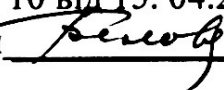


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**Master's Thesis
MARGARET THATCHER VS THERESA MAY: IMAGE, LANGUAGE
PROFILE, INDIVIDUAL STYLE**



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АНОТАЦІЯ

Меняйло Н. В. *Маргарет Тетчер і Тереза Мей: імідж, мовний профіль, індивідуальний стиль*. – Кваліфікаційна робота магістра. – Київський національний університет імені Тараса Шевченка, Київ, 2026.

Актуальність роботи зумовлена зростаючим науковим інтересом до мовних механізмів конструювання політичного авторитету, а також браком комплексних порівняльних досліджень мовних особистостей жінок-лідерів у британському політичному дискурсі. Об'єктом дослідження є політичний дискурс Маргарет Тетчер і Терези Мей як простір перетину лінгвістичної форми, гендеру та медійного конструювання іміджу. Предметом дослідження виступають лексичні, граматичні, стилістичні, прагматичні та самопрезентаційні особливості, через які обидві лідерки конструюють свою політичну ідентичність. Мета роботи – побудувати порівняльні мовні профілі обох прем'єр-міністрів і виявити архітектуру мовних засобів, якими кожна з них формує авторитет в умовах, зумовлених гендерними, інституційними та медійними обмеженнями.

Дослідження охоплює три розділи. У першому розділі сформовано теоретичну базу, що інтегрує концепції політичного іміджу, мовної особистості та індивідуального стилю. Другий розділ містить порівняльний аналіз лексико-граматичних і стилістичних особливостей промов обох лідерок. Третій розділ присвячено прагматичному аналізу та дослідженню конструювання самоіміджу і його медійному сприйняттю.

Методологічну основу становлять системно-функціональна лінгвістика, критичний аналіз дискурсу, теорія мовленнєвих актів, теорія ввічливості та феміністична прагматика. Результати засвідчують, що відмінність між обома лідерками – це передусім відмінність в архітектурі мовної відповідальності: Тетчер будує персонально видимий авторитет через комісивні мовленнєві акти й агентивну граматику, тоді як Мей розподіляє відповідальність через інституційні суб'єкти й колективні конструкції. Обидві стратегії є прагматично

витонченими відповідями на різні риторичні ситуації, однак водночас кожна з них несе у собі специфічні комунікативні ризики.

Ключові слова: політичний дискурс, мовна особистість, прагматика, мовний профіль, політичний імідж, гендер і мова, мовленнєві акти, системно-функціональна лінгвістика.

ABSTRACT

Nataliia Meniailo. *Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May: Image, Language Profile, Individual Style*. – Master's Thesis. – Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Kyiv, 2026.

The relevance of this study is determined by the growing scholarly interest in the linguistic mechanisms of political authority construction and by the lack of comprehensive comparative analyses of women leaders' linguistic personalities in British political discourse. The object of the research is the political discourse of Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May as a site of intersection between linguistic form, gender, and the mediated construction of political image. The subject of the research comprises the lexical, grammatical, stylistic, pragmatic, and self-representational features through which both leaders construct their political identities. The aim of the thesis is to build comparative language profiles of both Prime Ministers and to identify the linguistic architectures through which each constructs authority under gendered, institutional, and media constraints.

The study is organised in three chapters. The first establishes the theoretical framework, integrating concepts of political image, linguistic personality, and individual style. The second provides a comparative analysis of the lexicogrammatical and stylistic features of both leaders' speeches. The third presents pragmatic analysis alongside an examination of self-image construction and media reception.

The methodological foundation integrates Systemic Functional Linguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis, speech act theory, politeness theory, and feminist pragmatics. The findings demonstrate that the contrast between the two leaders is fundamentally a difference in the architecture of linguistic accountability: Thatcher builds a personally visible authority through commissive speech acts and agentive grammar, while May distributes responsibility through institutional subjects and collective constructions. Both strategies represent pragmatically sophisticated responses to distinct rhetorical situations, yet each simultaneously carries specific communicative risks that shaped each leader's public reception.

Keywords: *political discourse, linguistic personality, pragmatics, language profile, political image, gender and language, speech acts, Systemic Functional Linguistics.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	7
1. Theoretical framework of political discourse and image formation	12
1.1. The concept of political image and its linguistic representation	12
1.2. Linguistic personality and individual style in political communication	24
Conclusions	39
2. Lexical, Grammatical, and Stylistic Profiles of Thatcher and May	41
2.1. Lexical and Grammatical Features (Thatcher vs May)	41
2.2 Stylistic Devices and Rhetorical Organization (Thatcher vs May)	57
Conclusions	72
3. Comparative analysis of Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May's language profiles	75
3.1. Pragmatic Features, Strategies, and Tactics (Comparative Analysis)	75
3.2. Self-Image Construction and Media Reception	90
Conclusions	108
CONCLUSION.....	111
SUMMARY	115
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	121
LIST OF SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL	127

INTRODUCTION

The political speech of women leaders occupies a peculiar position in the history of public discourse: it is simultaneously one of the most analysed and one of the most incompletely understood domains of political communication. Analysed, because the performance of female authority under conditions of institutional constraint has attracted sustained attention from linguists, political scientists, feminist scholars, and media researchers since at least the 1970s; incompletely understood, because the analytical traditions that have addressed it have often remained within disciplinary silos – grammatical description without pragmatic depth, media critique without textual grounding, gender analysis without comparative rigour. The present thesis is conceived as a response to this incompleteness. It offers a systematic, multi-level linguistic comparison of the two women who have served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom – Margaret Thatcher (1979–1990) and Theresa May (2016–2019) – with the aim of constructing detailed and evidence-based language profiles for both leaders and situating those profiles within a coherent framework of political discourse analysis, image formation, and gendered communication.

Relevance of the topic. The study of gendered political discourse has gained new urgency as contemporary democracies increasingly rely on mediated language as the primary interface between leaders and citizens, making the mechanisms of linguistic authority formation both more consequential and less transparent. A systematic comparative analysis of two female Prime Ministers offers a uniquely controlled site for investigating how language constitutes political power under conditions of structural gender constraint across distinct historical and communicative contexts.

Key scholarly positions. Contemporary scholarship on political language and image formation rests on several converging premises, developed in the works of N. Fairclough, K. H. Jamieson, M. Scammell, R. Entman, B. McNair, M. McCombs, D. Shaw, and Ukrainian scholars N. Horbenko and O. Buinitskyi. Political image is

not a decorative addition to "real" politics but a constitutive mechanism of political life: representational work has become inseparable from political competition, and citizens inevitably navigate the political world through simplified mental pictures rather than direct access to events. Linguistic choices at every level – grammatical, lexical, pragmatic, rhetorical – are simultaneously social actions with ideological consequences: they distribute moral responsibility, allocate agency, construct audiences, and define the terms of political evaluation. Political image is, moreover, a co-production: it emerges from the interaction between a political actor's own discourse strategies and the framing, selection, and interpretive practices of media institutions, which actively build public images of political figures rather than passively reporting political reality. The study of women in political communication has further established that gender is not an incidental variable but a structuring condition that shapes both the strategies available to female leaders and the interpretive lenses through which those strategies are received – from the structural tension of the "double bind" to the gendered dynamics of media coverage. Ukrainian political linguistic scholarship contributes the framework of the "linguistic personality" as a multi-layered discursive construct, and treats political discourse as a complex communicative event inseparable from its social, institutional, and cultural context.

Aim and objectives of the research. The aim of this thesis is to construct comparative linguistic profiles of Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May as political communicators, demonstrating how their respective language choices – at lexical, grammatical, stylistic, pragmatic, and self-representational levels – constitute different architectures of political authority in response to structurally similar but historically and contextually distinct rhetorical situations.

In pursuit of this aim, the following objectives are set:

1. To review and synthesise the theoretical foundations of political discourse analysis, political image formation, and the concept of linguistic personality, establishing the conceptual framework within which the comparative analysis is conducted.

2. To identify and document the dominant lexical and grammatical features of both leaders' political discourse, with particular attention to personal deixis, evaluative vocabulary, modality, voice, agency, nominalisation, and clausal complexity.

3. To analyse the stylistic devices and rhetorical organisation characteristic of both leaders' speeches across a range of communicative genres – parliamentary address, civic speech, and party conference oratory.

4. To compare the pragmatic profiles of both leaders, including their speech act distributions, politeness and face strategies, use of implicature and presupposition, deictic management, and persuasion strategies, and to draw comparative conclusions about the architectures of political authority each leader developed and their implications for the broader study of gendered political communication.

Object of research is the political discourse of Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May as a site of intersection between linguistic form, political identity, gender, and mediated image construction.

Subject of research is the specific linguistic, rhetorical, and pragmatic features through which Thatcher and May construct their political identities and images in selected primary texts, and the relationships between those features and the media representations their discourse generated.

Methodological basis. The methodological framework of this thesis is interdisciplinary and integrative, drawing on the theoretical contributions of M. A. K. Halliday (Systemic Functional Linguistics), N. Fairclough (Critical Discourse Analysis), J. L. Austin, J. Searle, and P. Grice (pragmatic theory), P. R. R. White and J. R. Martin (Appraisal theory), R. Wodak (feminist critical discourse analysis), and Ukrainian scholars in linguistic personology. At its linguistic core stands Systemic Functional Linguistics, which provides the grammatical apparatus for clause-level analysis – the systems of transitivity, mood, modality, and theme. Critical Discourse Analysis supplies the analytical bridge between textual description and social explanation. Pragmatic theory provides the framework for

examining communicative actions, implicature, face management, and the political work of strategic indirection. Appraisal theory contributes the lexical-evaluative dimension, tracking how affect, judgement, and appreciation are encoded across the primary corpus. Feminist critical discourse analysis provides the gender-analytic dimension, situating both speakers within the structural asymmetries that shape female political communication and its media reception.

Research material and methods. The empirical foundation of the thesis is a corpus of 14 authentic political speech transcripts totalling approximately. For Thatcher, the primary texts include her threshold remarks delivered at Downing Street on 4 May 1979, her parliamentary crisis statement of 14 June 1982, and her address to the Royal Society of 27 September 1988. For May, the corpus comprises her Brexit-policy address of 17 January 2017, her Conservative Party Conference speech of 3 October 2018, and her final Downing Street statement of 24 July 2019, alongside additional speeches listed in the List of Sources of Illustrative Material. This genre diversity is methodologically deliberate: it ensures that the linguistic profiles constructed in the analysis are sensitive to communicative context rather than derived from any single speech type.

The textual analysis proceeds through four successive and complementary analytical procedures: comparative linguistic description using the SFL clause-element framework; discourse analysis guided by Fairclough's three-level model of description, interpretation, and explanation; rhetorical analysis of figurative language, structural organisation, and audience construction; and pragmatic analysis addressing speech act distributions, face-management strategies, implicature generation, presupposition management, and deictic framing. The analysis is unified throughout by the comparative method as its overarching procedural logic, complemented by critical reception analysis drawing on secondary scholarship in gendered media studies.

Practical significance and novelty of the research. This thesis offers the first systematic multi-level comparative linguistic study of both female British Prime Ministers, integrating grammatical, stylistic, pragmatic, and media-reception

analysis within a unified analytical framework. Its findings have direct implications for political communication education, media literacy training, and the study of gendered political authority in both Anglophone and Ukrainian scholarly contexts.

The thesis is structured in three chapters. Chapter 1 establishes the theoretical framework, defining the concepts of political image, linguistic personality, and individual style. Chapter 2 provides the lexical, grammatical, and stylistic profiles of both leaders through close textual analysis. Chapter 3 presents the comparative pragmatic analysis and the examination of self-image construction and media reception. Together, these three chapters constitute a systematic comparative linguistic portrait of the two women who held Britain's highest political office – and whose language represents two fundamentally different architectures of political authority in a shared institutional landscape.

1. Theoretical framework of political discourse and image formation

1.1. The concept of political image and its linguistic representation

The theoretical analysis of political discourse and image formation begins with a careful clarification of what is meant by *political image* and how it is built, circulated, and read through language. In contemporary political communication, political actors are encountered by citizens mainly through mediated texts: speeches quoted in news, interview fragments, debate clips, press releases, social media posts, captions, slogans, headlines, and commentary. These textual forms do not merely report political reality; they package political actors into interpretable public figures by repeatedly attaching them to certain topics, values, emotions, and roles. This is why, as Margaret Scammell notes, modern politics is so densely saturated with representational work that “analysts now frequently assume that ‘politics is image’” [Scammell, 2015, p. 426]. Scammell’s formulation is useful not because it implies a superficial politics, but because it points to a structural condition of contemporary democracies: political contestation is conducted in large part through competing representations of who leaders are, what they stand for, and what kind of future they can plausibly deliver.

A political image can be understood as a relatively coherent public representation of a political actor—an individual leader, a party, a government, or even a state—that organizes collective expectations and evaluations. Such an image is not simply “what a person looks like” or “how the media portray them,” but a semiotic construct stabilized by repeated communicative patterns. It is assembled from multiple resources: visible performance (gesture, dress, stage design), institutional behavior (decision-making, crisis response, alliances), media framing (selection and narration of events), and, crucially, language. Language matters because it is the most continuous and trackable material of politics: political actors speak in order to name problems, assign responsibility, justify decisions, promise outcomes, establish alliances, and demarcate boundaries of belonging. The same

political leader can appear as a “protector,” a “reformer,” a “fighter,” a “servant,” or a “manager” largely through how their discourse positions them in relation to events and audiences. Over time, such positioning becomes recognizable: citizens learn to expect a certain vocabulary, a certain rhetorical tone, and a certain pattern of self-presentation, which becomes the shorthand through which a leader’s public identity is interpreted.

This discursive view of image aligns with broad understandings of discourse as situated communication. N. Horbenko emphasizes that, in the broad sense, discourse “can be defined as a complex communicative event that includes extralinguistic factors and cannot exist without social, political, and cultural context” [Horbenko, 2023, p. 167]. Political image develops within precisely such events: a parliamentary speech gains meaning not only from words but from institutional setting, role expectations, timing, and audience interpretation. A wartime address is read differently than a campaign rally, even if it contains similar phrases. A televised debate produces impressions not only through arguments but through turn-taking, interruptions, and moments that can be clipped and replayed. Because discourse is embedded in social life, political image is never created solely by the politician; it is co-produced by institutions, media professionals, and audiences who interpret, share, parody, endorse, or reject the offered representation.

The linguistic representation of political image can be described as a cumulative effect of recurring choices that anchor the political actor to specific meanings. One of the most visible mechanisms is lexical selection, especially the repeated use of value-laden words that encode a preferred moral and political map. When leaders constantly speak of “security,” “threat,” “defense,” and “order,” they become linked to an image of guardianship and firmness. When they foreground “justice,” “dignity,” “rights,” and “equality,” the image shifts toward moral legitimacy and social responsibility. A leader who repeatedly emphasizes “innovation,” “growth,” “investment,” and “modernization” becomes associated with managerial competence and future orientation. The point is not that these words automatically produce trust, but that they build interpretive continuity: audiences

come to recognize what kind of political world the leader consistently constructs in language, and this continuity becomes part of image stability.

Another essential mechanism is framing, the discursive practice of defining “what the situation is” and “what is at stake.” Framing operates through naming and categorization. Calling a protest “a civic awakening” evokes legitimacy and democratic energy; calling it “a riot” evokes disorder and threat. Calling budget cuts “responsible savings” suggests prudence; calling them “austerity” suggests injustice. Through such labels, political actors craft images of themselves as reasonable evaluators and reliable guides through complexity. Importantly, framing also structures responsibility. Leaders can represent themselves as initiators (“we launched,” “we introduced,” “we delivered”), as protectors (“we will defend,” “we will secure”), as listeners (“we hear,” “we understand”), or as arbiters (“we will balance,” “we will decide”). Each role contributes to the broader public image. Even in short media extracts, role positioning persists because the same patterns are repeatedly selected and circulated.

A third mechanism is **evaluation**, which includes explicit judgement and more indirect stance-taking. Political image is built not only by what leaders claim but by how they express certainty, urgency, empathy, and moral orientation. When a leader uses categorical declarations and removes space for doubt, they project decisiveness; when they use cautious formulations and conditional reasoning, they project prudence and deliberation. When they speak with visible solidarity (“we share this pain,” “we stand together”), they activate an image of communal leadership. When they speak with distance (“the situation requires measures,” “it must be done”), they activate an image of technocratic governance. These effects are reinforced by audience expectations about what leadership “should” sound like in a given cultural and historical context, which is precisely why Horbenko’s emphasis on context is crucial: the same style can be received as strength in one community and as arrogance in another [Horbenko, 2023, p. 167].

Political image also depends on **narrative organization**, because public trust often attaches to stories rather than isolated facts. In political language, narratives

typically include a diagnosis (what is wrong), a cause (why it happened), a moral evaluation (why it matters), and a projection (what should happen next). Leaders who repeatedly construct narratives with clear causal logic and a coherent timeline often acquire an image of control and strategic orientation. Those whose discourse appears fragmented or inconsistent may be perceived as reactive, even when policy performance is comparable. Narrative work is especially visible in crisis communication: leaders often position themselves as calm interpreters of events, aligning their image with competence through the ability to provide meaning under uncertainty. Scammell's emphasis on representational politics helps explain why such narrative performance becomes constitutive of authority rather than an optional stylistic addition [Scammell, 2015, p. 426].

The contemporary media environment intensifies these linguistic processes because media formats privilege compactness, repetition, and recognizability. Political images are strengthened when certain phrases and framings become easily quotable and thus repeatedly reproduced. "Sound-bite logic" encourages the creation of short verbal units that can circulate independently of their original context, which makes carefully designed language a critical resource for image formation. In such an environment, political actors are often remembered through emblematic phrases that condense their self-presentation into a portable sign. A commitment expressed through a recurring formula ("I will always...", "we will never...") becomes not only a claim but an identity marker, especially when the media continuously attach it to the actor's name. This is one reason why political image is inseparable from mediatization: image is stabilized through the repeated circulation of recognizable linguistic fragments.

A further example-rich way to understand linguistic image construction is to consider how leaders craft *relationships* with audiences through language. Pronoun choices, for instance, create distinct perceptions of proximity and responsibility. Inclusive "we" can merge leader and citizenry into a shared collective identity, producing an image of solidarity and mutual obligation. "You" can create direct interpersonal address, producing an image of openness and engagement.

Institutional “we” can signal authority and bureaucratic capacity, producing an image of governance and command. These patterns shape not only what is said but how the speaker is positioned in relation to the audience: as a fellow citizen, as a representative, as a commander, as a negotiator. Over time, such positioning contributes to public expectations about the leader’s “type.”

The conceptual foundations of political image are inseparable from the broader problem of how citizens come to “know” politics in conditions where direct access to decision-making, backstage negotiations, and even the full policy record of leaders is structurally limited. Walter Lippmann’s classic diagnosis remains one of the most productive starting points because it frames image not as a decorative attribute of politics but as a cognitive necessity. In *Public Opinion*, he explains why the political environment cannot be grasped “as it is” and why citizens must rely on simplified internal representations; in this logic, “the pictures in our heads” become the operative reality for political judgment and action [Lippmann, 1922, p. 3]. For contemporary political communication, Lippmann’s point is not merely historical: it directly anticipates the dynamics of today’s information abundance, accelerated news cycles, and platform-driven fragmentation, where public attention is constantly reorganized and the interpretive burden is shifted onto short, repeatable, emotionally legible cues.

If political image is approached as a cognitive structure, it can be described as a relatively stable configuration that condenses beliefs, evaluations, and expectations about a political actor into a form that is quickly retrievable and socially shareable. Such condensation does not occur “naturally”; it is facilitated by recurring communicative patterns that make certain traits feel obvious and others irrelevant. This is why contemporary scholarship increasingly treats politics as a field saturated by representational work. Margaret Scammell captures the intensity of this representational saturation by noting that “analysts now frequently assume that ‘politics is image’” [Scammell, 2015, p. 426]. The importance of this formulation lies in what it shifts into focus: political competition is not only a contest over programs, resources, or institutions, but also a contest over the symbolic

recognizability of actors and their capacity to appear credible, decisive, empathetic, competent, “one of us,” or, conversely, alien, risky, incompetent, and morally suspect.

A crucial clarification follows from this: political image is not reducible to visual appearance or to the techniques of public relations. It is a multimodal semiotic construct in which the linguistic layer is structurally decisive because language is the primary medium through which politics becomes narratable, arguable, and morally assessable. A leader’s “image” is stabilized in public consciousness through what is repeatedly said, how it is said, and how events are made meaningful through naming, categorization, evaluation, and framing. Even when politics is delivered through highly visual media, language supplies the interpretive grid: captions, headlines, slogans, hashtags, quoted fragments, and recurring metaphors do not simply accompany images; they direct attention, attach value, and propose causal interpretations. The linguistic dimension of image formation becomes especially visible in those moments when a short verbal form crystallizes a broader persona. Campaign slogans such as “Yes We Can,” “Take Back Control,” or “Make America Great Again” function as condensed identity offers: they imply a collective subject (“we”), a moralized directionality (progress, restoration, liberation), and a promise of agency. Importantly, these formulas do not persuade primarily by providing information; they persuade by offering a recognizable narrative position to the audience and by projecting the leader as the plausible agent of that narrative.

The dependence of political image on mediated channels can be described with particular precision through agenda-setting and framing research, because both traditions show how language organizes salience and interpretation. In their foundational study of agenda-setting, McCombs and Shaw cite a formulation by Lang and Lang that is especially relevant for image formation: “The mass media force attention to certain issues. They build up public images of political figures. They are constantly presenting objects suggesting what individuals in the mass should think about, know about, have feelings about” [McCombs; Shaw, 1972, p. 177]. The quote is valuable here because it explicitly links attention management

(“force attention”) with the construction of “public images,” while also naming the affective dimension (“have feelings about”) that is indispensable to image as a political mechanism. The same page includes Bernard Cohen’s well-known observation, quoted by McCombs and Shaw, that the press “may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about” [McCombs; Shaw, 1972, p. 177]. For political image, the consequence is straightforward: controlling the agenda does not automatically control public opinions in a direct way, yet it strongly shapes the cognitive environment in which leader images are assembled, because repeated attention to selected issues becomes the background against which competence, leadership, and responsibility are inferred. When a leader is consistently presented in connection with “security,” audiences are invited to evaluate decisiveness and strength; when the repeated association is “corruption,” the interpretive axis shifts toward integrity and moral credibility; when the association is “economy,” the axis shifts toward competence, practicality, and managerial control. These are not abstract effects: they materialize through linguistic packaging—headlines, thematic repetitions, and the stabilization of a small set of evaluative descriptors.

Framing theory further clarifies the linguistic mechanics of this process by showing how selection and emphasis operate at the level of meaning construction. Robert Entman defines framing in a way that foregrounds this selective work: “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text” [Entman, 1993, p. 52]. For political image, the key implication is that linguistic representation is never a neutral “mirror.” When political actors describe the same policy as “reform” versus “cuts,” the lexical choice already performs image work by indexing the speaker’s values and anticipated loyalties. When a protest is labelled “civil resistance” versus “riot,” the categorization invites different moral inferences not only about the event, but about the leader’s stance: protector of rights, guardian of order, ally of “the people,” or defender of institutions. The leader’s image emerges through these patterned

selections over time, because audiences develop expectations about what the leader habitually treats as salient and what the leader habitually treats as negligible.

In contemporary conditions, this discursive construction of image is intensified by the professionalization of political communication and the marketing logic of campaigns. Brian McNair explicitly links modern political communication to processes of branding and market-like presentation, arguing that political actors are increasingly marketed as products in a competitive communicative environment [McNair, 2003, p. 5]. What matters for linguistic representation is that branding requires consistency, recognizability, and emotional resonance; therefore, political language becomes more dependent on stable verbal signatures—recurrent catchphrases, predictable moral binaries, repeated storylines about national identity, threat, renewal, dignity, competence, fairness. Such verbal signatures function as identity anchors: they allow supporters to recognize “their” leader across contexts and allow media systems to compress complex messages into quotable fragments. This compression is not merely stylistic; it is a structural condition for image circulation, because platforms reward short, high-salience units (soundbites, headlines, memes) and punish complexity that resists extraction.

The role of modern media in this environment is not limited to transmission. Even when political actors initiate messages, media systems select, edit, highlight, and contextualize them, turning certain verbal elements into public “facts” and leaving others invisible. This is precisely why Ukrainian scholarship increasingly emphasizes media space as an environment of political image production rather than a passive channel. Within this line of research, the very placement of Buinitskyi’s topic in a contemporary interdisciplinary proceedings volume—*Modern media in the formation of the political image of the state and political leader*—signals the institutional recognition that leader image and state image are co-produced through modern media logics [Buinitskyi; Yakovets, 2025, p. 30]. For theoretical purposes, the relevance is not only that media “show” leaders, but that they impose narrativity, personalization, conflict orientation, and emotional legibility as conditions for visibility. In such conditions, linguistic representation becomes a primary interface

between political actors and public interpretation, because language is what can be quoted, replayed, mocked, celebrated, and algorithmically circulated.

This media-centered environment also changes the internal structure of political image by privileging traits that are linguistically performable in short formats. Competence can be staged through confident modality (“will,” “must,” “can”), through numerical specificity, and through controlled explanation that signals mastery. Empathy can be staged through inclusive deixis (“we,” “our families”), through narrative about everyday life, and through emotionally marked evaluation (“I know your pain,” “no one should be left behind”). Moral authority can be staged through value-laden predicates (“betray,” “protect,” “honor”), through appeal to shared norms, and through explicit boundary-making between “us” and “them.” These are not theoretical abstractions but repeatable linguistic routines that audiences learn to interpret. The image effect is often achieved without explicit self-attribution. A leader rarely needs to say “I am decisive” for decisiveness to be inferred; repeated use of categorical statements, low hedging, and high-control verbs (“deliver,” “secure,” “restore”) can produce that inference more effectively because it appears as a property of performance rather than a claim.

Political discourse analysis is especially valuable here because it shows how fine-grained linguistic choices contribute to perceptions of agency, responsibility, and certainty. Within Critical Discourse Analysis, Norman Fairclough places language at the center of power relations and argues that discourse is implicated in how power is produced and maintained [Fairclough, 1989, p. 1]. When this insight is applied to image formation, political image appears not as an aesthetic layer added to politics, but as one of the forms through which power becomes acceptable, contestable, or resistible. Political image, in other words, is a discursive outcome with political consequences: it can legitimize authority (“strong leader in crisis”), normalize inequality (“responsible austerity”), stabilize exclusion (“real citizens” versus “outsiders”), or mobilize solidarity (“we stand together”).

Empirical work in Political Discourse Analysis illustrates this link between linguistic representation and political power through concrete textual mechanisms.

DeSouza's analysis of political discourse highlights that power can be exercised through representational choices that shape social relations and event interpretation. Summarizing the effect of a leader's linguistic strategy, he concludes that "most of the power" exerted by the political actor "stemmed from his careful use of language to represent people and events and to enact powerful social relations" [DeSouza, 2018, p. 123]. The conceptual significance of this conclusion for political image is direct: representing oneself as the primary agent of change, representing opponents as reactive or irresponsible, representing the public as unified or fragmented, representing the moment as "historic" or "routine"—these are discursive operations that become durable image material once repeated and circulated. Over time, they sediment into public expectations: who "acts," who "reacts," who "cares," who "knows," who "protects," who "threatens."

To make this mechanism more tangible, it is useful to observe how image is linguistically stabilized through recurring frames and narrative roles. When leaders consistently narrate politics as a "battle," they invite the public to evaluate them as commanders, defenders, and strategists; in such a frame, compromise can be interpreted as weakness and firmness as virtue. When leaders consistently narrate politics as "repair" or "rebuilding," they invite evaluation as technicians and caretakers; in such a frame, stability and competence become central image criteria. When leaders narrate politics as "moral renewal," they position themselves as guardians of values and judges of wrongdoing; in such a frame, purity and integrity become central. These image criteria are not simply "in the leader's head"; they are co-produced in discourse, then reinforced through media repetition and audience uptake. Agenda-setting explains why certain issues become the standard tests of leadership; framing explains how those issues become morally and emotionally legible; discourse analysis shows how grammatical agency, modality, and evaluation distribute responsibility and credibility.

In a media-driven political environment, political image increasingly functions as a communicative "hinge" that connects the recognizable individuality of a leader to collective identities that must be made tangible in public consciousness.

Contemporary political actors are routinely interpreted not only as decision-makers but also as symbolic stand-ins for parties, movements, regions, generations, or the state itself. This representative dimension becomes especially visible in moments when a leader speaks “as the nation” in crisis addresses, commemorative speeches, summit statements, or diplomatic encounters: the pronoun choices (“we” as citizens vs. “we” as government), the naming of the collective (“the nation,” “our people,” “the international community”), and the preferred value vocabulary (“freedom,” “dignity,” “security,” “justice”) all contribute to whether the leader’s voice is heard as inclusive, authoritative, paternal, technocratic, or delegative. Under mediatization, such linguistic signals are amplified by the formats through which citizens encounter politics: headline-driven summaries, soundbites, quoted fragments, short-form video, and platform-specific posting styles. In these conditions, branding logics become a routine feature of political representation, and Scammell’s observation that analysts often treat contemporary politics as saturated by image-work highlights why leaders and states alike become managed “objects” of symbolic production in global circulation [Scammell, 2015, p. 426]. The same communicative mechanism that stabilizes a leader’s personal image can therefore scale up into broader narratives of national identity and legitimacy, particularly in international communication where a leader’s phrasing, metaphors, and evaluative tone are quickly recontextualized as markers of the country’s posture and moral positioning.

This linkage between individual and collective representation is reinforced by the personalization of politics, understood not as a stylistic choice alone but as an observable structural tendency in contemporary political communication. In the comparative scholarship on personalization, it is explicitly defined as “an increase over time in the centrality and autonomy of individual politicians at the expense of collective institutions (parties, cabinets and parliaments)” [Langer & Sagarzazu, 2018, p. 472]. Even when institutions remain formally decisive, media environments often encourage the public to process political complexity through leader-focused narratives: election campaigns become “stories” about candidates, policy disputes become “clashes” between recognizable personalities, and institutional decisions are

interpreted through the perceived traits of the individuals associated with them (decisive, evasive, responsible, arrogant). This is not merely speculative: research on EU politics, for example, notes that personalization can “humaniz[e]” complex systems for citizens [Gattermann, 2022, p. 19], and it also foregrounds the idea that individual politicians may serve as “information shortcuts” in settings where institutional processes are distant or difficult to track [Gattermann, 2022, p. 24]. In practice, this means that linguistic representations—especially those easily portable across media formats—gain disproportionate weight in image formation: concise self-positioning formulas (“I take responsibility”), moralizing binaries (“honest taxpayers” vs. “corrupt elites”), future-oriented promises (“we will rebuild”), and crisis metaphors (“battle,” “frontline,” “recovery”) are repeatedly extracted, replayed, and recognized as signature cues that audiences attach to leaders and, by extension, to the collectives they are seen to embody.

Political image also plays a crucial role in citizens’ political orientation because it organizes attention and evaluation under conditions of informational overload. Lippmann’s classic point that political judgment is guided by “the pictures in our heads” [Lippmann, 1922, p. 3] remains directly applicable to contemporary communication environments, where fragmented exposure and accelerated cycles encourage schematic interpretation. What citizens often retain is not the full argument of a policy speech but the stable image-traits that the discourse repeatedly suggests: whether a leader appears protective, competent, empathetic, confrontational, or evasive. Horbenko’s emphasis that political discourse influences the formation of social interests and value orientations is important here, because image is one of the main routes through which such influence becomes psychologically manageable for recipients [Horbenko, 2023, p. 169]. In everyday political perception, image condenses heterogeneous signals into an interpretable pattern: a recurring “protector” image may be built through security lexicon, warnings, and firm modality; a “reformer” image through action verbs, timelines, and accountability frames; a “leader close to the people” through direct address, inclusive pronouns, colloquial markers, and emotionally resonant narratives. These

are not decorative effects: Edelman's argument that "political acts are largely symbolic in their effect" [Edelman, 1964, p. 6] clarifies why the linguistic packaging of political action can shape public response even when material outcomes remain uncertain or delayed.

Conceptualizing political image as discursively constructed and socially shared therefore provides a necessary foundation for analyzing political communication as meaning-making under power relations rather than as simple information transfer. Fairclough's insistence that discourse is implicated in "the production, maintenance, and transformation of relations of power" [Fairclough, 1989, p. 1] is particularly relevant because political image is one of the central "products" of these discursive processes: it becomes a resource for legitimizing authority, mobilizing support, and structuring perceptions of opponents and allies. Empirical political discourse analysis supports this view: DeSouza shows that political power can stem from "careful use of language to represent people and events and to enact powerful social relations" [DeSouza, 2018, p. 123], which is precisely the kind of representational work through which images are stabilized in the public mind. Recognizing these dynamics allows the thesis to treat image not as a superficial layer added to "real politics," but as a constitutive symbolic mechanism of political life—one that operates through patterned linguistic representation across mediated arenas. This conceptual clarification also prepares the ground for the next subsection, where the analysis can focus specifically on *linguistic personality and individual style* as a distinct level of image-relevant variation, without duplicating the general theoretical work on political image developed here.

1.2. Linguistic personality and individual style in political communication

In contemporary research on political communication, the issues of power, persuasion, legitimacy, and ideology are increasingly examined through the figure of the speaker as a publicly constructed communicative subject. Political discourse functions not only as a competition of arguments, policy positions, and interpretive

frames, but also as a space in which political actors continuously “stage” a recognizable public self through recurrent linguistic and rhetorical choices. This is why the theoretical framework of political discourse and image formation requires an explicit account of how linguistic personality and individual style operate in politics: without such an account, the analysis risks treating political texts as detached artifacts rather than as performances of agency, authority, solidarity, and responsibility that audiences interpret as cues of leadership. In this sense, political discourse can be treated as a complex communicative event shaped by linguistic form and by extralinguistic conditions—social expectations, institutional roles, media formats, cultural memory—because discourse “cannot exist without social, political, and cultural context” [Horbenko, 2023, p. 167]. When political actors speak, they do not merely “transmit” positions; they enact themselves as particular kinds of leaders, opponents, citizens, or representatives, and they do so in ways that become legible to audiences through repetition across genres and platforms.

Within Ukrainian scholarship, L. Slavova proposes a conceptual entry-point that is especially productive for political discourse studies: the linguistic personality of the political leader as a core category of analysis in political linguistic personology. Her approach shifts attention from isolated lexical features to a holistic construct that emerges across communicative situations and genres, where the leader’s public self is formed at the intersection of individual characteristics, institutional expectations, and collective symbolic resources. The analytic advantage of this move is that it allows the researcher to interpret political language not simply as a set of stylistic ornaments, but as a structured, socially meaningful profile that becomes recognizable through repeated communicative behavior. Slavova explicitly frames the object as a generalized discursive image: the linguistic personality of the leader is approached as a construct that represents typical traits of political communication while reflecting cultural specificity [Slavova, 2015, p. 110]. This emphasis is crucial for discourse analysis because it clarifies why audiences often perceive politicians as “authentic” or “artificial,” “strong” or “weak,” “close to the people” or “distant,” even when such attributes are rarely stated directly. They are

inferred from patterned ways of speaking: the leader's habitual forms of address, favored evaluative vocabulary, preferred narrative templates, the balance between promises and warnings, or the degree of categorical certainty expressed through modality.

Slavova insists that linguistic personality in politics is multi-layered and cannot be reduced to a single psychological portrait. She proposes a typology of manifestations that is particularly relevant for image formation because it links the political "self" to both individual embodiment and mediated construction. In her formulation, the linguistic personality of a politician appears as "1) individual personality (age, gender and status characteristics); 2) collective personality representing the ideas of stratum or nation; 3) generalized symbolic personality – stratum label of national ethnic community in the eyes of others; 4) virtual personality constructed by the institute of speechwriting" [Slavova, 2015, p. 111]. The value of this typology lies in its capacity to explain how one and the same politician can be interpreted simultaneously as a unique individual, a spokesperson for a collective, a symbol that circulates beyond the person, and a mediated product of professional communication work. Importantly, this is not a purely abstract classification. Each "hypostasis" corresponds to a distinct set of discourse effects and interpretive expectations that are activated in real communicative encounters, especially under conditions of mediatized politics, where audiences mainly meet leaders through speech fragments, headlines, debate clips, and algorithmically amplified quotations.

The first dimension—the individual personality—does not merely mean "biography" as a factual background; it becomes politically relevant when biography is narrativized and linguistically performed as credibility. A leader's age, professional trajectory, or wartime experience, for instance, becomes persuasive not because it exists, but because it is discursively turned into a stable interpretive frame: the politician is positioned as someone who "knows hardship," "understands ordinary families," "has managed crises," or "has paid a price." Linguistically, this performance often relies on autobiographical storytelling ("I grew up...", "I

remember...,” “When I worked as...”), on moral evaluation (“It taught me responsibility”), and on affective alignment (“I know what it feels like”). Such moves are rarely neutral: they are carefully calibrated to the norms of political genre. A parliamentary speech may foreground institutional responsibility and minimize intimacy; a campaign rally may maximize emotional proximity; a televised debate may compress identity into short memorable phrases. Even when speechwriting is involved, the “fit” between the narrated self and the publicly known life story becomes decisive for whether the audience reads the performance as natural or staged—an interpretive process Slavova’s model anticipates by treating linguistic personality as layered rather than purely individual [Slavova, 2015, p. 111].

The second dimension—the collective personality—captures the representative function of political speech as the performance of an imagined “we.” Here, linguistic choices do not merely express policy positions; they symbolically enact membership, solidarity, and entitlement to speak on behalf of others. This collective “we” can be constructed as national (“we as Ukrainians”), civic (“we as citizens”), moral (“we who believe in justice”), or geopolitical (“we with our partners”), and each version generates a different public self for the speaker. The mechanism is often subtle: it is built through inclusive pronouns, shared temporal references (“for decades,” “since independence”), culturally loaded symbols, and formulaic value language. In broad terms, political discourse operates as a structured interaction between individuals, society, and the state that shapes recipients’ worldview [Horbenko, 2023, p. 167]. The leader’s linguistic personality becomes a key mediator of that interaction because it provides a recognizable voice through which collective identity is narrated and evaluated. This is one reason why political leaders repeatedly return to shared memories, national traumas, victories, and moral lessons: such references authorize the leader as a representative speaker and simultaneously bind audiences into a collective interpretive horizon.

The third dimension—the generalized symbolic personality—explains how a leader’s linguistic profile can circulate as a condensed label that stands for an entire political camp or even for the nation in external perception. In this dimension,

individual style traits are lifted out of their original contexts and reprocessed by media routines: recurring expressions become memes, soundbites become emblems, and a politician's typical framing becomes shorthand for a whole ideology. A leader who repeatedly frames politics as "cleansing" and "betrayal," for example, may become symbolically linked to a moralistic antagonistic worldview; a leader who consistently speaks in managerial metaphors ("efficiency," "optimization," "delivery") may become a symbol of technocratic governance. Such symbolic condensation is intensified by contemporary media environments, where short clips and quotable lines travel faster than extended argumentation. As a result, linguistic personality becomes visible as an external "label" that can stabilize reputations across borders and languages. This phenomenon aligns with the broader idea—central to political discourse analysis—that political power partly depends on the ability to represent people and events in ways that enact social relations; DeSouza's study concludes that "most of the power" exercised by a political actor "stemmed from his careful use of language to represent people and events and to enact powerful social relations" [DeSouza, 2018, p. 123]. A symbolic personality, in this sense, is a durable interpretive product of such representational work.

The fourth dimension—the virtual personality constructed by speechwriting and professional communication—captures a defining condition of contemporary leadership: political discourse is often produced collectively and strategically, even when it is performed by an individual. Slavova highlights this directly by identifying the "virtual personality constructed by the institute of speechwriting" [Slavova, 2015, p. 111]. The analytical importance of this point is that it prevents a naïve assumption that style equals "inner character." Instead, it invites an institutional view of discourse production: advisors design key messages, consultants shape tonal registers, media strategists test slogans, and teams ensure consistency across platforms. Yet, the virtual personality cannot be arbitrary. It must remain plausible within the interpretive frames already attached to the politician, because audiences evaluate coherence not only at the level of content but also at the level of voice. When the scripted voice and the embodied speaker diverge too sharply—through

unnatural phrasing, inconsistent emotional cues, or mismatched cultural references—the audience often reads the performance as manipulation. Slavova’s model is therefore especially useful for explaining why image management sometimes fails: the virtual linguistic personality may be well-designed as a media product but weakly anchored in perceived authenticity and narrative continuity.

From a discourse-analytic perspective, these four manifestations are not separate compartments; they overlap and become visible through concrete textual and pragmatic mechanisms. Slavova proposes reconstructing the virtual image of a politician’s linguistic personality by analyzing speech acts, genre patterns, and precedent phenomena in authentic political speech [Slavova, 2015, p. 111–113]. This methodological orientation is compatible with political discourse analysis traditions that treat political language as action and struggle. Chilton’s definition of politics includes “a struggle for power, between two who seek to assert and maintain power and those who seek to resist it” [Chilton, 2004, p. 3]. If politics is struggle, then linguistic personality is one of the principal interfaces through which struggle becomes communicatively manageable: the leader’s public self is shaped as decisive or deliberative, inclusive or combative, confident or cautious, through repeated pragmatic choices that structure interaction.

Speech acts are central here because they position the speaker in relation to authority and obligation. When a leader’s discourse is dominated by commissives (promises, commitments), audiences are invited to read the speaker as an agent capable of delivery; when directives (calls, demands) dominate, the leader is staged as a commander or mobilizer; when representatives (assertions, interpretations) dominate, the leader appears as a narrator who defines reality. Slavova emphasizes genre-typical speech-act distributions in political speech and treats them as cues for reconstructing the leader’s discursive status [Slavova, 2015, p. 113]. This becomes especially visible in high-stakes moments—wartime addresses, crisis briefings, impeachment debates—where political actors must simultaneously interpret events, assign responsibility, and project future action. Even the smallest pragmatic details—whether a leader says “we will” versus “we must,” “I ask” versus “I demand,” “it

seems” versus “it is”—function as signals of stance and authority that accumulate into stable impressions over time.

Equally significant is the role of presupposition and background knowledge, because political discourse typically relies on shared cultural resources rather than explicit explanations. Slavova shows that political leaders’ background knowledge becomes visible through allusions, quotations, precedent phenomena, and other intertextual references [Slavova, 2015, p. 113–115]. These references do more than decorate speech: they position the speaker within cultural hierarchies and moral traditions. When a leader cites canonical poets, constitutional texts, religious phrases, or historical episodes, the leader signals membership in a valued symbolic community and claims interpretive authority over its meaning. Such references also work as recognition tests: they invite the audience to feel included (“we share this memory”), to experience moral alignment (“we honor these values”), and to accept political guidance (“this tradition supports our course”). Horbenko’s characterization of political discourse as a phenomenon mediated by sociocultural customs and oriented toward political goals [Horbenko, 2023, p. 169] is directly relevant here: intertextual resources are among the most efficient ways to compress complex ideological positions into culturally legible forms, thereby making leadership appear both meaningful and “naturally” grounded in collective experience.

Taken together, these mechanisms clarify why linguistic personality and individual style cannot be treated as a decorative add-on to political discourse analysis. They constitute one of the main infrastructures through which political image becomes persuasive and durable. The leader’s public self is constructed across genres—formal addresses, interviews, parliamentary performances, social media messaging—and across time, through repetition that stabilizes expectations. Discourse analysis, in turn, requires a method capable of connecting textual features to social power. Fairclough explicitly frames discourse analysis as a practice that links textual description to interpretation and explanation, connecting discursive processes to social processes [Fairclough, 1995, p. 97]. Within such a framework,

linguistic personality can be approached as the dynamic discursive form of political agency: it is where institutional role, ideological positioning, and communicative strategy become observable in language.

These observations allow us to treat **linguistic personality in political communication** as a *cognitive–discursive construct* that becomes recognizable through the cumulative repetition of communicative decisions rather than through any single “signature” feature. What audiences learn to identify as a leader’s public “self” is formed by stable patterns of lexical preference, recurrent evaluative formulas, habitual ways of naming political problems and social groups, preferred narrative templates, and predictable role positions taken in interaction (speaker as guarantor, protector, judge, witness, mediator). Because political communication is almost never confined to one genre, linguistic personality is best approached as a *cross-genre continuity*: it persists across parliamentary speeches, televised interviews, press briefings, campaign rallies, official statements, social-media posts, and ceremonial addresses, even though each genre imposes its own constraints on tone, pacing, and argument structure. Political discourse, understood in the broad sense as “a complex communicative event that includes extralinguistic factors and cannot exist without social, political, and cultural context” [Horbenko, 2023, p. 167], is precisely the environment in which this continuity is tested and stabilized: the speaker’s “self” is repeatedly re-assembled under changing institutional conditions and shifting public expectations.

A crucial implication is that linguistic personality is not merely a catalogue of linguistic markers but a **recognition mechanism**: recipients infer coherence from repeated exposure to patterned choices. For example, the public tends to perceive as “decisive” a politician whose discourse regularly compresses causality into short, high-certainty formulations (“we will,” “we must,” “this is the only way”), and who habitually frames collective action through deontic vocabulary (“duty,” “responsibility,” “obligation”). Likewise, “competence” and “managerial authority” are often inferred from routinized references to procedures, timelines, measurable indicators, and institutional coordination (“implementation,” “monitoring,”

“roadmap,” “deliverables”), especially when these are embedded in a narrative of control (“we have assessed,” “we have secured,” “we are coordinating”). A leader perceived as “empathetic” is typically one who recurrently builds a discursive bridge between policy and lived experience through forms of address, references to ordinary routines, and affective stance markers (“I know how it feels,” “you are not alone,” “we hear you”). Importantly, these impressions are not produced by explicit self-description but by the audience’s interpretation of how the speaker distributes agency, responsibility, and moral evaluation in talk. In this sense, linguistic personality functions as a *discursive profile of agency*: it helps recipients decide who appears as an initiator of action, who is positioned as vulnerable, who is blamed, and who is protected. Political Discourse Analysis has repeatedly shown that such representational choices are a resource of power; in DeSouza’s formulation, “most of the power” exercised by a political actor can stem from “his careful use of language to represent people and events and to enact powerful social relations” [DeSouza, 2018, p. 123]. Even without adopting a fully technical grammatical apparatus at this point, the general insight is methodologically decisive for linguistic personality research: the political “self” becomes legible where discourse persistently organizes social reality in a recognizable way.

At the same time, linguistic personality is never fully fixed because political life is structurally dynamic. It evolves with career stages (outsider candidate, opposition leader, head of government, wartime leader, international spokesperson), with institutional role changes (campaigning versus governing), and with transformations in the media environment. The same politician may cultivate a procedural and “technocratic” persona during press conferences where accountability norms and adversarial questioning dominate; a more intimate persona in social-media posts that simulate closeness through direct address, conversational rhythm, and everyday reference points; and a solemn, symbolic persona in commemorative or crisis addresses where the speech act of national reassurance becomes central. Contemporary mediatization intensifies these shifts because the leader’s discourse is constantly recontextualized into clips, headlines, captions, and

quotation fragments, each of which can reinforce a particular persona trait. The consequence is that linguistic personality must be approached as a *context-sensitive stability*: the stable element is not an identical style everywhere, but a set of recurring solutions the speaker uses to meet recurrent communicative tasks—legitimizing authority, constructing “the people,” identifying threats, promising protection, or narrating the future.

If linguistic personality answers the question of *who speaks* in political discourse, **individual style** answers the question of *how this political self speaks* in concrete communicative action. Style can therefore be defined as a motivated pattern of choices that remains sufficiently coherent to be recognized while remaining flexible enough to function across communicative situations. In contemporary politics, style is inseparable from visibility and circulation: what counts as “the leader’s style” often crystallizes through repeated media uptake—soundbites, signature phrases, preferred metaphors, a characteristic rhythm of listing or repetition, or a familiar sequence of moves (problem naming → moral evaluation → promise of protection → call for unity). The mediatized setting matters because political selves are increasingly produced for mass spectatorship. Corner and Pels underline that contemporary politics is inseparable from mediated self-presentation, describing political life as shaped by “processes of personalization, popularization and ‘theatricalization’,” where leadership is publicly performed and interpreted through visible stylistic cues [Corner; Pels, 2024, p. 2]. In such conditions, individual style becomes a practical resource for recognizability: it helps a politician remain identifiable across platforms where attention is scarce and where messages compete in compressed formats.

Political style is also **multimodal**: it incorporates linguistic form, rhetorical organization, visual staging, and performance conventions into one communicative ensemble. Linguistic style includes recurring vocabulary fields, preferred sentence complexity, characteristic modality strength, habitual pronoun patterns, typical evaluative adjectives, and stable metaphor repertoires. Rhetorical style includes preferred genres and argumentative schemes—whether the leader relies on policy

explanation, moral condemnation, personal storytelling, historical analogy, or crisis narration. Performance style includes pacing, emphatic repetition, pausing for applause, and the management of audience alignment (“we” as unity-building; “you” as direct mobilization; naming “they” as antagonistic identification). Visual style includes clothing choices, background symbols, staging props, and camera grammar, all of which become interpretive frames for the spoken text. Contemporary war and crisis communication makes this especially visible: a short, sober setting, minimal decoration, and restrained language can stabilize an image of seriousness and endurance; ceremonial backdrops and elevated diction can stabilize an image of sovereignty and institutional continuity. Corner and Pels, discussing the longer trajectory of “the restyling of politics,” highlight that political self-presentation is now routinely interpreted through stylistic performance conventions and celebrity logics, so that the leader’s public identity is co-produced by discourse, media form, and audience expectation [Corner; Pels, 2024, p. 2–3]. This does not replace policy content; it structures how policy is perceived and remembered.

Because style is performed under institutional constraints, it also has a strong **temporal** dimension. A leader’s style can become more procedural and cautious when entering office, where governing discourse is monitored for legality, diplomatic risk, and administrative feasibility. It can become more expansive and moralized in wartime or during national emergencies, where legitimacy is reinforced through unity narratives, sacrifice motifs, and future-oriented resilience frames. Diachronic discourse analysis helps trace these developments with methodological clarity. DeSouza’s study of political texts demonstrates how the representation of social roles and relations can be tracked through systematic patterns of linguistic choice, showing that power and authority are enacted not only through overt argument but also through the recurring organization of agency and certainty in discourse [DeSouza, 2018, p. 123]. The transferable methodological point is that style change is rarely random: it follows shifts in communicative tasks and in the risks attached to speech. When the dominant task becomes persuasion in competitive campaigns, style often intensifies affect, polarization, and slogan-like compression.

When the task becomes governance, style often increases procedural framing and institutional justification. When the task becomes international representation, style often foregrounds diplomatic register, strategic ambiguity, and carefully balanced evaluation.

The link between linguistic personality, individual style, and image formation becomes clearest when these phenomena are placed within the functional architecture of political discourse. Horbenko summarizes four key functions of political discourse—instrumental, informational, persuasive, and prognostic [Horbenko, 2023, p. 168–169]—and each of them is realized through the leader’s linguistically performed self. The instrumental function, tied to legitimization and authority, depends on stylistic resources that perform competence, responsibility, and institutional alignment (for instance, discursive emphasis on legality, procedure, and collective decision-making). The informational function depends on the leader’s ability to make complex processes cognitively manageable, often through narrative sequencing, exemplification, and stable naming practices that reduce ambiguity. The persuasive function depends on style as a vehicle for ethos (credibility), pathos (emotional alignment), and logos (argument), including the careful orchestration of evaluation and solidarity markers. The prognostic function depends on temporal narration—how leaders linguistically bind past sacrifice, present endurance, and future promise into a coherent trajectory that invites trust and patience. These functions do not operate abstractly; they operate through recognizably patterned language and performance choices that audiences learn to associate with the leader’s “voice.”

Finally, this perspective clarifies why discourse analysis must integrate textual form with social meaning. Fairclough formulates the core methodological requirement in terms of linking description, interpretation, and explanation, arguing that discourse analysis includes “linguistic description of the language text,” “interpretation of the relationship between (productive and interpretative) discursive processes and the text,” and “explanation of the relationship between the discursive processes and the social processes” [Fairclough, 1995, p. 97]. For the study of

linguistic personality and individual style, this means that identifying stylistic patterns is only the starting point; the analytic task is to show how these patterns function as resources for authority, identification, legitimacy, and strategic image formation under concrete historical and media conditions. When this is done, linguistic personality and individual style cease to be “ornamental” categories and become central theoretical instruments for explaining how political images are stabilized, circulated, and contested in modern political communication.

One important implication of studying linguistic personality and individual style in politics is that *style is always produced inside a framework of communicative constraints that are already “there” before the politician speaks*. A leader’s voice is shaped by institutional genres (parliamentary exchanges, governmental briefings, commemorative speeches, crisis addresses), by party communication routines, and by the media formats through which citizens most often encounter politics. In contemporary political communication, this framework is strongly mediated, which means that political visibility is filtered through the selection, editing, repetition and framing practices of media organizations. Buinitskyi and Yakovets describe this mediated dependence by noting that, in modern society, “the problem of choosing a political leader is solved by the majority of the electorate under the influence of the impression of their image in the media,” and that the mediated image is built by a “complex combination of qualities and characteristics formed on the basis of stereotypes of mass consciousness,” alongside the impact of “television and radio programs, print articles and political advertising” [Buinitskyi; Yakovets, 2019, p. 1]. This observation matters for style because it means that communicative success is never simply a matter of “speaking well”: it also depends on whether a leader’s linguistic and performative choices are legible within dominant media logics—short formats, memorable formulations, quotable lines, and recognizable emotional cues. The same authors underline that “media entities are actively involved in shaping the image of the politician’s image and reputation” [Buinitskyi; Yakovets, 2019, p. 1], which is why stylistic choices—tone, tempo, metaphor, and even syntactic

simplicity—often function as adaptations to the ways media circulate political speech as clips, headlines and “soundbites,” rather than as complete arguments.

Within these constraints, style is still a space for agency, because politicians can *stabilize* a recognizable voice by repeating specific linguistic patterns across contexts. Yet, in contemporary politics, this stabilization is rarely an individual achievement in the narrow sense. Political style is co-produced by an extended professional environment: speechwriters, advisers, media trainers, press teams and campaign strategists. Corner’s analysis of the “restyling” of politics stresses precisely this infrastructural dimension of mediated performance, noting that Zelenskiy’s “media production skills were those of many of his team, not only him” [Corner, 2024, p. 38]. The point is methodological as well as theoretical: if a political image is partly the effect of distributed production, then individual style becomes a hybrid outcome in which personal habits of speaking are combined with scripted phrasing, pre-designed narratives, and strategically selected registers. This directly supports Slavova’s emphasis on the “virtual personality constructed by the institute of speechwriting” [Slavova, 2015, p. 109], because the “voice” that audiences attribute to a leader may be an engineered continuity across texts rather than a spontaneous consistency of everyday speech. In such conditions, stylistic coherence becomes a managerial task: maintaining recurrent keywords and metaphors, preserving a stable cadence and persona, and ensuring that the leader’s public speech remains compatible with the broader branding of a party, a movement, or a presidency.

A further implication is that style is evaluated through interpretive communities that do not read it neutrally. A stylistic trait can become a resource of credibility for one audience segment and a trigger of distrust for another, because judgments about political style are also judgments about legitimacy, morality and belonging. Contemporary mediatized politics intensifies this dynamic by treating public leadership increasingly as a form of performance. Corner notes that in this environment “the boundaries between political leaders and ‘media celebrities’ become thinner” [Corner, 2024, p. 35], which helps explain why traits such as

fluency, immediacy, emotional expressiveness, and narrative clarity can become decisive components of “leadership” in public perception even when they do not map neatly onto administrative competence. At the same time, mediated leadership is structurally “distant,” because leader–citizen interaction is indirect; Buinitskyi and Yakovets stress that “ ‘leader-follower’ interaction is carried out indirectly through various mass media,” and that in this relationship “such an intermediate element appears as the image of a” leader [Buinitskyi; Yakovets, 2019, p. 1]. This distance increases the weight of stylistic signals: if citizens encounter a leader mainly as a mediated persona, then stylistic choices become primary evidence from which they infer character, intentions and values.

In the specific context of Ukrainian politics, this logic is sharpened by the coexistence of multiple audiences and multiple arenas of address. Political leaders must speak simultaneously to domestic publics (where legitimacy depends on responsiveness, solidarity, and recognizably “ours” cultural codes) and to international partners (where legitimacy depends on diplomatic register, strategic framing, and the ability to translate national experience into globally intelligible narratives). Because mediated environments compress and circulate fragments of speech, leaders often invest in phrases that can travel across platforms and languages without losing their intended meaning. The theoretical consequence is straightforward: political image formation must be studied as a patterned intersection of (1) institutional genre constraints, (2) media circulation and framing, and (3) the co-produced stylistic profile that audiences learn to recognize as a leader’s “voice.” This also clarifies why systematic linguistic analysis remains necessary: as DeSouza’s discourse-analytic work shows, political power can depend on “careful use of language to represent people and events and to enact powerful social relations” [DeSouza, 2018, p. 123], and those representational choices are among the most stable building blocks through which a political image becomes socially shareable and durable across time and across genres.

Conclusions

The theoretical analysis conducted in Chapter 1 establishes the conceptual framework necessary for a systematic comparative study of the two leaders' political discourse. The chapter demonstrates that political image is not a superficial attribute of political life but a constitutive discursive mechanism through which authority is built, circulated, and contested in mediated democratic environments. Drawing on the foundational contributions of Lippmann, Fairclough, Scammell, Entman, McNair, McCombs and Shaw, and Ukrainian scholars Horbenko and Buinitskyi, the chapter shows that political image emerges from the cumulative interaction of the political actor's own discourse strategies, media framing and selection practices, and audience interpretive processes – making it irreducibly a co-production rather than a unilateral act of self-presentation.

The review further identifies six principal linguistic mechanisms through which political image is stabilized: lexical selection, framing and categorization, evaluative stance-taking, narrative organization, pronoun-mediated audience construction, and the strategic use of verbal signatures adapted to media circulation logics. Each of these mechanisms operates not as an isolated feature but as part of a recurring communicative profile that audiences learn to recognize as a leader's public "voice" across genres and platforms.

The concept of linguistic personality, developed within Ukrainian political linguistic personology by Slavova, is established as a central analytic category for the study. Its four-dimensional typology – individual, collective, symbolic, and virtual personality – provides the theoretical apparatus for analyzing how political speakers construct recognizable discursive selves across institutional genres, and how those selves are amplified, compressed, or reframed by professional communication infrastructure and media logics. The concept is shown to be fully compatible with the Critical Discourse Analysis framework of Fairclough, which grounds the study of language in the analysis of power relations, and with the pragmatic and speech-act dimensions of political discourse elaborated by Chilton.

Individual style is theorized as a motivated, context-sensitive pattern of communicative choices – encompassing lexical preferences, rhetorical organization, modality strength, deictic framing, and performative conventions – that produces a cross-genre recognizability under institutional and mediated constraints. Style is understood not as a spontaneous expression of "inner character" but as a socially shaped and often professionally co-produced resource for leadership credibility, audience alignment, and image durability in an environment shaped by personalization, mediatization, and accelerated circulation.

Together, these theoretical positions establish three analytical premises that govern the comparative analysis in subsequent chapters: first, that linguistic choices at every level perform social and political functions rather than merely conveying information; second, that political image is stabilized through patterned repetition across communicative situations rather than through any single "defining" text; and third, that gender functions as a structuring condition – not an incidental variable – that shapes both the strategies available to female political communicators and the interpretive frameworks through which those strategies are received.

2. Lexical, Grammatical, and Stylistic Profiles of Thatcher and May

2.1. Lexical and Grammatical Features (Thatcher vs May)

A comparative lexicogrammatical analysis of Margaret Thatcher's and Theresa May's political speeches requires a theoretical framework that goes beyond impressionistic descriptions of individual style and locates observable linguistic choices within an explicit model of how grammar and lexis together produce political meanings. The most productive such framework for this purpose is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed principally by Michael Halliday and subsequently elaborated together with Ruqaiya Hasan and Christian Matthiessen [Halliday & Matthiessen 2014]. Within SFL, lexicogrammatical choices – meaning simultaneous selections from the lexical and grammatical systems of a language – are the clause-level resources through which speakers construe experience, negotiate social relations, and organise the flow of information. SFL distinguishes three metafunctions that operate simultaneously in every utterance: the ideational metafunction, which construes the speaker's representation of the world; the interpersonal metafunction, which enacts relationships between participants and encodes commitment, authority, and alignment; and the textual metafunction, which organises the message as coherent discourse [Halliday & Matthiessen 2014, p. 30]. For the analysis of political speech, the interpersonal metafunction is particularly central, because it is through interpersonal grammatical choices that authority is claimed, obligations are issued, and audiences are positioned. These choices are consistently interpreted through register variables – field (what is happening), tenor (who is involved and in what relationship), and mode (the communicative channel and role of language) – rather than through global characterisations of a speaker's personality or isolated "style" labels [Suaib 2021, p. 74].

Within the interpersonal metafunction, the clause serves as the primary unit of exchange. In the indicative mood – which encompasses both the declarative (information-giving) and interrogative (information-seeking) subtypes – the Subject

and the finite verb form together constitute the Mood element of the clause, which is the grammatical core carrying the speaker's commitment to the proposition [Halliday & Matthiessen 2014, p. 143–145]. The remaining clause elements – the predicator, complement, and adjuncts – constitute the Residue, which specifies the content of what is being exchanged. This analytical template makes it possible to trace how political speakers encode obligation, certainty, prediction, and authority through their grammatical choices, and to compare the resulting configurations across speakers and communicative situations. Political discourse analysts working within and alongside SFL – among them Norman Fairclough, Paul Chilton, and Ruth Wodak – have demonstrated that these grammatical resources are not neutral instruments but sites where power relations, ideological orientations, and political identities are constructed and contested. Fairclough, for instance, argues that the passive voice and nominalisation in political texts systematically obscure agentive responsibility by suppressing the grammatical Subject, which allows institutions to present outcomes as facts rather than as consequences of identifiable decisions [Fairclough 2001, p. 103–107]. Chilton similarly identifies modal verb selection as one of the most ideologically revealing grammatical features of political speech, since it determines whether future action is presented as personal commitment, collective obligation, or institutional necessity [Chilton 2004, p. 56–58].

The present subsection focuses on the following empirically visible lexicogrammatical domains: personal deixis, evaluative vocabulary, hedging and mitigation, modality, voice and agency, nominalisation, clausal complexity, and audience address. This selection is consistent with interpersonal clause analysis in SFL and with the established agenda of political discourse analysis more broadly [Halliday & Matthiessen 2014, p. 143–149; Fairclough 2001, p. 100–110]. The primary corpus is drawn from speech transcripts as specified in Table 2.1: Thatcher's first remarks as Prime Minister outside No. 10 on 4 May 1979; May's final Downing Street statement of 24 July 2019; and an extended excerpt from May's Brexit-policy address of 17 January 2017. The analysis is triangulated with a published SFL study of May's Brexit speech that reports clause counts and recurrent modal choices [Suaib

2021, p. 75–88]. Where the primary transcripts are not paginated, references use paragraph numbering.

Table 2.1. *Primary corpus used for lexicogrammatical comparison*

Speaker	Text (communicative situation)	Function for analysis	Approx. size
Thatcher	Remarks on becoming PM, No. 10, 4 May 1979 [Thatcher 1979, p. 1–2]	Leadership self-positioning; legitimacy; immediate programme	~330 words
May	Final Downing Street speech, 24 July 2019 [May 2019, para. 1–20]	Resignation ritual; gratitude; institutional continuity	~445 words
May	Brexit-policy address excerpt, 17 January 2017 [May 2017, para. 1–18]	Programme justification; obligations and guarantees; future commitments	extended excerpt

The methodological logic underlying the selection of these three texts is the following. Thatcher's 1979 remarks constitute a threshold event in the political sense: a newly appointed leader defines the moral frame of her office, acknowledges institutional constraints, and signals work discipline at the moment of crossing the threshold of power [Thatcher 1979, p. 1–2]. May's 2019 final statement is a termination event: it foregrounds gratitude, continuity, and national service rather than policy content [May 2019, para. 1–20]. May's Brexit-policy excerpt is included because it contains a dense concentration of modal programming, which is precisely the grammatical zone where political commitment and obligation are most legible in SFL terms [Suaib 2021, p. 87–88]. The resulting comparison is therefore not a comparison of personalities in the abstract but a comparison of how two Conservative Prime Ministers grammatically construct authority and alignment under different institutional pressures and at different moments of their political careers.

Personal deixis – the system of pronouns and reference expressions through which a speaker positions agents in discourse – is among the most analytically transparent lexicogrammatical domains in political speech. Subject selection is not a stylistic preference but a meaningful grammatical choice that allocates agency and distributes moral responsibility across participants in the clause [Fairclough 2001, p. 105]. In Thatcher's 1979 remarks, the gravitational centre of the text is an unambiguous first-person singular Subject. The opening sequence integrates

personal authority with constitutional legitimacy through a reference chain that begins with a third-person institutional agent and passes authority explicitly to the speaker: *"Her Majesty The Queen has asked me to form a new administration and I have accepted. It is, of course, the greatest honour that can come to any citizen in a democracy"* [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]. These clauses are in the indicative declarative mood; both finite verb forms are present perfect (has asked, have accepted), which presents the institutional transaction as a recently completed and uncontested fact rather than an ongoing negotiation. The first-person pronoun then sustains its central role through the subsequent commitment sequence: *"I know full well the responsibilities that await me ... and I'll strive unceasingly to try to fulfil the trust and confidence that the British people have placed in me"* [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]. The lexical signals here reinforce the grammatical ones: the verbs know, strive, and fulfil are all bound to an explicit first-person Subject, and their combination builds a picture of personal resolve anchored in public trust. Thatcher's first-person plural we emerges at the operational moment – the transition from symbolic threshold-crossing to administrative action: *"Well, we shall be going inside and we shall be getting on with that as fast as we can"* [Thatcher 1979, p. 2]. This we is proximate and administrative rather than an inclusive alignment with the citizenry.

May's 2019 final statement retains I as a frequent Subject, but it significantly redistributes the referential field. Institutional collectives – Government, the Civil Service, the armed forces – and possessive constructions built around our expand the sphere of acknowledged agency and dilute the concentration of personal authority: *"During that time our economy has been restored, our public services reformed, and our values defended on the world stage"* [May 2019, para. 6]. Where Thatcher uses I to anchor agency in personal commitment, May uses our to lexicalise collective ownership while simultaneously suppressing the grammatical agent through passive voice. In absolute terms, the pronoun I appears approximately fourteen times in Thatcher's remarks and approximately twelve times in May's final speech [Thatcher 1979, p. 1–2; May 2019, para. 1–20], which makes the raw counts broadly comparable. The functional distribution, however, differs markedly: in

Thatcher's text, I is tied to action and obligation (I know, I'll strive, I owe), whereas in May's text, I appears more frequently in relational and cognitive processes (I am, I want to thank, I will continue), shifting the speaker's grammatical role from agent of change to participant in an institutional ritual [Thatcher 1979, p. 1–2; May 2019, para. 1–20]. Table 2.2 makes this distribution concrete by recording pronoun patterns in both texts with interpretive notes.

Table 2.2. *Personal deixis in threshold vs. termination statements*

Category	Thatcher 1979 remarks	May 2019 final speech	Interpretive note
I	~14	~12	Both speakers foreground personal accountability [Thatcher 1979, p. 1–2; May 2019, para. 1–20]; Thatcher links it to beginning-of-office duties; May deploys it primarily in relational and gratitude contexts
we	11	rare; replaced by <i>our</i>	Thatcher uses <i>we</i> for immediate collective action (" <i>we shall be going inside</i> ") [Thatcher 1979, p. 2]; May uses possessive collectivisation (<i>our</i>) to project institutional continuity [May 2019, para. 4–7]
our	marginal	~12	May's <i>our</i> anchors achievements to nation/government as a corporate body [May 2019, para. 4–7]; Thatcher uses it sparingly
you / your	minimal	present	May uses direct address to widen audience inclusion during thanks and legacy framing [May 2019, para. 10–12]

This deixis pattern is consistent with the SFL study of May's Brexit speech, which reports that May's Subject choices are dominated by I and we, with we functioning as a strategic alignment resource that simultaneously positions the Prime Minister alongside the citizens she governs while preserving the asymmetry of institutional authority [Suaib 2021, p. 86].

Evaluative vocabulary is the lexical domain in which speakers make their assessments of persons, events, and states of affairs explicit. In political discourse, evaluation is realised principally through attitudinal adjectives, grading adverbs, and stance-marking adverbials – that is, through words that carry scalar or qualitative meaning above and beyond their referential content, positioning propositions on affective or judgement scales [Martin & White 2005, p. 35–37]. Thatcher's 1979 remarks deploy evaluation early and concentrate it within the moral register. The adjective greatest in the phrase "*the greatest honour that can come to any citizen in*

a democracy" [Thatcher 1979, p. 1] carries maximum positive graduation, assigning the speaker's appointment the highest possible value on a prestige scale. The adverb *unceasingly*, placed directly after the action verb *strive* – "*I'll strive unceasingly*" [Thatcher 1979, p. 1] – grades personal effort at the highest point on the scale of frequency and intensity, and the phrase *full well* in "*I know full well the responsibilities that await me*" [Thatcher 1979, p. 1] intensifies the cognitive process of knowing, presenting complete awareness of duty as a morally serious stance. The stance adverbial of course, attached to the honour claim, performs a normalising function: it frames the proposition as self-evident and shared rather than personal and contestable, which is a standard device for managing the tension between modesty and authority at a moment of public investiture.

May's 2019 final statement shifts the evaluative register towards ceremonial appreciation. The dominant evaluative adjectives and adverbs here – sincere, noble, warm, proud, truly – belong to the semantic domain of gratitude and tribute rather than duty and resolve: "*And as I leave Downing Street, my final words are of sincere thanks ... All are inspired by the noble wish to serve their country in the national interest*" [May 2019, para. 8–9]. The adjective *sincere* upwardly gradates the affective quality of thanks, while *noble* elevates the motivational state of public servants to the category of principled virtue. These evaluative choices are not decorative; they conform to the genre expectations of a resignation statement, which institutionally requires the speaker to celebrate collective service and distance herself from combative or self-promotional lexis. Grammatically, May's evaluative adjectives are frequently packaged within nominal groups (*sincere thanks*, *the noble wish*, *my final words*, *the national interest*) rather than in predicative position, which produces a ceremonial, contained tone. Thatcher's evaluative adverbs, by contrast, consistently appear in adverbial positions that amplify clausal action (*strive unceasingly*, *know full well*), which keeps evaluation dynamic and forward-oriented rather than ceremonially static.

Hedging and mitigation mark a speaker's degree of commitment to a proposition and manage the interpersonal distance between speaker and addressee.

Lakoff's foundational inventory of hedging resources – lexical items such as *just*, of course, *I think*, and tag-like confirmations – identified these as elements that adjust the epistemic or interpersonal force of an utterance, though subsequent research has stressed that their function is context-dependent and not reducible to weakness or uncertainty [Mazidah 2013, p. 4–5]. Two methodological cautions are necessary when applying this framework to public political address. Lakoff's original taxonomy was developed within gender and politeness theory, and its transfer to parliamentary or prime-ministerial speech requires contextual reinterpretation. Furthermore, the empirical basis in Mazidah's study is a film script rather than authentic parliamentary data, which limits direct applicability [Mazidah 2013, p. 4–5]. With these limitations in view, the categories nonetheless remain useful as observational prompts for items that carry interpersonal force in English political speech.

In Thatcher's 1979 remarks, the mitigator *just* appears in two strategic positions: "*I would just like to remember some words...*" [Thatcher 1979, p. 1] and "*I just owe almost everything to my own father*" [Thatcher 1979, p. 2]. In both cases, *just* constructs a controlled modesty that coexists with and contextually offsets the speaker's high-authority claims rather than genuinely weakening her epistemic stance. The adverbial of course similarly reframes personal judgements as shared communal knowledge, reducing the appearance of self-assertion while preserving the evaluative content. These mitigators operate alongside high-commitment modal verb constructions and direct action declaratives, functioning as interpersonal lubricants rather than hedges in any technically precise sense. May's 2019 final statement displaces individual lexical hedges with a structural mitigating device: the extended thanks litany built on repeated prepositional vocative frames – "*To my colleagues ... To everyone in the Civil Service ... To the men and women of our armed forces...*" [May 2019, para. 8–9]. This syntactic structure performs collective acknowledgement at the genre level, which is a more institutionalised and situation-specific form of interpersonal softening than the individual lexical hedges observable in Thatcher's text.

Modality is the grammatical domain in which political commitment, obligation, and prediction become most directly legible. Modal verbs – will, shall, must, may, should, can – are finite verb forms that encode the speaker's epistemic stance (degree of certainty or probability) and deontic orientation (degree of obligation or permission) [Halliday & Matthiessen 2014, p. 147–149]. Chilton has shown that modal verb selection is among the most ideologically consequential features of political discourse, since it determines whether future action is framed as personal volition, collective necessity, or institutional compulsion [Chilton 2004, p. 56–58]. The SFL study of May's Brexit speech demonstrates how the speech progresses from grounding in present and past events to future programming through will and then to high-modulation deontic obligation through must, treating will as a commitment-strengthening device and must as strong insistence that encodes obligation within a goods-and-services exchange logic [Suaib 2021, p. 87–88].

Thatcher's 1979 remarks employ shall as the primary vehicle of future commitment – a formal, quasi-institutional choice that carried a distinctly constitutional register even by 1979 and distanced the commitment from ordinary colloquial futurity: *"Well, we shall be going inside and we shall be getting on with that as fast as we can"* [Thatcher 1979, p. 2]. The repetition of shall projects collective futurity with procedural inevitability. The single must in this text – *"We must get that done"* [Thatcher 1979, p. 2] – appears at the precise operational pivot where symbolic threshold-crossing transitions into administrative action, encoding immediate necessity as a collective imperative without elaboration. The modal concentration is therefore not diffused but purposefully localised at the turning point between rhetoric and governance.

In May's 2019 final statement, will appears primarily for prediction and personal continuation, while must is entirely absent – an absence that is functionally motivated by the communicative situation. A departing Prime Minister who issues high-modulation obligations risks overstepping an institutional authority she is simultaneously relinquishing. The will clauses present in May's resignation speech convey personal continuation and institutional optimism: *"I will continue to do all I*

can to serve the national interest" [May 2019, para. 19] and *"Their achievements will build on the work of those who have gone before"* [May 2019, para. 5]. When May shifts into policy programme mode in her Brexit address, the modal profile changes markedly. *Must* becomes the structuring device for a sequence of enumerated conditions, each clause attaching obligation not to a personal agent but to an abstract institutional artefact: *"First, the agreement we reach with the EU must respect the referendum. Second, the new agreement we reach with the EU must endure. Third, it must protect people's jobs and security"* [May 2017, para. 12–14]. The grammatical structure of these clauses – indicative declarative mood, modal verb *must* after a nominalised or pronominal Subject – distributes obligation away from personal will and presents policy constraints as logically inevitable requirements, thereby reducing the apparent interpersonal coerciveness of the directive force while in practice issuing a binding programmatic commitment. This pattern is characterised in the SFL study as iterative "strong insistence" realising the speaker's political agenda through high modulation [Suaib 2021, p. 88]. Table 2.3 illustrates these modal configurations at the clause level using the SFL clause-element logic of Subject, finite verb form, predicator, complement, and adjunct.

Table 2.3. *Modal verb configurations in Thatcher vs. May (illustrative clauses)*

Speaker	Clause (full context preserved)	Mood type	Subject + finite verb form	Interpersonal effect
Thatcher	<i>"Her Majesty The Queen has asked me to form a new administration and I have accepted."</i> [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]	Indicative declarative; present perfect	<i>The Queen + has; I + have</i>	Institutional legitimization; agency explicit; constitutional transaction presented as completed fact
Thatcher	<i>"We must get that done."</i> [Thatcher 1979, p. 2]	Indicative declarative; deontic modality	<i>We + must</i>	High obligation anchored to collective Subject; immediate administrative necessity without elaboration
May (final)	<i>"I am about to go to Buckingham Palace to tender my resignation..."</i> [May 2019, para. 1]	Indicative declarative; imminent aspect	<i>I + am</i>	Procedural clarity; present tense with prospective meaning; composure through syntactic simplicity
May (policy)	<i>"The agreement we reach with the EU must respect the referendum."</i> [May 2017, para. 12]	Indicative declarative; deontic modality	<i>agreement + must</i>	Obligation attached to abstract institutional product; directive force

				without personal confrontation
May (policy)	"We will take back control of our laws..." [May 2017, para. 15]	Indicative declarative; epistemic/volitional	We + will	Future commitment as booster; collective Subject supports audience alignment and mobilisation

Voice and agency represent the grammatical domain in which the question of who performs an action – and whether that question is answerable from the clause itself – is most directly determined. The alternation between active and passive voice in political speech is never merely a stylistic matter: it determines whether responsibility is personalised, institutionalised, or grammatically removed from view [Fairclough 2001, p. 107]. Thatcher's 1979 remarks anchor the key institutional transition in a fully agentive active chain with the constitutional actor explicitly named: *"Her Majesty The Queen has asked me... and I have accepted"* [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]. The legitimacy of appointment depends grammatically on naming both the source of authority and the recipient, so active voice with explicit Subjects is not incidental but structurally necessary. The speech then sustains active agency through the commitment sequence – *"I'll strive... to fulfil the trust"* [Thatcher 1979, p. 1] – keeping the agent continuously visible at precisely the moment the speaker accepts institutional responsibility. At the operational moment, the agent expands to a collective but remains present: *"We shall be going inside... We must get that done"* [Thatcher 1979, p. 2].

May's 2019 final statement introduces a passive triad at its evaluative centre that exemplifies the opposite grammatical strategy: *"Our economy has been restored, our public services reformed, and our values defended on the world stage"* [May 2019, para. 6]. Each clause in this coordinated series suppresses the grammatical agent entirely. The possessive determiner *our* attributes the outcomes to a collective without identifying who performed the restoring, reforming, or defending, which means the achievement claim cannot be directly contested by attributing it to a specific person or party whose record is disputable. This is not a stylistic accident; it is a pragmatically motivated grammatical choice suited to the resignation context, where the speaker must simultaneously claim credit for governance outcomes and

insulate those claims from the attribution disputes that would accompany explicit agentive statements. A second passive example from the same speech reinforces this pattern: *"Of course, much remains to be done – the immediate priority being to complete our exit from the European Union..."* [May 2019, para. 7]. Here the non-finite participial construction (*being to complete*) further compresses a policy process into a nominal administrative object, reducing the clause's interpersonal load while retaining informational substance.

Nominalisation reinforces and extends the effects of passive voice by converting verbal processes into noun phrases, which removes the grammatical necessity of specifying a Subject and presents events as discrete objects that exist and can be managed rather than as actions performed by identifiable agents [Fairclough 2001, p. 103–104]. May's 2019 resignation statement exhibits particularly dense institutional nominalisation: resignation, administration, congratulations, election, achievements, responsibilities, priority, exit, renewal, opportunity, and national interest all appear as noun-form objects of governance, supporting a register in which political processes are handled rather than caused. Thatcher's text also contains nominalisations – honour, responsibilities, trust, confidence, values – but these are consistently bound to active verbs and first-person Subjects. The clause *"I'll strive unceasingly to try to fulfil the trust and confidence that the British people have placed in me"* [Thatcher 1979, p. 1] nominates trust and confidence as objects of a personal volitional verb (*fulfil*), embedding institutional abstractions within an explicitly agentive commitment clause. The structural difference between the two speakers is therefore not the presence or absence of nominalisation but whether nominalisation displaces agency or serves as the object of declared personal action. Table 2.4 organises these voice, agency, and nominalisation patterns into parallel excerpts with sufficient clause context to make the grammatical strategies visible.

Table 2.4. *Voice, nominalisation, and agency packaging*

Speaker	Excerpt (context preserved)	Voice / agency	Nominalisation	Functional implication
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May (final)	"Our economy has been restored, our public services reformed, and our values defended on the world stage." [May 2019, para. 6]	Passive; agent suppressed	High (<i>economy, services, values</i>)	Achievement claim insulated from attribution contest; collective ownership via <i>our</i>
May (final)	"...the immediate priority being to complete our exit from the European Union..." [May 2019, para. 7]	Non-finite packaging	High (<i>priority, exit</i>)	Policy task compressed into administrative object; interpersonal load reduced
Thatcher	"Her Majesty The Queen has asked me... and I have accepted." [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]	Active; constitutional agent named	Moderate (<i>administration</i>)	Legitimacy chain requires explicit actor; acceptance presented as completed event
Thatcher	"We shall be going inside... the first job is to try to form a Cabinet. We must get that done." [Thatcher 1979, p. 2]	Active; collective agent present	Moderate (<i>job, Cabinet</i>)	Administrative urgency; obligation anchored to collective <i>we</i>

Clausal complexity – the degree to which a text builds meaning through subordination, embedding, and parataxis – reflects the speaker's underlying rhetorical strategy for organising ideas and guiding audience inference. Thatcher's 1979 remarks contain multi-embedded sentences that accumulate layers of subordination within a single syntactic arc, binding personal resolve, institutional entry, public trust, and moral conviction into integrated units. The hallmark example of this strategy is the extended commitment clause already cited: *"I know full well the responsibilities that await me as I enter the door of No. 10 and I'll strive unceasingly to try to fulfil the trust and confidence that the British people have placed in me and the things in which I believe"* [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]. This sentence contains a relative clause (*the responsibilities that await me*), a temporal adverbial clause (*as I enter the door*), an infinitival purpose chain (*to try to fulfil*), and two coordinated nominal groups serving as objects of fulfil (*the trust and confidence... and the things...*), within which further relative clauses are embedded (*that the British people have placed in me; in which I believe*). The cumulative subordination produces a sense of integrated moral architecture: it is syntactically impossible to separate personal resolve from public trust and constitutional entry without unravelling the sentence entirely, which means the rhetorical proposition – that personal duty, institutional legitimacy, and public mandate are a unified whole – is

enacted at the level of syntax. A shorter passage illustrates the same tendency towards concessive layering at moments of personal narrative: *"Well, of course, I just owe almost everything to my own father. He didn't give me much, but what he did, he gave me most unselfishly"* [Thatcher 1979, p. 2]. The concessive structure (*he didn't give me much, but...*) embedded within a biographical narrative reframes acknowledgement of personal origins as evidence of working-class virtue and earned merit.

May's 2019 final statement approaches clausal complexity differently. The central speech act – resignation – is performed in a syntactically transparent declarative: *"I am about to go to Buckingham Palace to tender my resignation to Her Majesty the Queen"* [May 2019, para. 1]. The simplicity here is itself expressive: in a moment of high political drama, syntactic clarity projects composure and institutional competence. The thanks section that follows builds its rhetorical effect not through subordination but through parataxis – the accumulation of parallel, grammatically incomplete prepositional frames: *"To my colleagues – both those who supported me loyally, and those who will go on to serve in the government of my successor. To everyone who has worked tirelessly for the Conservative Party. To the men and women of our armed forces and our intelligence services"* [May 2019, para. 8–9]. Each element is a vocative fragment rather than a full clause, yet the rhythmic accumulation creates an expansive acknowledgement structure. This syntactic segmentation is a genre-appropriate choice: it slows the text, creates audience recognition points for distinct social groups, and prevents the emergence of argumentative subordination that could invite rebuttal during a resignation statement.

May's Brexit-policy address excerpt deploys both strategies in alternation according to the communicative function of each passage. The argumentative sections use careful subordination to build logical sequences of policy reasoning: *"I want us to be a truly global Britain – the best friend and neighbour to our European partners, but a country that reaches beyond the borders of Europe too"* [May 2017, para. 3], where the appositive structure (*the best friend and neighbour...*) and the adversative relative clause (*but a country that...*) build a spatial and relational

proposition within a single nominal complex. The programme-setting sections, by contrast, use the enumerated declarative series discussed above in connection with modality: *"First, the agreement we reach with the EU must respect the referendum. Second, the new agreement... must endure. Third, it must protect people's jobs and security"* [May 2017, para. 12–14]. The structural alternation between complex reasoning and simple enumeration is itself a rhetorical strategy: the complex subordinated sections establish credibility through argumentation, while the simple parallel conditions translate that argumentation into verifiable, memorable commitments. This pattern corresponds to the finding that May's Brexit speech is dominated by declarative clauses that position the Prime Minister as the provider of information and commitments rather than as a participant in negotiation, producing a discursive asymmetry in which audience interpretation is guided rather than invited [Suaib 2021, p. 76–77].

Thatcher's 1979 remarks, though arising in a context that includes journalist questions, exhibit the same declarative dominance in the speaker's own contribution. The external interrogation – *"How soon will you form a Cabinet?"* – is absorbed into a procedural declarative sequence: *"certainly not today ... very important ... not suddenly rushed"* [Thatcher 1979, p. 2]. Grammatically, this converts an externally imposed interrogative into internally controlled information-giving, maintaining discursive authority and controlling the tempo of commitment even under direct questioning.

The treatment of the audience as addressee constitutes the final dimension analysed here, and it is particularly revealing of how each speaker constructs the relationship between prime-ministerial office and the public. In Thatcher's 1979 remarks, the British people function as a third-person legitimising body that has already acted: *"the trust and confidence that the British people have placed in me"* [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]. Citizens are grammatically present as the agent of a relational process (*placed in me*) but are not directly addressed as you. The audience is constituted as an entity whose prior action – the electoral mandate – ratifies the speaker's authority; it is present as a source of legitimacy rather than as a

conversational interlocutor. May's 2019 final speech shifts this relation decisively. The British people move from third-person referent to direct second-person addressee: *"I also want to thank the British people for the privilege of serving as your Prime Minister"* [May 2019, para. 10]. The possessive *your* positions the speaker as serving the audience rather than being mandated by it, marking the key symbolic distinction between inauguration rhetoric and departure rhetoric. May then extends the address through a lexically concrete portrait of the citizenry: *"Everyone who loves our great country, who works hard for their family, who works hard for their children and their grandchildren"* [May 2019, para. 11]. The nominal lexis here – works hard, family, children, grandchildren – constructs a recognisable social subject as the recipient of gratitude and as the moral horizon against which the tenure is evaluated. In May's Brexit-policy address, the audience role is distributed between British citizens and European partners, with the second-person pronoun reserved for relational reassurance directed at Europeans – *"You will still be welcome here"* [May 2017, para. 10] – while the binding policy constraints are expressed through abstract Subjects and deontic modal verbs. This grammatical distribution separates interpersonal warmth from institutional firmness: direct address performs solidarity and accessibility, while abstract-subject modal clauses impose conditions without personal confrontation.

Table 2.5 condenses the main lexicogrammatical features of the supplied texts into a structured comparative profile, referenced here as a synthesis of the analysis presented in Tables 2.1–2.4.

Table 2.5. *Lexicogrammatical profile of Thatcher vs. May*

Dimension	Thatcher (1979 remarks)	May (2019 final; 2017 policy excerpt)
Deixis	Strong I/we centre; British people as third-person legitimising source [Thatcher 1979, p. 1–2]	I with institutional collectivisation (<i>our</i>); policy mode uses <i>we</i> for alignment and mobilisation; Subject shifts from I to we/it reported in SFL study [May 2019, para. 4–7; May 2017, para. 15; Suaib 2021, p. 86]
Modality	Formal futurity (<i>shall</i>), punctual necessity (<i>must</i>) at operational pivot [Thatcher 1979, p. 2]	Resignation mode: prediction and continuation (<i>will</i>); policy mode: iterative <i>must</i> for programme conditions, <i>will</i> as booster [May 2019, para. 5; May 2017, para. 12–16; Suaib 2021, p. 88]

Voice and agency	Active chain for constitutional legitimacy and personal commitment [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]	Passive triads for achievements; abstract Subjects for obligations; agent suppression reduces attribution risk [May 2019, para. 6–7]
Nominalisation	Present but bound to action verbs and first-person Subjects [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]	Dense institutional nouns (<i>priority, exit, renewal</i>); governance register; process-as-object [May 2019, para. 7]
Clausal complexity	Multi-embedded clauses binding values, trust, and duty in one syntactic arc; concessive layering in biographical passages [Thatcher 1979, p. 1–2]	Simple declaratives for the resignation announcement; paratactic vocative series for acknowledgement; alternation between complex subordination and enumerated modal conditions in policy mode, with examples of both strategies within the same address [May 2019, para. 1–12; May 2017, para. 3, 12–16]
Audience address	British people as third-person mandate-givers [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]	British people as direct second-person addressees; European citizens as reassured <i>you</i> ; policy obligations expressed through abstract Subjects to separate warmth from firmness [May 2019, para. 10–12; May 2017, para. 10, 12–14]

The comparative picture that emerges from these data is best described as a difference in how political authority is grammatically packaged rather than in whether authority exists. Thatcher's threshold speech concentrates authority in active voice, first-person declarative clauses, and a small number of high-necessity modal verbs placed at operational pivot points [Thatcher 1979, p. 1–2]. The grammar is agentive, visible, and action-oriented: responsibility is claimed through explicit syntactic agency, and personal resolve is bound to constitutional duty and public trust through complex subordinated clausal architecture. May's 2019 resignation statement, conversely, distributes authority across institutional collectives, nominalisations, and passive constructions, creating a sense of shared and continuous governance rather than individual command [May 2019, para. 6–12]. When May speaks in policy programme mode, she deploys precisely the grammatical resources identified in the SFL study – declarative dominance, will as a future-commitment booster, and deontic must as iterative high-modulation insistence – to convert political goals into quasi-contractual conditions [Suaib 2021, p. 76–77; p. 88; Chilton 2004, p. 56–58]. In Thatcher's grammar, responsibility is personal and immediate because the agent remains visible; in May's resignation statement, responsibility is institutional and distributed because the grammar elevates outcomes while suppressing agents [Fairclough 2001, p. 103–107]. In

May's policy address, obligation is attached to institutional artefacts rather than personal will, which strengthens directive force while limiting interpersonal confrontation – a grammatical move that is equally consistent with the SFL account of high modulation and with Fairclough's broader observations about nominalisations and power in political discourse.

It is necessary, finally, to state the boundary conditions of these claims explicitly. None of the patterns identified above should be treated as immutable features of either leader's discourse across all contexts and genres; the same speaker necessarily adapts her lexicogrammar across parliamentary debate, party conference address, crisis communication, interview, and resignation ritual. What can be responsibly claimed on the basis of the present corpus is narrower and more defensible: in comparable high-visibility Downing Street moments, Thatcher's threshold speech concentrates agency in active first-person commitments anchored in constitutional legitimation [Thatcher 1979, p. 1–2], while May's termination speech concentrates meaning in institutional collectives, nominalised outcomes, and passive achievement packaging consistent with the genre of public gratitude and continuity [May 2019, para. 6–12]. In policy address mode, May's grammar becomes programmatic through the repetition of modal operators and declarative sequencing that guides audience interpretation while maintaining speaker control of the discursive exchange [Suaib 2021, p. 76–77; p. 88]. These are precisely the lexical and grammatical resources through which late-modern British prime-ministerial authority is enacted, sustained, and reproduced in public political speech.

2.2 Stylistic Devices and Rhetorical Organization (Thatcher vs May)

Stylistic devices and rhetorical organisation are most productively understood not as ornamental additions to a political message but as constitutive choices that structure the conditions of uptake. They determine what counts as relevant information in a given exchange, distribute emotional weight and moral

responsibility among the speech's actors, and guide audiences toward particular evaluations of persons, events, and programmes. In classical and contemporary rhetoric alike, this dimension of discourse is treated as a set of affordances for reception rather than a surface layer separable from content [Kjeldsen 2018, p. 8]. The point becomes especially significant for British prime-ministerial address, where a single utterance is simultaneously directed at multiple publics – the parliamentary chamber, the party, the nation, and in some cases foreign governments – and then re-mediated through journalism, archival broadcast, and digital circulation. Since audience response does not simply follow from rhetorical design but actively shapes its subsequent iterations [Toye 2018, p. 88], the analysis of stylistic choices must account for the communicative situation that makes them functional: the same figure that achieves authority in a House of Commons statement may read as detachment in a party conference address, and the same narrative intimacy that mobilises a conference hall may appear indecorous in parliamentary debate.

A further theoretical premise is necessary before examining the primary materials. "The audience" of a political speech is never simply a sociological aggregate of people present in a room; it is partly a rhetorical construction – assembled within the text through pronoun frames, deictic choices, evaluative stance, and the explicit or implicit identification of shared values and common threats [Finlayson 2012, p. 763]. The notion that political speakers "conjure into objective reality" the collective subject they simultaneously address and produce is central to understanding how rhetorical devices work in practice [McGee 1975, p. 242]. When a speaker repeatedly uses *we* to include an audience in a shared moral project, she is not merely describing a pre-existing community but actively assembling a subject position that the audience is invited to occupy. When she uses rhetorical questions, she supplies both the question and its expected answer, staging a form of internal assent that feels self-generated rather than imposed. These dynamics make rhetorical organisation – the sequencing of moves, the distribution of epideictic and deliberative functions, the handling of narrative exempla and figurative language –

analytically inseparable from the question of who is being constructed as the speech's implied audience.

The primary materials analysed in the present subsection are drawn from three speech events that offer a productive comparative basis. The first is Margaret Thatcher's House of Commons statement on the night of the Argentine surrender in the Falklands (14 June 1982), recorded in Hansard at columns 700–702, together with the immediate parliamentary reception visible in the transcript [Hansard 1982, col. 700–702]. The second is Thatcher's after-dinner address to the Royal Society (27 September 1988), a text whose typed version contains explicit page markers and an internal organisational heading ("Peroration") that makes the speaker's own rhetorical segmentation unusually visible [Thatcher 1988, p. 1–5]. The third is Theresa May's Conservative Party Conference speech delivered in Birmingham in 2018, supplied as a continuous transcript [May 2018]. These three events represent three distinct rhetorical situations – parliamentary war reporting, elite civic address, and party conference oratory – and the variation across situations is itself analytically valuable because it allows comparison not only between speakers but also between the genres they inhabit.

The comparison is grounded in the understanding that genre is not simply a classificatory label but an organisational template that shapes available rhetorical choices. Thatcher's Falklands statement is constrained by parliamentary procedure and by the moral and informational demands of war communication in the Commons; May's conference speech is what Kranert identifies as a hybrid of the deliberative and epideictic genres, mixing policy claims with celebration, condemnation, and communal value articulation [Kranert 2019, p. 72]. In the Commons, audience responses – interruptions, expressions of solidarity, opposition challenges – become part of the rhetorical scene itself and are documented in the transcript as evidence of reception [Toye 2018, p. 94]. At a party conference, the speech must function simultaneously as internal mobilisation and as a message for the media audience beyond the hall; this dual address is linguistically visible in deictic shifts between "we in this hall" and "the British people." The analytical goal

is therefore not to assign evaluative labels such as "more rhetorical" or "more aggressive" to either speaker, but to show how each integrates figures, narratives, and structural sequencing to meet the specific constraints of her communicative situation.

Thatcher's Commons statement of 14 June 1982 provides the clearest available illustration of how rhetorical force can be produced through disciplined minimalism. The statement is formally framed by a procedural licence ("On a point of order, Mr. Speaker") and is internally organised as a tight narratio: a chronological report built from short declarative clauses, with limited explicit evaluation and a clear terminal promissory clause [Hansard 1982, col. 700]. The stylistic profile is defined by parataxis – the chaining of syntactically simple, parallel clauses without extensive subordination – which compresses the informational complexity of a military operation into a sequence that is easy to follow and difficult to contest in its factual core. Third-person references to named military commanders (General Moore, General Menendez, Brigadier Waters) anchor authority in identifiable institutional actors rather than in the speaker's personal assessment, while evidential distancing through reported speech markers ("They are reported to be flying white flags...") [Hansard 1982, col. 700] allows the statement to convey good news without overreaching the speaker's verified knowledge. Two organisational consequences follow from this design. The statement's restraint makes space for the House itself to perform the epideictic function – praise, collective relief, and communal value articulation – that the Prime Minister's informational role precludes her from providing directly. Thatcher's minimal evaluation is therefore not a deficit but a deliberate distributional strategy: she provides the factual skeleton that permits others to attach emotional and moral meaning in a publicly shared parliamentary frame. The statement also manages international and domestic legitimacy simultaneously by placing self-restraint at the centre of the official military report. The clause foregrounding the order not to fire pre-empts the interpretive risk that victory rhetoric will be read as brutality, and it does so without explicit moralising

– the moral claim is grammatically embedded in a passive command clause rather than explicitly asserted [Hansard 1982, col. 700].

The epideictic dimension suppressed in Thatcher's own contribution surfaces immediately in the parliamentary reception that follows and that is visible in the Hansard transcript. Classical rhetorical theory holds that epideictic discourse creates "a sense of communion centred around particular values recognised by the audience" [Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, p. 51], and Condit notes that such discourse is often generated precisely in moments when collective events demand shared interpretation [Condit 1985, p. 289]. The Falklands surrender announcement is exactly such a moment: it invites relief and praise while simultaneously demanding acknowledgement of loss. Table 2.7 presents the responses of Michael Foot and David Owen to document how this epideictic function was fulfilled within the parliamentary frame, and to make visible the organisational logic that Thatcher's minimal reporting strategy enabled.

Table 2.7. *Epideictic uptake in the Commons: praise, relief, and grief (Foot and Owen, 14 June 1982)*

Text (full context)	Epideictic functions	Devices and organisational effects
<i>"Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. First, may I thank the right hon. Lady for coming to the House ... the news is so good ... it appears ... that there will be an end to the bloodshed, which is what we have all desired. There will be widespread, genuine rejoicing ... I know that there are many matters on which we shall have to have discussions, and perhaps there will be arguments about the origins of this matter ... but I can well understand the anxieties and pressures that must have been upon the right hon. Lady ... and I congratulate her on that."</i> [Hansard 1982, col. 700]	Communion through shared desire (end of bloodshed); temporary suspension of partisan conflict; public recognition of leadership burden	Polite procedural framing mirrors Thatcher's exordium; repetition of "bloodshed" creates thematic anchor; concessive structure ("there will be arguments... but...") delays dispute and sustains unity; interpersonal mitigation ("I can well understand") protects the moment's communal frame
<i>"May I join ... in conveying the congratulations of the whole House ... I wish all well, especially – thinking of those who have lost their lives – those families who are currently grieving tonight for their sacrifice. The sacrifice of their loved ones was a sacrifice which was necessary for all."</i> [Hansard 1982, col. 701]	Incorporation of grief into public praise; moral justification of sacrifice	Parenthetical insertion shifts from celebration to mourning without breaking ceremonial flow; repetition of "sacrifice" builds a justificatory semantic chain; "necessary for all" universalises the value claim, aligning the House under a shared moral account

This parliamentary exchange also illustrates the rhetorical construction of collective identity. The House is treated as a synecdoche for the nation, "the whole House" serving as proxy for a national community whose shared emotions can be summoned without direct address to citizens. The implied audience – a community relieved at the end of fighting, grateful to armed forces, and mindful of bereavement – is rhetorically assembled through the exchange rather than pre-given as a sociological fact [McGee 1975, p. 242]. Thatcher's minimal narratio is, in this light, not simply informational; it is a discursive platform that enables this communal production of meaning under parliamentary conditions.

Thatcher's Royal Society speech of 1988 presents the opposite organisational strategy: elaborate rhetorical design made visible through explicit structural signalling and through a conspicuous concentration of metaphor, humour, and enumerative reasoning. The speech opens with ethos-building through personal narrative and self-deprecating humour, moves through institutional praise, policy arguments about science and economic development, and environmental risk framed as a systemic global problem, and closes with an explicitly marked peroration and a toast [Thatcher 1988, p. 1–5]. The internal organisational headings ("Basic science," "The environment," "Peroration") are not merely topical; they reveal a deliberate architecture that alternates between epideictic praise of science and deliberative policy reasoning, a combination that Condit identifies as one of epideictic's primary civic functions – to renew collective commitments at moments of challenge and transition [Condit 1985, p. 289].

The opening move of managing status asymmetry through strategic humour merits detailed attention because it is structurally necessary for the speech's subsequent ethos claims. The Royal Society is a prestigious scientific institution; Thatcher's political authority does not automatically transfer to the standing of a credible insider in this setting. She resolves the asymmetry by presenting herself as a Fellow of the Society who shares its values, while also introducing a reported stereotype about scientists as politicians – a "controlled other voice" that she can rebut, converting the potential liability into a credential. Table 2.8 presents this

passage and the value-list segment that follows it, which together constitute the speech's foundational ethos-building and agenda-setting moves.

Table 2.8. *Ethos-building through insider credentials, humour, and enumeration (Thatcher, Royal Society, 1988)*

Text (full context)	Rhetorical work	Device-level analysis
<i>"This is my first opportunity as Prime Minister to address our Society of which I am so proud to be a Fellow. I confess that I am quite pleased that I didn't continue my work on glyceride monolayers in the early 1950s or I might never have got here at all! But I am reminded of a reviewer of Solly Zuckerman's recent autobiography who said that as a rule scientists rarely make successful politicians! From my experience let me say this: in today's world it is no bad thing for a politician to have had the benefit of a scientific background."</i> [Thatcher 1988, p. 1]	Establishes speaker as institutional insider and cross-domain credible authority; defuses scepticism; reframes the science-politics relationship as mutually reinforcing	Self-deprecating humour ("I might never have got here") humanises authority without relinquishing it; reported remark creates a controlled "other voice" set up for rebuttal; pivot phrase ("From my experience...") converts anecdote into argument; evaluative understatement ("no bad thing") intensifies the positive claim through restraint
<i>"I want to make just three points. ... First ... national prosperity. Second ... international standing. Third ... trained intelligence."</i> [Thatcher 1988, p. 1–2]	Agenda-setting through enumeration; audience given cognitive scaffolding for subsequent policy claims	Three-part list provides mnemonic structure and rhetorical authority; common topoi of prosperity, standing, and education are presented as shared premises rather than contested values [Kjeldsen 2019, p. 227]; "just three" signals control and disciplined brevity

Thatcher's use of figurative language in the Royal Society speech constitutes a distinct rhetorical domain and deserves separate analytical attention. Her

metaphors are not decorative; they perform conceptual translation – converting abstract policy problems in science governance and environmental risk into images drawn from everyday and competitive domains. Charteris-Black identifies such metaphorical mappings in political speech as mechanisms that make a policy stance "feel like common sense" precisely because familiar source domains project their common-sense logic onto unfamiliar target domains [Charteris-Black 2005, p. 22–23]. In Thatcher's speech, the metaphor clusters operate across three domains: resource allocation (how to distribute research funding), competitive discovery (what scientific achievement means), and planetary systems (how to understand environmental risk). Each cluster accomplishes a different persuasive task, and Table 2.9 presents exemplary passages from all three clusters in full context, preserving the transition from humorous analogy to high-stakes risk framing.

Table 2.9. *Metaphor clusters, risk framing, and peroration (Thatcher, Royal Society, 1988)*

Text (full context)	Domain mapping	Persuasive function
"A commitment to basic science cannot mean a blank cheque for everyone with – if I may put it colloquially – a bee in his bonnet. That would spread the honey too thinly." [Thatcher 1988, p. 2]	Research funding ↔ beekeeping / honey distribution	Converts abstract budget constraints into an image of dilution; register shift marker ("if I may put it colloquially") signals deliberate accessibility move that broadens audience appeal without abandoning elite setting
"A good researcher is keenly competitive and wants to be first. The final stage of the race for the DNA structure was as exciting as any Olympic marathon." [Thatcher 1988, p. 2]	Scientific discovery ↔ competitive sport	Naturalises competition as productive energy; frames achievement as publicly admirable; connects scientific excellence to the shared discourse of national sporting pride
"For generations, we have assumed that the efforts of mankind would leave the fundamental equilibrium of the world's systems and atmosphere stable. But it is possible that ... we have unwittingly begun a massive experiment with the system of this planet itself." [Thatcher 1988, p. 3–4]	Anthropogenic change ↔ uncontrolled experiment	Creates urgency without sensationalism; positions policy as responsible management of unintended consequences; legitimises scientific observation as the necessary basis for governance
"Mr. President, this country will be judged by its contribution to knowledge and its capacity to turn that knowledge to advantage." [Thatcher 1988, p. 3]	Britain's standing ↔ knowledge stewardship	Mythic framing: Britain-as-knowledge-nation; epideictic praise of science becomes warrant for policy cooperation; "judged by"

		frames international standing as a continuing evaluative test
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The peroration's explicit marking as such, and its closure through rhetorical questions and a toast, enacts a genre-appropriate leave-taking that returns the audience to a mood of institutional pride and shared civic purpose. Rhetorical questions – "Should we be doing more to explain...?" [Thatcher 1988, p. 5] – do not solicit genuine answers; they are identification devices that present scientific communication as a shared civic responsibility, making the audience a co-author of the problem and its solution. The closure therefore achieves the epideictic function of renewing institutional commitment to values without issuing any explicit command, which distinguishes the Royal Society speech's ending from both the accountability pledge of the Commons statement and the explicit mobilisation call that will be seen in May's conference peroration.

May's 2018 Conservative Party Conference speech presents a structurally different approach to rhetorical organisation. The text is organised as a large-scale sequential arc that repeatedly alternates between ceremonial value articulation, partisan contrast and threat narrative, and policy exposition grounded in personal and national stories. Party conference speeches are, as Kranert argues, constitutively hybrid – they must simultaneously function as internal mobilisation devices and as messages crafted for external media circulation, which makes their implied audience inherently split between "the hall" and the wider national public [Kranert 2019, p. 72]. This structural duality is linguistically visible in the deictic shifts between "we in this hall" and "the British people," and in the strategic alternation between narrative intimacy and programmatic assertion. May's organisational signature is seriality: the text is built on long strings of parallel clauses, anaphoric frames, and list structures that sustain a shared cognitive and emotional rhythm across a coalition of listeners whose political preferences are not uniform.

The speech's commemorative section – built around the First World War centenary – provides the most concentrated site for examining May's handling of epideictic rhetoric. The extended anaphoric sequence "We remember..." builds a

ceremonial cadence that is not merely decorative but functionally essential to the speech's subsequent argumentative moves. In Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's account, epideictic discourse articulates shared values that subsequently serve as warrants for deliberative claims [Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, p. 51]; Burke's concept of the "representative anecdote" – a condensed narrative that guides interpretation of larger realities – is equally applicable here [Burke 1969, p. 326]. The "remarkable generation" of the First World War is deployed as precisely such an anecdote: it condenses the national capacity for unity and sacrifice into a single morally authoritative reference point that can then be used to discipline contemporary political behaviour. Table 2.10 presents this section in full context together with the pivot marker that converts commemoration into programmatic obligation.

Table 2.10. *Epideictic cadence, quoted command, and commemorative pivot (May, 2018 Conference)*

Text (full context)	Organisational role	Stylistic devices with function
<i>"This year marks a century since the end of the First World War. ... Inscribed within it are some familiar words: 'At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them.' We do remember them. We remember the young men who left their homes to fight and die in the mud and horror of the trenches. We remember the sailors who shovelled coal into hellfire furnaces in the bowels of battleships. We remember the selflessness of a remarkable generation, whose legacy is the freedom we enjoy today. ... We will remember them. But the builders of that Hall of Memory also wanted us to do something else. ... they inscribed a command that still calls to us today: 'See to it that they shall not have suffered and died in vain.'" [May 2018, P2]</i>	Extended epideictic renewal that produces shared values and converts memory into moral obligation	Anaphora ("We remember...") creates ceremonial rhythm; varied exempla (soldiers, sailors) widen audience identification; quotation imports prior moral authority resistant to direct contestation; pivot marker ("But...") converts memory into forward duty; imperative quotation ("See to it...") raises the stakes from recollection to command
<i>"Because the lesson of that remarkable generation is clear: if we come together, there is no limit to what we can achieve." [May 2018, P3]</i>	Bridge from epideictic to deliberative; representative anecdote becomes warrant for present-day unity claims	Conditional structure converts historical evidence into universal principle; "no limit" graduates upward to maximum possibility; collective "we" produces inclusive subject

		position as premise for subsequent calls to compromise
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The transition from historical unity to contemporary polarisation is one of the most structurally significant moves in May's speech, and it is performed not through an explicit topic marker but through a contrastive redefinition. May frames the deterioration of political debate as a moral decline – "rigorous debate between political opponents is becoming more like a confrontation between enemies" [May 2018, P4] – and simultaneously uses this diagnosis to position her party as the custodian of a higher standard of decency. This is an instance of what might be called meta-rhetoric: the speech talks about the dangers of rhetorical escalation while simultaneously preparing the argumentative ground for partisan contrast. Charteris-Black identifies the metaphorical mapping of political opponents as enemies as a familiar persuasive pattern in political speech [Charteris-Black 2005, p. 94–97], and May deploys precisely this mapping – but frames it as a social pathology to be overcome rather than a description of the current Government's own stance. The tension between the unity rhetoric and the subsequent adversarial sections is not a logical inconsistency but a structurally necessary feature of the hybrid conference genre: unity and mobilisation are interdependent functions of a speech that must hold together a fractured coalition while energising it against an opposition.

Table 2.11 presents May's management of this rhetorical tension through the value-triad section that follows the polarisation diagnosis, demonstrating how the same sequential logic – diagnosis of decay, claim to remedy, programme statement – is reproduced at a smaller scale within the speech's middle movement.

Table 2.11. *Meta-rhetoric, ethos claims, and value triad as programmatic spine (May, 2018)*

Text (full context)	Organisational role	Devices and effects
<i>"Real politics involves a lot of hard graft. ... We understood when we got involved that sometimes it's adversarial. But in the last few years something's changed for the worse. I feel it. I am sure you do too. Rigorous debate between political opponents is becoming more like a confrontation between enemies. ... Our party has more elected representatives than any other. We have in our hands the</i>	Establishes shared experiential premise; diagnoses moral decline; claims party capacity to repair civic norms	Conversational ethos ("I feel it... you do too") aligns speaker with hall; contrastive pivot ("But...") signals moral diagnosis; metaphor ("enemies") dramatises risk; modal "have in our hands" implies agency without immediate policy detail

<i>power to set a standard of decency that will be an example for others to follow."</i> [May 2018, P4]		
<i>"For me they can be summed-up in three words: Security. Freedom. Opportunity. Security for the nation with strong defences... Security for communities... Security for individuals and families... And security is the bedrock of freedom."</i> [May 2018, P8]	Programme framing that links ethos to policy clusters	Tricolon provides mnemonic structure; parallel "Security for..." lines create rhythmic authority and broaden audience identification from national defence to household; "bedrock" metaphor establishes causal hierarchy among the three terms

May's adversarial section is organised around an extended series of rhetorical questions directed at the record of Labour leadership, and this sequence deserves separate analytical attention because it illustrates how rhetorical questions can function not only as emotional intensifiers but as structural devices that give an attack the logical form of a moral test. By directing the questions at historical figures in Labour's own tradition ("Would Neil Kinnock... Would Jim Callaghan... Would Clement Attlee...?") [May 2018, P6], May constructs an implicit standard of political integrity drawn from Labour's own past, making the audience's assent feel like a historically grounded judgement rather than a partisan accusation. The implied audience here is constructed as one that shares a memory of Labour's "respectable" tradition and can therefore be prompted to agree that the present leadership fails that standard – a process of audience construction that relies on the rhetorical invention of a community of shared historical knowledge [Finlayson 2012, p. 763]. Table 2.12 presents this sequence in full context alongside the duty-framing that converts the comparative judgement into a call to political action.

Table 2.12. *Rhetorical questions as moral test and mobilisation (May, 2018)*

Text (full context)	Organisational role	Devices and functions
<i>"Compare Jeremy Corbyn's behaviour to that of his predecessors. Would Neil Kinnock, who stood-up to the hard-left, have stood by while his own MPs faced deselection...? Would Jim Callaghan, who served in the Royal Navy, have asked the Russian government to confirm the findings of our own intelligence agencies? Would Clement Attlee ... have told British Jews they didn't know the meaning of anti-semitism? What has befallen Labour is a national tragedy. ... It is our duty, in this Conservative Party,</i>	Attack sequence that converts historical comparison into present-day moral obligation	Anaphoric question series accelerates rhetorical tempo; appeals to authority through historical exempla supply the evaluative standard; evaluative climax ("national tragedy") raises the moral stakes; duty framing ("It is our duty...") converts comparative appraisal into programmatic imperative

to make sure he can never do it to our country." [May 2018, P6]		
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May's Brexit segment concentrates several of the speech's most analytically productive stylistic devices within a compact sequential arc. The speaker first establishes a duty narrative grounded in the referendum mandate, then introduces a conditional threat scenario through the "no deal" concession, then deploys a triple anaphoric pledge to mark unbreakable red lines, and finally performs a label contest over the proposed second referendum. Each of these moves is organisationally distinct but functions within a continuous staircase of commitment: each step forecloses a rival interpretation and prepares the ground for the next. Charteris-Black identifies the construction of political commitment through reciprocal trust language as a device that binds the speaker and the audience into a moral contract that is difficult to contest without appearing to betray shared values [Charteris-Black 2005, p. 52–55]. Table 2.13 presents the key passages in this Brexit sequence in full context, preserving both the commitment arc and the label-contest move that operationalises the speaker's claim to democratic authority.

Table 2.13. *Brexit sequencing: duty narrative, conditional threat, red lines, and label contest (May, 2018)*

Text (full context)	Organisational role	Stylistic devices with function
<i>"My job as Prime Minister is to do what I believe to be in the national interest. ... First, honouring the result of the referendum. MPs asked the British people to take this decision. We put our faith in their judgement. They have put their faith in us to deliver. I will not let them down. ... Britain isn't afraid to leave with no deal if we have to. But we need to be honest about it. Leaving without a deal ... would be a bad outcome ... So, let us send a clear message from this hall today: we will never accept either of those choices. We will not betray the result of the referendum. And we will never break up our country." [May 2018, P11–P12]</i>	Programme logic → legitimacy narrative → conditional concession → red-line pledges	"First/Second" list creates decisional clarity; reciprocal "faith" chain constructs a moral contract; concession ("But we need to be honest...") claims reasonableness; triple anaphora ("we will never... we will not... we will never...") converts policy constraints into a rhythmic pledge resistant to negotiation
<i>"Their latest plan is to hold a second referendum. They call it a 'People's Vote'. But we had the people's vote. The people voted to leave. A second</i>	Delegitimisation of rival option through naming and democratic topos	Repetition of "people" anchors the democratic topos; quotation marks signal a label conflict; the contrast pair ("people's" vs "politicians") reassigns agency and moral authority,

<i>referendum would be a 'politicians' vote'..." [May 2018, P13]</i>		positioning the speaker's position as popular and the rival's as élite
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The comparative picture that emerges when Thatcher's and May's rhetorical organisations are read against each other is not a simple question of which speaker is more or less "rhetorical" but a question of which rhetorical economy each employs to meet the constraints of her situation. Table 2.14 condenses the mythic and collective-subject construction strategies observable in both speakers' texts as a synthesis of the comparative dimension that has been implicit throughout the subsection's analysis.

Table 2.14. *Mythic framing and collective subject construction (Thatcher vs. May)*

Speaker	Text (full context)	Myth / topos activated	Organisational payoff
Thatcher	<i>"Mr. President, this country will be judged by its contribution to knowledge and its capacity to turn that knowledge to advantage. It is only when industry and academia recognise and mobilise each other's strengths that the full intellectual energy of Britain will be released."</i> [Thatcher 1988, p. 3]	Britain-as-knowledge-nation; institutional cooperation as national strength	Epideictic praise becomes warrant for policy cooperation; "judged by" frames international standing as ongoing evaluative obligation
Thatcher	<i>"We must ensure that what we do is founded on good science to establish cause and effect."</i> [Thatcher 1988, p. 5]	Governance-as-stewardship; scientific rationality as civic duty	Converts environmental concern into epistemic responsibility; justifies policy caution without denying urgency; stewardship myth positions Britain as responsible participant in global governance
May	<i>"We stand at a pivotal moment in our history. ... Ours is a great country. Our future is in our hands. Together, let's seize it. Together, let's build a better Britain."</i> [May 2018, P14]	Threshold myth; collective agency; national renewal [Probst 2003, p. 45–46]	Peroration uses repetition and inclusive "Together" to consolidate audience into a single subject capable of transformative action
May	<i>"Because the lesson of that remarkable generation is clear: if we come together, there is no limit to what we can achieve."</i> [May 2018, P3]	Representative anecdote of wartime generation as proof of unity capacity [Burke 1969, p. 326]	Past becomes evidence for present-day unity; functions as moral premise for subsequent calls to compromise and mobilisation

The closure strategies of the two speakers are among the most revealing points of comparison for assessing how rhetorical organisation reflects situational demands. Thatcher's Falklands statement closes with a procedural commitment ("I shall report further to the House tomorrow") [Hansard 1982, col. 700], keeping the focus on parliamentary accountability in a way that is institutionally appropriate and that

constructs the House as the legitimate site of continued information exchange. Thatcher's Royal Society speech closes with a toast and a celebration of discovery [Thatcher 1988, p. 5], returning the audience to epideictic praise after the policy arguments and leaving the assembled Fellows in a mode of shared institutional pride. May's conference speech closes with a crescendo of repeated "Together" and a direct exhortation to seize a national moment [May 2018, P14], deploying the full resources of mobilisation rhetoric appropriate to the conference genre's epideictic-to-deliberative arc. Each closure is genre-matched: the House demands accountability, the Royal Society demands recognition and encouragement, and the party conference demands morale and forward momentum.

Reception management – the way speakers design texts with imagined uptake in mind, anticipating and pre-empting likely criticism – represents one final dimension of comparison. Kjeldsen argues that rhetorical devices are not merely expressive but pre-emptive, designed for a media environment where any phrase can be extracted, reframed, and contested [Kjeldsen 2018, p. 8]. Toye similarly notes that audience reactions shape the subsequent iterations of a speaker's rhetoric, making reception a constraint as much as a consequence [Toye 2018, p. 88]. May opens her 2018 conference speech with a self-aware meta-reference to the previous year's difficulties – coughing fits and falling stage letters – converting reputational vulnerability into resilience by owning the memory before the audience can deploy it as criticism [May 2018, P1]. This move binds the hall into a shared inside joke, constructing an audience of loyalists who protected the speaker through adversity. Thatcher's Royal Society speech similarly anticipates the identity tension between a politician and a scientific audience, managing it through insider credentialing and humour before any policy claim is made [Thatcher 1988, p. 1]. Thatcher's Falklands statement anticipates international moral scrutiny by placing restraint in rules of engagement at the grammatical centre of the military report, pre-empting the charge of triumphalism without ever explicitly addressing it [Hansard 1982, col. 700].

Three grounded conclusions emerge from the comparative evidence. Thatcher's parliamentary rhetoric achieves authority through procedural

minimalism: parataxis, evidential caution, and accountability closure produce a high-control institutional ethos suited to wartime reporting in the Commons [Hansard 1982, col. 700]. Thatcher's elite civic rhetoric relies on structured enumeration and metaphor clusters that translate policy and systemic risk into accessible images while sustaining institutional alignment and scientific credibility [Thatcher 1988, p. 1–5]. May's conference rhetoric deploys large-scale seriality – anaphora, triads, rhetorical questions, quotation chains, and narrative exempla – to hold together a multi-audience coalition in a polarised environment, oscillating between epideictic value articulation and adversarial mobilisation in a genre that requires both simultaneously [Kranert 2019, p. 72; May 2018, P2–P14]. These organisational differences are not attributable to individual personality traits but to the rhetorical solutions each speaker develops in response to the distinct constraints of her communicative situation: the available genre, the implied audience, the political stakes, and the expectations of reception that any high-visibility prime-ministerial address must manage.

Conclusions

The analysis conducted in Chapter 2 establishes detailed and empirically grounded lexicogrammatical, stylistic, and rhetorical profiles for both leaders across three distinct communicative genres. The evidence demonstrates that the differences between Thatcher's and May's political discourse are not reducible to personality contrasts or evaluative labels such as "strong" versus "cautious," but reflect systematically different strategies for packaging authority, obligation, and identity under the specific institutional and situational constraints each speaker inhabited.

At the lexicogrammatical level, Thatcher's threshold speech concentrates political authority in active-voice, first-person declarative clauses anchored in constitutional legitimation, with formal modal verbs (*shall*, *must*) deployed at precise operational pivot points to encode personal resolve and collective necessity. May's resignation statement, by contrast, distributes authority across institutional

collectives, passive constructions, and nominalisations that elevate governance outcomes while suppressing agentive attribution – a grammatically motivated strategy suited to the ritual demands of a departure rather than an assumption of power. In policy-address mode, May's grammar becomes programmatic through the iterative deployment of deontic *must* attached to abstract institutional subjects, which allows the speaker to issue binding political commitments without interpersonal confrontation. Audience construction follows a parallel logic: Thatcher constitutes the British people as a third-person legitimising body whose prior electoral act ratifies the speaker's authority, while May addresses them directly as second-person recipients of service, enacting the symbolic shift from mandate-holder to public servant.

At the stylistic and rhetorical level, the two speakers employ distinct rhetorical economies adapted to their respective communicative situations. Thatcher's Commons Falklands statement achieves authority through disciplined parataxis, evidential distancing, and procedural closure that allow the House to co-produce the epideictic dimension the speaker deliberately withholds, while simultaneously managing international moral scrutiny through grammatically embedded restraint rather than explicit moralising. Thatcher's Royal Society address deploys structured enumeration and three thematically coherent metaphor clusters – resource allocation, competitive discovery, and planetary risk – that convert abstract policy domains into accessible conceptual images while sustaining institutional credibility in a high-prestige scientific setting. May's 2018 conference speech is organised as a large-scale sequential arc alternating between epideictic value articulation, adversarial mobilisation, and programmatic assertion, held together through anaphoric seriality, rhetorical questions directed at Labour's own historical precedents, and a Brexit commitment sequence that escalates through duty narrative, conditional concession, triple pledge, and label contest. Each closure strategy is genre-matched: Thatcher's parliamentary statement closes with an accountability commitment to the House; her Royal Society speech closes with epideictic praise through a toast; May's conference

speech closes with a crescendo of inclusive *Together* exhortations appropriate to the mobilisation demands of party conference oratory.

Taken together, the findings of Chapter 2 establish that both speakers develop sophisticated rhetorical architectures in response to the specific demands of their communicative situations, and that the differences between their profiles are most productively explained at the level of genre, institutional role, and historical context rather than through unidimensional stylistic labelling.

3. Comparative analysis of Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May's language profiles

3.1. Pragmatic Features, Strategies, and Tactics (Comparative Analysis)

Any serious comparison of Margaret Thatcher's and Theresa May's political language must reckon with the fact that pragmatic analysis is concerned not merely with what speakers say but with what they accomplish through saying it – the social actions performed, the relationships managed, the commitments issued, and the audiences constructed through every utterance. Pragmatics in this sense is not a supplementary layer of description added to lexicogrammatical analysis but a framework for explaining why particular linguistic choices are deployed in particular communicative situations, and what work those choices do in constructing political identities, negotiating authority, and managing the ideological terrain of public discourse [Chilton 2004, p. 3–4]. This subsection draws on speech act theory, politeness and face theory, the Gricean cooperative principle, relevance theory, and critical pragmatics to construct a detailed comparative profile of how Thatcher and May differ and converge in their pragmatic choices – not as expressions of personal temperament but as systematically motivated responses to the rhetorical situations each leader inhabited.

The starting point for a pragmatic comparison is speech act theory, whose foundational insight is that every utterance simultaneously performs a locutionary act (producing a meaningful sentence), an illocutionary act (performing a social action such as asserting, promising, commanding, or thanking), and a perlocutionary act (producing an effect in the hearer, such as belief, compliance, or reassurance) [Austin 1962, p. 108–120; Searle 1969, p. 23–26]. In Searle's taxonomy, illocutionary acts are classified into five major types: assertives (committing the speaker to the truth of a proposition), directives (attempting to get the hearer to do something), commissives (committing the speaker to a future course of action), expressives (expressing the speaker's psychological state), and declarations

(bringing about a change in reality through the utterance itself) [Searle 1969, p. 12–14]. When the speeches examined in Chapters 2.1 and 2.2 are mapped onto this taxonomy, a revealing pattern emerges. Thatcher's threshold speech of 1979 opens with a declaration – "*Her Majesty The Queen has asked me to form a new administration and I have accepted*" [Thatcher 1979, p. 1] – followed immediately by an expressive ("*It is, of course, the greatest honour...*") and then a dense sequence of commissives ("*I'll strive unceasingly to fulfil the trust...*" [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]). The overall illocutionary weight of the speech is carried by commissives and assertives, with directives present only at the operational moment of Cabinet formation ("*We must get that done*" [Thatcher 1979, p. 2]). This distribution reflects an inaugurative pragmatic logic: the speaker's primary task is to establish credibility through self-commitment and to anchor that commitment in an acknowledged social contract with the electorate.

May's 2019 final statement shows a complementary but structurally different speech act profile. The dominant illocutionary types here are expressives (thanks, congratulations, tributes) and assertives (claims about achievements and continuity), with commissives present but limited to personal continuation ("*I will continue to do all I can...*" [May 2019, para. 19]) and directives entirely absent. The absence of directives is pragmatically significant: a departing Prime Minister who issues commands would be claiming authority she is in the act of relinquishing, which would produce an incoherence between the speech's declared social purpose (resignation) and its illocutionary content. In her Brexit-policy address, however, the balance shifts decisively toward directives and commissives – specifically deontic directives directed not at the audience but at an institutional artefact ("*the agreement... must respect the referendum*" [May 2017, para. 12]) – a pragmatic device that allows obligation to be expressed while suppressing the interpersonal confrontation that a directive addressed to human agents would produce [Suaib 2021, p. 88]. Table 3.1. organises these observations into a comparative speech act profile across the four primary texts, drawing on the illocutionary framework of Searle and the extended political application in Chilton.

Table 3.1. *Comparative speech act profile across primary texts*

Text	Dominant illocutionary type	Secondary types	Pragmatic function of dominant type	Key example
Thatcher, No. 10 1979 [Thatcher 1979, p. 1–2]	Commissive	Assertive; Expressive; Declaration (opening)	Establishes personal commitment as foundation of political authority; creates binding social contract with electorate	<i>"I'll strive unceasingly to try to fulfil the trust and confidence that the British people have placed in me"</i>
Thatcher, Commons 1982 [Hansard 1982, col. 700]	Assertive	Commissive (accountability pledge)	Provides verifiable information within parliamentary accountability frame; institutional credibility through informational precision	<i>"They are reported to be flying white flags over Port Stanley. I shall report further to the House tomorrow"</i>
Thatcher, Royal Society 1988 [Thatcher 1988, p. 1–5]	Assertive	Directive (indirect); Expressive	Constructs policy reasoning and institutional ethos; directives embedded in rhetorical questions to avoid imposition	<i>"Should we be doing more to explain science to the public?"</i>
May, No. 10 2019 [May 2019, para. 1–20]	Expressive	Assertive; Commissive (limited)	Performs resignation ritual through gratitude; collective acknowledgement as genre obligation	<i>"My final words are of sincere thanks... All are inspired by the noble wish to serve their country"</i>
May, Brexit address 2017 [May 2017, para. 1–18]	Directive (deontic)	Assertive; Commissive	Issues binding programme conditions through institutional Subject; avoids direct personal confrontation while asserting obligation	<i>"The agreement we reach with the EU must respect the referendum"</i>
May, Conference 2018 [May 2018, P1–P14]	Assertive	Directive (explicit); Expressive; Commissive	Policy and identity claims combined with explicit mobilisation calls; declarative sequence structures audience interpretation	<i>"Together, let's seize it. Together, let's build a better Britain"</i>

The comparison in Table 3.1 reveals a fundamental pragmatic asymmetry: Thatcher's dominant mode is the commissive – she binds herself to action – while May's dominant mode oscillates between expressive (in resignation) and assertive-plus-directive (in policy address). This asymmetry is not simply a difference of personal style; it reflects a difference in the pragmatic situation each speaker faces. Thatcher in 1979 needs to establish why she should be trusted with authority she has just been granted; her commissives are the primary vehicle for that trust-building.

May in 2019 needs to exit the stage while preserving institutional dignity; her expressives accomplish the role exit without generating contestable policy commitments. May in 2017 and 2018 needs to bind future actors to a mandate already delivered; her deontic directives and programmatic assertives accomplish that binding while managing the political risks of direct personal command [Finlayson 2012, p. 757–759].

Politeness theory – principally in the framework developed by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, and subsequently elaborated by Spencer-Oatey's rapport management model [Spencer-Oatey 2008] – provides a second major analytical lens. Brown and Levinson's central claim is that speakers have two kinds of face wants: positive face (the desire to be liked, approved of, and included) and negative face (the desire to be free from imposition and to control one's own territory) [Brown & Levinson 1987, p. 61–62]. Political speech is a particularly rich site for face analysis because it involves simultaneous management of multiple face relationships – between speaker and audience, speaker and opponents, speaker and institutional bodies – under the scrutiny of public media. Ridge-Vesty's feminist pragmatic analysis of Thatcher and May in Prime Minister's Questions demonstrates that both leaders construct moments of power through a combination of stereotypically feminine and masculine interactional styles, deploying rapport management and what Ridge-Vesty identifies as patronising behaviour as complementary strategies for asserting authority while maintaining sufficient interpersonal access [Ridge-Vesty 2025, p. 3–5]. The findings are significant not only for what they reveal about gendered speech norms but for the broader pragmatic principle they illustrate: that face management in political discourse is always multiply directed and strategically calibrated.

Thatcher's positive face strategies are predominantly solidarity-based in her threshold speech and elite civic address. In the No. 10 remarks of 1979, she invokes shared values – neighbourliness, compassion, the role of the family – and uses the pronoun *we* to project herself as a member of the national community rather than as an elevated outsider: *"And I would just like to remember some words of St. Francis*

of Assisi... where there is discord, may we bring harmony" [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]. The use of *may we* here is pragmatically significant: it frames the aspiration as collective rather than personal, converting what might otherwise read as a public self-presentation into a shared civic wish. The self-deprecating humour in the Royal Society speech ("*I might never have got here at all*" [Thatcher 1988, p. 1]) performs positive politeness through a different mechanism – it reduces the social distance created by institutional prestige by allowing the speaker to become temporarily approachable, a Fellow rather than a Prime Minister. Negative politeness – the mitigation of impositions – appears in Thatcher's use of the hedging adverb *just* and the stance marker *of course*, which were analysed in 2.1 as controlling modesty devices. In the pragmatic framework of face theory, these markers function to soften the potential face threat of high-authority claims by presenting them as obvious and uncontestable rather than as personally asserted impositions [Brown & Levinson 1987, p. 131–132].

May's politeness strategies in her 2019 final statement are dominated by an extended positive politeness ritual built on gratitude and tribute – a macro-level expressives sequence that constitutes what Spencer-Oatey calls a face-enhancing act directed at others [Spencer-Oatey 2008, p. 12–13]. By systematically directing attention toward the achievements of colleagues, civil servants, and armed forces, May simultaneously performs the institutional humility required of a resignation genre and manages her own face by positioning herself as a generous acknowledger rather than a defensive self-promoter. This is a sophisticated pragmatic manoeuvre: the speaker's positive face is protected precisely through an act that ostensibly focuses entirely on others' positive face. In her conference speech, May's positive politeness strategies include conversational ethos markers ("*I feel it. I am sure you do too*" [May 2018, P4]) that perform alignment with the audience and reduce the social distance between Prime Minister and party members, while her negative politeness moves are visible in the conditional concession framing of the Brexit section ("*But we need to be honest about it*" [May 2018, P11]), which acknowledges the hearer's right to full information before issuing constraints.

The face-threatening dimension of both speakers' rhetoric is equally revealing. Thatcher's most consistently face-threatening moves are directed not at individual addressees but at abstract opponents or alternative ideological positions. In the Royal Society speech, she identifies "two dangerous fallacies" [Thatcher 1988, p. 1–2] in science policy – a move that threatens the face of whoever holds those positions without naming them personally, which is a classic political device for maintaining adversarial force while observing the norms of institutional decorum. In Prime Minister's Questions during the Falklands crisis, Thatcher's rhetorical masking strategy – converting defensive or reactive positions into authoritative statements of procedural necessity – illustrates what Wooten identifies as a systematic use of institutional constraint as a face-protection device: by presenting the Prime Minister as constrained by constitutional procedure, the strategy deflects personal criticism while maintaining an image of disciplined leadership authority [Wooten 2009, p. 339–341]. Table 3. 2 presents a structured comparison of positive and negative politeness strategies across the two speakers, with examples that demonstrate the contrast at the level of specific linguistic realisation.

Table 3.2. *Politeness strategies in Thatcher and May (Brown & Levinson 1987; Spencer-Oatey 2008)*

Strategy type	Thatcher: realisation and example	May: realisation and example	Pragmatic function
Positive politeness: solidarity	Collective wish through we: <i>"where there is discord, may we bring harmony"</i> [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]; institutional insider claiming (<i>"our Society of which I am so proud to be a Fellow"</i> [Thatcher 1988, p. 1])	Experiential alignment: <i>"I feel it. I am sure you do too"</i> [May 2018, P4]; inclusive possessive: <i>"our economy... our values"</i> [May 2019, para. 6]	Reduces social distance; projects shared membership in a community of values
Positive politeness: approval-seeking	Self-deprecating humour: <i>"I might never have got here at all"</i> [Thatcher 1988, p. 1]	Meta-reference to audience loyalty: <i>"You supported me all the way – thank you"</i> [May 2018, P9]	Converts potential status asymmetry into mutual appreciation; binds audience through acknowledged support
Negative politeness: hedging	<i>"I would just like to remember..."</i> [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]; <i>"if I may put it colloquially"</i> [Thatcher 1988, p. 2]	<i>"But we need to be honest about it"</i> [May 2018, P11]; conditional framing of policy threats	Mitigates potential imposition; presents authority claims as natural rather than coercive
Face-threatening act: indirect	Identifying unnamed "fallacies": <i>"Two dangerous"</i>	Label competition: <i>"They call it a 'People's Vote'... A second referendum"</i>	Threatens opponent's face through category

	<i>fallacies</i> " [Thatcher 1988, p. 1–2]	<i>would be a 'politicians' vote'"</i> [May 2018, P13]	assignment without direct personal attack
Face-threatening act: direct	Institutional necessity framing: <i>"We must get that done"</i> [Thatcher 1979, p. 2]	Deontic programming: <i>"the agreement... must... must... must"</i> [May 2017, para. 12–14]	Issues high-obligation directives with institutional or abstract Subject to reduce personal confrontation

The Gricean cooperative principle [Grice 1975, p. 45–47] offers a third analytical framework, particularly valuable for understanding the pragmatic force of implicature in political speech. Grice proposed that conversation is regulated by a general principle of cooperation and four associated maxims: quantity (say as much as and no more than required), quality (say only what you believe to be true and have evidence for), relation (be relevant), and manner (be clear, orderly, and brief). Political speakers exploit these maxims in systematic ways to generate implicatures – meanings that are communicated without being stated – and to manage the interpretive frame within which audiences process their utterances [Grice 1975, p. 49–51]. The exploitation of the maxim of quantity is a particularly productive site of comparison between Thatcher and May.

Thatcher's Falklands statement of 1982 is a striking example of quantity-maxim observance used strategically. The statement provides exactly the information required by parliamentary accountability norms – chronological narrative, named actors, current status, next steps – and provides nothing more. This strict adherence to quantity norms is not naive; it is a calculated exploitation of the maxim's pragmatic effects. By providing only the procedurally required minimum, Thatcher generates the implicature that the information is complete and reliable: surplus information would signal editorialising, while the absence of evaluation signals institutional propriety [Hansard 1982, col. 700]. The evidential distancing through reported speech markers (*"They are reported to be flying white flags..."*) is a quality-maxim compliance device that simultaneously generates an implicature of scrupulous accuracy: the speaker marks what she cannot personally verify, which makes her unmarked assertions appear all the more trustworthy.

May's Brexit address of 2017 exploits the relevance maxim in a structurally different way. By organising the policy programme as a numbered sequence of

conditions – First... Second... Third – she generates the implicature that the list is logically and politically exhaustive: if there are exactly three conditions, and they are enumerated, the audience infers that they form a complete and principled framework rather than an improvised response to political pressure [Sperber & Wilson 1995, p. 158–160]. The relevance-theoretic concept of optimal relevance is useful here: a speaker who provides an explicitly structured enumeration creates a cognitive context in which each numbered item confirms the relevance structure established by the previous ones, making the framework feel stable, pre-planned, and authoritative. May's conference speech exploits the manner maxim in the opposite direction: the extended anaphoric sequences (*"We remember... We remember... We remember..."* [May 2018, P2]) flout the maxim's demand for brevity to generate the implicature of profound emotional engagement – repetition here signals that ordinary efficiency would be insufficient for the gravity of the subject. Table 3.3 organises the principal maxim-exploitation strategies with examples from both speakers.

Table 3.3. *Gricean maxim exploitation and pragmatic implicature (Grice 1975)*

Maxim	Thatcher: exploitation strategy and example	Implicature generated	May: exploitation strategy and example	Implicature generated
Quantity	Minimal reporting in Falklands statement: only procedurally required information; no surplus evaluation [Hansard 1982, col. 700]	Information is complete and reliable; neutrality signals institutional propriety	Enumerated conditions in Brexit address: <i>"First... Second... Third"</i> [May 2017, para. 12–14]; numbered completeness	Programme is exhaustive and principled; enumeration signals prior deliberation
Quality	Evidential markers: <i>"They are reported to be..."</i> [Hansard 1982, col. 700]; marked epistemic hedges for unverified claims	Unmarked assertives are presented as fully verified; scrupulous accuracy implicature	Factual assertives about achievements: <i>"our economy has been restored"</i> [May 2019, para. 6]; passive suppresses disputable attribution	Achievements are presented as self-evident facts rather than contested claims
Relation	Procedural framing of all responses in PMQs; converts external questions into declarative information-giving	Maintains discursive control; relevance is defined by institutional procedure rather	Strategic pivot from commemoration to programme: <i>"But... See to it that they shall not have suffered in vain"</i> [May 2018, P2]	Past sacrifice is the warrant for present-day policy commitment; commemorative

		than the questioner		relevance extends into deliberative frame
Manner	Compressed, paratactic informational style in Commons; long, multiply-embedded clauses in commitment sequences [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]	Syntactic density signals seriousness and moral weight; compressed form in official contexts signals control	Extended anaphoric repetition: "We <i>remember...</i> " [May 2018, P2]; long parallelistic series flout brevity	Repetition signals that the subject exceeds ordinary economy; ceremonial gravity performed through manner flouting

A fourth major pragmatic dimension is the management of implicature and presupposition in political argument. Presuppositions are propositions whose truth is taken for granted by the speech act and that survive under negation, interrogation, and other logical transformations [Levinson 1983, p. 168–170]. Political presuppositions are particularly powerful because they smuggle ideological commitments into discourse without subjecting them to the scrutiny that would apply to explicit assertions. Thatcher's No. 10 remarks of 1979 presuppose that government works best when guided by principles of neighbourliness and the family, that there is discord in need of harmony, and that the electorate has placed trust in the new Prime Minister – all propositions that are presented as contextual background rather than contested claims [Thatcher 1979, p. 1–2]. The St. Francis quotation is pragmatically significant in this respect: by invoking an authoritative external voice to frame her programme, Thatcher loads the presupposition structure of her speech with values that appear prior to and independent of her personal position, making them harder to dispute without appearing to dispute the religious and civic tradition they embody [Charteris-Black 2005, p. 52–53].

May's presupposition management is equally strategic but operates in a different ideological register. Her Brexit address presupposes that the referendum result is authoritative, binding, and non-negotiable – a presupposition that does significant political work by converting a contested democratic event into an unquestionable premise: "*honouring the result of the referendum*" [May 2018, P11] presupposes that "honouring" is the only appropriate verb for the speaker's relationship to the result. The word choice is not neutral: honour carries connotations of moral obligation and personal integrity that do not belong to neutral process-

descriptors such as "implementing" or "acting on." In her conference speech, May's label contest over the People's Vote is a presupposition battle: "*We had the people's vote. The people voted to leave*" [May 2018, P13] presupposes that the 2016 referendum was the authoritative democratic event and that any further referendum would by definition be non-popular – a presupposition that the proposed "People's Vote" label explicitly contests. Fairclough's analysis of presupposition in political discourse identifies this kind of naming competition as a site where ideological struggle is conducted through apparently semantic choices [Fairclough 2001, p. 117–119].

Deixis – the grammatical and lexical system through which language anchors utterances to their context of production – provides a fifth pragmatic dimension that is particularly revealing in political speech, because deictic choices determine who is included in the speaker's "we," how space and time are framed, and what position the speaker occupies relative to the audience. Chilton's account of political deixis treats person, space, and time deixis as the three primary coordinates through which political speakers construct their positioning relative to the social world [Chilton 2004, p. 56–68]. Person deixis was analysed lexicogrammatically in Chapter 2.1; the pragmatic dimension adds the question of what membership claims and exclusions are performed through those choices. When Thatcher says "we shall be getting on with that" [Thatcher 1979, p. 2], the *we* is a proximate administrative collective – those physically about to enter No. 10 – and its pragmatic effect is to convert the solitary authority of a newly appointed Prime Minister into a collective enterprise, managing the face risk of appearing to claim sole personal power at the moment of appointment. When May says "we in this hall" [May 2018, P11], she explicitly marks the conference audience as a distinct deictic category, which simultaneously creates intimacy with that audience and acknowledges the speech's dual address structure.

Temporal deixis is particularly significant in Thatcher's political language. Her threshold speech of 1979 is carefully anchored in the present and immediate future – "*as I enter the door of No. 10*" [Thatcher 1979, p. 1] – with the near future

encoded through shall and must rather than through extended future-time reference. This temporal containment is pragmatically strategic: it prevents the speech from making specific long-term policy commitments that could be held against the speaker, while still conveying the impression of decisive and immediate action. Thatcher's Royal Society speech, by contrast, engages in extended temporal deixis – *"For generations, we have assumed..."* [Thatcher 1988, p. 3–4] – to construct a civilisational time frame within which present policy choices appear as responsibilities toward future generations rather than responses to immediate political pressures. May's Brexit address uses future time deixis densely and programmatically, with will and must anchoring obligations to a near and definite future: the speech's temporal deixis performs the pragmatic function of converting the open-ended uncertainty of Brexit negotiations into a structured timeline of outcomes, providing the audience with a sense of directional control over an otherwise highly uncertain political trajectory [Suaib 2021, p. 87–88].

Pragmatic markers – discourse-level items that manage the speaker's stance, the interpersonal relationship, and the informational organisation of the text – constitute a further analytical domain. In the typology proposed by Hyland , pragmatic markers in academic and public discourse include hedges (items that reduce the speaker's commitment to a proposition), boosters (items that emphasise certainty or commitment), attitude markers (items expressing the speaker's emotional or evaluative stance), engagement markers (items that explicitly address the reader/hearer), and self-mentions (explicit use of first-person reference to take personal responsibility for claims) [Hyland 2005, p. 49–55]. These categories are directly applicable to political speech and produce a revealing comparative profile when applied to the Thatcher and May corpus examined in this study. Table 3.4 applies Hyland's marker taxonomy to representative passages from both speakers, documenting the pragmatic functions of specific items with full textual context.

Table 3.4. *Pragmatic marker distribution (Hyland 2005; primary texts)*

Marker type	Thatcher: item and example	Pragmatic function	May: item and example	Pragmatic function
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Hedge	"just": "I would just like to remember..." [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]; "I think": procedural qualifications in Falklands statement [Hansard 1982, col. 700]	Reduces imposition; constructs controlled modesty that coexists with authority claims	"we need to be honest about it" [May 2018, P11]; "Of course, much remains to be done" [May 2019, para. 7]	Signals awareness of complexity; presents speaker as reasonable and complete-information provider
Booster	"full well": "I know full well..." [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]; "unceasingly": "I'll strive unceasingly" [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]	Maximises epistemic commitment and action intensity; counters perception of uncertainty	"will never": "We will never accept... We will never break up our country" [May 2018, P12]; "must" series [May 2017, para. 12–14]	Intensifies commitment; converts policy stance into non-negotiable pledge
Attitude marker	"greatest honour": "the greatest honour that can come to any citizen" [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]; "no bad thing" (evaluative understatement) [Thatcher 1988, p. 1]	Expresses evaluative stance through graduated positive/negative scale	"sincere thanks"; "noble wish" [May 2019, para. 8–9]; "national tragedy" [May 2018, P6]	Encodes affective stance; adjusts emotional register from ceremonial appreciation to political alarm
Engagement marker	"you" to interviewers in threshold speech; rhetorical "we" as inclusive invitation [Thatcher 1979, p. 1–2]	Maintains discursive connection with interlocutor; constructs audience as co-participant	"I am sure you do too" [May 2018, P4]; direct address in thanks: "To my colleagues... To everyone..." [May 2019, para. 8–9]	Creates experiential alignment; constructs inclusive audience through direct interpellation
Self-mention	High-frequency I as Subject of action and commitment clauses: "I know... I'll strive... I owe" [Thatcher 1979, p. 1–2]	Makes personal responsibility explicit and traceable; authority through visible agency	Lower frequency; I mainly in relational processes: "I am... I want to thank... I will continue" [May 2019, para. 1–20]	Positions speaker as participant in institutional process rather than sole agent of change

The pattern in Table 3. 4 confirms and enriches the lexicogrammatical observations from Chapter 2.1. Thatcher's pragmatic marker profile is characterised by the co-occurrence of hedging modesty markers and strong boosters within the same speech: she simultaneously reduces the appearance of assertion (through just, of course, I think) and maximises the force of her commitments (through full well, unceasingly, shall). This apparent contradiction is pragmatically coherent: the hedges perform interpersonal management of face and social distance, while the boosters perform the illocutionary force of the commissive act. May's marker profile

is more contextually segregated: hedges and engagement markers dominate in the resignation and gratitude contexts, while boosters dominate in the adversarial and policy contexts. This segregation reflects May's greater genre-sensitivity – her pragmatic register shifts systematically with communicative situation in a way that is more visible and more dramatic than Thatcher's relatively stable authority-plus-modesty balance.

The concept of persuasion strategy – understood as a systematic cluster of pragmatic choices organised to achieve a defined rhetorical effect – provides the highest-level comparative dimension. Charteris-Black's corpus-stylistic analysis of political metaphor identifies three dominant persuasion strategies in British prime-ministerial discourse: the strategy of moral authority (constructing the speaker as the authentic voice of shared values), the strategy of crisis definition (framing the political situation as dangerous or exceptional in ways that require the speaker's leadership), and the strategy of resolution (positioning the speaker as the agent capable of overcoming the defined crisis) [Charteris-Black 2005, p. 16–22]. The two speakers' rhetorical corpus maps onto these strategies in instructive ways.

Thatcher's 1979 threshold speech deploys the moral authority strategy through its dense concentration of ethical vocabulary (honour, responsibility, trust, faith, values) linked explicitly to first-person commissives that bind the speaker to the delivery of these values. The St. Francis frame converts the moral authority claim from a personal assertion into an invocation of a tradition that precedes and exceeds the speaker, making the authority appear supra-personal rather than self-appointed. The crisis definition strategy is implicit in Thatcher's 1979 speech – the reference to discord in need of harmony presupposes a state of disorder that the new government is positioned to remedy – but it becomes explicit in Thatcher's other rhetorical work, including the Royal Society speech's framing of environmental change as an unintended "massive experiment" with planetary systems [Thatcher 1988, p. 3–4]. The resolution strategy is enacted primarily through the commissive speech act profile: the speaker who commits to striving unceasingly and fulfilling public trust presents herself as the resolution to the crisis she has simultaneously defined.

May's persuasion strategy in her Brexit-context speeches is more explicitly organized around crisis definition. The 2018 conference speech constructs a triple crisis: the crisis of political decency (opponents as "enemies"), the crisis of national identity (Brexit obligations to the electorate), and the crisis of opportunity (a "pivotal moment" requiring collective seizure) [May 2018, P4; P11; P14]. The moral authority strategy is pursued through a different mechanism than Thatcher's: rather than binding ethical vocabulary to first-person commissives, May establishes moral authority through the representative anecdote of the First World War generation and through the borrowed authority of the Jo Cox and John McCain references [May 2018, P5]. This strategy of moral authority through proxy is pragmatically more complex than Thatcher's direct personal commitment strategy: it offers richer resources for audience identification by widening the moral frame beyond the speaker's own person, but it also introduces interpretive risk because the borrowed authority can be contested or seen as instrumentalising grief [Toye 2018, p. 88]. The resolution strategy in May's speeches is expressed through the deontic programming of her Brexit address – the *must* sequence that converts policy goals into quasi-contractual conditions – and through the mobilisation peroration of the conference speech's closing movement. Table 3.5 presents the comparative profile of deictic framing and persuasion strategies as a synthesis of the pragmatic dimensions analysed throughout this subsection.

Table 3.5. *Deixis and persuasion strategy: comparative profile (Chilton 2004; Charteris-Black 2005)*

Dimension	Thatcher	May	Pragmatic contrast
Person deixis: primary strategy	I as visible agent of commitment; we as proximate administrative collective [Thatcher 1979, p. 1–2; Thatcher 1988, p. 3]	I in relational role; our as institutional collectivisation; we for audience alignment in conference; abstract Subjects for obligations [May 2019, para. 6; May 2017, para. 12–14]	Thatcher: agentive personal accountability; May: distributed institutional ownership
Temporal deixis: primary strategy	Present and near future through <i>shall</i> and <i>must</i> ; civilisational past–present–future arc in Royal Society speech [Thatcher 1979, p. 2; Thatcher 1988, p. 3–4]	Near-future programming through <i>will</i> and <i>must</i> in policy mode; historical past as moral warrant in conference mode [May 2017, para. 12–16; May 2018, P2–P3]	Thatcher: near-future action anchored in present authority; May: referendum past as non-negotiable premise for future programme

Moral authority strategy	Direct: ethical vocabulary bound to first-person commissives; tradition invoked through St. Francis [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]	Indirect: borrowed authority through historical exempla (WWI generation, Jo Cox, John McCain); institutional values [May 2018, P2–P5]	Thatcher: personal ethical commitment; May: supra-personal moral community
Crisis definition strategy	Implicit (discord needing harmony, 1979); scientific-governance crisis through planetary "experiment" framing (1988) [Thatcher 1988, p. 3–4]	Explicit multi-crisis framing: political decency, Brexit obligations, national opportunity [May 2018, P4–P14]	Thatcher: technical and civilisational framing; May: political-moral urgency with personal stakes
Resolution strategy	Commissives: <i>"I'll strive... I will fulfil"</i> [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]; institutional knowledge stewardship [Thatcher 1988, p. 3]	Deontic programming: <i>"must... must... must"</i> [May 2017, para. 12–14]; collective mobilisation: <i>"Together..."</i> [May 2018, P14]	Thatcher: personal resolve as resolution; May: institutional contract and collective action as resolution

The overall pragmatic picture that emerges from this comparative analysis is one of two politically powerful women who share the Conservative institutional context and the challenge of establishing authority under conditions of public scrutiny but who accomplish authority through substantially different pragmatic architectures. Thatcher's pragmatic profile is characterised by a high degree of personal visibility: her commissives make her commitments traceable and attributable, her boosters maximise the force of her claims, her person deixis keeps the agent in the grammatical and discursive foreground, and her moral authority rests on the direct binding of ethical vocabulary to first-person action. This profile produces an authority that is both intensely personal and institutionally legitimate – personal because the grammar keeps saying I, institutional because that I is framed by constitutional appointment, parliamentary accountability, and invoked civic tradition. The pragmatic risk of this profile is that it creates a direct line of accountability: if the speaker fails to strive unceasingly, the commissive is violated.

May's pragmatic profile, by contrast, distributes authority through institutional grammar, borrowed moral frames, and audience construction. Her assertives and directives attach obligation to artefacts and institutions rather than to persons; her positive politeness strategies create emotional solidarity while maintaining a degree of personal distance; her persuasion strategies invoke communities of value that exceed the speaker rather than identifying the speaker as

the primary moral source. This profile is pragmatically flexible – it can absorb policy failures more easily because the grammar of institutional collectivisation creates shared responsibility – but it generates a different kind of vulnerability: when the institutions fail to deliver (as in the Brexit negotiations), the speaker lacks the personal commissive framework through which a Thatcher-style accountability claim could be made. The pragmatic difference between the two leaders is therefore not a difference in rhetorical sophistication or political commitment but a difference in the architecture of accountability – and in the distribution of pragmatic risk that each architecture entails.

3.2. Self-Image Construction and Media Reception

The construction of a political self-image is never a solitary act performed in a communicative vacuum. It is a relational, ongoing process in which the speaker strategically deploys linguistic resources – lexical choice, pronoun selection, narrative voice, figurative framing, illocutionary stance – to produce a publicly credible version of herself that can be recognised, affirmed, challenged, or contested by media institutions and their audiences. In the sociological tradition of Erving Goffman, this process is understood through the dramaturgy of self-presentation: every public utterance constitutes a performance on what Goffman calls the "front stage," where speakers manage impressions and present strategically curated versions of self for the benefit of co-present and mediated audiences [Goffman 1959, p. 22–27]. In discourse analysis and political linguistics, this dramaturgical insight has been refined into frameworks of identity positioning [Bucholtz & Hall 2005], ethos construction [Charteris-Black 2005], and what Fairclough describes as the "technologisation of discourse" – the systematic, often deliberate engineering of self-image through rhetorical and media strategies that are characteristic of modern political leadership [Fairclough 2001, p. 67–70]. For female political leaders, these processes are further complicated by what scholars of gender and politics call the

"double bind" – the structural tension between cultural expectations of femininity (warmth, accessibility, deference) and cultural expectations of political authority (decisiveness, assertiveness, command) that means women leaders are simultaneously judged against norms that are partially incompatible [Jamieson 1995, p. 16–20]. Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May, as the only two women to serve as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, navigated this double bind in conditions separated by nearly four decades of social and media change, and the comparison of their self-image strategies – at the level of language, performance, and reception – reveals both the enduring constraints of the gendered political field and the distinct pragmatic architectures each leader developed to work within and against those constraints.

The theoretical tools most productively applied to self-image construction in political discourse are those of positioning theory, appraisal theory, and ethos analysis. Positioning theory, as developed by Davies and Harré and subsequently applied to political language, holds that speakers position themselves and others in discourse through the stories they tell, the subject positions they occupy, and the conversational rights they claim and assign [Davies & Harré 1990, p. 48–50]. A political speaker who consistently positions herself as a dutiful public servant occupying a position of trust constructs a very different self-image from one who positions herself as a conviction leader whose authority derives from personal moral clarity. Appraisal theory – developed by Martin and White within the SFL tradition – provides the lexical and evaluative dimension of this positioning: it identifies the specific resources of affect (emotional evaluation), judgement (assessment of character and behaviour), and appreciation (assessment of objects and processes) through which speakers build and defend self-characterisations [Martin & White 2005, p. 42–48]. Ethos analysis, in Charteris-Black's political-rhetorical application, examines the metaphorical and evaluative resources through which speakers construct their credibility, moral authority, and leadership persona [Charteris-Black 2005, p. 10–16]. These three frameworks together provide the analytical vocabulary

for documenting how Thatcher and May construct self-image in language and how media institutions respond to, reinforce, and sometimes subvert those constructions.

Thatcher's self-image construction is among the most extensively analysed in British political history, and its linguistic foundations are more complex and internally differentiated than the "Iron Lady" label that became its dominant cultural shorthand suggests. The Iron Lady designation – originally coined in Soviet propaganda in 1976 and subsequently embraced by Thatcher herself – captures one dimension of the self-image: the dimension of uncompromising conviction, hard ideological clarity, and resistance to pressure. This dimension is linguistically realised through high-commitment modal verbs, personal commissives that bind the speaker to named positions, the refusal of syntactic hedging at critical policy moments, and the systematic use of first-person singular Subject when making ideological claims. The "Lady's Not for Turning" address to the 1980 Conservative Party Conference is the canonical text for this dimension: *"You turn if you want to. The lady's not for turning"* [Thatcher 1980] – a sentence whose pragmatic force lies not merely in its content but in its third-person self-reference, which enacts a kind of public self-mythologisation. By referring to herself as "the lady" rather than "I," Thatcher performs a split between her personal self and her political persona, treating the latter as a stable, named entity whose convictions are not subject to ordinary first-person doubt or revision. This is a positioning move of considerable sophistication: it presents conviction not as personal stubbornness but as a property of the political figure – of "the lady" as a public institution – and in doing so makes the label harder to contest without appearing to contest the person who now embodies it [Charteris-Black 2005, p. 47–53].

Yet the Iron Lady persona represents only one side of Thatcher's self-image architecture. Alongside the conviction politician, Thatcher consistently constructed a second, softer image grounded in domesticity, personal biography, and what she presented as ordinary human values – a construction that served the important pragmatic function of managing the double bind by claiming feminine credibility without relinquishing authority. Her No. 10 remarks of 1979 perform this balance

with notable precision. The St. Francis quotation – invoking harmony, truth, and hope – frames the new Prime Minister's aspirations in the language of spiritual service rather than political command. The biographical passage that follows it is even more revealing: *"Well, of course, I just owe almost everything to my own father. He didn't give me much, but what he did, he gave me most unselfishly"* [Thatcher 1979, p. 2]. This is a positioning move that situates the speaker within a domestic and personal narrative of gratitude and earned merit rather than within the register of professional political achievement. The adverb *just*, as noted in the pragmatic analysis of Chapter 3.1, functions as a modesty marker that constructs a controlled humility; but the biographical content itself frames the authority being demonstrated – the authority of the first female Prime Minister – as the natural outgrowth of personal character developed in a family environment, which is both an appeal to female experience and a claim to meritocratic legitimacy. Martin and White's appraisal framework identifies this as a combined affect and judgement resource: the speaker positions herself as someone whose emotional roots are in the ordinary world of family and duty, while the lexical judgement vocabulary (*unselfishly*, *almost everything*) constructs the source of her authority as genuine human virtue rather than political ambition [Martin & White 2005, p. 45–48].

The Royal Society speech of 1988 adds a third dimension to Thatcher's self-image: the technically credentialled insider who can speak science to scientists. The opening self-deprecating reference to discontinued laboratory work (*"I confess that I am quite pleased that I didn't continue my work on glyceride monolayers"* [Thatcher 1988, p. 1]) performs what Bucholtz and Hall term "adequation" – the construction of sufficient sameness between the speaker and her audience to support alignment and credibility, without claiming complete identity [Bucholtz & Hall 2005, p. 599–600]. The speaker positions herself as a Fellow of the Royal Society who chose a different path, not as a politician condescending to visit a scientific community she is external to. This is a self-image claim that goes beyond the conviction politician and the domestic meritocrat: it adds the dimension of intellectual authority and cross-domain competence, which was a consistent element

of Thatcher's broader political persona throughout her tenure. Table 3.6 maps the three primary self-image dimensions across Thatcher's texts and identifies the specific linguistic resources through which each is constructed.

Table 3.7. *Thatcher's self-image dimensions: linguistic resources and pragmatic positioning*

Self-image dimension	Primary text(s)	Linguistic resources	Positioning effect
Conviction leader / Iron Lady	No. 10 remarks 1979; Commons 1982; Conference speeches	High-commitment commissives (" <i>I'll strive unceasingly</i> " [Thatcher 1979, p. 1]); third-person self-reference (" <i>the lady's not for turning</i> "); absent hedges at ideological pivot points; minimal use of concessive framing	Constructs an immovable political persona whose positions are matters of principle rather than negotiation
Domestic meritocrat / ordinary woman	No. 10 remarks 1979; interview contexts	Personal biographical narrative (" <i>I just owe almost everything to my own father</i> " [Thatcher 1979, p. 2]); affect vocabulary of gratitude and humility; St. Francis spiritual frame; self-deprecating modesty markers	Claims feminine credibility and relatable origins without relinquishing professional authority; manages the double bind through biographical narrative
Intellectual and technical authority	Royal Society 1988; interviews on economic policy	Self-identification as Royal Society Fellow; insider scientific credentials; policy claims grounded in technical vocabulary; metaphors of expertise (" <i>our planetary experiment</i> " [Thatcher 1988, p. 3])	Bridges authority across science and politics; positions speaker as uniquely qualified to govern science policy from inside the knowledge community
Constitutional steward / accountable PM	Commons Falklands statement 1982	Procedural declaratives; first-person accountability pledge (" <i>I shall report further</i> " [Hansard 1982, col. 700]); evidential hedges for unverified claims	Positions speaker as answerable to Parliament and procedurally correct; authority is institutional rather than personal in crisis moments

Theresa May's self-image construction operates in a substantially different register, and the differences are illuminated by the four decades of social and communicative change separating the two leaders, as well as by the specific political circumstances – particularly the Brexit process – that defined May's tenure. Where Thatcher's dominant self-image was built on conviction and ideological clarity, May's primary self-image claim was one of public service, duty, and national responsibility. This distinction is visible at the level of lexical choice: May's resignation speech of 2019 is saturated with the vocabulary of service and obligation ("*the privilege of serving,*" "*the national interest,*" "*public service*" [May 2019, para.

1–10]), while Thatcher's threshold speech foregrounds personal conviction and commitment (*"I'll strive," "I'll do," "I believe"* [Thatcher 1979, p. 1–2]). The pragmatic difference between these vocabularies is significant: a service-based self-image positions the speaker as the instrument of a purpose that precedes and exceeds her person, which is simultaneously more modest and potentially more self-protective – if the outcome of service is imperfect, the servant is less personally implicated than the conviction leader who has personally staked her identity on a specific programme.

May's service-based self-positioning is linguistically realised through several consistent pragmatic strategies. The first is what might be called the duty narrative – the explicit framing of political choices as obligations owed to the electorate rather than as expressions of personal preference. In her Brexit address of 2017, the mandate of the referendum is treated as a command that the Prime Minister is bound to execute: *"MPs asked the British people to take this decision. We put our faith in their judgement. They have put their faith in us to deliver. I will not let them down"* [May 2018, P11]. The reciprocal trust chain here positions May not as the agent of Brexit policy but as its obligated executor – a positioning that simultaneously asserts strong directional commitment and distributes the moral responsibility for the policy's outcomes across the democratic process rather than concentrating it in the speaker's person. This is a sophisticated self-image manoeuvre: May claims the authority of the mandate without becoming personally identified with the mandate's content in a way that would make her the primary target of opposition. Fairclough identifies this kind of responsibility distribution through grammatical structure – particularly through passive constructions and nominalised obligations – as a characteristic feature of "technologised" political discourse, in which personal agency is managed through strategic grammar [Fairclough 2001, p. 69–72].

The second consistent element of May's self-image construction is the claim to authentic ordinariness – a claim to represent the experience of people who are not in the political class and whose everyday concerns are the proper subject of government. This claim is realised through the concrete social lexis of her

conference speeches: *"Everyone who loves our great country, who works hard for their family, who works hard for their children and their grandchildren"* [May 2019, para. 11]. The syntactic structure here – a relative clause series that enumerates qualities of ordinary citizenship – constructs a social portrait with which the speaker implicitly identifies: she is the Prime Minister who recognises and represents these people, which makes their values her values. Ridge-Vesty's feminist pragmatic analysis of May's PMQs performance identifies a related strategy: May systematically references real individuals, named constituencies, and concrete material problems in a way that presents her leadership as grounded in embodied social experience rather than abstract ideology, which is a feminised presentation of political competence that coexists with, and partially offsets, the institutional authority she exercises [Ridge-Vesty 2025, p. 112–115]. The Judith Baxter study of May's leadership positioning in Brexit negotiations further documents how May constructs a "collaborative leadership style" characterised by listening, consultation, and procedural respect – a style that is linguistically realised through hedged assertions, open acknowledgement of uncertainty, and frequent appeals to collective decision-making [Baxter & Wallace 2022, p. 7–10].

The third element of May's self-image strategy is more complex and involves the negotiation of feminist identity within a conservative ideological framework. The Cambridge study of women, language, and politics documents May's tendency to position herself as a feminist in critical gendered moments – most notably in explicit statements about her commitment to women's representation and to pay equality – while simultaneously adhering to conservative gender norms in other registers, producing what the study describes as a "feminist but" positioning: progressive in principle but constrained in practice [Childs & Webb 2012, cited in Pearce 2019, p. 148–150]. This self-positioning creates a distinctive pragmatic tension in May's discourse: she claims feminist credentials through explicit ideological assertion while her domestic/service vocabulary, her avoidance of aggressive confrontation in debate, and her consistent self-presentation as a servant of others rather than a protagonist of change all reproduce, at least in part, the

feminised register that the double bind imposes on women leaders. Table 3.8 provides a structured mapping of May's self-image dimensions and their linguistic realisations, parallel to Table 3.2.1 for Thatcher.

Table 3.8. *May's self-image dimensions: linguistic resources and pragmatic positioning*

Self-image dimension	Primary text(s)	Linguistic resources	Positioning effect
Dutiful public servant	No. 10 2019; Brexit address 2017	Service vocabulary (" <i>the privilege of serving</i> ," " <i>the national interest</i> " [May 2019, para. 1–10]); duty narrative (" <i>I will not let them down</i> " [May 2018, P11]); first-person in relational rather than agentive processes	Positions speaker as executor of a mandate rather than originator of ideology; distributes moral responsibility for outcomes across democratic process
Authentic representative of ordinary people	Conference speeches 2016–2018	Concrete social lexis (" <i>works hard for their family</i> ," " <i>children and grandchildren</i> " [May 2019, para. 11]); direct second-person address to citizens; biographical exempla from casework and constituency visits	Claims democratic legitimacy through social recognition; presents leadership as grounded in embodied experience rather than abstract programme
Collaborative and procedurally respectful leader	Brexit negotiations discourse; PMQs	Hedged assertions; acknowledgement of opposing views; appeal to collective decision-making; conditional framing (" <i>if we come together</i> " [May 2018, P3])	Constructs leadership as consensual and listening-based; manages authority through collaborative rather than hierarchical register
"Feminist but" identity claimer	Critical gendered moments; interviews	Explicit feminist assertions combined with conservative domestic vocabulary; self-positioning as role model constrained by institutional norms	Negotiates the double bind by claiming feminist credentials while operating within traditional political norms; produces ideological tension visible in reception

The media reception of Thatcher's self-image was shaped by the novelty of a female Prime Minister in 1979 and by the extraordinary force of her political personality, which proved to be both an opportunity and a liability in terms of representation. Blair Williams's comparative analysis of newspaper coverage of Thatcher's and May's first weeks in office documents what she calls "gendered mediation" – the systematic practice by which media representations of women politicians emphasise gender above professional capacity, reinforcing rather than reflecting the gendered assumptions of the political field [Blair Williams 2021, p. 390–392]. For Thatcher, the initial media coverage was characterised by a

combination of condescension (the "grocer's daughter" framing that emphasised class origins), novelty (the first woman PM), and genuine ideological engagement. The novelty framing is itself a gendered mediation: it treats the appointment of a female Prime Minister as a remarkable exception to the political norm – which is implicitly male – rather than as a natural democratic outcome, and it therefore reinforces the assumption it appears to celebrate [Blair Williams 2021, p. 394–396]. Thatcher's own response to this gendered mediation was pragmatically sophisticated: she consistently refused to frame her leadership in gendered terms while simultaneously and selectively invoking domestic and feminine imagery in biographical and personal registers. The effect was to make the gendered framing available for positive use (the competent woman who combines family values with national leadership) while denying it access to her professional political register, where conviction and authority were presented as simply political rather than specifically female.

The dominant metaphors through which the media eventually fixed Thatcher's public image – the Iron Lady, the Iron Maiden, Britannia, and the handbag-wielder – are revealing in their internal contradictions. The Iron Lady and Iron Maiden images draw on hardness, metallic rigidity, and inorganic resistance to external force: they are metaphors of masculinised toughness applied to a female body, which resolves the double bind not by transcending the gendered binary but by repositioning the speaker on the masculine side. Charteris-Black's analysis of Thatcher's metaphor systems documents how the iron imagery was embraced because it provided a resolution to the cultural dissonance of female authority: by becoming linguistically metallic, Thatcher's persona acquired a kind of post-gendered authority claim that made her authority feel natural in the masculine register of British political culture [Charteris-Black 2005, p. 48–50]. The handbag metaphor, by contrast, reinserted the domestic feminine object into the political arena but transformed it into a weapon of political force ("handbagging" as a verb for aggressive negotiating behaviour), which achieved a different kind of resolution: it domesticated the exercise of power in a way that made it simultaneously

recognisable as feminine and impressive as political authority. These media-constructed metaphors were not merely journalistic shorthand; they actively shaped public interpretation of Thatcher's linguistic performances, creating a lens through which any assertive or combative statement was read as an instance of the Iron Lady persona rather than evaluated on its specific content.

The King's College London study comparing the newspaper coverage of Thatcher's and May's early prime ministerial weeks found that, contrary to what might be expected given four decades of feminism and changing media norms, the gendered mediation of May was measurably more intense than that of Thatcher across the same mainstream press outlets [Blair Williams 2021, p. 397–400]. Where Thatcher's early coverage engaged substantially with her ideology and programme, May's early coverage was heavily dominated by appearance commentary – most notoriously the repeated focus on her kitten heels, which became a journalistic synecdoche for her entire public persona in a way that has no equivalent in the coverage of any male Prime Minister [Blair Williams 2021, p. 400–401]. The kitten heel trope is a striking example of what Murray calls the "symbolisation" of female political identity: a single visual detail is extracted from the leader's physical presentation and treated as the interpretive key to her entire political character, collapsing the complexity of her policy agenda and rhetorical strategy into a fashion choice. This is a more extreme form of gendered mediation than anything Thatcher encountered, and its intensification despite (or because of) the passage of time reflects what Sreberny and van Zoonen identify as the growing "infotainment" pressures of commercial media, which incentivise personalisation, spectacle, and embodied imagery at the expense of substantive policy coverage [Sreberny & van Zoonen 2000, p. 12–14].

May's media reception was further complicated by the Brexit context, which produced what several scholars have described through the lens of the "glass cliff" phenomenon – the tendency for women and minority leaders to be appointed to positions of institutional power precisely when those positions are most precarious and most likely to end in failure [Ryan & Haslam 2005, p. 81–84]. May became

Prime Minister in the immediate aftermath of the Brexit referendum, inheriting a political crisis created primarily by her male predecessors and colleagues, and much of the initial media framing of her appointment adopted what Lawless and Fox call the "headmistress" narrative: the competent, disciplined woman summoned to restore order after male irresponsibility. Baxter and Wallace's corpus-based analysis of media coverage of May's Brexit leadership documents how this initial framing – which was broadly favourable and gender-positive in its attribution of competence – gradually inverted as the negotiations faltered, with the same gendered resources (emotional control, loyalty to institutional process, feminine deference to collective decision-making) being progressively reframed from assets into deficiencies [Baxter & Wallace 2022, p. 12–15]. The self-image that May had constructed – a dutiful, procedurally correct, patient public servant – was reread through a negative lens as rigidity, inability to "do the deal," and a lack of the masculine decisiveness that was implicitly treated as the norm for successful leadership [Baxter & Wallace 2022, p. 14–16].

The most visible moment in which this reframing became explicit was May's resignation speech of July 2019 and the media coverage of the tears visible in her delivery. The analysis conducted by Murray of the gendered mediations of May's emotional display at resignation documents fourteen distinct coding categories in newspaper coverage, including focus on feminism, appearance, political legacy, and Brexit, with the dominant interpretive frame being simultaneously sympathetic (unexpected proof of genuine emotion) and pathologising (confirmation of the emotional instability presumed to make women unreliable leaders) [Murray 2020, p. 8–11]. The pragmatic dimension of May's own linguistic choices at that moment is significant: her speech – as analysed in Chapters 2.1 and 3.1 – is characterised by controlled institutional grammar, passive achievements, collective ownership through *our*, and a carefully maintained formal register. The tears were not a linguistic event but a somatic one, and their media interpretation overrode the careful linguistic self-management of the speech text itself, which demonstrates the limits of linguistic self-image construction in a media environment that treats the female

political body as a legible text in its own right. Table 3.9 documents the dominant media framings of both leaders with associated linguistic evidence and scholarly sources.

Table 3.9. *Dominant media framings of Thatcher and May and their linguistic correlates*

Leader	Dominant media framing	Linguistic correlate in primary texts
Thatcher	Iron Lady: metallic conviction, post-gendered authority	High-commitment commissives; third-person self-reference; absent hedges at ideological pivots; formal constitutional register [Thatcher 1979, p. 1–2; Hansard 1982, col. 700]
Thatcher	Grocer's daughter: class origins, meritocratic narrative	Biographical domestic narrative; modesty markers with paternal gratitude; evaluative understatement [Thatcher 1979, p. 2]
Thatcher	Handbag-wielder: domesticated aggression	Assertive directives in formal registers; controlled confrontation in PMQs; passive-aggressive institutional reframing [Hansard 1982, col. 700]
May	Headmistress: competent female authority in crisis	Service vocabulary; duty narrative; procedural declaratives; collaborative hedging [May 2019, para. 1–10; May 2018, P11]
May	Kitten-heel wearer: feminised appearance above substance	Bodily self-presentation (non-linguistic); symbolic media extraction of accessory as political synecdoche
May	Maybot / robotic / evasive	Formulaic response patterns in PMQs; high degree of hedging and evasion; repetition of fixed-phrase policy formulas
May	Emotional resigner: femininity confirmed by tears	Controlled formal resignation speech text overridden by somatic display; passive achievements; institutional register [May 2019, para. 6–12]

The "Maybot" framing deserves separate analytical attention because it arose directly from linguistic behaviour – specifically from May's performance in Prime Minister's Questions – and therefore provides the most direct point of contact between linguistic self-image construction and media reception. Ridge-Vesty's feminist pragmatic study documents that May's PMQs style is characterised by a high degree of what she calls "pre-formulated evasion" – the repeated deployment of fixed political phrases, return questions, and topic displacement strategies that avoid the specific argumentative content of opposition questions [Ridge-Vesty 2025, p. 117–120]. This behaviour is pragmatically rational: in a high-stakes adversarial context where any specific concession or admission can be used against the Government, formulaic non-answers minimise discursive risk. But the media framing that resulted – the robot metaphor – transformed a strategic communicative choice into a characterological attribute, presenting May's evasion not as political calculation but as an inherent robotic quality, an absence of authentic human speech.

The pragmatic irony here is significant: May's most carefully managed communicative strategy produced the media representation that most undermined her claim to authentic ordinariness, which was simultaneously her most important self-image resource. Goffman's dramaturgical framework captures this dynamic precisely: when the gap between front-stage performance and backstage self becomes legible to an audience, the performer's credibility collapses not because the performance is false but because the performance has been revealed as a performance [Goffman 1959, p. 141–142].

Thatcher's management of her PMQs image followed a structurally different pattern. Wooten's analysis of Thatcher's rhetorical strategies in the Falklands period documents a systematic approach in which potential face-threatening questions from the opposition were handled through what he calls "institutional reframing" – the conversion of personal accountability questions into procedural information-provision that respects parliamentary norms while maintaining complete control of the speaker's own discursive positioning [Wooten 2009, p. 339–341]. The difference from May's evasion strategy is grammatical as well as rhetorical: Thatcher's reframings produce complete, syntactically coherent declarative responses that appear to be direct answers because they are formally assertive, while May's responses were often more evidently formulaic because they contained recognisable repetitions of set phrases. The media reception of these different strategies is instructive: Thatcher was rarely accused of evasion because her responses had the grammatical form of substantive engagement, even when their informational content was carefully controlled. May was accused of evasion more explicitly because her responses more visibly reproduced fixed formulations, a perceptual difference that has as much to do with the surface grammatical appearance of the response as with its actual informational yield.

One further dimension of self-image construction that distinguishes the two leaders is the use of narrative self-positioning – the stories each speaker tells about herself, her origins, her motivations, and her understanding of political purpose. Thatcher's biographical self-narrative is remarkably consistent across her career: it

centres on the Grantham grocer's daughter who was taught by her father that individual enterprise, self-reliance, and domestic virtue are the foundations of political community. This narrative performs several self-image functions simultaneously. It grounds her authority in non-elite experience, which counters the charge that Conservative politics represents only the wealthy. It asserts a female lineage of domestic competence that connects individual household management to national economic management – one of Thatcher's most consistent metaphorical moves, condemned by economists but rhetorically effective in constructing a common-sense link between the familiar scale of the family budget and the unfamiliar scale of the national deficit. And it positions her political convictions as earned through experience rather than inherited through privilege, which is simultaneously a class claim and a meritocratic claim. Charteris-Black identifies this biographical narrative as Thatcher's most sustained "ethos myth" – a foundational story that provides the moral warrant for all subsequent policy claims by grounding them in an authenticated personal character [Charteris-Black 2005, p. 44–46].

May's self-narrative is more fragmented and less consistently performed. Where Thatcher's Grantham story provided a single coherent origin myth, May's personal self-presentation drew on several different registers – the vicar's daughter (moral seriousness and community service), the grammar school girl (meritocracy and work ethic), and the woman who navigated a political career without the support networks traditionally available to male politicians. The vicar's daughter framing is particularly significant because it provides a moral grounding for May's duty-based self-image: the claim to serve in the national interest is more credible from a speaker whose biographical formation emphasises communal obligation over personal advancement. But this narrative was never as explicitly or consistently deployed as Thatcher's grocery-shop story, which meant that May's self-image lacked a single anchoring myth around which audiences could organise their interpretations of her specific choices. Ridge-Vesty notes that May's PMQs performances show her most comfortable when making claims grounded in concrete social experience – specific individuals, named cases, verifiable outcomes – and least comfortable when required

to articulate a broad ideological narrative that could serve as the equivalent of Thatcher's conviction politics [Ridge-Vesty 2025, p. 122–124]. Table 3.10 maps the biographical self-narrative strategies with their evaluative and positioning dimensions.

Table 3.10. *Biographical self-narrative and ethos myth in Thatcher and May*

Element	Thatcher	May	Pragmatic difference
Origin narrative	Grantham grocer's daughter: individual enterprise, self-reliance, domestic virtue [Thatcher 1979, p. 2]; consistently repeated across career	Vicar's daughter, grammar school meritocrat: communal service, moral seriousness; less consistently deployed	Thatcher: single anchoring myth provides coherent moral warrant; May: fragmented narrative sources produce less stable ethos foundation
Key biographical detail in speech	<i>"I just owe almost everything to my own father. He didn't give me much, but what he did, he gave me most unselfishly"</i> [Thatcher 1979, p. 2]	Concrete social exempla from constituency and casework; named individuals representing policy values [Ridge-Vesty 2025, p. 113]	Thatcher: familial origin story as political character warrant; May: case-study grounding as democratic legitimacy claim
Moral authority basis	Personal conviction derived from formative values; convictions as inherited but earned principles	Duty to democratic mandate; service to "the people" as the primary ethical obligation	Thatcher: character-based moral authority; May: mandate-based moral authority
Gender strategy in narrative	Selective invocation: domestic/feminine in personal register, absent in professional/ideological register	More consistent feminine register throughout; service and listening as leadership style claim; explicit feminist self-identification in specific moments	Thatcher: strategic gender register-switching; May: gender more consistently present, producing greater vulnerability to gendered media reframing

Perhaps the most analytically significant conclusion that emerges from comparing Thatcher's and May's self-image strategies is that the effectiveness of a political self-image depends not only on the sophistication of its construction but on the degree of coherence between the persona projected in language and the persona attributed by media institutions working within their own generic and commercial constraints. Thatcher achieved a relatively high degree of coherence between her self-image and her dominant media image – not because the media were politically sympathetic (they were not uniformly so) but because the Iron Lady persona that media constructed was interpretively compatible with the conviction politician that

Thatcher constructed in language. The metallic rigidity of the Iron Lady was a somewhat caricatured but recognisably continuous version of the uncompromising commissive speaker of Thatcher's texts. When Thatcher's texts said "the lady's not for turning," the media metaphor of iron was available to encode that claim in a memorable, reproducible cultural shorthand. The self-image and its media reception achieved a kind of resonance that amplified each other, even where the specific content of that image was contested or satirised.

May's self-image experienced a more damaging incoherence. The persona she constructed – dutiful servant, patient negotiator, representative of ordinary people – was incommensurable with the Maybot trope that media eventually fixed on, because patience and procedural fidelity, when filtered through a media economy that prioritises spectacle, decisiveness, and personality, read as inertia and inauthenticity. The glass cliff literature is relevant here: as Baxter and Wallace's analysis shows, the qualities that enabled May's appointment – reliability, procedural competence, gender credibility in a crisis – became the qualities that were most easily pathologised when the crisis proved intractable [Baxter & Wallace 2022, p. 16–18]. The linguistic consequence is that May's carefully constructed service-based self-image was progressively undone not by any specific rhetorical failure but by the structural mismatch between the communicative situation she inherited and the self-image resources available to her. Table 3.11 synthesises the comparative self-image and media reception profiles for both leaders as a comprehensive overview of the subsection's analysis.

Table 3.11. *Comparative synthesis: self-image construction and media reception*

Dimension	Thatcher	May
Primary self-image claim	Conviction leader: personal moral authority through committed political positions; meritocratic biographical grounding	Dutiful public servant: authority through mandate obligation; collaborative and procedurally respectful leadership
Double bind strategy	Register-switching: domestic and feminine in biographical register, authoritative and post-gendered in professional register	Consistent service register: feminised authority claim presented as universally appropriate; explicit feminist self-identification in targeted moments
Biographical ethos myth	Single coherent Grantham narrative: individual enterprise, domestic	Fragmented narrative sources; vicar's daughter and grammar-school meritocrat; case-study grounding more frequent than

	virtue, meritocratic success [Charteris-Black 2005, p. 44]	origin myth deployment [Ridge-Vesty 2025, p. 122]
Dominant media framing	Iron Lady (post-gendered metallic conviction); Handbag-wielder (domesticated aggression); Grocer's daughter (meritocratic origin) [Blair Williams 2021, p. 394–396]	Headmistress (competent female in crisis); Maybot (formulaic evasion); Kitten-heel wearer (feminised appearance); Emotional resigner (somatic femininity overriding textual control) [Murray 2020, p. 10; Blair Williams 2021, p. 400]
Self-image / media coherence	High: Iron Lady compatible with conviction politician of texts; media metaphors amplify rather than contradict self-constructed persona	Low to moderate: service-based self-image incoherent with Maybot and kitten-heel framings; glass cliff context progressively undermined self-image resources
Key linguistic indicator of self-image	First-person commissives; high-commitment boosters; third-person self-mythologisation; domesticity combined with professional authority	Service vocabulary; relational first-person; collective possessives; duty narrative; acknowledgement of complexity and constraint
Media reception shift over tenure	From novelty fascination to ideological polarisation; Iron Lady hardened into permanent cultural icon	From headmistress-in-crisis to Maybot to emotional woman; self-image progressively dismantled through gendered reframing [Baxter & Wallace 2022, p. 14–16]

The comparative evidence reviewed in this subsection supports three broad conclusions about self-image construction and media reception as dimensions of political linguistic analysis. Linguistic self-image construction is a powerful but ultimately partial resource: it shapes the interpretive possibilities available to media and audiences, but it cannot fully control the metaphors that media institutions generate from the raw material of a political career, since those institutions operate according to their own genre norms, commercial pressures, and cultural assumptions about leadership and gender. The double bind imposes systematically different challenges on Thatcher and May as a function of their political circumstances rather than simply as a function of their individual communicative choices: Thatcher's political context rewarded the Iron Lady resolution of the bind, while May's post-Brexit context offered no comparably coherent gendered authority narrative. Finally, the relationship between self-image and media reception is not unidirectional: the Iron Lady became a resource that Thatcher actively managed and partly reauthored in her own texts, while the Maybot framing was resisted but never decisively overcome, demonstrating that the pragmatic resources available for managing media construction of political identity are unequally distributed across communicative

situations that are themselves structured by gender, timing, and the nature of the political challenge each leader inherited.

Conclusions

The comparative analysis conducted in Chapter 3 establishes the pragmatic and self-representational profiles of both leaders across the dimensions of speech act distribution, politeness and face management, Gricean maxim exploitation, presupposition and implicature, deictic framing, and persuasion strategy, and situates those profiles within a structured account of how each leader's self-image was constructed in language and received by British media institutions.

The speech act analysis reveals a fundamental asymmetry in the illocutionary architectures of the two leaders. Thatcher's dominant mode is the commissive – she binds herself to named positions and future actions through explicit first-person declarations – which produces an authority that is simultaneously intensely personal and institutionally legitimate, but carries the pragmatic risk of direct individual accountability. May's illocutionary profile is more contextually differentiated: in resignation mode, expressives and assertives dominate, performing the genre obligations of institutional gratitude; in policy-address mode, deontic directives attached to abstract institutional subjects issue binding programme conditions while suppressing personal confrontation; in conference oratory, assertives and explicit directives alternate in a mobilisation arc calibrated to party audience expectations. This differentiation reflects not lesser rhetorical sophistication but a more pronounced genre-sensitivity – May's pragmatic register shifts systematically and purposefully across communicative situations in a way that is more dramatically variable than Thatcher's relatively stable authority-plus-modesty balance.

The politeness and face analysis confirms that both speakers are skilled managers of multiple face relationships under conditions of public scrutiny, but that their strategies differ fundamentally in architecture. Thatcher's positive politeness resources – collective aspiration, self-deprecating humour, biographical domesticity – coexist with high-commitment boosters and categorical authority claims, producing a balance of controlled modesty and declared resolve that manages the double bind through strategic register-switching. May's positive politeness work is

predominantly other-directed: extended gratitude rituals, experiential alignment markers, and references to named individuals performing solidarity with the audience. Where Thatcher's face-threatening moves target abstract positions and unnamed fallacies, May's most confrontational rhetorical acts are organised through label competition and presupposition battles – as most clearly visible in the People's Vote contest – which attack opponents' claims without producing the direct interpersonal coerciveness that would compromise her service-based self-image.

The self-image analysis demonstrates that both leaders construct multi-dimensional public personas through specific and consistent linguistic resources, but that the coherence between self-constructed image and media-attributed image differs substantially. Thatcher develops three principal self-image layers – conviction leader, domestic meritocrat, and technical authority – which prove broadly compatible with the Iron Lady, grocer's daughter, and handbag-wielder framings that media institutions eventually fix on; the self-image and its media reception achieve a degree of mutual amplification even where the content is contested or satirised. May's primary self-image claim – dutiful public servant, collaborative proceduralist, representative of ordinary people – is structurally incoherent with the Maybot and kitten-heel framings that media progressively impose, because patience, procedural fidelity, and controlled institutional grammar, when filtered through a media economy that prioritises spectacle and decisiveness, are reread as inertia, formulaism, and emotional evasion. The glass cliff literature provides the theoretical context for this incoherence: the qualities that enabled May's appointment in a post-referendum crisis became, as the crisis proved intractable, the qualities most available for pathologisation through gendered media logics.

Three broad conclusions emerge from the chapter's evidence. First, linguistic self-image construction is a powerful but structurally limited resource: it shapes the interpretive possibilities available to media and audiences but cannot fully control the cultural metaphors that media institutions generate from the raw material of a political career under conditions of institutional and commercial constraint. Second, the double bind operates as a structuring condition that produces systematically

different challenges for Thatcher and May as a function of their specific political circumstances – Thatcher's context rewarded the Iron Lady resolution, while May's post-Brexit context offered no comparably coherent gendered authority narrative. Third, the pragmatic difference between the two leaders is most precisely understood not as a difference in rhetorical sophistication or political commitment, but as a difference in the architecture of accountability – in the grammatical and pragmatic distribution of risk that each speaker's discursive profile entails – and in the degree of fit between that distribution and the mediated environment in which it was received.

CONCLUSION

The present thesis set out to construct comparative linguistic profiles of Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May as political communicators, examining their respective language choices at lexical, grammatical, stylistic, pragmatic, and self-representational levels within a coherent framework of political discourse analysis, image formation, and gendered communication. The four objectives formulated in the Introduction have been systematically addressed, and the findings allow for a series of generalisations that extend beyond the individual profiles of the two leaders and bear on broader questions of political language, authority, and gender in contemporary public discourse.

The first objective – to establish the theoretical framework of political discourse analysis, political image formation, and the concept of linguistic personality – was fulfilled through the synthesis of foundational contributions from Fairclough, Scammell, Entman, Chilton, Jamieson, and Ukrainian scholars Slavova and Horbenko. The analysis established three core premises. Political image is not an ornamental supplement to "real" politics but a constitutive discursive mechanism through which authority is legitimised, contested, and reproduced across mediated contexts. The concept of the linguistic personality – understood through Slavova's multi-layered typology of individual, collective, symbolic, and virtual dimensions – was confirmed as the core analytical category for studying how political self-image is constituted in discourse and circulated through media. Political image was further established as a co-production: it emerges from the intersection between a speaker's own strategic discourse choices and the framing, selection, and agenda-setting practices of media institutions. These premises defined the thesis's central methodological commitment – to treat linguistic description and social explanation as inseparable rather than sequential analytical activities.

The second objective – to identify and document the dominant lexical and grammatical features of both leaders' discourse, with attention to personal deixis, modality, voice, agency, and nominalisation – produced a detailed and internally

differentiated picture of how both speakers construct authority through clause-level choices. The most significant finding is that the two leaders package political authority through structurally opposite grammatical mechanisms. Thatcher concentrates agency in active-voice, first-person declarative clauses bound to high-commitment modal verbs, making responsibility explicitly personal and traceable: the grammar places *I* in the Subject position of commitment clauses, anchors obligation in personal volition, and uses formal futurity (*shall*) and punctual necessity (*must*) at operational pivot points. May distributes authority across institutional collectives, passive constructions, and nominalisations, producing a grammar of shared governance in which achievements are presented as institutional outcomes rather than results of personal action. In policy-address mode, however, May deploys a systematically different grammatical profile – iterative deontic *must* attached to abstract institutional Subjects – that issues binding obligations with maximum force while minimising interpersonal confrontation. Both profiles constitute sophisticated, situationally motivated grammatical architectures rather than expressions of personal temperament.

The third objective – to analyse the stylistic devices and rhetorical organisation characteristic of both leaders across parliamentary address, civic speech, and party conference oratory – revealed consistent divergence in register, evaluative scale, and rhetorical economy. Thatcher's evaluative vocabulary concentrates in the moral and volitional register, with evaluative intensity delivered through adverbial amplifiers attached to action verbs; her rhetoric favours complex syntactic subordination that binds multiple propositions into unified moral arguments, and her anaphoric parallelism is propositional and value-binding. May's evaluative vocabulary concentrates in the ceremonial and affective register, carried through nominal group packaging; her rhetoric alternates between paratactic vocative accumulation in gratitude contexts and tightly enumerated policy sequencing in programme contexts, with anaphoric parallelism that is cumulative and socially acknowledging. Both leaders demonstrate precise genre-sensitivity: their rhetorical

strategies shift systematically across communicative situations, and each closure strategy is calibrated to the demands of its specific genre.

The fourth objective – to compare the pragmatic profiles of both leaders and to draw conclusions about the architectures of political authority each developed, including their implications for the study of gendered political communication – produced the thesis's most integrative findings. The comparative speech act profiles established a fundamental illocutionary asymmetry: Thatcher's dominant mode is the commissive, binding herself to action through traceable personal pledges, while May's dominant mode shifts between expressive in resignation contexts and assertive-plus-deontic-directive in policy contexts. Politeness analysis revealed that both leaders invest systematically in face management but through structurally different strategies: Thatcher builds solidarity through cultural tradition, institutional insider claiming, and controlled self-deprecation before reasserting authority, while May builds solidarity through experiential alignment, extended gratitude rituals, and borrowed moral authority through historical exempla. The analysis of presupposition documented how both speakers embed entire ideological frameworks into the background of their utterances – Thatcher loading the discourse with presupposed social conservatism through the St. Francis frame, May converting the referendum result into a non-negotiable discursive premise through the carefully chosen verb *honouring* – protecting those frameworks from the scrutiny that explicit assertion would invite.

The examination of self-image construction and media reception demonstrated that both leaders construct multi-dimensional public identities that cannot be reduced to dominant media labels. Thatcher simultaneously maintains the dimensions of conviction politician, domestic meritocrat, and intellectually credentialled institutional insider – a complexity considerably greater than the Iron Lady shorthand suggests. May's self-image is built on the dimensions of dutiful public servant, authentic representative of ordinary citizens, and procedurally correct collaborative leader. Both profiles were subjected to systematic gendered mediation: Thatcher's image eventually crystallised around post-gendered metaphors of

metallic hardness that resolved the double bind by masculinising her authority, while May's coverage was progressively dominated by intensified appearance-focus and embodied commentary that reproduced the double bind under changed media conditions. The glass cliff framework explains how the qualities that enabled May's appointment became, as the Brexit crisis proved intractable, the qualities most available for pathologisation through gendered media logics.

The overarching conclusion to which all the evidence converges is that the pragmatic difference between Thatcher and May is best understood not as a difference in rhetorical ability but as a difference in the architecture of political accountability. Thatcher's architecture is personal and visible: commitments are traceable, agency is grammatically foregrounded, and moral authority is attached directly to first-person volitional language. May's architecture distributes accountability through institutional grammar and collective agency constructions, offering pragmatic flexibility at the cost of a corresponding vulnerability when institutions fail to deliver. Both architectures proved simultaneously to be each leader's greatest discursive asset and her most consequential communicative liability in the specific political conditions each inhabited. These findings have direct implications for political communication education, media literacy training, and for future comparative research in gendered political discourse – and they demonstrate the productive cross-tradition fertilisation achievable through systematic engagement between Anglo-American frameworks of SFL and CDA and Ukrainian traditions of linguistic personology and contextualised discourse analysis.

SUMMARY

Кваліфікаційна робота присвячена порівняльному лінгвістичному аналізу політичного дискурсу Маргарет Тетчер і Терези Мей — двох жінок, які обіймали посаду Прем'єр-міністра Великої Британії. У центрі дослідження перебувають мовний профіль, індивідуальний стиль, риторична організація, прагматичні стратегії та медійна рецепція політичного образу обох лідерок. Робота розглядає політичне мовлення не лише як засіб передавання інформації, а як інструмент конструювання влади, легітимації політичного авторитету, розподілу відповідальності та формування публічного іміджу в умовах гендерно маркованого політичного простору.

Актуальність теми зумовлена зростанням ролі політичної комунікації в сучасних демократичних суспільствах, де публічна влада дедалі частіше сприймається через медійно опосередковані мовні образи. Політичні лідери постають перед громадянами насамперед через промови, інтерв'ю, заяви, парламентські виступи, партійні конференції та медійні фрагменти, у яких граматичні, лексичні, стилістичні й прагматичні засоби формують уявлення про їхню компетентність, рішучість, відповідальність, емоційну близькість або дистанційованість. Особливої ваги ця проблема набуває у випадку жінок-політиків, оскільки їхня комунікативна поведінка оцінюється в межах подвійного нормативного тиску: з одного боку, від них очікують владності, контролю й політичної рішучості, а з іншого — відповідності гендерним уявленням про стриманість, емоційність, доступність і соціальну м'якість. Саме тому порівняння Маргарет Тетчер і Терези Мей дає змогу простежити, як дві жінки-прем'єрки в різні історичні періоди вибудовували політичний авторитет через мову та як їхні мовні стратегії були сприйняті й переосмислені медіа.

Метою роботи є побудова порівняльних мовних профілів Маргарет Тетчер і Терези Мей як політичних комунікаторок та виявлення того, як їхні лексичні, граматичні, стилістичні, прагматичні й саморепрезентаційні засоби

формують різні моделі політичної влади. Об'єктом дослідження є політичний дискурс Маргарет Тетчер і Терези Мей як простір взаємодії мовної форми, політичної ідентичності, гендеру та медійного образу. Предметом дослідження є конкретні мовні, риторичні й прагматичні засоби, за допомогою яких обидві лідерки конструюють власні політичні образи та моделі відповідальності.

Матеріалом дослідження став корпус із 14 автентичних політичних промов різних жанрів, зокрема вступні й завершальні заяви біля Даунінг-стріт, парламентські виступи, партійні промови, програмні звернення щодо Brexit та інші тексти, що репрезентують різні комунікативні ситуації. Такий добір матеріалу дав змогу уникнути одновимірного опису стилю та простежити, як мовний профіль кожної лідерки змінюється залежно від жанру, політичного моменту, аудиторії й інституційного контексту.

Методологічну основу роботи становлять системно-функціональна лінгвістика, критичний дискурс-аналіз, теорія мовленнєвих актів, теорія оцінки, феміністський критичний дискурс-аналіз і концепція мовної особистості в українській лінгвоперсонології. Системно-функціональний підхід дав змогу простежити, як через граматичні структури розподіляються агентність, відповідальність і модальність. Критичний дискурс-аналіз забезпечив зв'язок між текстовими характеристиками й ширшими соціальними відносинами влади. Прагматичний аналіз дав змогу визначити домінантні мовленнєві акти, стратегії ввічливості, пресупозиції, імплікатури та способи управління обличчям. Феміністський дискурс-аналіз дозволив розглянути політичне мовлення Тетчер і Мей у контексті гендерних обмежень і медійних інтерпретацій жіночої влади.

У першому розділі роботи було обґрунтовано теоретичну базу дослідження. Політичний імідж розглянуто не як зовнішній або декоративний елемент політики, а як дискурсивний механізм, через який влада стає впізнаваною, прийнятною, оскаржуваною або легітимною. Було визначено, що політичний імідж формується внаслідок взаємодії мовних стратегій самого

політичного актора, медійного фреймінгу та інтерпретацій аудиторії. Особливе значення мають лексичний добір, оцінна лексика, граматичне розміщення суб'єкта дії, наративна організація, займенникові структури, повторювані мовні формули та медійно придатні вербальні маркери. Концепція мовної особистості дала змогу розглядати політика як багаторівневий дискурсивний конструкт, що поєднує індивідуальну, колективну, символічну й віртуальну, тобто професійно сконструйовану, складові.

У другому розділі було здійснено порівняльний аналіз лексико-граматичних і стилістичних характеристик мовлення Маргарет Тетчер і Терези Мей. Встановлено, що обидві лідерки конструюють політичну владу через принципово різні граматичні механізми. Тетчер концентрує агентність у першій особі однини, активних конструкціях і модальних формах високого ступеня зобов'язання. Її мовлення часто вибудовується навколо особисто маркованого суб'єкта, який бере на себе політичну й моральну відповідальність. Така граматики створює образ лідерки, яка персонально відповідає за дію, рішення й політичний курс. Натомість Мей частіше розподіляє відповідальність через інституційні колективи, пасивні конструкції, номіналізації та абстрактні граматичні суб'єкти. Її політична мова формує образ не стільки особистої волі, скільки процедурної, колективної та інституційно врегульованої влади.

Стилістичний аналіз засвідчив, що Тетчер тяжіє до морально-вольового регістру, у якому оцінна інтенсивність реалізується через дієслова дії, категоричні формули, складні синтаксичні побудови й риторичне поєднання цінностей, обов'язку та політичної мети. Її стиль спрямований на створення образу переконаної, принципової та інтелектуально дисциплінованої лідерки. Мей, навпаки, частіше використовує церемоніальний, афективний і процедурний регістри. Її мовлення поєднує подяку, визнання заслуг інших учасників політичного процесу, апеляцію до служіння країні та структуроване викладення політичних умов. Для Мей характерне чергування емоційно

стриманих звернень із переліковою, послідовною, адміністративно організованою аргументацією. Обидві лідерки демонструють високу жанрову чутливість: їхні мовні засоби змінюються залежно від того, чи йдеться про вступ на посаду, кризову заяву, програмний виступ, партійну промову або завершення політичної кар'єри.

У третьому розділі було проаналізовано прагматичні особливості мовлення Тетчер і Мей, а також співвідношення саморепрезентації та медійної рецепції. Порівняння мовленнєвих актів показало фундаментальну іллокутивну асиметрію. Домінантним прагматичним режимом Тетчер є комісив: вона прив'язує себе до майбутньої дії через персональні зобов'язання, обіцянки й декларації відповідальності. Такий спосіб мовлення створює прозору архітектуру підзвітності, у якій політична дія має конкретного мовного носія. Для Мей характерна інша структура: у промовах відставки переважають експресиви, пов'язані з подякою, визнанням і ритуальним завершенням повноважень, тоді як у програмних виступах, особливо щодо Brexit, посилюються асертиви й деонтичні директиви, спрямовані не безпосередньо на людей, а на інституційні умови, домовленості або політичні принципи. Це дозволяє їй висловлювати зобов'язання й політичну твердість без прямої персональної конфронтації.

Аналіз стратегій ввічливості й управління обличчям показав, що Тетчер вибудовує солідарність через культурну традицію, інституційне самопозиціонування, контрольовану самоіронію та подальше повернення до авторитетної позиції. Мей формує солідарність через досвідове зближення з аудиторією, подячні ритуали, посилення на служіння, спільні цінності та моральний авторитет історичних прикладів. Обидві лідерки активно використовують пресупозиції: Тетчер вводить у дискурс консервативні соціальні й моральні рамки як уже дані, а Мей перетворює результат референдуму щодо Brexit на безальтернативну політичну передумову, яку не потрібно щоразу доводити. У такий спосіб обидві політикині захищають ключові ідеологічні рамки від прямого заперечення.

Окрему увагу приділено саморепрезентації та медійній рецепції. Доведено, що публічні образи Тетчер і Мей значно складніші, ніж усталені медійні ярлики. Тетчер не зводиться лише до образу «залізної леді»: її мовний профіль поєднує риси політичині переконання, представниці меритократичного середнього класу, інституційної інсайдерки й інтелектуально компетентної лідерки. Мей також не можна редукувати до образів «роботизованої», «сухої» або «процедурної» політичині: її саморепрезентація базується на ролях сумлінної державної службовиці, представниці звичайних громадян і колаборативної лідерки, яка намагається зберегти процедурну коректність у ситуації політичної кризи.

Водночас обидва образи зазнали гендерно маркованої медійної обробки. Образ Тетчер був стабілізований через метафори твердості, металу, безкомпромісності й постгендерної влади, що фактично маскулінізувало її авторитет і допомогло частково нейтралізувати подвійний гендерний тиск. Образ Мей, навпаки, у медіа дедалі частіше підпорядковувався фокусуванню на зовнішності, тілесності, емоційності, «роботизованості» та нібито браку автентичності. У випадку Мей особливо показовим є те, що прагматично раціональні стратегії уникнення ризику, повторення формул і процедурна обережність були медійно переосмислені як ознаки особистої холодності або нещирості.

Головний висновок роботи полягає в тому, що відмінність між Маргарет Тетчер і Терезою Мей слід розуміти не як різницю в риторичній майстерності, а як різницю в архітектурі політичної підзвітності. Тетчер створює персональну й видиму модель відповідальності: її агентність граматично виразна, зобов'язання простежувані, а моральний авторитет безпосередньо пов'язаний із першою особою та вольовою модальністю. Мей формує інституційно розподілену модель відповідальності: її граматика переносить дію на колективні суб'єкти, процедури, угоди та інституції, що забезпечує комунікативну гнучкість, але водночас робить її вразливою у випадку провалу цих інституційних механізмів. Обидві моделі були ефективними у своїх

політичних умовах, однак кожна з них стала також джерелом комунікативного ризику.

Отже, дослідження підтверджує, що мовні засоби політичного дискурсу виконують не лише описову, а й владну, ідеологічну та іміджетворчу функції. Лексика, граматика, стиль, прагматика й медійна рецепція разом формують політичну особистість як публічно впізнаваний дискурсивний образ. Порівняння Тетчер і Мей демонструє, що жіноче політичне лідерство у Великій Британії реалізується в умовах сталих гендерних обмежень, хоча конкретні способи адаптації до них істотно різняться. Практичне значення роботи полягає в тому, що її результати можуть бути використані в курсах політичної лінгвістики, критичного дискурс-аналізу, гендерних студій, медіалінгвістики та міжкультурної комунікації, а також у подальших дослідженнях політичного іміджу й мовної особистості жінок-лідерок.

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