

It's about people: identifying the focus of parliamentary debates through a corpus-driven approach

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is two-fold: (1) to demonstrate the usefulness of corpus-driven methods in determining a research focus, and (2) to show that 'people'-focussing is a key feature of UK and Ghanaian parliamentary debates. Identifying one's research focus in discourse analysis after collecting a large amount of data can be challenging. It is relatively easier to pinpoint the items and focus of the research when the researcher employs a corpus-based method, since he or she normally has a theory to validate, refute or refine. However, when the researcher has assembled his or her data without having in advance specific theories, features, themes and concepts relating to the discourse that he or she intends to study, it becomes difficult to identify the essential issues on which to concentrate and explore. Perhaps this is even more challenging when dealing with parliamentary debates data given the wide-ranging subjects and alternative courses of action deliberated by parliamentarians. In such a situation, a corpus-driven method can be highly useful. As part of a major study of parliamentary discourse, this paper demonstrates how a corpus-driven method can help in determining one's research focus in the study of parliamentary debates.

Keywords: corpus-driven approach, parliamentary discourse, people, research focus, the people's concern.

1. Introduction

Using UK and Ghanaian parliamentary data, this paper expounds the application and usefulness of corpus-driven approaches in determining one's research focus. Through the application of CFL Lexical Feature Marker and

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Wordsmith Tools, the paper demonstrates that parliamentary debates revolve mainly around people and their needs and interests, such as the youth and employment and education, and the elderly and welfare benefits. The paper discusses each of the following in turn:

- (i) The complexity of discourse analysis, in an attempt to justify the need for corpus methods in discourses analysis;
- (ii) The two major strands of corpus approaches – corpus-based and corpus-driven approaches;
- (iii) Some relevant literature on corpus approaches to parliamentary debate studies;
- (iv) The description of the data for the study;
- (v) The determination of the research focus through the application of CFL Lexical Feature Marker and Wordsmith Tools; and,
- (vi) The concerns of people as a socio-political issue in parliamentary debates, and this is followed by the conclusion.

2. The complexity of discourse analysis

Discourse analysis concerns itself with both ‘linguistic and nonlinguistic social practices’ (Schiffrin *et al.*, 2001: 1), including ‘discursive practices associated with particular social practices’ (McEnery and Wilson, 2001: 114). It also involves revealing the socio-psychological characteristics of people. Thus, discourse analysis encompasses a broad spectrum of interests and foci, making the study of discourse such a complex enterprise. For instance, a researcher, depending on his or her interest, may examine cohesion in various discourse domains, including the media (for example, news reporting), law (for example, judgments), politics (for example, campaign speeches), the classroom (for example, teacher–student interaction), among others. The features the discourse analyst can study may be predetermined features of discourse such as turn-taking (in conversation analysis), hedges (in academic and business discourse), and implicatures in mundane everyday conversations (see Yule, 2010: 141–51). Again, from a critical perspective, one may explore social and political issues such as power, gender, racism and ideology in an institutional context. The plurality and complexity of the features of discourse available to the researcher make it difficult for the researcher to choose which characteristics of discourse to study. The discourse analyst has to specify the particular features and themes of the specific text that is being investigated as well as the principles that can determine the relevance or nature of the specification. As Brown and Yule (1983: 50) put it: ‘[a] problem for the discourse analyst must be [...] to decide when a particular feature is relevant to the specification of a particular context and what degree of specification is required’. Determining the relevant features and principles can be daunting, especially if it is done manually by visual identification.

Jørgensen and Phillips' (2002: 9) analogy of 'a flood associated with a river overflowing its banks' illustrates some of the difficulties associated with discourse analysis. According to them, the rise in the water levels leading to the floods is a material fact, but when people begin to ascribe meanings to it, it becomes a matter of discourse. While most people would consider this occurrence as a 'natural phenomenon', they would not necessarily describe it in the same way. Depending on their backgrounds and interests, people would draw on various categories of explanation:

Some [for example, meteorological experts] would draw on a meteorological discourse, attributing the rise in the water level to an unusually heavy downpour. Others [for example, climate specialists] might account for it in terms of the El Niño phenomenon, or see it as one of the many global consequences of the 'greenhouse effect'. Still others [for example, political analysts or opposition politicians] would see it as the result of 'political mismanagement', such as the national government's failure to commission and fund the building of dykes. Finally, some [for example, religious people] might see it as a manifestation of God's will, attributing it to God's anger over a people's sinful way of life or seeing it as a sign of the arrival of Armageddon.

(Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 9)

These distinctive ways of ascribing meaning to the floods are significant because they demonstrate how different people see the world, and each points to a different course of action to dealing with the problem. Suppose that parliamentarians deliberated on the possible cause of the floods, and the transcript of the debates was given to a discourse analyst to identify which ascribed meaning mostly typified the deliberations. How does the discourse analyst arrive at his or her conclusion, considering that the different ascribed meanings 'exist side by side or struggle for the right to define truth' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 13)? The analyst could attempt a manual identification of the relevant issues, which is likely to pose a major challenge, as it is highly possible that he or she might overlook the most important features that characterise the document or text. This is when corpus linguistic approaches become highly relevant, as they are 'capable of identifying the regularities that seem to be inherent in language use in a way that would not be possible, or would be very time-consuming, with the naked eye' (Bayley and San Vicente, 2004: 240).

3. Corpus linguistic approaches

Corpus linguistic approaches to the study of discourse have gained in popularity in recent times. As Baker (2010a: 93) states: '[c]orpus linguistics is an increasingly popular field of linguistics which involves the analysis of (usually) very large collections of electronically stored texts, aided

by computer software'. Corpus linguistics (CL) is simply defined as 'the computer-aided analysis of very extensive collections of transcribed utterances or written texts' (McEnery and Hardie, 2012: i). According to Hunston (2011: 4; see also Biber *et al.*, 1998: 4), CL has 'basic shared concerns', which:

include collecting quantities of text in electronic form so that they are open to data-manipulation techniques. Such techniques range from finding a research term and observing its immediate environments (key-word-in-context or concordance lines); to calculations of relative frequency (as in, for example, collocation studies); to annotation for such categories as word class, grammatical function or semantic class; and frequency calculations based on such categories.

(Hunston, 2011: 4)

The key issue here is the computerised (as opposed to manual) linguistic data analysis. CL is said to employ two main approaches: corpus-based and corpus-driven approaches. The corpus-based approach refers to 'a methodology that avails itself of the corpus mainly to expound, test or exemplify [existing] theories and descriptions' (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 65) 'in order to validate', 'refute' or 'refine' them (McEnery and Hardie, 2012: 6). In other words, items of interest are often specified in advance. The problem with the advance specification of theories and descriptions is that it can lead to bias in research findings (Groom, 2010). The corpus-driven approach 'claims instead that the corpus *itself* should be the sole source of our hypothesis about language', that is, the theory must be derived from the corpus (McEnery and Hardie, 2012: 6), without predetermined assumptions and expectations (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). Thus, the corpus-driven approach is more inductive, allowing 'the linguistic constructs themselves [to] emerge from [the] analysis of a corpus' (Biber, 2012: 1). For Hunston (2011: 91) the corpus-driven approach represents a 'serendipitous method', 'just "noticing" something that occurs frequently in concordance lines', while the corpus-based approach is a 'rigorous method' that attempts 'to quantify a concept that has no single realisation'. McEnery and Hardie (2012: 6, 147–53), however, reject 'the binary distinction between corpus-based and corpus-driven linguistics' and think that '*all* corpus linguistics can justly be described as corpus-based', as they believe that the distinction between the two is misleading. I take the view that both approaches can be useful in several ways. I share Baker's (2010b: 19) view that '[a]s corpus linguistics is a collection of methods, researchers need to determine which ones are most applicable in addressing their research questions, along with deciding which software will be used'. For example, when applying a corpus-based method, it is easier to pinpoint the focus of the research since the researcher already has a theory which he or she wants to validate or otherwise. However, when the researcher has assembled his or her data without having in mind any specific theories, features, themes and concepts

of discourse that he or she wants to study, it becomes difficult to identify the essential issues on which to focus and explore. This is when the corpus-driven approach becomes significant. In a study of paradigmatic relations in German, Storjohann (2005) points out that ‘paradigmatic structures which intuitively seemed common have proven to be unexpectedly uncommon: structures that were predicted as central or typical could not be verified or proved to be statistically insignificant’. This means that a researcher’s reliance on prior assumptions about language may lead to wrong judgments about his or her data. Thus, allowing the corpus to drive home the theory and our judgments about the corpus is essential.

4. Some corpus-based/corpus-driven studies of parliamentary debates

Baker (2006) examines keywords in the House of Commons 2002 and 2003 debate on fox hunting in the UK. Using concordance analyses, he attempts to identify different discourses that speakers access in order to persuade others of their standpoints. He further explores ways in which keyness can be used to find salient language differences. He concludes that a keyword list is useful for identifying lexical differences between texts. Using a corpus-driven approach, Bachmann (2011: 77) studies the language of the civil partnership debates in both Houses of the UK Parliament. By grouping keywords thematically and analysing them ‘in context, scrutinising collocations and concordance lines in order to see how (recurrent) uses of language construct gay and lesbian relationships’, Bachmann (2011: 77) states that ‘[d]ifferent, rather contradicting, discourses are drawn on by different parties in the debates [...] and] that discourses are often used to frame a line of argumentation’.

Employing a corpus-linguistic approach, Bayley *et al.* (2004) investigate lexical choices used by English, German and Italian MPs to communicate fear and reaction to fear in parliamentary debates. They find that all three groups of MPs have the propensity to express the fears of other people, and to speak of fear in relation to ‘propensity’ and ‘stability’. Whereas the UK MPs see integration as an external threat, the German and Italian MPs fear the failure of integration. Linguistically, Italian MPs are said to use low-intensity words to evoke danger and fear.

Bayley and San Vicente (2004) employ a corpus approach to analyse how UK and Spanish MPs talk about work. The study deploys concordance tools to examine how collocation patterns characterise ‘work’ and ‘to see whether there are any divergences and/or convergences between English and Spanish’ (Bayley and San Vicente, 2004: 240). They conclude that concordancing software allows for identifying certain linguistic details that cannot be observed with by simple perusal. They also state that the distribution of the lexis of ‘work’ in British and Spanish parliamentary discourse is very similar, even though the idea of work as ‘a “commodity” [...] realised through such collocations as *work force*, *labour market*, *labour*

costs and *cheap labour* are far more frequent in the British parliament than in the Spanish parliament (Bayley and San Vicente, 2004: 266). They further state that British ‘MPs rarely talk about the relationships between employers and employees [...] or the trade unions that represent them, nor of a mediating role of government between the two’, which seems to suggest a disappearance of ‘the idea of a social contract’ from British political practice and parliamentary discourse (Bayley and San Vicente, 2004: 266). There is a significant link between the paper and this study, which also employs keywords and concordance tools in looking at the focus of UK and Ghanaian parliamentary debates.

Although the above-stated studies use corpus approaches to study parliamentary debates, none of them:

- (1) Employs a corpus-driven approach to identify, among various features, the most regular feature of parliamentary debates;
- (2) Explores the UK and Ghanaian parliamentary debates in a single study; or,
- (3) Explores the UK Queen’s Address and the Ghanaian State of the Nation Address debates.

This is what makes this study original and expands the frontiers of research into parliamentary discourse. The paper exemplifies the usefulness of corpus-driven methods in determining a research focus when dealing with (large) specialised corpora, or ‘discourses’ – that is, ‘sets of meanings and values which are associated with specific communities or institutions, and which are produced and reproduced through characteristic and often highly conventionalised linguistic choices’ such as parliamentary discourse (Groom, 2010: 59). Specifically, I demonstrate that references to *people* and *the people’s concern* are a characteristic feature of UK and Ghanaian parliamentary debates. By *the people’s concern*, I mean the sense of putting people’s interests at the forefront of policy – the idea that public policies should cater for the socio-economic wellbeing of the people.

5. The corpus data

The data for the study were already orthographically transcribed Hansards of the UK Queen’s Address debates (UK QADS),² and Ghanaian State of the Nation Address debates (GH SONADS) obtained from the Ghanaian parliament. The UK QADS are House of Commons debates on the Queen’s Speech, which is written by the government and ‘marks the formal start of the parliamentary year [and] sets out the government’s agenda for the coming session, outlining proposed policies and legislation’ (UK Parliament, 2015).

² These were obtained from: www.parliament.uk.

Administration	UK QADS	Tokens	Administration	GH SONADS	Tokens
TB (Labour) (1997–2007)	2006 (November) six debate sessions	347,000	Kufuor (NPP) (2001–2008)	nine debate sessions (2005–2006, 2008)	152,000
GB (Labour) (2007–2010)	2009 (November) six debate sessions	338,000	Mills/Mahama (NDC) (2009–2015)	twenty-seven debate sessions (2009–2013, 2015)	464,000
DC (Conservative) (2010–2016)	2013 (May) six debate sessions	327,000			
Total:		1,012,000	Total:		616,000

Table 1: UK QADS and GH SONADS data.

The UK QADS dataset includes debates of 2006, 2009 and 2013 from the periods of Prime Ministers Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and David Cameron, respectively. These periods were deliberately chosen because I wanted one session each from the three Prime Ministers, while bearing in mind the periods and size of the Ghanaian data (see below) in order to make them comparable. The UK data consisted of about 1,012,000 tokens (see Table 1). The GH SONADS are parliamentary debates on the president’s State of the Nation Address (SONA), an annual address delivered to parliament and, by extension, the people of Ghana, on the socio-politico-economic wellbeing of the country in compliance with Article 67 of the Ghanaian constitution. The GH SONADS data, comprising about 616,000 tokens, were from 2005 to 2008 of the J.A. Kufuor (New Patriotic Party, or NPP) and 2009 to 2015 of the J.E.A Mills/J.D Mahama (National Democratic Congress, or NDC) administrations. (Note that the data exclude 2007 and 2014 because they were unavailable.) Table 1 shows the sizes of the two parallel corpora. These were the raw tokens from the Hansards but cleaned to exclude ‘stretches of text which do not correspond to any uttered statements in the actual proceedings’ such as headers and time (Mollin, 2007: 191). However, metatextual information indicating particular forms of behavior (for example, *interruption*) were maintained as they were useful for some other levels of analysis in the main study from which this paper is taken.

The GH SONADS data were the only ones available, which accounts for the imbalance in the data between the Kufuor (25 percent) and Mills/Mahama (75 percent) administrations. However, it does not affect the analysis because I do not compare and contrast the two administrations. Note also that the size of the UK data is larger than the size of the Ghanaian data. It results from differences in time allocation. Whereas each of the three UK QADS lasted for six days, with each day covering about eight hours of debating; the Ghanaian debates for 2005 to 2010 lasted for three days each, and 2011 to 2013 lasting for six days each, with each day being allocated about three hours on average.

After acquiring the data, the major question that needed to be answered was: what important features and discourse themes characterised the data and could be the focus of the main study? In other words, my purpose was to identify the pivotal subject around which the parliamentary debates revolved.

6. Determining the research focus: MPs' debates revolve around *people*

I employed the use of two different computational tools – CFL Lexical Feature Marker and Wordsmith Tools – to manipulate and examine the data to find out which features, trends, themes and concepts characterised the parliamentary debates that I was investigating. Such initial scrutiny of the data prevents superimposing previous linguistic theories or descriptions on the data and researcher bias (Groom, 2010: 60). This was done through ‘CFL content’ and ‘core’ words (using CFL Lexical Feature Marker) and ‘keyword’ analysis (using Wordsmith Tools). Keyword analysis is done by ‘comparing the frequencies of wordforms in a corpus of specialised texts [here, the parliamentary datasets] against the frequencies of the same wordforms in a larger and more general reference corpus [for example, the British National Corpus (BNC) and the International Corpus of English-Ghana (ICE-Ghana)]’³ (Groom, 2010: 60). The UK QADS corpus was compared with the BNC and the GH SONADS was compared with the ICE-Ghana. The purpose was to identify which words, and, by extension, themes most strongly typified the parliamentary debates.

6.1 Use of CFL Lexical Feature Marker and Wordsmith Tools

I used CFL Lexical Feature Marker version 5A (Woolls, 2011) and Wordsmith Tools (Scott, 2012) to systematically manipulate and explore the ‘aboutness’ of the datasets, ‘what the text [data] is about’ (Bondi, 2010: 7–8; Scott, 2010: 43–44; and Warren, 2010: 113), that is, themes and concepts which were key in the two datasets. The exploration of the data revealed ‘people’ as a significant concept in both the UK QADS and GH SONADS. The use of *people* here includes a wider view of people than the word itself and includes such related words and hyponyms as: *country, nation, men/women, children, youth, constituent(s)/constituency, Ghana, Ghanaian(s), UK/United Kingdom, (Great) Britain and British*, as

³ The BNC is a 100-million-word corpus of both written and spoken British English from a wide range of sources (including extracts from newspapers, academic books, popular fiction, and conversations from formal business or government meetings, informal social gatherings, and radio talk shows). The ICE-Ghana is a corpus of Ghanaian written and spoken English of about one-million words, which was created as part of the ICE project.

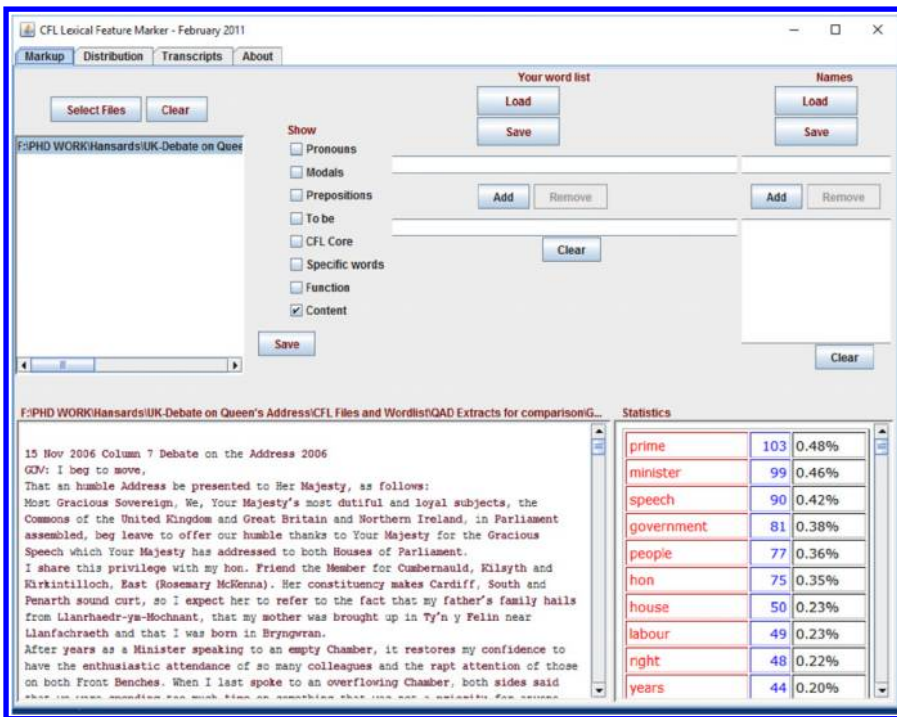


Figure 1: Screenshot of some content words from the UK QADs.

used in the debates. I will expand on this point below, but will first describe how the data were processed.

CFL Lexical Feature Marker is a piece of software that identifies built-in lists of words in a dataset: it can identify pronouns, modals auxiliaries, prepositions, forms of the verb ‘to be’, CFL core words, function and content words and their frequencies in the dataset. It marks words in the data according to these types, without doing grammatical parsing. It allows the user to enter, identify and highlight any list of words to enhance the analytical strength (Woolfs, 2011). In other words, the software allows the researcher to observe which vocabulary items are frequent and important in a particular dataset. For example, Figure 1 is a screenshot of content words with their frequencies in sample data from the UK QADs. On the bottom right are the first ten content words with their percentage frequencies. For instance, *prime* (as in Prime Minister) occurs 103 times (0.48 percent of words in the sample data), *minister* appears 99 times (0.46 percent), *speech* 90 (0.42 percent), *government* 81 (0.38 percent), *people* 77 (0.36 percent), and so on. The identification of which words are frequent in the corpus gives an idea, at least superficially, of what the corpus is about, including themes and concepts that are pronounced in it.

Another significant feature of CFL Lexical Feature Marker is that it allows the user to enter the names of conversants in a dataset and then

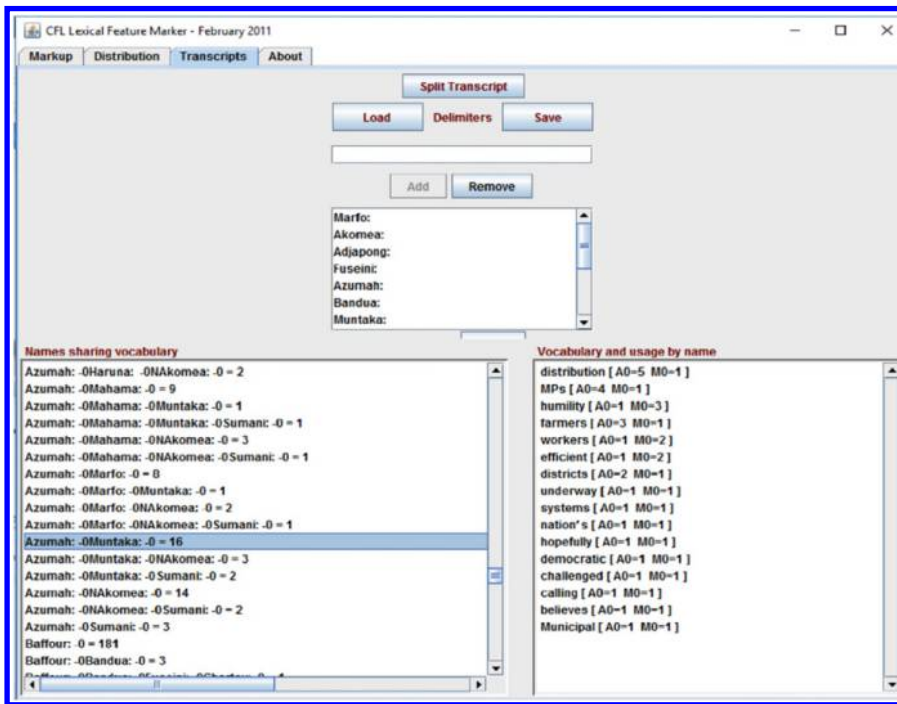


Figure 2: Screenshot of Azumah’s word sample shared with other MPs.

mark up the words of each of the conversants using the Transcript tab (see top left) and the Delimiters tab (see middle box). This feature enabled me to identify the vocabulary of government and opposition MPs and their frequencies. It involved running the programme after marking the starting point of each government or opposition MP’s debate transcript with his or her name followed by a colon (for example, Marfo:, Akomea:, Adjapong:, Fuseini: and Azumah:). The programme then indicates the vocabulary used by each MP, including those that are unique to each MP and those shared across the debates and their frequencies. Figure 2 exemplifies this process: it is a screenshot of Azumah’s vocabulary sample which she shares with the other MPs named in the screenshot. A word is shared if it is used at least once by each of the MPs involved. For example, the word *distribution* (see right box) is used five times by Azumah and once by Muntaka.

Clicking on a line in the left window, as shown in the blue highlighting, displays the words in the right window. For example, Figure 2 shows that Azumah shares with Muntaka the sixteen words in the right window. Azumah also shares fourteen words with Nakomea (Line 14, left hand box), nine words with Mahama (Line 2), three with Sumani (Line 16), and so on.

CFL Lexical Feature Marker could not handle large datasets. Therefore, using selection based on my judgement (Fraenkel *et al.*, 2012: 100, 94), I created samples. There were fourteen and nine transcripts from government and opposition MPs in the GH SONADS and the UK QADS,

	GH SONADS			UK QADS		
	Word	Freq.	Percent	Word	Freq.	Percent
1	speaker	703	1.87	prime	103	0.48
2	president	403	1.07	minister	99	0.46
3	madam	400	1.06	speech	90	0.42
4	state	186	0.49	government	82	0.38
5	<i>nation</i>	176	0.47	<i>people</i>	77	0.36
6	address	156	0.41	hon	75	0.35
7	<i>country</i>	154	0.41	house	50	0.23
8	feb	142	0.38	labour	49	0.23
9	said	112	0.30	right	48	0.22
10	col	103	0.27	years	44	0.21
11	government	94	0.25	<i>country</i>	43	0.20
12	<i>people</i>	94	0.25	member	43	0.20
13	houe	92	0.24	new	42	0.20
14	cent	82	0.22	said	42	0.20
15	<i>Ghana</i>	74	0.20	today	39	0.18

Table 2: The first fifteen most frequent CFL content words in GH SONADS and UK QADS

respectively. The GH SONADS sample was 37,637 words while the UK QADS sample was 21,347 words. Since I was interested in themes and characteristic concepts, I concentrated on content words (words to which independent meaning can be assigned, such as nouns, main verbs, adjectives and adverbs) and CFL ‘core words’. Core words are a list of commonly used content words for children (Woolls, 2011) or ‘a small set of simple words, in any language, that are used frequently across contexts’ (Baker, 2009; and Cross *et al.*, 1997). They are said to be the essential words that any learner or child needs that form the foundation of language (Lee, 2001: 256), which ‘dominate everyday speech for toddlers [...] preschoolers [...] adults [...] and seniors’ (Baker, 2009: 1). If large proportions of core words were frequent in MPs’ debates, then they were potentially significant as they pointed to the accessibility of the debates to the audience, since the fewer the core words, the more specialised the text is. I first ran ‘content words’ in both datasets and CFL returned 17,107 (45.45 percent) of 37,637 running words in the GH SONADS and 9,418 (44.12 percent) of 21,347 running words in the UK QADS, with *people*, *nation*, *country* and *Ghana* featuring in the top fifteen words (see Table 2).

Predictably, the majority of these words are parliamentary debate-genre specific, for example, from the Ghanaian data, *speaker*, *madam*, *president*, *state* (as in *state of the nation*), *address*, *house* and *hon.*; and from the UK data, *prime*, *minister*, *speech*, *government*, *hon.*, *house*, *labour*, *right*

	GH SONADS			UK QADS		
	Word	Freq.	Percent	Word	Freq.	Percent
1	<i>country</i>	154	0.41	<i>people</i>	75	0.35
2	said	112	0.30	right	46	0.22
3	<i>people</i>	91	0.24	<i>country</i>	45	0.21
4	going	61	0.16	said	42	0.20
5	time	56	0.15	new	41	0.19

Table 3: First five most frequent CFL core words in GH SONADS and UK QADS.

(for example, *right hon. friend*), *member(s)* and *parliament*. These are mainly conventional parliamentary address terms, and, therefore, their occurrence reflects the fact that the data consist of parliamentary interaction. Thus, the concept of *people* (reflected also in *nation*, *country* and *Ghana*) appears as the most frequent and important theme, since *people* is less predictable. These terms are more likely to elude a researcher who relies on visual observation. As Hanks (1990: 40) has noted, ‘natural languages are full of unpredictable facts [...] which a corpus may help us to tease out’.

In order to be certain about how frequent and significant *people* as a concept was, I re-processed the data using CFL core words. It returned 3,009 and 2,176 core words from the GH SONADS and UK QADS, respectively. Table 3 represents the first five most frequent CFL core words, representing 8 percent and 10 percent of core words in the GH SONADS and the UK QADS, respectively. The concept of *people* is reinforced by the appearance of *country* and *people* within the top three in both datasets.

As noted earlier, one other important feature of CFL Lexical Feature Marker is its ability to determine shared vocabulary among conversants. Thus, I ran the programme using the Transcript and Delimiters tabs and found that fifty-seven words were used by all fourteen MPs in the GH SONADS sample, while eighty-four words were used by all nine MPs in the UK QADS sample. Out of these, the first ten content words (Table 4) included *country*, *nation*, *people* and *Ghana* in the GH SONADS and *people* and *country* in the UK QADS. By hyponymic relation, that is, ‘the relationship of inclusion’ (Sekyi-Baidoo, 2002: 160; Yule, 2010: 118), where ‘the meaning of one word includes the meaning of another’ (Thakur, 1999: 41), we can say that the sense of each of the words *country*, *nation* and *Ghana* includes *people*. Again, by componential analysis (Sekyi-Baidoo, 2002: 21; and Thakur, 1999: 44), *country*, *nation* and *Ghana* have a semantic feature of *people*, as exemplified below:

(1) [...] we want to develop, and that means we want to improve the lives of *people*.

(GH Hansard: 8 Feb 2005/Col. 350)

	GH SONADS		UK QADS	
1	!! president		prime	
2	!! <i>country</i>	[Gv=98 Op=56]	minister	
3	!! address		!! government	
4	!! state		<i>people</i>	[Gv=38 Op=36]
5	!! <i>nation</i>	[Gv=27 Op=40]	speech	
6	!! <i>people</i>	[Gv=32 Op=59]	Labour	
7	!! house		right	
8	!! <i>Ghana</i>	[Gv=39 Op=35]	house	
9	now		years	
10	!! make		!! <i>country</i>	[Gv=3 Op=40]

Table 4: First ten CFL Content words shared by government and opposition MPs.

- (2) [The President] [...] is calling on support to deliver service to *the country*.
(GH Hansard: 3 March 2011/Col. 1991)
- (3) [...] decisions that would enhance the development and progress of *this nation*.
(GH Hansard: 26 Feb 2013/Col. 980)
- (4) [...] He is rather misleading *the whole Ghana*.
(24 Feb 09/Col. 690)
- (5) [...] It has seen an out-of-touch Chancellor, an isolated and absent Prime Minister, a decaying coalition and a weak Queen's Speech that cannot meet the aspirations of *our people*.
(UK Hansard: 15 May 2013/Col. 736)
- (6) [...] They have not been able to deliver their new deal promises to improve employment and training opportunities for *our teenagers*, and have resorted to endless reorganisation instead of tackling the real problems facing *our country*.
(UK Hansard: 16 Nov 2006/Col. 247)
- (7) [...] Corporation tax, the national insurance deal and so forth will get *Britain* booming. I have seen it in my local area, where, for example, Southend airport has boomed, generating over 500 jobs [...].
(UK Hansard: 13 May 2013/Col. 444)

The senses of delivering 'service to the country' (Example 2), 'development and progress of this nation' (Example 3) and 'misleading the whole nation' (Example 4) entail 'people', for it is people who benefit from the said

service delivery and the development and progress of the nation, just as it is the people who can be misled. Similarly, it is people who face ‘the real problems’ (Example 6) and, if Britain is booming (Example 7), it is the people who benefit from it. Therefore, the senses of ‘our country’ (Example 6) and Britain (Example 7) include ‘people’. In other words, the underlying reference for *the country*, *this nation*, *the whole Ghana*, *our country* and *Britain* is ‘people’.

The appearance of these words in the top fifteen and top five of CFL Content and CFL Core words respectively implies that, at least superficially, *people* is a significant term in the dataset. Table 4 shows that a word is used more by one speaker than another, with the differences between speakers shown in square brackets. The overall frequency of the use of *people* and *country* by UK opposition (Op) MPs was almost twice (0.36 percent) their use by government (Gv) MPs (0.20 percent). Whilst, in the Ghanaian data, the overall frequency does not show much difference between government (0.68 percent) and opposition (0.65 percent) MPs, the use of *people* by opposition MPs was almost twice (0.17 percent) that used by government MPs (0.09 percent).

The frequency differences in the use of these words, especially *country* and *people* (GH SONADS) and *country* (UK QADs) signal potential differences in the construction of the concept of *people* by the two groups of MPs. In their study of the 2010 British election debates, Woolls *et al.* (2011: 1) found that, even when answering the same questions, three Prime Ministerial contestants (Gordon Brown, David Cameron and Nick Clegg) said ‘different things and in distinctively different ways’. The authors ‘suggest that image perception, issue ownership, political commitment and candidate evaluation is strongly lexically constructed by the political leaders for the viewing and voting audience’. We can, therefore, hypothesise that government and opposition MPs differently construct *people* as a subject or theme in their parliamentary debates: government and opposition MPs are likely to say different things about the issues that affect the people.

While the use of the CFL Lexical Feature Marker is essential, there are some weaknesses that need commenting on. Woolls (2011) has stated that the CFL Lexical Feature Marker ‘can only show you what it has been asked to; it doesn’t “know” anything!’ Thus, he cautions about the over-reliance on the output of CFL Lexical Feature Marker since the flexibility of language does not always allow for accurate information on linguistic items. One needs to employ and exercise wider linguistic knowledge to make sure that all the necessary features have been identified. Therefore, by triangulation, that is, assessment of validity of information by cross-checking with different instruments (Fraenkel *et al.*, 2012: 426, 458), I used WordSmith Tools to run a keyword analysis of both the whole Ghanaian and UK datasets in order to test the sampling method for consistency, validate it and find the keyness value of *people* as a concept. This was important because a keyword analysis identifies words which occur with unusual frequency in a given text when compared with a reference corpus (Gabrielatos and Baker,

2008: 10; and Scott, 1997: 236). When the keyword analysis was run, *people* (with its hyponyms) was found to be key in the two datasets, as shown in Table 5.

The first twenty-two keywords in the GH SONADS are mostly specific to the parliamentary debate genre, which means that *nation*, *Ghana*, *country* and *Ghanaians* appear as the most significant words. Similarly, the majority of the first twenty-two keywords in the UK QADS are debate-specific. Thus, the keyword analysis confirms *people* (with the component *country*) as a significant subject. While *people* occurs at the 10th position, with a frequency of 0.43 percent, in the UK QADS, it is 91st, with a frequency of 0.23 percent, in the GH SONADS, making this difference worthy of investigation. Interestingly, the keyness value of *people* in the UK QADS is about four-times that of the British National Corpus (BNC) frequency (see Table 5, Columns 3 and 8 for Reference Corpus [or RC] frequency), while in the GH SONADS, it is about twice that of the International Corpus of English (ICE)-Ghana, which makes *people* especially key in both datasets. All the keyness values in both datasets have a *p*-value of 0.000000, which means that the probability that the keyness of a word is due to chance is zero. The foregoing indicates that the concept of *people* is a prominent discourse feature in MPs debates. This shows that there is substantial people-referencing and people-focussing, where MPs' debates largely revolve around the concerns of the people, and I discuss this in the next section.

6.2 The people's concern as a socio-political issue in MPs' debates

Having identified *people* as a significant concept in the two datasets, I explored the linguistic contexts in which *people* occurred, in order to find out what MPs said about *people*. I employed the Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) approach, using concordance lines and wordclouds through Wordsmith Tools. CADS is a discourse analysis approach which integrates into the analysis, where appropriate, techniques and tools of corpus-based and corpus-driven approaches (Partington, 2010; and Partington *et al.*, 2013). Concordance (see Figure 4) refers to 'a collection of the occurrences of a word-form, each in its own textual environment' (Sinclair, 1991: 33; see also McEnery and Wilson, 2001: 18). The textual environment consists of the collocates of the word-form in question – that is, words which occur 'in close proximity to a word under investigation' (Sinclair, 1991: 170). By using concordances, I was able to observe the use of *people* in context and to identify what MPs said about *people*. As well as using the concordance output, I could access the 'source text', by double clicking on a concordance line, which took me 'straight to the node within the context of the whole file' (Taylor, 2010: 224–45). This enabled me to go beyond just the collocates of *people* to observe the larger linguistic contexts in which *people* was used. A CADS analysis indicated that *people* occurred in the context of the concerns and interests of the people as

RANK	GH SONAD				UK QAD			
	Keyword	Freq. (percent)	RC freq. (percent)	Keyness	Keyword	Freq. (percent)	RC freq. (percent)	Keyness
1	Speaker	1.89		86,425.31	Hon	0.44	0.01	23,453.92
2	Mr	1.69	0.07	43,276.97	That	1.06	1.06	19,447.41
3	Madam	0.64		33,983.99	We	1.19	0.30	14,977.33
4	President	0.83	0.02	27,264.88	Gov't	0.52	0.06	13,827.43
5	Hon.	0.72	0.01	25,483.99	Speech	0.21		9,875.93
6	Nation	0.31		11,919.27	Member	0.20	0.02	6,085.08
7	Ghana	0.22		11,551.29	Bill	0.18	0.01	5,793.13
8	Address	0.30		9,397.00	Will	0.70	0.25	5,335.02
9	Excellent	0.16		9,153.75	Gentleman	0.12		5,242.19
10	That	2.53	1.06	8,587.95	People	0.43	0.12	4,983.24
11	Deputy	0.25		8,587.95	Our	0.36	0.09	4,528.66
12	Member	0.35	0.02	8,233.98	Am	0.19	0.03	4,528.66
13	We	1.13	0.30	7,659.96	Is	1.68	0.98	4,210.27
14	Interruption	0.15		7,168.37	Have	0.94	0.45	4,120.15
15	NDC	0.10		5,877.52	Secretary	0.15	0.02	4,041.05
16	Is	2.12	0.98	5,745.76	Friend	0.14	0.02	3,864.36
17	Country	0.30	0.03	5,033.13	I	1.32	0.74	3,809.51
18	I	1.67	0.74	4,994.04	Debate	0.11		3,751.74
19	Interruptions	0.09		4,326.81	Country	0.18	0.03	3,673.52
20	Am	0.26	0.03	4,196.38	EU	0.04		3,539.83
21	NPP	0.07		4,061.76	Not	0.87	0.43	3,498.48
22	Ghanaians	0.07		4,018.13	Queen	0.08		3,353.57
23	People	0.23	0.12	493.11				

Table 5: Keywords in GH SONAD and UK QAD.

those who need economic and social interventions for the improvement of their lives (what I refer to as ‘the people’s concern’). When talking about the concerns of the people, MPs classify the people with their corresponding socio-economic needs – a classification which is an important step towards making a fair distribution of state resources and social goods. The classification includes, in descending order: (UK) *young people, youth, pensioners, old/older/elderly* (which are age-based) and *disabled/vulnerable, local, (hard-)working, ordinary, poor/poorer/poorest* and *unemployed people* (which are condition-specific); (GH) *youth, young people* (age-based) and *poor, rural, local people, ordinary Ghanaian* and *working people* (condition-specific). The age-based classification considers age groups, while the condition-based classification depends on the circumstances of the people, as discussed in the sections below.

6.2.1 Rising youth unemployment, jobless young people

Young people are the most frequently mentioned group by UK MPs. I use *young people* to include *young workers, young men/women, youngsters, young teachers, youth*, etc. (see Figure 3, which represents L1 collocates that mostly classify *people*). Figure 3, which is a wordcloud generated by Wordsmith, shows that *young* is not as prominent in the Ghanaian as in the UK data, indicating that UK MPs may be more particularly concerned about *young people*. The frequency of occurrence in the GH SONADS indicates that *youth* (233; 0.04/1,000 words) is more frequent than *young* (103) – *young* did not appear in the first five percent keywords. These will be discussed shortly, but first I discuss *young people* and *youth* in the UK data. In the UK QADS, *young* occurred 678 times and was more significant than in the BNC, making it a keyword. For instance, *young* (excluding, for example, *youngsters, younger* and *youngest*) had a keyness value of 177.92 with a frequency of 0.06/1,000 words – twice as frequent as in the BNC, which was 0.03/1,000 words.

In the wordcloud (see Figure 3), L1 refers to the words that appeared at the immediate left of the word *people*. The larger the appearance of the word and closer it is to the centre, the higher its frequency, making *young* the most frequent class of people referred to by UK MPs. *Young* occurred in several thematic contexts and concerns, including:

<i>i.</i>	(un-)employment/job/skills	35%
<i>ii.</i>	Crime/crime-related	18%
<i>iii.</i>	Carers/care services	15%
<i>iv.</i>	Education	9%
<i>v.</i>	Hope/future	7%
<i>vi.</i>	Help/support	7%
<i>vii.</i>	Problems/difficulties	6%
<i>viii.</i>	Others	3%

N	Concordance
1	to help the rising number of long-term unemployed young people , in the lack of action to cap rail fares
2	of the Government's policies that more than 1 million young people are unemployed . Caroline Flint: My hon.
3	fear is that we are writing off a whole generation of young people to long-term unemployment amid low
4	towards addressing employers' concerns that some young people lack the right skills , attitudes or
5	change. Where is the job guarantee for Britain's young people? It is not there. Where are the rules
6	have made a difference. The number of persistent young offenders sentenced by courts in England and
7	on to say: 'The evidence suggests it is going to deter young smokers '. There is going to be legislation.
8	A minimum price for alcohol will lessen the number of young people who drink copious amounts of it.
9	use of drugs such as cocaine and amphetamines by young people . A total of £1.5 billion has been paid
10	subject of gang injunctions . Although the number of young people involved in gang violence is small, the
11	rewarded, to improve the quality of education for young people , to support those who have saved for
12	their lives to encouraging, enthusing and educating our young people. It is a tremendous career but a
13	thousands of new employment opportunities for young people now and into the future , and about
14	into work so that we can give people, in particular young people, hope and a chance to make a
15	hyperactivity disorder or any of the problems that lead young people into a life of antisocial behaviour and
16	that the bulk of the changes needed to protect young carers need to be made in the Children and
17	. That is where improved identification and support for young carers is valuable, because it can prevent

Figure 4: Seventeen of 678 concordance lines of thematic and evaluative contexts of young (UK QADs).

Young people are evaluatively and negatively represented as people among whom there is *rising, long term unemployment* (see Figure 4, Lines 1 to 3) and therefore need, positively, the *right skills* (Line 4) for *job guarantee* (Line 5) and *employment opportunities* (Line 13). They are also associated with *crime/crime-related* themes, including being *offenders sentenced by the courts* (Line 6), the *use of drugs such as cocaine and amphetamines* (9), *gang injunctions* and *gang violence* (10), smoking (7) and alcoholism (8), which are all negative characterisations. They are seen as *carers* (Lines 16 to 17) who need help, *protection* (16) and *support* (17), which have a positive outlook. In order to overcome the *problems* and the challenges (Line 15) they face, young people need *education* (11–12) and *encouragement* (12) to give them *hope and a chance* (12), *now and into the future* (14). The concerns associated with young people are seen as significant, indicated by evaluative phrases such as *rising number of long term unemployed* (Line 1), *more than 1 million* (2), *a whole generation* (3), *persistent* (6), *copious amount* (8), *tremendous career* (12) and *thousands of* (13). While the negative evaluations describe problems, the positive ones are possible solutions to those problems. Whereas government MPs think that the problems are being tackled (as in Figure 4, Lines 4, 11 and 13), opposition MPs disagree (see Lines 1, 2, 3 and 5).

On the other hand, *youth* occurred 102 times, mostly in the negatively evaluated context of *unemployment* (76 percent) followed by *crime* and *crime-related* issues (20 percent) (*crime, offender/offenders/offending, gang, justice*) (see Figures 5 and 6). Examples of expressions from L1 and L2 collocates of *youth* include: *massive* (L1) *youth unemployment* (L2), *long*

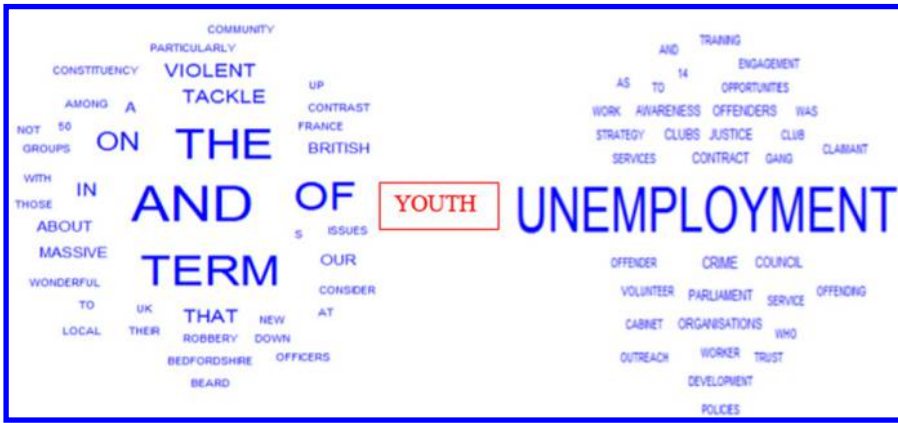


Figure 5: L1 and L2 collocates indicating main contexts of *youth* in UK QADs.

N	Concordance
1	to me. There is nothing on tackling the crisis in youth unemployment , nothing on housing when
2	whatever the figure is now and the massive youth unemployment that we see in my local
3	West (Mrs Hodgson), face very high levels of youth unemployment in their constituencies. To
4	the absence of any measures to bring down youth unemployment and the number of people
5	to justify the unacceptably high figures on youth unemployment he will sound incredibly
6	announced last week further steps to tackle youth unemployment in order to avoid at all
7	should regret the 15% rise in long-term youth unemployment in his constituency, which
8	of an offence within two years. Among youth offenders the figure is 73 per cent , and
9	the incidence of self-harm in both prisons and youth offender institutions increased by more
10	council the local authority is tackling violent youth gang crime by sharing its power with the
11	our communities. The problem is not just violent youth crime . I hope he agrees that the
12	better. Violent crime has doubled and robbery , youth crime and drug-related crime is

Figure 6: Twelve of 102 concordance lines indicating thematic contexts of youth in UK QAD.

term (L1) *youth unemployment* (L2), *tackle* (L1) *youth unemployment* (L2) and *youth crime* (L2). *Unemployment* was key in the UK data, with a frequency of 0.03/1,000 words as compared to the 0.01/1,000 words in the BNC. These contextual words have negative semantic prosody (the meaning acquired by a word in association with its collocates; Louw, 1993: 157), which puts the youth and young people in an undesirable situation, and constructs them as a threat.

Youth unemployment is evaluatively described as a *crisis* (Line 1, Figure 6), *massive* (Line 2), *unacceptably high* (5) and *long term* (7), with the youth facing *very high levels* (3) and *15% rise in long term youth unemployment* (7). It, therefore, needs *further steps to tackle* (6, 1) and *bring it down* (4). *Violent crime*, such as *robbery* and *drug-related crime*, is said

to have increased, and *among offenders the figure is 73 per cent* (Line 8). However, crime is being tackled (Line 10). The afore-mentioned indicates that the *youth* and *young people* largely show similar concerns. They are also negatively constructed as a threat to society, which makes the call for the government to intervene urgent.

There is some research evidence to suggest that, over the years, public policy for the young and youth has focussed on employment and training opportunities. In the decade before 1990:

Public policy towards youth employment and training in Britain [...] [had] been dominated by two themes: the quest to reduce youth relative pay, as part of a wider deregulation of the labour market, in order to increase access to jobs and training; and the neglect of apprenticeship in favour of the Youth Training Scheme.

(Marsden and Ryan, 1990: 351)

Years later, such focus had not changed, since, according to Barry (2005: 2), ‘young people experience relative deprivation’ in terms of ‘opportunities for personal and social development’. Such deprivation has in recent years prompted ‘[s]everal major government policy interventions (for example, the Connexions Service, developed by the Department for Education and Skills)’ that ‘have focussed on attempting to combat social exclusion ... and on improving services for children and young people’ (Barry, 2005: 2). These are attempts to create employment opportunities for young people. It could, thus, be argued that the key references to young people and youth, and the expression of concern over unemployment and joblessness among them, is MPs’ re-affirmation of such commitment. This explains the larger concern with young people in the UK data. The young/youth are represented by MPs as people who need jobs, education and support to overcome the challenges facing them in order to have hope and brighter futures. The expression of concern for the young/youth in the debates signals some political manoeuvring. From 1997, when the Labour government came to power, ‘young people’s relationship to work and to the labour market’ had ‘been the subject of intense scrutiny and policy activity’ and the young held ‘a special significance for New Labour’ (Mizen, 2003: 453). As Labour MP, Mr Hutton, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, claims:

The previous Conservative Government’s welfare reform policies were a *total failure*. The number of children living in *poverty doubled*. The number of people claiming lone parent or incapacity benefit *trebled*. *Twice in a decade*, the number of people unemployed *exceeded 3 million* [...] Things are different now. The new deal has helped *more than 1.7 million* people into work. Today there are *more people in work than ever before*. Employment is up by *more than 2.5 million since 1997* [...] The *biggest falls* in unemployment have been among those who were on benefits for the *longest*. Long-term claimant unemployment is down

by more than 70 per cent. and long-term youth claimant unemployment has been *virtually eradicated*.

(Hansard: 27 Nov 06/Col 929; italics added)

Consider Mr Hutton's negatively evaluative phrases in describing the previous Conservative government's performance: *total failure, poverty doubled, trebled, twice in a decade ... exceeded 3 million*; and his positive description of the Labour government's performance: *helped more than 1.7 million, more people ... than ever before, biggest falls and virtually eradicated*. He demonstrates a huge contrast between the two governments' performances. This is rhetorically striking as Mr Hutton attempts to prove that his government has out-performed the Conservative government. His contrastive evaluation creates an ideological construction of 'us' and 'them' (van Dijk, 2011: 396).

As part of its campaign promises in the 1997 UK general elections, the Tony Blair-led New Labour party promised a programme of action called *The New Deal* to give young people job and employment opportunities. The New Deal, which promised 'eventual reform of welfare assistance for all benefit recipients', had four thematic areas, namely: 'New Deal for Young People (NDYP)', 'New Deal for the Long-term Unemployed, New Deal for Lone Parents' and 'New Deal for the Disabled', with *young people* receiving the 'greatest proportion of New Deal funding' (Beaudry, 2002: 8–9). Three years later in 2000, Tony Blair 'hailed the government's New Deal as a success, saying it has offered real hope and opportunity to thousands of young people' (BBC, 2000). However, it was counter-argued that the 'government's New Deal programme to tackle youth unemployment [was] not working' (Field, 2007). In its 2010 manifesto, the Conservative Party (2010: 15) alleged that '[u]nder Labour, youth unemployment has reached over 900,000, with one in five young people unable to find a job' and promised to 'reduce youth unemployment'. In the 2015 manifesto, while commending itself that it had achieved the highest employment rate among twenty-seven other European countries, the Conservative Party (2015), having been in power for about five years, promised to 'abolish long-term youth unemployment'. Each party tries to show that it is more concerned with youth employment than the other. This has been a consistent concern in UK politics for the last decade. The question is whether this is mere rhetoric or reality. In its Third Report of Session 2010–12 (Volume 1) on Services for Young People, the House of Commons Education Committee (2011: 15, 3), acknowledged that 'youth unemployment is at a record high', while 'the Government's lack of urgency in articulating a youth policy or strategic vision is regrettable'. It shows some level of dissonance between political rhetoric and reality. When the reality is stark, MPs need more powerful rhetoric 'to spread out and colour' the 'phase of' the 'discourse' (Martin and White, 2005: 42) in order to 'control' what 'people think' (Jones and Wareing, 1999: 36).

As crime and crime-related subjects are second to (un-)employment as the most frequent theme associated with the young, it perhaps suggests some inter-connectedness between unemployment and crime among the young. The representation of the young/youth as perpetrators of crime and crime-related problems reflects the often-held view that they are ‘rebellious and troublesome’ (Barry, 2005: 1), as well as the ‘recurring and ongoing preoccupation with the perceived threat to social stability posed by unregulated, undisciplined and disorderly youth’ (Brown, 1998; cited in Barry, 2005: 1). MPs appear to think that the lack of work for young people renders them prone to committing crime. The assumption is that offering young people job and employment opportunities will help fight crime among them, as:

Youth work helps young people consider and make different choices about risky behaviour. Currently there is a nationwide concern about the involvement of young people in violent and gang related crime. Youth work is recognised as a process through which young people can be supported to take a different path.

(Mckee *et al.*, 2010: 17)

This idea is reiterated by Mark Oaten (MP for Winchester) thus:

There is merit in considering a scheme that would allow our youngsters to get involved in different projects across the country. They could move away from their peer group [...] and take part in a national programme of volunteering. That may be a way of providing benefit [...] giving them a change of experience [...] Sadly, many youngsters start on a life of crime and end up in prison.

(Hansard: 23 Nov 06/Col. 757)

There is clear suggestion that job and employment opportunities for young people reduce crime. It is manoeuvring, since linking unemployment to crime increases the urgency for the government to act: it is a means by which MPs legitimise their calls for governmental interventions.

The high frequency of references to the young/youth could also be the result of conscious attempts by MPs to win the hearts of young people for political purposes. The dispersion plot in Figure 7 shows the frequency of references to *young* people across the datasets. It indicates that there is an increase in *young*-referencing from 2006, 2009 to 2013. For example, the ‘hits’ column shows that the highest occurrence of *young* in 2006 and 2009 is 68 (1.15/1,000 words) and 73 (1.59/1,000 words) respectively, but it is 109 (1.64/1,000 words) in 2013.

Before the May 2015 UK general elections, research had shown, for example, that young people (under-25 year olds) had ‘[a]pathy or antipathy’ towards voting (Lewis, 2015). Lewis reports that while ‘many’ young people

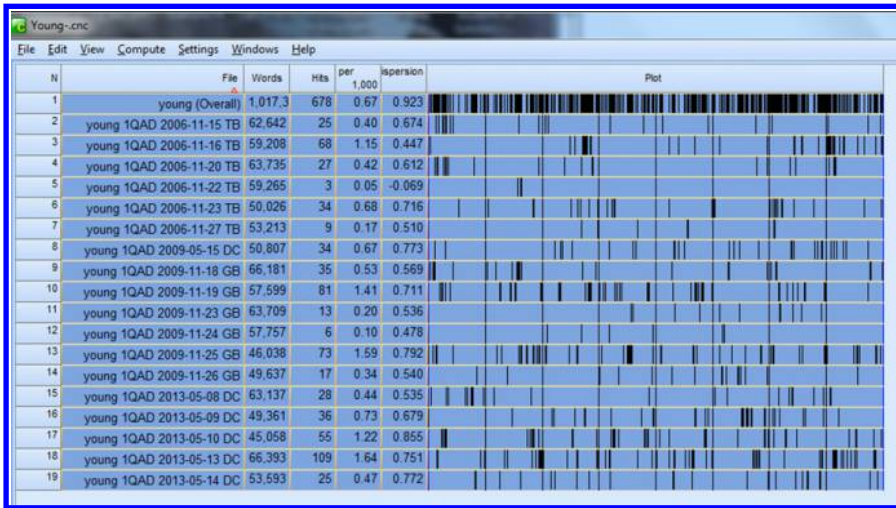


Figure 7: Plot of young across 2006, 2009 and 2013.

gave ‘very political’ reasons, ‘most’ felt ‘profoundly alienated and ignored’. There were therefore campaigns to encourage young people to vote in the 2015 general elections (Carter, 2015; and Sims, 2015).

Other contexts in which *young* and *youth* occur, such as *education*, *future/hope* and *support/help*, reinforce the point that MPs recognise the *problems/difficulties* that young people face. MPs express the kinds of interventions needed to help young people. They undertake to encourage young people, alerting them to government policy decisions for political purposes.

In the Ghanaian data, on the other hand, *youth* was more frequent and significant than *young*. *Youth* occurred 233 times, with a keyness value of 324.97 and a frequency of 0.04/1,000 words; while it was 181 times, with a keyness value of zero in the ICE-Ghana, making *youth* a keyword in the GH SONADS. *Young* (as in *young: people, men, adults, girls, graduates*, etc.) occurred 103 times but did not appear in the top five percent of keywords, that is the first 500 keywords. Both terms appeared to be fairly uniform in frequency across all the years in the GH SONADS, which means that the MPs’ focus on the young/youth has been consistent over the years, but less crucial than in the UK. *Young* occurred in contexts such as (Figure 8 illustrates them):

- i. (un-)employment/job/skills 45%
- ii. Education 19%
- iii. Hope/future 8%
- iv. Support/help 8%
- v. Emulating the elderly 6%
- vi. Crime/crime-related 3%
- vii. Problems/challenges 2%

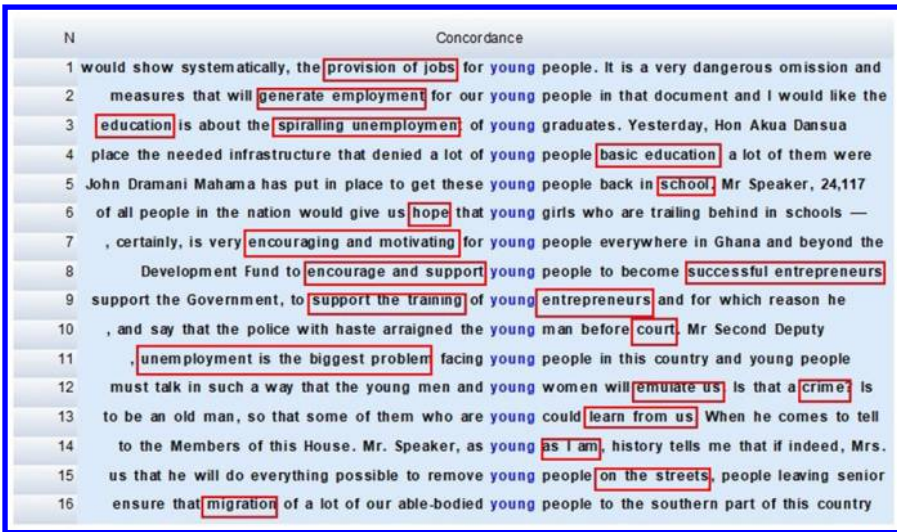


Figure 8: Sixteen of 103 concordance lines of thematic contexts of young in GH SONAD.



Figure 9: L1 and L2 collocates indicating main contexts of youth in GH SONAD.

- viii. Self-referencing 7%
- ix. Others 2%

Note that in the ‘Others’ category (ix) are included poverty, migration and roaming the streets.

Both youth and young people are mostly presented as lacking or needing employability skills/employment/jobs for which reason they need education to prepare them for the future (see Figures 8, 9 and 10). Unemployment among young people (and youth) is negatively described as the ‘biggest’, ‘spiralling’ problem (Lines 3 and 11 in Figure 8).

N	Concordance
1	are making either in terms of skill development or training for our youth and the impact on the economy. We have untransparent
2	has seen the need to address the unemployment problem among the youth; and it is a step in the right direction. Mr. Speaker, I fervently
3] When unemployment in the country is escalated with more jobless youth and graduates roaming our streets , can we say that the
4	lower interest rates to expand their businesses to create jobs for the youth and also to pay taxes to Government for development. Mr.
5	, where is the evidence of the job creation? Where is the law on youth employment? When H. E. President Agyekum Kufuor's
6	Mr Speaker, we are told that the future belongs to the youth and the youth of our country, we know, are in education such that they would
7	of this country that under his leadership under his guidance, the youth of this country has a brighter future . Therefore, I would urge all
8	has also started waning. Now, if we are going to promote the issue of youth education as the largest reservoir of human resource potential,
9	was meant to address the issue of lack of access by many of our youth to higher education . When the census on unemployment was
10	involved in this subject must co-ordinate very efficiently, so that our youth are insulated from this very hazardous drug system . This is not
11	that we face in the cities now. Crime is on the increase and if the youth have other alternatives of making their lives in the rural areas,
12	deliberative mechanism. He also stated that he would revamp all youth leadership training institutes and utilize them for year-round

Figure 10: Twelve of 233 concordance lines of *youth* in GH SONAD.

Unlike the UK, education is the second most important context in which young people occurs in the GH SONADS. This appears to suggest a close link between education and the fight against unemployment, as compared with unemployment and crime in the UK data. Crime among young people does not appear to be a major concern for the Ghanaian MPs. Of course, it should be recognised that, as a developed country, the UK has a far better educational system and standard than Ghana. Thus, it is the different ideological stances taken by UK and Ghanaian MPs that produce this difference between them: the two groups of MPs prioritise issues according to their needs. Whereas the UK MPs see unemployment and crime as matters which need immediate attention, the Ghanaian MPs see education as the most urgent issue that can reduce unemployment. The role of formal education in personal and national socio-economic development has long been recognised (Psacharopoulos, 1998), especially in Sub-Saharan Africa (Palmer, 2005). Apart from encouraging and supporting young people towards realising a better future, the Ghanaian MPs also talk about how young people emulate them (that is, copy their behaviour) as MPs (Figure 8, Line 12), which reflects a Ghanaian cultural value. The impact of culture in the socialisation process has been acknowledged (Twum-Danso, 2010). In the Ghanaian social system, children are seen as dependent on their parents for their wellbeing and ‘every effort is made to ensure that each child is taught her place from a very early age’ (Twum-Danso, 2010: 135), one of which is that the child is supposed to learn from the parent. In fact, ‘traditionally, child care was a collective social enterprise in which both parents and other kin were active participants’ (Twum-Danso, 2009: 419). Thus, when MPs remind their fellow MPs that they should be circumspect in their parliamentary speeches because children are learning from them, they are giving meaning to their *in-loco-parentis* role, since ‘the training of the children is not exclusively their [parents]’ (Nukunya, 2003; cited in Twum-Danso, 2009: 419).

The thematic contexts in which *youth* occurred include the following:

i.	(un-)employment/job/skills	70%
ii.	Future/hope	10%
iii.	Education	4%
iv.	Sports	3%
v.	Problem	3%
vi.	Leadership	2%
vii.	Crime/crime-related	2%
viii.	Others	3%
ix.	Help/support	3%

Similar to *the young* in the UK and Ghanaian debates, the biggest concern of the *youth* in Ghana is (un-)employment/jobs/skills (70 percent), as indicated in *job(less)*, *(un)employment*, *manpower*, *agriculture*, *training*, *skills*, *work* and *mining* (see Figures 9 and 10, Lines 1 to 5); with 10 percent occurring in the context of future and/or hope for the future: *future*, *leadership*, *leaders* and *aspiration* (Lines 6 to 7 and 12). These are represented in L1 and L2 positions (Figure 9) as: *teeming* (L1) *youth unemployment* (L2); *unemployed* (L1) *youth*; *develop* (L1) *youth policy* (L2); *youth development* (L2); *youth unemployment* (L2) and *youth leadership* (L2). It is recognised that the youth need *empowerment* and *development* (L2).

The idea of unemployment is reinforced by the statement that *the youth and graduates are roaming the streets* (Line 3), which has the potential to lead them to commit *crime* (Line 11) or become victims of the *very hazardous drug system* (Line 10). According to the MPs, the *future belongs to the youth* (Line 6) and, therefore, they need *leadership training institutes* (Line 12) to prepare them for the task ahead. To achieve that and overcome all the problems, the youth, like young people, need *education* (Lines 6 and 9), which is positively evaluated as *the largest reservoir of human resource potential* (Line 8).

Like their UK counterparts, Ghanaian MPs recognise that ‘youth unemployment is one of the *biggest* challenges’ facing the country (Hansard: 21 Feb 12/Col. 1157); the ‘*serious challenge* that this economy now faces is the *rising levels* of youth unemployment’ (Hansard: Mar 2010/Col. 1462). Notice the rhetorical evaluation: *teeming* (Figure 9, L1), *escalated* (Figure 10, Line 3), *largest* (8), *very hazardous* (10), *on the increase* (11), including *serious challenge* and *rising levels*. These evaluative descriptions intensify the extent of the problems and concerns associated with the *youth*. As in the UK, the issue of unemployment has been a major concern among the youth and young people in Ghana. In 2011, an association called the Unemployed Graduates Association of Ghana was formed. It epitomises the extent of joblessness among the youth. Its aim has been to engage government and stakeholders to tackle youth unemployment. In 2006, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) government established the National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP), an interventionist programme that

sought to identify projects with economic potential that could generate employment for as many youths as possible. When the National Democratic Congress (NDC) government came to power in 2009, it was renamed Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Development Agency (GYEEDA). In 2015, under the same government, it was again changed to Youth Empowerment Programme (YEP), a more euphemistically positive name, signalling affirmation and attention given to the programme by the government. The programme highlights the problems faced by the youth and various governments' attempts to tackle them. As the Deputy Minister for Manpower, Youth and Employment (NPP), puts it:

[...] since 2006 when the [...] NYEP was launched over 108,000 youth are engaged in various types of work. The NYEP has demonstrated beyond doubt that it is one approach that can within a relatively short time contribute effectively to providing jobs and a good training ground for the youth to make them more marketable.

(Hansard: 26 Feb 2008/Col. 1050)

MPs, in their debates, endeavour to show which government has better tackled youth unemployment, which points to the acknowledgment that youth unemployment is a major problem, as indicated by Dr Dakura (NDC MP):

We know that the [...] NYEP was started by the previous Government and at the time that we came to power, we had 43,000 youths on the NYEP. As we speak today, this figure has risen to 97,510 beneficiaries on the list and the payroll of the Programme. We have got 150,000 beneficiaries of this Programme, if you add the Youth in Agriculture Programme.

(Hansard 24 Feb 11/Col. 1597)

Notice that while acknowledging that the youth employment programme was initiated by the previous (NPP) government, Dr Dakura gives his government much more credit for improving it. This points to the political-point scoring nature of the debates.

In both the UK and Ghanaian parliaments, MPs try to show 'professional commitment towards young people' (Bright, 2015: xvii). The MPs see the young/youth as people who need appropriate interventions from government, such as avenues for training and acquiring entrepreneurial/employability skills to equip them for the job market. What government and opposition MPs disagree on is the response being offered by their governments to address such problems. While government MPs argue that the government is motivating young people/the youth, giving them incentives, creating and providing opportunities for them to face and reduce such challenges to prepare them adequately for the future, opposition MPs think the governments are not doing enough. Thus, there is extensive

ideological stance-taking and posturing aimed at exploiting the concerns of the young/youth for political ends. The next section discusses the issues MPs think affect other classes of people.

6.2.2 Providing excellent welfare, care and benefits for others, empowering local people

MPs recognise other classes of people, which appears to reflect the increased focus of the UK's New Deal. According to Beaudry (2002: 9), the New Deal programme was 'used as a pilot phase for the more ambitious New Deal reforms with other groups'. In 2006, the Blair government's reform programme, *A New Deal for Welfare: Empowering People to Work*, included other thematic areas, namely 'helping ill or disabled people', 'helping lone parents', 'helping old workers' and 'delivering welfare reform', among others. This reflects the other classes of people identified in the UK QADs, which include, in descending order:

i.	pensioners	32%
ii.	old(er)/elderly	17%
iii.	disabled/vulnerable	17%
iv.	local people	15%
v.	(hard-)working people	6%
vi.	ordinary people	5%
vii.	poor/poorer/poorest people	5%
viii.	unemployed people	3%

These groups generally seem to be economically challenged. Pensioners, old(er)/elderly and disabled/vulnerable people (Figure 11) are seen as facing *financial problems* (Lines 1 and 3). They, therefore, have similar needs: social support, care and benefits, such as *fuel* benefits (Lines 2, 9 and 10) and *free bus travel* (Lines 5 and 7). This is evidenced by the fact that these people were mentioned in the same sentences, as, for example: 'Elderly and disabled people are facing huge increases in home care charge; reducing cost of travel for pensioners and disabled people' (Lines 17–18). MPs believe that these groups should be given *excellent* (Line 11) *social care services* (Lines 6, 15 to 16) and benefits to lift them *out of poverty* (Line 1). These direct interventions suggest that these groups are not personally 'responsible for their vulnerability', which provides some moral grounds for politicians to directly intervene with 'appropriate social policies' (Mechanic and Tanner, 2007: 1222). They are seen as a form of social capital, a network, whose inter-relationships allow them to 'claim access to resources possessed by their associates' (Portes, 2000: 45).

Generally, MPs think that *local people* (Figure 12, Lines 1–3) need to be empowered, giving them *more control over their lives* (Line 1) and regenerating *local democracy* (Line 2) for them to control the development



Figure 11: Sample concordance of pensioners, old(er)/elderly and disabled people.

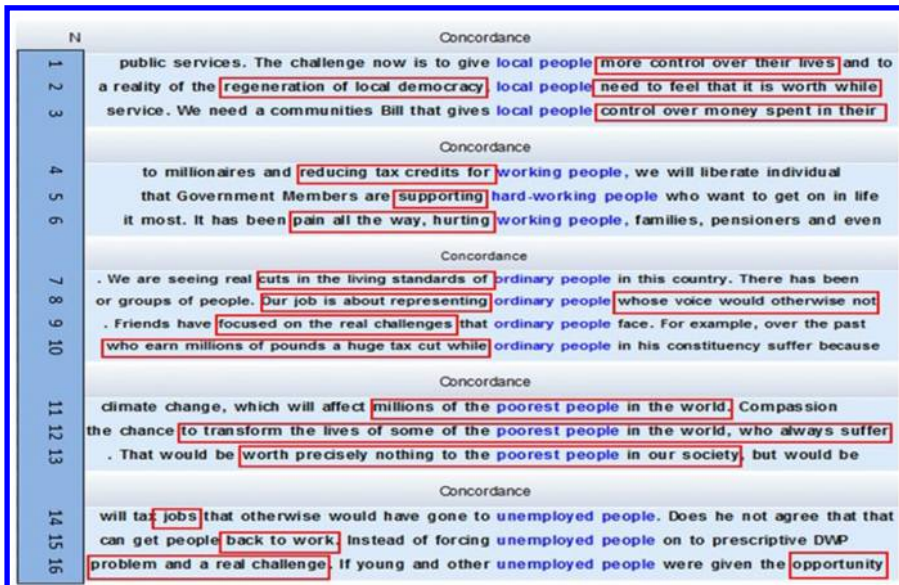


Figure 12: Sample concordance of local people, working people, ordinary people, poor people and unemployed people (UK QADS).

of their local areas. They are constructed as agents of their own development. Working people are described evaluatively as hardworking people who need governmental support *to get on in life* (Line 5), giving them ‘a cash boost’ (Hansard: 14 May 13/Col 579); even though the opposition thinks that support such as *tax credits* (Line 4) is being reduced and the people have *seen pain all the way, hurting* (Line 6). MPs believe that working people need tax reliefs and decent wages to enable them to cater for their families. Considering that the ‘Government [is] giving people ‘who earn millions of pounds a huge tax cut while ordinary people in his constituency suffer’ (Line 10), *ordinary people* implies those who are comparatively disadvantaged. As Ian Taylor (Con MP: Hansard: 15 Nov 06/Col. 53) puts it: ‘Ordinary people doing ordinary jobs on average pay simply cannot afford to pay that rent without assistance’. Like ordinary people, the unemployed are seen as needing support and *opportunity*, as they face *problem[s] and a real challenge* (Line 16). The MPs recognise poverty as a societal and world problem (Lines 11, 12, 23), which reflects the foreign policy and the globalised political culture of the UK, indicating that the UK political identity is connected to not only the UK, but also the rest of the world. The absence of this from the Ghanaian data portrays the Ghanaian MPs as being preoccupied with Ghana’s own concerns.

In the GH SONADS, there were thirty-two occurrences of other classes of people – namely, *poor, rural, local, ordinary Ghanaian and working people*. Poor/rural/local and ordinary people are presented by the Ghanaian MPs as people who are lacking the needed infrastructural access (for example, roads and water) and who cannot access justice and therefore need financial assistance. The reference to road and water infrastructural problems, which is absent from the UK QADS, is a reflection of Ghana’s status as a developing country, as developing countries are said to lack road and water infrastructure (Calvert and Calvert, 2007: 4, 103–4, 111). UK MPs, however, feel that these people need more empowerment and control over their lives, including direct monetary interventions such as tax credits, which reflects the welfare system of the UK. Similar to their description in the UK context, working people are described and evaluated in the GH SONADS as hardworking people who need decent wages.

The classification of people with specific needs hints at political responsibility as being concerned with the needs of the people and tailoring policies to meet every person’s aspirations. In both parliaments, government and opposition MPs recognise the issues confronting the different classes of people. The UK MPs, however, acknowledge a more specific and multi-layered classification than their Ghanaian counterparts. For example, the UK data contain categories such as *pensioners, older/elderly, disabled and vulnerable* people (see Figure 11), which are absent from the Ghanaian data. Whereas in the UK vulnerability is observed in terms of pensioners, the elderly and the disabled, Ghanaian MPs seem to recognise vulnerability in terms of rural communities. In Ghana, rural communities lack infrastructure

N	Concordance
1	tremendously from it and particularly, those poor people in the urban and rural areas
2	To
3	Kufuor, he said that "the worst enemy of the poor people is inflation". Measure this
4	fees thereby making it very inaccessible to many poor people but public institutions like the
5	Concordance
6	towards the construction of water for our rural people. Mr Speaker, this conditionality is one
7	. I believe it is up to us as leaders to help our rural people to know that such facilities and others
8	a project is going to a rural community, the rural people are made to contribute monies. It is
9	Concordance
10	that has affected the coconut; in fact, our local people call it "the coconut AIDS" because it
11	— that some flexibility should come in so that local people who stay in a locality and who
12	Concordance
13	process is time consuming and cumbersome. Ordinary people cannot access justice. The
14	what is happening, they cannot see what the ordinary people feel. In our streets in our
15	have lost their jobs. I am talking about very ordinary people in B.U. (Butimabuju) in Esikado
16	not attach any value to discrimination between ordinary people and so-called important people,
17	Concordance
18	is determined to provide skills for people who are unemployed. And we should join the President in
19	of creating employment for every single unemployed person. Nevertheless, our
20	give directions as well as give hope to the army of unemployed people on the streets of Ghana. Mr
21	go a long way to creat skills for the long-term unemployed. These are the things that we should
22	Concordance
23	said they are going to provide decent wages for working people. vigorously promote and support
24	countries. One country with very enterprising and hard-working people and another country of

Figure 13: Sample concordance lines of other classes of people and their concerns (GH SONAD).

and facilities such as roads, water and healthcare, making them the least privileged group. Both groups of MPs construct vulnerability as part of their socio-political discourse. Where there is vulnerability, there is the need for political action. The UK MPs' recognition of the multi-layered classes of people mirrors the longstanding view of the British political culture as 'the creation of a welfare state and the achievement of full employment' (Eatwell, 1997: 57). As noted by Harkins (2013): '[a] renewed focus on social class has been one of the features of contemporary political debates in Britain since the financial crash of 2008'. It demonstrates 'the increasing scale and complexity of [the] modern [British society]' (Baldwin *et al.*, 1999: 138). It is pertinent to appreciate that different classes of people have different needs. Such acknowledgment is important for political actors like MPs. It shows inclusivity and indicates that no-one will be discriminated against in policy formulation and implementation.

7. Conclusion

Due to its complexity of levels and objects of analysis, discourse analysis poses serious challenges when the researcher is deciding on his or her research focus. Often, there is the tendency to impose predetermined theories and assumptions on the data, which may deprive the researcher of the identification of some significant and inherent regularities in language use (Bayley and San Vicente, 2004: 240). This paper has demonstrated one of the ways in which corpus-driven methods can be useful for identifying a research focus in parliamentary discourse in particular and discourse analysis in general. The paper has shown that, after collecting one's discourse data without having any specific predetermined theories, features and themes to explore, the researcher can employ corpus-driven methods to find striking recurrent features to consider. In the traditional approach of visual identification of significant features and the application of the corpus-based methods, where there are theoretical presumptions, there is the tendency to overlook rather important features of the corpus. The corpus-driven approach helps to prevent that kind of danger and the imposition of predetermined assumptions on the corpus. The corpus-driven approach employed in this paper led to the observation that UK Queen's Address debates and Ghanaian State of the Nation Address debates revolve around the issues confronting the *people*, such as the youth and (un)employment.

Parliamentary politics is fundamentally the politics of representation, where representation 'means acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them' (Pitkin, 1967: 209). The analysis and discussion points to the concept of 'political representation' in which 'political actors speak, advocate, symbolize, and act on the behalf of others in the political arena' (Dovi, forthcoming). The mandate of MPs is to represent, at least in principle, the interests of their constituents: they are supposed to make laws, policies and decisions that will benefit the people. MPs' expression of concern for the needs of the people evokes a positive political image. Their ability to specify the needs of the people suggests that they are in touch with the people, know their needs and make laws and decisions and push for policies that respond to the people's needs. The legitimacy of such presentation, however, appears to be in doubt, after all, '[w]hether the represented [...] see themselves as they are seen or portrayed [by MPs] is of course another matter' (Saward, 2006: 314). People's trust for MPs (and politicians generally) depends on their policy directions in terms of the needs of the people. In recent times, the Ghanaian public see Ghanaian MPs as being in pursuit of their personal interests rather than the general good of the people, and, therefore, 'don't trust MPs' (Leonard, 2015), while the UK public perceive 'politicians' as 'simply not taking the issues that affect their lives seriously' (BBC, 2014). This perhaps points to a disparity between MPs' rhetoric or their mandate 'to serve the people' and their practice (Moshe, 2010: 179), which 'in recent

decades' has led to 'a trend decline in levels of trust and confidence in politicians' (Hay, 2007: 28) and 'a decline in voting rates in most established democracies, and rising disaffection from mainstream representative politics' (Saward, 2010: 1). This calls for further and critical examination of parliamentary representativeness within contemporary democratic theory of representation.

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