

**“What the dickens does he mean?! “1 A
lexical-relational approach to understanding
the meaning of a literary text**

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Issue No. 26-Winter 2015

“What the Dickens does he mean?! “¹ A lexical-relational approach to understanding the meaning of a literary text

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Abstract:

Students in the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Bahrain are required to study works of English Literature yet, typically, they are not equipped with the necessary reading skills to do so. Many will rely on graded readers or the kind of synopses common to published study notes. Over several semesters, students were assigned to read the first four paragraphs of *Little Dorrit* by Charles Dickens and asked to respond to them by answering the question “How does the text make you feel?” (in line with the approach known as Reader-Response). Significantly, being asked to respond to a text at all threw most into a panic and, as has been the case in ten years of me teaching semantics at the University and asking the same question of the same text, hardly anyone was able to provide a satisfactory answer. A Stylistic analysis of the lexical structure of the text demonstrates why its ‘meaning’ is unambiguous and why Dickens chose to say in 437 words what might be expressed in just seven. The conclusion is that an overexposure to syntagmatic features of texts denies students access to, and leaves them ignorant of, the paradigmatic structure and lexical complexity so important to appreciating Literature.

Keywords: Lexical relations, Meaning, reading, Literature, Dickens.

طريقة معجمية علائقية لفهم المعنى الأعمق للنص الأدبي من خلال تحليل المضمون السطحي

د. مارتن باركر

الملخص:

يتعين على طلاب قسم اللغة الإنجليزية وأدائها في جامعة البحرين دراسة الأدب الإنجليزي، غير أنه تعوزهم مهارات القراءة الضرورية للقيام بذلك، إذ يعتمد العديد منهم على مختلف أنواع المذكرات والكتيبات المختصرة المنشورة، وعلى مدى عدة فصول دراسية عرض على الطلاب الفقرات الأربع الأولى من ليتل دوريت Dorrit Little للمؤلف تشارلز ديكنز وطلب منهم الإجابة عن السؤال الآتي: «ما الذي تشعر به عند قراءة النص؟»، وهذه الطريقة تعرف باسم القارئ والاستجابة. وقد رد أغلب من طرح عليهم هذا السؤال بأنهم أُصيبوا بحالة من الذعر، كما هو الحال على مدى عشر سنوات من تدريسي لعلم الدلالة في الجامعة، إذ كنت أ طرح السؤال ذاته حول النص نسه، ولم يتمكن أي منهم من تقديم إجابة مرضية. إن التحليل الأسلوبي للبنية المعجمية للنص يوضح السبب الذي يجعل «معناه» لا لبس فيه، ولماذا اختار ديكنز أن يقول في 437 كلمة ما يمكن أن يقوله في سبع كلمات فقط "How does the text make you feel". والاستنتاج هو أن التعرض المفرط للسمات التركيبية للنص (syntagmatic features) تجعل الطالب لا يتمكن من فهمه ويظل جاهلاً بالسمات الجدولية (paradigmatic features) و بالتعقيد المعجمي، وهذا الأمر في غاية الأهمية لفهم وتذوق الأدب.

مصطلحات أساسية: العلاقات المعجمية، المعنى، القراءة، الأدب، ديكنز.

1- Introduction

When considering students of English Literature at a university, one might first of all expect them to have developed a level of English language in terms of both knowledge and skills to be adequate for such a purpose. This is, however, often not the case. Second, English major students are admitted to the programme which, as well as requiring them to be able to read and comprehend complex texts in both Literature and Linguistics, offers them a six-stage course in English language skills development and a separate three-stage course in writing, only the final of which involves academic writing. In respect of this second point, the programme requirements do not correspond to the rather modest linguistic abilities of the students. Third, at the end of the six-stage course in language development (beginning as low as at pre-intermediate level) and three-stage course in writing, students are expected to be able to achieve a grade of at least 500 on an institutional TOEFL (which does not require them to do any writing). Nevertheless, with regard to this third point, the TOEFL score is only a small part of the assessment procedure, but many students who graduate with a degree in English would not qualify for

admission to an undergraduate degree programme in other parts of the world.

The focus of this paper will be on the reading process and its objectives with a view to encouraging the reading of original texts in preference to simplified versions. There is a number of contentions about reading and Literature in the context of the English major programme in the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Bahrain which will form the background for the proceeding argument. These are:

1. The teaching of university students whose major study is English should be primarily concerned with their appreciation of the English language, together with its cultural and its literary specificities, rather than their ability to pass proficiency tests.
2. The use of simplified texts as substitutes for original texts discriminates against both language and plot in favour of ‘story’.
3. It is the richness of language and the subtlety of meaning that distinguish the Literary text from the non-Literary, and the Literary from the pseudo-literary text.
4. Any dilution causes the

destruction of language and of its meaning potential.

5. Impoverished texts lead to impoverished reading, and superficiality.

6. The reading of impoverished writing leads to graduates whose appreciation of language is stilled.

7. Teaching reading through the relationships that exist between words – i.e. that give words vitality, currency etc. – will help students to appreciate language and thus allow them to become more proficient and sophisticated users of the target language.

This paper will focus on a Literary text to reveal the complex vocabulary network that, among many other features of language, distinguishes Literary language from everyday language. Following a brief discussion of the relationship between reading and target language proficiency, I shall present a comprehensive analysis of the opening four paragraphs of *Little Dorrit*, a novel of almost nine-hundred pages by Charles Dickens, to show how a combination of the Reader Response and Stylistic approaches to a Literary extract might enhance not only students' understanding of a complex text but also

help them learn to appreciate the language and thus become better readers and better language users.

2- Reading and Target Language Proficiency

A good deal of research is devoted to investigating the influence on reading ability of the language one is reading in.² The overriding conclusion is hardly a surprising one: lack of language competence is a handicap to the successful reading of a text. In addition to lack of competence in the target language, however, one might also want to critically examine the perceived value of reading in the modern world.

It is often mooted today that reading is a good thing, while watching TV and/or playing computer games are bad things, without paying any attention at all to what is being either, read, watched or played. In terms of reading, it is somewhat disconcerting to know that, in the current environment where issues of educational standards and quality assurance are receiving so much attention, many of those graduating from the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Bahrain would be unable to read the classics of

English Literature in an unabridged form. Even the classics of English Literature for children, such as *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland/Through the Looking-Glass*, *Peter Pan* and *The Wind in the Willows* would probably expose just how inadequate English language proficiency in UoB’s graduates is. That they would also struggle with much of the Literature and pulp fiction produced today, not to mention the trivia in popular magazines, is an indication of the low level of English proficiency demonstrated by the average and below average undergraduate in the Department of English Language and Literature.

3 The Text

Chapter 1

Sun and Shadow

Thirty years ago, Marseilles lay burning in the sun, one day.

A blazing sun upon a fierce August day was no greater rarity in southern France then, than at any other time, before or since. Everything in Marseilles, and about Marseilles, had stared at the fervid sky, and been stared at in return, until a staring habit had become universal there. Strangers were stared out of countenance by staring white houses, staring white walls, staring white streets, staring tracts of arid road, staring hills from which verdure was burnt away. The only things to be seen

not fixedly staring and glaring were the vines drooping under their load of grapes. These did occasionally wink a little, as the hot air barely moved their faint leaves.

There was no wind to make a ripple on the foul water within the harbour, or on the beautiful sea without. The line of demarcation between the two colours, black and blue, showed the point which the pure sea would not pass; but it lay as quiet as the abominable pool, with which it never mixed. Boats without awnings were too hot to touch; ships blistered at their moorings; the stones of the quays had not cooled, night or day, for months. Hindoos, Russians, Chinese, Spaniards, Portuguese, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Genoese, Neapolitans, Venetians, Greeks, Turks, descendants from all the builders of Babel, come to trade at Marseilles, sought the shade alike--taking refuge in any hiding-place from a sea too intensely blue to be looked at, and a sky of purple, set with one great flaming jewel of fire.

The universal stare made the eyes ache. Towards the distant line of Italian coast, indeed, it was a little relieved by light clouds of mist, slowly rising from the evaporation of the sea, but it softened nowhere else. Far away the staring roads, deep in dust, stared from the hill-side, stared from the hollow, stared from the interminable plain. Far away the dusty vines overhanging wayside cottages, and the monotonous wayside avenues of parched trees without shade, drooped beneath the stare of earth and sky. So did the horses with drowsy bells, in long files of carts, creeping slowly towards the interior; so did their recumbent drivers, when they were awake, which rarely happened; so did the exhausted labourers

in the fields. Everything that lived or grew, was oppressed by the glare; except the lizard, passing swiftly over rough stone walls, and the cicada, chirping his dry hot chirp, like a rattle. The very dust was scorched brown, and something quivered in the atmosphere as if the air itself were panting.

4 The Analysis

4.1 Analytical Approaches

4.1.1 *A Reader Response approach to establishing what the text is about*

Over the last decade, a number of students in the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Bahrain have been shown the first four paragraphs of *Little Dorrit* by Charles Dickens and asked to respond to it by answering the questions, “How does the text make you feel? The answer I am attempting to elicit is “hot” (others I might expect include “thirsty”, “blinded by the light”, even “tired” or “exhausted”, in fact anything related to the intense heat that Dickens is describing with a large number of words). However, during my time of asking the question of students this answer has yet to be given by any of those asked. Indeed, verbal responses are mostly absent from the experiment except among the ‘control’ group of educated native English speakers I asked on *ad hoc* occasions. The number of blank faces that I do get suggests that

responding to a text is either beyond the capabilities of some or that the surprise at being asked to respond at all has left them speechless. A third alternative is that the language is too difficult.

I try again, this time asking, “What is the text about?”. The answer I am attempting to elicit on this occasion is “heat”, something that should be readily recognizable to a population most of whom have spent their entire lives in a desert country where temperatures might reach as high as 55 degrees centigrade (131 Fahrenheit) and where 45 (113) degrees is commonplace. It is encouraging to report that this time there are more verbal responses and fewer blank faces. Nevertheless, the verbal responses are all directly associated with surface features of the text (vocabulary items in this case) and are thus not to do with responding at all, but with desperately looking at the paper for clues. Some of the more sensible answers typically include: “nationalities”; “Marseille”; “the sea”, “the sun”. While the first three of these are not close, the final one is showing some greater sensitivity to the text’s ‘aboutness’. Nevertheless, what we are trying to establish through this exercise is not the physical context (i.e. the “who”, the “where” and the “what”)

but something more ethereal.

4.1.2 A Stylistic approach to establishing what the text is about

Stylistics, according to Short (1996), is “the direct application of linguistic evidence to interpret and analyze literature” (Kellem, 2009:12). In attempting to elicit a reader-response-type answer from the students, I have succeeded only so far as getting a Stylistic-based one. I say “only so far as” because there is something of a fallacy in assuming that the two approaches are mutually exclusive, yet this separation is how the relationship between the two has typically been perceived, not least because almost no knowledge about language is required for the former, while specific knowledge is required for the latter. In other words, the Reader-Response approach is appealing to teachers because it requires no teaching, and to students because anything goes. Even the vacant expression is a response, according to this approach.

This is not to dismiss the Reader-Response approach altogether, since responding to a text is what makes reading an elevating, enjoyable and worthwhile experience. However, it would be nonsense to suggest that the kind of devices and processes that

a Stylistic analysis attempts to identify and define are not also contributing to the ability of one to respond in the first place.³ It would be nonsense also to suggest that a less-than-sufficient language competence is not likely to hinder the ability to respond to a text (unless one counts responses such as “I don’t understand” and “the words are too difficult” as a valid ones!).

The Stylistic-oriented responses that students are able to give to the Dickens text all relate to word-frequency, or at least to the recognition of sets of words. This is a good sign, because as we shall see shortly, it is this notion of word-sets – particularly to a broad definition of **repetition** – that is central to the analysis of the text in attempting to establish what it is about. The argument here is that only when such a Stylistic analysis has been conducted will the reader be able to respond to the text, for such an analysis will reveal to the reader what it is they are required to respond to.⁴

4.2 An Alternative Opening to *Little Dorrit*

Before we conduct an analysis of this text or any other, it is a useful exercise to try to reduce a text deemed suitable for analysis to a single sentence with as few words as possible, without losing track

of the narrative essentials of WHAT was happening, WHEN it was happening and WHERE it was happening. This can be done with any suitably analyzable extract, since any narrative of any length is constructed of a series of related whats, whens and wheres. It might be assumed that the longer the text, the greater the number of series of whats, whens and wheres.⁵ However, in relation to the text being analyzed here, we have to consider how and why Dickens wrote. His novels appeared in installments in popular magazines of the day. He wrote to make money. He was paid by the word. Small wonder, then, that the 437 words of the actual text can be reduced to a mere seven, giving us this alternative:

One day in Marseilles, it was hot.

Not only would Dickens have been left short of cash had he chosen the shortcut above, he would have left his readers somewhat frustrated; certainly, the heat that emanates from the pages in the original text would have been lost.

We shall return to this alternative beginning to *Little Dorrit* later, as it will show us something rather interesting.

4.3 Identifying the Lexical Fields

A more technical way of describing the

word-sets alluded to in 4.1.2 above is to call them **lexical fields**. Recognizing lexical fields is the first step in establishing what a text is ‘about’.

The following analysis, and any similar analysis of a well-structured and well-written text, will be as objective as the language allows but will require some subjective judgements on the part of the one doing the analysis, particularly since Literary language is not expected to provide meaning as clearly as, say, a technical report is expected to. In the Literary text, therefore, one can expect repetition to be not direct but rather rich in **synonymy**, **hyponymy** and **meronymy**, as well as carrying a number of **instantial** relations (i.e. a word’s membership of a set in the particular instant of the text in question but not in any other, at least not in a predictable way⁶).

For reasons of space, I shall keep the presentation of lexical field analysis as brief and to-the-point as I can. Readers are invited to have a go at analyzing the text themselves before proceeding. This can be done by simply following the thread of each lexical word or phrase until it has been exhausted. As well as the repetition, synonymy, hyponymy and meronymy already mentioned, the categories of **opposition** and **links** should also be

considered.⁷ In my analysis, I have found a total of twelve lexical fields:

1. The sun
2. Shadow
3. Time
4. Location
5. Burning
6. Staring
7. Movement (or lack of)
8. Colours
9. Living things
10. Nationalities
11. Sounds
12. Heat

If we make a quick return to the seven-word alternative beginning, we can reduce the number of lexical fields to three: TIME, LOCATION, and HEAT: in other words, WHEN (*One day*), WHERE (*in Marseilles*) and WHAT (*it was hot*). Intuition tells us, therefore, that nine of these lexical fields are minor ones – analysis will show us why our intuition is probably correct.

The next stage of the analysis requires us to place each of the traced items into its correct category. We should also bear in mind that some of the traced items belong to more than one lexical field. This is extremely important as we shall see later.

4.3.1 *The Sun*

SUN and Shadow

Thirty years ago, Marseilles lay burning in **THE SUN**, one day.

A blazing **SUN** upon a fierce August day ..., and been **STARED AT** in return, ...

There was no wind ..., set with **ONE GREAT FLAMING JEWEL OF FIRE**.

The universal stare made the eyes ache ..., and the monotonous wayside avenues of parched trees **WITHOUT SHADE**, drooped beneath the stare of earth and sky...

4.3.2 *Shadow*

Sun and SHADOW

There was no wind ... come to trade at Marseilles, sought the **SHADE** alike--taking refuge in any hiding-place from a sea too intensely blue to be looked at, ...

... Towards the distant line of Italian coast, indeed, it was a little relieved by **LIGHT CLOUDS OF MIST**, slowly rising from the evaporation of the sea, ... Far away the dusty vines overhanging wayside cottages, and the monotonous wayside avenues of parched trees **WITHOUT SHADE**, drooped beneath the stare of earth and sky...

4.3.3 *Time*

THIRTY YEARS AGO, Marseilles lay burning in the sun, **ONE DAY**.

A blazing sun upon a fierce **AUGUST DAY** was no greater rarity in southern France **THEN**, than at **ANY OTHER TIME**, **BEFORE** or

SINCE. Everything in Marseilles, ... These did **OCCASIONALLY** wink a little, ...

...; the stones of the quays had not cooled, **NIGHT** or **DAY**, for **MONTHS**...

4.3.4 *Location*

Thirty years ago, **MARSEILLES** lay burning in the sun, one day.

A blazing sun upon a fierce August day was no greater rarity in **SOUTHERN FRANCE** then, than at any other time, before or since. Everything **IN MARSEILLES**, and **ABOUT MARSEILLES**, had stared at the fervid sky, and been stared at in return, until a staring habit had become universal there. Strangers were stared out of countenance by staring white **HOUSES**, staring white **WALLS**, staring white **STREETS**, staring tracts of arid **ROAD**, staring **HILLS** from which **VERDURE** was burnt away. The only things to be seen not fixedly staring and glaring were the **VINES** drooping ...

There was no wind to make a ripple on **THE FOUL WATER WITHIN THE HARBOUR**, or **ON THE BEAUTIFUL SEA WITHOUT**. **THE LINE OF DEMARCATION BETWEEN THE TWO COLOURS**, black and blue, showed the point which **THE PURE SEA** would not pass; but it lay as quiet as **THE ABOMINABLE POOL**, with which it never mixed. **BOATS** without awnings were too hot to touch; **SHIPS** blistered **AT THEIR MOORINGS**; the stones of **THE QUAYS** had not cooled, night or day, for months. ... come to trade **AT MARSEILLES**, sought **THE SHADE** alike--taking refuge **IN ANY HIDING-PLACE** from **A SEA** too intensely blue to be looked at, and **A SKY** of purple, ...

The universal stare made the eyes ache. Towards **THE DISTANT LINE OF ITALIAN COAST**, indeed, it was a little relieved by **LIGHT CLOUDS OF MIST**, slowly rising from the evaporation of the sea, but it softened nowhere else. Far away the staring **ROADS**, deep in dust, stared from **THE HILL-SIDE**, stared from **THE HOLLOW**, stared from **THE INTERMINABLE PLAIN**. **FAR AWAY** the **DUSTY VINES** overhanging **WAYSIDE COTTAGES**, and the monotonous **WAYSIDE AVENUES** of **PARCHED TREES** without shade, drooped beneath the stare of **EARTH** and **SKY**. So did the horses with drowsy bells, in **LONG FILES OF CARTS**, creeping slowly towards **THE INTERIOR**; so did their recumbent drivers, when they were awake, which rarely happened; so did the exhausted labourers in **THE FIELDS**. Everything that lived or grew, was oppressed by the glare; except the lizard, passing swiftly over **ROUGH STONE WALLS**, and the cicala, chirping his dry hot chirp, like a rattle. ...

4.3.5 *Burning*

Thirty years ago, Marseilles lay **BURNING** in the sun, one day.

A **BLAZING** sun upon a **FIERCE** August day was no greater rarity in southern France then, ..., had stared at the **FERVID** sky, ... from which verdure was **BURNT AWAY**. ...

...; ships **BLISTERED** at their moorings; ..., and a sky of purple, set with one great **FLAMING** jewel of fire.

... The very dust was **SCORCHED** brown, ...

4.3.6 *Staring*

A blazing sun upon a fierce August day was no greater rarity in southern France then, than at any other time, before or since. Everything in Marseilles, and about Marseilles, had **STARED** at the fervid sky, and been **STARED** at in return, until a **STARING** habit had become universal there. Strangers were **STARED** out of countenance by **STARING** white houses, **STARING** white walls, **STARING** white streets, **STARING** tracts of arid road, **STARING** hills from which verdure was burnt away. The only things to be seen not fixedly **STARING** and **GLARING** were the vines drooping under their load of grapes. These did occasionally **WINK** a little, as the hot air barely moved their faint leaves.

There was no wind ... a sea too intensely blue to be **LOOKED AT**, and a sky of purple, set with one great flaming jewel of fire.

The universal **STARE** made the eyes ache. Towards the distant line of Italian coast, indeed, it was a little relieved by light clouds of mist, slowly rising from the evaporation of the sea, but it softened nowhere else. Far away the **STARING** roads, deep in dust, **STARED** from the hill-side, **STARED** from the hollow, **STARED** from the interminable plain. Far away the dusty vines overhanging wayside cottages, and the monotonous wayside avenues of parched trees without shade, drooped beneath the **STARE** of earth and sky. So did the horses ..., was oppressed by the **GLARE**; ...

4.3.7 *Movement (or lack of – including shape, posture and mere existence etc.)*

Thirty years ago, Marseilles **LAY** burning in the

sun, one day.

A blazing sun ... The only things to be seen not fixedly staring and glaring were the vines **DROOPING** under their load of grapes. These did occasionally wink a little, as the hot air **BARELY MOVED** their faint leaves.

There was **NO WIND** to make **A RIPPLE** on the foul water within the harbour, or on the beautiful sea without. The line of demarcation between the two colours, black and blue, showed the point which the pure sea would not pass; but it **LAY** as quiet as the abominable pool, with which it never mixed. ...

The universal stare made the eyes ache. Towards the distant line of Italian coast, indeed, it was a little relieved by light clouds of mist, **SLOWLY RISING** from the evaporation of the sea, ... Far away the dusty vines **OVERHANGING** wayside cottages, and the monotonous wayside avenues of parched trees without shade, **DROOPED** beneath the stare of earth and sky. So did the horses with **DROWSY** bells, in **LONG FILES** of carts, **CREEPING SLOWLY** towards the interior; so did their **RECUMBENT** drivers, when they were **AWAKE**, which rarely happened; so did the **EXHAUSTED** labourers in the fields. Everything ...; except the lizard, **PASSING SWIFTLY** over rough stone walls, ..., and something **QUIVERED** in the atmosphere as if the air itself were panting.

4.3.8 *Colours*

A blazing sun ... Strangers were stared out of countenance by staring **WHITE** houses, staring **WHITE** walls, staring **WHITE** streets, staring tracts of arid road, staring hills from which **VERDURE** was burnt away.

... The line of demarcation between the two **COLOURS, BLACK** and **BLUE**, showed the point which the pure sea would not pass; ... from a sea too intensely **BLUE** to be looked at, and a sky of **PURPLE**, set with one great flaming jewel of fire.

... The very dust was scorched **BROWN**, and something quivered in the atmosphere ...

4.3.9 *Living things (including humans, flora and fauna)*

A blazing sun ... **STRANGERS** were stared out of countenance ... from which **VERDURE** was burnt away. The only things to be seen not fixedly staring and glaring were the **VINES** drooping under their load of **GRAPES**...

There was no wind .. **HINDOOS, RUSSIANS, CHINESE, SPANIARDS, PORTUGUESE, ENGLISHMEN, FRENCHMEN, GENOESE, NEAPOLITANS, VENETIANS, GREEKS, TURKS, DESCENDANTS FROM ALL THE BUILDERS OF BABEL**, come to trade at Marseilles, ...

The universal stare ... Far away the dusty **VINES** overhanging wayside cottages, and the monotonous wayside avenues of parched **TREES** without shade, drooped beneath the stare of earth and sky. So did the **HORSES** with drowsy bells, ...; so did their recumbent **DRIVERS**, when they were awake, which rarely happened; so did the exhausted **LABOURERS** in the fields. **EVERYTHING THAT LIVED OR GREW**, was oppressed by the glare; except the **LIZARD**, passing swiftly over rough stone walls, and the **CICALA**, chirping his dry hot chirp, like a rattle.

...

4.3.10 *Nationalities*

There was no wind ... **HINDOOS, RUSSIANS, CHINESE, SPANIARDS, PORTUGUESE, ENGLISHMEN, FRENCHMEN, GENOESE, NEAPOLITANS, VENETIANS, GREEKS, TURKS, DESCENDANTS FROM ALL THE BUILDERS OF BABEL**, come to trade at Marseilles, ...

The universal stare made the eyes ache. Towards the distant line of **ITALIAN** coast, ...

4.3.11 *Sounds*

The universal stare ... the cicala, chirping his dry hot **CHIRP**, like a **RATTLE**.

4.3.12 *Heat*

SUN and Shadow

Thirty years ago, Marseilles lay **BURNING** in the **SUN**, one day.

A **BLAZING SUN** upon a **FIERCE** August day was no greater rarity in southern France then, than at any other time, before or since. Everything in Marseilles, and about Marseilles, had **STARED** at the **FERVID** sky, and been **STARED** at in return, until a **STARING** habit had become universal there. Strangers were **STARED** out of countenance by **STARING WHITE** houses, **STARING WHITE** walls, **STARING WHITE** streets, **STARING** tracts of **ARID** road, **STARING** hills from which verdure was **BURNT AWAY**. The only things to be seen not fixedly **STARING** and **GLARING** were the vines drooping under their load of grapes. These

did occasionally wink a little, as **THE HOT AIR** barely moved their faint leaves.

There was **NO WIND** to make a ripple on the foul water within the harbour, or on the beautiful sea without. The line of demarcation between the two colours, black and blue, showed the point which the pure sea would not pass; but it lay as quiet as the abominable pool, with which it never mixed. Boats **WITHOUT AWNINGS** were **TOO HOT TO TOUCH**; ships **BLISTERED** at their moorings; the stones of the quays had **NOT COOLED**, night or day, for months. Hindoos, Russians, Chinese, Spaniards, Portuguese, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Genoese, Neapolitans, Venetians, Greeks, Turks, descendants from all the builders of Babel, come to trade at Marseilles, **SOUGHT THE SHADE** alike--taking refuge in any hiding-place from a sea **TOO INTENSELY BLUE TO BE LOOKED AT**, and a sky of purple, set with **ONE GREAT FLAMING JEWEL OF FIRE**.

The universal **STARE** made the eyes ache. Towards the distant line of Italian coast, indeed, it was a little relieved by light clouds of mist, slowly rising from the **EVAPORATION OF THE SEA**, but it softened nowhere else. Far away the **STARING** roads, deep in dust, **STARED** from the hill-side, **STARED** from the hollow, **STARED** from the interminable plain. Far away the dusty vines overhanging wayside cottages, and the monotonous wayside avenues of **PARCHED** trees **WITHOUT SHADE**, drooped beneath the **STARE** of earth and sky. So did the horses with drowsy bells, in long files of carts, creeping slowly towards the interior; so did their recumbent drivers, when they were awake, which rarely happened; so did the exhausted labourers in the fields. Everything that lived or grew, was

oppressed by **THE GLARE**; except the lizard, passing swiftly over rough stone walls, and the cicala, chirping **HIS DRY HOT CHIRP**, like a rattle. The very dust was **SCORCHED** brown, and something quivered in the atmosphere as if **THE AIR ITSELF WERE PANTING**.

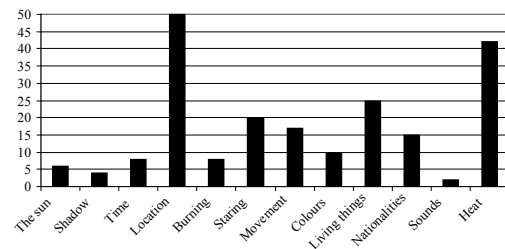
5 Results and Discussion

5.1 Results

5.1.1 Stage 1

If we place the results from a count of the twelve lexical fields into a simple graph (Figure 1), they reveal, first of all, what the passage is probably about and, more importantly, what it is definitely not about.

Figure 1: The 12 Lexical Fields



We can immediately discount the possibility of the text being about sounds, shadow, the sun (as a celestial body), burning (as a physical phenomenon involving fire), time or colours. Furthermore, since the category of ‘nationalities’ is also included in that of ‘living things’, we can discount the former too. What we cannot do, however, is discount these categories altogether.

Now, the alert reader will have noticed that in all this counting of words, many have been counted more than once. The reason for this is not merely a contrivance on my part in order to prove some preconceived notion about the text's meaning but one that has its basis in theory. Since words can belong to more than one lexical field at the same time, and that a lexical field can be embedded within another lexical field, it would be wrong to count each surface representation of a word (i.e. each **syntagmatic** – or horizontal – occurrence) as a single event. We need to consider, also, the network that words necessarily form through their textual association; in other words, the **paradigmatic** – or vertical – occurrence of each. Thus, the counting of a surface occurrence of any given word might be doubled, tripled, quadrupled etc. according to the number of lexical fields to which it might claim membership. Repetition of a word, then, by direct repetition, synonymy or hyponymy, increases the significance of that word by its number of repetitions. This is important because a purely surface reading of any text, such as is commonly performed by students in the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Bahrain, will miss out on the literariness of the text.

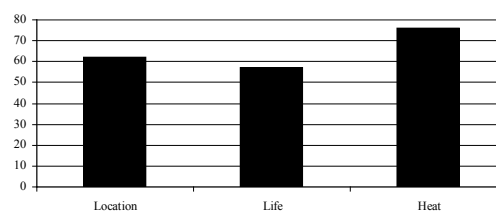
5.1.1 Stage 2

The next stage is to group the lexical fields into larger categories. These categories are arranged according to our intuitive reasoning regarding which ones go together in terms of their meaning. This will yield the following 'supercategories':

1. Location/Colours/Sounds
2. Living things/Movement Nationalities
3. Heat/Burning/Sun/Staring

If we call these LOCATION, LIFE and HEAT respectively, the graph in Figure 2 shows how they compare:

Figure 2: The 3 Supercategories



5.2 Discussion

From the above data, we can now accurately assert that the text is telling us that LIFE in some LOCATION is experiencing HEAT. Significantly, if we take the top two supercategories of LOCATION and HEAT and attempt to express them in as short a sentence as possible, we might end up with this:

In Marseilles, it was hot.

Given that an interesting narrative will link its events to a time, we might want to do the same with the above sentence:

One day in Marseilles, it was hot.

If we wish to add a little flavour to the above sentence and make it less bland, we might end up with this:

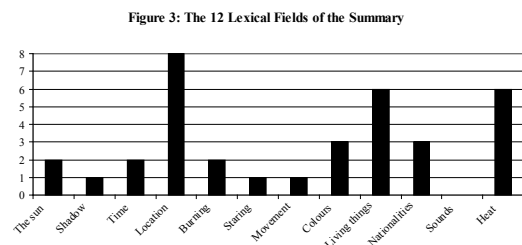
Thirty years ago, Marseilles lay burning in the sun, one day.⁸

In narrative terms, Dicken’s original opening sentence of 11 words would appear to be sufficient, and is certainly more literary than my seven-word version. Since an earthly location is generally understood to be a place teeming with life, whether human, animal or plant, and since a location itself without this complementary life cannot experience anything, we might assert that the subsequent lengthy description of who and what is experiencing the heat (i.e. everybody and everything) is solely because of the author’s need to write more words (426 more words) than might be required to communicate his point. We already know Dickens was paid by the word, but it would be wrong to dismiss his method of assuring a good pay day as just a heap of unnecessary verbiage. Verbiage, perhaps, but literary verbiage for sure.

In order to test the validity of my last assertion, imagine, after having carried out the above analysis we ask students to write as short a version of Dickens’ four paragraphs as possible with the provision that they are to include all originally identified twelve lexical fields in similar surface quantity to the original text. For example:

ONE DAY, IN AND AROUND MARSEILLES, IT WAS SO HOT, that NO LIVING THING, neither MAN OF ANY RACE, BEAST nor PLANT could MOVE TO ESCAPE the INTENSE HEAT from THE BURNING SUN that DAZZLED and that BLEACHED THE HOUSES WHITE and SCORCHED THE EARTH BROWN.

Figure 3 returns this text to the graphic quantities that generated it to yield a similar pattern to the graph in Figure 1:

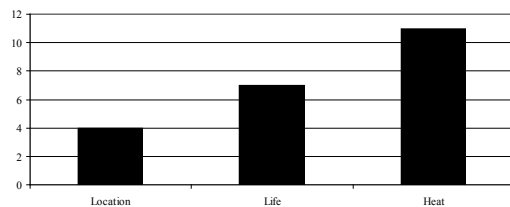


Doing a similar exercise with the three supercategories is hardly likely to bring out the Dickens lurking within:

IN AND AROUND MARSEILLES, IT WAS VERY HOT INDEED, and EVERY LIVING THING, whether MAN, BEAST OR PLANT was suffering in the INTENSE HEAT from THE BURNING SUN.

Figure 4 displays a similar pattern to Figure 2:

Figure 4: The 3 Supercategories of the Summary



Not surprisingly, so contrived an exercise will give us contrived pieces of writing, in which the informational quality of the texts is pretty much in keeping with what Dickens wished to impart to us, but whose quality as pieces of Literature is somewhat lacking. Such impoverished forms would hardly have the publishing houses and literary agents queuing up to offer us contracts, yet the abridged versions so favoured by students of English Literature at the University of Bahrain and elsewhere *do* present readers with this kind of reductive approach to literature; in other words, story (Figures 3 and 4) prevails over plot and language (Figures 1 and 2).

5.3 A 21st Century Alternative

A recently developed computerized form of analyzing what a text displays in terms of word count gives us a fresh way of looking at Dickens' text. Figure 5 is an example of a **wordle**, "a toy for generating 'word clouds' from text that you provide. The clouds give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the source text" (<http://www.wordle.net/>):

Figure 5: 'Wordle' Analysis



A quick glance at the 'wordle' results for our text immediately draws the eyes – somewhat appropriately – to the words 'staring' and 'stared'. A less cursory but still casual look will alert our attention to the words 'Marseilles', 'day', 'sea', 'sky', 'hot', 'white' and 'without'. A closer perusal will reveal 'everything', 'universal', 'slowly' and 'air'. At this point, trying to untangle the minor words begins to make our eyes ache, pretty much like the hot sun in Marseilles one day made the eyes ache.

Of course, the ‘wordle’ does not rescue the reader from having to make an informed, interpretative, reading to arrive at its core meaning. It does reveal why some students declare the text to be about ‘staring’ while at the same time supporting the contention stated here that what the text is ‘about’, or how it makes one feel, is not immediately recoverable from its surface elements, at least not entirely so.

Clearly, then, counting words is not a particularly fruitful exercise: in terms of a Stylistic approach, we need to be able to say something about what the word-count reveals to us; in terms of a Reader-Response approach, we need to establish what it is the reader must respond to in order to make his or her response an intelligent one. This brings us to the final stage of our analysis, in which the complex network formed by identifying a word’s membership to one or more lexical fields is rendered even more complex by identifying the relationships that occur between the words in any lexical field.

6 Lexical relations

Meaningful relationships between words constitute an important part of what Halliday and Hasan (1976) refer to as

‘cohesion’. Such relationships can occur only within a single lexical field (i.e. they cannot relate across lexical field boundaries), which is why a lexical item, to realize its full meaning potential, can occur in more than one lexical field. The relationships we shall consider are referred to as **sense** relations (Jeffries, 1998, page 102) and, as already alluded to above in 4.3, include the following categories (Cruse, 2004; Saeed, 2003, Chapter 3):

- Direct Repetition
- Synonymy
- Hyponymy
- Meronymy
- Opposition
- Links

6.1 Analysis

With these relationships we might analyze the 12 lexical fields of the opening four paragraphs of *Little Dorrit* in the following way:

6.1.1 *The Sun*

1. Sun (*original, or grounding, instance*)
2. the sun (*repetition of 1*)
3. sun (*repetition of 1 & 2*)
4. stared at (*?link – a consequence of the sun?*)

5. one great flaming jewel of fire
(*repetition of 1, 2 & 3 by way of a metaphorical synonym*)

6. without shade (*synonym of 1-3 & 5 by way of a negated antonym*)

6.1.2 Shadow

1. Shadow (*original, or grounding, instance*)

2. shade (*repetition/synonym of 1*)

3. light clouds of mist (*?link – a cause of the shade?*)

4. without shade (*antonym of 1 & 2 – gradable or complementary?*)

6.1.3 Time

1. Thirty years ago (*original, or grounding, instance – a hypernym?*)

2. one day (*meronym of 1*)

3. August day (*synonym of 2*)

4. then (*synonym of 1*)

5. any other time (*converse of 1-4 OR complementary antonym of 1-4*)

6. before (*converse of 1-4 OR complementary antonym of 1-4 OR hyponym of 5 OR meronym of 5*)

7. since (*same as 6 PLUS directional opposite of 6*)

8. occasionally (*hyponym of 1 OR meronym of 1*)

9. night (*hyponym of 2 OR meronym of 2*)

10. day (*hyponym of 2 OR meronym of*

2 PLUS converse of 9 OR directional opposite of 9)

11. for months (*meronym of 1*)

6.1.4 Location

1. Marseilles (*original, or grounding, instance – meronym of 2*)

2. southern France (*hypernym of 1*)

3. Everything (*superordinate of 6-49*)

4. in Marseilles (*repetition of 1 – directional opposite of 4 OR converse of 4*)

5. about Marseilles (*directional opposite of 3 OR converse of 3*)

6. sky (*? – what is the sky exactly?*)

7. houses (*meronym of 1 & 3*)

8. walls (*meronym of 1 & 3*)

9. streets (*meronym of 1 & 3*)

10. road (*meronym of 1 & 3 & 4 – hyponym of 33*)

11. hills (*meronym of 4 – hypernym of 34*)

12. verdure (*meronym of 4*)

13. vines (*meronym of 11*)

14. on the foul water (*meronym of 3 – meronym of 14*)

15. within the harbour (*meronym of 3 – hypernym of 13 – directional opposite of 16*)

16. on the beautiful sea (*meronym of 4 – hypernym of 13 & 14*)

17. without (*meronym of 4 – directional opposite of 14*)

18. The line of demarcation between

- the two colours (*meronym* of 4 – *meronym* of 13+14 & 15+16)
19. the pure sea (*meronym* of 4 – *synonym* of 15+16)
20. the abominable pool (*meronym* of 4 – *synonym* of 13+14)
21. Boats (*meronym* of 3 – *meronym* of 14)
22. Ships (*meronym* of 3 – *meronym* of 14 – *co-hyponym* of 20)
23. at their moorings (*meronym* of 3 – *meronym* of 14)
24. the stones (*meronym* of 24)
25. the quays (*meronym* of 3 – *meronym* of 14 – *hypernym* of 23)
26. the shade (*meronym* of 1 & 3)
27. in any hiding-place (*meronym* of 1 & 3)
28. a sea (*meronym* of 3 & 4 – *repetition* of 15 & 18 – *synonym* of 13+14 & 15+16 & 18 & 19)
29. a sky (*repetition* of 5 – *meronym* of 3 & 4)
30. the distant line of Italian coast (*meronym* of 4)
31. light clouds of mist (*meronym* of 4)
32. nowhere else (*meronym* of 1?)
33. Far away (*meronym* of 4 – *meronym* of 2 – *hypernym* of 33 & 34 & 35 & 36)
34. roads (*meronym* of 3 & 4 – *repetition* of 9 – *superordinate* of 9 – *meronym* of 32, 34 & 35 & 36)
35. the hill-side (*meronym* of 4 – *meronym* of 10 – *hypernym* of 33)
36. the hollow (*meronym* of 4 – *hypernym* of 33 – *converse* of 10 & 34 & 36)
37. the interminable plain (*meronym* of 4 – *hypernym* of 33 – *converse* of 10 & 34 & 36)
38. Far away (*repetition* of 32)
39. dusty vines (*meronym* of 32 & 37)
40. wayside cottages (*meronym* of 32 & 37)
41. wayside avenues (*meronym* of 32 & 37)
42. parched trees (*meronym* of 32 & 37 – *meronym* of 40)
43. earth (*co-hyponym* of 43? – *converse* of 43? – *complementary* of 43?)
44. sky (*co-hyponym* of 42? – *converse* of 42? – *complementary* of 42? – *repetition* of 5 & 28)
45. long files of carts (*meronym* of 33? – *meronym* of 32 & 37)
46. the interior (*synonym* of 3)
47. labourers (*meronym* of 47)
48. the fields (*meronym* of 32 & 37)
49. rough stone walls (*meronym* of 32 & 37 – *meronym* of 47?)
- 6.1.5 *Burning*
1. burning (*original, or grounding, instance*)
 2. blazing (*synonym* of 1)
 3. fierce (*link – a quality of burning*)
 4. fervid (*synonym* of 1)
 5. burnt away (*gradable antonym* of 1)

6. blistered (*link – a result of burning*)
7. flaming (*synonym of 1*)
8. scorched (*synonym of 5*)
- 6.1.6 *Staring*
1. stared (*original, or grounding, instance*)
2. stared (*repetition of 1*)
3. staring (*repetition of 1 in active form*)
4. stared (*repetition of 1*)
5. staring (*repetition of 3*)
6. staring (*repetition of 3*)
7. staring (*repetition of 3*)
8. staring (*repetition of 3*)
9. staring (*repetition of 3*)
10. staring (*repetition of 3*)
11. glaring (*synonym of 3*)
12. wink (*non-gradable antonym of 14*)
13. looked at (*gradable antonym of 1*)
14. stare (*repetition of 1 with change of grammatical class*)
15. staring (*repetition of 3*)
16. stared (*repetition of 1*)
17. stared (*repetition of 1*)
18. stared (*repetition of 1*)
19. stare (*repetition of 14*)
20. glare (*synonym of 14*)
- 6.1.7 *Movement (or lack of – including shape, posture and mere existence etc.)*
1. lay (*original, or grounding, instance*)
2. drooping (*link*)
3. barely moved (*link*)
4. no wind (*link*)
5. a ripple (*link*)
6. lay (*repetition of 1*)
7. slowly rising (*link*)
8. overhanging (*link – synonym of 2?*)
9. drooped (*repetition of 2*)
10. drowsy (*link*)
11. long files (*instantial link*)
12. creeping slowly (*synonym of 3 - gradable antonym of 16*)
13. recumbent (*synonym of 1*)
14. awake (*gradable antonym of 1-13 & 15*)
15. exhausted (*link – antonym of 15*)
16. passing swiftly (*gradable antonym of 12?*)
17. quivered (*link – hyponym of MOVEMENT*)
- 6.1.8 *Colours*
1. white (*original, or grounding, instance – taxonomic sister of 5*)
2. white (*repetition of 1*)
3. white (*repetition of 1*)
4. verdure (*taxonomic sister of 5*)
5. colours (*superordinate of 1-4 & 6-10*)
6. black (*taxonomic sister of 5*)
7. blue (*taxonomic sister of 5*)
8. blue (*repetition of 7*)
9. purple (*taxonomic sister of 5*)
10. brown (*taxonomic sister of 5*)
- 6.1.9 *Living things (including humans,*

flora and fauna)

1. Strangers (*first grounding instance – instantial superordinate of 3-14*)
2. verdure (*second grounding instance – hyponym of 21*)
3. Hindoos (*hyponym of 1 and 21*)
4. Russians (*hyponym of 1 and 21*)
5. Chinese (*hyponym of 1 and 21*)
6. Spaniards (*hyponym of 1 and 21*)
7. Portuguese (*hyponym of 1 and 21*)
8. Englishmen (*hyponym of 1 and 21*)
9. Frenchmen (*hyponym of 1 and 21*)
10. Genoese (*hyponym of 1 and 21*)
11. Neapolitans (*hyponym of 1 and 21*)
12. Venetians (*hyponym of 1 and 21*)
13. Greeks (*hyponym of 1 and 21*)
14. Turks (*hyponym of 1 and 21*)
15. descendants from all the builders of Babel (*hyponym of 21 – instantial co-hyponym/synonym of 1 – superordinate of 3-14*)
16. vines (*hyponym of 2*)
17. trees (*hyponym of 2*)
18. horses (*hyponym of 21*)
19. drivers (*hyponym of 21*)
20. labourers (*hyponym of 21*)
21. Everything that lived or grew (*superordinate of 1-20 & 22-23*)
22. lizard (*hyponym of 21*)
23. cicada (*hyponym of 21*)

6.1.10 Nationalities

1. Strangers (*original, or grounding, instance*)
2. Hindoos (*hyponym of 1 and 14*)
3. Russians (*hyponym of 1 and 14*)
4. Chinese (*hyponym of 1 and 14*)
5. Spaniards (*hyponym of 1 and 14*)
6. Portuguese (*hyponym of 1 and 14*)
7. Englishmen (*hyponym of 1 and 14*)
8. Frenchmen (*hyponym of 1 and 14*)
9. Genoese (*hyponym of 1 and 14*)
10. Neapolitans (*hyponym of 1 and 14*)
11. Venetians (*hyponym of 1 and 14*)
12. Greeks (*hyponym of 1 and 14*)
13. Turks (*hyponym of 1 and 14*)
14. descendants from all the builders of Babel (*superordinate of 1 & therefore of 2-13*)
15. Italian (*hyponym of 1 and 14*)

6.1.11 Sounds

1. chirp (*original, or grounding, instance*)
2. rattle (*link of 1*)

6.1.12 Heat

A quick look at the sheer number of relationships involved in this category ought to convince anyone that the lexical relations involved are far too numerous to mention and that is the position taken here. This is not opting out but rather sound reasoning as should be clear from the following brief discussion.

6.2 Discussion

We have been able to make a more than tentative assessment of what the text is about through its division into lexical fields; the subsequent analysis of the relationships within each lexical field has given us an insight into how the writer has reinforced what the text is about through various categories of what can all be included under the supercategory of repetition. We can see this by looking at the constituent structure – or the make-up – of the lexical field of ‘heat’, which contains hardly any items not already analyzed in the other 11 lexical fields, the exceptions being: *arid, the hot air, without awnings, too hot to touch, not cooled, evaporation of the sea, parched, his hot dry chirp, rattled, and the air itself were panting.*

The suggestion is that what a literary text is actually ‘about’ is not necessarily directly stated. In other words, Dickens himself might have said: “I’m going to write about heat by not mentioning the word itself, but rather by building up a network of associated lexical fields”. It is unlikely that Dickens said anything of the sort, but we can be certain, in his desire to make the most financial capital from the number of words he did use, that this is exactly what he did do.

7 Conclusion

The reading and writing processes are inextricably linked: a reading of a text is a recreation of it and, in order to capture the complexity of the written text, the reader has to somehow bring that complexity with him or her when reading it; in other words, to recreate the complexity. This is not to say that every reading of a literary text should undergo so detailed an analysis as the one featured here – that would be sure to kill the enjoyment that reading is supposed to bring and nobody would ever finish a book. Nevertheless, in the successful reading of a text, I am assuming that the brain does indeed perform a rapid series of associations that are similar to those highlighted here. For the reader’s brain not to do so would mean an impoverished reading, just as any reduced rewriting – for the purpose of synopsis or so-called graded reading, for example – would mean an impoverished text.

I am also assuming that students admitted to a university to study English are already skilled and experienced readers in their native language and that any difficulty in reading second or foreign language texts is due solely to the lack of sufficient proficiency and competence in that second or foreign language. In other words, the mental faculties for performing the

kind of rapid and subconscious analysis that this paper has made deliberate and conscious, are already in place before the future university student has left school. Ideally, at university degree level, the language competence and proficiency that is required to perform such a rapid and subconscious analysis in a second or foreign language – in our case English – should also be in place, and should be a requirement for admission to a university’s English degree programme. If this is not the case, the students will be expected to cope with complex texts for which they are simply not equipped with the appropriate or adequate linguistic skills. This means resorting to basic English Language Teaching in an attempt to compensate for what is lacking. The often puerile, culturally insensitive and confusing array of materials and methods employed might be suitable for a typical language school setting but are entirely unsuitable for degree level education.

University study requires intensive involvement in one’s subject. Literature cannot be studied without having a sound knowledge of the language in which it is written, and in order to acquire this knowledge, more than a casual acquaintance with the tools of Stylistic and

Discourse Analysis is needed. In terms of reading complex texts, both students and professors ought to have gone beyond the stage of respectively being asked for and asking for the kind of responses that the dubious Reader-Response approach seeks to elicit. If students cannot respond satisfactorily to my question of how the first four paragraphs of *Little Dorrit* makes them feel before they have been introduced to the analysis, there is a more than a slim chance that those who have an actual interest in the subject they are studying as opposed to the attitude of passive determinism prevalent in the majority, will have a better understanding of how literary language works after they have been introduced to the analysis.

As a final note, I have appended two further short extracts from literary texts with associated questions in order that readers might try their own hand at a similar analysis. Appendix 1 is a short paragraph from *Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert; Appendix 2 is the opening paragraph of Ernest Hemingway’s very short story *Cat in the Rain*. Those who wish to share their analyses with me and/or see mine – indeed to discuss any aspect of this paper – are welcome to contact me at mparker@arts.uob.bh.

(Endnotes)

1. “What the dickens!” is a common English expression similar to “What the blazes!” or “What the devil!” etc. It has no association with the writer Charles Dickens and its invention is attributed to William Shakespeare (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act 3, Scene 2).
2. Deutsch (2007); Kellem (2009); Kong (2006); Mourtaga (2006); O’Sullivan (2004); Seng & Hashim (2006); Singhal (1998); Walter (2008); Yamashita (2007).
3. For an overview of Stylistic analyses see, for example, Carter (1982), Fowler (1996), Leech and Short (2007), Halliday (1996), Verdonk (1995), Widdowson (1975).
4. I use the term ‘analysis’ loosely here, to mean not a strict poring over the text kind of analysis but one naturally motivated by the reader performing the act of reading in order both to use and acquire, at the same time, the necessary reading skills to be successful reader and, in the process, the language too.
5. Van Dijk (1972, 1977, 1980, 1981) calls this reduction of texts to episodes ‘macropropositions’.
6. A good example of the instantial membership of a set occurs in a passage from Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* (see Appendix 1) which is focused on the heroin and her lover walking along the riverbank. In the text, a number of river-like features are mentioned – insects, plants, trees, water etc.. In the set of words that belong to the lexical field of PLANTS, we find the phrase ‘green wigs’. Wigs belong on heads and are made of real or artificial hair and are not usually found in rivers. Flaubert is, of course, using a metaphor to invoke an image of how the plant might look. The high incidences of metaphor in Literature make literary language particularly rich in terms of performing a lexical-relational analysis and, of course, ambiguous and difficult.
7. Links are simply items which seem, in any sensible analysis, to belong to a category but which are neither repetition, synonymy, hyponymy, meronymy nor opposition.
8. Why Dickens chose to position the phrase ‘one day’ at the end of the sentence and after a comma is beyond the scope of this research. For an interesting discussion of this, see Mason (1982).

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Appendix 1

They returned to Yonville along the river. In summer there was more of its shelving bank to be seen, and the garden walls were uncovered to their base, with several of the steps leading down to the water. The river ran noiselessly, swift, cool to the eye. Tall slender grasses leaned above it in a mass, bent by the force of the current; weeds streamed out in the limpid water like green wigs tossed away. Now and then some fine legged insect alighted on the tip of a reed or crawled over a water lily leaf. The sunshine darted its rays through the little blue bubbles on the wavelets that kept forming and breaking; old lopped willow trees gazed at their own grey bark in the water. Beyond, the fields looked empty for miles around. It was dinner time at the farms. The young woman and her companion heard nothing as they went but the sound of their own voices, their footfalls on the path, and the swish of Emma's dress as it rustled about her.

(*Madame Bovary*, Gustave Flaubert p. 107)

Questions:

- What is the text about?
- How do we know what the text is about?
- What imagery does the text invoke (if any at all)?
- Why does the text invoke such imagery?
- Where are you, the reader, when reading the text?

Appendix 2

THERE were only two Americans stopping at the hotel. They did not know any of the people they passed on the stairs on their way to and from their room. Their room was on the second floor facing the sea. It also faced the public garden and the war monument. There were big palms and green benches in the public garden. In the good weather there was always an artist with his easel. Artists liked the way the palms grew and the bright colors of the hotels facing the gardens and the sea. Italians came from a long way off to look up at the war monument. It was made of bronze and glistened in the rain. It was raining. The rain dripped from the palm trees. Water stood in pools on the gravel paths. The sea broke in a long line in the rain and slipped back down the beach to come up and break again in a long line in the rain. The motorcars were gone from the square by the war monument. Across the square in the doorway of the café a waiter stood looking out at the empty square.

(*Cat in the Rain*, Ernest Hemingway)

Questions:

- What is the text about?
- How do we know what the text is about?
- What imagery does the text invoke (if any at all)?
- What is in the text but missing from the ‘image’?
- Where are you, the reader, when reading the text?