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A corpus stylistic study of the TV series script desperate housewives

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A Corpus Stylistic Study of the TV Series Script
Desperate Housewives

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จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

An Independent Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements
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วัจนลีลาศาสตร์คลังข้อมูลในบทละครซีรีย์ *Desperate Housewives*

น.ส.อัญจิตา ศิริปะชะนะ

สารนิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาอักษรศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต
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Independent Study Title	A Corpus Stylistic Study of the TV Series Script *Desperate Housewives*
By	Miss Unjita Siripachanah
Field of Study	Foreign Languages
Thesis Advisor	Associate Professor RAKSANGOB WIJITSOPON, Ph.D.

Accepted by the FACULTY OF ARTS, Chulalongkorn University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Master of Arts

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อัญจิตา ศิริปะชะนะ : วัจนลีลาศาสตร์คลังข้อมูลในบทละครซีรีย์ *Desperate Housewives*. (A Corpus Stylistic Study of the TV Series Script *Desperate Housewives*) อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก : รศ. ดร.รักสงบ วิจิตรโสภณ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาวัจนลีลาของบทละครซีรีส์อเมริกันชื่อดังเรื่อง *Desperate Housewives* ผ่านการวิเคราะห์คำสำคัญในตัวบทละคร ที่พบจากการเปรียบเทียบกับคลังข้อมูลภาษาของซีรีส์อเมริกันเรื่องอื่นๆ ที่ออกอากาศในช่วงเวลาใกล้เคียงกัน จากการใช้วิธีวิจัยเชิงปริมาณในการสกัดคำสำคัญ ผู้วิจัยพบคำสำคัญหลากหลายคำและได้จัดกลุ่มคำเหล่านั้นตามความหมาย ในงานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ ผู้วิจัยได้เลือกศึกษาคำสำคัญ 3 กลุ่ม ได้แก่ กลุ่มคำสำคัญที่เกี่ยวกับครอบครัว กลุ่มคำสำคัญที่เกี่ยวกับอาชญากรรม และ กลุ่มคำสำคัญที่เกี่ยวกับอาหารและเครื่องดื่ม คำสำคัญทั้ง 3 กลุ่มนี้มีบทบาทสำคัญในการสร้างตัวละคร นำเสนอแก่นเรื่อง และความเป็นหัสนาฏกรรม ซึ่งเป็นองค์ประกอบสำคัญที่ทำให้ซีรีส์เรื่องประสบความสำเร็จอย่างยาวนาน

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Unjita Siripachanah : A Corpus Stylistic Study of the TV Series Script *Desperate Housewives*. Advisor: Assoc. Prof. RAKSANGOB WIJITSOPON, Ph.D.

The present study aims to investigate the style of a famous American television series of all- time *Desperate Housewives* through analysis of keywords found in its scripts via a comparison with a corpus of American television series broadcast during the time period similar to the target corpus. Based on the quantitative methods adopted for keyword extraction, a number of keywords were identified and later categorized into semantic groups. In this study, three major groups of keywords were examined qualitatively, namely the *family and relationship* group, the *crime and mystery*, group and the *food and beverages* group. These groups of keywords were argued to contribute to characterization of the four housewife protagonists, creation of several themes of the series and that of the comedy-drama genre, all of which account for the success and popularity of the series over decades.

Field of Study:	Foreign Languages	Student's Signature ....
Academic Year:	2022	Advisor's Signature ....

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1. Introduction

In this section, I provide background information about the present study, including its rationales, research questions and research objectives.

1.1 Background of the Study

Corpus linguistics has now become a major approach in linguistic research. According to Kennedy (2018), it is clear that the ability to use computers to find, sort, analyze and quantify linguistic features and process a large number of texts with great speed has already had an impact in several sub-disciplines in linguistics. One of those sub-disciplines is stylistics, a study of the relationship between language and meanings in and/or effects of texts. As McIntyre and Walker (2019:1) indicate, corpus stylistics is "on the rise", becoming "a recognisable field within stylistics generally". Corpus stylistics makes use of computer-driven searches of text corpora to help identify stylistic features (Carter, 2010) and incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methods in stylistic analysis. The corpus-driven method can draw the researcher's attention to quantitatively significant linguistic features, which in turn demand qualitative explanations of their functions in a corpus or text under study.

Over the past few years, a growing number of corpus stylistics research has been conducted on stylistic features in television series. This is because, from a stylistic perspective, language in TV series has distinctive features. On the one hand, it is very close to real spoken language, as it is a great source of 'real-life' English language. On

the other hand, it is different from naturally-occurring spoken language because language of TV series is scripted on purpose by scriptwriters. It is used for advancing the plot, characterization and engaging with viewers, for example, by providing clues for audiences to interpret characters in the series (Bednarek, 2015). Linguistic profile in each TV series is therefore differently characterized by its setting, characters, their relationships, actions, events, etc. Moreiver, a growing interest in telecinematic discourse is also attributed to the fact that TV series are a modern-day popular cultural form and language use in TV series is an important communication tool that helps connect people from different places, cultures, perspectives, and experiences.

One of the noted TV series is *Desperate Housewives*. The series gained highly positive reputation and ratings. With its first episode launched in the US in 2004, the whole series drew in large audiences (Kenny, 2022) and quickly became one of the biggest shows on television, containing the longest running hour-long scripted series with all-female leads (Eames, 2016). While other primetime soaps take on the "happily ever after" theme, *Desperate Housewives* takes a darkly comedic look at main characters and gradually makes changes through real world scenarios. Importantly, its scripts are seen as different from other American soap operas and make the show different from other shows in its heyday. Dial (2007), an international professional speaker, author & consultant on Leadership, Branding and Digital Strategy, indicated that the series' scripts are sophisticated, able to drive audiences to want to keep watching it. Tom (2012), an American film scholar and critic, stated that thanks to the series' crew of writers, the

series can keep its audiences guessing not only in terms of plot but in terms of tone. Teri

Hatcher (2022), an actress who plays one of the female leads, stated how well-written

and flawless the script was and this was a reason for her to decide to accept the role.

Owing to such ultimate accolades, the present study seeks to explore stylistic features

in the American TV series script of all the eight seasons of *Desperate Housewives* and

examine their relationship with interpretations as well as evaluations of the series. This

will be conducted through a corpus-based approach, looking at language use in the

scripts of the series, with 180 episodes. Specifically, the present study will approach the

style of the series' scripts through the concept of keywords, statistically significant

words in a corpus of texts as a result of comparison with a relevant reference corpus.

Because existing corpus linguistic studies of television series language tend to

focus on a single season of an individual series and because there have not been any

studies that apply corpus linguistic methods to *Desperate Housewives*, this study can

fill gap in the literature of both telecinematic stylistics and literary criticism of the series.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What are keywords of the American TV series *Desperate Housewives'*

   script?

2. What are functional contributions of the keywords to the American TV

   series *Desperate Housewives*?

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To identify major stylistic features, through keyword analysis, in the script of the American TV Series *Desperate Housewives*.

2. To describe relationship between keywords in *Desperate Housewives* scripts and meanings in the series.

To this end, I give a literature review of the style and language of television series, background information about the series *Desperate Housewives*, and an explanation of corpus stylistics. It is then followed by a methodological section describing compilation of used in the present study, before explaining the concept of keyword, the major descriptive tool employed to extract stylistic features of DH scripts. It is then followed by reports and discussion of keywords in relation to their functional contributions in the series. Finally, a summary of results is given together with recommendations for future studies.

2. Literature Review

In this section, I provide explanations and definitions of relevant terms and keywords under the study. They are concepts about the style and language of television series, background information about the American TV series under study *Desperate Housewives*, and corpus stylistics.

2.1 Style and Language of Television Series

According to Biber and Conrad (2009), style has been used and investigated in a variety of concepts. In the Labovian tradition, style refers to the language used for different purposes during a sociolinguistic interview. In addition, the term *style* is generally treated as a characteristic way of using language which has been applied to literary language focusing on characteristics of particular genres, authors, texts, etc. In a diachronic way, stylisticians use linguistic choices to describe the situation, portray characters, and study conversational interactions in order to look at plot and/or character development (Mahlberg & McIntyre, 2011). In the modern day, the term *style* is a deliberate choice of authors to convey a text for their audiences covering characteristics of the imaginary world and choices of style in literary texts written for artistic or aesthetic purposes such as novels, short stories, poetry, and television series (telecinematic discourse).

Television series (or TV series), as well as films, are cultural products with massive viewers. They are scripted, fictional narratives, with characters and plot

strands, and are intended to run over several seasons (Bednarek, 2015; 2018). TV series is also viewed as multimodal discourse, which contains both verbal and visual narratives. Language use in TV series is an aspect of television discourse that has more and more gained extensive attention in linguistics. An important linguistic insight into the language TV series is that linguistic profile of a TV series depends on the series' narrative elements, such as characters and setting, and genres. Bednarek (2012), for example, has found that dialogues taken from seven different genres of TV series demonstrate different degrees of formality, varying according to the genre.

Within the TV series script, there are voice-overs by a narrator and characters as well as a dyadic or multiparty interaction. The language use in the scripted dialogue and the television narratives work together in creating connections between TV characters and audiences. American TV series are of particular importance because it transmits English to viewers across the world. It has also become a great and convenient tool in which EFL/ESL learners encounter English conversation as it satisfies English-speaking skills more than the traditional education mode that mainly focuses on grammar and vocabulary (Bednarek, 2014).

Therefore, the stylistic analysis focuses on the style of the overall text by comparing the language use in a text, such as the language use in TV series, with different texts in order to identify aesthetic values created and hidden through dialogues of characters and narrators by authors within the text as well as leading to its themes and/or ideas according to Jaafar (2017).

2.2 The American TV series *Desperate Housewives*

Desperate Housewives (henceforth DH) is an American comedy-drama and mystery series created by Marc Cherry. The story follows a storyline with twists and turns in the lives of four female protagonists: Susan Mayer, Lynette Scavo, Bree Van de Kamp and Gabrielle Solison. The story centers on Wisteria Lane, a street in the fictional town. It was aired on ABC from 2004 until 2012 and broadcast in several countries worldwide. The series ran for eight seasons with 180 episodes and received generally favorable reviews from critics. It was nominated and won numerous awards, including seven Primetime Emmy Awards, two People's Choice, three Golden Globe, four Screen Actors Guild, and many other awards ("List of Awards and Nominations Received by *Desperate Housewives*," n.d.). According to Kenny (2022), *Desperate Housewives* drew audiences to it as a teenager and made it so enduringly fun. Even though it came out in 2004, it is still an enjoyable watch.

With its positive feedback from audiences and the fact that the series was set but full of everyday-like and natural conversation portrayed by five female protagonists and others, DH has gained scholarly attention (Deng and Zhou, 2013). For example, in Prawalpatamakul and Keowkanya's (2017) study, the four leading protagonists of DH were analyzed in terms of women's roles from a feminist perspective in order to explore the depiction of issues women face in modern days. The result shows that this series

displayed women's roles through the characterization of the four female protagonists in all aspects.

The series has been approached from a linguistic perspective as well, mostly from pragmatics. For instance, in Xiaowei and Xiaolan's (2018) study, English euphemisms in DH was the topic of the study. The selected scripts emphasize how pragmatic functions of euphemisms make language appropriate and effective as they can save the faces of speakers and hearers and make unpleasant things sound more acceptable. The overall findings suggest that euphemisms in DH serve four functions of euphemism from a pragmatic point of view, including taboo, politeness, tactical, and humor functions. Leech's Politeness Principle was also taken to the study of dialogues in the first season of DH by Deng and Zhou (2013), with the help of the corpus study method. The study found that uses of each maxim in daily life in modern American culture were different and that the Tact Maxim was found to be the most useful maxim in the corpus of the TV series *Desperate Housewives*.

Apart from politeness strategies, DH was also studied in terms of hedges. Jia (2010) studies hedging devices in terms of their forms and functions in the private spoken language in all-female contexts of lead female characters in DH. The hedges were used in analyzing the conversational style and exploring possible factors affecting the conversational style of the female protagonists in some episodes of the series' first season. The study found *just* and *well* as the most frequent hedges used in the words spoken by the female characters. According to the study's results, some hedges are used

more as a habitual way of speaking. However, based on the study, the multifunctional

hedge, *well,* one of the most frequent hedges, was used only for response.

A different linguistic focus can be found in Zhong (2008), which undertook a

stylistic analysis of a dubbed Chinese edition of DH, aired by China Central Television

(CCTV). The result indicated that the role of dubbed Chinese of DH and the American

context of the series were too distant and unfamiliar to the Chinese audiences.

Furthermore, the researcher stated that the stylistic analysis from the series generated

how translation strategies could facilitate or hinder the transfer of information to the

success or failure of a foreign TV program.

It can be seen that previous studies on DH tend to focus on gender, feminism

and pragmatic features in the series. To the best of my knowledge, there have not been

any studies that examine overall stylistic features of DH. Moreover, none of the studies

look at all the 180 episodes of the series in all eight seasons. The present study will fill

in these gaps by using a corpus stylistic approach.

2.3 Corpus Stylistics

According to Biber (2011), corpus linguistics is a research approach that

facilitates empirical descriptions of language use. It is a methodology that involves

computer-based empirical analyses, both quantitative and qualitative, of language use

found in a corpus (plural: corpora) (Dinger, n.d.). According to Kennedy (2018), a corpus

is a body of written or transcribed spoken texts that can serve as a basis for linguistic

analysis and description. It is a computerized database that has led to corpus linguistics:
a quantitative analysis of corpus-based studies can contribute to linguistic description
and how languages work in all their variety. Through its highlight on authentic language
data in linguistic description, corpus linguistic approaches permeate various sub-
disciplines in (applied) linguistics, including stylistics.

Stylistics is a sub-discipline in linguistics that investigates characteristics of texts
and their relationship with textual meanings and/or effects. It pays particular attention
to linguistic deviations from a norm, which can arguably lead to textual effects upon
readers. Using corpus methodology, stylisticians would search the whole text to find
salient textual patterns across the whole text or corpus before qualitative analysis is
conducted on the identified features to explain the form-meaning/function relationship.
Even though corpus stylistics was developed in the late 1960s (Jaafar, 2017), research
on corpus stylistics is considered to be a recent innovation due to its extension of earlier
linguistic corpus-based studies that focus on lexical and grammatical variations to texts
and discourse, which are linguistic units longer than sentences (Biber, 2011). This view
corresponds to McIntyre's (2015) description of corpus stylistics as "similar to corpus
linguistics", except that it focuses on a different object of study, i.e. texts, rather language
in general. Corpus stylistics is a research approach that not only employs
computational/quantitative analyses of words in a corpus of texts but also uses
qualitative tools and techniques of stylistics to explain linguistic phenomena in
computerized data.

While principles and methods in corpus stylistics are often used to examine linguistic patterns in texts, often literary ones, they have recently been adopted to studies in telecinematic discourse. With regards to language use in TV series, one of the sample works on this area is Zyl and Botha's (2016), which look at the dialogue of *The Big Bang Theory*. Keywords and lexical bundles of the series' five main characters in the first seven seasons were identified in order to compare and explain how a main character, Sheldon Cooper, differs from the other main characters. The analysis of the character's keywords shows that the character is linguistically distinguishable from the other characters. Sheldon Cooper's speech has much in common with academic or expository discourse and does not display as many of the typical features of conversation compared to the speech of the other four main characters. This is related to the characterization of Cooper as a different kind of nerd compared to other nerds in the show. It also emphasizes how linguistic style is employed as a characterization tool to maintain uniqueness and distinct from other main characters throughout the language use in their dialogues.

While corpus stylistic studies of telecinematic discourse tend to focus on differentiation of characters through examination of each character's speech, the present study takes a different approach to the style of DH. That is, it highlights distinctive lexical patterns that occur across different episodes and protagonists. This is in order to find out what lexical items and their patterns account for the distinctive style of the whole series.

3. Methodology

In this section, I describe compilation of corpora and software used in this study before explaining the concept of keyword, which is the major descriptive tool employed to extract stylistic features of DH scripts.

3.1 Data

3.1.1 *Desperate Housewives* Corpus

To build a *Desperate Housewives* Corpus (henceforth DHC), the researcher collected the series scripts of all episodes throughout the eight seasons of *Desperate Housewives*, from different online platforms such as websites and blogs (Transcripts.Foreverdreaming, Sublikescript, and Cnentv). After getting hold of the scripts of all the episodes, the researcher manually converted the scripted data of 180 episodes to text format (.txt), each of the scripts saved as a separate file. Each text file was renamed and kept in different folders depending on its season and episode, for example DH01_01, meaning *Desperate Housewives* season 1 episode 1. DHC contains

1,087,611 word tokens and 20,345 word types from a total of eight seasons, as shown in Figure 1.
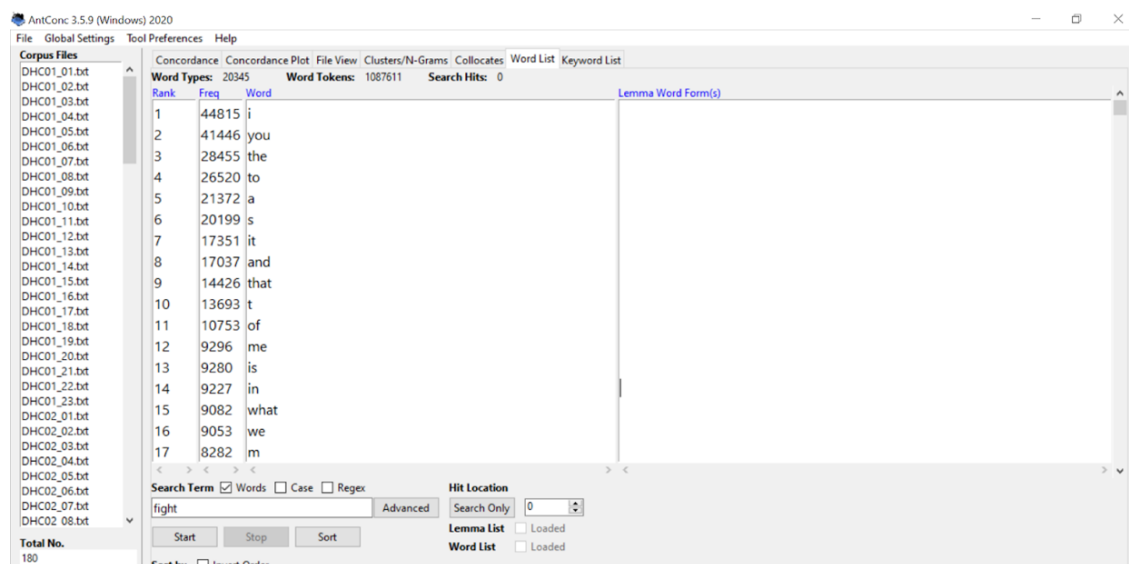
Figure 1: The interface showing word count of the *Desperate Housewives* corpus

3.1.2 American Television Series Corpus

To build a corpus of American television series scripts (henceforth ASC), the researcher downloaded scripts of American popular TV series, which had at least four seasons and were broadcast between 2001-2012, similar to the target corpus. These scripts were taken from the following series: *Gilmore Girls, Gossip Girl, Nip/Tuck, One Tree Hil, Six Feet Under*, and *the O.C*, downloaded from blogs and websites, i.e. Transcripts.Foreverdreaming, Sublikescript, and Cnentv. The researcher converted the scripted data of 715 episodes to the text format (.txt), renamed, and keep them by names in the same folder of a reference corpus, or ASC, for example GG_S1_01 referring to *Gossip Girl* season 1episode 1. In total, ASC contains 5,098,001 word tokens.

3.2 Software

The above two corpora were processed through AntConc, a freeware for corpus analysis developed by Laurence Anthony. The freeware provides comprehensive tools to examine corpus data, e.g. frequency, keyness, n-grams, concordance and collocation extraction.

3.3 Keyword Analysis

Keywords analysis, according to Pojanapunya and Lieungnapar (2017), is a corpus-based technique that highlights words that are found more frequently in a text within a target corpus than a reference corpus. It is related and significant to stylistic analysis (Mahlberg & McIntyre, 2011) as it shows what lexical items occur so often in a particular text that their frequencies deviate from a contextually related norm. In order to identify and explain keywords of a text, both quantitative and qualitative analyses are needed.

The quantitative aspect of keywords involves a statistical measure of differences in frequencies of words in the target and reference corpora. Certain criteria have to be set up for extraction of keywords, including minimal frequency of words in either corpus, a cut-off point of statistical significance. When a keyword list is derived, it is important to explain why those statistically significant words are 'key', or important to the text or corpus under study. This step features a qualitative approach to the keywords and their context of occurrence. Mahlberg and McIntyre (2011) suggest that keywords

need to be categorized into two broad semantic domains, *Fictional World Signals* and *Thematic Signals*, and their sub-categories (see Table 1). However, keywords in the former domain contain more concrete than the latter. They are parts of the story and keep the story continue going. In opposition to *Fictional World Signals*, identifying keywords in *Thematic Signals* needs researchers' interpretation, experiences, and schemata in order to examine concordance data and occurrences. This means the *Thematic Signals* group contains metaphorical meanings instead of concrete meanings, such as objects and places found in the text. To identify the styles of each text (e.g. characteristics of characters, plots and themes of the text, intentions of text writers, etc.), qualitative analysis of keywords and their concordances in each sub-category of the text is crucial.

3.3.1 Quantitative Analysis

After having both the target and the reference corpus, the researcher compared the two corpora in order to find keywords, or words that occur with unusual frequency in a given text or collection of texts when compared with a reference corpus (Bednarek, 2011). If the frequency as a percentage of the total number of running words was approximately the same in both lists, the word got filtered out no matter how frequent it is (Scott and Tribble, 2006). The researcher employed Log-Likelihood (4-term) to measure the degree of keyness , 'p < 0.0001 (15.13)' for Keyword Statistic Threshold, and 'Gabrielatos and Marchias % DIFF' for measuring Keyword Effect Size. All lexical

items that pass the threshold are considered keywords of DHC, totalling 1,022 word forms.

After keywords of DHC were extracted, all of them were manually categorized into four major groups (see Table 1), two based on Mahlberg and McIntyre's (2011) categories, i.e. *fictional world signals* and *thematic signals,* and the other two additional categories, i.e. s*poken language*, and *others*, added by the researcher because of their semantic properties. These four main categories were further classified into 22 subgroups (see Appendix 2), e.g. Characters' Name and Family and Relationship, which contains about 3 – 296 keyword types each.

3.3.2 Qualitative Analysis

To indicate and explain the importance of keywords in DHC, the researcher focused on their semantic properties and relationship found in collocations, or the certain lexical items that co-occurred frequently (Krishnamurthy, 2006) in a text for some reasons. However, due to time and word limits, the researcher selected only three semantic groups for detailed discussion, namely 'Food and Beverages' subgroup, found in a *Thematic Signal* group, 'Crime and Mystery' and *Family and Relationship*' subgroups found in both *Fictional World Signal and Thematic Signal* groups. In each group, the researcher paid particular attention to keywords that were found in high frequency as a main priority for the qualitative analysis.

4. Findings and Discussion

Findings of the present study are presented in two main parts according to the two types of analysis used in the study: quantitative and qualitative. The first part presents keywords of DH derived from a comparison of DHC with ASC, and categorization of them. The second part presents a qualitative analysis of some groups of the keywords to explain their functions in DH.

4.1 Keywords in DHC and Their Categories

Based on the criteria for keyword extraction spelled out in Section 5, AntConc showed a total of 1,022 keywords found in DHC (see Appendix 1), including proper nouns pointing to names of major characters and places that top the list.

Based on examination of their meanings and concordance lines, all the keywords were classified into four main groups, i.e., *fictional world signals, thematic signals, spoken language*, and *others.* The first two groups are set up based on Mahlberg and McIntyre's (2011) categories of keywords, as explained in Section 5. The other two groups of keywords i.e., *spoken language* and *others,* were added up by the researcher. The 'spoken language' group consists of words that are characteristic of spoken language, e.g., interjections and swear words. This does not seem very surprising given that the genre of DHC is the script of TV series (although its reference corpus is also TV series scripts). The group of "others" contains words that are not related to the aboutness of the text at all. They are words that come from websites I downloaded the

scripts of the American TV series *Desperate Housewives* from and are used to indicate components of the scripts, such as action lines, dialogues, and transitions.

The keywords in each of the four major groups were then further classified into specific subgroups as shown with some examples in Table 1. This is in order to shed more specific light on relationship between the quantitative significance of the words and their qualitative contributions to DH in terms of meaning and style. For instance, the thematic-signal group of keywords consists of those related to food and beverages, family and relationship and mystery, which in turn points to the importance of these conceptual domains in DH. In the present study, these three subgroups were selected for further qualitative analysis in the next section. This does not mean that other main categories and subgroups, e.g. body parts, and spoken language, are not important but, due to limitation on length of the dissertation, not all categories of keywords can be investigated qualitatively and those selected ones are considered to be insightful both of meanings and style of DH. The groups of 'Family and Relationship' and 'Crime and Mystery' are central to the aboutness of DH; the series is about the lives of four housewives, their marriage and family, while crime and mysterious incidents advance the story and contribute to the noted quality of the series as a black comedy (Lennon, 2019). Moreover, they were categorized into both fictional world and thematic signals. Additionally, 'Crime and Mystery' keywords are found the most excluding the 'Characters' Name' subgroup. On the other hand, the keywords related to food and beverages seem marginal to the aboutness of DH, i.e. the series is not about food and

drinks, but the fact that a number of them turn up as keywords prompts us to explore in what ways their statistical significance is meaningful to the series.

Table 1: Categories and subgroups of keywords

Category	Example of Keywords[1]

Fictional World Signal,

Characters:

Characters' Name	*Susan, Lynette, Bree, Grabriel, Calos*
Jobs, Occupations, and Status	police, *woman, nurse, lawyer, dr*
Family and Relationship*	*mrs, husband, neighbor, neighbors, kids*
Body Parts	*kidney, boobs, spleen, mind, boob*
Religion	*God, reverend, Jerome, chaplain, nun*
Action Words	*begins, began, care, keep, found*
Wh-Words	*why, when, what, xffwhat**, xffhow*
Characteristics	*young, xffjust, just, xfflike, lovely*
Ownership	*our, my, xffmy, her, xffyour*

Settings and Props:

Places	*Wisteria, Fairview, house, neighborhood, street*

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[1] The subgroups of 'family and relationship' and 'Crime and Mystery' are presented in two categories: Fictional World Signal and Thematic Signal.

* The words preceded with x and xff in the list of keywords are left in the current spelling according to their origin of the texts and source (e.g. xFFand meaning and in its context "He's got a good job and a wife who loves him xFFand a baby on the way.")

Crime and Mystery*	*killed, kill, gun, detective, shot*
Natural Disaster	*tornado, storms*
Animals	*chipmunk, chipmunks, giraffes, leopards, sharks*
Things and Objects	*hisel, jewelry, promotion, cable, art*
Day and Time	*nightime, xffbefore, months, years, later*
Function Words	*and, but, I, that, to*
Number and Quantity	*xffevery, xffone, xffsome*
Medical Terms	*mri, dental, dementia, arthritis*
Thematic Signal	
Food and Beverages	*honey, wine, cookbook, recipe, cake*
*Family and Relationship**	*mrs*, husband, neighbor, neighbors, kids
Crime and Mystery*	*killed, kill, gun, detective, shot*
Spoken Language	
Contractions and Interjection	oh, ahh, no, ow, dear
Swear Words and Taboo Words	*sakes, hell, damn, crap, sake*
Others	
N/A	*xca, narrator, voiceover, xadtch, download*

4.2 Qualitative Analysis of Keywords

In this section, analysis of keywords in the subgroups of 'family and relationship', 'crime and mystery' and 'food and beverages' is presented respectively. A

qualitative analysis of these keywords involves an examination of their occurrences in context and concordance lines, focusing on their patterns of uses and co-occurrences in DHC.

4.2.1 Family and Relationship Keywords

The theme about being a wife and mother obviously underpins the series, as suggested by its title itself. We have exemplars of women who try to perform their roles as wives and mothers.

One of the major characters that illustrate this theme is Lynette Scavo, who was once a successful career woman, turns herself off from the job she loves to become a full-time mother of four children. The traits of being bossy and competitive she had when she was a businesswoman influenced her new role. She is a character that succeeds in changing the mindset of being a mother in a male-dominated society. She is, somehow, perceived as the pants in the family instead of her husband, Tom Scavo. She is good at raising her child and operating a family business, a pizza parlor (in season 3). Even though the traits, once sufficient in her business world, do not seem to work smoothly and easily in her family household, she tries her best to make sure that her family, especially her children's feelings, is fine and that she meets her children's needs. This can be explained through some excerpts below.

In the example below, Lynette tries to explain how living things can reproduce to her son, Parker, in a living room, at home, after she finds out from her son's teacher

that he gives a piece of cookie to a girl at school in order to see her private part, where women deliver a baby.

4.2.1.1 Roles of Wife and Mother

The theme about being a wife and mother obviously underpins the series, as suggested by its title itself. We have exemplars of women who try to perform their roles as wives and mothers.

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In the example below, Lynette tries to explain to her son, Parker, how living things can reproduce. After she finds out from her son's teacher that he gives a cookie to a girl at school in order to see her private part, where women deliver a baby.

(1)   *Lynette:*   [2]*"Sweetie. Um, could you put the crayons down for*

second? We need to talk. So I spoke to your teacher

today and she told me about the cookie deal you made

with Cindy Lou."

Parker: *"Oh. Are you mad?"*

Lynette: *"No, no exactly. I'm just trying to understand why you*

did that."

Parker: *"Tommy Keenan told me babies come from down there.*

It doesn't sound right to me."

Lynette: *"Well, actually he's kinda right. He's got the concept*

down."

Parker: *"That's weird. How's a baby get in there?"*

Lynette: *"Daddy will be home from his business trip in a few*

days. Why don't you wait for him?"

Parker: *"Okay."*

Lynette: *"Okay."*

Parker: *"Or I can ask Tommy's brother. He's fourteen. He knows*

everything."

---

[2] Words, phrases, and sentences in italic enclosed by quotation marks indicate transcribe speech to text.

> Lynette: *"And then the **mommy and daddy**, because they love*
>
> *each other so much, they hug real tight and a seed is*
>
> *magically planted. And nine months later, a baby is*
>
> *born."*
>
> Parker: *"What kind of seed?"*
>
> Lynette: *"Oh, that's not important."*
>
> Parker: *"I don't believe you."*
>
> Lynette: *"Parker, I'm your mother. Mothers don't lie to their*
>
> *sons."*

(Season 2, Episode 19)

The word *mommy and daddy* which is shown in excerpt (1) shows how Lynette tries not to set up a male-dominant mindset in her family. She wants her son to see her role as a father and mother in one person and makes sure that he is not ashamed to ask and discuss what he is curious about with her, as well as his father, Tom. Rather than using the first-person pronoun, *I*, during the discussion, the use of *mommy and daddy* emphasizes how she wants to keep both her role and her husband's in the family equally. Also, soon after her son mentions that he is going to ask another guy about this, she realizes she cannot let her son wait for the answer from his father in order to maintain the role of the family. That is why she explains it to him herself, using *mommy and daddy* as a pronoun.

In another example, the situation below occurs when Tom and one of the twins have a great time buying ice cream on the street before Lynette shows up and accompanies them.

(2)

[3](*Tom buys one of the twins an ice cream from the ice cream truck. Lynette walks over to them and takes away the ice cream*).

> *Twin:* "*Mom!*"
>
> *Lynette:* "*Dinner is in an hour. You know the rules.*" *(to Tom)* "*And so do you.*"
>
> *Tom:* "*I know, I know, but he gave me the face.*"
>
> *Lynette:* "*You fell for the face. What are you, a rookie?*"
>
> *Tom:* "*Okay, you're right. Sorry, **buddy**. **Mom**'s the boss.*"

(Season 3, Episode 14)

Generally, in a male-dominated society, men hold power and dominate roles in many aspects. They feel superior, have power and influence over women. In contrast, the word *buddy* said by Lynette's husband to his twin son, as shown in excerpt (2), as well as the utterance *Mom's the boss* illustrates the powerful status of Lynette as a mother or being the boss of the family. Also, it emphasizes the characteristics of

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[3] Messages enclosed by parentheses describe the narratives of either situations or scenes of the series.

Lynette's trait as a controlling leader of the family rather than Tom. It makes Lynette becomes one of the most outstanding and different among the rest of the main housewives in DH.

Another character who is outstanding in her role as a wife and mother is Bree van de Kamp. She was born and raised in a wealthy conservative family. She grows up being obsessive with appearing perfect and presents herself as a perfectionist among others. Now that Bree is the mother of two, Andrew and Danielle, her attempt to maintain a perfect life and family totally affects the way she strictly raises her children and causes them to become rebellious. The way she raises and treats her husband and kids are represented in the dialogues with other characters in the excerpt below, which takes place in front of her neighbor's house, Mary Alice Young, on her first day of moving to Wisteria Lane, a fictional street in DH. It is a situation where she forces her young son, Andrew, to make a flawless statement to apologize to her neighbor after he steals a frog statue from her garden.

(3)   Bree: "Please don't make excuses for him. That is exactly what **_his father_** does. Rex!" This is my husband, Rex."

        Rex: "Hi. We're not weird. We just seem like we are."

        Bree: "And this is **_my son, the criminal_**. Go on."

Young Andrew: "I'm sorry I stole from you. Just so you know, my mom did teach me right from wrong, so my actions should in no way influence your opinion of her as a parent."

(Season 2, Episode 19)

The excerpt above portrays how Bree the perfectionist treats her husband and son in front of her new neighbor. Obviously, the way she describes her son (the criminal) and husband (that he spoils their son by always making an excuse for him when he does something wrong) reflects her concerns of always being right and moral, which in turn causes her to push her own people aside. This is reflected by her son's statements in the last turn that comments her role as a mother and parent. Her trait of wanting to be a perfectionist without caring for her family's member's faces as seen in the excerpt above becomes one of the reasons why she thinks she has an imperfect life and causes her to struggle throughout the series.

Apart from conversations with keywords related to family and relationship, it is also found that patterns of the keyword *wife* can point to pressures the female protagonist have in their role as wives. First, according to Concordance 1 below, occurrences of the word *wife* are found to repeatedly appear with a coordinating conjunction, *and*, following with words related to family, such as *kids*, *mom*, *mother*, and the name of family members. The data found in concordance lines help illustrate the point that being a wife is associated with another role in the family, especially kids and a mother.
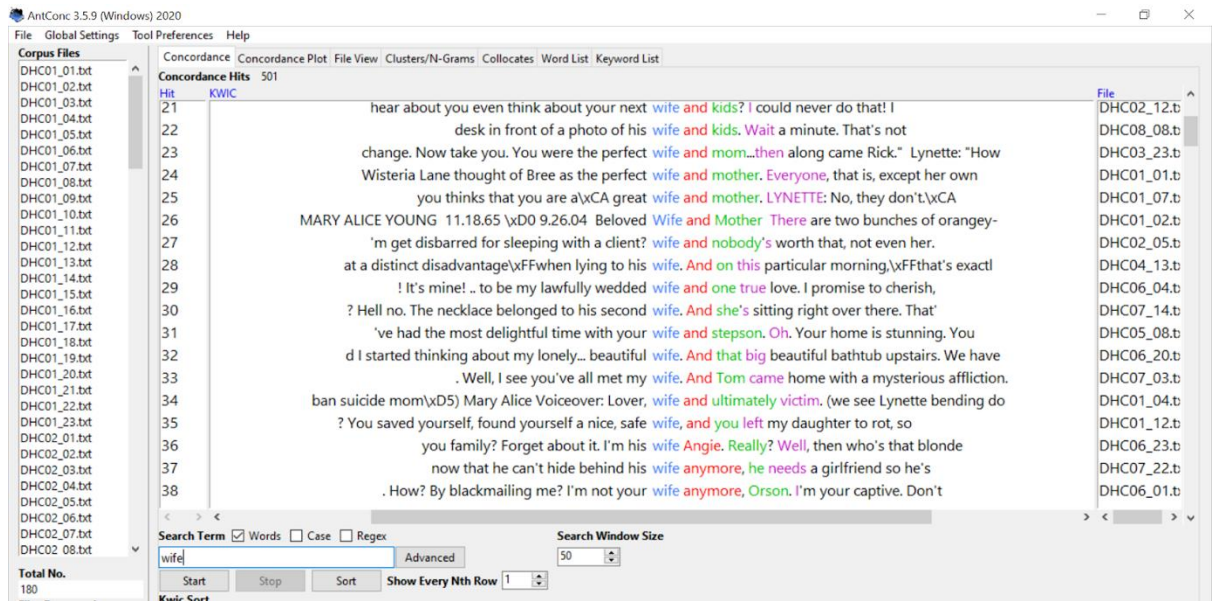
Concordance 1. Occurrences of *wife* with a coordinating conjunction, and with positive adjectives

Moreover, the word *wife* often collocates with positive adjectives, such as *perfect*, *beautifu*l, and *loving*. These suggest idealistic values that accompany the word *wife*, and hence expectations about their roles as a wife. Given that the series title is *Desperate Housewives*, which contains a highly negative adjective, the fact that positive words tend to be used to describe *wife* in the series creates a sharp contrast with the title and, perhaps, suggests an ironic interpretation of these positive evaluations of the lives of the four housewives. This can be illustrated in the excerpt below, in which three of the lead housewives desperately sit and talk to each other on Lynette's porch about the hard times in their love relationship.

(**4**)   *Gabrielle:*   "*Can I tell you guys something? Something I can only tell you guys?*"

     Susan: "*Oh, god, here she goes again. What grade is he in?*"

Gabrielle:	*"Not what I was gonna say. What I was gonna say is with all his conniving and trickery, I still love Carlos."*
Lynette:	*"Yeah, he's hot."*
Gabrielle:	*"Anyway, what if I never find that passion with anybody else?"*
Susan:	*"Well, maybe you should try to patch things up with him."*
Gabrielle:	*"Nah, I already paid a lawyer. I'm taking him down."*
Lynette:	*"I brought this on myself. I tell Tom, 'I want you to be your own man.' But the truth is, I don't. I want him to have what he wants if it's what I want. I'm a bitch with a capital C."*
Gabrielle:	*"No! No, you're not! You're a great **wife** and a great mother. Although, don't you have children?"*
Susan:	*"I had passion with Mike. And drama. Lots of drama. Love isn't supposed to be that hard."*

(Season 3, Episode 6)

In the excerpt above, the three housewives, Lynette, Susan, and Gabrielle, are having a hard time within their family and relationship. Lynette starts to blame herself after finding out her husband has another woman. Gabrielle tries to encourage her by emphasizing that Lynette is a great wife and mother and she should be proud of herself.

Based on this excerpt, being a great wife and mother can simply be words for cheering up a woman who is betrayed by her husband.

4.2.1.1.2 Friendship and Neighbors

Apart from words denoting family members, the word *neighbors* is also another interesting keyword in the family and relationship group. It plays a vital role in the series because it indicates the relationship among the four protagonists, which gradually develops from being neighbors into friendship. This is suggested by the fact that the keyword *neighbor* often appears as a signal of the beginning of new encounters of families in the neighborhood. The excerpt below illustrates well how relationship among families in the area can evolve over time.

After Bree brings her son to apologize to the new neighbor, Marie Alice, for stealing her property, Bree says:

(5)   *Bree:*   *"Well, now that we've finished with all this*

              unpleasantness, I want to assure you that we are going

              to be good __neighbors__, and I hope in time, great friends."

        Mary Alice: *"That sounds lovely."*

(Season 6, Episode 2)

In the series, Mary Alice has become a good friend with the four protagonists, sharing their secrets and memories.

Another illustration is when Susan successfully leaves her house for rent without her best friends' notice due to her financial problems.

(6)   *Bree:*   "*Hey there. What's going on?*"

Gabrielle: "*Susan trying to sneak off without saying good-bye.*"

Susan: "*The more I thought about it, the more I realized it's not a big deal.*

I'm just moving across town. I'm gonna see you all Friday for poker."

Lynette: "*You better, 'cause if we don't hear from you once a week, we will hunt you down and bring you back. You know that, right?*"

Susan: "*I do.*"

Bree: "*So who's renting your house?*"

Susan: "*Lee found a guy.*"

Gabrielle: "*It's just not gonna seem right, someone else in your house.*"

Susan: "*Yeah. Well, whoever the guy is, he is very lucky, 'cause he's about to get himself three of the most wonderful **neighbors** a person could ask for. You know, sometimes when you see people every day, you forget to tell them how much they mean to you so for the record… I think the three of you are such good people.*"

(Season 6, Episode 23)

In the excerpt above, Susan expresses her friends as *the most wonderful neighbors* to describe how good they are to her and how she appreciates having them as friends and being through all the ups and downs together in the neighborhood. Most importantly, the phrase makes audiences believe their friendship is real and are involved as a part of the show causing their need to continue watching the show.

4.2.2 Crime and Mystery Keywords

According to the genres of DH, being described as a comedy-drama and mystery series, keywords related to crime and mystery are selected to be analyzed as they contribute to the construction of the context of crime and mystery that is a highlight of DH. Of all 22 subgroups, this group contains the second largest keywords with 141 keywords (as seen in Appendix 2) among 1,022 keywords. Due to several keywords in this group, those appearing in the top 100 frequent keywords in DHC, i.e. *killed, kill, gun, detective, shot, fight, and murder* are prioritized for concordance analysis. The large numbers of keywords in this group indicate how crime scenes run the show. They can explain why audiences of DH have become addicted to the show, curious to know what is going to be or end up with the lives of the four housewives.

To illustrate, according to excerpt (7), Lynette, one of the leading female characters, gets involved in a hostage scene in a supermarket where she is shot in her arm, but survives, whereas Nora, a person who Lynette's husband had a one-night stand with and became a mother of his daughter, is shot to death.

(7)   Nora: "Kayla's the only good thing that I've ever done in my

                        whole life. I need you to really take really good care of

                        her. Okay? I don't have all day. Come on."

        Lynette: "Yeah, yes, I will, I will, I will. I will love her like she is

                        my own. I will, Nora. Nora? Nora!"

(Nora **dies**. Lynette, hands bloody, stares up at Carolyn).

        Carolyn: "Oh, don't look at me that way. You know you wanted her

                        dead."

        Lynette: "How can you say that?"

        Carolyn: "Well, you told me about her and your husband after I

                        made it pretty clear where I stand on whores."

        Lynette: "I did not want this. Don't you dare say that I wanted this."

        Carolyn: "Shut up!"

        Lynette: "No, I will not shut up! What's the matter with you?!"

        Carolyn: "Have you not been paying attention? My husband

                        cheated on me!"

        Lynette: "Who cares?! Who cares? We all have pain! Everyone in

                        here has pain, but we deal with it! We swallow it and get

                        going with our lives! What we don't do is go around

                        shooting strangers!"

        Carolyn: "She deserved it!"

> Lynette: "Well, maybe you deserved to be cheated on! I'm, I'm, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that."
>
> Carolyn: "Yeah, you shouldn't have."
>
> (She aims the **_gun_** at Lynette, but Art takes a can from his shopping basket and throws it at Carolyn, knocking the **_gun_** out of her hand, but not before she **_shoots_**, **_hitting_** Lynette in the arm. Austin grabs Carolyn before she can grab the **_gun_** again and the two of them struggle. Somebody picks up the **_gun_** and Carolyn falls to the ground, **_dead_**. It's revealed that Jordan's mother is the one who pulled the **_trigger_**).
>
> (Season 3, Episode 7)

An excerpt above contains several instances of keywords in the 'crime and mystery' group in one short paragraph, i.e. *gun*, *shoots*, *shooting*, *trigger*, *dead*, and *die*. However, they do not only represent the crime scene but also indicate the development of Lynette's character. Even though Lynette and Nora are enemies and expect to meet each other in a court for custody, being together at the crime scene gradually makes them understand and sympathizes with each other. Moreover, the death of Nora emphasizes Lynette's character and personality as a brave, strong open-minded, and kind person. Also, it leads to the theme of mother and child. No matter how selfish or bad a character is, a child is what she is worried about the most at the end of her life. Lynette, as a mother of four, understands how Nora feels and hence repeatedly promises to raise Nora's daughter after her death.

Furthermore, such a scene with these keywords about 'crime and mystery' creates a dramatic scene and get the viewers to be engaged with the show. As a comedy-drama series, the construction of crime scenes as illustrated by the above excerpt can serve to change the audiences' mood. Before the shooting, audiences are likely to find it amusing watching Lynette and Nora argue with each other. However, during and after the incident, the viewers are likely to feel excited and sympathetic towards both characters.

Apart from those keywords above, the word *killed,* the most frequent word in this group (223 instances) can indicate a plot advancement of DH. The word appears in more than half of the 180 episodes in all eight seasons of the series. According to Concordance 2 below, the word *killed* presents two forms of sentences, i.e. active and passive sentences. However, it is found more in active sentences where a character kills somebody than a passive sentence where a character is killed by someone.
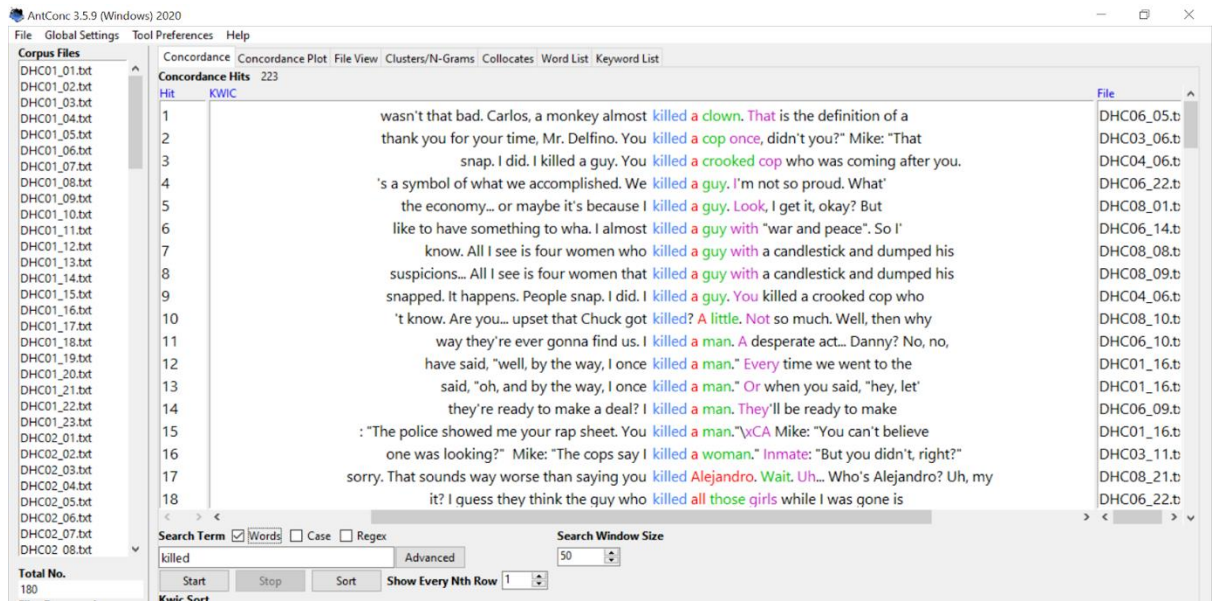
Concordance 2. Sample occurrences of killed as shown in sentences

Focusing on the name of the series, *Desperate Housewives*, and the beginning
episodes of the series, the audiences may not expect the storyline where the four main
housewives are parts of different crimes, but the lives of women who are struggling
with their roles of being a wife and a mother. As the story develops, the keyness of this
group of keywords points to the fact that the desperate lives of the four main characters
are not just about dealing with domestic problems in their household. It is beyond that.

The main characters are involved in and even committed crimes and mysteries
themselves, leading to something bigger and more serious, such as the mix of unkind
or illegal actions, suicide, killing, murder, and crimes which the four women have to
keep as secrets. For instance, during the Pilot episode in DH's season 1, Susan thinks
that her neighbor has a relationship with Mike, the guy she falls in love with, so she
breaks into the neighbor's house and accidentally sets the house on fire. Also, in season
1 episode 7, one of the four protagonist housewives, Bree, hides a secret about her son

being a hit-and-run driver, who unconsciously drives and hits Gabrielle's mother-in-law,

causing her to be in a coma for five months before she is secretly killed at the hospital.

Another example, as shown in excerpt (8), illustrates the incident where Gabrielle's

husband, Carlos, accidentally kills his wife's stepfather in order to protect her from

being taken advantage of by her stepfather after his many years of absence.

(8)   *Gabrielle:*   *"He came in. He came in and he was standing*

there, and I was so scared, and I couldn't do

anything!"

Carlos: *"It's okay."*

Gabrielle: *" I couldn't do anything!"*

Carlos: *"Okay, okay. Hey! Hey! Hey!"*

(Gabrielle groaning)

Gabrielle: *"Let's call the police before he wakes up."*

Carlos: *"Oh, God."*

Gabrielle: *(Sniffles) "What?"*

Carlos: *"There's no pulse. He's dead. I **killed** him."*

Gabrielle: *"But it was self-defense. I mean, he had my gun."*

Carlos: *"Your gun? I put that in the safe."*

Gabrielle: *"No. No, he had it. He had it right here. It was*

here."

Carlos:	*"I just **killed** an unarmed man."*

(Door opens)

Bree	*"Gabby, I thought you were gonna call."*
Susan:	*"Yeah, it's been 15…"*
Lynette:	*"What happened?"*
Bree:	*"Who is that?"*
Gabrielle:	*"My stepfather."*
Lynette:	*"The one who…"*
Susan:	*"Is he **dead**?"*
Carlos:	*"Yeah. I **killed** him."*

(Season 7, Episode 23)

According to excerpt (8), after Gabrielle's husband kills the stepfather, the four housewives appear and witness the scene before they agree to keep it secret and to help hide the dead body to protect her friend, Gabrielle, and her husband.

The mysteries and the crimes involving the four housewife protagonists in DH create curiosity among the audiences to continue to watch the show and to see how it will end, making the show very popular and become a prototype series that influences other new TV series plots.

4.2.3 Food and Beverages Keywords

Among 1,022 keywords in the DHC, 25 of them are related to food and beverages: *honey, wine, cookbook, recipe, cake, recipes, dessert, macaroni, lasagna, barbeque, pizza, meat, sweet, muffins, calzone, barbecue, antihistamines, poach, biscuits, margarita, cookies,* and *meals.* Intuitively, occurrences of these keywords may simply be related to the fact that DH is a story of housewives, who, according to general schematic knowledge, are directly involved in cooking and doing household chores. And, indeed, on surface they occur largely in dialogues among the four housewives about their cooking experiences. However, based on analysis of their occurrences in context of conversations among the characters in DH, it is found that the keywords about food and beverages play a vital role in the characterization of some main characters and themes of the series. These are discussed in turn below.

4.2.3.1 Characterization

Of the four major characters in DH, two are found to be referred to particularly in connection with food and beverages' keywords repeatedly: Susan Mayer and Bree van de Kamp.

(A) Susan Mayer

Susan Mayer is portrayed as clumsy, failure-prone and yet pleasant and funny. These characteristics of hers help make the series fun and relaxing among other dramatic scenes. It can be said that the character is viewed as a portrayal of the "Damsel

in distress", a naive lady who needs to be rescued from danger or trouble of some kind.

Nevertheless, she is strong and adorable. Even though she has issues to be upset about,

such as her ex-husband stepping out on her, she approaches life with laughter

(Tsintziras, 2022). These personalities are suggested through her conversations and

actions, of which food and drinks are often part. They occur repeatedly in situations or

contexts in which Susan is worried about something, having a hard time, or looking for

help. This can be illustrated through some excerpts below.

An excerpt below is found at Mary Alice's funeral and it is the first time when

Susan and Mike meet.

(9)　　　　*Susan:*　　　*"Oh, I wouldn't eat that if I were you."*

　　　　　　　　Mike:　　　*"Why?"*

　　　　　　　　Susan:　　　*"I made it, trust me. (MIKE prepares to take a bite) Hey,*

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　hey, do you have a death wish?"

　　　　　　　　Mike:　　　*"No, I just refuse to believe that anybody can screw up*

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　__macaroni__ and cheese."

(Mike takes a bite of the __macaroni__, as Susan gestures apologetically, smiling.)

　　　　　　　　Mike:　　　*"Oh my god. (makes a face) How did you it tastes like it's*

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　burnt and undercooked."

　　　　　　　　Susan:　　　*"Yeah, I get that a lot. Here you go."*

*(Susan gets a tissue and gives it to him, as he spits his mouthful of **macaroni** and cheese into the tissue).*

(Season 1, Episode 1)

The co-occurrence of the word *macaroni* before and within the situation in excerpt 9 above indicates what an imperfect housewife Susan is. She cannot cook, but *macaroni*, the only dish her ex-husband once agreed that she can cook, unfortunately none of them were edible. the presence of *macaroni* at the very beginning of the series when she is introduced in the shows suggests a 'non-typical' housewife persona of Susan's, unable to cook even the apparently simplest dish. At the same time, however, it points to her character as a lovely and optimistic woman, who can make fun of herself to a stranger via the food she cooked. She is not angered or upset by her cooking failures and even warns a stranger of her dish, with her sense of humor. This leads to a nice environment between Susan and her interlocutor in excerpt 9.

In another example, food and beverages are part of Susan's clumsiness and 'imperfection' as a woman. In this scene, Susan often appears in connection with *wine*. She is at a house kitchen where she is nervous and hopes to make a great impression on her fiancé (Ian)'s mother after many failures.

(10)   *Ian:*   *"And you've been relentlessly charming ever since. Trust me, when she looks back at tonight, she won't even remember the fire."*

*(They walk through the double doors into the dining room. The door that Susan opened hits Dahlia and she falls onto her back, spilling her **wine** all over herself).*

Ian: *"But she may remember this."*

Susan: *"Oh, my God! I'm so sorry! Are you all right?"*

Dahlia: *"Yes, I'm perfectly fine. At least this blouse made it through dinner."*

(Season 3, episode 17)

In excerpt (10), the accident occurs at Susan's hand and the spilling of the wine makes the situation even worse. Susan's clumsiness will lead her to an embarrassing moment in front of others again and it does.

(B) Bree Van de Kamp

Bree Van de Kamp is portrayed as a perfectionist and an ambitious housewife at all times when she appears in the show. However, it is the persona she creates to be seen as a flawless housewife. The way to become an ideal housewife, somehow, leads to her personal troubles as well as her domestic problems with family members. The keywords about food and beverages found in the DHC significantly prove and are associated with the fact that it has never been easy to become the persona she wants. Upon further investigation into the concordance lines of the keywords related to food and beverage, it is found that this character is set up to be opposite to what other

characters see, especially in a part of being a perfect housewife and being in a loving family with wonderful kids and a husband.

Excerpt 11 below takes place in a fancy restaurant where Bree is appointed to meet a reporter, Sandra, who wants to interview and hopes to expose whether Bree is what she seems to be as a perfect and successful housewife.

(11)   *Bree:*   *"I know you've been trying to dig up dirt on me."*

                          Sandra: *"Mm, just doing my job. And frankly, I didn't have to dig all that hard."*

                          Bree: *"I wrote a **cookbook**, Sandra... Meatloaf, pot pies, peach cobbler. Why are you trying to crucify me?"*

                          Sandra: *"Because it's not a **cookbook**, Bree. It's a "look how great I am" book... One designed to make every woman who reads it feel like a failure if she doesn't measure up. What you're selling's a total sham."*

                          Bree: *"But it isn't, Sandra, because I don't think I'm great. I have fallen down more times than I can count, just like so many other housewives out there. We're all just barely holding on and we all think that we're alone. So maybe you're right.*

*Maybe it isn't a **<u>cookbook</u>**. It's a lifeline from me*

to those other women, because I want them to

know there's always a chance to get something

right…"

(Season 5, Episode 8)

The association of the word ‘*cookbook*’ with a lifeline in the above excerpt reflects Bree's awareness and insecurity after receiving an unpleasant comment on her cookbook from Sandra. The real Bree, underneath the perfectionist persona she successfully wears, is being demolished. She makes an argument to the reporter and shows her a different angle of herself, as well as seeing a cookbook as an opportunity to start over and move forward from her failures.

The other word that usually appears in connection with Bree is *wine*. Her drinking wine reflects personal problems and stress she has in the journey of her married life. For example, in the description of a scene where Bree is with her husband and children at home, wine is used to suggest Bree is struggling with trouble after Rex, her husband, announces that he and Bree are soon to divorce:

(…SCENE: Bree, Rex, Andrew, and Danielle sit at the dining room table. Danielle brushes her hair, Rex has a glass of soda in his hands, and Bree has a nearly empty wine glass in front of her…)

4.2.3.2 Themes of the Series

The food-and-beverages keywords also contribute to the construction of themes about friendship and love-hate relationship in the series.

(A) Friendship

In the series, all four female leading characters go through their ups and downs and share good and bad times throughout the eight seasons of the series. Their love and kindness for each other is a powerful force that possibly draws audiences to believe in them and wants to continue to watch the series. The keywords associated with food and beverage are part of this theme, leading viewers to see the love and friendship among the four lead housewives.

For instance, the word *'wine'*, the second most frequent key in the subgroup, *'chocolate'*, *and 'honey'* in excerpt (12) below appear in the context where Susan Delfino and Gabrielle Solis easily make up and get drunk together after their fight about their weddings.

(12)   *OUTSIDE SUSAN'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME*

*(Susan takes a bottle of **wine** and is starting down the sidewalk when Gabrielle comes up to her holding a box of **chocolates**.)*

Gabrielle:	*"**Honey**, I am so sorry. I hope you don't hate me."*
Susan:	*"I don't. I was just on my way to apologize to you."*
Gabrielle:	*"Just so you know, I changed all my flowers."*
Susan:	*"You don't have to."*

Gabrielle:	*"The hell I don't. Those peach tulips belong to you...and so do these. She hands her the* **chocolate**.*"*
Susan:	*"Thank you. I was just bringing you this."*
Gabrielle:	*"Well, we got* **chocolate** *and* **wine**. *Your place or mine?"*
Susan:	*"Oh! Well..."*

(Susan puts her arm around Gabrielle and they walk into Susan's house. Later, the two of them are slightly tipsy as they drink their **wine** *and eat the* **chocolate***).*

(Season 3, Episode 22)

According to the excerpt above, the word '*honey*' Gabrielle uses to call Susan rather than the name indicates an intimacy between the two characters. The words '*wine*' and '*chocolate*' appearing in the scene are presented as tools for the two friends to reconcile very easily. According to the occurrences of keywords above, the two types of food make them tipsy and talk to each other a lot more than the time when they were mad at each other about their weddings.

(B) Love-Hate Relationships

A keyword related to food and beverages in DHC that is used in different ways compared to what is discussed earlier is '*honey*', the most key of the words in the food and beverages group, with 586 occurrences in all 180 episodes of eight seasons in DHC.

The keyword is often used metaphorically as an address term mostly between two characters who seem to be loving and caring people, e.g., between two lovers and between a mother and a child, such as when the four main housewives call their kids and husband, and be called by their husband as *'honey'* instead of the interlocutor's name at the beginning of the conversation throughout the series. However, this use of address terms in DHC is quite interesting since it ironically occurs in the dialogues between two people who have conflicts or experience a love-hate but unbreakable relationship, such as that between a couple, Lynette and Tom, who found themselves cheating on each other before breaking up and getting back together in some seasons, but they still call each other *'honey'* in all situations (e.g. when they are in love, have an argument, or run the business) until the end of the last season in order to remain the status. Also, the address term *honey* is also used between a mother and a child, Gabriel and Juanita, even when they are in conflict, as illustrated by excerpt (13) below. The conversation takes place in a living room where Juanita, Gabrielle's legal daughter who is always rebellious against her, is upset and doing homework in silence after Gabrielle objects to a school principal, Mrs. Peterson, removing Juanita from the Thanksgiving pageant.

The conversation in excerpt (13) belongs to Gabrielle and her legal daughter, Juanita, who is always rebellious against her. It takes place in a living room where Juanita is upset and in silence doing homework after Gabrielle objects to a school principal, Mrs. Peterson, removing Juanita from the Thanksgiving pageant.

(**13**) *Gabrielle*: *"Mrs. Peterson is a bully."*

Juanita:	*"I like Mrs. Peterson."*
Gabrielle:	*"Okay. I was wrong, and I'm sorry you're upset. You still think I'm a good mom, right?* **Honey?"**
Juanita	*"Can we just read?"*

(Season 6, Episode 6)

Excerpt (13) above indicates the love-hate relationship hidden between the two characters, Gabrielle and Juanita. As Gabriele realizes how Juanita blames her for not being allowed to go to school, she tries to explain the reason. However, when she knows that her daughter is truly upset about it, she tries to please her by apologizing. The way she uses the word '*honey*' in this case is not just an ordinary utterance to refer to her daughter, but she uses it as a hope to see a sign from her rebelling daughter that she understands and believes that she is a good mother to her. The fact that Gabrielle, a former model who used to care only about her appearance and herself trying to change to be a caring mother, and friend, does not mean that she always makes the best solution and decision for her daughter. However, she does and gives her best to be loved, accepted, and proven by her daughter as a mother in return. Unfortunately, according to Juanita's answer, no matter how hard Gabrielle tries, it does not work in the way she expects, and Juanita does not seem to understand or forgive her.

5. **Conclusions**

The present study approaches *Desperate Housewives*, one of the most famous series of all time, through a corpus stylistic perspective, focusing on groups of keywords, which are used statistically significantly in the series when compared with other American series Based on a quantitative analysis, a total of 1,022 keywords were found and categorized qualitatively into 22 semantic groups. Among these 22 groups, the present study selects three groups for further qualitative functional analyses, which are keywords related to 'family and relationship', 'crime and mystery' and 'food and beverages', in order to see what roles these stylistic keywords play in the series.

The analysis of the three groups of keywords reveals that these lexical items contribute largely to characterization of the four housewife protagonists and several themes of the series, including pressure on women's domestic roles and, female unity. Moreover, some keywords, especially those related to crimes and mystery, account for the popularity the series has entertained for decades due to its capacity to stimulate and sustain viewers' curiosity and engagement with the show.

Due to the limitations of time and length of the dissertation, the researcher cannot study all 22 groups of keywords. Other groups worth a further study include those related to 'religion' and 'medical term', because they do not seem to be obviously or straightforwardly relevant to the story of *Desperate Housewives* and yet they occur significantly in the scripts. Also, it would be interesting to study the style of each protagonist's spoken discourse to see how language can account for their similarities and differences as *Desperate Housewives*.

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Appendix 1

List of keywords found in a *Desperate Housewives* corpus

List of keywords	xca susan lynette bree gabrielle carlos mike tom edie orson rex gaby xffand andrew karl mary katherine alice solis danielle paul ian mccluskey scavo juanita john huber wisteria parker porter mrs victor xffbut george xffi kamp husband oh felicia delfino mayer betty fairview alma xffthat nora kayla xffto house xffyou killed gabby kill preston xffso gun xiao detective hodge mei ron austin matthew goldfine ed gloria shot penny narrator nina carolyn morty travers neighbor neighbors vern beth phyllis police mcclusky neighborhood kids de tilman ida xffthe rick bob deirdre honey britt voiceover fight she peter xfffor dylan annabel murder adam xffwhen had addison xffbecause xffif am stella you wife kendra xadtch xffwith ana mommy noah woman street was martha alisa van helen jane nurse god housewives our why celia roy hector bongo rowland xffwe a lonnie mama maisy lee marriage paige beat renee xffor sakes barton shoot young tammy xffis xffit lawn reverend dave danny harvey that rodney lawyer i monique begins xffabout heller mj xffwho dahlia shaw dana twin libby dr justin xffin can melanie twins bolen xffhe aah children lin restaurant crowley housewife sweetie policeman susie sanchez xffa we mr williams roberta began affair kidney robin mayfair xffjust no stu boys virginia xffshe xffwhich lang lucia peterson when suburbs ridley yao baby benjamin barr re divorce maxine me wine rupert irina this xffon care ow sophie hell mona been xfffrom toni men nighttime would applewhite heissel xffof keep ma killer connie gonna murdered xffthen job download porch faladi xffthere xffwas dear please dale found em xff bormanis jordana schilling xffas killing therapist what norma war desperate jail vance beale exclaiming murielle xffthey xffwhat suicide officer eli fome hisel xffhow just having well poker plumber marcella suburbia tish xffbefore cookbook monroe okay jewelry child damn recipe don craig barcliff mulberry xfflike xffuntil m ralph milton my julie promotion meyer exhaling daddy doogan maynard xffwhile lynn exclaims immigration residents threatened help cable dead ex garden those protect threatening pageant tornado dinsmore durkin hartley xffwhy cop crap women determined murderer started lovely

said dialysis carmen upstairs rita sims burned applewhites bigsby bup gaunt polier xffat xffmy cake need bill across divorced art could recipes amy daughter discovered technician months judge adultery guns cops alejandro son are remember fence alibi fractions gibbs hobson lamar xffinto xffwhere home her sullivan dillon tillman icon gardener aunt secrets heck married perry forgive roxy dessert afford supermarket who mwah toby brooch leila mckeever myron sykes xffafter xffmaybe xffthis xffwould xffby phil guilty car cabin evan telling houses jerome prison beating wayne ambulance let grace gotta mmm lady told ranger lamont mindy oakridge sicher tanaka xffnot xual trial academy stepfather crime yes fantastic us menopause yard bullet freezer steinberg stop greenberg talk uh teach mexican visit blind were ivana ange hennessey shayla tisha xffsince modeling va shooting whoa friends brandi counselling counsellor gibbons siesta bradley inmate jeez ty measuring wait while account brandy suitcase unhappy give woods decided leonard groceries obviously macaroni find gay crowely prudy scavos xffcan xffeven xffpeople xffwithout will dangerous nicky sherri so sorry pharmacist zachary gasps coma innocent little thompson doing defense site occurred laundry maria meter unpleasant walter ve donor motive t brought body neighbour saw lawns scruggs stammering toys trying attacked how years cleaning lonely kinsky turk xffno xffright xffthan xffwill xffyour flowers bought lila mowing pizzeria to kills items awful guilt angela punish husbands angie forbid course birth dentist do rude control gus shoots basement rough boobs candlestick marquez xffall shopper victim counseling filled jogs lasagna threaten hire lake mri beaten conjugal bath boomer greenburg gregg grimshaw kemper lakeview lenz mcdermott melina mumbai pashmutti pearce pinewood xffhis xffoh toilet digging driveway generous later blackmailing screaming knew garage chemo cheated blackmail moving poor advertising barbeque mother their sin trips bomb punished secret react settlement boss pills friend saying babe raymond sorts taking spleen thinking zach he jogging alfred oklahoma blouse realize cards faulkner lender old copeland confessions conner conti cumberly dolan duggan francois gallagher hainsworth hildebrand idon jasper lapera mitt oakdale paperboy rashi xffare xffcould xffdo xffevery xffone xffsome zeller threw mind convicted get client plumbing admit chuckles given confessed testify bonus begun trash month buy heard runway say mall suspicious take burnt values moved pizza questions eddie dental problem friendship beats boob

ground about devastated meat jury watering sweet favor sort cheating homeowners intruder rhoda courtroom sake abigail wrench felon mow sight buick chapman kirby prosecution mandarin murphy translating nup mailbox raising anniversary problems storms doll dementia disappearance spanked dumped fran done betrayal window few ourselves witness violence sordid strangled expensive lousy muffins doug wash auxiliary beckerman benjy braciole brit calzone cayman ceal chaplain chipmunk chipmunks dreamstime humphries kamps munchy portsmith silvercrest stabs truesdale umbilical vector vendeuse xads xffcarlos xffdoesn xffhas xffhave xfflet xffonly xffour xffuh xffunless yeager yeolin ordinary ramon support piano coroner vase wives insurance nightstand lessons candace hospital refuse sister nun dirt vacation hired did rage stripper trunk recess wheelchair chores mistress charades postman raphael clear sighing sell trick mysterious drinking passionate finish arthritis discover henderson nursing sweeney if tearing whilst kept whats people clarke fern flannery giraffes hammond ker knickknacks leopards lynwood weapon fashioned shark hurry assaulted jogger placard bills scrubbing raise inmates jingle oranges trust days niece teenager teeth bucks exercise angry barbecue hee nap cancer hostage capable noticed upsetting others removes homeschooling louisa heater kathy lowered warren antifreeze antihistamines arnie bixby bombelli bris cellmate cfo coletti cominis dabbled danner greta herds homemaker huskies inscription keck maintained orlofsky poach rushton shotgun shutterstock suse tactful thunderbolt withholding xffan xffbetween xffdon xffedie xffespecially xffexactly xffsomething xffwere candy till keeping sofa begging creative news marry dash pharmacy tell getting confession shame assault governor biscuits cunningham edna sleepwalking shots run occur worry claude liar prosecutor suspicion mothers herself arrest engagement behaved margarita peggy poisoned jog alaska swore loving camp eavesdrop housework manslaughter mower possum rid terrorist ulterior putting scene hidden deception interstate stabbed topher cookies aged nurses thursday tire of starting cavanaugh conceal despised dinosaur payroll pests unseen vera silly meals rehab alberta botswana condone duster forensic woo chuckling understand weeks learn memory criticize discovery kindness leopard samuel middle asking came

Appendix 2

The list of keywords in 22 subgroups

Fictional World Signal

Characters:

Characters' Name	susan lynette bree gabrielle carlos mike tom edie orson rex gaby andrew karl mary katherine alice solis danielle paul ian mccluskey scavo juanita john huber parker porter victor george kamp felicia delfino mayer betty alma nora kayla gabby preston xiao hodge mei ron austin matthew goldfine ed gloria penny nina carolyn morty travers vern beth phyllis mcclusky de tilman ida rick bob deirdre britt peter dylan annabel adam addison stella kendra ana noah martha alisa van helen jane celia roy hector bongo rowland lonnie maisy lee paige renee barton tammy dave danny harvey rodney monique heller mj dahlia shaw dana twin libby justin melanie bolen lin crowley susie sanchez williams roberta robin stu lang lucia peterson ridley yao benjamin barr maxine rupert irina sophie mona toni applewhite heissel connie faladi dale bormanis jordana schilling norma vance beale murielle eli fome marcella tish monroe craig mulberry ralph milton julie meyer doogan maynard lynn dinsmore durkin hartley carmen rita sims applewhites bigsby polier bill amy alejandro gibbs hobson lamar sullivan dillon tillman perry roxy toby leila mckeever myron sykes phil evan wayne grace lamont mindy sicher tanaka steinberg greenberg ivana ange shayla tisha brandi gibbons siesta bradley ty brandy leonard crowely scavos nicky sherri zachary thompson maria walter scruggs kinsky turk lila angela angie gus marquez boomer greenburg gregg grimshaw kemper lenz mcdermott melina pashmutti pearce raymond zach alfred faulkner lender conti dolan duggan francois gallagher hainsworth hildebrand jasper lapera rashi zeller eddie rhoda abigail chapman kirby murphy fran doug beckerman benjy brit humphries kamps munchy portsmith truesdale xffcarlos yeager yeolin ramon candace raphael henderson sweeney clarke fern flannery hammond ker lynwood louisa kathy

	warren arnie bixby bombelli coletti cominis danner greta herds huskies keck orlofsky rushton suse xffdon xffedie cunningham edna claude peggy cavanaugh vera alberta samuel
Jobs, Occupations, and Status	police nurse lawyer dr policeman mr men job therapist officer plumber pageant technician gardener lady ranger modeling counsellor gay xffpeople pharmacist donor dentist shopper boss old paperboy client jury homeowners vendeuse hired stripper postman nursing people jogger teenager homemaker governor interstate nurses payroll
Family and Relationship	mrs husband neighbor neighbors kids wife mommy woman housewives mama marriage twins children housewife sweetie affair boys baby divorce ma child daddy ex women divorced daughter discovered son aunt married friends counselling neighbour husbands birth conjugal cheated mother friend babe friendship anniversary strangled wives sister mistress passionate niece marry mothers engagement loving housework
Body Parts	kidney boobs spleen mind boob umbilical teeth
Religion	god reverend jerome chaplain nun
Action Words	begins began care keep found having don exclaims help determined started said need remember forgive afford xffmaybe telling let told stop talk teach visit measuring wait give decided find gasps doing occurred brought saw stammering trying cleaning bought mowing filled jogs hire knew moving react saying taking thinking jogging realize threw get plumbing admit chuckles given begun buy heard say take burnt moved questions beats watering mow translating raising dumped wash ceal xffdoesn xffhas xffhave xfflet support sighing sell drinking finish tearing kept scrubbing raise trust exercise nap removes dabbled maintained keeping begging tell getting sleepwalking run occur jog swore putting starting chuckling understand learn asking came

Wh-Words	why when what xffwhat xffhow xffwhy xffwhere who how
Characteristics	young xffjust just xfflike lovely gaunt xffnot fantastic menopause mexican blind obviously little meter motive xffright generous poor sorts values favor mandarin expensive xffonly ordinary nightstand clear fashioned hurry capable lowered bris tactful withholding xffespecially xffexactly creative behaved aged unseen kindness
Ownership	our my xffmy her xffyour xffhis their

Settings and Props:

Places	wisteria fairview house neighborhood street lawn that restaurant mayfair virginia suburbs this porch suburbia barcliff immigration residents garden those upstairs home supermarket xffthis cabin houses oakridge academy stepfather yard hennessey woods groceries site lawns pizzeria basement lake lakeview mumbai pinewood toilet driveway garage trips oklahoma copeland conner cumberly oakdale runway mall ground courtroom sight cayman silvercrest hospital vacation homeschooling pharmacy alaska camp botswana middle
Crime and Mystery	killed kill gun detective shot fight murder beat shoot killer murdered killing war desperate jail suicide poker threatened dead protect threatening cop murderer dialysis burned judge adultery guns cops alibi secrets guilty prison beating ambulance xual trial crime bullet shooting inmate unhappy prudy dangerous sorry coma innocent defense unpleasant body attacked lonely kills awful guilt punish forbid rude control shoots rough victim counseling threaten beaten digging blackmailing screaming chemo blackmail sin bomb punished secret pills confessions convicted confessed testify suspicious problem devastated cheating intruder felon prosecution problems disappearance spanked betrayal witness violence sordid lousy stabs coroner insurance refuse

|	
	dirt rage trick mysterious discover weapon assaulted inmates angry cancer hostage noticed upsetting cellmate shotgun dash confession shame assault shots worry liar prosecutor suspicion arrest poisoned eavesdrop manslaughter rid terrorist ulterior scene hidden deception stabbed conceal despised silly rehab condone forensic criticize discovery
Natural Disaster	tornado storms thunderbolt
Animals	chipmunk chipmunks giraffes leopards shark possum dinosaur pests leopard
Things and Objects	hisel jewelry promotion cable art fence fractions icon brooch car freezer account suitcase laundry toys flowers items course candlestick bath advertising settlement blouse cards mitt bonus trash wrench buick mailbox doll window piano vase lessons trunk wheelchair chores charades knickknacks placard bills bucks others heater antifreeze inscription xffsomething sofa news mower tire duster memory
Day and Time	nighttime xffbefore months years later month recess days thursday weeks
Function Words	xffand xffbut xffi xffthat xffto xffyou xffso xffthe she xfffor xffwhen had xffbecause xffif am you xffwith was xffwe a xffor xffis xffit i xffabout xffwho xffin can xffhe xffa we xffshe xffwhich re me xffon been xfffrom would xffof gonna xffthen xffthere xffwas em xffas xffthey xffuntil m xffwhile xffat across could are xffinto xffafter xffwould xffby gotta us were xffsince while xffcan xffeven xffwithout will so ve xffthan xffwill to do he xffare xffcould xffdo about sort done few ourselves xffour xffunless did if whilst whats xffbetween xffwere till herself of
Number and Quantity	xffevery xffone xffsome
Medical Terms	mri dental dementia arthritis

Thematic Signal

Food and Beverages	honey wine cookbook recipe cake recipes dessert macaroni lasagna barbeque pizza meat sweet muffins braciole calzone oranges barbecue antihistamines poach candy biscuits margarita cookies meals
Family and Relationship	mrs husband neighbor neighbors kids wife mommy woman housewives mama marriage twins children housewife sweetie affair boys baby divorce ma child daddy ex women divorced daughter discovered son aunt married friends counselling neighbour husbands birth conjugal cheated mother friend babe friendship anniversary strangled wives sister mistress passionate niece marry mothers engagement loving housework
Crime and Mystery	killed kill gun detective shot fight murder beat shoot killer murdered killing war desperate jail suicide poker threatened dead protect threatening cop murderer dialysis burned judge adultery guns cops alibi secrets guilty prison beating ambulance xual trial crime bullet shooting inmate unhappy prudy dangerous sorry coma innocent defense unpleasant body attacked lonely kills awful guilt punish forbid rude control shoots rough victim counseling threaten beaten digging blackmailing screaming chemo blackmail sin bomb punished secret pills confessions convicted confessed testify suspicious problem devastated cheating intruder felon prosecution problems disappearance spanked betrayal witness violence sordid lousy stabs coroner insurance refuse dirt rage trick mysterious discover weapon assaulted inmates angry cancer hostage noticed upsetting cellmate shotgun dash confession shame assault shots worry liar prosecutor suspicion arrest poisoned eavesdrop manslaughter rid terrorist ulterior scene hidden deception stabbed conceal despised silly rehab condone forensic criticize discovery

Spoken Language

Contractions and Interjection	oh aah no ow dear please well okay bup heck mwah mmm yes uh va whoa jeez xffoh xffuh jingle hee woo
Swear Words and Taboo Words	sakes hell damn crap sake

Others

N/A	xca narrator voiceover xadtch sakes hell download xff exclaiming damn exhaling crap t xffno xffall idon sake nup auxiliary dreamstime vector xads cfo shutterstock xffan topher
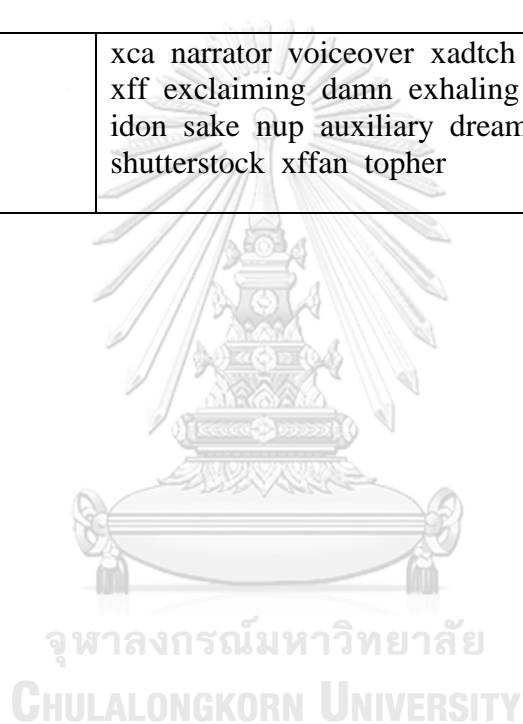
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