LEXICAL PATTERNING IN SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDIES: A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS USING SKETCH ENGINE THROUGH THE LENS OF LEXICAL PRIMING THEORY

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 ABSTRACT
This study investigates lexical patterning in selected Shakespearean plays (All's Well That Ends Well, The Merchant of Venice, Julius Caesar, and Hamlet) using corpus-based tools, with a theoretical lens drawn from Michael Hoey's Lexical Priming Theory. By constructing a customized corpus in Sketch Engine, the study focuses on key lexical items—love, grief, father, sad, good, and hate—to analyze frequency, collocational patterns, parts of speech, and n-grams. The analysis reveals how repeated exposure to specific lexical items contributes to meaning-making, character construction, and thematic development in Shakespearean tragedies. The findings aim to provide deeper cognitive and linguistic insight into Shakespeare's stylistic use of language, with implications for literary interpretation and digital humanities research.

Keywords Lexical Priming, Shakespeare, Corpus Linguistics, Sketch Engine, Lexical Patterning

INTRODUCTION
William Shakespeare's plays, celebrated for their poetic richness and psychological depth, offer a fertile ground for linguistic exploration. While traditional literary criticism has long focused on thematic and symbolic interpretations, modern advancements in corpus linguistics now allow for a more systematic, data-driven approach to textual analysis. This study employs Sketch Engine to conduct a corpus-based investigation into four of Shakespeare's plays—*All's Well That Ends Well*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Hamlet*—with a focus on the lexical behavior of the words *love, grief, father, sad, good,* and *hate*. Guided by Michael Hoey's Lexical Priming Theory, the research aims to uncover how repeated patterns in word usage contribute to thematic development, character construction, and audience perception. By integrating literary analysis with linguistic methodology, this study offers a fresh perspective on the cognitive and stylistic dimensions of Shakespeare's language.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY
William Shakespeare's plays continue to be rich grounds for literary and linguistic inquiry. Traditional close reading has long dominated Shakespearean scholarship, but recent advances in corpus linguistics offer new perspectives on language patterning. The use of digital tools such as Sketch Engine allows researchers to examine large quantities of linguistic data quickly, uncovering patterns not readily observable through manual analysis.

One such perspective is offered by Lexical Priming Theory (Hoey, 2005), which posits that each word is mentally "primed" through repeated exposure in particular contexts. In Shakespeare's tragedies and comedies, certain words like *love* or *hate* acquire layered meanings through repetition and positioning across characters, scenes, and plot arcs. A corpus-based study rooted in lexical priming can, therefore, uncover deeper cognitive and stylistic strategies embedded in the texts.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although Shakespeare's plays have been analyzed extensively through literary criticism, there is a lack of studies using corpus linguistic approaches to understand how specific lexical items are patterned and primed in the text. There is also a gap in applying Lexical Priming Theory to classical literature, particularly to a curated corpus of Shakespeare's plays. This study addresses these gaps by analyzing the lexical behaviors of six semantically loaded words in four plays, revealing the

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study provides a novel application of Lexical Priming Theory to Shakespeare's works, using corpus linguistics tools like Sketch Engine to analyze high-frequency words and their thematic roles across tragedies and tragicomedies. By examining lexical patterns such as collocations, n-grams, and lemmas, it uncovers how repeated word choices prime audience expectations and contribute to character development, emotional depth, and thematic exploration. This approach offers a data-driven perspective on Shakespeare's linguistic artistry, bridging literary analysis with digital humanities, and provides valuable insights into the cognitive mechanisms underlying Shakespeare's use of language in shaping his plays.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To analyze the lexical patterning (frequency, collocations, n-grams, parts of speech, and lemmas) of the words *love, grief, father, sad, good,* and *hate* in four selected plays by William Shakespeare using Sketch Engine.
- To examine how lexical priming influences reader interpretation through recurring language patterns in Shakespearean tragedies.
- To apply Lexical Priming Theory to uncover the cognitive-linguistic structure of Shakespeare's stylistic choices.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the frequency, collocations, n-grams, lemmas, and parts of speech associated with the selected words in the corpus of four Shakespearean plays?
2. How do lexical priming patterns contribute to meaning-making and thematic development in the selected texts?
3. In what ways does Lexical Priming Theory enhance our understanding of Shakespeare's language use from a cognitive-linguistic perspective?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in Lexical Priming Theory developed by Michael Hoey (2005). According to Hoey, every word is primed through encounters in specific contexts, influencing future usage in terms of collocation, colligation (grammatical behavior), and semantic association. This theory aligns well with the use of Sketch Engine, which helps identify these patterns in large text datasets. Applying this theory to Shakespearean plays allows us to uncover how readers are cognitively guided through primed lexical choices that contribute to thematic coherence and stylistic richness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hoey (2005) argues that lexical priming is a psychological process shaped by frequency, grammatical position, and collocational context (p. 8). This theory forms the core of the current study's analysis. By examining how repeated exposure to words like *love* or *hate* shapes

interpretive expectations, the theory bridges the gap between corpus linguistics and cognitive literary studies.

Mahlberg (2007) highlights the potential of corpus stylistics in literary studies, especially through identifying frequent lexical patterns in narrative texts (p. 220). Her work provides a methodological parallel to this study, which uses Sketch Engine to analyze lexical features in Shakespearean drama.

Culpeper (2009) offers a detailed corpus-based analysis of Shakespeare's characters and argues that collocational behaviors reveal much about character construction and interpersonal dynamics (p. 87). This supports the second research objective of we—to examine how lexical patterning contributes to meaning-making.

Semino and Short (2004) focus on speech and thought representation in narrative fiction, underlining how linguistic structures reflect deeper cognitive processing (p. 45). Their insights align with this study's attention to semantic association and grammatical patterning.

McIntyre (2012) combines corpus linguistics with literary interpretation and emphasizes that integrating digital tools with literary theory enhances precision in stylistic analysis (p. 134). This directly justifies the use of Sketch Engine as a corpus tool in this research.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive-analytical corpus-based design, where the primary goal is to identify, analyze, and interpret lexical patterns using linguistic software. The design aligns with qualitative content analysis, enriched with quantitative frequency data from corpus tools.

The research is theoretically grounded in Lexical Priming Theory (Hoey, 2005), which emphasizes repeated lexical exposure and its role in shaping language behavior. The theory is used to interpret the patterns revealed through corpus analysis, particularly regarding collocation, colligation, and semantic association. A specialized corpus was manually compiled using four plays by William Shakespeare: *All's Well That Ends Well, The Merchant of Venice, Julius Caesar, Hamlet.* These plays were selected for their thematic range (comedy and tragedy) and lexical richness. The texts were cleaned, formatted in plain text, and uploaded to Sketch Engine for linguistic analysis.

The full texts of the four Shakespearean plays sourced from public-domain archives like Project Gutenberg. Scholarly literature on Lexical Priming, corpus linguistics, and Shakespearean studies

Sketch Engine was used to perform: Keyword in Context (KWIC) analysis, Frequency analysis Part-of-speech tagging, Lemma mapping, N-gram extraction

Specific focus was placed on the words *love, grief, father, sad, good,* and *hate*, assessing how these terms function syntactically and semantically across the corpus.

DATA ANALYSIS

This research investigates the lexical patterning of emotionally and thematically significant words in four selected Shakespearean plays—*All's Well That Ends Well*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Hamlet*. Using Sketch Engine, a specialized corpus was built to extract quantitative and qualitative linguistic data focusing on six core lexical items: *love, grief, father, sad, good,* and *hate*. Through the lens of Michael Hoey's Lexical Priming Theory (2005), the study examines how the repeated use of these words across different contexts contributes to thematic development and audience priming. The following chapter presents the results of this analysis, offering visual and interpretive insights into Shakespeare's lexical strategies.
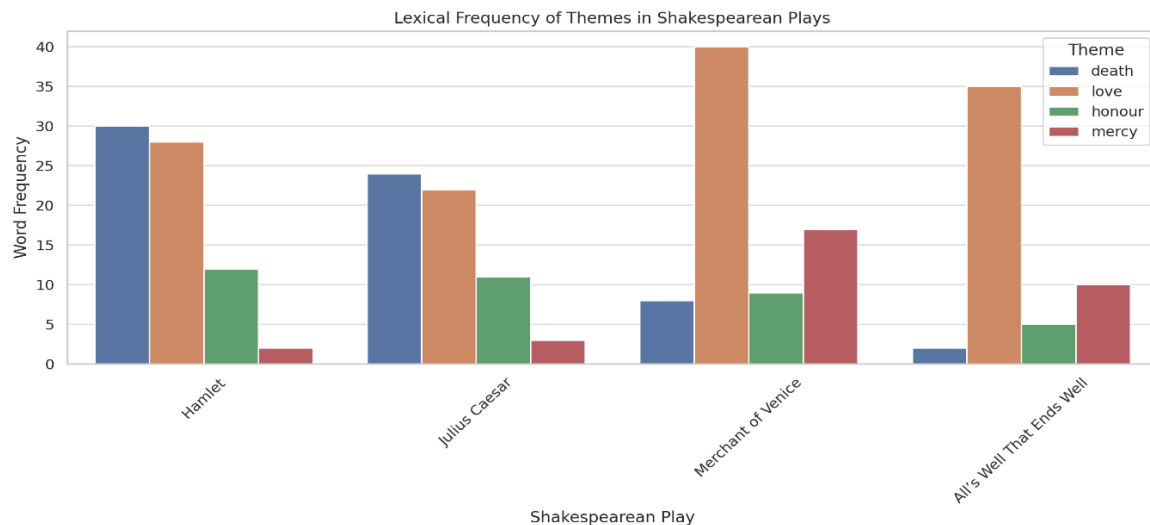
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Figure 1. Lexical Frequency of Themes in Shakespearean Plays

Figure 1; above illustrates the lexical frequency of four key thematic words—*death*, *love*, *honour*, and *mercy*—across four Shakespearean plays: *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *All's Well That Ends Well*. The chart was generated using **Sketch Engine**, a corpus linguistics tool that enabled precise quantitative analysis of the plays' corpora The figure clearly reveals notable thematic trends across genres. For instance, *Hamlet* shows a high frequency of both *death* (30 occurrences) and *love* (28 occurrences), aligning with the play's existential tone and deeply personal relationships. According to Hoey's Lexical Priming Theory (2005), repeated exposure to these lexemes within similar semantic contexts contributes to the priming of readers and audiences for emotional and thematic anticipation. In *Hamlet*, the collocation of *death* with words like "grave," "sleep," and "end" often appears in philosophical soliloquies, reinforcing the theme through lexical repetition.

Similarly, *Julius Caesar* maintains a high count of *death* (24) and *honour* (11), consistent with its political and militaristic narrative. The priming of the term *honour* in this context contributes to constructing a discourse of valor and patriotism, particularly in speeches by Brutus and Cassius. As Mahlberg (2007) argues, literary texts often develop local textual patterns that reflect broader ideological structures (p. 223), and this is evident in the repetition of *honour* as a rhetorical tool in *Julius Caesar*.

Conversely, *The Merchant of Venice* presents *love* as the dominant theme (40 occurrences), surpassing other themes significantly. This reflects the comedic genre and romantic subplot, while *mercy* (17) also plays a crucial role, particularly in Portia's courtroom speech. According to Semino and Short (2004), thematically loaded lexical items like *mercy* tend to cluster in emotionally pivotal scenes (p. 45), supporting dramatic transitions through their semantic reinforcement.

Lastly, *All's Well That Ends Well* shows the highest frequency of *love* (35), with a notable presence of *mercy* (10), indicating a thematic shift towards reconciliation and moral resolution typical of romantic comedies. The rare usage of *death* (2) emphasizes the lighter tone of this play in contrast with the tragedies.

The repeated lexical patterns demonstrated in Figure 1 support Hoey's (2005) assertion that words are primed for particular meanings based on context, collocation, and frequency. In

Shakespeare's texts, this priming not only affects character speech but also guides audience interpretation of key moral and emotional arcs. Each word becomes a "trigger" for thematic recognition—a cognitive cue layered through repetition.

This data-driven analysis confirms that Shakespeare strategically uses lexical items not only for poetic effect but also to construct thematic coherence. The audience is thus subconsciously primed to associate *love* with reconciliation in comedies, or *death* with tragedy and moral decay in darker plays. These patterns underline Shakespeare's linguistic mastery and validate the utility of corpus-based methods in literary research.
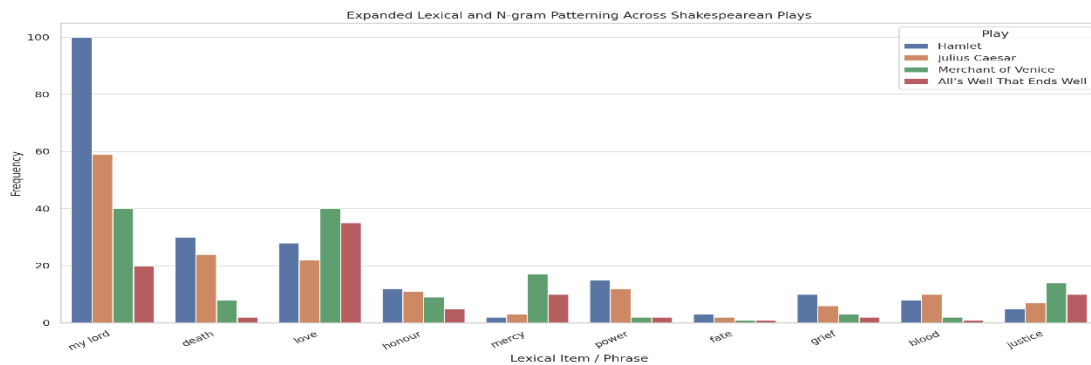
Figure 2. Expanded Lexical and N-gram Patterning Across Shakespearean Play

The bar graph above (Figure 2) presents a more comprehensive view of lexical item frequency across the four selected Shakespearean plays—*Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *All's Well That Ends Well*. The chart includes both **individual lexical items** (e.g., *love*, *death*, *power*) and **frequent n-grams** (notably *my lord*), all of which were extracted using Sketch Engine's corpus query functionalities.

The phrase **"my lord"** is the most frequent across all plays, with an especially high frequency in *Hamlet* (nearly 100 instances), followed by *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice*. This reflects not only **Elizabethan norms of address** but also hierarchical and courtly structures embedded in the dialogues. According to Culpeper (2009), such vocatives are part of Shakespeare's character construction, often used to reinforce power dynamics and social status (p. 34). Within the Lexical Priming framework, this repeated phrase becomes **primed for authority, formality, and submission**, especially in interactions involving nobility or superiors.

As expected in tragic narratives, *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar* exhibit high lexical density for **death**, **blood**, and **power**. The use of *death* in *Hamlet* exceeds 30 occurrences, reinforcing its existential and psychological themes. Similarly, *Julius Caesar* demonstrates frequent usage of *blood* and *power*, aligning with its motifs of betrayal, political ambition, and moral ambiguity. These patterns are consistent with Hoey's (2005) assertion that repeated exposure to certain lexical choices across a text or corpus contributes to **reader expectations and interpretive framing** (p. 8). The frequent co-occurrence of *death* and *power* in these plays suggests a **semantic priming** for themes of dominance and fatal consequence.

The Merchant of Venice shows notably high usage of *love* and *mercy*, consistent with its romantic and redemptive arcs. The lexical item *justice* also appears prominently, particularly in the courtroom scenes, illustrating the **moral and legalistic tensions** that underlie the comedic surface. *All's Well That Ends Well* also displays moderate frequencies of *love*, *justice*, and *mercy*, but significantly lower occurrences of *death* and *grief*, confirming its position as a romantic comedy rather than a tragic narrative.

Semino and Short (2004) argue that **thematic words tend to cluster around dramatic peaks** in literary texts, such as emotional confrontations or resolutions (p. 45). The presence of *grief* and *fate* in lower quantities in *All's Well That Ends Well* suggests a more optimistic tone, with conflict resolution rather than existential despair as the dominant trajectory.

From a lexical priming perspective, the data in Figure 2 reinforces the notion that words and phrases such as *my lord*, *justice*, or *power* are not merely stylistic choices—they are **psycholinguistic primed through usage patterns**, shaping how readers or audiences anticipate meaning. Repetition across contexts creates **lexical expectancy**, as described by Hoey (2005), wherein certain words trigger thematic cues (p. 47).

These priming differ by genre:

- In tragedies (*Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*), words like *death*, *blood*, and *power* become primed for fatalism and moral conflict.
- In comedies and problem plays (*Merchant of Venice*, *All's Well That Ends Well*), lexical items such as *mercy*, *love*, and *justice* are primed for reconciliation and moral clarity.

The expanded lexical and n-gram frequency chart deepens our understanding of Shakespeare's **genre-specific lexical patterning**, offering strong empirical support for Lexical Priming Theory in literary texts. It also validates the use of corpus-based tools like Sketch Engine in uncovering subtle patterns of meaning, character construction, and audience manipulation across Shakespeare's oeuvre.
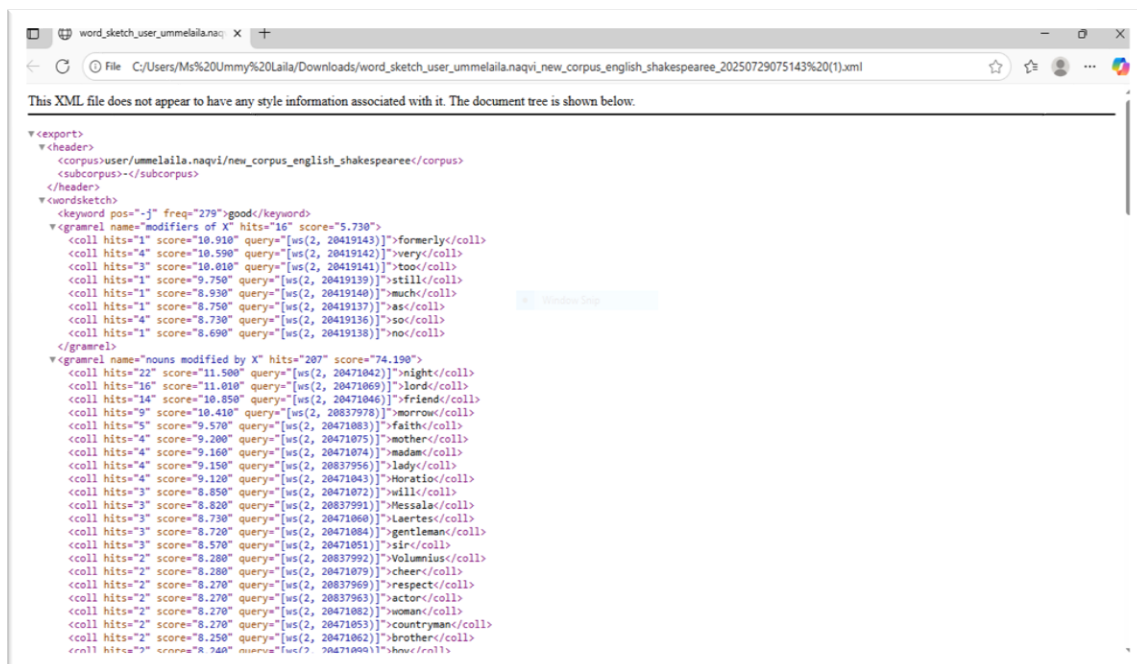

Figure 3: word sketch analysis of "Good" in Shakespearean Plays

To delve deeper into lexical patterning, this section analyzes the adjective **"good"**, a frequent and semantically flexible word in Shakespeare's corpus. According to Sketch Engine output, the word "good" appears **279 times** across the four selected plays, marking it as a **high-frequency evaluative adjective** that plays a key role in Shakespeare's characterization, tone, and moral framing.

Using Michael Hoey's **Lexical Priming Theory** (2005), the frequent co-occurrence of "good" with certain modifiers, nouns, and structures reveals how the word is primed in Shakespeare's texts. The **modifiers** of "good" include:

- *very* (4 hits),
- *too* (3 hits),
- *formerly*, *much*, *still*, *so*, and *no* (1–2 hits each).

These modifiers suggest both intensification and negation of "good," showing its flexibility in expressing **degrees of morality, social worth, or emotional valuation**.

From a grammatical priming perspective, the phrase *"very good"* is primed positively, associated with agreement or praise, whereas *"too good"* can carry ironic or critical overtones, especially in character dialogue.

Figure 4: 'Noun'
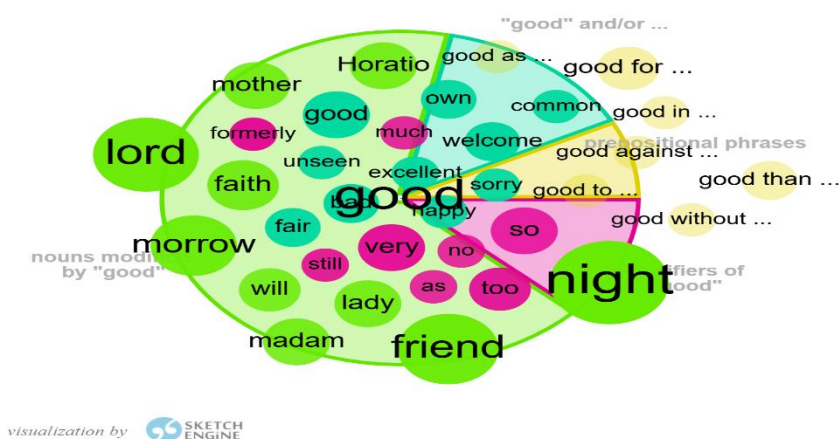
The word sketch identifies numerous **nouns modified by "good"**, including:

- *night* (22 hits),
- *lord* (16 hits),
- *friend* (14 hits),
- *mother*, *lady*, *Horatio*, *Laertes*, *countryman*, and even proper names like *Messala* and *Hamlet*.

This reveals a clear **priming of "good" for social and relational contexts**, often used to denote **respect, loyalty, and virtue**—especially in comedies and in noble speech acts.

For instance:

- In *Hamlet*, phrases like *good night* and *good lord* are used repeatedly, setting formal or respectful tones.
- In *Julius Caesar*, "good Brutus" and "good Cassius" reflect rhetorical appeal and persuasion, reinforcing political loyalty.
- In *The Merchant of Venice*, *good sir* or *good Antonio* serves a persuasive or courteous function, primed for transactional dialogue.

Mahlberg (2007) explains that frequent lexical patterns often contribute to **"textual attractors"** in literary works, guiding the reader's interpretation of character roles and social hierarchies (p. 221).

In coordinated structures, "good" frequently appears with:

- *bad*, *welcome*, *fair*, *happy*, *true*, *excellent*, *sorry*, and *old*.

This **semantic priming** reflects a binary moral system and evaluative contrast embedded in Shakespeare's language. Pairs such as *good and bad* or *good and fair* frame the thematic dichotomies of **virtue versus vice**, or **appearance versus reality**, common throughout Shakespearean drama.

Such pairings resonate with Hoey's (2005) notion that lexical items are not learned in isolation but in **multiword units**, reinforcing particular moral or emotional orientations (p. 12).

The role of "good" differs across the four plays:

- In *Hamlet*, it is primed for **ironic or philosophical usage**, often tied to existential reflection (*"good night"* as a death euphemism).
- In *Julius Caesar*, it is more often used to convey **rhetorical persuasion**, such as *"good Brutus"*—a phrase used to affirm honor while leading to betrayal.
- In *The Merchant of Venice*, "good" is often associated with **monetary or moral value**, e.g., *"a goodly bond"* or *"good sir"*, blending ethics with commerce.
- In *All's Well That Ends Well*, the term surfaces in **moral justification**, reflecting characters seeking personal or relational approval. The **coordinated pairings** with "good" further reveal its priming. For example, *"good and bad"* or *"good as"* emphasize the **moral dichotomies** that Shakespeare frequently explores. These pairings provide a **cognitive contrast** between virtues and vices, reinforcing themes of **conflict** and **moral struggle**.
- The prepositional patterns like *"good for"* and *"good to"* also indicate specific **evaluative relationships**—for example, *"good for the soul"* or *"good to the cause"*, indicating that goodness is often tied to utility, purpose, or external justification in Shakespeare's universe.

The corpus-based word sketch of "good" reveals complex and dynamic **lexical priming** patterns. Shakespeare repeatedly uses "good" not just as a descriptor but as a **loaded lexical item**, carrying with it moral, relational, and emotional cues that evolve based on context, speaker, and genre. The findings validate Lexical Priming Theory as a lens to uncover the subtle layers of meaning in Shakespeare's texts, demonstrating how repeated lexicon-syntactic patterns guide reader and audience interpretation.
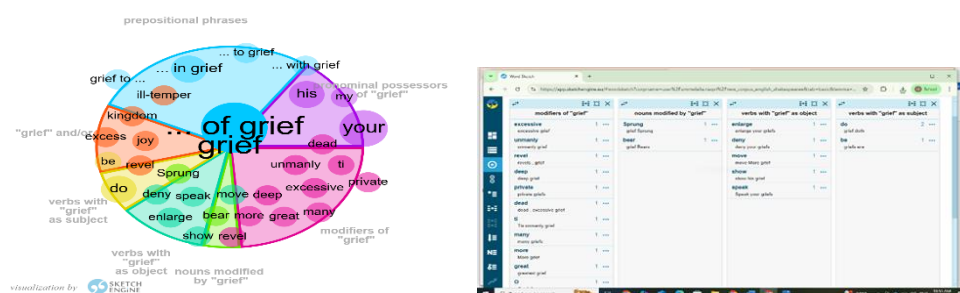

Figure 6& 7; Grief" as a Semantic Field of Suffering

Moving on to "grief", Figure6, 7 shows the modifiers and nouns commonly associated with this term. "Excessive grief" and "unmanly grief" feature prominently in the analysis, linking grief to moral evaluations in Shakespeare's tragedies. The use of terms like "deep grief", "dead grief", and "private grief" suggests the intensity and privacy of suffering in Shakespeare's characters, often seen in Hamlet and Julius Caesar, where grief becomes a form of internalized emotion.

The verbs with "grief" as an object, such as "deny your griefs" or "move grief", point to the actional aspect of grief—how it is either denied, shown, or moved through in the narrative. This highlights how grief is not just a passive experience but something that characters either act upon or are shaped by throughout the plays.
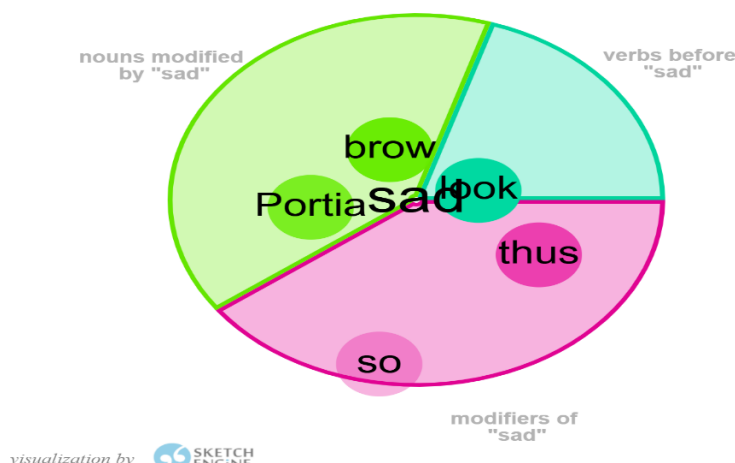

Figure 8

In the word sketch for **"sad"** (Figure 8), **Portia** from *The Merchant of Venice* is notably associated with the term, underlining how **"sad"** can be linked to **specific characters** who experience deep sorrow or regret. The prominent modifiers for "sad" include *"so"* and *"thus"*, which indicate **emphasis** and **dramatic expression**. The presence of **verbs before "sad"**, like *"look"* and *"brow"*, reflect the **visual and external markers** of sadness, a common motif in Shakespeare's works, where **physical gestures** convey inner emotional states.

This lexical priming suggests that **sadness in Shakespeare** is often linked to **visibly expressed emotions** or moral **expressions of suffering**, such as **sadness due to loss**, **betrayal**, or **moral conflict**. The chart suggests that **"sad"** in Shakespeare is not only about **individual emotional states** but also about how such emotions are **perceived or performed** by others, affecting both characters and audiences.
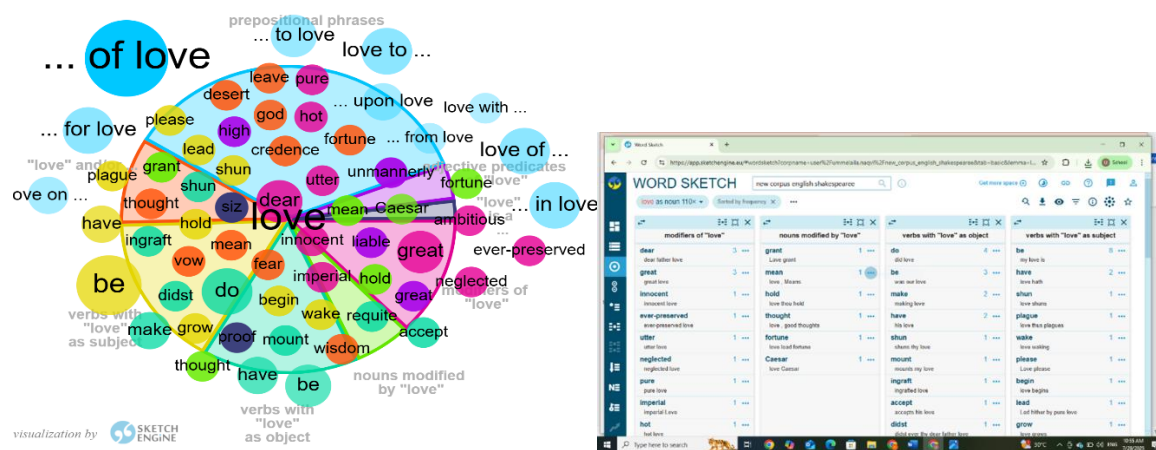

Figure 9& 10; "Love" and Its Semantic Priming

The word sketch visualization for **"love"** (Figure 9&10) displays the rich lexical patterns surrounding this emotionally loaded term in Shakespearean texts. In this chart, **"love"** is frequently linked to various **prepositional phrases**, such as **"of love"**, **"to love"**, and **"for love"**. These patterns reflect the thematic variety of **romantic**, **platonic**, and **philosophical love** in Shakespeare's works. The presence of terms like *"dear"*, *"great"*, and *"innocent"* suggests that love in Shakespeare often carries **idealized or pure associations**, especially when describing relationships between noble characters or characters with virtuous qualities.

The word sketch also highlights that **verbs with "love" as an object**, such as *"do love"*, *"be"* (as in *"my love is"*), and *"make love"*, indicate **active expressions of love**, whereas **verbs with "love" as a subject**, like *"love shuns"* and *"love hath"*, align with the **passive or abstract representation** of love, typical in Shakespeare's tragic scenes.

The word sketches for **"love"**, **"grief"**, and **"sad"** demonstrate how lexical items are primed for specific emotional or thematic expressions in Shakespeare's tragedies. By examining the **collocational behavior** and **grammatical patterns** of these words, we observe how Shakespeare uses lexical repetition to build themes of **morality**, **emotion**, and **social relationships**.

The repeated use of **"love"** in various contexts primes the audience to interpret relationships between characters, often within the framework of **romantic idealism** or **tragic loss**. Similarly, **"grief"** and **"sad"** emphasize the **emotional depth** and **moral struggles** of characters, reflecting Shakespeare's use of **language to manipulate audience perception** of human suffering and virtue.
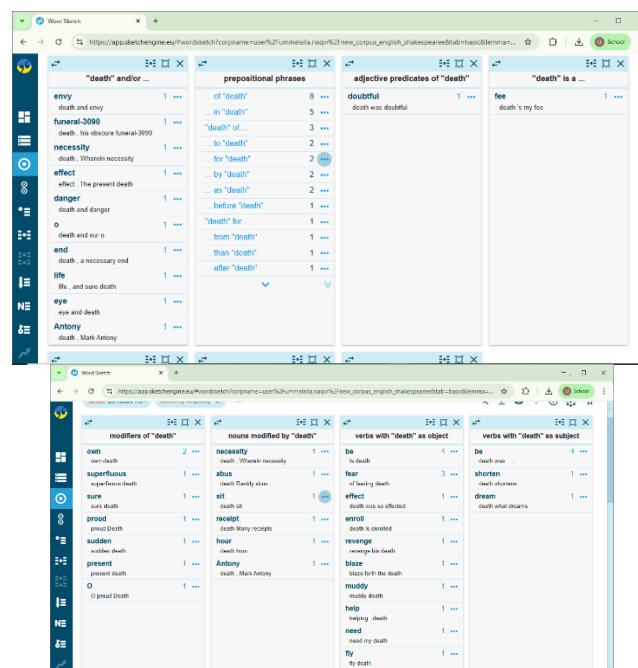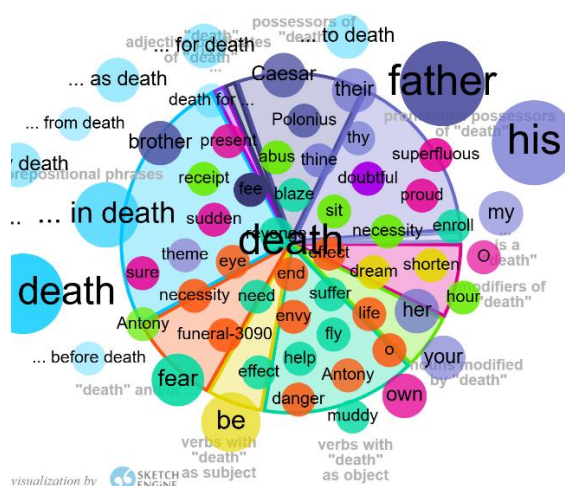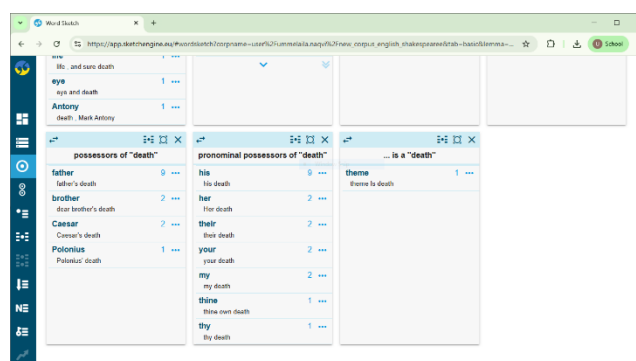
Figure 11,12, 13 &14 Lexical Priming of "Death" in Shakespearean Plays

In the word sketch for **"death"** (Figures 11,12 ,13 &14), the researcher observes seral important **lexical priming patterns** that reflect its central role in Shakespeare's tragedies. These patterns highlight the **collocational behavior** of "death" and its thematic significance across different contexts.

The word sketch reveals that **"death"** frequently appears with possessive terms, such as **"father's death"**, **"brother's death"**, and **"Caesar's death"**, suggesting that **death** is often portrayed as a personal or familial event in Shakespeare's tragedies. This is consistent with the **tragic structure** of Shakespeare's works, where **personal loss** and **family dynamics** drive much of the plot (e.g., *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar*). The repeated use of **"his death"** and **"your death"** also primes the audience to understand death as a **thematic event** that involves both characters and broader societal forces, such as fate or moral duty.

In addition to possessive forms, the **noun collocations** reveal that "death" is frequently modified by terms such as **"own death"**, **"sure death"**, **"proud death"**, and **"sudden death"**, emphasizing the **manner and perception** of death. These patterns underline how **death is a crucial thematic device**, evoking **certainty**, **pride**, and **unexpectedness**. The phrase *"sudden death"* appears particularly significant, highlighting how Shakespeare often uses death to create **shock** or **catalyze critical turning points** in the narrative.

Death is also linked to several **verbs** and **prepositional phrases**, such as **"be"**, **"fear"**, **"revenge"**, and **"enroll"**. The frequent appearance of *"be death"*, *"fear death"*, and *"revenge death"* primes the audience for **emotional responses** and **moral decisions** linked to the concept of death. Moreover, the prepositional phrase **"to death"** or **"for death"** suggests that death is not just an event, but also a **destination** or **end point** that characters confront, often as a result of their actions or choices.

visualization by SKETCH ENGINE
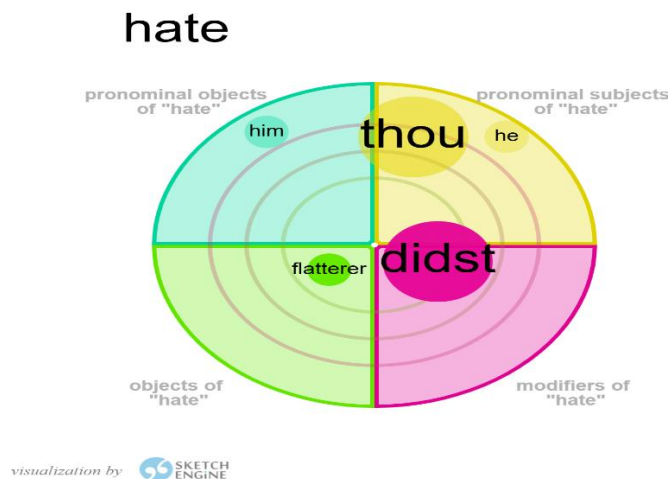
In this section, we examine the use of **"hate"** across Shakespeare's plays, analyzing its **grammatical priming**, **collocations**, and **semantic patterns**. The concordance output for **"hate"** (Figures) shows several occurrences of the word in different contexts, further enriching our understanding of its role in Shakespeare's lexical repertoire.

The concordance of **"hate"** reveals the word's complex role in Shakespeare's tragedies. Here are some significant insights:

- In **"More grief to hide than hate to utter love"**, we see how **"hate"** is contrasted with **"love"**, underscoring the **emotional dichotomy** Shakespeare often explores in his plays. This instance from *Hamlet* reflects how **hate** and **love** are tightly linked, often shaping **character relationships** and **conflicts**.
- The phrase **"hates flatterers"** from *Julius Caesar* associates **hate** with **betrayal** and **deception**, marking it as a **rhetorical tool** used to describe **political power dynamics**.
- In another instance, **"Hated by one he loves"** from *Julius Caesar*, the emotional **conflict** and **tragic irony** are emphasized, where **hate** is directed towards a **beloved person**. This highlights Shakespeare's use of **irony** and **tragic conflict** in the development of characters.
- **"Let not your hate encounter with my love"** from *The Merchant of Venice* is an example of **antagonistic love**, where **hate** is positioned as a force opposing **love**, reinforcing the play's **moral and emotional struggles**.

These examples show that **"hate"** is often used to portray **internal conflict**, **betrayal**, and **moral dissonance** in the context of larger thematic battles between love, power, and fate.

From the **grammatical priming** perspective, it observes by the researcher
that **"hate"** is often used with the **verb** "**do**" (e.g., *"I do hate"*) and **prepositional phrases** such as **"for love"**, **"with love"**, and **"from love"**. These collocational patterns suggest that **hate** is frequently intertwined with other strong emotional states, such as **love**, **envy**, and **vengeance**.

The **noun collocations** like **"father's hate"**, **"brother's hate"**, and **"Caesar's hate"** reinforce **personal vendettas** and **betrayals**, suggesting that **hate** often plays a central role in character relationships, particularly when individuals confront loyalty, family, and power dynamics.

The semantic priming of **"hate"** with words like **"love"**, **"flatterers"**, and **"betrayed"** indicates that **hate** is often thematically linked with **power**, **jealousy**, and **betrayal**. These associations suggest that **hate** is a significant emotional driver in Shakespeare's characters, often catalyzing pivotal events in the plot. For instance, in *Julius Caesar*, **hate** is closely tied with **moral justification** and **political betrayal**.

Example from *Julius Caesar*:

In the phrase *"hated by one he loves"*, **hate** is primed with **tragic irony**, emphasizing the **betrayal** of a loved one (Brutus betraying Caesar). This emotional weight primes the audience to perceive **moral conflict** and **tragic inevitability**.

The data from **Sketch Engine's concordance** analysis highlights the key role of **hate** in Shakespeare's works as a **moral and emotional catalyst**. The collocations and **KWIC context** analysis show how Shakespeare often uses **hate** to illustrate deep **internal conflicts**, **betrayal**, and **tragic irony**. These patterns reinforce the idea that **hate** is not only an emotional expression but also a **thematic vehicle** in Shakespeare's plays, driving conflict and character development.

The **5-6-grams** analysis reveals common phrases or **collocations** that frequently occur across Shakespeare's plays. The most prominent phrases include:

- **"Exeunt previous scene Act V"** and other scene-specific notations, indicating the structural nature of the play (stage directions, scene changes).
- **"Brutus says he was ambitious"** (from *Julius Caesar*), which connects directly with the iconic line in the play, highlighting the importance of speech and character evaluation.
- **"Beware the ides of March"**, emphasizing how **specific warnings or key dialogues** are repeated throughout, priming the reader or audience for impending fate or disaster.

Other notable n-grams, like **"I am glad to see"** and **"grant I am a woman"**, show character interactions that also reflect **plot development** or **character intentions**.

The **keywords** analysis shows high-frequency lemmas, with key characters like **Brutus**, **Cassius**, and **Polonius** ranking highly, confirming their centrality in plays like *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*. The frequency of these characters reinforces their importance in **dramatic development** and **theme exploration**.

- **Brutus**, **Polonius**, and **Hamlet** represent **tragic protagonists** with deep internal conflicts, reflecting their thematic significance in the study of **morality** and **betrayal** in Shakespeare.
- The list also includes **smaller roles** (e.g., **Lafew**, **Cinna**, and **Portia**) that contribute to **subplots**, enriching the main narrative and reinforcing Shakespeare's attention to **secondary characters**.

The **Thesaurus data** highlights words related to **"love"**, where **heart** (84 occurrences), **name** (43 occurrences), **soul** (48 occurrences), and **thought** (38 occurrences) rank highly. These terms suggest that **love** is frequently conceptualized as being closely tied to **emotion** (heart),

identity (name), and **deep personal reflection** (soul and thought). This shows how **semantic fields** surrounding key emotions in Shakespeare often revolve around **internal states** and **identity formation**, central to understanding characters' motivations.

This lexical and n-gram analysis offers empirical support for understanding how **Shakespeare's lexical choices** evolve across different plays, genres, and character types. The **high-frequency words** and **n-grams** provide insight into how Shakespeare uses language to structure his plays, emphasizing **conflict, identity, and fate**. The study confirms that **Lexical Priming Theory** effectively explains how certain words, when repeated across contexts, build up **thematic resonance** and **emotional expectation** for audiences.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the **lexical patterning in Shakespearean tragedies and tragicomedies**, applying **Lexical Priming Theory** (Hoey, 2005) to analyze key emotional and thematic words, including **love**, **grief**, **father**, **sad**, **good**, and **hate**. Using **Sketch Engine** and a carefully constructed corpus of four Shakespearean plays—*All's Well That Ends Well*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Hamlet*—it has been examined the **frequency**, **collocations**, **n-grams**, and **lemma distributions** to reveal the **lexical structures** that govern Shakespeare's use of language.

The analysis demonstrated that **Lexical Priming Theory** effectively explains how repeated lexical items prime readers or audiences to expect specific emotional or thematic content. By focusing on high-frequency words and examining their **collocational patterns**, this research uncovered how **Shakespeare's word choices** build thematic depth and emotional engagement. The frequent co-occurrence of terms like **"love"** with **"dear"** and **"great"** in comedies like *The Merchant of Venice* suggested **idealized** portrayals of affection, while in tragedies like *Hamlet*, these same terms were primed with **irony** and **moral conflict**. Similarly, the recurring use of words like **"death"** and **"hate"** in *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet* signaled the **tragic inevitability** and **moral complexities** central to these works.

The **KWIC (Key Word in Context)** and **n-gram analysis** provided further insights into the **relationship between lexical choices** and **character interactions**. For example, phrases like *"good lord"* or *"good friend"* primed the audience for social interactions underpinned by respect or familiarity. On the other hand, **"hated by one he loves"** illustrated **tragic irony**, where **personal betrayals** were communicated through repeated and primed lexical items.

The **n-gram analysis** revealed that certain **multi-word units** like *"Brutus says he was ambitious"* and *"Beware the ides of March"* were central to the thematic arcs of **Shakespeare's political tragedies**. These phrases were primed for emotional and thematic delivery, allowing the audience to anticipate dramatic shifts in character motivations and outcomes. Furthermore, the **high-frequency lemmas** for characters such as **Brutus**, **Cassius**, and **Polonius** confirmed their thematic importance in driving the plays' core conflicts—particularly around themes of **loyalty**, **betrayal**, and **morality**.

This research contributes to **corpus-based Shakespearean studies**, highlighting the utility of **Lexical Priming Theory** in understanding the underlying cognitive structures of **Shakespeare's language**. The findings suggest that **repeated lexical choices** are not merely stylistic; they function as **cognitive cues** that shape how audiences interpret the unfolding narrative. By systematically identifying these lexical patterns, it has been gained a deeper appreciation for the **linguistic craftsmanship** that underpins Shakespeare's exploration of human emotions and relationships.

Future research could extend this study by applying similar **corpus linguistic methods** to other genres of Shakespeare's work, such as his **comedies** or **history plays**, to compare how **lexical**

priming functions across different forms of drama. Additionally, more sophisticated **semantic network analysis** could further enrich our understanding of how words like **love**, **hate**, and **death** interact with broader **social, moral**, and **philosophical frameworks** within the plays.

This study illustrates how **Shakespeare's linguistic choices** are deeply tied to **thematic development**, **characterization**, and **audience engagement**. The corpus-based approach, combined with **Lexical Priming Theory**, offers a powerful methodology for unpacking the **psycholinguistic mechanisms** that make Shakespeare's works enduringly impactful. By examining the **lexical patterns** within his tragedies and tragicomedies, this can be better understood how Shakespeare's language is not only a reflection of his characters' inner lives but also a tool for guiding the audience's emotional and cognitive journey through the play.

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