

## Narrative descriptions in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga*. A corpus stylistics perspective

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**Abstract.** The present study draws on corpus stylistics (cf. [38]; [19]; [26]; [20], to name a few) to investigate the narrative style in Stephenie Meyer's *The Twilight Saga* (2005-2008). In particular, it focuses on keywords generated using *Wordsmith Tools version 7* [36], and the BNC as a reference corpus. Qualitative and quantitative analyses show that the most frequent lexical words (nouns, adjectives, and verbs) reflect the writer's focus on carefully selected physical elements of the characters. More specifically, the nouns preferentially denote specific physical attributes of the characters, the adjectives provide a general description of the protagonists and the setting, while the verbs used present the actions of all the characters, their interaction with the other protagonists, and their position in the narrative situation.

Lo studio qui presentato presenta metodi di corpus stylistics (cf. [38]; [19]; [26]; [20]) per investigare lo stile narrativo di Stephenie Meyer in *The Twilight Saga* (2005-2008). In particolare lo studio si basa sulle keyword generato da *Wordsmith Tools version 7* [36] e BNC come corpus di riferimento. Analisi quantitative e qualitative dimostrano come i termini più frequenti riflettano l'attenzione dell'autore verso dettagli fisici dei personaggi. In particolare, i nomi denotano attributi fisici, gli aggettivi caratterizzano personaggi e ambientazione, mentre i verbi presentano le azioni dei personaggi, la loro interazione e la loro collocazione nella narrazione.

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Stephanie Meyers' *Twilight Saga* is regarded as a popular-culture phenomenon which has attracted the attention not only of the media but also of the academic community. Academics (e.g. Anatol [1]; Morey [27]) have described the themes of the books, identified its intertextual links with other novels, criticized Meyers' deviation from the conventions of the Vampire Tale, but, to the best of the authors' knowledge, they seem to have neglected stylistic analyses of the

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<sup>1</sup> The research is the result of a joint effort of the two authors. However, Francesca Coccetta wrote Sections 1 and 2, while Daniela Cesiri wrote Sections 3 to 5.

Saga from a linguistic perspective. Yet style, defined by Leech and Short ([22]: 9) as “the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose, and so on”, can contribute to the success of a book [2].

Stylistics, as a branch of linguistic studies, adopts the theoretical and methodological principles of modern linguistics to analyze particularly literary and highly creative texts. *Inter alia*, stylistics aims to pinpoint a text’s features which distinguish it from other texts as well as an author from one or more other authors. It also explores the linguistic choices made by writers in their texts and the particular effects and impressions they produce in readers. Examples of stylistic analyses can be found in Spitzer [42], Halliday [17] and Leech and Short [21], just to mention a few. In the pre-computer era, stylistic analyses were carried out manually, which made it difficult to identify the specific linguistic features across a whole text or collections of texts [44]. In addition, they focused on a few carefully selected linguistic features, thus raising doubts about their objectivity (e.g. Fish [14]). With the advent of corpus stylistics, that is the use of corpus linguistics methods of analysis to the study of literary texts, empirical evidence for the linguistic features creating these effects can now be easily provided. The present study draws on corpus stylistics to investigate the style associated with *The Twilight Saga*. In particular, it aims to explore whether particularly crafty linguistic choices can be said to create original stylistic effects.

### Literature review

In the last decades, stylistic analysis of literary texts has benefited from corpus linguistics methodologies which have provided evidence in support of stylistic judgements. Corpus stylistics, as this sub-branch of stylistics is called, has facilitated the identification of particular effects produced in literary texts as varied as novels, drama and poetry. One of the basic tenets of stylistics is that writers’ creative ways of using language basically consists in deviations from linguistic norms. In this respect, Stubbs ([46]: 5) affirms that:

individual texts can be explained only against a background of what is normal and expected in general language use, and this is precisely the comparative information that quantitative corpus data can provide.

As a result, a text’s stylistic features can be identified by its comparison with other texts. As Mahlberg ([24]: 221) states, corpus stylistics

help[s] with the analysis of an individual text by providing various options for the comparison of one text with groups of other texts to identify tendencies, intertextual relationships, or reflections of social and cultural contexts.

Corpus-stylistic studies have adopted three main approaches [3] which focus on keywords, collocations and clusters. In corpus linguistics, keyword analysis compares and contrasts the

frequency of the words in a given corpus with the frequency of the same words in a reference corpus [35]. The words occurring with unusual frequency, or 'keyness', in that corpus, are indeed keywords. In literary studies, keyword analysis has been used to investigate characterization (i.e. the way in which a fictional character is constructed) and a text's subject matter (or 'aboutness', [35]). But keyword analysis can also provide information about a text's style. In this respect, Culpeper [11] observes that keywords correspond to 'style markers' in stylometry, which are defined as "those linguistic items that only appear, or are most or least frequent in, one group of contexts" ([13]: 34).

The use of keywords for a text's stylistic description is well illustrated by studies into Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Culpeper ([9], [11]), for instance, analyses characterization in *Romeo and Juliet*. In particular, he considers how the six characters who speak the most in the play, namely Romeo, Juliet, Friar Lawrence, Nurse, Capulet and Mercutio, are shaped in their speech. To do so, he compiles six corpora, each consisting of the speech produced by one of the above-mentioned characters, and compares and contrasts each corpus with the speech of the other five characters. Culpeper analyzes the keywords of each character and observes predictable and unpredictable findings. For example, Romeo's frequent use of the words 'beauty' and 'love' comes as no surprise. By contrast, Juliet's frequent use of the grammatical words 'if', 'yet', 'or', 'would' and 'be' (mostly subjunctive) is not as easily predictable. In Culpeper's view, these can be interpreted as indication of her constant state of anxiety throughout the tragedy.

Research into *Romeo and Juliet* from a corpus stylistic perspective is carried out by Scott and Tribble [37], too. In their study, they analyze the keyword list of the tragedy by using all Shakespeare's plays (tragedies, comedies and histories) as a reference corpus. The keyword list provides words reflecting the play's theme (i.e. its aboutness). A case in point are the words 'love', 'lips', 'light', 'night', 'death' and 'poison'. For example, 'love' and 'death' clearly signal the main subject of the play, that is the love between Romeo and Juliet and their death – in passing we may recall that Romeo dies by drinking poison which is one of the keywords identified by Scott and Tribble [37]. The keywords 'light' and 'dark' provide evidence of the widespread use of the imagery of light and dark discussed by many academics including the literary critic Spurgeon [43]. In addition, the keyword list provides words reflecting the play's style. This is illustrated by the exclamations 'Ah' and 'O', the pronoun 'thou', the verbs 'art' (the second person singular form of 'be') and 'wilt', and the pronoun 'she'. Scott and Tribble's analysis shows that the exclamations are unevenly distributed among the characters: Juliet, Romeo and the Nurse are those who use them the most; in addition, some minor characters, particularly Peter, the Nurse's personal servant, use them more than one might expect. Moreover, the exclamations 'Ah' and 'Oh' – whose occurrence has also been commented on by literary critics (e.g. Crystal, [8]; Blake [5]) – are both used in mockery; also, 'Ah' is more frequent in a negative context (e.g. "*Ah, well a'day he's dead*") than 'O' is (e.g. *O sweet Juliet*). Instead, the use of 'art' after 'thou' "reflect[s] the intimate nature of the theme" ([37]: 60).

As Scott and Tribble's study demonstrates, corpus linguistics can help literary critics provide more thorough insights into the use of language in a text. This is highlighted by Stubbs [46] in his study on Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Specifically, he illustrates that the use of corpus-

linguistics methods of analysis can provide quantitative data to support the subjective interpretations of a book already widely accepted in literary studies, but also identify linguistic features overlooked by stylisticians. In particular, Stubbs considers, *inter alia*, vague expressions and word distribution. Literary critics (e.g. Watt [47]) have observed that one of the major themes of the book is Marlow's unreliable and distorted knowledge and pointed out that this theme is detectable in the frequent use of content words from the lexical field of mist (e.g. 'dusk', 'fog', 'haze', 'mist/misty', 'smoke') as well the adjectives 'vague' and 'indistinct'. However, Stubbs demonstrates that this is also conveyed by grammatical words denoting vagueness and uncertainty including 'something', 'somebody', 'sometimes', 'somewhere', 'somehow', 'some', 'kind of' and 'sort of'. Considering that word distribution can reveal something about the text structure, Stubbs observes that the words 'heart', 'dark' and 'darkness' are present throughout the book, but more frequent at the end "when the story almost becomes *too dark – too dark altogether*" ([46]: 12, italics in the original).

Similarly to Stubbs [46], O'Halloran (2007) analyses James Joyce's short story *Eveline*, showing how corpus stylistics "can help say new things about a canonical and much analyzed literary work" ([34]: 228) in an objective way. In his view, this reduces the arbitrariness that typically characterizes stylistic analyses and interpretations, even the most rigorous ones. In his study, O'Halloran considers the distribution of the following keywords across the three major phases of the story identified by the critic Hart [18] and confirmed by Stubbs' [45] software analysis of the story: 1) the pronouns 'she' and 'her', used to refer to Eveline only; and 2) 'would' used to realize free indirect thought. He compares the log likelihoods of these keywords with BNC-baby and reaches the conclusion that they act as implicit clues in the story indicating that Eveline is unlikely to leave Dublin for Buenos Aires.

Another approach used in corpus-stylistic studies focuses on collocation, that is the frequent co-occurrence of two words within a given span. Collocations create connotations or semantic prosody [40], that is, evaluative meanings which are either positive or negative. Semantic prosody helps explain the stylistic effect of a given expression as illustrated by Louw [23]. An example of analysis of semantic prosody is provided in the above-mentioned study carried out by Stubbs [46] on *Heart of Darkness*. He shows that the word 'glitter' collocates with 'dark', 'sombre', 'gloom' and 'infernal stream', and 'gleam' collocates with 'blood' and 'fire', thus connotating dangerous and ominous things.

One final approach adopted by corpus-stylistic studies relies on the notion of cluster<sup>2</sup> [35], that is a repeated sequence of words. Again, Stubbs' [46] study is a good example of cluster analysis in literary texts. He observes that the top four-word clusters relate to Marlow's uncertainty (e.g. 'it seemed to me' and 'as though I had') and geographical space (e.g. 'the depths of the'), central themes of the book. Another example is to be found in the work by Mahlberg [25]. She argues that "clusters can be interpreted as textual building blocks for fictional worlds" ([25]: 26) and shows the validity of her argument in her study on Charles Dickens's fiction [25] with respect to characterization. Her findings show that some clusters contain expressions referring to characters as is the case of 'inspector bucket of the detective' and 'man with the wooden leg'.

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2 The term 'cluster' corresponds to Biber *et al.*'s [4] 'lexical bundle' and to Fletcher's [16] 'n-gram', namely sequences of words.

Another example of cluster analysis is Fisher-Starcke's [15] work on Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, where she investigates four-word clusters and their role in structuring the text. In particular, she identifies clusters expressing temporal sequence (e.g. 'at the same time', 'in the course of', 'as soon as they' and 'as soon as he') and the speed of the events which occur in quick succession. The clusters 'I do not know', 'I am sure I', 'and I dare say', 'I am sure you' and 'I hope you will' indicate the key role of direct speech characterized by the self-referentiality expressed by the personal pronoun 'I' typical of spoken discourse. Fisher-Starcke also observes the occurrence of different personal pronouns in the clusters which indicate the use of the omniscient narrator.

The above studies show that corpus linguistics methods are fruitfully applied to the investigation of stylistic features of literary texts. Drawing on these studies, the present research examines stylistic features of *The Twilight Saga*. In particular, it adopts the quantitative and qualitative approach to the study of keywords that are found in the four books of the Saga.

## Corpus and Methodology

### *The Twilight Saga*

The four books composing *The Twilight Saga* by Stephenie Meyer were published between 2005 and 2008. Since the publication of the first book, the series has become extremely popular among the readers it was first aimed at, i.e. young adults. Indeed, the literary genre in which it can be categorized is the young-adult, vampire-themed novel. The book series became so popular that it was adapted into five movies, hitting immediate box office success, thus becoming a literary as well as a blockbuster case.

The plot narrates the love story between a human teenage girl, Isabella (Bella) Swan, and vampire Edward Cullen, who looks like a teenage boy himself but is actually more than 100 years old. The story develops around the fulfillment of the romance between the two main characters as well as around the many obstacles they face in both the humans' and the vampires' world. The story is narrated mostly from Bella's viewpoint except for one part in the fourth book, which is narrated from the standpoint of Jacob Black, a werewolf and Bella's best friend.

Both the book series and the movie saga have encountered positive and negative reception. The book series became popular among the public of teenage readers (mostly girls). However, it has also attracted harsh criticism. Literary critics writing for newspapers such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and some websites have disparaged its plot development and poor personality characterization of the protagonists. According to Miller [32],

the characters, such as they are, are stripped down to a minimum, lacking the texture and idiosyncrasies of actual people [...]. *Twilight* would be a lot more persuasive as an argument that an 'amazing heart' counts for more than appearances if it didn't harp so

incessantly on Edward's superficial splendors.

Moreover, academics as well have analyzed the Saga, mostly criticizing its promotion and romanticization of an abusive relationship among young girls. For instance, Collins & Carmody ([7]: 389-390) state that

the presentation of these behaviors in popular fiction clearly does not cause dating violence. However, it is troubling when one of the most popular book series in recent history repeatedly normalizes, minimizes, and romanticizes these behaviors. It reinforces cultural norms that condone men's use of force to obtain a variety of goals.

### *Aims and procedure*

The present study collects into a corpus the four books of the Saga to investigate them from a quantitative and a qualitative viewpoint, using the software for corpus analysis *Wordsmith Tools Version 7.0* [36]. The quantitative analysis identifies the most frequently occurring keywords, subsequently divided according to grammatical categories such as nouns, adjectives, and verbs. Then, the qualitative analysis looks at the context and co-text of occurrence of the individual items. The aim is to find out narrative patterns emerging from Meyer's books in order to understand if the criticism against the books comes from their actual characteristics or from a biased view of the series.

## **Data Analysis**

### *Quantitative Analysis*

The quantitative part of the analysis uses as reference corpus the BNC (British National Corpus) [6]. It is a wide corpus of general English, comprising samples of written and spoken language, compiled between the 1990s and 2007. Despite the fact that the BNC is a corpus of British English, it was nonetheless chosen because it was considered more appropriate as a reference corpus than other corpora available for American English.

First, we can mention the Open National American Corpus (ONAC). It can be searched through *SketchEngine* (<http://www.sketchengine.eu>), an online platform for corpus investigation, which also permits the upload of one's 'personal' corpus as well as the creation of wordlists and keywords, just like *Wordsmith Tools*, using as reference corpora that are already available on the platform itself. However, the ONAC is divided into two separate sections, one for the spoken component and the other one for the written components. *The Twilight Saga* books contain narrative parts as well as a consistent amount of dialogue, supposedly reproducing spontaneous speech. Thus, it was important to have spoken and written language represented into one, single reference corpus. Moreover, works of fiction represent only 5% of the written component of the ONAC (<http://www.anc.org/data/masc/corpus/>), while in the

BNC fiction represents 27% of the corpus (<http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/docs/URG/BNCdes.html#BNCcompo>).

Another corpus of American English is the COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English). COCA “contains more than 560 million words of text (20 million words each year 1990-2017) and it is equally divided among spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic texts” (<https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/>). So, it would have been the ideal candidate as reference corpus. However, the corpus is accessible, and can be searched, only through its dedicated website, which does not permit the comparison of data with other corpora, as is the case of the Wordlist and Keyword tools in *Wordsmith Tools* and in *SketchEngine*. Thus, for the reasons just stated, neither ONAC nor COCA were considered viable for this study.

	Twilight Saga	BNC
Tokens	626,799	97,860,872
Types	15,699	512,588
Type/Token Ratio	2.50	0.52
STTR	41.69	42.66
Average word length	4.04	4.68
Number of sentences	60,974	4,754,513
Average sentence length	22.54	20.59

Table 1: Quantitative data from *The Twilight Saga* book series

Table 1 illustrates the quantitative data of the two corpora. As we can see, the STTR (Standardized Type-Token Ratio) in *The Twilight Saga* corpus indicates that it is lexically dense, namely rich in word use. Moreover, the average word length shows that the words are quite long. This means that they are content words, confirming the first interpretation of the STTR figure. The last row in Table 1 shows that the average sentence length in *The Twilight Saga* corpus is higher than in the reference corpus. This indicates that the sentences are long, a feature that, according to de Haan and van Esch ([12]: 198), is typical of “a more formal style”.

In sum, quantitative data from *The Twilight Saga* corpus indicate that the writing style presents a complex construction of long sentences rich in content words. This might be explained by the fact that the book is narrated from Bella’s point of view; indeed, it is rich in descriptions from her perspective, narrations of memories, soliloquies, and does not report a great amount of dialogues between the characters, as the following quotation from the first book of the *Saga* ([28]: 163) exemplifies:

“A very dangerous one,” he murmured. We were both silent then. I watched the headlights twist with the curves of the road. They moved too fast; it didn’t look real, it looked like a video game. I was aware of the time slipping away so quickly, like the black

road beneath us, and I was hideously afraid that I would never have another chance to be with him like this again – openly, the walls between us gone for once. His words hinted at an end, and I recoiled from the idea. I couldn't waste one minute I had with him.

As we can see from the example, brief lines of dialogue are followed by longer parts, in which Bella describes her thoughts and reflections on the situation. Moreover the vampire characters engage in long conversations, especially when they need to discuss their strategy of defense or offence when they fear an attack from enemy clans of vampires, as in the following example ([30]: 389), in which one of the members of Edward's family, Jasper, expresses his opinion on some attacks and threats that were posed to Bella's safety:

"Hmm," he finally said. "It's possible. I still think the Volturi are most likely ... But your theory – there's something there. Victoria's personality. Your theory suits her personality perfectly. She's shown a remarkable gift for self-preservation from the start – maybe it's a talent of hers. In any case, this plot would put her in no danger at all from us, if she sits safely behind and lets the newborns wreak their havoc here. And maybe little danger from the Volturi, either. Perhaps she's counting on us to win, in the end, though certainly not without heavy casualties of our own. But no survivors from her little army to bear witness against her. In fact," he continued, thinking it through, "if there were survivors, I'd bet she'd be planning to destroy them herself.... Hmm. Still, she'd have to have at least one friend who was a bit more mature. No fresh-made newborn left your father alive...."

### *Qualitative Analysis*

The qualitative analysis proceeded from the extraction of the twenty most frequent lexical words found through the corpus search. It must be said that clusters were also taken into consideration, as one of the approaches normally found in corpus stylistics (see Literature review). However, for *The Twilight Saga* the search for clusters did not produce relevant results to be considered for analysis in the present study. First of all, a list of keywords was generated by using *Wordsmith Tools Version 7.0* and, then, from this list the most frequent nouns, lexical verbs and adjectives were chosen. The analysis concentrated on the twenty most recurrent items for each category, as Table 2 illustrates, with the items in each group listed in order of frequency as they appear in the keyword list.

Nouns	Proper nouns: Edward, Jacob, Bella, Alice, Charlie, Carlisle, Jasper, Sam Common nouns: eyes, face, voice, head, hand, door, room, hands, expression, arms, moment, sound
Adjectives	hard, dark, wrong, deep, sorry, cold, alone, fine, perfect, afraid, quiet, strange, beautiful, warm, fast, safe, empty, angry, calm, stupid
Verbs	ask*, look*, felt, knew, seem*, turn*, tell, try*, fell, whisper*, stare*, tried, want*, sigh*, hear*, smile*, pull*, laugh*, start*, shook

Table 2: Twenty most frequent lexical words from the corpus

The wildcard asterisk (\*) in the verb row was used to extract any possible variant form from the corpus. A categorization of the three groups of lexical words was adopted to help the detection of the lexical choices made by Stephenie Meyer. This categorization was also functional to the analysis of collocates in the concordance search of the corpus. More specifically, the group of nouns contains the two categories of proper and common nouns, while Biber et al. [4] was consulted to identify the categories of the adjectives and lexical verbs retrieved in the corpus (as explained in the paragraphs below).

As Table 2 shows, the most frequent proper nouns used in *The Twilight Saga* are, unsurprisingly, those of the main characters: the three main protagonists (i.e. Edward, Jacob and Bella), Bella's father (Charlie), the members of Edward's family (i.e. Alice, Carlisle and Jasper), and one of the werewolves (Sam). What is interesting to notice is that, although it is Bella's voice that narrates the story, her name appears in third position, close to the names of Edward and Jacob. In this case, the occurrence of her name is probably due not to its use in narrative passages, but as an 'address' term, namely when the other characters address Bella directly in the dialogues, as in the sentence: "'Bella,' she [Bella's mother] wrote... Why haven't you e-mailed me yet? What are you waiting for? Mom" ([28]: 33).

The adjectives identified as most frequent in the corpus mostly fall under the category of 'descriptors' ([4]: 598-599), which include the semantic groupings of adjectives denoting color/brightness, size-quantity-extent (denoting size, weight, extent), time (denoting chronology, age, frequency), and evaluative/emotive (denoting judgements, affect, emphasis). As we can see in Table 2, the most recurrent adjectives in *The Twilight Saga* are those belonging to the grouping of color (e.g. 'dark'), thus indicating the external features of the reality experienced by Bella, and those belonging to the grouping of evaluative/emotive, indicating Bella's perception of people, events and situations (such as 'sorry', 'alone', 'afraid').

In the case of verbs, too, the most frequent ones are 'experiential verbs', namely those that narrate Bella's perception of events. Using Biber *et al.*'s ([4]: 361-364) terminology, we can see that they include verbs that belong to 'activity verbs' referring to actions and events with an agent (e.g., 'turn', 'stare'), 'communication verbs' referring to communication activities such as speaking and writing (such as 'ask' and 'whisper'), 'mental verbs' pertaining non-physical activities and states (such as 'laugh', 'sigh'), 'verbs of existence or relationship' (e.g., 'seem'), and 'aspectual verbs' indicating the progress of some event or activity (e.g., 'start').

### Collocations

The qualitative analysis subsequently considered the collocates that accompany the three categories of lexical words in Table 2. The concordances thus generated showed interesting results for a restricted number of words, mostly adjectives and nouns. For the present analysis, a few case studies were selected to illustrate the narrative style in *The Twilight Saga*, namely the noun 'eyes', and the pairs of adjectives 'black'/'dark' and 'cold'/'warm'. These (pairs of) terms were selected because they appeared to the writers of the present study to be relevant to recurrent thematic foci of the novel. In particular, the noun 'eyes' was chosen because Meyer

devotes a great deal of effort to describe the color of the protagonists' eyes, how it changes in the vampires and how this is in contrast with humans' eyes. The adjectives 'cold/warm' were selected because the text makes frequent reference to the contrast between the human body's warmth and the coldness of the vampires' touch, or the scenes when Bella searches for warmth in contrast to the outdoors inclement weather in the town of Forks (WA, where the books are set). Finally, 'black/dark' were selected because the author lingers on the description of gloomy atmosphere to provide a sort of 'gothic-like' aura to the books, meeting the readers' expectations towards a vampire-themed novel. The aim of the analysis of the concordances referring to these node words was to ascertain if – and to what extent – the insistence of the author on the development of specific themes was reflected linguistically in her narrative descriptions.

### *Eyes*

As already mentioned, the books contain constant remarks to the characters' eye color. The concordance search showed that the noun 'eyes' preferably collocates with description adjectives belonging to the categories of 'color' (Examples from 1 to 3) and 'evaluative/emotive' (Examples from 4 to 6, emphases added):<sup>3</sup>

- 1. His [Mike's] **clear blue eyes** were not as eager now (*New Moon*);
- 2. I could see Victoria's face, her lips pulled back over her teeth, her **crimson eyes** glowing with the obsession of her vendetta (*Eclipse*);
- 3. His [Edward's] **liquid topaz eyes** were suddenly shining with excitement (*Eclipse*);
- 4. Billy still stared at me with **intense, anxious eyes** (*Twilight*);
- 5. Emmett's laughter stopped at once, and he studied me with **appraising eyes** (*Eclipse*).
- 6. Edward nodded, his **tense eyes** following Eleazar as he spoke (*Breaking Dawn*).

As we can see from Examples (1) to (3) above, the description of the color is only functional to the portrayal of some specific emotion expressed by the character, whereas Examples (4) to (6) show that, whenever the emotion prevails over any physical description, the color of the eyes is not mentioned. This is particularly relevant in the case of the vampire characters, since their changeable eye color is often used by Meyer to express some kind of emotion (as in Example 2).

### *Cold/Warm*

The analysis of collocates shows that, in the pair of adjectives 'cold'/'warm', 'cold' is used to describe the weather and the vampires (Examples 7 and 8), while 'warm' refers to the warmth

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<sup>3</sup> In the examples provided here, and in the next subsections, the boldface highlights the specific collocates in which the selected keywords occur in the corpus.

of the humans and the werewolves (Examples 9 and 10):

- 7. The door opened again, and the **cold wind** suddenly gusted through the room (*Twilight*);
- 8. Alice interrupted this time, touching my cheek with her **cold fingers** (*Twilight*);
- 9. He [Jacob] took my face in his enormous, **too-warm hands** and held it just a few inches from his (*New Moon*);
- 10. His [Edward's] **skin** was **as icy as ever**, but the trail his fingers left on **my skin was alarmingly warm** (*Twilight*).

Example (8) reported above refers to fingers, but the concordances show that reference to the cold body of the vampires is given to other individual parts such as 'hands', 'breath', and 'lips' rather than to the body as a whole. As we can see in Example (10), in particular, 'warm' is used to contrast Bella's temperature with Edward's and to refer to the werewolves (in human and wolf form), as in Example 9.

### *Black/Dark*

The different uses of 'black'/'dark' in the book series are illustrated in Examples (11) to (15):

- 11. In his [Jacob's] place was a large red-brown wolf with **black eyes** (*Twilight*);
- 12. There's much that we need." His **black eyes** flickered to the cup that Bella was holding so tight (*Breaking Dawn*);
- 13. He [Jacob] slowed the car to a crawl, turning to stare at me with his **dark eyes wide and earnest** (*Eclipse*).
- 14. His [Jacob's] **dark eyes were glistening with tears**. A lump filled my throat (*New Moon*).
- 15. He [Edward] was glaring down at me again, his **black eyes full of revulsion** (*Twilight*).

As the examples illustrates, the collocations show that 'black' is used for the purely physical description of the color of the eyes (as in 11 and 12), while 'dark' is used to describe the color of the eyes when this is typically associated to a situation in which there is some emotional connotation (as in 13 and 14). The only exception is represented by Example 15, in which the adjective 'black' together with some emotional state is used when the character is described for the first time.

## Conclusions

The present study illustrated one of the practical applications of corpus stylistics to the investigation of literary works, namely the analysis of keywords and their collocates in the corpus under investigation. When the vampire-themed saga for young adults *Twilight* was first published, it attracted harsh criticism despite its success among the public of teenage readers. As stated in *Section 3*, some sociologists attacked its romantic portrayal of an abusive relationship that could set a negative example in such a young public, while literary critics attacked the books for their lack of in-depth characters' analysis and poor plot development. The aim of the study was to ascertain if a corpus-based linguistic investigation could confirm or reject the critics' opinions.

The keyword and collocation analysis established that the narrative choices present in *The Twilight Saga* are predictable and reflect the first impression that a reader gets from reading the books. The main focus of the descriptions is on the characters' external perception of physical attributes rather than inner qualities, as shown by the use of nouns such as 'eyes', 'face', and 'expression' (Table 2). Even the perception of emotions is filtered through the description of body parts such as the eyes, the appearance, and the reactions of the characters. In conclusion, the present analysis basically provides support for critics' interpretations ([32]; [7]), namely that the Saga's success was due to a clever marketing campaign rather than to its intrinsic literary merits.

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