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Suspended Quotations: A Corpus Analysis of Functions

Abstract I: Questo lavoro si avvale di strumenti tipici della linguistica dei corpora, oltre che di analisi manuali, per confrontare la *suspended quotation* in Charles Dickens e in Jane Austen. Il confronto tra due autori così differenti per stile, scopo e contesto letterario è funzionale alla creazione di un elenco dei ruoli che possono essere svolti da questo particolare espediente narrativo. Lo studio mostra che sebbene alcune delle funzioni identificate nella letteratura precedente in riferimento alle *suspended quotation* di Dickens siano specifiche di questo autore, molte altre possono essere considerate 'universali'. L'analisi mostra inoltre che questo espediente narrativo può svolgere una gamma di funzioni molto più ampia rispetto a quelle evidenziate fino ad ora.

Abstract II: By joining manual analysis and corpus linguistics methods, this paper compares and contrasts the use of suspended quotations in Charles Dickens and Jane Austen. An analysis of two authors whose styles, aims and literary contexts are so different is functional to creating a list of functions typically performed by suspended quotation generally. The study shows that some roles of the suspended quotation reported for Dickens' novels in previous literature are indeed specific to this writer and his idea of narrative, while others can be considered 'author-independent'. Furthermore, the current analysis has revealed that suspended quotations lend themselves to a much wider range of functions than those reported and described in the literature thus far.

Keywords: Dickens, Austen, CLiC database, POS tagging, semantic tagging.

Introduction

In the last few years, corpus analysis tools and methods have become increasingly important in the study of literary works (Mahlberg 2013), and new tools have been developed specifically for this purpose. One such tool is the CLiC web app (clic.bham.ac.uk; Mahlberg *et al*. 2016), an online concordancing system that analyses a wide collection of 19th century novels, annotated so as to distinguish speech (i.e. dialogue) from other parts of the text (e.g. suspended quotations).

The notion of suspended quotations – or suspensions – was first introduced by Lambert (1981) with reference to cases where the narrator interrupts a character's speech by interposing at least five words between the first and second part of the character's line.

Lambert examined novels by Charles Dickens, analysing the first 100 paragraphs containing instances of speech in each volume. He asserted that Dickens used suspensions for three main reasons: i) to provide information on 'suprasegmentals', i.e., gestures, facial contortions and other details that play a fundamental role in making fictional dialogue life-like; ii) to make fun of characters; and iii) to attack characters that deserve punishment. Thus, Dickens made use of suspended quotations to establish indirect contact with his readers. This conclusion is supported by the fact that – as Lambert noted – suspended quotations were used more frequently in Dickens' early novels and less frequently in his later novels (from *Bleak House* onwards). This may be related to the fact that in 1853 Dickens started giving public readings of his novels, thus having direct contact with his audience. Since Lambert's work was published, suspended quotations have been considered a distinguishing feature of Dickens' writing style (Newsom 2000).

Suspended quotations have more recently been analysed with corpus linguistics methods. Using the CLiC web app, Mahlberg and Smith (2012) found that Dickens' novels are less homogeneous in terms of the use of suspensions than Lambert's (1981) results suggest. Furthermore, by analysing concordance lines around characters' names (thus used as node words), lexical patterns and clusters in suspensions, a number of researchers have attested that the suspended quotations in Dickens' works very often illustrate habitual behaviour or typical character features, as opposed to atypical behaviour or reactions triggered by specific situations (Mahlberg 2012; Mahlberg & Smith 2012; Mahlberg *et al*. 2013). Suspensions were also shown to be used to provide the narrator's interpretation of the character's speech (Mahlberg 2012) or to clarify the character's manner or attitude (Mahlberg *et al*. 2013). Lastly, corpus studies have suggested that these linguistic units contribute to meaningful patterns in fictional prose (Mahlberg *et al*. 2013) and work as places where synchronicity between speech and body language can be explored productively (Mahlberg 2012; Mahlberg & Smith 2012; Mahlberg *et al*. 2013).

The current paper uses the CLiC database and corpus linguistics methods to see whether the roles of suspended quotations found in Dickens' novels in previous literature are specific to this writer and his idea of narrative, or should rather be considered 'intrinsic' roles of suspensions (RQ1), and to create a more complete list of the functions typically performed by suspended quotations in general (RQ2). To these aims, the suspended quotations of a novelist who strongly differs from Dickens in terms of style, aims and literary context were analysed and compared to those in Dickens' novels. Among the many novelists present in the CLiC database, Jane Austen was considered a suitable choice due to the fundamental role that dialogue plays in her works (Babb 1962; Morini 2009).

This study is in no way a literary or stylistic comparison between the two writers, but rather intends to provide researchers with a general description of the functions that suspended quotations may perform, which could be a useful starting point for further investigation of this specific narrative feature across literary periods and authors. As an adjunct, this paper tests out a specific semi-automated analytical method and verifies its adequacy to identify the functions of suspended quotations.

The following sections provide a description of the materials and methods used, and

report the results of a manual analysis of suspended quotations in Austen's novels. This is followed by a comparison between suspended quotations in Austen's and Dickens' work. Finally, the concluding remarks section offers a list of the functions that may be performed by suspended quotations.

Materials and Methods

The current paper capitalises on collections of texts stored in the CLiC database, which include the following Jane Austen novels: *Emma* (E), *Mansfield Park* (MP), *Northanger Abbey* (NA), *Persuasion* (P), *Pride and Prejudice* (PP) and *Sense and Sensibility* (SS). The database also contains the following works by Dickens: *Barnaby Rudge* (BR), *Bleak House* (BH), *David Copperfield* (DC), *Dombey and Son* (DS), *Edwin Drood* (ED), *Great Expectations* (GE), *Hard Times* (HT), *Little Dorrit* (LD), *Martin Chuzzlewit* (MC), *Nicholas Nickleby* (NN), *Old Curiosity Shop* (OCS), *Oliver Twist* (OT), *Our Mutual Friend* (OMF), *Pickwick Papers* (PP) and *Tale of Two Cities* (TTC). Each novel is annotated to distinguish characters' speech (i.e. dialogue) from other parts of the text (e.g. suspended quotations). It is particularly useful that the CLiC database distinguishes short suspensions (less than 5 words) from long ones (5 or more words).

For this study, only long suspensions were extracted and two corpora were created, including the suspended quotations from Austen's and Dickens' novels, respectively. Table 1 provides a summary of the two corpora in numbers.

Tab. 1.

	Dickens	Austen
No. of texts	15	6
Total no. of suspended quotations	7680	506
Total no. of words (suspensions only)	84417	4808
Average no. of suspensions per text	512	84.33
Average length of suspensions	10.99	9.50

As table 1 shows, the average lengths of suspended quotations by each author are similar (10.99 vs. 9.5), but, as the average number of suspensions per text shows, Dickens uses this narrative feature six times more often than Austen (512 vs. 84.33). This certainly explains why Dickens' suspended quotations have long caught scholars' attention, while Austen's have not.

As a first step, the suspensions in Austen's novels were manually classified in terms of the functions they perform. Initially, the suspensions that performed functions already described by Lambert (1981), Mahlberg (2012), Mahlberg and Smith (2012), and Mahlberg *et al.* (2013) were identified and classified. These functions included: illustrating synchronicity between speech and body language (or, in other words, providing information on gestures, facial contortions and other bodily details), making fun of characters, attacking characters that deserve punishment, illustrating habitual behaviour or typical character features,

providing interpretation of the character's speech, and clarifying the manner or the attitude of the speaker (see Introduction). The remaining suspended quotations were then analysed, and 'new' functions were attributed to them[1].

As a second step, it seemed logical to check whether the new functions found in Austen's suspended quotations also appeared in Dickens' corpus of suspensions. Since the latter comprises as many as 7680 lines, manual analysis was considered unsuitable, and we decided to try some form of semi-automated analysis. In corpus linguistics, a highly useful way of analysing a corpus is to compare it to a reference corpus and extract keywords, key POS tags and/or key semantic tags, the latter two being extensions of the keyword concept (Culpeper & Demmen 2015). In this study, we opted to compare the two corpora to each other. While previously untested in the given scenario, this procedure was expected to be able to highlight functions of suspended quotations as well as differences between the two authors in the use of those functions. Thus, the two corpora were tagged using Wmatrix (Rayson 2003), a corpus analysis and concordancing tool that offers automatic Part of Speech (POS) tagging and automatic semantic tagging. Key POS tags and key semantic tags were extracted by comparing the two corpora[2]. The lists were ordered by log-likelihood (LL; a measure of statistical significance) and only the positive key items with LL > 15.13 (p < 0.0001 1d.f.) were considered, a threshold that guarantees a very high level of statistical significance. Additionally, following Gabrielatos and Marchi (2011), each list was checked to ensure the items above the threshold included all the items having the same %DIFF (an effect size measure) of the last item above the threshold. When this was not the case, the list of items to consider was enlarged to include all the required keywords.

The results of the manual and automated analyses are illustrated and discussed in the following sections.

Manual Analysis of the Functions of Suspended Quotations in Austen's Novels – Findings and Discussion

A manual analysis of Austen's suspensions revealed most of the functions that previous scholars had observed in Dickens' suspended quotations, plus a few extra uses. In particular, as many as 48.81% of the suspended quotations in Austen's novels were used to clarify the manner or attitude of the speaker, as illustrated in examples [1]-[5]. This function was also observed in Dickens' works by Mahlberg *et al*. (2013).

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[1] A manual reading of the extracted data showed that 15 concordance lines had been wrongly identified by the software as suspensions, and were actually cases of text in between reported speech, as in the following example: *As to the management of their children, his theory was much better than his wife's, and his practice not so bad. "I could manage them very well, if it were not for Mary's interference", <u>was what Anne often heard him say, and had a good deal of faith in; but when listening in turn to Mary's reproach of</u> "Charles spoils the children so that I cannot get them into any order", <u>she never had the smallest temptation to say,</u> "Very true". (Sense and Sensibility)*. Cases such as these were removed from all analyses and counts.

[2] Such automated comparisons produce lists of unusually (in-)frequent POS tags, i.e. key POS tags, and unusually (in-)frequent semantic tags, i.e. key concepts, characterising each set of data. Keyness (i.e. prominence or non-prominence) of a given item (e.g. a semantic tag) in the corpus is established through statistical analysis.

[1] *cried Mrs. Norris, unable to be longer deaf;* [MP]
[2] *said Harriet, in a mortified voice,* [E]
[3] *(slowly, and with hesitation it was spoken),* [NA]
[4] *whispered one of the girls;* [P]
[5] *said Marianne, in her new character of candour,* [SS]

A much lower percentage of cases (27.47%) described concomitant actions, for example extracts [6]-[9]:

[6] *said Thorpe, as he handed her in,* [NA]
[7] *replied John Knightley, as they passed through the sweep-gate,* [E]
[8] *said Mrs. Reynolds, pointing to another of the miniatures,* [PP]
[9] *said Sir Thomas, taking out his watch;* [MP]

Furthermore, 22.33% of the suspended quotations found specified the time that the speech was performed, with reference to other events or actions. Examples [10]-[13] illustrate such instances:

[10] *said he, after a short pause* [NA]
[11] *said Emma triumphantly when he left them* [E]
[12] *he cried, after hearing what she said* [SS]
[13] *said Crawford to William as the latter was leaving them,* [MP]

Given the frequency of their occurrences, the functions illustrated above could be considered the dominant functions of suspended quotations in Austen's novels. However, they are not the only uses of this narrative feature. Some suspended quotations (8.70%) were used to provide readers with the desired interpretation of the character's speech (or reasons for such speech), including reactions triggered by specific situations, as also noted by Mahlberg (2012) regarding Dickens' works. Some instances are depicted in examples [14]-[17]:

[14] *cried Emma, feeling this to be an unsafe subject,* [E]
[15] *said Elizabeth; and then, unwilling to let the subject drop, added,* [PP]
[16] *he continued, in a lower tone, to avoid the possibility of being heard by Edmund, and not at all aware of her feelings,* [MP]
[17] *replied Elinor, startled by the question;* [SS]

There were instances of suspended quotations (4.74 %) that were used to specify to whom the speech was addressed, as in examples [18]-[20]:

[18] *Mr. Elton was appealed to* [E]
[19] *said Mrs. Bennet to her husband,* [PP]
[20] *said he, addressing Lady Middleton,* [SS]

A few suspended quotations (2.17%) illustrated habitual behaviour or typical character features, as shown in examples [21]-[23]. This function was also observed in Dickens' works by Mahlberg (2012) and Mahlberg and Smith (2012):

[21] *said Mr. Woodhouse, always the last to make his way in conversation;* [E]
[22] *their considerate aunt would reply,* [MP]
[23] *said Mrs Smith, assuming her usual air of cheerfulness,* [PP]

A small percentage of suspended quotations (0.79%) expressed the addressee's attitude, as illustrated by the underlined text in extract [24]:

[24] *Catherine found Mrs. Allen just returned from all the busy idleness of the morning, and was immediately greeted with, "Well, my dear, here you are", <u>a truth which she had no greater inclination than power to dispute;</u> "and I hope you have had a pleasant airing?"* [NA]

Finally, a minority of suspended quotations (0.20%) served to specify the place where the speech was performed (and the atmosphere of that place), as in example [25]:

[25] *cried Tom Bertram, from the other table, where the conference was eagerly carrying on, and the conversation incessant* [MP]

Of course, all suspended quotations perform the function of identifying the speaker – which is clearly the primary function of suspended quotations, though not a particularly interesting one. It should be noted that in one case (0.20%; example [26]) this was the sole function of the suspension:

[26] *as it was observed by her aunts,* [MP]

This confirms that a span of 5 is just the right threshold to analyse the function of suspended quotations, as it allows us to highlight all the interesting cases while minimising the presence of suspensions that only fulfil this general function.

Naturally, some suspensions (32.61%) perform more than one function. Such suspended quotations may be rather long and include several phrases or clauses, as exemplified in [27] where the first prepositional phrase (*in a lower tone*) portrays the manner in which the speech is uttered (followed by an explanation of such manner), while the coordinate clause (*and not at all aware of her feelings*) offers readers an interpretation of the speaker's reasons for saying such a thing. However, short, simple suspensions with more than one function are not infrequent. An example is [28], where the adverb (*gravely*) expresses manner, while the gerund (*examining*) describes a concomitant action:

[27] *he continued, in a lower tone, to avoid the possibility of being heard by Edmund, and not at all aware of her feelings,* [MP]
[28] *said he, gravely examining it;* [NA]

Suspended quotations where body language is specified (20.75%) were found to always have multiple functions. This is largely because descriptions of body language – which Mahlberg (2012), Mahlberg and Smith (2012) and Mahlberg *et al.* (2013) observed in Dickens' novels, and which can be said to correspond to Lambert's (1981) observation on how Dickens' suspensions provide information on gestures, facial contortions and other details for the purpose of making fictional dialogue life-like – never appear on their own. This can be observed in examples [29]-[32]:

[29] *cried Emma, shaking her head* [E]
[30] *said she, with a countenance no less smiling than her sister's,* [PP]
[31] *said Edmund, after looking at her attentively,* [MP]
[32] *said Mrs. Norris, her eyes directed towards Mr. Rushworth and Maria, who were partners for the second time,* [MP]

Indeed, in real life, body language always conveys some kind of meaning. Examining the present data, the body language descriptions in Austen's novels relate to the functions of: describing concomitant action (49.5%; [29]), expressing the speaker's manner or attitude (44.7%; [30]), identifying time (3.8%; [31]) and providing an interpretation of the speaker's reasons for his/her speech (2.8%; [32]).

The only two functions observed in Dickens' novels which were not found in Austen's work are making fun of characters and attacking characters that deserve punishment. This result could be expected, since they are characteristic features of Dickens' narrative approach and style.

Automated Comparison between the two Corpora – Findings and Discussion
The next phase of the research study was to check whether the new functions found in Austen's suspended quotations also appeared in Dickens' corpus of suspensions. To this aim, an automated comparison between the two corpora at the level of grammar categories and semantic fields was performed; next, their concordance lines were read.

Table 2 summarises the key positive items characterising each set of data. The tags are accompanied by their official explanations in square brackets. Where necessary, examples from the corpus have been added in italics/parentheses.

Tab. 1.

Positive key POS tags in Austen	Positive key semantic tags in Austen
Tag	*Tag*
PPHS1 [3rd person sing. subjective personal pronoun]	E4.1- (Sad)
CS31 [subordinating conjunction (*as soon as*)]	T1.1.3 (Time: Future)
PPHS2 [3rd person plural subjective personal pronoun]	T1.2 (Time: Momentary)
NP1 [singular proper noun]	T2- (Time: Ending)
CS [subordinating conjunction (*while, after, before*)]	

Positive key POS tags in Dickens	Positive key semantic tags in Dickens
Tag	*Tag*
VVZ [-s form of lexical verb]	B1 (Anatomy and physiology)
APPGE [Possessive pronoun, pre-nominal]	O2 (Objects generally)
AT [article]	B5 (Belongings)
PPIS1 [1st person sing. subjective personal pronoun]	S2.2. (People: male)
PPI01 [1st person sing. objective personal pronoun]	A1.1.1 (General actions/making)
NN1 [singular common noun]	M2 (Putting, pulling, pushing, transporting)
VVG [-ing participle of lexical verb]	O1.1 (Substances and materials: solid)

Key Tags in Austen's Suspensions

The key POS tags in Austen's suspensions include singular subject pronouns (PPHS1) and proper names (NP1), the latter almost always being subjects following a verb of saying (e.g. *said Emma*; *replied Harriet*). These tags are evidence of the function of identifying the speaker. Furthermore, their presence in Austen's list of key items suggests that the author took advantage of this function more often than Dickens did. However, in more than 50% of the cases, the speakers were identified through a pronoun (222 vs. 211). This would make it difficult to investigate Austen's suspended quotations starting from characters' names alone, which was the strategy used by Mahlberg (2012) and Mahlberg and Smith (2012) in their analysis of Dickens' works.

Another key POS tag of Austen's suspended quotations is PPHS2. Equally spread across all novels, it is instantiated by the plural subject pronoun *they*, which typically appears in the lexical pattern *as/when they* (88.2%) followed by verbs of motion (e.g. *said Lucy, as they walked up the stairs together* [SS]) – thus indicating the function of describing concomitant action – or by verb *be* (e.g. *said Emma, when they were fairly beyond the sweep gates,* [E]) – thus serving the function of identifying the time of the speech. These two functions are also expressed by key POS tags CS31 (*as soon as*) and CS (*while, after, before*). Most of the examples in these groups perform the function of identifying the time of the speech by establishing a temporal relationship between the reported speech and other actions or events in the story (e.g. *said she, as soon as they were left to themselves* [PP]; *said Miss Crawford, after a short pause* [MP]; *and, before she could reply, he added* [PP]), while rare cases serve to describe a concomitant action (e.g. *She was interrupted by a fine tall boy of eleven years old, who, rushing out of the house, pushed the maid aside, and while William was opening the chaise-door himself, called out,* [MP]).

The key semantic tag E4.1- primarily comprises the verb *cried* (87.2%; e.g. *cried Mrs. Dashwood as she entered* [SS]) and indicates the introduction of direct speech. The fact that this tag is key for Austen's suspensions compared to Dickens' suggests that the proportion of Austen's suspensions indicating the introduction of direct speech is higher than in the other author. The remaining cases of tag E4.1- are words that embody the function of indicating manner or attitude (12.8%; e.g. *he replied, and without the smallest apparent embarrassment* [E]; *replied Sir Thomas, gravely interposing,* [MP]). Lastly, key semantic tags T1.1.3 (for example the

words *presently*, *soon*, and *the next day/morning*) and T1.2 (for example *moment* or *moments*) express the time of the speech. Finally, key tag T2- (for example the words *pause*, *paused*, *pausing*, *quitted*, *finished*, *stopped*, *ceased*) includes words that primarily expresses the time of the speech (e.g. *said she, after a short <u>pause</u>,* [PP]; *And Emma distinctly heard him add, in a lower tone, before he <u>quitted</u> the room* [E]). Less frequently, they introduce concomitant action (e.g. *added he, <u>stopping</u> in his walk, and turning towards her,* [PP]) or provide an interpretation of the reasons for the speech (e.g. *replied Darcy, who could contain himself <u>no longer</u>,* [PP]).

Although the extraction and analysis of key POS and key semantic tags in Austen's suspensions performed in this study did not manage to highlight all the functions identified in the manual analysis, it did succeed in recognising the most frequent ones. Furthermore, it brought to the fore an extra function (i.e. identifying the speaker) which had passed unnoticed in the manual analysis. For these reasons, it can be considered a suitable analytical procedure for the purposes of this paper.

Key Tags in Dickens' Suspensions
The key POS tags PPI01 (*me*) and PPIS1 (*I*) characterising Dickens' suspensions are due to the presence of three novels – *Great Expectations*, *Bleak House* and *David Copperfield* – written partially or completely in the first person.

The gerunds (VVG) express concomitant actions (e.g. *says Mr. Snagsby, <u>walking</u> deferentially in the road and <u>leaving</u> the narrow pavement to the lawyer* [BH]; *said the old man, <u>stopping</u> and <u>turning</u> round* [BH]), synchronicity between speech and body language (e.g. *said Mr. Kenge, <u>shaking</u> hands with us* [BH]; *said he, <u>folding</u> his arms and <u>shutting</u> his eyes with an oath* [BH]; *said Ada, <u>clasping</u> her hands upon his arm and <u>shaking</u> her head at me* [CD]) or less frequently, a comment on the characters' speech (e.g. *said Richard, <u>coming</u> to my relief* [BH]; *I think I added, without very well <u>knowing</u> what I said* [BH]).

On the other hand, the VVZ group of present tense, third person singular verbs is largely composed of speech-describing verbs immediately following the subject (75%). They express a large range of meanings corresponding to the following: expressing a character's attitude (e.g. *asserts; expostulates; murmurs; pleads; recommends; repeats; retorts; urges*); underlining interruption and continuation of speech (e.g. *begins; goes on; resumes*); and announcing the introduction of direct speech (e.g. *adds; answers; declares; observes; remarks; replies; returns; says*). The remaining 35% of cases are miscellaneous verbs that are part of longer clauses and variably refer to subject, object or indirect objects. Further analyses would be needed to make sense of these miscellaneous cases.

The presence of category AT (article) testifies to the ample use of noun or prepositional phrases and goes together with categories NN1 (nouns) and APPGE (possessive adjectives *his*, *her* and *their*). The latter categories respectively include or collocate with general nouns identifying: the speaker or the addressee (e.g. *Chancellor; Lady; librarian // aunt; daughter; father, cousin; friend; guardian; husband; mother; patron; sister*); parts of the body (e.g. *arm; back; body; bosom // arm(s); chin; eye(s); eyebrows; face; feet; (fore)finger(s); head; hand(s); hair; knee(s); leg(s); lip(s); mouth; neck; nose; shoulder; teeth; throat*); personal or house objects (e.g. *apron; basket; ball; bonnet; book; bottle // chair; fan; glass; glove(s); handkerchief; hat; needle; paper; parasol; pen; pipe;*

pocket; spectacles; stick; stool); attitude or manner (e.g. *alacrity; alarm; anger; animation; anxiety; apprehension; assurance; astonishment; attention; authority; bitterness; boldness // indignation;* ADJ + *manner; reluctance; repugnance; tone; uneasily; ungainly*); or, less frequently, places (e.g. *bedroom; bed-chamber*). These suggest a wide range of functions, namely: identifying who utters the speech, specifying whom the speech is addressed to, illustrating synchronicity between speech and body language, clarifying the manner or the attitude of the speaker, and specifying the place where the speech is performed. Finally, a frequent colligation indicating attitude or manner was observed: gerund (VVG) + possessive adjectives (APPGE) + word *voice* (as in the following examples: *said the Major, lowering his voice* [DS]; *said Rachel, with a tremble in her voice* [HT]). Thus, the three POS categories of AT, NN1 and APPGE combined seem particularly productive for analysing the function of suspended quotations in Dickens' novels.

An analysis of the key semantic tags in the Dickens dataset highlights the following functions in the suspended quotations found there: describing synchronicity between speech and body language, and portraying concomitant actions (B1 - Anatomy and physiology; A1.1.1 - General actions/making; and M2 - Putting, pulling, pushing, transporting); and identifying the speaker or addressee (S2.2. - People: Male). Finally, categories O2 (Objects generally), B5 (Belongings; this group includes personal objects, such as *coat*, *cuff*, *dress*, *gloves*, *handkerchief*, *hat*, *pocket*, *waistcoat*, and *rig*) and O1.1 (Substances and materials: Solid; this group includes names of objects such as *ashes*, *glass*, *gold*, and *strings*, and a few character's names, such as *Brass*) – along with the presence of nouns referring to personal or house objects in key POS category NN1 (see above) – show that concomitant actions and body language act within or interact with personal belongings and the surrounding environment, the latter typically being indoors.

Concluding Remarks

Until this study, suspended quotations had only been studied in investigations of Charles Dickens' works, and had been considered a distinguishing feature of this writer. Without denying the prominence and specificities of this narrative feature in his writing, this paper has shown that many of the functions detected in Dickens's suspended quotations can also be observed in an author who strongly differs from Dickens in terms of style, aims and literary context, namely Jane Austen. This suggests that some uses of suspended quotations can be considered 'author-independent', or 'intrinsic roles' of suspensions (RQ1). More specifically, while it is indeed one of Dickens' distinguishing marks to use suspended quotations to make fun of characters or attack characters that deserve punishment, other functions reported in the literature regarding his use of suspensions – i.e. illustrating synchronicity between speech and body language (or, in other words, providing information on gestures, facial contortions and other bodily details); illustrating habitual behaviour or typical character features; offering the reader the desired interpretation of the character's speech (or reasons for such speech), including reactions triggered by specific situations; and clarifying the manner or the attitude of the speaker – are also found in Austen's suspended quotations, and can thus be considered 'intrinsic' roles of this narrative feature.

Furthermore, the current analysis has revealed that suspended quotations lend themselves to a much wider range of functions than those reported and described in the literature thus far (RQ2). In fact, this study has highlighted as many as eight functions that had not previously been pointed out. Specifically, the new functions discovered were: describing concomitant actions; specifying the time the speech is performed, with reference to other events/actions; specifying whom the speech is addressed to; expressing the attitude of the addressee; specifying the place the speech is performed; identifying who utters the speech; announcing the introduction of direct speech; and highlighting interruption and continuation of speech. In our research, most of these were observed not only in Austen's novels, but also in Dickens' works. It may very well be that these functions had not been mentioned in previous analyses of Dickens' use of suspended quotations due to being considered of little literary interest – a sort of 'expected' role of suspended quotations – or because of their limited frequency compared to the other functions observed. Nevertheless, taken together, the 14 functions mentioned above provide researchers with a list of functions that may be performed by suspended quotations (see Appendix), of which 12 could be considered 'author-independent'. This list is an improvement over previous descriptions of the functions of suspended quotations, which were very interesting but only relevant to Dickens' works, to be used as a potential starting point for further investigating this narrative feature across authors and literary periods. Of course, the list of functions presented in this paper is by no means exhaustive. An analysis of a wider range of authors would be needed to compile a list of every possible function performed by suspended quotations.

Finally, this study offers an interesting methodological contribution. The fact that in both corpora the concordance lines obtained through automatic tagging and key-items extraction procedures included the most frequent functions observed by manual analysis, and in some cases provided interesting cues to functions that had not been noted during the manual analyses, shows that automatic tagging can provide a different perspective to looking at suspended quotations. By drawing attention to individual words (grouped by grammatical or semantic category), tagging also brings to the fore some of the less frequent or less remarkable functional patterns that would otherwise go unnoticed, thus proving to be a useful complementary approach to manually reading the concordance lines. Moreover, automatic tagging could be considered a way to get a 'quick and dirty' idea of the functions of suspended quotations in an author's work, or to quickly compare several authors.

Besides providing answers to our research questions, our analyses lead to some additional observations, which could provide a springboard for future research.

First of all, the manual analyses of Austen's data revealed that when body language was specified between speech, the suspended quotation always performed multiple functions. In Austen's novels, the functions observed in connection to body language included: describing concomitant action; expressing the speaker's manner or attitude; identifying the time of the speech; and providing an interpretation of the speaker's reasons for his/her speech. An analysis of suspensions or other textual elements mentioning body language in a wide range of authors may help to provide a more detailed description of the ways in which body language contributes to the narrative structure of a novel.

The analyses also affirmed that the two authors employed suspended quotations in different ways. In particular:
–   Dickens used suspensions six times more often than Austen.
–   Austen identified characters through proper names and pronouns much more often than Dickens, who for this purpose used a statistically significant higher number of general nouns (e.g. referring to characters by their profession).
–   Austen used suspended quotations primarily to clarify a speaker's manner or attitude (48.81%), describe body language (20.75%) and concomitant actions (27.47%), and make time references to when the speech was performed, often in relation to other events/actions (22.33%). She did use suspended quotations to describe a character's typical traits or habitual behaviour, but these instances were rare (2.17%).

These rather sterile observations could perhaps be the starting point for more interesting comments on the ways different authors build their narratives. For this purpose, however, the whole novel should be considered and a wider range of analytical methods would need to be employed.

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APPENDIX
List of functions that suspended quotations may perform:
1. Illustrating synchronicity between speech and body language (or, in other words, providing information on gestures, facial contortions and other bodily details)
2. Illustrating habitual behaviour or typical character features
3. Offering the reader the desired interpretation of the character's speech (or reasons for such speech), including reactions triggered by specific situations
4. Clarifying the manner or the attitude of the speaker
5. Describing concomitant actions
6. Specifying the time the speech is performed in relation to other events/actions
7. Specifying whom the speech is addressed to
8. Expressing the attitude of the addressee
9. Specifying the place where the speech is performed
10. Identifying who utters the speech
11. Announcing the introduction of direct speech
12. Highlighting interruption and continuation of speech
13. Making fun of characters
14. Attacking characters that deserve punishment

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