

## CORPUS LINGUISTIC MANIFESTATIONS OF CULTURE IN *MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT*

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### ABSTRACT

Language and culture are interdisciplinary fields which cover artistic discourses, social conventions, and reflexive impacts. They are also two sides of the same coin, and thus the connection between them is inevitable. Culture is expressed through language, and language per se is affected by the culture it expresses. Hence, language can be a reference to traditions, social classes, behaviors, habits, and routines. The present study investigates the role of language in depicting cultural aspects in Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit*, and how ultimately culture affects and reinforces the language use in this novel. The focus of this study is, therefore, on linguistic politeness and literary dialect, as they are references to cultural expression; they reveal characters, social status, levels of education, and manners. A great deal of expressions in the novel represents the Victorian and the American cultures. This study, offers a corpus linguistic method using Wordsmith tools, to extract cultural aspects in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, and it brings as much as politeness markers and dialect clusters. The results show the spectrum of cultural expressions in different ways.

**KEYWORDS:** Corpus Linguistics, Politeness, Dialect, Language and Culture

### INTRODUCTION

The relationship between language and culture captivated many scholars. Some argued that language and culture are undeniably interrelated- like Hymes, for example, who believes that language is an integral part of a man's culture (21). Likewise Witherspoon emphasizes the two-sided relationship between linguistic and cultural studies that language and culture cannot be studied in isolation without reference to each other (2). This paper focus on the linguistic and cultural aspects viewed in Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit* written in 1843-4. It describes the different cultures in different societies in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain and America. In this novel, the language is studied in terms of cultural sides, analyzing social habits, traditions, behaviors, and language varieties. In this stream, Crats Williams defines language as "culture expressing itself in sound" (qtd. in Ovando 341). This means that a language's sounds, words, sentences, and speech are a mirror of a given culture. As cultures partly exist through language, cultural aspects can be derived from a corpus of expressions in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, revealing the main streams of language use in the novel. Dickens tries to be faithful in his representation of the Victorian everyday life with its traditions and routines.

Charles Dickens, in common, uses language not only as an insight into thoughts, but also as an indicator to identities, social classes, behaviors, and manners. The specific linguistic expression maps the region, the social, the educational, and the habitual aspects of the Victorian and American lifestyle, as his novel, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, deals with American and British language varieties and cultures. This can be said, in Tonkin words, that:

Language is a principal vehicle, If culture is a collection of shared behaviors, which themselves constitute a form of metalanguage, then language is fundamental to the culture. A given "culture" may have its own language or languages, or it may share a language with others, eventually it may seek to make that language its own in various ways, even to the

extent of defining it as a separate entity (5)

The interrelationship between language and culture is seen in linguistic anthropology, which can be defined, in William Foley's words, as an "interpretive discipline peeling away at language to find cultural understandings" (3). Therefore, the linguistic study of different layers of language (lexical, grammatical, and semantic) may reveal hidden cultural aspects within the text. By the same token, culture imposes a person to behave and speak in a way that is common in his speech community. Therefore, renderance of speech depends on the quality of education. Martin Chuzzlewit, has a mention on American and British culture, (during the 19<sup>th</sup> century), wherein analysis will be made using WordSmith tool, to unravel the maximum cultural manifestations from the corpus, with reference to language.

## CORPUS LINGUISTICS

This study is a quasi-quantitative, based on corpus stylistics, which gives importance to statistical tools and quantitative methods to derive cultural clusters in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. This does not mean that qualitative analysis is absent; rather, corpus linguistics prioritizes the qualitative analysis of data. Stubbs explains the method:

This will then advance corpus linguistic procedures, by not only describing achieved results, but also by interpreting them and answering the questions. If then similar findings to those already claimed within literary critical interpretations can be found, this is not a problem, because at least it can be proved that the methodology employed was right. (6)

Therefore, WordSmith tools are used, in this paper, to draw linguistic and cultural aspects from *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Concordance tool is, especially, used to look for specific clusters related to cultural manifestations in the language used by the writers. The approach focuses on, keywords and word clusters<sup>1</sup> of, dialect and politeness extracted from the corpus. These clusters are assumed to be indicators of cultural expressions of, Dickens's times. The repeated sequences of words are used to characterize the main traditions and habits of the Victorian and the American societies. Therefore, the study focuses on categorization of keywords and clusters related to culture in electronic lists, and then, it counts their occurrences in the corpus. The corpus will be derived automatically through word lists, and the sets will be marked with an asterisk (\*), as this indicates all the possible derivatives of lemmas. For example, the cluster "I \* beg \* pardon\*" refers to different derivatives, including *I beg your pardon(s)* or *I must beg your pardon(s)*. The analysis of the data, however, will be manual on its right context, to extract cultural expressions, concentrating on linguistic politeness and dialect.

## LITERARY DIALECT

The use of dialect in literature was common from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and so the term dialect had got a literary quality. The aim using literary dialect is to faithfully depict the language spoken in a specific region for a specific social class. Thus, we get regional and social dialects. Cud don, defines a literary dialect as a language or manner of speaking in a peculiar way to an individual or class or region. Usually, it belongs to a region (217). This style, and the linguistic device can be analyzed at different levels, including the lexical, the grammar, and the semantic ones. In *Martin Chuzzlewit*, dialect reflects social stratification in respect to character's speech, as it is used in as a historical record of speech patterns, in a given time and space. Working class speech, is characterized by deviations from the norms of the

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<sup>1</sup>A group of words which follow each other in a text

standard speech. Cuddon, claims that the difference between dialect and the standard language is, in some cases, very considerable (217). This distinction is culturally marked by the level of education a person has. Because industrialization was at peak in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, working class received little or, in worst cases, no education to meet the norms of the standard language.

## CORPUS OF DIALECT IN MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT

*Dickens* uses a remarkable amount of dialects to distinguish character's, social classes or regions. In *Martin Chuzzlewit*, language variety indicates standard dialect of the narrator, and British and American literary dialects. A concordance of some lexical and grammatical clusters of dialect use, is shown to illustrate the phenomenon.

**Table 1: Grammatical and Lexical Clusters of Dialect in *Martin Chuzzlewit***

Dialect Clusters	Frequency	Meaning	Dialect Clusters	Frequency	Meaning
<i>Aye</i>	67	Yes	<i>You/they did</i>	2	Do
<i>Ma</i>	2	Mather	<i>You/ they are</i>	4	Are
<i>Pa</i>	35	Father	<i>You has</i>	2	Have
<i>Papa</i>	17	Father	<i>Hath</i>	2	Has
<i>Nay</i>	7	No	<i>Afore</i>	32	Before
<i>Thou</i>	18	You (subject)	<i>Hadst</i>	1	Had
<i>Thy</i>	34	Your	<i>Begone</i>	2	Go away
<i>Thee</i>	33	You (object)	<i>Her'n</i>	1	Hers
<i>Yourn</i>	3	Yours	<i>Nigh</i>	6	Near
<i>a-</i>	20	Prefix <sup>2</sup>	<i>Seen</i>	2	Saw
<i>Ain't</i>	93	Are/is not	<i>Jolly</i>	55	Enjoyable
<i>Why</i>	186	Showing surprise	<i>Knoved</i>	3	Knew
<i>We/they/you was</i>	36	Were	<i>I +verb+ s</i>	65	I says/tells, etc.
<i>Pray</i>	47	Please	<i>Double negation</i>	45	Ain'tno/ nothing

Difference, is the most prominent feature of British and American dialects, as they represent distant varieties in time and space. In this vein, Witherspoon observes that, "the vulgar in America speak much better than the vulgar in Great-Britain [because] being much more unsettled and moving frequently from place to place, they are not so liable to local peculiarities, either in accent or phraseology" (qtd. in Forgue 518). Accordingly, differences in language varieties lead to differences in cultures.

## LANGUAGE CONTACT AND OTHERNESS

It is natural that, any contact between two different cultures is shown through language use. This can be clear when Dickens sends his British protagonist, young Martin Chuzzlewit, to America. His first contact with Americans shows the difference between cultures in their conversations. Therefore, the understanding of "otherness" is the key feature of the act of contact. Dickens indicates these notions of otherness and language contact as follows:

'Pray, sir!' said Mrs Hominy, 'where do you hail from?' 'I am afraid I am dull of comprehension,' answered Martin, 'being extremely tired; but, upon my word, I don't understand you.' Mrs Hominy shook her head with a melancholy smile that said, not inexpressively, 'They corrupt even the language in that old country!' and added then, as coming down a step or two to meet his low capacity, 'Where was you rose?' 'Oh!' said Martin, 'I was born in Kent.' (Dickens 353)

<sup>2</sup> Prefix added to present continuous tense or to a gerund form, for example, *a-thinkin'*

The American dialect is a descendant from the British one, but it seems to be corrupt from its mother dialect: British English. Martin does not understand the question *where do you hail from* because its grammatical structure and vocabulary are different from the standard use in Britain. In another example, Dickens shows the clash of cultures when American characters pretend to be culturally superior to the British ones. Martin Chuzzlewit makes fun of the American values celebrated by General Programs:

What an extraordinary people you are!' cried Martin. 'Are Mr Chollop and the class he represents, an Institution here? Are pistols with revolving barrels, sword-sticks, bowie knives, and such things, Institutions on which you pride yourselves? Are bloody duels, brutal combats, savage assaults, shootings down and stabbing in the streets, your Institutions! Why, I shall hear next, that Dishonor and Fraud are among the Institutions of the great republic! (Dickens 506)

### CULTURAL MANIFESTATIONS OF LANGUAGE

Dickens was social realists who dealt with social issues in a reliable language to show as much as cultural aspects of the everyday life. In particular, Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit* is considered a novel of manners because it draws the reader's attention the customs of speech towards different social classes. Politeness and impoliteness are, therefore, indicators for cultural discourse where the addresser sends his message in regard to the status of the addressee. Hartley claims that "Polite language is pleasant to the ear, and soothing to the heart, while rough words are just the reverse; and if not the product of ill temper, are very apt to produce it (144). Polite and impolite language use, thus, indicates the social status of the addresser, his temper, and his manner of speech.

Linguistic politeness can be considered as one of the distinct features of human language. It reveals the social side of language by taking into account the feelings of others or as a matter of showing respect in social interaction. The opposite act, however, is not necessarily impolite or rude. Jonathan Culpeper defines politeness as "an attitude consisting of particular positive evaluative beliefs about particular behaviors in particular social contexts" (qtd. in Mills 3). Thus, politeness are evaluated through the interactions of people in social context. However, this definition does not seem omit the ambiguity of the term. In this endeavor, Werkhofer explains politeness as "The power of a symbolic medium that, being used and shaped in acts of individual speakers, also represents social standards on how to behave or of what kind of conduct is considered 'just' and 'right'" (156). Perhaps this definition seems clear that it gives details about the medium (context), social standards (rules or traditions) of how to behave, and evaluation of the behavior as being just and right.

### CORPUS OF POLITE ACTIONS

The concordance for polite actions, reveals linguistic manifestations of culture in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. The novel is more representative of the genteel traditions, and good manners of the Victorian society, and expresses some cultural aspects when greeting or parting like, *hands shaking*, *raising hat*, and *bowing* for men and women, or *courtesying* for women. These actions aim to pay respect between the characters and, therefore, serve as a projection of everyday life's interactions. These actions are thought to be the fabric of everyday life.

**Table 2: Polite Action Clusters in *Martin Chuzzlewit***

Polite Action Clusters	Frequency
Raising hat	2
Bow*	24
Courtesy*	26
Shake hand*	17

The occurrences of polite actions reveal the social conduct, and the etiquettes of the Victorian society. Florence Hartley, wrote a guide for the lady to behave properly in the Victorian era. This guide suggests the appropriate manners and actions, that a lady should do to be socially accepted:

- If a gentleman, although a stranger, offers his hand to assist you in leaving a carriage, omnibus, or to aid you in crossing where it is wet or muddy, accept his civility, thank him, bow and pass on (114).
- Remember that the laws of politeness require the consideration of the feelings of others; the endeavor to make everyone feel at ease; and frank courtesy towards all. Never meet rudeness in others with rudeness upon your own part; even the most brutal and impolite will be more shamed by being met with courtesy and kindness, than by any attempt to annoy them by insolence on your part (5).
- It is very true, there are those whose position in society compels them to observe certain rules of etiquette which pass for politeness. They bow or courtesy with a decent grace; shake hands with the precise degree of vigor which the circumstances of the case require (147).

## CORPUS POLITE REQUESTS

The corpus, of polite requests shows to what extent the Dickens pays attention, to depict linguistic forms of address and requests, to portray the culture of the genteel tradition.

**Table 3: Polite Request Clusters in *Martin Chuzzlewit***

Polite Request Clusters	Frequency
<i>Can I</i>	8
<i>May I</i>	12
<i>May you</i>	4
<i>Would you</i>	25
<i>Will you</i>	73
<i>Could you</i>	12
<i>Be seated</i>	2
<i>Come in</i>	37
<i>Have the goodness</i>	17

The clusters, reveal a considerable number of polite requests in the novel, indicating that, middle class is the key focus of Dickens narrative. These clusters are impossible to come out in working class character's conversations because, they require a certain level of education.

## CORPUS OF POLITENESS MARKERS

Concordance of politeness markers, portrays the same cultural aspects and results discussed in, polite requests. The corpus proves that, middle characters show great respect to the addressee, and maintain the spirit of kindness in the course of conversations to the edge. Exaggerated expressions like, *thank you very much, so kind, very kind, I must beg your*

*pardon* are repeated over and over in Martin Chuzzlewit.

**Table 4: Politeness Markers in *Martin Chuzzlewit***

Politeness Markers	Frequency
<i>Sorry</i>	64
<i>Excuse me</i>	15
<i>Pardon me</i>	2
<i>I * beg *</i>	40
<i>Thank (s) / you</i>	135
<i>So kind</i>	5
<i>Very kind</i>	7
<i>Kind of you</i>	3

Watts suggests some interpretations of the use of politeness markers in a speech, or polite language as a whole: (a) “the language a person uses to avoid being too direct,” (b) “language which displays respect towards or consideration for others,” or (c) ‘language that displays certain ‘polite’ formulaic utterances like *please, thank you, excuse me or sorry*’” (qtd. in Vilkki 327). Whatever the interpretations are, some polite use of language can be interpreted as hypocritical like Dickens’s representation of Mr. Pecksniff Chuzzlewit’s speech:

It has been remarked that *Mr Pecksniff* was a *moral man*. *So he was*. Perhaps there *has never been a more moral man than Mr Pecksniff: especially in his conversation and correspondence*. In this particular *he was like the girl in the fairy tale*, except that if they were not *actual diamonds which fell from his lips, they were the very brightest paste*, and shone prodigiously. *He was a most exemplary man: fuller of virtuous precept than a copy-book*. (Dickens 23)

This representation of polite conduct and speech fades away at the end of the novel, and seems to be grounded on selfishness, hypocrisy, and self-interest, in the wealth of the old Martin Chuzzlewit. Dickens shows that, Mr. Pecksniff’s politeness is false and hypocritical. Other characters tend to be polite and show the British manners of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The following is a sample concordance for, *beg your pardon* cluster in the novel.

N	Concordance
1	at his empty finger-- 'Ah!' sighed Mr Tapley. 'Beg your pardon, sir.' '--We raised, in English
2	carry the feathers on his head! Come in, Tacker.' 'Beg your pardon, ma'am,' said Tacker, looking in
3	to me than any compliment I could have had. I-I-beg your pardon sir;' he was all in a tremble,
4	My good friend, that is not mine. Mr Pecksniff, I beg your pardon, but I think we have
5	I think your conduct scarcely decent, Mr Pinch.' 'I beg your pardon, sir,' replied Tom, 'for not
6	Bib,' said the gentleman himself TO himself. 'I beg your pardon, sir. Excuse me. Mr Julius
7	would not have bestowed upon them, if he could. 'I beg your pardon, sir,' said Mr Tapley, stepping
8	the period of your marriage unfortunately.' 'I beg your pardon, Mr Chuzzlewit,' retorted Cherry;
9	on,' said Martin. 'Why do you stop?' 'But it--well! I beg your pardon, but I think it may have been you
10	, as her brother, may be disposed to deny it--' 'I beg your pardon, sir,' said Tom. 'I am not at all
11	not the less amazed to see him at his elbow now. 'I beg your pardon, Mr Pinch,' he said in his ear. 'I
12	them suddenly, and looking towards the bed. 'I beg your pardon. I thought you spoke. Mrs Lupin,'
13	fellow! What do you mean by not disclosing?' 'I beg your pardon,' answered Tom. 'I thought you
14	,' said Mrs Lupin, curtsying and blushing; '--I beg your pardon, sir, but I have been so hurried
15	notice of him, he was fain to say, at last, 'Oh! I beg your pardon, Mr Pecksniff: I beg your pardon
16	, at last, 'Oh! I beg your pardon, Mr Pecksniff: I beg your pardon for intruding; but--' 'No intrusion,
17	some irritation, 'What a fellow you are, Pinch!' 'I beg your pardon,' said Tom, 'I thought you wanted
18	you would link yourself to, if you followed me.' 'I beg your pardon, sir,' said Mark; 'but afore you
19	of a roguish twinkle in his eye. 'To lecture, sir.' 'I beg your pardon. I forgot. You don't go to meeting
20	how the deuce we fell on this unlucky theme. I beg your pardon with all my heart.' 'You have a
21	'Yes; or Monday will do,' observed Tom. 'No, no, I beg your pardon. Monday will NOT do,' said Mr
22	off the grass, will you!' roared the gentleman. 'I beg your pardon, sir,' said Mr Pecksniff, doubtful

Figure 1: Sample Concordance for *Beg Your Pardon* Cluster in *Martin Chuzzlewit*

## CORPUS HONORIFICS

Throughout the novel, Dickens overuses honorifics as forms of address to indicate respect. They can be titled before a person's name like *Miss, Ms, Mr, Sir, Mrs, Dr, Lady*, or positions which are used as a form of address without the person's name, such as *General, Captain, Father, Doctor* or *Earl* (Def. 1). Honorifics or courtesy titles, also, indicate politeness in speech act. These are used to show respect between the parties involved in the conversation.

Table 5: Courtesy Titles and Honorifics in *Martin Chuzzlewit*

Honorifics	Frequency	Honorifics	Frequency
<i>Sir</i>	1042	<i>Gentleman</i>	533
<i>Mr</i>	2622	<i>Queen</i>	7
<i>Mrs</i>	954	<i>King</i>	19
<i>Miss</i>	335	<i>Baron</i>	3
<i>Mister</i>	4	<i>Judge</i>	32
<i>Madam</i>	9	<i>Duke</i>	7
<i>Ma'am</i>	45	<i>Duchess</i>	3
<i>Lady</i>	297	<i>Marquess</i>	4
<i>Doctor</i>	83	<i>Viscount</i>	5

## IMPOLITE MARKERS

Since politeness refers to, culture and social class, in English educated middle and upper class, impolite language does refer to, a specific social class and culture: the uneducated working class. Impoliteness, then, is linked to a social hierarchy and, the level of education an individual or a character has. Sara Mills, thinks that selectivity is a crucial element to classify individuals, when they speak, as being polite or impolite:

[i]ndividuals may indicate that they recognize their position within the hierarchy. Conversely, by choosing not to use phrases associated with politeness and instead using swear words and direct insults, interacts may simultaneously express their anger within a particular context, but may also be seen to be challenging the status quo and indicating their contempt for the community of practice or social system as a whole. (24)

Beside the social status and the level of education, Mills adds another dimension to impoliteness: psychology. She attributes impoliteness to *anger* and *contempt* of individuals for their community, or the whole social system. Linguistic impoliteness may include *bad language*, *rudeness*, *swear words*, *taboos* and *insults*; but it is difficult to deal with bad language or swear words in public. However, since the corpus contains some instances of this kind of language, and for the sake of objectivity, it is also important to shed light on the phenomenon in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. A list of impolite words is uploaded to Concord, to look for their frequencies.

**Table 6: Impoliteness Clusters in *Martin Chuzzlewit***

Impolite Clusters	Frequency
<i>What /where the *</i>	12
<i>Darn</i>	4
<i>Fool</i>	24
<i>Stupid</i>	4
<i>Damn / dam/ dam</i>	3
<i>Curse*</i>	20
<i>Shut * up</i>	4

As shown in table 6, clusters of impolite language indicate recognition of the addressee as, socially inferior to the addresser; they also indicate tempering of the addresser at a moment of anger. Though rude, abrupt, offensive, and impolite behaviors are negatively received, impoliteness, for Watts, is a “salient form of social behavior in the sense that it appears to go against the canons of acceptable, appropriate behavior operative for the ongoing social interaction” (18).

## CONCLUSIONS

Language and culture are both integral parts of human life, and the relationship between them is indispensable. Language is a principal vehicle of culture by which customs, habits, manners, values and identity appear in its fabric. Also, cultural background affects the way language is used between the addressee and the addresser in respect to social status and psychological states. In *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Dickens uses literary dialect and linguistic politeness to express the Victorian culture linguistically. By dialect use, the historical account for manners of speech, linguistic deviations, and regional varieties are expressed and recorded faithfully. Linguistic politeness, also, shows to what extent the Victorians paid attention to language use and polite forms of address in their social interactions. The linguistic manifestations of the Victorian culture, including manners, etiquettes, behaviors, social classes, and lifestyle as a whole can be found in Dickens’ *Martin Chuzzlewit* as an evidence of, the inevitable interrelationship between language and culture.



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