



# A corpus stylistic approach to Dickens's fiction - teaching students of language and literature

Michaela Mahlberg

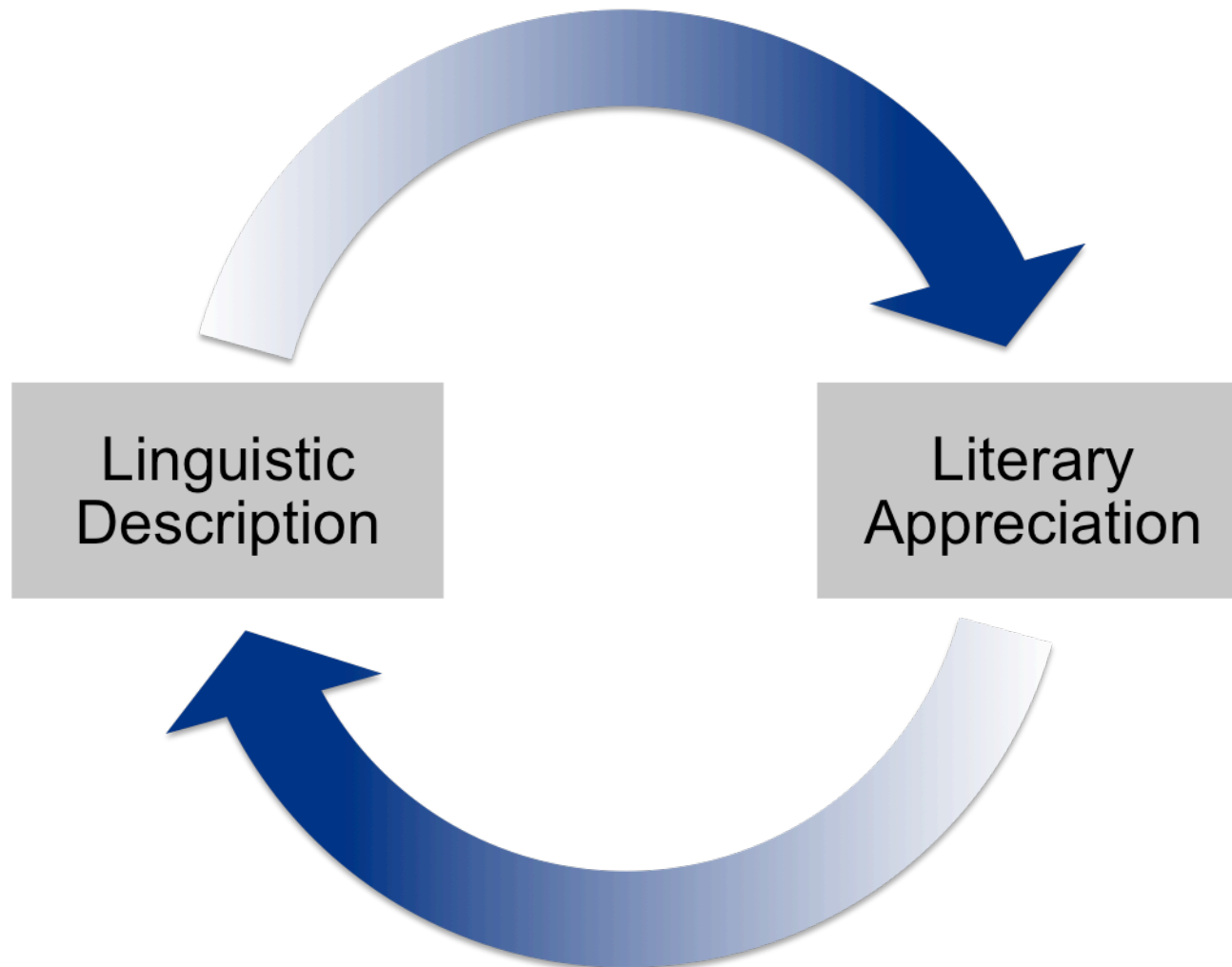
# Today's talk

- Teaching context
- Research-led teaching: Corpus stylistics
- Literary criticism and linguistic evidence: Dickens and characterization
- An example: Bucket and Tulkinghorn
- Module: 'Texts in a Digital World'

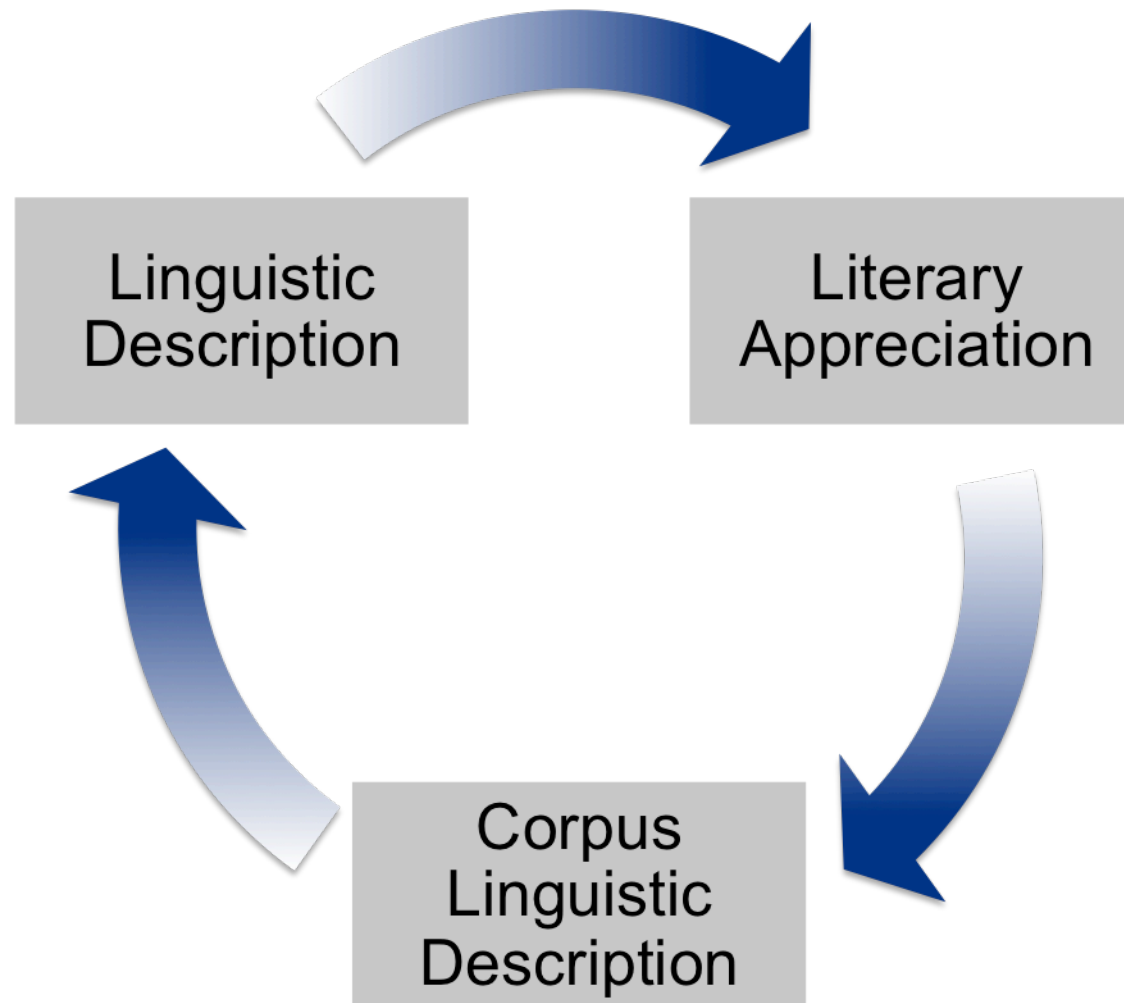
# Teaching context

- The School of English Studies
- Investigating English Language (Y2)
- Stylistics (Y3)
- *Texts in a Digital World* (Y3)
- Literature and Identity c. 1789-1914 (MA)

# The corpus stylistic circle



# The corpus stylistic circle



# Corpus linguistics

- a 'corpus' - usually a large collection of computer-readable **text(s)**
- quantitative data
- finding patterns

# A concordance ...

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... illustrates the typical patterns of a word (collocations)



# Corpus stylistics: an emerging field

- recognized by both corpus linguists and stylisticians
  - cf. Chappelle 2011, Lindquist 2009, O’Keeffe and McCarthy 2010
  - Leech and Short 2007, Jeffries and McIntyre 2010, McIntyre and Busse 2010

# Corpus work as comparison

- **primary** deviation: Louw (1993), Hoey (2007)
- **secondary** deviation: e.g. Scott (2006), Tabata (2002)
- **tertiary** deviation: Stubbs (2001), Culpeper (2009)

# Quantitative and qualitative

“Corpus stylistic analysis is a relatively objective methodological procedure that at its best is guided by a relatively subjective process of interpretation”.

(Carter 2010: 67)

# Focus on Dickens's fiction

- availability of data (4.5 million words in DCorp, copyright)
- Dickens's popularity
- “Dickens was never afraid of making excessive use of a way of writing that happened to appeal to him. [...] He was never afraid of repetition.” (Brook 1970:36)



# Characters

- Pickwick mania
- “[i]t is tempting to read Dickens’s work [...] as one long novel – partly because the plots seem to matter less than such things as his evocations of atmosphere and his handling of character”

(Kucich 1994: 403)



# Externalization of character

(John 2001)

- relying on methods of popular melodrama
- emotions shown in exaggerated ways
- gestures and actions add to externalize character
- mind only takes a marginal place
- transparent character

# Characterization and corpus

- characterization as a process, readers form impressions of characters in their minds (Culpeper 2001), cf. Rosenberg (1996)
- top-down and bottom-up processes

# Checklist of textual cues for character information

- patterns (clusters)
- places (suspensions)



# Context: building blocks of fictional worlds

- ... and the *young lady with the black* eyes and the fur round the boots, whispered something in Emily's ear, and then [...]  
**Labels**
- ... Thank you, Mr. Bumble, sir, *I am very much obliged* to you, I'm sure.' **Speech**
- ... said Riderhood, when his visitor sat down, resting his chin on his hand, *with his eyes on the* ground. **Body part clusters**
- Exceedingly red-eyed and grim, *as if he had been* up all night at a party which had taken anything but a convivial turn, Jerry Cruncher worried his breakfast rather than ate it, ... **As If**
- Kit stood *in the middle of the* road [...]. **Time and Place**

# Body language and where to look for it

- link to and difference from real world
- linearity of text
- the fact that body language is mentioned makes it significant
- primary deviation:  
*his hands in his pocket* 1 occurrence in BNC
- context of speech

# Suspensions

"Once had a friend and brother serjeant of the same name," *says Mr. Bucket, offering his hand,* "and consequently feel a liking for it. Mrs. Chadband, no doubt?"

- Cf. Lambert (1981)

Word List for

longsus




[SHOW](#)

Bucket longsus, non-quote, quote

Listing records 1 - 29 of about 203

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4	<a href="#">a</a>	280.69	234.36	204.43
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8	<a href="#">mr</a>	205.21	82.67	41.24
9	<a href="#">in</a>	192.92	195.83	130.35
10	<a href="#">to</a>	181.83	250.15	287.54
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12	<a href="#">her</a>	155.41	89.8	44.08
13	<a href="#">as</a>	113.97	93.76	72.44
14	<a href="#">at</a>	92.11	80.47	49.8
15	<a href="#">on</a>	74.71	71.64	42.42
16	<a href="#">him</a>	70.47	59.63	53.39
17	<a href="#">mrs</a>	63.62	25.41	11.75
18	<a href="#">it</a>	53.51	106.0	189.32
19	<a href="#">had</a>	53.07	94.95	32.6
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23	<a href="#">returned</a>	49.48	12.71	0.47
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26	<a href="#">after</a>	44.26	14.83	6.69
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hand, head,  
eyes, face,  
smile, air, tone,  
voice, manner

# Bucket and Tulkinghorn (*Bleak House*)

# Patterns: Bucket

- 5-word clusters: Speech Labels

*Sir Leicester Dedlock Baronet and  
Sir Leicester Dedlock Baronet I  
by Sir Leicester Dedlock Baronet  
now Sir Leicester Dedlock Baronet*

- no body language clusters, but Bucket and his fat forefinger, striking examples!



Mr. Bucket and **his fat forefinger** are much in consultation together under existing circumstances. When Mr. Bucket has a matter of this pressing interest under his consideration, **the fat forefinger seems to rise**, to the dignity of a familiar demon. **He puts it to his ears**, and it whispers information; **he puts it to his lips**, and it enjoins him to secrecy; **he rubs it over his nose**, and it sharpens his scent; **he shakes it before a guilty man**, and it charms him to his destruction. The Augurs of the Detective Temple invariably predict that when Mr. Bucket and that finger are in much conference, a terrible avenger will be heard of before long.

# Patterns: Tulkinghorn

Cluster	BH	B	T	D	D texts	19C	19C <u>texts</u>
his head against the wall	8	0	0	12	5	0	0
with his head against the	7	0	0	10	4	0	0
<u>with his hands behind him</u>	8	0	6	20	9	6	3
<u>his hands in his pockets</u>	5	0	2	90	20	13	8
<u>with his back to the</u>	5	0	2	43	14	22	11
<u>leaning back in his chair</u>	5	0	0	38	13	8	4

## *with his hands behind him*

During this dialogue Mr. Tulkinghorn has stood aloof by the old portmanteau, **with his hands behind him**, equally removed, to all appearance, from all three kinds of interest exhibited near the bed -- from the young surgeon's professional interest in death, noticeable as being quite apart from his remarks on the deceased as an individual; from the old man's unction; and the little crazy woman's awe. His **imperturbable** face has been as **inexpressive** as his rusty clothes. One could not even say he has been thinking all this while. He has shown neither patience nor impatience, nor attention nor abstraction. **He has shown nothing but his shell**. As easily might the tone of a delicate musical instrument be inferred from its case, as the tone of Mr. Tulkinghorn from his case.

# Places: Bucket

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- any of
- all of
- the phrase

Bucket

in

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- suspensions (5 word +)
- suspensions (4 word or less)

[SEARCH](#)

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<a href="#">25</a>	another narrow street. "Mr. Woodcourt," said Mr.	<b>Bucket,</b>	who had eyed him closely as we came along, "our
<a href="#">26</a>	bad grace. "In consequence of which," said Mr.	<b>Bucket,</b>	dismissing his agreeable manner all at once and
<a href="#">27</a>	will, you see. That's the drollery of it," said Mr.	<b>Bucket</b>	with the same lively air of recalling a joke for
<a href="#">28</a>	It an't what you endeavour to do," says Mr.	<b>Bucket,</b>	shaking hands with him and blessing him in the
<a href="#">29</a>	you good night." "You see, Mr. Snagsby," says Mr.	<b>Bucket,</b>	accompanying him to the door and shaking hands
<a href="#">30</a>	a thorough workman. And you needn't," says Mr.	<b>Bucket</b>	in a considerate and private voice, "you needn't
<a href="#">31</a>	of a murder?" "Murder!" "Now, George," says Mr.	<b>Bucket,</b>	keeping his forefinger in an impressive state of
<a href="#">32</a>	"Would you believe it, governor," says Mr.	<b>Bucket,</b>	struck by the coincidence, "that when I was a boy
<a href="#">33</a>	trooper, thunderstruck. "Now, George," says Mr.	<b>Bucket,</b>	urging a sensible view of the case upon him with
<a href="#">34</a>	on both sides. "Now George, old boy," says Mr.	<b>Bucket,</b>	taking his arm at the shop-door, "come along!" As
<a href="#">35</a>	And with you, governor? And Lord," says Mr.	<b>Bucket,</b>	opening his arms, "here's children too! You may

# 1) Body language

"... And Lord," says Mr. Bucket, opening his arms, "here's children too! ..."



## 2) Narrator's interpretation of speech / BL

"Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet," returns  
Mr. Bucket very seriously, "I hope it may ..."

### 3) Direct characterization

"Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet," proceeds Mr. Bucket, who delights in a full title and does violence to himself when he dispenses with any fragment of it, "the last point in the case..."

(cf. analysis of *Pride and Prejudice*, Mahlberg & Smith 2010)

Bucket with an engaging appearance of frankness  
Bucket, **again** tapping Mr. Snagsby on the breast  
Bucket, shaking hands with him and blessing him  
Bucket, accompanying him to the door and shaking  
Bucket in a considerate and private voice, "you  
Bucket, putting his hat upon the table with an a  
Bucket, keeping his forefinger going, "it is cer  
Bucket, struck by the coincidence, "that when I  
Bucket, keeping his **forefinger** in an impressive  
Bucket, taking his arm at the shop-door, "come a  
Bucket, quite reddening at another narrow escape  
Bucket with a complimentary twinkle of his eye  
Bucket, bringing the **finger** into persuasive acti  
Bucket very seriously, "I hope it may at one an  
Bucket, spreading it out on the table, "is in th  
Bucket, warming his hands and looking pleasantly  
Bucket goes on, glancing gravely at Sir Leicest  
Bucket with his head persuasively on one side a  
Bucket after awaiting his recovery, "to come to  
Bucket, and from this time forth the **finger** neve  
Bucket asserts with cheerfulness; "but for a ol  
Bucket in a cool determined way, "you go and si  
Bucket **with the same lively air of recalling a**  
Bucket begins, standing over him with one hand  
Bucket with the greatest composure, "I'm fully

# hands-on

(1a) "Yes! And lookee here, Mr. Snagsby," resumes Bucket, taking him aside by the arm, tapping him familiarly on the breast, and speaking in a confidential tone.

(1b) "Now, what YOU want," pursues Bucket, again tapping Mr. Snagsby on the breast in a comfortable and soothing manner, "is [...]"

# cheerful

(2a) ...so you chance to find, you know," Mr. Bucket went on, stooping over him **with an air of cheerful raillery which Mr. Smallweed by no means reciprocated**, "and so you chance to find, you know, a paper with the signature of Jarndyce to it. Don't you?"

(2b) ... That's the drollery of it," said Mr. Bucket with the **same lively air of recalling a joke for the enjoyment of Mr. Smallweed, who still had the same crest-fallen appearance of not enjoying it at all**; "what do you find it to be but a will?"

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- instantaneously altering his manner
- dismissing his agreeable manner all at once and becoming strictly business-like
  
- "How do you find them? Are they comfortable? If not, say so, for I wish to make things as pleasant as is consistent with my duty, and I've got another pair in my pocket."



# Limits to controlled behaviour

- (1a) "Why you see, miss," returns Mr. Bucket, bringing the finger into persuasive **action--and such is his natural gallantry that he had almost said "my dear"** --"it ain't easy to [...]"
- (1b) [...] society, miss," says Mr. Bucket, **quite reddening at another narrow escape from "my dear."**
- (2) "Now, George," continues Mr. Bucket, **putting his hat upon the table with an air of business rather in the upholstery way than otherwise, "my [...]"**

# Tulkinghorn

Tulkinghorn, **taking no more responsibility than neces**  
Tulkinghorn, who had risen hastily, "that Lady Dedloc  
Tulkinghorn, carelessly feeling-- tight, unopenable o  
Tulkinghorn to Krook, "whether he had any papers tha  
Tulkinghorn resumes as he leans on one side of his c  
Tulkinghorn, opening his door with the key, "in whose  
Tulkinghorn **in his methodical, subdued, uninterested**  
Tulkinghorn goes on to say in the fast-increasing da  
Tulkinghorn as a wind-up, "by his son." "By his son,  
Tulkinghorn, pursuing his case **in his jog- trot style**  
Tulkinghorn returns methodically as he softly rubs h  
Tulkinghorn, tapping his chin with the key and lookin  
Tulkinghorn observes, following her out upon the sta  
Tulkinghorn, loitering a little forward with his hand  
Tulkinghorn, standing on the hearth, again a dark obj

lawyer with undisturbed calmness, "that whether  
lawyer proceeds **in his dry passionless manner,**  
lawyer, deliberately putting away his handkerchi  
lawyer without minding her, "I place you in tha  
lawyer, still without minding her, "you had bett  
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"In a word, mistress," says Mr. **Tulkinghorn**, "I am sorry to be unpolite, but if you ever present yourself uninvited here--or there--again, I will give you over to the police. Their gallantry is great, but they carry troublesome people through the streets in an ignominious manner, strapped down on a board, my good wench."

"I will prove you," whispers mademoiselle, stretching out her hand, "I will try if you dare to do it!"

"And if," *pursues the lawyer without minding her*, "I place you in that good condition of being locked up in jail, it will be some time before you find yourself at liberty again."

"I will prove you," repeats mademoiselle in her former whisper.

"And now," *proceeds the lawyer, still without minding her*, "you had better go. Think twice before you come here again."

"Now, mademoiselle," says Mr. **Bucket** in a cool determined way, "you go and sit down upon that sofy."

"I will not sit down upon nothing," she replies with a shower of nods.

"Now, mademoiselle," repeats Mr. Bucket, making no demonstration except with the finger, "you sit down upon that sofy."

"Why?"

"Because I take you into custody on a charge of murder, and you don't need to be told it. Now, I want to be polite to one of your sex and a foreigner if I can. If I can't, I must be rough, and there's rougher ones outside. What I am to be depends on you. So I recommend you, as a friend, afore another half a blessed moment has passed over your head, to go and sit down upon that sofy."

# Bucket and Tulkinghorn

- Patterns (clusters) and places (suspensions)
  - show similarities in behaviour of individual characters and between characters
  - help to focus on character information (cf. situational features, discounting principle)
- Clusters and suspensions to be added to checklist of textual cues
- Character information and lexical items (specifically semantic preference)

# Texts in a Digital World

- Basic methodology and tools (concordances, key words, clusters, WordSmith, webcorp, Wmatrix)
- Case studies ('sustainable development', Dickens)
- luxury of small groups and 'extra tutorials'
- own project: language or literature focus, linking to other modules, presentation and feedback session



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