

Languaging diversity 2017

Culture wars and class conflicts: elites and the left behind. Discourses of identity and allegiance in the era of Trump and Brexit.

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Abstract

Class is a demographic and socio economic description used by sociologists and economists to describe groups of people. The *2013 State of the Nation Report to Parliament* claimed that the class effect is bigger than the gender effect. Such classifications and the conflict between the categories came to the fore recently in Britain and America, though in discussions about voting patterns class terms were used, in the campaigns themselves a greater variety of lexis was salient, among them divisions and allegiances expressed in terms of *élites*, *the political class*, *the left-behind*, *the forgotten*, *deplorables*. Identity politics, class conflict and culture wars surfaced remaining as yet unreconciled, with *us* and *them* discourses abounding.

It is not so much the fact of the existence of diversity, division and inequality which is of interest to the investigating linguist but rather the way certain diversities are construed and constructed by the press. Questions of social groupings, diversity and discrimination have been investigated many times in corpus studies. Baker (2004, 2010); Baker and McEnery (2005), Baker et al (2008), Duguid (2015). Gabrielatos and Baker (2008) Khosravinik (2010), Krishnamurthy (1996), Mautner (2007), Morley and Taylor (2012), Partington (2012); Taylor (2013). The question of class has been touched on by corpus research in studies of the BNC, mostly in terms of language features being preferred by one class or another (e.g. Rayson et al 1997, Berglund 2000, Deutschmann 2006, Xiao and Tao 2007) while Duguid (2013) devoted a study to representations of class in the British broadsheets over 20 years.

What a corpus analysis does best is uncover the subtle and pervasive meanings that construct identity. Corpora can provide a lens for viewing attitudes. This study is a corpus assisted comparative case study on the ways in which class itself is represented, using a search-word initiated investigation. and aims to look at the way in which class is handled in a range of corpora (a million words from broadsheets and tabloids, presidential and referendum campaign speeches and aggregator websites (Breitbart, Leave.Eu) between 2013-2017 built up in the context of the Brexit referendum and American elections.

Keywords: CADS (corpus assisted discourse studies) class, news discourse, Breitbart, Brexit, Presidential elections 2016.

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