

Teaching English Literature and Linguistics Using Corpus Stylistic Methods

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Abstract

This paper reports on the teaching of an interdisciplinary undergraduate seminar on English linguistics and literature at the University of Augsburg (Germany). The focus of this seminar was 19th century women's fiction, with three novels discussed from literary and linguistic perspectives: Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. The paper describes the main corpus stylistic methods that were applied in the analysis of these three novels by the students (inspired by Stubbs's 2005 outline of corpus linguistic methodologies in the study of literary texts). It is shown how keyword and collocation analyses (Scott 1999) can provide information on key themes of the novels, the construal of characters and socio-cultural attitudes prevalent in 19th century English society. The seminar is also evaluated in terms of its success, in particular with respect to interdisciplinarity and corpus stylistics.

1 Introduction

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a speaker in possession of an intelligent audience is in want of an arresting opening.
(Monica Ali in *The Guardian Unlimited*, 9 Dec 2004)

This paper describes an interdisciplinary project undertaken at the University of Augsburg (Germany) in the winter term 2005/2006: teaching English literature and linguistics to non-native (i.e. German) students of English. This course was taught by Sibylle Pärsch and the author, and involved about 40 undergraduate university students in their first, second or third year of study (the German *Grundstudium*). Most students studied English language, linguistics and literature. Three 19th century women's novels were discussed in this module: Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. This paper focuses on the linguistic part of the course, in particular the corpus stylistic methods that were applied by the students in their analyses of the chosen texts, though I shall also briefly mention traditional stylistic studies.

The paper begins with some comments on the motivations for teaching this class, and with some background information on the contents of the module before discussing in more detail the corpus stylistic analyses and concluding with an evaluation of the class. The paper also hopes to stimulate teachers in tertiary education to use both interdisciplinary and corpus linguistic methods in teaching non-native students.

2 Motivations

Let me start with some comments on interdisciplinary teaching. Generally speaking, it seems to me that interdisciplinarity is much preached, but much less often practiced, in particular where actual teaching is concerned. Consequently, there are not many guidelines on how to structure and teach such classes successfully. At the same time, there is a natural connection between some disciplines, for example linguistics (as the study of language) and literature (as the study of an art form created through

language), and many students at (German) universities study both. Linguistics and literature, then, are much more closely related than, say, physics and literature, and presumably easier to combine. This also means, however, that this type of interdisciplinary teaching is much less ‘interdisciplinary’ than others.¹ Consequently, teachers of other interdisciplinary combinations (e.g. mathematics and linguistics) might need to come up with more novel and innovative respective teaching techniques than those mentioned in this paper.

Interdisciplinarity thus lends itself to the teaching of linguistics and literature, but what are the motivations for choosing the three 19th century novels? Firstly, from a legal point of view, the copyright for these books has expired, which means that these texts are easily available to download on the internet. This is particularly important when corpus stylistic methods are applied (see below). Secondly, from a feminist point of view, the beginning of the women’s movement can be traced back to England in the 19th century, and *Jane Eyre* in particular lends itself to a feminist analysis. Thirdly, from a literary point of view, these three novels are all ‘classics’ of 19th century (women’s) fiction and the novel genre. The choice of these three classics was one the one hand influenced by the idea to present female writers whose works demonstrate the continuity and development of the genre as well as feminist issues. However, the three novels also differ from each other to a great extent, and consequently present a wide variety of issues, for instance, the struggle for independence or the quest for more than a ‘common’ life. From both perspectives, the literary as well as the linguistic, the choice of these novels provided the students with the opportunity to compare and maybe favour one novel over the other. On the other hand, the novels also had a big influence on ensuing literary works as well as on popular culture. The latter is particular apparent with respect to *Frankenstein* (think of the many horror films based on it) and Jane Austen’s novels. When googling Jane Austen, we quickly come up with many hits which demonstrate the popular reception of Jane Austen as well as *Pride and Prejudice*, for instance:

Dating expert gives love lessons based on **Austen**
Jane Austen letter on display in time for tea
 Bath tires of **Austen** and turns to radicals
 Change your life with **Jane Austen**
Jane Austen laid bare
Jane Austen: the brand
Darcy goes to Bollywood
 Why do we still fall for **Mr Darcy**?
Pride and Sikh

And when googling the first part of the first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice* (*It is a truth universally acknowledged that*), intertextual references also abound on the internet:

It is a truth universally acknowledged that nothing is more likely to strike fear and xenophobia into the heart of an English person than a national treasure being appropriated by an American.
It is a truth universally acknowledged that an old wizard in possession of a big secret must be in danger of his life.
It is a truth universally acknowledged that the book women feel has most transformed their lives is the one that has assured them for the past two centuries that, yes, they will marry the wealthy, handsome man next door and live happily ever after.
It is a truth universally acknowledged that a theatre company in need of a decent living must be in want of a classic novel to adapt
It is a truth universally acknowledged that any article about *Pride and Prejudice* must start with ‘it is a truth universally acknowledged ...’

¹ In making use of stylistic methods, it might also be said that we combine an already somewhat ‘interdisciplinary’ linguistic methodology (stylistics) with the study of literature.

Additionally, *Pride and Prejudice* (as well as *Frankenstein*) has been adapted many times to the screen, with the most famous adaptation perhaps the BBC production with Colin Firth and Jennifer Ehle (released on DVD in 2005). But there are also more recent ones in the 'noughties' (e.g. 2004: *Bride and Prejudice*, 2005: *Pride and Prejudice* with Keira Knightley and Matthew Macfadyen). These bear witness to the ongoing popularity of Jane Austen and *Pride and Prejudice*, particularly (but not exclusively) in Anglo-American culture.

3 Background information

Table 1 in the appendix shows all the linguistic and literary topics that were discussed in the course of the module (not all of which will be described in detail in this paper). In a first session, the students were introduced to stylistics (including its historical background), with extracts from the (in)famous Fowler-Bateson debate providing much amusement, such as: 'Would I allow my sister to marry a linguist? It is a good question. And I suppose, if I am honest, I must admit that I would much prefer *not* to have a linguist in the family' (Bateson in Fowler and Bateson 1968:176). The students were also given an introduction to corpus linguistic techniques in the computer lab. This involved essentially questions of how and where to download the three novels (constituting the corpora) and the software, and how to use the software. Since Wordsmith (Scott 1999) was installed in the computer lab at our university, this was the software taught to the students, but other software would be similarly usable (some available for free online). The novels were downloaded from <http://www.gutenberg.org/>, all information other than the text of the novel (e.g. headers) removed, and the text saved in a Wordsmith-compatible format (e.g. plain text). Each novel constituted a corpus that could then be analysed by the students with the help of Wordsmith.²

4 Topics and projects

In most sessions, one or more important concepts were discussed both from a literary and from a linguistic perspective. Focusing on the linguistic perspective only, some of the projects the students undertook included more 'traditional' stylistic analyses such as:

- Speech/thought representation (e.g. Leech and Short 1981, Semino and Short 2004)
- Metaphor (e.g. Lakoff and Turner 1989, Lakoff and Johnson 1994, Lenk 2002)
- Characterisation (e.g. Culpeper 2001)
- Stylistic characteristics (e.g. Thornborrow and Wareing 1998, Toolan 1998, 2001, Simpson 2004)

Much stylistic research deals with such analyses, and many studies are available for consultation, so no more shall be said about these here. More interesting (and more rarely discussed in research) are corpus stylistic studies (Stubbs 2005), in particular keyword analyses and studies of collocation. Such corpus methods have one clear advantage over traditional methods, namely that they are based on quantitative data. This is important because, as Stubbs has pointed out, 'stylistics has long led an uneasy half-life, never fully accepted, for many related reasons, by either linguists or literary critics' (Stubbs 2005:5) – though, presumably, we have advanced from the days of the fierce debate between linguists and literary critics referenced above. While keyword and corpus analyses were the main corpus linguistic techniques that were applied in this class by the students, and that will be discussed in the following, Hubbard (2002) and Stubbs (2005) give additional suggestions for corpus stylistic research.

² For recent introductions to corpus linguistics see Tognini-Bonelli (2001), Hunston (2002), Meyer (2002), Stubbs (2002) or Sinclair (2004).

4.1 Keywords

In corpus linguistic terms, a *keyword* refers to a word that occurs with unusual frequency in a given text or collection of texts when this is compared with a reference corpus of some kind. Crucially, this means that a keyword can be unusually frequent or infrequent. *Keyness* is thus defined in terms of statistical ‘unusuality’. How exactly does this work? We need two corpora: the text (or collection of texts) that we are interested in (Scott and Tribble 2006 call this the *node-text*), and a reference corpus, which provides the standard of comparison. This reference corpus should be larger and an appropriate sample of the language of the node text. This notion of ‘appropriate’ is of course problematic, and it may at times be helpful to compare keywords that result from the use of different reference corpora. For example, if we compare *Pride and Prejudice* with a reference corpus of *all* of Jane Austen’s novels this might point to characteristics of *Pride and Prejudice*. If we use a reference corpus of 19th century fiction, we might additionally get information on Jane Austen in general, and if a reference corpus of 20th century fiction is used, some additional insight into 19th century fiction should be the result. Thus, Scott and Tribble (2006) compare *Romeo and Juliet* with a reference corpus including a) the tragedies alone, b) the complete works by Shakespeare including poetry, and c) the British National Corpus (100 million words of general British English). They point out that ‘while the choice of reference corpus is important, above a certain size, the procedure throw up a robust core of KWs whichever the reference corpus used’ (Scott and Tribble 2006:64).³

After choosing a reference corpus, we need to produce wordlists of the two corpora (with the help of Wordsmith’s *WordList*), i.e. lists of all the words and their frequency in the two corpora. Wordsmith’s *KeyWords* software then compares these two word lists, and identifies keywords with the help of tests of statistical significance (log likelihood or chi-square). A list of keywords might look like table 2:

Table 2 Key words in *Romeo and Juliet*

KWs of *Romeo and Juliet* vs. all Shakespeare plays (Scott & Tribble 2006:60):

Ah	death	married	slain
art	early	mercutio	thee
back	friar	montague	thou
banished	Juliet	monument	Thursday
benvolio	juliet’s	night	thy
capulet	kinsman	nurse	torch
capulets	lady	o	tybalt
capulet’s	lawrence	paris	tybalt’s
cell	light	poison	vault
churchyard	lips	romeo	Verona
county	love	romeo’s	watch
dead	mantua	she	wilt

Such keywords can tell the students a number of things about the novels they chose to analyse. Firstly, they can tell them about content, allowing for a discussion of the key themes of a novel. Secondly, they can provide information on the stylistic characteristics of a novel (functioning as ‘style-markers’ (Culpeper 2002:12) or ‘vocabulary fingerprint for a writer’ (Graves 1999)). Thirdly, keywords reference important cultural, historical and social information on the background of the events depicted in the novel. (It is interesting in this respect to note Stubbs’s (2002) research on *cultural keywords*.) Keywords can thus be *content keywords*, *style keywords* or *socio-cultural keywords*, and can even combine these three aspects.

³ On the problematic issue of the choice of a reference corpus, which, it seems, should be at least five times bigger than the node text see also Scott and Tribble (2006, 63-65).

In the interdisciplinary seminar, keyword analyses were predominantly used for introducing and summarising the three novels, clarifying and underlining motives, themes and other important aspects (see appendix for all projects involving keywords). For example, a keyword analysis of *Frankenstein* (with a reference corpus of 19th century fiction compiled by the student herself), throws up keywords such as *I, my, me, myself* (style markers pointing to the importance of first person narration and dialogue), *creature, monster, fiend, wretch, daemon* (referencing the gothic elements of the story), *mountain, mountains, nature, earth, ice, lake, sun, moon, desert* (relating to the importance of nature and the romantic elements of the novel) and *science, discovered, knowledge, journey* (associated with the key theme of scientific responsibility, and Romanticism as a counter movement to Enlightenment). Some keywords are clearly negative, and make reference to the results of Frankenstein's quest, his creation, his leaving behind of the 'monster', and the resulting actions of the latter: *miserable, misery, despair, horror, enemy, death, melancholy, revenge, destroy*. The keywords hence show a number of interesting aspects of the book.

Frankenstein also lends itself to a different keyword analysis. The novel is characterised by its distinct embedding, and narrative framing: the story is told by Walton to his sister in a series of letters. In them, he tells her about meeting Frankenstein, who, in turn, tells him his story of creating a being, including a meeting with this being in the Alps and the being's narration of what happened to him after Frankenstein left. Each of these stories can be turned into a node text and compared with the rest of the novel (figure 1):

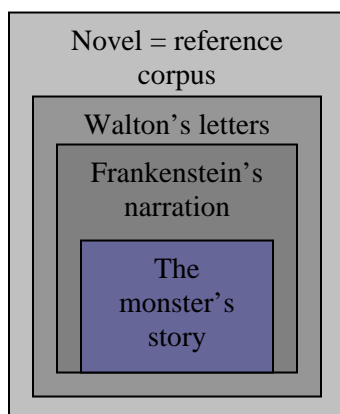


Figure 1 Embedding in *Frankenstein*

The student undertaking this analysis found that Frankenstein's story is characterised by the keywords *Elisabeth, our, Justine* (references to the females who are important to him), whereas Walton's keywords point to his journey to the north pole (*ice, sledge, north*) on a ship (*vessel, cabin, deck, ship, board*) where he meets Frankenstein (with *traveller, stranger, guest* references to himself and the latter). It is also in Walton's story that we find the conceptualisation of the scientific foray into nature as dangerous (*die, danger, peril*). Finally, the monster's story has keywords referring to his life in and with nature (*fire, wood, trees, roots, fields, sun, berries*), his process of acquiring language (*conversation, sounds, understood, uttered, understand, improved, comprehend, language*), and references to his suffering as a result of Frankenstein's actions (*sadness, hunger, pain*). Again, such an analysis proves useful in discussing key aspects of the novel and its structure. Scott and Tribble (2006) – not published at the time of teaching – give further useful suggestions for using keywords in language education, but for now the discussion will move on to collocation.

4.2 Collocation

The importance of collocation is well publicised in research on corpus linguistics and language teaching (e.g. Partington 1998), though there are competing definitions of what exactly a collocation is, and what different types there are (see e.g. Klotz 2000 for an overview). In essence, collocation concerns the syntagmatic association of lexical items (often defined statistically as a probabilistic tendency of words to co-occur). One way of (manually) analysing collocations is by looking at concordances – the output of concordancers such as Wordsmith's *Concord*, which provide lists of words (the node) in their context. Here, for example, are concordances for *pride* in *Pride and Prejudice*:

1	than pride."	"Can such abominable	pride as his have ever done
2	But his pride, his	abominable	pride --his shameless avowal
3	not penitent, but	haughty. It was all	pride and insolence.
4	other, real or	imaginary. Vanity and	pride are different things,
5	is actions may	be traced to pride; and	pride had often been his be
6	designs, or	satisfy the appetite and	pride of one who had ten
7	then she had	expected most pleasure and	pride in her company, for s
8	of money, great	connections, and	pride ." "Beyond a doubt,
9	to ridicule. "	"Such as vanity and	pride ." "Yes, vanity is
10	was also in the	same state of angry	pride . Elizabeth had hoped
11	Lucas, "does not	offend _me_ so much as	pride often does, because t
12	motive. He has	also _brotherly_	pride , which, with _some_
13	"Yes, vanity is	a weakness indeed. But	pride --where there is a re
14	They had nothing	to accuse him of but	pride ; pride he probably h
15	and remarks; Mrs.	Reynolds, either by	pride or attachment, had
16	serving daughters.	With what delighted	pride she afterwards visite
17	tenants, and	relieve the poor. Family	pride , and _filial_ pride--
18	the poor. Family	pride, and _filial_	pride --for he is very prou
20	that he is to the	less prosperous. His	pride never deserts him; bu
21	of those very	people against whom his	pride had revolted in his o
22	mislead him, _he_	was the cause, his	pride and caprice were the
23	cousin could	refuse him; and though his	pride was hurt, he suffere
24	so strong an	affection. But his	pride , his abominable prid
25	the _appearance_	of what is right. His	pride , in that direction, m
26	you _never_ to	dance with him." "His	pride ," said Miss Lucas, "d
27	shire. Everybody	is disgusted with his	pride . You will not find h
28	"and I could	easily forgive _his_	pride , if he had not mortif
29	"I love him. Indeed	he has no improper	pride . He is perfectly
30	principles, but	left to follow them in	pride and conceit.
31	there is a real	superiority of mind,	pride will be always under
32	if he had not	mortified _mine_."	"Pride," observed Mary, who
33	imputed the	whole to his mistaken	pride , and confessed that h
34	Such a change	in a man of so much	pride exciting not only
35	made him altogether	a mixture of	pride and obsequiousness, s
36	mother-in-law	of Wickham! Every kind of	pride must revolt from the
37	to be very bad	indeed, a mixture of	pride and impertinence; she
38	partly governed	by this worst kind of	pride , and partly by the w
39	on the subject	of tenderness than of	pride . His sense of her
40	nothing to	accuse him of but pride;	pride he probably had, and
41	there were	stronger impulses even than	pride ." "Can such abomin
42	manner, and the	rest from the	pride for her nephew, who
43	almost all his	actions may be traced to	pride ; and pride had often
44	person may be	proud without being vain.	Pride relates more to our
45	how abominable!	I wonder that the very	pride of this Mr. Darcy has
46	material weight	with Mr. Darcy, whose	pride , she was convinced, w
47	everybody says	that he is eat up with	pride , and I dare say he h
48	have been	overlooked, had not your	pride been hurt by my hone

Collocations can tell the students about meaning, patterns and context (see appendix for all projects involving collocations). For instance, as seen from the above list, some instances of *pride* co-occur in *Pride and Prejudice* with negative adjectives (*abominable, angry, improper, mistaken*), nouns (*vanity, caprice, conceit, obsequiousness, impertinence, insolence*) or verbs (*offend, accuse of, eat up with*), that is, they have a tendency towards ‘negative’ collocates. This has been referred to in corpus linguistics as *negative semantic preference* or *prosody* (e.g. Louw 1993, Partington 2004). Another important collocation (*his pride*) refers to the main character (Darcy), but also points to the fact that pride was conceptualised as a male characteristics in Jane Austen’s time (in contrast to female vanity). Collocations can reflect key themes, cultural attitudes, or the meaning of words in a novel.

Another example of this is provided by the collocations for words referring to marriage (e.g. *husbands, marry, marriage*) in *Pride and Prejudice*, where a key collocation is *GET husbands*, and where *marry* collocates (or colligates) with modal verbs of obligation (*must, should*) as well as verbs of intention (*wish, intend, want*) – reflecting cultural attitudes at the time and attitudes of characters in the novel (as may be remembered, Elizabeth’s mother, Mrs Bennet, desperately wants her daughters to be married, and this makes for many funny scenes in the book).

Perhaps the most striking example for how useful the analysis of collocation can be in the discussion of literature can be seen by looking at negation in *Jane Eyre*. Negation is an important resource of interpersonal meaning, and plays a part both in the discourse semantic APPRAISAL (ENGAGEMENT) system (Martin and White 2005:118-120) and in the lexicogrammatical MOOD system (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004:135). As has often been pointed out (Watson 1999, Stubbs 2005, Bednarek 2006:49) it is associated with unexpectedness, and hence also notions such as deviation or difference. In fact, negation in *Jane Eyre* shows us how the female protagonist (Jane Eyre) does not confirm to stereotypes about women in the 19th century (and beyond). Thus, the student analysing negation in her project found the following clusters (visualised in table 3):

Table 3 Clusters with negation in *Jane Eyre*

N	cluster	Freq.	N	cluster	Freq.
1	I could not	109	22	he would not	10
2	I did not	60	23	she is not	10
3	I am not	48	24	I need not	9
4	you are not	34	25	she could not	9
5	I was not	32	26	she did not	9
6	I have no	28	27	I shall not	8
7	I had no	25	28	you did not	8
8	I do not	24	29	you have not	8
9	I have not	20	30	you would not	8
10	I would not	20	31	he had not	7
11	he did not	19	32	I know not	7
12	I had not	19	33	you do not	7
13	he could not	18	34	I must not	6
14	I should not	17	35	you could not	6
15	I will not	17	36	you need not	6
16	you will not	17	37	you were not	6
17	he is not	12	38	he has no	5
18	he was not	12	39	I am no	5
19	she was not	12	40	I was no	5
20	she would not	11	41	you shall not	5
21	she would not	11			

As becomes apparent, negation often clusters with modal verbs, BE and HAVE, with the modal verbs frequently being deontic (perhaps pointing to the rules, necessities and coercion that are part of Jane’s life). Compare the following dialogue between Jane and Helen from chapter 6:

‘But then it seems disgraceful to be flogged, and to be sent to stand in the middle of a room full of people; and you are such a great girl: I am far younger than you, and **I could not** bear it.’

‘Yet it would be your duty to bear it, if you could not avoid it: it is weak and silly to say **you CANNOT BEAR** what it is your fate to be required to bear.’

Where Jane exclaims ‘I could not bear’, passive Helen exclaims ‘Yet it would be your duty to bear it’. Jane, in contrast, refuses to do so, is independent, headstrong and resistant. Similarly, *I will not* (indicating non-volition), shows Jane’s strong character when referring to Jane’s refusal towards St John’s wish to marry her, and Rochester’s desire for her to be his mistress. She does not take the easy way out, since she neither believes in marriage without love (with St John) nor wants to throw in her lot as Rochester’s mistress. Again, Jane is not the passive and unresisting female, who gives in to the wishes of strong male characters. Other occurrences of negation (with HAVE) point to Jane’s status as an orphan who has neither money nor friends nor relations, or as someone who is evaluated by others as having no talents, but who evaluates herself as fearless (*I have no fear*) – again refuting the female stereotype. In this respect, it is also interesting to look at negated evaluations with BE in general, both self-evaluations (Jane pronouncing ‘I am/was not/no’) and evaluations of Jane by others (‘you are/were not/she is not’):

1 me from?" "From just below; and **I am not at all afraid** of being out late when
2 "No, Sam, return to the kitchen: **I am not in the least afraid**." Nor was I; bu
3 sealed my doom, -- and his. But **I was not afraid**: not in the least. I felt
4 d, "Come over and help us!" But **I was no apostle**, -- I could not behold the h
5 of a woman in Miss Ingram's. But **I was not jealous**: or very rarely; -- the nat
6 she. "I am near nineteen: but **I am not married**. No." I felt a burning g
7 no doubt. But, in my opinion, if **I am not formed for love**, it follows that I
8 formed for love, it follows that **I am not formed for marriage**. Would it not b
9 nce of an even tenor in life." "**I am not ambitious**." He started at the wor
10 them in this blunt sentence - "**I am not deceitful**: if I were, I should say
11 eberg. He is not like you, sir: **I am not happy** at his side, nor near him, nor
12 aughed at him as he said this. "**I am not an angel**," I asserted; "and I will
13 ear -- and lie down a little." "**I am not your dear**; I cannot lie down: send
14 aken in supposing me a beggar. **I am no beggar**; any more than yourself or yo
15 n plumage in its desperation." "**I am no bird**; and no net ensnares me; I am a
16 incapable of taking any other. **I am not brutally selfish, blindly unjust**, or
17 ry: there, though somewhat sad, **I was not miserable**. To speak truth, I had n
18 f the village of Gateshead: no, **I was not heroic** enough to purchase liberty
19 mit. I sometimes regretted that **I was not handsomer**; I sometimes wished to ha

1b uzzled, Miss Eyre; and though **you are not pretty** any more than I am handsome,
2b lks to us in our own hearts, "**you are not beautiful** either, and perhaps Mr.
3b h as ever I expected of you: **you were no beauty** as a child." I smiled at B
4b to its nature." "Miss Eyre, **you are not so unsophisticated** as Adele: she de
5b emaciated, pallid wanderer?" "**She is not an uneducated person**, I should think
6b I told you not to go near her; **she is not worthy of notice**; I do not choose th
7b here he is?" "I cannot." "**You are not a servant** at the hall, of course. Y
8b ditch under some stream? And **you are not a pining outcast** amongst strangers?"

Here again we find references to Jane’s fearlessness (1, 2, 3), but also to cultural expectations (6, 7, 8), of which Jane is aware (that 19-year-old women should be married). More interesting, perhaps, are references such as *I am not an angel*, *I am not your dear*, *I am no dear*, which refute the 19th century image of the woman as the ‘angel in the house’. Furthermore, a number of negations point to the fact that neither Jane nor Rochester confirm to the beauty standards that we might expect from such a novel’s protagonists (19, 1b, 2b, 3b), with Jane’s intelligence seeming to make up for it (4b, 5b). Summing up, the female protagonist in *Jane Eyre* is construed as neither passive nor fearful, but rather independent, strong-willed, and courageous, a character who wants to create her own destiny. She refutes stereotypes against women, and does not conform to normal beauty standards that we expect of romantic novels. And it does seem as if negation at least partly reflects this construal.

Overall, then, collocation analyses were used mainly to discuss key themes of novels, the construal of characters (and of the reader) as well as the socio-cultural background (in particular, the role and status of women).

5 Conclusion and evaluation

Let me conclude this paper by briefly evaluating the seminar. Concerning the students' projects (which got turned into term papers), it must be said that the best papers were by those students who used corpus stylistic analyses, and who interpreted their results with information from literary research, that is, by those who used a truly interdisciplinary approach. Of the keyword analyses, the best were by those that complemented their analyses with collocation studies, i.e. combined different corpus stylistic methods.

Moving on to the students' evaluation of the seminar, an informal questionnaire was handed out to them at the end of the term, with the students' answers summarised in tables 4 and 5:

Table 4 Evaluation of interdisciplinarity

Evaluation of interdisciplinarity (n = 37)	
Combining a literary and a linguistic approach was useful ('gelungen')	
36 students thought this was either true (16) or at least partly true (20).	
I think interdisciplinary seminars make sense ('sind sinnvoll')	
All 37 students thought this was either true (30) or at least partly true (7).	
<i>I would recommend this seminar to other students</i>	
36 students agreed.	
Likes	Dislikes
application of linguistics, usefulness of linguistic methods, different methodologies, connections between linguistics and literature become clearer, different aspects, themes, novels, look beyond own interests	not enough depth, too superficial

Table 5 Evaluation of corpus linguistic methods

Evaluation of corpus linguistic methods (n = 10)	
<i>Help for the corpus analyses was sufficient</i>	
4 said this is very much true, 6 said this is partly true.	
<i>I was comfortable using the software</i>	
All ten students agreed.	
<i>I liked using corpus linguistic methods for my own analysis</i>	
2 enjoyed it very much, 8 enjoyed it.	
Likes	Dislikes
independent and own research, finding facts and results themselves, simple, quick, empirical basis for interpretations	too complex, too much time, difficulties in interpreting

It thus seems as if the interdisciplinary and corpus stylistic approach adopted in this seminar was very successful. In particular, it made the students recognise the usefulness of linguistic methods for a rigorous analysis of texts (see 'likes'). On the other hand, an interdisciplinary approach means that only half the time is available for talking about one subject (e.g. linguistics) than otherwise, which necessarily results in some superficiality (see 'dislikes').

Concerning the corpus linguistic methods, most students particularly enjoyed that they could undertake their own research and find out things that no one had investigated before, i.e. that they

became ‘true’ researchers. While most seemed to find the corpus linguistic methods simple and quick, some thought that they were too complex and took up too much time. Clearly, it is necessary to provide sufficient help to the students to enable them to do corpus research themselves.

Overall, the interdisciplinary approach seems to have worked very well, in particular to allow the students a glimpse into the potentials of systematic linguistic analysis. The corpus stylistic methods were extremely successful in allowing the students to engage with their own research projects and to come up with innovative findings. The main disadvantage lies in the fact that students need to learn how to use the corpus software, which makes an accompanying tutorial very helpful. All in all, the seminar increased the awareness of the students for the usefulness of linguistics: many students expressed the view that they finally saw how linguistics can be applied to text analysis to yield interesting results.⁴ And from the literary approach offered in the seminar they got help in interpreting these results, to move from the descriptive to the interpretative, i.e. to avoid the trap of coming up only with descriptions rather than interpretations and explanations (a danger that seems to be particularly great where corpus linguistic analyses are concerned).

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⁴ The only previous contact with linguistics that most students had had before taking this class was one introductory lecture to linguistics, covering overviews of key aspects of linguistics (e.g. semantics, pragmatics, syntax, morphology, word formation, structuralism, sociolinguistics).

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Appendix

Table 1: Course outline

**‘The madwoman in the attic and other monsters’:
linguistic and literary perspectives on 19th century women’s fiction**

<p>Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corpus linguistic techniques (LING) - Socio-political background, status of women
<p>Jane Austen <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biography Jane Austen, point of view, dialogue, free indirect speech - Speech and thought representation (LING) - The language of Jane Austen (LING)
<p>Jane Austen <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social and gender roles - Marriage, husbands and wives (concordances) (LING) - Lydia in book and film (LING)
<p>Jane Austen <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Character development and emancipation - <i>Pride, prejudice, vanity, prepossession</i> (concordances) (LING) - Keyword analysis (LING)
<p>Mary Shelley <i>Frankenstein</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biography (Mary Shelley, M. Woolstonecraft, W. Godwin, P.B. Shelley) - History and structure of novel - Changing perspectives in <i>Frankenstein</i> – a corpus linguistic analysis (LING)
<p>Mary Shelley <i>Frankenstein</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gothic and romantic elements - The modern Prometheus: ‘Faustian desire’, responsibility - The monster (references) (LING)
<p>Mary Shelley <i>Frankenstein</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interpretative analyses: status of woman, references to contemporary society etc - Keyword analysis of <i>Frankenstein</i> (LING)
<p>Film analyses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Austen <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> - Shelley <i>Frankenstein</i> - Bronte <i>Jane Eyre</i>
<p>Charlotte Brontë <i>Jane Eyre</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biography: The Brontës - Introduction: history, narrative strategies - Keyword analysis of <i>Jane Eyre</i> (LING) - ‘Gentle and romantic reader’: construal of the reader (LING)
<p>Charlotte Brontë <i>Jane Eyre</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The governess: gender and social roles in early Victorian society - Nature and religion - Metaphor in <i>Jane Eyre</i> (LING) - Negation in <i>Jane Eyre</i>: difference and deviation (LING)
<p>Charlotte Brontë <i>Jane Eyre</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Jane Eyre</i> as Entwicklungsroman - Feminist literary theory: <i>The Madwoman in the Attic</i>
<p>Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keyword-analysis of all novels (LING) - Stylistic characteristics of realist texts (LING) - Gothic feminism

