

Piotr Cap
University of Łódź

‘Britain is different’: Farage’s rhetoric in the Brexit referendum debate

1. Introduction

The beginning of summer 2016 saw a momentous event in the history of the modern Europe: the UK’s referendum on EU membership. On June 23, 2016, after a long and heated campaign, 52% of the British people cast their votes in favor of leaving the Union. Voting for ‘Brexit’, they put an end to the 24-year long period of UK’s membership in the EU as one of its founding states. The promise to hold the referendum was first announced by the British PM David Cameron in January 2013, subject to the condition that the Conservative party win the next general election in 2015. Cameron’s announcement was thus the starting point of a nationwide ‘proto-referendum’ debate, which lasted for the following three years, involving a variety of themes, attitudes, and arguments among the supporters as well as opponents of Brexit. A theme that was particularly salient, and often marking the dividing line between the two camps, was *immigration* – discussed in the context of ‘big’ national issues such as sovereignty, democracy and economic prosperity. Looking back, immigration (and mainly *anti*-immigration) topics and narratives pervading the Brexit debate can be considered directly responsible for the ultimate shaping of attitudes surrounding the Brexit referendum, and thus also for its results. Specifically, much of the anti-immigration discourse in 2013-2016 has been instrumental in instilling a sense of public uncertainty and ever-growing anxiety, inspiring isolationist postures and plainly xenophobic attitudes, which found their outlet on the day of the referendum. The leading role in perpetuating such attitudes can be attributed to the members and supporters of the oppositional United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), which made immigration a central issue of the Brexit campaign.

In this paper I explore the main characteristics of the UKIP anti-immigration discourse, as exemplified in the rhetoric of public addresses (including parliamentary speeches, press conference statements, as well as television and newspaper interviews

and comments) by the UKIP leader Nigel Farage between February 2013 and June 2016, that is throughout the entire period of the proto-referendum debate. Working with a corpus of 88 addresses in total, I identify discursive strategies whereby the influx of Middle East and North African refugees, as well as economic migrants from new EU member states, is construed as a growing threat to well-being, security and identity of the British people and Britain as a nation. This construal subsumes the essentially adversarial position of Brussels as the warrant of free economic movement of all EU citizens, and the staunch promoter of the movement of non-EU migrants between EU countries. As can be seen from Farage's rhetoric, defining the EU as an antagonistic entity helps the UKIP strengthen their Brexit rationale. The main cognitive, discursive and linguistic-pragmatic strategies used to realize this goal are *proximization*, *deictic othering*, and *conceptual metaphor*. I investigate these strategies in sections 3-4 of the present paper. I start, however (section 2), from placing the question of immigration in a broader context of the proto-referendum debate and its focus on the critical issues of Britain's political and economic sovereignty and independence. The awareness of that global context goes a long way toward understanding the relevance and effectiveness of Nigel Farage's rhetoric.

2. From sovereignty to immigration

It takes a quick glance at the British public discourse of 2013-2016, in its state-political, parliamentary as well as journalistic manifestations, to see that issues of immigration and anti-migration are hardly ever addressed in isolation from the general theme of Britain's sovereignty and democracy. This theme is dominated by those who proclaim dissatisfaction with what they see as negative consequences of EU membership for UK's political and socio-economic freedoms. While the UKIP party and Nigel Farage play the leading role here, it is interesting to note that, initially, isolationist moods are present in many of the 2013 media appearances by top politicians of the ruling Conservative Party, including the Prime Minister David Cameron. The most telling example is Cameron's speech at Bloomberg on January 23, 2013, in which he addresses questions of sovereignty and democracy, making an explicit link between British identity and foreign policy:

(1) I know that the United Kingdom is sometimes seen as an argumentative and rather strong-minded member of the family of European nations. And it's true that our geography has shaped our psychology. We have the character of an island nation – independent, forthright, passionate in defence of our sovereignty. We can no more change this British sensibility than we can drain the English Channel. And because of this sensibility, we come to the European Union with a frame of mind that is more practical than emotional. For us, the European Union is a means to an end – prosperity, stability, the anchor of freedom and democracy both within Europe and beyond her shores – not an end in itself. (Cameron 2013)

Later in the speech, Cameron goes on to note that 'there is a gap between the EU and its citizens which has grown dramatically in recent years. And which represents a lack of democratic accountability and consent that is felt particularly acutely in Britain'. He affirms that 'there is a growing frustration that the EU is seen as something that is done to people rather than acting on their behalf' and that 'democratic consent for the EU in Britain is now wafer thin'. This leads him to conclude that 'we need to have a bigger and more significant role for national parliaments. There is not, in my view, a single European demos. It is national parliaments, which are and will remain the true source of democratic legitimacy and accountability in the EU' (Cameron 2013). These excerpts show Cameron advocating British exceptionalism and enacting a strong political distinction by reference to an 'independent' and 'forthright' country that is an 'island nation'. The latter reference is a form of intertextuality, in that it is a programmatic deictic catchphrase, bringing to mind Churchillian wartime speeches. Cameron rejects the notion of a 'single European demos' (a single 'European self') and prioritizes national parliaments, thereby privileging the 'national self' and rejecting a shared sense of European identity. Doing so, he confirms Marcussen et al.'s (1999: 628) observation that 'classical Anglo-Saxon notions of political order emphasize parliamentary democracy and external sovereignty' and that 'there is not much room for 'Europe' or 'Europeanness' in British political space'. This in turn implies that any act performed in the interest of 'Europe' is potentially anti-British and can be considered a threat (Todd 2015).

As noted by Todd (2015), Cameron's Bloomberg speech sets the terms for the debate over the rest of 2013 and virtually the entire period preceding the referendum. Conservative backbenchers take his arguments further still, often arguing for a defense of British sovereignty through reference to history and especially the World War II. Richard Shepherd (C(onservative)) asserts that:

(2) This vote, what we decide and what people in the future decide will determine the character and strength of our national constitutional history, which is being threatened. Why should we defer in such an adventure, when this is the most remarkable and ancient of all the democratic communities within western Europe? Why? (Hansard 2013-14: 1201)

William Cash (C) makes an intertextual reference to Churchill, stating: 'People have fought and died. The only reason we live in the United Kingdom in peace and prosperity is because, in the second and first world wars, we stood up for that freedom and democracy. Churchill galvanised the British people to stand up for the very principles that are now at stake' (Hansard 2013-14: 1210). Finally, Gordon Henderson (C) argues that:

(3) It is inconceivable that only 30 years after the end of the second world war, the British people would have willingly embarked on a programme to hand over swathes of their hard-won sovereignty to another state, and let us be clear: that is what the European Union aspires to be. (Hansard 2013-14: 1232)

The references to World War II and Churchill serve to consolidate the national self. They stress the centrality of the moment and prescribe the future course of action. The historical flashbacks activate reasoning by analogy: what makes current policies legitimate is, above all, their consistency with the long accepted principles and solutions (Musolff 2004, 2016). The past is thus invoked as a lesson to heed in the uncertain future. As Daddow (2006) notes:

This is the kind of commonsense history everyone knows even if they are not historians... the kind that tells [British people] all [they] need to know about Europe from Britain's martial past; its encounters with the Spanish Armada, at the battle of Trafalgar, with Napoleon at Waterloo, after the let-down of Munich in 1938 and against Hitler's Germany during the Second World War. (Daddow 2006: 320)

Indeed, the majority of voices in the 2013-2016 proto-referendum debate tend to see Great Britain as, in Shepherd's words, 'the most ancient and remarkable of democratic communities'. The continental Europe is in turn framed as a threat to the '[British] national constitutional history' and to the principles of freedom and democracy for which 'Churchill galvanised the British people to stand up' (Cap 2017). This conceptual arrangement provides a firm ideological groundwork for all policy issues, including the critical issue of immigration. The UKIP and Nigel Farage's rhetoric is constructed to be consistent, at least initially, with that groundwork, and indeed fits its main premises very well. From the very start, Farage builds his hard-Eurosceptic case on identity-related claims:

(4) The fact is we just don't belong in the European Union. Britain is different. Our geography puts us apart. Our history puts us apart. Our institutions produced by that history put us apart. We think differently. We behave differently. (...) The roots go back seven, eight, nine hundred years with the Common Law. Civil rights. Habeas corpus. The presumption of innocence. The right to a trial by jury. On the continent confession is the mother of all evidence. (Farage 2013)

Farage's argument in (4) initiates a number of strategies which are going to appear throughout most of his 2013-2016 discourse, getting increasingly salient and radical as the referendum date draws near. Specifically, he sets up a lasting *us vs. them* distinction, which involves consistent deictic 'othering' of the adversarial *them* party, based on insurmountable historical and ideological differences. He appeals to the weight of 'seven, eight, nine hundred years' of history, in which Great Britain is 'different [from continental Europe]'. He also uses ethical dimensions of identity to differentiate between a British tradition of presumption of innocence and jury trial from a continental system based on confession. In the same speech Farage goes on to affirm that '[British people] know that only by leaving the Union [they] can regain control of [their] borders, [their] parliament, democracy and [their] ability to trade freely with the fastest-growing economies in the world'. Implying lack of control of the '[UK] borders', he sets up a direct link to the immigration theme, framing it as

an issue of extreme urgency and consequentiality. Like Cameron and the MPs, he employs identity and cultural differentiation (Todd 2015) to serve his political cause of increasing UKIP’s electoral strength and achieving a British exit from the EU. The text in (4) is thus an example of how Farage’s rhetoric builds on the general aura of Euroscepticism observable right at the outset of the proto-referendum debate. The later discourse becomes gradually more distinctive; it makes the central arguments far more salient, thus unveiling specific rhetorical patterns and linguistic-pragmatic strategies used to make the Brexit case.

3. Proximization

The enactment of the *US* vs. *THEM* conceptual distinction, which lies at the core of the argument in (4), and becomes a trademark of Farage’s later speeches, provides for some effective rhetorical strategies involving fear appeals and coercion. One such strategy is *proximization*, which builds on the positioning of the *US* and *THEM* camps in the opposite (central vs. remote) domains of the Discourse Space (DS) – a socio-cognitive space activated by speaker’s discourse (Van Dijk 1998; Chilton 2004, 2005, 2010; Gavins 2007). In its broadest sense, proximization consists in presenting the remote *THEM* – physically and temporally distant entities, events, states of affairs, and adversarial hence ‘distant’ ideologies (Van Dijk 2017) – as increasingly threatening to the speaker and her addressee (the central *US*). It thus involves a conceptualization of *movement* (Werth 1999) of the remote *THEM* entities in the direction of the *US* entities. Notwithstanding its cognitive, mostly deictic underpinnings (cf. Levelt 1989; Levinson 2003), proximization possesses some clear pragmatic goals. Projecting the *THEM* entities as encroaching upon the *US* camp (both physical and ideological), the speaker aims to legitimize actions and policies which he or she proposes to neutralize the growing impact of the negative, ‘foreign’, ‘alien’, ‘antagonistic’, entities (Figure 1).

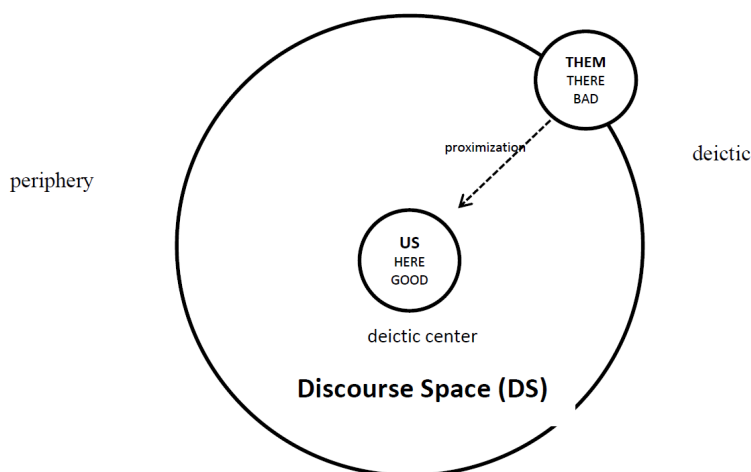


Figure 1. Proximization in Discourse Space (DS)

The concept of proximization was first applied in studies of coercion patterns in the US anti-terrorist rhetoric following 9/11 (Cap 2006, 2008, 2010). Since then it has been used within different discourse domains, though most commonly in analyses of state political discourses: crisis construction and war rhetoric (Chovanec 2010), anti-migration discourse (Hart 2010, 2014), political party representation (Cienki, Kaal and Maks 2010; Kaal 2012), construction of national memory (Filardo Llamas 2010, 2013), and design of foreign policy documents (Dunmire 2011). These studies have refined the concept of proximization, which can now be defined in more formal terms. In this paper, I shall refer to proximization as a forced construal operation meant to evoke closeness of an external threat, to solicit legitimization of preventive means (Cap 2013, 2017). As has been noted, the source of the threat are DS-remote entities, *THEM*, which are conceptualized to be crossing the Space to invade the us entities, the speaker and his addressee. The threat possesses a spatio-temporal as well as ideological nature; thus, there are three main types of proximization. First, 'spatial proximization' is a forced construal of *THEM* entities encroaching *physically* upon the us entities. The spatial aspect of proximization can be seen as primary as the remaining types involve conceptualizations in spatial terms. 'Temporal proximization' is a forced conceptualization of the envisaged conflict as not only imminent, but also momentous, historic and therefore requiring an immediate response and unique preventive measures. Spatial and temporal proximization involve fear appeals and typically use various kinds of analogies to conflate the developing threat with an actual disastrous event in the past – so as to endorse the current scenario. In turn, 'axiological proximization' involves construal of a gathering ideological clash between the 'home values' of the DS central entities (*us*) and the alien and antagonistic *THEM* values. It is worth noting that the *THEM* values are not just abstract entities; they possess a potential to materialize and impact the us camp. Finally, apart from the fear-based, coercive axiological proximization, there is also a sub-type which is, so to say, 'positive' – involving the us entities and values. This 'positive-type' axiological proximization consists in invoking commendable historical postures and behaviors as motivation for current action, a strategy we have already seen in the example (3) above.

While early voices in the Brexit debate, viz. (4), merely invoke the *us* vs. *THEM* distinction, establishing some basic polarities and hardly performing 'proximization' as such, the pace of the debate and the growing radicalization of attitudes quickly lead to a new kind of discourse, in which the antagonism between the supporters and opponents of Brexit gets more acute. In this new discourse, immigration turns into the central and most frequent theme addressed by the UKIP party to make their case for the leave vote. Accordingly, proximization becomes the main conceptual tool and rhetorical strategy to picture the influx of immigrants in terms of a developing '*THEM*-invasion'. This can be seen from the following examples, which reveal the growing radicalism of Farage's discourse in the 2014-2016 period:

(5) In the last ten years opinion polls have shown substantial majorities in favour of cutting immigration to a rate at which it can be comfortably absorbed. Yet instead of listening to those who elected them, the government takes orders from the European Union and is throwing open our borders to more than 30 million Bulgarians and Romanians who may be coming to settle here. (...) What do we call it if not yet another sovereignty-sapping power grab from EU elites? And with our sovereignty and identity at stake, the time to act is now. I mean, the time has come to defy Brussels and declare that our country is full up. (Farage 2014a)

(6) Truth is, in scores of our cities and market towns, this country in a short space of time is becoming unrecognisable. What I am saying is we now have nearly 10 per cent of our schools in this country where English is not the primary language of the homes those children come from. And further, Migration Watch estimates that over 250,000 people from Bulgaria, the EU's poorest country, may be arriving over the next five years. Under EU rules, we are powerless to deny them entry or benefits after restrictions were lifted in January [2014]. If we don't re-claim our powers from Brussels, we risk losing control not only of our country's borders, our identity, but also the welfare state. (Farage 2014b)

(7) Mr. Cameron and his ministers have chosen to duck questions about the scale of a new wave of immigration from Syria and other countries of the Middle East and North Africa. Today, *The Sun* reveals the shocking figure that nearly one in five of all rape or murder suspects is a non-EU migrant. The sheer scale of crimes committed by immigrants is astonishing. Confront our government with this embarrassing statistic and they try to get off the hook by talking about 'context'. So here's some context for that crime figure. A report published today shows that, because of a loophole in the immigration rules, more than 20,000 migrants from outside the EU come to live here every year. It doesn't take a genius to work out that the two figures might be connected. (Farage 2015)

(8) We refuse to sacrifice our freedom and security for political correctness. We must call things by their true names. Rather than shedding tears like Federica Mogherini or organizing marches that solve nothing, the state should ensure the safety of its citizens. (...) To those who are happy to welcome immigrants at our doors, I have a suggestion: go and see the refugee camps in Turkey. See the gangs and the riots. See the young Muslim criminals. See the anger, violence, and terror. It is there and is ready for export. This kind of evil might not have reached us yet, but it is well in sight. And there is no-one in Brussels who can protect us when it comes. (Farage 2016b)

Analytically, these examples fall into two pairs, illustrating respectively two phases of Farage's Brexit rhetoric. In the first phase (examples 5-6), the status of THEM is ascribed to mostly economic migrants from new members of the EU such as Bulgaria and Romania. In ideological terms, THEM applies also to 'Brussels', as the promoter of free flow of people and the freedom of employment within the EU. This designation makes (5) and (6) relatively moderate in their fear-inducing and coercive appeal – though a possibility is left for threat levels to rise in the future (discourse)

(‘If we don’t re-claim our powers from Brussels...’). Such an arrangement involves a balanced use of different proximization strategies. While spatial proximization is used to construe the ongoing influx of migrants from the new member states in physical terms, axiological proximization is applied to construe some long-term consequences of immigration. These are conceptualized in largely socio-ideological terms, as a threat to sovereignty and national identity (‘our sovereignty and identity at stake’, ‘we risk losing control not only of our country’s borders, our identity ...’). The axiological aspect of proximization in the two texts covers not only migrants, but also the ‘EU elites’ in Brussels, who are held responsible for enforcing ‘sovereignty-sapping’ policies against some of the countries’ national interests. The argument in (6) makes explicit one of such interests, namely the ‘welfare state’. This phrase marks, incidentally, an important theme of the UKIP and Farage’s immigration discourse, which can be described as ‘welfare chauvinism’. The term ‘welfare chauvinism’ was coined by Andersen and Bjørklund (1990) to account for the perspective that state support should be restricted to national citizens and not provided to ‘others’.

At the pragmalinguistic and lexical levels, the proximization strategies in (5) and (6) involve a variety of tools. First of all, much of the narration makes use of progressive tense forms. This pertains to both spatial and axiological proximization. The progressive aspect increases the appeal of the projected physical impact (‘30 million Bulgarians and Romanians (...) may be coming to settle here’, ‘250,000 people (...) may be arriving over the next five years’), as well as strengthens the identity-related claims and threats (‘this country in a short space of time is becoming unrecognisable’). It is often noted (Cap 2013; Dunmire 2011) that the use of the progressive helps construe negative scenario by conflating the present and the future; it describes a current developing event which presages an ominous future. Such a scenario, involving temporal proximization, derives extra strength from the strategic vagueness it carries, especially when specific modalities are used in support. As can be seen from (5) and (6), the encroachment threat has feeble temporal underpinnings and the apparent impossibility to determine the very moment or critical culmination of impact (‘may be coming’, ‘may be arriving’) only makes that threat bigger and harder to contain. At the same time, the conflation of the present and the (ominous) future results in centralizing the present timeframe as *the* moment to act preventively, thus revealing its coercive force.

As the proximization strategies in (5) and (6) involve temporal projections and anticipations of the future, they are accompanied by rhetorical ploys whose goal is to earn credibility for the visualized scenarios. Thus, the argument in (6) makes use of ‘source-tagging’, a judgment attribution strategy whereby an authorial voice is invoked to communicate sensitive or controversial information (Mann and Thompson 1988). By referring to research of the respectable Migration Watch, Farage endorses his threatening vision of mass migration from the new members of the EU, legitimizing the urgent need for preventive measures. The criticality of the moment is graphically expressed in the last phrase in (5) (‘our country is full up’), which employs a conceptual metaphor to strengthen its pragmatic appeal (see the next section).

The other pair of examples (7-8) illustrates the 'second' phase of Nigel Farage's Brexit rhetoric (years 2015-2016). In this second phase, the status of *THEM* is ascribed primarily to non-EU migrants and in particular Muslim immigrant groups from the Middle East and North Africa. This redirection of focus allows for a swift radicalization of UKIP's isolationist rhetoric, building ever since upon the aura of fear triggered by the concurrent terrorist attacks and other criminal acts involving Islamic perpetrators. Hence, terrorist threat underlies the argument in (8), where Farage indirectly refers to the July 2016 attack in Nice, in order to criticize EU's passivity and lack of response ('Rather than shedding tears like Federica Mogherini [EU Foreign Minister] or organizing marches that solve nothing, the state should ensure the safety of its citizens').¹ At the same time, everyday safety of the British people is called into question in comments such as (7), the threat being linked again to the growing Muslim migration into UK ('a new wave of immigration from Syria and other countries of the Middle East and North Africa').

Finally, the strongest fear appeal is made in the narrative that develops in the second part of (8) (from 'To those who are happy...' until the end of the excerpt). This narrative exhibits a peculiar discursive structure, involving a causative connection between two consecutively occurring segments, which can be described as 'abstract/ideological' and 'material/physical', respectively. The first segment ('refugee camps in Turkey (...) gangs and the riots (...) young Muslim criminals (...) anger, violence, and terror. It is there and is ready for export') provides socio-psychological context and conditions for a possible *THEM* threat. The second segment ('This kind of evil might not have reached us yet, but it is well in sight') transforms the status of that threat, from a 'remote possibility' to 'actual occurrence' within the *US* space ('is well in sight'). Such a dynamic construal involves thus both axiological and spatio-temporal proximization. While the former forces the conceptualization of a relatively distant vision based upon a specific contextual (ideological) arrangement, the latter turns that threatening vision into a material threat and nearly inevitable impact ('when it comes'). To smoothen this conceptual shift by lexical and grammatical means, a modality change is used – a possibility-setting *might*-phrase ('might not have reached us yet') leads to a more 'realistic' *be*-phrase ('is well in sight').

The analyzed corpus (88 addresses total) includes 47 such complex narratives, in which specific lexico-grammatical items occur in a linear order to construe, within the space of one, two or maximally three sentences, a subtle conceptual transformation of initially remote and largely abstract danger, into a concrete threat involving tangible consequences. Interestingly, out of these 47 sequences, as many as 35 occur in the speeches and comments made after January 1, 2015. This shows that Nigel Farage's rhetoric is indeed radicalizing as the referendum date draws nearer. As has been noted, this evolution takes place hand in hand with the gradual re-conceptualization of the

¹ Farage's comment in (8) was made a week after an Islamic terrorist attack, in which a truck was deliberately driven into crowds celebrating the Bastille Day AD2016 on the Promenade des Anglais in Nice, France, killing 84 people and injuring 434.

THEM party. Figures demonstrate that, in the post-1/1/2015 texts, only one in four embodiments of THEM is EU migrants, the remainder being immigrants and refugees from Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa. In these texts, the use of various proximization strategies, and their interplays such as in (8), contributes greatly to instilling the aura of fear, thus fueling isolationist attitudes.

4. Metaphorization

A substantial part of Nigel Farage's anti-immigration discourse in the proto-referendum debate reveals extensive metaphorization, particularly *conceptual metaphors*, which often add extra strength to the appeal of threat patterns enacted by proximization shifts. From a theoretical point of view this is hardly surprising since metaphor and proximization are fundamentally connected at the cognitive level of the Discourse Space (recall Figure 1 above). Specifically, the deictic center, a 'home camp' of US entities, is frequently conceptualized in/through discourse as a CONTAINER, thus othering the non-members, which are conceptualized as THEM entities. As a result, metaphorization of the US entities as elements of the CONTAINER provides for some excellent rhetorical benefits, especially in fear-generating and coercive discourses. Namely, threats to the CONTAINER and its US elements can be symbolically derived from a limited *volume* of the CONTAINER that 'fills in' quickly with THEM entities in the process of proximization.

Given these benefits, it is understandable that conceptual metaphor of CONTAINER has a long tradition in British (anti-)immigration discourse, recruiting the CONTAINER schema to conceptualize the country (Charteris-Black 2005; Hart 2010). Charteris-Black (2005) presents evidence that metaphors construing UK as a CONTAINER are a stable feature of the British discourse on immigration, reflecting and reinforcing an underlying cognitive arrangement, that is perception of Britain as an island. In an attempt to explain where exactly the rhetorical powers of the CONTAINER metaphor lie and how they get activated, Hart (2010, 2014) argues that the CONTAINER schema emerges from ubiquitous and reoccurring experiences with the state of containment:

Our encounter with containment and boundedness is one of the most pervasive features of our bodily experience. We are intimately aware of our bodies as three-dimensional containers into which we put certain things (food, water, air) and out of which other things emerge (food and water wastes, air, blood, etc.). From the beginning, we experience constant physical containment in our surroundings (those things that envelop us). We move in and out of rooms, clothes, vehicles, and numerous kinds of bounded spaces. We manipulate objects, placing them in containers (cups, boxes, cans, bags, etc.). In each of these cases there are repeatable spatial and temporal organisations. In other words, there are typical schemata for physical containment. (Hart 2010: 160)

Thus, the CONTAINER schema consists of three structural elements: an interior and an exterior defined by a boundary. The interior also includes a CENTER-PERIPHERY structure, and the CONTAINER possesses, as has been noted, *volume*, which is to say a FULL-EMPTY structure (Charteris-Black 2005; Hart 2010, 2014). This arrangement holds, argues Hart (2010), some important implications for political discourse. First, it follows from the nature of the CONTAINER schema that something is either *in* or *out* of the CONTAINER; second, the experience of containment typically involves protection from, or resistance to, external forces. Altogether, the conventional character of metaphors based on the CONTAINER schema increases credibility and pragmatic appeal of discourses and texts where they occur.

In the corpus of Farage's 2013-2016 speeches the CONTAINER metaphor involves multiple lexical items and phrases, such as 'wave [of immigration]', 'absorb', 'throw open', 'borders', 'full up', and 'burst', most of which could be seen surfacing randomly in examples (4-8) above. In combination, these items construe a scenario that justifies a restrictive immigration policy to contain what is conceptualized as a growing social threat. The scenario comprises a structured set of inferences, such as the following:

- the country – Britain – has a limited capacity;
- continued immigration could cause the country (the 'container') to 'rupture';
- immigration will continue as, 'under orders from the EU', the government are 'throwing open' the country's 'borders';
- the country is thus under a real and growing threat;
- the only way to offset the threat is to force the government to ignore the 'orders' and maintain a tough immigration policy.

The final inference ('to force the government to ignore the 'orders'') is a direct instruction for the Brexit vote. The entire chain of inferences draws, as was noted, upon the conventionality of the CONTAINER metaphor, which facilitates a swift reception of the conveyed insight. Farage's discourse includes also other reception facilitators, grounded in some further features of the CONTAINER schema. As observed by Chilton (2004), the CONTAINER schema entails *exclusivity* such that members have to be *in* or *out* and that it entails 'protection by means of exclusion' (: 88), as opposed to any other means available to human societies. This makes people accept and adapt to the reality pictured in the CONTAINER metaphor on account of their territorial instinct and in-group allegiance (Jowett and O'Donnell 1992). Since, under the CONTAINER schema, the entity construed as 'container' is presupposed to cover a given territory and those inside the container are presupposed to own the territory it covers, the CONTAINER metaphor reinforces the general aura of stability and permanence associated with that entity (Chilton 2004, 2014; Goatly 2007). This is yet another reason why metaphors conceptualizing countries in terms of bounded entities are extremely frequent in political discourse, and immigration discourse in particular, which Farage's rhetoric illustrates very well. Similar to proximization strategies, conceptual metaphors

involving the CONTAINER schema rise in number and density toward the end of the proto-referendum debate:

(9) We already have a problem with home grown terror. The last thing we need to do is add to it from the outside. We see the terrible mistakes that Germany and France have made over the course of the last couple of years. Mercifully, we are not part of the the Schengen Area. Still, day in and day out we face waves of asylum seekers from Calais and Cherbourg, France's biggest ports. This only means that illegal entrants are already at our gates and we must stand firm because Britain is full to bursting point. The Government's own figures show that the UK has the highest levels of immigration in its history: in the last ten years, over two millions were added to the UK population, and the flow shows no signs of slowing. There are reports that say we're better off with mass immigration. But to me, there is an issue here called the quality of life and I think that matters more than money. Cause, I am getting a bit tired of my kids coming home from school being taught about every other religion in the world, celebrating every other religious holiday but not actually being taught about Christianity. Cause, I would remind you, of the eight people who committed those atrocities in Paris a mere three months ago², five of them had got into Europe posing as refugees. So, there is an issue here. (Farage 2016a)

Made at the end of February 2016, the address in (9) can be seen as directly instrumental in shaping attitudes on the eve of the referendum. The argument includes some explicit fear appeals, involving both ideological and physical threats. This duality is reflected in the two final sentences of the text, which construe, respectively, a cultural/religious identity threat, and an ominous material threat of terrorist attacks similar to the Paris attacks of November 2015. The job of preparing such a hard-hitting ending is notably left to metaphors, which develop an appealing argument that outlines a (favorable) context for the gathering threat. Thus, the first part of the text includes numerous lexical items and phrases depicting the (caliber of) the THEM immigration impact ('waves of asylum seekers', 'flow [with] no signs of slowing', 'mass immigration'), as well as the already critical condition of the us home camp ('(...) illegal entrants are already at our gates and we must stand firm because Britain is full to bursting point'). As has been noted in the previous section, many of these CONTAINER items are also, technically, markers of proximization (especially spatial proximization). The interplay of conceptual metaphor and proximization can be further noticed in the use of a historical flashback to generate analogy (Musolff 2004, 2016). Namely, the memory of the 'atrocities in Paris' is invoked and temporally proximized as a lesson to heed in the future. It is worth noting that, altogether, Farage's 2013-2016 discourse features a moderate number of such analogies, yet their occurrences increase markedly in the years 2015-2016. This corroborates the finding about the ever-growing explicitness of Farage's rhetoric in the course of the referendum debate.

² Farage refers to a series of coordinated terrorist attacks that occurred on Friday, 13 November 2015 in Paris, leaving 130 people dead and another 413 injured.

5. Conclusion

The examples in sections 3 and 4 are among the most representative in the corpus, thus painting a fair picture of UKIP and Nigel Farage's (anti-)immigration discourse in the four years preceding the Brexit referendum. In general, this discourse can be characterized as conceptually bipolar, recognizing the US/THEM distinction, and enacting this distinction with regard to ideological and policy issues. In the course of the proto-referendum debate, it expresses, first, some relatively moderate positions (as in the largely ideological argument in the years 2013-2014), and later, more radical stance (in the years 2015-2016). The ongoing radicalization of Farage's rhetoric throughout the debate is both caused by and reflected in the change of discursive focus, which is gradually redirected from EU immigration to largely Middle East and North African immigration. This change can be seen as a natural consequence of the simultaneously occurring events (such as Paris terrorist strikes), as well as an attempt to earn some extra popular support in the last months before the Brexit vote. Altogether, Farage's discourse draws heavily on isolationist moods inspired by various voices in the proto-referendum debate, coming from opposition and government supporters alike. The understanding of this broad context is crucial for the study of the UKIP Brexit discourse, which often addresses and benefits from the popular feeling of anxiety and uncertainty about Britain's political and economic sovereignty.

At the pragmalinguistic and lexical levels, Farage's rhetoric makes ample use of threat-constructing, coercive devices, which antagonize the US/THEM camps, legitimizing the measures proposed to offset or prevent the projected immigration impact. The two most effective strategies are proximization and conceptual metaphor, which both contribute to the deictic othering of immigrants, while at the same time mobilizing the home group (i.e. British people) to accept political leadership and guidance of the speaker (Farage). In these goals, metaphor and proximization complement each other remarkably well. Metaphoric scenarios, particularly those involving the CONTAINER schema, consolidate the US camp, increase in-group allegiance, and depict possible consequences of THEM's encroachment on the in-group. For their part, proximization shifts construe direct and growing threats against the US camp, thus centralizing the current moment and adding to the urgency of response. Not least, proximization operations in the temporal domain perform some useful credibility jobs, in that they set up analogies referring to past events to endorse present scenarios and anticipations.

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Britain is different: Farage's rhetoric in the Brexit referendum debate

Abstract: This paper explores the influence of the immigration issue – involving political and war refugees as well as economic migrants – on the outcome of Britain's 2016 referendum on EU membership. I argue that the 'leave' result of the referendum can be attributed, to a great extent, to the consistent anti-immigration campaign led by the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) before the referendum. Working with a corpus of 2013-2016 addresses by the UKIP leader Nigel Farage, I identify discursive strategies whereby the influx of Middle East

and North African refugees, as well as economic migrants from new EU member states, is construed as a growing threat to well-being, security and identity of the British people and Britain as a nation. This construal subsumes the essentially adversarial position of Brussels as the warrant of free economic movement of all EU citizens, and the supporter/promoter of the movement of non-EU migrants between EU countries. Defining the EU as an antagonistic entity helps the UKIP strengthen their Brexit rationale. The main cognitive, discursive and linguistic pragmatic strategies used to realize this goal are deictic othering, conceptual metaphor, and proximization, which I investigate within the interdisciplinary paradigm of contemporary Critical Discourse Studies.

Keywords: proximization, immigration, referendum, British, Europe, conceptual