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UTILISING CORPUS STYLISTICS TO FACILITATE LITERARY ANALYSIS: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SEMANTIC DOMAINS IN IDENTIFYING MAJOR LITERARY THEMES IN A SELECTION OF CHARLES DICKENS' NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

Though still in an early stage of development, corpus-assisted literary analysis is becoming increasingly popular as having the full potential of corpus linguistics methodology for literary stylistics. This paper argues that corpus linguistic procedures can be considered an addition to the analytical inventory of traditional stylistics. It aims to explore how corpus linguistic procedures, particularly semantic domains, can be effective in detecting major literary themes in fiction. In order to do so, five corpora were compiled: a corpus for each of the four novels of Charles Dickens' selected (i.e., *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations* and *Our Mutual Friend*) and a compiled corpus combining all four novels. Wmatrix 5, with the BNC Sampler-Written as a reference corpus, was used to extract the key semantic domains in each corpus respectively. The literature on the selected novels was consulted to identify the major themes. Then, it was verified whether these themes were reflected in the corpus analysis, and, finally, the extent to which the procedure was effective in reflecting the major literary themes was also explored. The findings confirmed the effectiveness of the procedure of analysing semantic domains in studying literary texts, particularly in relation to their themes.

Keywords: Charles Dickens, corpus stylistics, literary themes, semantic domains, WMatrix5

INTRODUCTION

Corpus linguistics approaches the study of language in use through corpora. A corpus is 'a large, principled collection of naturally occurring examples of language stored electronically' (Bennett, 2010: 2). It can be

defined as ‘dealing with some set of machine-readable texts which is deemed an appropriate basis on which to study a specific set of research questions’ (McEnery and Hardie, 2012: 1). Its goal is to describe the patterns of language use in the target textual domain. (Biber, 2011: 15). In addition, it aims to answer two fundamental research questions which are ‘1. What particular patterns are associated with lexical or grammatical features? and 2. How do these patterns differ within varieties and registers?’ (Bennett, 2010: 2). Leech (1992) defines corpus linguistics as ‘not just a newly emerging methodology for studying language, but a new research enterprise, and in fact a new philosophical approach to the subject’ (Leech, 1992: 106). However, there is a debate among scholars whether corpus linguistics is a methodology (see Meyer, 2002; McEnery and Hardie, 2012; Taylor, 2008) or a theory in its own right (see Gilquin, 2010). McEnery and Gabrielatos (2006: 34) refer to this debate stating that while some scholars ‘assert that corpus linguistics is not a branch of linguistics, nor a linguistic theory, but a methodology’, others argue that it is ‘more than just a methodology’.

Toolan (2006:181) highlighted that in the effort to bring corpus linguistic tools to bear on literary linguistic analysis, ‘many recent publications have begun to map out new possibilities. The use of computer-assisted textual analysis in the field of stylistics has given rise to a new field termed ‘corpus stylistics’ (Sinclair, 2007; Mahlberg, 2007b). McIntyre (2015) highlights the difference between corpus stylistics and corpus linguistics stating that ‘corpus stylistics is simply corpus linguistics with a different object of study (literature as opposed to non-literary language)’, and that it makes itself unique by using qualitative tools and techniques of stylistics to analyse texts with the help of computational methods (McIntyre, 2015: 60). Mahlberg (2014: 378-380) also draws attention to the fact that corpus stylistics links principles from corpus linguistics and literary stylistics. A corpus-based work is highly quantitative in nature, but when combined with qualitative analysis, both help us to reach a higher degree of understanding of literary works or any other selected data (Semino and Short, 2004: 7).

Mahlberg and Smith (2010: 450) describe corpus stylistics as ‘an emerging field that aims to combine questions from literary stylistics with approaches from corpus linguistics’. It constitutes an ‘interface of corpus linguistics and literary stylistics’, which ‘employs methods and approaches of corpus linguistics and links them with concerns in literary stylistics and literary criticism’ (Mahlberg, 2010: 295). Corpus Stylistics allows ‘a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis of literary texts’ (Mahlberg, 2013: 355). It is generally defined as employing ‘corpus linguistic methods to support the analysis of textual meanings and the interpretation of texts’ (Mahlberg, 2013: 346). O’Keeffe (2006: 50) argues that corpus stylistics allows ‘for the quantification of recurring linguistic features to substantiate qualitative insights and vice versa’.

The value of applying corpus methods in studying literature, which is the core of corpus stylistics, ‘is defined through the links that can be made between quantitative findings and qualitative analysis’ (Mahlberg, 2010: 295). O’Halloran (2007a: 241) adds that ‘the value of the corpus stylistic approach ... is that it can help reveal such subtleties that even some close readings may not detect’. In similar vein, Hunt and Carter, (2012: 27) emphasize that corpus stylistics provides ‘new insights into narrative texture and demonstrates the importance of recurrent linguistic features in shaping meaning’. It aims to ‘typically explore interpretations of literary texts identified in conventional readings but which may be hard to substantiate by traditional methods’ (Hunt and Carter, 2012: 30). According to McIntyre (2010: 180), corpus stylistics is an approach that ‘employs the service or the evidence elicited from corpus linguistics to support literary analysis, transforming it from a basic, subjective claim-and-quote strategy into evidence-based objectivity that encompasses linguistic features. Thus, it enables us ‘to address what has long been an issue with the analysis of prose fiction; the problem of length and the fact that most prose texts are simply too long for the stylistician to deal with’ (Mahlberg and McIntyre, 2011: 205). The application of the methods of corpus linguistics to text analysis has made it possible ‘to place the selection

and description of stylistically significant features on a firmer empirical footing' (Semino, 2011: 543). When 'both quantitative and qualitative techniques of analysis are employed', the consequent strengths of such an analysis lie both in its scope and reliability' (Murphy, 2007: 67). O'Halloran (2007b: 33) suggested that empirical corpus evidence can usefully provide 'substantiation of such initial evaluations of literary works', or in other words, it 'can provide textual substantiation to impressionistic interpretation' (Widdowson 2008: 294). Indeed, corpus stylistics has enabled analysts 'to test empirically claims about the language of literature, to search for and provide evidence from texts, to establish the norms of literary and non-literary style, and to have in-depth insights into the texts' structures and meanings' (Keshabyan-Ivanova, 2014: 59).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since its inception, scholars have been interested in using corpus stylistic techniques. Examples of corpus stylistic studies include Adolphs (2006), Adolphs and Carter (2002), Biber (2011), Culpeper (2002, 2009), Fischer-Starcke (2010), Hoover (1999, 2002), Hori (2004), Lawson (2000), Louw (1993), Mahlberg (2007a, 2007b), McEnery et al. (2006), McIntyre (2008), McIntyre and Walker (2010), O'Halloran (2007a, 2007b), Romaine (2010), Scott (2006), Scott and Tribble (2006), Semino and Short (2004), Sinclair (2004), Starcke (2006), Stubbs (2001, 2005), and Toolan (2006).

Semino and Short (2004) investigated speech, thought and writing presentation in a corpus of late 20th century fictional and non-fictional works; Stubbs (2005) examined clusters in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*; Starcke (2006) concentrated on clusters in Austen's *Persuasion*; Mahlberg (2007) studied clusters in a corpus of Dickens' works; Culpeper (2009) investigated characterization in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*; Walker (2010) examined keywords and semantic domains in Julian Barnes's novel *Talking it Over*; and Mahlberg and McIntyre (2011) demonstrated the interplay of qualitative and quantitative methods in their corpus stylistic analysis of Ian Fleming's novel *Casino Royale*. This paper supports the argument that integrating corpus procedures in the toolkit of traditional stylistics or manual literary analysis would enhance analysis and enable analysts to deal with large amount of data. In addition, it assessed the corpus procedure of semantic domains and revealed its effectiveness in identifying major literary themes. In order to do so, it examined to what extent semantic fields could identify the literary themes in four of Charles Dickens' novels, namely: *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations* and *Our Mutual Friend*.

The 'limits and pitfalls' of corpus stylistics are acknowledged by its practitioners (Mahlberg, 2007b: 222). The most common problem is difficulty in obtaining either digital copies of literary texts or the right to use the available ones. Fortunately, the texts of Charles Dickens' works are all in the public domain, having been made available in digital form via Project Gutenberg¹. For the purposes of this paper, the four selected works of Charles Dickens were downloaded from the Project Gutenberg website and compiled into five separate text corpora (one for each novel and one combined corpus).

METHODOLOGY

This paper aims to investigate the following research issues: (1) whether the semantic domains (provided by WMatrix5) relate to the major themes of literary text(s); and (2) the similarities and/or differences between the results of corpus analysis in relation to semantic domains and the traditional critical reviews

¹ Project Gutenberg is an online book catalogue that offers over 45,000 ebooks. They are all accessible and free to download. For further details see <http://www.gutenberg.org/>.

of the selected novels. To achieve this aim, four novels of Charles Dickens were downloaded from the website of *Project Gutenberg* (See Table 1 below).

Table 1

A list of the selected novels and their word counts

No.	Novel	Word Count
1	<i>David Copperfield</i>	358644
2	<i>Great Expectations</i>	186487
3	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	158656
4	<i>Our Mutual Friend</i>	328329
Total		1032116

Each novel was saved as a plain text file. Then, the four novels were compiled into one large corpus also saved as a plain text file. Using the BNC Sampler-Written (a subset of the BNC - British National Corpus - consisting of about one million words) as a reference corpus, the key semantic domains of the selected novels and the compiled corpus were identified by the WMatrix5 semantic tagger. Finally, the categories of the semantic fields were examined and compared to the identified literary themes suggested in the literature.

Wmatrix: What it offers and how it works

Corpus stylistics is not only based on the availability of large collections of machine-readable texts, but also on computer software programs, such as, for example, Wmatrix (Rayson, 2003, 2008, 2021), which is used primarily in this paper. Wmatrix² is a software tool for corpus analysis and comparison which provides a web interface to the CLAWS³ (Constituent Likelihood Automatic Word-tagging System) and USAS⁴ (UCREL⁵ Semantic Analysis System) corpus annotation tools. It allows researchers to investigate the frequency and distribution of word forms and lemmas, keywords, grammatical word classes and semantic domains. Researchers can upload their own corpora to Wmatrix and click on the tag wizard which will automatically tag/annotate the uploaded files/corpora grammatically by CLAWS and semantically by USAS. Once the tagging process is complete, each word in the corpus will be separated, numbered and assigned different kinds of tag codes (i.e., Frequency, Semantic tags, and POS tags).

Wmatrix has two interfaces: simple and advanced. The simple interface consists of four functions: extracting wordlists, identifying frequencies, searching for a particular word, and extracting keyword clouds, which display the significance of each keyword by allocating it an appropriate font size. The advanced interface offers more tags, particularly semantic and part of speech tags.

² See <http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/wmatrix.html> for further details

³ See <http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/ucrel/claws/> for further information.

⁴ See <http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/ucrel/usas/> for further information.

⁵ University Centre for Computer Corpus Research on Language.

Figure 1

The Advanced Interface of Wmatrix

The screenshot shows the Wmatrix Advanced Interface. It has a top navigation bar with tabs: Frequency list, Concordance, N- & C-grams, Collocation, and Keyness analysis. The 'Frequency list' tab is active. Below it, there are three main sections: Word, Part of speech, and Semantic. Each section has a 'Word only' and 'Word and [category]' option, both sorted by 'Frequency'. The 'Keyness analysis' section on the right has three dropdown menus for 'Key words compared to:', 'Key POS compared to:', and 'Key concepts compared to:', all set to 'BNC Sampler Written', with 'Go' buttons next to them.

The semantic tagger in the Wmatrix5 was used in this study. In the semantic tagging/annotation process, USAS assigns a semantic tag to each word in the corpus. According to Rayson (2003: 66), the semantic tags are composed of:

1. An upper-case letter indicating general discourse field
2. A digit indicating a first subdivision of the field
3. A decimal point followed by a further digit to indicate a finer subdivision (optional)
4. One or more 'pluses' or 'minuses' to indicate a positive or negative position on a semantic scale (optional)

USAS includes 21 major semantic domains, as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Semantic fields of USAS – Adapted from Rayson (2003)

1.	A	General & Abstract Terms
2.	B	The Body & the Individual
3.	C	Arts & Crafts
4.	E	Emotion
5.	F	Food & Farming
6.	G	Government & Public
7.	H	Architecture, Buildings, Housing & the Home
8.	I	Money & Commerce
9.	K	Entertainment, Sports & Games
10.	L	Life & Living Things
11.	M	Movement, Location, Travel & Transport
12.	N	Numbers & Measurement
13.	O	Substances, Materials, Objects & Equipment
14.	P	Education
15.	Q	Language & Communication
16.	S	Social Actions, States & Processes
17.	T	Time
18.	W	The World & Environment
19.	X	Psychological Actions, States & Processes
20.	Y	Science & Technology
21.	Z	Names & Grammatical Words

These major domains are refined and expanded into 232 semantic categories⁶. Figure 2 below provides an example showing how the major domains of MONEY & COMMERCE (I), ENTERTAINMENT, SPORTS, & GAMES (K), and LIFE & LIVING THINGS (L) are expanded into subcategories.

Figure 2

An illustration of the expansion of three semantic domains

I MONEY & COMMERCE	
I1	Money generally
I1.1	Money: Affluence
I1.2	Money: Debts
I1.3	Money: Price
I2	Business
I2.1	Business: Generally
I2.2	Business: Selling
I3	Work and employment
I3.1	Work and employment: Generally
I3.2	Work and employment: Professionalism
I4	Industry
K ENTERTAINMENT, SPORTS & GAMES	
K1	Entertainment generally
K2	Music and related activities
K3	Recorded sound etc.
K4	Drama, the theatre & show business
K5	Sports and games generally
K5.1	Sports
K5.2	Games
K6	Children's games and toys
L LIFE & LIVING THINGS	
L1	Life and living things
L2	Living creatures generally
L3	Plants

The investigation of semantic domains is particularly useful in corpus stylistics. Many studies have employed the USAS component of WMatrix (see, for example, McIntyre and Walker, 2010; Murphy, 2007; and Walker, 2010, 2012). It should be noted, however, that, to my knowledge, no other study has used the WMatrix to study the effectiveness of the semantic domains procedure in identifying the major literary themes in Charles Dickens' works.

FINDINGS

Literary critics argue that Charles Dickens' novels offer deep insights into the spirit of the Victorian age through addressing themes such as social class, poverty, child labour, morality, education, self-actualization, and so on⁷. Dickens was

'one of the first popular writers who brought pictures of what is called common life into fashion. It is he who has been mainly instrumental in leading the present generation of authors to disregard to a great extent the pictorial advantages of life on the upper levels

⁶ See <https://github.com/UCREL/Multilingual-USAS/blob/master/English/USASSemanticTagset.pdf> for the complete Semantic Tagset.

⁷ Analysis of Charles Dickens's Novels – Literary Theory and Criticism (literariness.org)
<https://literariness.org/2019/04/02/analysis-of-charles-dickenss-novels/>

of society, and to find a counter picturesqueness in the experiences of the poor'
(Oliphant, 1862, in Wall, 1970: 158).

Charles Dickens was born in 1812 into a bourgeois family as his father, John Dickens, worked in the Naval Pay Office and earned a good salary (Johnson, 1977: 13). However, due to his merrymaking, Dickens' father went bankrupt and was sent to the debtors' prison, and so the family became poor. As the eldest son, Dickens, who was 11 years old, had to work as a child labourer in a blacking warehouse. This painful experience led Dickens to deeply sympathise with poor and oppressed people, especially children. After his father's release from prison, Dickens was sent to study at the Wellington House Academy for two years. Then, he had to drop school and work again as his father faced financial problems for the second time. He successively managed to work in many jobs: a junior clerk at a law office, a freelance reporter in a newspaper office and a stenographer in the court. Dickens' early work experience and suffering helped him to understand the hardships of the people, especially the heavy burden on the poor, and inspired many of his novels (Johnson, 1977).

"[N]o other writer of the English language except Shakespeare has left so many types of characters as Dickens has done" (Trollope, 1870, in Wall, 1970: 180).

"Dickens' world was richly populated with a variety of characters drawn from different social structures and often his moral vision is engaged through the mechanism of caricature. [...] Dickens' novels also show, at the same time, 'a remarkable awareness of contemporary social issues' (Choudhury, 2009: 5).

Several critics have identified Dickens as a writer for "the people" because his characters are ordinary people: lawyers, clerks, merchants, hotel owners, craftsmen, criminals, servants and workers (Ackroyd, 1990: xiv). Indeed, Dickens' characters embody people from all occupations and social classes in 19th century Britain.

"His range is very varied. He has attempted to describe every kind of scene in English life, from quite the lowest to almost the highest...Mr. Dickens's novels aim to delineate nearly all that part of our national life which can be delineated" (Bagehot, 1858, in Wall, 1970: 124).

One of the major themes in Dickens' novels is child labour and suffering. "No one, at any rate no English writer, has written better about childhood than Dickens. [...] no novelist has shown the same power of entering into the child's point of view" (Orwell, 1968: 423-424). In Dickens' works, "the figure of the child and the topic of childhood have always loomed large" (Merchant and Waters, 2015: 1). He portrayed "how children were perceived by the Victorians and how the phenomenon of increasing child labour did fit into this particular perception" (Schuster, 2014: 7). Dickens' amazing talent for portraying the world of children is evident in his vivid child characters in novels like *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, and *Great Expectations*. Dickens' miserable childhood had an impact on his portrayal of the darkness of the social reality faced by poor children. Ackroyd (1990) explained this idea as follows:

'There is something in Dickens's infancy, something which cannot now be recovered or understood, some primal fear which left him casting about for images with which to express it and which gave him as a novelist that sensitivity to the adult world which is most often to be found in the eyes of a frightened child' (Ackroyd, 1990: 54).

Dickens also criticized the social system. As George Orwell (1968) puts it:

'Fasten upon this or that minor abuse, expose it, drag it into the open, bring it before a British jury, and all will be well – that is how he sees it...There is no clear sign that he wants the existing order to be

overthrown, or that he believes it would make very much difference if it were overthrown' (Orwell, 1968: 416).

It seems that Dickens' criticism of the social system is almost exclusively moral. His main target of criticism is not the social system but human nature which he was much concerned to improve. Therefore, Dickens stresses the need for reformation, through focusing on morality (Orwell, 1968: 427).

"It seems that in every attack Dickens makes upon society he is always pointing to a change of spirit rather than a change of structure His approach is always along the moral plane... Useless to change institutions without a 'change of heart' – that, essentially, is what he is always saying" (Orwell, 1968: 427).

Morality is emphasized in Dickens' works. Dickens' focus on morality might be attributed to his Christian puritanism. He advocated what he thought to be typically Christian moral values: love, mercy, benevolence and so on. According to Walder (1981: 208), Dickens' 'knowledge of the Bible ... as well as the Book of Common Prayer, is testified to by frequent, accurate and often surprisingly relevant allusion throughout his works'. Dickens attempted to convey charity as a kind of Christian virtue. Charity 'means more than the simple human virtue of benevolence, or giving alms to the poor; it implies the more general motive of Christian love, expressed as a love of God and one's neighbor' (Walder, 1981: 45). As George Orwell (1968: 417) explains, Dickens' 'whole 'message' is one that at first glance looks like an enormous platitude: If men would behave decently the world would be decent'. Indeed, Dickensian humanitarianism is reflected in his calling for mercy, universal love and forgiveness, and opposing all kinds of evil, violence and oppression in his novels (Orwell, 1968). '[T]he novels of Dickens can all be reduced to one phrase, to wit: Be good, and love' (Taine, 1856, in Wall, 1970: 103). Dickens strove to create a sense of "human solidarity" through shared experience and emotions to evoke in his readers a sense of collective responsibility for social problems (Bell, 2000: 126-127).

The German philosopher Karl Marx valued the critical realism of Victorian novelists, particularly Dickens. 'The graphic and eloquent pages have issued to the world more political and social truths than have been uttered by all the professional politicians, publicists, and moralists put together.' (Raina, 1986: 137). This is true of Charles Dickens, whose works offer deep and enlightening insights into the spirit of the 19th century.

A Corpus-assisted Analysis of Dickens' Selected Works

In this section, the corpus-assisted analysis was conducted as follows: (1) the semantic domains were identified in each selected work using WMatrix 5; and (2) the extracted semantic domains were compared to the literary themes suggested in critical reviews of Dickens' works (Churchill, 1975; Wall, 1970).

Oliver Twist

Oliver Twist is set in a workhouse and discloses the cruel, greedy and egotistic nature of Victorian industrial society. It tells the story of the miserable childhood of an abandoned orphan, Oliver Twist. As a child, he was mistreated, beaten, and forced to join the diabolic underworld of criminal life. He ran away and always preserved his positive outlook despite his suffering. Morality is the overarching theme of this novel since it depicts a conflict between good and evil, exposes and punishes vice, and advocates public morality. It revealed the poor conditions of workhouses and orphanages, and reflected how they were devoid of compassion. It also reflected on the financial discrepancies between the social classes, portraying the lives of both the lower classes who inhabit the London underworld, and of the rich aristocrats. It also tackles the themes of thought and belief in criticizing the Church of England for not providing enough care for the poor who sought their help.

The semantic categories/fields extracted from the text of Oliver Twist are shown in Figure 3 and listed in Table 4.

Figure 3

Semantic clouds in Oliver Twist



As shown in Figure 3 above, the bigger the font size of a semantic field, the more significant it is in the text. This makes it easier for anyone to get a general idea about the major components of the story: the setting, inhabitants of the story world, events and so on.

Table 4

WMatrix Semantic Tagging of Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist

Semantic Field	LL	Semantic Field	LL	Semantic Field	LL	Semantic Field	LL
Pronouns	+3259.46	Moving, Coming & Going	+362.84	Negatives	+233.69	Judgement of Appearance: Negative	+145.92
Anatomy & Physiology	+1472.67	Putting, Pulling, Pushing, Transporting	+360.04	Sensory: Sight	+222.97	Crime	+145.81
Unmatched	+1070.20	Darkness	+356.20	Like	+197.40	Knowledgeable	+130.58
People: Male	+979.37	Sensory: Sound	+335.70	Speech Acts	+196.08	Fear/Shock	+129.10
Speech: Communicative	+747.32	Alive	+265.37	Sound: Loud	+179.04	Disease	+128.71
Light	+605.55	Time: Old; Grown-up	+257.77	Time: General	+166.26	Content	+127.37

Degree	+494.73	Speed: Fast	+256.4 9	Happy	+164.56	Seem	+115.55
Location & Direction	+481.90	Degree: Boosters	+252.3 6	Unexpected	+153.44	Money: Lack	+108.79
Sad	+466.61	Parts of Buildings	+245.3 5	Sound: Quiet	+152.28	Violent/Angr y	+104.75

Table 4 lists the semantic categories according to their statistical significance. The semantic categories which are relevant to the major literary themes in the story are highlighted in the table. Table 5 below provides a list of the significant words used in the text to reflect each category.

Table 5

Oliver Twist: Significant words in each semantic category

Oliver Twist, Charles Dickens	
Semantic tag	Word
People: Male	man – gentleman – boy – men - fellow - gentlemen - lad - Mr – male - fellows - bachelor - chaps - mister - lads - chap
Sad	cry - desperate - misery - grief – suffered - miserable - sad - sorrow - weeping - suffering - melancholy - pity - rueful - lamentations - pitied – sobbed – wept - unhappy – grim - desolation - repent - sob - cheerless – tragic – sullenly – lamented
Moving, Coming & Going	come - returned - left - go - passed – walked - went – followed - fell - entered - reached – nodded – got - ran – return - arrived – rising - crossed - darted - sunk - journey – emerged - staggered
Putting, Pulling, Pushing, Transporting	turned - put - lay - brought – raised – held - shook - carried – turning - hung - placed - set - threw - raising - thrust - putting – moved – send - hold - bring – dropped - pushed - delivered - thrusting - throwing - dragged - pulling - carriage
Alive	life - alive - lives - live - bloodless
Time: Old; Grown-up	old - venerable - growing up - grown up - adult- middle aged - grow up - mature
Happy	happy - laugh - smile - merry - joy - grin - delight - humour - relief - cheerful - merriment - jolly - chuckled - jokes - sanguine – mirth – funny – amused - fun - lol – playful - gaiety - grinned
Judgement of Appearance: Negative	dirty - duff – wretched – dismal - hideous - ugly - ghastly - awful - repulsive - horrible - frightful - filthy - ragged - horrid - soiled - unpleasant - vulgar - squalid - filth – unwashed
Crime	thief - robber– stole - villain - guilty - crime - ruffian - offence - burglary - fraud - plundering - kidnapped – injustice - conspiracy - offender

Knowledgeable	know – awakened - information - acquainted - remember - experience - recollection - news - conscious - wisdom - recognised – recollect - recall
Fear/Shock	fear - afraid - alarm - terror – frightened - horror - dread - startled - frighten - menacing - coward – startling – cowardly - cowered - fearing - scared
Disease	ill – fever – pain - mad – sick – cold – cripples – painful – fit - hurt - exhausted – wounded – weary - sickness - symptoms - crazy – wearied - bruised - sickly - fatigue - injured - cough - wounds – limped
Money: Lack	poor – paupers – poverty – destitute - in need - beggar - pauper - debased
Violent/Angry	violent - force - violence - rage - angry – fierce - wrath - agitation – threatening - hit - indignation - angrily - furious - brute - cruel - fury - threats - ferocity - anger

The semantic category **People: Male** (+979.37) relates to the inhabitants of the story world and shows that it was dominated by males. The significance of the category **Time: Old; Grown-up** (+257.77) can be accounted for by the fact that the story is told from the perception of a child who is controlled by grown-ups and that the story depicts his life journey as he grows up. The semantic categories **Sad** (+466.61), **Judgement of Appearance: Negative** (+145.92), **Fear/Shock** (+129.10), **Disease** (+128.71), and **Money: Lack** (+108.79) relate to the miserable life and work conditions of the protagonist, and hence, to the themes of child labour and poverty. The categories **Crime** (+145.81) and **Violent/Angry** (+104.75) relate to the mistreatment and cruelty the protagonist suffered from and also the life of crime he was forced to join. The category **Happy** (+164.56) is related to the protagonist's positive outlook despite his suffering. The categories **Moving, Coming & Going** (+362.84) and **Putting, Pulling, Pushing, Transporting** (+360.04) relate to the actions and, hence the main events, in the story. Hence, the semantic categories reflect plot elements and relate to the themes of morality, criminality, child labour and poverty.

David Copperfield

Dickens' *David Copperfield* is a bildungsroman which depicts the hardworking and the moral and spiritual development of its protagonist, David Copperfield. The novel highlights the themes of injustice in the educational system, marriage, morality, financial discrepancies between social classes, and the miserable conditions of the working class.

Figure 4 and Table 6 provide the extracted semantic categories in the text. Table 7 provides a list of the words reflecting each semantic category in the text.

Semantic clouds in *David Copperfield*

*WMatrix Semantic Tagging of Charles Dickens' David Copperfield*

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Light	+730.97	Darkness	+232.95	Time: Old; Grown-up	+138.31	Psychological Actions, States and Processes	+101.11
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Table 7

David Copperfield: Significant words in each semantic category

David Copperfield, Charles Dickens	
Semantic tag	Word
Knowledgeable	know- remember- recollect- knowledge- remembrance- informed- aware- experience- conscious- recall- information- recollection- looking back- famous- news- memorable- recalled- recognized- wisdom- recognition- recollections- inform- recalling- informing- experiences- spies- identify- informs- recognizing- expert
Thought, Belief	think- felt- believe- opinion- considered- wonder- suppose- supposed-impression- regarded- belief- thinks- suspicion- conviction- suspect- musing- conceived- attitude- views- opinions
Kin	aunt- mother- family- father- wife- sister- married- brother- son- papa- daughter- husband- engaged- mama- uncle- marriage- niece- cousin- marry- nephew- widow- Mrs- the old man- marrying- families- parents- wedding- parent- godmother- brothers- mothers- grandfather - father in law- widower- twin- husbands- offspring- bride- son in law- great aunt- brother in law- great grandfather- sister in law- fathers
Moving, Coming & Going	returned- went- go- come- left- walked- passed- trot- return- entered- journey- rising- followed- nodded- come back- went away- went in- departure- steps- advanced- voyage
Happy	happy- smile- laughing- delighted- cheerful- joy- delight- relief- smiled- cheerfully- merry- laughter- humour- amused- cheer up- happily- gaily- jest- cheerfulness- joyfully- joke- grin
Polite	thanked- grateful- compliments- gratitude- gracious- compliment- polite- gentlemanly- indebted- propriety- decently- complimentary- politely- civilities- courtly- pleasantry
Respected	respect- admiration- dignity- praise- honoured- honour- admire- homage- respecting- esteem- glorified- reverence- deference- admirable
Calm	rest- softly- gentle- calm- peace- resting- patience- rested- placid- cordiality- soothing- gentility- soothed- rests- serenity- gentler- repose- soothe- serene
Relationship: Intimacy & Sex	love- kiss- in love- embrace- romantic- intimacy- hug- fell in love- intercourse- hugged- hugging- sweetheart- fall in love- sweethearts- suitor- sleeps with- love making- live together
Time: Old; Grown-up	old- grown up- grew up- matured- grow up- grown- growing up- dated- middle aged- old age- superannuated- maturer- established- patrician- mature

Putting, Pulling, Pushing, Transporting	put- turned- brought- lay- shook- held- bear- set- raised- turning- sent- carried- moved- thrown- dropped- put down- send- shed- seated- lifted up- squeeze- fetch- hanging- pushed
Psychological Actions, States and Processes	mind- state of mind- instinctively- instinct- trance

The semantic categories **Knowledgeable** (+842.24) and **Thought, Belief** (+652.76) relate to the themes of the protagonist's self-development and education. **Kin** (+606.87) and **Relationship: Intimacy & Sex** (+154.26) reflect the themes of family and marriage. The protagonist's psychological state, positive outlook and maturity are reflected in the categories **Happy** (+338.16), **Calm** (+173.24), and **Psychological Actions, States & Processes** (+101.11). The themes of morality and social class are conveyed by the categories **Polite** (+211.58) and **Respected** (+187.21). The protagonist's progress into maturity is reflected by the semantic category **Time: Old; Grown-up** (+138.31). This category may also refer to older inhabitants of the story world. The categories **Moving, Coming & Going** (+506.78) and **Putting, Pulling, Pushing, Transporting** (+122.71) reflect the actions which propel the plot. As such, the semantic categories show that *David Copperfield* discusses the themes of education, marriage/family, morality, and self-development to maturity.

Great Expectations

Dickens' *Great Expectations* portrays the journey of its protagonist, Philip Pirrip (Pip) from childhood into youth. The major themes conveyed by the novel include morality, self-development, the social class system, and crime. Figure 5 and Table 7 provide the extracted semantic categories in the text. Table 8 provides a list of the words reflecting each semantic category in the text.

Figure 5

Semantic clouds in Great Expectations

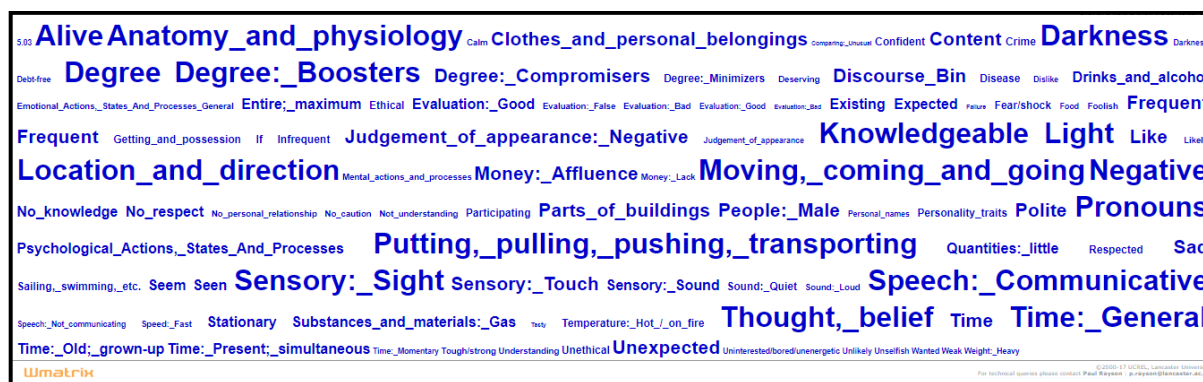


Table 8

WMatrix Semantic Tagging of Charles Dickens' Great Expectations

Semantic Field	LL	Semantic Field	LL	Semantic Field	LL	Semantic Field	LL
Pronouns	+12951.68	Time: General	+423.21	People: Male	+209.93	Polite	+134.03
Anatomy & Physiology	+1122.50	Location & Direction	+384.77	Frequent	+189.08	Time	+127.51
Light	+794.59	Moving, Coming & Going	+379.70	Parts of the Buildings	+182.15	Money: Affluence	+126.51
Speech: Communicative	+671.78	Putting, Pulling, Pushing & Transporting	+324.52	Discourse Bin	+181.31	Clothes & Personal Belongings	+123.59
Sensory: Sight	+647.64	Degree: Boosters	+315.23	Like	+181.10	Content	+112.19
Degree	+488.69	Darkness	+283.52	Sad	+161.99	Sensory: Touch	+92.83
Negative	+446.00	Thought, Belief	+233.82	Degree: Compromisers	+148.17		
Knowledgeable	+441.82	Alive	+226.62	Unexpected	+146.09		

Table 9

Great Expectations: Significant words in each semantic category

Great Expectations, Charles Dickens	
Semantic tag	Word
Knowledgeable	know - remember - knowledge - remembrance - information - aware - informed - recognized - acquainted - experience - recalled - remembered - news - memorable - recognition - recall - recollect - identify - wisdom
Moving, Coming & Going	go - come - returned - left - passed - walk - leave - fell - coming - entered - rising - crossed - nodding - tumbling - movement - steps - arrival - journey - staggered - rolled - approached - scattered - ascended - creep - drifting

Putting, Pulling, Pushing, Transporting	put – held - lay - turned - bring - shook - threw - seated - placed – pulled - hanging - pushed - removed - dropping - carriage – shipping - dragged
Thought, Belief	thought - felt - believe - considered - opinion - supposed - suspicion - impression - meaning - conscience - judgement - attitude
People: Male	man – boy - gentleman – fellow - chap - Mr - bachelor - lad - male - manhood - manly
Sad	cried - miserable - suffered - melancholy - desperate - sulky - despair – mourning - regret - dejected - unhappy - remorse - grim - suffering - wept - sorrowful - sad - miserably - gloomily
Polite	thanked - grateful - compliments - polite - gracious - gratitude - apologetically – compliment - thanks - peasantry - indebted
Money: Affluence	fortune - fortunes - treasure
Clothes & Personal Belongings	pocket - dress - clothes - boots - hat - wore - coat - put on - sleeve – suit - gloves - shoes - bag - purse - cloak - apron - waistcoat - trousers - veil - jewels - shroud – crown - skirts – brooch - knitting - tailor

The semantic categories **Knowledgeable** (+441.82) and **Thought, Belief** (+233.82) reflect the protagonist's self-development. The high statistical significance of the categories **Moving, Coming & Going** (+379.70) and **Putting, Pulling, Pushing & Transporting** (+324.52) convey an idea about the nature of the plot as full of events and actions. The category **People: Male** (+209.93) informs us that most of the inhabitants of the story world are males. The category **Sad** (+161.99) reflects the miserable conditions of the inhabitants of the story world and may relate to the theme of social class. The category **Money: Affluence** (+126.51) reflects the theme of social class and may potentially relate also to the theme of criminality. The category **Polite** (+134.03) relates to the theme of morality. Finally, the category **Clothes and Personal Belongings** (+123.59) may relate to the theme of criminality particularly stealing, which is evident through the use of words such as 'pocket', 'purse', 'jewels', and 'brooch'. It may also relate to the female inhabitants of the story world through references to items of clothes and actions stereotypically linked with women such as 'dress', 'apron', 'veil', 'skirts', 'brooch', and 'knitting'.

Our Mutual Friend

Our Mutual Friend criticizes moral and social problems, particularly, the wide gaps between the social classes, crime, and corruption. It also tackles the theme of family and marriage in Victorian society. Figure 6 and Table 10 provide the extracted semantic categories in the text. Table 11 provides a list of the words reflecting each semantic category in the text.

Figure 6

Semantic clouds in *Our Mutual Friend*



Table 10

WMatrix Semantic Tagging of Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*

Semantic Field	LL	Semantic Field	LL	Semantic Field	LL	Semantic Field	LL
Pronouns	+10782.94	Darkness	+380.19	Money: Lack	+205.50	Respected	+144.58
Unmatched	+3931.05	Sensory: Sight	+372.29	Content	+193.98	No Respect	+142.58
Anatomy & Physiology	+1864.49	Alive	+355.12	Speech Acts	+183.88	Unethical	+139.31
Speech: Communicative	+1059.46	Location & Direction	+343.22	Unexpected	+179.82	Sensory: Touch	+131.57
Negative	+1002.99	People: Male	+335.99	Ethical	+169.53	Personal Relationship: General	+120.95
Light	+824.68	Putting, Pulling, Pushing & Transporting	+299.11	Kin	+167.67	Deserving	+118.46
Like	+785.20	Moving, Coming & Going	+285.64	Frequent	+164.84	Degree: Compromises	+110.86
Degree	+620.60	Thought, Belief	+278.10	Judgement of Appearance : Positive	+154.53	Sensory: Sound	+103.97

Time: General	+431.95	Sad	+238.0 1	Foolish	+150.1 3	Quantities: Little	+102.4 4
Knowledgeable	+414.19	Money: Affluence	+220.6 4	Size: Small	+148.7 4	Confident	+100.6 0
Work & Employment: Professionalism	+395.13	Polite	+212.2 0	Seem	+147.2 5	Calm	+96.41

Table 11

Our Mutual Friend: Significant words in each semantic category

Our Mutual Friend, Charles Dickens	
Semantic tag	Wordlist
Knowledgeable	know – remember – knowledge – aware - information - acquainted- remembrance – news – recall – experience – recollect - wisdom - recognized – awakened - recollection
Work & Employment: Professionalism	secretary- reputation- secretaries- reputations- gatekeeper- colleagues
People: Male	man- gentleman- boy- Mr- men- fellow- gentlemen- chap- fellows- boys- male- manly- lad- bachelor- Mister- lads- chaps
Putting, Pulling, Pushing, Transporting	put- turned- brought- held- set- lay- shaking- carriage- turn- raised- removed- seated- borne- thrown- delivered- hung- pick up- took down- twisted- stuck- deposited- put into- tossed- turns- stretched out.
Moving, Coming & Going	returned- come- go- left- passed- walk- sat down- followed- comes- pass- return- steps- arrived- move- nod- come home- wandering- rolled- laid down- departed- floating- fallen- advancing- slipped
Thought, Belief	think- feel- believe- opinion- suppose- wonder- suspicion- regarded- attitude- meaning- trust- impression- distrust- musing- guess- find- meditating- reason- assumed- deemed- deliberation
Sad	cried- melancholy- miserable- glum- mourning- wept- sad- grim- desperate- weeping- unhappy- gloomily- suffering- despair- suffered- miseries- cries- regret- downcast- burst into tears- embarrassing- misery- sobbing
Money: Affluence	fortune- fortunes- riches- treasure- richest- fortune hunter
Polite	thankful- gracious- grateful- compliments- polite- thanked- compliment- thank- thanks- politely- politeness- gratitude- apologetic- complimentary- graciously- courteous- apologetically- thanking- complimented- indebted- thankfulness- refined- good manners- decently- well bred- courtesy

Money: Lack	poor- beggars- poverty- insolvent- pauper- beggar- destitution- in need- needy- hard up- broke- beggar- penniless
Ethical	honour- fair- honourable- noble- respectable- forgive- moral- gallant- virtue- justified- virtuous- virtues- forgiveness- justly- unimpeachable- honours- justification- excusable- chivalrous- integrity- honourably
Kin	father- sister- husband- wife- daughter- family- brother- mother- married- godmother- marry- son- marriage- parent- bride- mum- marrying- wedding- daughters- fathers- aunt- bridegroom- mamma
Judgement of Appearance: Positive	pleasant- pretty- lovely- comfortable- beautiful- charming- handsome- delicate- grand- neat- clean- nice- majestic- attracted- beauty- grace- radiant- impressive- adorable- charmed- fashionable- gorgeous
Respected	respect- dignity- admiration- honoured- deference- dignified- homage- submissively- estimable- flattered- praises- honorary
No Respect	disgrace- contempt- scorn- disdain- degraded- irreverent- disgraced- humiliation - derision- profane- disdained
Unethical	rogue- mercenary- wicked- betrayed- rascal- cheat- reproachful- disgraceful- fiddle- swindlers- sin- traitor- corruption- vices
Personal Relationship: General	friend- partner- meet- acquaintance- companion- comrade- escort- friendship- mate- playmate
Confident	confidence- trust- emphatic- peace of mind- confident- reassuring- trustfulness

The semantic categories **Knowledgeable** (+414.19) and **Thought, Belief** (+278.10) relate to the themes of self-development and education. The theme of the gap between the social classes is quite significant and is reflected in the categories **Work & Employment: Professionalism** (+395.13), **Sad** (+238.01), **Money: Affluence** (+220.64), **Money: Lack** (+205.50), and **Respected** (+144.58). The category **People: Male** (+335.99) reflects the fact that the majority of the inhabitants in the story world are males. The categories **Putting, Pulling, Pushing & Transporting** (+299.11) and **Moving, Coming & Going** (+285.64) reflect the amount of action in the story. The theme of morality is highlighted in the story through the categories **Polite** (+212.20), **Ethical** (+169.53), **No Respect** (+142.58), **Unethical** (+139.31), and **Confident** (+100.60). The theme of family is conveyed by the categories **Kin** (+167.67) and **Personal Relationship: General** (+120.95). Finally, the category **Judgement of Appearance: Positive** (+154.53) relates to the theme of family/relationships. It may, however, reflect the theme of social class, which is evident in the use of these words: ‘grand’, ‘majestic’, ‘grace’, and ‘fashionable’.

The Combined Charles Dickens’ Corpus

Figure 7 and Table 12 below provide the extracted semantic categories in the combined corpus of the four texts. Table 13 provides a list of the words within each of these semantic categories.

Figure 7

Semantic clouds in Charles Dickens' combined corpus

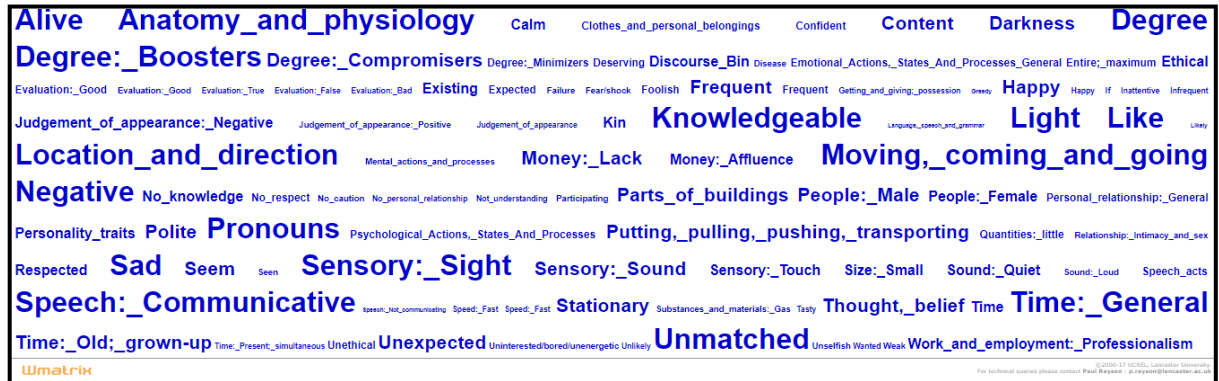


Table 12

WMatrix Semantic Tagging of Charles Dickens' Combined Corpus

Semantic Field	LL	Semantic Field	LL	Semantic Field	LL	Semantic Field	LL
Pronouns	+26807.89	People: Male	+639.91	Sensory: Touch	+218.00	Foolish	+169.36
Anatomy & Physiology	+3448.65	Putting, Pulling, Pushing, Transporting	+592.96	Calm	+217.66	Frequent	+167.85
Unmatched	+2839.41	Darkness	+528.89	Money: Affluence	+216.27	No Respect	+164.21
Speech: Communicative	+2358.95	Content	+509.90	Size: Small	+215.98	Degree: Minimizers	+147.57
Negative	+1348.69	Unexpected	+379.78	Existing	+214.43	Expected	+145.29
Light	+1269.87	Polite	+334.99	People: Female	+213.87	Quantities: Little	+139.60
Degree: Boosters	+1207.57	Happy	+293.08	Discourse Bin	+211.34	Deserving	+129.85
Like	+1191.28	Frequent	+291.43	Sound: Quiet	+201.20	Clothes & Personal Belongings	+129.41

Sensory: Sight	+1131.01	Sensory: Sound	+285.35	Time	+191.91	Speech Acts	+126.94
Degree	+1071.37	Degree: Compromises	+274.36	Personality Traits	+191.88	Emotional Actions, States & Processes General	+125.33
Knowledgeable	+1050.76	Stationary	+269.36	No Knowledge	+188.42	Confident	+122.35
Moving, Coming & Going	+900.01	Parts of Buildings	+257.95	Ethical	+179.48	Sound: Loud	+121.68
Time: General	+887.25	Seem	+256.60	Work & Employment: Professionalism	+177.52	Fear/ Shock	+114.99
Sad	+788.80	Money: Lack	+227.19	Judgement of Appearance: Negative	+176.45	If	+114.26
Location & Direction	+767.73	Time: Old; Grown-up	+225.00	Evaluation: Good	+172.57	Mental Actions & Processes	+105.97
Alive	+683.19	Kin	+219.55	Unethical	+171.73	Unselfish	+101.60
Thought, Belief	+659.67	Respected	+218.96	Psychological Actions, States & Processes	+171.25	Seen	+100.79

Table 13

The Combined Corpus: Significant words in each semantic category

Charles Dickens Combined Corpus	
Semantic tag	Wordlist
Knowledgeable	know- remember- knowledge - aware- recollect- information- experience- heard of- recall- news- awakened- recognized- wisdom- looking back- recalled- recognition- remembrances- memorable- famous- identify- recalling- call to mind- experiences
Moving, Coming & Going	returned- go- come- passed- walked- leave- fell- rose- nodded- arrived- coming back- trot- fall- journey- steps- trembling- crossed- wandering- advanced- enter- arrival- rolled- crept- approached- departed- movement

Sad	cried- miserable - unhappy- melancholy- desperate- suffered- sorrow- sad- gravely- misery- weeping- mourning- despair- suffer- wept- sobbing- suffering- grim- sobbed- remorse- sorrowful- burst into tears
Thought, Belief	think- felt- opinion- considered- suppose- wonder- impression- suspicion- trust- meaning- attitude- belief- conviction- conscience- suspicious- imagine- found- assumed- regard- guess- musing- deemed
People: Male	man- boy- gentleman- men- fellow- Mr- boys- gentlemen- chap- lad- fellows- male- Mister- bachelor-manly- messrs- manhood- chaps- masculine- lads- manful- boy- nobs- males- man - manliest
Putting, Pulling, Pushing, Transporting	put- turned- brought- lay- held- laid- shook- set- bear- dropped- turn- carriage- placed- threw- seated- hung- raising- removed- delivered- pushed- shed- put into- withdrew- pull- thrust- hanging- stuck- bearing- tossed- dragged
Polite	grateful- thanked- thankful- gracious- compliments- thank- compliment- polite- gratitude- thanks- politeness- politely- complimentary- apologetic- apologetically- graciously- gentlemanly- indebted- pleasantries- thankfulness- propriety- complimented- thanking- courteous- decently- refined- civilities- courteously- civilly- cultivated- good manners- proprieties- tact- civility- courtly- well bred- courtesy- complimenting- pleasantries
Happy	happy- smile- laughed- smiling- cheerful- delighted- relief- joy- delight- humour- merry- gaily- grin- amused- playful- beaming- sanguine- cheer up- chuckled- comic- jest- fun- rejoiced- bliss- rapturous- merriment- mirth- overjoyed- festive
Money: Lack	poor- paupers- beggar- poverty- pauper- in need- beggars- destitute- insolvent- needy- destitution- beggared- poor laws- fruitlessly- beggar woman- debasing- underpaid- pauper- debased- beggar- looking poor- penniless
Time: Old; Grown-up	old- mature- old fashioned- grown up- pensioner- matured- old age- matronly- adult- maturer- looked old- maturity
Kin	aunt- mother- father- sister- family- wife- husband- married- brother- daughter- son- engaged- marriage- papa- uncle- marry- mama- godmother- cousin- parent- niece- bride- mum- marrying- parents- wedding- widow- twins- sisters- aunts
Respected	respect- admiration- dignity- admired- honoured- stately- praise- homage- dignified- esteem- deference- praised- reverence- deferential- praises- self-respect- estimable- glorified
Money: Affluence	fortune- fortunes- treasure- riches- richest- fortune hunter
People: Female	lady- girl- woman- miss- female- housewife- feminine- girlish- hag- womanhood- crones ⁸ - begum- lass- ladylike- crone- maiden
Personality Traits	kind- childish- unjust- temperament- human nature- kinder- unkind- childish- stubborn- trait- stiff necked- pig headedness- unjustly
Ethical	honour- fair- forgive- noble- respectable- mercy- virtue- gallant- innocently- disinterestedness- scruple- acquitted- humane- fairest- ingenuous- blameless- chaste

⁸ 'Crone's means ugly old women. 'Begum' refers to a Muslim woman of high rank.

Work & Employment: Professionalism	secretary- reputation- carpenter- accountant- reput- practitioners- malpractices- colleague- bricklayer- carpentering- gatekeeper- colleagues
Judgement of Appearance: Negative	wretched- awful- dismal- dirty- ragged- ugly- horrible- desolate- shabby- frightful- duff- hideous- unpleasant- unspeakable- withered- imperfectly- clumsy- wreck- abhorrence- nasty- harsh- imperfect- bleak- filthy- horrid- gaunt
Unethical	ashamed- evil- shame- wicked- rogue- mercenary- betrayed- tricks- mischief- rascal- naughty- reproachful- sordid- sin- vice- guilt- degradation- wickedness- devilish- corruption
No Respect	disgrace- contempt- scorn- disdain- impudent- insolent- affront- degraded- humiliation- dishonourable- dishonour- abase- derision- irreverent- undignified
Emotional Actions, States & Processes General	pity- temper- sentiment- emotion- compassion- flushed- wits- awe- touching- shudder- moody- hysterical- wit- tempers- feel- discomposed- rosy cheeked
Confident	confidence- trust- faith- emphatic- confident- emphatically- peace of mind- forcibly- trustfulness- reassuring- forcible- minds- reassured
Fear/Shock	fear- frightened- dread- terror- alarmed- horror- shock- timid- fearful- startled- shy- terrified- fright- shocked- timidly- scared- frighten- coward
Mental Actions & Processes	memory- mental- dreamed- intellect- dreaming- meditation- mentally- intellectual- dream- meditations- memories- intuitively

The furnishing of the story worlds of Dickens' selected novels is reflected by the semantic categories **People: Male** (+639.91) and **People: Female** (+213.87). The high statistical significance of the **People: Male** semantic category reflects the fact that the majority of the inhabitants of these story worlds are males. The category **Personality Traits** (+191.88) elaborates Dickens' characters even further. The categories **Moving, Coming & Going** (+900.01) and **Putting, Pulling, Pushing, Transporting** (+592.96) reflect the actions of the stories. The categories of **Knowledgeable** (+1050.76) and **Thought, Belief** (+659.67) relate to the theme of education. They may also relate to the theme of self-development and progress to maturity which is primarily conveyed by the categories **Time: Old; Grown-up** (+225.00), **Emotional Actions, States & Processes General** (+125.33), and **Mental Actions & Processes** (+105.97). The theme of discrepancies in the social class system, which is characterized by the presence of two extremes: affluence and poverty, is reflected by the semantic categories **Sad** (+788.80), **Money: lack** (+227.19), **Respected** (+218.96), **Money: Affluence** (+216.27), **Work & Employment: Professionalism** (+177.52), **Judgement of appearance: Negative** (+176.45), and **Fear/Shock** (+114.99). The theme of morality is reflected in the categories **Polite** (+334.99), **Ethical** (+179.48), **Unethical** (+171.73), **No Respect** (+164.21), and **Confident** (+122.35). The theme of family is conveyed by the category **Kin** (+219.55). Finally, the semantic category **Happy** (+293.08) relates to Dickens' positive attitude in the face of suffering and his tendency to have happy endings where evil is always punished and morality is always rewarded.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to address the effectiveness of semantic domains in detecting the major themes of literary texts. Through suggesting a methodology consisting of a synergy of quantitative and qualitative approaches, the study managed to contribute to the evidence supporting the effectiveness of corpus tools, particularly the Wmatrix, in supplementing traditional stylistic analysis. The results of the corpus analysis indicated the effectiveness of Corpus Stylistics in detecting literary texts. This study recommends the use of corpus-based analysis of literary texts as a milestone step to provide quantitative evidence for further qualitative assessments.

The implications of this study could be extended to the field of pedagogy since the corpus-stylistic approach to studying literary themes, being an evidence-based approach, may facilitate the teaching of literary works objectively and, hence, their study for non-native readers. According to Semino (2011), the pedagogical implications for stylistic analysis have been examined by stylisticians in respect to native speakers, second language and foreign language contexts (e.g., Widdowson, 1975; Widdowson, 1992; Watson and Zyngier, 2007). In fact, the effectiveness of using stylistic evidence-based approaches in teaching literary texts in language classrooms has been advocated in many studies (Carter and McRae, 1996; Carter and Simpson 1989; Cook, 1994; Fowler, 1996; Kramsch, 1993; Kramsch and Kramsch 2000; Short, 1996; Simpson, 1993; Toolan, 1998; Widdowson, 1975, 1992).

“Herein lies its educational value – for it offers an alternative to the traditional teaching of literature. Rather than being the passive recipients of the second-hand interpretations of literary critics, students can be enabled (empowered even) to take the initiative and engage actively and directly with literary texts themselves” (Widdowson 2008: 302).

Applying the procedure of semantic domains to literary works would, in essence, advance non-native readers’ comprehension of these works by, and probably also contribute further to, developing their level of English language proficiency through relating themes to linguistic triggers. Behnam (1996: 12) asserts that when non-native learners do not only depend on ‘some intuitive responses for which little evidence can be drawn’, they may activate ‘a general analytic skill which can serve as a first step towards the ultimate interpretative responses expected from readers’. Naciscione (2010: 205) adds that literary texts can be used as a significant medium for language acquisition and awareness raising, through focusing on ‘lexical and grammatical accuracy’ and additionally enhancing ‘literary awareness and stylistic sensitivity’. Hernández (2011: 235-6) argues that using literary texts in language teaching facilitates the development of ‘literary comprehension and sensibility’ in learners, and elevates their communicative competence through ‘the expression of ideas, opinions, and beliefs’. The ‘use of literary texts is often advocated as a means to enhance proficiency in reading, vocabulary growth and cultural knowledge, if not indeed, in more traditional systems’ (Hall, 2007: 4).

The approach suggested in this paper seeks to achieve two main aims which were firstly, to enable students to make meaningful interpretations of the text itself; secondly, ‘to expand students’ knowledge and awareness of the language in general’ (Lazar 1993: 31). Hence, practicing this corpus-stylistic approach would likely extend teaching literature in the classroom beyond traditional literary criticism, which primarily depends on intuition, to encompass more systematic and objective practices, and eventually help develop non-native learners’ English language proficiency.

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