism*. These metaphors simplify the discussion about the conditions and process by which the backstop comes into force during the tenure of Theresa May.

- d. *...if the backstop were nevertheless to be triggered.* (Theresa May, Hansard,

14/01/2019)

- e. ...allow the backstop to be turned off. (Theresa May, Hansard, 04/12/2018)
- f. ...no legal termination mechanism...on the backstop. (Jeremy Corbyn, Lab)

As shown in the examples, *trigger* and *turn off* respectively refer to activating the backstop when certain conditions are met, such as when the UK and the EU cannot reach an agreement on the Irish border issue in the negotiations) and to stop its implementation. *Mechanism* symbolises a structured procedure enabling the UK to unilaterally withdraw from or terminate the backstop.

6.2.9.2 THE BACKSTOP IS A DANGEROUS BUILDING

In the context of the backstop, certain metaphor lemmas were found to cluster around the same topic: making sure there is a way to exit the backstop. These semantically interrelated metaphors thread up a metaphor story (Cameron et al, 2010), with the following scenario settings: (1) A set of opposing characters, which are a person who imprisons others (the EU) and a person who is imprisoned (the UK); (2) A location where the event takes place, which is a building; (3) Three sequential actions, which are entering the building, being trapped, and looking for an exit to leave.

Metaphor lemmas that participate in the creation of this metaphor story are *enter*, *exit*, *get out*, *leave*, *go into*, *lock*, *tie*, *keep...in*, *pull out*, *stuck*, *hold...in*, *trap*, *escape*, and *escape route*. These metaphors involving the groupings of *BUILDING*, *CONSTRAINT*, *ATTACHMENT*, *CONTAINER*, *MOVEMENT*, and *PRISON*. Several examples are provided below:

- a. ...if we were to enter the backstop... (Theresa May, Hansard, 12/02/2019)
- b. ...a unilateral exit mechanism from... to get out of it. (Theresa May, Hansard, 29/01/2019)
- c. ...find itself locked into the Northern Ireland backstop protocol with no legal escape route. (Jeremy Corbyn, Lab)
- d. The backstop is not a trick to trap us in the EU. (Theresa May, Hansard, 04/12/2018)

Through these metaphors, the backstop is symbolically described as a building that the UK wishes to avoid entering; yet if it had to enter, it would need to ensure an exit exists through which it can leave freely. The established connections among different

metaphors map out the metaphorical trajectory through which the topic of exiting the backstop is communicated. These connections were identified based on overlapping semantic features across different metaphors. For instance, *enter* or *leave* as movements, are relative to a stationary object (e.g., a building), while other metaphor lemmas from different groupings point to a dangerous state of being unable to get out at will, portraying the UK as shackled as a prisoner. Together, these systematic connections lead to the construction of a metaphor scenario: *THE BACKSTOP IS A DANGEROUS BUILDING*. Moreover, specific story elements, such as characters and actions, emerge through the use of these metaphors in the context of *backstop*, further enriching this scenario.

The frequency of these metaphor lemmas used to describe this topic in TM data is significantly higher (108.08 per million tokens) than in BJ data (16.68 per million tokens). Meanwhile, the significant collocates of the term *backstop* differ across the two corpora—for instance, *enter/(go/fall) into/replace (the backstop)* in TM data, and *get rid of/remove (the backstop)* in BJ data. These differences indicate a shift in focus during Boris Johnson’s tenure, where discussions on this topic mostly centred on removing the backstop rather than debating its implementation and exit mechanism, as was the case during Theresa May’s tenure. For example, in his first public speech as Prime Minister (24/07/2019), Boris Johnson declared, “*Never mind the backstop – the buck stops here.*” By using this idiom, he emphasised his leadership and willingness to take responsibility for making final decisions on the backstop, signalling his aim to bring an end to the ongoing debates and indecisiveness over this issue.

6.2.9.3 THE BACKSTOP IS A PROTECTIVE INSTRUMENT

As discussed in Section 5.3.2.1, *insurance policy (INSURANCE)* is used in TM data to describe the backstop as a protective measure designed to prevent undesirable outcomes, specifically, the re-emergence of a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, as shown in example A.

- a. *The point of the backstop as an insurance policy is that it is a guarantee that... there will be no hard border...* (Theresa May, Hansard, 14/01/2019)

In addition to the previously discussed creative metaphor *excess* and *pay for the other driver’s policy*, used by Opposition MPs to question Theresa May’s backstop

proposal, this study also identified a pair of *INSURANCE*-related metaphor lemmas—*expiry date* and *renewal date*—used to discuss the validity of the backstop.

- b. ...an example of any insurance policy she has ever seen or signed up to that was based on an expiry date? (Stephen Kinnock, Lab)
- c. I do not know what insurance policies...takes out, but most insurance policies have a renewal date. (Theresa May, Hansard, 22/10/2018)

In the conversation provided by examples B and C, Stephen Kinnock's use of *expiry date* metaphorically questions the backstop as automatically ending without negotiation, suggesting it may lack lasting protection. In contrast, Theresa May's use of *renewal date* indicates that the backstop can be extended if there is a delay in reaching a UK-EU agreement on their future relationship, allowing it to continue providing protection, even though she repeatedly emphasised that the backstop is not permanent. The analogy between the backstop and an insurance policy, developed through these metaphors, showcases how a metaphor can be elaborated in a dialogue to convey a particular evaluation of the target topic. Opposition MPs use it to raise questions or criticisms, while the Prime Minister employs it to offer explanation or defence, by incorporating more relevant elements of the metaphor—specifically, specialised terms related to insurance—and associating them with a specific metaphor scenario of car accident (see Section 5.3.2.1). For both interlocutors, the clarification of the insurance policy metaphor helps make their arguments about the backstop more coherent and support their conclusions through the analogy (Musolff, 2011, p.191).

The metaphor lemma *insurance policy* also occurs in BJ data but much less frequently (eight instances, 7.41 per million tokens) than in TM data (55 instances, 30.18 per million tokens), with only one instance referring to the backstop. The remaining occurrences pertain either to the United Kingdom Internal Market Bill (UKIMB), which was intended to ensure the smooth functioning of trade within the UK after Brexit; or to the Benn Act, which required the Prime Minister to request an extension to the Brexit deadline if no withdrawal agreement was approved by 19 October 2019, thereby preventing a no-deal Brexit.

Drawing on the physical experience of a net catching someone who falls, *safety net* (*PHYSICAL OBJECT*) is also found in both data with low frequencies. In TM data, it appears eight times (4.39 per million tokens) and is used to characterise either the

backstop or legislative measures as protective safeguards to prevent a no-deal Brexit (example D), conveying the idea of providing security and precaution in case of a catastrophic outcome. In BJ data, *safety net* occurs seven times (6.46 per million tokens) and, in the examples identified, refers to the UKIMB, as shown in example E.

- d. *...important to have in place my amendment...ensure there is a safety net to prevent no deal on 29 March.* (Yvette Cooper, Lab)
- e. *It is a protection, it is a safety net, it is an insurance policy, and it is a very sensible measure.* (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 14/09/2020)

The difference in the contextual use of these two metaphors across the two corpora suggests that the metaphorical frame of the backstop as *A PROTECTIVE INSTRUMENT* is more salient in TM data. While only a limited number of relevant metaphor lemmas were identified and occur at relatively low frequencies, their use in TM data is explicitly and consistently linked to the backstop's safeguarding function. This pattern aligns with the shift in emphasis between the two Prime Ministers' governments regarding the backstop observed in the previous section.

Through the use of *insurance policy* and *safety net*, the backstop is metaphorically construed as a contingency plan designed to guard against potential risks. However, in the context of Brexit negotiations, the term appears to have acquired a technical sense, denoting a specialised measure to prevent a hard border, and has thus become somewhat detached from its original metaphorical connection with the SPORTS domain, as discussed in Section 6.2.9.1. Similar to the use of *hard Brexit* and *soft Brexit*, which will be discussed in Section 6.5.1, Charteris-Black (2019a) argued that the term *backstop* also condenses complex political stances into a simple label but does not itself present a complete moral argument (p.11).

6.3 Similarity 3: Continuation of key topics across both Prime Ministers' tenures as reflected in metaphors use

This section focuses on the shared and distinct metaphor lemmas identified in the two corpora that centre on topics related to the Brexit agenda persisting across the leadership transition from Theresa May to Boris Johnson. As demonstrated by the shared systematic metaphors and metaphor scenarios discussed in the previous section, the continuation of these topics is evident in the metaphor use across both

corpora. Meanwhile, as shown in Section 6.2.9, the differences in metaphor lemmas and their token frequencies used to describe the backstop across the two corpora suggest, although the discussion of the backstop continued from Theresa May's government to Boris Johnson's, the focus of the two Prime Ministers differed. Therefore, this section discusses both the shared key topics that emerged from the metaphor analysis and the differences in focus between each Prime Minister's government corresponding to the distinct stages of the Brexit process, as evidenced by the metaphor lemmas and their tokens, though these frequencies are relatively low. The Brexit discourse in the two corpora can be divided by stance into pro-Brexit and anti-Brexit discourse. Metaphors describing these ongoing topics and conveying either support for or opposition to Brexit across the tenures of both Prime Ministers are analysed in Sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2.

6.3.1 Metaphors reflecting the continuation of topics in pro-Brexit discourse

6.3.1.1 The legitimacy of honouring the Brexit referendum result

The notion of honouring the referendum's result is emphasised from the perspective of the people, primarily conveyed through metaphor lemmas identified in TM data, with a normalised frequency of 17.6 per million tokens, compared to 2.8 per million tokens in BJ data. *VERBAL ACTION* metaphors, such as *translate* (shared by both corpora), *(people's) instruction*, and *instruct* (TM data), are used to frame the referendum as a democratic mandate, as shown in example A.

- a. *...honours the vote in the referendum by translating the people's instruction into a detailed and practical plan...* (Theresa May, official public speech, 14/01/2019)

As Theresa May asserted, the result of the referendum represents the will of the people that must be transformed into action in order to maintain the *health (ILLNESS)* of the democratic system. Appealing to the will of the people has played an important role in the legitimisation of Brexit (Zappettini, 2021a, p.277).

In other pro-Brexit MPs' discourse in TM data, *BODILY ACTION*-related metaphors, such as *reach out*, and *SLEEPING* metaphors, such as *awake* and *stupor* (example B), describe the referendum as an unprecedented moment of political engagement, particularly among the younger generation, who George Freeman claimed had previously been unaware of and disengaged from politics.

- b. ...youth of this country, who were awoken from their political stupor by the EU referendum...(George Freeman, Con)

A cluster of *GAME* metaphors, as shown in example C, compares the referendum to a card game in which voters faced a choice between *stick* (maintaining the status quo) and *twist* (taking a risk by opting for change).

- c. ...the referendum and a game of cards—a choice between stick or twist. Voters...were told...the risks...were told all the horror stories...but they voted to leave ...In the choice of stick or twist, they opted for twist... (Ben Bradley, Con)

These metaphor lemmas emphasise the referendum as a legitimate and powerful expression of the people's will. By reinforcing the notion of “the people,” as opposed to the elite, as “the core and the heart of democracy” (Akkerman et al., 2014, p.1327), the use of these metaphors once again confirms the prevalence of populist narratives in Brexit-related political discourse (Alkhamash, 2020).

6.3.1.2 Criticism of the lengthy and frustrating Brexit debates

As noted in Section 6.2.6, the shared metaphor lemma *merry-go-round* describes Parliament as being caught in repetitive debates and procedural deadlocks over Brexit. Additional metaphors were also identified, depicting the Brexit debates as wearying and frustrating, particularly in BJ data (eight lemmas, 7.4 per million tokens) compared with TM data (two lemmas, 2.2 per million tokens). Two examples illustrating this are *auto-pilot* (*VEHICLE*) in TM data and *Groundhog Days* (*FILM/PLAY*) in BJ data, as shown below:

- a. ...can now talk about Brexit almost on auto-pilot... (Liz Saville-Roberts, PC)
- b. ...another debate after so many groundhog days...same people rehearsing the same arguments... (John Redwood, Con)

In example A, *auto-pilot* is used to express that discussions of Brexit have become so routine for many MPs that they can handle it almost automatically. In example B, *Groundhog days* alludes to the film of the same name, in which the main character repeatedly experiences the same day. In this context, it signifies the repetitive cycle of Brexit discussions that do not lead to any progress. *Grinding* (*SOUND*) in TM data

also suggests that Brexit negotiations are tedious and exhausting, with no smooth progress in sight. Boris Johnson likened the Brexit process to the Greek myth of Prometheus' punishment, as shown in example C, expressing his frustration with the seemingly endless cycle of debates and delays on Brexit, just as the eternal torment of Prometheus.

- c. *When Prometheus brought fire to mankind...Zeus punished him...every time his liver regrew the eagle...pecked it again. And this went on for ever - a bit like the experience of Brexit in the UK...* (Boris Johnson, UN General Assembly speech, 25/09/2019).

Due to the prolonged Brexit discussions, some MPs raised concerns that Brexit has overshadowed other important issues, such as scrutiny of government spending. As illustrated in examples D and E, *drowning out (SOUND)* and *airtime (BROADCASTING)* in BJ data are used to complain that Brexit debates have become so all-consuming that many other important issues received little attention.

- d. *Brexit is drowning out the scrutiny of all these other things.* (Marcus Fysh, Con)
 e. *We have had a spending review, but it hardly got any airtime whatever.* (Tobias Ellwood, Con)

The differences in metaphor lemmas and their frequencies on this topic reflect the distinct focuses of each Prime Minister's government, aligning with the stages of the Brexit process each was navigating. Theresa May's government primarily concentrated on negotiating the detailed terms of the UK's departure with the EU side, while Boris Johnson's government focused on finalising Brexit and implementing the exit. Cooper and Cooper (2020) argued that Boris Johnson's simple election slogan "get Brexit done" cleverly capitalised on public's fatigue with the Brexit debate, especially after Parliament failed to reach a clear resolution, as evidenced by the Lord Ashcroft election day poll (p.751).

6.3.1.3 Criticism of the obstacles to implementing Brexit

Various metaphor lemmas and idiomatic expressions in both corpora were used to criticise actions perceived as obstructing the delivery of Brexit, centring on calls for a second referendum, Parliament's disapproval of the negotiated deal, and Labour's indecisiveness and delays in the Brexit process.

In TM data, as examples A and B show, *fool's gold* suggests that a second referendum may appear promising but would ultimately be pointless. *Snatch defeat out of the jaws of victory* implies that despite the apparent success of the referendum, parliamentary rejection could undermine that victory.

- a. *A second referendum is fool's gold.* (Simon Hoare, Con)
- b. *Snatching parliamentary defeat out of the jaws of referendum victory would be bad for trust...* (Richard Graham, Con)

In BJ data, the term *the blob*, as shown in example C, is used as a politically defined label for a group of a coalition of bureaucrats, academics, media outlets, and other establishment institutions, a term coined by Boris Johnson's chief adviser Dominic Cummings and widely adopted in Conservative discourse (Voice of America, 2020). As Craske (2021) argued, labels such as *the Blob* function as populist metaphorical devices that collectivise diverse institutional actors and negatively evaluate them, representing them as an amorphous and powerful elite that obstructs the delivery of political change.

- c. *I urge him to step in before it is too late, because otherwise the blob will win and we will fail to deliver a key benefit of Brexit.* (John Penrose, Con)

Idiomatic expressions such as *chop the legs out from under* and *sword of Damocles* (example D) indicate that resistance from remain-leaning MPs would both weaken the UK's negotiating position with the EU and leave constant pressure over the heads of the UK's negotiators. *Dilute (LIQUID)* in example E, identified in both corpora, metaphorically refers to the weakening of the original intention of Brexit. Ongoing debates and challenges within the House of Commons are seen as watering down the outcomes of Brexit, reducing its expected effects on UK sovereignty, economic benefits, and trade policy, so that the final outcomes may not be as strong as initially expected.

- d. *...they will plainly chop the legs out from under the UK position...let our negotiators get on with their work. Without that sword of Damocles over their necks...* (Boris Johnson, official public speech, 02/09/2019)
- e. *...Brexit diluted, seriously delayed, or ditched altogether.* (Rebecca Pow, Con)

Hayton (2022) noted that, in contrast to the Conservative Party, which eventually shifted towards a unified focus on delivering Brexit after the referendum, the Labour Party continued to experience the internal divisions and uncertainty regarding its Brexit stance (p.352). For example, Theresa May used *face both ways* (*JOURNEY*) to criticise the Labour Party's ambiguous position, while, as shown in example F, Boris Johnson used *troops* (*FIGHT/WAR*) to criticise the Labour Party's inconsistent stance on the referendum.

f. *One day...they accept the result...The next day, they are going to tell their troops to do the exact opposite.* (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 15/07/2021)

In BJ data, regarding opposition from Labour and other remain-aligned parties, idiomatic expressions including *clasp on to any passing straw*, *plunged down* (*MOVEMENT*) *every blind alley*, and *every trick in the book* (example G) were used by Boris Johnson to criticise their attempts to hold on to any opportunity to delay or invalidate the referendum's result.

g. *...but we were thwarted by a Parliament determined to use every trick in the book to stop us leaving the EU....* (Boris Johnson, PM's new year message, 31/12/2019)

Boris Johnson also employed a cluster of *VEHICLE* metaphors, as shown in example H, portraying the country as a car in motion. These metaphor vehicles suggest that the country could achieve rapid political and economic benefits by leaving the EU, while Labour's opposition obstructs and slows this progress. He further metonymically portrayed the Remain campaigners as a "*stentorian friend in the blue 12-star hat*," using a mocking tone to suggest that they should stop their vocal opposition and accept Brexit as a final decision (example I).

h. *While we want to take our country up a gear—to go forward with an accelerated programme of investment...they are throwing on the hand brake.* (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 25/09/2019)

i. *...to our stentorian friend in the blue 12-star hat, 'That's it, time to put a sock in the megaphone and...* (Boris Johnson, election campaign speech, 13/12/2019)

Boris Johnson's populist performative communication is reflected in his consistent willingness to provoke controversy (Senior et al., 2021) and his habitual construction of self-other narratives (Čatipović, 2023). He demonstrates skill in discrediting

political opponents by targeting their negative traits based on their own value systems and employing techniques of insult (Humeniuk, 2020, p.74). His creative and derogatory portrayal of Jeremy Corbyn as a *chlorinated chicken* (see Section 5.3.2.1) and the metonymy in example H both exemplify these strategies. In contrast, no metaphor vehicles directly targeting Jeremy Corbyn were identified in Theresa May's discourse.

6.3.1.4 Breaking the deadlock to move Brexit forward

Faced with the stalemate in which the government's proposed Brexit deal struggled to get Parliament's approval, both Prime Ministers and Brexit supporters frequently employed the metaphorical expressions, such as *break (BODILY ACTION) the deadlock/gridlock(TRAFFIC)/impasse and way out of (BUILDING) the deadlock/gridlock* (example A) to advocate for resolving the obstacles that were preventing progress in the Brexit negotiations.

- a. *The way out of this gridlock is for the House to identify the deal that it can agree...*
(Theresa May, Hansard, 11/04/2019)

The concordance lines of the terms *deadlock*, *gridlock*, and *impasse* in the two corpora indicate that, in addition to *break* and *way out of*, Boris Johnson used a wider range of metaphor lemmas to convey the determination to break through a political deadlock and push through a resolution, compared with Theresa May. Meanwhile, the total frequency of metaphor lemmas identified on this topic in BJ data (18.4 per million tokens) is also notably higher than in TM data (7.7 per million tokens). Expressions such as *drive an electoral bulldozer (VEHICLE)* in example B, *smash (VIOLENT ACTION) the roadblock*, and *break free (CONSTRAINT) from this impasse* all capture the idea of proactively and violently eliminating the obstacles that hindered the negotiation process.

- b. *...to drive an electoral bulldozer through the deadlock and paralysis, that has unblocked parliament...* (Boris Johnson, PM's official message, 31/12/2019)

In addition, Boris Johnson used more metaphor lemmas, such as *maelstrom (LIQUID)* (example C), *paralysis (ILLNESS)* and *roadblock (BARRIER)*, to describe the stalemate in which the negotiation could not progress further.

- c. ...people wanted certainty, clarity and a way forward out of the maelstrom and gridlock... (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 19/12/2019)

In contrast with the aggressive attitude embedded in the metaphors used by Boris Johnson, no clear metaphors were identified in Theresa May's discourse that convey similar emotions in this context. Instead, Theresa May tended to use adjectival forms such as (*Parliament is*) *deadlocked/gridlocked*, which are not as evident in Boris Johnson's discourse.

6.3.1.5 The opposition to holding a second referendum

A second referendum refers to the motion for a public vote to reconsider the UK's decision to leave the EU after the initial 2016 referendum. While Remainers questioned the legitimacy of the referendum and increasingly called for a second vote to overturn it, Leavers countered that challenging the initial result was "itself illegitimate" and a rejection of "popular sovereignty" (Bellamy, 2019, p.126). Among the metaphor lemmas used to describe opposition to a second referendum, more were identified in TM data (25) compared to BJ data (12), with seven of them shared by both corpora. Their normalised frequencies are 24.1 per million tokens in TM data and 15.7 in BJ data. These differences also subtly reflect the shifting political context during each Prime Minister's time in office. Under Theresa May, the UK faced a significant political deadlock over Brexit, as negotiated deals were repeatedly rejected in Parliament, whereas by the time Boris Johnson took office, it had been argued that the opportunity for a potentially legitimate second referendum had diminished (Bellamy, 2019, pp.131-132). Consequently, the issue of a second referendum was likely no longer a major focus in parliamentary debates, and fewer metaphor lemmas related to this topic were found in BJ data.

In TM data, metaphor lemmas such as *decimate*, *disaster*, *catastrophic*, and *disastrous* (*DISASTER*); *shatter* (example A), *break*, *damage*, *damaging*, *disfigure*, *broken*, *harm*, and *harmful* (*PHYSICAL HARM/INJURY*); and *exacerbate* and *wound* (*ILLNESS*), were used to indicate the potential risks and harms of holding a second referendum. These metaphors suggest that a second referendum would further deteriorate the fragile political and social environment, deepening the divisions and tensions among the public.

- a. ... faith in politicians would be shattered... (Theresa May, Hansard, 21/01/2019)

Metaphor lemmas such as *unleash* (ANIMAL), *hammer blow* (VIOLENT ACTION), and *stain* (TIDINESS), as illustrated in example B and c, further convey that a second referendum would damage the ethical foundation of Parliament and undermine public's trust in democracy.

- b. ...a stain on the soul of this House... (Julian Knight, Con)
- c. if the biggest vote in our history were to be rerun...what it would do to that democracy; what forces it would unleash. (Theresa May, Hansard, 04/12/2018)

Metaphor lemmas such as *resurrect* (LIFE/DEATH) and *fuel* (FIRE), along with the expression *give wind...sail* (JOURNEY), as shown in example D, were used to convey concern that a second referendum might considerably bolster right-wing populism in UK politics.

- d. ...this will give wind to UKIP sails, and it will be resurrected as a genuine political force. (Daniel Kawczynski, Con)

The metaphorical expression *put on lipstick* (COSMETICS) was used to refer to a confirmatory public vote, as proposed in Peter Kyle's motion E (UK Parliament, 2019). As shown in example E, it draws on the use of make-up to conceal an underlying reality, suggesting that a confirmatory vote would be essentially the same as a second referendum, regardless of how it is labelled. The metaphor therefore conveys scepticism towards attempts to reframe the proposal through alternative terminology.

- e. We cannot vote for a second referendum, regardless of how much lipstick is put on it in what it is called. (Gareth Snell, Lab/Co-op)

In BJ data, Boris Johnson used *toxic* (POISON), *torpor* (PERSONIFICATION), and *torture* (PHYSICAL PAIN), as shown in example F, to express that the process of a second referendum would bring prolonged suffering, particularly when combined with another proposed referendum on Scottish independence. He further used *cacophony* (SOUND) to depict the proposed two referendums as a source of political noise and disorder, as if the country were filled with clashing voices.

- f. ...going through the toxic, tedious torpor of two more referendums...turn year 2021 into a toxic, tedious torture of two more referendums. (Boris Johnson,

Hansard, 30/10/2019)

In addition, *FOOD*-related metaphors appearing in MPs' discourse in BJ data, such as *(have my) fill (of)* and *(no) appetite*, indicate that people were tired of referendums and had no interest in engaging in another one.

6.3.2 Metaphors reflecting the continuation of topics in anti-Brexit discourse

6.3.2.1 The negative prosody constructed around *hard Brexit*

Regarding the discussions of hard Brexit and soft Brexit, metaphors were primarily found in the context of *hard Brexit*, as the term occurs more frequently in both corpora. In TM data, the term *hard Brexit* occurs at 36.76 per million tokens, while *soft Brexit* occurs 10.97 per million tokens; in BJ data, their frequencies are 11.07 and 4.61 per million tokens, respectively. Broz (2021) noted that in news discourse, politicians, whether consciously or unconsciously, tend to imply positive or negative semantic prosody when discussing the concepts of hard Brexit and soft Brexit (p.510). This study found that the discourse about hard Brexit in both corpora conveys negative connotations through the use of various metaphors.

Metaphor lemmas shared by both corpora include *disaster*, *disastrous*, and *devastating* (*DISASTER*); *damage* and *damaging* (*PHYSICAL DAMAGE*), and *sideline* (*SPORTS*). In TM data, *car crash* (*TRAFFIC*) and *hit* (*VIOLENT ACTION*) were used, while in BJ data, *cut* and *hobble* (*PHYSICAL INJURY*) as well as *yank* (*VIOLENT ACTION*), were also used to describe hard Brexit.

- a. ...with an extension that means we can avoid the car crash and disaster of a hard Brexit? (Jonathan Djanogly, Con)
- b. This hardest of Brexit deals...cuts British jobs, sidelines our services sector... yanking Britain completely out of the customs union... (Caroline Lucas, Green)
- c. ...a hard Tory Brexit is hobbling our economy... (Liz Saville Roberts, PC)

As shown in the examples above, these metaphors collectively convey concerns about the potentially harmful impacts that hard Brexit could bring to the economy and society. *Yank...out of* in example B suggests that the UK would be forcibly removed from the customs union and single market. Conservative MP Roger Gale also referred to the possible introduction of customs controls between Dover and Calais

as a result of a hard Brexit, which he warned would cause big traffic problems in the southern area of London. By stating “*that shutter will come down,*” he symbolised the creation of a hard border, as if a physical barrier were being dropped into the place.

6.3.2.2 Criticism of the government’s reckless and overly optimistic approach to Brexit

As discussed in Section 6.2.1, the shared systematic metaphors of Brexit as a *PERSON* and as an *ENTITY* describe the government’s chaotic handling on Brexit. Other metaphors addressing a similar topic include *play Russian roulette (GAME)* in TM data and *bodge (REPAIRING)*, typically associated with a cheap and temporary fix) in BJ data. As example A shows, *play Russian roulette* criticises the government’s strategy on Brexit as thoughtless and highly risky. In example B, *bodge* is used to imply that the government’s modification of the Brexit deal was rushed and poorly executed.

- a. *Why is the Prime Minister still playing Russian roulette with the option of no deal?* (Tom Brake, LD)
- b. *They bodged the Brexit deal, which has led to a 4% hit to the UK economy.* (Matt Western, Lab)

The idiomatic expression *wing-and-a-prayer* in BJ data, as shown in example C further emphasises the government’s unrealistic optimism, suggesting that Brexit had little chance of success and relies more on hope than reliable planning. Leggett (2020) argued that war-related expressions, especially those referencing World War II, are abundant in English, and many have become part of the lexicon of Brexit discourse, such as *the Dunkirk spirit* (p.49). The expression *pre-Christmas pantomime mode*, used by Lab/Co-op MP Geraint Davies, also criticises the government’s blind optimism by drawing an overt evaluative comparison between a Brexit campaign that was expected to be serious and Boris Johnson’s campaign, which, with his populist slogan “Get Brexit done,” is portrayed as comical and exaggerated. Another idiom, *for the birds*, shared by both corpora, conveys a similar sense of impracticality, implying that something is only worth the attentions of birds. In the context (example D), it criticises the notion that the UK can quickly strike global trade deals outside the EU as completely unrealistic.

- c. *Nobody voted for a wing-and-a-prayer, cake-and-eat-it, blindfold Brexit...*

(Catherine McKinnell, Lab)

- d. ...*those who believe that a UK...quickly put together trade deals around the world. It is a fantasy; it is for the birds.* ((Ian Blackford, SNP)

Similarly, both *fantasy* and *theory (MIND)* in TM data were used to describe the government's vision of Brexit as disconnected from practical realities, as reflected in phrases such as *Brexit fantasy* and *the theory of a perfect Brexit*. When criticising this vision of Brexit working perfectly, Stephen Crabb (Con) argued that it ignored the complex realities of Brexit, including the conflict between the goals of Brexit and the Northern Ireland peace process, which *square off (FIGHT/WAR)* against each other. Wera Hobhouse (LD) also used the idiom *hit the wall* to convey that the Prime Minister's unpractical commitment on Brexit would inevitably clash with reality and fail.

Another example illustrating the criticism of the government's unrealistic optimism is the proverb *you can't have your cake and eat it too*. As noted in Section 3.3.1, this expression is commonly used in Brexit discourse and appears in both corpora (see Section 5.3.3). According to the OED, it is used "chiefly in negative contexts". Musolff (2019) noted that the proverb conveys the idea that Brexit embodies a "contradictory" expectation of pursuing two mutually exclusive benefits (p.208): restricting immigration while maintaining access to the EU single market (p.212). Meanwhile, Brexit supporters also strategically adapted this proverb to counter this criticism, which will be further discussed in Section 6.4.3.

6.3.2.3 Criticism of the hard Brexiteers within the Conservative Party

As discussed in Section 6.2.6, deep internal divisions within the Conservative Party over Brexit impeded reaching a consensus in Parliament, particularly due to the strong influence of its hard-right faction. As noted by Dorey (2023), the formation of the European Research Group led by Conservative MP Jacob Rees-Mogg, along with the departure of pro-European MPs such as Anna Soubry from the Conservative Party during Theresa May's leadership, reflects the irreconcilable divisions within the party over Brexit (p.234).

In TM data, Opposition MPs used a range of metaphors to criticise the Prime Minister's weakness in confronting the hard-line Brexiteers within her party and to highlight the internal turmoil this caused. The expression *cower behind (BODY*

MOVEMENT) in example A portrays Theresa May as lacking the courage to stand up to the pressure of the right-wing press and party members.

- a. ...preferring to cover behind the hard-right pages of the Brexit press than stand up and present her case... (Tim Farron, LD)

Rabid (HEALTH/ILLNESS) elements in example B, through drawing on the aggressive and uncontrollable behaviour associated with rabies, emphasises the pathological extremism and danger of the hard-right members of the Conservative Party. In example C, the metaphor lemmas *latest chapter (NARRATIVE/BOOK)* and *melodrama (FILM/PLAY)* depict the ongoing Brexit situation as a dramatic story filled with internal conflict. Labour MP Heidi Alexander claimed that, under the pressure and fear of the hardliners, Theresa May *ramped up (MACHINE)* the threats of a no-deal Brexit.

- b. ...all because she is afraid of the most right-wing, rabid elements in her own party.
(Heidi Alexander, Lab)
- c. ...is just the latest chapter in the Tory party's Brexit divisions and melodrama.
(Emma Reynolds, Lab)

Under Boris Johnson's leadership, the probability of a no-deal Brexit considerably increased, as the Prime Minister and his hard-Brexit colleagues seemingly wanted to leverage the threat of no deal to secure a better deal than the one achieved by Theresa May (Ryder, 2020, p.146). In BJ data, several Opposition MPs used *fanboy* to describe the hard-right Brexiteers who are blindly loyal to the idea of Brexit.

- d. *Because of the narrow ideology of the Brexit fanboys who sit on the Government Benches.* (Stewart Malcolm McDonald, SNP)

As shown in example D, they criticised these "fanboys" for being ideologically dogmatic and unwilling to adopt more flexible approaches to Brexit issues.

6.3.2.4 Questioning the legitimacy of the 2016 referendum and Brexit

Following the Brexit referendum, many Remain supporters did not fully accept the result and continued to challenge it, whereas those from the Leave side argued that the outcome represented the genuine will of the people against a small elite group

(Bellamy, 2019, p.126). In both corpora, opponents of Brexit expressed their stance by questioning the legitimacy of the Brexit referendum and highlighting its consequences, with more metaphors identified in BJ data (fourteen lemmas, 12.9 per million tokens) than in TM data (three lemmas, 1.6 per million tokens)

In TM data, metaphor lemmas, such as *deploy* (*FIGHT/WAR*), *con* (*TRICK*), and *sorcery* (*MYTHOLOGY*), reflect the opposition's doubts about the fairness and integrity of the referendum process. These metaphors suggest that the referendum result was influenced by fake promises, deception, and unethical trickery, as illustrated in the following examples:

- a. ...deployed all kinds of political sorcery and false promise to win the referendum?
(Stewart Malcolm McDonald, SNP)
- b. ...they were conned over the last referendum by a combination of fraudsters, cheats, foreign money... (Barry Sheerman, Lab/Co-op)

In BJ data, MP Anna Soubry used a group of metaphor lemmas related to *PHOTOGRAPHY* (e.g., *snapshot*, *distorted photograph*), *prey on* (*ANIMAL*), and *fuel* (*FIRE*), implying that the referendum cannot be seen as an accurate reflection of the people's will, as the result was shaped by misinformation that exaggerated fears and biases. *Gimmickry* (*TRICK*) in example D also implies that the 2016 referendum was affected by political manipulation, thereby supporting the case for a legitimate second referendum. As Sebastião and Borges (2021) argued, misinformation amplified through social media dilutes the "democratic effectiveness" and legitimacy of the Brexit referendum (p.346).

- c. ... a referendum, which in effect was a snapshot on a single day. A distorted photograph was obtained. It was distorted by false images...It was created by preying on people's fears and fuelling their prejudices... (Anna Soubry, IGC)
- d. ...if it came subject to a confirmatory referendum, disentangled from all the election gimmickry. (Rupa Huq, Lab)

Additionally, example E uses the phrase *have the biggest stake* (*INVESTMENT*) to convey that people who did not participate in the decision-making process of the referendum, such as those born after 2000, will nevertheless be most affected by its outcome. This argument, together with accusations of misinformation by the Leave campaign, such as the assertion that the £350 million EU membership fee could

instead fund the NHS, played a key role in challenging the normative legitimacy of the 2016 referendum, as noted by Bellamy (2019, p.129).

e. *...no person born this century voted in the referendum, but every person born this century will have the biggest stake in the outcome.* (Nic Dakin, Lab)

A set of metaphor lemmas from the *SOUND* grouping in BJ data, including *shout down*, *voice*, and *silence* (example F), were also used by SNP members to convey that the Scotland's interests and opinions (having voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU) have been marginalised and disregarded following the referendum. Metaphor lemmas such as *carnage* (*FIGHT/WAR*) and *wreckage* (*PHYSICAL DAMAGE*), as shown in example G, were used to create a hyperbolic portrayal of the post-referendum situation, comparing it to an aftermath of a battlefield, accompanied by escalating hostility, severe damage, and mutual accusations of betrayal.

f. *The voices of the people of Scotland are being silenced...* (Drew Hendry, SNP)

g. *I have watched the carnage and the wreckage, and the ratcheting up of the rhetoric to "traitor" and "treason" ...* (Edward Vaizey, Ind)

In the discussion of challenges to the legitimacy of Brexit, BJ data also contained more metaphors (seven lemmas, 2.2 per million tokens) than TM data (one lemma, 8.3 per million tokens), highlighting the government's false or misleading promises. A common argument presented in the government's official Brexit discourse is that leaving the EU would allow the UK to operate as a fully independent entity, remove the constraints of Brussels' red tape, and exert greater influence on WTO policies (Zappettini, 2019a, p.147). However, the shared metaphor lemma *bubble* (*LIQUID*), often appearing in collocations such as *Brexit bubble* and *Westminster bubble*, and *burst* (*LIQUID*, when it collocates with *bubble*), as well as *myth* (*MYTHOLOGY*), and *assortment* (*PHYSICAL OBJECTS*) (*of lies*) in BJ data, were used to condemn this commitment as being deceptive.

h. *...Brexit has been treated as a problem and choreographed by people who do not have their heart in it...* (Gareth Johnson, Con)

i. *I do not want to hear his fancy stock answers about Brexit or Russia that he has been giving from his little folder.* (Jess Phillips, Lab)

Both examples H and I criticise that the government's decisions or statements about Brexit are scripted and performed by those who lack sincere dedication to this cause. *Choreograph (DANCING)* in H suggests that the Brexit process has been managed in a mechanical way, akin to a rehearsed dance routine. Similarly, *fancy stock answers* and *his little folder (PHYSICAL OBJECTS)* in example I sarcastically indicate that the Prime Minister's statements on Brexit are formulaic and embellished, drawn from a limited and prepared set of responses. MP Ian Blackford also used the idiom *a leopard does not change its spots* to imply that disregarding due process is a true characteristic of the Conservatives, as he claimed that the government consistently sought to bypass parliamentary scrutiny throughout the Brexit process.

6.3.2.5 Support for holding a second referendum

Hayton (2022) noted that under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, Labour transitioned from a hesitant stance on a second referendum to fully supporting it, due to growing internal party pressure (pp.353-354). The promise for a "final say" referendum was included in Labour's manifesto for the 2019 general election (Mason, 2019). The Liberal Democrats, the Green Party, the SNP, and Plaid Cymru also took a pro-second referendum position, as reported by Allegretti (2019).

- a. *I can see no other way forward but to put the decision back to the people in another referendum.* (Roger Godsiff, Lab)
- b. *Bring on a people's vote—our salvation in public democracy.* (Liz Saville Roberts, PC)

As shown in example A, the shared metaphor lemmas *put back* and *take back (MOVEMENT)* emphasise returning control to the public through a second vote, allowing them to have a final say on Brexit. This contrast with Theresa May's argument that calling for a second referendum would be an attempt to avoid responsibility for making a difficult decision, effectively "*passing the buck back to the British people*". In example B, the metaphor *salvation (RELIGION)* shared by both corpora was used by Opposition MPs to express their support for a second referendum, viewing it as a means to restore the democratic trust or as a solution to *break the impasse* in the Brexit process.

This section discussed the metaphors used to describe five topics reflecting a pro-Brexit stance and five topics reflecting an anti-Brexit stance. The shared and differing

metaphors identified in the two corpora demonstrate how evaluative stances regarding Brexit were encoded in metaphorical language, while also functioning persuasively to encourage others to adopt the same position. Certain topics aligned with pro- and anti-Brexit discourse, such as the legitimacy of the referendum (affirming or challenging its validity) and the debate over a second referendum (supporting or opposing it), represent two opposing perspectives on the same issue. For each topic, metaphor plays an important role in shaping and communicating these opposing evaluative stances. The difference in the number of metaphor lemmas and their frequencies related to these topics between the two corpora may reflect which issues were more central to Brexit discussions during the respective tenures of the two Prime Ministers. In the discourse of the pro-Brexit side, Theresa May's government placed greater emphasis on justifying the legitimacy of the 2016 referendum and opposing the proposal for a second referendum, whereas under Boris Johnson's government, the focus shifted to criticising the drawn-out Brexit debates and the obstacles to completing the Brexit process.

6.4 Similarity 4: Ideological commonalities on Brexit across both Prime Ministers' tenures as reflected in metaphor use

As illustrated in Chapter 3, Brexit as a political event was shaped by the influence of several interrelated ideologies, such as Euroscepticism, British exceptionalism, nationalism, and populism. Previous CDA research and metaphor studies have explored how ideologies associated with Brexit, and the evaluative stances they entail, are communicated in discourse through different rhetorical strategies and the use of metaphors. This section will further examine the metaphors identified in the two corpora that reflect key ideologies closely related to Brexit, specifically those manifesting nationalistic, Eurosceptic, and populist perspectives.

6.4.1 Metaphorical construction of the future vision: a "Global Britain"

The way political discourse constructs and represents future realities is a key ideological aspect of political discourse (Dunmire, 2005, pp.483-484). Metaphor serves as a conceptual framework that shapes our understanding of the past, present, and future, playing a "creative role" in organising the past experiences and constructing "new realities," especially in political discourse (Solopova & Chudinov, 2019, p.48). As discussed in Chapter 3, previous studies have shown that the vision of a "Global Britain" played an important role in legitimising Brexit discourse,

particularly through narratives of global free trade, post-EU national renewal, and reimagined global identity linked to Britain's imperial past (Virdee & McGeever, 2018; Zappettini, 2019a; Eaton, 2020). Based on these observations, this section demonstrates how metaphors appearing across the two corpora contribute to constructing Brexit as a forward-looking national project associated with optimism, renewal, and global ambition.

On the one hand, in both corpora, *JOURNEY*-related metaphor lemmas, such as *direction*, *set out*, *on course*, and *pave the way (for the future)*, were used to portray the UK's post-Brexit future as a brighter and ambitious goal, towards which the country is moving forward with optimism. As Solopova & Chudinov (2019) noted, selecting a path and direction is one of the most common metaphorical frameworks for envisioning the future (p.54). In addition, metaphor lemmas related to *NARRATIVE/BOOK*, such as *chapter*, *mark*, and *story* shared by both corpora; *write* in TM data, and *final page* and *turn the page* in BJ data, frame the UK's future as an unfolding story in which the country has the power to author its own destiny.

- a. ...as we reach out into the world and write this new chapter in our national history... (Theresa May, Lord Mayors Banquet speech, 13/11/2017)
- b. ...two years ago marked not the final page of the story, but the start of a whole new chapter for... (Boris Johnson, official public speech, 31/01/2022)
- c. ...we can also turn the page on the division... (Boris Johnson, PM's new year message, 31/12/2019)

As shown in the above examples, the use of *write* and *mark* implies the nation's agency in shaping its own future path, while *turn the page* indicates Brexit as a closure of past divisions and the beginning of a new phase.

On the other hand, the vision of a "Global Britain" emerged as a key topic concerning the future in the discourse of both Prime Ministers. As Zappettini (2019a) noted, the economic expectations associated with a "Global Britain" and the pursuit of expanded international trade are central themes in the institutional discourse (p.151). The following examples from the two corpora illustrate how metaphors are used to convey this topic.

- d. The result of the referendum was not a decision to turn inward and retreat from the world. (Theresa May, official public speech, 03/02/2017)

- e. ... *this is not the time when we become fortress Britain; it is the time when we become global Britain.* (Alex Chalk, Con)

Metaphor lemmas such as *(turn) inward (DIRECTION)* and *retreat (FIGHT/WAR)* in TM data, as shown in example D; *fortress (FIGHT/WAR)* in BJ data, as shown in example E; and *outward (DIRECTION)* shared by both corpora, all emphasise that the decision of leaving the EU should not be misinterpreted as a desire to isolate Britain, but rather as a move to make the UK more open and engaged globally.

- f. *A future that sees us step up with confidence to a new, even more internationalist role...* (Theresa May, Republican Party conference speech, 26/01/2017)

Theresa May also used *embrace (BODILY ACTION)*, *step up (BODY MOVEMENT)* as shown in example F, and *reach out to (BODILY ACTION)* to convey that the UK is prepared to take on a more proactive and confident role in global collaboration following Brexit.

- g. ...*an opportunity to forge a new future: one outside the EU, but working closely with our great partners, friends and allies.* (Keir Starmer, Lab)

In example G, the shared metaphor lemma *forge (PHYSICAL OBJECT)*, as well as *construct (BUILDING)* in BJ data, were likewise used to convey the same notion of building new international relationships and shaping Britain's future outside the EU.

6.4.2 Conflicting portrayals of the UK-EU relationship in metaphor use

Gamble (2021b) argued that Global Britain is a vague concept, as the central uncertainty in post-Brexit Britain lies in managing its relationship with the EU (p.466), the risk of which is the potential failure of government to establish a clear strategy for this (p.467). In fact, the ways in which the two Prime Ministers describe the UK's relationship with the EU during their premiership appear somewhat contradictory (Parnell, 2024, p.177) and ambiguous, as reflected in the metaphors used to describe the UK-EU relationship. This further supports the view that metaphor analysis can be suggestive of underlying political attitudes, intentions, and contradictions that are not always immediately apparent in political rhetoric (Charteris-Black, 2011; Wu et al., 2020), since metaphor often functions as face-saving strategies (Otieno et al., 2016, p.24), which in political discourse can allow for implicit meanings and indirect

ideological positioning. In the Brexit context, these contradictions are closely linked to national identity, specifically British exceptionalism and Euroscepticism (Wenzl, 2019, 2021; Brusenbauch Meislová, 2021), which were largely manifested in the discourse of the Leave side and in pro-Brexit newspapers (Musolff, 2017; Wenzl, 2020; Maccaferri, 2019).

On the one hand, as discussed in Section 6.1, common metaphor lemmas such as *friend*, *neighbour*, and *partner* emphasise the close, positive, and cooperative side of the UK's relationship with the EU. Additionally, in TM data, Theresa May repeatedly emphasised that Brexit does not mean to *turn back on the EU (BODILY ACTION)*. This emphasis is also reflected in the use of the inclusive *we* in her official letter to the European Council, which serves to highlight the bond and alliance with the EU ahead of negotiations (Leung, 2018, p.61). As shown in examples A and B, *cement (BUILDING)* and *distant (DISTANCE)* convey that the UK does not intend to sever its ties with the EU, but rather to preserve a close and constructive partnership after leaving.

- a. *...my aim is to cement Britain as a close partner of the EU once we have left.* (Theresa May, EU Council speech, 21/10/2016).
- b. *It was no attempt to become more distant from them...* (Theresa May, World Economic Forum speech, 19/01/2017)

In BJ data, *friendship (PERSONIFICATION)*, as well as *doorstep (DISTANCE)* in example C, similarly underscore the UK's desire to maintain cooperation and an amicable relationship with the EU by invoking the concept of geographical proximity and neighbourhood. The idiom *it takes two to tango*, which appears in both corpora, further conveys shared values and interests between the EU and the UK, a view typically portrayed in the discourse of Remain campaign (Alkhamash, 2020, p.87).

- c. *...the EU to have a prosperous and dynamic and contented UK on your doorstep.* (Boris Johnson, official public speech, 24/12/2020)

On the other hand, previous studies have shown that pro-Brexit discourse frequently constructs the EU as an external constraint on UK sovereignty and economic potential (Zappettini, 2019b; Brusenbauch Meislová, 2021). Consistent with these findings, the metaphor scenario *THE EU CONSTRAINS THE UK* identified in this study (as illustrated in Section 6.2.8) conveys a negative evaluation of the UK-EU

relationship and is evident in both corpora. In addition, through *BODILY ACTION* metaphor lemmas such as *sit* and *bend* in TM data, as shown in example D, Theresa May conveyed the idea that the EU's supranational nature inherently prioritises conformity over adaptability, which does not align with Britain's political traditions and national identity.

- d. ...supranational institutions as strong as...sit very uneasily in relation to our political history and way of life...It bends towards uniformity, not flexibility. (Theresa May, official public speech, 03/02/2017)

In example E, her statement argues that the UK's EU membership limited its global influence and economic opportunities. This perspective aligns with the practical considerations, as discussed in Section 3.1, about the economy and identity that formed part of the rationale for Brexit (Vasilopoulou, 2016; Clarke et al., 2017). These statements again reinforce the idea that Brexit was not a rejection of Europe itself, but an effort to restore Britain's political and economic autonomy and national identity.

- e. ...the United Kingdom's place in the European Union came at the expense of our global ties, and of a bolder embrace of free trade with the wider world. (Theresa May, official public speech, 03/02/2017)

In TM data, MP Conor Burns also used *the character (PERSONIFICATION) of Britain* to suggest that the referendum reaffirmed the national identity of the UK, as the EU was moving on a *journey (JOURNEY)* that no longer suited Britain's identity. As discussed in Section 3.3.1, British identity, particularly English identity, has been a powerful driving force behind Brexit, with both the Leave and Remain sides adopting it to craft their respective nation-oriented narratives (Wenzl, 2020; Zappettini, 2019b; Brusenbauch Meislová, 2021).

In BJ data, Boris Johnson employed the idioms *play hardball* and *ride roughshod over* to portray the EU as a confrontational force that put pressure on the UK during the Brexit negotiations. Reference corpus evidence shows that *play hardball* largely appears in contexts of pressure, non-cooperation, and conflict, particularly within political and institutional discourse, where it tends to carry a negative semantic prosody. As shown in example F, *play hardball* is used to suggest that the EU took an aggressive stance, while in example G, *ride roughshod over* refers to the EU disregarding its commitments on Northern Ireland's status in the customs territory,

which was unfavourable for the UK.

- f. *Parliament told the EU that if it played hardball, this House would oblige it by weakening our country's hand...* (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 14/09/2020)
- g. *The EU...to ride roughshod over its own commitment under article 4 of the protocol...* (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 14/09/2020)

In addition, the shared idiomatic expression *hold...to ransom*, as shown in example H, is used, according to the claims of Brexit-supporting MPs, to suggest that the EU was exerting pressure on the UK, leaving it with no real freedom to make decisions regarding the deal in negotiations.

- h. *If someone...says, "The only alternatives are to accept the deal or stay in the European Union,"...The EU is holding us to ransom.* (Christopher Chope, Con)

These "discursive tensions" in describing the UK-EU relationship, as Parnell (2024) noted, likely resulted from the conflicting pressures faced by the government: balancing the need to maintain trade relations with the EU while fulfilling the narrative of the Leave side on restoring the UK's status as a global nation (p.179). Three passages produced by Boris Johnson, in which metaphors appear in clusters, illustrate the conflicting ways the UK-EU relationship is described. As shown in Example I, he used a range of metaphor vehicles, such as *half-hearted*, *stand aloof*, *obstructive*, *friendly neighbour*, and *best friend* (*PERSONIFICATION*), as well as *sever* and *rupture* (*PHYSICAL SEPARATION*), to portray a UK holding dual and ambivalent emotions as a member of the EU: sceptical towards political integration and bureaucracy, yet still deeply connected to Europe culturally and in its desire for continued cooperation.

- i. *...who campaigned for Britain to leave the EU never sought a rupture with our closest neighbours. Never...sever ourselves from our fellow democracies...but a resolution...First we stood aloof, then we became a half-hearted, sometimes obstructive member of the EU. Now...we are going to become a friendly neighbour—the best friend and ally the EU could have, working hand in glove...* (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 30/12/2020)

In the other two cases, *PERSONIFICATION*-related metaphor lemmas such as *instinct*, *heartfelt*, and *half of our hearts* also convey the UK's emotional inclination to

cooperate with Europe, while metaphor lemmas such as *backmarker* (*SPORTS*) and *block* (*BARRIER*), as shown in example J, reflect the UK's Eurosceptic stance, acknowledging its critical distance from the EU while avoiding expressing antagonism towards Europe.

- j. ...it is true that we in the UK have often been a backmarker—opting out of the single currency...very often trying to block some collective ambition. (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 19/10/2019)

The Eurosceptic stance is also conveyed through a creative scenario identified in BJ data that depicts Euroscepticism as a *virus in a vial*, framing the referendum as a catalyst that turned a contained issue into a national crisis (Section 5.3.2.1). As noted in Section 3.1, Euroscepticism has historically been an active force within the Conservative Party. This scenario vividly captures the process through which this force ultimately culminated in David Cameron's decision to call a referendum as a means of resolving the party's long-standing divisions over European issue and securing its unity (Smith, 2018).

Another important aspect of the UK-EU relationship is immigration and free movement, which were decisive factors triggering Britain's departure from the EU (Freedon, 2017; Goodwin & Milazzo, 2017; Dennison & Geddes, 2018). Although both Prime Ministers emphasised the plan of *controlling* (*MACHINE*) *immigration*, the specific immigration system they proposed differed. Compared to Boris Johnson's government, which advocated an Australian-style, points-based immigration system (Elgot, 2019), Theresa May's government adopted a stricter stance on immigration by focusing on limiting net immigration (Hickson et al., 2020, p.339). In TM data, metaphor lemmas related to *MACHINE*, such as *system*, *automatically*, *streamline*, *process*, and *in control*, were used to represent immigration as a system that can be designed and optimised.

- k. ...the system's being abused....met the criteria, they were automatically allowed in. (Theresa May, press conference speech, 05/09/2016)

As shown in example K, Theresa May criticised the points-based system for being exploited, as it allowed some individuals who did not fully meet the criteria to enter the UK. She claimed that her government's plan for immigration was more efficient and simplified and designed to attract top global talent. The *MACHINE* metaphorical

framing emphasises the sense of control, efficiency, and fairness, reinforcing the idea that immigration should function like a well-regulated mechanism rather than something uncontrolled.

- I. *EU nationals...can jump the queue ahead of engineers from Sydney...One that allows us to attract the brightest...more streamlined application and entry processes.* (Theresa May, CBI conference speech, 19/11/2017)

In example L, Theresa May also used *jump the queue* (*TRAFFIC*) to reference the fact of EU nationals' automatic residence and work rights in the UK, which constitutes a potential violation of the principle of fairness (Martin, 2021, p.347). This rhetoric drew criticism from oppositions; for instance, MP David Lammy argued that her labelling of the EU nationals as queue jumpers was a form of stigmatisation and unfair treatment of migrants. Martin (2021) noted that the phrase *jump the queue*, often used to delegitimise asylum seekers, derives from the conceptual metaphor "*IMMIGRATION as QUEUE*," which frames immigration as a structured and fair process for all who follow the rules, positioning the host nation as "just and humane" (p.347).

6.4.3 Populist narratives in Brexit discourse as reflected in metaphors

As demonstrated in Chapter 3, the prevalence of populist narratives in both British media (Berry, 2016; Zappettini, 2021a; Parnell, 2023) and the discourse of Leave campaign (Buckledee, 2018; Browning, 2023; Brusenbauch Meislová, 2021), as well as the populist ideology particularly promoted by UKIP (Ross & Bhatia, 2021), have been significant driving forces behind Brexit and continues to shape Brexit-related discourse among the public and politicians after the 2016 referendum. Well-known slogans such as *Brexit means Brexit, the will of the people, take back control, and Global Britain* exemplify the populist and nationalistic rhetoric within pro-Brexit discourse (Schnapper, 2022, p.11; Gamble, 2021b, p.465).

The multiple adaptations of the proverb *you can't have your cake and eat it too* by Brexit supporters likewise exemplify how populist rhetoric was used to suggest that the promises of Brexit could deliver mutually exclusive benefits. As shown in example A, in TM data, the expression *cake exists to be eaten and cherries exist to be picked*, which reverses the meaning of the original proverb and carries a positive semantic prosody, is used to suggest that Brexit should enable the UK to fully benefit from

trade deals without making significant concessions.

- a. *When she gets into negotiations about trade arrangements with her European counterparts, will she remind them that cake exists to be eaten and cherries exist to be picked?* (Iain Duncan Smith, Con)

In BJ data, Boris Johnson used *have our cake and eat it*, as shown in example B, to challenge the notion that the UK cannot maintain close ties with the EU while retaining sovereignty, suggesting instead that Brexit could make both possible. Charteris-Black (2019a) also cited a similar hyperbolic expression from him—“*My policy on cake is pro having it and pro eating it*”—arguing that it blends moral argument with a touch of humour (p.2).

- b. *We were told that we could not have our cake and eat it—do you remember how often we were told that...* (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 30/12/2020)

Boris Johnson also used this proverb to mock Labour’s indecisiveness, which conveys a negative connotation. In the contexts provided by example C, the variation of this proverb is combined with a simile likening Jeremy Corbyn to the two-faced Roman god Janus and the fictional Pushmi-Pullyu from *Doctor Dolittle*, emphasising his inability to make decisions. As Charteris-Black (2019b) noted, Boris Johnson often employs creative metaphors to provoke opponents, combining vivid personal jabs with elite-school humour (p.161).

- c. *He resembles a Janus, a pushmi-pullyu facing in both directions...His policy on cake is: neither having it nor eating it.* (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 14/10/2019)

These various uses of *you can’t have your cake and eat it too* serve as pro-Brexit arguments, implying that taking advantage of opportunities is natural and justified. By reducing complex issues into simple, optimistic, and emotionally appealing messages combined with moral justification, even if practically contradictory, it promises the public maximum gains with minimal compromise, reflecting populist rhetoric. The differing evaluations of this proverb across contexts align with Musolff’s (2019) observation that it signals divergent stances on Brexit and is strategically integrated into politicians’ rhetorical approaches to appeal to public sentiment (p.218).

In discussing the topic of reclaiming sovereignty, in addition to the frequently used

metaphor *take back (control)* and *restore*, this study also identified *fight*, *win*, *defend*, and *mission (FIGHT/WAR)* shared by both corpora; *retake (FIGHT/WAR)* in TM data; and *restoration (REPAIRING)* and *recapture (FIGHT/WAR)* in BJ data. As shown in example D, *retake* suggests that the UK would independently decide its trade policies rather than being represented at the WTO through the EU. In example E, *recapture* frames Brexit as a battle to reclaim the UK's control that had previously occupied by the EU.

- d. *Retaking our seat at the World Trade Organisation, so we can strike trade deals around the world...* (Theresa May, official public speech, 14/01/2019)
- e. *...using these new powers – this recaptured sovereignty – to deliver the changes people voted for.* (Boris Johnson, official public speech, 31/01/2020)

These *FIGHT/WAR*-related metaphors are closely tied to the populist narrative, representing Brexit either as a war in which the UK must fight to protect its national interests or a path to liberation (Zappettini, 2021b, p.656), which resonate with the public's desire for control and sovereignty. In BJ data, other *FIGHT/WAR* metaphor lemmas, including *battle*, *epic struggle*, *free people*, and *spear carrier*, as shown in examples F and G, similarly frame Brexit as a hard-fought victory for independence, conjuring strong nationalistic themes.

- f. *What I call the battle for Brexit is now over. We won, ...We are about to write a new chapter in what Sir Winston Churchill called our "island story," but now, after a truly epic struggle, we will do it as a free people.* (Mark Francois, Con)
- g. *...I was a spear carrier in the Brexit campaign...* (Edward Leigh, Con)

To a new and potentially challenging chapter, Mark Francois quoted "island story" (example F) from Winston Churchill's parliamentary speech on 8 October 1940, emphasising the UK's historical independence and distinct national identity separate from the European Union. The narrative of island story represents an important ideological part of predominantly English Eurosceptic's push for withdrawal from the EU among Conservatives (Wellings, 2016, p.369).

Another metaphor reflecting a nationalistic theme identified in this study is the phrase *red, white and blue Brexit*, found in TM data. Originally coined by Theresa May to assert a distinctively British version of Brexit by referencing the colours of the UK flag (The Guardian, 2016), the slogan was later criticised and mocked for its ambiguity

and lack of policy details (McDonald-Gibson, 2016). Like the frequently used slogan *Brexit means Brexit*, it has also been argued as an “empty signifier” (Parnell, 2024, p.179).

- h. *It seems that her red, white and blue Brexit has become the blue, white and red of the flag of France.* (Jeremy Corbyn, Lab)

In the statement shown in example H, Jeremy Corbyn subverts this metaphor by twisting it into *blue, white and red*, referencing the French flag, which contrasts the intended British nationalist message, suggesting that Brexit, which was supposed to assert UK sovereignty and interests, has instead appeared to favour EU interests. The altered phrase functions as a device for irony and sarcasm, satirising the expected nationalistic triumph.

As discussed in Section 3.1, the imperial nostalgia for past glory has been debated as a motivation behind the public’s vote for leaving the EU (Virdee & McGeever, 2018; Saunders, 2020). In the Brexit discourse of both Prime Ministers, a series of *PERSONIFICATION* metaphor lemmas, including *pioneer* shared by both corpora, and *outrider, agile, ambitious, usher, vanguard, and leader* in TM data, as well as *ambition, pluck, nerve, campaigner, and proselytiser* in BJ data, attribute positive human qualities to the UK, portraying it as a resilient and pioneering nation. These metaphors appeal to a sense of national pride, which is a key theme in populist discourse. As previous studies illustrated (see Section 3.3.3), Boris Johnson’s Brexit rhetoric clearly manifests a populist style, particularly through the use of hyperbole.

- i. *...firmly planting the British flag on the world stage once again.* (Boris Johnson, official public speech, 31/01/2022)
- j. *...no caricature can be more inaccurate than the idea of some bargain-basement Dickensian Britain, as if enlightened EU regulation has been our only salvation from Dickensian squalor.* (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 30/12/2020)

In example I, *plant flag (CONQUER)* is used to signal the strengthening of the UK’s independent identity and influence after Brexit, analogous to explorers planting a flag to mark territory or achievement. In example J, *bargain-basement (SHOP)* and *salvation (RELIGION)* are used to challenge the portrayal of Britain as reliant on the EU, aligning with the populist narrative of rejecting the establishment’s negative and humiliating warning to the nation (Homolar & Löffmann, 2021, p.7).

6.5 Differences: Metaphors reflecting the different stages of the Brexit process as represented by each Prime Minister

As demonstrated in Section 6.3, there are noticeable differences in the metaphor lemmas and their token frequencies used to describe certain shared topics across the two corpora. These differences reflect a shift in the thematic emphasis of Brexit discourse between Theresa May's government and Boris Johnson's, corresponding to the distinct stages of the Brexit process during their respective tenures. In addition, TM data contains more metaphors related to *ACCESS* (eleven versus five lemmas; 88.3 vs. 68.4 per million tokens), whereas BJ data contains more metaphors related to *BARRIER* (eight versus four lemmas; 35.1 vs. 26.0 per million tokens). Although the total number of metaphor lemmas identified is relatively small, this pattern aligns with the broader discourse focus. The greater number of *ACCESS* metaphors in TM data reflects a focus on trade and border access, which were central concerns during the negotiation phase of Brexit. In contrast, the higher frequency of *BARRIER* metaphors in BJ data emphasises the obstacles impeding Brexit progress, particularly when the government was focused on rapidly completing the process. This section further illustrates the metaphors identified in each corpus that support this observation.

6.5.1 Metaphors related to the early stage of Brexit in TM data

In TM data, the metaphor vehicles used to describe the backstop, the legitimacy of the 2016 referendum, and the opposition to a second referendum are closely related to issues central to the early stages of the Brexit negotiations. During Theresa May's government, the discourse appeared to largely focus on explaining the complexities of the Brexit negotiations, especially on finding solutions to avoid a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, and on defending the result of the 2016 referendum on leaving the EU. In addition to the metaphors describing these topics, other metaphors and idiomatic expressions reflecting concerns specific to the early stages of Brexit include *blueprint* (*BUILDING*), *off-the-shelf* (*SHOP*), *kite-flying* (*SPORTS*), and *over a barrel*. By saying *no ready-made blueprint for Brexit*, Theresa May emphasised that there was no pre-existing framework for how Brexit should be carried out, as if designing and constructing a building from scratch. The metaphor *blueprint* highlights the uncertainties and challenges her government faced in navigating Brexit. In contrast, when used by Boris Johnson, the same metaphor

refers to the vision for the country's future after Brexit. *Off-the-shelf*, as shown in example A, emphasises the government's aim to negotiate a bespoke outcome that serves the UK's interests, rather than accepting a pre-existing solution (e.g., Norwegian model) offered by the EU.

- a. *And we are not going for an off-the-shelf solution.* (Theresa May, Lord Mayors Banquet speech, 14/11/2016)

Regarding the Brexit deal proposed by Theresa May's government, *kite-flying* in Example B refers to the informal floating of a compromise proposal on Brexit within the Conservative Party to gauge reactions. Since the proposal included ideas that had already been rejected, it might have been more of a speculative tactic rather than a plan intended for serious discussion. In Example c, *over a barrel*, by evoking the picture of someone being placed over a barrel and unable to move freely, suggests that the proposed Brexit deal would leave the UK in a powerless position and force it to accept the demands set by the EU in the negotiations.

- b. *...there was some kite-flying about a so-called Tory Brexit compromise that would still take Scotland out of the EU...* (Neil Gray, SNP)
- c. *Under this deal...we...either pay more and extend the transition period or lock us into the backstop...the UK would be over a barrel.* (Jeremy Corbyn, Lab)

Another example that clearly illustrates how metaphor differences in the two corpora reflect both the different stages of the Brexit process under each Prime Minister and their respective positions on Brexit is that certain metaphor lemmas identified in TM data express a desire to move away from the simplistic labelling of Brexit as either hard or soft. However, no similar metaphors or discussions were identified in BJ data. According to Schnapper (2022), Theresa May faced a challenging compromise between meeting the negotiation expectations from Brussels and satisfying the conflicting demands of domestic audiences, such as soft and hard Brexiters (p.68). During her premiership, Theresa May's Brexit negotiation strategies reflected both a dismissal of soft Brexit within the Conservative Party and a concession to a softer Brexit through measures designed to avoid using the backstop (Schnapper, 2022, pp.73-76). In contrast, Boris Johnson, despite being known for drafting both Remain and Leave speeches before the referendum, stood as a vocal supporter of a hard Brexit after the 2016 vote (De Landtsheer et al., 2021, p.126). The following three

examples, drawn from TM data, illustrate the opposition to labelling Brexit as either hard or soft:

- a. ...they reject the *shrill* and divisive *tone* in which Brexit has been presented –the sort of “come on if you think you're hard enough” *approach* to Europe. (Theresa May, Hansard, 21/06/2017)
- b. ... a *weapon* of propaganda intended to create a *fog* when we need above all else *clear lines* and meanings. (William Cash, Con)
- c. ...let our negotiator get on with this task without undue *noises off*. (Andrew Mitchell, Con)

As shown in example A, Theresa May suggests that the *hard* and *soft* labels make communication about Brexit overly confrontational, leading to division rather than consensus. In example B, William Cash criticises the terms *hard Brexit* and *soft Brexit* as unhelpful and misleading descriptors, arguing that they do not accurately reflect the complexities of Brexit negotiations and instead obscure them with vague language (*create a fog*). What is needed in discussing Brexit, he implies, is straightforward and unambiguous language (*clear lines*). In example C, Andrew Mitchell employs the concept of offstage sounds, as in the theatre, to represent the debates over hard Brexit and soft Brexit as distractions that could disrupt the negotiator's focus.

Like the use of metaphors framing Brexit as an *INVESTMENT* and the idiom *you can't have your cake and eat it too*, as previously discussed, the terms *hard Brexit* and *soft Brexit* do not fully capture the complexities associated with Brexit. As Yu and Huang (2019) noted, *hard* and *soft* are primary metaphors that instantiate the conceptual metaphor “DIFFICULTY IS SOLIDARITY” (p.115). When collocated with the term *Brexit*, *hard* and *soft* produce a distinct political meaning that goes beyond their dictionary definitions and previous corpus usage (Broz, 2021, p.496). As discussed earlier in Section 6.1, *hard Brexit* refers to a firm and uncompromising approach to leaving the EU and its affiliated institutions, whereas *soft Brexit* indicates a less disruptive approach that maintains some level of ties with the EU. While the *hard/soft* metaphor provides a convenient binary framework that can reduce the effort required to understand complex political issues, its potential for extended interpretation is limited. Nevertheless, Brexit negotiations are a back-and-forth, intricate, and dynamic process marked by competition and compromise, which creates considerable scope for metaphorical explanation. Consequently, it is

challenging for a pair of binary metaphors to capture the nuances, uncertainties, and potential outcomes that may arise during this process. From this perspective, the terms *hard Brexit* and *soft Brexit* could promote a binary perception of Brexit, which may not accurately reflect the range of options or the compromises that may be necessary in the negotiations.

In TM data, this study identified various metaphor vehicles related to *hard* and *soft* used to indicate different degrees on the scale of hardness, including *softer*, *very soft*, *softest* and *hardest*, as shown in the examples below.

- d. ...end up with an even softer Brexit than the one... (Julian Lewis, Con)
- e. ...witness it implement the softest of soft Brexit... (Gareth Johnson, Con)
- f. ...seek to...the hardest form of Brexit –a no-deal Brexit. (Anna Soubry, IGC)

These forms appear to allow greater scope for interpreting the different approaches to withdrawal. However, I argue that they often introduce more vagueness than clarification, as the specific implication of each degree can only be understood in the wider context. Unless explicitly specified, such as in example F, *the hardest Brexit* is identified as a no-deal Brexit. For instance, *softer* in example D suggests that Theresa May would need to make concessions to her proposed Brexit deal to accommodate the views of MPs who support remaining in the EU, while *softest* in example E implies that the extension of Article 50 could potentially reverse Brexit entirely—that is, no Brexit.

Hard Brexit and *soft Brexit* seem to present two poles on the scale: no Brexit (*softest*) and no-deal Brexit (*hardest*). Other degrees of hardness used to depict the ways to leave the EU depend heavily on context to determine their concrete meaning. Instead of providing precise distinctions between different Brexit scenarios or policy approaches, the primary purpose of *hard/soft Brexit* metaphor appears to be a reflection of the ideological divisions between people who strongly support Brexit and those who advocate remaining in the EU. This aligns with Godioli and Pedrazzini's (2019) observation that the use of rhetorical devices tends to be more effective in provoking an "instinctive and emotional response" from audiences than in facilitating "detailed and accurate argumentation" (p.321).

6.5.2 Metaphors related to the finalisation of Brexit and its envisioned benefits in BJ data

In BJ data, metaphors used to describe the topics of criticising the frustrating Brexit debates and the obstructions to delivering Brexit, as well as expressing the decisiveness in breaking the Brexit impasse, strongly resonate with the strategic objectives of Boris Johnson's government, which emphasised the determination and urgency in bringing Brexit to a conclusion. A key narrative linked to this notion is that finalising Brexit would be simple and swift, as the deal proposed by his government was fully ready and could be enacted easily and immediately. Charteris-Black (2019b) argued that Boris Johnson showed a preference for using metaphors related to *FOOD* (p.164), with his depiction of Brexit choices frequently conveyed through such imagery (p.165). During the general election campaign, Boris Johnson employed a range of *FOOD*-related metaphor lemmas in his social media posts to express this idea. In addition to those discussed in Section 5.3.2.1, other related variants include *slam...in the microwave, go into the microwave, and (bake) an oven-ready pie*.

In response to this narrative, beyond *convenience food* and *burnt (deal)* in Section 5.3.2.1, which criticise the government's Brexit deal as inadequate and detrimental to the country's long-term wellbeing, other *FOOD*-related metaphor lemmas identified, such as *serve up, consume, and cook up*, were also used to convey similar criticism. As shown in example A, *serve up* and *consume* depict the Brexit deal as a meal being presented to the public, who are then expected to accept it quickly, implying there is pressure to endorse it without thorough examination.

- a. ...people who do not support this oven-ready deal that we are being served up and asked to consume very quickly... (Geraint Davies, Lab/Co-op)

According to the LDOCE, the basic meaning of *cook up* is "to prepare food, especially quickly," which is supported by instances from enTenTen21. In its culinary context, the adverb *quickly* typically appears to the right of this phrase as a common collocate. The figurative meaning of *cook up*, as noted by the LDOCE, refers to "inventing an excuse, reason, plan...that is slightly dishonest or unlikely to work". In the context provided in example B, this phrase suggests that the proposed deal was hastily schemed without careful planning and may also involve some degree of dishonesty.

- b. ...who caves in on bended knee to a deal cooked up by the Prime Minister... (Ian

Blackford, SNP)

With the finalisation of Brexit becoming an increasingly central theme in Boris Johnson's government, the portrayal of Brexit's potential benefits for future is prominently reflected in the discourse through the use of metaphors. In addition to the commonly used metaphors *strike*, *role*, and *stage* related to this topic, as discussed in Section 6.1, twelve additional metaphor lemmas were identified in BJ data from Boris Johnson's discourse. The metaphor *unleash*, which carries negative connotations in TM data with a token frequency of 0.55 per million, occurs more frequently in BJ data (17.53 per million tokens), implying that Brexit holds great opportunities that can be released to benefit the future, as shown in example C. In this context, *edge* (*SHARPNESS*) denotes the advantage or leading position that Brexit could provide the UK in new industries.

c. ...unleash the immense potential of Brexit and will give us the edge in these new areas of growth. (Boris Johnson, Twitter, 31/01/2022)

In example D, *turbocharge* (*MACHINE*) analogises the economy to an engine that can be significantly boosted by Brexit. Similarly, *reshape* (*SHAPE*) and *harness* (*ANIMAL*) in example E emphasise that Brexit would allow the UK to transform its economy and make full use of its technologies.

d. ...we can now go further to turbocharge the economy and unleash the benefits of Brexit. (Boris Johnson, official public speech, 01/02/2022)

e. ...we can reshape our economy, harness the technological revolution and build a brighter future. (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 29/10/2019)

These metaphors collectively frame Brexit as a catalyst for change or a reinventing force that could unlock opportunities, drive economic growth, and reshape the economy for long-term prosperity. Furthermore, some metaphors were used to convey the idea that Brexit is not just about leaving the EU, but also serves as a foundation for building the UK's new role in the world.

f. Detaching ourselves from the EU is only a prelude to the greater task of establishing our new role... (Boris Johnson, Hansard, 30/12/2020)

g. ...the extraction having been done, the building now begins. (Boris Johnson, press conference speech, 17/10/2019)

As shown in example F, *prelude (MUSIC)* suggests that leaving the EU is only the beginning. A set of *BUILDING* metaphor vehicles, including *extraction* and *building* in example G, as well as *lay the foundations* and *solid masonry*, frame Brexit as a two-stage process: first removing the UK from the EU, which provides the groundwork, and then building upon it to actively construct the country's future, much like building a strong and lasting structure.

This section discussed how the metaphors identified in the two corpora connect to the different stages of Brexit that each Prime Minister's government was handling. The shift in focus between the tenures of these two Prime Ministers, corresponding to the different stages of Brexit, as reflected in the metaphors used in discourse in this study, is also supported by Jamet and Rodet (2021). They (2021) noted that Boris Johnson uses the word *other* frequently in his speech, which does not appear in speeches of David Cameron or Theresa May, reflecting a new phase in the UK-EU relationship, with the EU becoming "other" (p.14). Additionally, they found that in Theresa May's speeches, frequent keywords are linked to both the EU and the UK, such as *deal* and *trade*, marking the start of Brexit negotiations (2021, p.19). Boris Johnson, however, uses fewer EU-related words, with *EU* being the only one, and introduces the construction *let's*, emphasising his action-oriented approach to quickly accomplishing Brexit (2021, p.20).

Chapter 7 Conclusions

This chapter begins by summarising the similarities and differences in metaphor use, and the ideologies these metaphors encode, across the tenures of Theresa May and Boris Johnson as analysed in the previous chapters. It then discusses the implications of these findings for existing research on Brexit discourse, corpus-based approaches to (critical) discourse analysis and metaphor analysis, as well as for broader socio-political research and practice. Finally, It also reflects on three main limitations of the study and suggests several directions for future research.

7.1 Main findings of the study

7.1.1 Similarities in metaphor use and the ideologies it encodes across the two Prime Ministers' tenures

Sections 6.1 to 6.4 in the previous chapter discuss four similarities in the use of metaphors related to Brexit between the two Prime Ministers' tenures. The first similarity lies in the shared use of the most frequent metaphors in the two corpora. These metaphors are consistently connected to specific topics across both Prime Ministers' tenures and constitute an important part of the Brexit-related common vocabulary. As shown in Section 6.1, these metaphors include *hard*, *soft*, *deliver*, *frictionless*, *support*, *back*, *leave*, *remain*, *take...out of*, *get/come out of*, *reverse*, *overturn*, *crash out*, *cliff edge*, *friend*, *neighbour*, *partner*, *divorce*, *close*, *take back*, *control*, *build*, *bright*, *vision*, *seize*, *grasp*, *strike*, *stage*, and *role*. Meanwhile, the high frequency of these metaphors in the two corpora reflects that the topics they are associated with were central to the Brexit agenda and frequently discussed in the institutional discourse under both governments, such as the approach to Brexit, the possibility of a no-deal Brexit, the future UK–EU relationship, and the aim of reclaiming sovereignty.

The second similarity is that, under both Theresa May's and Boris Johnson's tenures, common systematic metaphors and metaphorical scenarios were constructed around Brexit. In pro-Brexit discourse, the scenario *BREXIT IS A JOURNEY*, frequently employed by both Prime Ministers, conceptualises the Brexit process as a forward movement towards a destination that requires the government to overcome various obstacles. This metaphorical framing not only emphasises the government's effort and perseverance in pursuing this goal but also helps legitimise Brexit by portraying it as a desirable and ultimately rewarding endeavour. At the same time,

the scenario *DIVISIONS IMMOBILISE PARTIES AND PARLIAMENT*, employed by the pro-Brexit side, conveys that the journey towards Brexit was impeded by a parliamentary deadlock caused by the deep divisions among MPs over the issue. Both Prime Ministers, along with other pro-Brexit MPs, also drew on the scenario *THE EU CONSTRAINS THE UK* to highlight the perceived restrictions it imposed on trade and national autonomy, thereby reinforcing the othering of the EU and further legitimising Brexit as an act of reclaiming control. Regarding the perceived rewards of Brexit, the systematic metaphor of Brexit as an *INVESTMENT*, realised through words such as *dividend*, *bonanza*, and *prospectus*, frames the withdrawal from the EU as a financially beneficial investment to support public services, thereby presenting Brexit as an economically profitable decision. Additionally, reflected in the use of the systematic metaphor *FREE TRADE IS ACCESS WITHOUT BARRIERS*, both Prime Ministers conveyed a desire to maintain open access to the EU market after Brexit while simultaneously expanding trade opportunities with countries beyond the EU.

In anti-Brexit discourse, the government's handling of Brexit was often depicted, through the systematic metaphor of Brexit as a *PERSON* or an *ENTITY*, as disorganised, unclear, and poorly prepared. The systematic metaphor of Brexit as a *DISASTER* or a *VIOLENT ACTION* underscores the perceived damage, actual or potential, that Brexit, particularly a no-deal Brexit, poses to different areas of British society, such as workers' and consumers' rights. Similarly, Opposition MPs used metaphors to construct the scenario *THE NHS IS A BODY IN PAIN*, portraying the institution as suffering from potential shortages of staff and medicines resulting from Brexit and further criticising the risks that Brexit brought to this vital national service. As discussed in Section 3.1, the political, social, and ideological divisions surrounding Brexit represented both drove and deepened from the referendum. These divisions are reflected in the systematic metaphor *THE NATION IS DIVIDED*, constructed through *PHYSICAL SEPARATION* metaphors, which depict the state of fragmentation manifesting in internal party conflicts, inter-party divisions, and a nation split along political and ideological lines.

Discussion of the backstop did not correspond directly to the pro- and anti-Brexit divide, as not all anti-Brexit MPs opposed it, while some pro-Brexit figures, including Boris Johnson, also rejected the arrangement. Both corpora contain metaphors that conceptualise it as a *PHYSICAL OBJECT*, helping to explain its implementation during Theresa May's premiership and its subsequent cancellation under Boris

Johnson. In support of the backstop, the systematic metaphor *THE BACKSTOP IS A PROTECTIVE INSTRUMENT* emphasises that the backstop was not a permanent arrangement but a necessary safeguard to prevent the return of a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, which would undermine the Good Friday Agreement. By contrast, in opposition to the backstop, the scenario *THE BACKSTOP IS A DANGEROUS BUILDING* was constructed to highlight the perceived risks associated with entering into the arrangement.

The third similarity is found in the use of metaphors in both corpora that are thematically linked to shared Brexit-related topics, indicating that these topics persisted from Theresa May's government to Boris Johnson's government. The shared and distinct metaphor lemmas, as well as idiomatic expressions, associated with these continued topics occur less frequently compared with those presented in the first two similarities. Among them, the most frequent metaphor, *put...back to* (see Section 6.3.2.5), appears eight times in TM data, while 43.7% of all metaphor lemmas linked to these ongoing topics occur only once in either corpus. In pro-Brexit discourse, the continued discussion of key issues includes the legitimacy of implementing the referendum result, frustrations over the prolonged Brexit debates, criticism of obstacles impeding the Brexit process, calls to break the parliamentary deadlock, and opposition to holding a second referendum. In the discourse of the anti-Brexit side, topics spanning both Prime Ministers' tenures include the consequences of a hard Brexit, reflected in the negative prosody surrounding it in context; criticism of the government's reckless approach, also evidenced in the shared systematic metaphor *BREXIT IS A PERSON/ENTITY*; criticism of hard-line Brexiteers within the Conservative Party; questioning the legitimacy of the 2016 referendum and the government's handling of Brexit; and continued advocacy for holding a second referendum.

Metaphors used to describe these topics highlight the entrenched ideological conflicts throughout the Brexit process. Both pro- and anti-Brexit camps relied on the use of metaphors to legitimise their stances. The pro-Brexit side used metaphors to emphasise the legitimacy of honouring the referendum result and completing Brexit, thereby evoking action and movement in advancing the Brexit agenda. These metaphors highlight determination to overcome obstacles, reinforcing an image of agency and progress. By contrast, metaphors employed by the anti-Brexit side challenged the legitimacy of the 2016 referendum and the decision to pursue Brexit, particularly targeting hard-line Brexiteer advocates. These metaphors also evoke a

sense of harm and recklessness, framing Brexit as a risky and damaging endeavour that requires resistance or correction, thereby reinforcing the anti-Brexit position.

The fourth similarity lies in the metaphors identified in each corpus, particularly those employed by the two Prime Ministers, reflecting and reinforcing common ideological perspectives central to Brexit. The metaphors identified in both corpora exemplify prevalent narratives surrounding Brexit, such as British division, the decline of Britain (Parnell, 2024, pp.168-169), the EU's constraints on the UK, and a "future-oriented globalist national identity" (p.178). As shown in Section 6.4, the first ideological perspective is reflected in the metaphorical representation of the UK's post-Brexit future as a "Global Britain," portraying the nation as ambitious and proactive in shaping its own destiny. Through metaphors related to groupings such as *JOURNEY*, *NARRATIVE/BOOK*, *BODILY ACTION*, and *FIGHT/WAR*, both Prime Ministers depict Britain as an active agent, able to author a new chapter in its history and confidently engage with the wider world through expanded international trade.

The second ideological perspective is evident in the conflicting ways the UK-EU relationship is represented. As evidenced through metaphor use in both corpora, the EU is depicted simultaneously as a cooperative partner and as a restrictive or obstructive institution. These metaphorical portrayals reflect a dual ideological view of the UK–EU relationship, embodying the pro-Brexit side's attempt to balance maintaining close cooperation with the EU, and reclaiming national political and economic autonomy from the perceived demands of political integration and bureaucratic constraint. The third ideological perspective is manifested in the populist and nationalist narratives within pro-Brexit discourse, as reflected in the metaphors identified in both corpora. A notable example is the use of variants of the proverb *you can't have your cake and eat it too* in both corpora, especially by Boris Johnson, which frame Brexit as a means to secure mutually advantageous outcomes, alongside other rhetorical strategies, such as similes, hyperbole, and humour, that draw attention to key arguments and appeal audiences' emotions. In addition, *FIGHT/WAR*-related metaphors frame Brexit as a battle to assert sovereignty, emphasising national liberation and independence. Nationalistic themes are further reinforced through *PERSONIFICATION* metaphors portraying the UK as a pioneer or explorer, which evoke ambition and historical pride. Collectively, these metaphorical representations highlight a populist narrative that emphasises the UK's agency, national distinctiveness, and the pursuit of sovereignty.

7.1.2 Differences in metaphor use and the ideologies it encodes across the two Prime Ministers' tenures

This study demonstrates two differences in metaphor use between the two Prime Ministers in their Brexit discourse. The first difference lies in their rhetorical style, which can be seen from the use of novel metaphors and idiomatic expressions in the two corpora. As presented in Section 5.3.2, more novel metaphor lemmas were identified in BJ data than in TM data, with 14 of these used by Boris Johnson, whereas none were used by Theresa May. Specifically, across the discussions in Sections 5.3.2.1, 6.3.1.3, and 6.4.3, Boris Johnson demonstrates a creative and playful use of metaphors that often carries an element of provocation, combining wit and humour to challenge opponents and appeal to public sentiment, thereby reflecting a more expressive and populist rhetorical style.

Likewise, the analysis of idiomatic expressions in Section 5.3.3 shows that 20 idiomatic expressions appear in Boris Johnson's discourse and seven in Theresa May's. Of those used by Boris Johnson, six draw on shared cultural sources, including religious texts and classical mythology, indicating his preference for literary and historically grounded expressions, likely influenced by his education in classics. This contributes to a theatrical and performative style in his Brexit rhetoric (Abramicheva, 2022; Čatipović, 2023). In contrast, Theresa May illustrates a more restrained, formal, and technocratic rhetorical style, as evidenced by the absence of novel metaphors and relatively few idiomatic expressions in her Brexit discourse. Additionally, as shown in Sections 6.3.1.3 and 6.3.1.4, she tends to rely on descriptive language, such as adjectival forms like *deadlocked* or *gridlocked*, rather than provocative or personalised metaphors to convey political issues.

The second difference lies in how metaphors employed during the tenures of the two Prime Ministers reflect different thematic emphases associated with distinct phases of Brexit, as illustrated in Sections 6.3 and 6.5. Section 6.3 shows that while certain topics recur across both Prime Ministers' tenures, there are notable differences in the lemmas and frequencies of metaphors used to address them, especially in pro-Brexit discourse. For example, TM data contains more metaphors that stress the legitimacy of respecting the referendum result and rejecting a second referendum, whereas BJ data includes more metaphors conveying frustration with the prolonged Brexit debates and criticising the obstacles to delivering Brexit. These differences indicate that metaphor use across the two premierships aligned with the shifting

stages of Brexit: from Theresa May's phase of defending and securing the decision to leave, to Boris Johnson's phase of pushing Brexit forward and bringing it to completion.

This is also exemplified in the comparison of specific metaphor groupings, such as the higher number of *ACCESS*-related metaphor lemmas in TM data and *BARRIER*-related lemmas in BJ data. Additionally, as discussed in Section 6.2.8, BJ data includes more metaphor lemmas portraying the EU as imposing restrictions on the UK, such as those related to *CONSTRAINT* and *PRISON*. This emphasis likely reflects the need of Boris Johnson's government to conclude Brexit while also aligning with his more populist rhetorical style, as noted earlier. Conversely, as shown in Section 6.2.9, TM data includes more metaphors referring to the backstop, particularly the distinctive systematic metaphor *THE BACKSTOP IS A MACHINE*. This further highlights the negotiation-focused context of Theresa May's tenure, during which debates over how the backstop would operate and how the UK could exit it became major concerns, due to its significance for Northern Ireland.

Section 6.5 presents further metaphors that reflect the shifting focus of Brexit discourse throughout the different stages under the two Prime Ministers. In the discourse during Theresa May's government, metaphors highlighting early-stage Brexit topics focused on explaining the complexities and uncertainties of negotiations, including the challenges of designing Brexit deals from scratch and addressing the limitations of simplistic "hard" and "soft" Brexit labels. By comparison, in Boris Johnson's government discourse, metaphors focused on completing Brexit, particularly through *FOOD*-related imagery that framed Brexit deals as ready-to-consume meals, while also emphasising the potential benefits, opportunities, and future transformations resulting from Brexit.

7.2 Implications of this study

7.2.1 Implications for existing research on Brexit discourse

This study contributes to and engages with existing research on Brexit discourse by both extending some aspects of the previous findings in CDA and metaphor studies, particularly through offering a diachronic perspective on metaphor use across Theresa May and Boris Johnson's premierships. The first implication is that it demonstrates substantial continuity in the key metaphorical framings despite

changes in political leadership. Earlier studies have identified recurring metaphors related to *JOURNEY* (Silaški & Đurović, 2019; Greavu, 2018; Rodet, 2020), *WAR* (Tinceva, 2019b; Koller & Ryan, 2019; Leggett, 2020), *RESTRAINT* (Islentyeva, 2019; Koller, 2020; Wenzl, 2021), and *MARRIAGE/DIVORCE* (Morozova, 2017; Berberović & Mujagić, 2017; Landmann & Ganz, 2024), as well as the proverb *you can't have your cake and eat it too* (e.g., Musolff, 2019, 2021; Charteris-Black, 2019), as central to Brexit discourse. The present findings extend this body of research by showing that these specific metaphor domains, reflected in the most frequently used metaphors and the shared systematic metaphor patterns, form part of an institutionalised metaphorical lexicon of Brexit that persists across the tenures of both Theresa May and Boris Johnson.

The second implication is that, through a relatively systematic comparison, this study demonstrates that differences in metaphor use between Theresa May and Boris Johnson are not only shaped by individual rhetorical style, but also by the institutional and ideological demands associated with different phases of the Brexit process. By highlighting this interaction, the study extends previous research on institutional Brexit discourse, which has largely focused on describing metaphor use at a single point in time, by providing an account of how metaphor use evolves in relation to shifting political contexts. For example, in relation to the *JOURNEY* metaphor, *BREXIT IS A JOURNEY*, as the most prevalent metaphor scenario across both Prime Ministers' tenures, functions not only as a general conceptualisation of Brexit as a process, as identified in earlier studies (e.g., Yang, 2018; Jamet & Rodet, 2021), but also as a dynamic ideological framing device. Specifically, the *JOURNEY* metaphor shifts in meaning and contextual use across political phases: in Theresa May's tenure, it frames Brexit as a stalled journey characterised by delay, deadlock, and institutional blockage in negotiations, whereas in Boris Johnson's discourse, it is reconfigured to depict a forward-moving, goal-oriented process, emphasising delivery, completion, and future opportunity.

The third implication is that this study demonstrates that legitimisation and crisis framing in Brexit discourse are deeply embedded in metaphorical patterns, thereby strengthening existing CDA research by explicitly linking these discursive processes to their metaphorical realisations at the lexical level. Beyond legitimisation strategies (Vaara, 2014), systematic metaphors and metaphor scenarios identified in this study, such as *BREXIT IS A JOURNEY*, *BREXIT IS AN INVESTMENT*, *THE EU CONSTRAINS THE UK*, *FREE TRADE IS ACCESS WITHOUT BARRIERS*, and

THE BACKSTOP IS A PROTECTIVE INSTRUMENT, serve as recurring discursive resources through which Brexit is legitimised. These metaphors construct Brexit as purposeful and forward-moving process, an economically beneficial decision, and a necessary act of reclaiming sovereignty from EU-imposed constraints, while also framing post-Brexit arrangements as protective and as maintaining continued access to global trade. Importantly, with the exception of the one related to the backstop, other metaphorical patterns remain consistent across both premierships, suggesting shared legitimising narratives centred on sovereignty, autonomy, and a reorientation towards a “Global Britain” agenda. These narratives closely align with constructions of British identity and populist discourse, two ideological issues that have been widely discussed in previous studies (Zappettini, 2019a, b; Wenzl, 2020; Freedon, 2017; Brusenbauch Meislová, 2021; Parnell, 2023).

This study also extends research on crisis discourse (e.g., Zappettini & Krzyżanowski, 2019; Bennett, 2019; Krzyżanowski, 2019) by offering insights into how metaphors, during periods of major national crisis or uncertainty like Brexit, are used strategically by politicians to frame issues in ways that align with their stances, strengthen their arguments, justify policies, and persuade audiences. Systematic metaphors and metaphor scenarios such as *BREXIT IS A DISASTER*, *BREXIT IS A VIOLENT ACTION*, *THE NATION IS DIVIDED*, and *THE NHS IS A BODY IN PAIN* contribute to portraying Brexit as a multifaceted crisis affecting political institutions, economic systems, and social stability by encoding negative evaluations that represent it as a source of disruption and national fragmentation, a damaging and conflictual process, and a threat to key public institutions. When viewed through the perspective of governmental crisis management, Theresa May’s discourse emphasises the complexities and uncertainties of the Brexit negotiations, framing Brexit as an ongoing process requiring careful management, while Boris Johnson’s discourse, increasingly reframes Brexit as moving towards resolution through narratives of delivery and completion. This indicates that crisis framing in discourse is also shaped by shifting temporal and political contexts.

Overall, by comparing metaphor use in the Brexit discourse of Prime Ministers Theresa May and Boris Johnson across their social media posts, official speeches, and parliamentary debates with other MPs, the study demonstrates the role of metaphor in constructing common narratives around key Brexit topics and in reflecting the distinct stages and contexts of Brexit under each government. This suggests that examining metaphor use across different Prime Ministers’ leadership

provides an important perspective for understanding continuity and change in political discourse on the same political event. It can reveal similarities through common metaphors that have become part of the Brexit-specific lexical repertoire, shared systematic metaphors reflected in the recurring connections between metaphors and the same topics, shared evaluative metaphor scenarios related to these systematic metaphors, and the persistence of key discussions across governments expressed through metaphors. At the same time, variations in the number and frequency of metaphor lemmas related to key topics can serve as evidence of shifts in focus between governments, shaped by the distinct political stages and circumstances of Brexit that they each encountered.

7.2.2 Methodological implications

Methodologically, this study further demonstrates the applicability and advantages of combining corpus-based methods with Critical Discourse Analysis and metaphor analysis. In line with previous studies that show corpus-based methods provide a systematic, empirical, and flexible approach to metaphor analysis (e.g., Deignan, 2005, 2016; Philip, 2010, 2016; Semino, 2017), this study demonstrates how corpus techniques provide multiple, complementary forms of evidence that can be cross validated to support empirically grounded interpretations of metaphor in political discourse. For example, in this study, the collocational behaviour of a central term, together with its concordance lines, provides complementary contextual evidence of how the term is semantically associated with key themes, as well as whether the term and its collocates are employed metaphorically.

First, this study extends the established methodological synergy between corpus linguistics and discourse analysis (Baker et al., 2008; Gabrielatos & Duguid, 2014; Mahlberg, 2014) by bringing out the potential of corpus-based metaphor analysis to trace discursive shifts across political leaderships or phases of policymaking. The previous research has highlighted the usefulness of corpus methods in identifying patterns of language use and ideological representation (e.g., Orpin, 2005; Baker et al., 2013; Partington et al., 2013). This study further shows that a carefully designed integration of concordance, collocation, and frequency analysis can provide a coherent methodological framework for comparing metaphor use across the target corpora. Working in combination, these techniques facilitate the identification of recurring metaphorical patterns (e.g., systematic metaphors and metaphor scenarios) and their evaluative meanings, while also capturing how their frequency distribution

varies across key topics, thereby revealing both consistent patterns and diachronic change in metaphor use, as well as in the narratives and ideologies encoded in these metaphors.

Second, the study contributes to methodological practice by showing that, in the absence of predetermined thematic categories, the combined use of wordlists and keyword lists offers a robust way to identify salient topics within a corpus. On the one hand, this strengthens claims in the corpus linguistics literature that keyword analysis can serve as an indicator of salient lexis and thematic concerns (e.g., Scott, 1997; Baker, 2004; Bondi, 2010; Gabrielatos, 2018), while also addressing concerns about selective data sampling in CDA (Stubbs, 1994; Cheng, 2013) by underpinning topic determination with quantitative evidence. It also extends this approach by integrating wordlist and keyword analysis with the researcher's assessment of lexical items' relevance based on KWIC concordance lines, thus mitigating the risk of a mechanical analysis lacking critical engagement (Culpeper & Demmen, 2015). On the other hand, it supports and operationalises prior corpus-based approaches to metaphor analysis that identify metaphors through high-frequency search terms (Partington et al., 2013; Deignan et al., 2019), thereby providing a suitable method for studies that do not rely on predefined source or target domains.

Third, the study demonstrates how the integration of collocation and concordance analysis can be effectively used to move from the identification of key lexical items to the analysis of metaphorical patterns. In line with previous research emphasising the importance of collocation in revealing semantic associations and evaluative meanings (e.g., Sinclair, 2004; Hunston, 2022; Xiao, 2015), the analysis of significant collocates and semi-fixed phraseological patterns not only clarifies key themes but also enables the identification of potential key metaphors (Philip, 2010) and the semantic relationships between them. This provides a solid foundation for tracing systematic metaphors, beginning with the systematic connections between topics and metaphor vehicles, particularly those that are central to the discourse.

Finally, this study demonstrates that corpus linguistics can be applied in a flexible and research-driven manner within metaphor analysis by drawing on a range of corpus outputs, such as identifying key metaphors through the examination of significant collocates of central terms. Consistent with the view that corpus linguistics and discourse analysis should not be treated as a strict quantitative–qualitative divide (Gabrielatos & Duguid, 2014; Marchi & Taylor, 2018; Mautner, 2022), corpus-based

metaphor identification and analysis, while grounded in quantitative evidence, does not constitute a fixed set of analytical procedures, but is instead better understood as a flexible approach, allowing for multiple corpus-supported routes of analysis.

7.2.3 Broader socio-political implications

From a wider socio-political perspective, this study once more demonstrates that metaphors in political discourse play a central role in shaping how complex political processes are understood, evaluated, and acted upon. The findings show that metaphorical framings of Brexit used by politicians and institutions can construct particular narratives about agency, responsibility, and consequences, thus legitimising specific political positions while marginalising alternatives. For instance, journey metaphors employed in pro-Brexit discourse position the UK government as an active agent progressing towards a desirable goal, while metaphors of disaster and violent action in anti-Brexit discourse foreground risks such as economic disruption and institutional instability, framing Brexit as harmful and in need of resistance.

The study also highlights how political actors strategically deploy metaphorical language to align audiences with specific evaluative positions. For example, metaphors of conflict and division are mobilised differently across the two camps: in anti-Brexit discourse, they emphasise the damaging consequences of Brexit, while in pro-Brexit discourse, they help construct a sense of urgency and inevitability around completing Brexit, which can justify certain political measures and limit the scope for nuanced debate. In this way, metaphorical framing does not simply reflect political argumentation or reasoning; it actively shapes it by privileging certain interpretations over others. As Charteris-Black (2011) wrote, political metaphor can, like the siren's song, draw audiences towards particular viewpoints by offering "a soothing narrative" that limits critical engagement (p.329).

From a theoretical perspective, this study extends existing socio-political research of discourse and ideology by not only supporting prior research on metaphor as a means of shaping ideological perspectives (Fairclough, 1989; Charteris-Black, 2004; Musolff, 2016; Mio, 2018), but also by demonstrating how metaphor operates not simply at the level of individual expressions but as systematic, topic-linked patterns that structure discourse over time. For example, metaphors associated with "Global Britain" and populist discourse, such as those drawn from the domains of *JOURNEY*,

NARRATIVE, *FIGHT/WAR*, and *PERSONIFICATION*, depict the UK as a pioneering and forward-looking global actor, reaffirming a sovereignty-centred national identity while appealing to a collective sense of national pride and autonomy. These findings align with arguments in critical discourse analysis that discourse is not neutral but instead plays a central role in the reproduction of power relations and ideological meanings (Fairclough, 2013; Wodak, 2014), while also showing how systematic metaphor patterns, which persist or vary across time and contexts, sustain such processes.

More broadly, in the context of Brexit, these metaphorical constructions may have tangible socio-political consequences, shaping public perceptions of the issue, influencing policy preferences, and potentially intensifying social and political polarisation by framing opposing positions in adversarial or crisis driven terms. Alonso-Belmonte et al. (2026) noted that metaphor, by enabling the representation of a target domain through the strategic selection of specific source domains, alongside pejorative language and hyperbole, serves as a key polarising strategy frequently used to frame opposing groups as threats or enemies, thereby further deepening divisions (pp.4–5). Musolff (2026), in his analysis of English and German media discourse on COVID-19, shows that metaphorical war scenarios can intensify political polarisation by framing public health officials such as Dr Anthony Fauci and Dr Karl Lauterbach as traitors or internal enemies, thereby embedding them within conspiracy narratives that persist despite fact-checking (p.290).

Against this backdrop, the metaphorical patterns identified in this study that contribute to narratives of division and to conflict or crisis based framings in Brexit discourse, such as *THE NATION IS DIVIDED*, *DIVISIONS IMMOBILISE PARTIES AND PARLIAMENT*, and *THE EU CONSTRAINS THE UK*, as well as those highlighting the negative consequences of Brexit (e.g., for the NHS and workers' rights), may play a comparable role in sustaining ideological polarisation over time. Atmawijaya (2025) further argued that crisis-oriented metaphors, while effective in mobilising public support, can undermine democratic deliberation by polarising opinion, oversimplifying complex issues, and hindering compromise and negotiation (p.290). In this regard, the study speaks to wider debates about the relationship between language, ideology, and social cohesion, suggesting that critical attention to metaphor is not only analytically valuable but also socially and politically consequential.

Beyond academia, this study has important implications for media practice and public engagement. Figurative language, including metaphor, hyperbole, and irony, plays a significant role in shaping public discourse (Burgers et al., 2016). Experts and the media use metaphors to construct interpretations of the past and projections of the future, with the aim of shaping present social and political action (Nerlich, 2010, p.66). The findings of this study similarly demonstrate how metaphorical patterns in Brexit discourse can structure public understanding and influence evaluative responses to political issues. For journalists and political commentators, the study therefore highlights the need to critically evaluate metaphorical language, as they influence how political issues are interpreted and debated. Atmawijaya (2025) suggested that, in response to the ethical concerns that may be caused by metaphorical framings in political coverage, media outlets can establish fact-checking procedures for metaphor-based claims, train journalists to recognise and contextualise potentially problematic metaphorical framings, and develop public education initiatives on the role of metaphors in political communication (p.289).

Metaphor is often used as a manipulative tool (Goatly, 2007, p.25), as it can highlight certain aspects of an issue while obscuring others or masking the speaker's intentions; its conventionality and repeated use of the same conceptual metaphor across a text can further reinforce particular interpretations (Jamet & Terry, 2020, p.36). This manipulative potential is particularly significant in political communication, where metaphor can be strategically used to frame issues, legitimise specific positions, and shape how the public interprets political events, as shown in the study. For the wider public, recognising the narratives embedded in the metaphors used by politicians and institutions can help individuals critically evaluate political rhetoric and the persuasive strategies that influence opinion and decision-making. Greater awareness of metaphorical language, such as framing Brexit as a journey or an advantageous investment, can thus promote more critical engagement with political discourse by enabling individuals to see how language shapes interpretation and to question dominant narratives. As Charteris-Black (2011) noted, critical metaphor awareness is essential for democratic participation, as it equips citizens to recognise how discourse shapes legitimacy and power, and to resist uncritical acceptance of persuasive political narratives (p.51).

7.3 Limitations of this study

The methodological and analytical choices made in this research inevitably involve some limitations, which should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, only a limited number of central terms were selected for analysis. While these terms were carefully chosen to capture key topics in the Brexit discourse, it is possible that including additional central terms may have uncovered further metaphorical patterns, highlighting more similarities and differences in Brexit-related metaphor use across the two Prime Ministers' tenures.

Second, because only a limited set of central terms was selected, the range of metaphor lemmas identified in the two corpora was relatively small. Although the metaphors analysed offered useful insights into shared patterns, such as variations in metaphor lemmas and their frequencies across key topics, which indicate shifts in thematic emphasis aligning with different stages of Brexit, a larger dataset with a wider range of metaphor lemmas and higher token counts could have made the generalisations more robust.

Finally, while the decision to include contributions from other MPs in the parliamentary debates provides necessary context and a more complete representation of key themes and narratives in Brexit discourse, it may also dilute the focus on the particular metaphorical choices of Theresa May and Boris Johnson in their Brexit speeches. As a result, the observed patterns, including commonly used metaphors, shared systematic metaphors and metaphor scenarios, and the continuity of key topics reflected through metaphors, highlight the overall similarities in metaphor use related to Brexit across the tenures of the two Prime Ministers, rather than providing a distinct comparison of their individual metaphor use.

7.4 Continuing research directions

Future research could look at how Brexit-related metaphors continue to develop in post-Brexit discourse, such as the political discourse of Prime Ministers following Boris Johnson, further exploring how metaphorical framing surrounding Brexit shifts over time, with particular attention to topics such as trade, immigration, and the UK's global role. Analysing how political actors on the EU side employ metaphors about Brexit and comparing this with metaphor use on the UK side could also shed light on how metaphors serve as a powerful tool to encode communication purposes and are

influenced by different ideological, cultural, and institutional contexts. Additionally, this study only focuses on verbal metaphors; extending the analysis to multimodal forms of communication, such as campaign posters or interview videos, would allow for a better understanding of how multimodal metaphors strengthen persuasive effects and convey the underlying evaluations surrounding Brexit.

The political texts of Brexit discourse in this study were collected from various public sources, which differ in both genre and register. Investigating variation in metaphor use across these different types of discourse by the two Prime Ministers is worthwhile, as metaphors have diverse representations and functions depending on the discourse type (Semino, 2008, p.1), and their emergence and development are largely influenced by genre and register features (Deignan et al., 2013, pp.163–164). Littlemore (2015) further argued that metaphor research addressing real-world issues needs the dynamic perspective, supported by register/genre based empirical studies, to enhance its relevance and practicality (p.331). A possible approach for this future research direction is to adopt the combined framework of genre and register proposed by Deignan et al. (2013), alongside corpus-based techniques, to examine how cultural and contextual differences influence the use of figurative language in Brexit discourse.

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Data resources

Theresa May's political texts related to Brexit

1) Twitter

[https://twitter.com/search?q=Brexit%20\(from%3Atheresa_may\)%20until%3A2019-07-24%20since%3A2016-07-11&src=typed_query](https://twitter.com/search?q=Brexit%20(from%3Atheresa_may)%20until%3A2019-07-24%20since%3A2016-07-11&src=typed_query)

[Search filters: Brexit (from:theresa_may) until:2019-07-24 since:2016-07-11]

2) Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/search/posts?q=brexit&filters=eyJycF9hdXRob3I6MCI6Intclm5hbWVcljpcIm15X2dyb3Vwc19hbmRfcGFnZXNfcG9zdHNclixclmFyZ3NcljpcIlwifSJ9>

3) Government speeches (official and non-official websites)

https://www.gov.uk/search/all?keywords=brexit%20Theresa%20May&public_time_stamp%5Bto%5D=24/07/2019&order=relevance

<https://www.ukpol.co.uk/?s=theresa+may+brexit>

<http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?q=brexit&speaker=194&party=5&searchRangeFrom=2016&searchRangeTo=2018>

4) Hansard records

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/search/MemberContributions?memberId=8&startDate=2016-07-11&endDate=2019-07-24&type=Spoken&searchTerm=brexit&outputType=List&partial=False>

Boris Johnson's political texts related to Brexit

1) Twitter

[https://twitter.com/search?q=Brexit%20\(from%3ABorisJohnson\)%20until%3A2022-09-06%20since%3A2019-07-24&src=typed_query](https://twitter.com/search?q=Brexit%20(from%3ABorisJohnson)%20until%3A2022-09-06%20since%3A2019-07-24&src=typed_query)

[Search filters: Brexit (from:BorisJohnson) until:2022-09-06 since:2019-07-24]

2) Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/search/posts?q=brexit%20boris%20johnson&filters=eyJycF9hdXRob3I6MCI6Intclm5hbWVcljpcIm15X2dyb3Vwc19hbmRfcGFnZXNfcG9zdHNclixclmFyZ3NcljpcIlwifSJ9>

3) Government speeches (official and non-official websites)

https://www.gov.uk/search/all?keywords=brexit%20Boris%20Johnson&public_time_stamp%5Bto%5D=06/09/2022&order=relevance

<https://www.ukpol.co.uk/?s=boris+johnson+brexit>

<http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?q=brexit&speaker=194&party=5&searchRangeFrom=2016&searchRangeTo=2018>

4) Hansard records

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/search/MemberContributions?memberId=1423&startDate=2019-07-24&endDate=2022-09-06&type=Spoken&searchTerm=brexit&outputType=List&partial=False>

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(1) Finish

Pearson Education (n.d.) *Finish*. In *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, [online]. Harlow: Pearson Education. Available at:
<https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/finish> (Accessed: 19 July 2025).

(2) Unleash

Pearson Education (n.d.) *Unleash*. In *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, [online]. Harlow: Pearson Education. Available at:
<https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/unleash> (Accessed: 19 July 2025).

(3) Benefit

Oxford University Press. (n.d.). *Benefit*. In *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, [online]. Retrieved July 19, 2025, from
https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/benefit_1?q=benefit

(4) Grow

Oxford University Press. (n.d.). *Grow*. In *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, [online]. Retrieved July 19, 2025, from
<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/grow?q=grow>

(5) Cut

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<https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/cut> (Accessed: 19 July 2025).

(6) The cost of living

Oxford University Press. (n.d.). *The cost of living*. In *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, [online]. Retrieved July 19, 2025, from
<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/the-cost-of-living?q=cost+of+living>

Dictionary definitions cited in Section 4.3.3

(1) Deliver

Pearson Education (n.d.) *deliver*. In *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, [online]. Harlow: Pearson Education. Available at:
<https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/deliver> (Accessed: 9 March 2025).

Dictionary definitions cited in Section 5.3.2

(1) Ping

Oxford University Press. (n.d.). *Ping*. In *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, [online]. Retrieved Sep 29, 2025, from https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/ping_2

(2) Guy rope

Oxford University Press. (n.d.). *guy*. In *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, [online]. Retrieved Sep 29, 2025, from https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/guy_1?q=guy+rope

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(1) Bonanza

Pearson Education (n.d.) *bonanza*. In *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, [online]. Harlow: Pearson Education. Available at: <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/bonanza> (Accessed: 12 Oct 2025).

Dictionary definitions cited in Section 6.2.9.1

(1) backstop

Oxford University Press. (n.d.). Backstop, n., a. In *Oxford English dictionary*, [online]. Retrieved April 26, 2025, from <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1413079001>

Dictionary definitions cited in Section 6.3.2.2

(1) To have one's cake and eat it

Oxford University Press. (n.d.). *to have one's cake and eat it*, in *Cake*, n. & adj., P.3.a. In *Oxford English dictionary*. [online] Retrieved October 21, 2025, from <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6031680978>

Dictionary definitions cited in Section 6.5.2

(1) Cook up

Pearson Education (n.d.) *Cook something up*. In *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, [online]. Harlow: Pearson Education. Available at: <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/cook-up> (Accessed: 30 April 2025).

Dictionary definitions cited in Appendix F

(1) Square the circle

Oxford University Press. (n.d.). *Circle*, n., 1.1.a. In *Oxford English dictionary*, [online]. Retrieved April 23, 2025, from <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/2777468719>

(2) A leopard can't change its spots

Pearson Education (n.d.) *a leopard can't change its spots*. In *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, [online]. Harlow: Pearson Education. Available at: <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/a-leopard-can-t-change-its-spots> (Accessed: 23 April 2025).

(3) Jot and tittle

Oxford University Press. (n.d.). *Jot*, n., 1. In *Oxford English dictionary*, [online]. Retrieved April 23, 2025, from <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1020749908>

(4) The Goldilocks (deal)

Oxford University Press. (n.d.). *Goldilocks*, n., 1. In *Oxford English dictionary*, [online]. Retrieved April 23, 2025, from <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/4611457593>

(5) The philosopher's stone

Oxford University Press. (n.d.). *Philosophers' stone*, n., 1.a. In *Oxford English dictionary*, [online]. Retrieved April 23, 2025, from <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7923817570>

(6) The jewel in the crown

Pearson Education (n.d.) *Jewel in the crown*. In *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, [online]. Harlow: Pearson Education. Available at: <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/jewel-in-the-crown> (Accessed: 23 April 2025).

(7) On a wing and a prayer

Pearson Education (n.d.) *on a wing and a prayer*. In *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, [online]. Harlow: Pearson Education. Available at: <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/on-a-wing-and-a-prayer>(Accessed: 23 April 2025).

(8) The buck stops here

Oxford University Press. (n.d.). *The buck stops here*, in *Buck*, n.⁹, P.2. In *Oxford English dictionary*, [online]. Retrieved April 23, 2025, from <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6884524011>

(9) *Sword of Damocles*

Oxford University Press. (n.d.). *Sword of Damocles*, in *Damocles*, n. In *Oxford English dictionary*, [online]. Retrieved April 23, 2025, from <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/2871710995>

(10) Screw...courage to the sticking point

Oxford University Press. (n.d.). *To screw one's courage to the sticking place*, in *Screw*, v., P.1. In *Oxford English dictionary*, [online]. Retrieved April 23, 2025, from <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6334816398>

(11) Dance on the head of a pin

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Heffer, G. (3 July 2019) *Boris Johnson claims Brexit backstop is 'terrible moral blackmail' on UK government. Sky News.* Available at: <https://news.sky.com/story/boris-johnson-claims-brexit-backstop-is-terrible-moral-blackmail-on-uk-government-11755325?> (Accessed: 16 April 2025).

News cited in Section 6.3.1.3

Dettmer, J. (11 February 2020) *Britain's Boris Johnson Takes on 'The Blob'.* Voice of America. Available at: <https://www.voanews.com/amp/europe/britains-boris-johnson-takes-blob/6184096.html?> (Accessed: 26 November 2025)

News cited in Section 6.3.2.5

Allegretti, A. (4 June 2019) *Labour pivots to support second EU referendum 'now' after election slump. Sky News.* Available at: <https://news.sky.com/story/labour-pivots-to-support-second-eu-referendum-now-after-election-slump-11729708?> (Accessed: 2 April 2025).

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News cited in Section 6.4.2

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Appendix A Excel spreadsheets of metadata from the two Prime Ministers' datasets

Figure A.1 Screenshot showing Twitter files in Theresa May's dataset

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
	file name	Date (dd-mm-yy)	Token count	Tenor	Mode	Attached file	Transcribed token count	Video field	Tenor	Mode	Sub-mode	Article resource
1	tm_t_text_1	03/12/2018	13	PM-general public	written	video	91	Brexit deal for controlling borders	PM-general public	spoken		
2	tm_t_text_2	28/11/2018	13	PM-general public	written	video	150	Brexit deal for jobs and economy	PM-general public	spoken		
3	tm_t_text_3	10/12/2018	14	PM-general public	written	video	110	Brexit deal for fishing and farming	PM-general public	spoken		
4	tm_t_text_4	06/03/2019	47	PM-general public	written	no			PM-general public			
5	tm_t_text_5	06/12/2018	8	PM-general public	written	article	1284		PM-general public	written		Daily Express
6	tm_t_text_6	03/12/2018	22	PM-general public	written	no			PM-general public			
7	tm_t_text_7	19/05/2018	43	PM-general public	written	article	749		PM-general public	written		The Sunday Times
8	tm_t_text_8	01/12/2018	12	PM-general public	written	video	115	Brexit deal for small businesses	PM-general public	written		
9	tm_t_text_9	10/01/2019	16	PM-general public	written	video	99	Brexit deal for workers'rights and environment	PM-general public	spoken		
10	tm_t_text_10	19/09/2018	29	PM-general public	written	article	924		PM-general public	written		Die Welt
11	tm_t_text_11	12/07/2018	25	PM-general public	written	article	651		PM-general public	written		The Sun
12	tm_t_text_12	23/03/2019	26	PM-general public	written	no			PM-general public			
13	tm_t_text_13	03/12/2018	19	PM-general public	written	video	150		PM-general public	spoken	dialogue	
14	tm_t_text_14	21/05/2019	22	PM-general public	written	video	303	Brexit deal's ten-point offer	PM-general public	spoken	monologue	
15	tm t text_15	06/01/2019	43	PM-general public	written	article	1295		PM-general public	written		Daily Mail

Figure A.1 Screenshot showing metadata of Facebook files in Theresa May's dataset

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
	file name	Date (dd-mm-yy)	Token	Tenor	Mode	Attached file	Trancribed token count	Video field	Tenor	Mode	Sub-mode	Context	Article resource
1	tm_f_text_1	23/07/2019	46	PM-general public	written	no			PM-general public				
2	tm_f_text_2	27/05/2019	44	PM-general public	written	no			PM-general public				
3	tm_f_text_3	19/05/2019	43	PM-general public	written	article	749		PM-general public	written			The Sunday Times
4	tm_f_text_4	05/05/2019		PM-general public		article	814		PM-general public	written			Daily mail
5	tm_f_text_5	17/05/2019	48	PM-general public	written	no			PM-general public			election campaign	
6	tm_f_text_6	07/04/2019	7	PM-general public	written	video	378		PM-general public	spoken	monologue		
7	tm_f_text_7	21/05/2019	27	PM-general public	written	video	311		PM-general public	spoken		official introduction	
8	tm_f_text_8	21/05/2019	22	PM-general public	written	video	303		PM-general public	spoken	monologue		
9	tm_f_text_9	20/03/2019	21	PM-general public	written	video	548		PM-general public	spoken	monologue		
10	tm_f_text_10	09/04/2019	18	PM-general public	written	no			PM-general public				
11	tm_f_text_11	09/04/2019	22	PM-general public	written	no			PM-general public				
12	tm_f_text_12	23/03/2019	29	PM-general public	written	no			PM-general public				
13	tm_f_text_13	11/02/2019	50	PM-general public	written	article	971		PM-general public	written		official letter	
14	tm_f_text_14	20/03/2019	24	PM-general public	written	video	78	Parliament has indulged itself for too long	PM-general public	spoken	monologue	parliament statement	
15	tm_f_text_15	06/07/2018	25	PM-general public	written	video	155	12 key principles in	PM-general public	spoken		official introduction	

Figure A.2 Screenshot showing metadata of government files in Theresa May's dataset

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	File name	Date (dd/mm/yy)	Token count	Field	Tenor	Mode	Sub-mode	Context
1	tm_g_text_1	14/12/2018	373	PM's statement at EU council	PM-press	spoken	monologue	press conference speech
2	tm_g_text_2	20/10/2017	667	PM's statement at EU council	PM-press	spoken	monologue	press conference speech
3	tm_g_text_3	21/03/2019	361		PM-politicians	spoken	monologue	EU Council speech
4	tm_g_text_4	25/11/2018	1266	PM's statement at EU council	PM-press	spoken	monologue	press conference speech
5	tm_g_text_5	01/12/2018	90	UK to tell EU it will no longer seek access to secure aspects of Galileo		spoken	monologue	official speech
6	tm_g_text_6	02/04/2019	514		PM-general public	spoken	monologue	official public speech
7	tm_g_text_7	02/03/2018	6820	our future economic partnership with the European Union	PM-politicians	spoken	monologue	Mansion House speech
8	tm_g_text_8	03/02/2017	6430	The governments negotiating objectives for exiting the EU	PM-general public	spoken	monologue	official public speech
9	tm_g_text_9	04/03/2019	77	16 billion Stronger Towns Fund launched		spoken	monologue	official speech
10	tm_g_text_10	05/02/2019	3233	PM's speech in Belfast	PM-general public	spoken	monologue	official public speech
11	tm_g_text_11	06/04/2019	444	PM's words on the current Brexit negotiations	PM-general public	spoken	monologue	official public speech
12	tm_g_text_12	06/10/2017	75	PM to host Business Advisory Council at Downing Street		spoken	monologue	official speech
13	tm_g_text_13	07/12/2018	77	PM's visit every nation and region in the UK		spoken	monologue	official speech
14	tm_g_text_14	08/12/2017	463	PM's commitments to Northern Ireland	PM-general public	spoken	monologue	official public speech
15	tm_g_text_15	08/03/2019	3183	PM gave a speech on Brexit in Grimsby	PM-general public	spoken	monologue	official public speech
16	tm_g_text_16	08/03/2019	754	We can deliver the change	PM-general public	spoken	monologue	official public speech

Figure A.3 Screenshot showing metadata of Hansard files in Theresa May's dataset

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	File name	Date (dd/mm/yy)	Token count	Field	Tenor	Mode	Context	
1	tm_h_text_1	01/03/2017	6702	Engagements	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
2	tm_h_text_2	02/07/2018	10426	June European council	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
3	tm_h_text_3	03/04/2019	8787	Engagements	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
4	tm_h_text_4	03/07/2019	8425	Engagements	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
5	tm_h_text_5	03/07/2019	10984	G20 and leadership of EU institutions	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
6	tm_h_text_6	04/12/2018	66526	European union withdrawal act	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
7	tm_h_text_7	04/07/2018	7671	Engagements	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
8	tm_h_text_8	05/12/2018	7879	Engagements	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
9	tm_h_text_9	05/03/2018	16213	UK-EU future economic partnership	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
10	tm_h_text_10	05/09/2018	7430	Engagements	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
11	tm_h_text_11	06/02/2017	11362	Informal European council	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
12	tm_h_text_12	06/06/2018	6759	Engagements	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
13	tm_h_text_13	06/09/2017	6668	Engagements	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
14	tm_h_text_14	07/03/2018	7568	Engagements	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
15	tm_h_text_15	07/09/2016	15170	G20 summit	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
16	tm_h_text_16	08/05/2019	7187	Engagements	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
17	tm_h_text_17	09/01/2019	3099	Engagements	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
18	tm_h_text_18	09/07/2018	18649	Leaving the EU	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
19	tm_h_text_19	09/10/2017	17178	UK plans for leaving the EU	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
20	tm_h_text_20	10/04/2019	6291	Engagements	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
21	tm_h_text_21	10/12/2018	26357	Exiting the European Union	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
22	tm_h_text_22	10/01/2018	6655	Engagements	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
23	tm_h_text_23	10/07/2017	11022	G20	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
24	tm_h_text_24	10/07/2019	7802	Engagements	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
25	tm_h_text_25	11/04/2019	18581	European council	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
26	tm_h_text_26	11/12/2017	16777	Brexit negotiations	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
27	tm_h_text_27	11/10/2017	6693	Engagements	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
28	tm_h_text_28	12/12/2018	6186	Engagements	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
29	tm_h_text_29	12/02/2019	22436	Leaving the EU	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
30	tm_h_text_30	12/03/2019	49918	European union withdrawal act	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
31	tm_h_text_31	12/10/2016	4281	Engagements	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
32	tm_h_text_32	12/09/2018	3767	Engagements	PM-MPs	spoken	parliament debate	
33	tm_h_text_33							

Figure A.4 Screenshot showing metadata of Twitter files in Boris Johnson’s dataset

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
	file name	Date (dd-mm-yy)	Token count	Tenor	Mode	Attached file	Transcribed token count	Tenor	Mode	Sub-mode	Context	Article resource
1	bj_t_text_1	11/12/2019	6	PM-general public	written	poster	5	PM-general public	written		election campaign	
2	bj_t_text_2	12/12/2019	9	PM-general public	written	poster	3	PM-general public	written		election campaign	
3	bj_t_text_3	12/12/2019	11	PM-general public	written	no		PM-general public			election campaign	
4	bj_t_text_4	11/12/2019	17	PM-general public	written	poster	11	PM-general public	written		election campaign	
5	bj_t_text_5	11/12/2019	8	PM-general public	written	no		PM-general public			election campaign	
6	bj_t_text_6	11/12/2019	7	PM-general public	written	no		PM-general public			election campaign	
7	bj_t_text_7	11/12/2019	20	PM-general public	written	no		PM-general public			election campaign	
8	bj_t_text_8	02/02/2021	45	PM-general public	written	no		PM-general public				
9	bj_t_text_9	01/02/2020	23	PM-general public	written	no		PM-general public				
10	bj_t_text_10	18/12/2019	23	PM-general public	written	article	866	PM-general public	written		election campaign	The spectator
11	bj_t_text_11	31/01/2022	47	PM-general public	written	no		PM-general public				
12	bj_t_text_12	12/12/2019	16	PM-general public	written	poster	16	PM-general public	written			
13	bj_t_text_13	31/01/2022	34	PM-general public	written	video	312	PM-general public	spoken	monologue		
14	bj_t_text_14	12/12/2019	19	PM-general public	written	poster	3	PM-general public	written		election campaign	
15	bj_t_text_15	11/12/2019	43	PM-general public	written	no		PM-general public				
16	bj_t_text_16	11/12/2019	45	PM-general public	written	poster	25	PM-general public	written			

Figure A.6 Screenshot showing metadata of government files in Boris Johnson's dataset

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	File name	Date (dd/mm/yy)	Token count	Field	Tenor	Mode	Sub-mode	Context	Article resource
1	bj_g_text_1	13/08/2020	655		PM-general public	written		newspaper article	Belfast Telegraph newspaper
2									
3	bj_g_text_2	21/12/2019	852		PM-general public	written		newspaper article	The Spectator
4	bj_g_text_3	28/03/2018	2023		PM-politicians	spoken	monologue	Easter Banquet speech	
5	bj_g_text_4	02/10/2019	4153		PM-party members	spoken	monologue	Conservative Party conference speech	
6	bj_g_text_5	06/10/2020	3937		PM-party members	spoken	monologue	Conservative Party conference speech	
7	bj_g_text_6	06/10/2021	6186		PM-party members	spoken	monologue	Conservative Party conference speech	
8	bj_g_text_7	24/11/2019	1881	Conservative Manifesto Launch	PM-party members	spoken	monologue	Conservative Party conference speech	
9	bj_g_text_8	06/11/2019	1343	Boris Johnson Launching General Election	PM-general public	spoken	monologue	election campaign speech	
10	bj_g_text_9	13/12/2019	945	Boris Johnson election victory	PM-general public	spoken	monologue	election campaign speech	
11	bj_g_text_10	23/07/2019	832	Becoming Prime Minister	PM-general public	spoken	monologue	election campaign speech	
12	bj_g_text_11	02/09/2019	525		PM-general public	spoken	monologue	official public speech	
13	bj_g_text_12	03/09/2019	1976	G7 Summit	PM-MPs	spoken	monologue	Parliament statement	
14	bj_g_text_13	06/09/2022	1033	Boris Johnson final speech as PM	PM-general public	spoken	monologue	official public speech	
15	bj_g_text_14	07/07/2022	897		PM-general public	spoken	monologue	official public speech	
16	bj_g_text_15	13/12/2019	599	Boris Johnson first statement as PM	PM-general public	spoken	monologue	official public speech	
17	bj_g_text_16	15/07/2021	343	PM welcomes independent report on re-imagining regulation in the UK	PM-general public	written		official letter	
18	bj_g_text_17	19/10/2021	2127		PM-businesses and investors	spoken	monologue	Global Investment Summit speech	
19	bj_g_text_18	24/07/2019	1677	Boris Johnson first speech as PM	PM-general public	spoken	monologue	official public speech	
20	bj_g_text_19	24/09/2019	1195		PM-business	spoken	monologue	Hudson Yards business	

Figure A.7 Screenshot showing metadata of Hansard files in Boris Johnson's dataset

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	File name	Date (dd/mm/yy)	Word count	Field	Tenor	Mode	Context	
1								
2	bj_h_text_1	02/02/2022	5551	Engagements	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
3	bj_h_text_2	02/03/2022	1698	Engagements	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
4	bj_h_text_3	03/10/2019	17337	Brexit negotiations	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
5	bj_h_text_4	03/09/2019	13375	G7 summit	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
6	bj_h_text_5	03/09/2019	1203	Points of order	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
7	bj_h_text_6	04/03/2020	5359	Engagements	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
8	bj_h_text_7	04/09/2019	13017	Early parliament general election	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
9	bj_h_text_8	04/09/2019	4784	Engagements	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
10	bj_h_text_9	05/02/2020	4840	Engagements	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
11	bj_h_text_10	05/01/2022	6650	Engagements	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
12	bj_h_text_11	07/09/2021	15919	Health and social care	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
13	bj_h_text_12	08/01/2020	5098	Engagements	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
14	bj_h_text_13	08/07/2020	5398	Engagements	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
15	bj_h_text_14	08/09/2021	3673	Engagements	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
16	bj_h_text_15	08/09/2021	2003	Infrastructure for Businesses Weymouth	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
17	bj_h_text_16	09/12/2020	6155	Engagements	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
18	bj_h_text_17	09/02/2022	5317	Engagements	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
19	bj_h_text_18	09/09/2019	15141	Early parliament general election No 2	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
20	bj_h_text_19	09/09/2019	187	Government structures for Brexit	PM-MPs	Written	parliament written statement	
21	bj_h_text_20	10/05/2022	64729	debate on the address	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
22	bj_h_text_21	11/05/2021	62144	debate on the address	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
23	bj_h_text_22	13/07/2022	4356	Engagements	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
24	bj_h_text_23	13/05/2020	5077	Engagements	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
25	bj_h_text_24	14/10/2019	64240	debate on the address	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
26	bj_h_text_25	15/07/2021	6083	Engagements	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
27	bj_h_text_26	15/06/2022	5907	Engagements	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
28	bj_h_text_27	15/09/2021	6387	Engagements	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
29	bj_h_text_28	16/12/2020	4577	Engagements	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
30	bj_h_text_29	16/06/2021	6753	Engagements	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
31	bj_h_text_30	17/12/2019	4370	election of speaker	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
32	bj_h_text_31	17/06/2020	5313	Engagements	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	
33	bj_h_text_32	18/07/2022	45020	Confidence in Her Majesty's Government	PM-MPs	Spoken	parliament debate	

Appendix B Words excluded from the wordlists and keyword list of both corpora

TM data
Words excluded from the wordlist
<i>the to that and of in a is we i for will it have on this be not are with our as has my she but what they at by would about do was there no an can her from which been all who so if us those he their more when am or very does should one because also me them than just many any were you some other into last had why his only how over being may its going must these could through such before did two between here both every best well want said now say time work need get make made today good think know years first point (of) course week year working hon right mr con gentleman lab speaker secretary order (Q&A) question north council</i>
Words excluded from the keyword list
<i>our will we 50 am cannot those that 29 does 2019 us want time today hon gentleman con lab member speaker secretary snp mr lady north council welcome right lab/co-op blackford attorney interruption east congratulate chancellor ian cabinet president</i>

BJ data
Words excluded from the wordlist
<i>the to and of that in a is i we for it this have will on not are be our with he as they has my but was by do what who from at all can would there about his an so their been which more us no if or those am now because one when very you should me just many had than were does them some any how only also him over done other why through could must her into she its did being much may every such most these here well where before cannot after hon right mr speaker gentleman con order north thank lab want get say time said think know years make going today last work point great made like first good year let of (course) own even again better</i>
Words excluded from the keyword list
<i>our will am we cannot those us 31 that 2019 don't hon speaker gentleman member con lab snp pandemic mr secretary covid interruption welcome lady blackford keir starmer learned north chancellor sir ian deputy general congratulate right east tribute order vaccine zero west housing chamber thank gracious today done point</i>

Appendix C Words retained in the wordlists and keyword lists of both corpora

TM data
Wordlist (arranged by frequency)
<i>prime minister deal people house government european union eu friend country brexit uk out agreement trade vote future leave members united clear ensure way up ireland take kingdom new support important parliament issue party referendum back agree british northern across withdrawal see put place voted labour give believe continue relationship deliver able world backstop negotiations jobs come forward economy free national public look customs set britain move absolutely control end scotland</i>
Keyword list (arranged by frequency)
<i>prime minister union deal brexit european eu agreement kingdom government withdrawal trade parliament vote backstop ensure referendum friend down negotiations ireland country members customs house northern deliver minister's united agree constituents issue future jobs opposition citizens continue clear arrangements leave economy government's constituency businesses border relationship labour uk conservative corbyn recognise right(s) face party declaration interests negotiating amendment statement debate election britain article commitment partnership relation leaving ensuring scottish people's scotland no-deal discussions british support important agreed nhs remain leader negotiate confirm majority delivering billion build deals extension bill absolutely forward believe speech exit security legal position issues mps implementation funding opportunity countries workers policy certainty national people negotiated motion proposals committed market prosperity accept indeed services benches result period votes standards million seek across legislation nationals commitments progress co-operation protect sides membership trading decision secure borders political ministers meaningful parliamentary europe arrangement compromise economic negotiation health raised voting uk's devolved delivers concerns assure rules access states able schools public agreements</i>

BJ data
Wordlist (arranged by frequency)
<i>prime minister people government country deal house brexit friend up out uk new way eu need members party bill union northern back support ireland european parliament election scotland speech take vote see across trade labour world future put move place united forward come public care conservative agreement free british voted agree hope leave opposition queen's down referendum economy kingdom health constituents clear look important leader believe</i>

Keyword list (arranged by frequency)

prime minister brexit government deal country parliament bill eu union election queen's ireland northern speech constituents friend members kingdom voted opposition conservative agreement referendum vote trade european constituency scotland minister's government's deliver house party labour agree economy nhs leader legislation scottish debate jobs billion uk withdrawal ensure businesses united control support people's customs standards right(s) opportunity nation benches democracy forward investment workers tory law delivering crisis future people commitment no-deal proposals levelling million majority confidence border mandate care manifesto sector parliamentary corbyn communities respect delay britain conservatives protect build funding continue leadership health issue tax committee british arrangements public growth motion services leave remain ministers indeed away poverty across clear regulatory negotiations elected protocol promised mps liberal uk's climate national promises tackle democratic bills proud democrats believe priorities scotland's parties infrastructure policy measures citizens regulation deals amendment act consent leaving opportunities agenda voting address delivered campaign economic goods scrutiny result

Appendix D Significant collocates of topic-related central terms shared by both corpora

Figure D.1 Shared significant collocates and their numbers

Term	Number	Share significant collocates
<i>deal</i>	44	<i>no (deal) good trade get leave negotiate vote Brexit bad deal support deliver agree Prime House Minister back want out say EU European table union new issue believe country government take secure put free bring off way go need now mean make come future world</i>
<i>vote</i>	47	<i>leave remain people deal Brexit today Scotland tonight referendum vote election European party Union House Conservative confidence Labour MP get time second member conservative majority overwhelmingly want Parliament meaningful motion country down government million constituent EU constituency way give last deliver say withdrawal article support only trigger</i>
<i>Brexit</i>	29	<i>deliver no-deal deal Secretary mean vote Brexit hard want do people get government Britain stop have now say Prime referendum Minister only new talk opportunity way party country go leave Government whole EU economy rest part make market</i>
<i>UK</i>	24	<i>business law Ireland lead job have investment UK citizen trade remain good continue national interest</i>
<i>Northern Ireland</i>	26	<i>border Ireland Great Republic Britain Wales rest Executive Kingdom Scotland people peace protocol relation Assembly part United issue custom Northern Irish status include constitutional Secretary remain</i>
<i>EU</i>	34	<i>citizen leave UK national live trade relationship member state right remain have agreement deal law future country outside give stay rule out agree new EU work vote referendum free market membership custom now take</i>
<i>bill</i>	17	<i>withdrawal pass agreement Bill second bring introduce support bill draft private domestic Parliament passage reading publish Union free agreement deal barrier world union global EU frictionless negotiate arrangement International policy trade new future</i>
<i>trade</i>	41	<i>independent international benefit negotiation rest talk good business able partnership include UK sign European border United Organisation enable service strike Union tariff investment market comprehensive</i>
<i>business</i>	28	<i>small certainty uncertainty job British Strategy Energy Industrial community business Secretary give trade individual local</i>

		<i>investment invest rate Department grow create need provide big help new industry UK</i>
<i>European Union</i>	22	<i>leave withdrawal exit remain Act out vote membership stay agreement relationship United outside Kingdom State deal future citizen Bill take trade member</i>
<i>referendum</i>	22	<i>second result honour respect vote deliver independence another hold campaign first leave want Scottish promise EU election Scotland Brexit call remain have</i>
<i>law</i>	20	<i>control international money border rule law UK EU own enshrine pass back electoral force change domestic uphold respect English break</i>
<i>United Kingdom</i>	16	<i>whole part Union European integrity rest leave Northern Great citizen nation Ireland union Scotland Government Britain</i>
<i>Britain</i>	14	<i>Great global Northern Ireland Kingdom United Britain Global world good truly lead role Brexit</i>
<i>market</i>	23	<i>single custom access union membership free internal stay open common leave UK European remain digital trade economy big benefit integrity EU labour housing</i>
<i>border</i>	23	<i>Irish sea control hard money border Ireland check law open between down custom Northern island create infrastructure avoid land back trade physical take</i>
<i>Withdrawal Agreement</i>	10	<i>declaration Bill political bill change reopen legally backstop binding negotiate</i>
<i>interest</i>	12	<i>national protect value defend Scotland serve constituent economic interest own put party</i>
<i>negotiation</i>	7	<i>stage phase next future trade begin progress</i>
<i>backstop</i>	4	<i>alternative replace backstop arrangement</i>
<i>customs union</i>	9	<i>single market stay leave outside remain alignment out EU</i>
<i>arrangement</i>	10	<i>alternative custom backstop trade future trading security current necessary free</i>
<i>negotiate</i>	11	<i>deal trade agreement position relationship free team withdrawal new table Brussels</i>

Appendix E Vehicle groupings and corresponding metaphor lemmas in the two corpora

Table E.1 73 metaphor vehicle groupings in TM data

Vehicle grouping	Proportion	Metaphor lemma example
JOURNEY	14.73%	<i>route, way/step forward, leave, remain, destination, journey, move on/forward, set out, sail, turning back</i>
MOVEMENT	8.12%	<i>take back, take...forward, come/get/take/pull out of, held, stuck, mired, put back, deadlock, logjam, plunge</i>
MACHINE	6.30%	<i>control, trigger, turn off, break down, device, tweak, system, set up, operate, reset, part, streamline</i>
DELIVERING	5.33%	<i>deliver, deliverable, delivery</i>
BUILDING	4.69%	<i>build, enter, exit, way out of, blueprint, tear down, put up, framework, rebuild, structure, cement, entry</i>
SEEING	4.20%	<i>see, clear, look at, focus on, vision, witness, sight</i>
PHYSICAL SUPPORT	3.82%	<i>support, back, get/stand behind, pillar</i>
BODILY ACTION	3.72%	<i>reach out, put/lay down, seize, duck, overturn, nod, turn back on, break, strike, stamp, embrace, grip, give, bend, sit</i>
POSITION	3.21%	<i>position, outside, (put)...in place, half in, half out</i>
ACCESS	3.19%	<i>access, open, reopen, open the door, gateway, bridge, close off, unlock, leave the door open</i>
PERSONIFICATION	3.05%	<i>friend, neighbour, listen to, blind, subservient, soul, agile, pioneer, outrider, betray, usher</i>
TEXTURE	2.85%	<i>hard, soft, smooth</i>
PHYSICAL SEPARATION	2.65%	<i>break up, division, divide, crack, split (off), carve (off/out of), crumble, polarise, separate, unravel</i>
PHYSICAL STRENGTH	2.16%	<i>strong, strength, powerful, force, strengthen</i>
FIGHT/WAR	1.96%	<i>fight, bombshell, withdrawal, weapon, wrestle, defend, square off, defeat, retreat, mission, retake, forefront</i>
VIOLENT ACTION	1.92%	<i>hit, rip up, tear up, slash, trample, drag...out of, attack, threat, threaten, blackmail, abuse, buffet, hammer blow</i>
GROUPING	1.90%	<i>come together, put together, bring together, glue</i>
AREA/PLACE	1.56%	<i>side, place, area, periphery</i>
FRICITION	1.56%	<i>frictionless, friction</i>
SPORTS	1.60%	<i>over the line, crash out, sideline, win, run down the clock, champion, arena, pitch, in play, kicker, prize</i>
DISASTER	1.43%	<i>disaster, destructive, destroy, calamity, decimate, shock</i>

<i>TIDINESS</i>	1.41%	<i>orderly, sort out, mess, stain, shambles, clean up</i>
<i>DIRECTION</i>	1.37%	<i>face, outward, inward, direction</i>
<i>PHYSICAL DAMAGE</i>	1.29%	<i>damage, shatter, broken, crush, breaking point</i>
<i>MARRIAGE/FAMILY BARRIER</i>	1.03%	<i>divorce, relative, partner</i>
<i>BARRIER</i>	1.01%	<i>barrier, hurdle, obstacle, block</i>
<i>BODY PART</i>	0.97%	<i>hand, heart, numb, eye, back</i>
<i>DISTANCE</i>	0.95%	<i>close, distant, remote, breadth, depth</i>
<i>LIGHT/DARKNESS</i>	0.92%	<i>bright, looming, shroud, undim</i>
<i>ATTACHMENT</i>	0.77%	<i>tie, lock, bind, bond, link, tighten, attachment, linkage</i>
<i>FILM/PLAY</i>	0.65%	<i>stage, role, melodrama keep in, held (in), lock, tie</i>
<i>PHYSICAL OBJECT</i>	0.55%	<i>shutter, clear line, forge, craft, replicate, blindfold, magnet, mark cradle</i>
<i>SEWING</i>	0.55%	<i>seamless, unpick, weave</i>
<i>PRISON</i>	0.55%	<i>trap, capture, imprison, escape, held hostage</i>
<i>PHYSICAL HARM/INJURY</i>	0.51%	<i>harm, shock, expose, cut, wound, self-harm</i>
<i>LANDSCAPE</i>	0.48%	<i>cliff edge, landscape, bedrock, sunlit upland</i>
<i>LIQUID</i>	0.47%	<i>flow, dilute, bubble</i>
<i>VEHICLE</i>	0.46%	<i>reverse, drive, auto-pilot, emergency brake</i>
<i>PHYSICAL GROWTH</i>	0.46%	<i>grow</i>
<i>BODY MOVEMENT</i>	0.44%	<i>step up, step back, walk out, cower</i>
<i>INVESTMENT</i>	0.49%	<i>dividend, bonanza, stake, prospectus</i>
<i>INSURANCE</i>	0.42%	<i>insurance policy, excess, expire date</i>
<i>REPARING</i>	0.36%	<i>restore</i>
<i>VERBAL ACTION</i>	0.34%	<i>rhetoric, translate, instruction, instruct, dirty word</i>
<i>MIND</i>	0.30%	<i>theory, fantasy, philosophy, mindset, nightmare</i>
<i>FOOD</i>	0.28%	<i>half-baked, unpalatable, appetite, preserve, bile, grain</i>
<i>CONSTRAINT</i>	0.26%	<i>hold in/by/back</i>
<i>GAME</i>	0.26%	<i>game, play, Russian roulette, merry-go-round</i>
<i>MEDICINE</i>	0.26%	<i>heal</i>
<i>HEALTH/ILLNESS</i>	0.24%	<i>exacerbate, ill, health, paralysis, haemorrhage, rabid</i>
<i>CONTAINER</i>	0.22%	<i>keep...in, surface, full</i>
<i>PHYSICAL PAIN</i>	0.18%	<i>suffer, painless</i>
<i>TRAFFIC</i>	0.18%	<i>gridlock, one-way street, jump the queue</i>
<i>NARRATIVE/BOOK</i>	0.16%	<i>chapter, write</i>
<i>SOUND</i>	0.16%	<i>tone, grinding, noise off, shrill, voice, quiet</i>
<i>REMOVING</i>	0.14%	<i>ditch, remove, rub out</i>
<i>SHAPE</i>	0.14%	<i>shape, template</i>
<i>MATHEMATICS</i>	0.12%	<i>binary, mathematics, stack up</i>

<i>ANIMAL</i>	0.10%	<i>harness, unleash</i>
<i>FIRE</i>	0.08%	<i>bonfire, fuel</i>
<i>TRANSPORTATION</i>	0.08%	<i>sorcery</i>
<i>CONTROL</i>	0.06%	<i>monopoly, slip through/away</i>
<i>SLEEPING</i>	0.06%	<i>sleepwalk, awake, stupor</i>
<i>POISON</i>	0.04%	<i>poison, corrosive</i>
<i>RELIGION</i>	0.04%	<i>salvation</i>
<i>SHOP</i>	0.04%	<i>off-the-shelf</i>
<i>SIZE</i>	0.04%	<i>size</i>
<i>WEATHER</i>	0.04%	<i>fog, wind</i>
<i>COSMETICS</i>	0.02%	<i>put on lipstick</i>
<i>HEIGHT</i>	0.02%	<i>height</i>
<i>MYTHOLOGY</i>	0.02%	<i>sorcery</i>
<i>TEXTILE</i>	0.02%	<i>fabric</i>
<i>TRICK</i>	0.02%	<i>con</i>
<i>PHOTO/PICTURE</i>	0.02%	<i>image</i>

Table E.2 77 vehicle groupings in BJ data

Vehicle grouping	Proportion	Metaphor lemma example
<i>JOURNEY</i>	16.66%	<i>move on/forward, step/go/way forward, departure, path, on course, approach, journey, arrival, route map, return, blind alley</i>
<i>DELIVERING</i>	8.03%	<i>deliver, delivery</i>
<i>MOVEMENT</i>	7.59%	<i>take...forward, take away from, level up/down, stuck, rut, take/come/get out of, put/bring/take back, surge, shift</i>
<i>SEEING</i>	5.55%	<i>see, clear, look at, unfold, vision, spectacle, focus on</i>
<i>MACHINE</i>	5.03%	<i>control, trigger, shut down, run down, turbocharge, apparatus, lubrication, reboot, ratchet, mode, system</i>
<i>BUILDING</i>	4.03%	<i>build, exit, way out of, trapdoor, put up, foundation, rebuild, construct, masonry, construction</i>
<i>PERSONIFICATION</i>	3.69%	<i>friendship, neighbour, blind, yawn, fanboy, torpor, character, pluck, contented, proselytiser, half-hearted</i>
<i>PHYSICAL SUPPORT</i>	3.24%	<i>support, back, on the back, supporter, position,</i>
<i>ACCESS</i>	3.10%	<i>access, open up, reopen, bridge</i>

<i>BODILY ACTION</i>	2.72%	<i>reach out, stand, grasp, clasp, bust, push, overturn, strike, hold...out, sit, lift up, give, break, seize</i>
<i>POSITION</i>	2.72%	<i>(put)...in place, place, outside, position surrender, beat, battle, struggle, troop,</i>
<i>FIGHT/WAR</i>	2.62%	<i>fortress, fight, withdrawal, free people, recapture, liberate, warring</i>
<i>PHYSICAL SEPARATION</i>	2.38%	<i>break up, division, divide, split, fault line, untangle, uncouple, rift, sever, carve (off/out)</i>
<i>DISASTER</i>	1.55%	<i>disaster, disastrous, devastating, catastrophic, calamity</i>
<i>VIOLENT ACTION</i>	1.52%	<i>rip/drag...out of, rip/tear up, slash, smash, blow, assault, attack, yank, hammer through, threat, threaten</i>
<i>AREA/PLACE</i>	1.48%	<i>area, side, place, locus</i>
<i>GROUPING</i>	1.38%	<i>come together, bring together, put together</i>
<i>PHYSICAL DAMAGE</i>	1.38%	<i>damage, damaging wreckage, disfigure, broken</i>
<i>SPORTS</i>	1.38%	<i>crash out, sideline, win, dead heat, lead, pull ahead, competition, backmarker, spur, prize, stalemate</i>
<i>BARRIER</i>	1.31%	<i>barrier, block, roadblock, blockade, palisade, thicket</i>
<i>DIRECTION</i>	1.21%	<i>outward, face, direction</i>
<i>REPARING</i>	1.17%	<i>restore, bodge, restoration</i>
<i>FOOD</i>	1.03%	<i>half-baked, oven-ready, pre-cooked, convenience food, cook up, serve up, fill, sprout, chew, super-masticated</i>
<i>PHYSICAL STRENGTH</i>	0.97%	<i>power, powerful, force, strength</i>
<i>TIDINESS</i>	0.90%	<i>orderly, mess, shambles, clean up</i>
<i>FILM/PLAY</i>	0.86%	<i>role, farce, pantomime, stage, act, drama</i>
<i>REMOVING</i>	0.86%	<i>remove, scrap, sweep/strip away, extraction, jettison</i>
<i>CONSTRAINT</i>	0.83%	<i>hold by/back, break free of/from, let go, disentangle, pent up, release, guy rope</i>
<i>DISTANCE</i>	0.83%	<i>close, length, doorstep, breadth, send...into orbit</i>
<i>PHYSICAL HARM/INJURY</i>	0.83%	<i>harm, harmful, cut, hobble, strain, rupture</i>
<i>ANIMAL</i>	0.83%	<i>unleash, harness, dragnet, hencoop</i>
<i>TEXTURE</i>	0.79%	<i>hard, soft, smooth</i>
<i>HEALTH/ILLNESS</i>	0.72%	<i>healthy, recover, paralyse, exacerbate, infect,</i>

		<i>virus</i>
<i>ATTACHMENT</i>	0.66%	<i>anchor, attach, tie, bind, detach, lock</i>
<i>FRICITION</i>	0.66%	<i>frictionless, friction</i>
<i>LIGHT/DARKNESS</i>	0.66%	<i>bright, looming, dawn</i>
<i>MARRIAGE/FAMILY</i>	0.66%	<i>divorce, family, partner</i>
<i>LIQUID</i>	0.62%	<i>dilute, bubble, burst, flow, blob, maelstrom, sap, pour</i>
<i>PHYSICAL GROWTH</i>	0.62%	<i>growth</i>
<i>PHYSICAL OBJECT</i>	0.59%	<i>ersatz, safety net, armature, convert, blindfold</i>
<i>PRISON</i>	0.52%	<i>trap, cuff, capture, held hostage, prisoner, prison, escape, escape route</i>
<i>SOUND</i>	0.48%	<i>voice, silence, drown out, cacophony, shout down, megaphone</i>
<i>INVESTMENT</i>	0.48%	<i>dividend, bonanza, stake, stakeholder, prospectus</i>
<i>MEDICINE</i>	0.41%	<i>heal, remedy, inject</i>
<i>VEHICLE</i>	0.41%	<i>drive, accelerate, reverse, bulldozer, handbrake, gear</i>
<i>CONTROL</i>	0.34%	<i>orbit, hijack, hoard, ensnare, stick, leverage</i>
<i>MYTHOLOGY</i>	0.31%	<i>myth, prophesy, slumbering giant, stentorian</i>
<i>BODY PART</i>	0.28%	<i>heart, hand, nerve, back</i>
<i>LANDSCAPE</i>	0.28%	<i>cliff edge</i>
<i>NARRATIVE/BOOK</i>	0.28%	<i>story, chapter, final page, turn the page</i>
<i>VERBAL ACTION</i>	0.24%	<i>rhetoric, language, translate</i>
<i>BODY MOVEMENT</i>	0.21%	<i>step/walk away, waddle</i>
<i>INSURANCE</i>	0.17%	<i>insurance policy</i>
<i>PHYSICAL PAIN</i>	0.17%	<i>suffer, painful, torture</i>
<i>SHAPE</i>	0.17%	<i>distort, symmetry, distortion, reshape</i>
<i>TRAFFIC</i>	0.17%	<i>gridlock</i>
<i>CONTAINER</i>	0.14%	<i>keep...in, closure, full</i>
<i>POISON</i>	0.14%	<i>toxic</i>
<i>PHOTO/PICTURE</i>	0.14%	<i>snapshot, photograph, image, caricature</i>
<i>FIRE</i>	0.10%	<i>bonfire, fuel</i>
<i>MIND</i>	0.10%	<i>mindset, nightmare</i>
<i>SHARPNESS</i>	0.10%	<i>edge</i>
<i>TOOL</i>	0.10%	<i>tool</i>
<i>COMPANY</i>	0.07%	<i>enterprise</i>
<i>GAME</i>	0.07%	<i>merry-go-round, keep the ace up my sleeve</i>
<i>MATHEMATICS</i>	0.07%	<i>arithmetic</i>
<i>BROADCASTING/TELEVISION</i>	0.03%	<i>airtime</i>
<i>CONQUEST</i>	0.03%	<i>plant flag</i>

<i>GIFT</i>	0.03%	<i>wrap up</i>
<i>MUSIC</i>	0.03%	<i>prelude</i>
<i>RELIGION</i>	0.03%	<i>salvation</i>
<i>SEWING</i>	0.03%	<i>thread</i>
<i>SHOP</i>	0.03%	<i>bargain basement</i>
<i>TRICK</i>	0.03%	<i>gimmickry</i>
<i>WEATHER</i>	0.03%	<i>weather event</i>
<i>WEIGHT</i>	0.03%	<i>labour</i>
<i>DANCING</i>	0.03%	<i>choreograph</i>

Appendix F Idiomatic expressions with a specific origin

Table F.1 11 idiomatic expressions and their dictionary definitions

Idiomatic expression	Definitions in the dictionary
<i>Square the circle</i>	OED: "to find a square of the same area as a given circle (a famous problem, incapable of geometrical solution)".
<i>A leopard can't change its spots</i>	LDOCE: "used to say that people cannot change their character". Biblical origin: "Jeremiah 13:23".
<i>jot and tittle</i>	OED: "the very least or a very little part, point, or amount; a whit. Often in the phrase jot or tittle, (Usually with negative expressed or implied.)". Biblical origin: "Matthew 5:18".
<i>The Goldilocks (deal)</i>	OED: "often with reference or allusion to the folk tale of Goldilocks and the Three Bears".
<i>The philosopher's stone</i>	OED: "A mythical solid substance...change any metal into gold or silver...cure all wounds...and prolong life indefinitely".
<i>The jewel in the crown</i>	LDOCE: "a British television programme...about British people in India before the country became independent".
<i>On a wing and a prayer</i>	LDOCE: "you do not have much chance of succeeding," "originated during WWII...in the 1942 film <i>The Flying Tigers</i> ... and a patriotic song <i>Coming in on a Wing and a Prayer</i> ".
<i>The buck stops here</i>	OED: "H. S. Truman's phrase for 'the responsibility rests here', i.e. the buck cannot be passed any further".
<i>Sword of Damocles</i>	OED: "Used by simile of an imminent danger, which may at any moment descend upon one," "Damocles, a flatterer, ...was placed...with a sword suspended over his head by a hair".
<i>Screw...courage to the sticking point</i>	OED: "to summon up as much courage, determination, etc., as possible," originated from "Shakespeare's use" in <i>Macbeth</i> .
<i>Dance on the head of a pin</i>	OED: "used as the type of an esoteric topic of debate on which time is wasted...of no practical value," "regarded depreciatively as a characteristic speculation of Scholastic philosophy".