

## **“I am not what I am”: Corpus-based Analysis of Shakespeare’s Character Iago from *Othello, the Moor of Venice***

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### **Abstract**

The paper uses keyword analysis as the empirical basis for the characterization of Shakespeare’s character Iago from *Othello, the Moor of Venice*. The aim of the paper is to determine how Iago’s manner of speech reflects his deceitful and manipulative nature and how it differs from the speech-styles of non-deceitful prominent characters: Othello, Cassio, Roderigo, Desdemona and Emilia. Keywords for the chosen characters are based on the corpora of character speech and the Sketch Engine tool is used to process the data. The results are then interpreted and discussed on the basis of six interconnected points of discussion: focus, adjectives, use of the expression *Moor*, references to the handkerchief, poisoning-the-ears technique, and pronouns, all of which confirm that Iago’s manipulative nature is indeed evident in his speech and that there is a clear difference between his speech-style and the speech-styles of other, non-deceitful, prominent characters.

**Keywords:** characterization, corpus linguistics, keyword analysis, Othello, William Shakespeare, Iago

## INTRODUCTION

A fictional character is brought to life in the mind of the reader or spectator through their actions and their words, and this relationship is particularly intriguing when there is a mismatch between the two. The aim of this paper is to use keyword analysis to determine whether the cunning, deceitful and manipulative nature of Shakespeare's character Iago from *Othello, the Moor of Venice* is evident in his speech-style and if so, how Iago's speech-style then differs from that of some of the other, non-deceitful, prominent characters within the play, such as Othello and Cassio.

The first part of the paper reviews the existing literature on characterization in *Othello* and proposes keyword analysis as an attested method of corpus stylistic research. In the methodology section, the preliminary steps of the study are described alongside the specific parameters used within the *Sketch Engine* tool. In the third part of the paper, the quantitative results of the keyword analysis are given in the form of tables with keywords for each of the chosen characters: Iago, Othello, Cassio, Roderigo, Desdemona and Emilia. These statistical results are then discussed, interpreted and compared to previous studies in the fourth, qualitative and final part of the paper.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

As one of Shakespeare's prominent works, *Othello* has been extensively analyzed and interpreted, with the character of Iago receiving much of the scrutiny. Recently, the development of corpus stylistics has brought with it new ways of approaching familiar texts and there are already a host of studies examining various Shakespearean characters. This section summarizes what has so far been proposed about Iago (and to a lesser extent other characters in *Othello*) as well as the current developments in corpus stylistics.

### The master and the puppets: characters in *Othello*

As pointed out by John W. Draper in his article "Honest Iago," there is a general agreement among scholars and critics of Shakespeare across centuries, from Johnson, Coleridge, Swinburne and Shaw to Bradley, Canning, Herford, Stoll and Winstanley, as well as visible German and French writers and academics, that Iago is "a villain of the deepest dye" (724). There is thus a consensus that Iago is a villainous, manipulative, dishonest and deceitful character, even if researchers may disagree on his motives. In his article "Iago—An extraordinary honest man," Weston

Babcock for instance agrees that Iago is an exceptionally clever manipulator (299–300; 301) yet ascribes this behaviour not to his wickedness but to his frustration stemming from a socially inferior rank of which he is constantly reminded by other characters, something also apparent in the characters' use of *thou* and *you* (298).

Bradley, Arenas and West, on the other hand, characterize Iago not as a wronged or understandably envious man but as a psychopathic schemer. A. C. Bradley in his *Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth* chooses what Arenas describes as a "humanizing approach to literary characters" (Arenas 43) and arrives at similar conclusions as Arenas does in his article "Causal attribution and the analysis of literary characters", where he uses Covariance Theory of Causal Attribution (CTCA) to review Bradley's claims about Iago. Arenas thus uses a cognitive approach to confirm Bradley's characterization of Iago as an exceptionally clever schemer with a tendency to deceive (Arenas 56; cf. Bradley 211) and succeed at it (Arenas 59; cf. Bradley 192), turning other characters, primarily Othello, into his puppets (Arenas 57; cf. Bradley 195). Fred West goes a step further in his article "Iago the Psychopath", stating that there was great interest in (what we now know as) the field of psychology during Shakespeare's time (27), that Shakespeare himself must have been familiar with it (34) and that he constructed Iago as a clinically accurate example of a psychopath (27). West also revises Bradley's description of Iago and claims that it clearly depicts Iago as a psychopath (33) even though Bradley never uses the term himself. Similarly, Marvin Rosenberg in his article "In defense of Iago" analyzes Iago as having a neurotic personality. Rosenberg uses a psychoanalytic approach and relies upon the theoretical contributions of Karen Horney to explain Iago's manipulative scheming (151) and his exceptional abilities as well as his desire to deceive (152) as a consequence of a "severe function disorder" (155).

Earl L. Dachslager, on the other hand, points out that what makes Iago a superb character is precisely the elusiveness of his motives (5), which are also, he claims, rather unimportant as he merely does what he is supposed to do as a dramatic character: perform his function of the villain (10). In a similar manner, instead of focusing on Iago's motives, Jacobsen, Beier, Altman and Vickers focus on Iago's superb rhetorical skills which he uses to gain power over other characters. In the article "Iago's art of war: the 'Machiavellian moment' in *Othello*," Ken Jacobsen writes that Iago's smooth and convincing manipulation (502) is largely informed by Machiavelli's text *The Art of War* (498). Iago, as analyzed by Jacobsen, employs Machiavelli's military techniques transferred to the level of speech in order to gain power over other characters, as military strategy (Iago as the general) and rhetoric (Iago as the orator) are closely connected (505).

Benjamin V. Beier in the article "The art of persuasion and Shakespeare's two Iagos" similarly describes Iago as "the play's exemplary sophist" (36) since his

goals as well as his methods are unethical and his skill of manipulation extraordinary (38), and claims that it is through Iago (especially in comparison with Iachimo from *Cymbeline*) that Shakespeare explores the dangerous powers of sophistry. Brian Vickers in "Power of persuasion" marks Iago as "Shakespeare's greatest rhetorician" (434 qtd. in Beier), and in his study *The Improbability of Othello*, Joel Altman, labelling *Othello* as the most intimate portrait of "rhetorical anthropology" (22), analyzes Iago's great skills of manipulation on the basis of the Greek sophists Protagoras, Gorgias, and Isocrates (23). In "Talk, small talk and silence in *Othello*," Robert Frost uses discourse analysis to characterize Iago as a manipulative and cunning initiator of dialogue based on the manner Iago chooses to get Othello's attention. Iago is also described as an initiator in Alexander G. Gonzalez's article "The infection and spread of evil: some major patterns of imagery and language in *Othello*." Gonzalez analyzes Iago's technique of infecting other characters with his manner of speech and thought and then letting them finish his job for him (37).

Iago's status as a villainous master manipulator is thus largely agreed upon by a majority of scholars and critics employing various methodological tools. Seen either as a wicked man, a wronged man, a psychopath or the Devil itself, Iago is commonly regarded as a deceitful, lying and cunning character. Othello, on the other hand, is commonly thought of as a good, noble and trustful character, not unintelligent yet not as sharp as Iago (cf. Bradley 189), which is why he also fails to recognize Iago's intrigue. He is, however, not to be blamed for his inability to see through Iago's manipulation, as none of the characters are in fact able to see through him (cf. Bradley 192; Arenas 56; Jacobsen 508; Draper 725–6; Beier 43, 46–7; Rosenberg 152), not even his wife Emilia, whose love for and loyalty to Desdemona proves crucial in the end (cf. Bradley 239–40; Babcock 301; Jacobsen 529). Emilia and Desdemona are commonly regarded as likeable characters (cf. Gonzalez 39), as is the character of Cassio (ibid.), who is regarded as a good-natured and handsome character loyal to Othello (cf. Bradley 238–9). One of the least important characters per se yet crucial for Iago's plan is the character of Roderigo, who primarily functions as Iago's most easily manipulated tool (cf. Gonzalez 46).

## Corpus stylistic approaches to Shakespeare

Despite developing rather late compared to other areas of corpus research, corpus stylistics has had an important impact on literary critical work since the early 2000s. What is more, Sean Murphy, Dawn Archer, and Jane Demmen demonstrate that corpus stylistic methods to Shakespeare are "well established" with a number of different studies already undertaken in this vein (224). An

important contribution to corpus stylistic studies of Shakespeare is the 2020 special issue of *Language and Literature*, entitled *Shakespeare's Language: Styles and meanings via computer*, which offers a selection of corpus-based studies of Shakespeare's plays.

One such corpus-based approach, also used in this paper, is keyword analysis, used early on in Shakespearean stylistics by Jonathan Culpeper, whose corpus-based study "Computers, language and characterisation: An analysis of six characters in *Romeo and Juliet*" from 2002 this paper is largely informed by. In his innovative study, Culpeper analyzes the dialogue in *Romeo and Juliet* using keyword analysis to demonstrate how this computational approach can be used to determine the speech-styles of different characters. He also emphasizes how function words such as pronouns can be an important factor in determining style (27). "Style," as explained by Culpeper, "is a matter of 'frequencies', 'probabilities' and 'norms'" (12). Style-markers can be equated with words whose frequencies in the text under investigation are significantly skewed compared to their frequencies in some reference text(s), which corresponds very well to the statistical notion of "keyword" (cf. Culpeper, "Keyness" 30). In his 2009 article, Culpeper analyzes key part-of-speech and key semantic domains in addition to keywords, once again using *Romeo and Juliet* to illustrate how these additional research techniques may be of great contribution to keyword analysis with regard to characterization.

Keyword analysis can thus be used as a starting point for characterization, as "the text for each character is highly likely to constitute a different, and sometimes radically different, kind of style" (Culpeper, "Keyness" 31). In their study "Depictions of deception: A corpus-based analysis of five Shakespearean characters," for example, Dawn Archer and Mathew Gillings also use keyword analysis, in combination with some additional techniques, to characterize five deceptive Shakespeare's characters: Aaron, Tamora, Lady Macbeth, Falstaff and Iago. Their findings reveal that the five examined characters exhibit different deceptive speech-styles consistent with their different character traits. They also confirm a correlation between Shakespeare's depictions of deceptive language and a real-life use of deceptive language features. They analyze Iago on the basis of six keywords: *money*, *purse*, *Roderigo*, *lieutenant*, *sleep*, and *angry*, and discuss how these keywords reveal Iago's cunningness although this may not be readily apparent (253–4). They also examine the characters' use of pronouns and find that, across the board, deceptive characters statistically overuse other-oriented references (e.g., you, he, she, him) as opposed to non-deceptive characters, who predominantly use self-oriented references (e.g., I, me, my). Furthermore, they find that this feature is, even among the deceitful characters, especially typical for Iago, who proves to be particularly skilful at keeping himself out of others' focus (261).

## METHODOLOGY

Keeping in mind its historical nature and potential problems such as spelling variation and the existence of various editions of *Othello*, the online version published on *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*<sup>1</sup> webpage was used. This was followed by the choice of characters to be examined and compared to Iago and the compilation of corpora and reference corpora. First, the three most prominent male characters were included who are characteristically different from Iago, that is, not presented as cunning and deceitful: Othello, Cassio and Roderigo. Then the two most prominent female characters were added, Desdemona and Emilia. Excluding stage directions and other non-speech material, six different corpora were compiled, each consisting of the lines spoken by the target character only: Iago Corpus, Othello Corpus, Cassio Corpus, Roderigo Corpus, Desdemona Corpus and Emilia Corpus. Each character corpus was then paired with a corresponding reference corpus, consisting of a combination of all the lines spoken by other characters.

*Sketch Engine* was selected as the tool to be used for corpus analysis, and each character was examined for seven different types of keywords as the “key items that reflect the distinctive styles of each character compared with the other characters in the same play” (Culpeper, “Keyness” 34):

- positive single-words (with the parameter for the rare-common focus set at 1000)
- negative single-words (rare-common focus: 1000)
- positive multi-words (rare-common focus: 1000)
- negative multi-words (rare-common focus: 1000)
- positive common/grammatically oriented single-words (rare-common focus: 1000000)
- negative common/grammatically oriented single-words (rare-common focus: 1000000)
- positive rare/lexically oriented single-words (rare-common focus: 0.001)

Here, the term *multi-words* refers to combinations of two words. *Positive* keywords are items that are overrepresented in a character’s speech compared to other characters’ lines, and *negative* keywords are items that a character uses less commonly than the other protagonists. When it comes to the last group of rare/lexically oriented keywords, only positive single-words were considered, since positive as well as negative rare multi-words turned out to be extremely similar or identical (e.g. Roderigo) to keywords (1000): (negative or positive) multi-words, probably

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1 <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/index.html>

due to the smallness of the corpora. It is for the same reason that the minimum frequency was set to 1 and only the top 10 keywords were considered with some interesting and interpretatively important exceptions discussed below. The attribute for all of the corpora was set to lemma.

The last step was to deal with spelling variation, which has been deemed "perhaps the greatest obstacle in the statistical manipulation of historical texts" (Culpeper, "Romeo and Juliet" 14). In this case, using a single play facilitated the manipulation of the data, as the small size of the datasets allowed manual scrutiny (cf. Culpeper, "Keyness" 31), so examples of spelling variation which were parsed incorrectly, such as *ti* or *t* for *tis*, for instance, were rare and did not present an issue as the concordances in such cases were simply manually checked.

## RESULTS OF KEYWORD ANALYSIS

Table 1: Keywords for Iago

	keywords (1000): single- words	negative keywords (1000): single- words	keywords (1000): multi- words	negative keywords (1000): multi- words	common/ grammati- cally orient- ed keywords (1000000)	negative common/ grammati- cally orient- ed keywords (1000000)	rare/ lexically oriented keywords (0.001)
1	Roderigo	Iago	good lieutenant	honest Iago	you	my	mark
2	lieutenant	heaven	good name	o thou	he	I	thief
3	Moor	willow	noble nature	good night	in	me	trash
4	may	thou	noble lord	good Iago	his	O	sometimes
5	which	O	honest man	virtuous Desdemona	him	thou	second
6	mark	husband	fair Desdemona	whole course	be	Iago	directly
7	his	die	inclining Desdemona	o devil	a	do	degree
8	yourself	me	lustful Moor	thou diest	and	have	clink
9	money	my	great ability	good faith	Cassio	heaven	chair
10	Cassio	deed	timorous accent	good lady	as	it	apt



Table 2: Keywords for Othello

	keywords (1000): sin- gle-words	negative keywords (1000): single- words	keywords (1000): multi-words	negative keywords (1000): multi- words	common/ gram- matically oriented keywords (1000000)	negative common/gram- matically ori- ented keywords (1000000)	rare/ lexically oriented keywords (0.001)
1	thy	lord	honest Iago	o heaven	of	you	moon
2	Iago	Moor	whole course	good liutenant	the	him	story
3	once	him	o devil	good lord	thou	he	soft
4	thee	may	st thou	noble lord	thy	lord	earth
5	turn	help	o thou	virtuous Desdemona	Iago	I	wake
6	thou	alas	gentle Desdemona	other course	O	be	pitiful
7	handkerchief	willow	brave Iago	good faith	she	his	oh
8	whose	his	o brave Iago	warlike isle	her	in	heed
9	heaven	he	such acco- modation	heavenly light	thee	will	yond
10	moon	watch	old acquaintance	nether lip	my	Moor	wont

Table 3: Keywords for Cassio

	keywords (1000): single- words	negative key- words (1000): single-words	keywords (1000): multi- words	negative key- words (1000): multi-words	common/ gram- matically oriented keywords (1000000)	negative common/ grammati- cally oriented keywords (1000000)	rare/ lexically oriented keywords (0.001)
1	ha	lord	virtuous Desdemona	good night	the	do	ship
2	drunk	say	good Iago	honest Iago	me	her	past
3	reputation	thy	divine Desdemona	o heaven	I	as	exquisite
4	general	Cassio	bold Iago	good liutenant	of	lord	expert
5	Bianca	as	good ancient	sweet Desde- mona	Iago	Cassio	enemy
6	save	husband	haste- post-haste appearaance	good lord	here	you	drinking



7	bold	when	own power- ful breath	noble lord	general	say	divine
8	ancient	these	powerful breath	honest man	ha	if	arrive
9	God	handkerchief	poor caitiff	st thou	drunk	thy	Fore
10	Iago	her	great contention	whole course	reputation	not	worser

Table 4: Keywords for Roderigo

	<b>keywords (1000): single- words</b>	<b>negative keywords (1000): single- words</b>	<b>keywords (1000): multi-words</b>	<b>negative keywords (1000): multi- words</b>	<b>common/ grammati- cally oriented keywords (1000000)</b>	<b>negative common/ grammati- cally oriented keywords (1000000)</b>	<b>rare/ lexically oriented keywords (0.001)</b>
1	signior	love	lascivious Moor	good night	I	the	wheel
2	return	Cassio	wise consent	honest Iago	have	he	votarist
3	Barbatio	lord	fair daughter	o heaven	me	love	unkindly
4	reason	speak	great devotion	good liutenant	will	for	tush
5	myself	see	inhuman dog	o thou	if	Cassio	transport
6	issue	such	much experience	sweet Des- demonia	it	a	torment
7	tell	there	full fortune	good Iago	but	his	tie
8	jewel	must	good guard	good lord	to	lord	thinkest
9	courtesy	upon	common hire	noble lord	not	by	thicklip
10	house	their	knave of common hire	honest man	can	as	suppliest

Table 5: Keywords for Desdemona

	keywords (1000): single- words	negative keywords (1000): single- words	keywords (1000): multi-words	negative key- words (1000): multi-words	common/ gram- matically oriented keywords (1000000)	negative common/ grammati- cally orient- ed keywords (1000000)	rare/ lexically oriented keywords (0.001)
1	willow	Desde- mona	good night	honest Iago	I	the	unkind- ness
2	lord	she	good faith	o heaven	my	and	falsely
3	Emilia	more	green willow	good lieutenant	lord	she	sing
4	praise	Iago	noble Moor	o thou	him	her	unpin
5	sing	up	dear absence	sweet Desdemona	do	of	trespass
6	him	devil	finger ache	good Iago	me	it	sooth
7	talk	ti ( <i>tis</i> )	last article	homest man	willow	this	morn
8	bad	thus	such baseness	st thou	not	a	more
9	lose	which	unkind breach	virtuous Desdemona	you	ti ( <i>tis</i> )	education
10	alas	nothing	maid call	other course	so	more	dinner

Table 6: Keywords for Emilia

	keywords (1000): single- words	negative keywords (1000): single- words	keywords (1000): multi- words	negative key- words (1000): multi-words	common/ gram- matically oriented keywords (1000000)	negative common/ grammati- cally orient- ed keywords (1000000)	rare/ lexically oriented keywords (0.001)
1	husband	of	good madam	good night	husband	of	villany
2	villany	sir	o villany	honest Iago	have	to	frailty
3	jelaous	much	o heaven	good Iago	O	and	despite
4	madam	one	t Iago ( <i>"give it to Iago"</i> )	noble lord	lord	in	yonder
5	lady	at	cruel Moor	honest man	she	me	wicked
6	alas	these	dull Moor	st thou	for	him	west
7	false	him	o thou dull Moor	virtuous Desdemona	do	be	wedlock
8	us	night	thou dull Moor	other course	speak	the	wayward
9	lie	yet	great affinity	o devil	some	love	wager
10	speak	Othello	filthy bargain	thou diest	it	I	venture

## FROM KEYWORDS TO KEY CHARACTER TRAITS

Generating a list of keywords "does not in itself constitute an analysis" (Bondi 3) and "only by examining the usage of those keywords can [one] determine whether a keyword has anything to do with characterisation" (Culpeper, "Romeo and Juliet" 18). The characterization of Iago as a deceitful character is carried out by comparing his keywords to the keywords of the other five examined characters. The interpretative analysis of the obtained data is divided into six (interconnected) points of comparison: focus, adjectives, the use of the expression Moor, references to the handkerchief, poisoning-the-ears technique, and pronouns.

### Focus

Iago's top three keywords (1000: single-words), referred to here as the character's focus, are *Roderigo*, *lieutenant*, which refers to Cassio, and *Moor*, which refers to Othello. The three unlucky characters in Iago's focus all end up fighting, wounded and/or dying either of each other's or their own hand, which goes to prove how successful a manipulator Iago is, as this is one of his goals (cf. Beier 39).

Othello's top keywords (1000: single-words), in comparison, show his preoccupation with Iago, as *Iago* is his second top keyword. Furthermore, Othello's first keyword is *thy* which is used predominantly to refer to Iago and Desdemona, or to Emilia, speaking to her about Iago, for example in the often repeated phrase "thy husband". As *honest Iago* is Othello's top multi-word keyword (1000), his preoccupation with and what seems a kind of dependency on Iago can again be interpreted as proof of Iago's successful manipulation of Othello (cf. Arenas 57; Bradley 196–7; Gonzalez 37). Cassio, on the other hand, does not seem to pay much attention to Iago as his top three keywords are *ha*, *drunk* and *reputation*, yet his lack of attention (cf. Bradley 238) makes him just as easy a prey (Gonzalez 46). It is also clear that Cassio ignorantly trusts Iago, as *good Iago* is Cassio's second multi-word (1000) keyword, which again confirms Iago's manipulator status.

### Adjectives

At first glance, some keywords may seem irrelevant for the present analysis yet they prove to be important tools of manipulation when considered in context (Archer and Gillings 252). The adjectives Iago uses point to his manipulative nature as they are either flattering or pejorative, often about the same referent, depending on the situation Iago finds himself in (cf. Jacobsen 507 on Iago's adaptation of his manner of speech to different interlocutors). The group of the

most interesting and relevant keywords for this point are the positive and negative (1000) multi-word keywords.

As pointed out by Archer and Gillings, to disguise his ill intentions regarding Cassio, for instance, Iago cunningly refers to him as *good lieutenant*, but only after he has already revealed his cunning scheme<sup>2</sup> to the audience (253). In this situation the flattering adjective thus clearly points to his manipulative MO (cf. Frost on Iago's increasingly ironic use of *noble lord*). Another subtle proof of his manipulation is the way he describes Desdemona. As he is carefully trying to convince Othello of her infidelity yet retain the façade of good intentions, he calls her *fair Desdemona* and *inclining Desdemona* but never *virtuous Desdemona*, a phrase which we in fact find in his negative keywords. Lastly, adjectives reveal further evidence of his success in Othello's top multi-word keyword (1000): *honest Iago*. This makes it clear that Othello, just like the other characters, trusts him (cf. Bradley 192; Arenas 56; Jacobsen 508; Draper 725–6; Beier 43, 46–7; Rosenberg 152) which is additional proof of his successful manipulation.

## Moor

Not unlike adjectives, the use of the arguably pejorative expression *Moor* by different characters is another interesting feature. As pointed out by Maggie Bayles in "Othello: The 'Other,'" the expression *Moor* functions as an othering device used in tandem with animalistic and hyper-sexualized imagery evident in expressions such as *black ram*<sup>3</sup> and *thicklip* (cf. Roderigo's keywords) to continuously emphasize Othello's position of an outsider. As mentioned above, *Moor* is Iago's third top keyword (1000), as this is a common expression he uses to talk about Othello to other characters. When he is speaking to Othello directly, however, he uses the fourth top multi-word keyword (1000), *noble lord*, again revealing his deceitful nature, as argued already by Frost. Tables 7, 8, and 9 list additional negative keywords (1000, multi-words) for *Moor*.

Table 7: Iago's negative keywords (1000) *multi-words* featuring *Moor*

24	cruel Moor
25	dull Moor
26	lascivious Moor
27	noble Moor
28	o thou dull Moor
29	thou dull Moor

2 "with as little a web as this will I / ensnare as great a fly as Cassio" (2.1.157)

3 "An old black ram / is tuppung your white ewe" (1.1.89–90)

Table 8: Othello's negative keywords (1000) *multi-words* featuring *Moor*

25	cruel Moor
26	dull Moor
27	lascivious Moor
28	lustly Moor
29	noble Moor
30	o thou dull Moor
31	thou dull Moor

Table 9: Cassio's negative keywords (1000) *multi-words* featuring *Moor*

33	cruel Moor
34	dull Moor
35	lascivious Moor
36	lustly Moor
37	noble Moor
38	o thou dull Moor
39	thou dull Moor

As we can see, Iago somewhat carefully only ever uses the expressions *Moor* and *lustly Moor* even when he is speaking to other characters. He is, it seems, always careful not to reveal his villainous nature (cf. Bradley 216; Dachslager 6). If we then examine the usage of other expressions featuring the word *Moor* in the tables above, we see that *lascivious Moor* is used by Roderigo, *noble Moor* interestingly by Desdemona and the rest, *cruel Moor*, *dull Moor*, *o thou dull Moor* and *thou dull Moor* by Emilia. This seems to suggest that it is in fact Iago's wife who dislikes Othello the most. However, as proposed by Culpeper in his "Romeo and Juliet" article, "[a]n important factor ... in determining whether keywords relate to a particular character or not is whether they are localised or well-dispersed throughout the play" (39). Emilia uses all those labels in the final act, where Othello, enraged by jealousy that Iago instills into him, murders Desdemona, so they are rather an expression of her distress in this particular situation (cf. Bradley 240) and not so much a reflection of her general dislike for Othello (cf. Culpeper 2009, 41 with regard to the character of Romeo). What is more interesting although less apparent is that Cassio never, not once, uses the expression *Moor*, which additionally even appears as his thirteenth single-word negative keyword (1000), and only ever refers to Othello as *general*, which is his fourth top single-word keyword (1000). This suggests that Cassio is an honest character and reinforces the interpretation that he is truly devoted to Othello (cf. Bradley 238–9; Gonzalez 39).

## Handkerchief

Further evidence of Iago's successful manipulation, as well as Cassio's ignorance of it, can be found in the presence and absence of the keyword *handkerchief*. The handkerchief is used by Iago to seemingly prove to Othello that Desdemona is having an affair with Cassio yet it does not appear in his keywords. Iago only subtly plants the idea in Othello's – at the time already manipulated and thus suspicious – mind<sup>4</sup> (cf. Bradley 186; Jacobsen 519; Beier 43): "Tell me but this, / Have you not sometimes seen a handkerchief / Spotted with strawberries in your wife's hand?" (3.3.443–5). It is Othello who then becomes preoccupied with it (cf. Beier 41; Gonzalez 47–8): it appears in seventh place among his single-words (1000) keywords. Cassio, however, has no idea about Iago's plan (cf. Bradley 239), which is supported by the fact that *handkerchief* not only does not appear within his positive keywords, but even appears in his negative single-word (1000) keywords and thus emphasizes his ignorance as well as the success of Iago's cunning plan.

## Poisoning the ears

Subtle planting of ideas into other characters' minds seems to be Iago's speciality (cf. Jacobsen 521; Beier 41) and yet additional proof of his cunningness (cf. Arenas 56; Bradley 192; Jacobsen 517) as apparent in his speech (Jacobsen 528; Gonzalez 36–7). This aspect of his subtly manipulative speech (cf. Jacobsen 516) can also be observed in his frequent use of expressions such as *may*, *mark* and *see* (Iago's eleventh positive single-word keyword: 1000), all of which appear on his list of keywords (single-words: 1000), also in combination with *sometimes* (cf. handkerchief), appearing in his rare or lexically-oriented keywords (0.001), which further points to his careful and indirect smooth-talking and manipulation (cf. Jacobsen 502; Beier 40, 43).

Instead of bluntly telling his victims what he wants them to believe, Iago carefully guides them towards certain conclusions in such a way that the victims think they saw everything on their own: "You shall observe him / And his own courses will denote him so / That I may save my speech: do but go after / And mark how he continues" (4.1.229–32). First, he delicately pours the poison, all the while making sure he is efficient yet not too direct: "Foh! one may smell in such a will most rank / Foul disproportion thoughts unnatural / But pardon me; I do not in position / Distinctly speak of her, though I may fear..." (3.3.238–41). Then he provides further guidelines such as: "Didst thou not see her / ... didst not mark that?" (2.1.246–7), or, "I say, but mark his gesture" (4.1.77), "And mark the fleers,

4 "The Moor already changes with my poison" (3.3.335).

the gibes, and notable scorns / That dwell in every region of his face" (4.1.72–3). He thus carefully creates and then controls the situation yet cunningly positions himself outside of it, presenting himself merely as an objective observer.

## Pronouns

A similar technique can also be observed in the most interesting and perhaps the most telling feature of all, Iago's use of pronouns, especially when compared to other characters. Pronouns normally appear in the positive and negative grammatically-oriented single-word keywords (1000000) presented below.

Table 10: Pronouns among positive and negative grammatically-oriented single-word keywords (1000000)

	Iago +	-	Othello+	-	Cassio +	-	Roderigo +	-	Desde- mona +	-	Emilia +	-
1	you	my		you			I		I			
2	he	I		him	me	her		he	my			
3		me	thou	he	I		me			she		
4	his		thy						him	her		
5	him	thou		I							she	me
6						you			me			him
7			she	his				his				
8			her									
9			thee			thy			you			
10			my									I

As proposed by Archer and Gillings, the pronouns are divided into "(singular and plural) self-oriented references and (singular and plural) other-oriented references" (257). The findings confirm their claim that other-oriented references are more typical of deceptive characters as they suggest that the character is "taking the focus away from himself" (261). Especially telling is the fact that the pronoun *I* appears among Iago's negative keywords and his positive keywords consist mostly of other-oriented pronouns such as *you*, *he*, *his* and *him* (ibid.).

In contrast, other, non-deceitful, characters predominantly tend to use self-oriented references, something particularly obvious in Cassio's, Roderigo's and Desdemona's speech, which further supports Archer and Gilling's findings although these three characters were not included in their research. Othello, interestingly, does not use self-oriented pronouns. That, however, is rather the consequence of him being completely taken in by Iago's schemes (cf. Arenas 57). He consequently mainly focuses on Desdemona (*thy*, *she*, *her*). He also tends to focus on Iago, but



in a non-threatening, dependent way. This goes to prove that Iago's cunning and manipulative nature is indeed expressed in his speech and stylistically differentiated from the speech of other, non-deceitful characters.

## CONCLUSION

Keyword analysis is a useful and already established method in the research of stylistic features of language, including when it comes to the characteristics of fictional characters' speech. In this paper keyword analysis is used to determine whether the status of the villainous character Iago from Shakespeare's tragedy *Othello, the Moor of Venice* as a manipulative puppet-master is also reflected in his speech-style. This is confirmed on the basis of six points of discussion: focus, adjectives, use of the expression *Moor*, references to the handkerchief, poisoning-the-ears technique, and pronouns. While keyword analysis is a form of computer-assisted research and the interpretation of the data requires a certain amount of subjectivity, all of the discussed features show that Iago's cunning nature is indeed reflected in his speech and that there is a clear difference between his speech-style and the speech-styles of other, non-deceitful, prominent characters, especially Othello and Cassio.

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### **»Tisto pa več nisem jaz«<sup>5</sup>: korpusna analiza Jaga iz Shakespearove tragedije *Othello***

Prispevek na podlagi analize ključnih besed obravnava Jaga iz Shakespearovega *Othella*. Namen prispevka je raziskati, kako se v Jagovem načinu govora odraža njegova manipulativna narava in kako se njegov govor potemtakem razlikuje od govora nemanipulativnih osrednjih likov, in sicer Othella, Cassia, Roderiga, Desdemone in Emilije. Diskusija temelji na analizi ključnih besed posameznih dramskih likov z orodjem Sketch Engine in je razdeljena na šest medsebojno povezanih delov: fokus, raba pridevnikov, raba izraza *Maver*, omemba Desdemoninega robčka, Jagova tehnika zastrupljanja ušes in raba zaimkov. Raziskava potrjuje, da se Jagova manipulativna narava resnično zrcali v njegovem govoru, ta pa se tudi jasno razlikuje od govora ostalih obravnavanih likov.

**Ključne besede:** karakterizacija, korpusno jezikoslovje, analiza ključnih besed, *Othello*, William Shakespeare, Jago

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5 Shakespeare, William. *Othello*. Trans. Milan Jesih. Mladinska knjiga, 1996.